



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

JANUARY 2025

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Calvary Messenger

January 2025

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

Assistant Editor: Don L. Martin
 50 Green Pastures Ln., Mifflin, PA 170858
 Ph: 717-436-9115
martins@emypeople.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

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Wholeness

Hannah Eicher, McArthur, OH

How can two states exist,
Broken and whole?
Together in one small heart,
Empty but full.
Empty of self and pride,
Full of His grace.
Cleansed from the deepest stain,
Gone with no trace.
Rescued, adopted,
And cleansed at the cross,
Losing all self to Him,
Counting it loss.
Finding as I submit
My willful heart,
He splits the waters that
I cannot part.
With His hand in mine,
We walk on day by day.
He is my Savior, and
I walk His way.
He speaks in the dark;
At the sound of His voice,
My heart thrills with courage,
I know I'm His choice.
There's nothing to fear
When my King is my friend
Not storm and not heartbreak.
He's there to the end. 

Distracted

Llewellyn Martin, Clayton, MI

I'm sure that we all have experienced times when we were driving and looked away from the road, only to look back and realize that we drifted across the yellow line. We say a prayer of thanksgiving for God's mercy and protection despite our irresponsible driving. Sadly, those incidents don't always end up that well.

Some results of distracted driving are easy to spot. We drift across the yellow line or hit the rumble strip on the side of the road. But even if we manage to do something on our phones and stay within the yellow and white lines, it doesn't mean we are safe drivers. All it would take is for something small to cross in front of our vehicles, and since we aren't fully focused, we run over it.

There are numerous ways we can get distracted in life and the reality is the same. Some of the results of distraction are quickly seen and some of them take longer to recognize.

Distracted Relationally

Our minds go quickly to the dad with his head in the newspaper, completely oblivious of anything

happening around him. But now, we carry our distractions everywhere we go and it even beeps and vibrates to get our attention. But beyond that, our digital media is a lot more addictive than a newspaper ever was and can consume our attention long past the slowest newspaper readers. So, what are the results of being distracted relationally?

How often, dads, are we oblivious to what our children are doing because we are reading the news or catching up with emails on our phones? Once the fighting or crying gets loud enough, like a rumble strip, it brings us to the present, and we see that we were distracted. If we had kept our focus on the situation, the children could have easily been steered correctly to "stay in their lane." But are all the results as easily spotted?

What will be the long-term silent results from parents who have their attention on their phones more than on their children? Children long for attention and care, and when they don't receive it they will turn to someone or something that will help

fill that void. Sadly, it isn't usually for their good. We sometimes try to multi-task by reading our phones and listening simultaneously, but our family can sense our lack of attention. Is what we are reading on our phones or in the newspaper that much more important than our families? We are subtly telling our children that our phones are more important than they are.

So, you finally get the children off to bed, and they are all peacefully sleeping. Now, you can catch up on what you've been wanting to read. But wait, there is still someone else in the room. Oh well, they are also on their phones, so it doesn't matter. What message are we sending to our spouses when we focus on our phones after the children are in bed? How do they feel when we try to read our phones and listen to them simultaneously? Just because your spouse isn't the "rumble strip" type doesn't mean that your relationship isn't suffering from distraction. When was the last time that you gave your spouse your complete attention?

What will be the long-term consequences for a generation who is more comfortable sending a text message than sitting down and talking? What is the result of a generation who would rather focus on their phones than smile at the

person they meet while walking down the street? How will the world know that we care for them if we are constantly distracted by our phones?

You may argue that you don't really have a problem with the digital distractions. What about the dad who works such long hours that he is barely awake when he is finally at home? What about the person who is so distracted by what others think that they can't be a blessing to others? What about the minister so distracted with church work that his family's needs aren't met?

Distracted Spiritually

While being distracted from the relationships around us is serious, it pales compared to being distracted from our most important relationship, the one with God. Numerous things can distract us from God, but we'll only look at a few here.

"And take heed to yourselves, lest at any time your hearts be overcharged with surfeiting, and drunkenness, and cares of this life, and so that day come upon you unawares. For as a snare shall it come on all them that dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man" (Luke 21:34-36).

In the Amplified Bible, for the word surfeiting, one of the phrases it uses is “nausea of self-indulgence.” I wonder sometimes if we can even see the distraction and drunkenness we are experiencing spiritually from our self-indulgent society. While we have shunned a lot of our culture’s indulgence compared to a lot of the world, we still have a lot of stuff and can do many things to pamper ourselves. Is this affluence and ease distracting us from our relationship with God?

These verses also talk about the cares of this life. We all have responsibilities weighing on our shoulders: making money to provide for our own, caring for the needs of our spouse and family, committees at church, upkeep around the house, and the list goes on and on. We can sometimes fill our lives so full of busyness that we are distracted from our relationship with God. Is your life

so full of responsibilities that you do not have time to sit and focus on God and commune with Him?

In reality, distractions remove our focus from the present and put it on something else. Sometimes, that is a good thing, but often, the distraction takes our focus away from what is most important and puts it on something of lesser value. Are your children and spouse being negatively affected by the distractions in your life? Is your relationship with God suffering because you have been distracted by much less important things? What you do about that will reveal what really is most important to you. *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you”* (Matthew 6:33).

[Originally printed in Pilgrim Witness in the October 2023 issue. Used with permission from the author.]

–Submitted by Paul L. Miller 



Announcement

Don L. Martin has joined the Calvary Messenger editorial team as the Assistant Editor (see his contact information on the Title Page inside the front cover). He and his wife, Mildred, live in Mifflin, PA, and attend Shade Mountain Christian Fellowship. They own and operate Green Pastures Press. One of the things they are working on presently is digitizing out-of-print Mennonite books and periodicals for their *Mennonite Heritage E-Library*.

Currently, he is becoming familiar with the publishing process of *Calvary Messenger* and helping with final proof-editing.

–AY

Witnessing: Being Ready and Available

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

“In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thy hand: for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that, or whether they both shall be alike good” (Ecclesiastes 11:6).

The modern-day Anabaptist says, “I am not a morning person, and in the evening, I like having some time for myself.”

The Bible was written before gas lights, electric lights, and battery lights. To make a go of it, they had to maximize on daylight hours. It is interesting to see how the very faintest of light appears at pre-dawn, even at pre-twilight, and before the rooster is awake enough to stretch himself and do his first crowing.

“*In the morning*” of our text is back at that pre-twilight moment. That special slot of time in the very early morning has much less competition in what to do, than say, in mid-forenoon. Early morning comes with a pure, unencumbered intent, with a plan that can be put in place the evening before. Really, that concept is a creation principle,

for the Bible says, “*And the evening and the morning were the first day*” (Genesis 1:5). Yes, in some respects, every day is somewhat put in place at the previous evening.

Being intentional about going **out** to sow the seed of God’s Word is enhanced by wanting to do it, visualizing some possible outlet, planning for available output, expecting a good outcome, and participating in a personal outreach.

You don’t need to be the outsoken type; you just speak out. You don’t need to be outstanding to sow the seed of God’s Word; you just go out and take a stand for Christ. You don’t need to fear outdoing someone else; there are so few who just go out and do it.

Some people talk about certain aspects of “normal” church work as having “gone outside their comfort zone.” Well, that could be good for a change, like everyone going to our congregation’s Sunday evening services, as we did in earlier years. Sadly, extra-curriculars become more appealing to some than fulfilling our

covenant with the church.

Here are a few instances in witnessing where someone left their comfort zone, resulting in a witness harvest.

Southern Mississippi

The church in Darbun set up a small tent in the outskirts of a smallish town for evangelistic services. There was the usual singing and preaching and invitation to respond to the call of the Gospel.

After the dismissal, all the Mennonites had a typical, engaging fellowship with each other. They saw the non-Mennonite couple who stood for a little while at the rear of the tent, then left. One of the ministers followed them to acknowledge their presence at the meeting, asked a few questions, including whether they had wanted to be saved. Surprise! The man indicated his desire to be a Christian, but his wife was not ready for that important move. A soul was born into the Kingdom of heaven that evening, after the call was officially ended at the service, and after the seeking servant of Christ walked after the couple.

What was next? This couple was carrying their baby, and they lived under the bridge nearby! The church people helped them find a house. The man wanted to be baptized. They invited him to a series of instruction

classes for new believers. During those sessions, he asked what would happen to him if he was killed or became incapacitated in some way before he was baptized? Would he still go to heaven?

The pastors assured him the criteria for going to heaven is repentance for sin and faith in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord. Baptism is a seal to the individual being baptized of his saving faith in Christ. It also is a sign to people of the new life he has accepted.

Before he was baptized, he was in a pickup truck which skidded on a wet road and hit a tree, causing serious head injuries to this man. He was hospitalized for a lengthy time about 50 miles away. The pastors went quite often to visit him in the hospital. His wife and child could also reside in his room.

Unfortunately, this man had suffered brain injuries and some other injuries in which he was incapacitated.

Morris, Oklahoma

A recent church outreach from Paris, TN, has located in a rural area in the eastern half of Oklahoma. They have some good, attractive ways to provide for a livelihood for their families, school, and church. Our visit there was a time of refreshing from the Lord (Acts 3:19-21). That

refreshing was provided by Jesus Christ unto a future “restitution of all things,” all of which uniquely encompasses the past, present, and future.

The deacon, Glenn Hostetler, informed me of an unusual witnessing-for-Christ opportunity recently at his place of business. A man was riding his bicycle by the road in a way that infuriated a local man in a pickup truck. The driver turned around in a road rage fury, and tried to hit the man on his bicycle. The bicyclist swerved into a parking lot next to Glenn’s business in trying to escape being hit by the truck. In the melee, he dropped the bike and ran into the neighbor’s place as a means to escape. The truck driver’s son ran over to seize the bicycle.

The commotion next door attracted Glenn and his wife and children, who made efforts to help the fleeing man. (We will call him Bob, not his real name).

The son of the irate man had thrown Bob’s bike across the road and left. The wheel was bent, so he needed to push his bike as he continued into town. Bob was looking for employment, had no money, considered leaving his wife and family, and dropping out of sight. The wages of sin had made him a poor man in several ways.

Glenn invited him and his wife to attend their church. The Lord drew Bob and he began attending, and soon was asking how he could be one of them. Bob was interested in Bible teaching and was frequently thanking God for the bad experience on the road because now he found the way to God. He began to pray for his assailants, specifically that he might learn who they were so he could thank them for what they did to him, and its outcome. Like Joseph in Egypt, who said to his brothers, “*Ye have thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass, as it is this day, to save much people alive*” (Genesis 50:20). In this case, one or several souls in a remote area of Oklahoma were saved from sin.

Bob often prayed for this man for nearly two months. One evening after dark, Bob was on the road in his home area and saw a man walking by the road. He drove past, but the Spirit of God pressed upon Bob that he should offer this man a ride. He turned around and offered to give him a lift. Surprise! It was this assailant’s son! Bob recognized him and thanked him for what he and his dad had done to him.

“But why, of all things?” inquired the assailant’s son.

“Because by that bad experience I have found the Lord and my life is so

much better!” Bob replied. Bob told him he had prayed that God would show him who had done him this evil although good has come out of it.

The son apologized profusely. His dad was a tyrant, and the son knew he would do something bad to him if he refused his demands.

This young outreach church had communion and invited Bob to be present as an observer. When the time came to wash one another’s feet, Glenn invited Bob to go with the men to watch. Later, Bob said that he could feel in his spirit that this ordinance of our Lord was a very sacred and spiritual experience for the participants. It was special to Bob, and he could feel himself being drawn additionally to these Spirit-filled men, even if he did not participate in it with them. Amen! Bless God!

The growth of Christ’s Kingdom is often by one soul seeking and winning another one! Sometimes it is by the words that are spoken, and maybe more often by the Christ-like, everyday kind of deeds that are done.

Connecticut

Evangelistic efforts were said to be very difficult in our northeastern states. Three of our churches in Lancaster County looked for families to move to a rural area in Connecticut and they did so in 2018, establishing a congregation.

Several news articles appeared locally in CT, making the community aware of the Mennonites. Early reception for their presence was encouraging with a neighborly welcome at several different levels. Soon the Covid menace came, which added some additional seekers to their church life. Some stayed for fellowship and church membership.

When the government mandate specified no gatherings of people to prevent Covid’s spread, this church group met at a warehouse instead of at their regular church meeting place. “What is wrong with our world?” was somewhat of a driving force to seek for a better way for some of these local people than typical American responses. Covid was somewhat of a catalyst to prompt action and to consider God’s way.

The brothers in Connecticut were in a needed place for a witness that has led people to Christ for the entrance into salvation and its needed nurture. This is given to encourage all of us to be expecting people to be seeking after the Lord Jesus in these troubled times, perhaps more than ever. New locations for our witness are a part of going into all the world, as Jesus commanded His disciples before He ascended back to heaven.

The Bottom Line is that we have

reasons to give ample support both to our outreach churches throughout North America and our foreign missions. These perilous times are presenting new occasions to witness, not only to make Jesus Christ known, but also to actually and truly bring souls who never were saved into our congregations.

We cannot be all things to all men,

but there are indications that making renewed attempts to invite people to serious discipleship can be done as we go about our daily lives. Even as the apostle Paul said, that “*we might by all means save some.*” For some of our churches, we might consider the will of God for us to test God’s will about starting an outreach church!



history matters

500th Anniversary Celebration Part 1

The Beginning

Tim Miller, McKenney, VA

(January 2025 marks the 500th anniversary of the first rebaptism that began the Anabaptist movement during the Reformation of the Roman Catholic Church. This is the first of several articles dedicated to this part of our church history. AY)

“**T**he Spirit of God has already decided!” Simon Stumpf’s challenge to Ulrich Zwingli and the governing council of Zurich, Switzerland, on October 27, 1523, stands as a defining moment in

church history and marks the beginning of a movement.

Twelve hundred years before this, a church council in Nicea, Bithynia, had been called, presided over, and influenced by the Roman Emperor, Constantine. In a remarkable shift, the church of Jesus Christ went from 300 years of persecution, oppression, and explosive growth to become the Roman Church in partnership with the government to keep peace within the Empire. As the Roman Empire disintegrated

over the next 150 years, the Roman Church gained power and influence far beyond the parameters given to the church of the New Testament. The resulting opportunities for wealth and control produced a system where professional clergy dispensed spiritual life to be received by a passive laity as “grace.”

Spiritual darkness was maintained by the use of a church language, Latin, which fewer and fewer people understood, as well as by the understanding that spiritual truth could only be discerned and proclaimed by the church and its professional clergy and theologians. With God’s Word hidden behind obscure language and ritual as a substitute for the new birth, most people lived and died within the church but without Christ. The church and the government became so closely aligned that a person was required to be a “Christian” if they were a part of a “Christian” country. To reject the religious teaching of the church was to invite punishment and even death by the secular government.

While there were always sincere people seeking relationship with God, illiteracy, ignorance, and restricted means of communication allowed the church to suppress and control spiritual awakening for the most

part. A significant crack in the wall of darkness that separated people from God was the idea promoted by John Wycliffe in the late 1300s that the Bible should be made available in the common language of the people. The rise in literacy, along with the invention of the printing press with movable type in 1436, meant that by 1500 most people in Europe had access to printed material in a common language. Almost everyone at least knew someone who could read even if they themselves couldn’t.

Two more huge cracks in that dark wall happened nearly simultaneously with Desiderius Erasmus’ publication of a Greek New Testament based on early Greek manuscripts rather than the Latin Vulgate (1516) and Martin Luther’s challenge of church authority (1517) along with his translation of the New Testament into German (1522). Erasmus’ vision that “The most exalted aim...will be to obtain a knowledge of the pure and simple Christianity of the Bible” alongside Luther’s teaching on the priesthood of all believers, produced the opening in the spiritual wall through which Anabaptism emerged.

As rejection of the Roman Catholic Church and its authority spread in the early 1500s, Ulrich Zwingli was appointed lead pastor of the Grossmünster Church in Zurich,

Switzerland. He preached the authority of Scripture over earthly authority and the priesthood of all believers. With the support of prominent community leaders, he began to preach against many teachings and practices of the Roman Catholic Church, as well as translating the Bible into Swiss German. He began a Bible study with numerous young men interested in his teaching, including Conrad Grebel and Felix Manz.

For many reasons, not just spiritual ones, Zwingli's preaching against the established world/church order gained such support that the Council of Zurich met several times to hear arguments on how the religious life of the canton should proceed. At the first "disputation" in January 1523, Zwingli convinced the council to break with the Roman church and start on the path of reformation.

A second disputation took place in October the same year primarily to discuss whether the practice of the Catholic mass, which Zwingli had taught was not biblical, would continue in Zurich. When it became apparent that the city council was not going to abolish the practice of the mass and that Zwingli would accept their decision, Stumpf stood and made his simple and, to us, obvious declaration.

At least three radical premises formed the basis of Simon Stumpf's statement: that the authority of the state was limited to secular matters, that the Spirit of God through the Word of God was the sole authority for the spiritual life of believers, and that any believer could know and understand the will of God without the aid of theologians and clergy. In the Affair of the Sausages in 1522, Zwingli had vigorously defended disobedience to the established practice in order to obey the Bible. But by the Second Disputation in October of 1523, he was just as adamantly defending the right of the government to determine the pace of changes he had taught were biblical. Earlier, he had taught his Bible students that obedience to Scripture was a Christian's primary responsibility. Now it seemed to many of them that he was compromising and rejecting his own teachings for the sake of government favor and support. Stumpf's statement was an echo of Zwingli's earlier teaching but now it set him and a core group of Bible students on a collision course with Zwingli and the Zurich City Council.

The year 1524 was a time of much discussion about the pace of various changes. The discussion shifted to include whether the practice of

infant baptism was biblical. Since the religious affiliation of an area was determined by the government and the association of citizenship with church membership was almost universally accepted, baptism was not just a religious issue but a political one as well. The Third Disputation, January 17, 1525, resulted in the council deciding that Zwingli had won the debate in support of infant baptism, and on January 18, 1525, an order was issued that all parents who did not baptize their babies within eight days of birth would be punished with banishment from the canton and confiscation of all of their goods and property. On January 21 another edict was issued which forbade opponents of infant baptism from meeting together or speaking in public.

That evening, 16 of the “brethren” met at the home of Felix Manz’s mother to consider their response. Since Conrad Grebel’s daughter, Rachel, born January 5, 1525, had not yet been baptized, this discussion was very personal to him as well as to several others whose children had not been baptized.

The Hutterian Chronicle records the event:

After prayer, George of the House of Jacob (George Blaurock) stood up and besought Conrad Grebel for God’s

sake to baptize him with the true Christian baptism upon his faith and knowledge. And when he knelt down with such a request and desire, Conrad baptized him, since at that time there was no ordained minister to perform such work.

After Blaurock was baptized, he in turn baptized others at the meeting. Even though some had rejected infant baptism before this date, these baptisms marked the first re-baptisms of those who had been baptized as infants and so marks the beginning of Swiss Anabaptism. This made complete the break with Ulrich Zwingli and the Zurich City Council and formed the first church of the Radical Reformation.

The vision of the new movement in the words of Conrad Grebel was to “Seek earnestly to preach only God’s word unflinchingly, to establish and defend only divine practices, to esteem as good and right only what can be found in definite clear Scripture, and to reject, hate, and curse all the schemes, words, practices, and opinions of all men, even your own.”

They took this stand under the threat of exile and confiscation of their property, willing to accept even worse, and the worst was soon to come.

To be continued 



Well Done, Weary One

Judy King, Harrison, AR

Trailing down her withered face,
Run wrinkles deep with time,
But still her heart is seasoned young
While she lives well her prime.

One hundred years! Yet, she's not done!
She wonders why she's here.
But simply walks her talk with God.
The message is quite clear.

So now, she works yet while she waits.
Till she hears the Son
Call her from His throne above,
And say, "Well done,
Come home,
Weary one!"

[Written about an elderly believing lady at Hillcrest Nursing Home]

marriages

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

Beiler-Anderson

Bro. Kenny, son of Priscilla and the late Dan Beiler, Lock Haven, PA, and Sis. Margaret, daughter of Steve and Violet Anderson, Rochelle, VA, on September 6, 2024, at Orange Baptist Church for Oak Grove Mennonite Church by Ken Gehman.

Beiler-Wengerd

Bro. Ryan, son of Melvin and Verna Beiler, Bridgeton, NJ, and Sis. Rhoda, daughter of Andy and Dora Wengerd, Greeneville, TN, on October 19, 2024, at Boones Creek Christian Church for Greene County Mennonite Church by Melvin Beiler.

Byler-Miller

Bro. Daniel, son of Robert and Heidi Byler, Plainview, TX, and Sis. Brianna, daughter of Kevin and Christina Miller, Wamego, KS, on September 20, 2024, at Town and Country Christian Church for Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church by Lawrence Overholt.

Byler-Miller

Bro. Jeremy, son of Robert and Heidi Byler, Plainview, TX, and Sis. Corina, daughter of Joseph and Hannah Miller, Melvern, KS, on August 15, 2024, at Lyndon Amish Mennonite Church by

Lawrence Overholt.

Miller-Hershberger

Bro. Tyler, son of Gerald and Cathy Miller, Guys Mills, PA, and Sis. Amber, daughter of Roy and Ruth Hershberger, Saegertown, PA, on October 19, 2024, at First Baptist Church of Linesville for Plainview Gospel Fellowship by Roy Hershberger.

Yoder-Coblentz

Bro. Vernon, son of Denver and Betty Yoder, Strawberry, AR, and Sis. Kayla, daughter of Ed and Kathy Coblentz, Greeneville, TN, on November 16, 2024, at First Baptist Church for Greene County Mennonite Church by Raymond Fisher.

Yoder-Swartzendruber

Bro. Nathan, son of Marvin Jr. and Ruth Yoder, Colon, MI, and Sis. Melinda, daughter of Scott and Annette Swartzendruber, Shedd, OR, on June 29, 2024, at Lost Cabin Trail by Jon Yoder.

Yoder-Yoder

Bro. Edward, son of Marvin Jr. and Ruth Yoder, Colon, MI, and Sis. Karina, daughter of Lawane and Esther Yoder, Sturgis, MI, on October 11, 2024, at Pilgrim Fellowship Church by Jon Yoder.



cradle roll

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

Byers, Nevin and Jessica (Mast), Leoma, TN, twins, second and third children, first and second daughters, Eden Lyric and Astrid Haven, November 1, 2024.

Clemons, Caleb and Dorcas (Shank), Rochelle, VA, first child and son, Kemper Ray, November 15, 2024.

Hostetler, Jason and Donna (Yoder), Danville, AL, fifth child, second son, Lincoln Cole, November 11, 2024.

Martin, Dwight and Melody (Mast), Crossville, TN, second child (first son in heaven), first daughter, Eliana Ruth, July 5, 2024.

ordinations

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

Bro. Joseph O. Mullet, 36, (wife, Rhoda Miller), Owenton, KY, was called by God through the voice of the church and ordained minister for Owenton Amish Mennonite Church on October 20, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Mark Yoder. The charge was given by Joshua Yoder, assisted by Floyd Lengacher and Milt Kinsinger.

Mast, Lyndall and Carla (Byler), Drasco, AR, fifth child, second son (one son deceased), Coleman Lynn, November 12, 2024.

Miller, Matthew and Rachel (Stoltzfus), Wytheville, VA, first child and son, Jude Ezekiel, November 13, 2023. Received for adoption on August 9, 2024.

Miller, Will and Gwen (Stauffer), Centreville, MI, sixth child, fourth daughter, Amber Jean, October 16, 2024.

Weaver, Tyler and Miranda (Miller) Weaver, Denmark, SC, first child and daughter, Kinsley Hope, October 26, 2024.

Yoder, James Michael and Luna (Lopez), Creel, Mexico, second child and son, Matias Yoder Lopez, October 31, 2024.



Bro. Marcus Schlabach, 31, (wife, Alyssa Miller), Beach City, OH, was ordained minister for Messiah Amish Mennonite Church on October 20, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Wayne Lapp. The charge was given by Philip Miller, assisted by Paul Leroy Miller and Wayne Lapp. Benjamin Beachy and Christopher Miller shared the lot.



obituaries

Byers, Sara Mae, 70, of Leoma, TN, passed away peacefully on October 14, 2024, surrounded by her loving husband and family following a prolonged battle with cancer. She was born on June 20, 1954, in Millersburg, OH, to the late Albert and Esther (Mast) Schlabach. On August 16, 1980, she married Myron Byers who survives.

She was a member of Goodspring Mennonite Church. She was a homemaker and enjoyed gardening and loved her children and grandchildren.

Surviving, in addition to her husband of 44 years, are eight children and their spouses: Philip (Maryann), Pulaski; Faith (Elvin) Stoltzfus, Somerset, PA; Nevin (Jessica), Leoma; Michelle Byers, Ephrata, PA; Murray (Natasha), Mercersburg, PA; Marlin (Elaine), Rosalyn Byers, and Lucinda, all of Leoma; four brothers: Eugene, Free Union, VA; David, Vanleer; John, Bonners Ferry, ID; Stephen, Sarasota, FL; three sisters: Ruth Miller and Miriam Otto, both of Crossville; Naomi Schlabach, Sarasota, FL; and 14 grandchildren.

The funeral was held on October 20, 2024, at the Goodspring Mennonite Church with Perry Miller, Ben Miller, and John Byers serving. Interment followed in the church cemetery.

Glick, Anna M., 86, formerly of Ronks, PA, passed away at Fairmount Homes, Ephrata, PA, on November 17, 2024. She was born in Ronks, PA, on July 3, 1938, to the late Christian F. and Lydia (Lantz) King. She was the wife of the late Samuel B. Glick, who passed away on April 14, 2012.

She was a member of Mine Road Amish Mennonite Church.

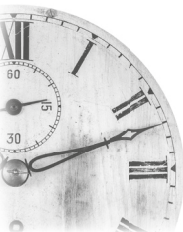
She is survived by seven children: Amos J. (Tammie Luzier), New Providence; Elsie M. (Timothy) Martin, New Holland; Paul J. (Mary Jane Fisher), Farmville, VA; Mahlon L. (Naomi Petersheim), Narvon; Sarah E. (Terry) Weaver, Clearwater, FL; Allen R., Lancaster; Samuel M., Lake St. Louis, MO; 28 grandchildren, 27 great-grandchildren, four siblings: Jonathan King, Ronks; twin, Amos (Phyllis King), Manheim; Mary Fisher, Lancaster; and Esther Courtney, New Holland.

She was preceded in death by a son: John M., great-grandson, Andrew Glick; four siblings: Melvin, Reuben, Samuel King, and Fannie Beiler.

A celebration of life service was held at Mine Road Amish Mennonite Church on November 23, 2024. A private graveside service was held in the church cemetery prior to the service.



Counting time is not so important as making time count.



The year 2025 stretches before us with plenty of questions, opportunities, and possibilities. The coming year is not particularly different from the years past in that each year brings questions, opportunities, and possibilities. However, part of the nature of time is that it is linear and moves in one direction. This means that each year brings its own unique set of questions, opportunities, and possibilities. Because time is linear and life's opportunities and challenges tend to be similar in that way, we should consider them in the context of faithful Christian stewardship. May the questions we ask and answer help to sharpen our awareness and our faithfulness.

A number of incidents this past month has reminded me again of our responsibilities of stewardship. My wife, Brenda, and I spent most of November in Kenya. The first three weeks were focused on the work of Amish Mennonite Aid in Kenya. The next week we spent with our son-in-law and daughter and their two children in Kisumu. They moved there from our community early this year, so it was really nice to reinforce

those family connections.

The work of Amish Mennonite Aid (AMA) began in Kenya a bit more than 30 years ago. Currently, there are 17 established churches. The church at Nyakunguru, where our son-in-law pastors, is the newest of the 17 congregations as a result of these efforts. On one of the Sundays we were there, we worshiped with brothers at the church in Ombeiye where there has never been a missionary pastor. It is an outreach congregation of the church at Kasongo. Currently, six of the 17 congregations operate without resident American-missionary church leadership.

I'm struck again by the opportunity of sharing and spreading the Gospel message. We should always cultivate a profound humility that reminds us that we might not always steward this message the best, and that we aren't the only ones who take this stewardship seriously, neither is our approach the only valid one. But the story of the work of AMA in Kenya is one that has impacted many, many lives. It also follows that since lives have been impacted, the eternities of many have been impacted as well.

It's not our job to keep track of all those things, but it is appropriate that God's people should rejoice when people are saved and believers are strengthened in the Kingdom. God loves to cooperate with faithful people who are serious about serving Him and growing His Kingdom.

I do not have access to the statistics, but I wonder how many hundreds of funerals of church congregants have occurred in these past 30+ years. Earlier this year, a pastor who was more than 90 years old passed away. During our visit another church member, more than 90 years old, also passed on. His radiant testimony continues to inspire. It's probable, certainly possible, that both of these men were actually over 100. They lived during a time when those recording these statistics were encouraged to record ages about 10 years younger than actual in order to reduce the eventual number of retirees.

The AIDS epidemic ravaged many in Africa a couple of decades ago. Again and again, brothers and sisters in the congregations, with bright and promising futures, took sick and died of HIV. Sometimes we wonder what the church scene would look like if AIDS/HIV would not have claimed so many lives. One missionary of that era commented that it seemed

as if at that time they concentrated on preparing people to die rather than building the church. Even today many of our brothers and sisters in the Lord in Kenya still have HIV. But the drugs currently available have transformed the dreaded death sentence of HIV/AIDS into a very manageable condition.

Interest in the Lamp and Light Correspondence Courses is strong and ongoing. Jason Yoder, who directs the Lamp and Light work in Kisumu, was invited to preach at a nearby church one Sunday in November. There were between 300-400 people present. Part of the impetus of the invitation was to present the work of Lamp and Light. A few more than 60 persons in that congregation are currently enrolled in the courses. The 60 or so students gathered in front of the congregation to share some of what they have been learning. Almost all of the ladies who are enrolled have chosen to head-cover in some way as a result of what they have been learning. This church is not Mennonite in any way nor do they have ties to historic Anabaptism outside these Bible correspondence courses.

In the Nakuru area at least half of the schools and prisons, that are easily accessible and ripe for presenting the courses, have not

been reached as of this time due to the limitations of time, personnel, and finances. Most of the Lamp and Light work is being carried forward by Kenyan brothers with oversight and direction still coming from AMA and some key personnel.

I continue to find it humbling and challenging to observe that Kenya continues to be a place where there is tremendous interest in and openness to the Gospel as well as Christian faithfulness as expressed in a conservative Mennonite context. I don't like to express church matters in business lingo, but if I were to describe the situation in Kenya in economic terms I would say, "There are plenty of folks who are buying what we're selling."

Among the varying factors related to expanding the church-planting effort and growing the Lamp and Light efforts in Kenya, personnel and finances are much more instrumental in setting the tempo than interest and opportunity.

One highlight of the trip was attending a midweek service in Nyakunguru in which three couples were wed. Each of these couples had begun living together as unbelievers and had children born to them. Two of the couples are relatively young and the third one is older than we are. But each of these three couples

expressed a desire to live in marriage fidelity according to God's design and wished to have the marriage done in a way that the government and the church sanction. In a place where cultural practices such as dowry, polygamy, missing documents like birth certificates, etc. are common, this event represented a huge amount of work to get all the things in order.

I've been to a number of weddings over the years, but I've never been to one exactly like this one. I'd be surprised if many of the rest of us had either. There were no decorations. We shared fellowship afterwards over bowls of rice and cups of chai, but we didn't need any tables. There was a measure of subdued celebration and a festive spirit after the service. May the Lord continue to draw people to Himself.

If you're familiar with the work of AMA in Kenya, you know that it's not uncommon for babies who are born to be named after one of the missionaries. About a month ago, the wife of one of the church brothers at Nyakunguru needed to be transported to a medical facility due to uncertainties surrounding the birth of their child. The child did arrive without significant complication, much to the joy of the parents. Randall and our daughter, Melissa, visited the mother and baby

a bit later. The baby's father explained it to me this way. Since the baby was a boy and the first Christian lady to visit the mother and child in the hospital was Melissa, he wanted to give the baby the name of Melissa's father and grandfather. So, his name is Ronald Ray. He was in church the first time on the Sunday that we were there. It was nice to meet and even pose for a few pictures with little Ronald Ray, who is now off to a good start physically.

One of the interesting events that occurred in November while we were in Kenya was that the USA held national elections. Many in Kenya were also quite aware of and interested in this election. There is very little that I could write about this election that has not already been written. But I will take this opportunity to remind us of our responsibility to pray for those who

are governing. Those promoting political ideology often grossly exaggerate both the weaknesses of those they do not agree with and the strengths of those they agree with. Hence, things are likely not nearly as bad as some people think they are. Neither are things nearly as good as some people think they are. If we find ourselves in either of these ditches, I'd like to encourage us to do a bit of self-reflection, and bring Kingdom priorities into focus rather than these kingdoms that will pass away.

There's one more thing I was reminded of in Kenya that is parallel to what goes on in the political sphere. There's a whole bunch of stuff that happens that doesn't make much sense to a foreigner. The Hebrew writer reminds us that, "... *here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come.*"

-RJM 

You can't go back and change the **beginning**,
but you can start where you are and change the **ending**.

-C. S. Lewis



He That Swareth to His Own Hurt (And Changeth Not)

Marvin Joel Eicher, McArthur, OH

God is very concerned about how we keep our word. When we promise something, whatever goes out of our mouth we are expected to fulfill.

One of the plagues of our day is man's shallow view of keeping his word. God never meant for our talk to be considered cheap. All through the Scriptures this principle is supported.

Listed below are a few verses that clearly teach God's heart on this matter.

Deuteronomy 23:21-23 *"When thou shalt vow a vow unto the Lord thy God, thou shalt not slack to pay it: for the Lord thy God will surely require it of thee; and it would be sin in thee. But if thou shalt forbear to vow, it shall be no sin in thee. That which is gone out of thy lips thou shalt keep and perform; even a freewill offering, according as thou hast vowed unto the Lord thy God, which thou hast promised with thy mouth."*

Psalm 22:25 *"My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him."*

Psalm 50:5 *"Gather my saints*

together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice."

Psalm 50:14-15 *"Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High: and call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me."*

Psalm 56:12 *"Thy vows are upon me, O God: I will render praises unto thee."*

Psalm 65:1 *"Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion; and unto thee shall the vow be performed."*

Psalm 76:11 *"Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God: let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared."*

Psalm 89:34 *"My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips."*

Psalm 111:5 *"He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant."*

Psalm 116:14 (also repeated verbatim in verse 18) *"I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people."*

Proverbs 20:25 *"It is a snare to the man who devoureth that which is holy, and after vows to make enquiry."*

Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 “When thou vowest a vow unto God, defer not to pay it; for he hath no pleasure in fools: pay that which thou hast vowed. Better is it that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow and not pay. Suffer not thy mouth to cause thy flesh to sin; neither say thou before the angel, that it was an error: wherefore should God be angry at thy voice, and destroy the work of thine hands?”

Jonah 2:9 “But I will sacrifice unto thee with the voice of thanksgiving; I will pay that that I have vowed. Salvation is of the Lord.”

Matthew 5:37 “But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.”

Romans 1:31, 32 “Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them.”

Galatians 3:15, 17 “Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulleth, or addeth thereto. And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make

the promise of none effect.”

James 5:12 “But above all things, my brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea; and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation.”

Next, we will look at Scripture passages that teach, by implication or example, the very principles clearly taught above.

Joshua 9-10 - The Gibeonites were from the land of Canaan. Because of their great fear of the Israelites they devised a scheme to make a league of peace with Joshua. They acted as if they were ambassadors from a far country. They dressed in ragged clothes and old shoes. They showed Joshua and his men old bottles of wine and moldy bread saying that the bottles were new when they left their homeland and the bread fresh from the oven. Joshua was deceived. He made a league with them to let them live. After three days the Israelites received the shocking news that the Gibeonites were their neighbors. The congregation murmured against the princes for being deceived like this, but everyone knew that they could not break this agreement.

While it is obvious that this league was not made according to God’s will, yet God Himself revealed His heart toward keeping this oath, not

once but twice in Scripture. The first account is found in Joshua 10 where five surrounding kings, having heard of Gibeon's agreement with Israel, formed an alliance and made war on Gibeon. The Gibeonites called on Israel to help them and the Israelites hurried to their rescue. The battle was fierce, but God greatly helped the Israelites by casting hailstones on the Amorite attackers. However, daylight was fading and Joshua knew that he could not finish this battle without more time. He called upon the Lord to stop the sun from going down and the moon from coming up. God honored his unusual request and for about one whole day the sun and moon stood still while the Israelites finished their victory.


II Samuel 21 - Many years later during the reign of King David, God again honored this agreement. There was a famine in Israel and David sought the Lord as to the reason. The Lord answered, "*It is because Saul and his house slew the Gibeonites.*" David went to the Gibeonites and asked them how to make amends. They required that seven of the sons of Saul be delivered unto them. David agreed and the Gibeonites killed these men and hung them up before the Lord. God honored this response of David and the famine lifted.

Judges 11 - Jephthah vowed that

if God gave him victory over the children of Ammon he would offer the first thing that came out of his doors to greet him when he came home. His only daughter was the first to greet him, and he was very troubled. However, even his great love for his daughter did not sway him from offering her to the Lord. It seems that she lived the rest of her days in celibacy as an offering to the Lord in order to keep the vow of her father.

Psalm 132:12 - God promised David that if his children would keep His covenant and teach His ways to their children that David's children would sit upon his throne forever. Even though David's children failed, God went above and beyond what He had promised and put Jesus on the throne of David forever as a fulfillment of this promise.

Indeed, God has made it unmistakably clear by word and deed that He expects us to keep our word. It is also very clear that God will bring judgment on those who break their word. Romans 1:31 lists covenant-breakers as one of those who is worthy of death.

"Lord, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill? He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness... He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not" (Psalm 15:1-2, 4b). 

The Young Snowplow

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

His earnest young face with its dimples lifted to greet me in the brisk and chilly afternoon. His dark eyes shone as he recited the wondrous news, “Did you hear it might snow nine inches on Monday?” I likely made some reply, but my expectations were vastly lower than his. I hoped he wouldn’t be grievously disappointed with a small dusting on the pines. Not only that, my nearly 60 years were definitely more interested in sunshine and warmth than in trudging through snow and single-digit temps to the main building. It was winter, in Arkansas, at CBS.

On Sunday the snow fell in lacy

curtains outside the windows as I sipped hot tea, decidedly content to admire it from afar. Steadily, silently, the beauty collected, heaped up on tree and car and roof: five, then six, and perhaps eight of the desired nine inches! The sharp cold chilled the enthusiasm of most adults, and young enthusiasts found snowballs disintegrated before they could inflict any damage on passersby.

On Monday morning, the rhythmic scrape, scrape of snow being shoveled from sidewalks filled the air. At some point, a teacher husband cleared an 18” path on the gravel to the front of Hillside, the pleasant new staff building which housed three families and a couple. As he scooped, my dimpled young friend inquired of the older man if he should add to the path. “Sure!” replied the teacher.

I had been choosing my steps with care as I went to and fro, trying to ensure my heels might connect with gravel and prevent surprises. The fluffy snow sifted down into my leather boots. That evening, as Stan



and I wound our way up the hill hand-in-hand, I exclaimed in glad surprise—the path wound along to the back of the building also! This was the only entrance to our nest, and someone’s thoughtfulness warmed my heart and kept my toes dry.

Enthusiasm seemed to have been in good supply, for our nine-year-old good Samaritan had extended his efforts right up to the steps to

the back porch. Later, my husband thanked him, “You made it a four-lane highway!” Truly, it was closer to four feet wide than 18 inches.

The reason given for the expanded width was, “Before, they had to walk single file; now they can walk beside each other.”

More than was asked, beyond what was expected, and all given with a glad heart. What a lovely way to live.



mission awareness

The Tragedy of a Lost Soul

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

Many of us clearly remember where we were when the first plane smashed into the World Trade Center. Then 17 minutes later the second jetliner crashed into the South Tower. These two structures (North Tower, 1,368 feet tall; South Tower, 1,362 feet tall) came tumbling to the ground. The South Tower was at ground level in 56 minutes and the North Tower in one hour and 42 minutes.

An estimated 1,600 people died in the North Tower. An estimated 1,000

people died in the South Tower. A total of 2,753 people died in New York on that memorable day of September 11, 2001. The attacks also killed 184 people in the Pentagon and 40 people in Pennsylvania. The 19 hijackers who committed murderous suicide also died. That is a total of 2,996 people. The September 11 attacks were the deadliest terrorist attacks in human history. (Britannica)

We call this a tragedy and indeed it was. No doubt, some of these 2,996 people became born again believers and confessed Jesus Christ as their

Lord and Savior before they died. But likely, many were not ready to meet their Maker.

I remember the feeling of standing on the top (outside) of the South Tower some years ago. I was glad for a strong fence on the outer perimeter to hold onto as it swayed back and forth. It was supposed to move like that. It was a clear evening on September 15, 1988, and we watched the sunset. It was a magnificent sight. You could see all over New York City and into New Jersey.

That was the very day a false prophet predicted the Lord would return at 12:00 noon Eastern Time, but it never happened. The writer published a well-known booklet, *Eighty-eight Reasons Why Jesus Will Return in 1988*. He missed Jesus' words, "No man knows the day, nor the hour." We were with a youth group that weekend singing, witnessing, and passing out Christian literature in New York City.

The tragedy of a lost soul is now!

"But the wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked" (Isaiah 57:20,21).

There is no security, tranquility, and no "shalom" of a lost soul. There is a constant restlessness and a gnawing of the conscience of eternal

judgment. There are people whose consciences are dulled, seared, and past feelings of any convicting pain. But there are many who are traveling on life's pathway, not heeding the road signs: REPENT AND BE CONVERTED, THAT YOUR SINS MAY BE BLOTTED OUT! Life goes on at an easy pace. Prosperity is at a high level and there is little trouble. But life looks hopeless and purposeless. For some there is constant hunger, gnawing pains of starvation, and no place to call home. It is like traveling in a long, dark tunnel without any outlet and the end is so sad—suicide.

To others, even blood-washed Christians, there may be an abundance of hardships: accidents, fire, sickness, pain, death, grief, and sorrow. Oh, what distress for the sinner! But the Psalmist gives us hope, *"They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in. Hungry and thirsty their soul fainted in them. Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble, and he delivered them out of all their distresses. Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!" (Psalm 107:4-6, 8).*

Yes, the tragedy and fateful distress of a lost soul is **now**. But our precious Lord Jesus proclaims, "He who

believes on Him—who clings to, trusts in, relies on Him (Jesus)—is not judged (he who trusts in Him never comes up for judgment; for him there is no rejection, no condemnation; He incurs no damnation). But he who does not believe (not cleave to, rely on, trust in Him) is judged already; (he has already been convicted; has already received his sentence) because he has not believed in and trusted in the name of the only begotten Son of God.” Jesus makes it plain in the same context, that if we do not believe in Jesus Christ and become born again, “we shall not see (experience) life, but the wrath of God remains on him; His indignation hangs over him continually” (John 3:18, 36 - Amplified).

The tragedy of a lost soul is at the judgment day.

“The book of Revelation is a special message from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. This is what He sent back to the church approximately 60 years after His ascension and exaltation in glory.

“The book of Revelation is an unveiling of the truth about Jesus Christ and what He will do at the end of the ages. What an amazing process this is by which the message came to us: God planned it, Jesus Christ showed it, the Spirit inspired it, an angel signified it, John wrote it, and

we hold it in our hands.

“The question is: ‘Now, what shall we do with it?’ Perhaps a more important question would be, ‘What will the book of Revelation do in us and through us?’” -George R. Brunk II

There is “*a great white throne*” judgment set. The Apostle John saw it in his vision and wrote it down, just as it was given to him.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire” (Revelation 20:11-15). Oh, what a distressing fate to be forever lost!

Here are comforting words from the Lord Jesus, “*Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life*” (John 5:24). Luther’s German translation


is clearer than many English translations in the phrase “...shall not come into condemnation.” The German rendering is precise: “und kommt nicht in das Gericht” or simply translated, “The believer will not come into that condemnation judgment.”

There is another judgment to prayerfully consider. “*For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that everyone may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad*” (II Corinthians 5:10). The Apostle Paul is writing to the Corinthian believers. The pronoun “we” appears 26 times in II Corinthians 5 and “us” appears eight times in the same chapter. Whereas in Revelation 20:11-15, “them” occurs twice and “their” occurs twice.

Is there a phone call that I should

make to help some wandering soul find Jesus as their personal Lord and Savior? How about sending a text of encouragement? Or simply arranging a personal visit with your neighbors, a husband and wife, who never really heard the gospel? I am personally convicted of the sin of negligence. How about handing out some gospel tracts, New Testaments, or devotionals like *Beside the Still Waters* at some public location where it is legal?

Friends, may our hearts be stirred for the “lostness” of the lost. People all over the world are in bondage, chained in false religions that have a deep grip on their lives. Jesus gave us an assignment, “*Ye shall be witnesses unto me*” (Acts 1:8b). Judgment is coming. Time is running out!

(To be concluded next month, “*The Tragedy of a Lost Soul is Eternal.*”) 

A Woman After God’s Heart

Ahinoam, Wife of Saul

Susan Garcete, Hartly, DE



The early hour was quiet, inviting new beginnings and balm for a troubled spirit. The promise of the new day

outlined the palace of Israel’s first-crowned king. A glimmer passed a dark, narrow window, Ahinoam and her lamp, steadily meeting the

call of the morning. Low, yearning notes of a prayer song accompanied her traversing through this new dwelling. She liked its spacious commodities, or did she? Things were... an approaching form in the dimness startled her. Oh! It was only Zilla. Yes, things had changed, now there was a maid to be in charge of the housework.

“Good morning to you, mistress,” Zilla spoke softly, eagerly. “Let me do this! There is no need for you to be up so early.” The first little blaze of the cooking fire came alive, illuminating two faces intent on the earliest chore of the homemaker’s day. Ahinoam’s slow smile smoothed away the worry wrinkles for a moment.

“Blessings to you, Zilla. Go ahead, but permit me to enjoy the morning hour with you.”

As preparations progressed, the mother heart turned toward her children. *Merab and Michal should be rising, they need not be pampered just because we have kitchen help. That’s me pushing against reality, she mused, they are princesses. Reality? Reality does not look good, and I don’t know what I can do about it.* Ahinoam, whose very name implied the pleasantness, the graciousness that she lent to and enjoyed in relationships, suddenly felt inundated with foreboding dread.

Soon enough, young Merab slipped into the kitchen nook. “The sound of the grindstone woke me,” she yawned. The welcoming warmth of the fire drew her closer. “Maybe this is a king’s house,” she murmured to herself, “but it surely is cold in here.”

“I know, it’s true,” her mother overheard. “Help yourself to a hot drink,” Zilla motioned towards the steaming pot. Merab did so as she offered a hand at the grindstone.

Just then a grinning face appeared in the doorway. “Good morning, Mother, Merab, Zilla! I’m out to check on my donkey.”

“Good morning, son!” Jonathan, what a blessing he was! His cheerful, kind ways warmed the heart. The children, all of them, were good to her, even as they faced so many current changes. For them, she must be strong. She must not be so distracted by the underlying uneasiness that plagued her waking hours.

Saul. What was happening to him? Would he be grouchy this morning? She had much appreciated his quiet thoughtfulness in earlier years. True, there were times when he needed to be cheered and encouraged out of his melancholy moods, but he was a humble and good man. Was this what kingship did to a man? Wistful memories of a happy bride

and a tall, handsome dream of outstanding character. She shook them off, literally. It was too painful. The moments of uncontrolled rashness were becoming more frequent. Where was he now? The morning's bread was ready—it was best while warm. Should she rouse him? Or did he not want to be disturbed?

She watched her girls accompany the maids to the well to fetch water. They did not do that often anymore. Michal was becoming a pretty young lady. She had strong likes and dislikes like her father. What would her daughters', the king's daughters, future be? No doubt there were many who would wish to become part of the royal family. Would the girls have any say in the matter? They could very possibly be moved around as pieces in a game, at the whim of one who saw gain in the transaction.

The queen turned briskly, *No more borrowing trouble! I must occupy myself with happier thoughts.* She picked up her embroidery, finding her seat by the window. *God in heaven sees all of this, I know.* Thoughts and prayer intermingled and her heart grew calmer. Stitching steadily, she watched the pattern emerge, drawing the colored thread through the border of the garment

on her lap.

Movements in the adjoining area suddenly hit her awareness. Handwork aside, she rose. It was habit, feeling she needed to be there for every one of her family. Stepping quickly to the arched doorway, she observed Saul getting ready for the throne room. He was aging, this man she had married—small wonder, with the load of responsibility he carried on those broad shoulders. But was he responsible? Stable? Committed? Aloud, “Do you have all you need? May the day go well.”

He turned, seeming to appreciate her presence. “Need my cloak yet, it’s chilly today,” he almost smiled.

Having seen him off, Ahinoam returned to her pastime, wondering at the relief she was feeling. Saul seemed to be his normal self this morning. She hoped it would last.

“Jerusha, you and Leah go to the marketplace today with Eben.” It was Zilla addressing her daughter. The capable housekeeper was back. Others were assigned the day’s washing.

A smile played around Ahinoam’s lips, “How our household has grown. I love and trust that family! God is good to give us such an energetic and caring servant.”

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A muffled thud. Angry voice,

hurried footsteps. What was happening in the throne room? The queen tensed, her quickened heartbeat reminded her of how the morning had gone. Saul's drink had not been hot enough, the servant was too slow, his dark brooding look sent out a high alert. Why? Why the terrible temper? It hurt to see him so, to see the servants scurrying to serve before disgust turned to anger. An involuntary shiver brought her back to the present.

The hours dragged on. Towards evening Jonathan slipped in. "Mother, you know David from Bethlehem? The one who plays the harp so beautifully? Father was in one of those dark moods this morning, so David was called for. The music usually calms and relaxes him, but this time he lost control and threw his dagger! Why is he so jealous? We must keep David safe somehow! If he hadn't dodged just in time..." The anguish in his eyes revealed his loyalty.

"Do what you can, son," Ahinoam's voice barely above a whisper. "Your father has failed in following God. It seems he can't bear to see another do right and eventually take his place. The throne would otherwise be yours, you know," her eyes met his for just a moment.

"David can do better than I could,"

Jonathan smiled slowly, turning towards the window. The distant mountain held his gaze, "He does so much for us all. He is a wonderful friend!"

One pleasant morning Mrs. Saul dressed for going out. Seeing the question in Zilla's eyes, she explained, "Just a short visit to Eva's house."

"Yes, go! It will do you good," Zilla smiled. She loved her mistress and sensing her sadness and often wished to cheer her somehow. "I will let Eben know, he will go with you and your maid."

The walk in the fresh air and sunshine was refreshing, and even more so the cheery voice calling from Eva's courtyard, "Ahinoam! It's so good to see you! Come in, come in!"

Ahinoam, smiling, accepted the preferred seat, easily leaving behind her palace life. The persistent, personal pain faded as she entered Eva's world and slipped happily into the feminine camaraderie understood by women of all time.

"I love these little ones," Eva's bright, expressive eyes observed her friends' amusement, watching the carefree play and chatter. "Grandchildren it is for us at this stage in life. Your girls are both married now, aren't they? I hope they are happy! David was the secret hope of many a maiden."

"Indeed, he was," Ahinoam's voice

was laced with wistful sadness, “but where is he now? Michal is alone.”

“Oh no...is Saul out in the wilds again trying to capture David?”

The sympathetic tone brought brimming, downcast eyes. Ahinoam simply nodded, lifting her hands as if in petition towards the heavens.

Eva broke the weighted silence at length. “May Jehovah God, Whom you still worship and praise, protect you and your children.”

“Thank you, my friend,” the royal lady spoke falteringly, “I am learning that my life can go on, I can still have joy. I can always, every day, love and trust the Most High.”

“At times Saul seems so sincere in worshiping the true God, but those moments get lost in his fits of anger and jealousy. Even Jonathan, who has stood for truth and right, has been threatened. And when Saul had those innocent priests killed...” her face clouded with palpable sorrow. “I thought he was truly losing his mind. I cried a long time that night.”

Eva sat motionless, her eyes inviting her friend to keep on sharing her heart. How small and vulnerable she looked, yet queenly, on the low stool, her lovely dress flowing onto the packed dirt floor.

“David will be the next king, we know. Not only has he been anointed by the prophet Samuel, but

he has proven himself worthy and has won the hearts of the people. Saul knows it too, but frantically fights against it. Ever since he first rejected God’s command, he has times of an unclear mind and can’t seem to make good decisions. I have been much disturbed by his lifestyle. He has gotten used to going against better knowledge and is destroying himself.”

Ahinoam rose slowly and motioned to her maid. Her voice grew brisk, “Well, Eva, I must not keep Eben waiting any longer. It has been a breath of fresh air to spend this time with you! Like a shared prayer to the Almighty.”

Little maid scurried over and looked up expectantly, “Here I am.”

“We shall now return to the palace,” her mistress smiled at her eagerness to be of assistance. “Find Eben and tell him I’m ready.”

A warm, loving farewell later found Ahinoam walking home with her small company. “What an unexplainable strength comes to our hearts,” she mused, absentmindedly watching the neighborhood children calling happily to each other, “when we take our focus off the terrible tensions and open ourselves to the good and beautiful, and work towards creating more of it.” Soft purposeful steps carried her on.

(This is written from the viewpoint of Ahinoam being a “daughter of Sarah.” See I Peter 3:6. Women of today can also be daughters of Sarah, as long as you do right

and let nothing terrify you—not giving way to hysterical fears or letting anxieties unnerve you.)



junior messages

Let the Little Children Come to Me

Lindon Yoder, San Juan, TX

“**H**ola, Lindon.” The children call out a greeting as they scamper over to where we get out of the vehicle at the Refugee Camp in Reynosa, Mexico. Some run and wrap me in a big hug while others give the cultural high five and fist bump. I talk to the ones I’ve met before, asking about their day. Others whom I’ve not met, stare up at me. “You are tall!” they exclaim.

I kneel down to their height. “Is that better?” I ask, grinning.

They nod and smile, and now I have another new, small friend.

Children adjust rapidly to living here in the refugee camps. On the outside, they look happy, carefree, and enjoying life. But often if I take time to hear their families’ story, I find a painful history. Many come from single-parent homes, and like

most children, they thrive on any love and attention I can give.

I am reminded of the words of a song, CAN YOU HEAR THE CRY OF THE CHILDREN, SOFTLY PLEADING FOR SILENCE IN THEIR SHATTERED WORLD?

Leo was a big four-year-old who loved to be held. He wasn’t fat, just big boned. He insisted on being held and would angrily stomp off to throw rocks if I picked up someone else.

Danaika also liked to be held. This little tornado would tear around and torment people. She was a real terror. But underneath the tough core, there was a hurting little girl who missed her mother.

Melissa will slap me for the fun of it, and then laugh about it. Her moods swing one direction and then the other. What would make a two-year-old act like this?

All three of these children have something in common. All of them are part of a broken home. Leo and Melissa were both without their dad, and Danaika was traveling with relatives. There are so many sad stories for us to hear.

A little Colombian boy had big, bad attitudes. He thrived on pulling the girls' hair and having fun at the expense of others. He could throw a royal fit if he didn't get what he wanted, and his parents wouldn't do anything about it. What had happened to this little boy? He hadn't always been this way. The story came out that as they traveled, they were kidnapped. The emotional trauma of the kidnapping had changed this child into what he is now. Is it permanent? Only God knows. How sad that the little ones of God are treated so cruelly at such a young age!

Broken homes are everywhere, and it's the children who suffer the most. Heartless gangs kidnap, but the defenseless children take the brunt. Someone kills a man in a fit of anger, and at home, the children cry and cry for their daddy.

Jesus said, "*Suffer the little children to come unto Me and forbid them not.*"

Ministering to adults is important. But touching the lives of children is important too!

How do I comfort the little girl who

is crying because the other children call her "Fatty?" How do I relate to the little fellow who likes to wreak havoc in the lives of other people? How do I respond to the energetic child who is used to doing whatever he wants? Or the pile of little ones who all want to be held at the same time? Or they want to be spun in circles again, and again, and again?

It breaks my heart when I see children hurting. I feel helpless hearing the stories of kidnappings. I wish I could do more to help! What can I do in this brief window of opportunity that I have with them? How can I minister to these little people of God? How can I show the love of Christ in a practical way to a child? How can little hearts be turned to a God Who has a special place in His heart for them?

I have heard something that impressed me. Love is time. Time is love. Do I take time for the children? Focusing on a child and spending time with them quickly brightens their life. I do not know what all Jesus said or did with the children in His life, but I do know that He spent time with them. Maybe He was tired. He probably had other things to do. But He gave His time to those children, and I believe that the children were changed.

We who love Jesus are His hands

and feet. Are we taking time for these little people? Who knows what the results of loving a child can bring? We build a relationship, and then Jesus can reach into this small child's life.

“Suffer the little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.”

Children are important wherever we live.

[Adapted from ABM Newsletter, June-July 2024 . Anabaptist Border Ministry reaches out in refugee camps in Mexico bringing care, compassion, and the love of Jesus to homeless, suffering people.

If you would like more information about Anabaptist Border Ministries, please contact Marc Sommers at: (903) 413-8280.]



youth messages

The Bigger Picture

Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH

In life today, it is easy to become distracted. We are so busy with work and church and life that we easily lose sight of the bigger picture. We Christians need to be careful not to sacrifice the future for the perceived needs of the now.

On May 22, 2010, a man by the name of Laszlo Hanyecz got hungry. Laszlo was a computer programmer and an early bitcoin miner. He made a post on a bitcoin forum offering someone 10,000 bitcoin (around \$41 worth) if they would order two large pizzas and have them sent to his house. A British man took him up on the offer, ordered the \$25 dollars'

worth of pizza from Papa John's and had them delivered to Laszlo. Bitcoin has increased in value exponentially since then. That 10,000 bitcoin recently would have been worth 998 million dollars. If Laszlo had had any inkling of what his bitcoin would become, chances are that he would have gone hungry that night and many more nights, staving off his hunger with the hope of what would come.

Although the story is true, it is so far removed from most of our reality that it seems like a tall tale. With bitcoin projected to hit six figures in 2025, that would mean that Laszlo

could have potentially squandered over a BILLION dollars' worth of potential growth. Although I highly doubt that most of those reading this have one or even a fraction of a bitcoin, there are other "valuables" that we can squander and undervalue as callously as Laszlo treated his bitcoin.

Time

The first is time. Bitcoin has a maximum supply of 21 million units. We as humans only have a finite number of days here on earth. God already knows the exact number of our days because He exists through time. He is in the past, the present, and the future. One day our time here on earth will come to an end. Every moment that we spend is lost, never to return. We cannot get it back, and we will someday have to give an account of how we spent it. How are we spending our time? Like Laszlo, are we wasting it on temporary things that have no eternal value and will be eaten up? Or are we wisely investing it in people, the one thing here on earth that can go to heaven with us? Remember, eternal life is infinite. Time, as we know it, will cease, and we will experience life in perpetuity.

Relationships

Relationships are another "valuable" that we can mismanage. People, as I mentioned earlier, are

the only "thing" that can go to heaven with us. Healthy, meaningful relationships are vital to emotional maturity and spiritual growth. Both of these are paramount to the impact of the family in the church and the effectiveness of the church in the community. We tend to undervalue the relationships we have with people whom we care about until we lose them. We have so much to gain and nothing to lose by valuing and endeavoring to maintain the relationships that we have.

Research shows that loneliness is as deadly as if you smoked 15 cigarettes per day and that people who are lonely are 50% more likely to die at a premature age.¹ There are a lot of lonely, hurting people in the world. We tend to assume that they are "out there," but often, they sit next to us on the pew at church, or we rub shoulders with them at work. They count out our money for us at the bank and ring up those last-minute items for us at Dollar General. Opportunities to build relationships and influence people for God are all around us.

Our Minds

Our minds are priceless and, well, "mind-blowing" (sorry, I couldn't help myself). The human brain is

1. <https://www.tonyrobbins.com/blog/loneliness-and-longevity>

capable of amazing things. According to an article by Clinical Neurology Specialists of Nevada, the human brain is capable of holding 2.5 petabytes of information which is the equivalent of 2.5 million gigabytes of digital memory² or 4.7 billion books³. What are we filling our minds with?

I am amazed at my children's ability to memorize Scripture. Scientists say that we never actually forget anything. All consumed information is in our brain imprinted on neurons called engram cells. The information doesn't go away. It just becomes more difficult to reactivate the cells that some information is imprinted on the less we use it. Our brain actually alters the access to some information based on importance. The older we get the harder it is to memorize because we become less able to focus our attention on the relevant target information. If we fill our minds with things that aren't necessarily bad, but maybe aren't edifying, there are that many more things for our brains to process and file away. In order to keep certain information more accessible in our brains, it is


2. <https://www.cnsnevada.com/what-is-the-memory-capacity-of-a-human-brain>

3. <https://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/science/science-news/12114150/Human-brain-can-store-4.7-billion-books-ten-times-more-than-originally-thought>

recommended to write it down and review it periodically to keep it fresh.

Memorization

Dr. William Evans, author of *How to Memorize the Bible*, did just that. He is said to have memorized the entire KJV version of the Bible and additionally the New Testament in the ASV. Most of us memorized Scripture in school, a few passages of which I can still recite to this day. To my shame I don't emphasize Bible memorization like I did when I was single, but it is possible. In countries where Bibles are restricted or illegal, believers will memorize large portions of whatever Scripture is available since a person's memory cannot be controlled by the government.

These are just a few things that we can undervalue. I'm sure there are others that you can think of, but this is a start. We need to take the time to look at the bigger picture and appreciate some of the blessings that we so often take for granted. Laszlo Hanyecz had no idea of the potential profit he would have made if he had invested his bitcoin properly rather than trade it for a couple of pizzas. Likewise, we have no idea how the Kingdom of God will prosper if we properly manage and invest in our time, relationships, and minds. It's important that we don't sacrifice the future for the sake of the now. 

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He who aims at nothing is sure to hit it.

• • • • •

Every problem is a possibility in disguise.

• • • • •

God has no problems, only plans. -Corrie ten Boom

• • • • •

Don't let yesterday use up too much of today. -Will Rogers

• • • • •

Sign over college classroom clock: "Time will pass, will you?"

• • • • •

He who lays no plans for the future will have an empty old age.

• • • • •

If your day is hemmed with prayer, it is less likely to unravel.

• • • • •

Time is so powerful it is given to us only in small doses.

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Be humble or you'll stumble. -Dwight L. Moody

• • • • •

Stick to your job until one of you is finished.

• • • • •

Failure is the path of least persistence.