



# Calvary MESSENGER

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

*Galatians 6:14*

A P R I L 2 0 2 4

Meditation

- Sheer Joy* ..... 1

Editorial

- Tracks in the Snow* ..... 2

School Matters

- Keeping the Vision for Christian Education (Part I)* ..... 6

The Bottom Line

- The Puzzle* ..... 10

I Saw a Beautiful Thing

- A Gracious Gift* ..... 13

Marriages ..... 14

Cradle Roll ..... 14

Ordinations ..... 15

Obituaries ..... 16

Observations ..... 17

A Future Spring ..... 21

Our Triune Gods ..... 23

Sitting in the Father's Lap ..... 26

Mission Awareness

- A Call to Rescue* ..... 28

A Woman After God's Own Heart

- Age Bridge* ..... 30

Junior Messages

- Craziness in Haiti* ..... 32

Youth Messages

- Standards—Safety or . . .* ..... 34

- Thought Gems ..... back cover

## Calvary Messenger

April 2024

**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.

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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.

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This periodical is digitally available at  
[calvarymessenger.org](http://calvarymessenger.org).

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 Sugarcreek, Ohio. Postmaster: Send address changes to Calvary Publications, Inc., 6681 Lake Rd, Hicksville, OH 43526.

# Sheer Joy

- Ralph Spaulding Cushman

Oh, the sheer joy of it!  
Living with Thee,  
God of the universe,  
Lord of a tree,  
Maker of mountains,  
Lover of me!

Oh, the sheer joy of it!  
Breathing Thy air;  
Morning is dawning,  
Gone every care,  
All the world's singing,  
“God's everywhere.”

Oh, the sheer joy of it!  
Walking with Thee,  
Out on the hilltop,  
Down by the sea,  
Life is so wonderful,  
Life is so free.

Oh, the sheer joy of it!  
Working with God,  
Running His errands,  
Waiting His nod,  
Building His heaven  
On common sod.

Oh, the sheer joy of it!  
Ever to be  
Living in glory,  
Living with Thee,  
Lord of tomorrow,  
Lover of me!

*[In memory of Keith Crider,  
Strasburg, VA, who died in an  
accident in Guatemala while  
helping his son and family in their  
move to Guatemala. This poem  
was a favorite of his.]*



## Tracks in the Snow

*“Ponder the path of thy feet, and let all thy ways be established. Turn not to the right hand nor to the left: remove thy foot from evil” (Proverbs 4:26-27).*

For the past 11 years our congregation has been enjoying a weekend “Winter Retreat” at a church campground nearby. The backdrop for this campground includes several lakes, various wooded areas, trails, several lodges, and cabins. While the month of February isn’t normally considered a good time to spend time outdoors, it is a time when the campground is available, and we enjoy spending time together indoors.

We have had a variety of temperatures and weather conditions. Some of us have also spent some refreshing time outdoors walking along the lake and on the trails. Sometimes the children have enjoyed snow-related activities.

I enjoy nature, and the raw beauty of the outdoors in the middle of winter provides a unique opportunity to observe things usually hidden by leaves. There was the familiar

honking of Canada geese on the lakes. A large flock of sandhill cranes flew high overhead, betrayed by their raspy squawks. The occasional chattering of the local fox squirrels can be heard. Despite the cold temperatures, usually the songbirds are starting their spring songs. And while there are no leaves on the trees, it is interesting to observe the varied species of trees and their respective growth characteristics.

Last year the ground was snow-free and the damp leaves made my progress almost silent as I walked along. The trail took me past a swampy area, and I was pleasantly surprised to see a red fox curled up in the sun about 25 feet beside the trail. I was able to quietly walk to around 15 feet before he looked up upon hearing my mouse squeaks and dashed away into the thicket.

This year we had a fresh covering of snow the day before we arrived. As I followed the same trail, I encountered many tracks along the trail. I could accurately conclude that the large resident dog and his master had

walked on this trail. Of course, I was wondering whether I would see the red fox again, so I looked for his tracks. Various smaller canine tracks crossed the trail. Was this my friend the fox or was it a local dog on the loose? Then there were half-dollar-sized tracks. Were those of my friend the fox or were they cats from the neighborhood on a predatory stroll? I was able to accurately identify squirrels, rabbits, deer, and turkeys. All these had passed along or crossed the trail, but they were nowhere in sight. I thought I might see where these deer went as they entered the thicket. But my attempt to follow their tracks was hindered by the undergrowth, and I returned to the path without seeing any deer. I had not seen any of these tracks last year since there was no snow. Had the same creatures crossed my path last year as did this year? I will never know.

How many other creatures cross our paths unawares? How many times do we go places without leaving tracks? Or do we leave tracks?

If all of our tracks would be as evident to others as these animal tracks in the snow were to me, what would they tell others? Would our tracks be good tracks to follow or would others wonder what we were doing in that swampy thicket?

Our tracks can lead others on a particular pathway of life. The familiar story is told of a young child following his daddy in the snow. The child was taking huge steps so he could walk in the same tracks that his father had made. He said, “Look, Daddy, I’m walking right in your steps.” Do I want others to follow me? Am I seeking after worthwhile things in life? The Proverb author tells us that wisdom is the best thing to follow, “*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom: and with all thy getting get understanding*” (Proverbs 4:7). Are my steps leading others in the right path? Do my tracks show that my principal ambition in life is seeking wisdom and understanding? Are my tracks congruent with Proverbs 4:10-12? “*Hear, O my son, and receive my sayings; and the years of thy life shall be many. I have taught thee in the way of wisdom; I have led thee in right paths. When thou goest, thy steps shall not be straitened [hindered]; and when thou runnest, thou shalt not stumble.*”

The Scriptures also admonish us what not to follow. Proverbs chapter four tells us to not enter into the path of the wicked, but to avoid it and turn away from it. That way is dark and causes us to stumble.

“*Enter not into the path of the*

wicked, and go not in the way of evil men. Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and pass away. The way of the wicked is like darkness; They do not know what makes them stumble” (Proverbs 4:14-15, 19). Of course, we would not follow the wicked into houses of ill repute, but are there paths of the wicked that we can follow without changing physical locations?

We can follow the paths of the wicked by the things we read. And it goes without saying that the ease of “going places” digitally carries with it darkness and many places for us to stumble. But what about the paths we go in our minds? What are the thought “paths” that we find difficult to avoid or turn from? Surely there were those temptations before the printing press and digital technology? Here are the paths our Creator said will defile us. “For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies: these are the things which defile a man” (Matthew 15:19-20a). Oh, but I will not go down those paths! Surely, the “little” sins are not as bad as this list that Jesus gave. Where do the paths of envy and pride take us? “Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking

one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:26). “For where envying and strife is, there is confusion and every evil work” (James 3:16).

If we are not sure how dark and wicked our thoughts are, we can beseech God as David did, “Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting” (Psalm 139:23-24). Long before Google and Apple tracked all of our “paths,” there was a God Who knew not only where the outcast Hagar was (“Thou God seest me”), but He also knows the dark paths we are on. He promises mercy to those who are willing to get off those dark paths. “Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.” (Isaiah 55:7).

God tracks all of our paths, including our thoughts, whether we carry a digital tracking device or not. Are the tracks I make leading others toward the Shining Light? **“But the path of the just is as the shining light, that shineth more and more unto the perfect day”** (Proverbs 4:18).

-AY 

## *Announcement*

# *Marriage Enrichment Seminar*

**APRIL 12-14, 2024**

**Theme: Side by Side – *Growing Together in Marriage***

### **TOPICS:**

- **Unraveling the Threads** - Ben Waldner
- **Unspoken Obstacles** - David Martin
- **Building Bridges** - David Martin
- **Finding True North** (for the husbands) - Tom Johnson
- **The Power of Partnership** (for the wives) - Christine Martin
- **Life Story** - Josh Woodcock
- **Securely Intimate** - Ben Waldner
- **The Ultimate Love Triangle** - Dave Snyder



*Seminar will be held at Deeper Life Ministries in Plain City, OH. Preregistration is required. To register, or for more information regarding the seminar, please call 614-873-1199 or email info@dlmohio.org. Registration deadline is March 29, 2024.*

## *Announcement*



### **Past Calvary Messenger Issues**

Recently, I inquired about *Calvary Messenger* issues from the 1970s to Dec. 2003. I am happy to say that I have received all of those issues.

A special thanks to Josiah Beachey, John E. Glick, and Esther and Marlin Yoder for making those available.

*-Aaron Yoder, Editor*

## Keeping the Vision for Christian Education (Part 1)

*Marvin Kauffman, Weldon, IA*

### **What is your vision for your child's education?**

Soon after moving into our southern Iowa community I was asked by a local high school teacher to lecture his "Religions" class on Mennonite history and doctrine. Near the beginning of my second visit, a student raised the inevitable question, "So why don't you send your children to the public school?"

My immediate response was, "That's somewhat of a 'hot potato' in this setting!"

And the teacher piped up, "Yeah, especially with the principal sitting here!" I had no idea that the gentleman who walked in with him was the principal.

The ready answer God gave me was certainly not one I had thoughtfully considered before I entered that classroom. Though I was serving on our school board, I did not yet have children in school, I had never taught school, and was never involved in starting a school. All 12 years of my education were in Mennonite

schools, and I took my Christian education somewhat for granted. All I knew was that the public school was not a good place, and I was glad I had no part in it.

My response in essence was that though we are concerned about potential negative influence in the public school, our greater reason is that having our own schools with Christian teachers and Christian curriculum is an opportunity to teach and model Christian principles and a godly lifestyle to our children throughout the entire week, not only on Sunday. As I reflect on that greater reason, I question whether the minimal goal of avoiding negative influences would have been enough motivation to found our schools or to sustain their continuance.

Would men like Daniel Glick and Clarence Fretz have moved forward against much opposition to found the Christian Day School movement if their vision had not risen above the concern about negative influence? Especially in the day when public

education had not deteriorated in both environment and content to its deplorable condition in our day.

We're moving into the third generation of the Christian school movement and the second generation of the Christian homeschool movement. We're long past the Joshua generation, the people who pioneered the Christian school movement and weathered the opposition, not only from the local school boards but from those within the church who didn't see the need. We can only imagine the vision and effort it took to begin our schools after education had been in the hands of the state for many years.

Daniel Glick, in the early 50s, helped to give vision to Clarence Fretz, who wrote: *Christian Schools, a Must for our Children*.

The basic problem with the public school in Dan Glick's mind was that God was left out. Not only did that have serious consequences in both the teaching and the environment of the school, but the simple fact that what is basic to our children's education is simply not there; God Himself. What it means to live as a disciple of Jesus Christ with a commitment to the Word of God and to the Body of Christ, with eternal values and a sense of purpose as a Kingdom builder, is also missing.

What our children need most is just not there, and the Christian school is an opportunity to incorporate a God-consciousness into the academic training that is taking place seven hours a day, five days a week.

Do we have a biblical mandate for giving a godly education to our children. Indeed we do! Here are two passages:

*"Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD: and thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: and thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up"* (Deuteronomy 6:4-7).

*"And ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord"* (Ephesians 6:4).

Our goal, our vision, and our responsibility is to raise up godly children, which is, of course, primarily the responsibility of parents, whether they choose to educate their children at home or delegate a part of that responsibility to the church through the church school. But even raising up godly children is not an end in

itself, but rather the means to an end. The focus of Christ's love and attention as portrayed in the New Testament is the church, the family of God, the Body of Christ. The vision and purpose for raising godly children is for them to be active in the church and to advance the Kingdom of God here on earth which then carries into eternity. We need a vision for godly children who will be builders, encouragers, supporters, and pillars in our congregations for the sake of expanding and advancing the Kingdom of God worldwide.

It is so easy to lose that vision, and to be satisfied with having our children in the church and take them to heaven with us, rather than really having a vision for our children being church builders and Kingdom promoters.

Several things will be true of us if our goal for the education of our children is to build the church and advance the Kingdom of God:

### **1. The school will hold a high priority in the life of the church.**

The school will receive adequate financial support. The teachers will receive adequate reimbursement, as well as the needed moral support, including those situations where you think they could have done better with your children.

We say that the school is an arm of the church, but even that analogy seems a little weak. Perhaps it's more like one of the vital organs. Just as in our physical body, the school gives *to* the Body, while it is receiving sustenance *from* the Body. A school or homeschool that is properly nourished, protected, cared for, and supported by the Body, will in turn strengthen and build the Body. On the flip side, if the church fails to nourish the school by its interest, prayers, and willingness to search for and support competent teachers, it may not only fail to build the Body, but actually become an energy drain to the Body.

### **2. We will conclude that education is more important for the Christian than for anyone else in the world, simply because we have the most important mission in the world.**

Our children's education will be much more to us than just a necessary inconvenience to satisfy the requirements of the state. We will see it as being more than something that will enable them to function and to earn a living in today's world. We will see it as an opportunity to give them tools for Kingdom work. While we do not know exactly which tools our children need, let's fill their toolbox!

One school administrator observed that the least support and appreciation for education comes from families where it seems that the primary goal is for the child to get through school and get involved in the family business. While some have less appreciation for high school and may for various good reasons choose not to take advantage of that opportunity, those parents and children should not place any less value on a quality education or make it their goal to simply get through it as quickly as possible.

While we can certainly honor God through our businesses, it is all too easy to get caught up in building our own financial empire and to lose our vision for why God has put us here in the first place. It is so easy for us, along with our children, to get caught up in the American Dream.

### **3. We will have a high regard for the role of teaching.**

A number of years ago, a long-time teacher was asked by another brother what he does for a living. When he said, "I'm a school teacher,"

the response was, "Well...yeah, I guess we need school teachers too," as if the "normal" occupation for a grown man would be farming or construction. Another related that each summer as he got into manual labor, one brother would shake hands with him on a Sunday morning and say, "It feels like you got your *real* job back again!"

Hopefully, that attitude is much less prevalent than it was at one time. Our teachers need a tremendous amount of respect and appreciation for filling the vital role we are giving them, and they should be well reimbursed for their efforts. We are expecting them to have a positive impact on the academic, spiritual, social, and emotional development of our formative young children which will have eternal consequences. What an incredible responsibility!

### **4. We will think well about what it means for our children to be truly educated.**

(This will be addressed next month in Part 2.)



A person becomes *wise by observing*  
what happens when he isn't.



## The Puzzle

*Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA*

My good wife has a love for puzzles. Her latest one is aggravatingly difficult for me, to which I can give two minutes at the most or an occasional “fly by” that affirms my earlier thoughts. All those small pieces have the same shape. Last evening I suggested that she should use a magnifying glass to enlarge that puzzle where pieces are still needed.

I get more satisfaction from taking a word or an idea and do my own puzzle, that is, getting the larger picture around a certain word or idea and put it in writing. So here goes: the puzzle this issue and the magnifying glass next month.

Life on earth is like a puzzle. There are times when some pieces are missing, as it would seem. Or there are pieces to our life puzzle that cannot be made to fit anywhere. We can mull over it for hours, even for days, and sometimes for years. Many of us could insert an illustration of our own here. The death of a spouse before old age, or the passing of a beautiful child before he reaches his teen years. Or the life-long disability of yourself or a family member.

Our losses are numerous: business related, marital unfaithfulness, abuse as a child, loss of a life vision, and losses of various relationships.

Losses greatly mar our view of life’s puzzle when we become stuck on seeing them only through a magnifying glass. When we look at life, our humanly-contrived focus so often is drawn to those missing pieces. We are broken by it. “O Lord, help me.” Broken? Yes. Why the tears? Why this sorrow again?

My first deep grief as an adult hit me when I was in my 30s. Again, another one in my 40s. Yes, another one in my 50s—the big one. “Oh Lord, that is enough now; I am trying to fully surrender to you.”

There was always, always, always, the healing balm of Gilead. The balm of Gilead had healing qualities, as can be seen in Jeremiah 8:22. *“Is there no balm in Gilead: is there no physician there? Why then is not the health of the daughter of my people recovered?”* It is also spoken of in 46:11 and 51:8. Then in Genesis 37:25 it is in the lists of interstate commerce as honey and balm and myrrh and various spices,

noting that the balm was from Israel to other nations. Webster gives it as a gum resin from certain trees or plants, having a pleasing fragrance, and was used as an aromatic ointment for healing in Asia and Africa. Likely, it was what the Good Samaritan used to alleviate the pain of the hapless man who went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, pouring oil (balm) and wine into his open wounds.

Some of our emotional wounds heal so slowly, even as do some physical wounds and maladies. The internal wounds of the mind and heart seem to never heal. It is as though all of our church-affiliated counseling centers have a backlog of clients that extends out excruciatingly long, even to weeks and months. There are urgent crises because some people have critical needs today, yet more wait extended months for meaningful answers. The local church can send ambulances for the “911” calls, but ambulances are not made for long-term care. The local church has first-aid kits which can help alleviate surface pain until the deeper issues can be addressed on a level where the hurts are known to be.

It is possible, even likely, at times, that the missing pieces to life’s puzzle are put under a magnifying glass, whereby the problems are needlessly enlarged. Of course, in that case, the missing pieces are actually right

there in front of me in full view, but the pieces appear too large to be considered, and are cast aside as misfits to my dilemma.

In Christian counseling, there are at least these two things to consider.

#### Perspective

Our Adamic fallenness, on the one hand, causes us to think more highly of ourselves than we ought to think. Therefore, I deserve better than what has been dished out to me. My parents owe me better, giving me life as I like it. My pastors could cater more to me each Sunday when I make efforts to attend church. Even God could easily arrange a better life for me.

And then there is also the very real problem of thinking too lowly of ourselves. I can entertain, and even cultivate, a lengthy line of mental labor. I tell myself over and over that I am a nobody, I don’t count for anything that people appreciate, I can’t do anything right. In that ditch, I go yet lower by fulfilling my own internal, mental prophecy.

#### Expectations

Mentally, I carry in a private bag slung over my shoulder a long list of expectations. These are my internal hopes for my own attempts at accomplishing my private, personal wishes. My train of thought has a one-track mind, arriving at devastating

dead ends. At other times it is like a 10-year-old's train set; a small oval track where my little train goes endlessly round and round.

My expectations might be legitimate; many good people around me somehow have and enjoy these stations, experiences, friends, invitations, and stuff that I always wanted for myself. At a special meeting where I wished for a front seat, I must take what is left toward the back of the auditorium. When I am included to play games with a group, I can never win. The snacks are strange food I do not actually care for, but I must be nice and compliment the hosts. On the road, the traffic lights are always red for me, whether I drive slow or fast. Last year's corn was high in price, so this year I planted lots of corn, but now the price is low.

Unfulfilled expectations are cast into another bag, which is then slung over the other shoulder. The weight from both sacks bogs me down. Someone sees me overwhelmed, lying in a ditch beside the road. In their "kindness," they dial 911 for the church's ambulance, as they hurry along on their way to that special party where I also had wished to be invited.

In the emergency room, the counselor tries to help, they say, by unpacking those cantankerous bags.

I am helped to see that my aspirations were wrong, known as adversarial expectations. My goods need to be redirected toward being more faithful in regular church attendance and joining one of the church's small groups. (I had the impression that one does not ask to join; you need to be invited.) Good people do more Bible reading and spend more time in prayer, they say. This will change my perspective, they say. Meanwhile, I continue to flounder in the ditch.

These wounds need more than the band-aids of this last paragraph.

**The Bottom Line:** One day, I met Jesus, and He drew me in with His love. He told me how He was often shunted aside by "the big boys," and was spoken against despite His well-doing. He said to me, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall [first] lose it: and whosoever shall [first] lose his life for my sake shall find it*" (Matthew 16:25-26).

"Really, Jesus, is that true?" And all He did was kindly look at me again, and added, "*Verily, verily, [surely, surely] I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him*" (John 13:16).

And all the pieces of the puzzle began to fit in their places after all! 

## A Gracious Gift

*Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS*

We traveled to a new community for a special event lasting five days. Since we knew few people in the area, strangers hosted us. This family of seven arranged to give us very nice quarters while those we displaced made do in the basement. Each evening, no matter the hour, scarcely had we stepped in the door before we were offered food and drink! And what's more, presence—an invitation to visit. They could have set out the snack and been snoozing comfortably long since!

One night the four of us arrived...well, it was after 11 p.m. While we chatted around the table and munched the outstanding party mix, I learned from her husband that our hostess had already set her alarm for 3 a.m. She needed to begin preparations to feed hundreds for lunch. I was aghast—we should let her get to bed! But no, she seemed to have all the time in the world to be with us.

I was humbled and took note to imitate this generosity. What a picture of the hospitality of God in Christ—the freely-offered gift of being present with others, undeterred by cost and inconvenience! It's nearly four years later and still my heart is stirred as I recall this scene, and I taste again the goodness of it. What a gracious and lovely gift they offered: their food, their space, their time, and themselves.



## **m a r r i a g e s**

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

### **Miller-Miller**

Bro. Monroe, son of Joe and Anna Miller, Millersburg, OH, and Sis. Lucy, daughter of Albert and Susanna Miller, Sarasota, FL, on February 3, 2024, at Sunnyside Mennonite Church for Bethesda Fellowship Church by Larry Miller.

### **Peachey-Stutzman**

Bro. Kendon, son of Michael and Regina Peachey, Centerville, PA, and Kelsie, daughter of Galen and Rhonda Stutzman, Plain City, OH, on September 16, 2023, at the bride's home for Bethesda Fellowship Church by Elmer Stoltzfus.

### **Yoder-Peachey**

Bro. Caleb, son of Pete and the late Miriam Yoder, Jamestown, PA, and Sis. Ashley, daughter of Michael and Regina Peachey, Centerville, PA, on February 10, 2024, at Plainview Gospel Fellowship by Roy Hershberger.

### **Yoder-Yoder**

Bro. Alvin, son of Mervin and Viola Yoder, Marysville, MO, and Sis. Julie, daughter of Jonathan and Rose Yoder, Marysville, MO, on January 19, 2024, at Mt. Moriah Fellowship Church by Dale Byler.

## **c r a d l e   r o l l**

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

**Funk**, Nicholas and Lynita (Beiler), Wytheville, VA, second child, first son, Cohen Reid, February 5, 2024.

**Hinds**, Andrew and Esther (Brenneman), Knotts Island, NC, second child and son, Gilbert Daniel, November 19, 2023.

**Mast**, Paul and Jen (Sommers), Wytheville, VA, first child and son, Hayden Jace, January 19, 2024.

**Miller**, Alvin and Joanne (Yoder), Abbyville, KS, second child, first son, Colton Samuel, December 23, 2023.

**Miller**, Loren and Bethany (Yoder), Owenton, KY, second child, first daughter, Kelsey Beth, January 3, 2024.

**Miller**, Nelson and Lydia (Miller), Owenton, KY, third child, first son, Chadwin Marcus, February 9, 2024.

**Miller**, Shane and Kayla (Yoder), Arlington, KS, second child, first daughter, Ellie Retha, January 9, 2024.

**Stoltzfus**, Duane and Kelsey (Garman), Coatesville, PA, first child and son, Jedidiah Reid, February 29, 2024.



**Stoltzfus**, Dwayne and Anchen (Dueck), New Holland, PA, first child and son, Everett Miles, November 13, 2023.

**Stoltzfus**, Justin and Anita (Hostetler), Mechanicsburg, OH, third child, second daughter, Emilia Fern, February 7, 2024.

**Stoltzfus**, Lyndon and Caitlin (Snyder), Wytheville, VA, second child, first daughter, Hollyn Grace, February 17, 2024.

**Stutzman**, Marcus and Amanda (Yoder), Torrington, WY, seventh child, fourth son, Roger Lee, February 3, 2024.

**Weaver**, Joseph and Melody (Miller), Lexington, IN, seventh child (one in heaven), first daughter, Monica Lynelle, February 4, 2024.

**Yoder**, Ray and Frieda (Beiler), New Holland, PA, first child and son, Emerson Wyatt, December 4, 2023.

**Yoder**, Tyler and Joella (Yoder), Owenton, KY, third child and daughter, Jocelyn Brielle, December 26, 2023. 



## ordinations

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

**Bro. Henry Miller**, 50, (wife, Sharon Miller), Auburn, KY, was ordained minister for Franklin Mennonite Church on February 18, 2024. Preordination services were conducted by Ervin Kauffman. The charge was given by Jonathan Overholt, assisted by Lavern Eash and Luke Troyer. Sam Fisher and Justus Peachey shared the lot.

**Bro. Derrick Swartzentruber**, 35, (wife, Ruth Bucher), was ordained deacon for Cold Spring Mennonite Church, Abbeville, SC, on February 18, 2024. Preordination meetings were brought by Rodney Weaver, Wendell Heatwole, and Morris Yoder. The charge was given by Javan Bender. Benji Jackson and Keith Yoder shared the lot.

**Bro. Josh Yoder**, 34, (wife, Tammy Yoder), Blackville, SC, was ordained minister for Calvary Fellowship Mennonite Church on January 28, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Raymond Fisher. The charge was given by Ken Kanagy, assisted by Raymond Fisher and Wesley Yoder. Alphy Yoder and Gerald Troyer shared the lot. 

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It's smart to pick your  
**friends**—but not to **pieces**.

## obituaries

**Hershberger**, Barbara, 84, passed away peacefully and unexpectedly at her home in Greenville, VA, on January 17, 2024. She was born January 28, 1939, to Tobias J. and Saloma (Nisly) Yoder in Nowata, OK.

On February 26, 1965, Barbara married Paul D. Hershberger, who survives, and with whom she enjoyed nearly 59 years.

She was a member of Pilgrim Christian Fellowship, Stuarts Draft, VA, having been baptized at age 15 in the Amish Church of Stuarts Draft.

Their home was blessed with eight children: Lucinda (Dale) Hochstedler, Mocksville, NC; Rosetta (Steve) Zimmerman, Woodleaf, NC; Anita (Alex) Portorreal, Dominican Republic; Brenda Hershberger, Bird-in -Hand, PA; Michael (Rosalie), Amherst; Wendel (Sarah), Greenville; Conrad (Esther), Harrisonburg; and Julia Hershberger, Stuarts Draft. Their 28 grandchildren and three great-grandchildren were her great delight.

She is also survived by three sisters and one brother: Nora (the late Enos) Schrock, Rochelle; Sylvia (William) Miller, McKenney; John Henry (MaDonna), Baltimore, MD; Irene (Maynard) Nisly, Berne, IN; and a sister-in-law, Mary Yoder, Baton Rouge, LA.

She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, Leo Yoder.

Barbara graduated as an LPN in 1965,

two weeks before her marriage to Paul. Within months they moved to Free Union, VA, to assist with the start-up of Faith Mission Home where Barbara served as nurse and matron. Paul and Barbara enjoyed serving together and shared a heart for the underprivileged. Over the years they gave time to friends and neighbors, Christian Light Publications, Calvary Bible School, local prison ministry, as well as a second term at Faith Mission Home. Barbara especially enjoyed her work with the Fresh Air Fund and assisting with the local church's Widow's Dinner. She also enjoyed quilting, gardening, sewing, socializing, and outings and picnics. Her family was very important to her, and nothing brought sunshine to her life like visits from her children and grandchildren.

Around six years ago, her vision began to deteriorate more rapidly due to macular degeneration. She faced this difficulty with persistence in pursuing activities that she could do within her abilities. Attending a week-long retreat for the vision impaired gave her new courage and inspiration to live with her limitations.

Barbara will be remembered for her cheerful smile and enthusiasm for life and people. She will be sorely missed, but we rejoice that she now has perfect vision and health.

The funeral service was held January 21, 2024, at Pilgrim Christian Fellowship with Jonathan Miller, Maynard Nisly,

and Ken Miller serving. Burial followed in the church cemetery, with Darrell Hershberger serving.

**Stoltzfus**, Joanna Dawn, 59, of Morgantown, PA, passed away on February 13, 2024, after a gradual decline in health for several months. She was born February 26, 1964, in Lancaster, PA. She was taken into the home of Elam and Mattie Stoltzfus as a young child and was adopted by them.

Elam and Mattie and their two daughters, Rebecca and Linda, showered much love on her as she was growing up. She enjoyed playing and being the “tomboy” with her foster brothers.

She was preceded in death by her parents, sister, Linda, and sister-in-law, Judy.

She is survived by her sister, Rebecca Cantwell, FL; and brother, Rick Shaffer and his family, OH.

The family moved to Sarasota, FL, when she was 15. There she was a part of Minecraft where many people learned to know her as she joined in the competition in shuffleboard and other games. As a person with Down syndrome, she was happy with friends and hugs. In 2016, she and her widowed mother moved to OH to be cared for by Rick and his family. A while later they moved to Sunny Crest Home in PA. Joanna was well taken care of and loved up until her death, remaining there after her mother’s death.

The funeral service was held at Gap View Church on February 17, 2024. Interment was in the church cemetery.



## observations

**O**ne of the effects of advancing age is the erosion of mental agility and physical dexterity. This erosion doesn’t come at the same age for everybody. This reality gives rise to the debate regarding the merits of having drivers perform a driving exam when renewing a driver’s license after a certain age.

I drove school bus for our local school district for a couple of years. One of the things that the drivers were required to be able to

accomplish was to enter the bus unassisted through the rear door. The bus-driving schedule doesn’t lend itself well to other full-time jobs, so the school bus driver team includes a significant percentage of retirees. This little physical test was not a trivial matter for some.

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I recently read that the Pharaohs of ancient Egypt were required to complete a foot race after they had served as Pharaoh for 30 years. If he was unable to do this, it signaled

that it was time to find a successor to the throne. The source I saw gave no indication how long the race was, or whether there were other participants. It was reported that the test was related to being able to complete the race or not.

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So, the question of age-related fitness for the highest office of the land didn't begin with this presidential election or the last one. In fact some of us are old enough to remember the quote by Ronald Reagan in response to the presidential debate moderator who asked whether age should play a role in the upcoming election. Reagan was seen as being too old by some folks. Reagan replied, "I will not exploit for political purposes the youth and inexperience of my opponent." Reagan was 73 years old when he began his second and last term as US President. Walter Mondale would have been 57 years old when he entered the Oval Office had he been elected instead of Reagan.

If Joe Biden would be elected to a second term as President this year, he would be 82 years old when his second term begins. If Donald Trump would be elected this year, he would be 78 when his term begins. Reagan was the oldest US president to hold office when his second term

ended. Biden has surpassed that and Trump would too if he would serve a second term.

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The questions related to age and driving are almost all related to the person's fitness, whether mental or physical. But there is another element that comes into play for some positions of influence and responsibility, like the US president. That element is that the organization being served does better when the one in charge doesn't stay there too long. So, the office of president of the USA is subject to term limits. But those in the Congress and the Senate are not.

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The church of Jesus Christ is an entirely different entity from a geopolitical institution. However, the questions of age-related suitability for leadership and the benefits of limited tenure of those in leadership are discussed in these settings as well. One of the issues that complicates this discussion is that the American culture tends to glorify youth and undervalue the benefits of age and experience. Inasmuch as this cultural tendency colors the discussion in our churches, it is regrettable. Both those who feel it is best for there to be some standardized transition expectation for those in church leadership and

those who regard such a system as inappropriate, might defend those perspectives with carnal motives or with noble and proper priorities.

Scripture is not specific on age as a qualification for leaders in the New Testament church. However, the Scripture provides caution about placing one in leadership who is a novice. Generally speaking, age is regarded as an asset rather than a liability. In the tradition of conservative Anabaptist churches, we give a lot of weight to the discernment of the body to evaluate the qualifications of our brothers when a leader is chosen. Generally speaking, more opportunity is given for the input of the congregation regarding the presence of those qualifications at the time of ordination than at any other time.

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There was a time when all these discussions about the limits that age brings seemed to be pretty theoretical and distant. It is not illogical to assume a connection between my accumulation of birthdays and my growing awareness of and interest in these themes.

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One time we had visitors in our home for the evening and supper. We knew this dating couple only casually. We had some interaction with his

family about 10 years prior and had only recently met the lady. He related how his parents were in Africa at that time studying Arabic in preparation for mission work. After supper she washed dishes while my wife tidied up the kitchen and put things away from supper. I would not characterize our conversation as superficial. While seated next to his girlfriend in our living room, he described some of his personal difficulty in reconciling his upbringing with his same-gender-attraction as he entered adolescence. He expressed himself as firmly settled on the fact that he is not a slave to his attraction. He understands that love is a choice and he is committed to live in holiness and make godly choices in this regard. He also described some of the disappointments in himself that he recently experienced as he responded with inappropriate anger to situations at work that he found frustrating.

That evening she was more quiet than he was. But she enjoyed talking about the work she finds fulfilling in her local church. She is quite involved in the church school and teaches some Bible classes. Her involvement in church programs and teaching take up various evenings as well as the weekly meetings of the congregation. She is employed by the church, so her life does revolve around the church

schedule and calendar.

They talked about their standard of personal purity as it relates to their courtship. We discussed some of the books they are reading and what we're reading. He ended up taking one of my books home stating his intention to bring it back on a subsequent visit.

As we prepared to bid adieu, he asked, "How can I pray for you?" We went around the circle each giving a personal prayer request. His girlfriend, in referencing the interaction between Jesus and Mary and Martha, requested prayer that she would grow in her ability to practice the presence of Mary and the diligence of Martha. Then he led us all in prayer, bringing each of our requests to the Father.

We enjoyed our interaction that evening quite a bit. Part of what made that evening good was that these folks didn't seem to be concerned with presenting a shiny, flawless veneer of pretense. We felt drawn to the Lord through our interaction that evening. She was a Catholic, and he was part of a mainline Protestant denomination and was considering becoming Catholic.

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We live in an acrimonious society. This us-and-them mentality is really pretty pervasive. It is quite

evident in political discussions, ethnic groupings, and even faith communities. I wish our conservative Anabaptist congregations and communities would be exempt from the negative aspects of this emphasis. Sometimes it even feels like the more we have in common, the less it takes to create another line of demarcation that seems too big to cross to another subgroup. This mentality flourishes where our lives can be described as layers, comprised of self-protection based on personal insecurity, because it's rooted in changeable things rather than an unchanging foundation that supersedes our various contexts.

Nothing that was done or said that evening in our home served to erode my commitment to Christ and sense of belonging and commitment to the local fellowship of believers in our home congregation. Neither should it inspire us to point out all the things that these dear folks might not understand well or do right. We should be able to acknowledge that other sincere people are also seeking God. They may have things to teach us that we've not done so well with. In this case I'm thinking of personal transparency and vulnerability. Our lives were enriched by our interaction that evening, and we were drawn closer to God as a result.

-RJM 

# A Future Spring

*Rose Ella Wagler, 1951-2001*

**I**t had sprouted from a mere seed carried to the hillside by the wind of destiny. It stood alone there, a bit of a sapling apart from the densely populated pine forest. Summer suns and winter storms were not wasted as they left behind unseen blessings penetrating to the fragile roots of the young maple plant.

Months and years went by while the stalwart young tree stood on its place as intended, praising God for the protecting blankets of whiteness after the autumn breeze had won the amusing tugs of war, sending the final clinging leaf skipping into oblivion. “So be it,” it chuckled year after year. Spring would come soon. Then it was here again with all its tingling freshness. The sap raced in brittle veins and soon new bits of green began appearing along rejoicing boughs. “God is so good,” it marveled all summer long as it waved the fruits of the Creator before all who would stop to observe.

What is this blowing upon the early autumn breeze? The murmuring of the pines is heard in the distant wood. Faintly upon the wind comes the sound of wistful musings at the “splendor of a privileged one”

bedecked with the brilliant seasonal hues. “Who could this marvel be?” questioned the juvenile on the hillside to itself. It stretched to view the landscape. “I see none ... why it must be *me*,” it thought in surprised wonder.

It stood straight and tall, a protection from the sweltering late summer sun. It truly was a bulwark for those feeble creatures seeking security in its golden branches with each approach of threatening storms. Seeking stimulation, creatures of the forest continued gazing in moments of reflection upon this stately piece of creation. Modestly it unfurled its limbs one by one in the warm sunny breeze, trying to quench the small glows of smug satisfaction arising within. “I must give the glory to God,” came fleeting harsh reminders.

It was indeed an asset to the landscape, a virtue of refreshing and radiant tones against a transparent blue sky. Here was an inspiration to many a soul thirsty for simple, uncomplicated beauty.

“Of a truth,” reasoned the young sprout, “the trying experiences of my youthful childhood have been leading to this occasion. Thank You,

God, for dealing with me in all the past—for enabling me to be now, of an inspiration to others. Lord,” it whispered with reluctant humility, “help me to live out Your special purpose for my life.”

As the days went by, the tree on the elevated plane gradually began resisting the keen knowledge that it owed everything—its very existence—to the One in Whom *is life*. The shroud of humility became cumbersome—the struggle for self-discipline a fierce war.

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The leaf fell tumbling, the last stitch of flaming color to the robe of vainglory, at his feet. The bygone weeks had begun in a pretence of cool indifference to the autumn breeze snagging bits of scarlet leaves as it passed by. But as greater bunches of leaves listlessly floated to the ground, the tree clung to each fluttering leaf. Upon each inevitable relinquishment, intense determination was placed upon the next faltering attachment.

Now it stood alone—a solitary figure against a cold, gray sky. From the bottom of its roots to the tip of outstretched limbs came a faint heart-broken cry, “LORD, I stand

naked before You, starkly bared of all arrogance and conceit. Only a poor beggarly element am I, sick and weary to the very core. But,” continued a yet more feeble sigh, “I’m Yours now—if You’ll have me—Yours to mutilate, to pound, to shape into the tree You would have here in this countryside.”

Quietly, as a growing conviction within, came the Voice of the Universe saying, “Dear little one, the scope of My vision includes other hillsides you cannot perceive. Again I have brought you to be the piece of My Creation intended from the dawn of time. As long as you stand upon earth’s horizon will I have you put on new life and relinquish the old, however I deem best. ‘*What is that to thee*’...be still and learn to know that I am GOD!”

As for a tree, so are there seasons for man—“*a time to live...a time to die.*” Although you may not understand it, your season of surrender is not concluded by winter, but climaxed by a future spring!

[First published in the January 1992 issue of Calvary Messenger. Submitted by Aaron Lapp.]



*Happiness* is something that comes into our lives through a *door* we don’t remember leaving *open*.

# Our Triune Gods

Simon Schrock, Catlett, VA

*[In the August 2023 issue we began a series of letters that Simon has written in response to challenges he received from a friend to give up his faith and belief in God. They are addressed to “Athie,” Simon’s pen name for atheists. AY]*

Dear Athie,

After nearly four years of reading, rereading, and more studying of what I call your epistles, it has strengthened my faith and trust in the triune God, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. I have also concluded that you have also placed your faith and trust in a triune god, the god of self, evolution, and science (SES). I know you will likely reject this conclusion with tooth and nail as some would describe it. I have reached this conclusion from your own strong declarations refuting the existence of the God Whom I trust and your severe criticism of the Bible. Listening to the atheist podcasts and “In Science We Trust” program you recommended strongly influenced my conclusion of your trust in your SES god.

Your frequent self-exalting comments are really what moved

me in discerning that you are putting your trust in the god of self. You boasted about your pride of “knowing facts,” a “rational mind,” “better knowledge” and “greater truth” you presently hold. You boast of being a “free thinker” and the “ability to question everything.” You stated, “That’s why I’m a proud member of “Freedom From Religion.” Athie, these statements lead me to conclude that you are trusting your self-knowledge, which to me and the dictionary translates into, not freedom from religion, but religion that trusts in the god of self. I have concluded that you have placed your faith in your great knowledge.

As to your claim of being a “free thinker,” that seems to me to be a glaring contradiction of your own epistles. I glean from your writings that you are a disciple of the gospel (a set of principles or beliefs), according to Dan Barker, Bart Ehrman, Burton L. Mack, and others. Your thinking is influenced by the lyrics of Shelly Segel, “House with no Walls.” In my opinion, that’s not free thinking. My uncle Perry was a free thinker with his self-educated claim that man never set foot on the moon.

My focus is in a different direction of being a free thinker. I don't trust my own "smartness" to be a solid foundation to build and place my trust and faith. My focus is on a teaching in Philippians 2:5, "*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*" I'm focusing on not being a person of "*strife or vain glory*," but in "*lowliness of mind*" esteeming the value of others. I'm focusing on being what verse four teaches for those who place their faith in Jesus Christ. "*Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others*" (Philippians 2:4).

You wrote, "today we are better than the Bible in our ethical standards and quality of life." You have challenged me with this; "BUT if you would only allow your mind to be open to the possibility that the bible is not a holy book,...that does not reflect our evolved morals of today, then you might begin to see things differently." Because your many references to evolved morals and evolution indicate to me that you are putting your faith and trust in the god of evolution. From your "Bible Contradictions and Other Moral Issues" and later epistles, I have concluded that your main premise of "evolved morals" is from your obsession with slavery, circumcision, and sexual copulation. You strain out

a gnat but swallow a camel.

Again, my focus is in an opposite direction. The chattel slavery issue is cleared up for me in the teachings of Jesus. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus repeatedly taught, "*Ye have heard that it was said...But I say unto you.*" Practicing what Jesus taught and is recorded in Matthew 7:12 includes the believers' attitude about slavery. I never endorsed or promoted slavery. Concerning circumcision, I think I understand, in part, the reason for this command and practice in the Old Testament. From your writings it appears to have been a much-debated issue in your journey of religion. You point to this issue for one reason to believe the Bible is not our word from God. You blame present day circumcision on people of faith. As I recall it was the doctors (the god of science) who recommenced it in my day. It was not a debated issue as you describe it in my nearly 69 years of membership in the church.

As for "evolved morals," that claim is completely crushed just by reading one day's reported news. "Evolved morals," I just don't get it. I clearly see "evolved immorals." It is shocking and hard to believe, the atrocious, cruel brutality committed against fellow citizens. One morning I quickly glanced at the news. "Young mother shot to death in front of

her kids—grocery store parking lot dispute.” Can you imagine such brutality just over a dispute about parking? Another article, “Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles fatally shot in his home.” Tears flooded my eyes. I thought of Nehemiah when he prayed before the God of heaven, “*We have sinned.*” Other atrocious news, “Killer allegedly stood over fallen officer, fired several more shots.” “Six-year-old reportedly caught with handgun in school.” “Three days, 10 mass shootings.” Man enters back door of school, “sexually assaulted 14-year-old girl,” “Man beating a woman for 11 hours.” “State representative saying, ‘DEI’ is deity—diversity, equity, and inclusion is god.” “Teenagers ransack Queens seafood restaurant, estimated \$20,000 in damage.”

The theory that I evolved from a glob in a swamp, to an ape, to a human being, then to “evolved morals” is crushed by looking at the rate my fellow citizens kill their babies through abortion. According to Guttmacher Institute data, in 2020 there were over 930,000 children killed in the name of a woman’s rights. How can that be evolved morals? Monkeys don’t even act like that. I simply can’t place my faith in that kind of atrocious morals. And now the foolish question, “What is

a woman?”

In consideration of your “in science we trust” claim, science has accomplished a lot of good things we enjoy today. At age 12, I was diagnosed with appendicitis. Because of the medical science of surgery my life was extended. I understand that in grandma’s time that would have been fatal. Then in my cancer journey, I told my doctor I’m grateful to the Great Physician, pointing upward, and His helper, pointing right at the doctor. On the other hand, my faith “in science we trust” is limited when I think of the Spanish flu of 1914-1918 that I heard the older folks talk about in my childhood. From what information I could gather there were 50 million people who died worldwide. Then in my adult life came AIDS. I well remember that scary time. In 2021 around 650,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses worldwide, compared to 2 million people in 2004. Now it is COVID-19 with more new diseases on the horizon. I do not believe and trust science to ever wipe out all such diseases.

Science brought us the atomic bomb. Years ago we were blessed with a brother from Japan to speak at church about the terrible results of the bomb. White parts of his skin came from the atomic bombing of

Hiroshima. According to Newsweek, it is estimated that around 140,000 of Hiroshima's population were killed in the bombing, and it is estimated that around 74,000 people died in Nagasaki. Many more died later from the bombing. Presently, thousands are dying from missiles fired across Ukraine and Russia. As I see it, the good things of science are blocked out by these atrocious acts of war.

As I reviewed your charges against the Bible and the God I trust, and even thought about it while trying to go to sleep at night, something unexpected happened! It was like a light turned on, focusing on your criticisms. It may have come from my Bible reading that morning, or from reading in the devotional, "Soli Deo Gloria," which you declined to read with me last year. Whatever,

I'm convinced that God's Spirit directed me to His light on your criticism of the Bible. My faith in God and the Bible was strengthened. My faith is placed in the Creator God Who revealed Himself to us in His Son, Jesus Christ. And in further revelation, He sent His Spirit, the Holy Spirit, to lead us further into truth and become our present abiding Comforter. That's where I find myself right now.

But you have the freedom to proudly trust your "still small voice of common sense," the theory of evolution, and "in science we trust." The good news is that my God and I still love you anyway, I'm still your friend, and the moon and stars will shine their lights on both of us.

Your friend from Virginia,  
Simon



## Sitting in the Father's Lap

*Elmer and Sara Gingerich, Mountain View, AR*

*(This writing was first sent as an email, mostly to their children, but was submitted as a possible encouragement to others. Enjoy! AY)*

**I** am thinking of the "Lord's Prayer" as I write these words. "**O**ur **F**ather which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom

come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven..." (Matthew 6:9-10).

This pictures us coming to someone with whom we have a relationship, "**O**ur **F**ather." Romans 8:15b says, "but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." Abba, Father, we are told, is an endearing

term, similar to how a child might say, “Daddy, Daddy!”

Sara and I are older, as you well know, and what used to be our normal way to be useful is limited. Many of the physical things we used to love to do, don’t easily happen anymore. So we ask ourselves, what is our purpose here at this time in life? One thing that keeps coming to us is that we can pray. It doesn’t require any hard work, anything that causes you to run out of breath, or anything that causes serious exertion. Is it exciting enough to attract our interests? Do we want to be used in that way? Is it alright if nobody notices and commends us for it? Or is praying a duty we should be learning to do for sure? Should old people especially be the people who pray?

I could try to answer some of those questions, but I think they have some merit without me spending time on their answers. What caught my attention this morning is, “When will I arrive at this attitude of a glad child in the father’s lap—to come to know Him as a confident son at ease

in His presence?” I know I have more confidence in Him than I did when I was a teenager, but I’m afraid I have still been far from seeing Him as my daddy, the One in Whose family I am and Who is caring for me and wants to help me with everything that is good for me.

In fact, I am now wondering if this relationship is not what He has been wanting me to know and has been working to have me understand? When this is happening, will it not help me *worry* less about my future issues and *pray* differently for those I pray for? Is it legitimate for us to begin to see ourselves as sitting in His lap at those times or maybe even all the time? Would it make a difference for us to see ourselves there? Is faith something I do now that takes me into His lap, or is faith just a “realizer” that helps me enter into what I could have all the time, if I just realized it? (I’m not saying there are no conditions for legitimate realization.)

“Lord, guide our “realizer.”



## WHY WONDER

If radio's slim fingers can pluck a melody from the night and toss it over a continent or sea;  
If the petaled white notes of a violin are blown across a mountain or a city's din;  
If songs, like crimson roses are culled from the thin blue air;  
Why should mortals wonder that God hears and answers prayer?

-Ethel Romig Fuller

April 2024



## A Call to Rescue

*Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA*

**R**escue implies “prompt action in freeing someone or something from immediate danger.” Following are two stories of rescuing action. The first story is an analogy of how a church body can work together in sowing the precious seed of the gospel of Jesus Christ to rescue people from the tragedy of hell fire. The second account is from a dear brother who had a passion for the lost and made a telephone call.

### **A Visit to New York City**

Hosea Troyer, Free Union, VA,  
Director of Faith Mission Home

I had the opportunity to visit the 9/11 Museum located at the site of the former twin towers. The museum, which focuses on the awful events of that day, is a stark reminder of the depravity of man. Yet, there are a few good things that happened on September 11, 2001, that can inspire us. As the towers collapsed, leaving much of Manhattan in a cloud of smoke and dust, thousands of people fled for their lives.

Transportation options off the

island were blocked with the exception of boats. For the first time in over a century, the only way to get off the island was by boat, and people were desperate to flee. In a very short time thousands of people crowded along the shoreline. People got onto any available boats, but it quickly became apparent that the few available ferries would be vastly insufficient to take the multitudes across the river. The Coast Guard transmitted a radio call to people with any available boats to assist with evacuating people off the island. Within minutes, boats of all shapes and sizes converged on the island. Ferries, pontoons, ski boats, john boats, tugboats, and jet skis, came scurrying from all directions as the helpless people waited. The boats quickly loaded up with passengers and ferried them away from Manhattan Island and danger. People did not care where they were going, they just wanted to get off the island! This was the greatest boat-lift in history, evacuating nearly 500,000

people in nine hours.

Able humans helping humans in need with God's help are a large part of what makes the world go around. I see this in action on a daily basis as I see our staff working with the residents at Faith Mission Home. Those who are able generally aren't forced to help those in need, but when assistance is offered from a willing and generous heart, everyone benefits.

*[This is part of an article that first appeared in the MIC Newsletter. Used by permission FS]*

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### **Personal Work in the Congregation**

Steve Yoder, 1924-2018

Jim and Maria\* had been married 10 years. They were poorly educated. Life in their home was coarse and rough. They both needed salvation. They were members of the Maple Lawn Amish Mennonite Church, Nappanee, IN. Our first revival meetings (in the 1950s) were in session. Brother Roman J. Mullet from Sugarcreek, OH, (now deceased) was the evangelist. Night after night people were responding to the altar call.

Jim and Maria were not attending. One afternoon, as a matter of responsibility, I talked with them on the telephone and invited them to the

meetings. She said, "I can see if I can get my husband 'a-goin.'" They were present that evening. During the altar call Jim was convicted. He said within himself, "They want me to go forward, but I am not going to do that." He fought it off and went home.

The following day was long and miserable at the trailer factory. He cried on his way home. That was weird. He was a strong man but was weeping. "What is going on with me?" he muttered to himself. He opened the window and pitched his pack of cigarettes. Then Jim stopped at our house and several other homes and made numerous confessions. Once he got home he shared the good news with Maria.

This man sincerely repented and made a great change! Maria said that previously she needed to get all eight children up on Sunday mornings and fix breakfast, get them dressed, and ready for church. They would sit in the car and wait for Jim.

But Jim made a drastic change. He is active in church. Previously, he had put nails, bolts, and nuts in his lunch box and carried them home. His vocabulary changed. He did not use foul language anymore. He became kind and loving. Over the years I have helped others find the Lord, but none made as great a change as did Jim.

\*not their real names

*[Brother Steve gave me this article some years ago. "For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). And the ministry of the Holy Spirit is still alive today. Just maybe,*

*there is some person in the church or in the world who needs a taste of heavenly manna sweetly seasoned from the throne of God. FS]*



## A Woman After God's Heart

### Age Bridge

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



**A**fter supper, four of us intentionally lingered after the others had pushed away from the table. Our group was comprised of a 40-ish single woman, another 40-year-old mother of seven, a single 30-year-old, and I, a grandmother in my 60s. The meal conversation had been rich and stimulating and none of us was willing to let go of each other just yet. It felt like maybe we were on the edge of momentous discovery. If we grasped truth together, and held onto it for a bit, might it become reality?

"What if," one asked, "the older ladies among us would be intentional about loving and nurturing those who come behind? We wonder about so many things. And what if, when I was caring for my invalid parents, someone had told me it would be

so hard?" Her voice wavered as she continued, "What if others had come alongside me with encouragement?"

The exhausted mother picked up, "And what if we'd be paired with the gray hair who've done motherhood ahead of us? A grandma who would be able to tell us about pitfalls and reminders like 'do this and not that'?"

The third one continued, "What if churches would mix together little enclaves of old and young to be able to talk together about what good responses to life could look like?"

I deliberated, measured-like, not wishing my words to appear overly passionate or accusatory. "What if," I said, "the young ladies would ask us for a word? What if, the younger would seek out mentors. Mentors who will not go around offering on their own accord? What

if, our clothing styles and décor choices were not quickly dubbed *so-grandma*, but evaluated as stand-alone preferences? What if we might converse in nonthreatening ways about issues going both ways?"

We dialogued about what building the bridge could look like. It would need to be a two-lane bridge because not all traffic goes a single direction. If the grandmas appeared too eager, younger ladies might get scared and go away. Or if grandmas just say, "We had to figure it out, you can too" without being willing to go where it's messy and do the hard work; U-turn again. Would the younger ladies dare to be honest about the pitfalls they've inherited with the *way we've always done it?*

Our conversation turned into a general admiration of relationship. Day-by-day mentoring and stimulating conversation, we determined, happens best in spontaneous friendship. However, the 60-30 bridges can also be deliberate coffee breaks on the calendar. Sometimes it might be may-I-come-and-help-you-can-soup-while-we-talk? Or how can I best pray for you? Or come and I'll show you how I do it even when my house isn't *Good Housekeeping* perfect.

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Our after-supper conversation continues to knock around the edges of my mind. I ponder the longings and possibilities we'd shared. Within the framework of my own life experience, I feel like we've both failed and succeeded by turns. Recently, the following examples of bridge-building surprised me in pleasant ways.

A family member visited a large congregation on a Sunday morning. For the noon meal all the 60+ year-old attendees were invited to a fellowship dinner with all the youth age attendees. After the meal the seniors and the juniors spent time singing together.

I observed a young mother studying a book which explored the issue of child training. I commented on the book with interest. She quickly informed me that in their congregation on every Tuesday evening, all the parents, old and young, gather to study this book together. They love the lively and enriching discussions brought by the variation of ages and experience represented.

Mother-daughter relationships provide optimum exchanges of wisdom going both ways. Nothing can replace the strength of this bridge. However, I quickly insert a refrain I've built my life around:

“I need all the help I can get.” I am indebted to other ladies who regularly invest in my daughters’ lives in powerful ways. Sometimes their voices cover areas I missed, or they underscore subjects I did cover, and my daughters say, “You sound just like our mom.” As mothers, our calling is enhanced, not diminished, when our daughters hear from other voices who speak reassurance, truth, and love into their lives.

We all benefit from bridges, two-lane ones. So, if they’re constructed by friendship and relationship, how do I determine to begin the hard work? And once the relationship is formed, can I be intentional in engaging humbly and vulnerably

so as to maintain that valuable connection between these two life-giving parts of God’s Kingdom? I believe this aspiration is shared by all of God’s women. I trust we will purpose to build, maintain, and travel this bridge—joyfully—over and over. And for years to come.

*To stimulate more positive conversation around this subject, feel free to drop a few lines of suggestions or true-life practices that have affected age-less connection in your experience. My contact information is inside the front cover. If I receive an impressive amount of feedback, I may construct an article sharing those with everyone. Thank you!*



## junior messages

### Craziness in Haiti

*Darryl Miller with Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH*

Darryl and Mary and their two young children were the only Americans at the CAM compound during the 120 days of uncertainty when the International Airport was shut down due to COVID-19. Haitian workers were in and out of the compound, and there were many Haitians living nearby.

The sun was shining brightly. It was another hot, dry day on July 17, 2020. Before they left that morning, Darryl and Mary bowed their heads, asking God to protect and guide them. They were happy as the Toyota Land Cruiser sailed out of the compound with their children between them on the front seat, on their way to the airport to pick up returning

missionaries. They looked forward to the camaraderie of working together. This day was the first time they left without national friends with them.

The joy of the sunny day was darkened as they entered the town of Anse-Rouge. They noticed several places where rocks were placed at the sides of the road. This was never a good sign in Haiti. When they turned onto the main road, the road was blocked with large rocks, and people were rolling more rocks to stop the traffic. Strangely, there was a small phone booth on top of the rocks.

Darryl decided to take a detour which would bring them to the other side of the blockade, only to see that the road going around the blockade was blocked with a tanker truck and burning tires. As they turned around, a growing mob of angry people began throwing stones and waving branches in the air.

Bang! A man hit the side of their vehicle with a stick. Darryl kept going and desperately hoped they could find a way out as they headed up the unfamiliar street. He noticed in the rearview mirror that people were rolling a line of boulders on the street behind them that meant one thing—a dead end. Were they to be trapped in a mob gone crazy?

They tried turning around where the street narrowed to a walking trail.

A motorcycle parked behind them. Darryl continued slowly in reverse and managed to turn around. He knew he had to get out the same way they came in.

By that time the mob was closing in. Mary was fervently praying as Darryl drove back down the street. What about all those rocks they had to cross? A crazy-looking man with a bandana mask, sunglasses, and a big stick was standing in front of the boulders. Darryl promptly revved the three-cylinder diesel, engaged four-wheel drive, and accelerated toward the rocks. The man leaped out of the way just in time, and the family held their breaths, expecting to bottom out. The vehicle made it over those rocks without touching any of them! Miraculously, their Cruiser was carried over the blockade. They sped back home, thanking God that no one was in pursuit.

Darryl and Mary were new in Haiti and not fluent enough in Haitian Creole to communicate to the mob what they wanted to do. Darryl was grateful that this had not been a gangster checkpoint. Those always seemed more dangerous.

Later, David Martin was in that town buying supplies. A man recognized the beige Land Cruiser and informed him that he'd better report to the police station. When

asked why, the man stated they reported that vehicle to the police because the driver had a gun and fired a shot! What a wild rumor!

Eight months later, on March 15, 2021, Darryl and Mary and John Neufeld and his wife traveled together in the same Cruiser to the annual Missionary Bible Study held in Titanyen.

On their way back to La Source, they came upon a manifestation in Pont-Sonde. Before they knew it, they found themselves stranded with a box truck with flattened tires across the road in front of them and another box truck across the road behind them. Its tires were being deflated. People around them were growing agitated.

An angry-looking man threatened to throw stones at their windshield, then he bent over and was obviously wanting to deflate their front tire.

“Stop in the name of Jesus,” the missionary women prayed. Instantly, a man came streaking out of the crowd and dragged the evildoer away from the tire, then replaced the valve cap. A man wearing a black robe and black hat motioned them to start moving. He cleared a path, then allowed them to drive past the box truck. The squeeze was tight, with only inches to spare, between the truck and the drop-off at the side of the road.

There was singing and rejoicing in the Cruiser! God’s awesome power had protected them.

“We serve a powerful God,” Darryl testifies. “I frequently fly to Haiti for catch-up work at the CAM base. When people question whether I’m afraid to travel, my answer is, ‘I have seen what God can do in Haiti. What have I to fear?’”



## youth messages

### Standards – Safety or...

*Josh Kooistra, New Concord, OH*

In the church today there is something that can often start conversations ranging from minimally controversial to all-out conflict. In some churches this

thing is clear, well-stated, up-to-date, and easily understood. In other churches this thing is vague, outdated, confusing, and sometimes even unwritten. Some churches talk

about it fairly regularly while others almost never discuss it. For youth this thing often raises questions of “Why?” which aren’t all bad. Let’s talk about standards.

The *Standards of Faith and Practice* for a church are an important part of a church’s identity. When properly written, they have clear statements of faith, doctrinal beliefs, and the agreed-upon application of those beliefs and doctrines. Standards can cover many different areas of our lives. They influence our appearance, where we go, and how we conduct ourselves.

In thinking about why standards are important, let’s look at the children of Israel. If you read the book of Leviticus, you will find numerous rules and regulations regarding the everyday lives of the Israelites. It’s a wonder that they were even able to function! It seems like there were rules for everything! No matter how minute a detail that was covered, there was a reason for it. The children of Israel were in the midst of wandering around in the wilderness for 40 years while God allowed a rebellious generation to die. A portion of their laws (especially those regarding relationships, health, food, etc.) were for the safety and preservation of the lives and health of the Israelites as well as their ability to maintain

peace and stability socially and relationally among themselves. Take for example the laws of cleanliness, not eating certain kinds of animals, and avoiding intimate relationships among close family. These laws were specifically designed to keep them healthy and holy.

“That’s great for the Old Testament,” you might be thinking. “But what does that have to do with us today? We are no longer under the law, but under grace!” Standards aren’t here to replace the law, but they are important and have a useful function in our lives. Similarly, every day we walk out to our vehicles, get in, put on our seatbelt, and drive to a destination of choice. Along our way, we stop at stop signs and stop lights, yield when we see a yield sign, and for the most part drive as close to the speed limit as possible. If we cross a bridge or are near a drop off, we often have a guard rail or concrete barrier of some kind to deter us from driving off the road. We use turn signals to indicate to others where we intend to turn or merge. Contemplate, if you will, what it would be like to drive on the road if we had no traffic laws. How many accidents and fatalities do you think would occur if we all drove exactly as we pleased?

Like the Old Testament laws and traffic laws of today, standards are not

a punishment or to make our lives miserable. Standards aren't meant to be oppressive in any way. One of the greatest functions of our standards is to aid in the safety and preservation of our faith, purity, and ability to live a holy life.

Yes, some churches focus more on obedience to the standards than they do the spiritual wellbeing of their members. This is where much of the frustration comes from in regards to standards. One young man confided in one of his ministers, "As long as we look like everything is okay, and we follow the standards, no one looks at us twice." I don't think that this is an anomaly. I have spoken with youth who have expressed the same frustrations and heard it from other leaders.

We hear stories of young people who kept the standards but made poor life choices. We say, "But they looked fine. We had no idea anything was wrong!" The outward appearance is not always an accurate reflection of a person's heart.

Standards do aid us in maintaining our lifestyle. They also help us to present a unified and cohesive brotherhood to the community around us. Although standards are important, by themselves they are not enough to pass on our faith and way of life to the next generation

or evangelize the lost. We need to understand why we do what we do.

This doesn't mean that we don't have to obey until we understand and agree. There is blessing in obedience, submission, and honoring the wishes of our parents and church leaders even when it doesn't always make total sense. However, it is paramount that we come to an understanding of why we do the things that we do. "This is just how we've always done it" is not going to be enough of an answer for the next generation.

Things change with time. Technology changes. Clothing, beard and hair styles, and trends change. Available clothing changes. It follows then, that our standards should be examined and updated as well. Something written in the 70s or even the 90s wouldn't even cover some of the things we face today. The same is true of laws in society. Look up some outdated ridiculous laws in the USA today. It's illegal to drive blindfolded in Alabama. In one Arizona town, it is illegal for a donkey to sleep in a bathtub. In Berkeley, CA, it is illegal to whistle for a lost canary before 7 a.m. It's illegal to keep a couch on your porch in Boulder, CO. In Connecticut a law was enacted that states that a pickle must be able to bounce in

order for it to be considered safe for human consumption. Surprisingly, in the state of Michigan, you aren't allowed to sell your car on Sunday. The lawmakers felt that time is better spent with family, friends, or at church. Obviously, these laws were put in place in reaction to a situation that happened years ago and hasn't been an issue since.<sup>1</sup>

Our church goes over our standards either annually or semi-annually. We discuss the various standards and see if there are any suggestions or concerns that need to be discussed or if we need to update anything. If your church doesn't go over and discuss the standards (even as a refresher and reminder) then you should request that it does. This coin has two sides. Parents and leadership should take initiative in teaching the biblical basis and reasoning for our standards. On the other side, young people should seek answers so *"that their hearts might be comforted, being knit together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ. In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and"*

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<sup>1</sup>. 50 Craziest State Laws From Around the United States; [www.goodhousekeeping.com](http://www.goodhousekeeping.com)

When HAPPINESS gets into your system,  
it is bound to break out....

April 2024

*knowledge*" (Colossians 2:2-3).

The story is told of a newlywed young woman who, while preparing a ham for dinner, cut the ends off of the ham and put them aside to throw out. Her husband asked her why she had done that since his mother never did. She replied that her mother always had done that, but she didn't know why. She called her mother who said that her mother always had, but she didn't know why. The mother called the grandmother and asked her why she had always cut the ends off of the ham, and she said that her pan was too small so she always had to cut off the ends of the hams so they would fit in her pan. "This is just how we do it; stop questioning your elders!" is not a legitimate answer. It's a lazy answer. It's an indication that no one in the congregation may be able to explain why, and is a failure on the part of leadership to keep the biblical principle in front of the congregation or communicate it to the next generation.

When we have a sound Biblical basis and understanding for our standards, it is much easier to support, submit to, and pass those standards on to the next generation.



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Periodicals

## T H O U G H T G E M S

Unused experience is a dead loss.



Happiness is a direction, not a destination.



The egotist says, "Everyone has a right to my opinion."



The first step to wisdom is silence; the second is listening.



A good way to forget your troubles is to help others out of theirs.



If you don't know where you are going, any road will get you there.



The world at its worst demands Christians at their best  
—on top of the circumstances.



Happiness increases the more you spread it around.



There is no free tuition in the school of experience.



The one who listens is the one who understands.



An egomaniac is a self-made man who insists  
on giving everyone the recipe.