

"And the dragon...went to make war with the remnant...which keep the commandments of God, and have...

THE TESTIMONY

...of Jesus Christ." Revelation 12:17

VERSE OF THE MONTH

*"Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you.
Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." John 14:27*

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WHERE IS PEACE?

Karlin H. Miller

Where is "Peace on Earth" today?
When politics and leaders fray,
And riots stain the light of day,
And cursing's will not cease—
Where is Peace?

But listen! From a distant knoll
A Christmas bell begins to toll,
And wakens in our longing soul
A hope that will not cease.
Here is Peace!

Where is peace, the Bethlehem star
To guide the weary wanderer,
When "Christians" hate and kill in war,
And striving does not cease—
Where is Peace?

Here is peace! The God above
Brought us the Nation spoken of,
That reaches out to all in love,
To make the striving cease.
Here is Peace!

Where is peace when sickness falls,
When quarantine and virus calls
For loneliness behind closed walls,
And fear just will not cease—
Where is Peace?

Here is peace though ill may come,
And troubles try to keep us from
The hope that morning soon will dawn,
His presence will not cease.
Here is Peace!

Where is peace in forlorn pain,
Where little children long in vain
For parents, who for greed of gain
Their selfish lives won't cease—
Where is Peace?

Here is peace in darkest night,
A King who sees each desperate plight
Has strength to crush the tempter's might
And give us sweet release.
Here is Peace!

Where is peace found deep within,
When hearts are bound by chains of sin
In Satan's grip, no hope to win,
And gnawing guilt won't cease—
Where is Peace?

Oh, Jesus! Babe of Bethlehem,
Royal King! Thy diadem
Will live on when this world shall end,
Thy reign shall never cease,
Prince of Peace!

THE TESTIMONY

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“...what hast
thou that thou
didst not
receive?”

I Cor. 4:7

EDITORIAL

THE GIFTS

The gift of life that's mortal. New body from the womb. Fresh life that takes us forward from the cradle to the tomb. Awakening every morning. Sustained through every night. With senses, and awareness, and sound, and taste, and sight!

The gift of friends to love us. That hold us by their side. That smile at us and share our joys, and many things beside.

The gift of precious family! Parents to guide our feet. Or those who reached and brought us in to make our lives complete.

How can we keep from praising? And singing on our way? When God has filled our lives with gifts to bless us day by day!

And now there comes upon us, this season of the year, a time to pause and fill our minds with sacred joy and cheer. Because our God in mercy has come, "a little child"! From a Righteous God in Heaven to a Baby, "meek and mild."

The thought is awe-inspiring! His love for us so GREAT! That He would stoop so low to save us from our sinful state! He came to a lowly family. A place of humble birth. To begin a life of sacrifice for the people of the earth.

And the shepherds watched with wonder! The angels said to them: "Peace on earth, goodwill to men," They ran to worship Him! And through the streets they went to tell the things that they had seen. And some believed, and some did not, and so it's ever been.

The Gift of life example, that Jesus gave to men! So free from

sin! So full of love for all who came to Him!

"I will in no wise cast them out that come to me," He said. He gave so much, though He could find "no place to lay His head."

He bore affliction for them. He healed the blind and lame. He bore their sorrows, healed the wounds of those to whom He came. Some praised Him for His blessings! Some thanked Him for His care. And some just mocked and scorned His gifts even as He blessed them there.

So much to us is given! So many gifts He gave! With love and tender mercy as He reached to earth to save!

The people thought to crown Him. He surely could be King! Why, He could feed and clothe them, and give them everything!

If He could heal diseases. If He could heal the lame. If He could give them loaves and fish and bless all men the same! Then take Him to the City. Enthroned Him King of all! And Israel would be head among the nations after all!

But He set His face toward Calvary! We know the story well. He had come to save, not from disease, but from sin, and death, and Hell!

Besides the gifts of life and health. Besides the gift of friends. He came to take our sins away! His giving never ends! The gift of all forgiven! The gift of Him within! The Gift of hope that lifts above this world of death and sin!

So praise the Loving Saviour who's delivered us from loss! By pouring out His Gifts—from His cradle to His cross!

Lowell Miller

SEASONAL

THE SHEPHERDS' STORY

*"While shepherds watched their
flock by night,
Near little Bethlehem town;
The angel of the Lord came down;
And glory shone around."*

Can we imagine how that must have been! Probably they were a little sleepy when, (Luke 2:9) "And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore [greatly] afraid."

Here are the shepherds; lowly people, caring for their sheep. They must have had some learning though.

"And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2:10–11).

Why the shepherds? To show that Jesus was born to all people? Did the poor think that such a gift was not for them? Like David, were they of his branch of people? Had they in the open field, been praying?

Jesus, many times in the Scriptures, had stories about sheep, and He is our Shepherd. He is the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. He spoke of the ninety and nine. But one lamb was missing! We are lost sheep without Jesus! Jesus, often called people the sheep of His pasture.

Jesus was of the lineage of David, the Psalmist (Matt. 1). Yes, David we find in the field with sheep (I Sam. 16:11).

Luke 2:10–12 says, "And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the



Lord. And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger."

The Son of God, born in a barn! Born to all people! If He had been born in the inn, the atmosphere would have been very noisy. And many people around! But out behind, in the barn, all was quiet and calm, and the star shone above, and all was peace. Swaddling clothes were like a blanket wrapped around snugly, to comfort the baby. Babies feel really secure when wrapped like this.

Back out in the field with the sheep the story continues. (Luke 2:13-14) "And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude [a great many, a great crowd, like a legion] of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men." The birth of our Saviour far exceeds anything of this world!

Luke 2:15-19, "And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us. And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds. But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart." How often in our family gatherings do we ponder about **Jesus our Gift?**

Why are the shepherds a part of the story? We found ourselves wondering about sheep. We read from our Encyclopedia these words by Robert M. McClung: "Over in the eastern continents the sheep and goats run together. Sheep were raised in Bible times for offerings to God. They also used their wool, meat, skin, and milk. Some wild goats had shorter stiffer wool. They are now used for leather, soap, and glue.

"The sheep in the mountains are quicker moving animals with padded feet to help them with slippery surfaces in their mountain home. They mostly eat grasses and plants.

"Some are small, and reddish brown with darker lines running along their backs. They have long and slender horns. They are found to be a heavier animal in Asia.

"There are other breeds living in Northern Africa. They have longer hair and look somewhat like a goat. Some live in Tibet and Western China. People say it seems that they wander, not taking heed where they are going.

"Most of these animals are weak and timid. It is said of some sheep that if they are accidentally rolled over onto their backs, they are helpless."

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned everyone to his own way..."

When Jesus was born, the angels came quickly to tell the sheep and the shepherds. We are all like sheep! We are in great need of our Shepherd!

Praise God that He has come to save!

Vicki Witmer

GENERAL

**A HERITAGE OF
HOSPITALITY**

The clink of silverware on china, the murmur of voices, the warmth of good food, the stories, the laughter, the sober discussions, these are some of my memories around my grandparents' dining room table. The stories—examples of faithfulness through the trials of life. I learned about a brother's life and how he had overcome his stuttering. I heard about depression-era marriages, starting out with 10 dollars in the groom's pocket, but now I could see they'd made it through 30-plus years together. I heard the story of a brother who refused a gold watch because of the scriptural teachings against the wearing of gold. I remember the old Uncle who knew the exact amount of money in the Service Committee's treasury. I heard many, many discussions of prophecy, who might the man of sin be, when might the Lord Jesus come?

As I think about my heritage of hospitality, I also think about my own Mother's dining room table. Many people have been welcomed around my Mother's table over the years. Sometimes it was a well-planned meal with a cleaned-up house, but many other times it was a hastily-tidied house and a sharing of the roast that was in the oven and a "crazy cake" that was baked late Saturday night.

But always it was with love and enjoyment of the people around her, and often the time together would include some type of story read, a story that told a lesson, but had a bit of humor in with it. I also remember, when I was a girl, how one or another of the sisters in our church district would have a partial meal fixed after morning services and would invite a few other families to their home "to bring what they had fixed." Suddenly there was a last-minute potluck, with the older folks visiting, and the children playing a lively game of "Kick The Can."

Christian fellowship is a blessing, a time of encouragement, learning, and sharing and caring with and for one another. We see this happening in the New Testament. In Matthew 8:15, after the disciple Peter's mother-in-law was healed, she "arose and ministered unto them." Most likely she prepared and served them some sort of a meal. The Lord Jesus, in Luke 11:37, dined at a Pharisee's house, and then proceeded to teach and admonish those that were there. In Luke 19:5–10, Jesus went to visit at Zacchaeus' house, and the Lord's very presence caused Zacchaeus to repent. In Mark 6:35–44, after a day of teaching, Jesus fed a multitude. What do you suppose the discussions were that day in the circles of 50 and 100? In John 21:12 the resurrected Jesus called His disci-

ple's to "come and dine." Jesus also gave us the command to remember His death and suffering in the sharing of food together.

As we think about the biblical practice of sharing a meal together, it is a practice we would like to encourage us to continue with.

Among our church family, it is a way to exhort one another, to learn about the cares and concerns of each other's lives, and to learn of the struggles and lessons learned in each other's lives. One Sunday afternoon in our home, an older sister shared how, as a young Christian, she gave up what seemed to her the ideal job because she would not have been allowed to wear her prayer covering. Also present that day was a family with several preteen daughters, and they were listening intently. What a blessing for them to hear of that sister's example of faithfulness.

When we share a meal with fellow Christians who are traveling from another area, it can be a way to provide for their physical needs, but also to learn of how the Lord has worked in their lives. I remember a dear older out-of-state minister who responded to our last-minute invitation to come for a snack after Sunday evening services when we were a young married couple. When we later expressed appreciation for them coming to our home, he said, "It never hurts to ask." Then he relayed an account of how in their younger years a brother had come and preached to their congregation

on Thanksgiving Day. They assumed the visitors likely had plans for the Thanksgiving meal, but they asked anyway, and the visitors didn't have plans, and this young couple was so glad they had asked them. "So," he said, "It never hurts to ask." Don't be afraid to invite those older than you, or those younger than you. They likely have their plans all made, but if not, you can gain by learning and sharing with them. The older folks benefit from the younger's perspective, and the younger learn from the experiences of those who are older. I'm reminded how the Apostle Paul in Acts 28:15 had some of the brethren come to meet him as he was traveling to Rome, and "...he thanked God and took courage." Let us encourage our fellow brethren and sisters who are traveling in our area.

To those who are our neighbors or those who want to learn more about Christianity, welcoming them into our home can give them a glimpse of biblical families. Witnessing the husband taking the lead in the home, husband and wife serving, listening to the needy with an occasional word of encouragement or advice, and what a good example respectful obedient children can be. This can give a new light on what Christianity is all about in an atmosphere of orderliness and peacefulness, no television screen in the background, and no loud, blaring music. Recently I was told by a young Christian wife who was raised in a non-Christian environ-

ment and who had been in a home with some of our young couples, “I didn’t know how biblical submission was supposed to work in real life until I saw it in the German Baptist ladies.” I’m sure these sisters never realized they were giving lessons on submission; they were just being hospitable.

So how do we accomplish this? It is not always easy, but I think a willingness to share even in our imperfections is one “helper.” Certainly, praying for strength for the day and praying about who to have around your table is another help. Simplicity in our homes and meal preparation is also helpful; we don’t need as large of a menu as they did in our grandparents’ day when more physical work was done. A heart that is willing to let others help us finish our meal preparations, even though it can be scary at times, to let someone see inside of our frig or that certain drawer! Having meals in mind that we know how to easily make and serve can save us time and trouble, rather than thinking we should serve something new and exotic.

Sharing our food is enjoyable but then let us also share in the “good part” as Mary did in Luke 10:42. It is a blessing to read and discuss a part of Scripture together and to sing together. It can be helpful if the host can help direct conversation in a spiritual direction. Perhaps a topic can be brought up that each person can share briefly about.

Some general suggestions

about mealtime hospitality: it is nice to have a variety of age groups around our tables, and also a variety of circumstances in life; it is an inspiration to include singles and widows. A single sister told me one time, “We really appreciate getting to be with families.” Most children enjoy having someone their age to be with, but it is not always a necessity. Children can learn by listening to the older folks visit, and they can learn to sit and listen respectfully; it is good if they can be included some in conversation. If children from various families are together and go off to play, they should be checked on often. A tableful of company is enjoyable, but so is just sharing with one couple or family. We have experienced very pleasant meals and fellowship in the homes of single brethren and single sisters, so we know that singles can have company successfully, too. I remember what one sister (who had meal company often) told me one time: “There are times in life where you just can’t have company.” That is so true; sometimes health and circumstances do not allow us to accomplish it. Our primary responsibility as wives is to care for our husband and children, but neither let us become too lazy or selfish to reach out to others.

This article has focused on mealtime hospitality, but that is not the only way to show hospitality, which means, “A love of strangers.” It may mean giving an elderly person a ride, handing a

cold water bottle to a homeless person in the shopping center parking lot, caring for children in need, a friendly chat with a neighbor, singing to the elderly, or helping to serve a meal at the mission. May we be willing to give and to share in the circumstances that are in front of us.

My mother, the person who passed on to me a heritage of hospitality that she learned from my grandmother, is no longer able to cook and serve a meal. Neither is she able to go to another's home to enjoy a meal. But she would love for you to stop by, and you would be warmly welcomed, and chances are you might be handed a story to read, a story that might have some humor to it and yet teaches a lesson. May the Lord grant me strength to pass on this special heritage to my children and grandchildren.

Our Lord Jesus, the ultimate example of hospitality, has invited us to come to Him and fellowship with Him. "Blessed are they which are called unto the marriage supper of the Lamb." "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord." What a blessed mealtime that will be.

Note: Since this was written, my mother has passed on to glory, and the responsibility now lies with my generation to demonstrate to others the blessing of hospitality.

In Christian love,

Kimberly Bauman

FLOOD GATES

Fences are boundaries to keep things in. But sometimes they are to keep things out, whichever is needed. Robert Frost, a renowned poet of the last century, spoke of how two neighbors met each year to mend a stone wall between their fields. They piled up stones to repair the barrier which had fallen down, to restore the wall. As Robert Frost said, "Good fences make good neighbors." So, every year these neighbors mended the fence between them. Boundaries require maintenance.

A small stream ran through the woods on my Grandfather's farm where I spent my childhood. The stream ran from this farm, into the farm next west. When I was a boy, a woven wire fence separated the wooded lots of the two farms keeping horses, grazing cattle, and sheep in their respective wood lots. In the winter and in the heat of summer, the creek on my Grandfather's farm ran low, but in a spring freshet, Pike Run overflowed its banks. Erosion had caused the stream to run some three or four feet lower than the level of the surrounding woods. The fence between the farms could have been built straight from bank to bank above the stream. But that would result in an opening below the fence where the cattle could pass under. The fence could have been built down the slope to the level of the stream, through the water, and up the opposite bank. But experience had taught that, in the spring freshet, the

force of high water, and the trash that the waters carried in its flood would wash the fence away. For these reasons, people in those days built what was called a “flood gate.” A flood gate hung on hinges below the fence and above the stream. Ordinarily it was to keep livestock in their respective woodlots. But when the spring rains came and caused the stream to rise, the flood gate floated up on the surface of the water and the power of the flood, with all the trash it carried, passed under the fence and on downstream.

Over the years I have thought about fences and flood gates. I have thought of how the storms have passed through my life and how the waters rise and fall with the swelling of the stream. These swollen waters can bring damage

and destruction to one’s life. Storms pass through, disturbing our inner peace. The waters of troubled times become swollen, and the overflow of emotion sometimes brings distress. Flood waters and debris can wash away fences—fences intended to serve as boundaries against those things which disturb our peace. Flood gates permit a lot of trash to pass on downstream.

In Ohio, at least, fences are built to keep livestock in—so they can’t get out and wonder away. We were once visiting near Quinter, Kansas. There we found a fence all around the house, garden, and barnyard. This fence was intended to keep livestock out. Although livestock there could roam far and wide, the animals stayed near the house and barn where they found



feed and water. There was no fence to keep them from wandering off to Oklahoma or to Colorado! But they did not. They found their feed and water near the farmstead. In that situation it was not necessary to fence stock in—they weren't going anywhere. There, fences were intended to keep livestock away from the house and away from the garden. The purpose of a fence is to keep things in—or to keep things out. Whatever the need may be.

Just so it is with our spiritual lives. Fences have more than one purpose. Fences are to remind us to stay in where we are safe—or to stay out of where there is danger. Fences determine the boundaries of safety and the bounds of peril, confining that which should be confined while letting go those things which should be permitted to go—just like flood gates keep the livestock in but let the flood waters pass on. In life, it is important to understand the reason why someone built those fences. Never tear down a fence unless you know why it was built in the first place.

It is possible to build a fence to keep everything out—even to keep out the good. It is possible to send a message to others that they are not welcome in our lives. It is possible to throw up a barrier against those who would be a comfort and an encouragement to us, against those who we need desperately. Even against those who we love the very most. That is not what fences are intended for.

It is possible to build a fence to keep good things in—even to keep in blessings. To avoid a relationship with those who need our love, who need our approval, who need the blessing of God through us. Others may crave our love and affirmation. To withhold love and to prevent God's love from flowing through us to others seems to be selfish. We have heard grown people say, "I know my parents loved me, but they never once said so." "My father never gave me a hug." "When I did something wrong, I heard about it, but when I did something good my parents never said anything." Love cannot pass through a stone wall—nor through a hard heart.

So, fences should be made to keep things in which need to stay in, and to keep things out which need to be kept out. But there needs to be provision for those things that need to pass through. Which brings us back to the purpose of flood gates.

Bitterness is a destroyer of peace. Bitterness cannot be fenced out because it comes from within one's self. We must let it go. It is trash which will build up and, carried on flooded waters, may destroy everything in its way. A flood gate is to let trash go.

Hatred is a destroyer of the soul. Hate cannot be fenced out because it arises from within one's self. We must let it go. If left to build up it will destroy the boundary between us and loved ones living next to us.

Envy is a destroyer of relation-

ships. Envy cannot be fenced out because it comes from within one's self. We must let it go.

The same is true of foolishness, disobedience, deceit, lust, malice, strife, railings, evil surmisings, and such like. By and large, these characteristics do not arise on the other side of the fence. They originate on this side—within one's own heart. The longer we fence them in the worse they become. In time, and sometimes suddenly, the stream will rise. The floods will overflow their banks. The "trash" becomes too much, and the fence is washed away—destroyed, no longer of any use to anyone. A destroyed barrier will neither hold things in nor keep things out.

On the other hand, while walls are built to keep things out—or to keep things in, flood gates are made to let things out—or even to let things in. Imagine, for a moment living, not upstream from a flood gate but downstream, on the other side. Imagine that the goodness of God is upstream, and you and I are down stream of the grace of God. Sometimes blessings come in showers, even sometimes as a downpour. The goodness of God may be a deluge. In Malachi 3:10 God commands Israel to bring tithes into His storehouse, "that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." When we are living downstream, that is what we can expect from the grace of God—God will

pour out blessings in abundance, so much that we cannot even imagine the magnitude of His love. The grace of God to us is like living downstream of the flood gate.

The flood gates are not only to prevent the accumulation of "trash" in our lives but also to let blessings flow from God. And through us to others. Amos, in 5:24, says the swollen streams of the Love of God are to "let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream." A flood gate is an important part of any boundary between self and others—or self and God. A flood gate lets out what should not stay in—sometimes the trash, sometimes the blessings.

Maintain good fences.

Marcus Miller

THANKFUL FOR SECURITY

My life as a child, to most people, would seem like a time of suffering and hardship. Times were difficult and money was scarce, but I always had a feeling of security with Dad and Mother.

On a cold, bitter morning in the winter, I would poke my head out of the heavy comforters that Mother had tucked around me the night before; I could see my breath in the frigid air; Ice paintings coated the windows on the inside, but I felt warm and snug as I'd settle down in my soft nest of a fluffy feather bed.

As I listened, I could hear Dad

as he shook the ashes down in the old stove. Afterward he would carefully place kindling, corncobs and old paper, in the stove's big belly. Striking a match to it, a blaze would flame, and he would add a chunk of wood on top. Soon a brisk fire took the chill out of the air.

As I waited for the shivery air to warm, I felt sorry for Dad and Mother, having to get up to a cold house, but I never heard them complain.

Eventually, I'd turn the covers back, and slowly place my feet on the icy teeth-chattering linoleum. Hurrying out to the stove, I'd stand behind it to bask in its warmth.

Coming in from the kitchen, Mother would greet me and give me one of her special smiles. She was a vigorous worker and did so much for us children. On the old wood-burning range, she prepared a hearty breakfast for her hungry family.

Summers were spent working in the garden, canning all kinds of fruits and vegetables, and laying in food for the winter. Times were severe during the Depression days, and I don't think she ever threw anything away as we might need it someday. We had a ball of string the size of a volley ball. All of our well-worn and much mended clothes which we just couldn't wear anymore, were cut in strips, sewed together and made into woven rugs.

Every bit of drippings from meat fat was saved and made into soap. Mother would cook it in a big iron kettle over an open fire outside. She would warn me to stand

back as I might get burned. I was fascinated as I watched the grey bubbling mass. It reminded me of a large cauldron.

Dad had a desire when he was growing up to be a doctor. He would have been a good one too, as he was so gentle when he removed splinters or patched up a wound. At the time we never realized it though. We wouldn't tell him about a splinter until we nearly had blood poisoning.

Anyway, Dad had to give up his dream as finances just weren't available. So he ranched a rented farm until he bought the family home-place when his father retired. His heart wasn't really into that type of work, however.

Life at home was a secure place to be. I always felt that Dad or Mother could repair anything or make any circumstance that was wrong, become perfect.

They gave us upright instructions. Bible reading took place every morning to start the day. I know I didn't appreciate this as I should have, as I'd wiggle in my chair sometimes, thinking I'd miss the school bus.

On long winter evenings, as the wind would howl around the corners of the house, and the sleet beat against the window panes, we sat close to the warmth of the stove. By lamplight, Dad or Mother would read stories, or poetry to us, we would play games, or put a puzzle together. This was usually accompanied with huge bowls of Dad's special popped corn and occasionally we'd have crunchy apples to bite into.

Sometimes Dad would get out his harmonica or Jew's Harp and entertain us. More often we'd have a family singing, as we all loved to sing. Taking turns, we'd have to start the song we chose and sometimes we didn't recognize the tune very well.

Church was a must on Sunday. Dad would load us in the old car and away we'd go. There wasn't a question of "Are we going?" We just went. Our grandparents would all be there and so would all our cousins and friends. What a blessing for an inheritance!

When we had an illness, a doctor was seldom called. Oh, once in a while he'd come during the night with his big black bag and leave us a new brother or sister. At least that's what we thought.

When we were really ill, he'd give us a bottle of the most awful bitter-tasting medicine. That seemed worse than the sickness. Mother's treatment was much nicer. A chest cold would bring out Watkin's Medicated Ointment, which she'd rub on our chest, cover it with a warm soft flannel cloth, feed us warm milk with buttered toast, and her own special touch. I miss it yet.

So it never entered my mind that anything distressing could enter our lives. I was in for a shock.

One day my little brother didn't feel very well. He didn't respond to medication, so one afternoon when we arrived home from school, he wasn't there, as they had taken

him to the hospital. That was almost unheard of in that day. So I felt my first sense of insecurity. Dad and Mother couldn't "fix" this.

On Christmas Day my little brother turned and looked at Mother, smiled and went to be with Jesus.

This was hard for me to accept. I had cared for him so much as an older sister. There beneath the chair lay his little scuffed shoes that I had put on him every day. His Christmas gifts lay unopened.

Dad and Mother explained to us though that someday we could go to be with him. Just have faith and believe in Jesus.

This made me realize our earthly parents can make us feel secure, but they can never take the place of a Heavenly Father. Parents do what they can with the knowledge the Lord gives them, as what is best for their children. My parents did give us a godly heritage, and as a result all my brothers and sisters have faith in God and are completely dependent on Him, and we love His Word, the Bible.

So thank you, Dad and Mother, for teaching us His security.

I Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."

Emily Bauman

THE FORBIDDEN BOOK

A communist soldier was ordered to take a Book away from a Christian and burn the Book, but he'd never seen the Book before and instead of burning it, he began to read it. It was the Bible.

When he was seen by the Christian again, he begged her to let him keep it. He said, he'd have to keep it hidden from his superiors. It was against the law in this communist country to own a Bible. The Christian wondered if she could remember many of the verses in her Bible that she had given up. I wondered to myself how many verses I could recall if I had to give up my "only" Bible. The guard said he had never been so strangely moved by it. We know, "the Word of God is quick and powerful..." The Christian thought she couldn't give it up, but knew this man needed the Bible. For her, Bibles were rare in communist country.

When this Christian girl was being lead away to prison, her father stood at a distance, outside of the wall shouting Psalm 23 so she could hear. She was instructed by her captors to not look at her father, but she did and received great comfort in seeing and hearing him.

Satan continues to try to destroy the Word of Truth. Unfortunately, it appears many Americans don't read the Gospel Truth. We need to embrace it! Write it in

our hearts. We can be thankful we still have Bibles available in America and the freedom to worship, so far.

Darlene Killingsworth

THE LITTLE FOXES OF FABLES, FAIRY TALE, AND FICTION

The grandchildren are coming to the age when we often see them reading. As a parent we were cautious about what our children read. Even the "Christian" fiction got an eagle eye. Or maybe we should say, especially it did. Well, we remember an uncle telling his son who was reading "Christian" books and challenging sound doctrine that he'd rather he just read an old shoot 'em up western because at least he knew we didn't practice that.

I Timothy 4:13 says, "Till I come, give attendance to reading, to exhortation, to doctrine." Reading has not always been as common as it is today and neither have books.

In bygone years it was the skill of the wealthy and learned. If one could not read it was considered a handicap. Occasionally, we will meet someone who can't read well or doesn't like to, and it still is a handicap because they can so easily be taken advantage of by others

who can read and write skillfully in an unfair manner.

The one thing required of brethren was to teach any manumitted slaves to read and it stands to reason they knew how themselves and taught their children.

It is not easy to teach a child how to read. We had one that would rather be read to and one that struggled to read in general. At no point did we ever accommodate their struggle. They were expected to learn how, and God provided this mother some effective circumstances that helped. One was a reading contest at the local library and the other an illness that left a child with little but the choice of reading for several weeks while recuperating on the couch. To this day they read very well, and when we converse it is obvious what they are reading.

To overcome this the teacher had to be able to read, and other teachers recommended a book a month. As a busy mother we struggled until we took to reading aloud each evening. Looking back, we can pinpoint four books that had an influence, the Bible, a book that taught a son to build houses from paper, a book on the life of Chessie Cummins who developed the Cummins diesel engine, and more than one on wildland fire-fighting. Early on we had read that if you teach a child to read he

can teach himself anything, and that is so true. Teachers don't need to know everything. A general education can be taught, and the child can read to a reasonable level of skill on their own. This teacher never learned to trim trees, but she knew what was coming when the books arrived, and then the boots, ropes, and harness.

Is it possible that we were the last generation with strong oversight concerning what our children read? For many families a good portion of the library was never borrowed. What books were bought were carefully chosen, and those gifted were checked out. Book sales were a good source of affordable reading since the libraries in our area were purging their shelves of the old volumes. Still by far our choice was nonfiction. The common children's fairy tales weren't read, and we always told our children the truth was better than any fiction however tantalizing the fable may be. We especially warned our girls against the "Christian" romances because of the harm they would do an ordinary marriage. Boys never read them and don't expect them to be anything close to reality. Even the adversity in them was contrived. We can tell you they did not heed that and were disappointed to find out that indeed truth supersedes fiction.

What kind of books do we read? As the children grew up we would discuss what we were reading on our own. Sometimes they wanted the book next. We would take a deep breath and tell them it was quite salty. Seldom did we forbid a book except if they were too young. This mother's feeling was that the Bible addressed anything we read. The most troubling book for them was the first one we read of a persecuted Christian we would later meet. They could reckon the suffering of Jesus, but the suffering of Sylvia at the hands of her countrymen was disturbing. They understood that of Anne Frank and the Jews, but Corrie ten Boom and the Christians bothered them deeply. We never expected a teen to read through *Martyr's Mirror* for it was more than we could bear, and our father had not encouraged us to do it all at one time, but we didn't restrain her.

Enter the Internet. Our home-schooled children didn't carry reading material in their pocket. Their school library was our home library. Not so today, if your children are public schooled and carrying a tablet or smart phone. When we go into a public place, we don't see people sitting and reading a book. They are reading their phone. More and more the content they are reading or hearing is being chosen for them especially when this is their only source.

There was a time when I could pick up a couple of local newspapers and get different views of current events. Today that would require one from another state. The sole news magazine in our library has become alarmingly biased since 2020, so much so that we read a second published by a church to find out what is truly happening in the world around us. It is no secret that journalists are censored, threatened, jailed, and even killed. While we don't like it, there is something more dangerous coming.

You've heard of fake news which by now we all know translates to "something we don't want known," but have you heard of fake reality? Of course not. It is called virtual reality. The devil doesn't sell fake, but he is into "nearly real." It is getting so real that we heard a man tell about picking up what his son was using for gaming and he was shocked. It has become so real that he said if you didn't know you had put on the headset you wouldn't remember it wasn't actually happening. It has gone from cartoon-like to so realistic it is killing people. That's right! They lose track of time, sit too long, develop blood clots in the legs, or die of dehydration and exhaustion. Then there is the killing of others as a result of the game or someone messing up a game. This is playing games!

Soon to go into clinical trials is Neuralink, a brain chip designed to transmit and receive information between the brain and a computer. Of course, the plan is good; to get paraplegics walking. This could take you where your computer goes or where someone else transmits whatever from a computer. That's disturbing. It seems the technology is getting as high as the tower of Babel, "and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do" (Gen. 11:6). We once heard someone say, "If you want to know what is coming next go to the theater; that's the imagination process before the created product."

We have a new oft-used word: metrics. It went from seldom used except in music to frequently used in the '90s. Today it refers to the measure of anything, but usually mathematically, with computer data which can translate to bots ("bot" is a contraction for "robot") and artificial intelligence. You are probably not even aware of when it is in use. While we are indeed creatures of habit and quite predictable, not everything fits metrics. Any variable, including repentance, throws it on it's head and red flags alert. Thus change, even for the better, is considered bad or at least suspect. If the metric is false data, then true and honest data skew it. Think what that does to reality. I am currently trying to convince someone of this,

and it is going to take more than one run-in with reality before they will decide they have to change their metric mentality.

Many a time we've wished to have the Apostle Paul near at hand. He fought so well the false gods of his day. He knew about cunningly devised fables. Fiction is so frustrating when people depend on it. One feels like they are turning the world upside down to correct the course. Is it any wonder that the first sign of the Lord's return was, "Take heed that no man deceive you"? (Matt. 24:4)

*O, 'tis a lovely thing for youth
To early walk in wisdom's way;
To fear a lie, to speak the truth,
That we may trust to all they say!*

*But liars we can never trust,
Even when they say what is true.
And he who does one fault at first
And lies to hide it makes it two.*

*Have we not known, nor heard, nor read
How God does hate deceit and wrong?
How Ananias was struck dead
Caught with a lie upon his tongue?*

*So did his wife Sapphira die.
When she came in, and grew so bold
As to confirm that wicked lie,
Which just before her husband told.*

*The Lord delights in them that speak
The words of truth; but every liar
Must have his portion in the lake
That burns with brimstone and with fire.*

Isaac Watts

Rachel Brubaker

MEDITATIONS

He is the exalted Prince and Savior, giving repentance and remission.
 The government is on His shoulders. Let Him carry it.
 Don't beg for thunder when just a whisper will do.
 You cannot find peace by looking to the world.
 Unless Jesus is our Master, He is not our Lord.
 Born in a manger; bound for a throne!
 I'll see you over there!

QUESTIONS TO PONDER

This section offers some questions to think about, or for Sunday afternoon discussions, or to prompt future articles from our readers, etc. Readers are encouraged to offer questions.

Many times in the Scripture we read of ***“serving the Lord.”***

Often it says of men and women of God that they ***“served the Lord.”***

Questions:

1. When the Bible says that someone ***“served the Lord,”*** what does that mean?
2. Does it mean that they regularly lifted up their hands in the wor-

ship services, and also joined in the singing?

3. Does it mean that they dressed in a certain recognizable way?
4. Does it mean that they were very fervent in their religious opinions?
5. “They feared the LORD, and serve their own gods...” (II Kings 17:33). How was that possible?
6. Who am I serving?

Testimony Email Delivery Option

We are presently building an email mailing list for all who would like to receive ***The Testimony*** by email in addition to print. This is available at no charge for all whose households are subscribed to ***The Testimony*** and are receiving a hard copy.

If you would like to receive this publication by email also, please send your request to the following email address: thetestimony@emypeople.net.

The Testimony Committee

SUBSCRIPTION RENEWAL NOTICE

We are making our call for subscriptions for the year 2023 at this time. The rate continues at \$20 per year. The subscription price for each subscriber should be received by December 1, 2022, from the District Agents. Each District Agent should include an updated list of subscribers, with their current addresses, and any changes noted. Individual subscribers' subscription payments should be received by December 1, 2022, as well, if possible, for the 2023 subscription year.

GENERAL ITEMS

BAPTISMS

Oct. 13, 2022; Stillwater, OH
Mitchell Bayer
Oct. 20, 2022; Stillwater, OH
Ashlyn Boone
Nov. 2, 2022; Kidron Valley, KS
Linda Porter
Nov. 11, 2022; Lower Twin, OH
Kip Deaton
Nov. 14, 2022; Pleasant View, OH
Trudy Denlinger, Amariah Markley
Nov. 17, 2022; Sugar Grove, OH
Marcie Rapp, Kayde Sink

NEW MEMBERS RECEIVED

Oct. 1, 2022; Western Kansas, KS
Janet Edgecomb

COMMISSIONS

Oct. 24, 2022; Sugar Grove, OH
Jesse Burns (with wife, Lisa)
Called to the office of Deacon
Nov. 1, 2022; Cutler Ridge, IN
Luke Wolf (with wife, Kara)
Called to the Ministry
Keith Brumbaugh (with wife, Mary)
Called to the office of Deacon
Ivan Garber (with wife, Amanda)
Called to the office of Deacon
Nov. 7, 2022; West Modesto, CA
Derek Wise (with wife, Heather)
Advanced to the second degree
of the Ministry

COMMUNION NOTICES

Feb. 4, 2023..... Living Epistle, NM
Feb. 4, 2023.....Pine Grove, FL
Feb. 25, 2023.....West Modesto, CA
Mar. 4, 2023..... West Manchester, IN
Apr. 1, 2023 Fair Haven, KS
Apr. 1, 2023Mt. Zion, PA
Apr. 1, 2023Salem, OH

Apr. 15, 2023 Cascade Valley, WA
Apr. 22, 2023 Caldwell, ID
Apr. 22, 2023Cutler Ridge, IN
Apr. 22, 2023Sugar Grove, OH

SHENANDOAH BUILDING
UPDATE

The Shenandoah building project has made progress with lots of prayer, sacrifice of time, and with our church family and those from our communities working together for a common goal. Our Lord has graciously provided us with many blessings including protection from any serious injuries.

The remodeling construction work has been completed in the sanctuary/fellowship area, restrooms, and nursery. While work is continuing in other areas of the building, our Shenandoah District was able to start having worship services.

We’ve been blessed abundantly in many ways. The Shenandoah church family would like to thank all for your prayers, your support, and your generous contributions in every way.

All are invited to worship with us.

“We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers; Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father; Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God” (I Thess. 1:2–4).

In behalf of our Shenandoah church family,

Richard L. Jamison Sr.

UPDATE FROM MOUNTAIN VIEW BRETHREN DISTRICT

The Mountain View Brethren in Northern Idaho have recently purchased a 2 ½ acre lot in which we hope to begin building a meeting house. We would like to give a heartfelt expression of appreciation to all who have contributed to this purchase. We now have a conditional use permit from the county, have selected a building committee, and are in the planning process. We have agreed to proceed as the Lord wills and provides available funds. We would greatly appreci-

ate your prayers as we embark on this project. If any feel to contribute to this endeavor, contributions may be sent to:

Mountain View Brethren
Building Fund
Kyle Deaton

May the Lord continue to bless as we seek to advance His Kingdom.

In behalf of the Mountain View Brethren,
Sam Wray

POEMS

GOD'S BEST

Those things which might be counted gain,
Must oft be counted loss
That by God's grace I might attain
The glory of the cross.

The seeming good life doth bestow,
Appealing though it be
I must reflect if I would know
My Saviour's best for me.

Lord, may I ne'er be satisfied
With this world's second best,
When Thou hast blessings multiplied
For those who stand the test.

Let me not deem it sacrifice
To miss the joys of earth
To gain from Thee a higher prize
Of everlasting worth.

Avis B. Christiansen

THE CHRISTMAS PLAN

Word of God, before we were made—
In the beginning: “I Am.”
In eternity past, never to fade,
That’s when He made “The Plan.”

Jesus—the Word—brought creation
to earth
When He spoke and pronounced it
was good.
Then He made man and his wife
without e’en a birth.
And for a time it was good—VERY
good.

Then the beautiful serpent in the
garden one day,
Told Eve to eat of the fruit.
She did eat and told Adam, “It is
good I must say...
Try it. You’ll not refute!”

The sly creature thought he’d won
on the spot,
When Adam took his first bite.
“Creation is mine!” (He had to
have thought.)
They went down without even a
fight!”

But Eden was made to be shut
from them soon,
And they went out of there destitute,
dead.
It was then God spoke of His plans
for the goon
How one day He’d bruise his big
head.

But He also gave promise of
Bethlehem’s child,
Who was bruised for the sin of us all,
Revealed and rejected, afflicted,
reviled, and
Killed as a cure for the fall.

Years passed as the children of
Israel stood
In darkness without a great light.
Sure, they had pillars of fire and a
burning bush,
But their poverty was a great
plight.

They spoke to the God of creation
Through prophets, signs, angels,
and priests.
And this wandering people who
wanted a nation
Brought sacrifice (countless!) of
beasts.

God said that the sore sin of
mankind
Was grievous! And the blood of a
lamb
Was required to be restored,
realigned
With Jehovah: God of Abraham.

You see, Abraham saw the
prefigure of Christ
Firsthand as he raised up his hand
To give his son as a sacrifice
When God stopped him and
provided a ram.

For God so loved us that in loving
He gave us
His only Son, Jesus ,our Saviour,
Who died on the cross our sins to
redeem us.
Believe. Do not perish. Get life-
giving favor!

In revealing His arm, Immanuel,
God sent incarnate His Son
In the form of a boy-child, presented
as Gospel
Who brings light and life like the sun.

Before descending to this, His old
 footstool,
 He laid down His crown and kingly
 apparel,
 To take upon flesh that was created
 of molecules,
 Born in a stall that was so far
 from sterile.

Those small fingers of flesh that
 were curled
 'Round Mary's, point back to creation
 Where God's plan was carefully,
 deliberately unfurled,
 To bring us to Him and save from
 damnation.

Oh, glory to God in the highest—
 Messiah!
 The Wonderful Counselor
 throughout all the ages,
 Promised in Genesis throughout
 Zechariah,
 Vanquished for all—ALL of sin's
 wages.

Just like in Eden when the devil
 deceived,
 He thought he had won and become
 like a god;
 So also on Calvary Satan was
 pleased,
 When Jesus took God's wrath like
 a rod.

He was blinded, you see, to the
 plan of his foe
 When Jesus was laid in the grave.
 Soon, very soon Jesus arose
 And forever defeated the knave.

If we but believe, accept Him and follow
 Christ faithfully all of our span,
 Then one day in person we'll join
 millions to hallow
 Lord Jesus, and that is "The
 Plan."

A THANKSGIVING HEART

Jim Thomas

A thankful heart should always be,
 Wanting to please their Lord;
 Who stands so far above us all,
 Yet He will give reward.

To every broken life on earth,
 Where Love has touched their heart;
 Their brokenness for all their sin,
 They've now become a part.

The Family of God will dine,
 On good things in the earth;
 They dine upon His precious Word
 Which gives each one true worth.

They sup the cup of Righteousness,
 And not on earthly wine;
 They know all things are from the Lord
 And that just suits them fine.

The thankful heart will want to share
 Good things the Lord has done;
 And how He came to deal with them,
 Their meeting One on one.

The awe and reverence that we show,
 Whenever He draws near;
 Could sometimes best be so described,
 Instilling loving fear.

How thankful are we for His Cross
 Where He bore all our shame;
 While others stood and mocked Him there,
 His shoulders bore the blame.

We know no earthly mind could think,
 Devising such a plan;
 It took the Lord and His own blood,
 To reconcile His man.

So when you bow your head in prayer,
 Each night and every day,
 Remember who has paid the price,
 To carry you away.

Selected by

David Fall

Ron and Caroline Holsinger

OBITUARIES

BRUNK — Ralph E. Sr., oldest son of Howard J. and Clara May (Layman) Brunk, was born on July 12, 1934, in Montgomery County, Ohio. He departed this life at home, surrounded by family, on September 6, 2022, at the age of 88 years, 1 month, and 25 days.

On August 23, 1953, he was united in marriage to Mary Eileen King. This union was blessed with five children—four sons and one daughter. In May 1963, Dad and Mom accepted Christ as their Saviour and were baptized into the Old German Baptist Brethren Church, where they remained faithful. They were kept busy with their family, church, farming, and running the dairy operation for many years on Springhill Road near Union City, Ohio. Dad enjoyed being a rural mailman for a number of years, as well. In March of 1975 they were elected to the Deacon's office at Shady Grove. Dad joyfully labored for the Kingdom in that capacity until recently, when his declining health became more pronounced. One highlight in his life was being able to host the 2006 Annual Conference of the Old German Baptist Brethren Church on the family farm.

Mom passed from this life in April 2012, leaving Dad very lonely. In the spring of 2014, he began traveling to North Manchester, Indiana to visit Phyllis (Roth) Coning. They were married in June 2014, which added a new dimension to both their lives. They moved to Union City, Indiana the following year, where they lived contentedly until Dad's passing. Although Dad had numerous health issues the last four years, he liked to be occupied and kept pressing on.

Left to mourn his passing are his companion of 8 years, Phyllis; his children: Gene and Lois, Dean and Brenell, Barb Sink, Steve and Penny, Chuck and Yvonne; 17 grandchildren: Shawn and Tara, Kip and Amy, Josie and Micah Turner, Nicole and Laban Garber, Deanyl and Jesse Denlinger, Daynon and Jessica, Dylena and Corbin Holsinger, Aislinn and Greg

Miller, Alexa and Todd Longenecker, Abe and Vicki Sink, Aaron and Sheila Sink, Mindy and Tim Tobe, Travis and Rachel, Nathan and Gemma, Chet and Amanda, Alex and Sarah, Logan and Cassidy; 62 great-grandchildren; and 3 great-great-grandsons. He is survived by one brother, Dennis Brunk and wife Barb; in-laws: Pat Brunk, Sue Brunk, Marcella King, Calvin Bowman, Louise Beachler, Marlene Brumbaugh, Marlin and Connie Bowman, Rufus and Penny King. He will also be remembered by his step-family: Bill and Marsha Miller, Randy and Darlene Coning, Ronald Coning, Jim and Janelene Hufford, and their families.

Preceding him in death are his parents; his wife, Mary; 2 brothers, Marvin Brunk and Donald Brunk; and son-in-law, Wilbur Sink.

A memorial service, conducted by Alvin King, Joe Montgomery, and Anthony Miller was held September 12, 2022, at Shady Grove, Old German Baptist Brethren Church. Hymns 86, 455 and II Timothy 4:7, along with thoughts on stewardship were used to encourage us. Burial at Greenville Township Memorial Gardens with a few more memorable comments on the personal traits of Dad. We sang as we filled the grave, beginning with "How Great Thou Art."

We trust our loss is his eternal gain.

The Family

DENLINGER — Ashley Thomas, son of Robert and Marilyn (Bowman) Denlinger, was born on March 28, 1980, in Troy, Ohio, and passed peacefully on October 11, 2022. He grew up in Bethel Township near Tipp City, Ohio. In his early years, Ashley enjoyed being outdoors, riding four wheelers and dirt bikes, boating, and raising animals for 4-H. His peers were drawn to his zest for life and his free-spirited nature. It was easy for him to make new friends wherever he went. Ashley attended Bethel Local

Schools, graduating in 1998. He played soccer, basketball, and ran track. He worked at Bowman & Landes Turkey Farm during his school years and was later employed by The Site Group, followed by Aqualon, Oncite Enterprise, and most recently by D. A. Bowman Construction. He was valued by his employers for his hard work ethic and cheerful attitude.

Ashley was diagnosed with Tourette Syndrome in 1985 and had a lifetime of challenges associated with this neurological disorder. Our Maple Grove family was especially gracious as they observed the difficulties his mental health issues presented and were always supportive no matter the circumstance. Our family will always cherish the unconditional love and support we felt from them.

Feeling the weight of his sin and a need for redemption, Ashley was baptized in May of 2002. This was the beginning of a spiritual journey that had many highs and lows. In September 2021, Ashley experienced another close encounter with Jesus, and as a result, visited Heartcare Ministries. He recommitted his life to Jesus and that has given us great hope as we rest in the mercies of our great God.

Ashley was preceded in death by his paternal grandparents, Robert and Audra Denlinger; maternal grandmother, Naomi Bowman; and Uncles, Albert Bowman, Jerry Bowman and Don Flory.

Ashley is survived by his sons Austin, Maxwell, Adriel, and Hudson; his parents; brother, Casey; sister, Lindsey Coning and her husband Ryan; nephew, Graham; and nieces, Amelia and Everly, along with many other

relatives and friends. The love of Ashley's life, Lindsey Sakal, holds a special place in our hearts. Her loyalty and understanding spirit, coupled with an unconditional love for Ashley, was and is, an amazing blessing to us all.

Words of Truth were spoken to us as we gathered under a tented setting surrounded by October's splendor.

Alex Bowman welcomed us in the name of Jesus and in the sufficient grace of Christ. He encouraged us to stay the course. To rise each time we fall. And to finish well in our Fathers cheering name.

John Sink comforted us with sweet memories of Ashley and with the glorious Gospel sound.

Danny Lynch gave us a reassuring glimpse of Ashley's heart, as he had come to know him during their time together at Heartcare Ministries. Speaking to a diverse audience, Danny's appeal was "to taste and to drink deeply of the Living Water that only Jesus can give."

Ian Bowman turned our thoughts toward home as he concluded the service with an eternal question...." ***Do you know the way home?"***

Beautiful music filled the tent as we said goodbye, releasing our son to the One who does all things well. As we reflect back on Ashley's life, we will be forever grateful for God's relentless pursuit for the soul of His beloved—Ashley Thomas Denlinger.

It is finished, the battle is over.

It is finished, there will be no more war.

It is finished, the end of the conflict.

It is finished, and Jesus is Lord!

The Family

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Old German Baptist Brethren
Church—New Conference

THE TESTIMONY

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The Testimony is a Christian publication intended for those who desire nourishment in their spiritual walk, and for writers who wish to express witness to the Truth of the Gospel as experienced in their own lives. It holds the Holy Scriptures to be its only Creed. Its purpose is to bear witness to the Truth of God's Word as it is applied in the daily life of committed Christians. It supports the anabaptist and pietist foundations of the Brethren of Schwarzenau, Germany (1708) including the biblical principle of the community of believers bound by a confession of faith in the Lord Jesus confirmed by adult immersion baptism (Mark 16:16). It strives to promote a life of true living piety among all who confess Jesus as their Lord. It seeks to restore and

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