



Calvary MESSENGER

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

Galatians 6:14

APRIL 2025

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Calvary Messenger

April 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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Song of the Night Watches

Hannah Eicher, McArthur, OH

It takes a night of darkness for the stars to truly glow,
The howling wind and driving rain will help a plant to grow.
If it wasn't for the winter, you would notice not the spring,
Nor care about the birds so much if they would always sing.

If you don't brave the hike, you won't appreciate the view;
The mountain peaks are brighter after mud and muck and slough.
Ask not, "What will this do to me? Oh, how can I get through?"
The trial that you're facing now may well be what makes you.

A soldier brave, a warrior true, a lover of the King
Who doesn't fear when trouble comes; one who can always sing;
You'll love the light of morning after walking through the night;
Your soul will shed His grace abroad and glow with His own light.

You'll be as strong a warrior as ever walked this earth;
The sorrow of your soul be turned to happiness and mirth;
You'll stand atop the mountain as the sun begins to rise;
Your soul reflecting back the radiance of the morning skies.

Writing Your Obituary

“Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints” (Psalm 116:15).

Have you ever wondered what your family will write in your obituary when you pass away? In the past five and a half years, I have read many obituaries, not just those that you read in this periodical but also from other sources. While I do not read those as carefully as the ones published in *CM*, sometimes there are interesting bits of information about the deceased person’s life that stand out.

One of those bits of information is the age of the deceased. While it is to be expected that all of us will die at some point, there is no promise of tomorrow for any of us. So, when children and young people pass away, we wonder what happened. And somehow it is easier to question God’s sovereignty when a mother or father passes away in the middle of raising their families. And increasingly, I see more obituaries with ages in my decade, the 60s. Then there are those who live into their upper 90s and 100s. They stand out as well.

While we could cogitate on why

we respond differently to death at unexpected ages, I would like us to think about what will be written in our obituaries. Typically, besides the family connections, obituaries include personal traits and interests that were obvious to the survivors. We typically have refrained from flowery eulogies, but these personal traits and interests can be great testimonies of faith. Sharing these things in obituaries and funerals should encourage the younger generation to faithfully follow God. Here are some that stand out to me because of the obvious significance and importance of these things in the lives of the deceased. These are direct quotes from obituaries.

Faith

“Above all, Elizabeth was a woman of deep faith. She loved her Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, served Him faithfully, and eagerly encouraged others to follow Christ. She was a woman of prayer and loved reading the Scriptures.”

“Glenn accepted Christ at an early age. He was baptized as a youth and was a faithful member of Mountain View Church.”

“He was baptized in his youth and was a faithful member of the Montezuma Mennonite Church for many years, serving as a Sunday school teacher, youth counselor, and in many other capacities as needed.”

“She received the Lord Jesus in her youth and loved Him all her life. She read and knew her Bible thoroughly.”

“His number one love in life was Jesus and the church. Telling the neighbors about Jesus was a high priority.”

“Freida followed the ‘path of Jesus’ and positively touched the lives of people everywhere she went.”

“His life reflected his love for his Lord.”

“Lana lived only a few minutes before passing on to be with Jesus.” (newborn twin)

“Willis placed his faith in Jesus Christ in his youth, was baptized, and lived conscientiously for God all his days.”

“She will be greatly missed for her courage and trust in her Lord despite the trial of aging.”

“Most of all, Grace was led by love for Jesus and His Kingdom...”

“He was also known for his thorough knowledge of the Bible, his loyalty to his church, and his rock solid commitment to his Master.”

Family

“His greatest joy was his family and

spending time with them.”

“Mary Ellen was a homemaker and found fulfillment in caring for her family.”

“He was a father who taught his children that God and His Word are the principle to live by.”

“She was a loving mother and appreciated her family very much.”

“Her family was very important to her, and nothing brought sunshine to her life like visits from her children and grandchildren.”

“She enjoyed working alongside her husband at Kauffman Fruit farm, singing, traveling, serving others, and sharing God’s love to all.”

“She highly valued relationships and...spending time with her children and grandchildren.”

“He loved spending time with his family and especially taking family vacations every year. Family was very important to him.”

“He especially enjoyed spending time with his grandchildren and great-grandchildren.”

“At family gatherings she was the favorite auntie, singing and playing with the children in the basement, usually slipping them items to make a little party.”

Marriage

“The Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis

2:18 NIV).

“As a pastor’s wife, she faithfully supported her husband in ministry and was his encourager.”

“She faithfully supported her husband in his many interests and projects.”

“Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it” (Ephesians 5:25).

“He was a loving and faithful husband to his wife for 45 years... who loved to spend quality time with his family.”

“On August 31, 1944, he married Susie May Beachy in Hutchinson. They were blessed with 72 years of marriage prior to her death on March 6, 2017.”

Passion

“She had a passion for gardening, preparing food, and serving others and cherished her family.”

“Perry loved music and singing and belonged to the Kansas Mennonite Men’s Chorus. He loved history and loved people.”

“Amos loved life and hard work; farming was his work and hobby.”

“Ervin was known for his love of singing and preaching, often reciting poetry during his sermons.”

“Perry loved to travel. He loved auctions of all types...”

“He had an adventurous spirit and enjoyed traveling and celebrated

his 100th birthday by taking a hot air balloon ride with his son and a granddaughter. But his biggest passion was his love for Jesus and the Word. He wasn’t afraid to share Jesus with those around him and had a deep burden for the salvation of others.”

“In 1990, Dad was ordained to the ministry, and in 1991 Dad and Mom moved to the Philippines. They lived there with their growing family for the next 18 years. Dad learned the Filipino language fluently and built lasting friendships with the people there. He walked many kilometers to spread the Gospel, winning the respect of many by his quiet service and ability to listen. We children loved to go along with him to Bible studies or trips to the city or market, and he included us in his work and travels as much as he could. Dad was never a big talker, but he taught much by his faithful example. We watched him fix engines, rebuild jeeps, butcher pigs, or build roofs; and our hearts watched him live out Christ’s love in everything he did. In the summer of 2006, Dad spent many hours building the Sapang Palay church under the blazing sunshine, which later resulted in the start of his melanoma.” (He died at age 59 from melanoma.)

Service

“He was a member of Center

Amish Mennonite Church and gladly served in any way he was asked.”

“Paul and Barbara enjoyed serving together and shared a heart for the underprivileged.”

“She had a servant’s heart and would go out of her way to serve her family, church, and community.”

“He invested many years of voluntary service for Gospel Echoes Prison Ministry Correspondence Courses, Choice Books, and MCC Relief Sale.”

“The church was an important part of Elva’s life, being involved in getting the title to the property, the building of the new building, and for more than 30 years, he opened the church house in preparation for the Sunday morning service.”

“She offered herself freely to the communities of which she was a part.”

Friend

“David left a legacy of serving others and his heart of kindness touched many people.”

“She will be remembered for her

shy, sweet smile and gentleness with children.”

“He was a friend to everyone and enjoyed handing out candy to the children at church.”

“Joshua had a bright and cheerful outlook and was a friend to many, especially his classmates of the Light of Hope Christian School where he attended for all eight years of his school life.”

“He loved his family and friends, and his life revolved around them.”

“Grace loved people so well and was profoundly tuned in to the needs of people around her. Grace was a nurturing friend and, in her own words, just wanted to spread her butterfly wings over the suffering.”

What do you think your obituary will say? How reads my life book? Will our lives be worthy of being added to the heroes of faith in Hebrews 11? With our greatest motivations and passions in life, we are writing our own obituaries in the hearts of our families—those who know us the best.

AY



A Promise Restored

In the garden of sorrows, the flowers did bloom,
With grace unrelenting, He turned our hearts’ gloom.
Death lost its sting; in His arms we’re set free,

The promise of life. for you and for me.

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the bottom line

The Radicals Are Not Always Correct

Aaron Lapp, Kinzers, PA

We are in the 500th anniversary of the original Anabaptist movement. We have noted how some modern Anabaptists have justified their radical moves based on their view of the “radical movement” of the larger groups of the early Anabaptists. For instance, going against the “status quo,” but just what is that? Or calling people to declare

themselves to positions contrary to “the establishment.” Who or what is that? Or to announce a “confab” (chat box) in a free-for-all in other people’s in-box. Confabulation = (1.) To talk together in an informal way; to chat. (2.) To fill in gaps in the memory with detailed accounts of fictitious events” (Webster).

By definition, there is lots of space here between the Holy Writ

theology and some of the current vacillating philosophy in how people have claimed to justify their radical, far-out applications of Scripture with leftist-leaning agendas and lifestyles. And that, mind you, is because the Anabaptists were “radicals,” they say. They yet add to that to say Jesus was a radical.

To be sure, some professed moderns of today base their claims for modern church living on a “radical Anabaptist” platform, which happens, as we see it, to be at least halfway on their base, on the radical half. Sadly, they are far removed from the 1525 Anabaptist movement, and their platform for discipleship.

We seek to join the truly faithful disciples of Christ and keep our hearts and hands with those Anabaptists who found it necessary, for the sake of Christ, to break with the established church. It feels good to have had such a long tradition of believer’s baptism, non-swearing of oaths, refusal to bear arms in warfare, and being unpretentious in attire. There continues to be ample reasons to emulate the original Anabaptists, especially in those distinctives for which they were noted. Much good can be learned from their applications to a “word value” (literal) interpretation of the Bible. That was the interpretation

that brought heartfelt convictions of a literal faith to a continuing literal obedience.

The modern church of our time has departed from the Anabaptist norms, but some still prefer to concern themselves with quite some fanfare and churchly celebration as being Anabaptist. It seems correct to say that the original Anabaptists would hardly have considered holding hands with such, but would rather call on them through one-to-one witness to “come out from among them,” and be separated unto God.

To be radical in our time means to stir a rally to foment change in economics, social norms, or political change from what was established of long standing. In Jesus’ day, He lived and served to make drastic changes from long-established religious wrongs to a more correct way and approach to God. The radicals in the churches are more intent to changes that are meant to change from Bible-approved living to lifestyles that target an upset in the larger social order. This was intended and directed toward certain church bodies and institutions and also where feasible in political circles. The seed for that had its beginning with the imported hippie movement back in the 1960s; their leading edge was their ungodly music and radical lyrics, their dress,

hair, language, and body movements likewise. It invaded the nation, and unfortunately, the church.

Being radical for a desired cause is never right or necessary to being a new man in Christ. One can make a radical change for the right without needing to be a radical with an agenda about change for change's sake.

Posing as radicals is not what real Anabaptism is about. Being a disciple for Christ in humble submission to one another in a decided obedience to Christ and His Word is the real test.

We can try to mimic the Anabaptists. We can hardly reproduce their measure of devotion that was received and cultivated in their hearts; nor the steadfast conviction held so firmly through the study of God's Word. That conviction came from an adult group study of the Bible. From that inner conviction came a ready obedience.

We might start right there where the original Anabaptists began. Sure enough, brother, with group Bible study! Some traditional Anabaptists would censure their members for having Bible study as a group. Others, who claim to be of today's Anabaptists, would rather have tea parties and ball games than group Bible study.

Then there are those in a very wide

spectrum of today's Anabaptists whose errant views, interpretations, and bits of unbiblical teaching are contrary to the Bible in a number of areas. We are thinking about the atonement, eternal hell, divorce and remarriage, devotional covering, voting in political elections, future prophecy, cremation, soul-sleeping, sports, music, social media, and even some aspects of salvation itself. To be more like the original Anabaptists, some churches today would not qualify to honestly claim to be like they were back then, but perhaps partly so in some things and in certain respects, and in part of the time. We should not become radical and revolutionary, but much rather redemptive and revivalistic. Truly, we want to be faithful and communicative of the true Gospel, not philosophical and antagonistic.

Then there were the half-Anabaptists. They sympathized for the noble cause of their Anabaptist neighbors and were impressed by their devotion and their unpretentious faith. Actually, some of them claimed to believe the same as their Anabaptist neighbors but merely chose to keep their faith in their minds and not in their hearts. Having it in their hearts would have meant to declare it by a confession by their mouth and to live openly

as one in a public identity. Thus, the 50% types of Anabaptists of the 1500s somewhat have spawned many “percentage” Anabaptists of today. Some being also 50% Anabaptists today, while others are more variable, some 25% and some 75%, each according to his own comfort level.

Here are a few take-aways from these considerations.

1. We have much reason to be encouraged with the many ordained church leaders who seek to be faithful to the Word of truth. Besides, we also have many men who serve on church boards and committees, who put in many hours and muscle-work to maintain many good church needs and functions. Then there are also the dedicated sisters who support their men in these extra duties, who attend the monthly sewing circle and help in its worthy contribution to world needs. We have increasing amounts of young people who are eager and ready to learn and to serve.

2. We should caution to still accept the Word of God to be the guide for our lives and its precepts as the determining factor to establish doctrine, faith, and practice. Some speakers, who seem to have the goal to endorse widely the original Anabaptists, probably do not intend to portray their writings as the clinching means to promote how we

should believe and live. Certainly not to make the writings of the Anabaptists to be of equal authority to the Word of God, and certainly not to position it above the Bible.

3. It appears to be assumed that any group that has Mennonite attached to their church name is a present-day Anabaptist, since Mennonite was designated to the followers of Menno Simons. Do any other early Anabaptist leaders have such groups of churches, who can trace their churchly lineage to a recognized early Anabaptist?

4. I have an 18-page pamphlet, sent to me three years ago, whose author claims the Anabaptists taught and believed in soul sleeping. He says the soul will not awaken in any conscious state until the final resurrection at the end of the world. Until that time, they will sleep in death. He quotes three Anabaptists with various snippets of writings.

Here is a valid caution: it was fourth-handed in his writing. There was the purported Anabaptist who wrote it (1). Another author quoted it (2), from which the author he quoted had written it (3). Then the author of this pamphlet quoted it (4), and if I quote him, that would be another step (5). Thus certain quotes from Anabaptists could be fourth or fifth-handed, as in this case. (It actually


was an erroneous interpretation, which I wish to address later.)

The main point here is this: since the Anabaptists received their teaching from their study of the Bible, why not just go back to that same source for our own learning and enlightenment? Our call to a needed obedience to God’s Word should be more convincing and compelling if it came from the Bible rather than a glorified appeal based on Anabaptist personalities and their writings.

5. We surely should not miss this concluding point, which is to express thanksgiving to God for their steadfast faith—both men and women—and for their settled and

firm convictions even unto terrible persecution and death. Also, for the various records that were preserved to our time and place.

The Bottom Line is that the Anabaptists did not do it to be looked upon as radicals. They sought only to please God and to follow Him in faith, which was very new for its day, and live in obedience to God. To be a novelty and a radical contrary to God’s righteousness, would simply end up being a proponent of unrighteousness.

Their devotion in personal life and their zeal in being a witness for Christ could serve us best in our day as worthy examples to follow. 

I Saw a Beautiful Thing

A Simple Kindness

Carol Nisly, Altamont, KS

It stung my heart and ignited desire, this flicker of beauty in an unexpected place. How oft we miss the loveliness because it does not look as we think it ought and instead, sparkles in homely, smelly places.

Our group of 14 gathered in front of the TV with our green songbooks. A handful of residents at this full-care facility were sprinkled about,

in varying degrees of wakefulness. To my left, a gravelly-voiced man welcomed us from his wheelchair, letting us know he will turn off the TV. A bright-eyed lady, her hair still damp from a morning shower, greeted me. She cheerfully introduced herself as “Robbie. R-o-b-b-i-e because I’m a girl and not a boy.” Across the way, sat a man with

chin drooped onto chest, letting the denim bill cap with its message be clearly read, "I love Jesus." Still another reclined in a geri-chair, her lips in constant motion as she communicated with people visible to her alone.

Against the wall, a younger woman, who might have been 45-50, watched us curiously, her hungry eyes making prolonged contact. Long blonde hair, with dark roots growing out at the scalp, cascaded over the back of her wheelchair. Losing interest in the devotional, she noticed comrades being wheeled out for their turn at a smoke. She signaled her desire to a staff member who signaled back, "Just be patient." She settled back into her chair, resigned as we sang about lifting the helpless and oppressed from depths of sorrow... I thought about being helpless, and of humbling hours spent waiting for others to attend to your needs. I watched as she explored a nostril with a tentative finger, absently wiping it on her shirt. I shuddered involuntarily.

Another resident, dressed in fuzzy slippers and long, belted robe, strolled into the dining room where we sang. Observing the blonde's eagerness, she rummaged in the bag hanging behind her wheelchair for a coat; it was a blustery 27 January degrees

outside. I observed while she kindly did what we sang about: she lifted the helpless....guiding her friend's arms into the sleeves, then pulling a crocheted hat over her own dark head... I thought to myself, "Would I have ventured to grasp that hand with the exploring finger or would I have excused myself from kindness?" Ouch.

Leaning forward with tiptoes against the tiled floor, the blonde maneuvered her wheelchair outside, eager for the temporary comfort afforded by a small stick of nicotine. The momentary flicker of a lighter caught my eye—another small kindness extended. Do you think Jesus would have preached to them about the dangers of smoking? I think He may have asked, "What do you want Me to do for you?" as He asked in Judea. And I ponder; how can I learn to see people as Jesus does? How am I to love in homely ways and unexpected places?

What a lesson on the love of God, enacted before my eyes! In this little vignette, the leading actor was not dressed in Sunday best, but in a robe and slippers—perhaps God's love more present in embodied kindness than in starched theology? Of this I am sure: the simple concern of one creature for another is compelling and it is beautiful.



Michael Sattler

1490-1527

Ray Shank, Rochelle, VA

One of the most notable aspects of Michael Sattler's ministry was its short duration. After only one year as an independent reformer, and an additional year as an Anabaptist teacher, martyrdom overtook him. He wrote in his farewell letter, "the Lord, however, can certainly raise up for Himself another laborer to complete His work." This statement left a clear testimony to his faith in God's sovereign plan.

Despite the brevity of his ministry, Michael, more than any other, gave lasting coherence to the Swiss-South German Anabaptist Reformation. Mennonites and Amish in America recognize their current understanding in his writings. His address to Bucer and Capito and the Schleithem Confession succinctly outline the difference between Anabaptists and Magisterial Reformation thought.

Michael spent most of his life in Hapsburg-controlled German territory just north of Switzerland, except for comparing notes with other reformers in both Zurich

and Strasburg. As a Benedictine monk, his education prepared him for later Reformation ministry. The monastery where he served was taken over by the troops in the Peasants War. He escaped with his recently-married Margaretha. In Zurich he identified with the organized group of Anabaptists. When persecution against Anabaptists in Zurich intensified, Michael moved on to the tolerant city of Strasburg. The established reformers, Bucer and Capito, welcomed him and cordially went over biblical principles without coming to a full agreement. Although not life threatening, continuing in Strasburg did not seem like a place for fruitful ministry.

Back at Horb, Michael took up pastoral responsibilities. This was Catholic country and much more dangerous than Zurich and Strasburg. The dangerous environment kept conference deliberation among the Anabaptists at a minimum. The church suffered from divergent ideas that helped fuel suspicion from their enemies. Finally, a meeting

of Anabaptist representatives was called at a northern Swiss town. With Michael as chairman, the conference developed the Schleithem Confession. Within several months the authorities put a group of Anabaptists from Horb in jail. The Hapsburg ruler of the area prescribed death by drowning without court trial for Michael. The local court wanted a trial to show due process.

While waiting for the trial, Michael redeemed the time by writing an encouraging farewell address to the church family. He was resigned to the fact that it would not be a fair trial. The court was not satisfied with a quick execution but ordered an extended torture to satisfy their wrath. Michael's calm resignation

during his torture had an inspiring effect on the observers that reversed his detractor's purposes. Margaretha and the other imprisoned Anabaptists received a mercifully quick execution.

Anabaptist leaders were hounded out of Zurich before they had time to put a faith statement together. They went out with tremendous zeal and energy and received widespread positive responses. Their fugitive status did not allow for relaxed conferring meetings, group planning, and accountability structures. In that chaotic situation, there was a brief window of time before most of the early educated leaders were martyred. In that open window Michael helped develop the Schleithem Confession that defined and guided the Swiss Anabaptist for the next five centuries.



"The one who **plants** and the one who **waters** work as a team with the same purpose. Yet they will be rewarded individually, according to their own hard work."

I Corinthians 3:8-9

marriages

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

Hershberger-Miller

Bro. Reuben, son of Ivan and Rachel Hershberger, Scottville, MI, and Sis. Emily, daughter of Andy and Naomi Miller, Stone Creek, OH, on October 19, 2024, at First Baptist Church for Meadows of Light Church by James R. Mullet.

Mast-Troyer

Bro. Donavon, son of Chester and the late Karen Mast, Ossian, IN, and Sis. Karina, daughter of Jamie and Priscilla Troyer, Coshocton, OH, on November 9, 2024, at First Baptist Church for Meadows of Light Church by James R. Mullet.

Shiley-Miller

Bro. Bill, son of Christopher and Christine Shiley, Chambersburg, PA, and Sis. Jolene, daughter of Andy and Naomi Miller, Stone Creek, OH, on April 27, 2024, at First Baptist Church for Meadows of Light Church by James R. Mullet.

Sommers-Tice

Bro. Jeremy, son of Reuben and Miriam Sommers, Salisbury, PA, and Sis. Brooke, daughter of Gerald and Loretta Tice, Grantsville, MD, on January 25, 2025, at Cherry Glade Mennonite for Mountain View Mennonite Church by Merlin Beachy.



cradle roll

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

Coulter, Jared and Eunice (Peachy), Honey Grove, PA, fourth child, second daughter, Nadia Arwen, February 7, 2025.

Jantzi, Cam and Liz (Verwer), Perth, ON, first child and daughter, Annika Lily, November 27, 2024.

Jantzi, Darren and April (Overholt), Smiths Falls, ON, sixth child, fourth son, Franklin John, January 3, 2025.

King, Ryan and Stephanie (Mast), Goodspring, TN, second child, first son, Trea Ryan, February 21, 2025.

Mast, Milton and Marcena (Overholt), Auburn, KY, second child, first son, Kade Everett, February 26, 2025.

Miller, David J. and Julia (Kurtz), Abbyville, KS, fourth child and daughter, Abigail Praise, January 30, 2025.

Mullet, Marvin and Viola (Miller), Milan, IN, fourth child, third daughter, Adelynn Noelle, January 11, 2025.

Overholt, Austin and Liz (Jara), Brightwood, VA, second child and daughter, Ivy Sophia, January 30, 2025.

Overholt, Leland and Amber (Yoder), Marshallville, GA, second child, first

daughter, Savannah Kate, February 6, 2025.

Peachey, Jesse and Kaitlyn (Jantzi), Mannsville, NY, first child and son, Kedric Zane, February 6, 2025.

Stoltzfus, Arlen and Angie (Stoltzfus), Morgantown, PA, sixth child, second daughter, Gracelyn Brooke, December 26, 2024.

Stoltzfus, Jerry and Shannon (Miller), Coatesville, PA, first child and son, Todd

David, December 23, 2024.

Stoltzfus, Matt and Ariana (Lapp), Coatesville, PA, fourth child, second son, Josiah Carter, January 26, 2025.

Swartzentruber, Joshua and Krista (Yoder), Bittinger, MD, fifth child, second daughter, Aria Joy, February 1, 2025.

Yoder, Roman and Brenda (Miller), Clarkson, KY, tenth child (one deceased), third son, Lance Wade, January 26, 2025.



ordinations

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

Bro. Willie Borntrager, 62, (wife, Carolyn Miller), Sunman, IN, was ordained bishop for Still Waters Mennonite of Milan on November 24, 2024. Preordination messages were brought by Jeremy Weaver and Loren Troyer. The charge was given by Paul Weaver, assisted by Loren Troyer and Jeremy Weaver.

Bro. Dave King, 61, (wife, Faith Troyer), Waverly, TN, was ordained bishop for Waverly Mennonite Church on December 15, 2024. Preordination meetings were given by Paul Weaver. The charge was given by Raymond Yoder, assisted by Dwight Yoder and Delmar Bontrager. Tim Yoder shared the lot.

Bro. Lamar Yoder, 47, (wife, Lorene Miller), Colon, MI, was ordained deacon for Pilgrim Fellowship Church of Nottawa, MI, on November 17, 2024. Preordination messages were given by Darlton Bontrager and Roman Miller. The charge was given by Jonathan Yoder, assisted by Roman Miller. William Miller shared the lot.



Prayerless pews make
powerless
pulpits.



Miller, Karla Elizabeth, 30, of Sugarcreek, OH, passed away at her home surrounded by her family on December 6, 2024, after a short illness. She was born July 5, 1994, in Darbun, MI, to Matthew and Anna (Yoder) Miller.

Karla was born with cerebral palsy and was “our special girl.” Even though she couldn’t walk or talk, she was filled with joy and loved being with people. She especially loved when her niece and nephews climbed on her chair or held her hand. She attended Living Waters Fellowship with her parents and loved the singing in church, especially when we sang children’s songs with hand motions. Karla had a big impact on people. Friends often mentioned that Karla was always happy.

In addition to her parents, she is survived by her brothers and sisters: Allen, Sugarcreek; Wesley (Evelyn), Ragersville; Rebecca (John Lamar) Kline, Sugarcreek; Aden, Heidi, and Steven, all of Sugarcreek; one niece and two nephews, Danny and Daysi Miller, and Archer Kline.

She was preceded in death by her paternal grandparents, Aden and Susan Miller; maternal grandparents, Andrew and Mary Belle Yoder; two

uncles and an aunt, Durlan Miller, Titus Yoder, and Esther Mae Yoder.

The funeral service and burial were held at Maranatha Fellowship Church on December 8, 2024, and officiated by James B. Mullet.

Steven, Jason Dean, 47, of Hattieville, Belize, passed away on June 1, 2024, at his job. He was born on December 3, 1976, to Gilbert and Catherine Steven (both deceased).

Brother Jason accepted Christ in his youth and was baptized upon the confession of his faith by Brother Lester Gingerich and Brother Hughdele Ysaguirre.

Jason fell in love with Starla Joy (Hewlett), and they got married on October 23, 2004. Their union was blessed with two sons: Eiden and Ezron, and a daughter, Kailey.

Jason was a faithful member and enjoyed fellowship with his family and church family to which everyone can attest. Knowing that God’s timing is always right, we anticipate the great reunion day.

He was preceded in death by siblings: Mark, Leroy, Gilbert, Orvin, Sandra Steven, and Julie Ysaguirre.

Along with his wife and children, he is survived by sisters: Jacqueline

(Charles) Sutherland, Esther and Cynthia Steven, Shana (Richard) Staine, Judith (Michael) Somerville, Lisa (Tim) Miller; brothers: Kenrick (Sandra), Paul, Dwight (Lydia), Marvin, and Sean (Toni) Steven.

The funeral service was held on June 18, 2024, at Pilgrim Fellowship Mennonite Church in Hattieville, Belize, with Bishop Louis Ysaguirre officiating.

Stoltzfus, Samuel J., 58, of Gap, PA, went home to be with his Lord and Savior on February 15, 2025. He was born in Gordonville, PA, to Eli K. and Linda (Fisher) Stoltzfus of Parkesburg. He was the husband of Mary Ann King.

He was a member of the Pequea Amish Mennonite Church of Narvon. He owned and operated LanChester Grill & Hearth of Gap.

Surviving besides his wife are six children: Kathryn Rose (Joshua) Miller, West Lafayette, OH; Ruth Ann (Daniel) Stoltzfus, Coatesville; Steven J., at home; John Mark (Georgia Martin), Narvon; Susan Liz and Michael David, both at home; eight grandchildren, and five siblings: Priscilla (Daniel) Stoltzfus, Honey Brook; Elias (Rachel Esh) and Daniel (Cheryl Stoltzfus), both of Parkesburg; Sally (Sam) Glick, Quarryville; and Elmer (Elizabeth

Zook), Parkesburg.

He was preceded in death by a brother, John.

He courageously fought cancer for six years. In the end it was his heart that lost its rhythm. We grieve his sudden passing, but we rejoice that he is safe in heaven free from all pain and weariness. "Yet not I, but through Christ in me" was his favorite verse.

The funeral service was held at Pequea Amish Mennonite Church, Narvon, PA, on February 18, 2025. Interment followed in the adjoining church cemetery.

Tice, Gerald Wayne, 61, of Grantsville, MD, died February 9, 2025, at his residence. He was born on April 22, 1963, in Meyersdale, PA, to Sarah Marie and the late Henry E. Tice.

Gerald is survived by his wife of 38 years, Loretta (Schrock), son, Brock David, and daughter Brooke Danielle (Jeremy) Sommers, her husband of two weeks; five brothers: Ken (Carol), Philip (Charlotte), David, Timothy (Jencene), and Daniel (Darla); two sisters: Dorothy (Galen) Beitzel, and Ruth (Joseph) Overholt. He is also survived by 24 nieces and nephews.

Gerald was baptized as a teenager and was a member of the Mountain View Mennonite Church. He sang with The Mountain Anthems and

served on its board for many years. He was most recently employed at Precision Pallet as a truck driver. Formerly, he was employed at Silver Knob Pallets and Bowman's Milk Hauling. He was co-owner of T. F. Milling and served the community as an EMT with Northern Garrett Rescue Squad for nearly 15 years.

Gerald loved children and easily engaged the little people around him. He was passionately involved in the work of Mountain View Christian School and was a visionary in gathering funds to build the gym that is currently used for numerous community activities. He served in various positions at the school, both administratively and educationally.

Music was a huge part of Gerald's everyday life. He served many years as congregational song leader at Mountain View Church. He was preparing songs for the Sunday morning service when he went to meet his Savior. What a meeting!

The funeral was held at Mountain View Mennonite Church on February 13, 2025, with Derrick Bender, Junior Beachy, and Terry Yoder serving. Interment followed in the church cemetery.

Tice, Sarah Marie, 90, of Grantsville, MD, peacefully passed from this life at the Goodwill Nursing Home and

was welcomed into the glories of heaven by her Lord and Savior on February 25, 2025. Sarah, known by all as Marie, was born July 7, 1934, in Meyersdale, PA, to the late Noah S. and Fannie (Hershberger) Beachy.

She was preceded in death by her husband, Henry E. Tice, two brothers, Marvin James Beachy and Homer Alvin Beachy (child), one sister, Mary Lois Beachy (infant), and just 16 days prior, a son, Gerald Wayne. She was also preceded in death by three infant great-grandchildren.

Marie is survived by a brother: Simon (Martha) Beachy, Grantsville; sisters: Martha (Raymond) Yoder, Grantsville; Miriam (Eli) Yoder, Sebree, KY; and sister-in-law, Dorothy (Marvin) Beachy. Marie is also survived by five sons: Kenneth Dale (Carol), Salisbury, PA; Philip James (Charlotte), David Nelson, Timothy Edward (Jencene), and Daniel Glenn (Darla), all of Grantsville; two daughters: Dorothy Louise (Galen) Beitzel, Grantsville; Miriam Ruth (Joseph) Overholt, Minerva, OH, and daughter-in-law, Loretta (Gerald) Tice. Also surviving are 26 grandchildren and 29 great-grandchildren.

As a teenager, Marie placed her trust in Christ and His blood for the atonement of her sins. She was baptized and was a lifelong member

of Mt. View Mennonite Church.

Marie was a wife and homemaker, raising eight children, all of which had arrived within a span of 13 years. She loved music and would often sing as she worked around the house. While focused on the needs of her family, she also showed love to others who crossed her path. Many times, she welcomed unexpected guests to “join us for supper.”

In recent years, while dementia took away many of her memories, it never took away her joy, contentment, and appreciation. When asked by family how she was doing, the answer was

often, “Well, fine and dandy comes to mind.” When others, such as doctors, would ask, it was, “Pretty well with the Lord’s help. I feel He blesses me richly!” Dementia also failed to take away her trust and dependence on Christ. She would often comment that she wants to remain faithful to the Lord as long as she lives. With the Lord’s help, she did that.

A celebration of life service was held at Mountain View Mennonite Church on February 28, 2025, with Jerry Yoder, Merlin Beachy, and Terry Yoder serving. Interment followed in the church cemetery.



observations

This morning my wife and I purchased a box containing five dozen eggs in the grocery store for more than \$27 plus tax. In case you wanted me to do the math, that is about \$5.50 per dozen. It does seem as if grocery prices have been at the front line of inflation pressure the last couple of years. But “bird flu” has been ravaging flocks of chickens, with millions of birds having been destroyed on account of this disease. Local headlines reported that a flock in southwest Missouri, with more than one million birds, was euthanized recently because this dread malady was detected in the flock. I have no authority to say this, but it is

my guess that the whole problem with this bird flu and all those layers that were killed has more to do with the egg prices than unrelated inflationary pressure.

I recently saw an article that caught my attention. One enterprise is offering a service whereby people are able to rent a package that entitles them to a portable chicken coop, necessary feeders, waterers, two chickens, and 200 lbs. of feed. At the end of six months they can either adopt the chickens for a fee and purchase the equipment or all can be returned. The language of animal rental and adoption is lingo that is

more palatable to those who object to the buying and selling of animals. The six-month rental package is priced at about \$500. The outfit states that they intend to rent out chickens that are laying, and they will start laying when they arrive. Those renting out the birds boast that the birds should supply the caretakers with one or two dozen eggs per week.

Now I seem to remember that chickens don't normally lay more than one egg per day. It seems to me that one dozen per week would be a more realistic expectation with ideal conditions for two chickens. If the renters harvested 26 dozen eggs in the six-month duration of the rental, the eggs still cost over \$19 per dozen, provided things go well and the chickens remain healthy. And I thought \$5 per dozen was pretty pricey for a dozen eggs!

It can be observed that there is considerable interest among a growing segment of the population to be more closely connected to their food source. So, economy isn't likely to be the primary motivation for these chicken renters. There is actually a variety of options for chicken renters around the country.

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The blue whale is considered by many observers to be the most intelligent animal on the earth. It is

the largest. Of course, many of us will remember that whales are not fish. Even though blue whales live in the water, they are mammals. They're warm-blooded, breathe air, need mother's milk when they are young, and have a life span of 70-90 years.

There are more than 75 different known whale species, but the blue whale is the largest of them all. It can reach a length of 100 feet long which would be about the length of three school buses parked bumper to bumper. Adults can reach a weight of 200 tons! Elephants are really big, but the weight of one mature blue whale can equal that of 25 adult elephants. The tongue of the blue whale weighs as much as a single elephant.

With an animal so large, I'd tend to think that its diet consists of large things. But this monstrosity can't swallow anything larger than a beach ball. The main diet of blue whales is a variety of marine creatures the size of shrimp and smaller. But they can eat as much as 8,000 lbs. of these small animals, known as krill, in a single day!

The heart of an adult blue whale can weigh 1,300 lbs. This heart pumps a vast quantity of blood through some vessels that would be large enough for humans to swim through if this activity would be feasible and accessible.

Little is known about how specific the communication system is among blue whales, but some evidence exists that the haunting tones that the blue whales emit are designed to transmit information to other blue whales. Some of these “whale songs” are very noisy, having been measured as high as 188 decibels, with the sound traveling hundreds of miles under water.

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The Scripture reminds us that we humans are created in God’s image. We are amazed as we “zoom out” and contemplate the intricacy of these enormous whales. But a parallel wonder awaits those who “zoom in” and observe the amazing design of microscopic life. The creative genius of our great God is abundantly evident to those whose hearts are turned toward Him. In some cases the evidence of creative design has led people from a posture of skepticism to belief. This shouldn’t be surprising to Christians.

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National news outlets are reporting a measles outbreak in west Texas. As of this writing more than 100 cases have been reported, almost exclusively among people who are known to not be vaccinated with the MMR vaccine or whose vaccination status is unknown. One child has died. Scant information is publicly available regarding the identities of those affected. However,

a variety of news sources indicate that this outbreak is centered in an under-vaccinated Mennonite community. This area southwest of Lubbock, consisting of the towns of Brownfield, Seminole, and spilling into nearby Hobbs, New Mexico, is home to thousands of Mennonites of various church affiliation, almost all of whom would fit under the broad umbrella of what we sometimes call “Russian Mennonites.” Public health outreach efforts to promote vaccination efforts are being undertaken where this outbreak is occurring.

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Under the cover of darkness, one January evening in 1525 a small number of concerned individuals gathered. That meeting was significant, because it is the first recorded incidence of adult believers’ baptism during the period known as The Reformation. This event marked what we now identify as the beginning of the Anabaptist movement. The 500th anniversary of this watershed moment was a time when many of us reflected on our complicated history. Indeed, those who went before have left us a rich example of resolute faith in the face of steep obstacles. Regarding this milestone, much has been thought, written, and said. I’d like to add just a few comments related to this ongoing discussion.

I recall my father’s response,

more than 40 years ago, when he was being interviewed by a local radio station about Anabaptist origins. Dad explained that the Anabaptist movement grew out of an understanding that the mainline reformers didn't go quite far enough in their reformation efforts.

I consider that representation helpful as we reflect on what happened at that time. The Anabaptists had much in common with mainline reformers but differed in several key areas.

What began as a small movement eventually included some quite diverse practices. Human nature leads us to identify those elements in our story that we most closely identify with today and elevate those elements as "true Anabaptism." I doubt this is usually an intentional misrepresentation of history, but it's part of the package of looking at history through the lens of our own perspective. We should cultivate an awareness of our bias in that regard.

Those who chose the bold step of adult believers' baptism, stated by their loyalties that they were willing to lose all they held dear in this life, because obeying God above all else was worth whatever it cost. Since that time, the Anabaptist church family has seen many splits, splinters, and factions. In almost all of these cases,

one or both of the factions saw these events as justifiable on the basis of embracing understood truth even if it proved to be very costly.

I admit that I feel a bit rueful about these divisions as I think about this and wonder how much of it is traceable to the actions and loyalties of the founders who made those difficult choices in very different times. How does our distance or proximity to these divisions affect our perception of their validity? Think about that.

One of the priorities of the early Anabaptists was to disentangle the problematic concept that made church and state membership synonymous. The loyalties and priorities of the church are quite distinct from that of civil government. While some overlap in overall desires is observed from time to time, the means of pursuing these goals is different for the church and the state.

I'm not sure that the value of maintaining a clear distinction between geopolitical values and Kingdom values, and the methods that we use to reinforce those values, are as clear today as it was to those early Anabaptists. Today is still a good time to remind Anabaptists that we should be wary of aligning ourselves with current political systems, philosophies, ideologies, and methods.



Conflicts

Tim Miller, McKenney, VA

“The goods are enriched but the soul is impoverished. Love has cooled and diminished, and quarreling has increased.” Do these words of Hans de Reis (1553-1638) capture the essence of conflicts among the Anabaptists of his day? How about of ours?

Before we review the major conflicts among various groups of Anabaptists, let’s consider a few other things.

First, what can be considered mainstream and core Anabaptism? I’ll base my conclusion on the writings that were most commonly used throughout the history of the movement. Many other Anabaptist writings have been compiled, published, and have their adherents, but are ones that had a marginal effect on the movement as a whole. The writings that had, by far, the most impact on the continuity of Anabaptism in both Europe and America are the Schleithem and Dordrecht Confessions of Faith, the Ausbund, the Martyrs Mirror, the writings of Menno Simons, and the Dirk Philips Handbook. While the Hutterian Chronicle has maintained its influence continuously since it was written, it is limited mainly to the Hutterite branch of the faith. The individuals and groups that accepted, used, and passed on the above documents will be considered to

be “true” Anabaptists for purposes here, while others such as the Munsterites, even though they rebaptized, will not be considered such because they rejected core tenets of the teachings listed above.

Second, we need to consider the impact of persecution on people and churches. The emotional toll of living under the reality of banishment, loss of home, place, and property, imprisonment, and death must have been significant. To know that friends and family had experienced the loss of everything, including life, for the sake of what you and they believed, doesn’t lend itself to much tolerance for people you consider to not be living up to the demands of the Gospel. The displacement and scattering of Anabaptist refugees, many times repeatedly, meant adjusting to new people, places, cultures, and languages while trying to maintain church fellowship, spread the Gospel, and keep yourself and your family alive. Add to that the devastating religious wars that engulfed the region where Anabaptism had spread and you have a tremendous amount of upheaval for individuals, churches, communities, and nations. While most of the conflicts among the brethren had some element of personal problems along with the

doctrinal/practical concerns, we can understand why an element of “testiness” seemed to be fairly prevalent in most of them. We have time and space to engage productively and biblically in conflict and still many times haven’t done any better than they did.

How do you fairly represent conflicts that are centuries old, especially without being able to read correspondence in the original language? How do you evaluate tone and intention when it is likely some bias of translators has crept into translations? Is it even important to consider these things at a time when we are focused on celebrating the positive effects of our history? These are just a few of the difficulties of examining historical conflict.

We’ll start with the Dutch Anabaptists since four of the six core Anabaptist documents came from them. A group called the Waterlanders (a region of Holland) separated from the others because they wouldn’t adopt the strict shunning practiced by the other Anabaptist groups. They also were more accommodating to the culture around them and, as persecution eased, became very wealthy and even influential. Hans de Reis, quoted above, was an influential leader and writer among them. They maintained some connection with the other Anabaptists and were involved in the attempts to bring reconciliation between the Flemish and Frisians although they did not reunite with the other Dutch groups until the 1700s.

Anabaptism came to Flanders, Belgium by 1535, and the persecution there was particularly intense. From 1555 a large group of these Flemish moved to the relatively safer Netherlands. While they believed the same as the Frisian Anabaptists of northern Holland among whom they settled, in personality and culture they were very different so they maintained separate congregations. While they tried to work together for a while, many conflicts developed over differences in practices. Misunderstandings and hurts developed even in attempts for reconciliation by leaders outside the conflict. In June 1567, several years after the death of Menno Simons, the Flemish excommunicated all the Frisians and the breach became perpetual. Other Anabaptist congregations throughout Holland became involved, resulting in many Dutch Anabaptist churches splitting into separate Frisian and Flemish allied meetings. Flemish and Frisian became party names rather than geographical or cultural identities.

Twenty years later the Flemish split into two groups because of differences over the degree of separation from the world and the strictness of the ban. Several other splinters happened among the Dutch in succeeding years.

Some leaders were burdened by the divisions and began working to bring reconciliation. In May of 1591, Dutch and German church leaders came together and signed an agreement on doctrine and practice called the Concept of Cologne in

Cologne, Germany. The signers included Dutch from both the Waterlanders and the Frisians, and leaders from Alsace and the Palatinate, Strasbourg, and other South German cities. This became a pattern for reconciliation and there were more meetings in the following years where various groups came together for discussion and signed agreements called “confessions of faith.” These were not intended to be complete doctrinal statements but to reflect conclusions on issues that were points of contention and difference between them.

The Olive Branch Confession written by Flemish leaders with influence from Hans de Reis, resulted in a reuniting of the Flemish and Frisian Anabaptist churches in Amsterdam in 1630. This led to further reconciliation around the Dordrecht Confession of Faith in 1632. Fifty-one Flemish and Frisian ministers signed that agreement. Later, in 1660, the leaders of the Swiss Anabaptist refugees in Alsace, France, and the Palatinate in Germany also signed this Confession. Many Anabaptist leaders remaining in Switzerland did not sign it at that time, highlighting a disagreement that led to the “Amish Division” over 50 years later. Gradually, more reconciliation in Holland happened as the practice of the Dutch Anabaptist churches became more alike until by 1796 most were united under the registered title “Doopsgezinden” or “baptism minded.” The Flemish/Frisian division persisted among some Russian Mennonite churches until their dispersal.

A practical result of these reconciliation meetings was the relationships that led to the wealthier Dutch providing relief aid to their persecuted brethren in Switzerland and South Germany, aiding the emigration to North America of those fleeing down the Rhine River, and financial aid to those new communities in the New World.

Discussion of the “Amish Division” gets more personal since its effects are plainly present for many North American Anabaptists today. I am indebted for my perspective to the extensive research done by Leroy Beachy on this subject which is more comprehensive than any other done so far. It’s helpful to understand that the geography of Switzerland contributed to three main groups of Swiss Anabaptists with distinct cultural and spiritual perspectives: the original group from around Zurich which existed mainly in the Alsace area of France by 1660, the group around the Emmental which formed in late 1525 and continues to this day, and the churches established in the Bernese Highlands around Lake Thun in the 1670s. This last group was evangelized about the time the Dordrecht Confession was translated into their Swiss dialect.

Due to persecution, almost all the Anabaptists from Zurich not scattered were in the Alsace. Emmentalers and Highlanders, who had fled Bern, were located in both the Alsace and the Palatinate. As mentioned before, Swiss Anabaptist leaders in exile had signed agreement with the Dordrecht Confession

in 1660 but of the ones remaining in Switzerland only the Highlanders were in support. The Emmentalers were not in agreement with the strict use of the ban stated in Article 17. In addition, they were committed to having Communion only once a year while the Highlanders had introduced the practice of doing so twice yearly and they did not practice foot-washing although their brethren in exile began the practice under the influence of the Confession.

The Highland group became increasingly concerned about the disagreements, and in 1693 sent two bishops from the Alsace, Jacob Amman and Nicholas Augsburg, and two from the Highlands, Christian Plank and Ulrich Amman, to the Emmental for meetings with the leaders there to investigate and to try to close the gap. Initial individual meetings with Emmental ministers were positive but the two group meetings in Nicolas Moser's barn/house were not successful and resulted in the Highland group silencing seven of the Emmentaler ministers including Hans Reist, the leading bishop, who refused to attend. The three disagreements mentioned were whether shunning should include social avoidance or only withholding Communion, under what conditions excommunication should be exercised, and whether or not the "kindhearted" (unbaptized sympathizers) could be considered to be saved. Under threat of arrest (Nicolas Moser lost his farm to confiscation by the Bernese government as a result of these meetings), the delegation left the area and returned to the Alsace by

December 1693.

Numerous letters were exchanged and a meeting for Anabaptist leaders from the Palatinate, Alsace, and Switzerland was held in Ohnenheim in March of 1694. Other issues were reconciled but the issue of acceptance of the Dortrecht Confession's Article 17 on shunning continued to divide them. On March 13, 1694, the Emmentalers and Zurichers, led by Hans Reist, excommunicated all the Highland churches stating "...we cannot, nor do we desire to retain him (Jacob Amman) or those affiliated with him as brethren and sisters." There were more attempts at reconciliation but since neither group would give ground on the shunning issue, no progress was made. The Emmentalers who came to North America later signed agreement with the full Dortrecht Confession but the Swiss never did. On a side note, Jacob Amman and his followers were the Mennonites in this story since they were calling for alignment with the Dutch "Mennonites" as they were already called.

I chose to reference the Dutch divisions because they produced the Dortrecht Confession, with its continued deep impact on us, as well as contributing to the production of the Martyrs Mirror. The "Amish Division" (I put the term in quotes because its accuracy is debatable) is, of course, still impacting us today. So what's the point? I'll just make some observations.

One, the Dutch/Flemish conflict was primarily a result of two cultures not

meshing well. From it we can learn the importance of working hard to understand the cultures of other believers and recognize that not every difference is a result of doctrinal differences or lack of commitment to Christ.

Two, the wise use of confessions of faith in working toward doctrinal unity calls us to be equally clear in articulating our positions; then coming together with those positions held in open hand before God, the Word, and our brothers, recognizing that truth is found through Holy Spirit-led conferring rather than prideful dependence on my own personal “conscience” and “wisdom.” My conscience must be under submission just

as much as any other aspect of my person.

Three, in the “Amish Division,” we see a conflict between brethren who had likely been in the faith for three or four generations and those who were first-generation believers. More humility on the part of each side toward the wisdom that each brought to the table would have gone a long way toward a less-destructive outcome.

Fourth, let’s consider the nearly 350 years of that division and reflect on whether the current issue over which we are prepared to reject our brother is of a nature that will please God with the outcome and consequences 350 years later.



mission awareness

Sermon Preparation and Delivery (Part 2)

Floyd Stoltzfus, Gordonville, PA

These two articles were printed in the Calvary Messenger several years ago. I make no apology for this because many new brethren were ordained to preach the Word since that year. God bless you with Holy Spirit unction. (FS)

The degree of loneliness the missionary experiences may depend on how long he has been on the field, how acquainted and attached he is to the local people, or if he is really enjoying the work. This

feeling may especially be acute on Sunday morning. But since he is the missionary pastor, he must face the audience and preach the Word gladly and with fervor. “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (II Timothy 4:2). The following counsels may give some help in sermon preparation and delivery.

1. We must “believe in the plenary and verbal inspiration

of the Bible as the Word of God; that it is authentic in its matter, authoritative in its counsels, inerrant in the original writings, and the only infallible rule of faith and practice” (Mennonite Confession of Faith, 1921). A minister from a certain denomination, while visiting one of our Amish Mennonite churches, observed a lack of affirmation: “Thus saith the Lord.” This affirmation occurs approximately 2000 times in Scripture. When a minister faithfully communicates the Word of God, he speaks with authority. There is no substitute for this that will feed and nourish the flock of God.

2. There must be adequate and accurate interpretation of God's Word. To interpret is “to explain the meaning of; make understandable” (Webster's). A preacher must unfold, unravel, and expound the Word clearly. Always keep the text in its context. A Bible expositor has said, “A text, after all, is a thread woven into the warp and woof of Scripture. We must not select such a thread, isolate it from its context, and then make it to mean whatever we choose.” It has been well-stated, “A text taken out of context is a pretext.” If there is a Scriptural passage that appears unclear in its setting, expose it to a clearer passage for a better understanding. We must compare

Scripture with Scripture. There is only one correct interpretation of a given passage in the Bible. There may be some prophetic revelations in that section. But often there are many practical applications. The phrase “rightly dividing the word of truth” has been translated “handling aright the word of truth.” In other words, cut the word of truth straight.

3. Is preaching the art of preparing a sermon and delivering it? That is only part of it. Really, that is not preaching. Preaching is the work of the Holy Spirit molding and shaping the preacher and delivering him. As the expositor studies, so the Holy Spirit plows deeply in his heart (if he allows this action) and prepares the soil of his life to sow seeds that will grow to fruitfulness.

4. Depend totally on the Lord, for without Him we can do nothing. Pray often during message preparation. Pray while driving to church. Pray while sitting in the pew. Pray as you walk to the pulpit. And it is very needful that the congregation is in prayer for their minister.

5. Be enthused by the power of the Holy Spirit. The Feast of Tabernacles was a joyous celebration for the Jewish people. On that last day of the feast, while the priests were marching around the altar, and no doubt were pouring out the water for the last

time, symbolic of the water Moses drew from the rock, Jesus stood and cried out with great enthusiasm His invitation to thirsty sinners, *"If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37b, 38).

6. Be serious about the gospel message. Paul carried this spiritual attitude in his missionary journeys. *"Therefore watch and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears"* (Acts 20:31). Someone has said, "Today, it is easier to get an audience to laugh than it is to move them to tears." While some seasoned, wholesome humor may be fitting in certain messages to make a point stick and to keep the attention of the listeners, it is irreverent to be lighthearted and silly. Clowns belong in the circus, not in the church.

7. Look at the audience. Normally, people are neither sitting on the floor in the aisle, nor are they outside the windows or in the ceiling. Eye contact is important. *"And Paul, earnestly beholding the council, said, Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day"* (Acts 23:1). Use gestures and be dressed neatly.

8. Get to the point. Aviation

instructors urgently inform their student pilots to get that aircraft in the air. Peter, under the power of the Holy Spirit, soon got to the point of his message on the day of Pentecost. He made it clear that the gift of the Holy Spirit was because of the resurrected Christ and that through repentance and faith the believers can experience forgiveness of sins.


9. Stick with the main theme. Do not overload your audience by an overdose of detail. I remember Jacob Hershberger, a dynamic preacher from Virginia Beach, because he often hammered on one point all through the message. One evening at a certain church he spoke on holiness. He repeated the verse many times during the message: *"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord"* (Hebrews 12:14). That is why I remember the thrust of that message so clearly. Now, every preacher has his own style of delivery; it is useless to imitate another minister's pulpit manners.

10. Get landed. A crucial time in flying is landing the aircraft. Let's avoid the pattern of the pilot who circled the landing strip around and around before landing. Have a goal in view. It seemed Jesus abruptly ended the greatest message ever preached. Jesus' message and manner

of speaking left people spellbound. *“And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: For he taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes”* (Matthew 7:28, 29).

In summary, a preacher from the “old school” wrote, “Three out of the 27 books of the New Testament are labeled pastorals. They are so called because Paul addressed them to two of his younger friends, Timothy and Titus, who were pastors. Among the valuable admonitions given is a terse suggestion that we ‘preach the word.’ The term means to cry out, herald, or exhort. It is as if the message so burned in one’s heart that it must be expressed with

compassionate feeling and godly fervor. The pastor’s sermons are to be based on Scripture, not about Scripture, but the very Word of God itself. If one desires the blessing of God upon his congregation, his method of preaching must be to take the Word itself and expose his people to it.

“Preacher of God’s glorious gospel, ask God to give you a fresh glimpse of the potency of preaching. Then preach the gospel in its fullness and freshness. Preach it in its glory and greatness. Preach it in its majesty and mystery. Preach it in its richness and rewards! Amen.” 

[Some of these thoughts and ideas were taken from the book: Expository Preaching Without Notes, by Charles W. Koller]

A Woman After God’s Heart

Women in Construction

Susan Schlabach, Ripley, OH



“The wise woman builds her house, but the foolish pulls it down with her hands” (Proverbs 14:1 NKJV).

The book of Proverbs packs punches a line at a time. The subjects range from

arrogance to alcoholism to child training in that many verses. The above verse pops up about halfway through Proverbs, without forewarning or a backward glance.

As women after God’s heart, we yearn to know the meaning behind

these words. Why did Solomon write them? Quite likely, he had both demolition-ladies and women-builders in his living space.

If we use the book of Proverbs as a commentary on this verse, wise and godly contrasts foolish and immoral. House is not a literal building, but speaks of surroundings, home, children, and husband.

I suggest that a builder-lady isn't completely aware of her building occupation, even as a destructive-lady isn't intentionally tearing down. And, if that's true it makes it especially important that we perceive what's going on in this verse! There is some super-power going on here that calls to be interpreted.

Ask a twenty-some year-old young man if he remembers his mom helping him pull on his t-shirt each morning, repeating his memory verses before he could read, or holding him when his tummy ached. He probably remembers few of those favors. Life happened in the small and insignificant. Life was fed to him on the spoon of his mother's consistency, rocking, discipline, wiping, and faithfulness, naptime after naptime, morning, noon, and night. And it all came together whether she felt like it or not.

With time, her home became the very womb of godly wisdom. Her

character helped to form children who learned to avoid foolishness. Her spirit defined the home and made it more than just a place to live, but a place to grow and thrive. It happened in the repetition of predictability and faithfulness. It happened in a climate of encouragement and in the arms of picking up and trying again whenever there was wrong-doing and falling down.

As mothers wipe drool, pack lunches, and tuck children in at night, they really ought to remind themselves that this is the Great Commission. This is their part of teaching "all nations." This is home building. Non-mothers are a part of Great Commission kingdom building in all that they build. The Bible draws engaging pictures of women-builders like Jochebed, Abigail, Ruth, Lois, Eunice, and more.

Keil and Delitzsch said: "In truth, the oneness of the house is more dependent on the mother than on the father. A wise mother can, if her husband be dead or neglectful of his duty, always keep the house together; but if the house-wife has neither understanding nor good-will for her calling, then the best will of the house-father cannot hinder the dissolution of the house."

Herman Bavinck's observation still often holds true: "Far more than the

husband, she lives along with all her children... Indeed, if the husband is the head, then the wife is the heart of the family." (*The Christian Family*, 95–96)

How, then, does the tearing down happen that we may not be aware of? Defining the fear of God, a key topic in Proverbs, helps us grasp the building up and tearing down contrast. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. The healthy fear of God is not terror at a Being waving a stick. It is an awe-inspiring reverence and awareness that changes everything about us. When we fear God, it calms our other fears. When we fear God, we are humbly acknowledging that we are not God and that means embracing His definition of right and wrong even when it's inconvenient. Fearing God means learning those boundaries and respecting them.

Could it be that a fearful spirit and a lack of trust are indications that we don't fear God? Sometimes we shift into I've-got-to-handle-this when hard times squeeze us. Grown women can become skilled at arranging details around themselves to protect their personal ideas and goals. Adult women sometimes live in little-girl minds, and get stuck fearing outcomes, other people, and loss of control. Fearful consequences follow these fearful women who

haven't comprehended the fear of God.

A woman who fears the wrong things does not take God's perspective on wealth and beauty. Passing on the world's values to her children assuredly tears her house down. She also does not grasp her own inherent value as one who bears God's image. That's obvious in the ways she tries to help God with what He seemingly can't do well enough on His own. The Bible draws graphic pictures of ladies with misplaced fears: Eve, Lot's wife, Jezebel, Delilah, Herodias, and Sapphira. As a side note, Proverbs paints this perspective clearly: when God-created-feminine-beauty is used to seduce men to sin, it's like putting expensive gold jewelry in a pig's snout.

In which category shall we put Abraham's Sarah? While God delayed His promise of a son, Sarah became ultra-helpful, even pushy, when she offered Hagar to Abraham. But in her defense, Sarah called Abraham Lord even when he wasn't the greatest protector.

Naomi rides the fence too in the sense that she accused God of bringing calamity on her. But she encouraged Ruth to follow an unknown path, while trusting the Almighty. After traveling a difficult road, she ends by gratefully embracing the fulfillment

of redemption for her household.

I often live where Sarah and Naomi lived. I have nagged and been fearful and pushy and accusing with God and those around me. I have also laid hold on the complete sacrifice for my irreverence of God and experienced the forgiveness and kind redemption of Jesus.

We build, by showing our families

how the fear of God applies to everything in life, from food preparation to sibling rivalry. Our daily sanctification is demonstrated to those around us as we learn to retrace our steps and admit our pushiness. We're committed to being accountable as we daily make the intentional shift from tearing down to building up.



junior messages

Streetlight Missions

Mary Ellen Beachy, Dundee, OH

Streetlight Christian Ministries is an Anabaptist urban ministry based in Sacramento, CA, and established in 2014. The staff promotes life skills and biblical discipleship. They hold a Kids Club, Bible classes, and more. Currently, a big part of their ministry is teaching ESL, mostly to Afghans.

Six young ladies work at the mission. They teach English classes or babysit while the mothers study. Approximately 80 women are in their classes. What an opportunity to love and touch these women's lives for Jesus!

The Fruit Lady

What do you do to show love to

people? What do you do to establish relationships? How do you dispense kindness and care to those you want to get to know? Here is one creative approach to all of these questions from Streetlight Missions.

Almost every day you will find Rosanna, wife of Lavern, the director of Streetlight Ministries, in her kitchen, washing and cutting fruit. She hands out fruit in the afternoon to hungry neighborhood children.

A lot of the fruit comes from Miss Shirley, a sweet local lady, who has connections with stores and food banks where she gets secondhand produce to distribute rather than

having it end up in the garbage.

Rosanna says, “I have been thinking about why I keep giving out fruit, and I ask myself the question, Why? Why do I sort and wash and cut fruit almost every single day of my life? Why do I subject myself to a life of fragmented afternoons? Why do I give up space in my refrigerator, arranging and rearranging it to fit in the last bag of grapes from the batch of free ones Miss Shirley brought this week? Why have we continued giving fruit to neighbor children for more than 12 years?”

Rosanna shares, “Here are some gifts the Lord has given us through this opportunity. The first one I will cite is the tremendous opportunity it gives my children and me to be involved in the neighborhood from our patio! There is no other way that I know of that we could interact with the community this much and still do the necessary living we all need to do—cooking, cleaning, and homeschooling.

“The second is all the fun surprises and meaningful opportunities we have received over our patio wall—an abundance of laughter and love! You truly never know who a day will bring.

“It might be Cara, a teenager who has lived a rather wild life, who stops by. I ask her how she has been and

if she’s staying out of trouble. She replies that finally she has a clean slate with the police and wants to make a fresh start. We talk about God and chat for a while.

“It might be Sana, the neighbor girl, asking if I have seen Sparkles, her cat. Sometimes it is the three-year-old twins from upstairs who always come laughing and chattering with excitement to get fruit. Later, it is Grandma Zanae, who just lost her housing and needs prayer.

“Other times, it is a group of boys with bikes. They ask for Eric, because they want to get their tires pumped up and brakes adjusted, along with their daily fruit snack.

“Occasionally, little four-year-old Omar, who can hardly speak English, comes around, opens our door, and comes right in because he wants to buy candy.

“And just last week eight-year-old Nasrin quickly crowded her little brother and friend inside our door because she was sure she heard screaming and thought it was too scary to walk home.

“The variety and quantity of people that we have chatted with over our patio is vast. What love we have been able to give and receive! What richness they have added to our lives! What an opportunity to live in and know our neighborhood! It’s

definitely worth it!”

And so every afternoon, Rosanna is ready to serve free fruit to neighborhood children. The freezer is stocked with bags of frozen grapes and there are apple slices or other fruits when available. Children ring the doorbell, Rosanna steps out onto the patio, smiles warmly, and asks the

children what they would like.

Rosanna remembers that Jesus took time for children. Jesus loved the children—all the children of the world. Rosanna takes time for her neighbor children.

How are you called to love the children in your life? Do you take time for children?



youth messages

The Lamb of God

*Evelyn Swarey, Stuarts Draft, VA**

The rising sun cast a lurid light through an open doorway as an aging Jewish elder reclined near the open door. It graced the ancient stone house with a solemn air, much like the man himself wore as he studied the cobblestone street just outside.

It was 33 A.D. and the tyranny of Rome nearly drove the Jews insane. But this was the day of Passover. Oh, so long ago the old man’s dim mind could not recall the years his very own people were led forth out of the historic land of Egypt. This was God’s miracle, accomplished only by reason of something dying. The lamb—yes, the lamb! He faintly remembered his grandfather saying, “A pure lamb, my son. Not one scratch! Our ancestor then took a strong-smelling branch

and dipped it in the blood of the slain lamb.”

The white-haired elder pondered, A branch. Hyssop, that is what it was! Hyssop signifies the cleansing of sins.

Grandfather’s voice continued, “They splashed it on the doorposts and above the door. The lamb was roasted and eaten with unleavened bread. That night was the night! God, with no mercy, killed the Egyptians’ firstborns. Pharaoh, his heart stricken with terror, roared at persistent Moses, ‘Get out, you! Get out before all of us die!’”

Benyoseph’s thoughts wandered to the crossing of the Red Sea, the giving of the Ten Commandments, forty years in the wilderness, then—freedom, freedom at last in that rich

land of Canaan! His heart swelled with pride as he reflectively gazed out the door at the bottom of the stone steps, his white head resting on his hand. Yes, he soon would hear the shofar, and the traditional Passover lamb would be slain for the sins of the Jewish nation. It was, after all, nearing the third hour. But what was that? His ears perked to an ominous roar he heard in the distance. A clashing of steel rang out; then people began to come into view. He gritted his teeth and his green eyes steeled.

“Secundus, Claudius Lysias, Archelaus, Sergius Paulus,” he growled through clenched teeth. He knew those Roman officers by name. Benyoseph’s eyes now lighted on a pathetic sight. Archelaus first reeled then sneered at a heart-rending, blood-covered figure who stumbled into view carrying—horror of horrors—a splintery wooden cross! Obviously, the man had acquired a blow which had swelled one eye; he was covered with dried blood, and the skin on his back hung in shreds. A severe little crown of thorns was settled securely on his head from which blood was even now trickling over his distorted features. His hair was in caked bloody locks. The scene was gory!

“Hail, thou King of the Jews!” the nasty Roman scorned as he spat on the man dragging his cross.

The man looked up at the Roman compassionately. As he did so, he stumbled on a large cobblestone.

“Ho there, Simon, carry his cross,” a red-robed legate ordered. When a middle-aged Jew came forward only haltingly, Sergius Paulus swung his sword menacingly as Simon raised the cross off the suffering man’s shoulders. As that scene passed out of view, Benyoseph understood what had made the distant uproar. A mob! A fist-waving, flashing-eyed, ferocious, hate-filled mob crying in terrible unison, “Crucify Him!” He could not bear it; he closed his eyes.

“Joktan,” he called huskily. Footsteps rang out as a tunic-clad youth appeared and took a seat.

“Yes, Father,” he replied.

“Son, did you see or hear the mob?”

“Yes, I saw it all from an upper window.”

“Then go, my son! I must know who is being crucified!”

“Father, you know I cannot! This is almost the third hour!”

“Oh, my son, I had forgotten. Yes, tarry until the lamb is slain.” The boy disappeared for more than a quarter hour before reappearing.

“The shofar should sound presently,” he commented. “The lamb! Oh, Father!” The boy clung to the frail man.

“Why does not the shofar blow,

Father? We can always hear it; we are but a short league from the temple itself.” The interval of time as the son stayed with his invalid father seemed interminable. At the sixth hour, a thick darkness settled over the land and no one stirred.

Some three hours later, Father spoke with an awestruck voice. “Son, something supernatural has occurred. Stand by me until this darkness is past.” Just then another terror gripped them. The stone house began to creak. The partly open door shook hideously. And Joktan and Benyoseph clung to each other as the rolling of the earthquake increased. Soon it was over, but the experience left them shaken.

When the sun burst out in new, unshadowed glory, Joktan exclaimed, “Tis the ninth hour, Father! We have been in darkness for three hours!”


“My son, go straightway now; bring me speedily report of this man who has died. Somewhere, somewhere, I have heard of him. First, my son, bring me the Book of the Prophets.”

Benyoseph’s gnarled hands unrolled the scroll. Soon he found what he wanted, and read, “*He hath no form nor comeliness, and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.*” Scanning the gracefully-written script, he noted

phrases such as, “*He was despised... surely he hath borne our griefs... he was wounded for our transgressions... he was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth... he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter.*” He rose up in his chair; tears—happy, jubilant tears—hung on his cheeks.

Joktan’s cursory pace soon brought him back from his investigation. He entered the room and called to his father, “It was Jesus!” he exclaimed. “A woman at the foot of the cross told me that He was her Son.”

Getting no answer, Joktan was up the steps in a few leaps, and shook the old Levite by the shoulder.

“Father, she said His name was Jesus!” he spoke hopefully. Still, there was not the slightest response. He grasped hold of his father’s hand, a limp white hand. Joktan sorrowfully bent his head with the realization of what had happened. As he did so, he focused on the very words his father had comprehended only five minutes before. He pondered for a few moments, then his glistening brown eyes lit up. Releasing the hand, he descended the stone steps, passed out the old door, struggled up the nearby hill, and knelt beside the cross of the pure Passover Lamb. 

* Reprinted from the August 2004
Youth Messages

THOUGHT GEMS

A danger foreseen is half avoided. -*Thomas Fuller*

• • • • •

We go down on our knees, or we go down to oblivion.

• • • • •

We may face situations beyond our reserves but never beyond God's resources.

• • • • •

Reputation comes over one from without; character grows up from within.

• • • • •

Responsibility is my response to God's ability. -*Albert J. Lown*

• • • • •

Great wealth and contentment seldom live together.

• • • • •

Some people won't suffer in silence because that would take the pleasure out of it.

• • • • •

If you don't say anything, you won't be called on to repeat it. -*Calvin Coolidge*

• • • • •

It's funny how people on a diet are never reduced to silence.

• • • • •

A hypocrite never intends to be what he pretends to be.

• • • • •

Success is never final and failure never fatal. It's courage that counts. -*George Tilton*

• • • • •

Diplomacy is the art of letting someone else have your way.

• • • • •

Tact is changing the subject without changing your mind.

• • • • •

Sincerity needs no witnesses.

• • • • •

The angel said to the women, Do not be afraid: for I know that you are looking for Jesus who has been crucified. He is not here, for He has risen, just as He said.

Matthew 28:5-6a