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Glen A. Pierce

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*Evangelical*  
**VISITOR**

March 10, 1981

***Baptism: Waters That Divide  
The Trees of the Lord***



# The Trees of the Lord

by C. R. Heisey

It was revival time in our congregation. The visiting evangelist (who happened to be the bishop of the district), his wife and daughter were having Sunday dinner in one of the homes in the congregation. The pastor and his wife were also invited.

After the noon meal the six adults and one teenager were in the living room. The young lady wanted to do something for her entertainment and ours. We agreed to her offer to "paint" a picture.

With a sweep of her hands in an open place she said, "Here is the lake." Placing the five adults in position (omitting the pastor), she said, "These are the trees." Then she gave instructions to the pastor to run around the group. As he did, she explained, "That's the sap running."

She was amused and so were we all. Later her father expressed concern lest there be adverse consequences from this little prank. What the young lady did

not know was that her jolly joke was laying the foundation for a message on a text straight from God's Word: "The trees of the Lord are full of sap" (Ps. 104:16, KJV).

Trees as a symbol of life in God are used repeatedly in Scripture. The Book of Psalms opens with a picture of the person whose character is conditioned by meditating in God's law day and night. "And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water" (Ps. 1:3). Have you ever wondered why the Psalmist says "rivers"? We have seen a towering tree on a riverbank, but one tree watered by two rivers? It must be an orange tree watered by irrigation "rivers." What a symbol of the Christian life that is!

Have you experienced the delightful fragrance as you drove by an orange grove at blossom time? Paul says that God "uses us to tell others about the Lord and to spread the Gospel like a sweet perfume. As far as God is concerned there is a sweet, wholesome fragrance in our lives. It is the fragrance of Christ within us, an aroma to both the saved and the unsaved" (II Cor. 2:14, 15 LB).

The fruit-laden trees at picking time and the trucks loaded with golden fruit remind us of the words of Christ himself: "If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit. . . . This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples" (John 15:5, 8 NIV).

Psalms 52 describes Doeg who gave David's whereabouts to Saul. This resulted in the slaughter of the priests and increased the danger to David's life. Doeg is told God will "root" him from the land of the living. What a contrast to David, the man after God's own heart. "I am like a green olive tree in the house of God; I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise thee for ever because thou hast done it."

The olive is a beautiful tree, ever green, affording the comfort of shade when shade is desired. Not far to the east of us is a grove of well-matured olive trees, ready to be sold to people sufficiently wealthy to have the full-grown tree transplanted for immediate shade in landscaping homes or parks. It is a useful tree. Gifts made from olive wood are prized because of their beauty and dur-

ability. Its fruit is good for food. Its oil has many uses in cooking and the making of cosmetics and ointments. It is a most suitable symbol of the useful, fruitful Christian life.

In Psalm 92 we are told that "the righteous will flourish like a palm tree, they will grow like a cedar of Lebanon; planted in the house of the Lord they will flourish in the courts of our God." This is beautiful to contemplate, but listen: "They will still bear fruit in old age, they will still stay fresh and green, proclaiming, 'The Lord is upright, he is my Rock, and there is no wickedness in Him.'" The senior citizen may feel like a has-been and a "wuzzer" among his actively working contemporaries but there is no need of it; he isn't that to God. He is still a "proclaiming" witness of the faithfulness of God.

I like Taylor's paraphrase of verses 12 to 15 in the Living Bible: "But the godly shall flourish like palm trees, and grow tall as the cedars of Lebanon." The reason: "For they are transplanted into the Lord's own garden, and are under his personal care. Even in old age they will still produce fruit and be vital and green. This honors the Lord, and exhibits his faithful care. He is my shelter. There is nothing but goodness in Him!" A golden-ager still producing golden fruit under God's culture and care!

The palm tree—what a symbol! There it stands, straight and tall in the fiercest of storms, withstanding attack by most insects and diseases. You seldom see a crooked palm tree. It is said of the date palm, it must have its feet in the water and its head in the sun. It is a useful tree contributing many products profitable for human welfare. One tree may produce 300 pounds of luscious dates in a season. Sixteen hundred Deglet Noor date palms (at Furnace Creek Ranch in Death Valley) yield nearly 400 tons of dates annually, and have been doing so for nearly 50 years. Deglet Noor is Arabic for "Date of Light." How suggestive of what Jesus said of his followers. "Ye are the light of the world" (Mt. 5:14), and Paul, "... the sons of God without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye are to shine as lights in the world" (Phil. 2:15). The palm tree is a well-rounded symbol of a thriving Christian life and testimony.

The cedars of Lebanon are another tree frequently mentioned in Scripture. "The trees of the Lord are full of sap: the cedars of Lebanon which He hath planted" (Ps. 104:16, KJV). Solomon secured the timber of these trees from Hiram, king of Tyre, for building his magnificent temple for the worship of Jehovah. Paul says that we are to be "temple timber." "For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people'" (II Cor. 6:16 NIV). These trees are not of ordinary planting; they are "the cedars of Lebanon which he hath planted."

Psalm 92 tells us they were planted "in the courts of the Lord." This suggests close and frequent association with the Lord which is essential for the growth and development of the Christian. Note their durability. "They will still bear fruit in old age." This enabled the Psalmist to pray in faith when he had arrived at that stage in life when his strength was failing and he might have been under severe testing. "Since my youth, O God, you have taught me, and to this day I declare your marvelous deeds. Even when I am old and gray, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Ps. 71:17).

Oswald Chambers once wrote, "Jesus said, 'I am come that they might have life and that they might have it more abundantly.' Be being filled with the life Jesus came to give. Men who are radiantly healthy, physically and spiritually, cannot be crushed. They are like the cedars of Lebanon, which have such super-abounding vitality in their sap that they intoxicate to death any parasites that try to live on them" (*The Place of Help*, Oswald Chambers, p. 128).

I recall prayer-meetings when I was a boy, when Grandfather Herr would testify. He had a long, flowing white beard and was perhaps eighty years old. He would jump up and down gracefully and say, "It happifies the soul." Even down to old age—a tree of the Lord—the sap still running.

*C. R. Heisey is a retired pastor living in Upland, CA.*

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# Baptism: Waters That Divide

by Robert B. Ives

Some time ago a person applied to become a member of the Grantham Church. The church board, after a long discussion, turned the request down. This person had been baptized as an infant in a church that did such things and in good conscience wouldn't be re-baptized.

There are others who have worshipped here for years and who, for various reasons, don't wish to be baptized again and give testimony before the church. They continue to worship here, but they don't become members. They are certainly Christians, but from our perspective they don't meet all the requirements for membership. Meanwhile, from their point of view, a big question mark hangs over believers' baptism. Is it really necessary for people who have been Christians for years and who were baptized when they were infants to be baptized again?

Let us consider the question of baptism from three perspectives: historically, theologically and practically.

## Historical Perspectives

Historically, we need to look at baptism in the New Testament and in the early church, seeing who was baptized and why.

The answer to the question of "why" is that when people heard the gospel, they believed and then they were baptized, sometimes whole families being baptized at once. So, Paul preached to the Philippian jailer and to his household and they believed and they were all baptized (Acts 16). Peter preached the gospel to the Jerusalem crowds at Pentecost. They repented and were baptized by the thousands (Acts 2). Cornelius gathered his relatives and friends of all

sort. They listened to Peter preach the gospel, they believed and they were baptized (Acts 10). Over and over again this pattern was followed.

But in no passage in the New Testament does it say infants, or infants as part of households, were baptized. Of course, neither does it say that the households did not include infants. We don't know. There was a famous scholarly debate that went on in the 1960s between Joachim Jeremias of Gottinger University and Kurt Aland. The question was, were infants baptized in the early church? Each of them wrote books and their answer was, we don't know whether infants were baptized until the 3rd century.

In the 3rd century, Origen, the theologian from Egypt, in his commentary on Romans wrote that the tradition the church had from the apostles was that even little children were baptized. About the same time Tertullian, bishop of North Africa, wrote in his Homily on Baptism that infants are not to be baptized and that there is no word from the apostles about it. Here are two completely different answers to the same question.

## Theological Perspectives

The theological approach also walks along two different tracks. The strongest argument of people who favor infant baptism is the argument about the covenant. (A covenant is an agreement between God and people.) They say that in Scripture there is basically one covenant. In the Old Testament the sign of the one covenant was circumcision; in the New Testament, it is baptism. The covenant promises that God will be

faithful to the children of believers. This promise, they say, is the same in both the Old Testament and the New Testament. The sign is first circumcision, then baptism.

In the Old Testament, for example, Noah alone was faithful of all the people in the earth, but his children came on the ark with him. The Psalmist sang, "The Lord's love never fails those who fear him; his righteousness never fails their sons and their grandsons" (Ps. 103:17). And when the Spirit fell at Pentecost, Peter explained to the wondering crowds, "The Promise (of the Spirit) is to you and to your children."

Now it is true that God is faithful to the children of believers. Christian parents with children who have gone away from the Lord or who have lost interest in spiritual things hold on with hope to the promise that God will be faithful to the children of believers. Circumcision was given in the Old Testament as a sign of that covenant God first made with Abram. The promise was that Abram would have descendants and God would bless them for Abram's sake.

The problem with that argument is that baptism is not the New Testament equivalent of circumcision. It is not the way to show God's faithfulness. Col. 2:11-12, which seems to say circumcision and baptism are equivalent, is about spiritual circumcision, about faith, and the inner life of the person baptized. It may well be that God will be faithful to your children, but there is no theological reason to baptize them when they are infants as a sign of that. That is not what baptism symbolizes at all.

In I Cor. 7:14 children and spouses seem to enjoy some privileges because of a believing parent or spouse, but again

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baptism is not the symbol of that.

But the idea of baptizing children is firmly entrenched. Look at the practice we have of dedicating infants. We want to do something to ask God to protect our children. That desire is right, but God promises there are guardian angels protecting children (Mt. 18:10). The obligation of parents is to train children in right ways, not to try to gain them special salvation privileges by baptizing them as infants.

We must also consider Romans 6. The first part of this chapter uses baptism as an analogy to try to describe to Christians why they should try to live a new life, dead to sin. Paul says, now when you were dunked down under the water, it was like all the old sin nature is dead and buried. And when you are pulled up out of the water, it is like resurrection to a new style of life. Here is a little drama in which a person acts out what it means to be identified with the death and resurrection of Christ. So, after baptism you must regard yourselves as dead to sin and alive to God in a new way (vs. 12), as a new person.

That analogy is not only a picture of how Christians ought act, but it is a picture of baptism. Paul's picture of baptism is meaningful only if we are thinking of believer's baptism.

## The Practical Perspective

But as we come to consider the practical question, I need to ask again, are there not a lot of believers in churches that baptize infants? Yes. And are they all wrong about baptism? (Long pause, in which you might hear a pin drop.) The evidence seems to me to tip the scale on the side of believer's baptism, but who am I to have a knock down, drag out fight with a Presbyterian or a Methodist or an Episcopalian or a Lutheran over this question? People can serve God without having to agree with me or the Brethren in Christ about this.

But what if one of these Presbyterians or Methodists or Episcopalians or Lutherans or whatever wants to come and join the Grantham Church? What then?

Well, then they must meet the membership requirements of the Brethren in Christ Church. That is a practical, not a Biblical, consideration. What are these requirements?

First, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ as his Savior and Lord and know that he has personally committed his or her life to Jesus Christ. Then, this

person must be in substantial agreement with our beliefs and practices as a church—not with every jot and tittle and not in every single point (we may not have anybody like that in the whole church). And thirdly, they must be baptized as a believer and give a public testimony of their faith in Christ.

Of all these requirements, some people think it strange that we demand baptism. Some Baptist-type churches simply allow those baptized as infants to reaffirm their baptism. Others choose to ignore the question of baptism and take any person who is a believer into the church.

We would deny our heritage to do that. Our ancestors were burned at the stake and drowned specifically because they were baptized, for which they were called Anabaptists and for which they died. Shall we say what was so important to them means nothing to us?

Furthermore, we have a church of more than 15,000 members, all of whom have been baptized as believers. Why should we be hesitant to ask other people who want to be part of the Grantham Church to identify with us as a church and to do what we have all done?

Thirdly, baptism is part of a person's testimony. It is a clear symbol that one commits himself or herself to lead a new sort of life apart from sin, and serving God. It is surely right to give that kind of testimony before the church.

Why does the New Testament command baptism rather than let it be a variable in a person's Christian experience? Jesus, in Mt. 28, commanded people who believed to be baptized. The purpose of baptism is the confession of faith. As we can see in Romans 6, it is not our own faith, but rather faith in what God did by grace and what Christ did in destroying the body of sin and

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what the Holy Spirit did when he gave the strength for dying and for renewal of life. We can do nothing to gain resurrection from the dead, so we witness to what God has done in baptism. The fact that baptism is a confession of such serious matters points to adult, believer's baptism.

So the evidence leaves some questions. But I think the answers favor believer's baptism. That it is right, practically, for us to insist on believer's baptism, I have no doubt.

But there are still puzzling questions. One of them is what to do if we have a 7-year-old child who makes a confession of faith in Christ? Shall that child be baptized? Baptism is about serious matters. It is a pledge to offer oneself to God (Rom. 6:13) and to die to sin (Rom. 6:7). How can children be expected to cope with all of that when they first commit themselves to Christ?

In our history, we have answered that question in two ways. We have baptized the child but encouraged him or her to wait for some years to become a church member, to wait until there is more of a readiness to be a disciple and to tread the way of the cross.

Other parents, not wanting to separate baptism and church membership and wanting both baptism and membership to be a mature, adult decision, counselled their children to wait for both. Then the problem was that one of the most important spiritual events of the child's life, when he or she becomes a Christian, had no way to be recognized in the church.

I counsel children to wait, all other things being equal, so that both baptism and membership can have the meaning they ought to have for an adult. We are a believers' church and God's covenant was always about a society of *faithful* people.

About those of you who aren't sure about church membership because of baptism, I counsel you to continue worshipping here if God is encouraging you here, to continue to search the Scriptures for what they show, and to not violate your conscience. For our part, we are glad to have people who identify with what we do become part of the Grantham Church, but we think no less of people who are not yet ready to make that commitment.

*Abridged slightly from a Sunday morning sermon preached at Grantham, Pa., where Dr. Ives is senior pastor.*

# NAE/NRB CONVENTION REPORT

## Convocation '81

by Alvin J. Book

Evangelical leaders and religious broadcasters came together January 25-28 in Washington, D.C., as the National Association of Evangelicals and the National Religious Broadcasters held their joint 1981 convention. Twenty-three Brethren in Christ attended the Convocation, representing the denomination or local congregations, or as members of NAE commissions or associations.

The keynote addresses were given in the power of the Holy Spirit. Pianist Dino Kartsonakis, after playing his first number, said "The Holy Spirit is certainly in this place; it is like electricity." Adrian Rogers clearly heralded the truth as he said that persistent faith is still the only way to please God. Sharing his vision of church growth, Paul Cho, pastor of perhaps the world's largest congregation (over 150,000 believers), attributed his success to a "home cell unit" principle. His church is growing by 5,000 persons per month, and has a goal of 500,000 members.

Karen Mains stimulated many with

her insightful views on world hunger and today's refugees, asserting that all Christians and churches must play an increasing role in alleviating hunger and suffering. James Kennedy reminded the audience of their constitutional rights and that Christians need to be activated to protect those rights which we so often take for granted. And Billy Graham, recently returned from Eastern Europe, spoke from his world perspective when he said he believes the Christian church has a few short years to be open and unopposed in the ministry of the Gospel in our world.

Ethel Brubaker (Chambersburg, PA congregation) commented on the sense of being a part of the larger body of believers which you can't get in smaller gatherings—a dynamic force for good. Carl Ulery (Beulah Chapel, Springfield, OH), a long-time member of NAE, felt the level of speaker input was up. He is taking tapes along home to Springfield for his pastor and congregation.

Dave Brubaker (on the staff of the Elizabethtown, PA missions office)

served as proxy for Roy V. Sider, Secretary of Overseas Missions, in the meetings of the Evangelical Foreign Missions Association. Dave was impressed with the intensive commitment to world missions in EFMA, as well as a desire to deal with justice issues and inherent in the Gospel. Ronald J. Sider addressed the EFMA on these issues. Dave also noted Billy Graham's prophetic ministry at the Convocation when he said it is abominable that \$550 billion will be spent on arms when millions are starving.

Several position papers were adopted. One was "The Church and Media: Partners in World Evangelization." The church is God's ordained instrument for evangelization. There is no other redeeming agency on earth. Evangelism is a first priority of the church's ministry in the world. God's plan is not random evangelization but concerted effort. The media is a concerted voice and is an effective means to let the earth hear God's voice.

Another paper was "A Response to Secular Humanism." The church was alerted to the fact that secular humanism has already infiltrated the life of our nation. Its proponents dissuade people from a belief in God, his Word, and his moral commandments. Counter to this is the message of evangelical Christianity which in Christ's name offers peace, prosperity, freedom and happiness (Romans 5:6-8, Titus 3:5-7, II Corinthians 2:17 and Galatians 6:14-15).

The well attended sessions of the various associations and commissions, the twenty NRB and the ten NAE workshops, the special musical talent, the prayer sessions, the keynote speakers, the precise leadership of both organizations—all were used of God to bring inspiration and challenge to hundreds of people.

There are thirty-five Brethren in Christ congregations that presently hold membership in the NAE. It is my feeling that there should be many more. Why? The NAE through its associations and commissions is doing strategic ministry that as a denomination we can never do ourselves. This way we join a stronger organization that has the personnel and resources to make an impact in so many different ways. Joining now will increase this effective ministry.

*Bishop Alvin Book is the denominational representative to NAE.*

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A number of Brethren in Christ are members of NAE commissions or affiliates, either as denominational representatives or members at large:

NAE Board of Administration—Alvin J. Book, Clarence Brubaker, Arthur M. Climenhaga

Commission on Higher Education—D. Ray Hostetter

Evangelical Churchmen—Abner Haldeman

Evangelical Foreign Missions Association—Roy V. Sider

Evangelical Social Action Commission—Samuel Brubaker, Martin Schrag, Ronald J. Sider, John Stoner

Evangelism and Home Missions Association—Arlene Miller, R. Donald Shafer

Stewardship Commission—Carl E. Keefer

Theological Commission—Arthur M. Climenhaga

Women's Fellowship—Lona Climenhaga

World Relief Corporation—Roy V. Sider

# NAE NEWS BRIEFS

## Dr. C. Everett Koop is NAE's Layman of the Year

NAE President Bishop J. Floyd Williams presented Dr. C. Everett Koop with NAE's Layman of the Year award for his distinguished service to God and humankind during his medical career.

Dr. Koop is noted for his development of advancements in pediatric surgery and has contributed to the marked progress in the management of certain forms of childhood cancer.

He has trained a large number of residents, and has written a large number of articles and books, the most recent of which is the series done with Dr. Francis Schaeffer, *Whatever Happened to the Human Race?* He now serves as surgeon-in-chief of Philadelphia's Children's Hospital.

"Suffice it to say," Williams concluded the presentation, "that this man recognized as one of our country's most prominent surgeons, has been God's representative in a field where Deity's own hand is so fearfully and wonderfully in evidence. Indeed, he has taken what his God has given and transformed a field of service into the very large image of that living, loving God."

Also honored were Everett S. Graffam and the late Wendell Lewis Rockey, both former executives of NAE's World Relief Corporation.

A former NAE Layman of the Year himself, Graffam received the World Relief Helping Hand Award for his distinguished service on behalf of suffering humanity.

Also recognized by World Relief in a special citation ceremony was the late Wendell Rockey, from 1953 until 1970 the organization's executive director.

## Media must complement, not undermine, world evangelization, Sweeting says

Calling for greater organization of the "centrality" of the local church in world evangelization, Moody Bible Institute president Dr. George Sweeting issued some stern words of caution to parachurch leaders and television evangelists at the NAE-NRB Convention.

Emphasizing the "Bible way of evangelization is establishing and building

## Billy Graham addresses strategic role in 1980s

Convocation '81 ended on notes of optimism and caution sounded by evangelist Billy Graham, the closing speaker.

Reviewing the impressive growth of the evangelical movement over the past few decades, the evangelist warned his nearly 3,000 listeners of dangers that could mar the movement's success.

"We must have the highest standards in morality, ethics, and integrity," he said, "if we are to continue to have influence."

He warned against pride and reliance on "gimmicks and high pressure professional fundraising tactics as we seek to accomplish God's work."

On the opposite side, Graham cited as signs of success the wide media attention given to evangelicals in recent years, the

local churches," Sweeting warned that the proliferation of parachurch groups and media evangelists may be undermining the church's role in evangelization.

The media often quote parachurch leaders and not pastors, he lamented, and he implied that the millions of dollars raised "aggressively" by parachurch groups may be at the expense of churches. He also suggested that churches are losing the services of many seminary and Bible college graduates who are being signed up instead by parachurch organizations.

"It is my personal conviction that parachurch groups are to serve the local churches and be accountable to them," declared Sweeting. The media, he indicated, should be viewed in the same light—as "an instrument given to us to carry out the great commission."

However, dangers exist in media ministries, he cautioned, and he cited four of them: adding to or subtracting from the Gospel, substituting entertainment for the Word of God, promoting bigness at the expense of individuality, and engaging in extravagant spending and excessive lifestyle.

"Wasting money is as much an act of violence against the poor as refusing to feed the hungry," he declared.

Sweeting criticized those who "confuse the Gospel" by injecting it with western culture, by using it to promote self-improvement, by mixing politics with it, and by accenting its "good news" aspects but omitting the cross.

building of evangelical colleges and seminaries, the explosive growth of Christian broadcasting and publishing, renewed commitment of evangelicals to social action, the spread of Christianity among young people, and the rapid growth of the Church overseas.

The charismatic movement, he noted, has contributed to resurgent evangelicalism.

"For thousands," he declared, "it has taken faith out of the cold storage of intellectual doctrine alone and brought it into the warm kitchen of experience."

Graham also called for a negotiated end to the arms race.

"How can we be indifferent to the millions and millions who live on the brink of starvation each year," he said, "while the nations of the world spend \$550 billion each year on weapons?"

## FCC Commissioner Warns of Moral Majority Provincialism

Outgoing FCC Commissioner Tyrone Brown told a Tuesday luncheon meeting he is concerned that the Moral Majority is a divisive rather than a unifying force in our society.

"The theme that appears to me to run through some of the polemics of the Moral Majority is the provincial notion that people are to be divided into 'them' and 'us,'" Brown said, "with minority Americans all too often falling into the 'them' category."

"I fear that unless this theme in the catechism of the Moral Majority is eliminated, force could become another code word for racism in our society."

Identifying the "them-us" attitude as narrow and unloving, Brown warned his audience about the danger of allowing the current religious revival in America to become too closely identified with a political movement whose contours are "still uncertain and which you cannot control." Brown said that such a narrow viewpoint will mean the end of any lasting political force from the Moral Majority and the demise of any enduring impact on spiritual revival.

"In your missionary work, in your roles as spiritual leaders, in using the miracle of the electronic media to reach scores of millions of Americans with your message," Brown said, "seek to identify religious revival with the illusive but noble principle upon which our society is based—the principle of the equality of man."



Samuel Hembrom and Luke Murmu, leaders in the Santal church, were excited as they shared with me the invitation from wealthy Brahmin landowners, "Come and preach the Gospel to us." Ordinarily, the despised Santals are seen as servants or tillers of the soil.

The invitation to share the Gospel was doubly significant due to a tragic incident that occurred nearly a decade ago. In a dispute over the rights of share cropping, these Brahmins had unexpectedly descended with guns and torches on the huts of the Santals. In the melee, 14 Santals lost their lives—shot or burned alive in their huts. Now the same Hindus were requesting Santal leaders to come and explain the message of Jesus Christ.

This incident is indicative of a new openness and responsiveness, though not without persecution, to the witness of the Gospel in India today. The Spirit of God is moving into the vacuum of spiritual uncertainty, civil unrest and the degenerating economic conditions of the masses. In addition, the educated elite, becoming more world conscious, are eager to dialogue with sincere Christians regarding their faith.

Dusk was rapidly descending when we left Barnabus Minz for a visit to an Uraon village. It was dark by the time we had arrived on the outskirts of Purnea. Suddenly, Barnabus broke the silence. "Look to the left. There are two Christian families in that small village." A couple moments later he pointed to the right. He identified a village in which seven families formed a Christian center. As we travelled the six miles to our destination, over and over again Barnabus would indicate villages where new Christians are living. Just as the physical blackness of that night was pierced by the small campfires, candles and lanterns of those villages, so the true Light of the world was beginning to penetrate the deep spiritual darkness of that society.

Upon reaching our destination, we were warmly greeted by faces scarcely visible in the inadequate light of lanterns. In the darkness, I reached out my hand to greet a believer with the words, "Yesu sahai!" I noticed the tips of his fingers were missing. Leprosy had left only stubs. Later the same man led the group in joyous Christian singing. He sang in falsetto and I wondered if leprosy had taken its toll in his vocal cords as well. But in spite of his physical disabilities, he was greatly enjoying his new



## Opportunities with opposition

by Harvey Sider

life in Christ. The darkness of that moonless night was made bright by the faith and joy of the Christian families. I praised God for the handful of believers and prayed that many of the 1,000 Uraons in that village will let the Light of the world into their darkness.

It is encouraging to see steady growth continuing in the tribal church. New congregations like Neponia, Sukwa Tola and Pakariya are being established. Non-Christian villages are being invaded with the Good News. In the areas where people have heard little or nothing about Jesus Christ, there is an open and ready responsiveness not witnessed where men and women have already become hardened through years of contact with the Christian church.

As we observed the spread of Christianity, it appeared that the absence of missionaries has not been a hindrance to church growth. In fact, Roy Sider, Secretary of Overseas Ministries, reported to the India Church that last year it was the fastest growing church in the international brotherhood.

The extent of the outreach into the tribal areas was impressed upon me just minutes before leaving Purnea. In my final conversation with Rev. Patros Hembrom, he said, "There is only one small corner remaining in Purnea District where the Santals have not had contact with the Gospel. Everywhere else the light has shone. There is scarcely anywhere that the farthest Christian

would be more than two villages away."

Among the educated and elite there is also a growing desire to know more about Jesus Christ. On my first day in Delhi, I encountered this openness. I had gone to a travel agent to finalize plans for the trip to Bihar. As soon as the work was completed, the well-educated Hindu in charge of the office initiated a conversation concerning Christianity by saying, "You seem different than most people I deal with. What's the secret?" In spite of office staff around, he exhibited no embarrassment as we discussed the Christian faith.

Rajendra Yadav, a local Hindu, upon conversion worked for a short time at Madhipura Christian Hospital. He is currently taking further medical training in Patna. While his parents have not been warm to his conversion, neither have they totally ostracized him from the family. Recently, a professor from the college in Madhipura expressed faith in Christ. He attends some of the Sunday services. He openly witnessed about his faith but has not yet been baptized which becomes the true test and mark of the Christian in India.

Persecution takes many forms. Death may still be the penalty for adhering only to the Lordship of Christ. Rev. S. N. Roy recounted the incident of a convert from a village southwest of Saharsa who was poisoned after his family was unsuccessful in trying to persuade him to forsake Christianity. In recent years,

the new state of Tripura was carved out of Assam. This state is controlled by the Communist party. Several months ago, during a large church convention, a Christian compound was attacked and over 600 Christians were massacred. While death in such numbers rarely occurs, many reports indicate that it is not uncommon for a Christian to pay for his faith with his life.

But more often opposition may mean social and/or psychological ostracism from the family, theft of crops and animals, beatings, etc. One day the tribals of Jibespur came to the two Christian homes to collect money for a Hindu festival. When the women refused to give any money, the villagers grabbed them and severely beat the palms of their hands with sticks.

The words of Luke Murmu ring in my years, "It will be good if persecution never stops."

Unparalleled opportunities, along

with opposition, characterize the scene for the India church in the latter part of the twentieth century.

As in the days of the apostles, the India church also faces difficulties created by fellow believers. Foremost among these is the struggle with the parasitic nature of the Pentecostal church in Purnea. Rather than expending major efforts to convert the heathen, it seems they find it more rewarding to offer monetary rewards to attract members of the Brethren in Christ. Even the Hindus have become aware of this. Hanok, a former Brethren in Christ, is now a leader in the Pentecostal church. One day he accosted Philip Murmu in the Purnea Court area. Finally, words ended, he struck Philip. In the ensuing tumult, Hindus gathered around. Familiar with the situation, they upbraided Hanok for "sheep stealing" rather than preaching the Gospel to unbelievers who really needed it.

Divisions caused by the Pentecostals have invaded several churches, taking scores of members. Fortunately, after a period of some time, varying from a few months to several years, many of these return to the Brethren in Christ Church. But the disruption created in local congregations leaves a bad witness in the community and sharp divisions and disillusionment within the body of Christ. This particular type of internal stress has been more enervating than the persecution from without.

Opportunities have been seized; opportunities continue to abound. With this, opposition serves as a refining but unpleasant instrument to aid in the advancement of the Gospel.

*Harvey and Erma Sider recently visited the church in North Bihar. An earlier report by Bishop Sider on India appeared in the Feb. 25, 1981 issue of the Visitor.*

## A Vision in Action

by Ruth Carter

It was a windy, cold, January day when we crowded into the little Hagerstown, Maryland airport. What an exciting moment! There was standing room only for the friends and relatives coming to say bon voyage. Children were sneaking through the crowd to get ringside seats at the front windows. Airport officials were quizzical. Why all the commotion on an ordinary winter weekday afternoon?

Why all the commotion? *Our* people were leaving! *Our* very own missionaries!

At fifty-nine years of age, Blanche and Walter Strite never dreamed they would be boarding a plane destined for Zambia, Africa. The little rural community of Waynesboro, Pennsylvania was home for this retired couple. Blanche had spent most of her adult years raising three daughters and perfecting homemaking skills in cooking and sewing. Walter, a Hagerstown farmboy, spent his most productive years as an electrician. Both had accepted Christ as personal Savior at young ages. Both have had a "heart for missions."

Three years ago the Strites joined "Vision in Action," a new group from the Fairview Avenue congregation in Waynesboro. This group began meeting for a potluck noon meal on the first Sunday of every month for the purpose

of informing and involving its membership in crosscultural missionary experiences. From monthly contributions of approximately ten dollars per member, short term overseas trips could eventually be financed for interested participants.

Blanche and Walter became the second couple to be sent overseas by V.I.A. The Strites will be located at

Sikalongo Brethren in Christ Mission where Walter has been asked to install electrical wiring in the new Bible School buildings. Blanche will be sewing draperies for the building as well as assisting in entertaining guests who visit the mission compound.

There is no experience more valuable for increasing missionary awareness within a congregation than sending out its own people. Vision in Action has become one innovative subgroup within our total church missionary program striving to make this ideal possible.



**Blanche and Walter Strite and the send-off group, many of them members of "Vision in Action."**



**When Benjamin Mirandi died in 1979 he was nearly 90 years old.  
That year the church in North Bihar numbered over 1000.**

(a missionary story for young children—  
and older people, too)

# BENJAMIN

by Alice Dourte



There is a place in the country of India called North Bihar. Many, many people live there. Not long ago no one in North Bihar knew about Jesus. Now there are many people there who love Jesus and follow His way.

How did they hear about Jesus?

Here is a true story about someone God used to tell the people in North Bihar, India, about His Son, Jesus. This person's name was Benjamin.

Benjamin did not live in North Bihar when he was young. Instead, he lived in a village in another part of India called South Bihar.

Nobody in Benjamin's village knew about Jesus. Benjamin's father worshipped evil spirits and demons. He taught Benjamin about these evil beings. When Benjamin got older, he became a witch doctor. He knew all of the witch doctor cures and ceremonies. He believed that this was the true way to live.

When Benjamin was older he got married and had children. One day he got a disease on his skin. He tried all the witch doctor cures but none of them worked. While he was sick, Benjamin's three sons got sick and died. He was very, very sad.

Then Benjamin's daughter got sick, too. He loved his daughter and did not want her to die. What could he do to help her get better? Again he tried all the witch doctor cures, but none of them worked. Benjamin's daughter died. He was very sad, so sad that he cried.

While Benjamin's daughter was sick, he had remembered something. He remembered that one time some Christian missionaries had given him a book with Bible verses in it. They had told him that Jesus' way was best. But he had not really believed them. He had not thought about that book or what the missionaries said for a long, long time.

But now he knew that all the witch doctor cures and the demons and the evil spirits did not make him well. He knew that they did not keep his children from dying. Benjamin said, "I have tried all these things and they have only brought trouble to my family and made me very sad. I will not worship these spirits any more."

Now Benjamin wanted to learn about Jesus' way. He

thought maybe Jesus could help him. So he went to services where people taught about Jesus. He told these Jesus-believing people all about his disease and about how his children had died. They told him to pray to God to be healed.

Finally a missionary came to Benjamin's house and prayed for him. Benjamin was healed that day. Now he knew that Jesus was the true God. He decided to follow Jesus. Benjamin felt peaceful inside.

But people in Benjamin's family and in his village were very angry. They didn't believe in Jesus and they did not want Benjamin to believe and follow Jesus either. They treated him very unkindly and tried to make him change his mind. But Benjamin didn't. He knew that Jesus had healed him and had forgiven his sins. Now Benjamin was determined to serve Jesus.

Benjamin knew that God wanted him to tell other people about Jesus. One night he had a dream. In the dream Benjamin saw other people like him who had believed in Jesus. The next day a Christian man came to ask Benjamin to come with him to North Bihar to teach about Jesus. Benjamin knew that God was telling him to move to another place to tell the people there about God's love. He wanted to obey God, so he went to North Bihar.

In North Bihar Benjamin taught about Jesus. He played his violin and sang songs about Jesus' love. He talked to children, teenagers, middle-aged people and older people. He loved them all and wanted them to know that Jesus loved them too.

And God's Holy Spirit helped lots of people to believe what Benjamin told them. They decided to follow Jesus, too. Benjamin taught them to learn more about Jesus' way by reading the Bible and by praying. He taught them to sing songs about Jesus, too.

Benjamin lived to be very old. But even when his body was getting tired, he still smiled and talked about Jesus. He remembered how God had healed his disease and had given him peace inside. Benjamin was glad that he could tell people in North Bihar about Jesus.

*Alice Dourte is Secretary of Information Services for Brethren in Christ Missions.*

# Church News

## Weddings

**Anderson-Goodemote:** Ruth Lee Goodemote and Jack Douglas Keith Anderson, Jan. 25, in the Beulah Chapel, Oh., with Rev. Kenneth R. Gibson officiating.

**Enders-Hansen:** Lori Denise, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Arthur E. Hansen, Millersville, Pa., and Joel Robert, son of Mr. and Mrs. Ray H. Enders, Columbia, Pa., Jan. 10, in the Manor Brethren in Christ Church with Rev. John Hawbaker officiating.

**Robertshaw-King:** Karen, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Gordon King, Guelph, Ont., and Keith, son of Mr. and Mrs. Owen Robertshaw, Cambridge, Ont., July 27, in the Emmanuel Bible College, Kitchener, with Rev. Roger Charman and Rev. Gerald Tyrrell officiating.

## Obituaries

**Benner:** Miriam K. Benner, Souderton, Pa., born Aug. 8, 1893, died Jan. 14, 1981. She was the daughter of Milton B. and Mary Elizabeth Kratz Benner. She is survived by a brother, George; and a number of nieces and nephews. She was a member of the Silverdale Brethren in Christ Church and served at the San Francisco Mission. The funeral service was conducted in the Silverdale Church by Rev. Omer King. Interment was in the adjoining cemetery.

**Bowers:** Mrs. Margaret Bowers, Collegetown, Pa., born March 4, 1893, died Dec. 24, 1980, in the Leader Nursing Home, Norristown, Pa. She was married to Norman H. Bowers who preceded her in death. She is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Mildred Cestroni; three grandchildren; and two great-grandchildren. She was a member of the Perkiomen Valley Brethren in Christ Church where the funeral service was conducted by Rev. Frederick Gieb. Interment was in the church cemetery.

**Buckwalter:** Andrew Ryan, died Jan. 13, 1981, at birth. He was the son of Mr. and Mrs. Bryan Buckwalter, Canton, Oh. In addition to his parents he is survived by a sister, April Lynn; grandparents: Mr. and Mrs. Ray Buckwalter, Mr. and Mrs. Basil Bailey; great-grandparents: Mr. and Mrs. Donald Brannon, Mr. and Mrs. Okey Bailey, Harvey Buckwalter, and Arthur Essick. Rev. Atlee Hershberger officiated at the private graveside service.

**Cassel:** Mrs. Anna Moist Cassel, Union, Oh., born Nov. 11, 1885, died Jan. 9, 1981. She was married to Jesse C. Cassel who preceded her in death in 1971. She is survived by three children: Mrs. Marjorie Niesley, Mrs. Clarabelle Boyce, and J. C.; seven grandchildren; six great-grandchildren; and a brother. She was a member of the Fairview Brethren in Christ Church. The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Carl Ulery and Rev. Henry Miller. Interment was in the Fairview Cemetery.

**Esau:** Jerry Esau, born Oct. 26, 1906, in Russia, died Jan. 15, 1981, in Pomona, Ca. He is survived by his wife, Sena; two brothers; two grandchildren; and three great grandchildren. He was a member of the Upland Brethren in Christ Church. The funeral service was conducted by Rev. Robert Hempy and Rev. Alvin Burkholder. Entombment was in the Bellevue Mausoleum.

## Allegheny Conference

A Drug Prevention Seminar was held for the youth of the **Air Hill** congregation on Saturday, Feb. 14. Resource people included an associate youth pastor who formerly used drugs, director of "Insight," a registered nurse, and a law enforcement officer from the Bureau of Drug Control.

**Linda Stern** spoke to the adults of the **Five Forks** congregation on Sunday morning, Jan. 25, about prophecy. The parsonage indebtedness was completely paid off recently. • The **Paramount** congregation reports that **Dr. Arthur Climenhaga** was guest speaker on Sunday morning, Jan. 25. Dr. Climenhaga's topic was "To Live is Christ, To Die is Gain." The Missions Commission sponsored the film, "Peace Child" on Sunday evening.

## Atlantic Conference

Youth Day was observed on Sunday, Feb. 1, by the **Conoy** congregation with members of the Christ's Crusaders conducting the morning services. Families of the congregation invited the teenagers to dinner. A nearby gym was used in the afternoon. • Six persons were received into fellowship by the **Free Grace** congregation on Sunday, Feb. 1.

Special guest speaker for the **Manheim** congregation on Feb. 18 was **Harold Paulus** who showed slides of voluntary service at the Life Line Mission. • The **Silverdale** congregation reports receiving a couple into fellowship on Sunday, Jan. 18.

## Canadian Conference

A concert of sacred music was presented to the **Bridlewood** congregation by the Emmanuel Bible College Chorale on Sunday, Jan. 25. • The **Cross Roads** congregation reports that their Sunday school attendance was increased 56% during the October campaign when the 200th anniversary of Sunday schools was observed. The church's pastor, **Rev. Roger Charman**, was ordained on Sunday, Oct. 19.

Members of the Hannigan family, "The Singing Family Tree," brought special music and testimonies for the **Houghton** congregation on Sunday, Jan. 25. A fellowship meal was held following the morning service.

## Central Conference

The film, "Without Onions" was viewed by the **Beulah Chapel** on Sunday evening, Feb. 1, sponsored by the Missions Prayer Fellowship. • The pastor of the **Fairview** congregation, **Rev. Henry Miller**, participated in an Evangelism Explosion Clinic on Jan. 30-Feb. 4.

The youth of the **Mooretown** congregation were in charge of the Sunday evening service, Jan. 18. • A congregational prayer box has been established by the **Western Hills Church**. Members of the congregation are encouraged to drop their name in the box each week to be prayed for as well as taking a name from the box to pray for that person.

## Midwest Conference

The Focus on the Family Film Series were shown in the **Mountain View Church** beginning Sunday evening, Feb. 8. • A Valentine's Banquet was held for the **Oak Park** congregation in an area restaurant. The film, "Strike the Original Match" was shown following the meal.

The **Rosebank** congregation held a Bible Conference on Feb. 22-March 1. Dr. Merne Harris from Vennard College was the speaker. • Five persons were received into church fellowship by the **Zion** congregation on Sunday morning, Jan. 25. There was also a baby dedication.

## Pacific Conference

The Johnny Gomez Trio presented an evening of music to the **Alta Loma** congregation on Sunday, Jan. 18. A potluck supper was held preceding the program.

A Friendship Banquet was arranged by the Women's Fellowship of the **Labish** congregation. It was held on Wednesday evening, Feb. 11 to celebrate Valentine's Day. • **Bishop Alvin Book** was the special speaker for the 70th anniversary of the **Life Line Mission** on Sunday, Feb. 1.

## For The Record . . .

### Births

**Clugston:** Eric Allen, born Dec. 17, to Paul and Julia Clugston, Free Grace congregation, Pa.

**Froese:** Jolene Faye Helen, born Jan. 17, to Ken and Faye Froese, Massey Place congregation, Sask.

**Glenn:** Amanda Arlene, born Jan. 19, to Al and Janet Glenn, Dillsburg congregation, Pa.

**Hess:** Jason Matthew, born Jan. 14, to Ray and Cindy Hess, Souderton congregation, Pa.

**Homsher:** Amanda Marie, born Jan. 12, to Andrew and Eatha Homsher, Refton congregation, Pa.

**Leaver:** Tabatha Dawn, born Jan. 9, to Randy and Tina Leaver, Souderton congregation, Pa.

**Robertshaw:** Heather Ann, born July 9, to Owen and Mary Robertshaw, Cross Roads congregation, Ont.

**Werkheiser:** Nathan Richard, born Jan. 15, to Rick and Ruth Werkheiser, Manor congregation, Pa.

**Wiedrick:** Matthew Douglas, born Jan. 18, to Darrell and Jane (Walker) Wiedrick, Springvale congregation, Ont.

**Winger:** Chad Nathan, born Nov. 5, to Gary and Sylvia Winger, Westheights congregation, Ont.

**Zercher:** Amy Elizabeth, born Jan. 27, to Gene and Paula Zercher, Nappanee congregation, In.

*Jesus said, "And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."*

# We praise him for the opportunity

## **We evaluated and restructured**

We at Houghton Brethren in Christ Church climbed on the bandwagon during the Year Of The Child and utilized the major opportunity of evaluating and restructuring our primary and junior Sunday school programme.

We reminded ourselves of the great importance which our Lord put on children. We considered Jesus' powerful statements in Matthew 18 and we saw anew the importance of effective ministry to these little ones.

We decided that whenever a child appears at the door of our Sunday school he or she presents a direct challenge to us and to *all* our abilities. We must therefore provide a true educational experience for our children. We must set the stage for learning by understanding the principles of child growth and development and then encourage them to participate in tasks which lead to success.

We took advantage of our new gymnasium facilities to create the environment needed for the programme we had planned, and in May, we implemented the programme beginning with grade three to grade five.

## **We planned with the children in mind**

Our programme structure includes learning centres organized around a unit of study. These centres provide activities and experiences in the areas of communications, arts, and environmental studies. For example, in the unit we are now completing which is entitled "God's Wonderful World," the content for learning was Creation, Seedtime and Harvest, Thanksgiving and How to Praise and Worship. The activity centres provide experiences in creative writing, picture making, crafts, identifying and planting seeds as well as a nature centre to provide a basis for later learning.

The children are allowed to select the area of interest where they will work for a designated time before moving to the next centre. Our timetable provides for twenty to twenty-five minutes of Bible nurture, which is directed by our pastor's wife. Music is an intricate part of our programme and selections are used which complement the theme.

## **We utilized the gifts of teachers**

Since only one person is needed to teach the Bible lessons and only one to conduct the music activities, we have found willing, competent staff to guide the children through the learning centre activities. Much interaction between children and staff at the centres is encouraged to provide for social, emo-

tional and spiritual needs as well as intellectual needs.

Now that we have completed two units, which covered six months of study, we must evaluate. Our findings are encouraging. Personal involvement between staff and children has greatly increased. We see our students as people to be disciplined rather than objects to be taught. We observe children being guided into an experiential knowledge of the Word of God. It is thrilling to watch the enthusiasm of the children grow and the result is that they are arriving earlier and earlier each Sunday. Staff members have arisen to this situation and many come twenty to thirty minutes before Sunday school opening. This provides an excellent time for building team spirit, for goal setting and for prayer time. We also realize that many young staff members are learning teacher methods and are being guided into an enrichment of the discipleship teaching process.

## **We offered the sacrifice**

Finally, we can think of no greater thing to do than proclaim that Jesus' words still stand and we *will* provide a sacrificial ministry that will love and teach children as He did. We *will* plan and prepare a quality Christian education for our children that will focus on the skills and knowledge basic to primary and junior divisions. We *will* praise Him for the opportunity to "receive one such little child in His name" (Matthew 18:5).



*Glenna West, a wife, mother, school teacher and music consultant tells how it is done at Houghton.*

## **The Houghton (Ontario) Sunday school is outstanding for at least two reasons:**

- 1. Teachers arrive at least fifteen minutes ahead and gather with the children, who are early arrivals also, for a circle of prayer.**
- 2. Because of the approach used and the strong commitment to service, there is a waiting list of teachers.**

## **"Motivate them" says the Midwest Board of Christian Education**

The theme "Motivation" became the central focus of the Christian Education Retreat of the Dickinson County Churches of the Midwest Conference.

The retreat setting provided a relaxed atmosphere for pastors, superintendents, and teachers as they gathered at the beautiful Rock Springs Retreat Centre for a program coordinated by Don Gilbert, Christian Education director of Abilene Brethren in Christ Church.



Serving as the planning committee were (from the left): Myron Lady (standing), member of the Midwest Regional and General Conference Boards of Christian Education; Kevin Ryan, pastor of the Zion congregation; Ron Freeman, pastor of the Rosebank congregation; Don Hostetler, chairman of the Midwest Board of Christian Education; and Henry Landis (absent when the picture was taken), pastor of the Abilene congregation.



Don Hostetler (second from right), chairman of the Midwest Conference Board of Christian Education, discusses the retreat with wife Marilyn, and with Brian and Joyce Lady. Brian is the Sunday school superintendent at Zion.



Sharing retreat program plans are Gwyn Throne, Carolyn Pointer, Winnie Swalm, Myron Lady, and Twila Engle.

March 10, 1981

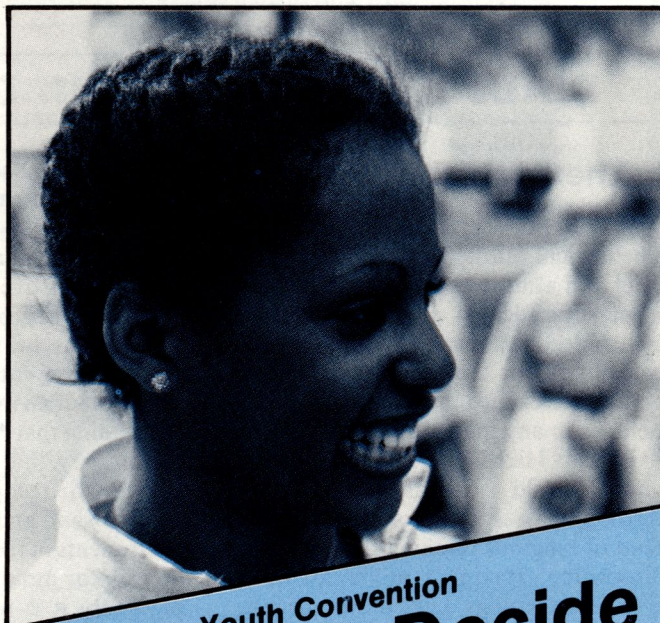
## **"It will work," says the Pacific Conference BCE**

"It will work" through quality teacher training, was the theme of the Pacific Conference Christian Education weekend. The special emphasis on quality teaching was held at the Upland Church in November. It was organized by Stan Long of Christian Light Bookstores in cooperation with board chairman Bill Armstrong.

A banquet on Friday evening featured a keynote address on the theme by Winifred Swalm, Executive Director from the General Conference Board. Workshops on Saturday were led by outstanding workshop leaders including, Herb Anderson, Bishop Shaffer, and Rick Feeney. Christian Light Bookstores provided an excellent display of resource material.

The Pacific Conference Board has placed, in high priority, service training for leadership in Christian Education. An emphasis is placed on the importance of training for Sunday school.

The Pacific Conference board also sponsored a rally at the Alta Loma Church with panel members Ralph Wenger, Curtis Byer, and Winifred Swalm from the General Conference board. Panel members explained available programs the board offers and also responded to questions from the audience.



Youth Convention  
**Let YOUTH Decide**  
French Lick, Indiana  
December 28-30, 1981

Brochures for **Let YOUTH Decide**, a Brethren in Christ Youth Convention, will be available at regional conferences across the brotherhood. All congregations will receive a mailing of the brochures from the Board of Christian Education office in Nappanee.

# Readers Respond

To be considered for publication,  
letters must be signed  
and should be 300 words or less.

## Comments on the Visitor

Enclosed is a check for a two-year renewal of the *Evangelical Visitor*.

Wouldn't it be good to get some good old time testimonies published in our paper? When I was a girl and read the *Visitor*, those testimonies were so uplifting to my young Christian life. Just a suggestion.

Mrs. Herbert Kreider  
Hershey, PA

May I take this opportunity to tell you how much I appreciated the cover of the January 10 issue. In these days of world turmoil, in the face of a new year, in the face of family uncertainties, it just seemed to come as a comforting balm—"Chart and compass come from Thee

(praise Him), Jesus Savior, pilot me (please do)."

I thought "Faith Is . . ." was great, too, and the "Seven Steps to Renewal" was so timely. Isn't John Wesley's covenant service a choice morsel in that article?

To sum it all up, I am enjoying the *Visitor*.

Joanna Hoke  
Garrett, IN

## Help needed in research project

I am currently working on my Masters thesis in the area of "The Response of the Historic Peace Churches to the Internment of the Japanese-Americans During World War II." Executive Order 9066 signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on Feb. 19, 1942 began the process of moving over 120,000 Japanese-Americans into "relocation centers" in

California, Idaho, Utah, Oregon, Washington, Colorado, Arizona, Wyoming and Arkansas.

I would be very interested in corresponding with either persons who know of materials which would be helpful or with persons who were directly involved, e.g. by working in relocation centers, by farming in areas where Japanese had to move from, by protesting this assault on a group of people (2/3 of whom were American citizens).

I would also appreciate reflections from Japanese-Americans on the visibility and response of Mennonites, Friends, Brethren, and Brethren in Christ.

Please write to me at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries, 3003 Benham Ave., Elkhart, Indiana, 46514.

Charles Lord  
Elkhart, IN

## LOGUE DIALOGUE DIALOGUE DIALOGUE DIALOGUE DIALOGUE DIALOGUE

## Theological Options?

Dr. Owen Alderfer's "Options in the Theological Marketplace" (Dec. 10) is a brief and almost homey treatment of a most sophisticated and complex subject. Indeed it sounds like a made-easy description for the ordinary person to go and select for himself a very needed item, as in any marketplace.

Frankly I like Dr. Alderfer's presentation. I could sit comfortably in his theology class. It proffers a kind of freedom of religious thinking that suits my disposition. Having a utilitarian bent, even as to theology, I like the privilege to adjust my faith to my need. Such is very much a necessity of life as well as a convenience in church relationships.

But within my own church, which happens to be the same as the author's, there isn't or hasn't been that measure of eclecticism which he suggests, unless perhaps the approach is only for a kind of intellectual window shopping. I note that the usual church, my own included, clings to what it considers *the* correct theology. And I do not disparage this. Much as I like them as part of my understanding, the varieties of the "theological marketplace" do me little good within

that most vital society. Whose options are the ones mentioned?

I am not sure the author's presentation lacks anything. That would depend on the objective he had in mind. But after a concise presentation of four of the options he says, "but singly and together they fall short," and leaves us with neither an option nor a theology by concluding that "we can but bow before the mystery."

Though freedom and variety make life pleasant and enjoyable, especially for students of theology, the ultimates of life call for more than an open marketplace. So it is not an idle concern or evidence of an unloving dogmatism when churches strive to point to *the* truth.

But if options there be, permit me to add one more, describing it before giving it a name. If *my* theology includes anything within it, or if I have any attitude toward it, which produces or promotes estrangement between me and others—any others, my theology should be considered faulty or inadequate. One's attitude toward his fellowmen is a divine matter and should be the central element in "the language and ideas by which we try to convey a knowledge of

God to an age," to quote Dr. Alderfer's definition of theology.

I am bold to add this to the four listed. I am not sure it has any heritage among the great systems mentioned. But it is so fundamental to the spiritual life of man that it should be named among them. But I haven't named it! The most basic things have common names. The term is a bit spoiled, but I can think of none better than *Social Theology*, even at the risk of being classified with the humanists.

This "system" deserves a full development by a great theologian. Its adherents are the nicest folk, and it adds a dimension of life not found in the others. It isn't "worked out—majors and minors, point by point." While the four major ones listed provide some most valid "answers in this uncertain age," I do note that the more zealous one becomes in behalf of them, the more likely he is to be lacking that universally needed and agreeable element in "social theology."

Truly I believe in this little-noted theology. Therefore I choose not to be estranged from those who adhere to something else. And just to be sure I am not thought to be alone in this: Jesus

## Messiah College News

Robert Short, author of *The Gospel According to Peanuts*, made two audio-visual presentations at Messiah College: "Christ and the Playboy," and "The Gospel According to Peanuts." Both were enthusiastically received.

The Messiah College Concert Choir, directed by Dr. Larry S. Landis, is touring 15 churches and schools during March. The 45-voice choir, for many years known as the Choral Society, is giving programs in New Jersey, Connecticut, New York, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania.

Research by Dr. Ronald R. Sider, Professor of Music at Messiah College, is quoted in two articles in the recently-published, twenty-volume *Grove's Dictionary of Music and Musicians*. The set, published in England, is the most authoritative and widely used reference work in Music. Dr. Sider is also quoted in the recent *Dictionary of Contemporary Music*, by John Vinton.

## THE DIALOGUE DIALOGUE

said in John 13:35, "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another."

Millard Herr  
Upland, CA

### Owen's response . . .

Millard graciously sent me a copy of his response to "Options . . ." I thank him for that. His charge of over-simplification is valid; this seemed inevitable in the terms of the time-frame of the assignment—a fifteen minute chapel address.

I am interested that the great Karl Barth was willing to try simplification of his theology. When asked if he could summarize his greatest theological insights into a brief statement, he responded with

Jesus loves me, this I know,  
For the Bible tells me so.

I am willing to add Millard's option to my list. I would note that I think Walter Rauschenbusch, a "great theologian," has already done the systematizing. We could add some more options, I think, and we still come up wanting in our effort to "define the Almighty."

March 10, 1981

## Editorial

### New in the community

We have lived here in Nappanee for nine months now, but we still are very much outsiders in our neighborhood. Each family on the block is involved with its own activities and circle of friends (many of whom have lived in Nappanee all their life). Of course, the home we bought has had four owners in about three years. (The previous owners were transferred shortly after buying.) Perhaps the neighbors have grown weary of trying to make friends with the transients living, for the moment, at 107 East Van Buren!

But I find we're not unique with this problem. Several other persons, each more outgoing than are we, have shared similar observations. Nappanee, like many other small towns, seems to be a tightly-knit community, where it's tough to be an outsider.

Now in the congregation, things are a bit different. People there have made us feel at home, and have even put us to work. Of course, we knew many people from college and from church contacts, so we were insiders even before we arrived.

New in the community.

I have a hunch that our feelings of being outsiders in our neighborhood unfortunately parallels the experience many people have as they join a Brethren in Christ fellowship. Especially if they come from another denomination or have no church background at all, new people seem often to have a difficult time being really accepted as full-fledged, *bona fide* Brethren in Christ, even after taking their membership vows.

Granted, many of our congregations justifiably pride themselves on their reputation of being friendly churches to visit. But there is a big difference between "being friendly" and "making friends."

In his book, "A New Look at Church Growth," Floyd Bartel emphasizes the need for accepting and affirming new people who are coming into the fellowship of believers.

*Churches with a visitation evangelism program or regular altar calls do not necessarily grow. While new people may respond, they may also be leaving by the "back door" as fast as they come in through the "front door" if there is no attention given to fellowship, personal growth needs, and training for witness and service. Thus, some important questions for any church to ask itself at any time are, "Where are our new members of the last five years? Are most of them participating or have they 'disappeared'?" Without assimilation of new members, congregational evangelism also leaves many casualties.\**

I sense that as a church, we are improving in our ability to incorporate new people into our congregations. As I look over the *Visitor* subscription list, I am encouraged to see the number of names which are obviously not "ethnic Brethren in Christ" names. But from observation and recent conversations I am convinced we have much room for additional growth in the art of wholeheartedly embracing new persons and encouraging (permitting?) them to become fully functioning members in the life and ministry of the church.

As we progress toward our goal of doubling our membership in a decade (a goal adopted in 1978), I believe the Holy Spirit will continue to add persons daily to the church. Our efforts in accepting and affirming new members will be amply rewarded as these sisters and brothers enrich and enliven our community of faith. G

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## Religious News

### Pioneer Girls Becomes Pioneer Ministries

On February 1, 1981, Pioneer Girls became Pioneer Ministries, Inc. The new name marks the expansion of Pioneer Girls into boys club programming as well as other facets of Christian education ministry.

The decision to expand the ministry was made after much research into the expressed needs of churches and the organization's ability to supply those needs. Established in 1939, Pioneer Girls provides a girls club program to churches in 70 denominations. For many years, churches and Christian leaders have asked the organization to include a boys program in the outreach or to provide means of combining girls and boys clubs, should the churches desire this approach. Pioneer Ministries is seeking to meet both requests. To insure a quality program, a national Christian education advisory council is critiquing the ongoing program development.

### Grass Roots Evangelism is Goal of 1981 American Festival

Up to 20,000 Christians from more than 150 church bodies in America are expected to take part in the American Festival of Evangelism July 27-30, 1981, in Kansas City, Mo. According to Thomas F. Zimmerman, general superintendent of the Assemblies of God, who is planning committee chairman for the festival, the sessions are intended to spearhead evangelism in the United States during the 1980's. Crusade Evangelist Billy Graham will head the list of major speakers for the sessions along with Evangelist Luis Palau and the Rev. Adrian Rogers.

The spotlight of the Kansas City gathering will be upon local churches, and the program will be designed to help each congregation effectively evangelize its own community. Far from being brash and overconfident evangelists, most Christians "must be encouraged and taught before they are willing to share the 'good news,'" Rev. Zimmerman said. In addition to the major evening sessions, the festival will feature daily Bible studies, worship services and nearly 100 workshops and seminars. The sessions will focus on methods and resources for evangelizing every group and segment of the nation.

### Convention-Wide Agenda For Peacemaking Explored

"We have never lived in a time when it was more important to preach peace, practice peace and do the things that make for peace," Foy Valentine told a Southern Baptist Consultation on Peace With Justice. Mr. Valentine, executive director of the SBC Christian Life Commission, was one of the participants in the consultation, which explored plans for a convention-wide agency for peace and discussed new ways to help churches deal with peacemaking.

In spite of the seemingly dim prospects for world peace, two denominational ethicists and a South Carolina pastor urged the moral concerns agency to help Southern Baptists concentrate on peacemaking. Bill Elder, director of Christian citizenship development for the Commission, said Southern Baptists must understand the biblical definition of peace. "Peace is clearly linked with a constellation of values which are revealed throughout the Bible," he said. "Peace is whatever happens that fulfills God's purpose for humanity. When we work for justice and liberty and righteousness we are working for peace."

Glen Stassen, associate professor of ethics at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, majored on the urgency of working for peace with justice, saying the current move toward ground-launched intercontinental ballistic missiles on the part of both Russia and the United States could lead to an uncontrolled arms race. The ethicist said Ronald Reagan's election as President still leaves room to

hope and work for peace, despite fears to the contrary.

"During the campaign Ronald Reagan was worried about being labeled a warmonger and he changed his rhetoric and promised to do some things in support of peace," Mr. Stassen pointed out. "Reagan stopped talking about superiority and started talking about adequacy." Mr. Stassen said that the President-elect can be influenced by individuals and groups committed to peace with justice. "Individual Christians and church groups should not just deplore the arms race, but should start being specific (with Reagan) about ways to achieve peace," he said.

### Fuller to Launch Black Ministries Outreach

A \$107,000 grant from the Lilly Endowment, Inc. will enable Fuller Theological Seminary to launch a pilot model of outreach to youth in the urban black churches of Los Angeles.

The Black Ministries Division of the Seminary has observed the exodus of black youth from churches and the hopelessness they so often face with unemployment, crumbling neighborhoods, fatherless homes and temptations of crime. Through training black pastors in youth ministry skills and assigning interns to each church, congregations can learn "new ways to reach their troubled youth." The plan involves a cooperative effort with Youth for Christ, Young Life and 10 local black churches. The churches selected will be those pastored by students already enrolled in the Seminary Black Pastors Program.

### Historian Outlines Value Of Singles in the Church

According to Historian and editor Martin Marty, singles have two primary gifts to offer the church—"a reminder of the value of privacy, of time alone to think and reflect," and "a reminder that no one can afford to overlook the gift of friendship."

"Couples," he said "often become so focused upon themselves and their own relationship that they forget the importance of friendship. The friend is one of God's great gifts to people."

He also spoke of the need to look at singleness as an opportunity to give. "We must make provisions for the meaningful aspects of singlehood. What does giving in that context mean? All circumstances of life provide an opportunity for a plurality of givings."

### WOMEN ALONE FEMINAR April 10-12, 1981

The Women Alone Feminar is planned for April 10-12, 1981 at Camp Hebron, Halifax, Pa. This is for women of all ages who are divorced, single, or widowed. It is a time of spiritual, social, and physical enrichment. Our theme this year is "The Joys of Sharing." Many persons will be sharing their talents. Our special will be the testimonies of girls from the Walter Hoving Home, Garrison, New York.

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