

Be ye doers
of the Word
and not hearers
only...
James 1:22

Anabaptist Voice

Championing a Faith that Works

In This Issue:

"NO MATTER THE COST" - CHRIS WYAN

"DEATH IN THE MIDST OF LIFE" - MELVIN S. BURKHOLDER

"THE VALUE OF A SONG" - SAMUEL HEATWOLE

"THE PEOPLE OF GOD" - MENNO KNIGHT

"CAN YOU SING?" - VERNON HEGE



Letter from the Editor



Swallow-tailed kite

Five different colors of crepe myrtles—lavender, light pink, deep pink, cardinal red, deep red—have been blooming at Mystic Gardens. Some started their praise song to the Creator more than a month ago.

The swallow-tailed kites came to our cut-over cornfield again this year. They are one of the most graceful and beautiful of all birds as they glide and swoop low over the ground to feed on bugs and grasshoppers.

A funeral in Utah gave Doris and me the occasion to set foot in southern Idaho. At some point in our lives we had been to all of the 48 continental US states except Idaho, Nebraska, Montana, and North Dakota. Now we added Idaho to the list of states we have visited.

In Wyoming a beautiful visitors' center furnishes spectacular views of the Grand Teton peaks and gives the many tourists an explanation of how and when the mountains came into being. The universal flood and a Creator God is so much easier to believe than the preposterous ideas posted at the visitors' center.

By divine appointment, Doris and I met a Baptist pastor at a motel in South Carolina. Without me even mentioning anything about nonresistance, my new friend made this astonishing statement: "Baptists don't make good pacifists because they like to fight." I believe he made the statement tongue-in-cheek, but I hope this may never be said of Anabaptists.

In AV26 Samuel Heatwole, Vernon Hege, and Norman Ward all illustrate the power of a song when people put words to tunes and sing them.

Melvin Burkholder helps us face the ever-present reality that death will overtake us, all of us, and offers hope beyond the grave.

Chris Wyan gives us an exciting story of his life journey to following Christ. He found true faith when he gave everything to God. And Joseph Kollie tells a great story of forgiveness in "New Son."

May these tidbits stir you to read, then ponder, and then put your faith into practice.

Always remember, God's children are on the winning side.

James G. Landis

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About Anabaptist Voice

Our Mission Statement:

We want *Anabaptist Voice* to be a servant to the churches of Jesus Christ. We choose the name “Anabaptist” as a fitting term to describe an obedient “people of God” in our generation. We follow the *example* of the historic Anabaptists who sought to obey the teachings of Christ and the apostles, but we do not idolize Anabaptists nor historic Anabaptism. We follow Christ.

Our Purpose:

To interpret Scripture in a simple childlike way, and to apply Bible teaching to the lives of living saints.

Our Tone:

The tone of the magazine shall be positive in that:

- it presents the right way when it decries the wrong way.
- it presents the truth when it warns of the untruth.

Our motto shall be words from Isaiah 30:21.

Whenever you turn to the right hand
Or whenever you turn to the left,
You shall hear a voice behind you, saying,
“This is the way, walk in it.”

Our Bible Translation Policy:

All Scriptures quoted will be in either the KJV or the NKJV translations unless otherwise specified.

We respect the specific preference of a writer who wishes to use other translations for his article.



Some Historic Tenets of Anabaptism:

In order to provide clarity about who we are, *Anabaptist Voice* lists some historic Anabaptist beliefs and practices we believe are still valid today.

1. God accepted Jesus’ death on the cross as an atonement for the sins of the whole world. Thus the blood of Jesus enables each person to be acceptable to God when he repents of his sin and surrenders himself to King Jesus. This initial commitment is followed by obedience to the commands of Christ which gives the disciple assurance of his right standing before God. “Salvation” is not just a one-time event but a life-long experience.
2. Adult believer’s baptism signifies a commitment to follow Christ as His disciple in His Kingdom.
3. The teachings of Christ and the apostles in the New Testament are to be put into practice. The Sermon on the Mount and the Sermon on the Plain are the heart of Christ’s Kingdom teaching for His disciples.
4. Anabaptists recognize the church as Christ’s Kingdom on the earth.
5. Faithful obedience to the commands of Christ often brings persecution upon us.
6. The world (*all who do not obey God*) is evil and under the sway of Satan.
7. Our earthly conduct determines our eternal destiny. True faith must result in obedience that will be rewarded in heaven. Evil works prove a lack of faith in God and will result in eternal punishment.
8. Kingdom disciples do not participate in the civil government or “serve” in the military.

Our Finances:

There is no set subscription price for *Anabaptist Voice*. We appreciate donations from those who wish to support the work.

To assure an informed supporter base, each issue will contain a statement giving the number of copies printed and distributed, the total costs for the previous issue, and the amount of donations received.

Our Organization:

The AV Editor is responsible for assuring that *Anabaptist Voice* adheres to the stated purpose, securing writers, and proper copy editing. The AV Production Team is responsible for design, layout, printing, subscriptions, and all financial matters.

At present, *Anabaptist Voice* is choosing to be free of government regulations and control as much as possible: We are not registered with any federal or state government body. We are not a 501(c)3 organization; individual contributions are not tax deductible. Those who give to *Anabaptist Voice* through the local church may obtain a tax deduction.

Our Audience:

Our primary target audience is anyone associated with an Anabaptist church. We define an Anabaptist church as one that practices a follower-of-Jesus baptism, maintains actual applications of Bible truths, and one where a close-knit, disciplined brotherhood exists among the believers.

Our secondary target audience is those not familiar with Anabaptist churches but are searching the Scriptures for truth.

Our Readers Write

Policy Note: Email letters to *Anabaptist Voice* are encouraged. All letters must be accompanied by the writer's full name and physical address (not a PO Box). If the letter is printed in the magazine, only the writer's initials and state will be attached to the comments. If you send AV a letter, we assume the right to use any part of the letter we deem of interest to our readers. Not all comments by readers express the thoughts of *Anabaptist Voice*, but we think they may have some merit in showing counter points of view.

AV Editor

Enjoyable Read

I picked up a copy of *Anabaptist Voice* at the CAM rummage sale near Arthur, Illinois. We enjoyed reading the magazine.

Please add our name to your mailing list.

M. R. M. | *Illinois*



Hard Work

Thanks for putting information about Venezuela in the *Anabaptist Voice* (AV24, page 19). I was glad to hear more details about that country.

Enclosed find a check to help.

I am thankful for all the hard work that goes into this publication.

N. Y. | *Georgia*



It Happened to Us

I see where you are facing criticism for your comments on vaccine for COVID-19 and ivermectin.

Here's our story: I have a master's degree in Christian education, but have no degree in medicine. We usually take at face value the advice of medical professionals. For us, these last two years have produced a crisis in that trust. We would have "caved in" to the pressure for vaccine had it not been for a family member with a medical degree.

Here's what happened: In July, 2020, I got very indisposed after a two-hour exposure to ragweed. Soon thereafter, my wife (though not exposed to ragweed) got the same symptoms. After three or four days we both recovered.

As a regular donor of blood to Red Cross, I then

gave blood in October, 2020. Soon thereafter, Red Cross reported to me that they had found COVID-19 antibodies in my blood. In layman's language, they exclaimed: "Give us more!"

Now back to the advice we got and heeded. In later months when we were exposed to folks with COVID-19, we took Vitamin D and zinc and dosed with ivermectin according to FLCCC guidelines for our circumstances. We have had no further indications of COVID-19.

At age 88 and 87, we were told that we should, by all means, take the vaccine. We believe, however, that we are fortunate to not have taken the vaccine that had no long-term safety profile established.

P. L. M. | *Kansas*



Second Look

Thank you for the AV. I am taking a second look at various issues.

I would like to receive an additional five copies of AV24 and, if possible, one copy each of issues 22 & 23.

Thank you and God bless.

A. J. S. | *California*



I no longer have place to give out as many copies. I have been quite disappointed in the political tone and theories put out by the editor around the whole COVID controversy. I am afraid you are losing a clear understanding of what our role ought to be as ambassadors of God's Kingdom, representing heaven on earth. Please don't get sidetracked. I'm not ready to give up on you yet, though.

God bless your efforts

W. M. | *Pennsylvania*

Venezuela Aid Project

Reported by Paul N. Kaufman | New Mexico
Luke Martin | Huaral, Peru

Thanks for running the article in AV24 about the Venezuela Aid Project. It brought numerous responses.

The following three notes come from folks in Venezuela who have been helped through the Venezuela Aid Project:

How can I express such thanks? The soup kitchen is a miracle. And you even sent me help to buy glasses because I could hardly see anymore. Praise the Lord! Here we are, willing to continue. Thanks for being a great blessing.

– Wilmer, a helper at one of the soup kitchens

First, I thank God for the soup kitchen. It is a great blessing because of the great need in Venezuela. Using the “arepa” we display the message of salvation to all those who are thirsty for the water of eternal life. Thank you, brothers. Glory and praise to the Lord Jesus Christ.

– Artemenio, a coordinator of a soup kitchen

We give thanks to God for the soup kitchen, because since it started our family has supper every day. We also have been able to help in the soup kitchen, helping to serve other families in extreme need. My family and I have also benefitted from help to buy medicine. It has been a great blessing—this food and evangelistic project which has come from God’s hand in time of crisis.

– the Delgado family.



For the Record

Five years from now no one will bother trying to prove what I want to tell you. In five years an illusion will erase reality. People will believe something about 2020 and COVID-19 that won’t be true if no one speaks up now.

COVID-19 arrived in Holmes County, Ohio in

March of 2020. The Amish Community, 38,000 people strong, braced for its approach with narratives like: “It’s political” or “It’s really nothing to worry about” to “It’s demonic.” It hardly matters whether these narratives had a grain of truth or were completely false—COVID-19 came.

As an Amish community we felt the sting of COVID along with the rest of the world. We felt the pain of increased deaths. The elderly and those with pre-existing conditions felt it most. Smaller funerals and weddings were a short-term cultural shift.

The Holmes County, Ohio, Amish community responded to COVID-19 with a month of cancelled church services because our medical world thought us irresponsible to continue. We wore masks where required in public places. We temporarily adjusted the size of our funerals and weddings as a nod to civil authority and medical experts. A few social events were cancelled.

But, for the most part, life among our 38,000 members quickly resumed normal. Thousands attended auctions. No masks in sight. No six feet between bodies. Business as usual. Our schools didn’t close. We avoided consigning our children to fear and alienation. Amish didn’t wear masks to church, social, and family gatherings, or to work (except where required by non-Amish employers). *Social closeness has been and remains a plain-people distinctive.*

COVID came. When it did, some of us left earlier than we expected. We had a few more funerals than usual. But then COVID left. COVID exited.

Then the vaccine came. Trillions of dollars were thrown at their warp speed development and hasty distribution. Mankind was saved by a jab in the arm just in the nick of time.

Or was it?

Not the Amish community. COVID came then COVID left. COVID exited and then the vaccine entered (note the order here). Yes, COVID caused some to leave earlier than expected. Yes, it interrupted our social and spiritual lives for a month or so. But it left. It left before salvation arrived. It left the Amish community prior to the arrival of the vaccine.

Even if the vaccine had arrived prior to COVID’s exit, the vaccine would have failed its purpose for a very important reason: almost no Amish were, or are, vaccinated. Very few of the Amish population chose to vaccinate. Reasons for not vaccinating may have varied, but even if we had accepted the vaccination, COVID still left us prior to the vaccine’s arrival.

When medical experts, anthropologists, sociologists, and government agencies look back on 2020 and the COVID pandemic, they will do so with the sharpness of 20/20 hind-sight. “COVID came,” they will say, “then we mandated, masked, social distanced, and vaccinated it out of existence.” And in their perfect hindsight they may miss a group of 38,000 people for which that was not true.

They may miss it, that is, unless someone says something today. So I have.

M. W. | *Ohio*



A Good Source

Thank you for the back issues.

I would be willing to tell of my journey. I will work on getting it into writing and will let you know when it is done. When time allows, I will work on it.

I am currently teaching Sunday school and trying to learn computer programming for work.

Thanks again for what you do. I believe AV is a good source for reminding us of why we believe certain things, as well as allowing us to see what others think and then working things out.

C. W. | *Kansas*



Half and Half

I was just recently introduced to AV by a friend. I picked up my first copy (winter 2022) for some inspirational reading. The first half did not disappoint me. The last half was disappointing enough I am finding it difficult to pick up the next issue.

Please keep biased COVID discussions out. The editor should not try to have the last word. I thought MD Healer had some good points, only to be critiqued by the editor.

I will try to lay my first impressions aside and look at a few more issues.

D. K. | *Missouri*



A Front-Runner

I’ve enjoyed the variety and practical application that is found in the *Anabaptist Voice*.

In the most recent issue (AV25, pages 11-13), I thought the article “Integrity or Loyalty” was very well done. It sparked a conversation with some friends where the question was raised, “Will a life of loyalty to God result in a life of integrity...or is a life of integrity a sign of loyalty to God?”

I conclude that loyalty to God is the one situation where loyalty can front-run integrity because we are loyal to a God of perfection who is everything good and produces the good fruit of a life of integrity.

Another thought I gleaned and appreciated from the latest AV (page 38), was in the article “No Shots, No Job” talking about COVID vaccines. He quoted, “God gently prods, the Devil coerces.” So true.

E. W. | *Georgia*



Bravely Stand

I appreciate the Michael Sattler information in AV 25 page 6. Although I knew the name, I didn’t remember him or else I knew little of his life and death.

In the future, if stories of other martyrs are printed in AV, it may embolden all readers to also bravely stand for biblical truth.

It seems that few people talk about the martyrs of the past, yet we may be martyrs in the future. Although some people may choose to ignore politics, persecution from government can come to where we live. We can run. We can hide. But we can’t escape. Our ancestors fled to America, but where can we go?

I didn’t know about my ancestor, Hans Heinrich Landis (1553-1614), until I got interested in my family tree. Hans was an Anabaptist preacher who became a martyr for Jesus Christ. Likewise, by a study of my family tree, I learned that my ancestor Hans Rudolph Negele and wife joined the Ephrata Society.

B. H. | *Pennsylvania*



The Value of a Song

by Samuel Heatwole



Songs influence us. To illustrate this point, I will begin with two stories showcasing how singing ministers to both believers and unbelievers. This ministry of music touches the hearts of saints and sinners.

In the following account, a church's singing led to an angry man's conversion. This story is written by Steve Hollaway, whose parents were missionaries to Japan following World War II. His parents tell the story.

A young tailor lived in Hiroshima but was out of town the day the atom bomb fell. He searched through the ruins and could not even locate his house until he heard a voice calling him faintly from a mound of flesh he could only recognize as his sister by the print of the dress burned into her skin. He watched her die and determined to hate the Americans forever.

But as he wandered in a daze through Hiroshima he came across a Baptist church which had three walls standing and no roof, and inside those walls a group of people were singing hymns. He was drawn to the joy in their voices in the midst of destruction. Week after week the young tailor came to hear the songs. He would leave before the sermon, because he was not interested, he said, in a God who was the God of Americans. But finally the music drew him in and he stayed to hear the message that there is a loving God who cares for all his children of every nation, who offers forgiveness and the ability to forgive, and the tailor came to faith in Christ.”¹

What an amazing story! In the midst of a war-torn country where hope was scarce, the singing drew the tailor to the church. Eventually he stayed to hear the preaching, which led him to faith in Christ. Hymn writer Brian Wren says, “Congregational song does

important things that speech alone cannot do.”²

While that story highlights the effect of Christian song on an unbeliever, I'd like to share a second story which shows the effect of a hymn on a believer in her hour of crisis. The songs we sing in church become a part of us. They inform us and shape what we believe about God.

In the book, *Singing – A Mennonite Voice*, Marlene Kropf shares a personal testimony.

“As a young adult, I once found myself unexpectedly in a hospital emergency room. Full of fear as I lay on a table in the examining room, I desperately tried to remember a scripture I could repeat to myself that would bring calm. Nothing came. Though I searched every corner of my mind, I couldn't remember a single text I had ever learned. After a few minutes, a hymn began singing itself inside me: ‘O God, our help in ages past, our hope for years to come, our shelter from the stormy blast, and our eternal home.’ I sang the song over and over again until peace returned. Later, when I reflected on the incident, I felt chagrined that I had been unable to remember any scripture. I thought of how ashamed all my childhood Sunday school and Bible school teachers would be if they knew! Then I looked at the hymn text again and realized that it was a setting of Psalm 90. I had indeed remembered Scripture – a text mediated through music. I also realized that in moments of panic one does not necessarily have access to information stored in the left brain; fear can stop those circuits from functioning. What I did have access to was something embedded more deeply still in my blood and bones – a song I had sung over and over again in worship.”³

If you look at the history of God's people, you will see a thread connecting the Old Testament and New Testaments saints—and that thread is singing. In fact, God himself sings. In Zephaniah 3, Zephaniah tells Israel, “**The LORD thy God in the midst of thee**

¹ from the article *The Command to Sing*.

² from the book *Singing – A Mennonite Voice*, Nafziger and Kropf, copyright 2001

³ from Kenneth Osbeck's book *The Endless Song*, copyright 1987

is mighty; he will save, he will rejoice over thee with joy; he will rest in his love, he will joy over thee with singing.”

Why do Christians sing? Is the singing in our church services just filler between the speaking parts? Although not exhaustive, I present three answers to the question why Christians sing—singing honors God, singing instructs us, and singing encourages us.⁴

1. Singing honors God.



The Westminster Catechism, written in the 1600s, presents a series of questions and answers as a way to teach theology. While we don't agree with some theology in this catechism, many answers are excellent. One of these question/answer pairs is, “What is the chief end of man? Man's chief end is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever.”

How do we glorify God? How do we enjoy Him? I believe God receives glory when our hearts and minds are fully engaged in worship. Psalm 50:23 says, “**He who offers praise honors Me.**” Although there are other ways to offer praise besides singing, singing songs of praise honors God. As an indication of its importance, the Bible references music in 44 of its 66 books.

Many problems would seem much smaller if we spent more time worshipping God; not only praising Him for what He has done, but adoring Him for who He is. To illustrate this point, if I thank someone for the card he sent, that expresses gratitude; but if I tell him, “You are such a kind and caring person,” that goes much deeper. That compliments his character.

At the end of the hymn “*Love Divine, All Loves Excelling*,” a phrase says “lost in wonder, love, and praise.” In that context it's speaking of a future event after we've cast our crowns before God. But we can have these moments now—moments where we are lost in awe and wonder of who God is and what He has done. When wonder is lost, praise can be a way to rekindle that wonder.

Urie Sharp, who has been involved with music his entire life, often says that praise scatters the enemy. Too often we forget about the spiritual dimension of Christian singing. He believes this is the primary reason why singing is one of the first things we do in our church services—to praise God and give God his rightful authority, causing the enemy to flee.

What is required to worship well? Singing can be part of it, but singing merely for the sake of singing

is not enough. Our hearts also need to be right with God and engaged in worship. Worship is an act of the will. It's possible to be physically present in a church service while our minds are far away. It's possible to sing songs in church without thinking about the words we are singing. This can apply to all aspects of a church service. Just because the pastor is praying doesn't mean that I am also praying.

God sees our whole life when He looks down on us. To Him, there is no separation between our public praise and our private lives. He sees our hearts. He sees our actions. He knows our motives. In Amos 5: 23-24, the Lord is speaking to Israel. He says, “**Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments. But let justice run down like water, And righteousness like a mighty stream**” (NKJV).

Another way singing honors God is by our obeying His commands to sing. Steve Hollaway says, “The Bible never says, ‘Let those who can sing, sing,’ as if it were a spiritual gift. The Bible never says, ‘Let those who have beautiful voices sing,’ as if natural talent were required to praise God. The Bible just says, ‘Sing!’ Over and over, dozens of times, we are commanded to sing: ‘Sing to the Lord, Sing praises, Sing joyfully, Sing a new song. Come into God's presence with singing.’”

Here are three verses in the New Testament with commands to sing:

– “**Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord**” (Colossians 3:16).

– “**Is any among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let him sing psalms**” (James 5:13).

– “**Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord**” (Ephesians 5:19).

During worship, there is potential for distractions, but let's sacrifice our time and energy because we value the One we worship. He is the One who has created us and is worthy of our praise! John Bell, an expert on congregational singing, writes, “The worship of God is not a casual thing. It is an expression of worth. That is what worship, or *worth-ship*, means. Worship which is offered with little forethought or preparation is shoddy, and when badly led, is not simply an inconvenience to the congregation; it is an insult to the Almighty.”⁵

⁴ from the book *The Singing Thing*, Bell, copyright 2000

⁵ from the book *Meditations from a Prison Cell*, Stockwell, copyright 1954

2. Singing Instructs Us



Consider the number of concepts that come into our lives through songs. I'm now thinking broader than church music. Advertisers know the persuasive power of music in commercials.

As an example, my in-laws had water damage in their basement a few years ago; the problem turned out to be far worse than they first imagined. They realized they needed to get a company in to give recommendations. They weren't sure who to call. My sister-in-law remembered hearing a jingle on the radio from Terry's Cleaning and Restoration. Although I don't know the tune, the words were "An accident's an accident; it's not a devastation. Call Terry's Cleaning and Restoration." Because she remembered that catchy jingle, they called that company.

Former missionary to China, F. Olin Stockwell, relates this account from China:

"During the first long period of my imprisonment, I was at a center where the government was training its new cadres. The young people, seventy-five to a hundred of them at a time, were brought in and given six or eight weeks of training and indoctrination before being sent out to government jobs. The mornings were spent in study, the afternoons and evenings in singing. The leader had no instrument other than a pitch pipe. Sounding the note, he would sing a phrase. Then the group would sing it over in the same way. Thus phrase after phrase was lined off until the young people had the melody firmly in mind. After that, they memorized the words. The tunes were catchy, easy to remember. Over and over they sang these songs until the whole courtyard rang with music. In this way the hates and fears, the hope and faith of Communism sang themselves into the minds and hearts of these youth. This is being done all over China—in schools, offices, army and training groups. China is singing herself into the communist ideology."⁶

Since music is so influential, let's use that influence to teach truth. We learn many truths about God through songs we sing at church. An excellent way to memorize Scripture is to learn Scripture songs.

I find the connection between the Word of God and singing fascinating. Notice the relationship between

⁶ from the book *The Complete Book of Hymns*, William Petersen and Ardythe Petersen, copyright 2006

the two in Colossians 3:6, "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Even a small phrase in a hymn can contain a lot of truth. Consider the following examples:

Five bleeding wounds He bears—Christ had wounds in both hands, both feet, and in His side.

Darkness be over me, My rest a stone, Yet in my dreams I'd be nearer, my God, to Thee. This is a reference to Jacob who slept on a stone and had a vision while he slept.

The song, "Alas! And Did My Saviour Bleed?" has spoken to many people through the years. Consider this story:

A young man wrote his former Sunday school teacher: "'Do you remember that old hymn, 'Alas! And Did My Savior Bleed'? I thought it was rubbish at the time, but its lines have followed me like a detective. I have been unable to shake off the question: 'Was it for crimes that I have done?' So I finally decided to surrender my life to Him. 'Here, Lord, I give myself away, 'Tis all that I can do.'"⁷

One hymn! And this is just one of many stories. Many more have also come to Christ through that hymn, as well as many other hymns and songs. Singing instructs us.

3. Singing Encourages Us



Congregational singing encourages us more than we realize. It's a tradition we don't want to lose. Alice Parker, a well-known musician, once said, "My own idea of what a congregation might be asked to do changed radically after I heard Mennonite singing in the late 1950s. One voice began a familiar hymn. On the second note, the entire room joined in the most beautiful four-part hymn singing I had ever heard. It gave me a vision of what hymn singing must have been in days past and could be gained in days to come. It made me realize that where there is an unbroken tradition of good singing, children grow up hearing their parents and neighbors sing and recognizing they love to sing. It is the norm. They simply join in."⁷

When singing in a group, something happens within the individual that is difficult to explain. There's often a feeling of connection—a united feeling with the

⁷ from the book *Melodious Accord: Good Singing in Church*, Alice Parker, copyright 1991

people of God. As a group, we're able to produce a sound that none of us can make individually. When we join God's people in singing songs celebrating God's faithfulness, that in itself can be an encouragement. In those moments, we don't feel alone. We are part of God's family, and we are singing with other saints.

There are times when Christians become weary and discouraged. Kenneth Osbeck says, "Many believers.....have experienced the healing, encouraging power of sacred song. They have come to a church service with their spirits drooping. They may have experienced serious physical, financial, or emotional difficulties during the week. The daily demands of living may have built up a mountain of despondency. But then they hear a triumphant song of praise, a majestic hymn of worship, or a simple gospel song that reminds them of God's presence and guidance. The struggling Christian's burdens are lifted, their minds become clear, their fragile emotions are mended, and their hearts are singing once again as they return to their busy life."³

Sometimes a phrase leaps from a well-known song and meets the need of the moment. It can be encouraging to hear the testimony of saints from previous generations who have written songs of their unwavering trust in God. As an example, I'm reminded

of the circumstances surrounding the hymn, *Now Thank We All Our God*. Martin Rinkart, the man who wrote that text, conducted around five thousand funerals in one year, including that of his wife. This was during the Thirty Years' War in Europe, and when he prays, "Guide us when perplexed," he certainly has cause to be perplexed! Yet we have a beautiful hymn of praise, "Now thank we all our God with heart and hands and voices, Who wondrous things hath done, in whom His world rejoices."

Conclusion



Singing honors God. Singing instructs us. Singing encourages us.

That is the value of a song. When song leaders take their role seriously and when congregants are fully engaged in the singing, it will create an experience of congregational singing that will enhance our worship of God. We have many more reasons to sing than these three, but the psalmist David says it best, "**And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord**" (**Psalm 40:3**).

S. H. | Pennsylvania

A Song of Praise

by Norman Ward

I read of a Christian who was taken captive by communist guerillas and locked up in a filthy, rat-infested prison filled with hardened criminals. Every morning, as was his habit, he would sing a rousing hymn of praise to God.

At first the other prisoners would throw things at the singing Christian and curse, mock, and ridicule him, but he kept singing his song of praise. Every so often the guards would take him off and beat him, then bring him back all bloody and bruised—but the next morning he was praising God again. The Christian's continued singing astounded the other prisoners.

One morning the guards came early and dragged him off before he sang. As they took him away, the other prisoners all burst out singing at the top of their voices the song of praise they had learned from him; they made the corridors ring!

The cruel guards, who had been vainly trying to beat Christ out of the prisoner, found out that a song of praise was contagious!

– *Echoes from the Mount*, #889, 7/28/21



Can You Sing?

by Vernon Hege

Sir Ernest Shackleton was looking for men to go with him on an expedition—men made of steel, for his expedition would test the mettle of the strongest. It was 1914, and his goal was to cross Antarctica coast to coast, on foot. With winds raging two hundred miles per hour and temperatures dropping as low as -100°F, Antarctica bristled with hostility toward invaders.

Sir Shackleton had explored Antarctica before. He well knew the long, bitterly cold days with little to eat. He knew the sheer exhaustion of hiking thirty-six hours non-stop because life depended on reaching the next cache.

Now Sir Shackleton was handpicking the most indestructible men he could find. Before him sat R. W. James, a physicist who hoped to go with him. How could Sir Shackleton discover whether James would be an asset or a hindrance? The difference could well mean the difference between life and death—the life or death of the entire crew.

Sir Shackleton started his interview with one simple question. “Jimmy, can you sing?”

But, we wonder, what about scientific qualifications or mental aptitude or physical strength? Surely Sir Shackleton should have considered these before musical ability. What could singing do for exhaustion and frostbite?

Sir Shackleton had his reasons for asking, “Can you sing?” And he explained to the bewildered scientist that it was not so much about singing ability. What he was looking for was a “singing attitude.”

How about it? In loneliness or in cramped quarters, can you sing? When you feel others are discouraged, can you sing? When hopes are disappointed, can you sing? In the face of a cold, miserable death, can you sing?

The expedition proved the worth of Sir Shackleton’s question. Not one man that sailed with him towards Antarctica would actually set foot on the continent. Instead, their ship would be frozen in the ice pack eighty miles from shore, turning the glorious expedition into a twenty-two month struggle for survival. The fact that the entire crew survived is credited to the positive, optimistic attitude Sir Shackleton was able to help his men maintain. Sir Shackleton knew the power of song.¹

Jesus too, is looking for strong, brave men—men willing to follow Him anywhere in the face of anything. He asks His recruits the same question: “Can you sing?”



Sir Ernest Shackleton

We feel His blood cleanse us from our sin and His joy fill our hearts. We know it will be a glorious expedition, so we confidently say, “Yes, we can sing.”

But then ... we face a spell of loneliness. A large hospital bill. The death of a loved one. We face a day-after-day struggle that wears down our morale. Our plans are disappointed. Our Christian life turns into a struggle for survival. Then ... can we sing?

A great crowd of witnesses has said, “Yes, we can sing.” Paul and Silas decided they could sing in jail, in the dark, with bleeding backs and fettered feet. *Martyrs Mirror* tells the stories of many Christians who could sing even in deep suffering. Claus De Praet in 1556, in a lonely prison cell, having just endured severe interrogations, facing discouragement and temptation, “fled to God, and commenced a hymn, singing joyfully, and became glad and happy.” Gerrit Hasepoot, after a sorrowful farewell to his wife, sang his way from the wagon to the scaffold where he was tied to a stake to be strangled and burned. When he felt the rope loosen, not having been well tied by the executioner, he resumed his song, finishing his hymn before the executioner twisted the rope tight, thus ending his life.²

Incarcerated Christians have written new songs to express their hearts. With bodies bound, or even burning, their spirits soared in song. We ponder the lyrics and marvel. We covet their strength and joy, and in so doing we do well.

Sir Shackleton’s crew sang earthly songs. At best, they could lift emotions and build camaraderie. How much more power have the songs of Zion! They give hope. They minister grace. They bring deliverance. Whatever we face on the expedition of life, they lift our eyes from “our light affliction, which is but for a moment,” to God, the source of our eternal joy.

How about it? Can you sing?

— V. H. | Tremonton, UT

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¹ Caroline Alexander, *The Endurance* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1998).

² *Martyrs Mirror*, pp. 555, 560.

The People of God

by Menno Knight

Two worlds. Two kingdoms. Two rulers.

We cannot be part of one kingdom, and also part of the other kingdom.

We wholly serve in God's kingdom, or we wholly serve in Satan's kingdom.

Only One God

Joshua made it clear to the people of Israel that they could not serve both the Lord and other gods at the same time. They told Joshua, *"We also will serve the Lord, for He is our God."* But Joshua firmly declared, *"You cannot serve the Lord, for He is a holy God. He is a jealous God; He will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins"* (Joshua 24:18-19). The firmly implied meaning of Joshua's response was: you cannot serve God and other gods at the same time. It can be only one, not many.

Only God or Only Baal

Elijah made the same choice clear to the people on Mount Carmel. In words that have trumpeted down through the ages, he cried, *"How long halt ye between two opinions? If the Lord be God, follow him: But if Baal, then follow him. But the people answered Elijah not a word"* (I Kings 18:21). The people were not ready to commit to serving only the Lord God. Elijah gave the people only two choices; it was either the Lord God of Israel, or it was Baal. The god that could send fire down from heaven, and consume the sacrifice would be God. There was no halfway business here; either all for Baal or all for God.

Elijah pitted himself and his God against 450 prophets and their lifeless god Baal. All the dancing, shouting, and bloodletting did not bring any response from Baal. But when Elijah prayed, the fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt sacrifice and the wood and the stones and the dust and licked up the water that was in the trench; the choice was easy. Then the people were ready to commit to following only the Lord God. *"They fell on their faces; and they said, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!'"* (I Kings 18:39).

On that day, Elijah executed the 450 prophets of Baal by the brook Kishon. Again it was either life or death, God or Baal. No halfway following of God would please the Lord God.

Today the struggle to serve only the Lord God and

obey only Him is as real as it was in the days of Joshua and Elijah. There are two kingdoms: the kingdom

of God, and the kingdom of the world under the sway of Satan. There can be no dual citizenship, no dual allegiance, no half-hearted serving in two kingdoms under two different rulers. God will accept only full allegiance and obedience from His people.

The apostle Peter calls such committed people, *"The people of God"* (I Peter 2:10). What kind of people are the people of God in the twenty-first century? I would like to discuss three areas of particular interest—people of life, people of peace, people of hope. These three areas mark the people of God as positive-minded people, in contrast to the fearful people of the world.

People of Life

God created the world and everything in it—the animals, the plants, the birds, the fish, and mankind. He created human beings in His own likeness, distinctly different from every other living thing on the earth.

God as the Creator planned and designed the world the way He wanted it. Then God gave to mankind the command to be the steward of His stunning creation. Man's express task was to *"be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground"* (Genesis 1:28).

God loves life. He wanted man to increase in number and fill the earth. That was God's design and His will. With the long recorded lifespans and the garden-like atmosphere of the earth, the earth could easily have sustained a population of over eight billion people—more than the population of the earth today.

God did not destroy the living things on the earth



because it was overpopulated with people nor did the flood come because people were perishing from hunger. God sent the flood because He hated the continual wickedness of mankind (Genesis 6:5). The animals and plants did not sin against God; they cannot sin.

God did not change His design for the earth or His commission to Noah after the flood. Instead, when Noah came out of the ark and offered up his pleasing sacrifice, God restated His will for Noah and his family. “Be fruitful and increase in number and fill the earth” (Genesis 9:1; 9:7). “Fill the earth” tends to be an elastic clause. I do not find anywhere in the Bible that God placed a limit on the earth’s population. He said to “fill it.”

Julian L. Simon wrote in 1996 that the earth had enough resources using technology available at that time to sustain a population of 35-40 billion people.¹ With more time and more people now, and with more discoveries on the horizon, I believe the earth can sustain an unlimited number of people. That is God’s design. God wants a great number of people honouring and praising Him.

When Noah and the animals left the ark, God added to the original commission He gave to Adam. “Everything that lives and moves along the ground, the birds in the air, and all the fish in the sea; they are given into your hands. Everything that lives and moves about will be food for you. Just as I gave you the green plants, I now give you everything” (Genesis 9:2-3).

God could not have made it any plainer. Every living thing was given to man for food. In God’s plan, man was to have dominion over the earth, and the purpose of all the plants and animals was to sustain mankind. Therefore, man is free to destroy troublesome plants and animals that harm mankind. Wolves, bears, eagles, rats, mice, mosquitos are not sacred objects to be preserved and worshiped. But God has declared that man’s life is sacred, “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed” (Genesis 9:6). [This also includes an animal who kills a man.]

God loves life, especially human beings who love, obey, and praise Him. When man nurtures plants and animals for the sustenance of man, it pleases God. That is His will and pleasure for the people of God.

So in 2022 God wants His people to be happy gardeners, nurturing plant and animal life for the good of all mankind.

1 Simon, Julian L. “*The Ultimate Resource 2*”. Princeton New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1996; page 167. The ultimate resource is the God-given human brain that makes man different from all the animals.

People of Peace

The people of God should be a people of peace. Jesus said, “Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God” (Matthew 5:9). “Peacemaker” indicates an active and not a passive role. Peacemakers are not just sitting under a shade tree and not fighting while the fighters have-at-it all around them. Peacemakers attempt to bring two quarrelling parties to stop fighting with each other.

Or a peacemaker takes the initiative to bring about reconciliation between himself and another person. Romans 14:19 says it like this: “Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification.” A real peacemaker does not just stand by and wait for the other party to come to him first. He seeks out the other person and attempts reconciliation. Peacemaking may be costly and call for personal sacrifice as well as large doses of humility.

“Mutual edification” gives the idea of two parties within the church, not two nations warring with each other. I Thessalonians 5:11 says it clearly: “Live in peace with each other.” All war is evil and the children of God have no part in trying to negotiate peace inside Satan’s kingdom. The kind of peacemakers we are talking about bring peace of heart on an individual basis.

Jesus told His disciples, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives” (John 14:27). Here Jesus contrasts the peace of heart He gives with the peace the world gives. The peace Jesus gives flows out of a heart governed by the Holy Spirit and brings life. The world’s peace may bring a cessation of fighting but the bitterness of heart and the hatred for one’s enemies continue on. The peace the world gives does not submit to God’s law, nor can it do so. It is still governed by the flesh and is hostile to God (Romans 8:6-8).

In I Timothy 2:2 the people of God are told to pray that kings and those in authority may allow us to “live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness.” A peaceful life means we get along with our neighbors, building each other up, doing good in our work and not evil. We are not out sowing discord and stirring up strife or fomenting rebellion against governing authorities. We may need to suffer injustice at times but never sue at the law to push our cause. If brought to law by an aggressor, we try to settle outside of court. Those are illustrations of what it means to live peaceably.

Living peacefully and quietly does not mean we are sluggards. We are diligent in godly occupations so we may be able to support our families, and have more to give to others in need. I Thessalonians 4:11

tells us, “**Make it your ambition to lead a quiet life: You should mind your own business and work with your hands, just as we told you, so that your daily life may win the respect of outsiders and so that you will not be dependent on anybody.**”

We ought not squander God’s wealth on ourselves or openly flaunt wealth before others. Instead, we strive to be fair and generous with employees and those we buy from as well as those we sell to. Boaz furnishes the most beautiful picture of an employer/employee relationship in a peaceful setting. “**Boaz arrived from Bethlehem and greeted the harvesters, ‘The Lord be with you!’**”

“ ‘The Lord bless you!’ the harvesters answered” **(Ruth 2:4).**

When we pray for the ability to live quiet and peaceable lives in all godliness we should not attempt to make a lot of fuss or trumpet our good deeds before men. Quietness means not making a lot of noise. And if need be, we are to suffer quietly. “**So then, those who suffer according to God’s will should commit themselves to their faithful Creator and continue to do good**” **(I Peter 4:19).**

When rulers of this world encourage us we should thank them. They are doing what God has ordained they should do.

The ministry of people of peace goes far beyond not fighting back and not joining the army. Often the people of God, right in the midst of danger, bring aid and help to those suffering the terrible effects of war or natural calamity. People of peace bring food to the hungry, clothes to the destitute, and comfort to the suffering. Beside supplying physical needs, they minister to hurting hearts and offer hope. Loving one’s enemies is even possible by God’s grace and kindness.

The current war in the Ukraine illustrates how the people of God risk much to carry food and medicine into war zones. They also preach to refugees hungry for the gospel of peace and healing. Anya Hursh² tells this story:

Fear hung over the city of Rubehnoye. Life under Russian occupation was tough, especially for believers. They were viewed as a threat to the Russians. Pastors especially were targeted. They were the ones who rallied the spirits of the people and of the Ukrainian soldiers. They offered hope and courage when the Russian army wanted to see them defeated and hopeless.

One night, eight drunken soldiers banged on

² An Anabaptist writer living in Ukraine for twenty years. She is currently active in food and aid distribution projects among grieving and suffering people.

the door of Vladimir and Tanya’s home. With angry hollers and loud curses they dragged him away to shoot him. Vladimir was not scared of death. At nearly 70 years of age his life had been full and fulfilling.

But he thought of his wife at home and of the church he pastored. Should he have left the area earlier? Was the little bit of good he had been able to do in the past weeks worth it? He thought so. He had known the risks, but he had chosen to stay. He had been able to help, to encourage, and to make a small difference in the darkness that covered that city.

Many thoughts rushed through his mind, as he stood there, hands tied behind his back, waiting for the end. Suddenly he realized something had happened. He looked at the soldiers who had taken him captive. The gun was pointed at him. The soldier pulled the trigger, but nothing happened.

“Let me try,” another soldier said. He cocked his gun and aimed. Again, nothing happened.

“Fellows,” Vladimir said, “you want to kill me. If I die, everything will be all right for me. I am ready to meet God. I’ll go straight to heaven. But I am worried about you! Are you ready to meet God?”

An uneasy silence filled the night air. “May I pray for you?” he asked.

Vladimir did not wait for an answer, but fell on his knees and began to intercede for the soldiers around him. He did not pray for his own safety; he knew he was ready to go. Instead, he pled to God to have mercy on these young soldiers, to show them what they were doing, and to help them find salvation. On and on he prayed. Suddenly he realized he was not praying alone.

He recognized the voice of a Russian soldier saying, “Lord, be merciful to me a sinner! Forgive me, Lord!” He listened as the soldier brokenly confessed his sins and asked God for forgiveness. The ground beneath them became holy as they prayed together, a Ukrainian pastor and a Russian soldier. They stood to their feet as brothers.

“You may go home,” the soldiers said. “We won’t shoot you after all.”

This story illustrates how Vladimir could be a true peacemaker by loving his enemies. His prayer brought repentance and a changed heart. Vladimir could be calm

in the face of death because he had no fear of judgment to come.

The people of God have no fear of impending judgment after death. **“In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment” (I John 4:17-18).**

People of Hope

The people of God are a people of hope. Anya Hursh has this story from the war-torn Ukraine:

While driving across Ukraine, we see much destruction and heartbreak. As the Russian army travels through villages, many times they destroy anything within reach. At times, it seems as though they destroy simply for the evil joy of destroying. Beautiful homes become graveyards and junkyards. Stately trees are splintered like matches. Buildings, roads, and fences are ruined or permanently scarred.

This war has wounded thousands of lives. Will healing ever come? Then I saw it, a photo of a fence that spoke volumes. It was scarred by shrapnel and bullets, like so many others along



the street, but it carried a message of hope. With a steady hand and a paintbrush, someone had painted flowers around the bullet holes. Now, instead of dozens of unsightly punctures, flowers are scattered across the fence, each one bearing a scar from a bullet or shrapnel.

As I thought about the scarred fence, I began to wonder if God can do the same for us. If we quit resisting the pain and suffering and simply trust the steady arms that hold us, will Christ use the scars of our lives as the center for flowers of grace?

The people of God live with the hope of a better life

to come in the presence of God for all eternity. People of God do not fear greater punishment after death because they have repented and cleared their consciences of past wrongs.

Paul tells the Ephesian Christians that at one time they were without hope and without God in the world. Then he goes on: **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far away have been brought near by the blood of Christ” (Ephesians 2:13).** Now, because of the blood of Christ, these Ephesian Christians enjoyed a better life than they had before. Now they had joy and peace and a clear conscience, but in addition they could see beyond the present difficulty or disaster or suffering to a glorious hope beyond the grave.

Beside a better life here and now and the hope of eternal glory is the assurance that Jesus will rescue us from the wrath to come when we die (I Thessalonians 1:10; 2:16; Luke 3:7).

Only Baal or Only God

So the wicked people of the world live under the curse of sin, in fear of many things—scarcity, disease, over-population, chemicals, climate change, pandemics, punishment when caught, war, destruction, and eternal punishment.

The redeemed people of God live differently from the people of the world because they have chosen to serve only God:

- **They love life** according to God’s design for the earth.
- **They live in peace** with their neighbors, enemies, and God.
- **They live in hope** and holiness now, and with the hope of eternal glory.

Discussion Questions:

1. How is man superior to all other creatures?
2. If the earth is sin-cursed, what does that mean?
3. How can the earth support an unlimited population?
4. In what way is it still God’s plan for man to rule over the creatures?
5. Why does a peaceable life bring conflict with the world?
6. Why does a holy life bring peace to the soul?
7. How can one be separate from the world and still live in it?



Rubies & Diamonds

Memorable quotes that speak to the heart.



“The way to backslide is to reserve something for yourself.”

– Joeseeph Yoder at Pelkie Mennonite Church, MI



“Jesus taught salvation is a gift of God. The Pharisees taught it was the paycheck for righteous living.”

– Nate Nissley at Farmington Mennonite Church, MO



“It was not that Israel completely forgot God, but they thought He was too high and holy. They wanted some idols to help them with their own agendas.”

– Bryce Geiser at Caneyville Christian Community, KY



“Comparison with others robs us of our joy.”

– Duane Strite at Burkland Mennonite Church, GA



“Be honest. Practice integrity. Never violate integrity, but if necessary, eat the loss.”

– Ivan Beachy at Faith Mission Fellowship, VA



“We are held accountable for how we teach our children. They are held accountable for how they respond.”

– David Yoder at Cimarron Christian Brotherhood, OK



“We must choose to move toward God’s standard or we will take the world’s standard and move downward with them.”

– Clifford Martin at Living Hope Mennonite Church, IA



“To guard the purity of our minds we must not lose a sense of shock to sin.”

– Randy Hoover at Bethel Mennonite Church, GA



“Since God delivered us, He has the right to tell us how to live.”

– Barry Zeiset at New Haven Mennonite Church, PA



“It is not the intensity of our beliefs, but the basis of them that gives them stability.”

– Daniel Schrock, Shekinah Mennonite Church, MO

Share your rubies and diamonds with AV readers. Send in the quote followed by the name of the speaker and the name of the congregation or church where it was given. Just for our records, we also would like to have the name and address of the person sending in the quote.

Death in the Midst of Life

by *Melvin Burkholder*

Obituary:

Wilda Irene Rhodes Hege died of a severe stroke May 29, 2022, at the age of 79 years, 11 months, and 12 days. She was born June 17, 1942, in Columbiana, Ohio, to Mark and Ina (VanPelt) Rhodes. She married P. Harold Hege on October 17, 1964. They lived in Maryland, Pennsylvania, Ohio, the Dominican Republic, and for the last year and a half at Tremonton, Utah. She was a member of the Riverside Mennonite Church in Kenton, Ohio.

In her youth, Wilda chose to give her life to Christ. She served Him as a thrifty homemaker for her family and others—cooking, sewing, gardening, and tending house plants. Her life was enriched by extending hospitality and sending mail. Her love for wholesome poetry is reflected in the lines she wrote in her youth and in the many poems she copied in cursive, filling personal notebooks or sending them on to friends.

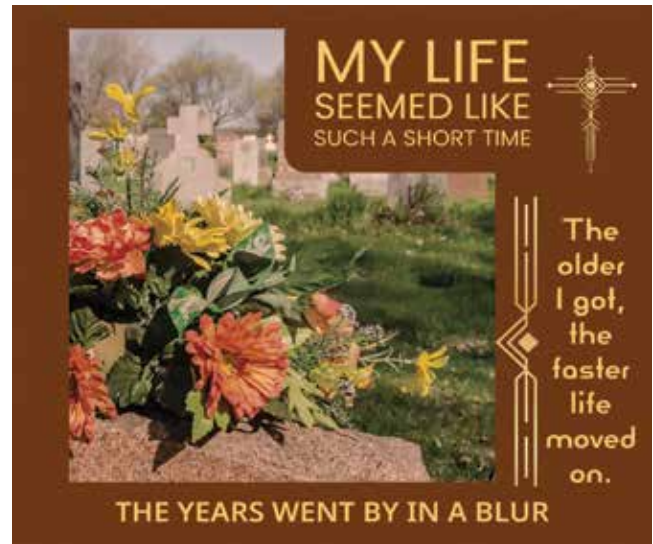
Wilda is survived by her husband, P. Harold Hege of Tremonton, Utah and her eight children—Regina (Mrs. David Horst) of Loma, Colorado; Nathan (Evelyn) of Tremonton, Utah; Crystal (Mrs. Carl Steiner) of Hawley, Texas; Seth (Grace) of Plainview, Texas; Lamar (Sheryl) of Deer Park, Washington; Lynn (Brenda) of Nortonville, Kentucky; Bethany (Mrs Mark Shertzer), of Deer Park, Washington; and Jewel of Tremonton, Utah. She is survived by four sisters—Hazel (Mrs. Joel Mosemann), Eva (Mrs. David Weaver), Beulah (Mrs. Harold Petre), and Dorothy (Mrs. Ron Cross). She is also survived by four brothers—Webster, Lee, Allen, and Carl Rhodes; 52 grandchildren; and 30 great-grandchildren. She was preceded in death by her brother Harvey, by two grandchildren—Amber Horst and Trenton Horst, and by one great-grandson—Tyrell Horst.

Funeral Sermon at Tremonton, Utah

We are met for the funeral of Wilda Hege, beloved wife, mother, grandmother, sister, and friend. A week ago, we had no expectations of being gathered together in this way today.

Once again, in the midst of life we are in death.

Life moves on normally; we are in control of our lives and our schedules; we plan our days and work our plans. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, in the midst of life, we are in death—death with its uncontrollable



reality and its disconcerting finality.

So many things flood our minds at these times. Powerful emotions. Regrets, perhaps. Feelings of sorrow, loss, fear.

Thoughts of the future with its uncertainties, changes, adjustments.

Sobering thoughts of our own mortality. Of choices and consequences. Of eternity and destiny.

These times are good for us. It is soul-refining to experience the descent into the valley of the shadow of death, the final painful parting, the placing of the lifeless body in the earth, the gathering of family and friends.

The Scripture says: **“It is better to go to the house of mourning, than to go to the house of feasting: for that is the end of all men; and the living will lay it to his heart” (Ecclesiastes 7:2).**¹

May we consider the end of all men and lay to heart the issues of mortality and destiny and eternity that we consider, especially at times like this.

I have chosen to meditate briefly on various scriptures touching on issues we should be laying to heart in the house of mourning.

1) “It is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Hebrews 9:27).

¹ “the living will lay it to heart” is translated in the NIV: “for death is the destiny of everyone. The living should take this to heart.”

We are appointed to die.

We are a dying people. Dying starts when life starts. At first, growth outpaces dying. But too soon dying takes the lead, and the signs of aging appear.

This is appointed by God, a part of the curse. All must die. We are not better than our fathers. Even the best of them, the prophets and saints, lived their lives and passed away.

Death is natural. Not abnormal. Not accidental. It is normal and inevitable, barring the return of Jesus.

At best, life is short. The Bible says:

Life is like a mist that hangs over the meadow on a summer morning and vanishes when the sun comes up.

- Life is like a flower that blooms for a day, and withers away.
- Life is like a shadow.
- Life is like grass – not a tree, which may live for centuries – but grass.
- Life is short. Even when people live a long time, it seems short.

Sister Wilda lived nearly 80 years. Yet I suppose that she would have said: “My life seemed like such a short time. The older I got, the faster life moved on. The years went by in a blur.”

Why does life seem so short?

Perhaps because we were designed for immortality. God’s original design specifications for human beings called for a lifespan of ... eternity. But Adam sabotaged God’s design through sin. We lost our birthright of immortality, and death has been wreaking its havoc ever since.

Because life is short, the Psalmist says: **“Teach us to number our days that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom” (Psalm 90:12).**

We normally number our lives by years. But God tells us to start thinking about life a day at a time. To count each day. To make each day count. To fill each day with a day’s worth of accomplishment. To value each day as a gift and an opportunity.

Because the countdown is on for each of us. Each day means one day nearer. For Sister Wilda it was more than 29,500 days. For some it is more; for some, less. But for all, the final day comes.

So teach us to number our days—that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.

Wisdom tells us we have an appointment with death: “It is appointed unto men to die.”

Wisdom tells us we have an appointment coming up with Almighty God: “after this the judgment.”

Common sense tells us it is wise to prepare for important appointments. Our appointment with God will be the most momentous, far-reaching appointment we ever keep. And we will keep it. He will see to that.

Come to that final day prepared. Make your peace with the Judge before you stand before Him. Be ready.

Numbering our days means remembering that no day is to be wasted. It means living so that we are prepared to die. Because death is inevitable and unpredictable, and strikes both old and young.

“The living know that they shall die” (Ecclesiastes 9:5).

We all know this is the truth – the evidence is overwhelming. But many push the truth away and live as if there is no end, no judgment, no accountability.

We speak to the living today, that each may lay to heart this sober truth: judgment will follow death. It will be final. It will be unchangeable. There will be no loopholes. There will be no appeals. We are today deciding where we will spend all eternity. Today, this day, every day—we make choices that impact eternity. Today is the proving ground for eternity.

Are we thinking about this? We tend to push the thought away. We fill our lives with busy-ness and activity to distract us from the disturbing thoughts of judgment, destiny, and eternity. Then death strikes among us once again, and God speaks once more, reminding us of the certainty of death and the inevitability of judgment. May we lay this to heart again today.

Death comes with a crawl, or comes with a pounce,
But whether he’s slow or spry,
It isn’t the fact that you’re dead that counts,
But only, how did you die?

Funerals force us to confront the fact of our own mortality. Death is on our trail, and he is catching up with us. What I need to do to be ready, I had better get done today. I have no promise of tomorrow.

God’s word is *today*. **“Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts” (Hebrews 3:15).**

Satan’s word is *tomorrow*. Tomorrow. Tomorrow. And for many, tomorrow never comes until it’s too late.

2) “But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly one” (Hebrews 11:16).

A better country, infinitely better, than the present

world.

Better in purity. No pollution. No sin.

Better in health. No curse. No disease. No bodily, no mental, no spiritual afflictions there.

Better in happiness. No disquiet. No grief, no pain. No bitterness—no crosses—no enemies—no false friends and no imperfect brethren—no poverty—no bitter toil—no fears—no temptation—no death. No funerals and no funeral sermons.

It is significant that the Bible describes heaven mostly in negatives—what is NOT there. I suspect that describing heaven to fallen creatures like us would be like describing the colors of a sunset to a person blind from birth. We simply lack the mental and sensory equipment to comprehend it. It's out of our world.

Better in permanence. Here we are but temporary residents in a temporary country. There we will be permanent residents in an everlasting kingdom.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” (Revelation 21:4).

I believe the happiest, most peaceful person in this assembly this morning is Wilda Hege, though of course she is not really here at all, just the shell of her. All tears have been wiped from her eyes. All sorrows have been transformed into joys. For her, there will be no more of the infamous D's: discouragement, disease, disability, and death. No more aging nor declining. No more disappointments. No more sorrow nor crying. No more pain. All that makes existence a burden is wiped away.

What is left are perfections: perfect capacities, perfect enjoyments, perfect security, perfect employments, perfect day, and perfect bliss unchanging and unchangeable.

To the Christian . . .

Death is the funeral of all his sorrows and evils, and the resurrection of all his joys.

Death is the royal highway to betterment of the Christian's estate.

Death is the gateway to life, the vestibule of heaven.

Death is the soul's emancipation from all bondage and limitations.

Death is like a birth. It means moving from the narrow, the restricted, and the limited into light and freedom and endless possibility.

Death is the entrance into light!

Death is like moving from the poorhouse into the king's palace.

Death is the gateway to greatly increased comfort and bliss.

For the believer, there is much to anticipate and nothing to fear in death. The best is yet to come.

The erstwhile prophet Balaam said to King Balak, *“Let me die the death of the righteous, and let my last end be like his” (Numbers 23:10).* We believe that Sister Wilda died the death of the righteous—an enviable death.

3) “They shall rest” (Revelation 14:13).

“And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, ‘Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth:’

“ ‘Yea,’ saith the Spirit, ‘that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them’ ” (Revelation 14:13).

Rest from their labors, from the burdens of responsibility.

Rest from uneasy thoughts, anxieties.

Rest from exhausting physical labor.

Sometimes we sing: “In that beautiful city, there is rest by and by.”

I remember a discussion in my youthful days, about a proposed church effort. Some said it would be too much work. Brother Warren Martin said: “There is rest by and by. We will have plenty of time to rest in heaven.”

Some want their rest today. They have a self-sparing mentality: *Not too many demands. I've got to take care of myself. No one else will.*

Others have a self-sacrificing mentality. Some are Givers. Some are Getters. Some people's hands are stretched out to receive. Others are stretched out to help.

Sister Wilda put herself out for us—and others. Today she is at rest.

4) “Together with them” (I Thessalonians 4:17).

13. But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope.

14. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also which sleep in Jesus will God bring

with him.

15. For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them which are asleep.

16. For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first:

17. Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

18. Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

– I Thessalonians 4:13

Note that this passage is not just about meeting the Lord, but is about the hope we have of seeing again those who have fallen asleep (verse 13).

Verse 17 says we meet the Lord **“together with them”** ... that death separated from us.

We will meet our departed loved ones again.

In just a few minutes, we will have what we call the final viewing of Sister Wilda Hege. But today's parting is not final. This will not be the last time we look upon her face. We shall meet again.

Resurrection day will be reunion day.

What a hope and comfort in the presence of death! We shall meet again. For the Christian, all will be restored and more than restored. Life will be much, much better than it ever was before—more happiness, closer relationships, fuller love. There will be nothing to mar our joy. No subjects avoided because they are too painful. No unresolved issues. No unhealed hurts. No secret resentments. Nothing between us and our loved ones. Nothing between us and our Lord.

Wherefore comfort one another with these words.

We anticipate much glory in the future, and we believe Sister Wilda is enjoying this glory right now. But now, especially for you, Bro Harold, the present stark reality is that after nearly 60 years of being TOGETHER, you are now ALONE.

This means pain, heartbreak, and tears. As Jacob said of his sons, Benjamin and Simeon in Genesis 43:14, we could say of our great sorrow, “If I be bereaved of my [wife], I am bereaved.”

Jesus sees our tears and broken hearts.

5) “Jesus wept” (John 11:35).

Why did Jesus weep? Surely not for Lazarus. He

knew He would restore Lazarus to life in just a few minutes.

Verses 33-35 imply that Jesus wept because Mary and others were weeping.

John 11:33-35 says, “When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews also weeping which came with her, he groaned in the spirit, and was troubled, And said, Where have ye laid him? They said unto him, Lord, come and see. Jesus wept.” If Jesus wept with Mary when she lost her brother, would He not also weep with Harold when he lost his wife?

Does Jesus care when I've, said “good-bye” to the dearest on earth to me

And my sad heart aches till it nearly breaks

Is it ought to Him? Does He see?

Oh yes, He cares. I know He cares.

His heart is touched with my grief.

Jesus understands our pain, sorrow, tears. He knew what it was to weep at a funeral.

Bro Harold, Jewel, all the family, we commit you to the One who weeps. The One who said: **“I will not leave you comfortless; I will come to you”** (John 14:18).

You will never be alone. Jesus also said, “I will be with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.” So be it.

Fear not! He has you in His heart and in His hand.

The way is dark just now, but one day you will come out of the darkness and find that God the Son was with you in the valley of the shadow of death.

Moreover, He is the One who holds the keys of death and the grave. He is the One who had the authority to unlock the chains of death and call Lazarus out of that grave. We have the confidence that one day, that same Jesus will open the grave of our beloved sister and bring her forth with a new body.

Hallelujah!

M. S. B. | Pennsylvania

*Many Roads
Many roads through this life we meet;
Only one ends at Jesus' feet.
Many detours would lead us astray;
Only with Christ we'll stay on "the way."
Many hills here hinder the race;
Only faith brings us face to face.'*

– Wilda I. Rhodes

Should You Go First

Should you go first and I remain
To walk the road alone,
I'll live in memory's garden, dear,
With happy days we've known.
In spring I'll watch for roses red,
In summer—lilacs blue;
In autumn when the brown leaves fall
I'll catch a glimpse of you.

Should you go first and I remain
For battles to be fought,
Each thing you've touched along the way
will be a hallowed spot.
I'll hear your voice, I'll see your smile,
Though blindly I may grope,
The memory of your helping hand
Will buoy me on with hope.

Should you go first and I remain
To finish with the scroll,
No length'ning shadows shall creep in
To make this life seem droll.
We've known so much of happiness,
We've had our cup of joy
And memory is one gift of God
That death cannot destroy.

Should you go first and I remain,
One thing I'd have you do;
Walk slowly down that long, lone path,
For soon I'll follow you.
I'll want to know each step you take
That I may walk the same.
For someday, down that lonely road,
You'll hear me call your name.

Albert K. Rowswell
(1884-1953)



No Matter the Cost

by Chris Wyan



Chris Wyan as a Teenager

I was born March 15, 1969 in California. I only lived in California six months because my dad was in the Air Force for 20 years and we moved a lot. When our family was complete, there were four boys and one girl; I was the middle child. I remember going

to church when I was little, but I cannot remember how old I was when we quit going to church.

Growing up in the military meant that we moved every two years. I made many friends, but the friendships had no depth and didn't last long. Every time, either we moved or my friends moved. After a while, I quit trying to make friends. Ever since my high school days, I have had no friends – acquaintances, but not friends.

One thing that helped me growing up was that there were four of us boys so we always had somebody to play with, but as we got older we all kind of went our own way. We still love each other and enjoy getting together to talk, but we all live in different states and don't see each other very often.

After my dad retired from the military we moved to Corbin, Kentucky where my dad grew up. We lived there only 6 months because dad could not find a job that paid enough to raise four boys.

My sister had married at the age of 16 right before my dad retired. When we left Corbin, Kentucky, we moved in with my sister, her husband, and their one-year-old child at Terre Haute, Indiana, while my dad searched for a job.

We did not stay with my sister's family very long. My dad found a job in Indianapolis, Indiana working for Wavetech as a technician. So we moved again to Greenwood, Indiana, a suburb of Indianapolis.

I was in 6th grade in 1985 when we moved to Greenwood. We lived there until after I graduated from

high school. There I met Melinda who was to become my future wife. Her family lived down the street from us and they were the first ones in our neighborhood to buy an Atari 2600 video game system. I mention this because I was a video game junkie. My love of technology played a large part in my initially wanting to spend time with Melinda. But as I got to know her, I didn't need the video games to be interested.

When we were in our freshman year of high school (grade 9), Melinda's folks moved to Kokomo, Indiana, 70 miles away. We continued dating on and off throughout high school. Long distance relationships are hard, so she broke up with me three times. The third time we were seniors.

The last breakup helped me decide that after I graduated from high school I was going to drive a semi. I loved to drive and see the country. However, after the last breakup, Melinda asked if I would come and talk with her. So I drove up to Kokomo and we talked.

After that we dated for six months. One night before I graduated, I took Melinda to a drive-in movie theater. After the movies, as we drove back to her home, I built up the nerve to ask her to marry me. She said "Yes," and we got married August 29, 1987, five days before her 18th birthday.

I had a job when we got married, working as a chef in a German American Club. I was getting minimum wage and soon found out that was not enough. We moved to Kokomo where Melinda's parents lived. There I continued my search for a better paying job, but I finally gave up and in 1988 I joined the army.

I went through basic training and AIT (Advanced Infantry Training) where enlistees learn the skills for the job they choose. For me, it was law enforcement since I was going to be with the Military Police. After I graduated, I was shipped off to Germany.

As soon as I could, I brought Melinda over the Atlantic to be with me and we spent the first 3 ½ years of our marriage in Germany. We were there when the Berlin wall came down, and we were there during the 1st Gulf War. It was hard living in Germany as a newly married couple, but it helped us to learn to communicate with each other and to work things out. We couldn't go running back to mom and dad. Telephone calls were expensive, and we had no internet or cell phones.

While we were in Germany, Melinda's parents divorced. This was painful for Melinda. Growing up,

she always felt close to her family. Then we also found out that we could not have children. Another blow! Melinda's world was spiraling out of control. She reasoned that if her parents divorced after 20 years of marriage, I would eventually leave her, especially if she couldn't give me a child. So the sooner the better! She tried pushing me away, but I wouldn't leave. I married her because I loved her, not because she could give me children.

In 1991 we came back to the States, and I was stationed at Fort A.P. Hill, Virginia. After 1 1/2 years there, I was tired of the politics of military life. I found a loophole in the rules that allowed me to get an honorable discharge.

In November, 1993, I was discharged from the military and we moved to Ohio. At one point I was making \$3.83 an hour while we lived in a Nighty Night Motel. After a couple of years, we moved to Jasper, Indiana, where I started working for Kimble International. I learned to operate several different wood manufacturing machines, working "piece rate," which means I got paid by the piece. I worked up to over \$10 an hour, then one day the company didn't want to pay me what I had turned in. They finally paid me, but I started looking for another job.

While living in Jasper, Indiana, I used my G.I. bill to go back to school and get an associates degree in tool engineering design. I enjoy looking at a problem and finding a solution, and I figured this would allow me to do that.

My hectic schedule during this schooling time went like this: I worked an 11-hour night shift at Jasper Engines in the Tool and Die department. Then I drove one hour to school, spent eight hours in classes, drove one hour home, and slept for two or three hours. Then I got up and did it again the next day. I pushed through like this for two years.

During this time of very little sleep and a big ego, I became a poster child for road rage. This comes into play later.

After graduating I got a job in Henderson, Kentucky. While we were living in Henderson, my wife felt that something was missing from her life. She decided that she would start going to church. I was fine with that; I liked to have Sunday mornings to myself, and she could do something she enjoyed.

Up until now I have only mentioned church in conjunction with my childhood. This is because religion was not a part of my life. I was a proud American. I believed in the American dream. Life revolved around me and my desires. Unless you could prove me wrong,

I was right ... and you couldn't prove me wrong.

In 2003, my dad was diagnosed with Renal Cell Carcinoma. It is a cancer of the kidneys with no known cure. By the time it was discovered, the cancer had already spread to his blood and bones. That meant it was stage four cancer. There was no known cure, and the experimental treatments they had would have left him in a vegetative state. Dad and mom decided that if he was going to die, then he would die in his right mind. They sold their house in Columbus, Indiana, and moved back to London, Kentucky, so that when dad passed mom would be around family and she would be taken care of.

My sister and brothers all moved close to them so that they would be there to help. I had just gotten my degree and accepted a job in Henderson, Kentucky. We debated whether to move close to my parents, but they told us that we had to live our own life. We didn't make the move.

My dad decided to do only one treatment: surgery to remove the kidney that was eaten up with cancer. I remember being there the day of the surgery.

Before dad went into the operating room, I heard an audible voice say that he would be okay. I looked around. There was no one near me. I couldn't explain it, but when I heard that voice, I knew with every fiber of my being that dad would be okay. I now know and recognize that it was God getting my attention, though I didn't realize my need for Him yet.

During one of the many visits back to Indianapolis to see Dad's cancer doctor, they did a scan and could not find any cancer. It was completely gone! After God healed Dad from cancer, he told every person he could what God had done for him. According to the doctors dad was expected to die before Christmas the year of the surgery, but he lived another 15 years and eventually died from an infection.

My wife started going to a church where they had what they called REACH teams. These teams visited people that were recommended to them. My wife had submitted my name for a visit, but she forgot to tell me. When they knocked on the door, we let them in and I listened to what they had to say. At the end of the visit, the pastor, who happened to be with this group, asked me if I would be willing to attend a service. I said I would. I figured I could give them my obligatory visit and then they could leave me alone.

The next Sunday I went to church with my wife and the message spoke to me. After attending for a month I came to the realization of who I was and my need for a savior. I followed the modern church pattern of



Chris Wyan's baptism

accepting Jesus as my Lord and Savior by saying the sinner's prayer.

Let me say here that I always knew that following Jesus was going to cost me something, I just wasn't sure what. While attending this church, which was a Southern Baptist Church, God convicted me of how I acted behind the wheel. This was the first price I had to pay for following Jesus. We were studying Romans 13:1 in Sunday school and the Holy Spirit said to me, "Okay, if you're going to follow Jesus, then you have to do what this says." My driving habits changed that day and the road rage I had, disappeared.

We enjoyed our church. I liked my job. Life was good.

All of a sudden, things started going wrong. Problems developed in my job, and for the first time in our lives, we decided to pray for God's guidance. When we prayed, we told God that we would go anywhere He wanted us to go, except for California, Chicago, New York, etcetera. I did not want to live in a liberal stronghold. God opened the doors for us to move to Parsons, Kansas, a place we had never heard of. We knew no one there. As soon as we settled in, we sought out a Southern Baptist church, since that was how my wife was raised, and that is what we were attending when Christ became my Lord.

We found a small church made up of older folks. At 37, we were the youngest ones. We later found out that the church had just gone through a split and all the younger people left. We attended this church for about three years. Six months after we left, the church closed its doors.

While Melinda and I attended this church we were introduced to ministry. We started volunteering at a local youth center that was started by some of the local youth pastors. We also went on a mission trip with a group of about 100 people down to Fort Worth, Texas. There is a church there that ministers to the homeless, and the group we went down with helped with construction (fixing things/clearing ground/putting up fencing/electrical/etc...), street ministry, clothing ministry and children's ministry. I have gone on that trip every year since then and God has used it to help me grow in my walk with Him.

When we left the church we were attending, we found another Southern Baptist church that was in a nearby community. While attending this church we met some Mennonites by accident. We went to a birthday party for an elderly lady in church and some of her neighbors were there.

Melinda had been reading Amish and Mennonite romance novels and was longing for that simple lifestyle. She asked the Mennonite lady some questions, starting a friendship that still exists. We started visiting the Cornerstone Mennonite Church once a month for about a year.

During this time, we left the Southern Baptists and started attending a Nazarene church in our community. It was known around town as a local mission-oriented church. We decided to join them, since we really enjoyed missions.

The young pastor at the Nazarene church really struggled with opposing forces. I felt God wanted me to stay there full-time and support the pastor. So, we stopped visiting the Mennonites once a month. After about a year we felt it was time to leave the Nazarenes. There was nothing more I could do for the pastor.

Why we didn't go back to attend the Mennonite services again, we don't know. From the Nazarenes, we went to a non-denominational church, and attended there for about six months. Again, this church was known for local outreach which was what we were looking for. At first we really enjoyed it, but over time we both started feeling like we didn't belong there.

Then one Sunday as Melinda and I were talking on the drive home, we discovered that both of us had been feeling a pull to go back to the Mennonites. We



The Wyan's dwelling

went back to Cornerstone Mennonite Church the next Sunday and have never looked back. This is where I learned another price I was going to have to pay. This time it was going to cost me ... me. I had to die to myself and everything I had believed. This was not an easy thing to do, but I was determined to follow the truth of following Jesus, no matter the cost.

One very important factor played into all of this. You see, for some time, we had been struggling with the fact that what we were hearing from the pulpit, reading in Sunday school material, and hearing in everyday talk did not line up with what we were reading in Scripture. Noticing these discrepancies between the Scripture and the teaching began while we were still attending the Nazarene church.

The more these differences appeared, the more I wanted to understand the Scriptures the way the pastors seemed to understand them. I figured the pastors had been through seminary so they should know these things and I wanted to be able to understand Scripture like they did. So I started on a journey trying to gain the knowledge they had. It was during this journey that I read all of A.W. Tozer's books, Lee Strobel's *The Case for Christ*, Reformation history, church history, David Bercot, and William Lane Craig. I also started looking for resources online about Mennonites after we had met Ronald and Brenda Miller. I knew I had to be careful of what resources I took stock in, as the internet has good and bad resources. This is where David Bercot's books helped.

That is a condensed version of my

journey to Anabaptism. I now use what I have learned and try to share with and teach others what Scripture actually says and what the early church believed, so that they can see that the worldly churches have it wrong. Anabaptists aren't perfect and there are things they need to work on, but they are much closer to the gospel truth than the worldly churches. I would actually say it is a good thing if the Anabaptists are challenged every now and then. They need to dig into the Scriptures for themselves, not just depend on their tradition. If the younger generation doesn't know why they practice what they do, at some point they will be persuaded by

the world to leave it behind. After all, the world looks fun and is full of smooth talkers. Anabaptists should periodically review the Scriptures and principles that are the basis for the head covering, for modest dress and separation from the world, as well as other distinctive practices and beliefs.

Roger Hertzler's book, *Through the Eye of a Needle*, brought me face-to-face with one doctrine that has been lost by Anabaptists. Jesus taught non-accumulation as clearly as He taught nonresistance. The early church understood it, and so did the first Anabaptists. And they understood that Jesus meant what He said. However, this doctrine is unknown to most Anabaptists today. John D. Martin calls it "voluntary poverty," but it is simply following the teachings of Jesus.

I have learned quite a bit since we joined Cornerstone



The Cornerstone Mennonite Church new building

Mennonite Church in Oswego, Kansas. One of the most important things I have learned is the love of God. It was only after I learned and accepted His love that I was able to truly die to self and become a servant leader of our household. The old man still tries to raise his head every now and then, but those times are coming less frequently. Despite what the flesh and the world say, I get great pleasure in serving my wife. That has also translated into serving others.

Melinda and I currently serve in prison ministry along with Ernest Yoder. We go in every two weeks (rotating with another church) and do a 1-1/2-hour Bible study with the prisoners. They choose a book of the Bible and we read through it, asking questions and looking at how Scripture calls us to live. I have introduced Anabaptist teachings like nonresistance, loving your neighbor, and brotherhood to the men. When we started back up after the COVID shutdowns, the number of students dwindled down to two. Many former students had left the prison. One student rejected nonresistance and chose not to come back. But our numbers are growing again. Now we study God's Word with around eight men (out of a prison population of 159). We have also bought some Anabaptist books and obtained copies of *Anabaptist Voice* to donate to the prison.



Melinda and Chris Wyan today

To love God with everything we have is the first commandment. To love others as ourselves is the second. Jesus said everything else hinges on those two commandments. Jesus also said that you can't follow the first if you don't do the second.

C. W. | Kansas



The Ukrainian *Holodomor*

by James G. Landis

Introduction:

In AV19, page 19, Chester Weaver wrote, “Lessons from *Lost Fatherland*.” This book tells the story of a mass migration of Russian Mennonites from Ukraine between the years 1921-1927. After that no more Mennonites were able to leave Ukraine until after World War II. Those who had not been able to leave suffered many cruelties and a planned famine orchestrated by the evil one.

Today’s generation must be aware of Ukrainian history. Brother Chester says, “God commands the fathers to tell the children the stories of the past.” With God’s command in mind we share another often forgotten story of suffering that came on the Ukrainian people.

The “*Holodomor*” is the story of what happened in Ukraine during the years 1932-1933. The term “*Holodomor*” means “death by hunger” and that time is also known as the Terror-Famine. Some historians estimate 3.5 to 5 million Ukrainians starved to death in this terrible time. Some estimates range as high as seven to ten million who died from the planned “starvation” of the Ukrainian people.

The *Holodomor*

The “*Holodomor*” was not caused by acts of nature but was purposely planned and carried out by men—not by natural forces such as drought or disease. It can be seen as the culmination of an assault by the Communist Party and Soviet state on the Ukrainian peasantry who resisted Soviet policies.

By the end of the 1920s Soviet leader Joseph Stalin decided to end Ukraine’s cultural autonomy. He ordered the arrest, imprisonment, and execution of thousands of Ukrainian intellectuals, church leaders, and Communist Party functionaries who supported Ukraine’s distinctiveness.

Stalin also ordered the collectivization of agriculture. The majority of Ukrainian farmers resisted the confiscation of their property and being forced to work on government collective farms. Those who resisted were branded “kulaks” (rich peasants) and declared enemies of the state. Even Communist Party functionaries thought to be sympathetic with Ukrainian separateness were not spared. Thousands of Ukrainian villagers were thrown out of their homes and deported.

This disruption of the villages and their ability to produce grain brought about drastically short harvests. But the government needed grain to export and to feed the people in the cities.

In 1932, the Communist Party set impossibly high quotas for the amount of grain Ukrainian villages were required to contribute to the Soviet state. When the villages were not able to meet the quotas, authorities intensified the requisition campaign. At gunpoint they took even the grain set aside for seed and levied fines to be paid in meat and potatoes. Special teams searched homes and seized other foodstuffs.

Starving farmers attempted to leave their villages in search of food. But Soviet authorities forbade the peasants from leaving the country and going to the cities. Thousands of farmers who had managed to leave their villages were apprehended and sent back, a virtual death sentence.

Although informed of the dire conditions in the Ukraine, central authorities ordered local officials to extract even more from the villages. Millions starved as the USSR sold crops from Ukraine abroad.

Records of the Communist Party, secret police, and government archives that became available to researchers after the collapse of the Soviet Union, verify these things. The famine was caused by Soviet state policies and was intentionally intensified by Soviet authorities. Photos depicting some of these terrible times are available, but they are too ghastly to be used in *Anabaptist Voice*.¹

J. L. | Georgia

Lessons to Learn from this Account:

1. Suffering and cruelty can happen when and where not expected.
2. Murder and starvation by hunger does not make sense.
3. Do not put your trust in earthly health and wealth.
4. Satan is still active in the hearts of evil men.
5. Lay up treasure in heaven by always doing good to others.

¹ Based on records of HREC (Holodomor Research and Education Consortium), Canadian Institute of Ukrainian Studies, University of Alberta.

New Son: The Story of Joseph Kollie

as told by Jerry Martin

Liberia, founded in 1821 as a home for free slaves from the United States, is a tiny country situated on the west coast of Africa. The country gained its independence in 1847, thus becoming the first independent nation in Africa.

Despite its long experience of freedom from colonial rule, it became one of the most unstable nations in Africa due to civil war. The instability lasted for more than 20 years, but was more atrocious in 14 of those years.

During the civil war, some parts of Liberia were almost in a state of anarchy. Consequently, anyone could do anything to anyone without fear of punishment. During those dark times, a story occurred that I feel very privileged to share whenever the opportunity affords me.

As the darkness of war continued to spread across the country, a widow and her only son decided to flee from the war zone to a safe location. While they were escaping, they met a group of soldiers they could not identify as rebels or government soldiers because none of them were in uniforms.

As both groups (rebels and government soldiers) were accustomed to doing, they falsely accused the widow's son of being an enemy. The widow and her son tearfully pled and debated to counter the accusation, presenting every evidence at their disposal. Unfortunately, all the evidence they provided was not taken, and the plea to be spared was turned down. One of the soldiers killed the widow's son.

However, the widow remembered which one did the killing. The scene would never be wiped from her mind.

When the war finally ended in 2003, the widow traveled between Liberia and Guinea to transact business. That is how she made a living. Every time she returned to Liberia from a business trip, she always changed taxi cars at Red Light before reaching home.

Red Light is an open-air market situated at an intersection before exiting Monrovia, Liberia, to go to Guinea or the Ivory Coast. The intersection can be extremely populated. People from the rural regions and urban areas always meet there to transact business.

In Red Light, a group of men called "wheelbarrow boys," made their living by transporting passengers' loads some distance from one parking station to another.

At the one parking station, incoming taxis from Liberia and the Ivory Coast must stop. At the other parking station, taxis were able to continue on into Liberia ("wheelbarrow boys" had no other source of income).

On one occasion, when the widow returned from one of her business trips, she had to switch taxi cars at Red Light to be able to go home. But she needed the help of the wheelbarrow boys to transport her goods to the next taxi car.

As was the manner of these men, a flock of them would crowd in when a passenger arrived and the passenger would have to decide who to hire. Only one person was needed at a time; the others would have to look for another passenger to hire them.

As the wheelbarrow boys came running, pushing, and shoving to be chosen, the widow recognized one of them: the one who had killed her son. She could not believe her eyes. She struggled very hard to conceal her emotions. After regaining her composure, she hired him to take her load to the next pickup station. He was very excited.

After loading her packages into his wheelbarrow, he took the lead and the widow followed as they headed to the new pickup station. When they arrived, he unloaded his wheelbarrow and then requested his pay.

But the widow had a plan in mind: she would not pay the man until she took him to her house. She promised to double his pay if he would go along to help unload the taxi-car when they arrived at her house. But the boy was not willing to take her generous offer.

He and the widow then entered a heated debate, and they soon became the center of attention. Some bystanders intervened; after some deliberation, the wheelbarrow boy/man reluctantly agreed to go with the widow.

Upon their arrival at the widow's house, the wheelbarrow boy helped unload the car. The driver then pulled away, leaving only the young man and the widow. The widow invited him into her house. Inside, she offered him a seat and then sat close by and faced him.

She initiated the conversation with a question, "Do you remember me?"

He replied, "No."

The widow then proceeded with the next question: “Do you remember my son you killed?” Without waiting for his response, she proceeded with a description of the time and place of the incident to convict him. When the entire memory became fresh in his mind, a terrible fear gripped him. He almost fled through the door. But the sobbing and gentle lady assured him that all was well.

After a time of silence, she left her seat and lovingly caught hold of one of his hands, placing it in her own as she said, “From today onward, you are going to replace my son whom you killed. Do not be afraid. I forgive you. But what happened between us must not go beyond these walls. It must be a secret only between the two of us.”

That was the end of his wheelbarrow career. He was forgiven of his past and became the widow’s son.

After this remarkable act of forgiveness, the widow took her new son out and shopped for him. He enrolled in and completed high school and got a business degree at the University of Liberia. Today, the two characters refer to each other as mother and son.

Reflection: The grace of God does wonders. The natural response to this kind of situation would be retaliation in some form or fashion. But for those who have comprehended the sacredness of human life through their relationship with God, their reaction will be different from a natural response. I cannot tell if the widow is a Christian or not. But what she did, by not only forgiving the man who made her childless, but by also adopting him as a son is Christ-like. Isn’t this a great example of Christ’s unconditional love towards sinners?

J. M. | Georgia



Easy Reading

At ALL-NATIONS Bible Translation, one of our translation values is accessibility: translating into familiar, present-day language. This goes beyond the obvious choice to translate into the Mixtec language for Mixtec-speaking people. It refers to the words and expressions used in the translation.

Normal Speech

We could think that the Bible should use language that sounds special and feels elevated and profound. If God is high and holy, reading His Word in high and formal language almost feels appropriate, doesn’t it?

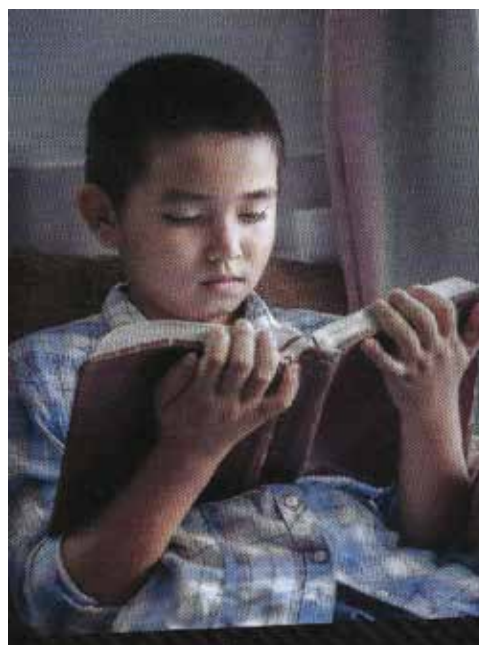
But God is intimately involved in each person’s life. His Word speaks to our daily walk. Our Christian experience is just as alive and present on the job or in the kitchen as when we are at church. The things of God are part of our everyday speech.

Still, many of us struggle to use normal speech in our prayers or in church. A Bible that uses everyday English may sound strange if we grew up using the King James Version, whose language was last updated about 250 years ago. We may subconsciously expect God to use special sounding language in His Word.

When you think about it, no one speaking English today would say, “Understandest thou what thou readest?” And no one translating into modern English would even think of putting such an expression in evangelist Philip’s question to the Eunuch. Whether in Mixtec or Sungai, they want the result to sound just as normal as, “Do you understand what you are reading?”

We seek to translate the Bible using language that is both current and normal.

– from *ALL-NATIONS Bible Translation*,
Summer 2022 Newsletter



Understandest thou what whou readest?

The Canoe Race

by Menno Knight

Some years ago we stayed in a New Zealand home where we could watch some canoe races taking place on the water below us. As I remember, six people were in each long canoe. Six paddles flashed in the morning sun in perfect timing. Six paddles dipped in the water together and then raised for another stroke at the very same moment. No paddler lagged or sprinted ahead of the others. None raised his paddle higher than the others.

All worked together as they raced toward the finish line. Not one dared be distracted by friends or rivals along the shoreline or by other canoes in the water. The six in each canoe became one as they bent and bowed their bodies with each stroke. Every muscle strained as they plowed their paddles through the water ... together.

I studied a bit about canoe racing. I found a booklet of 41 pages of definitions and rules that govern the sport of canoe racing. And by those rules the team must paddle if they would compete in the race.

I would like to think of a congregation of believers as a canoe team racing toward the finish line. We joined the team voluntarily and now strive to win the race ... together. We dip our paddles into the water in harmony and with joy we strain together toward the goal. We must paddle according to the rules so that our canoe is not disqualified from the race.

Now some of the rules by which we must help paddle the congregational canoe are listed in I Thessalonians 5:12-23.

- Hold them in high regard who care for you in the Lord.
- Live in peace with each other.
- Warn those who are idle and disruptive.
- Encourage those who are disheartened.
- Help the weak.
- Be patient with everyone.
- Strive to do what is good for everyone.
- Pray continually.
- Rejoice always.
- Give thanks in all circumstances.
- Do not quench the Holy Spirit.
- Hold on to what is good.
- Reject every kind of evil.

Now assume that your congregation wholeheartedly agrees on these rules. Our commitment is to abide by them. That is why we have joined the team and gotten in the canoe. And as we paddle with all our might, we dare not be distracted by others standing along the shore. We must keep the goal in mind: **“May your whole spirit, soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (I Thessalonians 5:23, NIV)**

So I ask myself and you, “How is your timing? How is your paddling?”



Round Table Discussion

by AV Readers

The following pages are meant to encourage interaction between *Anabaptist Voice* and our readers. If you have questions or thoughts and would like to hear a response from AV, this section is for you. Write to us.

– AV Editor

The New Testament Revelation

by More Thoughts

In AV24, pages 13-17, Menno Knight, points out the differences between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant and the superiority of the New. I did not feel the terms “Old Testament” and “New Testament” were always complete.

Key #1. The two testaments stand in stark contrast to one another. The two covenants are indeed different, but the God of both is the same, so we can expect some things in common between them. Both covenants teach the need to love God and to love the people we know. Both covenants teach our uncleanness before a holy God and our need for a sacrifice involving death for our sins (the New Testament teaches a perfect sacrifice once for all). Both teach the importance of obedience to God, of integrity and righteousness.

Key #6. No physical circumcision in the New Testament. Paul took a strong stand against any teaching that non-Jewish believers needed to be circumcised. At the assembly of apostles and elders in Jerusalem (Acts 15), those present reached the conclusion that God had already indicated His position by giving the Holy Spirit to those who were uncircumcised. Yet we find in Acts 16:3 (possibly only months after that meeting in Jerusalem) that Paul circumcised a young man named Timothy. Why? Being circumcised would probably not hinder Timothy’s work among non-Jewish unbelievers, but remaining uncircumcised could have hindered his work among Jewish unbelievers.

Summary. Menno Knight makes this statement in his summarizing points: “*Christian servant-leaders are prophets, not priests.*” Paul in several of his letters mentions various gifts of the Holy Spirit. Leadership, teaching, and prophesying are three separate gifts. We do find one characteristic of a leader is that he should be able to teach. I do not believe that anything is said about being able to prophesy.

I want to emphasize that the New Covenant is different from and better than the Old Covenant.

AV Editor:

True. The same God was over both testaments and covenants. We do want to make sure that Bible believers understand the New Testament is the fulfillment of the Old Covenant with His people and a further revelation of the promises God made in the Old Testament.

In I Corinthians 14:3, Paul defines one who prophesies as one who “*speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men.*” Then in I Corinthians 14:5 he writes, “*I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied.*” Thus it sounds like prophecy in the New Testament is not reserved just for one group of leaders; rather it is a gift to be sought after by all believers.

Paul’s circumcision of Timothy can be understood, if one considers Paul’s statement in I Corinthians 9:22. “*I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some.*”



Errors of Fact

by Bee Exact

In the article, “The New Testament Revelation,” Menno Knight offered eight keys to distinguish Old Testament practices from New Testament ones (AV24, pages 13-17). I have found four errors of fact in the eight keys given:

If one gets his facts wrong, his conclusions are unreliable.

Key #2 – No Kingdom of Heaven in the Old Testament

Error of fact: The Kingdom of David of the Old Testament is, in fact, speaking of the same kingdom as the one Jesus calls the Kingdom of Heaven or the Kingdom of God. Don’t think David’s kingdom was in any way inferior to the Kingdom of Heaven.

Correction: The Old Testament foretells the coming of a kingdom much greater than the kingdom of David. It was to be led by the Messiah.

Key #3 – No Messiah in the Old Testament

Error of fact: The term “Messiah” is an Old Testament term. The prophecies of the coming great deliverer, Jesus, are in the Old Testament.

True: The term “Messiah” is to be found in the Old Testament. But the coming of “The Messiah” was nowhere announced until the arrival of Jesus in the New Testament.

Key #5 – No Human Priests in the New Testament Covenant

Error of fact: Beyond the mention of priests in Matthew, Mark, Luke, John and Acts, Hebrews speaks of Jesus as our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Peter, in his letter to the church, says we are made to be a kingdom of priests. This parallels an Old Testament text that tells Israel they were to be a kingdom of priests.

Correction: The New Testament mentions human priests many times. But Hebrews 7 & 8 makes clear that Jesus is now our eternal High Priest interceding for us at the right hand of God. We have no need for human priests to plead with God on our behalf. The kingdom of priests mentioned in I Peter 2:9 was exhorting the believers to live holy lives so they would be God’s special people. Please reread Key #5 (AV24, page 15).

Key #6 – No Physical Circumcision in the New Testament

Error of fact: Jesus was circumcised on the eighth day, as also was the Apostle Paul. And Paul had Timothy circumcised. Circumcision of the heart is mentioned first in the Old Testament, not in the New (Jeremiah 4:4).

True: Physical circumcision is mentioned many times in the New Testament. Menno could have been more explicit in the heading by saying, *Physical Circumcision Was Not Required of Either Jews or Gentiles in the New Testament Church*. I like the short parallel headings.

The New Testament is less in contrast with the Old than is claimed in this article. There are various schools of thought to justify rejecting Old Testament teaching. This seems to be the Anabaptist one.

AV Editor:

AV wants to correctly interpret and apply the Word of God. We do not reject Old Testament teaching but want to correctly understand both the Old and the New Testament. Understanding that the New Testament standards for the life and conduct of the Christian supersede all the law and the prophets of the Old Testament is a fundamental concept. This is so important I am going to repeat the summary points

given in the article, “The New Testament Revelation” (AV24, page 17).

Summary

1. *Christians are called to a holy life by New Testament standards.*
2. *God’s kingdom requires separation from political kingdoms.*
3. *Christians accept Jesus as the promised Messiah.*
4. *The sacrifice of Jesus on the cross did away with animal sacrifices.*
5. *Christian servant-leaders are prophets, not priests.*
6. *God requires the circumcision of the heart and not of the flesh.*
7. *Christians should not use violence for any reason.*
8. *Christians should not call their meeting places “temples.”*



Bad Things

by Natural Law

I have been thinking more about why bad things happen. It seems to me the book, *Why Bad Things Happen* gets it about right (AV25, page 42). God should *never* be “credited” for bad things.

While thinking about the subject, I went back and reread Menno Knight’s article “If Job Had Known” (AV18, page 19). I remembered the article from two years ago. In general, I liked it. But I also remembered that something in it left me a bit uncomfortable.

So I looked, and I found one paragraph in particular that seemed to me to give too much “credit” to Satan. It’s right at the top of page 21. It reads, “*But if our hands are clean before God and our hearts are innocent of sin, we can be sure that the tornado or the car accident or the disease was sent by Satan—that’s where I disagree—and will be used by him in an attempt to drive us away from God—this is always correct. When Satan sponsors bad things against us, that makes them evil.*”

Apparently, from the illustrations in Job, God does give Satan power at times to start a storm, or send a tornado. Or Satan can sponsor an accident. God can also overrule and stop a storm from touching His people or protect us from an accident, as Menno noted.

As I see it, most times storms are products of the

laws of nature that God put in place in His creation. These laws produced peace and harmony and beauty in the Edenic world. Tornadoes, hurricanes, destructive fires, and earthquakes do not require either Satan's direct intervention, or God's.

Likewise, accidents are normally products of natural forces, and sometimes of man's carelessness or lack of foresight. If a person falls off the roof and ends up handicapped for life, or dead, Satan may have planned it. God could have prevented it. But God's sovereign rule has established a law that we call gravity. If we fall off a roof, we go crashing down. Momentum, another of God's laws, makes a force at impact that can break our bones.

AV Editor:

"This is a good point. Not all bad things happen because of sin in our lives as Job's story proves. But when our hearts are not right with Him, God can pursue us relentlessly through natural forces as He did Jonah.



The Study of the Created World

I am writing in response to your comments to "Adapt or Mutate" by Gene Doctor (AV25, page 33).

"Adapt" means to adjust to a specified use or situation.

"Mutate" means the act or process of being altered or changed.

Science at its core, especially prior to Darwin's theory of evolution, is based on the study of the created world.

Adaptation and mutation do indeed take place. You need not believe in evolution to be able to observe this. Our family farms for our livelihood. We do so organically. Your references to cross-breeding are not examples of adaptation or mutation. Here are three examples that we as farmers have seen and heard of where adaptations and mutations occurred.

#1. Glyphosate resistance in a variety of weeds. Today there are nearly 40 different weeds with genetic resistance to Roundup. Plants that barely survived at first, set seed and continued on.

#2 Barber Pole worm resistance to ivermectin. When ivermectin first came out, commercial sheep producers thought this was a miracle drug. Yearly

problems with the intestinal parasite, the Barber Pole worm, seemed to disappear. Over years of repeated use, however, the Barber Pole worm began to present problems again and ivermectin proved ineffective.

#3. Antibiotic resistance creating super-bugs. Antibiotics have been overused and misused in the same way Roundup and ivermectin were. Thanks to their over-use we now have bugs which antibiotics are ineffective against.

These three examples are all real world, here-and-now examples of genetic mutations. Mutations, such as the albino deer, contrary to evolutionary thought, generally do not result in favorable outcomes.

Postscript:

Please, can we have the old *Anabaptist Voice*? The one not plagued with COVID conspiracies and government skepticism, but on applying the WORD to daily life? I joined the Anabaptists over eight years ago. I am afraid that seekers, finding a magazine with all the same discussions and fears the world has, will be turned away. After all, this magazine claims to be the voice of Anabaptists.

Please, let's return to true Anabaptist practice of the Word where Jesus is exalted as Savior and Lord and His words are meant for daily application.

AV Editor:

Your letter gives a number of interesting items for discussion. I shall comment on them, beginning with the last one first.

#1. His words are meant for daily application. This expresses well the purpose of *Anabaptist Voice*. Ours is a faith that permeates one's life. It comes out and affects everything we do. If our faith does not affect our talk, our work, our food, our medicine, and our worship, it is a dead faith. A godly faith is not segregated into separate parts, some of which we should not discuss or mention. **"Christ is all and in all." (Colossians 3:11).**

#2. Not plagued with COVID conspiracies and government skepticism. If one wants to know the difference between right and wrong, should he not trust the word of Christian brothers and sisters above that of unbelieving government officials and scheming atheists? We should go first to the brotherhood and the Word of God to decide the issues of life rather than following the edicts of ungodly men and then checking to see if their decrees violate the Word of God. The early Anabaptists denied the state church system jurisdiction in matters of conscience. They understood that Christ's church guided their individual consciences.

#3. Seekers will be turned away. I think nothing will drive seekers away from the church and this magazine more than inconsistent lives and wrong applications of Scripture. If the Holy Spirit does not drive our hearts and thoughts to right living and sound doctrine, the Holy Spirit will not bring seekers to us.

#4. Adaptation and mutation do take place. In your understanding there is a genetic change in plants that allows them to resist chemicals used in weed control. In my understanding, certain strains of weeds are already resistant to the chemical and thus multiply rapidly while non-resistant weeds are suppressed. There is no genetic change in the plants.

I believe there is not a change in the genetics of the creatures, but through selection plants and animals and microbes not resistant to the chemical die off while the creatures resistant to the chemical or microbe multiply.

I do not think it sinful to use chemicals to control weeds. It may not be economically feasible or the best way to control weeds in crops, but using chemicals is within God's commission to subdue the earth.

I farmed in a time before chemicals were used to control weeds. Whether weeds were genetically altered or not, they were persistent and damaging. I am glad for the wonders of chemicals to help control undesirable plants in our fields and gardens. I think it beautiful and God-pleasing to see clean fields of soybeans, cotton, corn, and peanuts with greatly increased yields compared to the weed-infested crops of fifty years ago when "cold steel" was the only remedy for weed control. With no-till planting and the use of chemicals, it is not necessary to lay the fields bare and exposed to wind and water at any time during the year.

Thankfully, we are not forced to use chemicals on plants or animals. As you suggest there may be better ways for the people of God to nurture our plants, birds, and animals. The rotation of crops has always been a healthy practice and helpful in suppressing troublesome pests. Livestock and grass in the rotation helps increase fertility and holds the soil in place. High-intensity controlled grazing with electric fence and the moving of cattle and sheep on a regular basis helps prevent parasite infestations.

Good stewards of God's creation marvel at the wonders inherent in living creatures and we do our best to care for them according to God's plan.



Giving All

by Empty Pockets

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Sell your possessions and give to the poor?" (**Luke 12:33 NIV**). Or what about when John the Baptist said, "Anyone who has two shirts should share the one with him who has none, and anyone who has food should do the same?" (**Luke 3:11 NIV**).

If I have \$50,000 in my bank account, a nice home and a car, and a severely malnourished refugee family, would come along, should I feed them or send them away to die?

Now, just assume that every day a few others would pass by with the same plight—tattered clothes, hungry and shivering with cold. Eventually my 50k is depleted, but more needy folk keep passing by. I know that either I let them starve or I sell my car and feed them with the monies. Soon the funds are all used up and I face another decision, to either turn them away or downsize from my lovely mansion to a shack and feed them.

Looking at life this way, how should I live? How much should I save up for retirement or future doctor bills, knowing there are many who die each day from starvation when I could feed them with money from my assets?

When can the true radical follower of Jesus say, "That is enough; go starve. I need the rest for future use?" When Jesus said, "Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink" (**Matthew 6:25**), what did He mean?

AV Editor:

What did Jesus mean when He said, "Take no thought for the morrow, what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink"? Luke 12:22 speaks to the issue. "Do not worry about your life, what you will eat; or about your body, what you will wear. For life is more than food, and the body more than clothes."

Your hypothetical proposition with giving presents a number of false assumptions that avoid reality.

1. By giving a refugee family a one-time gift you can save them from starvation.

2. If you give everything away until you have nothing left, you will be doing what Jesus commanded you to do.

3. When someone holds any savings, one is causing others to starve.

One reality is that, "though I give all my goods

to feed the poor ... and have not love, I am nothing” **(I Corinthians 13:3)**. We cannot earn our salvation by doing good deeds: these must be accompanied by love.

Another reality is that though one gives all his goods away and lives in a shack, he cannot save all the refugees and needy from starvation. This requires the banding together of many people. One person cannot make much of a dent by himself. And if one gives away all he has, he has nothing more to give. Jesus dealt very forcefully with the lazy servant who did not use the talent He had entrusted to Him, but instead buried it.

Many charitable organizations like Christian Aid Ministries (CAM) aim to help needy refugees. Gifts by donors have gathered large sums to aid helpless ones. And still much need exists. But these organizations do more than minister to just the physical needs. Worthy charities also seek to minister to the spiritual needs as well, because Jesus said, “Life is more than food, and the body more than clothes.”

A big challenge lies in not only helping refugees and starving individuals with the need of the moment, but also having the wisdom to know how to help them so they are no longer refugees or in refugee camps. In the end, God must aid, direct, and bless such help.

Your challenge to think about how we should live in an affluent society is according to the Scripture found in II Peter 3:11: “**Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming**” (NIV). Realizing that we are going to die certainly blocks out squandering wealth on ourselves in riotous living—\$60 steak meals, luxury cars and high-priced horses, expensive hunting trips, cruise ships, and so on.

In America, godly people have been given the opportunity to earn far more than we need to support ourselves and our families. God will require of us an accounting as to how we have used that money. Have we lived righteously and frugally so that we are able to give generously to the poor and needy? Or have we frivolously frittered our earnings away on ourselves?

Jesus said, “**Occupy till I come**” **(Luke 19:13)**. Jesus wanted His servants to whom He had entrusted some wealth to use it for the Master until He returned. We should be busy laying up treasure in heaven by using the wealth granted us to help the fatherless and widows and while doing that be careful not to be contaminated by the world. (James 1:27).

That is what Jesus meant when he said, “**Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will never fail, where no thief comes near**

and no moth destroys. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also” **(Luke 12:33-34 NIV)**.



To Be Seen of Men *by Sold Out*

It’s fun. It’s exciting. It raises a lot of money. But is it God’s way?

Amish/Mennonite benefit and fund-raising auctions have evolved and grown in popularity in the last 30 to 40 years.

Another way of raising money was used in bygone years. When a financial need arose and was made known in a church or community, brethren would quietly and privately put money into the offering plate until the need was met. Today we have an overabundance of school, church, mission, and hospital bills that employ auctions to raise money.

Are these benefit auctions something the early church or our reformation brethren would have embraced? Or are auctions a cultural shift that developed in our more modern world?

Does the charitable end justify the means used to raise the money? I still have a hard time reconciling what Jesus said about giving with the showcasing of the benefit auction: “**But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret**” **(Matthew 6:3)**.

Discussion Question:

Why do you, or, do you not go to benefit auctions?



Climate Change

What should the people of God know about climate change? What we believe does affect how we farm and how we live. So how does our faith in God affect what we believe about climate change? This page presents some views on the subject contrary to the politically correct view often promulgated.

About CLINTEL

“Climate Intelligence (CLINTEL) is an independent foundation that operates in the fields of climate change and climate policy. The considerable knowledge and experience of this group is indispensable in reaching a

balanced, dispassionate and competent view of climate change.”

The World Climate Declaration (WCD)

The World Climate Declaration (WCD) has brought a large variety of competent scientists together from all over the world (There are more than 1100 signatories to the WCD).

Here are some statements from the World Climate Declaration:

- Climate policy relies on inadequate models
- Climate models have many shortcomings and are not remotely plausible as global policy tools. They blow up the effect of greenhouse gases such as CO₂.
- In addition, they ignore the fact that enriching the atmosphere with CO₂ is beneficial.
- CO₂ is plant food, the basis of all life on Earth
- CO₂ (Carbon Dioxide) is not a pollutant. It is essential to all life on Earth. Photosynthesis is a blessing. More CO₂ is beneficial for nature, greening the Earth: additional CO₂ in the air has promoted growth in global plant biomass. It is also good for agriculture, increasing the yields of crops worldwide.
- Global warming has not increased natural disasters.
- There is no statistical evidence that global warming is intensifying hurricanes, floods, droughts and suchlike natural disasters, or making them more frequent. However, there is ample evidence that CO₂ mitigation measures are as damaging as they are costly.
- Climate policy must respect scientific and economic realities
- There is no climate emergency. Therefore, there is no cause for panic and alarm. ... The aim of global policy should be ‘prosperity for all’ by providing reliable and affordable energy at all times.

Notable Climate-Change Comments

Featured in *La Verità*, an Italian newspaper, on August 23, 2022 was an interview of Christopher Moncton by Franco Battaglia. Christopher Moncton served as an adviser on climate change, among other things, to Margaret Thatcher (British Prime Minister, 1979-1990).

Here are some outstanding statements in this interview:

- **There is no “climate emergency.”** The notion of large and dangerous (rather than small and beneficial) global warming arose from an elementary

error of physics. ... Climate scientists had forgotten the Sun was shining, and that, without any greenhouse gases in the air, the average temperature would be 260°K. ... There will not be 4°K warming this century, as currently imagined, but little more than 1°K, which will be globally beneficial. Warming is already proving beneficial.

- **Coal-fired power stations** used to provide clean, reliable electricity at \$30 per megawatt hour. Recently, to keep the lights on in London during a heatwave, the grid authority had to pay more than \$11,300 per megawatt-hour for electricity generated in Europe. ... The price of rare-earth metals can, therefore be expected to rise many times over in the coming years, as a direct consequence of the needless shuttering of coal-fired power stations capable of generating electricity at a levelized cost of only \$30 per megawatt hour.

- **“The North Pole will completely melt by 2013.”** A statement made by Al Gore in 2007 while accepting the Nobel Prize. This silly Arctic melting prediction was anti-scientific nonsense.

- **Energy bills will rise.** In the United Kingdom (UK), coal, oil and gas provided 90% of energy in 2000 and 80% in 2021 while CO₂ emissions increased by 50% worldwide. Two years ago, the typical UK household’s energy bill was less than \$1,000 a year. Next year, it will be \$8,000, and it will continue to rise thereafter.

- **Even if global warming were a problem rather than a benefit,** every cent spent on attempting to abate it would be a cent wasted, since the effect of global net-zero emissions would be so small as to be unmeasurable.

Practical Questions:

1. In what ways does your faith contradict climate change theory?
2. How will the climate change practices affect your life?



The Practical Side:

“Whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus.”

— Colossians 3:17

This recurring feature in *Anabaptist Voice* consists of three parts.

1. **Reader Responses**—feedback on previous stories
2. **The Rest of the Story**—what actually happened
3. **New Stories**—situations met by today’s Anabaptists

Here is your chance to help others live out the Gospel of Jesus Christ “right in the corner where they are.” This section is not for some idealistic future kingdom posing theological complicated questions with no good answers—for example, the woman who had seven brothers as husbands (*Matthew 22:24-28*).

Take the time to write *Anabaptist Voice* and share your situations where you faced a difficulty... and failed, or won a victory. As you ponder the situations in these stories and then share your answers and experiences with others, remember the words of Jesus when He told the packed-out house, “**My mother and brothers are those who hear God’s Word and put it into practice**” (**Luke 8:21**).



The Practical Side: Work Boots Required

The Practical Side: Reader Responses

Reader responses to stories from previous issues.

Zimbabwe Trillions

by Sue Veneer



I found the article, “Zimbabwe Trillions” interesting (AV25, page 34).

I collect currency from foreign visitors to the library.

In 2005, I slipped on ice going from the house to the library and tore the rotator cuff in my left shoulder. So while I was doing physiotherapy for many months, we had a receptionist at the library to take my place.

The receptionist said a white lady came in to the library who had a distinct accent. She said she was from Zimbabwe. The lady left me a \$2.00 bill from Zimbabwe to add to my collection. Little did she know her gift was soon worthless.

Several years later a longtime friend visited me. He opened his wallet and pulled out a \$100 trillion dollar bill from Zimbabwe. He showed it to me but then put it back into his billfold. To be nice to me, he handed me a \$50 trillion dollar bill to add to my collection.

Rather than getting a daily newspaper, I buy the *Year*

Book Annual supplement. The 2008 book has a color photo of a worker’s hands holding five thick stacks of Zimbabwe \$500 dollar bills for his take-home pay. Imagine that!!!



Armed

by Con C. Quences



I am writing to answer the questions at the end of the article “Armed” (AV25, page 38). Like the author, I too am greatly disturbed to think that we could have a shoot-out in a Mennonite Church.

1. *If one brother carries a pistol to church, how might that affect other areas of his life? Would he carry a pistol only to worship services?*

It seems logical that if a brother carries a gun to church to protect the worshippers that he would also think it right to “protect” his family at home. And if he protects his family, it would also be reasonable to carry

a gun to protect himself should the need arise.

The problem with the whole logic is that the New Testament nowhere supports such action. We are to be people of peace. We are not to take revenge. We are to be wise as serpents and harmless as doves.

2. *If the rest of the congregation knows that one of their members carries a weapon to church, how would that affect the congregation?*

This is a pivotal question. I believe that if the rest of the congregation is comfortable with a brother or two carrying a weapon, they no longer have a peace testimony and are no different from the world or most of the other churches. When the test comes and they are pushed, they will also join the police force or the armed forces.

3. *If the congregation felt a brother carrying a weapon threatened their testimony and witness, what must be done to stop them from carrying weapons.*

Of course, the first step is for brethren to quietly talk to the offender and ask them to stop carrying weapons. New Testament teaching should be a part of the discussion. Anabaptist examples of suffering should be cited. If all else fails and the brother is still unrepentant, he must be treated the same as a pagan or a tax collector (Matthew 18:17).



Integrity or Loyalty

by Can B. Both

Thank you for an excellent article on “Integrity or Loyalty” by Frank Reed (Issue 25, Spring 2022, page 11).

My wife and I have been very close to a situation where integrity or loyalty seems to be the issue.

I think one Scripture that is very appropriate for issues/situations that come down to “Integrity or Loyalty” is James 4:17: **“Therefore to him that knoweth to do good—the right thing to do (NASB)—and doeth it not, to him it is sin.”**



What Would Jesus Do?

by Zee Lotz



I am writing in response to “What Would Jesus Do?” (AV25 page 40).

Jesus can never be classified as a peaceful protester. He taught the crowds what the Kingdom of God and its people would be like. He did not teach the crowds to “protest” Roman rule as the Zealots did.

The Zealots of Jesus' day “were an aggressive political party whose concern for the national and religious life of the Jewish people led them to despise even Jews who sought peace and conciliation with the Roman authorities.”¹ Instead of advising Simon the Zealot to peacefully protest Roman rule or to secretly attend one of their rallies, Jesus made him one of his disciples. Being a Zealot was contrary to everything Jesus taught.

It seems to me Jesus would have had nothing to do with the trucker convoy in Canada. His Kingdom was not to be a kingdom of protesters worried about their “rights” and “fairness,” but a kingdom of servant conquerors.



Jesus said:

“My kingdom is not part of this world.

If it were, those who serve me would fight.

They would try to keep the Jews from arresting me.

My kingdom is from another place.”

— John 18:36 (NIRV)

¹ Encyclopaedia Britannica.

The Practical Side: New Stories

Real world situations met by today's Anabaptists.

A Pivoting Problem

by Hess I. Tate



Recently we had an inspiring men's meeting. We sang by memory "Just as Seemeth Good to Thee." A brother shared some thoughts from several scriptures and gave ten principles for loving engagement, even when we may disagree on some points. Different ones mentioned specific needs within the congregation. This was followed by an extended prayer period in which we took our thanks and petitions to the heavenly Father. God heard our prayers and His presence seemed real.

Before we dismissed, the trustees had a small matter to take up with the brothers. One brother-in-the-know introduced the subject. A neighbor was asking permission to install an irrigation pivot that would extend out over a wee corner of the church property. Worthless chinaberry trees presently cluttered the corner in question. The end gun on the pivot would pass quietly by, but not over, the church cemetery. If granted permission the neighbor would be able to swing his proposed 3/4 pivot back to the tree-line. The brother-in-the-know recommended granting the neighbor permission.

Then the matter was open for discussion. One brother wondered if we might need that corner to extend the cemetery. The answer was that we had enough room in the cemetery on two sides to bury everyone in the congregation.

Another brother questioned the need for the neighbor to even extend the pivot over that corner. He thought the pivot could simply be redesigned so it did not need to cross the church property. The answer came that the pivot dealer had already shortened the original design by 20 feet so as not to affect the church property as much.

One brother was sure that the steel should not cross the property line. He said that is a commonly understood rule. Future sales or transfer of the pivot ownership could cause problems for the church.

Another brother suggested giving title to the piece of land in question to the neighbor so he could comfortably install the pivot. This would be in keeping with our profession of peace.

One brother suggested that the worst thing that could happen would be for the church to lose 1/4 of an acre and all of us be raptured out. I'm not sure which of those events was supposed to come first.

Then the trustee came prepared with plats and photo drawings showing the proposed pivot track. In addition, there was a written 150-word lease agreement ready to sign by the landlord (the Church) and the tenant (neighbor who wanted to install the pivot). The trustee agreed that some changes to the lease agreement might be a good thing.

Practical Questions:

1. What should the brothers decide would be the right thing to do?
2. How might the decision affect future relations with the neighbor?
3. How might the decision affect the eternal destinies of us and our neighbors?



Bumper Bump

by Dee Livered



Several years ago, I was involved in a small accident while sitting in the drive-through of a local restaurant. My vehicle at the time was a stick-shift Honda Accord. Since I was sitting on a bit of a hill waiting for my turn to move up, I was using the clutch to keep me in place. I was looking in my console for some change and did not realize that I was actually drifting slowly forward. To my surprise and dismay my car bumped into the car in front of me.

I immediately applied my brake and got out of the car to assess damages. Thankfully, there was no visible damage to either vehicle. As I went up to the driver's side of the other car, it became clear to me that this was not going to be just a minor accident. The older lady in the driver's seat was in an excited state. As bystanders gathered around, she loudly and tearfully demanded

that an ambulance and the police be called.

Eventually the ambulance arrived and hauled her off on a stretcher. The policeman wrote up the accident with me clearly being at fault. Insurance information was given and I was allowed to leave the scene.

Several months later I received a letter from my insurance company informing me that they had been unable to come to a settlement with the aggrieved party. It looked like the case would have to be settled in court. They had assigned an attorney to represent both me and them, but warned me there was a possibility that an award could go beyond my insurance coverage.

The legalities of the case dragged on for several months with depositions, missed appointments, and other issues. Eventually my case came before a jury trial. The lawyer assigned to my case defended me well and pointed out numerous inconsistencies in the plaintiff's testimony. Finally, the jury was told to go out and return with a verdict.

When the jury arrived back in the courtroom and the judge queried them, the forewoman announced that they "decided in favor of the plaintiff, and awarded her zero dollars."

According to the testimony given during the trial, the plaintiff had incurred expenses for the ambulance ride and for two subsequent back-doctor appointments. She had also had several back-doctor appointments in the year before the accident.

My lawyer told me the insurance company had offered the plaintiff \$10,000 but she had refused the settlement. At this point, my insurance company was completely off the hook.

How should I, as a follower of Christ, relate to this woman who had tried to get all that she could from the case? How, after she had asked for "my coat," should I have given her my "cloak" also?

Practical Question:

Should the brother offer the aggressor an additional gift even though the court left him free of any obligation to do so? Explain your reasons.



True Price Discovery

by Live Love



I love auctions.

As a very shy and timid boy growing up in Virginia Beach in the 60's, I recall the very first live cattle auction I ever attended. This was the dispersal sale of the dairy herd of the late Will Overholt in either 1964 or 1965. At that sale I was smitten with a true puppy love for auctions.

As a small preschool youngster I often conducted my own live auctions. I would pull my little red wagon into our calf barn and set up a make-believe tent with small chairs. Then I would go from pen to pen selling calves. My microphone was an empty toilet paper roll attached to a piece of twine. As I recall, the calves sold quite well despite there being no buyers present!

From that time forward, my puppy love matured into an absolute love for the auction way of merchandizing. In my opinion it is still one of the best ways to find true price discovery in just about anything.

After moving to Montezuma, Georgia, in 1968 and growing into my later teen years, I would often go to Tifton, Georgia, on Saturdays to purebred beef breeder cattle auctions so I could hear my favorite auctioneer, Col. Gerald Bowie from Lagrange, Georgia; in my opinion he was one of the best. I am nearly ashamed to say that I have driven many miles over the years to listen and record on a cassette recorder some of my favorite auctioneers!

In my late teens and early twenties, I enjoyed a job at Cordele Livestock (Crisp County Livestock) where I helped tag, pen and sort livestock and then helped work the ring in the afternoon sale. This "work" paid \$7.00 to \$8.00 an hour for 10 to 12 hours a day. This was very GOOD money for a Mennonite boy back then!

I just love going to auctions—the chant of the auctioneer, the excitement of the crowd, the tension, and guessing at the final price. But I have been close enough to auctions to learn that sometimes not everything is what it seems to be.

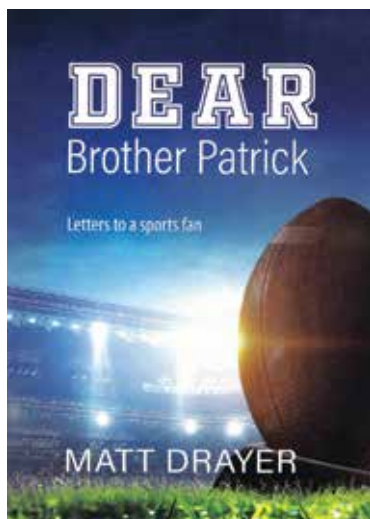
Practical Questions:

1. What are some of the tricks used in auctions that are questionable?
2. How can one spot a dishonest auction?

Book Review

Dear Brother Patrick

by James G. Landis



Roman armies destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. In the same year the Romans began construction in Rome of a huge outdoor amphitheater holding up to 50,000 people. Cruel sports such as gladiators fighting, sometimes to death, and humans fighting with wild beasts furnished entertainment for the screaming crowds. About 3,000 Christians were martyred in the Colosseum. Much of the entertainment had to do with the Roman gods.

In America today, amphitheaters holding more than 50,000 people exist for the entertainment of huge crowds. Millions follow the sports games on their large screens. Is this sports craze simply for personal relaxation or are the gods of this world also involved?

The introduction to *Dear Brother Patrick* states, “The sports craze is possibly the most popular religion in America.” Matt Dreyer is concerned about how he, himself, has struggled with a sports addiction, along with the many other “Christians”—and Anabaptists—who

likewise become wrapped up in the sports games and this false religion.

Matt has seen many “Christians,” in name only, become more excited about sports than they are about Christ and His Church. Matt wanted to warn people about this danger so he wrote *Dear Brother Patrick*. This book consists of a series of letters between himself and an imaginary younger brother named Patrick Troyer who is taken up with sports. Patrick could represent you.

In the exchange of letters, Matt seeks to gently lead Patrick from a fascination with professional sports to an awareness of the sinfulness of his addiction. But it does not stop there. Matt goes on to challenge Patrick with what a fuller and deeper commitment to following Christ in everyday life might mean to him.

This book can be useful in helping young people see the sinfulness of being overcome with sports and its associated evils—idolatry, lust and immorality, drinking and partying, and unchristian behavior. But the book can also speak to older Christians who spend large amounts of time and money to watch and thrill with the sports games when they should be attending church, visiting with friends, or reading their Bibles and other edifying books.

Dear Brother Patrick could also be useful to parents who want to steer their children away from a sinful sports craze and do not quite know how to do it. By showing how a life devoted to Christ is much more satisfying and rewarding than the life of the greatest sports heroes, this book could at least make them pause and think. Will they follow Christ or be enslaved by the Devil in a sinful sports religion?

“Brother, let’s lift up the name of Christ. People get so excited about touchdowns and home runs. But those things are insignificant when compared to the kingdom of God.”

– from *Dear Brother Patrick*, page 63

Where to buy?

Order information: TGS International; Berlin, Ohio 44610

Phone: 330.893.4828

www.tgsinternational.com



Circulation & Financial Statement

Income & Expense Report April thru September 2022

April 1, 2022 Beginning Balance	\$1,935.98
Income	
Donations	\$2,181.00
Local Support*	\$10,000.00
Total Income	\$12,181.00
Beginning Balance + Income	\$14,116.98
Expenses	
Handling & Packaging	\$672.00
Postage	\$3,669.01
Printing	\$5,932.00
Staff Expenses	\$890.94
Total Expense	\$11,163.95
September 30, 2021 Ending Balance	\$2,953.03

AV publication costs have gone up. The costs of publication have largely fallen to local support. If you wish to share in the publishing costs for AV27, it would be much appreciated. All gifts given to Anabaptist Voice through the local church are tax deductible.



End Matters

Doris and I have attended three funerals since AV25 went to press. Funerals always cause one to pause and think about "End Matters." I cannot think of a more eloquent way to end AV26 than the poem we used at the end of AV25.

What Then?

When the plants of our mighty cities
Have turned out their last finished work;
When our merchants have sold their last yardage
And have dismissed the last tired clerk,
When our banks have raked in their last dollar
And paid out their last dividend;
When the Judge of the earth says,
 "Closed for the night."
And asks for a balance—what then?

When the choir has sung its last anthem
And the preacher has made his last prayer,
When the people have heard their last sermon
And the sound has died out on the air;
When the Bible lies closed on the altar,
And the pews are all empty of men,
And each one stands facing his record,
And the Great Book is opened—what then?

When the actors have played their last drama,
And the mimic has made his last pun;
When the film has flashed its last picture,
And the scoreboard displayed its last run,
When the crowds seeking pleasure have vanished
And gone out in the darkness again,
When the Trumpet of the Ages has sounded,
And we stand up before Him—what then?

When the bugle's call sinks into silence,
And the long marching columns stand still;
When the captain has given his last orders,
And they've captured the last fort and hill,
And the flag has been hauled in from the mast head
And the wounded afield have checked in,
And a world rejected its Savior,
Is asked for a reason—what then?

— Henry Blank | *Pennsylvania*

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ISSUE #22 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

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ISSUE #23 - ACTUAL NUMBERS

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**see section "Our Finances" on Page 4 for more info.*

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*“Teach us to number our days, that we may apply
our hearts unto wisdom.”*

- Psalm 90:12 (KJV)



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