

"Be not thou therefore ashamed of...

THE TESTIMONY

...our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be thou partaker of the afflictions of the gospel..." II Tim. 1:8

— VERSE OF THE MONTH —

*"My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I
direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up." Psalm 5:3*

Vol. XVI

March 2025

No. 3

A MOMENT IN THE MORNING

A moment in the morning, ere the cares of day begin,
Ere the heart's wide door is open for the world to enter in,

Ah, then, alone with Jesus, in the silence of the morn,
In heavenly sweet communion, let your duty-day be born.

In the quietude that blesses with a prelude of repose
Let your soul be smoothed and softened, as the dew revives the rose.

A moment in the morning, take your Bible in your hand,
And catch a glimpse of glory from the peaceful promised land;

It will linger still before you when you seek the busy mart,
And like flowers of hope will blossom into beauty in your heart.

The precious words, like jewels, will glisten all the day
With a rare refulgent glory that will brighten all the way;

A moment in the moment—a moment if no more—

Is better than an hour when the trying day is o'er.

"Tis the gentle dew from heaven, the manna for the day;

If you fail to gather early—alas! it melts away.

So, in the blush of morning, take the offered hand of love,
And walk in heaven's pathway in the peacefulness thereof.

Arthur Lewis Tubbs

THE TESTIMONY

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EDITORIAL

"And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And..."

"THE WIND CEASED, AND THERE WAS A GREAT CALM"

Once a fleet of small boats was sailing across the Sea of Galilee. They were sailing south toward Gadara and darkness was settling upon the troubled waters. Suddenly, as often occurred in that area, a great storm came up the Valley of Esdraelon and down from Mount Tabor. The little fleet was in trouble. The boats quickly filled with water. As experienced fishermen, it was not without reason that they roused the Lord, with a little sharp edge to their voices, "Master, carest thou not that we perish?" Surveying the raging tempest a moment, Jesus said in calm rebuke, "Peace! Be still!" Just like a man would say "Whoa" to his horse. And there was great calm! Turning to the men cowering in the boat, and perhaps to those in the boats nearby, Jesus said, "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" Now what? The only thing to do now was to wait for a breeze, or to start rowing.

We would like to assume that, from that day on, the disciples lived lives free of fear and with abundant faith. But it was not so. Nor is it so in our lives. The storms of life trouble our sea. We cower in fear and doubt. We sometimes address our Lord reprovingly instead of prayerfully. So, He must arouse Himself and redirect

the winds that assail our tranquility. Do we fall to the floor of our frail boat in praise and adoration? No. Still in unbelief, looking at one another we say, "What manner of man is this! for he commandeth even the winds and water, and they obey him."

From about 5 degrees north to 5 degrees south of the Equator, there is a belt called "the windless waters." They are known as The Doldrums. Here the ocean currents and the trade winds collide. Sailors used to dread these areas, for their sailing ship might lay becalmed for weeks. Squalls occasionally appeared on the horizon, raising hopes of wind for the sails. But the squalls passed by. Sailors fell into a state of inactivity, depression, and despair. On a large sailing ship there was nothing to do but wait it out while the hot sun beat down. Water became rank and ran low, and food spoiled. Tempers rose with the heat. Misplaced blame led to mutiny. Captains retaliated with vengeance. Bad things sometimes happen "when the winds cease and there is a great calm." We also sometimes find ourselves in the Doldrums.

He is the God not only of the storm. He is also God of the Doldrums. On this we can arrest our fear and anchor our faith. Whether it be the equatorial Doldrums or the raging Sea of Galilee, "No water can cover the ship where lies, the Master of ocean, and earth, and skies."

Marcus Miller

GENERAL

THE MESSAGE

Our Creator wants to communicate with us, His image-bearing sons and daughters. He has done this since the beginning of creation. As He spoke to Adam and Eve in the garden, so He speaks to us. He wants us to hear His words with receptive hearts. He doesn't want us to hear just words but the message behind them. So it is with earthly fathers and mothers.

Years ago, a young boy in his play destroyed some of his neighbor's property. The father took this boy to the neighbor to tell him what he had done. The neighbor graciously received this little boy and minimized his "crime." Then he said to the boy, "But I know why your father brought you here." On the way home, the father asked his son, "Did you get the message?" This wasn't a question so much about the words spoken but about the lesson and passion behind them.

Our heavenly Father loves us with an everlasting love. The prophet Zephaniah wrote, "The LORD thy God in the midst of thee 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" (Zeph. 3:17). This love gets personal. Jesus said, "Behold, I stand at the door and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with

him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

God has always communicated with His people. The writer of Hebrews says, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son..." (Heb. 1:1-2).

How does the Son, Jesus, speak today? Certainly in "divers [various] manners." Five come to mind. By the written Word, by the spoken word, by circumstances, by the church (His assembled people), and by His Holy Spirit. Our sovereign Lord is unlimited in the ways He speaks to man.

The written Word is the history of God's people and the words of the Father as recorded by the prophets. We call this portion of Scripture the Old Testament. Cod-ed in this trail of history are the prophecies of a coming Messiah. Also types and shadows that reveal Messiah to be Jesus of Bethlehem, Nazareth, Gethsemane, Calvary and the empty tomb. The first five books of the Bible were recorded by Moses. Thereafter various prophets, kings, and scribes communicated for us what the Lord was doing among His people that we might be led to know Jesus, "...the fountain of living waters..." (Jer. 2:13, also see John 4:14).

The New Testament was recorded from the words spoken by Jesus

and His apostles (including Paul) while he was ministering on earth. This testimony also includes that of His teachings as recorded by eyewitnesses and those who heard directly from eyewitnesses. This record was compiled by as many as 40 writers over the span of about 1500 years. The words may vary by translation over the years and some are written as parables or hyperbole to convey the meaning. Such literary methods are used to communicate. Nevertheless, the message of Scripture is infallible! The preservation of the written Word is validated by fulfilled prophecies, archeology, and copies of original texts. We can trust the written Word to define the parameters of other ways God speaks to His people.

The Spoken word can come to us through any believer in whom the Spirit of God dwells. The Bible informs us that "...iron sharpens iron" (Prov. 27:17). Our Lord can use any brother or sister to speak a "word of knowledge" that is convicting or comforting. Those He has called to be apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers are charged to speak to us "For the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ..." (Eph. 4:11-13). All of us have been given the "ministry of reconciliation" as this ministry has been patterned to us by Jesus. He has reconciled us to the Father by our faith in His atoning blood. (See II Cor. 5:17-19). Although this ministry is car-

ried out by the witness of consecrated lives in our daily walk, it will also involve the words we speak to others. This ministry begins at home with our family, reaches out to friends, neighbors and to others as we have opportunity.

God sometimes speaks through circumstances that occur as a result of our prayers or events that occur in our lives that are unexpected and address a specific need. One example of this in Scripture is when the children of Israel were delivered by God to bondage of the Midianites because they "...did evil in the sight of the LORD..." After seven years God raised up Gideon to deliver them. Even though God had called him by an angel visit, Gideon was in doubt because of their superior army. He asked God for a sign that this would really happen. He asked God to show him if he put a wool fleece on the threshing floor and in the morning, it was wet with dew and the ground was dry he would know God was with them. When this confirmed as he asked, he still was uncertain and asked God to reverse this, let the fleece be dry and the ground wet. When God confirmed His deliverance this way also, Gideon was confident to lead Israel in deliverance from Midian. (See Judges 6.) The key to this fleece is that: 1) this deliverance by Gideon was already declared to be God's will, and 2) this was an event that couldn't have happened coincidentally in nature.

If we are testing for God's will by circumstances, it would be important to be fully submitted to God's will regardless of our interpretation of the circumstance and further test the circumstance by the Spirit and the Word. Still, many of us have been influenced by circumstances that display God's providential involvement in our lives.

God's indwelling Spirit is given to each believer when they surrender to Christ. Jeremiah prophesied this when he described a "new covenant" that God would make with His people. "But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer. 31:33). Also, consider Ezekiel's words after cleansing them from all filthiness and idols. God promises: "A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them. And ye shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; and ye shall be my people, and I will be your God" (Ezek. 36:26-28). Combining these two prophecies reveal that clearly God is preparing to do something to usher in a spiritual kingdom. Ezekiel was prophesying

to the children of Israel recently released from captivity. The prophet's vision was of the "promised land," but God was foretelling of a place that Abraham had his eye on, "whose builder and maker was God" (Heb. 11:10). Such a spiritual kingdom will begin on earth and continue in heaven!

At Pentecost, the Apostle Peter quotes the prophet Joel saying, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughter shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams..." (Acts 2:17). The new covenant prophesied by Jeremiah had come to pass!

As Jesus promised the Comforter, or Holy Spirit, coming to indwell His people after His ascension, He was very descriptive about the message His Spirit would speak to us. The Holy Spirit would comfort, teach of His words, testify of Jesus, reprove the world of sin, reprove the world of righteousness, reprove the world of judgment, guide into all truth, speak whatever He hears from the Father for us, and He will show things to come. Jesus told us this in John chapters 14, 15 and 16. May we tune our hearts to listen for the message from this abiding Spirit.

From Jesus' words in Matthew's Gospel we know that Jesus speaks through the collective assembly of His people. In teaching how to ad-

dress offenses that arise among brothers and sisters in close fellowship, Jesus informs us that if we are unable to reach reconciliation by discussing concerns privately or with one or two others, we should "...tell it unto the church..." The text that follows makes it clear that the church has the responsibility to speak to issues concerning the group. God hears these deliberations, and He hears the church's agreements. He binds them for this church in heaven. This "binding" affects the individual's relationship with the group. It seems our Lord's purpose is to restore fellowship within the local church and open a path of reconciliation to the group. God, alone, knows if those within the local body are properly discerning the Word and Spirit. We can then rest with assurance that the Judge of all the earth will do right (Gen. 18:25).

As a corollary to the voice of the church, we see that the seven regional churches identified in Revelation 1-3, are held accountable for how they dealt with sin and false doctrine in their midst. While this was a collective responsibility, it seems like individual members were judged on how they responded to the "angel" or Spirit's correction of that body. We see this especially as correction was brought to the church at Sardis. It seems that at a minimum, they were a dying church. But "Thou hast a few names even in Sardis which have

not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev. 3:4). Churches have governmental responsibilities to speak. Individuals have governmental responsibilities to yield their hearts to the leading of the Holy Spirit.

"There are, it may be, so many kinds of voices in the world, and none of them is without significance" (I Cor. 14:10). In this passage, Paul was bringing light and guidance in the practice of speaking in tongues. In spite of instructing on balance of this spiritual gift in the local church, Paul may be warning that we would do well to "Take heed therefore how ye hear..." (Luke 8:18). These words of Jesus could suggest that we can hear words but miss the message. In this chapter of Luke's Gospel, Jesus' disciples were trying to understand a parable He had just spoken to them. This raises some questions. Can we know the message unless we apply ourselves to receive His seed (the Word of God)? Can we receive this seed by study alone? We think not.

I have known a number of men in prison who know and can quote chapter and verse of Scripture, get released, and shortly return to a life of crime and vice after prison doors open. I have known others who on release connected to a local church and walked out the lessons learned from the Word. It seems the difference is that one has had a vital conversion and is walking

in the light of the Gospel. If we desire to hear Jesus speak to us, we are going to have to avail ourselves to hear the Word by reading or hearing it spoken. Hearing the Word by circumstances or prompting of the Spirit will follow. If we understand that Jesus wants us to know and be known of Him, we would do well to yield to His Spirit within.

It is the design of our Lord for His people to live in communities, bear one another's burdens and so fulfill His law. (See Gal. 6:2.) If we are willing to humble ourselves and hear Him speak through this assembly that He calls His church, we will have an important part to "take heed how we hear." The written and spoken words of the Lord are our hedge against presumptions arising from our flesh. The Spirit is His gift that gives us essential access to our Lord's ever presence. The church is another hedge as we bear one another's burdens and struggle with issues of daily living. The Spirit teaching by the Word with accountability to brothers and sisters in this walk will help us rightly divide the Word of Truth. May we tune our hearts to hear.

*The church of Christ, the school of grace,
The Spirit teaching by the Word.
In those our Savior's steps we trace,
By this His living voice is heard.*

James Montgomery

Stanley Boyd

BIBLICAL BEHAVIOR

Part 13

"But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

This is a continuation of a previous article. The purpose of this continued article is to provoke thoughts as to how we, as born-again believers, should behave. In doing so, it is not our intent to lose sight of the basis of behavior, which is belief. Belief dictates behavior. I offer the following axioms:

1. All behavior is based on a belief.
2. Lasting behavioral change always starts in the mind.
3. When people genuinely change, it's because their beliefs changed first.
4. Changing your behavior without changing your belief is not true change at all. This is why Paul says, "be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

As we mentioned in the earlier articles, the apostles used the word "conversation" to describe behavior. In the Greek it is the word *anastrophe* which means "behavior." *Anastrophe* is rooted in *anastrepho* which means to turn, or to turn oneself about. This implies the idea that godly behavior is a turning away from a direction you were once going, and going in a different direction. This is the essence of repentance—a change of your mind and direction of your life—turning away from sin, self, and the world, and turning toward Jesus, the Holy Spirit, and heaven.

Because the Word of God is

quick (living), we will, no doubt, only touch a fraction of the depth and meaning of the verses calling us to a godly behavior. The next verse we will consider is found in II Peter 2, verse 7:

“And delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation of the wicked...”

This verse is nestled within a long sentence that spans almost seven verses. Peter is on a roll explaining God’s treatment of those who have rejected Him. Coupled with this litany of God’s judgment Peter shows how there was always a remnant that was saved. Verse 9 seems to summarize Peter’s thought, which is, God knows how to deliver the righteous, and reserve judgment for the unrighteous.

Our verse deals with the filthy behavior that Lot would have been accustomed to, while living in Sodom. This behavior was filthy. In the Greek, this means outright, unrestrained, strong sexual desires. This type of behavior was modeled in Genesis 19 when the people of the city surrounded Lot’s house and demanded the angelic visitors come out so they could engage in sexual relations with them. This demonstration shows the type of behavior Sodom was known for. Understandably, this behavior vexed Lot. Vexed means it *oppressed* and *harassed*, to the point of wearing him down.

As we consider this verse, I can’t help but think of the similarities to today in America. The filthy behavior of our society is in lockstep with the behavior of Sodom almost 4,000 years ago. Surely we all feel the weight and oppres-

sion of the promiscuity of our times. While we cannot escape this literally, in behavior we can, *“... Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues”* (Rev. 18:4). We can do this by the choices and involvement we allow for ourselves and our families. May we all recognize the vexing power of filthy behavior, and choose carefully how we will maintain separation from sin.

The positive part of this verse is God’s ability to deliver. Lot’s deliverance is an example of God’s redemptive power, for He delivered “just” Lot. God will always deliver His “just ones.” In Lot’s day, a just man was one who trusted in the God of Abraham. In the New Covenant, “just ones” are those who put their trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ.

May I suggest Lot’s experience is a bellwether to how God will judge the world. As with Lot, God first pulls His “just ones” out of the cesspool, before destroying it. This doesn’t mean the “just ones” avoid tribulation, but it does indicate they will not endure God’s righteous wrath. This is because they have found refuge in Jesus Christ, who has already propitiated God’s wrath for them at the cross.

Until next time, may you be mindful of the vexing power of our sinful society. May you continue to trust in the person and work of Jesus Christ, and may you be confident that God will deliver you from this present evil world!

Grant Fullmer

THE GLORIOUS LOCAL CHURCH

Gary Paul Miller

In his book, *I Will Build My Church*, Val Yoder wrote: “It has been a burden of my heart for some years to see the church of Jesus Christ suffer such infamy and derision in the local setting. Innumerable books glorify and adulate the universal church. Yet, the local church, so often, is seen in contrast to that honor given to the universal church.” He made a valid point. Let us consider how we can “keep the local church attractive and glorious.” The term “glorious church” was coined by the apostle Paul in Ephesians 5:25–27. “Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.”

JESUS CHRIST LOVES HIS CHURCH!

- This is love given *first*. He loved us while we were still sinners.
- This is love that may be *rejected*. He gave Himself sacrificially that He might sanctify and cleanse her. Christ cleanses the church by the washing of the Word, especially the preached Word or Gospel.
- The love of Christ for the church

is precious and lavished on her rather than the rest of humanity. Despite its weaknesses, the local church is glorious to Jesus! Dear readers, rest assured that if your local church were the only one left on earth when Jesus returns, our Bridegroom would still appear with a trumpet sound to claim those who are faithful in your church as His glorious bride!

THAT HE MIGHT PRESENT IT TO HIMSELF A GLORIOUS CHURCH

- Jesus prepares and presents the Glorious Church. He works in us, so the glory is not of us but of Him!
- Since the church is not fit for Christ by nature, Christ cleanses her by grace.
- Since Christ cannot commune with sin, holiness is required for the Bride of Christ.
- Not having spot or wrinkle. This perfection is not experienced before the wedding day but on the wedding day!
- Like a bridegroom, Jesus shares His plans and future with His bride, the church!
- Even as a wife shares in her husband’s future, we will share in the glorious future of our Lord.

Finally, remember that the church is only the Church of Christ because He has made her so!

THE CHURCH AS A FAMILY

This book beautifully compares the church to a family, a metaphor that resonates with our shared experiences and fosters a sense of

belonging and unity. "A family is never defined as a single person. But no family is without individual members. The individual is the foundational building block of the family, usually composed of a father, mother, and children. The individual Christian plays a significant role in God's family. He is the most basic component of the church of Jesus Christ, a role that cannot be fulfilled by any other entity. Yet, it is important to remember that no individual can make up the church alone, emphasizing the collective nature of our faith. We are designed to function harmoniously with a group of individuals in a local church. In much the same way, a local church is not the total of the Bride of Christ. It, too, is part of something bigger.

"In typical settings, a conference or fellowship of churches provides a framework of fellowship, stability, and teamwork. However, a denomination does not exclusively compose the Bride of Christ."

While comparing a church to a family is instructive, we admit that Scripture focuses on the church. The family is only a means to an end. The church is the most significant focus of Christ's love and attention in the New Testament. When Jesus said, "I will build my church," it was a testament to its significance and mission.

BECAUSE OF JESUS!

These glorious blessings are because of Jesus. Jesus saves, recreates, cleanses, redeems, purifies,

sanctifies, pursues, and glorifies because of His love, power, grace, holiness, patience, and mercy. Glory to the Lamb that was slain. Hallelujah to the risen LORD!

- *The local church is glorious when Jesus reigns supreme.* "And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). The Bible teaches that Jesus is before all things and all things hold together in Him. God was pleased to have all His fullness dwell in Him! The church is glorious when Jesus reigns supreme.

- *The local church is glorious when it provides refuge.* Where shall people turn when they face loneliness, failure, hostility, abuse, and failing health? Psalm 46:1 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."

So, like David, we turn to the Lord. "One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to enquire in his temple" (Ps. 27:4).

Seeking God in His house and with His people strengthens and encourages hurting souls. A sheltering church is a glorious church.

- *The local church is glorious when peace prevails.* Paul instructs, "And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful" (Col. 3:15). By

God's grace, we can live in peace even when we disagree. As one dear lady once said, "In the 17 years that I have been here, I have not had someone speak unkindly to me or about anyone else." Romans 12:16 urges us to "Be of the same mind one toward another." A peaceful church glorifies God.

• *The local church is glorious when it upholds the truth.* Paul wrote to Timothy, "But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (I Tim. 3:15). In I Timothy, chapter 1, Paul charged Timothy to oppose false teachers. In chapter 2, Paul gave instructions on worship. In chapter 3, Paul enumerated qualifications for overseers and deacons. Now, he tells us why he wrote; that Timothy might know how to conduct himself in the household of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth. Paul challenged the early church to hold up the truths of God's Word. Let the church of Jesus Christ promote and support all the doctrines of the Bible, beginning with the Gospel. A glorious church upholds the truths of God's Word.

ATTRACTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A LOCAL CHURCH

1. *A changed church attracts others.* "Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new" (II Cor. 5:17).

Jesus was different from any other person on earth; this difference caught the attention of others. When Jesus converts His followers, it attracts the attention of others as well. There is something attractive about people who were once caught up in sin now demonstrating entirely different lives. Too many times, the world is turned away from Christianity because they know people who call themselves Christians, yet do not live a changed life. A question for today: "Are we content to be **called** a Christian, or do we want to **be** a Christian?" A church composed of members changed into the image of Christ is attractive.

2. *A committed church attracts others.* "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men..." (Col. 3:23).

Someone who puts himself wholeheartedly into a cause is spiritually attractive. Total dedication and commitment amaze people. Many Christians are not committed to their cause or their Savior. The church is not a country club, and "Christian" is more than a label. Another question for today: "Do we want to be thought of as yielded to God's will, or do we want to yield to God's will?" A church composed of members committed to God's will is attractive.

3. *A consistent church attracts others.* "He that saith he abideth in him ought himself also so to walk, even as he walked" (I John 2:6).

Consistent means acting or do-

ing in the same way over time, unchanging in nature or standard over time. Christian means, "Christ follower." In other words, if I call myself a Christian, I am like Jesus; not just in what I say, but in what I do and how I live. Charles Spurgeon said, "A man's life is always more forcible than his speech. When men take stock of a Christian, they reckon his deeds as dollars and his words as pennies. If his life and doctrine disagree, the mass of onlookers accept his practice and reject his preaching." A church composed of members who practice what they preach is attractive.

4. *A compassionate church attracts others.* "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you" (Eph. 4:32).

Attractive Christians are compassionate people. A little boy attended a church in Chicago. When his parents moved to another part of the city, the little guy still attended the same church, although it meant a long, tiresome walk each way. A friend asked him why he went so far and told him there were plenty of other churches just as good nearer to his home. "They may be as good for others but not for me," he replied. "Why not?" his friend asked. "Because they love a fellow over there," he replied. A church that loves and moves with compassion will attract others.

5. *A cheerful church attracts others.* Psalm 100:2 says, "Serve the LORD

with gladness: come before his presence with singing."

Proverbs 17:22 states, "A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth the bones."

Cheerfulness means being in good spirits, joyful, and spreading happiness. There is nothing worse than seeing a grumpy Christian. That's because grumpiness is not a fruit of the Spirit of Christ! If we want to be attractive Christians, we must allow our joy to show. We must wipe that etched frown off our faces and start smiling. We must stop always seeing the negative side of things and begin looking for the positive. A cheerful church is an attractive church.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH'S EXAMPLE

"Paul, and Silvanus, and Timothy, unto the church of the Thessalonians which is in God the Father and in the Lord Jesus Christ: Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ. 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. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake. And ye became followers of

us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia. For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing. For they themselves shew of us what manner of entering in we had unto you, and how ye turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God; And to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, even Jesus, which delivered us from the wrath to come" (I Thess. 1:1–10).

In verse seven, Paul commended this church because the Christians there served as an example to all those who believed in Macedonia and Achaia. The original word translated as "example" means a stamp or shape, such as a statue, a model, or a pattern. This church was a model to be copied by others.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS EXEMPLARY FOR ITS TEAM LEADERSHIP

Team Leadership (I Thess. 1:1). Paul's collaborative approach to his work is evident in his partnerships with Silvanus (also known as Silas) and Timothy. Their joint efforts are a powerful example of the effectiveness of teamwork in church leadership. Silas was Paul's experienced companion and traveled with him on his second

missionary journey. They were imprisoned in the Philippian jail (Acts 16:19–30). When Paul first came to Thessalonica, Silas came with him (Acts 17:1–9), so the Thessalonians knew Silas well.

Timothy, a resident of Lystra, played a significant role in Paul's missionary journeys. His involvement demonstrates the value of shared responsibilities in effective church leadership. Paul had previously sent Timothy to the Thessalonians (I Thess. 3:2). The Thessalonian church demonstrated effective team leadership.

A PLURALITY OF PASTORS

Here are New Testament examples that show a plurality of pastors as caring for individual local churches:

The church at Thessalonica. I Thessalonians 5:12 states, "And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labour among you, and are over you in the Lord, and admonish you..."

The church in Jerusalem. (Acts 15:2, 4). Verse 2 states, "...they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question."

The churches at Derbe, Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch of Syria. Acts 14:23 says, "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed."

The church at Ephesus. Acts 20:17 states, "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus, and called the

elders of the church.”

The church at Philippi. Philippians 1:1 says, “Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons...”

There is no clear apostolic command in Scripture to appoint multiple elders to leadership, but it was commonly practiced. James 5:14 says, “Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord...” Biblical church leadership is essential because, without it, God’s people are like sheep without shepherds. However, this pattern will be tested because of differences of opinion and gifting among the leaders. There must be a commitment to working as a team. In my observation, the breakdown of team leadership is the leading cause of church problems and splits. Individual ministers who cultivate relationships with lay members at the expense of team relationships are sowing the seeds of disunity. The recipe for successful leadership is maintaining appropriate openness with lay members in the context of loyalty to the team. The New Testament churches are good examples of Team Leadership.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS EXEMPLARY FOR ITS FAITHFUL LIVING

Faithful living. In I Thessalonians 1:3, Paul says,

“Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope...”

When Paul and his companions arrived in Thessalonica, they planted the first Christian church in that city but left quickly because their lives were threatened (Acts 17:1–10). Paul sent Timothy back to Thessalonica at the first opportunity to see how the new believers were doing. Timothy returned with good news; the Christians in Thessalonica remained firm in their faith. These believers stood firm when persecuted (1:6, 3:1–4, 7). Notice again the commendation, “Your work of faith, and labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ.” These believers also anticipated the Lord’s return. These characteristics are marks of a faithful and glorious church.

The Thessalonian Church Was Exemplary for its Clear Message

A clear message. The Gospel is not a matter of mere words. The Good News came with the Holy Spirit’s power and much assurance (I Thess. 1:5). It powerfully transformed their lives. Lives are changed whenever the Gospel is preached—the message of sin, sacrificial atonement, the resurrection, repentance, and faith in Jesus Christ. Christianity is more than an interesting collection of facts; it is God’s power for the salvation of everyone who believes! The Thessalonian church had a clear message.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS EXEMPLARY FOR ITS READY OBEDIENCE.

Ready Obedience. Whenever the Bible is heard and obeyed, lives are changed. The Thessalonians responded to the Gospel by becoming followers (I Thess. 1:6). They stopped following idols and other things and followed Paul and the Lord. Paul wasn't shy about saying, "Follow me," because he knew where he was going. There is an element of personal discipleship here. Paul led out, and the converts readily followed the Lord and those who led them to the Lord. Further, the Thessalonians followed, having received the Word in much affliction. Paul thanked God for their obedience, noting that they faced difficulties with the "joy of the Holy Spirit." Paul and Silas experienced the same joy not long before when they sang in the Philippian jail despite their chains and sufferings. The Thessalonian church is marked by its ready obedience.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS EXEMPLARY FOR ITS FRUITFUL WITNESS.

Fruitful Witness. I Thessalonians 1:8 says, "For from you sounded out the word of the Lord not only in Macedonia and Achaia, but also in every place your faith to God-ward is spread abroad; so that we need not to speak any thing."

The church in Thessalonica was a center for outreach and testimo-

ny. The happenings in the church "sounded forth" or echoed. Their faith was spread out, and their testimony was heard.

THE THESSALONIAN CHURCH WAS EXEMPLARY IN ITS WITNESS FOR GOD.

The Thessalonian church models for us: 1) team leadership, 2) faithful living, 3) a clear message, 4) ready obedience, and 5) a fruitful witness. May we follow them today.

Losing Patience with the Local Church. Despite the local church's Christ-given glory, some members lose patience with their congregation's pace of deliberation and leave it for "greener pastures" elsewhere. But that comes at a personal cost. Joseph Hellerman points out the price one pays by taking the exit ramp in the following article.¹

The Price on the Exit Ramp.

For all of its foibles—which at its worst includes lousy preaching, political infighting, self centeredness, stagnation, and a gaggle of special interest groups—the local church in suburbia is still the most fertile environment for spiritual development. Genuine spiritual progress doesn't happen without a long-term attachment to a local church. I'm all for improving the organization of a local church to make it more biblically effective, but the maddening frustration that prompts someone to leave one church for another may be the precise thing that holds great

¹ Hellerman, Joseph, "Suburban Spirituality," *Christianity Today*, July 2003.

potential for spiritual progress—if one stays.

Disillusionment with one's church, then, is not a reason to leave but a reason to stay and see what God will create in one's life and in the local church. What I perceive to be my needs—I need a church with a more biblical preacher who uses specific examples from real life—may not correspond to my true spiritual needs.

Often, I am not attuned to my true spiritual needs. Thinking that I know my true needs is arrogant and narcissistic. Staying put as a life practice allows God's grace to work on the unsanded surfaces of my inner life. All the troubles in one's church are really cures to the poison of one's old nature, or, as the apostle Paul put it in Romans 7, the sinful nature.

The biggest problem in any church I attend is myself—and my love of self and my penchant to roam when I sense my needs are not being met. Staying put and immersing oneself in the life of a gathered community forces one into eventual conflict with other church members, with church leadership, or with both. Frustration and conflict are the raw materials of spiritual development.

All the popular reasons given for shopping for another church are actually spiritual reasons for staying put. They are a means of grace, preventing talk of spirituality from becoming sentimental or philosophical. Biblical spirituality is earthy, face-to-face, and often messy.

The above essay is not quoted to excuse laziness or inattentiveness

among church leaders, but to encourage realism about church brotherhood processes and stimulate thought about the valuable character development that comes from willing surrender to the local church. Brotherhood deliberation frequently requires a significant investment of time to reach a good resolution. Impatience and a quick exit, bypass significant opportunities to grow into a greater likeness of Jesus. This is, most importantly, a lesson for church leaders, but secondarily, for all church members. Let us unite in loving patience, willing surrender, and faithful building of the local body. May the Holy Spirit transform us into a glorious bride for our coming Bridegroom!

WHO GETS THE GLORY?

In conclusion, if local churches today aspire to glorious greatness in these times, let us focus as the Apostle did, "Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us; Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen" (Eph. 3:20–21). God transforms our local churches by His wondrous and unthinkable power. Let us give Him unceasing gratitude and glory for His magnificent grace, perfect holiness, and self-sacrificing love. Alleluia!

Selected from the 2024 Summer issue of *The Anabaptist Voice*

by The Editor

THE JOY NO MAN CAN TAKE AWAY

Jesus, before His crucifixion, when He had made known to His disciples that He was going away, spoke these words to them: "And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you" (John 16:22).

Think of this statement! The Saviour was going to give His disciples a joy after the resurrection that no man could take from them!

Jesus said to His disciples, "These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full" (John 15:11).

And again: "Hitherto have ye asked nothing in my name: ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full" (John 16:24).

The apostle John writes "And these things write we unto you, that your joy may be full" (1 John 1:4).

But the promise of Jesus is not just that we will receive joy by believing His glorious Gospel, but it is that this joy can never be taken away from us!

The joy of the Gospel is the joy of knowing the love of God for us. It is the joy of the full forgiveness of our sins. It is the joy of being brought into the fellowship of saints who are experiencing salvation and deliverance from the bondage of sin. It is the joy of having eternal hope, when earthly hopes are often fading, temporary, and disappointing.

Oh, how often are the joys of earth taken away! With very little

effort we can think of joys that have been snatched away from those we know or have known of. Hopes are dashed, plans are forced to be changed, the lives of family members are ended, and there is much sorrow.

But believers are clinging still to this promise.

NO MAN CAN TAKE OUR JOY FROM US!

Think of all of the hard circumstances out of which the saints will come as they are gathered to glory in the Day of Christ! Extreme poverty, conflict and war, false accusation and being lied about, loss of children in death, loss of children through unfaithfulness and departure from God, struggles with health, church divisions, extreme marriage heartaches, loneliness, bereavement.

Think of the terrible martyrdoms that have taken place through the centuries.

THE TESTIMONY OF MARTYRS

Behold this record of Stephen: "When they heard these things, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed on him with their teeth. *But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up stedfastly into heaven, and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing on the right hand of God, And said, Behold, I see the heavens opened, and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.* Then they cried out with a loud voice, and stopped their ears, and ran upon him with one accord, And cast him out of the city, and stoned him..." (Acts 7:54-58).



Or this:

A widow, Julitta, in the year 304, was apprehended with her three year old son. As her captors tormented her, the small boy was afraid, and clung to his mother. One of the soldiers finally grabbed the child and flung him down a long stone stairway, where he died instantly. The mother then replied, ***“Please do not believe that I am so timid as to be conquered by your cruelties. The tearing of my body shall not intimidate me, nor will the racking of my body move my spirit; neither shall the threat of fire, nor death itself be able to separate me from the love of Jesus Christ. The greater the torments are that you threaten me with, the more acceptable it is to me, for I hope the sooner to come to my son, and to receive with him the crown of righteousness at the hand of Christ Himself.”***

Note the following account of the death of George Wagner in A.D. 1527:

Having been delivered into the hands of the executioner, and led into the middle of the city, he said: “Today I will confess my God before all of the world.” He had such joy in

Christ Jesus, that ***his face did not pale, nor his eyes show fear; but he went smilingly to the fire***, where the executioner bound him on the ladder, and tied a little bag of powder to his neck, at which he said: “Be it done in the name of the Father, the Son, and Holy Ghost,” and having ***smilingly bid farewell*** to a Christian, who was there, he was thrust into the fire by the executioner, and happily offered up his spirit, on the 8th day of February, 1527. The sheriff, however, surnamed Eisenreich von Landsberg, while returning home from the place of execution, traveling on horseback, purposing to apprehend other of the brethren, died suddenly in the night, and was found dead in his bed in the morning, having thus been removed through the wrath of God.

THE PROMISE

The promise is, “Your joy no man taketh from you.”

Yes, the world can sometimes give us sorrow, but ***no man can take away our joy!***

Lowell Miller

TRUE THANKFULNESS

There are things we face each day, and the decisions we make will either make them or break them!

Will we have gratitude and give thanks? Well, it may be something we're not very thankful for! "Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (Eph. 5:20).

I am not sure that some things are "thankworthy"! So how can we be thankful?

First, we do know that we have many, many blessings!

1. We have religious freedom.
2. We can read our own Bibles daily.
3. We have good food and health.
4. We have the blessing of family.
5. We have many friends.
6. We have a loving Father who does not allow us to have more than we can bear.
7. We have Jesus!
8. We have all that Jesus taught!
9. We have salvation!

But what can we do with the trials that we have? Can we be thankful for them? Yes, Jesus taught us to bear our cross, as He did. Will these trials make us do more reading of His Word? Will these trials help us have more faith? Hebrews 11:13 says of those of old, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth."

This is the secret! Faith!

The old hymn says, "Faith is the brightest evidence of things beyond our sight!"

We have so many blessings and comforts to be thankful for in this life! And then, that which is beyond!

The next question we have is, "What is it that brings us JOY?" Is it what we are able to have and keep here? Or does our Joy come from what we can share?

Ill health can sometimes seem like a barrier to our joy, and yet, have we not seen thankful saints, smiling in their beds? They seem so thankful! They are thankful you came! They are thankful for the pretty leaves outside! They are thankful for family and friends. They are thankful for caregivers. They are thankful for the cards they receive.

Thankfulness brings us peace! Everyone smiles when we smile! Is it like a magnet?

Again, let us be thankful for all that Jesus has done for us! Let us be thankful for our knowledge of Him! Let us be thankful for our church.

These thoughts came to me after I heard some children tell their parents they could find two things to be thankful for. I can find more than two. Can't you?

Vicki Witmer

GENERAL ITEMS

BAPTISMS

Jan. 19, 2025; West Modesto, CA
Annika Bowman

COMMUNION NOTICES

Mar. 2, 2025Morning Star, OH
Mar. 29, 2025Dallas, OR
Apr. 5, 2025 Cutler Ridge, IN
Apr. 5, 2025 Shiloh, OH
Apr. 12, 2025 Fair Haven, KS
Apr. 12, 2025Salem, OH
Apr. 19, 2025Modesto, CA
Apr. 26, 2025 Cascade Valley, WA
Apr. 26, 2025 Bear Creek, OH
Apr. 26, 2025 Sugar Grove, OH
May 10, 2025 Caldwell, ID
May 25, 2025 A.M., Cedarville, OH
Jun. 28, 2025. Mission Valley, MT and
Mountain View, ID, held jointly in ID
Jul. 19, 2025 Olive Branch, OH
Sept. 27, 2025..... Pleasant View, OH
Oct. 11, 2025..... Lower Twin, OH
Oct. 11, 2025..... Zillah, WA
Oct. 18, 2025.....Maple Grove, OH
Oct. 25, 2025.....Stillwater, OH
Nov. 1, 2025..... Bethel, OH
Nov. 8, 2025..... Covington, OH
Nov. 8, 2025.....West Modesto, CA

HARVEST MEETINGS

Jul. 13, 2025.....Lower Twin, OH
Jul. 20, 2025..... Bethel, OH
Jul. 27, 2025..... Shiloh, OH
Aug. 3, 2025.....Maple Grove, OH
Aug. 10, 2025...Covington/Sugar Grove, OH
Aug. 24, 2025..... Stillwater, OH
Aug. 31, 2025.....Salem, OH
Sept. 21, 2025 Bear Creek, OH
Nov. 27, 2025 Pleasant View, OH

COMMUNION NOTICE

ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2025

If the Lord tarries, the brothers and sisters of the Eastern districts joyfully anticipate hosting a Communion Service together at our 2025 Annual Con-

ference at Cedarville University, Ohio. This service will be held on Sunday, May 25 at 4:30 P.M. I Corinthians 11:26 reminds us that, "...as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come." All members of the OGBBC—New Conference are invited to attend.

On behalf of the 2025 Committee of Arrangements,

Christian Filbrun, Secretary

DISTRICT NOTICE

MT. ZION DISTRICT CHAMBERSBURG, PA

We at Mt. Zion have been making progress on our building project. However, we have not been able to get our foundation completed as quickly as we planned due to the weather. We have decided to delay our workdays to March 27, 28, and 29. We are planning to frame the addition. If anyone would like to come and help with these workdays, we would feel blessed to have the support. If you are interested in coming, please contact Leslie Bowman at 717-729-0850 so we can keep you updated if there are any changes.

We would like to thank everyone for their continued prayers and support. If any feel to contribute financially to this project, please send donations to:

Mt. Zion Building Fund
c/o Keith Garber
890 Guilford Springs Rd.
Chambersburg, PA 17202

We desire your prayers that the Lord would continue to bless and build our district both naturally and spiritually. May all we do be to His Glory and the building of His Church.

In behalf of the Mt. Zion District

Leslie J. Bowman
Building Committee Secretary

LIVING FOR OTHERS

Lord, help me live from day to day
In such a self-forgetful way
That even when I kneel to pray
My prayer shall be for others.

Yes, others, Lord, yes, others, Let this my motto be;
Help me to live for others, That I may live like Thee.

— Charles D. Meigs

MEDITATIONS

God created the universe and all that is in it.
Things cannot simply arise out of what never was.
Before it could ever exist, everything had to be created.
In the beginning, everything was created by One who already is.
Before He created all things, God already was. He was before creation.
I know that God was the beginning of all things as they now are.
By knowing that, I have come to know and love my God.
Most important of all, He knows me and loves me.
He's prepared a place for me to live eternally.

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.

We were reminded recently that we live in a very affluent culture in America, and perhaps have come to love it here. The luxury of our homes and vacations are shared by only a small percentage of people in the world.

All of us reflect on this at times, and wonder what we are to do, and how the teachings of Jesus are to be lived out in our setting. It might be easy for us to make ourselves or others feel guilty for just existing here. This may not be profitable.

But are there questions we may each ask ourselves?

1. Am I committed to following Jesus and His teachings in all areas including wealth and giving?
2. Do I become sensitive when I hear teaching on wealth and ease?
3. Am I seeking the will of the Lord as I make decisions concerning lifestyle, and how my life may affect the Gospel message I carry?
4. Are the poor deeply affected by my Gospel message and life?
5. Do I love this world?
6. Is this worthy of discussion?

POEMS

THE TONGUE*James 3*

Do we use our tongue to glorify our God above,
Treading then upon our brother whom we're called to love?
Will we with our tongues worship our merciful King most high,
Yet devour our brothers, who, from us, for mercy cry?

Do we with joy speak well of the goodness of our God,
Turning then to those in need with jeering words do prod?
Do we, to the Lord, plead for His freedom and forgiveness,
Then go gossiping about those who we feel have wronged us?

Do we with thankful lips exclaim how much we are blest,
Then begrudge those around us whom we think got the best?
Will we proclaim surrender while seeking our Father's face,
Then, use the "Sword" to belittle our brother for his space?

Blessing God and cursing man, it says, should not be so
To the bitter fountain for sweet water, we don't go.
The tongue, though a little member, so unruly can be.
If we don't ask God earnestly, for our lips pure to be.

Our tongue can be like the sword that many nations slew.
If not directed by our Lord, will destroy men too.
When self-projection and self-protection rise up to reign,
We will, with words, oppress those around, causing death and pain.

With thanksgiving for man and God, may our tongues express
That we carry no guilt from causing His children distress.
May JESUS direct and guard our tongues from His courts above
That we to each other may speak life-giving words of love.

Winter Etter

WHEN WE GET TO HEAVEN, YOU AND I

“And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,
In the light of His glory and grace.” –Helen Lemmel

“Grandpa, What is heaven like?” enquired a little lad,
Grandpa thought a little bit and then, at last, he said,
“Heaven will be is richer than anything on earth.
Greater far in value, and grander, far, in worth.”
So, the Lad returns to playing with his toys and car,
But Grandpa turns to thoughts of where his treasures are.

Will there be farms and factories there, houses, fields, and trees?
Will there be vacation spots with mountains, skies, and seas?
Will there be people there, and folk we knew below?
Will there be friendships dear, of those who loved us so?
Will there be smiles there, and harmony, and love?
Will there be everlasting peace in that Land above?

Looking out across his farm, at last the Grandpa smiled,
And thinking of that Better World, he whispered to the child,

“All will be better in that place.
We’ll meet our Savior face to face.
We’ll praise Him in that Home on high,
When we reach Heaven, you and I.”

Marcus Miller
Pleasant Hill, Ohio

STEPPING ASHORE

Oh, think to step ashore,
And find it Heaven;
To clasp a hand outstretched,
And find it God’s hand!
To breathe new air,
And that celestial air;
To feel refreshed,
And find it immortality;
Ah, think to step from storm and stress
To one unbroken calm:
To awake and find it Home

Robert E. Selle

OBITUARIES

KELLEY — Irene Louise (Jarboe), the youngest of four daughters, was born on May 26, 1954, to Warren and Mary Jane (Mettler) Jarboe. She passed into the presence of the Lord on September 28, 2024, at the age of 70 years and 4 months.

Irene grew up on her family's chicken ranch on Dale Road in Modesto, California, surrounded by the simple joys of farm life. She attended local schools, including Stanislaus Elementary and Davis High School. She often recalled studying math with her father, both of them learning algebra together, which was a cherished memory and an indication of Irene's love of learning.

Irene publicly professed her faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized on August 9, 1970. She lived with a quiet, steady devotion to God, staying committed to the Old German Baptist Brethren Church, New Conference, until her passing.

On November 18, 1973, Irene married Philip Kelley. They had three daughters, Beth, Mary, and Sharon. She was a strong example of faith to her family, often emphasizing the many ways God provided and cared for them as a Father cares for His children. Her deep love and commitment to her family remained a priority throughout her life.

Irene also worked as a Respiratory Therapist at Memorial Medical Center for 28 years before retiring in 2017. She was dedicated to excellent patient care, constantly learning new ways to care for her patients and sharing her knowledge with fellow therapists.

After her retirement, Irene was diligent, always working on one project or another, regularly using sewing and card making to express her creativity and bless others. She found joy in volunteering her time in disaster relief, community hospice, her daughter's classroom, and helping her family however she could.

Irene enjoyed thoughtful, methodical study of God's Word and loved sharing what she learned with others. One of her favorite Bible passages was Isaiah 26:3-4: *"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Trust ye in the LORD for ever: for in the LORD JEHOVAH is everlasting strength."* This verse embodied the steadfast faith that guided Irene throughout her life and the source of her enduring strength.

She is survived by her daughters and son-in-law, Beth and her husband, David Cover, Mary Kelley, and Sharon Kelley. She also leaves behind four grandchildren: Aaron, John, Sarah, and Stephen Cover; two sisters, Margaret Jarboe and Janice Jarboe; and three sisters-in-law, Myrna and her husband, Ferrell Nachatelo, Beth and her husband Tim Witmer, and Anne and her husband Kurt Wolf.

Irene is also survived by numerous nieces, nephews, cousins, and dear friends. She was preceded in death by her beloved parents, Warren and Mary Jane Jarboe; her sister, Virginia Jarboe; her husband, Philip Kelley; and her parents-in-law, Eugene and Idamae (Flory) Kelley.

Irene was admitted to the hospital on September 15, 2024. She found great comfort in the anointing from the elders on September 17, resting in her complete trust in the Lord's sovereign will. There she learned of the imminent need for open heart surgery to repair her aortic valve. After returning home on September 19 to await surgery, she was lovingly cared for by her sisters and daughters. She was readmitted to the hospital a week later and passed into the presence of Jesus on September 28, 2024.

Her unwavering faith, deep love for her family, and devotion to the Lord will continue to inspire and be cherished by all who were blessed to know her. Funeral services were held at Modesto District on October 4. Her body was laid to rest in the Wood Colony Cemetery to await the resurrection morning when Christ shall come for His own.

The Family

FLORA — Eula Jane (Kuns, Miller, Bowser), daughter of Chester and Opal (Layman) Kuns passed from this life to eternity in the early morning hour, on December 15, 2024. Eula was born May 8, 1936 in Carroll County, Indiana. She was living at the Village Green, Greenville, Ohio.

Eula was baptized at an early age into Christ and fellowshiped with the Old German Baptist Brethren Church all her life. She was joined in holy matrimony to Paul Miller on June 14, 1953. They shared 23 years of marriage together before Paul's passing on November 28, 1976. To this union was born 5 children; Marietta (Jim

Gascho, deceased), Marilyn (Rick Kingery), Myrna (Mike Eikenberry), Michael (Rachel Montgomery) and Maurice (Gail Dutter).

Mother was a widow four years before she married Robert Bowser, June 21, 1980. They shared 12 short years together before Bob's passing on June 22, 1992. He left two daughters, Bonnie (Gerald Miller), and Linda (Danny Thurber), and six grandchildren. On February 5, 1995, she married Robert Flora. They shared 29 years together, sharing her first 25th wedding anniversary with Bob. After the passing of Paul, she started a bakery at Landes Meats which she enjoyed for 20 years. After selling it, she baked at home for others. She was a woman with much perseverance, who could do almost anything she set her mind to. Mother worked very hard and God saw she was getting tired and called her home. She attended Covington's Love Feast this past October and was very thankful she could go.

Left to mourn her passing with her children is Robert Flora; his children, Meldon (Lisa Rinehart), Gerald (Jane Garber) and Rue-shan (Donald Boone); 16 grandchildren, 58 great-grandchildren, three great-great-grandchildren, 13 step grandchildren and 22 step great-grandchildren. A brother, Marlin Kuns; sister-in-law, Lois Jean Mohler; brothers-in-law, Paul Riffey, Donald Balsbaugh, and Melvin Filbrun and a host of nieces, nephews, and friends.

The visitation was Tuesday, December 17, and the funeral was Wednesday, December 18, 2024, all at the Covington meeting house. Officiated by the home brethren, taking thoughts from II Corinthians 1-6. A grandson, Ryan Kingery,

spoke at the grave using Titus 2:13.

“Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.”

The Children

BARNHART — Norma Jean was born January 28, 1928, in Clay township, Carroll County, Indiana, to Fay and Verna (Keller) Kessler. She answered the call of the Master and departed this world December 16, 2024, at Milner Healthcare in Rossville, Indiana, making her life on earth 96 years, 10 months and 18 days. On November 3, 1946, she was united in marriage to Alvan Barnhart at her parents home in Rossville, Indiana. They were blessed with three daughters: Joyce Shively, Delphi Indiana, Gloria (Clayton) Filbrun, Hillsboro Wisconsin, and Marilyn (Jerry) Fisher, Piqua, Ohio.

She was a member of the Old German Baptist Brethren church, Bachelor Run district and served

with Daddy in the deacons office. Her faith was steadfast until the end. She called for and received the anointing in 2021.

Mother was a homemaker and helped Daddy on the farm. She lived a simple, quiet life, never asking for much and always appreciated what she had.

Surviving with her daughters are nine grandchildren, thirty-five great-grandchildren, two great-great-grandchildren and a sister-in-law, Verna Kessler. She was preceded in death by her parents; husband, Alvan; two brothers, Marion and Donald Kessler; son-in-law, Larry Shively; and a great-grandson.

A visitation was held the morning of December 20, 2024, with a funeral service following in the afternoon at the Bachelor Run Meeting House, Flora, Indiana, with the home brethren officiating. Mother was laid to rest at the North Fork Church cemetery near Pymont, Indiana.

The Family

Terms

Subscriptions should be made through the congregational contact or through *The Testimony* office. Subscription price is \$30.00 per year. New subscriptions should be paid (prorated) through the remainder of the current year. All renewals begin at the first of the calendar year. Newly married and those unable to pay for a subscription may receive a free subscription through the agent of their local congregation.

Contributors

Authors of essays, devotionals, poems, etc. are asked to review the Statement of Purpose on the back page of this periodical. Articles should

be based on Scripture. References are appreciated. Shorter focused articles are more desirable than articles that move from one topic to another. Selected material will be considered. Original writings are preferred. It is recommended that writers submit themselves to the Spirit, which reveals the will of God to the Church in every age, according to the varied needs and circumstances.

Written articles should be legible. Typed material is preferred and should be double-spaced. Electronic transmission or CD will be accepted. The author's name and address must be included on all material. An attempt will be made to contact the author of articles that are not accepted.

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 maintain

a fellowship of true primitive Christianity through the communication of all good things.

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