



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

AUGUST 2023

Meditation	
<i>You Have Been Good</i>	1
Editorial	
<i>Jenny Wren</i>	2
The Bottom Line	
<i>The Strength of a Vow</i>	5
My Trusting the Bible	9
Marriages.....	14
Cradle Roll.....	14
Ordination.....	15
Obituaries	15
Observations	17
Church Matters	
<i>Segregated Seating</i>	20
The Struggle!	22
I Saw a Beautiful Thing	
<i>Real Music</i>	24
My Father and I Are One	25
Mission Awareness	
<i>Hosting Foreign Students</i>	26
A Woman After God's Heart	
<i>Zarephath's Widow</i>	29
Junior Messages	
<i>Escape From Ukraine (Part 2 of 2)</i>	34
Youth Messages	
<i>A Place Called Heaven</i>	35
Thought Gems	back cover

Calvary Messenger

August 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.**

Calvary Publications, Inc., is a non-profit organization, incorporated in the State of Ohio, for the purpose of sponsoring, publishing, and distributing Christian literature. The board is elected, one member annually, by the ministers of the Beachy Amish Mennonite Churches, at their annual spring meeting.

Board of Directors

(Calvary Publications, Inc.)
 Matthew Raber, Chairman
 Mark Webb, Vice-Chairman
 Barry Hochstetler, Treasurer
 Galen Stutzman, Secretary
 Nathan Fisher

Material for *Calvary Messenger*, marriages, births, ordinations, obituaries, and general articles—send to the *Editor*. Other material—mail to their respective *Editors*.

Subscriptions, renewals, changes of address, etc.—mail to **Circulation Manager**.

When you move, please notify the Circulation Manager one month in advance, giving your old and new address in full, so that your mailing label can be properly corrected and your credit be kept in order.

This periodical is digitally available at calvarymessenger.org.

Editor: Aaron D. Yoder
 5188 W. 825 N., Leesburg, IN 46538
 Ph: 574-646-2123; Fax: 800-956-7850
calvary.messenger.19@gmail.com

Contributing Editors:
 Simon Schrock, Enos D. Stutzman,
 Aaron Lapp, Ronald J. Miller

Missions Editor: Floyd Stoltzfus
 3750 E. Newport Rd.
 Gordonville, PA 17529

Youth Messages Editor: Josh Kooistra
 2445 Rough & Ready Rd.
 New Concord, OH 43762
cm youtheditor@gmail.com

Junior Messages Editor:
 Mrs. Mary Ellen Beachy
 11095 Pleasant Hill Rd.
 Dundee, OH 44624
maryellenbeachy@icloud.com

Women's Editor:
 Mrs. Susan Schlabach
 7184 W. Henry Rd., Ripley, OH 45167
skschlabach@gmail.com

Circulation Manager/Treasurer:
 Barry Hochstetler
 6681 Lake Rd.,
 Hicksville, OH 43526
 Ph: 419-487-0887
hochdrywall@gmail.com

Calvary Messenger (USPS 767-160) is published monthly by Calvary Publications. Subscription rates are: 1 year (U.S.) \$13.50, 3 years (U.S.) \$39.00. For congregations using the every-home-plan, \$12.00 per year to individual addresses. With a renewal at \$13.50 for 1 year, you may use a 1-year gift subscription free. Second class postage at Sugar creek, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to Calvary Publications, Inc., 6681 Lake Rd, Hicksville, OH 43526.

You Have Been Good

Rosie Miller, Grove City, MN

1. I see beauty all around me in the wide world below.

God, You are good. You've been so good.

For there's winter and summer, there is springtime and fall.

God, I can trust You for You have been good.

Though the leaves fall and wither and the grass dries to brown,

God, You are good. You have been good.

And the beauty of snowflakes make the earth turn to mud,

God, You are sovereign and You have been good.

2. Lord, it seems like the darkness comes to conquer my soul.

God, You are good. You've been so good.

And I can't see a light in this valley below.

God, I can trust You for You have been good.

Though Your plan and Your purpose, Lord, I don't understand,

God, You are good. You've been so good.

I will cling to Your promise that You hold to my hand.

God, You are sovereign and You have been good.

3. Just like Job, tried and tested in that day long ago.

God, You are good. You've been so good.

I want to be patient and stand firm to the goal.

God, I can trust You for You have been good.

I can't see in the future, but I know You are there.

God, You are good. You've been so good.

I need You to help me for my faith seems so small.

God, You are sovereign and You have been good.



Jenny Wren

“A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones” (Proverbs 17:22).

Around the outside of our house during spring and summer it is normal to hear a jubilant, bubbly song being repeated over and over again. A bird guidebook describes the song as “a stuttering, gurgling song, rising in a musical burst, then falling at the end.¹ It is a short, 2-3 second burst and when on a singing roll, this bird repeats its song every 5-7 seconds, going on for 25-30 times. The House Wren is a small bundle of energy that is not bashful or fearful of humans. It will also, with the same energy and fearlessness, give a raucous scolding to any predator that poses a threat to its nest and fledglings. At the time of this writing (late June) we have three wren nests in our yard. So, why does the wren sing so much? Many birds do most of their singing early in the morning but are less likely to sing during the daytime. Is it naturally a happy bird? Does it ever have bad days? Does its constant jubilation

ever become pesky to humans or to other birds? What does my song sound like on a given day?

In a work environment where there are people arriving at various shifts and times, there is an obvious difference between people at the end of their shift and people arriving at work in the early morning hours. While some may still be half asleep, others are at the end of their shift and ready to talk. Do you greet your fellow workers with a “Good morning?” What should you do if people regularly do not return your greeting? Should you give them a 60-second burst of Jenny wren jubilation until they respond or react?

Some of you may have spent time at Calvary Bible School in the late 70s and early 80s. Maybe you recall the wake-up “good morning” that came over the intercom to each dorm. While not a morning person, Brother Ervin Hershberger’s Jenny wren, or Johnny wren, jubilation didn’t grate on my groggy mind as it did for a friend. We did recall the verse in Proverbs 27:14, *“He that blesseth his friend with a loud voice,*

1. *Eastern Birds*, Peterson Field Guides, 1980, Roger Tory Peterson

rising early in the morning, it shall be counted a curse to him.” We focused on the “*early in the morning*” part and probably took this verse out of context. What is an appropriate greeting and tone of voice for our exchanges with the people we meet?

Are there times when we should respond to people according to their disposition and mood? It is good to be sensitive to the joys or difficulties they are experiencing at the time. Paul tells us to “*Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep*” (Romans 12:15). Just as the human body cares for its various members, so we should do for other members of the human race or the church body. “*And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it*” (I Corinthians 12:26). Job’s three friends may be the extreme examples of mourning and comforting in distress and grief. Holding our peace and our “piece” may be better than spouting off with trite words of sympathy and counsel. Sometimes others just need someone to listen to the difficult things they are facing, but sitting in silence for seven days and seven nights goes beyond reason for us in the Western world.

However, a true friend will always seek to lift up his friend who is in

need or despair. Proverbs 17:17 tells us that “*A friend loveth at all times, and a brother is born for adversity.*” A brother’s love is especially seen in adversity. All of us can use someone to lift us up at times according to Ecclesiastes 4:8-10, “*Two are better than one; because they have a good reward for their labour. For if they fall, the one will lift up his fellow: but woe to him that is alone when he falleth; for he hath not another to help him up.*” Who of us has not been blessed with having a good friend stand up for us when we are being beaten down? And a cheery Jenny or Johnny wren can be just what we need to brighten our day. “*Heaviness in the heart of man maketh it stoop: but a good word maketh it glad*” (Proverbs 12:25). “*A merry heart maketh a cheerful countenance: but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken*” (Proverbs 15:13).

Maybe you are not a bubbly, vivacious person who is constantly singing the joys of life to the world. Remember that birds are not all wrens. Bluebirds frequent our yard as well and their song is a plaintive and much quieter call. But they are also singing the song their Creator God gave them. May our song and daily disposition bring honor to our Creator God and brighten the lives of the people around us.

So, why do Jenny wrens sing so much? It's possible that it may be Johnny wren. One suggestion is that the wren's cheery song is an "all clear" that lets Jenny wren know that it's safe to leave the nest. Here's another lesson from nature for the human "Johnny wrens" to communicate the joys of parenting

to our spouses and nestlings and to be alert to the predators that are certain to be lurking somewhere in our neighborhood.

"Therefore encourage one another and build one another up, just as you are doing" (I Thessalonians 5:11 ESV).

-AY 

Acknowledgment

The three-part story, "The Freedom of Forgiveness Received," ending in June 2023 was reprinted with permission from the author, Joel Kime. It is published on his website at: <https://joelkime.com/2017/12/13/the-freedom-of-forgiveness-received/>.

-AY

Announcement

Single Ladies' Seminar

August 4-6, 2023



"Building Your House"

"The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands." Proverbs 14:1

The Design - Catherine Kipps, Aroda, VA

Building Relationships - Allison Payette, New Paris, IN

Money Matters - Valerie Steiner, Plain City, OH

Women in Leadership? - Chelsea Good, Logan, OH

Embracing Loveliness - Delores Mast, Whiteville, TN

Walking With the Master Builder - Dorcas Peachey, Belleville, PA

Location: Deeper Life Ministries, 5123 Converse Huff Rd, Plain City, OH 43064

For more information or to register, please contact Deeper Life Ministries:

(614) 873-1199 or info@dmlmohio.org

The Strength of a Vow

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

Recently, I overheard a discussion in our van about the subject of their church covenant (bund). Their preacher had chosen to speak on the subject, apparently using some Bible-based ideas. He referred to the time in the Old Testament, in Judges 11, when Jephthah vowed a vow to the Lord. The people had made him the head and captain over the people of Gilead. Crisis: the powerful Ammonites threatened war.

In a showdown with the king of the Ammonites and their army, the crucial confrontation was shaping up as a slaughter of Israel by these adversarial armies. Jephthah, as the head man, made a personal vow to God. A vow or an oath was a very serious and binding promise, especially in Old Testament times. To not keep a vow was held as being condemned by God, being so serious as to not receive forgiveness for it. It was, in some ways, close to being a seal to an eternal banishment from Heaven. No good man could go back on any vow he made.

The conversation I was hearing was about a preacher who said that Jephthah's personal vow was equivalent to the vow people make when they join their particular church. If one breaks that vow to God, it would put him at a similar position as Jephthah. There was no recourse for a vow; no way to reverse it once it was spoken. They were making affirmation of being bound under God to remain in the church where your baptismal vows are made.

Jephthah felt that he was in a very tight spot, and as the leader of these people of God, he needed to summon all the possible strength he could for his army. The Ammonites were a strong people and known for their barbarous way of fighting. If they would gain the victory, they were cruel to their captives.

Jephthah's vow was that if God would somehow give him and his army the victory, it would be evidence of God's miraculous help. Upon that, he vowed to offer to God the first thing that comes out of his house when he returns home in triumph.

God gave Jephthah a clear victory. In jubilation, he returned home. The first thing that came out of his house was his daughter. Imagine the grief Jephthah immediately felt, not because it was his only daughter, but also his only child. But much larger than that, it was his child. Even if it was one out of his 20 children, it would still have been his own daughter!

What constitutes a vow made by an individual to God?

- Is a vow made to God or man the same as an oath?
- If they are not the same, how are they different?
- Is a personal vow different from making a personal promise?
- Is a personal vow less binding than one made directly to God, either by yourself or through a representative of God?

In Bible study, we consider the law of first mention. The first instance where a vow had been made was by Jacob. It is in Genesis 28:20-22, initiated by him to God. His father, Isaac, charged Jacob that he should not take a wife from among the Canaanites, but seek one from “*thy mother’s brother*.” On his way, he slept under the stars, with stones for his pillows. In Genesis 28:12-15, Jacob is visited by God in a dream.

He awakes, and is startled by how

near God was to him. He calls the place Bethel, the house of God. “*And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace, then shall the Lord be my God. And this stone which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house: and of all that thou shalt give me, I will surely give the tenth unto thee.*” This vow was made to God wherein Jacob has 10 personal pronouns in which he stipulates five conditional things for God to do for him. And **if** God does so for him, Jacob will solidify his commitment to God and give the tithe.

In our time this would seem typical of a promise rather than a vow.

Our focus here is not about Jephthah’s unnecessary and thoughtless vow, but about the strength and permanency of a vow made at one’s baptism. To whom is the vow made? Is there a primary aspect to that vow and in conjunction with it also a secondary factor?

The typical vows at a baptism in our churches involve two specific functions as can be readily observed in the vows themselves. Central to it is the declaration to being born again, and the confession by each applicant saying, “I believe that Jesus Christ is

the Son of God.” Secondly, there is then one or several vows stated as it relates to becoming a member of that home congregation.

The vows made in regard to salvation have lifelong implications. The vow or vows made relative to becoming a church member are recognized as applying as long as one is a member of that church. The vows made concerning church membership apply as long as a person is a member there. Biblically and historically, the vows made in the presence of a given congregation are singly made to God and to Christ, Who is the Head of His universal church. We enter that heavenly church by Holy Spirit baptism, as a transfer from the kingdom of this world into the kingdom of Christ. *“For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit”* (I Corinthians 12:13).

Being baptized into Christ by Holy Spirit baptism is distinctly separate from water baptism, as one who responds to faith in Christ to salvation. This verse is in the passive tense, clearly that which is done by God to those who are saved by grace through faith, without anyone specifically asking God for it.

Baptism by water is administered

upon the head of the applicant, whether by immersion or pouring (both require it on top of the head), which signifies a transfer from being a non-communicant individual to having an official relationship as a brother or sister in the church and its attendant benefits.

A person who has been given the privilege of church membership, could, if he so chooses, transfer his membership to another church upon his past faithfulness to his vows. A valid case can be made to include becoming a member of the church at the time of water baptism. Becoming a recognized member of the universal church of Christ by Holy Spirit baptism is no light thing, nor is it a frivolous matter to be given membership in a local congregation upon water baptism. Some of us perhaps should give it more serious thought and priority at times.

Some illustrations of vows as recorded in the Bible:

- Peter promised three times he would not deny Christ.
- Forty men vowed they would not eat or drink until they had killed Paul. (Acts 23:12-33)
- Herod made a vow (swore) to the daughter of Herodias. (Mark 6:14-29)
- Israel vowed a vow, and the


Lord answered their plea. (Numbers 21:1-3)

- Hannah vowed a vow, and the Lord gave her a son. (I Samuel 1)
- Absalom claimed he had made a vow in Hebron, as a cover for his deception. (II Samuel 15)

This subject could use some more study. It could be used as a topic for review at some Wednesday or Sunday evening discussion time. The Old Testament Amplified Bible has some interesting footnotes on Jephthah. There are numerous laws in regard to swearing with an oath, the oath itself, and of vows and promises elsewhere in the Old Testament.

The Bottom Line is that Jephthah's vow should not be made equal to one's baptismal vow in saying one who makes a vow at that time is duty-bound to remain in that

church body for life. The churches referred to at the beginning of this article have received persons who were baptized in other Conservative Anabaptist or even worldly churches without applying their own strict interpretation of that transfer to their church.

We have vows made at weddings, which we believe should be made to God via the bishop or pastor in charge. Those vows should not be made to each other, as some are wont to do. They are binding to each other, of course, but become a divine obligation to God and not basically to a person. Christian marriage is not a humanly-contrived contract, as some have construed. We also maintain that the vows entered upon at ministerial ordinations are for life, and not subject to term limits. 



I do not ask for mighty words
To leave the crowd impressed;
**But grant my life may ring so true,
My neighbor may be blessed.**

My Trusting the Bible

Simon Schrock, Catlett, VA

Over the years, Simon Schrock has had various contacts with people who believe there is no God. A more recent contact has resulted in email exchanges with an atheist friend. This writing begins a series of letters that Simon has written in response to challenges he received to give up his faith and belief in God. They are addressed to "Athie," Simon's pen name for atheists. All Scriptures are from the NKJV. -AY

Dear Athie,
You have challenged me to the core for believing the Bible is our word from God. You have asked me to *"just take a step back and for once consider that" you could be right about the Bible being "couched in the context of a barbaric and primitive mindset that had little clue as to the reality of our existence."* You have challenged me to allow my *"mind to be open to the possibility that the bible is not a holy book, that it is not inspired by some innately good, supernatural force, but that it in fact may be a product of a primitive mindset that does not reflect our evolved morals of today,*

then you might begin to see things a lot differently. And don't think this is some temptation of Satan that I'm presenting to you. It's just common sense."

I have been pondering about you questioning me and your disbelief in my "holy book" for about a year now. I simply cannot embrace the beliefs in which you put your trust. Since you stated your beliefs, I'll give you several reasons why I cannot agree with your "common sense" beliefs.

In my yearly Bible reading I am thrilled and can become excited about the foretelling of the coming of a Messiah King. In Moses's writings he foretold of a coming Savior over 4000 years before an angel proclaimed to the shepherds *"behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord"* (Luke 2:10-11). The inspiring story of Joseph portrays the coming of the forgiving Messiah 1700 years before He came. My "holy book" is about a Savior coming into our world to save us from our sins. The Prophet Ezekiel spoke of a Shepherd who was

to come around 600 years before He came to earth. His coming was declared by the Prophet Isaiah over 400 years before Messiah came. As relating to the prophets promising the coming of Messiah, the Bible refers to *“which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures, concerning His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, who was born of the seed of David according to the flesh”* (Romans 1:2-3). It states further, *“But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law”* (Galatians 4:4). I can get enthused that at the right time God sent Jesus into our world. Jesus Himself spoke of the prophets writing about Him, *“These are the words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me”* (Luke 24:44). The Psalms tell of Christ’s coming and the crucifixion around a thousand years before their fulfillment.

The history and story of the Bible spans 4000 years of time, written by approximately 40 different authors of its 66 books. These writers could not possibly have compared notes with each other about their goals and purpose. The Bible is the mysterious history of God fulfilling His promise

to send His Son to our world to be *“unto you a Savior”* and establish the kingdom of God.

So Athie, I simply cannot put my faith and trust in the idea that Moses, the prophets, and the Psalms, who foretold the coming of Christ hundreds of years before the event, could have been written *“in the context of a barbaric and primitive mindset that had little clue as to the reality of our existence”*. A *“barbaric and primitive mindset”* could not make such prophesies that were then fulfilled.

Maybe I could come closer believing *“that the bible is not some holy book, that it is not inspired by some innately supernatural force”* if it were not for my seeing some of its predictions happening in my short lifetime. After reading my *“holy book,”* I read some of the news of the day. Just reading of *“evolved morals,”* actually evolved immorals, affirms to me that my Bible is not a product of a *“primitive mindset,”* but is from a *“supernatural force”* that goes way beyond *“just common sense.”*

A long book could be written about Bible prophecy being fulfilled right before our eyes. Matthew, Luke, Paul, and other writers wrote about perilous times that would come upon the earth along with wars and commotions, rumors of wars, nation

against nation, earthquakes, famines, pestilences, perilous times, fearful sights, great signs from heaven, persecution of believers, Jerusalem surrounded by armies, men's hearts failing them for fear, mankind hating and betraying one another, and more. Every day newscasters and writers report such activities taking place around the world. Especially noticeable to me are the increase of these predicted activities in the nation where I live. I'll mention just several of the many predictions I personally observe being fulfilled as I read my "holy book" and then today's news.

First, a passage from the Book, *"Then he told them, Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be mighty and violent earthquakes, and in various places famines, and pestilences (plagues, malignant and contagious or infectious epidemic diseases, deadly and devastating) and there will be sights of terror and great signs from heaven"* (Luke 21:10-11 Amplified).

Now some news. For several years the headline news was about COVID-19 that has plagued the world. As of August 22, 2022, it is reported to have caused 6,445,398 deaths globally. It brought devastation to the routine way of life around the world. In the United States alone it has infected more than 93,000,000

people causing 1,039,036 deaths. That included many of our dear loved ones. "Pestilences, epidemic diseases, deadly and devastating." Now I'm reading what was foretold around 2000 years ago. I do not believe this to "be a product of a primitive mindset."


Hardly a day passes that the daily news isn't flooded with stories of terrible wars and rumors of more wars. There is intense fighting of one nation against another, killing thousands of people, including mothers and their dear children, handicapped seniors, and innocent civilians. Nations cast fears around the world with the threat of using nuclear weapons just to gain power over another nation with no respect for human beings. My Bible predicts "*perilous times*" in the last days. Again, dozens of perilous events are reported daily around the world: murder mysteries, killing law enforcement officers, deadly shootings at schools, homes, supermarkets, on the streets and highways, and other places too numerous to mention. Looters steal crowbars, mattocks, and sledge hammers that will likely be used for smash-and-grab robberies across the nation. A former policeman is shot to death protecting a news crew covering a smash-and-grab incident. Teenagers beat a 73-year-old man to death on a city street using a traffic

cone and laughing about it. A gay man lures another man to his house, killing him and eating of the dead man's body parts. This is just a tiny speck of the terrible "perilous" times that are reported daily in the news.

Jesus said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). I get a number of newsletters from missions preaching the Gospel around the world. In following some of their prayer guides it is evident to me that this prophecy from my "holy book" is taking shape right now. One mission alone is preaching the Gospel around the world in 22 languages. The good news of the Gospel is being proclaimed in

China, Israel, Africa, the Middle East, Ghana, Albania, India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, North Korea, Ethiopia, just to mention a few of the places. It is preached in North and South America and Canada. People are placing their faith in the good news of Jesus, including Muslims, Hindus, and Jews. Seeing this prophesy being fulfilled enhances my faith that the Bible is our Word from God and not from a "barbaric and primitive mindset."

That's where I am. But God's love allows you to believe what you want to believe as you go through your short time in life. He even lets it rain on both of our gardens.

From your believing friend in Virginia named Simon. 



A Christian will find it cheaper
TO PARDON THAN TO RESENT.

Forgiveness saves the
expense of anger,
the cost of hatred,
the waste of spirits.

-HANNAH MORE



CRITICISM

should not
be querulous
and wasting,
all knife and
root-pulling,
but guiding,
instructive,
inspirational—

*a south wind and
not an east wind.*

-RALPH
WALDO
EMERSON

marriages

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

Jantzi-Adams

Bro. Lavon, son of Larry and Beatrice Jantzi, Brunner, ON, and Sis. Kaylyn, daughter of Steve and Donna Adams, Millbank, ON, June 17, 2023, at Donegal Mennonite Church for Fairhaven A.M. Church by Arnold Jantzi.

Miller-Yoder

Bro. Hosea, son of Alpha and Lauranna Miller, Owenton, KY, and Sis. Wanda, daughter of Ivan and Rosemary Yoder, Lexington, IN, June 2, 2023, at Hanover Baptist Church for Living Waters Mennonite Church by Floyd Lengacher.


Peachey-Jantzi

Bro. Jesse, son of Louie Jr. and Olive Peachey, Woodville, NY, and Sis. Kaitlyn, daughter of Wayne and Judy Jantzi, Blackstone, VA, April 29, 2023, at Smyrna Baptist Church for McKenney Mennonite Church by Tim Miller.

Yoder-Brenneman

Bro. Raymond, son of Keith and the late Nettie Yoder, Millersburg, OH, and Sis. Esther, daughter of Miriam and the late Philip Brenneman, Millersburg, OH, April 29, 2023, at Dayspring Mennonite Church for Messiah A.M. Church by Philip Miller.

Yoder-Hostetler

Bro. Shane Laroy, son of Steve and the late Carolyn Yoder, Mifflintown, PA, and Sis. Nancy, daughter of Amos and Emma Hostetler, Watsonstown, PA, May 6, 2023, at the Buffalo Community Church for Shekinah Church by Dave Beiler. 

cradle roll

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

Beachy, Merle and Rosetta (Yoder), Arthur, IL, first child and son, Jaxson Cole, March 1, 2023.

Brenneman, Matthew and Hannah (Miller), Millersburg, OH, second child, first son, Grant Isaac, June 13, 2023.

Byler, Kendrick and Heather (Stoltzfus), Rural Retreat, VA, second child (a son deceased), first daughter, Savannah Grace, May 22, 2023.

Fisher, Mark and Mary Heather (Bennett), Mifflin, PA, first child and son, Theodore Bennett, June 13, 2023.

Hershberger, Brandon and Hannah (Miller), Sugarcreek, OH, third child, first daughter, Allison Brooke, June 20, 2023.

Miller, Anthony and Teneika (Zook), Malta, OH, second child, first son, Andric Jeremy, June 4, 2023.

Miller, Jesse and Lori (Hostetler), Blackville, SC, second child, first son, Troy Harrison, May 24, 2023.

Miller, Justin and Shelly (Gingerich), Kalona, IA, first child and son, Carter David, January 7, 2023.


Sharp, Darius and Charity (Swarey), Henderson, NY, first child and daughter, Kezia Rose, December 24, 2022.

Sharp, Matthias and Debra (Peachey), Belleville, NY, third child, second daughter, Rhoda Violet, June 2, 2023.

Yoder, Adam and Christina (Yoder), Montezuma, GA, third child, second daughter, Alivia Ryann, May 18, 2023.


Yoder, David and Kendra (Schrock), Burkesville, KY, third child, first son, Elijah David, May 23, 2023.

Yoder, Scotland and Jacquelyn (Brechtbill), Whiteville, TN, first child and son, Hudson Bennett, April 14, 2023.

Zook, Joel and Krista (Miller), Rural Retreat, VA, second child and daughter, Aspyn Shay, May 26, 2023. 

ordination

May the grace of God be upon our brother as he ministers faithfully. Let us pray for him.

Bro. Morris Yoder, 37, (wife, Beth Martin), Montezuma, GA, was chosen by the voice of the church and ordained bishop for Montezuma Mennonite Church on May 28, 2023. Preordination messages were given by Delmar Bontrager. The charge was given by Donny Swartzentruber, assisted by Delmar Bontrager and Dwight Yoder. 

obituaries

Bontrager, Salina, 88, of Kalona, IA, passed peacefully from this life on February 21, 2023, at Mercy Hospital in Iowa City, surrounded by her family. Salina was born July 17, 1934, in Mazie, OK, to Menno and Barbara (Bontrager) Chupp. On May 26, 1955, she was united in marriage to Joe E. Bontrager in Mayes County, OK.

She attended rural school and completed the eighth grade at the age of 12. She accepted Jesus as her Savior at a revival and was baptized in her

youth. Salina worked as a nurse's aide in Kansas City for two years while Joe served in 1W. In 1964, Joe and Salina and their three oldest children moved from OK to Kalona and bought a farm where she lived the remaining years of her life. Salina cooked for the Kalona Historical Tours for 50 years, serving over 78,000 people from over 15 countries. She enjoyed reading, gardening, quilting, visiting shut-ins, and making her family's favorite foods. She was a faithful member of the Sharon Bethel Church. Salina was

a woman of deep faith, praying for her children and grandchildren every day.

Survivors include eight children: Merle (Fern), Wellman; Mary (Willis) Schrock, Lincoln, MO; Karen (Tim) Miller, Tyler, TX; Marlin (Becky), Gary, and Lavon (Vesta), all of Kalona; Wayne (Linda), Parsons, KS; and Wanda (Leon) Stutzman, Wellman; 42 grandchildren, 40 great-grandchildren, and a brother, Andy Chupp, of Pryor, OK.

Preceding Salina in death were her parents, her husband, Joe, in 1985, four brothers, and three sisters.

The funeral was held February 25, 2023, at Sharon Bethel Church with Delmar Bontrager and Leighton Yoder serving. The burial followed at the Brenneman Cemetery in rural Kalona.

Schmucker, Lydia Ann, 74, of Stanardsville, VA, was called to her heavenly home on June 17, 2023, after battling multiple myeloma for eight years.

She was born in Parkman, OH, to Mahlon J. and Gertrude Nora (Troyer) Mast on November 27, 1948, and was the youngest of 11 children. The family left OH and moved to Holiday, TN, when Lydia Ann was 14. She was baptized into the Amish Church at the age of 15. She had a deep love for God and greatly admired the Apostle Paul.

She married Clarence M. Schmucker on Thanksgiving Day, November 27, 1969. To this union were born four children. The early years involved several moves that were job-related until they

settled in Franklin, KY, where they lived for 33 years.

After their family had all left the area, and due to declining health, it was decided to have them move to Aroda, VA, to be near their daughters. In 2021 the decision was made to move Clarence and Lydia Ann in with daughter Leanna and family. They cared for her until the time of her death.

She is missed by her family: her husband, Clarence, of 53 years; Nora (Robert) Troyer, Aroda; Robert (Elva Overholt), Oskaloosa, KS; Leanna (Mervin) Glick, Stanardsville; Nelson (Janice Martin), Oskaloosa, KS; 17 grandchildren, 12 great-grandchildren, and three sisters: Gertie (Eli Jr.) Mast, Laura (Allen) Mast, and Anna (John) Troyer.

She was preceded in death by her parents, three sisters: Amanda Miller, Mary Miller, and Emma Kuhns; four brothers: Alton, Clarence, John, and Mahlon, Jr.; one grandson, and numerous nieces and nephews.

Lydia Ann loved flowers, quilting, and had an especially soft spot for dogs. She had a sense of humor that kept making an unexpected appearance right until the very end. She loved her family dearly and said the hardest part of dying was the separation from her family. She took a real interest in her great-grandchildren and always enjoyed having them there. She had a spiritual concern for her family, and it was her greatest wish that we would all be ready when Jesus calls us home.

A funeral service was held at the Oak Grove Mennonite Church, Aroda, VA, on June 21, 2023, led by Lamar Hochstetler, followed by the committal by Mike Yoder and burial at the church cemetery.

Shenk, Charis Hope came into this world on June 11, 2023, in Wichita, KS, and passed into that world for which she was created about an hour and a quarter later. Her little body was beautiful but broken. Now it is perfect and she is fully alive and fully free in body, soul, and spirit.

Charis is survived by her parents, Brian and Cynthia Shenk, and sisters, Aliyah and Kiana, Hutchinson; grandparents: Marvin and Rosanna Kauffman, Leon,

IA; Harry and Edith Shenk, Partridge; 21 aunts and uncles, and 28 cousins.

She was preceded in death by her brother, Demetrius.

When early testing revealed that Charis's development made life unlikely, God's people united to pray. In a number of special prayer meetings, in numerous small clusters, and in countless prayer closets, we lifted our voices and poured out our hearts to our kind heavenly Father. We lifted Charis and her family and all of us to the throne of grace. And we received grace. While the outcome grieves and disappoints us deeply, we affirm our unshaken confidence in the sovereignty, power, wisdom, goodness, and love of God. Blessed be the Name of the Lord!



observations

The Atacama Desert in Chile, South America, serves as a destination for an unusual concentration of a particular type of refuse. A number of factors contribute to this unusual situation. Allow me to explain.

The garments we wear today are manufactured from a variety of organic and synthetic materials. Chemically formulated dyes and artificial leather are part of this picture.

The collective affluence and personal insecurity of folks who

live where an abundance of garment options exist are also major components of this problem. Much of western society discards the clothes they wear, not because they are worn out, but because ever-changing fashion makes them "irrelevant." When folks have the resources to continually adjust their wardrobes alongside the personal insecurity that makes them a slave to the ever-changing fashion industry, we wind up with mountains of discarded clothes that are not worn out.

It's not clear to me why Chile serves

as a destination for many of these unwanted garments. But after the second-hand options are exhausted, more than 50,000 tons of garments are deposited in the arid Atacama Desert in Chile where they slowly decay. Some of the synthetic elements of these garments will take 200 years to decompose! The concentration of chemical residue that these decaying garments leave behind give rise to concerns that grow along with the pile of clothes. This mountain of discarded clothes in a remote desert in Chile continues to grow and grow, to the point that it can now be seen from space!

I'm not aware how I have personally contributed to this problem in the desert of Chile, South America. But there are a few areas where we could make better choices along these lines. (Thanks to two readers for pointing me toward this news item.)

• • • • •

One advantage of a standard dress code is that it reduces the need to constantly make adjustments based on fashion evolution. I wish I could say it eliminates this, but it doesn't. Somehow trends and fashion expression find insidious expression even in our conservative Anabaptist sub-culture.

I do not doubt that fashion pressures are different in our settings

than in society at large. However, I'll leave it to you to try to understand if those in our conservative Anabaptist sub-culture should feel smug or satisfied that we are "less affected" by fashion choices than others are. And while we're at it, let's expand the question to consider if it is better to be shaped by the fashion sensibilities of our sub-culture than that of society at large. Pondering this question reminds us that the same root insecurities that lead to wardrobe choices driven by peer pressure are problematic wherever they are manifested.

• • • • •

Those who provide health and nutritional advice, whether lay-people or professionals, are nearly unanimous in their recommendation that we drink plenty of water. Howard Murad, MD, estimates that as many as 95% of women over the age of 40 experience dehydration. Many popular beverage options today contain caffeine. Caffeine is a diuretic which oftentimes prompts us to lose more fluid than we take in with the drink that contains the caffeine.

But even the goodness of water can be overdone. When we drink too much we can flush out things that our bodies need. As we age, our ability to efficiently absorb water deteriorates a bit as well. This conglomeration

of factors creates a ripe market for a wide array of hydration options where liquids are combined with electrolytes in order to facilitate hydration.

Sufficient hydration is also associated with healthy weight loss. Jorje Cruise, who has authored more than a dozen books related to health and weight loss, says that adequate hydration is an often-overlooked component of maintaining healthy weight. Cruise asserts that over decades many of us have mistaken some of the signals that our body gives out for dehydration as symptoms of hunger. Cruise says, “If you’re always craving carbs, sweets, or salty snacks, it’s actually ‘false hunger’ triggered by an electrolyte imbalance.” He says that adjustments that lead to appropriate hydration alone often significantly moves the needle on his clients’ bathroom scales. He reported that one of his clients lost 95 pounds due to giving special attention to hydration, without disclosing her beginning or her ending weight.

• • • • •

In early June, Ukraine began a counter-offensive aimed at dislodging the Russians who had invaded in the last 18 months or so. The developments are fluid but the military deaths and losses continue to pile up on both sides of the conflict.

Wagner is a private military group that Russia had hired to fight on their behalf in Ukraine. The Wagner group was in some cases successful where the Russia military wasn’t. With Wagner operating alongside the Russian army, this displaced the numbers of Russian conscripts that needed to be mobilized.

However, tensions between Wagner and the Russian military establishment began to fester and finally boiled over. Prigozhin, the Wagner leader, accused the Russian military brass of working against the Wagner group in a variety of ways. Then he accused Russia of attacking their camps with missiles and killing several dozen fighters. This incensed Prigozhin. So he marched toward Moscow with the stated aim of dealing with the “incompetent and corrupt” military leaders there. However, amid threats of being arrested and punished for treason and insurrection, he was offered amnesty if he would abandon his plans. He accepted an offer to relocate to neighboring Belarus.

Prigozhin’s very public defiance of Russia’s stance raised legitimate questions for a watching world regarding the actual effectiveness of Putin’s control over Russia.

• • • • •

In June the Supreme Court ruled

that the President didn't have the authority to unilaterally forgive about 400 billion dollars of student debt without congressional involvement. The plan would have erased between \$10,000 and \$20,000 of student debt per qualified person. President Biden seems eager to find another way to fulfill this campaign promise.

Biden had announced this popular initiative prior to the midterm elections last year. After this setback, it isn't clear if the congressional machinery has enough cohesion and enough time to make student loan forgiveness happen before next year's elections.

-RJM 

church matters

Segregated Seating at Church

Matt Peachey, Lewistown, PA

When visitors attend many conservative Anabaptist churches gathered for worship, they immediately notice something different from most others churches: the men and women sit separately. Segregated seating is a long-standing tradition for many of us. It is good for us to examine our traditions and give explanations for why we do what we do. In doing so, we should avoid two common errors when thinking about traditions. One is the assumption that if we have "always done something," it must be the right thing to do. The other is assuming that what we have "always done" is probably less than ideal. Rather, we should recognize that traditions can keep us from being

pressed into the world's mold but can also become a mindless form if not examined. Today it is possible to check with Bing Chat about why we should or should not continue this practice. However, I highly recommend discussing it with others at church instead.

Although some may argue that we should update our practice, I offer several items for our consideration.

Sometimes people suggest that segregated seating is not conducive to reaching out to our communities. They feel it is a practice that unnecessarily makes non-Mennonites uncomfortable. While it may be uncomfortable to those not used to it, it doesn't need to be a hinderance to evangelism.

Muslims have an even more odd seating practice when they gather for worship, and it doesn't seem to embarrass them or keep them from getting converts. Perhaps we could learn something from them. Others suggest dropping this practice because they enjoy sitting with their spouses. While it is commendable that they enjoy this, surely church services are not the main time we can sit with our spouses. If it is, we should likely evaluate our lifestyle.

Segregated seating does offer some practical benefits. When we had three young children, we attended services for a year where segregated seating was not practiced. We found that sitting together made it more difficult to train toddlers to sit quietly. Often, they want to switch between parents (in my observation they most times want to sit with Mom), and sitting beside each other increases the difficulty of fathers sharing in taking care of the children. Also, at times children need to be taken out during the service. When benches are fairly close to each other, which they often are in a sanctuary, this means scooting out past others on the bench. In close quarters that's nicer to do with the same gender.

Segregated seating also facilitates some practices that we value. Sitting segregated helps improve our singing.

Rather than having the parts scattered throughout the auditorium, they are more concentrated. Young people are surrounded by others singing their parts. I was made aware of this after our church hosted a community hymn sing. That evening we did not sit segregated, and after the service, a visitor from a church that no longer practices segregated seating, mentioned his disappointment that we had not sat segregated. Segregated seating also facilitates visiting after the services are over. While I don't mind visiting with the ladies at church, I do prefer visiting with the men. If large families sit together, the options for this are at least limited.

Most importantly, I propose that we should sit as *a-family-in-church* rather than as families. After all, as a local church, are we not to be a family? My observation is that blood family loyalty often trumps church family loyalty. Is this really what the New Testament teaches? Sitting together every Sunday as one family helps reinforce this reality. Rebecca McLaughlin in an article for CT Women said this in an article entitled "Why I don't Sit with my Husband in Church."

My younger daughter loves another couple in our church. She often sits with them, and people routinely think that my friend is her mom. When

my friend has had a hard week, my daughter's affection encourages her, which in turn gladdens my heart and reminds me of a simple but poignant truth—that we're all family in the church.

The Bible insists on this: We are brothers and sisters in one body. As part of this body, my five-year-old does not need my undivided attention. She belongs to a much bigger story, a gospel story in which she is an active participant, not just a pre-Christian, training within the confines of the nuclear family for a future role that might one day be outward-looking. Liuan Huska's recent article on attachment parenting makes the point that the Christian family is not a closed unit but rather part of a larger ecosystem. Community starts now.

Although being a healthy family sometimes requires drawing boundaries, we must be careful how

we operate in community. If we close off in biological pods every Sunday, we leave out singles, newcomers, and others. If we open up, we experience a gospel gift—the body of Christ in all its fullness.¹

Sitting together as one family also makes it less awkward for those who don't have blood family to sit with.

Of course, none of this amounts to a “thus sayeth the Lord.” However, it seems to me that we ought to, at times, consider what is wise or best rather than merely what is right or wrong. So what do you think? Is segregated seating in church something that is still a blessing or something that would be better to be changed? I'd be delighted if this essay can stir thinking and conversation among us.

¹ <https://www.christianitytoday.com/women/2018/april/why-i-dont-sit-with-my-husband-at-church.html>



The Struggle!

Elmer Gingerich, Mountain View, AR

Our Sunday School class is studying in Romans 7 and it pictures a man in a struggle. “For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I” (Romans 7:15). All of us know some of the pain of that struggle. It strikes me that there are

two ways to handle the phenomenon of struggle, and that this may be what Romans 7 is trying to say.

Sara and I have been talking about our propensity to idealize a life without struggle. I would love to have no phlegm, no coughing, no clearing of the throat, and no lung issues. It

would be such a relief. And for Sara to have no chest pains. And to never have snow and ice storms and run out of electricity. Where is the end of the list? It is somewhat understandable to us though, that this area of struggle will be lifelong. The Bible even pictures that *“the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.”* And that *“ourselves also, which have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.”* It’s something we cannot change and it is better to learn to practice some acceptance toward it, even if we do it a little reluctantly.

Is this phenomenon also true in the spiritual life? We idealize, visualize, and teach a sweet victory! Let me ask a cautious, unnerving question. Is a constant, sweet victory a realistic and achievable goal? Is that primarily what God holds up before us as the main thing we should aim for? Or is His aim to have us love Him, serve Him, and really **want** to do what is right, even if we have some struggle with that? Is God saying, “I know that doing right is a struggle. I accept that. Don’t feel discouraged about that. Only don’t give up the struggle. Discontinuing the struggle is the bad choice. That is giving in to the wrong. Do not let yourselves be too discouraged. *‘There*

is no condemnation to them which are in Christ Jesus who do not live after the flesh (abandon themselves to the wrong side of the struggle) *but after the Spirit* (continue their best to do right).” God is glorified in where the will is turned.

Because we misunderstand the phenomenon, role, and even the value of struggle, we try hard to stop it. One way to handle the struggle is to refuse to try anymore. It’s too wearing. We’re just going to give in and stop this struggle. We abandon ourselves to the desires we have fought against. The peace we now have is not the peace of knowing that God is pleased with where **our will is turned**, but the peace of just not fighting the fight we used to fight. The other way to handle the struggle is to realize that absence of struggle is not the real goal. The struggle is the sign that the will is still turned the right way and that glorifies God much more than the abandonment of the struggle.

So, we encourage fellow pilgrims who have already given up the struggle or may even now be tempted to give it up, to take up the fight again. The goal is not to have a struggle. There may be areas in which we struggle less than we used to but that all struggle should go away is a deception, not a reality, in a Christian’s life.

Lord, guide us. 

Real Music

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

Actually, I heard it. It was an untuned voice participating in corporate worship. I have loved singing and making music for as long as I can remember. While I appreciate many different kinds of music, choral music sensitively interpreted transports my soul. But at church, I find congregational singing is real and the beauty is deep.

Not carefully practiced, and hopefully not a performance, and yet it is rich and resonant. Babies cry. Toddlers join in with more zeal than knowledge. Adolescent male voices squeak. Not all can read music. The same selections given out repeatedly. Where is the beauty in this, you may ask?

The beauty is in the offered heart. The droner leads by example, participating where it does not come naturally or easily. The song leader embodies humility by tackling an unfamiliar hymn. And the child who selects the same song repeatedly, reminds us to bring what we have, not fearing shame.

Isn't that beautiful? 

My Father and I Are One

Ernest Lee, Aroda, VA

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not” (John 1:1-5).

“Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deuteronomy 6:4).

“Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14).

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace” (Isaiah 9:6).

“Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us” (Matthew 1:23).

“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? Wist ye not that I must be about my Father’s business?” (Luke 2:49).

“And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17).

“Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6).

“Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep” (John 10:7).

“I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture” (John 10:9).

“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand. **I and my Father are one**” (John 10:27-30).

“Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I


...speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very works' sake" (John 14:8-11).

"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images" (Isaiah 42:8).

When on the mountain at His ascension, Jesus told His disciples, *"All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen" (Matthew 28:18-20).* If Jesus and the Holy Spirit are not God with God the Father, in three Persons, then why was God not jealous when Jesus commanded His disciples to baptize in three Persons?

"The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. For he hath put

all things under his feet. But when he saith all things are put under him, it is manifest that he is excepted, which did put all things under him. And when all things shall be subdued unto him, then shall the Son also himself be subject unto him that put all things under him, that God may be all in all" (I Corinthians 15:26-28).

Always remember that no man is able to pluck you out of God the Father's hand. But you yourself can forsake God. That is why He warns us again and again. He tells us, *"For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (II Peter 2:21).* And in Hebrews 10:2 it is written, *"Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?"* 

mission awareness

Hosting Foreign Students

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

In the past, the Mennonite and Amish Mennonite churches in Lancaster County, PA, had hosted

foreign students through a certain agency. This was done during Thanksgiving Day and weekend.

These students attended colleges and universities mostly in the eastern United States. Through the years they probably represented countries from every continent in the world and various nationalities and religions. They usually were taken on a bus tour through the farmlands and a restaurant of home cooking. One evening they would gather somewhere for a question and answer time. This was an extremely interesting session both for the guests and hosts.

However, the key highlight of the weekend was to see how these students enjoyed family life and being occupied

with daily chores, sitting at the table to enjoy food and fellowship, washing the dishes, and just observing what makes a Christian family tick. The family worship session was a wonderful opportunity to sow the eternal Word of God by singing, reading from the Holy Scriptures, and united prayer. This was indeed rewarding!

These people are on “our territory.” We have the advantage and responsibility to tell them the everlasting news of Jesus Christ. Brother Ernest and his family and team members are involved in this great assignment. Read on.

LifeQuest Community, a Disciple-Making Ministry

Ernest Eby, State College, PA

In 2000, when I was in my mid-twenties, I learned the story of the L’Abri community Francis and Edith Schaeffer founded in Switzerland in 1955. (L’Abri is a French word that means “The Shelter.”) L’Abri began in the Schaeffers’ home as a place for people seeking truth, meaning, and purpose for life. Those who spent time at L’Abri for a weekend, a month, or multiple months experienced Christian community through the hospitality, friendship, and inspiration of the Schaeffers and the church at L’Abri.

Guests were given lots of time to ponder, study, and serve other guests who came to this spiritual shelter. Some stayed and joined the church while others took their new faith in God with them to many countries around the world. You can read more about this story in a book by Edith that is simply titled, *L’Abri*. Today, L’Abri has ten branches around the world including three in North America. While reading about L’Abri, the vision began forming in my mind for being part of a similar community someday—a community that would

embrace the theology and practices commonly understood by early Christians, early Anabaptists, and other faithful churches through the centuries. In talking with others in the years since then, I came to realize that I was not the only person who had a vision for seeing something like this happen in an Anabaptist context.

Our family moved to State College, PA, in 2014 to help start a church here. We began interacting with internationals, college students, and locals the following year. Our first interactions were inviting people to our home and church, introducing them to the Bible, and inviting them to Bible studies. Some were eager to study the Bible and invited their friends to join as well. Next, we began offering English classes (ESL) and Bible Literacy classes at our kitchen table. As these classes grew in size, I began teaching these classes on the Penn State campus while continuing to conduct Bible studies at our home. Then Covid came along and halted our on-campus activities for a couple years. This resulted in most student and international interactions again taking place at our home. In 2021 we had the joy of welcoming a new believer into the family of God. This new believer had planned to return to her home country along with her family, but that got delayed a year due

to Covid. During this “extra” year, she eagerly received the Word of God. We are always amazed at how God uses situations that are results of the Fall and the Curse in the Garden to further His purposes in the world and bring seekers into contact with people who can introduce Him to them.

Over the past number of years, it became obvious to us that the spiritual needs in our city were greater than what we as a family or church could reach. Due to health issues and other constraints, we began thinking of ways we could continue and expand the outreach to people in our region. It was decided at the end of 2021 to form a non-profit organization with board members from various church communities who could oversee the work and help it expand, enabling us to reach more people. The new organization was named, LifeQuest Community. By August of 2022, the organization was able to support several part-time staff as well as volunteers. This allowed us to restart our ESL classes, Bible Literacy classes, and international friendship program on campus. In 2023 we (along with another campus ministry) began offering a meal once a week for international students and scholars. The goal with all of these endeavors is to find people who are

open to learning about God, begin studying the Bible with them, and disciple them in the way of Jesus. For people not raised with a Christian worldview, it can sometimes take years until they have counted the cost and are ready to commit themselves to Jesus and His Word. But the process needs to start somewhere. We enjoy interacting with people from many countries around the world. And we enjoy sowing seed in a variety of ways in the hearts of men, women, and children who don't know their Creator, or don't know much about Him.


We are grateful for two Christian brothers who have purchased houses in our region for us to use for weekend, week-long, and two-week discipleship classes as we have need for them. Otherwise, these houses are used for short-term rentals.

A year ago we were praying for staff to teach and facilitate our classes and

outreach activities. At the last minute, we watched as God miraculously provided us with experienced staff who were well-suited for the needed positions.

Now we are praying for physical space next to campus, where we can establish a Christian study and discipleship center. Again, we are in need of a miracle. We invite you to join us in praying for God's will in providing a space that will accomplish His purposes and suit our needs.

We also welcome volunteers to join us in the work for a day, a week, or much longer.

One of our goals is to provide materials and resources that can be helpful for churches and disciple-makers around the world. If you are interested in these materials or want to receive our newsletters, you can visit www.LifeQ.org or email contact@LifeQ.org. We appreciate your prayers. 

A Woman After God's Heart

Zarephath's Widow

Susan Garcete, Hartly, DE



Chosen to suffer, chosen to serve, chosen to experience the wonder

working of Almighty God—all this for a privileged little woman for whom we have no name. Zoe is the

identification I've chosen for her in this writing. Somehow it seems to fit the courageous heart that so quickly accepted and cultivated the seed of faith.

Zoe lived, loved, and labored in the town of Zarephath (zar'-e-fath), on the Mediterranean seacoast. Pottery was produced there, also the smelting and refining of metals. (Unger's) Whatever work her husband was involved in, facts are that he met an untimely death.

When the security of the house of her husband came to an end, Zoe found herself on a different level in society. Widowhood must have charted an unappealing course. She and her son were possibly regarded as a burden to relatives and neighbors, a burden that no one cared to relate to.

Did Zoe have any inkling of *being chosen*? Did she live life with zest after her initial mourning? Or was there no more purpose in life, only drowning in sorrow? These are things we simply do not know, but if we could imagine her eagerly supporting herself, now she was facing a new crisis—the rains had stopped. Totally stopped.

Where were the gods when the poor became poorer and hungrier? When their produce patches dried up? When a mother's greatest joy in life was threatened? How she loved

her son! Did he not have a right to a chance in life? Was there no one to care what was happening? Were the prayers and rituals she practiced of no value?

In the dusky interior of Zoe's small house, we see a slender form with her neatly-woven work before her. The loom waited patiently, her hand poised above it, and her eyes fixed on the unseen. Her mind reviewed much of the recent past and, as always, searched for answers.

There had been such a pitiful little to fall back on after her garden wilted. She'd briefly tried to water a few withering plants, but the moisture evaporated into nothingness. Surely, she thought, the rains would come and bring them relief. But nothing had changed. The relentless ache in the pit of her stomach was heavier than ever. Hope was slipping, fading away, and leaving only the sharp pang of reality.

There were no more fresh, dewy mornings with their sense of a new start. It was disheartening to step outside into the hopeless drought. Dismal mornings, long dehydrating days, year after weary year. The dust swirled across the fields and around the houses, while anxious eyes eagerly scanned the horizon—hoping. Would there be any clouds today? Why this terrible famine?

Why must the innocent suffer with the evildoers?

Water for domestic use became harder to find. Creeks, rivers, and wells were drying up. Drinking water was essential; clean clothes and bathing could wait. But wait till when?

Suddenly, her little son's voice pierced her mindfulness. Unbidden tears filled her eyes; he was such joy and her reason to go on with life. If only he did not have to suffer along with her. It seemed that this yawning emptiness was all life offered anymore. "This will be the end for us," she whispered, "we won't make it through this terrible famine. The gods have not answered. Maybe it is better this way."

She roused her tired, sorrowful self, reviewing her work. She had accomplished little. Her plan had been to weave her remaining yarn to clothe her little man for another year. How quickly he grew! It might be just enough, she thought. But now, what was the use? Why be concerned with garments when starvation...oh, that monster! She pushed away quickly, stepping into her kitchen nook.

Once more she peered anxiously into the oil vessel. She dreaded draining those last drops from the container. Its hollow emptiness mocked her. No, more than mock,

it spelled out the end of her very existence. And the barrel—the barrel that was once filled with life-sustaining flour. The blessed little bit on the bottom now rose to meet her hungry eyes.

Turning from her humble abode, Zoe allowed her mind to wander even farther. Gathering firewood did not take much concentration. "One last time," she thought matter-of-factly, yet bitterly. "I need only a few sticks to bake those last cakes. The end is here." A shuddering sigh escaped. "My life has not fulfilled my dreams. It has been, so, so different." Her patient eyes were downcast, her feet shuffled mechanically along the dusty path. A neighbor called out a greeting as she passed. She noted the forced cheerfulness, responding similarly.

Leaving the beaten road, she meandered toward a stand of trees, lost in thought. "I used to wish to just be *normal*, like my friends, when difficulties threatened to be more than I could manage. They still had their husbands and busy, happy households, while I am left with only memories. Now I wouldn't even care about all those sorry feelings, if only we had food! If only my son could grow up to be a good man. I guess my life still contained blessings that I hadn't considered. I should have

been more thankful. Now, it's not, *life isn't fair*, but there is no life. Who had enough food to share?" She wouldn't even ask, life was too much trouble anyway. Let the feared moment come quickly.

"Oh!" she tripped over a rock jutting out of the ground, half hidden by the dry, brittle grasses. It was easy enough to catch herself from falling, but stopping her thoughts was another story. She felt herself falling into a darkness that she had battled before; there was little energy to fight it. "What have I done to deserve this?" An angry resentment rose against—she didn't know who or what. "I must keep going." She whispered desperately through the confusing, swirling depression, "I must."

"Woman!" a man's voice startled her. She glanced around quickly. Who could have drawn close unnoticed? "Woman," he repeated kindly, "Could you bring me a drink of water?"

She quickly obliged, that much she could do, but before she had gotten very far, the strange man spoke again, "And, please, a bit of bread too."

Widow Zoe stopped, turning abruptly to face him, and her words came rushing out. It was a relief to tell someone of her plight and this someone looked like a prophet. "I tell you the truth by the Lord your

God, that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. I have only a handful of flour left in the bottom of my barrel and a little oil for one more meal for my son and myself. After that, we will die."

Her heart throbbed with the finality of those words. How dare this stranger be asking for some of her last crumbs?

"Do not be afraid," the man's voice was calm and reassuring. "Do what you've said, but make a little bread for me *first*. Then use what's left to prepare for yourself and your son. The Lord God of Israel says, 'There will always be flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain on the earth.'"

Speechless with wonder, the poor woman stood for a long moment, clutching her firewood. Dare she believe this ludicrous change in events?

Then, a quick nod to the prophet, and her footsteps quickened as she hurried home. Could she, would she, share? Something burned within her. She knew the answer was *Yes!*

Her eyes brightened with a new spark of life and hope as the prophet's words replayed in her mind over and over again. Fanning her fire to get it to burn faster, and it crackled as if excited.

"Always enough, enough for

always,” Zoe was whispering, watching the flames grow. Was this man’s God bigger, more responsive to prayers than her gods? She would see.

A few quick motions and the dough was ready to be baked. “Are you happy, Mama?” The boy was close beside her, spellbound, watching every movement.


Mama Zoe glanced up surprised, she had not identified the cautious bubbling within as happiness, but... “Yes! My boy, we have a visitor and I need to bake the bread quickly. He is an Israelite, he has a great God, we will share our food and water with him. I think there will be enough for us all.” It was barely a smile, but the stress lines smoothed off her face for a moment as the boy did a few dancing hops around her supper preparations.

That evening, after hunger pangs had been quieted and the prophet Elijah had gone to sleep in her loft, Zoe paused to thank—who? Who would she thank? Her gods had not done this. Would they harm her if she disowned them? A niggling fear sneaked into her pensiveness, yet the awe and wonder of the God of Elijah was greater. He must be a

God of love and miracles. She’d noted that her flour barrel was not scraped clean as she had expected it would be tonight and there was enough oil for the morning’s meal! Her heart rested in Elijah’s presence—Elijah and his God. There would be breakfast tomorrow.

• • • • •

An opportunity given, a promise given, and Zarephath’s widow passed the test! What if she had not first of all baked a cake for Elijah? What if she had given him leftovers? She must have been forever grateful that she allowed faith to override feelings! Her life still held difficulty, we have record of her beloved son’s sickness and death. But again, her believing allowed her to see the glory of God.

We too are women chosen to suffer, serve, and experience God’s provision. May we seize our opportunities and take the way God offers us. If your path is obscure and of seemingly endless self-sacrifice, remember—you are chosen. Be alert for the signs of God’s miraculous goodness along your way. God’s provision rests on your obedience. And, be sure, there will be New Life tomorrow. 

If you want to walk on the water—*get out of the boat.*

Escape from Ukraine (Part 2 of 2)

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

Continued from last month: Venya and his dad were fleeing Ukraine. They had paid a guide a lot of money to take them over the mountains to Romania on a cold winter night. They were told it would be a three-hour hike.

At 3:00 a.m. it was suddenly time to leave the cabin where they waited under a table. One other man joined them. As quietly as they could, they sneaked out. They walked on the snowy grass to avoid the crunching of the snow on the path.

Not far into the mountains, the man who had joined their group nervously kept calling his wife on his cell phone. The cell phone lit up a tiny patch of the darkness. Venya's dad asked him to put away his phone. "Your phone is putting us all in danger," he admonished.

The night was dark. The journey was treacherous with icy rocks to climb over. In the darkness they had to go over or under fences and carefully crossed frozen rivers. It was surreal to be going over the mountains and through the valleys in the wintry darkness.

The climb up the one mountain was so long and so difficult that at times they stumbled around bushes and fell over rocks, but they always got up and kept climbing.

"Where is the end? Where is the top of this mountain?" they wondered as they struggled up and up that rugged, difficult mountain.

Venya's dad got tired and discouraged. He sat to rest, breathing hard.

Venya encouraged his father, "We can't give up." He reached out his hand to steady and pull his father along.

Finally they crested the mountain. What a relief when they were told they were almost in Romania. They hunkered down in another small cabin. They could see guard vehicles at the border.

There was a 30-minute break between guard shifts. That was the time to move rapidly toward freedom. Their guide herded them into a small car and took off fast down a snow-covered hill. The snow was flying. The driver was always on his phone with a friend. Venya feared


they would get stuck in the snow. The man kept his foot on the pedal as they careened along the snowy track.

God kept that little car on the road. Relief and gratefulness flooded over them when they passed the border zone. God had brought them out safely. They had made it over the mountains even though a friend had said that Venya's dad would not be athletic enough to make that rough hike.

Venya's brother came to meet them. Their family praised God for His love, mercy, and miracles in bringing the

men out of Ukraine. He watched over every step.

Venya testified, "Sometimes we fall for the lie that as long as we follow God, everything will be perfect—everything will be good. God does not always answer prayer exactly as we want. God gives me situations to help me grow and be closer to Him. I Peter 4:1 tells me, *'Christ suffered for us, arm yourself with the same mind. Be ready to suffer for Him.'*"

In life we need to keep climbing, and help and encourage each other to not lose sight of the goal. 

youth messages

A Place Called Heaven

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

"In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also" (John 14:2-3).

In some of my recent writings, I've focused on the more practical aspects of our Christian lives and serving God through serving others. However, it can be easy for us to get so caught up in the day-to-day "living" for Christ, that we forget to take time and contemplate the reason

that we are doing what we do and living how we live. I'd like to share a few thoughts I had when I found a quiet spot, sat down, and thought about eternity with Christ in the New Jerusalem.

We say we know what forever means. We even erroneously use it to describe how long someone is taking to do something. However, the true meaning of forever is something we'll have to experience in order to understand. Our little finite minds struggle to wrap themselves around the reality that we as Christians will

(by the grace of God) experience eternity. Every book I've ever read has a final page. Every stairs I've ever climbed had a last step, and every day I've ever lived has had a last moment. Just like a circle, or an infinity symbol, there is no end to eternity. It goes on and on with no stopping point.

Not all, but many of us have or had at one time a good relationship with our parents. As youth, you are venturing out of their home, whether for service, marriage, or God calling you to another body of believers. There is something about going "home"—to our father's house. I've never lived where my parents live now. I haven't lived in the last three or so homes they've resided in, but there is something welcoming, something special about going to your father's house. When we consider Heaven as Jesus described it in John 14, as "*my Father's house*," it becomes almost more welcoming. It's a little easier to imagine what it might be like. Not a disembodied place of brightness. Heaven is a prepared place for a prepared people.

In order to be in the physical presence of Jesus Christ, as Christians, we must die. Most of us fear death or at least the unknown that is death, and yet when we know what we are looking forward to, and our sins are

covered by the blood of Christ, we have the **PROMISE** of eternal life with Christ Jesus. Years ago, Helen Lemmel penned the song, "Turn Your Eyes Upon Jesus." In it, a verse says, "Turn your eyes upon Jesus. Look full in His wonderful face, and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of His glory and grace." All else pales in comparison to the glory of God.

In a message entitled "What Does the Bible Tell us About Heaven?" Pastor David Jeremiah shared these thoughts. "Because the Church does not have Heaven on its mind, sometimes the Church becomes indulgent and self-centered and weak, sometimes its present comfort consumes its thoughts, and Heaven is just an afterthought. God has placed within your heart and mine, a hunger for eternity—a hunger for Heaven. If we do not understand that and if we don't feed that hunger with the spiritual truth of the Word of God, we will end up suppressing that need and replacing it with cheap and tawdry things that will leave us empty and without satisfaction."

The story is told of a very rich man who dies and arrives at the pearly gates with a large, heavy bag on his back. St. Peter asks him, "What's in the sack?"

The man replies, "I've given most of

my riches to the poor, and I thought I could bring a small amount with me to Heaven.”

Peter says, “Hmmm, I’ll have to ask God if you’re allowed to bring this in.” After a while Peter comes back and says that it’s probably fine, but he has to check the bag. He opens it and discovers it’s full of gold bars. “Oh!”, he says, “That’s OK. You’ve brought paving stones.”

Obviously, this story isn’t true, but the point is that the things that people consider valuable here on earth, things that people have been killed over—gold, precious stones, etc.—are building materials in Heaven. It’s hard for us to fathom that those things with so much “value” here on earth are of so little value in Heaven. The most valuable things in Heaven won’t be things. It’s the people. One of the things I look forward to most about Heaven is the people, all the faithful people from all the centuries of existence, and all the loved ones who have gone before us that we’ll see again in their glorified bodies. I’ll see my grandparents, my brother, the child I never held, and my friends who have passed on. I’ll get to talk to Elijah, David, Peter, the Apostle Paul, John the Baptist, and so many more. Most importantly, I’ll get to see Jesus. I’ll get to see God the Father. I’ll be able to behold Their glory and

live! All the while crying “Holy, Holy, Holy!” People have testified to having heard heavenly singing. I love to sing, so I look forward to the day when I can join that angelic choir and sing without missing a note, my throat drying out, or getting tired.

There are other things about eternity that are a mystery to us. The Bible tells us some things, but not everything. Have you ever folded a fitted sheet? It dawned on me that trying to settle all of this in our minds exactly like it will be is like trying to fold a fitted sheet. It’s difficult and a bit confusing but we do the best we can with what information we have. Regardless of exactly how it all works and will transpire, we’re promised eternity in the presence of God if we are faithful.

I look forward to spending eternity visiting the mansions that Christ refers to in John 14. Maybe sitting on the porch of the mansion of a martyr from China, or maybe even of Stephen, the first martyr. I don’t know about you, but I enjoy food. Can you even begin to imagine the marriage supper of The Lamb? As I sit here typing, my mind is filled with people I want to meet, questions I want to ask, and things I want to see. The more I think, the more I want to go. What are you looking forward to?



(USPS 767-160)
Carlisle Printing
2673 Township Rd. 421
Sugarcreek, OH 44681

Periodicals

THOUGHT GEMS

Have old memories but young hopes.

• • • • •

Some people learn the traffic rules by accident.

• • • • •

The heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the
harvest of the future.

• • • • •

Forget your mistakes but remember what they taught you.

• • • • •

He who knows how to read but doesn't read is no different than
the man who can't read.

• • • • •

The future always holds something for the man who keeps his faith in it.

• • • • •

Forgiveness means God buries our sins and does not mark the grave.

• • • • •

Part-time faith, like a part-time job, will not fully support you.

• • • • •

Faith keeps the sails of life filled with the breath of heaven.

• • • • •

It is dangerous to drive in a fog, especially if it's mental.

• • • • •

A reckless driver is usually not wreckless for long.