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MARCH / APRIL 1977

therefore

TREASURE

*in
earthen
vessels*

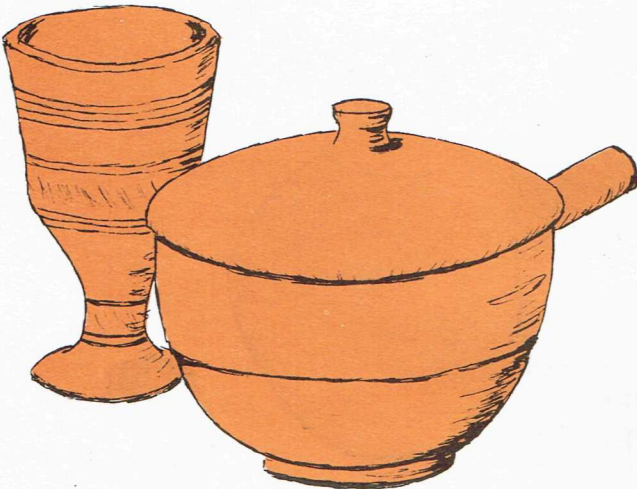


HOW MANY OF US HAVE A "TREASURE"?

WHAT ARE WE TO DO WITH IT?

***“We have this treasure
in jars of clay
to show that this
all-surpassing power is
from God and not from us.”***

2 Corinthians 4:7, NIV



We have a treasure. The treasure is the refreshing new life, the welcomed new light, the energizing new power which comes as we walk with the Lord. "For God...made his light shine in our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ." (2 Cor. 4:6, NIV).

Neither you nor I manufacture this treasure; it is a free gift of God to each of His children. "We have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us."



Each one of us is fulfilling our purpose as a "jar of clay" as we daily share with our needy world the blessings of our "treasure." As Paul said earlier in his second letter to the Corinthian church, "God has enabled us to be ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit."

Note carefully that we are not just *expected* to be ministers of the Gospel...God himself *enables* each of us as well.



The life and vitality of the Church is in you and me—the people of God—as we walk in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Life and vitality cannot be found in plans or programs, in committee meetings or administrative structures, in bricks and mortar or in pages of statistics.

The Church is faithful to her task only as each one of us, as members of the Body of Christ, is alert and actively involved in ministry.

Wait a minute! I'm just an ordinary Christian.

You are suggesting that I have the ultimate resource for building the church.

I thought that was the responsibility of the pastor and church board, of the mission board and the missionaries.

Are you saying that the responsibility is basically MINE?



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therefore

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Volume V, Number 2



treasures in earthen vessels

One of the real joys of being a member of a congregation is to realize that one is a part of a community of people which has many God-given gifts. These gifts are not given exclusively to one of a few people in the congregation but rather to every member of the group. It is quite normal to think of leadership in terms of a person or a few persons leading a larger group. The New Testament however suggests that there might be another concept of leadership in which case leadership is conceived as the many serving one another. Two of the New Testament passages (I Corinthians 12 and Ephesians 4) that discuss the subject of gifts suggest that every member does indeed have a ministry. "The Spirit's presence is shown in some way in each one, for the good of all," 1 Cor. 12:7. "Each one of us has been given a special gift, in proportion to what Christ has given," Ephesians 4:7.

It may be unrealistic to assume that all of the gifts in a congregation can be properly utilized. However, this should be a goal that is never removed. Improper or insufficient utilization of spiritual gifts may be due to the inability to recognize the gifts that do exist.

—James D. Kratz, MISSION-FOCUS May 1974

Sometimes it is hard for us to realize that the primary resource for the growth of the church is found in the *new convert* rather than in the missionary or pastor. But Paul had discovered the necessity to incorporate the new believers into the ongoing ministry right from the start. In the beginning of his letter to the Christians at Philippi he referred to their "partnership in the gospel" from the first day until now."



We must take care to avoid squelching the vitality of new believers, by underestimating their ability to function as disciples. Instead, we need to concentrate on "stirring up the gift God has given," as Paul admonished Timothy. The goal—that every believer actively put to work in the service of our Lord the "treasure" God had entrusted to his "clay pot."



Really, there is no way that all the needed resource could be "imported" into a new situation. The secret of church growth is to carry the seeds of the Gospel, not to transplant a field of full-grown plants.

NO POWER SHORTAGE

I think it's oil.

This idea of a treasure in my earthen jar is intriguing. The pot is not very attractive—it's somewhat misshapen and it is apt to crack if dropped carelessly. You can't see immediately what is in that jar. That only becomes evident as it is used.

The treasure feels good to my skin. It heals the roughness and cracks.

The treasure reduces the friction between me and my fellows. As the friction is reduced it keeps down the heat and quiets the noise.

The treasure will burn when given a chance to soak the wick of my lamp. That flickering light attracts persons to me and gives light for several at a time as we walk along together.

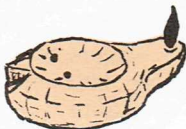
It must be oil.

It must surely be clear that the treasure in my pot is oil for "such overwhelming power comes from God and not from us."

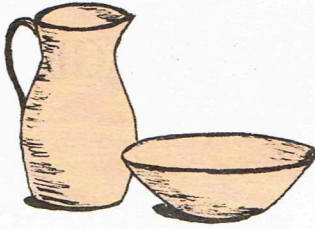
That Sidonian widow experienced a miracle every time she reached into her flour jar. You know, it's just like that every time I dip into the treasure in my pot. The oil never "gets all." It's a miracle.

There is no energy crisis as long as I keep the treasure.

James



WITNESS AND SERVICE IS DONE



IRA WOLGEMUTH is one of several people filling a real need at Fellowship Chapel in New York. Renovation of the new building at 240 E. Tremont is being done with volunteer labor. Ira has made several trips from his Elizabethtown home, enlisting as many people as he can find to "come along and help." They are sharing substantially of their treasures.

NEEDED A number of volunteers to finish the new Chapel in time for the anticipated May 22 dedication. Work yet to be done includes some masonry, carpentry, plumbing and electrical, and much painting and laying of floor coverings. [Contact AL BOOK in New York (212-583-1954) to see how you can help.]



One of the newest projects of Brethren in Christ Missions is the joint church-planting venture in Wilkes-Barre, PA (co-sponsored with two Mennonite conferences). A house-fellowship has been started, with contacts being made in the community.

One aspect of the new work is the creation of a Voluntary Service unit which will relate closely to the work of the house church.

NEEDED 1 mature couple to serve as houseparents for up to eight adolescents. Will involve some one-to-one counseling, recreational development and general operation of residence (including meal preparation, housekeeping, laundry). One or both persons should have counseling training/experience, plus experience in working with adolescents. (Assignment is with Volunteers of America.)

NEEDED 2 resident aides for a new "halfway house" mental health program being started. Aides will supervise up to 6 adults in a boarding residence setting. Will give guidance in homemaking and personal hygiene skills and community involvement. College or experience needed; single persons preferred.

NEEDED 3 activity aides for mental health day activity center. Aides will assist staff in arts and crafts activities, in follow-up of clients in the community, and in recreational activities. Crafts or recreational experience needed.

SERVICE

NEED IN RESPONSE TO NEED

NEEDED in Nicaragua are replacements for Glen and Wanda Heise, who recently completed Voluntary Service assignments in community development and adult literacy. This assignment offers a good opportunity to be vitally involved in a dynamic young church. [Contact VOLUNTARY SERVICE, Elizabethtown.]

NEEDED in Japan is another missionary couple in an evangelism-nurture-church building assignment. The first step will be to learn the Japanese language. Who is the Lord calling to meet this long-standing need for missionary personnel? [Contact OVERSEAS MISSIONS, Elizabethtown.]



Beginning a new assignment as Community Ministries Coordinator, JAN HYKES moved into the Bronx only two weeks ago and began looking for some part-time "tent-making" employment. But already she's had as an "overnight guest" a 13-year-old girl who periodically runs away from home. A camper last year at Spring Lake Retreat, she is almost never in school and can't read. Jan has made contact with her home and is tutoring her on the alphabet and simple words...and the girl was in school three days last week!!

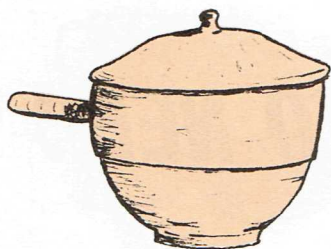
NEEDED Persons (young and old) willing to get involved with the needs of cities in North America...perhaps in a "tent-making" capacity...bringing "treasures" into Dayton, Wilkes-Barre, Des Moines, Cincinnati, New York, Toronto, Albuquerque, Harrisburg, Denver, Roanoke... [Contact URBAN MINISTRIES, Elizabethtown]



Is there a need for several congregations to join together in doing "localized mission," perhaps in a nearby city? For example, churches ringing Lancaster might focus on downtown needs...southern Ohio congregations might work together on a mission project in Dayton...etc.

Some people talking about this concept see the mission board as a resource to such a local project, but also see value in keeping personnel, finances and decision-making at the local level. What do YOU think?

SHARING "TREASURES"



IN RESPONSE TO NEED

Mission outreach—that is, the process of going into all the world and making disciples—begins in our homes and local congregations. We cannot escape our obligation as individuals and local fellowships to witness daily by word and life in our communities. To do this effectively, the congregation mobilizes and trains its members. The process of discovering gifts and training for ministry starts at home.

But there is a world beyond our local community. To reach this larger world, the church created the Board for Missions. Our purpose is given in the MANUAL OF DOCTRINE AND GOVERNMENT: "The Board shall advance the cause of Christ and the church through Missions, Church Extension, Mission Churches, and Christian Service Ministries [...the concerns and witness of the church in Christian social welfare and peace testimony]...." (page 87)

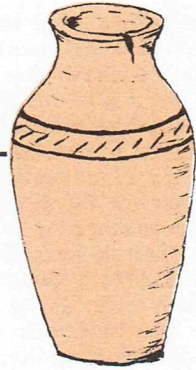
"To carry out this purpose," the MANUAL continues, "it shall utilize the resources of the Brethren in Christ and other cooperating groups." In other words, the congregations provide *persons* and elements of *support* (prayer, finances, etc.) which are then coordinated by the mission board.

As the congregation discovers, develops and utilizes gifts, it also must be in the business of sending from its group those whom God has called to move out and pioneer for the express purpose of being a part in the formation of new communities of faith. Congregations are sometimes strengthened by the sending of personnel resources they feel they can least afford to give up. —James D. Kratz, MISSION-FOCUS May 1974

Support from the Church

An indispensable aspect of putting to use the "treasures in clay pots" (the talents and spiritual gifts God gives to members of His Body) is the money given freely by His people.

"Utilizing the resources of the Brethren in Christ..." Unlike some independent mission societies which create their own constituency, the Board for Missions works with the mission vision of the Brethren in Christ church. The Board is challenged to translate that vision



*I'm interested in
helping to meet the need...*

How do I apply?

Discovering the Lord's will is an exciting part of the Christian life, best accomplished by checking your sense of God's leading with others in the fellowship. Generally our vision is limited by our knowledge of possible options.

Why not talk over your interest in Christian service with your pastor, and perhaps a mission board member in the area. And contact the Missions Office: Box 149, Elizabethtown, PA 17022, Phone (717) 367-7045.

We will be happy to talk over your interest, talents and sense of calling, along with the current and future needs in missions, education and experience requirements, etc. Such an interview may take place either before or after you fill out an application form (available upon request).

into programs which the Church will support. The number of personnel supplied by the churches, the amount of funds forthcoming, coupled with counsel of brothers and sisters—all help to shape the missions program.

Someone recently asked, "What would you do if 100 couples volunteered this year for mission assignments?" Such hypothetical questions are almost impossible to answer. But it does focus a concern: How many people can a brotherhood of 13,210 members support? And, if there is a logical upper limit on the number of supported mission workers, what should their areas of ministry be?

As this issue of *therefore* goes to press, there is a lag in budget receipts as compared to 1976 (which itself was a "slow" year financially). The 1977 missions budget is \$620,420. Contributions may be channeled through your congregational treasurer, or mailed directly to:

BRETHREN IN CHRIST MISSIONS
Box 149, Elizabethtown, PA 17022
R. #1, Stevensville, ONT LOS 1S0

His father died when Jonah Musanje was 13. His Christian mother had the task of raising the family in a non-Christian setting.

Jonah's faith has triumphed over numerous tests. His wife died after the birth of their first child. Jonah remarried, but illness and death has plagued the family (due, according to some outside the church, to his refusal to perform the customary purification rites after his first wife's death). But Jonah and his wife have remained steadfast in faith through it all.

Head teacher of a 290-student primary school, Jonah is Treasurer of the Church in Zambia, serves 13 churches as district deacon, and is the visiting pastor to Brethren in Christ students at Namwala Secondary School. He has been a member of the Church Executive Committee (later Executive Board) since its inception.

As fellow Zambians might put it, "Jonah has a strong spirit for the work of God."

"TREASURES"

In his high school days, Behnan was known as "Satan," but his evangelical experience has quite altered his life. He still has more nervous energy than his muscles know what to do with but his spirit can handle it well. He and our Muslim taxi driver kissed warmly after a day together and he talked freely about his faith to a soldier going home to his father's funeral, exchanging addresses with him and gave him a Gospel of John before they parted.

Distribution of Christian literature is an avocation with Behnan. Periodically he gets lodged overnight in a jail for carrying "subversive" literature. The magistrates always free him, however, because Turkey is a secular state that permits freedom of religion in law if not always in practice. Whatever one's view of Behnan's evangelizing, one must admit that he is doing much to guarantee one of the basic civil rights, the right to talk of his faith.

Behnan and his group have more dependence on some of the foreigners than I'd like to see, but they also show a healthy independence. They have a strong teaching of Christian maturity; the Turkish word is also translated "perfection" or "holiness." So while they cooperate with a foreign missionary movement in some prayer meetings, they say that they really don't like this particular movement because it says that a Christian can't have victory over sin. "Always we have victory over sins, and the devil" Behnan writes.

—Harold Nigh (MCC Crete) after a visit to Turkey

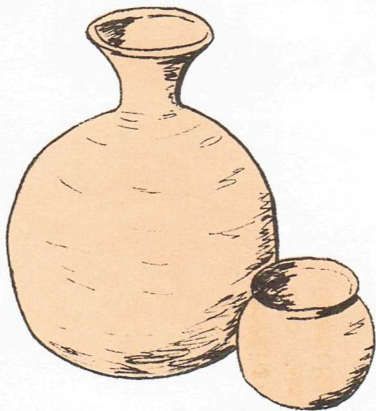
NEW CALL TO PEACEMAKING is available from the Commission on Peace and Social Concerns. Into its 80 pages are packed seven chapters of challenging material rising out of the moving of the Holy Spirit among evangelical Friends.

The call is to take "a new look at the problem of war, perhaps a total new set of approaches, particularly a positive approach" (from the Introduction).

Send \$1.00 per copy desired to:
Box 149, Elizabethtown, PA 17022

A Tale of Two Churches...

Once upon a time, not so long ago, an established and thriving congregation decided that it needed additional leadership resources. After giving the subject some thought, a "feeler" was sent out to the missions office, to see if some voluntary service person might be available. "You recruit and support them," the proposition went, "and we will put them to work."



...And Their Vision

About the same time, a small congregation struggling for its existence had an upsurge in attendance and offerings.

A visitor remarked about the improvement. "Well, I don't know how it happened," was the response.

"We just got excited about the possibilities."

(A wise young pastor was helping people in the church see their potential.)

(Use a sheet of paper if you don't want to cut this copy).

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TREASURE IN JARS OF CLAY

The world is made up mostly of ordinary people and ordinary experiences. And just such a person is Dona Aurora. She has a husband, five girls and a little shack on top of a knoll. The only extraordinary part of her life is her experience with the Lord.

You need to ask her only once and you'll know—she loves Him. And the whole neighborhood knows it too.

Not that she goes around preaching, or even talking about religious things—she's just not that type. It is more like one lady said, "Have you noticed the difference in Dona Aurora? She has really changed; she seems to be on fire."

It's not that she has a lot of education and thus is rich intellectually. She can't read, and has turned down offers to teach her because she doesn't think she has the ability. Nor does she have any real possessions—the knoll where her family lives is another person's land. It's her testimony, her way of life, her singing as she goes through each day, that have made people take notice.

Dona Aurora spends the best part of the day with a basket of vegetables perched loftily on her head, winding her way through the streets of one suburb of Managua crying "Yucca, platanos, tomatoes...", looking for a sale of her interesting assortment of vegetables.

Ordinary people—the world is full of them. Oh, that there were more with that extraordinary testimony which Christ gives each of us in response to our search for fulness in Him. Oh, that there were a few more testifying with their lives as Dona Aurora is.

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