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Glen A. Pierce

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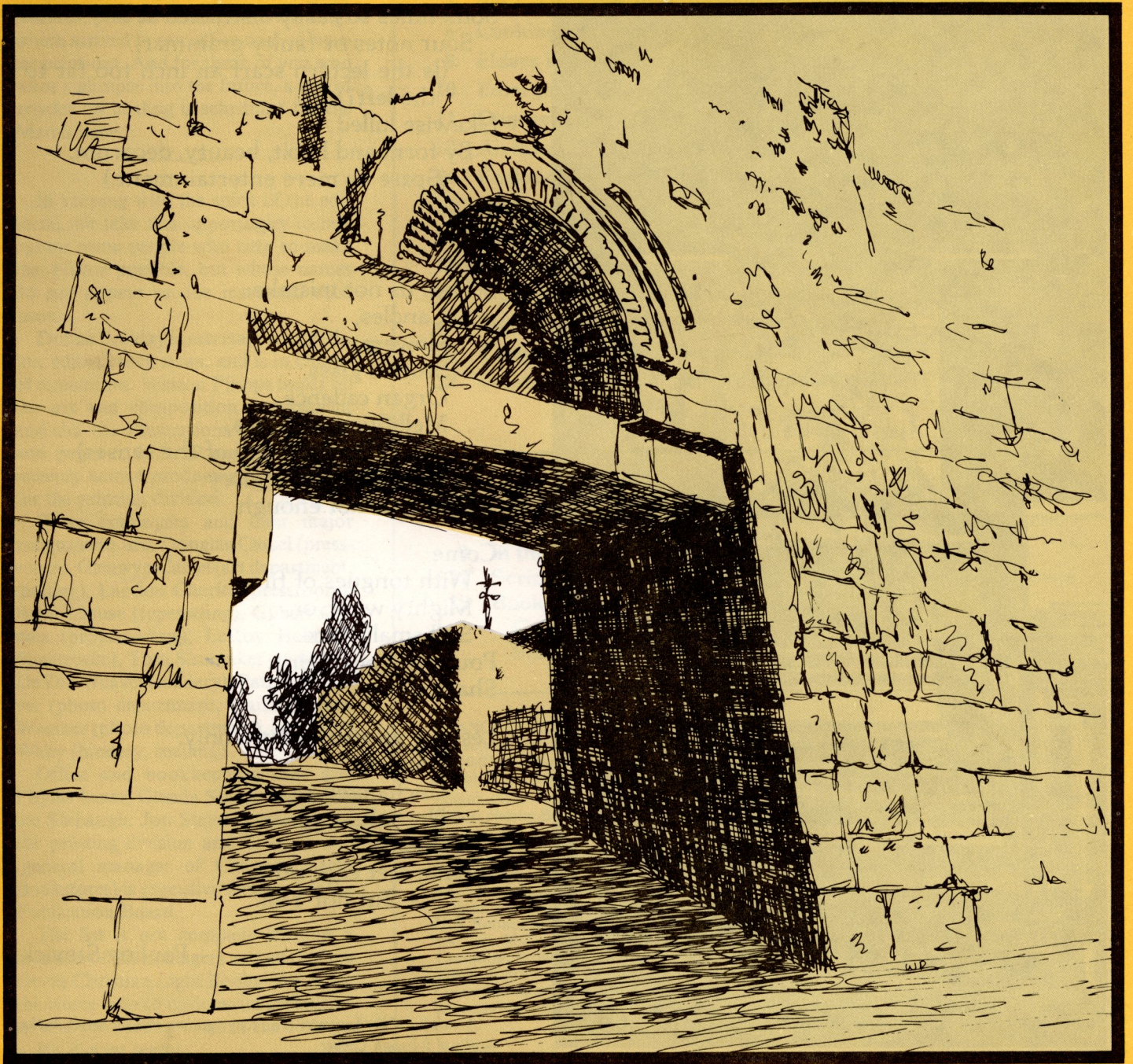
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evangelical
VISITOR

February, 1983

*Open for me the gates of righteousness;
I will enter and give thanks to the Lord.*

Psalm 118:19





In Spirit and in Truth: Stanzas on Worship

-1-

Sunday morning sunlight;
Soft organ tones;
I sit, three seats back, silently waiting.
Here in this palace sanctuary
It is easy to forget You were born in a stable
And wore a crown of thorns.

-2-

Sometimes so easily distracted . . .
Sour notes or faulty grammar;
(Is the lectern scarf an inch too far to
the left?)
Likewise lulled
By form and habit, beauty, decorum,
(Spare us mere entertainment.)

-3-

Lord,
Help us not mistake:
Candles,
Flowers,
Storied glass,
Organ cadence,
Mellifluous phrases,
(This titillation of the senses)
For the Shechinah glory.
Beauty is not enough.

Come
With tongues of fire,
Mighty wind, or
Still small voice.
Pour out your Spirit:
Shake us.

Lest we go away salved only;
Uncured,
Unchanged,
Unchallenged,
Empty.
Having met each other.
—But not You.

—Pauline Stevick

*A member of the Lancaster, Pa., congregation, Pauline serves on the
faculty of Messiah College.*

Three Brethren in Christ writers address the intertwining themes of preaching, ordination and spiritual leadership in the first section of this *Visitor*. A few pages later, early church leader Barnabas grants an "interview." And the editorial calls all Christians to see themselves as ministers, not just preachers, missionaries or church planters—a truth reinforced by the back-page article, "Waste of Time."

You won't want to miss the regular features, plus an "emergency warning" which arrived in our office on a computer print-out. And for those of you who want a glimpse into the future, a trio of articles on healing is scheduled for the March issue.

In keeping with the spirit of the editorial, we take this opportunity to recognize some people who help to make the *Visitor* possible, but whose names do not appear on the masthead each issue.

Donna Soliday is secretary to the editor, edits church news, and is in charge of circulation. Weston Phipps heads up the art and composition department, and did the illustrations on the cover and pages 5, 6, 9, 12 and 32. He was recently named production coordinator for the printing division.

Other employees and their major assignments are: Douglas Cassel (pressroom), Glenwyn Cassel (art department, mailing), Landon Charles (pressroom), Ruth Clouse (typesetting), Gilbert Gomez (proofreading), LeRoy Helmuth (pressroom), Tom Shumaker (bindery), DeVon Weaver (bindery), Patricia Weaver (photo department, mailing), Don Weesner (photo department), and Viola Welty (bindery, mailing).

Office and bookkeeping staff are: Phyllis Lentz, Glenda Sheets, and Pauline Slabaugh. Jon Stepp is manager of the printing division and Elwyn Hock (general manager of Christian Light Bookstores) is executive director for the Publication Board.

The list is not complete without a mention of the managers and staff of the eleven Christian Light Bookstores, since the stores help to underwrite the editorial and production costs of the *Visitor*.

It's a great team!

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Preaching

A Biblical Mandate

by Rodger McCann

Preaching is one of the more notable parts of a worship service, certainly one which most people could readily identify with worship. But in spite of its popularity in the past and recognition as a part of worship today, we often find preaching under attack by some and simply neglected by others, or relegated to unimportance. We need to understand some basic biblical as well as practical truths about preaching before we determine its importance and role in worship today.

First, perhaps it would be best to answer the question, "What is preaching?" Is it as Webster's New International Dictionary says, "to discourse publicly on a religious subject"? If that were so, then a sermon could be preached by anyone, in any setting, without there ever being any reference to God, the Bible, or God's saving action in Jesus Christ. It could well be man's thoughts or opinions about God rather than the truth of God as presented in his Word.

If we are to consider preaching as God's Word to humanity, then it must follow that the Bible itself becomes the preacher's charter. Preaching only occurs when the preacher becomes a contemporary instrument through which the prophets, apostles, and Christ himself speak. When God, who spoke for himself as recorded in the pages of Scripture, is allowed to speak again through preaching of the Bible, then an address truly becomes a sermon.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us."¹ God gave his Word

Rev. Rodger McCann has pastored the DeRossett and McMinnville congregations in Tennessee. Tentative plans are for him to begin a new church-planting project in Tennessee this summer.

to man, first in written and spoken form, then as the incarnate Son of God. As the writer of the book of Hebrews said, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in times past to the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."² The challenge we face in preaching is to make that Living Word live in the hearts of our hearers as we speak of his wondrous grace.

If we are to fully grasp the meaning of what preaching really is, then it is important that we have a reason for doing so. Why do we preach? What is the biblical mandate for preaching? Why should it be a consuming fire in the breast of those whom God has so called?

Preaching is literally the "power of God." In his infinite wisdom, God has chosen preaching as the means of revealing to a lost world his power and purposes. Individuals, in all of their conceit and supposed wisdom, may scoff at preaching, but it is God's ordained method of speaking to humanity.

The presupposition behind all worship is a revelation. That is, that God by his very nature wants to reveal himself to mankind. God has "in due times manifested his Word through preaching."³ If God has made himself known by the means of preaching, then preaching is a very worthwhile task indeed.

Preaching in the way God intended is not just a form of worship to be endured or a ritual to perform. True preaching must have the goal of persuasion. The more enthusiastically involved we are in any project, the more effort we will put into it. If we realize the "terror of the Lord,"⁴ then we must and will do all that is within our power to persuade people to turn from a life of emptiness to a life of fulness in Jesus Christ.

God has charged us who are called to

the gospel ministry "to feed the church of God."⁵ If we love God and love his flock, then we must responsibly feed the flock from God's Word. It is still true today that "man cannot live by bread alone," and we must see to it that our materialistically minded world gets food for the soul from God's Word.

Why do we preach? Why not someone else, someone better suited or better qualified? Why me? First, because it is the call of God. No man can properly choose the task of preaching, but rather it chooses him. As God called Aaron, so he calls those today whom he will.⁶ And we preach because the whole of Christianity involves obedience to God. One cannot truthfully call himself a Christian unless there is a willingness to obey God. As the Apostle Paul said, "woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

If we then begin to understand what preaching really is and why we preach the gospel, then we must consider what we are to preach. Never let us be like Ahimaaz who was eager to run, but had no tidings when he arrived, but rather be like Cushii who arrived with a message of truth, with compassion.⁷ There is a sense in which preaching calls the church into being. Preaching becomes a "spearhead" in the unifying of a congregation. With the background of a week of ministry to his people and sensitivity to their needs, the preacher bears witness by his sermon to how the gospel works in the lives of believers.

Our message, though broad in scope, varied in style, and tailored to the needs of our people, should always be centered in "Jesus Christ and Him crucified."⁸ We must teach our people that through the death of Christ, all the answers to life's problems and heartaches can be found.

"The mystery . . . which is Christ in you, the hope of glory"⁹ must be proclaimed over and over to our congrega-

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tions. We must open up the mystery of ages and generations so that the world may know the wonder and goodness of God's grace. To fully understand the love of God for us through Christ is to change a person's life forevermore. If we could but grasp this truth of God and pass it on to those in our charge, we would do more to enhance true worship and devotion to God than any other plan or method known to man.

Our people are varied, their needs are varied, and thus our message must be a variety of God's Word. Just as eating only one food, regardless of quantity, would soon lead to physical illness, so our spiritual diet must be balanced as well. Fortunately there is no problem, for God's Word is a veritable treasure-house for those who would open the door. There we find words of instruction for those who lack knowledge, correction for those who have wandered from the path of righteousness, reproof for those who need reproving, doctrine that we may understand God's will—and all of these that we may live pleasing to God, that we may be worthy of our calling and thoroughly furnished unto all of God's work here on earth.¹⁰

"But we have this treasure in earthen vessels."¹¹ Thus we must carefully consider how we are to preach this eternal truth of God. Since the days of the reformers our worship has been Word-centered; thus the reading and expounding of Scripture becomes more pronounced. However, we must take care never to allow the sermon to achieve such a prominence that there is no response required of the hearers. If that happened, worship would become a mere listening activity, another "spectator sport." The preacher then would

become the center of the congregation's focus. His personality and prowess would be exaggerated beyond anything else and the concept of the church as a community of God's people responding to the preached Word would be lost. The congregation must be allowed, in fact, encouraged, to make a corporate response.

Seeking to accomplish this, we must first be careful not to preach with wisdom which we have (or think we have), but rather let it be God's wisdom coming through. We must be careful not to set forth ourself, but be hidden behind the cross of Jesus. We must use care never to deceive our listeners, for the end never does justify the means.¹²

We must also endeavor to preach all the counsel of God and not just a few of our "pet" ideas, doctrines, or philosophies. In doing so we more thoroughly prepare our congregation to live as God's people.¹³ If it is God's Word we preach and not our own, we may preach boldly and without excuse or intimidation.¹⁴

One mistake often made is that of preaching above our listeners. Certainly the concepts and doctrines of God are high and lofty ideas, but they must be given in such a way that the least educated, least equipped of our congregation may grasp them easily. Plain speech may not be in fashion, but it is imperative that our message be understood by our audience as much as our ability allows.¹⁵

We must use care to "rightly divide the word of truth."¹⁶ There are many today who use Scripture to prove whatever they desire through manipulation and an incorrect understanding of the division of God's truth. Faithfulness at

this point at times will require every ounce of the gifts that God has given us. But then, that's why God gave us gifts, to enable us to carry out his work.¹⁷

Above all else, we must realize that it is not enough to preach one "sermon" a year while the rest are mere discourses. We must realize the burden of men's and women's souls are laid upon us and be faithful in all ways and at all times, as God is our helper.¹⁸

In conclusion, if we are faithful to preach God's Word, then we should *expect* results. The results may be many and varied, not always what and when we expected, but they will come as we are faithful. People will be saved as God's message is preached by God's messengers and in God's way. Christians will be instructed in the way of Christian living. There will be evidence of holy living where God's Word gets through to hearts. There will be a response of faith from those who learn of God's faithfulness through the ages. God will be glorified in our communities as his truth is proclaimed and as lives are changed. The body of Jesus Christ here upon earth will be edified and built up through the results of the faithful preaching of God's Word.

References

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| ¹ John 1:14 | ¹¹ 2 Corinthians 4:7 |
| ² Hebrews 1:1, 2 | ¹² 2 Corinthians 2:17, 4:1, 2 |
| ³ Titus 1:3 | ¹³ Acts 5:20 |
| ⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:11 | ¹⁴ Ezekiel 2:6; |
| ⁵ Acts 20:28 | Matthew 10:27, 28 |
| ⁶ Hebrews 5:4; | ¹⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:12 |
| Acts 26:16 | ¹⁶ 2 Timothy 2:15 |
| ⁷ 2 Samuel 18:19-32 | ¹⁷ Romans 12:6 |
| ⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:2 | ¹⁸ Ezekiel 3:17, 18 |
| ⁹ Colossians 1:26, 27 | |
| ¹⁰ 1 Thessalonians 2:11,12; | |
| 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 | |



Ordination seems to be one of those things in the church which is practiced without many people understanding either its background or purpose. Moreover, the meaning varies according to different church traditions. To illustrate, let me tell you about two churches I've been affiliated with, and their attitudes toward ordination.

In one church, the pastor would not use the word "Reverend" in connection with his name, even though he had been ordained, because he thought it created an unnecessary and ill-founded distinction between himself and the people. At his insistence, the church people called him by his first name. In the other church, there were people who expected the benediction to be performed by an ordained man *only*, and in a certain way—with arms outstretched in blessing. This was because the ordained person alone, in their eyes, had the position before God to do such a thing as dismiss the congregation with God's blessing.

Is ordination a matter to be relegated to the level of personal choice and opinion? Of course, opinion isn't always the worst criterion. Plato said, "Between knowledge of what really exists and ignorance of what does not exist lies the domain of opinion. It is more obscure than knowledge, but clearer than ignorance." On the other hand, opinion can have marginal value. I read one maxim which said, "Everyone has the right to his own opinion. It's generally no use to anyone else." So before we resign ourselves to opinion, let's ask the question, what do the Scriptures say?

Ordination is usually performed by a "laying on of hands," which in the Bible conveys several meanings. In the Old Testament, the person offering a sacrifice would lay hands on the victim. In the case of the scapegoat, there was a transfer of guilt.¹ More often, the act was a way of setting the victim apart for a sacred purpose.² The laying on of hands could mean blessing, as illustrated in the story of Jacob and Joseph's sons.³ And when Moses passed on to Joshua the task of leading Israel, the laying on of hands denotes the idea of ordination.⁴

These ideas are carried into the New Testament. The laying on of hands can

An ordained minister and a graduate of Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary, David Hall is associate pastor of the Grantham, Pa., Brethren in Christ Church.



be for blessing, such as Jesus and the little children.⁵ Healing is often the focus, as in the ministry of Ananias to Paul⁶ and in many of Jesus' encounters.⁷ In the book of Acts, the laying on of hands is a sign of ordination for the seven deacons⁸ as well as for Paul and Barnabas as they set out from Antioch on their missionary journey.⁹ And in the Pastoral Epistles, the laying on of hands is used in the context of imparting spiritual gifts to people being ordained.¹⁰

We notice, too, the functions for which people were ordained, general concepts of ministry implied in such phrases as "ministry of the word," "ministry of the Spirit," "minister of righteousness," and "minister of reconciliation." In addition, there were the specific offices of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor/teacher, deacon and later the office of bishop. But there does not seem to be a great chasm between clergy and laity in the apostolic age. The ministers are as dependent on redeeming grace as the members of the congregation, while congregational members shared equally in the blessings of the gospel. There was equal access to the throne of grace and all had direct communion with Christ. The New Testament calls all believers "saints" and "priests." In I Peter the term for ministerial order does not denote some special group, but the believing community.¹¹

A distinct change came in the second century. The idea of a special priesthood, distinct from the people, had deep

roots in both Judaism and the pagan religions. And while the church had set its course away from legalistic and ceremonial observations (especially because of Paul's writings), the old pattern began to reappear after the apostles were dead. Some parallel can be found between the Levitical priesthood with its high priest, priest, and Levite and the developing idea in second century Christendom of bishop, elder, and deacon. The concepts involved with ministry became isolated and the term "clergy" changed in its focus, from all Christians ministering and serving, to a select group of people set apart for such tasks. Solemn ordination by a laying on of hands was the admission into this select group. And with the exaltation of clergy there was a separation from the common people. The clergy had special restrictions such as refraining from all secular business and a developing pressure for celibacy. And by the fourth century, there were official clerical costumes to further illustrate the separation of clergy and laity.

This should be seen within the context of other institutionalization within the church. Church life and personal expressions of faith were becoming increasingly liturgical. Worship centered in the Eucharist and the set-apart clergy were the ones who could legitimately distribute the bread and cup to the people. The parallel in the Old Testament priesthood is perhaps most obvious here. A contrast is also obvious with the first century church. In the apostolic

church, preaching and teaching were not confined to a particular class, but every convert could proclaim the gospel and many Christians with gifts would pray, teach, and exhort in the congregation.

By the middle of the fourth century, ordination was a sacrament, a solemn consecration to the special priesthood, as baptism was the introduction of a

contended that the Roman sacrament of ordination had a built-in separation of clergy/laity that led to tyranny. Luther found no ground in Scripture for vows of poverty and chastity like those taken by monks and nuns. He urged people to avoid such things because of the non-biblical support and because they bred pride and contempt for ordinary Christian living. He maintained that the

congregation who provided for their own finances through a secular vocation. The 1935 *Manual of Doctrine and Government*, revealing a period of transition, says the pastor may either have congregational support or provide his own, both being acceptable scripturally.

Over the years there seems to be no consistent policy regarding *who* is to be ordained. Ordination in the Brethren in Christ Church has been for bishops, ministers, and deacons. Sometimes the ministers' wives are ordained; other times they are consecrated. The 1935 manual describes dedication for missionaries and children, but later policy allowed—or even called for—ordination for missionaries, especially men.

Our current manual gives a rather explicit insight into the nature of ordination as it now stands within the church:

Ordination is a rite having lifelong significance, and the ordained minister carries the privileges and responsibilities of ordination throughout life, conditional upon worthy conduct and loyalty to God and the church.

Manual of Doctrine and Government Article LIV, p. 122

Having considered these brief observations regarding ordination from a biblical and historical perspective, I want to conclude with some practical thoughts. What does ordination mean? What should ordination not do?

I admit that I'm reading my own subjective feelings into the data, so maybe I should say, what does ordination mean to me? My starting point in Ephesians 4 where we read that Christ, as the head of the church, has provided "some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers . . ." When a person feels within himself or herself a call to a special ministry of this nature, and (this "and" is very important) when the church recognizes and confirms this call to be valid, it is legitimate to set the person apart for that work. Ordination is that "setting apart." It is a recognition by the church of a person's gifts and call and then giving that person a commission to do the job.

One might ask, "Well, if the person has the gifts and the church recognizes it, why a special commission and title?" One reason is to keep an established line of leadership and authority. But in saying that, we who are ordained should remember that it means greater respon-

continued on next page



Joel Kauffman

believer into the universal priesthood. Ordination was the medium for communicating gifts for the ministerial office, giving the capacity and authority to administer the sacraments and govern the body of believers in order to secure church order. Like baptism, ordination was a once-for-all endowment and could only be suspended in case of gross immorality or heresy. Thus, it became something important for its own sake; so much so that Augustine held that ordination was independent of the moral and spiritual condition of the person ordained. The efficacy of the sacraments (notice the priest/mediation assumption) did not depend on the devout state of mind of the priest. Instead, the whole church was understood as acting through him representatively. Thus ordination was very much a part of the growing formality that characterized the Catholic Church.

When we come to the Reformation, ordination was one of many practices which received criticism, especially because it had achieved the status of a sacrament. Luther held that ordination had been invented by the Church of Rome. He admitted that as a rite practiced for many ages, it was not to be condemned, but he reiterated as basic convictions that *all* Christians are priests, that what is called priesthood is merely a ministry entrusted to those who exercise it with the consent of other Christians, and that ordination is a ceremony for choosing preachers in the Church. He

works of priests and members of religious orders are no more sacred in the sight of God than those of a farmer in his fields or a woman in her household duties.

Ordination among the sixteenth century Anabaptists was not uniform. Organization and discipline differed between the Anabaptists of southern and northern Europe. In the north, authority usually resided in a small circle of elders. These alone could baptize and effect the Son. In the south, authority lay more with the brotherhood as a whole.

The terms "elder" and "bishop" were often used interchangeably in early Mennonite writing. It is noteworthy that many of the Anabaptist ministers who were formerly Catholic priests felt it necessary not only to be rebaptized, but to be reordained as well. The implication here is that ordination was understood in different terms, and its resulting authority had a different focus.

Within the Brethren in Christ church, there seems to have always been a consignment to ordained people those tasks traditionally thought to be ministerial duties such as preaching, baptizing, and administering the Lord's Supper.

But unlike what had developed in the Catholic Church, we have a history where until as recently as the first half of this century, special measures were taken to minimize separation of clergy and laity. There were no stipulated salaries paid for ministerial services. There were often several pastor/teachers within a

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sibility. Notice these words from James and Peter:

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly."¹²

"To the elders . . . Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock."¹³

Finally, some things that ordination does *not* mean. Again, based on Ephesians 4 and also I Corinthians 12, ordained persons do *not* have all the gifts, nor are they to do all the work. Notice in Ephesians 4:12 why pastors/teachers are given to the church: "to prepare God's people for works of service." In fact, that's what a good part of church gathering is all about. First of all, we gather to worship. But we also gather in order to learn how to minister to one another and to an unbelieving world. Worship and service always go together (look at Romans 12:1 very carefully). It's the pastor/teacher who is "ordained" to see that this is being done.

There is one other thing ordination does not mean. It does not mean that there is a double standard of righteousness and holy living. The believer in the pew is called to holiness no less—and no more—than the preacher behind the pulpit. Ordination does not give the pastor any mystical or magical resource to overcome sin and live victoriously. Our children aren't born sanctified, and weeds grow in our gardens, too. We have to live in the power of the Holy Spirit just the same way any believer in any place has to do.

"Ordained" or not, may each one of us be built up in the faith and be committed to do our work of service in the church.

References

¹Leviticus 16:21

²Leviticus 24:14

³Genesis 48:14

⁴Numbers 27:18, 23; Deuteronomy 34:9

⁵Matthew 19:15

⁶Acts 9:12, 17

⁷Mark 5:23; 6:5; 16:18; and others

⁸Acts 6:6

⁹Acts 13:3

¹⁰1 Timothy 4:14; 2 Timothy 1:6

¹¹1 Peter 2:5, 9; 5:3

¹²James 3:1

¹³1 Peter 5:1a, 2, 3

by John A. Byers

Elders in

From time to time people ask why Brethren in Christ Churches don't have a Board of Elders. There is a feeling among some that a church cannot experience its fullest power unless it uses this concept of leadership which they see in the Bible.

Often these persons suggest that the reason people find the church to be lukewarm or tasteless is because they are faced with a church spoiled by man. They believe the cause of this spoilage is a less than biblical form of church structure.

The solution, they suggest, for such lukewarmness is for a church to be led by elders to whom the local fellowship of believers are accountable. These elders are Spirit-chosen and confirmed by the congregation. They are responsible for the pastor (who is one of them), the church board, deacons and trustees. Therefore, the key to spiritual power, they conclude, is in having elders.

It is noteworthy that the Brethren in Christ did at one time have elders. I remember when my father got mail addressed to Elder John Byers. Research of General Conference Minutes gives some insight into the view of elders in the Brethren in Christ Church. In 1883 the General Conference was asked "May all ministers of a district solemnize marriage. . . ." The answer was that only bishops should do so, not elders. In 1885, General Conference was faced with the situation of inter-faith marriages. This time Conference said it was the duty of all elders, ministers and deacons to carefully instruct unmarried members on this matter.

The *Evangelical Visitor* (September 4, 1911) contains an article entitled "Elder or Bishop." The unidentified author says, "The term elder or bishop

designates the same office (Acts 20:17, 18). The former refers to the man and the latter to the function of office." Tradition tells us that later, "elder" was used as an alternate term for "Reverend."

Should the Brethren in Christ return to the practice of using the term elder to designate the function of a particular person in the organizational life of the church? Perhaps it would be easier to answer that question if we understand the meaning and usage of the word. Kittel's *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* says that elder refers to one of an older generation as compared to a younger generation. It is one who has the positive element of venerability.

In Sparta, an elder was someone with a political position, such as the president of an institution. Elder meant an office. The Greeks, however, did not use elder to identify an office-bearer but a group of older people. This set up the continuing tension between elder denoting office or age.

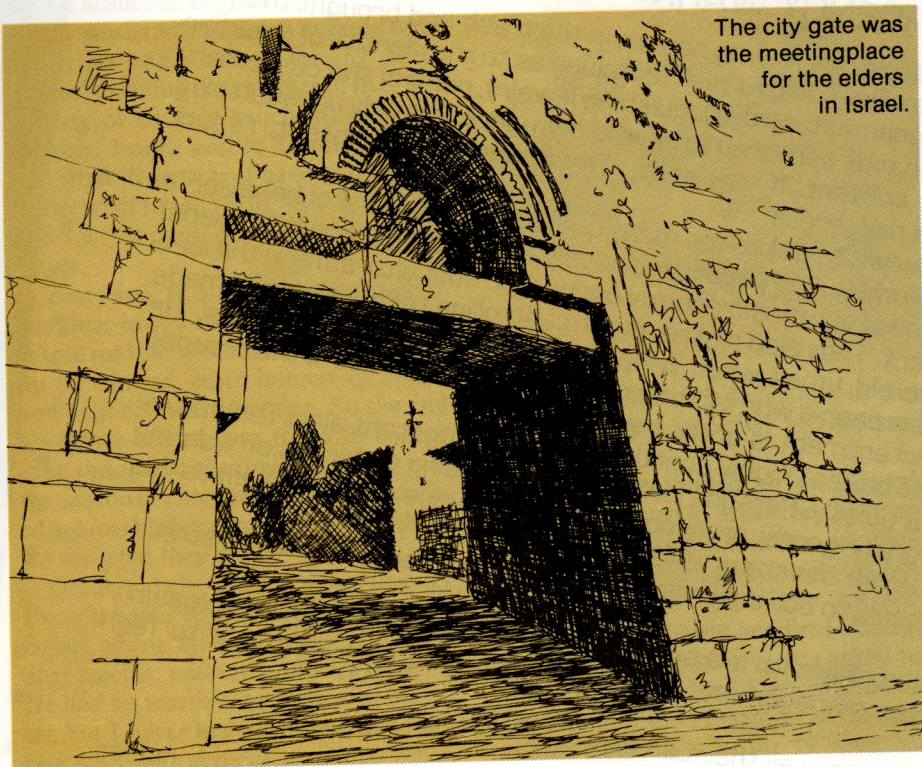
The Old Testament reveals a variety of usages of the term as well. Prior to the leadership of Moses, elders served as the representatives of the tribes and clans. They were the ones to speak for the family they represented. Under Moses, they were his colleagues. They accompanied Moses to visit Pharaoh, and they announced the coming exodus from Egypt.

Numbers 11 reports their official appointment, but they did not have governing powers. It was during the time of the judges and the monarchy that the elders assumed governing privileges. It was the elders who confronted Samuel with the demand for a king (I Samuel 8:4). When Absalom threatened to take David's throne, David sent his priests to ask the elders to help him regain his throne (II Samuel 19:11).

The collapse of the tribes during the post-exilic period did not bring an end to the role of the elders. During the exile they served as community heads, and worked with Jeremiah and Ezekiel. How-

Evangelical Visitor

the local church



The city gate was the meeting place for the elders in Israel.

So, what can we conclude? For one thing, it is very difficult to argue that the New Testament teaches one specific pattern of organization. In fact, in the New Testament, the early church was still so much an organism that it was only beginning to learn how to structure its life. That is not to say that when a church has structure it is an organization and not an organism. But no society can live without some measure of order. Christ organized the 5,000 and the 4,000 into groups of 50's and 100's. It is interesting to note that the later books of the New Testament refer to office bearers (For example, see James 5:14).

It has already been noted that the New Testament is not consistent in its use of the term elder. In I Timothy 5:1 it is clearly a designation of age. I Timothy 4:14 uses it as an office of leadership, while in Titus 1:5, elders are appointed for the sake of order. Several factors are responsible for this. One is because the various congregations were in different stages of growth. Another reason is that the same term carried different meanings for Jew and Greek.

The principle of servanthood is in all of the passages. The tasks of preaching, feeding, teaching, etc. are not positions of status but opportunities for service. Also, the work of the church is not a "one man operation." There is no place for the person who wants to "lord it over others." Yet, there is a need for someone to give leadership. The important fact is not the terms we use but the principles we practice.

What is biblical is that leadership is done in the plural. A church board can fill that role as well as a board of elders. One needs to be careful that in seeking in our organization to be biblical, we don't become so dogmatic in terminology that we kill the principle we wish to express.

John A. Byers is bishop of the Atlantic Regional Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church.

ever, as the period came to a close, the elders lost their place of prominence. The book of Nehemiah recounts one story of a leadership struggle between the elders and the nobles.

Bridging the gap between the Old Testament and the early church is the Sanhedrin and the Hellenistic Jews. At first, an elder in the Sanhedrin was any member. Gradually, usage changed so that the term described a lay person as distinct from those in the priesthood. The Hellenistic Jews used the word elder to refer to members of the supreme court, Jewish senate and local authorities. As we come to the early church, there remains the tension between the idea of the word elder designating an office based on a legal concept and the idea of elder being a person with spiritual insight and authority.

Well, you say, what was the practice of the early church? In Acts we find elders carrying the collection to Antioch (Acts 11:30), attending the Jerusalem

Council (15:2, 4, 6) and representing the Jerusalem church when Paul visited (21:18). It may be significant that in Acts 21:18, only the apostles and elders are mentioned and not the "ecclesia," or the larger assembly.

Can Paul help us? First, we note that Paul rarely conferred a title on the office-bearer in a local church. It was his usual custom to refer to them in terms of their function, such as prophet, teacher, preacher, etc. (Compare Romans 12:7f, I Corinthians 12:28 and I Thessalonians 5:12). In Titus 1:5, Paul says to appoint elders, but two verses later, in 1:7, he gives the portrait of a bishop. A number of scholars feel that the terms "episcopos" (bishop) and "presbuteros" (elder) are synonymous in the New Testament. Perhaps the different terms suggest difference in function, for in the Pastoral Epistles, the word bishop is always used in the singular, while the concept of elder is used in the plural and is seen referring to a group which ministers.

Brethren—take note! A copy of the September 1982 *Visitor* containing Roger Sider's story, "On What It Is Like To Have More Money Than You Know What To Do With," has fallen into unfriendly hands.

As a result, the enemy has placed his staff on "red alert" and issued the following memo, spearheading

an assault on any person exhibiting stewardship, gratefulness or charity.

Attired in three-piece suits (or Gloria Vanderbilt jeans, depending on your gender), his representatives will be calling on you, launching an

all-out campaign to rid the world of biblical conscience and lifestyle. These foes are armed with blinders and are dangerous. Take heed, and read on.

EMERGENCY WARNING!

An alert motel maid discovered suspicious looking papers in the trash and brought them to headquarters. Upon questioning, Miss Bell could furnish few clues as to the identity of this man occupying the room. He had no designer suit, no distinguishing jewelry, none of the customary markings of affluence. She noted his hands appeared to have known work. The only unusual thing about him was that he appeared content. If you spot a man who looks content, report immediately to headquarters. He is dangerous.

While he seemed to be a mere tourist, he asked too many questions. If this kind of behavior is permitted, our whole society will crumble. His papers (obviously some kind of report to aliens) discussed discretionary income (one of our most recently conquered subcultures) and the idea of monetary and choice enslavement. They also hinted at our controlling techniques and made strange inferences, similar to the old times when people were guided by other forces. He seemed close to discovering the few people who still practice the harmful tenets of the dreaded Bible (such as "Godliness with contentment is great gain").

This sensitive information must be kept highly confidential. Be on constant alert to capture and convince or destroy him—but quietly. Persons looking content, being generous or wanting to be responsible with their worldly goods or accountable to anyone but themselves (as influenced by us) are to be kept under strict surveillance.

Meanwhile, our pressured appeals to our enslaved public must be intensified. Added strategies to be applied are:

1. Insist that the accumulation of wealth is a sign (for others to also see) of direct blessing from God and our slave's clever management. It is important that they be made to feel important and responsible.
 2. Foster the idea that they deserve all they can get.
 3. Distract the slaves by
 - a. driving them to entertainment and light-heartedness so they have no time to consider the poverty of other peoples.
 - b. dulling their consciences to the point of no concern.
 - c. causing them to be distraught at the thought of losing what they have.
 - d. discouraging them about the future—which will not be hard if they see others as being selfish.
 4. Step up all efforts at rationalization. Avoid getting involved in discussions about stewardship, compassion, sharing, tithing and any other thing that would cause our slaves to wake up and remember simple living, trust in God, seeing the brother in need and such other detrimental doctrines.
 5. Specialize in selling things that take up A LOT OF TIME and keep our subjects in a dither and under constant stress. Only then will we succeed in creating insatiable desires. NOTE: It is permissible to use worthwhile projects for this purpose.
 6. Attitudes to be nurtured and encouraged are—superiority, discontent, momentary pleasure, approval of peers, feeling of success as measured by acquisitions, intellectualism, and the need to be pampered.
- If the ideas of stewardship, gratefulness or charity take hold, we are doomed. We must at all cost maintain the current delusions in order to survive. Please, report any deviance to headquarters immediately.

Degrees: *I Love them and I Hate them*

How does one sort out her thoughts about academic degrees?

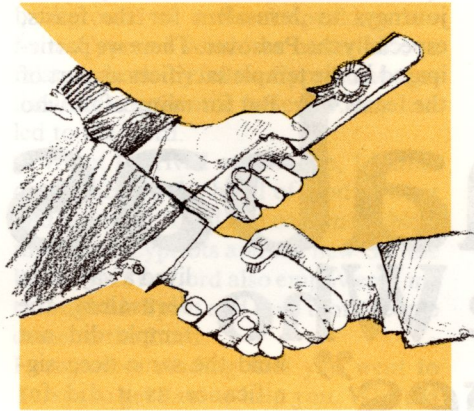
My husband's and my degrees were all in his name except for my M.A. degree, meaning Ma, mother of five. But neither of us paid much attention to degrees. I once said to Grant, "People ask what degrees you have and I don't know what to tell them." So he told me and I wrote them down so I would not forget.

Years ago, in a cozy mother-in-law/daughter-in-law conversation, his mother told me that while Grant was growing up he showed more interest in books and papers than in farming. So she and his father helped him to go to college even though, at the time, his father was the deacon in a congregation that preached against higher education. I love them yet for what they did.

Grant slowly added more degrees along the way while he was a husband, father, editor, author, college and seminary teacher, and active church layman. He had an insatiable appetite for learning but I never knew before that someone with four degrees would so much value the views of others whether they had degrees or not.

Degrees? I guess I love them.

But wait. Sometimes they cause an air of superiority, an eliteness that destroys biblical freedom and equality in the Christian brother/sisterhood, the church. If they are not counted as loss for Christ's sake, they hinder the use of others' gifts. Sometimes they seem to foster competition more than caring, the spirit of ruling more than serving. In the selection of leaders and workers, degrees are sometimes considered more important than spiritual qualifications or en-



dowment of gifts or dedication to God or continuing years of self-directed study.

Degrees are thought to make people authorities, even in areas they have not studied. A church committee was planning special meetings on family life relationships. One committee member (male) with a newly acquired doctor's degree in church history was asked for ideas with "bowing and scraping" by the chairman. Another member of the committee (female), who for 19 years had studied, written and spoken on family

life relationships, was not asked for ideas.

In a large Sunday school class of men and women, a critical world situation was being discussed. A medical doctor spoke up who may have known more about the bones of the body than world affairs, yet a hush fell over the entire group. A medical doctor was speaking! In that congregation there are people with doctors' degrees in different fields and with higher education than a medical degree, but a medical doctor is addressed as "Doctor" and not "Brother" as are the other kinds of doctors.

Perhaps a ten-year-old girl expressed the typical reservation about those other doctors when she answered the phone one day. The caller asked if the child's father was a medical doctor since "Dr." was in front of his name in the phone book. "O, no," the girl said, "he's not the kind of doctor who can do anybody any good."

Degrees? I guess I love them or hate them depending on whether they are used as tools under the lordship of Christ or worshipped as idols under the lordship of Self. ■

Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, Harrisonburg, Va., enjoys a family "tribe" of 16, including seven grandchildren. As founder and manager of Concord Associates she produces family life messages for newspapers and radio and sometimes travels for speaking engagements. She manages some rental units "owned by the bank and me."

SCRIPTURES TO LIVE BY • 83

Sunday, Feb. 13 • Psalms 21-23
 Monday, Feb. 14 • Exodus 38-40
 Tuesday, Feb. 15 • Leviticus 1-3
 Wednesday, Feb. 16 • Leviticus 4-6
 Thursday, Feb. 17 • Leviticus 7-9
 Friday, Feb. 18 • Leviticus 10-12
 Saturday, Feb. 19 • Leviticus 13-15
 Sunday, Feb. 20 • Psalms 24-26
 Monday, Feb. 21 • Leviticus 16-18
 Tuesday, Feb. 22 • Leviticus 19-21
 Wednesday, Feb. 23 • Leviticus 22-24
 Thursday, Feb. 24 • Leviticus 25-27
 Friday, Feb. 25 • Numbers 1-3
 Saturday, Feb. 26 • Numbers 4-6

Sunday, Feb. 27 • Psalms 27-29
 Monday, Feb. 28 • Numbers 7-9
 Tuesday, Mar. 1 • Numbers 10-12
 Wednesday, Mar. 2 • Numbers 13-15
 Thursday, Mar. 3 • Numbers 16-18
 Friday, Mar. 4 • Numbers 19-21
 Saturday, Mar. 5 • Numbers 22-24
 Sunday, Mar. 6 • Psalms 30-32
 Monday, Mar. 7 • Numbers 25-27
 Tuesday, Mar. 8 • Numbers 28-30
 Wednesday, Mar. 9 • Numbers 31-33
 Thursday, Mar. 10 • Numbers 34-36
 Friday, Mar. 11 • Deuteronomy 1-3
 Saturday, Mar. 12 • Deuteronomy 4-6

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Barnabas, well-known leader in the early church, "talks" with Arlene Miller, Secretary of Home Ministries for Brethren in Christ Missions.

An interview with Barnabas -the "One Who Encourages"



Barnabas, your name, which means "one who encourages," was given to you by the apostles, wasn't it? Why did they prefer that to your name Joseph?

Well, I often seemed to find myself in situations where I was helping to build relationships between individuals and groups within the developing church.

How did God prepare you for this role?

I was born and raised in Cyprus. My family were Levites and assisted with the care of the synagogue and teaching in the services. For those of us who lived

outside of Palestine, the synagogue, rather than the temple, became the center of our religious and social life. Of course, there were no sacrifices in the synagogue as in the temple.

How did you view the Jerusalem Temple?

Of course Jerusalem was the center of Judaism and communication flowed back and forth between Cyprus and Jerusalem. We would make periodic journeys to Jerusalem for the feasts, especially the Passover. There we participated in the temple sacrifices as part of the feasts. But for many of us who

lived away from Jerusalem, the temple did not hold the same deep significance as it did for native Palestinian Jews.

Another element was the cultural differences between the native Palestinian Jews and those of us who were scattered throughout the Roman Empire. In addition to learning the language of the people around us, we took on some of the culture. Of course, we were still distinctly Jewish in relation to the Gentiles around us. But we were often very different from our Jewish brethren who had always lived in Palestine.

What languages do you speak?

I speak both Aramaic and Greek. During my earliest years on Cyprus I was most comfortable in Greek.

Did you live in Jerusalem for some time?

Yes, the family of my Aunt Mary, John Mark's mother, lived in Jerusalem for many years. I came to the city several years before the death and resurrection of our Lord.

Barnabas, how did your background prepare you to be "one who encourages" in the developing church?

Well, one of the earliest hurdles we faced after Pentecost involved a misunderstanding between two cultural groups, the native Palestinian believers and the Greek-speaking immigrants. Having come from outside Palestine, I could identify with the concerns of the immigrant group. At the same time, my position as a Levite and my having lived in Jerusalem for some time helped me to gain the respect of the church leaders, all of whom were native Palestinians.

Could you say more about what happened?

Of course. The days following Pentecost were glorious and turbulent. Our leaders in Jerusalem were the apostles, all native Palestinians. They were used mightily of God to teach the rapidly increasing numbers of believers.

We shared our goods and food, and fellowshiped together in our homes. I had a field in Cyprus which I sold and contributed the proceeds to the common fund for those in need. Others were doing the same. These funds were distributed by the apostles.

The problem arose because the Greek-speaking believers saw that their widows were being neglected in this distribution of funds.

How did you solve the problem? Perhaps the Greek-speaking widows were being overly sensitive.

You have asked two questions. I will answer the second one first. The problem was not that the widows were being overly sensitive, so much as that the apostles were being unwittingly insensitive. Let me explain. Because the apostles were native Palestinians, communication flowed to and from them within the larger native-born Palestinian community through language and cultural and family ties. There was no leadership, however, representing the community of Greek-speaking believers. The differences in language and culture made communication more difficult. In the case of the widows, they often did not receive word concerning the fund distribution until it was too late. Thus, they really were being neglected, not because of intent, but because of poor communication.

Well, it would seem to be a simple matter to select someone to take the word to them.

It was a bigger issue than merely transmitting information. These people were concerned that someone in a position of power would be looking after their interests. The Holy Spirit used this development to lead us to a major breakthrough in our understanding of leadership in the church.

How was the matter handled?

I, with several of my fellow Cypriots, went to the apostles with the concerns of the widows and the larger Greek-speaking community. I helped them to see that this was a serious matter which needed a creative solution.

Following that, the apostles called the entire group of believers together and asked us to choose seven men who were full of the Holy Spirit to care for the distribution of funds to those in need.

This is the third in a series of articles relating to ministries by the Brethren in Christ in North America. The first two articles appeared in the Oct. 10 and Nov. 25 issues.

This pleased everyone and seven men were selected. Six of them were immigrant believers and the seventh was a Gentile convert from Antioch. For the first time, major leadership responsibilities were entrusted to Jewish believers who were not native Palestinian Jews.

Did this harm the witness of the church among the larger Jerusalem community?

In the words of Brother Luke, "And so the word of God continued to spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem grew larger and larger, and a great number of priests accepted the faith" (Acts 6:7).

I thought the gospel would have broken down those cultural differences.

Well, very slowly we began to see that God accepted persons from every cultural group equally. I could tell you many stories of how long and painful those lessons were, but Brother Luke has written many of them in his letter to Theophilus.

At the same time we began to see also that our cultural differences were valuable in helping us to grasp a fuller meaning of the gospel. For example, those of us who did not view the Temple in the same way as the apostles did were better able to grasp the idea that Gentiles, who were not permitted in the Temple, would be accepted by God. We needed each other to stretch beyond our own sometimes narrow understanding.

Thus, it was not so much that cultural differences were obliterated, but rather that they were valued and respected. It was later in Antioch that we saw in another way the significance of preparing leaders for the church from every cultural group.

What about Antioch?

During the days when Saul was persecuting the believers, many fled to cities scattered throughout the Roman Empire. As you know from Luke's account, the believers preached the Good News of Jesus wherever they went, but to Jews only. However, then came Peter's experience with Cornelius; the apostles realized that the Good News was for the Gentiles as well. Some of my fellow Cypriots, along with men from Cyrene in North Africa, went deliberately to Gentiles in Antioch. The Lord's power was with them and a great number of Gentiles believed and turned to the Lord.

That really confirmed what the apostles had recognized earlier about the Gentiles, didn't it?

Yes, but it was also quite radical. The word spread quickly back to Jerusalem.

One or two God-fearers like Cornelius was one thing, but great numbers of Gentiles were another matter. At least God-fearers were people who had some knowledge of Judaism and the Scriptures. But these were untaught people. It was agreed that someone from Jerusalem would need to investigate this new development.

Did Peter go?

No, it was felt that because of my background as a Greek-speaking Jew from Cyprus I would be better able to relate to both my fellow Cypriot evangelists and the Gentile believers they had led to the Lord.

When I arrived at Antioch, I immediately sensed the hand of God in what had occurred. The Lord used me to bless my fellow Cypriots and the new Gentile believers. The Lord also empowered me through his Spirit and even more people came to the Lord.

I remember reading that you went to Tarsus to get Saul to help you. Why did you select him?

I remembered Saul from the days fourteen years earlier when I had supported him in his efforts to establish communication with the Jerusalem church. Of course they were fearful of him, even three years after his conversion, because they had suffered much at his hand. I saw then how deep his understanding of the gospel was and had heard since of his continuing ministry in Tarsus. Saul was a Roman citizen and spoke Greek, Aramaic and Latin fluently.

What was your ministry with Saul?

We taught for one year. We were particularly interested in working with potential leaders in the growing church at Antioch. We focused on three men: Simeon, Lucius and Manaen.

Manaen is the only Jewish name you had given. Was he Jewish?

Yes, he was raised in the court of Herod in Galilee. Simeon was called the Black and was from Africa. Lucius was a Greek from Cyrene. Because the group of believers at Antioch included all of these cultures, it was important that the leadership of the group reflected that same diversity.

I notice that you and Saul are listed as leaders along with these three by Luke. What is the significance of that?

We shared the power equally with these men. We knew that for them to carry the responsibility they were given in teaching and preaching, they needed to be given real authority. Thus, we shared the decision-making of the group

The following principles from the interview with Barnabas will be developed in the next article relating to home ministries in the Brethren in Christ Church:

1. A church which binds persons of diverse cultures in brotherhood reflects greater dimensions of God's image.

2. When people of differing cultural heritage live as neighbors, potential conflict always exists.

3. Persons gifted and prepared for cross-cultural communication facilitate brotherhood among diverse cultural groups.

4. The developing of church leaders from each cultural group must be intentional.

5. Leadership of the church at every level must reflect the cultural diversity of its membership.

Watch for this article in the May *Evangelical Visitor*.

with them mutually. Later, we together agreed that the Holy Spirit was sending Saul and me on to an itinerant mission.

I am surprised you moved them so quickly into these responsible positions. Today we usually require persons to move up through the system.

Well, for one thing, it is the Holy Spirit who gives the gifts of teaching and preaching which need to be developed. These men were recognized leaders who had gained the respect of their people. Furthermore, if we had required that they work through the same system as the Jerusalem church leaders, they would never have qualified.

You might also be helped if you knew that these three did have an opportunity to work without Saul and me while we took the relief collection to Jerusalem. It was following our return from that mission that the Holy Spirit spoke to the five of us as we were worshipping the Lord and fasting one day. We all agreed that he was telling Saul and me to leave on a preaching mission. What a blessing it was for Saul and me to have these men we had disciplined lay their hands on us and commission us for further service.

References

The Book of Acts.
A World of Difference: Following Christ Beyond Your Cultural Walls, by Thom Hopler. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1981).



Furlough feasting

by Pete and Mim Stern

About a year ago we asked if we could have a short study experience during this furlough. Now so quickly it is history.

We agree with the person who said the biggest problem in attending Fuller School of World Mission is digesting the abundance. Maybe you have had a similar feeling at the family Christmas feast—so many things to taste and all so good! We are still digesting and assimilating the “goodies” from the fall quarter at Fuller. We would like to share with you some of the infill and our reactions.

Culture and Language

Thinking it would help us to encourage young recruits on our mission field, we signed up for the “Culture and Language Acquisition” class. From the start we were impressed with the different approach but sensed we may be putting our vulnerability on the line.

The lesson on cultural bonding spelled out what had been part of our job for the past fifteen years: meeting the new missionaries at the airport, helping them through immigration and customs, coddling and protecting them for the first few days of jet lag and culture shock and then gently landing them at their post without too much jolt. For the first week or so the “stranger” was surrounded and reinforced by many homeland artifacts. Finally, the recruit got to “the people” and hoped there would be acceptance and ministry.

But this course taught that for a newcomer to become a believer, he or she should be met at the port of entry by a national and be entertained straightway by the host culture for the first month or so, to take advantage of the absorption which happens during early exposure when the learning “adrenalin level” is high.

Upon returning from class one night, a phone call from Roy Sider in London brought a message from the recent Zambian church Executive Board meeting. It was proposed that Zambians be the ones to orient new missionaries, beginning in 1983. What a coincidence that two similar inputs came in the same week.

Meanwhile, it was proposed that we move to the Copperbelt for a church-planting ministry—into a new area and language group. Although the original thrust was for the many Batonga people living in that area, the ministry must be to all people, regardless of tribe. Perhaps the course in language and culture was meant more for us than for those we would encourage.

Church planting in the Copperbelt will mean not only a change of place but of pace. As we wait for the Lord's specific direction, we are aware that God may be wanting to do a new thing. Paradoxically, part of the new thing may be not even returning to Zambia, due to Pete's heart problem. He is having further studies these next months. We are trying to “hang loose.”

Church Planting

A course in “Techniques of Planting New Churches” involved surveys and studies pointing up some interesting facts and ideas:

—A primary reason for people not going to church is boring sermons.

—Unchurched people want need-oriented sermons.

—Church growth happens best when a good pastor stays long enough for something to happen.

—Failure comes not so much in failing to reach a goal, but in failing to set a goal. People do not set goals for fear of failure. God wants us to set goals on the

basis of what he is, not what we are. “You haven't believed God until you have attempted something that cannot be done in the flesh” (Rick Warren).

—An enthusiast knew about a soon-to-be-developed new ethnic community and planted a church there, all ready to receive the newcomers in their vulnerability.

—Missionaries are expected to plant churches among ethnic groups overseas. Today America has the world at her doorstep with so many ethnic groups pouring in all around us. Are we accepting the challenge of the nations at our door?

Prayer

The class in “Foundations for Spiritual Life: Prayer” warmed and stimulated us as we read, studied, discussed and had small group sharing on the subject. During term, a classmate died of cancer of the liver, which made very practical the lesson on “What about when we pray and God doesn't answer the way we ask?”

Pertinent to us as missionaries was the thought that workers' effectiveness in the harvest field is in direct relation to the prayers for those workers by God's people. There are many instances of those burdened enough to pray becoming the “goers.” Are people willing to agonize in prayer, to fast, so that the lost will be saved?

We can be rich in theory and methods about doing God's work. But unless all we do is bathed in prayer, unless we know how to get hold of God and allow the Holy Spirit to be released through us and through those with whom we work, little lasting good will be realized. We were both grateful for this class as we sensed a personal deepening in our spiritual lives.

With this sampler we conclude by asking that you “hang in there” with us in prayer (as you have done before) as we wait for positive health signs, all the while becoming more malleable and conformable to his will and purpose. ■

Pete and Mim Stern have served as missionaries in Africa since 1952. While in North America, they are available for speaking appointments with groups and congregations. For more information, contact Esther Ebersole at the Brethren in Christ Missions office, P.O. Box 27, Mount Joy, PA 17552-0027; (717) 653-8067.

Acting Out the Message

Four and a half months on the road, traveling thousands of miles, giving up to ten performances a week in different churches, eating at a different table every day, and waking up in a different room every morning may seem like a strange way to live. But for the MCC Players, it represents only part of their rigorous and adventuresome schedule.

Through drama, reader's theatre, song, and pantomime, the group focuses primarily on the Mennonite Central Committee's 60-year history and on various aspects of the peace issue. While touring North America, the six young actors are conveying the news and views of MCC to Mennonite and Brethren in Christ churches wherever they perform. As one of the actors says, they are "planting seeds in the minds of the people, challenging them to think and to act."

Two of the Players, Jeff Books and Nick Frey, are members of the Brethren in Christ Church and graduates of Messiah College. Jeff is the son of Virgil and Nadine Books of Waynesboro, Pa., while Nick is the son of Charles and Anne Frey of Conestoga, Pa.

The idea for the troupe originated through Mark Beach of the MCC Information Services office in Akron, Pa. and came to life when Jeff Books became director in early 1982.

Although the idea of using drama to present the MCC story is relatively new in Mennonite and Brethren in Christ circles, and although the audiences have often been small, the response has been positive. The Players notice that modern audiences ask questions about the actors themselves, but despite this curiosity have given them a "gracious reception." One of the six, Kathleen Hull, was pleasantly surprised when people applauded, a taboo in her Baptist background. However, she feels that audience feedback is essential because theatre is two-way communication.

In order to give the audiences an "involved sense" of the nature of MCC, the troupe's presentations combine factual events with the personal experiences of workers. The Players are "message-oriented in an artistic way," one reason for their acceptance. Their flexibility in stage arrangement and compactness of props necessitate an artistically simple production. A down-to-earth approach

makes people feel comfortable, allowing the message to dominate.

Programs for churches start with an historical sketch of MCC. The dramas touch on themes of relief, development, justice, and on actual fictional situations dealing with draft registration and Christian lifestyle. A less requested option from their three hour repertoire is a medley of selections that are more entertaining than thought provoking.

For Sunday morning services the presentation is more conventional, composed of litanies, songs, children's stories, and a major dramatic devotional. Dialogue with the congregation is encouraged at the end since one of their purposes is to provide communication between constituency and MCC.

The actors report that sometimes the powerful message of the five to six short dramas called "A Cry for Peace" almost overwhelms the observer. According to Hull, the troupe hopes that the topics and dilemmas presented will result in reflection that will continue after the presentation. "It's not the initial response that is so important. We want to communicate that MCC is really there, working overseas in small communities, trying to help the best the volunteers can. The volunteers face a lot of larger questions about culture, relief, and development."

As in any voluntary service, the Play-



Nick Frey

Kathleen Hull and Gary Hasek on stage.

ers have to cope with difficulties. Transience, lack of solitude, frustration with the simplicity of the performances—are all dealt with as the members support each other through personal relations and Bible study. Bringing life to these dramas day after day requires discipline and sacrifice. But despite occasional doubts, one member's purpose often seems so clear that she can say with conviction, "Hey! I know why I'm here."

In January the Players visited churches from Florida to Virginia before making their long trip to the western United States and then back through the Midwest. Their last performance is scheduled for May 1, 1983 at the Manor Brethren in Christ Church in Conestoga, Pa. Since that is his home congregation, for Player Nick Frey that should prove to be a happy and long-awaited homecoming.

From MCC news releases by Anita Tiessen and Joy Hoffer.

MISSIONS SUNDAY —MARCH 20

**"Not by might, nor by power,
but by my spirit"**

March 20, 1983, has been designated "Missions Sunday" throughout the Brethren in Christ Church. Congregations are encouraged to plan a service for this day emphasizing the missions mandate of the church. A presentation on the Biblical basis for missions is suggested. If March 20 is not suitable, another Sunday during Lent is suggested as an alternative missions emphasis day.

Resource materials in the form of a poster, bulletin inserts and Bible reading guides are being mailed to congregations in February. For more information or materials for your Missions Sunday service, contact Louis Cober, Secretary for Church Relations, Brethren in Christ Missions, P.O. Box 27, Mount Joy, PA 17552-0027; (717) 653-8067.

The First Eight Months

by Dora Myers

Excerpts from personal journal
entries during her service
with Brethren in Christ
Missions in Japan.

August 26, 1980, Tuesday, 12:30 a.m.

My journey begins in the dark. At night, under the stars, above the waves, speeding through the air to Hawaii and on to Tokyo. . . .

Oh, I think of my friends so special, so dear to me. I think of my family. I have so much, so many things to be thankful for. What a blessed woman! Lord, you have walked me through each day. Lord of my heart, of my life, thank you for your care each moment, for directing my path, for gifts of friends and family and, best of all, freedom in you. I rest myself in you tonight.

August 27, 1980, Wednesday

I feel tired and disoriented, but, thankfully, not discouraged in the least. It's very, very quiet out tonight.

September 2, 1980

This is our first night in the new apartment at Fuchu. The day has been busy packing up and moving, cleaning this filthy flat of rooms, and shopping for those first groceries. Mary, Connie and I had a nice supper of grilled cheese sandwiches, grapes and McVities Digestives. Today has been a good day of working together.

September 21, 1980, Sunday

Friday finished my two-week sound pattern course in Japanese; very intense and lots of homework which I never felt I'd thoroughly prepared. Even though it was very demanding, I really enjoyed the learning and the sense of accomplishment of communicating in spite of the elementary level. Each day I can hear more, understand more. . . .

Each day I speed by train past miles and miles of narrow, crooked streets, each lined with apartments, filled with people, millions of people.

September 25, 1980, Thursday

Didn't sleep very well last night. After the first earthquake about midnight I slept so very lightly and woke often. All totalled there were four. Nothing to do but lie there and take it. I thought of the green woods and pastures of Pennsylvania, the sunshine, my cat. . . .

Yesterday I sat in on my first English class. The discussion was slow. I got awfully sleepy, struggled not to yawn.

October 1, 1980

Sometimes I feel as though I move about in a plastic bag, separated by a thin film of something from everyone. Once in a while, to my relief, this is penetrated. This morning, seated in the sun, waiting for my bus, the air cook, a short, bent man, sweeping up cigarette butts, came to me with a toothy smile and a "good morning."

October 13, 1980

Trusting the Lord is hard enough. I now struggle with trusting people with myself. So many times my self is hurt, is crushed by thoughtlessness. Naturally, I retreat. I build protective walls. Not many are consistently kind, dependably caring. I don't ask for these in excess. God, you wean me away from people onto yourself, into yourself again and again, over and over. "Bless the Lord who healeth thee, who redeemeth thy life, who crowneth thee with lovingkindness and tender mercies."

November 15, 1980, Saturday

There was a little beggar woman in the train station tonight. Father, there are many things about this life that I don't understand—the little woman, separation, etc.—sometimes I feel like being totally intemperate—to scream. Not now, but sometimes.

November 21, 1980, Friday

It's late. I hear the rain outside. This week has been busy with teaching and classes. . . .

The Siders are here. Roy is such a tease! I thought I'd cry. It wasn't sadness at all, but sort of a relief, an untying, a releasing, a peace at hearing English. I hadn't realized how much I've missed it.

December 1, 1980, Monday

I'm waiting for the bath to heat. It's dark outside; I'm alone. If I could just cry a little maybe, I'd feel so much better. There is so much to do. You've given me a work that I cannot possibly do alone. Father, your daughter is tired, she is sad, her heart feels heavy. Father, fill me with your grace. As we celebrate your light—the Light of the World—illuminate us.

December 7, 1980, Sunday

It's such a refreshment to my heart to sit among these people during the service. Sermon title was "My grace is sufficient—your strength is made perfect in my weakness."

January 4, 1981

Most intriguing this frozen winter afternoon were the last rays of sun angling over the mountains to shine on the underneath of each needle-laden branch of pine. I've caught that image, frozen it in my mind.

January 5, 1981, Monday

Got a letter from Mary Sue today. I laughed and cried—good, strong emotions, pure and wholesome response.

January 18, 1981, Sunday

Lord, this week is going to be so full. Be with me, help me to do my best in everything for your honor, for your glory. Give me wisdom to handle difficult situations, difficult questions. Help me to be satisfied with my best and go on to the future.

February 17, 1981, Tuesday

I met this day in a flurry of huge snowflakes as I stepped out for the paper. What a wonderful surprise! What a pleasure to feel those huge, wet flakes cling and melt on my neck.

February 21, 1981, Saturday

I'll never understand the love that allows me to approach, not neutral, not positive, but in great need and leave with everything. How can He love me this much? How can I love others that much?

March 7, 1981, Saturday

Oh, Dora. Another day past, more people met, more vocabulary taught.

March 10, 1981

Dear Lord, thank you for the day, for the flowers, plum blossoms, the smiles of friends, pictures sent by mail, the care I feel from those around me. Lord, I love you.

March 15, 1981, Sunday

Plum trees and some other shrubs are in full bloom, creating fragrances so vivid and pleasing that at times I can scarcely endure the smelling. Clear, starry night. Another week lies before me.

March 17, 1981, Tuesday

Lord, it's your way that I pray for, isn't it? It's your will that I want, don't I? Help me to see, to accept. I see so many hours of rebellion that get in my way. I want to live in the fullness of your will. As your daughter, work in me the grace and maturity and completeness of a holy woman, alive physically and emotionally and spiritually.

March 31, 1981, Tuesday

It's late. It's very late. Tonight I returned from a two-day trip with Connie to a lot of mail. Oh, sweet mail from special people, so dear to me. Reading these few words brings tears of remembrance, silent chokes of longing, sighs of relief, prayers of gratitude.

April 19, 1981, Sunday

Day by day I walk on, meeting what is to meet. Lord, be with me. I need you. Sometimes I feel as if I'm pouring out my life, not spilling. Spilling carries the connotation of accidental. I *will* this spending—of time, of this study, of this work. It is a willful pouring of energy. Living God, how much we owe you.



Dora Myers taught English as a second language in Japan in 1980-82. Recently married, she is living with her husband, Toru Kawate, in Japan.

Nicaraguan church asks for understanding from North American evangelicals

Ron Sider, who recently visited Nicaragua, reports that evangelical Christians there are "deeply disturbed by what they consider to be a highly distorted picture of their country in the United States." Sider, evangelical author and lecturer whose trip was partially funded by Mennonite Central Committee Peace Section, toured Nicaragua with seven other North American evangelical leaders. Their visit was at the invitation of the Evangelical Committee for Aid Development (CEPAD), which represents Protestants in Nicaragua.

CEPAD had earlier protested to

North American churches when reports surfaced that the United States had launched a massive campaign to destabilize and eventually remove Nicaragua's Sandinista government. *Newsweek* (November 8, 1982) reported that the CIA provided funding for armed attacks in Nicaragua by former members of Somoza's National Guard. In a highly polarized situation the evangelical church in Nicaragua, which historically has had strong ties with North America, has had to struggle to find its identity.

Sider reports that while "Nicaragua today is not a utopia," most Nicara-

guans claim that life is much better than life under Somoza. Government priorities under the Sandinistas have shifted from favoring a small wealthy minority to programs which "promote basic education, health care and an adequate food supply for the majority who are very poor," Sider says.

The church has been affected by society's new emphasis on aiding the poor. Thelma Pareira, who manages an evangelical radio station, says that evangelicals in Nicaragua are now concerned "not just with the soul but with integral growth." Rodolfo Fonseca, a pentecostal, confessed that formerly he was not concerned for hungry people and injustice, but now the evangelicals have discovered Luke 4:16 and want to transform both the soul and the environment.

Is there religious freedom in Nicaragua? Sider observes that virtually everyone the group spoke with reported complete freedom of religion. "Reverend Joaquin Gato, a pastor in the pentecostal Church of God, said he traveled all over the country and found full religious freedom everywhere. There is freedom to worship, to evangelize in public places and to distribute Christian literature freely. Even the U.S. ambassador flatly asserted that he had no fear that religious freedom would be threatened even in the long term."

The director of the Bible Societies in Nicaragua, Ignacio Hernandez, spoke of the rapid increase in Bible distribution, some of it due to the government's successful literacy program. He reported that about 400,000 copies of the New Testament had been given to people who had just learned to read, and appealed for help to fund an additional 400,000 that they want to distribute to other newly literate people.

In spite of reports that the government allows religious freedom and that

A large poster of General Sandino, the national hero, appears in front of the entrance of the cathedral on the central square in Managua. The church struggles in the new Nicaragua to find its identity.



Phillip Hofer

the church is growing, Sider reports that tensions between the church and state during 1982 were troubling.

A few evangelicals waged a highly-visible campaign in May and June, declaring that the devastating spring floods were "God's judgment on atheistic Nicaragua." A charismatic evangelist from the United States, Morris Cerullo, had pamphlets distributed which claimed that satanic activity in Nicaragua was stronger than ever. When Cerullo arrived in Nicaragua on the day of General Sandino's birthday celebration, the government refused to let him enter.

During late summer, tensions between the state and church escalated and a number of churches were taken over by unauthorized local popular organizations, Sider relates. Hostile slogans were painted on churches and the government newspaper, the *Barricada*, attacked all evangelicals as "sects."

CEPAD, which has good relations with the government, promptly protested the anti-church crackdown to the government. CEPAD also met with top government officials and demanded the return of church properties. Approximately 80 percent of evangelical groups, which claim to have 400,000 members in Nicaragua, participate in the work of CEPAD, which was established under the leadership of Dr. Gustavo Parajon immediately after the earthquake in 1972. MCC, which has four workers in Nicaragua, also works directly with CEPAD.

In spite of tensions between the church and state, Sider reports that "very few evangelical leaders seemed hostile to the government. At the same time I also sensed some uneasiness and fear on the part of a substantial number. Some worry about the presence of Cuban teachers, doctors, technicians and very probably military advisors."

It is clear that the evangelical church in Nicaragua has been profoundly impacted by the revolution. Sider says, "one of their strong feelings was a deep feeling of being neglected and ignored by their evangelical brothers and sisters in the United States. Church delegations from the World Council of Churches and the National Council of Churches, they said, had come much earlier to listen to them, but evangelicals had not. They do not in any way demand that U.S. evangelicals agree with them, but they very much want us to come and listen to their problems, concerns and viewpoints."

MCC News Service ■

February, 1983

Growing the Small Church A Guide For Church Leaders

By C. Wayne Zunkel

Reviewed by R. Donald Shafer

Every now and then you find a book that has a special ring of truth as you read it. You know it is real and that it will be helpful to others. Such was my experience as I read Wayne Zunkel's practical guidebook entitled, *Growing the Small Church*. It is a new book (1982), written out of the context in where most churches find themselves. As the writer reminds us, the average congregation in the United States has fewer than 200 members. Thus he writes to help pastors and local church leaders who really want to do something about growth. With the thrust of helping churches see the value of their smallness, the author goes on to deal with the reality of what happens to congregations that remain small.

Having met the author, I knew that his writing would be honest and helpful. Here is an experienced pastor who has served local churches of varying sizes and at points east and west in the United States. He writes with humility and with a caring concern for those who live life in the arena of the average congregation.

What is even more exciting about this book is that it is written by a man with roots in the Brethren church. That will be helpful to those of us who are Brethren in Christ. With church growth principles skillfully applied, the author deals with potential that can be based on faith worked through to productive action. From the bottom line of biblical natural growth, the reader is led through

the crucial principles and strategies of church growth. Pastors will find the fifth chapter on "Leadership, Followership, and Growth" of special significance. And the workbook format with reproducible overhead slides makes it a resource far beyond the average book on the market.

The reader will find that issues are faced squarely and a variety of options for growth are shared in concept and practice. It is set forth in eleven chapters that can be shared as lessons with others. Pastors and planning groups will find this book a refreshing drink from the well of church growth water.

Bishop Don Shafer is the director of evangelism and church growth for the Brethren in Christ Church.

**CHRIST IS NOT
PLEASED WITH...**



- Fishing without catching.
- Empty banquet tables.
- Sowing without reaping.
- A fig tree that bears no fruit.
- Lost sheep that are not brought into the fold.
- A lost coin that is sought but not found.
- Harvests that are not reaped.
- Proclamation without response.
- Sons and daughters outside the Father's house.

Published by David C. Cook for \$14.95, *Growing the Small Church* may be ordered from Christian Light Bookstore, P. O. Box 189, Nappanee, IN 46550.

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Cumberland Valley

Ingredients for Growth

This is the second in a series of articles featuring the 1982 Sunday Schools of the Year. The Cumberland Valley Brethren in Christ Church (formerly Williams Grove) qualified for the Sunday School of the Year award in both percentage and numerical increases in attendance. During 1981, they achieved a gain in average attendance of 29, which amounted to a 120% increase.

by **Ralph Roach**

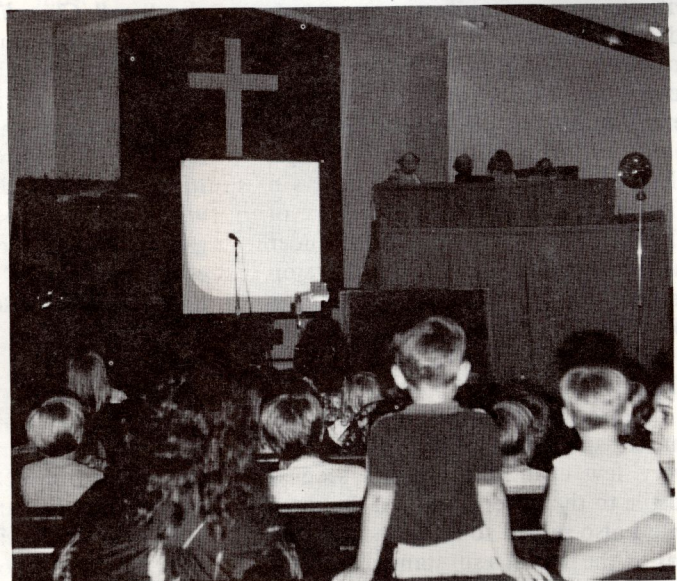
Running and maintaining an effective Sunday school can be as frustrating as keeping track of leftovers in your refrigerator or freezer. I can state this from my experience of being responsible for the Cumberland Valley Brethren in Christ Sunday School and also working as the Inventory Control Supervisor in the Food Service Department at Messiah College. However, the ingredients for a successful Sunday school are not completely elusive. At the Cumberland Valley Church we have both accidentally and purposefully discovered several of these important ingredients. Just as every good cook knows that there are indispensable additives to a good recipe, so there are essential elements to every successful Sunday school. Here are some ingredients that we have discovered and used.

Learner centered

First, a successful Sunday school program must be learner-centered. From the time our pastor Ray Bert and our congregational leaders anticipated moving into our newly-built church, we decided to extend love, acceptance, and forgiveness to all who would come through our church doors. Our primary concern has been to function as a transforming community by loving, accepting, and forgiving in Jesus' name many guilt-ridden, burdened and hurting people. Our emphasis is on ministering to individuals, not on building extensive programs or on teaching dogmatic doctrines. By placing individuals above any sincere desire to simply indoctrinate people with "correct" teaching, we have created an atmosphere where Bible learning can occur in a non-threatening and affirming environment.

When individuals sense that they are sincerely loved and cared for, then they are more likely to wrestle with and integrate into their lives the transforming truths and principles from God's Word. The love of God and the life of Christ, incarnate in the lives of fellow Christians, Sunday school teachers and pastors, is able to reach out and transform the lives of people.

We have also tried to design our Sunday school program so that it is effective in meeting the needs of our learners. Someone once said that "success is finding a need and filling



Enjoying a puppet show.

it." Many of our teachers have built sincere and warm friendships with the learners under their care. Personal visitation by Paul Lebo in the adult class contributed significantly to the doubling of that class in one year. Many of our teachers combine a good meal with an invitation to "get acquainted," which usually produces a positive experience and helps to break the ice in establishing new friendships. A good Sunday school must be learner-centered!

Flexible in methods

I believe that another significant factor in the growth of our program and learner interest is our ability to be flexible in our teaching methods. In our adult classes we have not restricted ourselves to the "lecture only" approach to presenting and learning truths from the Word of God. We combine group discussion, small group inductive Bible study, visual aids such as overhead projectors, posters, and chalkboards

Ralph Roach is the Director of Christian Education for the Cumberland Valley, Pa. congregation.

Evangelical Visitor

Sunday School:

with a teacher lecture. We try to avoid redundancy and attempt to be creative in our communication of the Word of God. We owe this to our learners who take the time out of their busy lives to share with us in a Bible-learning experience. A good Sunday school program is one that is flexible in its teaching approach and methodology.

We are fortunate to have a dedicated and enthusiastic team of Sunday school teachers. Did you catch the two key words? A successful Sunday school program cannot exist without people who are dedicated and enthusiastic! A negative attitude about the church, its leaders, other Christians, etc. on the part of a teacher can kill a class and threaten the rest of the program. We feel that if teachers cannot serve enthusiastically and with hearts filled with love, acceptance, and patience, then regardless of how knowledgeable and important they are, we do not allow them to teach until they have a change of heart. A good Sunday school program must have a staff of dedicated and enthusiastic people.



Qualifications, Job Description, and Covenant for Teachers at Cumberland Valley

Qualifications:

Sunday school teachers must:

1. be born-again believers.
2. show a willingness to commit themselves to ministry, fellowship, and body life at the Cumberland Valley Church.
3. have a desire to help others to grow in Christ and evidence a call to the teaching ministry.
4. be mature, flexible, and able to get along with others.

Job Description:

Teachers are expected to:

1. teach class regularly (allowing approximately four weeks of excused absences as a guideline).
2. arrive at least 15 minutes before Sunday school begins.
3. use the materials approved and provided by the church.
4. be available to meet with the rest of the staff for regularly scheduled planning and training meetings and conferences.

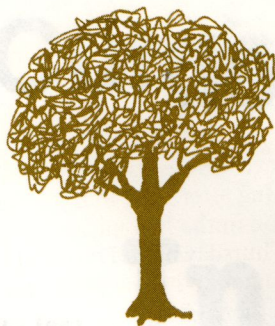
5. be committed to visit the students at least twice a year and to follow up absentees (writing notes is also a good way to make and keep personal contacts).
6. read Lawrence Richards' book, *A Theology of Christian Education*, and attend one conference a year which will enhance teaching/ministry skills.
7. be willing to commit themselves to serious study of God's Word.
8. be flexible in their approach to teaching, and be free in the Spirit.

Covenant:

I pledge to live according to the standards and expectations of Christian conduct as given in the New Testament, and commit myself to the goals and teacher job description as presented by our church, and dedicate my teaching ministry for the equipping and maturing of my fellow saints (learners).

Signed, 9/13/82 _____

(one year term, 1982-83)



Teach for change

As a teaching staff our primary goal in ministry is to teach for change. We don't want change just for the sake of change, but we want people to become more and more like Christ. If we cannot measure over a period of time steady and progressive growth in our learners, then we cannot be satisfied with our teaching ministry, even though we might be successful in communicating Bible content.

Change in our learners must occur in three areas if our teaching is to be effective. First, there must be a change in information. This is the transmission of facts, truths about and from the Word of God. Second, there must be a response to the new information by the learners that reflects a change of attitude. Third, there should be a progressive and consistent change in the learners' actions that reflects Christ-likeness. A successful Sunday school program teaches for change in information, attitude and actions.

I believe that the success of any Sunday school program is also significantly related to its commitment to present Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and to uphold the Word of God as the final authority on matters of doctrine, faith and lifestyle. At Cumberland Valley Church, we have had two exciting and busy years. We hope our success will continue as we

grow. We are indeed grateful to our sister churches who have given us the important ingredients and support to make a successful Sunday school as realized dream. ■



Pastor Ray Bert greets some of his parishioners.

Cumberland Valley Sunday School Goals for 1982-1983

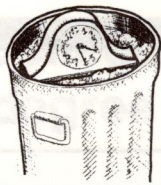
1. Growth

a. *Spiritual*: As we are equipped through the Word of God, various gifts, and body ministry, we should be seeing the life of Christ in each other, as well as clear evidence of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-26).

b. *Numerical*: As we meet people's needs and touch their lives where they are hurting, then healing and intimacy will occur as we minister and fellowship. Also, we will draw others into this "caring community."

2. *Fellowship*: We are committed to developing meaningful and caring-nurturing relationships, especially with those who are weaker, in addition to teaching facts about the Bible or telling others of God's love and judgment.

3. *Unity*: As a result of our study in God's Word, meeting real needs and developing meaningful relationships, we will grow in the unity of the Spirit which will help us individually and collectively to know God's will.
4. We will bring the Christian education staff and teachers together regularly for lesson planning and staff meetings.
5. We will join together before each service (9:00 a.m. sharp) for prayer and a brief devotion.
6. We will plan and implement an effective Christian Education Seminar on October 15-16 (1982) with the theme, "Helping Teachers to Equip." (This goal was achieved already, with Dr. George Kimber, Dr. John Yeatts, Rev. Charles Pugh, and Ralph Roach participating and leading the workshops.)



Waste of time

from page 32

I was ready to leave—had been for quite some time, in fact—but Jody pulled a booklet out of the witnessing packet we always carried with us. “This contains pretty much the same information we’ve discussed tonight,” she explained. “I hope you’ll continue to attend services at our church.”

“Yes, I will,” Betty promised, walking toward the door.

“And why don’t you come back to choir?” I suggested. “We have a new director now, and he’s just excellent.”

“Maybe,” Betty said. “It’s not a very friendly group, though.”

I forced a smile. I had gone out of my way to be friendly to her! “Give us another chance.”

“Maybe,” she repeated. “Good night.”

As far as I was concerned, the evening was totally wasted. By then it was too late to make another call, and Betty Harris was just plain unreceptive to the gospel.

“That’s a woman in real need,” Jody told me as we drove back to the church. “We’ll have to remember her in prayer, Kitty.”

“Yes, we will,” I agreed, not meaning it. Oh, I’d pray for her, I decided, but people like Betty Harris seemed to enjoy their misery. I had known others like her in the past. Attempting to help them was usually a waste of time, and frustrating besides.

At the church we had a report session, same as always, with some of the other teams sharing first-time decisions for Christ. That was typical each Monday night, but somehow Jody and I hadn’t been as successful during our weeks together.

It’s just not worth it,” I told my husband on the way home. “I’m having a terrible time learning the witnessing presentation and feel awkward giving it. I really don’t think I’m going back.”

Kitty, you committed yourself for sixteen weeks,” Dave reminded me, “and we still have a few to go. I think you should stick it out.”

And so I did—reluctantly. I still was-

n’t convinced that I belonged in the program, though. There were other things I could have been doing on Monday nights.

Not everyone is cut out for this type of witnessing after all, I announced to my reflection in the hall mirror.

On Thursday night Dave and I had an early dinner and went to choir practice. At least there I felt sure of myself and on solid ground. Of course I had been a choir member for years and years and loved to sing.

I was talking to someone—I don’t remember who—and suddenly I stopped and stared at a woman sitting alone on the other side of the room. It was Betty Harris!

After the initial shock of seeing her there, I hurried over to say hello. “I’m so glad you came back!” I said.

“Thank you,” she replied, her voice and facial expression showing no enthusiasm at all.

I refused to let her strange personality throw me, as it had in the past, immediately introducing her to our new director and some of my friends. Fortunately they seemed to overlook Betty’s lack of warmth—or whatever it was—and showered her with attention.

I told Jody about Betty’s return to choir and she was delighted, of course. “I’m sure it’s because we visited her and you invited her to come,” she said. “It’s an answer to prayer, isn’t it?”

“Yes, I guess it is,” I agreed, still not fully convinced that it was. Betty Harris was back in choir, yes, but so what?

Much to my surprise, she kept coming and gradually began to warm up just a little. Eventually there was even something which could pass for a smile on her lips when she saw me. Well, that’s an improvement, I had to admit.

Last Sunday she grabbed me in the robe room and gave me a hug. “Kitty, I was hoping I’d see you this morning!” she hissed excitedly.

“Betty, what is it?” I wanted to know, staring at her. The usual narrow, untrusting eyes were wide open and beautiful. Her whole face was radiant, in fact.

“I did it!” she whispered.

“Did it?” I repeated, frowning. “What do you mean?”

“I asked Jesus to be my Savior last night!” she explained, smiling. “I’ve been fighting it for so long—possibly because of a terrible experience I had at another church—but I was reading that little book you and the other lady gave me

and suddenly everything made sense. I finally realized that I couldn’t do it on my own, that I needed Him to save me! Kitty, I’m so happy!”

She was happy? What about me? Me, who thought that the evening we had spent in Betty Harris’ apartment had been wasted? Me, who had actually considered quitting the witnessing program because God didn’t seem to be using me!

I couldn’t wait to tell Jody of course. For some reason she didn’t seem at all surprised. “I expect miracles,” she told me. “But I want you to do something, Kitty.”

“Keep in touch with Betty?” I surmised.

“Yes, of course—and we’ll have to get her into a Bible study group, too, so she can grow spiritually, but I want you to tell the other visitation teams about Betty and what the Lord has done in her life.”

I would have preferred singing ten solos to giving one report in front of the witnessing class, but I was willing to share my experience, not only because it was such a beautiful story, but because I knew there were others in the program who had considered quitting, just as I had.

“You may be thinking it’s a waste of time,” I said, “but let me assure you that Satan wants you to think just that, and he’ll throw as many roadblocks in your path as possible to keep you from coming out each Monday night. I came awfully close to falling for his lies, but I’m glad I didn’t.”

There was spontaneous applause from my friends in the class, and I blushed in spite of myself.

“I do want to say one more thing,” I added when the clapping stopped. “Betty’s husband is not a Christian, but apparently he has seen a real change in her life already because he’s coming to our choir banquet in a couple of weeks. I’d like to ask special prayer for him.”

I felt a lot different about witnessing and our witnessing program than I did not so long ago. Yes, it’s very exciting if you have a first-time decision while you’re in the home, but God doesn’t always work that way.

Sometimes we plant spiritual seeds, other times we water, and occasionally we’re given the honor of harvesting a soul for His Kingdom. But the important thing is that we go out and share our faith with those who don’t know Jesus Christ.

That is never a waste of time. Betty Harris is living proof. ■

church news

Allegheny Conference

Four choirs from the **Carlisle** congregation, involving over 100 people, presented a concert, "Sounds of Christmas" on Sunday, Dec. 19. The choirs were accompanied by instrumental groups from the church. • The **Dillsburg** congregation participated in a local Crusade for Christ on Dec. 5-12. Churches in the Dillsburg area organized the crusade.

Ten persons were recognized by the **Mt. Rock** congregation for perfect Sunday school attendance for 1982. **Paul Wenger**, who has been attending the Mt. Rock Sunday School since 1905, received the attendance award. • Nineteen persons were received into membership by the **New Guilford** congregation on Sunday, Dec. 12.

On Sunday, Nov. 14, the **Pleasant View** congregation held dedication for a ten-foot addition, carpet, pews, air conditioning, heating system, and a steeple. The steeple was erected in honor of the congregation's first pastoral couple, **Rev. and Mrs. Samuel Lady**. In addition to Rev. Lady, the current pastor, **Harold Bowers**; **Bishops Charlie Byers** and **Alvin Book**; **Albert Engle**; and **Kenneth Sechrist** also took part in the services.

The first and second grades of the **Waynesboro Sunday School** held a contest to earn money for three missionary families. A total of \$62.11 was given to purchase Christmas gifts for the **Gilmores** in Venezuela; the **Spanglers** in California; and the **Witters** in New Mexico.

Atlantic Conference

The College-Careers Class of the **Cross Roads Church** sponsored a Christmas dinner for the congregation on Sunday, Dec. 12. • A New Year's Eve Service was hosted by the **Elizabethtown** congregation. Congregations invited to participate in the joint service were: Conoy, Crossroads, Maytown, Mount Pleasant, and Shenks. The film "John Hus" was shown.

The **Holden Park** congregation announces that three persons were received into membership on Sunday, Dec. 26. • An installation service was held by the **Lancaster** congregation for their new associate pastoral couple, **Scott and Judy Miles**.

An "In-Gathering" victory dinner was held by the **Souderton** congregation on Sunday, Nov. 21, following the morning worship service. Over twelve thousand dollars was received.

Canadian Conference

Rev. Charles Byers was the guest speaker for spiritual growth meetings held by the **Rosebank** congregation on Nov. 17-21.

Nine persons were received into fellowship by the **Sherkston Church** on Sunday, Dec. 12. The Ladies Auxiliary of the congregation provided Christmas gifts for children from **Timber Bay Children's Home**. • The **Westheights** congregation held an installation service recently for **Dave Ward** as student assistant pastor.

Central Conference

The **Carland Zion** congregation reports their teens sponsored a family night recently. The film "Humpty" was viewed after a hayride.

A Sunday school contest held by the **Dayton** congregation from Oct. 4-Nov. 14, resulted in 91 visitors. Sixteen of them are now regular attenders.

An international Christmas program was held by the Music Department of the **Fairview** congregation. • Church board members of the **Pleasant Hill Church** led members of the congregation in an evaluation meeting. Small groups were formed for discussion time. Organized activities were held for the children.

The film, "God's Prison Gang," was viewed by the **Western Hills** congregation on Sunday evening, Dec. 5.

Midwest Conference

The choir of the **Bethany** congregation presented the cantata, "King of Love," on Sunday evening, Dec. 12. • Special guest of the **Rosebank** congregation on Wednesday, Dec. 29, was **Roy Sider**.

The **Zion Church** made MCC grocery bags available to the congregation as a church/family project. The bags are to be filled with nutritional food for the hungry.

Pacific Conference

A holiday pot-luck dinner was enjoyed by members of the **Diamond Bar** congregation on Saturday, Dec. 11. The dinner was hosted by Lee and Diane Breitenbach.

Guest speaker for the **Labish** congregation on Sunday, Jan. 2, was **Rev. Art Cooper**. • **Bishop Don Shafer** ministered to the **Upland** congregation on Sunday morning, Dec. 26. A Christmas communion service was held in the evening.

For The Record

Births

Brubaker: Marcus Anthony, Nov. 16; Verle and Maralee (Hade) Brubaker, Carland Zion congregation, Mi.

Burkholder: Curtis Mark, Nov. 23; Mark and Joyce Burkholder, Big Valley congregation, Pa.

Fretz: Jacob William, Dec. 9; Terry and Wendy Fretz, Sherkston congregation, Ont.

Gerlach: Gretchen Elaine, Dec. 7; Bruce and Margie Gerlach, Manor congregation, Pa.

Glenney: Sarah Elesha Naomi, Nov. 22; Bob and Becky Glenney, Wainfleet congregation, Ont.

Gose: Jonathan Michael, Oct. 31; Mike and Evelyn (Sisco) Gose, Bothell, Wa., formerly of the Carland Zion congregation, Ont.

Groff: Jonas Isaac, Dec. 21; Joseph and Ginger Groff, Elizabethtown congregation, Pa.

Grove: Christopher Charles, Sept. 1; Jay and Peggy (Charles) Grove, Mt. Rock congregation, Pa.

Henderson: Chad Tyler, Dec. 4; Vern and Mary Henderson, Wainfleet congregation, Ont.

Homsher: Kari Ann, Dec. 1; Don and Kelly Homsher, Refton congregation, Pa.

Kilts: Justin Wayne, Dec. 3; Wayne and Cindy Kilts, Wainfleet congregation, Ont.

Leister: Brent Thomas, Nov. 29; Clifford and Linda Leister, Cedar Grove congregation, Pa.

Miller: Christopher Michael, Nov. 19; Jay and Helen Miller, Cross Roads congregation, Pa.

Musser: Aaron Daniel, Dec. 9; Merle and Kathy Musser, Upland congregation, Ca.

Szusz: Ryan David, Dec. 9; David and Frieda Szusz, Rosebank congregation, Ont.

Waller: Matthew Eric, Nov. 29; John and Peggy (Eshleman) Waller, Lancaster congregation, Pa.

Weddings

Curtis-Switzer: Edna M. Switzer and Wayne O. Curtis, both of Upland, Ca., Oct. 14, in the Upland Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Robert Hempy officiating.

Harner-Mumma: Heather, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Adin Mumma, Mt. Joy, Pa., and Jeffrey, son of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Harner, Greensburg, Pa., July 25, in the Salem United Church of Christ, Campbelltown, with Rev. Barry Smock officiating.

Knight-Sherk: Mae Sherk and Muriel Knight, Dec. 9, in the bride's home in Ontario with Rev. E. C. Flewelling officiating.

Leckie-Steele: Leslie Steele and Wayne Leckie, Oct. 2, in the Emmanuel United Church, Ont., with Rev. Daniel Boone officiating.

Murray-Madeira: Julie, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gene Madeira, Lancaster, Pa., and Paul B., son of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Murray, Lockport, NY, Nov. 27, in the Lancaster, Pa., Brethren in Christ Church with Revs. Merle Brubaker and David Madeira officiating.

Shearer-Harnish: Tami, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Abram Harnish, and Richard, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clarence Shearer Jr., Oct. 23, in the Pequea, Pa., Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. Gerald Wingert officiating.

Obituaries

Casler: Frank E. Casler, born Dec. 3, 1895 near Brookfield, Mo., died Nov. 28, 1982 in the Veterans Hospital, Des Moines, Ia. In May 1920, he married Sadie Lutz who survives. Also surviving are a daughter, Pauline; two grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a son, Leroy. He was a member of the Brethren in Christ Church. Rev. Millard Halde-man conducted the funeral service in the Dallas Center Brethren in Christ Church.

Swartz: Earl H. Swartz, McAlisterville, Pa., born March 27, 1907, died Oct. 20, 1982. He was the son of Cyrus and Ella Spade Swartz. He was

continued on next page

Evangelical Visitor

Messiah College to launch overseas degree program in Kenya

Messiah College, located in Grantham, Pa., is in the process of launching "Messiah College—Africa," a baccalaureate program based in Africa for the granting of Messiah bachelor of arts degrees.

The program will be carried out in cooperation with Daystar Communications, an educational and research institution located in Nairobi, Kenya. Fall of 1983 is the target date for beginning the program.

A Christian school, Daystar presently offers a post-secondary diploma and an accredited master's degree in cooperation with Wheaton Graduate School. Interestingly, it does not have a baccalaureate degree program. Messiah College is stepping in to fill that need, said Dr. D. Ray Hostetter, president of Messiah.

President Hostetter outlined several of the reasons for selecting Daystar Communications, a choice made after visiting a number of institutions in other countries. "Nairobi is an excellent location because the city is an Afro-Asian crossroads in transportation, culture, and commerce. Daystar, as an institution, has a highly competent indigenous leadership at both the board and administrative levels. Since its present educational program attracts students from more than a score of emerging countries, its promise for future impact can hardly be overstated. And Daystar's potential for development and Messiah's strengths seem to be highly complementary."

The college will assist and monitor the new program at Daystar, granting Messiah degrees under the umbrella of its own accreditation. It will, in cooperation with Daystar, set the standards for admission, curriculum, faculty recruitment and graduation. Plans are for the

free exchange of students and faculty between the campuses.

Dr. Hostetter noted the benefits of the new development. "Beyond any doubt, Messiah College—Africa will help fulfill the important objective of expanding the international education dimension of our college, causing both students and faculty to think more globally. But two other benefits will accrue—it will help meet international educational needs, particularly in underdeveloped countries, and it will assist the Christian church in ministering to a changing world."

Niagara Christian College News

A Niagara Christian College alumnus, Dr. John Climenhaga, has been honoured by having the University of Victoria Observatory renamed the Climenhaga Observatory. The occasion of the surprise announcement by University of Victoria President, Dr. Howard Petch, was a dinner held in honour of Dr. Climenhaga's retirement from the University of Victoria, where he has taught for 33 years.

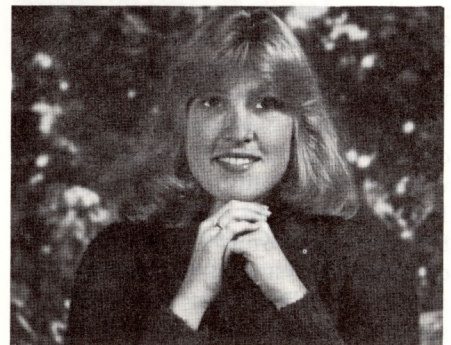
The son of Rueben and Elizabeth Climenhaga, Dr. Climenhaga has his roots in Delisle, Saskatchewan, where his father was the pastor of the Delisle Brethren in Christ Church. Graduating from NCC in 1940, he received his Ph.D. in Astronomy from the University of Michigan in 1960. He started teaching at Victoria College in 1949 when he and another colleague taught all the physics courses. From 1958 to 1969 he was head of the Physics Department during which time the Elliott Building with rooftop Observatory was built, and physics plus astronomy programs grew to involve 22 professors. The Board of Governors approved the renaming of the landmark dome in recognition of the key role played by astrophysicist Climenhaga in establishing astronomy as an area of teaching and research at the University of Victoria.



Daniel Houck Ordained

On Sunday afternoon, December 12, Rev. J. Daniel Houck was ordained to the Christian ministry. The service was held in the Shenks Brethren in Christ Church where Rev. Houck has pastored since August. Bishop John A. Byers was in charge of the service. The message was delivered by Dr. George Vanderlip, professor at Eastern Baptist Seminary and Dr. Owen Alderfer gave the charge. Also participating were Fred Geib, Jay R. Booser, Omer King, Dick F. Christma and John A. Brubaker.

Dan and his wife Sharon are the parents of two sons. He graduated cum laude from United Wesleyan College in 1978 and from Eastern Baptist Seminary in 1982.



New Field Representative

Gail Purcell, Springfield, Pa., has joined the staff of the Publication Board as a field representative for its various divisions—Christian Light Bookstores, Evangel Press, and the editorial department (including the *Visitor*).

A Messiah College graduate with a Christian education major, Gail will be available to share in a variety of workshops. In addition, she will be contacting congregational leaders to discover how the ministries of the Publication Board can better serve the church, as well as introducing materials produced by the board.

Gail's office is at the Christian Light Bookstore in Elizabethtown, Pa., phone (717) 367-1360.

Church News . . .

married to Anna Coldren Swartz who survives. Also surviving are three sons: Earl, Paul and Donald; two daughters: Mae Crum and Jean Booker; a brother; three sisters; a half-sister; 18 grandchildren; and seven great-grandchildren. He was preceded in death by a daughter, Connie. He was a member of the Cedar Grove Brethren in Christ Church. Rev. M. Eugene Heidler and Rev. Wilbur Benner conducted the funeral service. Interment was in the Hillside Cemetery, McAlisterville, Pa.

It is not a question of how much the church needs, but how much the members need to give in order to fulfill their call to ministry . . .

COOPERATIVE

History

A little over two hundred years ago a small group of Christians joined together to baptize each other and begin a movement known as the River Brethren. Now known as the Brethren in Christ, this religious movement practiced in that early baptismal service a cooperation which continues to be a mark of the group of this day.

This effort to cooperate in giving expression to the Christian faith relied much on family models for direction. Known as Brethren, they were a part of the family of God. The small numbers and kinship ties between families made it easy to understand the concepts of interdependence and cooperation. Some of the early outreach ministries accentuated the interdependence between those who went and those who stayed.

This closely knit structure began to change as the church caught a new vision of certain outreach possibilities. Nearly a hundred years ago, church buildings became one way in which local congregations started to expand their ministries. About this time, Sunday schools were established, as was a denominational paper which linked the increasingly scattered group. From the founding community in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the group spread north to Canada, west to California, and many points in between. The opportunity and challenge to present the Gospel overseas was accepted and schools were started to train leadership.

David McBeth is the Director of Stewardship and Finance, U.S.A. He and his wife Lois live in Grantham, Pa.

This reaching out and starting new ministries required vision and commitment. It also necessitated support and consensus, requiring much cooperation. By the middle years of this century, greater sophistication was needed to operate a growing church. In addition to continuing to rely on volunteer leadership for churches and other ministries, more professionally trained people were installed into key leadership roles. Programs, including those for financial support, have been refined to serve the needs of a generation more oriented to special and technical concerns.

With all of this specialization, however, the practice of cooperation has not been lost. Budgets continue to be reviewed and approved by congregations, regional conferences and the General Conference. The various ministries support different stages of the life cycle. That is, a camper at Kenbrook Bible Camp or Mile High Pines Camp may soon be a student at Niagara Christian College or Messiah College and later a seminary student scholarship recipient at Asbury, a pastor in Oklahoma or a missionary in Japan. Pension funds or care at Messiah Village may later be available for retirement years.

For a number of years the Canadian Conference has been working with a model of cooperative financial support known as Cooperative Ministries. Through this joint effort, ministries have been helped more than ever and the Conference has grown. In the United States, projects such as Roxbury Holiness Camp have regularly received cooperative support from the people of both Allegheny and Atlantic Conferences.

Scriptural foundations

These actions of the past have had their origins in admonitions and examples found in the Bible. They begin with a view that one's faith should affect all of life, including resources and relationships. The *Manual of Doctrine and Government* states that "stewardship becomes the Christian interpretation of life itself and is concerned with the Christian's use of all the resources committed to him, of possessions and personality." Tithes and offerings are seen as the method for gathering support in the congregation. This should be done on a weekly basis (I Corinthians 16:2). When done cheerfully as unto the Lord, it does not become legalistic or burdensome.

Jesus talks about Christians as those who give or lose themselves in order to find themselves and have a meaningful life (Matthew 10:39). The same principle speaks to Christians who are cooperatively working together in the context of a local church. Their fellowship will be stronger when they give to needs locally and beyond themselves. The church is a giver of resources, be it money, people or talent, and not a conservator. This will build strength and a vision of God's will for his people.

Several key passages of Scripture deal with the gifts of the people of the church and liken them to the human body. Just as one part of the body does not have all the characteristics needed for life, so one individual or one church does not have all the abilities to fulfill Christian ministry. Interdependence within the congregation or denomination is needed in order to complete the task. Those strong in one area need the freedom and support to carry out their particular function while others serve in other capacities. Competition is then minimized and supportiveness is encouraged.

Across the church, plans are being made to implement Cooperative Ministries and Mission, the new funding method approved in first reading at Conference last year. This article reviews what led up to Cooperative Ministries and Mission; a sequel next issue will describe how the funding plan is expected to work.

MINISTRIES & MISSION

by David P. McBeth

When the congregation develops a strong sense of community it can take on the many characteristics of an individual person. The church can be ambitious in growth and development, for the resources received will be that much more numerous for distribution to those who need it most. Just as individuals can commit in faith and give cheerfully, so groups of individuals (churches) can also carry out the admonition of I Corinthians 16:2 to give systematically to those needs beyond their local congregations.

A challenge to growth

For some years, the leadership of the Brethren in Christ Church has been troubled about a relatively modest rate of growth. A church group which has been in existence for more than two hundred years ought to have more adherents than can be presently counted. This is especially true if it is sincerely believed that the way of life we practice is thought to be the ideal scriptural interpretation.

A major expression of this concern came from a special Consultation on Church Growth for church leadership which was held prior to the 1976 General Conference. At that time, it was affirmed that "we believe it is God's design that churches should experience growth, both in terms of spiritual depth and in numerical increase." Also, at that time, a number of suggestions were offered which would encourage the church to move toward a more rapid growth in the years ahead.

One of the very specific goals to come from the consultation was the one to "Double in a Decade." While not quite that rapid, the growth already experienced has highlighted areas needing attention if continued growth is to take place. In fact, maybe the reason our expectations have not been met is that there was not adequate planning and preparation. For God to entrust our church with this great an influx of new converts requires that we be able to incorporate and nurture them. The old ways did not include methods to cope with such growth. Perhaps we need better and more sophisticated ways of operation, not the least of which is better planning and coordination of the financial resources entrusted to us.

A second Church Growth Consultation held the summer of 1982 affirmed the call for a joint (or cooperative) effort which unites all of our congregations and agencies. Cooperative Ministries and Mission is one of those unifying movements which can help the Brethren in Christ move to a new level of outreach ministry.

Some specific problems

In looking at the church structures needed for the new growth and outreach of the future, the leadership of the Brethren in Christ Church has also been working on the financial support problems which have increasingly been identified. In recent years, some brotherhood budgets have been adequately funded, while others have been woefully underfunded. At the same time, there has been a severe cash flow problem, since some individuals and churches have delayed support until near the end of the fiscal year, attempting to use the cash balance as a means to earn extra interest income. In the meantime, thousands of dollars are borrowed at short term, high interest rates in order to fund the operation of the several ministries.

This shortfall spawns several other problems. Competition for the charitable dollar increases between the various brotherhood ministries as each works to maintain cash flow. This competition is in addition to that generated by ministries of other religious groups. With the increase in appeals, some are beginning to turn a deaf ear to all, and church ministries are the losers. At the same time, other donors may make a giving decision based upon the emotional impact of the appeal and overlook a more significant responsibility which should have been cared for by generous support. This has led some ministry groups to use an assessment approach which removes the joy from giving.

Since we are not the small, intimate church family that we once were, it is not as easy to know what the most urgent needs are of the church. With limited knowledge, some have not known adequately about the opportunity to support the more distant needs which are of high priority. Others have generously supported some ministries at the expense of other less visible, but equally worthy causes. Decisions on giving have been done more at the time of spending, rather than at the time of planning, budgeting and waiting before the Lord for his direction. Faith has had to be exercised by ministry leaders, but very little by those who support.

Past approaches have made it relatively unimportant to think in terms of giving potential in comparison to actual support. They have encouraged the use of pressure and provided little opportunity for responsible giving patterns to grow. Moreover, rather than delegating decision-making on recommendations to those who are more knowledgeable, limited personal evaluations and decisions have been accepted as the norm.

continued on next page

COOPERATIVE MINISTRIES & MISSION

from page 27

When these patterns develop, it then becomes easier to consider supporting causes which are not our first priority as church members. Some donors provide a comparable level of trust to church ministries as to non-church groups, which in some cases may be very ineffective and untrustworthy. These groups may seem more current in their approaches or may appear to be more effective, but in the final analysis may be only as stable as the strength of the current leadership.

Something better than these approaches needs to be used in order to anticipate the ministry opportunities uniquely available to the Brethren in Christ.

A cooperative approach

The 1982 General Conference of the Brethren in Christ Church adopted a plan of financial support which is to be known as Cooperative Ministries and Mission. Cooperation is a central ele-

ment of this plan to support the mission of the church through its numerous ministries, whether they be sponsored by the local congregation, regional conferences or the General Conference.

This plan is an effort to encourage the church, including individual members, to see the ministry opportunities as a whole and not just focus on some of the parts. Leadership people are encouraged to set priorities based upon public presentations of the opportunities as seen by the various ministry groups. As leaders hear each other and responsible groups evaluate the priorities, recommendations for support will be more representative, and will more accurately match the capabilities of the talents and resources of the church, be it a local congregation, a regional conference or the General Conference.

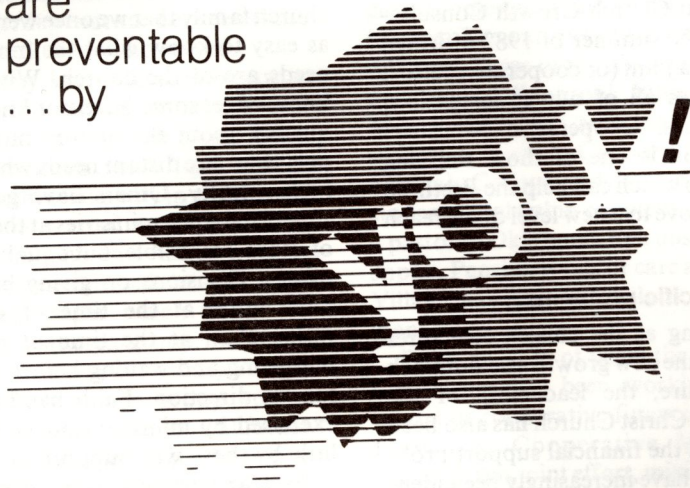
This approach can help to fund the future growth of the church. The demonstration of strong, mutual support can increase the unity of the brother-

hood, even though there is marked growth and wide geographical or cultural distribution. Rather than each ministry promoting only its work, specific needs will be shared in connection with the total ministry of the church. This will put into practice what we believe about the church being a supportive community.

Cooperative Ministries and Mission will encourage members to give regularly by way of the local church, for each local church can participate in a wider range of ministries in this approach. Such regular giving to the biblical "storehouse" will help to assure regular cash flow. The goals which are projected will be based upon the opportunities available for ministry, the financial potential of the group and the amount of vision known to be present. Assessment or taxation will not be a part of this, as past giving practices and the direction of the Holy Spirit will also be considered when goals are suggested. This should help to make cheerful givers!

Since we are not the small, intimate church family that we once were, it is not as easy to know the most urgent needs of the church.

most accidents
are
preventable
... by



The fact that more people have been killed in automobile accidents than in all the nation's wars is a truth that should shock all people.

The combination of defensive driving methods and a commitment to the Christian belief in the sanctity of human life should go far toward changing how we think about driving and our driving behavior.

While the emphasis of this approach is cooperative, there is also provision for direct giving by a donor to a specific ministry. This allows for the expression of a special calling or concern. Specific guidelines for using this approach will be available to the donor and the receiving ministry.

In establishing Cooperative Ministries and Mission, it is hoped that more resources will be able to be available to fund church ministries. Some of the energy now expended competitively can be rechanneled to expand the total support, for a rising tide can lift everyone. It is not a question of how much the church needs, but how much the members need to give in order to fulfill their call to ministry through the church. This becomes brotherhood giving at its best—each one gives proportionally to causes which knowledgeable people have evaluated and promoted in order to meet ministry opportunities uniquely available to the Brethren in Christ.

Evangelical Visitor

the contemporary scene

"Priceless" page from rare Bible found in England

LONDON (EP)—A British scholar has discovered a priceless page from an eighth-century English Bible wrapped around land records in a house in Dorset, the Guardian newspaper reported recently.

John Fuggles, library adviser for Britain's National Trust historic and conservation society, was going through real estate documents in a room at the house—recently acquired by the trust—when he found the page from the Ceolfrid Bible, the paper said. Dating from the year 713, the Ceolfrid Bible is considered one of the rarest and most ancient documents in the English language.

A few pages from the Bible, originally intended as a gift for the Pope, have survived and are a treasured exhibit at the British Library in London.

Soviet troops in Afghanistan turning to religion?

NAIROBI, Kenya (EP)—Letters and other personal papers found by Afghan guerillas, the Mujahidin, on the bodies of Soviet soldiers killed in Afghanistan show that a significant minority of these young men were Christians or Muslims, according to a special article in the *Kenya Standard*, reported by East/West News Service.

The recently acquired letters (all taken out of the country by Afghan refugees) include one written by Private Peter Ivanovich Dik. In it he warmly greets his two sisters, "with the love of our Lord Jesus Christ." He implored them not to forget to ask their parents to send him a New Testament. Dik, a 22-year-old bachelor from Tokskov village in Orenburg district and a driver in civilian life, reported that he was "living a dog's life" in Afghanistan. He said he had just spent three days "lying under our vehicles and sleeping." "Maybe," he added, "they will move us tomorrow."

The authorities' atheist indoctrination of members of the Soviet armed forces, even more intense than that of the U.S.S.R.'s civilian population, is often maladroit. This was acknowledged in a recent Volga Radio discussion program. The broadcasters, all official spokesmen, admitted the existence of religious people in the Soviet armed forces and discussed the "problems" associated with "re-educating" them. In a recent issue of *Krasnaya Zvezda*, the Defense Ministry daily newspaper, a Colonel N. Kusher deplored the state of "atheist education" in the armed forces. "There are still many commanders and political workers who give too

little attention to this important area of educational work," he said. Another issue of this Moscow newspaper expressed outrage over an army officer, a member of the Communist Party, having married in a church.

The state publishing houses in the U.S.S.R. have greatly increased their output of anti-religious books and pamphlets since early in 1980, only a few months after the start of the Soviet military intervention in Afghanistan in December 1979. A recent article in *Qazadstan Komunisii* (the Kazakhstan Communist) appealed to all "honest citizens" to conduct a "merciless struggle against religion, which poisons minds."

Islands linked by spiritual force

NASSAU, Bahamas (EP)—Twenty-five thousand Bahamians crowded into Nassau's 15,000-seat T. A. Robinson Sports Stadium for a one-day Billy Graham Rally on November 24. It was the largest religious gathering ever held in the Islands. The crowd at that midweek evangelistic meeting was over one-tenth of the 230,000 population of the Bahamas. When the Pope visited here, 15,000 heard him. Over 2,200 people responded to the evangelistic invitation at the conclusion of the rally. Fifty percent of those were indicating first-time decisions for Christ.

"This crusade will have a lasting impact on the Islands from a spiritual, social and moral perspective," said the Right Reverend William M. Johnson of the Church of God of the Bahamas. "It is something even the Christian community did not expect."

Church leaders commented on the unprecedented cooperation. "We are 700 islands and have not been used to cooperating," said the Rev. Charles A. Sweeting, president of Queen's College, a Methodist training school. "Billy Graham has been a focus for the church. I believe that this is the start of something that is going to carry on."

Archaeologists may have made historic find in Capernaum

NEW YORK (EP)—Archaeologists may have discovered the house where Jesus stayed in Capernaum, according to an article published in the November/December issue of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*. In the topmost level of the site, the Franciscan Fathers who conducted the excavation found an octagon-shaped church. In antiquity, octagonal churches were built over sites

that memorialized places of special importance to the early church.

The octagonal church in Capernaum probably marked the site of St. Peter's house, say James F. Strange and Hershel Shanks, authors of the article. Strange is a Biblical archaeologist and expert in early Christianity who teaches at the University of South Florida. Shanks is editor of the *Biblical Archaeology Review*, the journal of the Biblical Archaeology Society. According to implications in the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, Jesus lived in St. Peter's house in Capernaum. If this is in fact St. Peter's house, this is where Jesus stayed. Here he also cured the paralytic who was lowered through the roof (Mark 2).

Beneath the octagonal church, archaeologists found a house that had been converted into a church in the mid-first century A.D. The house was originally built in the first century B.C. Christian pilgrims by the thousands came to the house-church and scratched their messages and signs in the plaster walls of the now-venerated room. Over 100 of these graffiti, as they are called, have survived. These include a number of crosses and messages like "Christ have mercy" and "Lord Jesus Christ help thy servant." The Franciscan Fathers believe they can read the name of Peter in two of the graffiti, but Strange and Shanks are skeptical; they cannot see these letters in the almost illegible scratchings.

Nevertheless, they argue that the first-century house may have originally belonged to St. Peter and was then turned into a house-church when the walls were first plastered in the late first-century A.D. Then in the fifth century, the octagonal church was built precisely over this venerated room. St. Peter's house is just 84 feet south of Capernaum's famous ancient synagogue.

And finally . . .

GARDEN GROVE, Calif. is talking about the \$1 million Christmas pageant at the Crystal Cathedral. The Glory of Christmas—A Living Nativity, ran in mid-December nightly with live camels, donkeys, sheep and a ram, a 90-foot tall backdrop with six separate screens, a sky with more than 1,000 stars, a cast of nearly 400, a shepherd boy, the largest pipe organ in the USA and four "flying angels." "Never before in the history of Christianity in the United States has anyone retold the story of the birth of Christ in the scope presented in the Crystal Cathedral," says Dr. Robert H. Schuller, the cathedral's senior pastor and TV preacher. Admission ran \$10.50 and \$12.50.

readers respond

Job well begun

First let me say that we thoroughly enjoy reading the *Visitor*. The articles are interesting and informative and of just the right length.

I am not writing this letter in protest against or rebuttal to any issue, but rather in praise of an institution that does not receive much praise.

In November, we made ourselves available to spend two weeks at the Paxton St. Home in Harrisburg doing whatever kind of work there was to be done. When we arrived on a Sunday evening, we were welcomed into a loving, caring, homey atmosphere and immediately felt a part of the family. As the days passed we found plenty of work to be done—that is a big place and just the everyday upkeep is a big job. The people who have given so much time there in renovating the building have done a tremendous job, but there is always something that needs fixing.

The one thing that impressed us most was the way the staff give of themselves to make Paxton Street a real home for the residents. The physical, social and spiritual welfare of the residents get equal attention. Many times during the day a staff member is called upon to minister in a personal way. There are Bible study groups that meet regularly and each evening devotions are held for those who care to participate. The food is outstanding—tastily prepared and attractively served.

We truly considered it a privilege to be a part of such a dedicated program of providing a home for those people, many of whom have no one else to care. It is a job well begun and merits the support of all of us.

Wilma B. Frey
Abilene, KS

Adding a word

Naturally I can't object if someone tells of his own life and contributions with humility—that's what I would have expected of Lewis Sider (whose testimony appeared on the back cover of the

December 10 *Visitor*). But let me add a word.

Like us all, he affirms that life is "no bed of roses," and his was "filled with many mistakes and failures." However, Lewis Sider's life was not only that. I found him to be a friend and source of good advice when I was a young, fresh (in many ways!) missionary. People here in Zimbabwe still ask about him and remember him with love and appreciation. He worked hard, did much, did it well, and didn't complain.

Perhaps the best thing I can remember is that when Lewis talked, he always had something to say—a rare quality!

Fred Holland
Bulawayo, Zimbabwe

Permit me to respond to Lewis Sider's "Reflections of a 'retired' missionary" (Dec. 10). Do I detect a faint tinge of need for him to reassess the values to be gained from life's inevitable struggles, a reaffirmation of the gain from a life spent in service to spiritual needs without the usual assurance of adequate material security? I suspect he represents something of a multitude of people who experience an occasional uncertain thought. Even the patient and virtuous Job cried out at one point, "If a man die, shall he live again?" Doubt is part of the legacy of human finiteness.

But it isn't the big, the famous, or the glamorous that represent values, or not many would find place in the world of worth. Sometimes it goes back to little things. Lewis and I, as well as some others, went to college together in the latter 1930's at Beulah College. I remember his struggle with a speech problem while I gained some notice as a speaker. But he got the A in History while I got the C. I recall how at one of those Young Adult Forum sessions we used to have at the Upland Church, Lewis outlined the variant religious beliefs of the most renowned of our country's founding fathers. It was a little jarring to some of us who always thought of our country as founded on our brand of Christianity.

Lewis may not have had a "silver tongue," but he delivered the message. And isn't that what mission work is all about?

Like the rest of us, he worked for what he got. He was just as black as the rest of us when he came in from smudging orange groves on those cold mornings. Part of our education in those days was earning the money to pay for it.

Is this trivia that I am writing? Maybe so. But the detail of Lewis Sider's life isn't. As it isn't for anyone who struggles to be a worthy part of God's Kingdom. How many more stories could be told about the efforts of others? The appreciation we have and express for the life of others is an integral part of the foundation of the Christian faith.

Millard Herr
Upland, CA

Thanks for the airmail

While we were in Nairobi, we really appreciated the airmail service for the *Evangelical Visitor*.

We got the *Gospel Herald*, for example, by surface mail, and it would be three to four months before we got it. One day we received four *Gospel Heralds*. Interesting!

Paul W. Nisly
Messiah College
Grantham, PA

The Visitor is sent by airmail to persons assigned by Brethren in Christ Missions, to church members serving under other missions organizations, and to selected leaders in overseas Brethren in Christ fellowships. This is made possible by the generous support of relatives of mission workers and others interested in this practical expression of brotherhood.

If you would like to join in bringing the *Visitor* "on time" to persons we've sent overseas, send your gifts to "Airmail Fund," P.O. Box 166, Nappanee, IN 46550.

Evangelical Visitor

A "front line" ministry

It was near the end of a church growth conference when one of the participants commented that "church planting pastors really are the ones in the front line of the ministry."

That phrase really struck me, and I jotted on the margin of my tablet: "Who really is on the 'front lines'?" A pastor of a small, struggling mountain congregation came to mind—faithfully ministering to the needs of the church and community families but not seeing a great surge of growth in his church. That pastor is not "in the front line"?

Then a few days later, I heard a person, championing the need for increased support for overseas mission personnel, assert that "they are the ones who are out there, on the front lines, spreading the gospel." And I had to think of some home mission workers who have spent decades in dedicated service—don't they qualify for such honor?

Both speakers had very good intentions, I am sure. And perhaps they had similar ideas in mind when they referred to these two groups of church workers. Both the missionary and the church planter have been given the apostolic commission of establishing the church in areas where there is no church. Called by God, they are thrust into new and different communities and cultures, and often must learn a different language. Removed from family, friends and the supportive Christian community to which they have been accustomed, these servants of the church have to seek out or create new sources of fellowship, emotional support and spiritual encouragement.

Let me pause to note that as members of the sending church, we must be sensitive to the unique needs of the brothers and sisters we have commissioned for such assignments. They are deserving of our continued prayer and our careful, liberal support. While our fellowship has done well in this regard, there is still much room for improvement.

However, we dare not think of these essential ministries as being exclusively "where the *real* action is." We know, of course, that the value of our

service to the Lord is not measured by the miles we have traveled away from home. Certainly our personal ministry is not validated by the degree of visibility we have attained within the church. But every now and then, we seem to act as if this were so.

In I Corinthians 12—a beautifully practical exposition of the essential nature of the church—the Apostle Paul likens the community of believers to the human body. Just as there are different limbs and organs in the body, so there are different functions and spiritual gifts in the church. These differing gifts and ministries, Paul says, are present "because God has arranged the parts in the body, every one of them, just as he wanted them to be" (v. 18). Some of these (could he have said apostles, pastors and teachers?) have more visibility than others, but each one has value, regardless of visibility, since each works together for the healthy functioning of the whole body. In fact, from God's perspective, honor is given to those members whose ministry might otherwise go unnoticed.

We do well to voice appreciation for those who serve the church in positions of leadership and ministry, both in the larger church and in the congregation. But there is very little profit to be realized in debating who among us *really* is "in the front line." In fact, there is the danger that the rest of us may be tempted to sit back, relax, and assume our task to be that of the cheering section. Such "spectator Christianity" is totally foreign to the spirit of the New Testament.

"Now you are the body of Christ," Paul asserts, "and each one of you is a part of it." God offers a "front line ministry" to each of us—whether we be a teacher in the classroom, an office worker or machinist on the job, or a neighbor having tea with a friend. We need not cross cultural or language barriers to find people in need of a listening ear, a healing touch, a restoring embrace. Sharing the good news of love, forgiveness and wholeness through Christ is the calling of every believer, with the Holy Spirit giving us differing arenas in which to minister.

Who really is "in the front line" in sharing the Gospel? It should be each one of us. G

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The names have been changed in this true story, which has its setting in southern California.

Betty Harris. I recognized the name instantly, but remained silent. After all, I was a new member of the visitation program at my church and had joined to learn how to share my faith in Christ more effectively—with anyone whose name we were given.

Could be someone else with the same name, I thought as we drove across town that particular night. To be honest, I hoped it was. Not that I had anything against Betty personally, of course, but she was such an odd person.

I hadn't seen her for several months, but would never forget the first time she visited choir practice one Thursday evening. Since our choir is large, it's easy for a newcomer to get lost in the crowd; I determined to welcome this new person and make her feel at home.

"Hi, I'm Kitty Reese," I began with a big smile.

She just looked at me for a moment. "Hello," she said finally, cautiously, not even a slight smile on that sober face. It was more than just sober, though. The look was suspicious, almost guarded.

"What's your name?" I asked, still smiling.

"Betty Harris," she replied so softly I barely heard it. "Excuse me, I'd better find a seat."

Being human, I was annoyed by her indifferent attitude, but refused to let it show. In fact, I said hello to Betty every time I saw her after that. The most I got in return was a nod. Suddenly she dropped out of choir, and I soon forgot about Betty Harris. We had a committee which checked up on absentee members, and I was not on that committee. Perhaps I should have made an effort to contact Betty myself, but to be honest I didn't even think about it. We hadn't become friends, after all, and I didn't have her address or phone number.

"Betty Harris," my visitation partner and trainer repeated as she parked the car. "I'll expect you to take part in the initial conversation, Kitty, and perhaps share your testimony as well."

"Okay," I agreed halfheartedly. I had been singing solos for years, but this witnessing business was something brand new, and much more difficult. At the same time, Jody Cutler, my trainer, had been very patient, helping me master the gospel outline one step at a time. Watching her witness for the Lord was a tremendous inspiration.

Betty Harris—the same Betty Harris I had known in choir—opened the door. "Yes?" she began. Then our eyes met and it was obvious that she remembered me. "Oh, you're from the church."

"Yes, we wanted to return your visit," Jody replied brightly.

"I'm Jody Cutler and this is Kitty—"

"We know each other," I interrupted. "Betty sang in the choir a while back."

"How nice!" Jody exclaimed. "May we come in, Betty?"

"All right," Betty agreed, not overly enthusiastic.

We went through the usual procedure, complimenting her apartment—which really was beautifully decorated—and talking about general subjects. She would answer direct questions, but volunteered nothing. I watched Betty as Jody carefully directed the conversation toward spiritual matters. There was still that guarded, suspicious look in Betty's eyes, as if she didn't quite trust us.

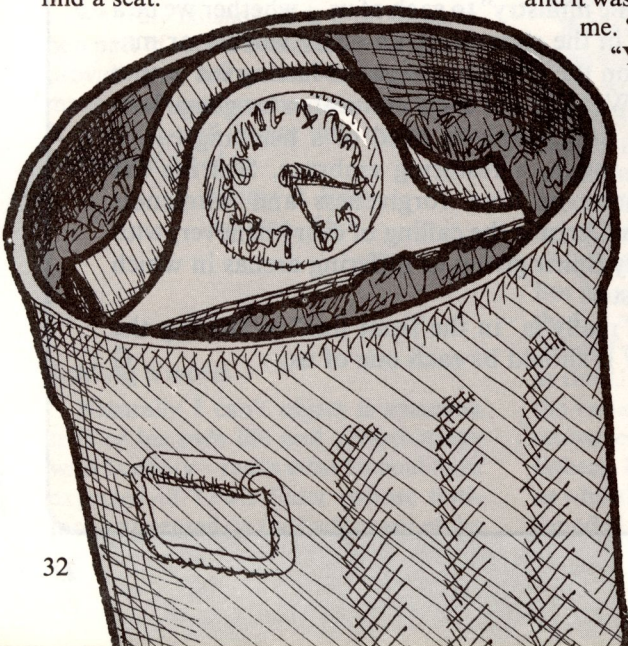
Jody was skilled in witnessing and moved right into the gospel presentation after I gave a brief testimony. This is a waste of time, I thought, even though it was quite apparent that Betty Harris was trusting in her own good works and accomplishments. Oh, she believed in God, but was clearly not trusting Christ alone for her salvation.

If it had been me, I would have stopped long before Jody did. Betty listened quietly, but was not really absorbing. The dull expression on her face told me that much.

"Would you like to receive the gift of eternal life which Christ offers you tonight?" Jody asked finally.

"No, I just couldn't do that right now," Betty answered, glancing at her watch.

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Waste of time

A true story as told to Angela Keith Benedict