

DreamSeeker Magazine

Voices from the Soul



The Search for Life As It's Meant to Be

Lauren Deville

Tornadoes in the Night

Lisa Weaver

The Turquoise Pen

Bacon Bits

Noël R. King

Stand up Straight

Ross T. Bender

Danny and Me

David W. Corbin

Passover/Passion Week 1977 Lives On

Jonathan Beachy

Beneath the Skyline

Getting a Word in Edgewise

Deborah Good

and much more

Spring 2007

Volume 7, Number 2; ISSN 1546-4172

Editorial: Longing for Life As It's Meant to Be

Except for Jonathan Beachy's dramatic story, this issue of *DreamSeeker Magazine* mostly doesn't focus explicitly on Passion week or Easter. Yet I see implicit connections. Passion week and Easter mix suffering and joy, evil and goodness, human frailties and divine surprises. And longing. Because though Easter marks a joyful turn in the story God is telling beneath and above and through us, still so often Easter's promise seems only partly palpable. The materials in this issue in their various ways evoke longing for more, probe shadows and wounds, and offer glimpses of joy or life as it's meant to be.

Lauren Deville's article appears first because she sets the stage with, precisely, her longing for life as it's meant to be yet so often isn't. Lisa Weaver reports on her son's terrifying experience made bearable by one whose faith embraced a fearful boy. Noël King tells a parable of a writer burning with passion to find joy in LIVING, not just whatever his muses want him to transmute into words to fan fame.

Then Ross Bender, David Corbin, and Jonathan Beachy offer a trio of testimonies to human mortalities, frailties, and losses. Their stories lack stereotypical happy endings. Yet, within the shadows of each, hints of Easter's reminder of life as it's meant to be can be sensed. Bender finds the

courage to speak of what Parkinson's is doing to him. When his friend gets cancer, Corbin finds bittersweet comfort in remembering their boyhoods. When Beachy loses a child, he realizes arms that long for that child can also hug others.

Deborah Good is not so sure the world as currently organized gives adequate voice to more than a powerful minority, but in her call for the voiceless at least to get a word in edgewise, she echoes the Jesus who preached release to the captives on his way to the cross and beyond. Mark Wenger tenderly tells of the preciousness of time—*kairos* time—with his parents.

Kairos time is God's time, the type of time that broke into ordinary time at Easter. In my column, I wonder what we can learn from both those who don't and do attend church about how we treat Sunday mornings as God's time.

Dave Greiser reviews "Children of Men," a film which simultaneously paints a picture of a nightmare future world and hints at a reenactment of the Christ story. In his reviews of two books on Scripture, Dan Hertzler draws us into the source of the Christ story. And the various poets in their own ways both probe sufferings and long for life as it's meant to be.

—Michael A. King

The materials in this issue in their various ways evoke longing for more. . . .



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Submissions
Occasional unsolicited submissions accepted, 750-1500 words, returned only with SASE. Letters invited

Subscriptions
Standard rates in U.S.
\$14.95/yr. in US, automatic Jan. renewals, cancel any time.
Single copy: \$3.75

Free online:
www.CascadiaPublishingHouse.com/dsm

DreamSeeker Magazine is published quarterly in spring, summer, fall, winter.
Copyright © 2007
ISSN: 1546-4172 (paper)
ISSN: 1548-1719 (online)

IN THIS ISSUE

Spring 2007, Volume 7, Number 2

Editorial: Longing for Life As It's Meant to Be Responses	2
Poetry	
Ann M. Schultz, <i>Lot</i> • 2; Jonathan Beachy, <i>The Stench</i> • 23; Freda Zehr, <i>Black Holes</i> • 38; <i>Saturday Night—Sunday Morning</i> • 44; Kenneth Gibble, <i>Perspective</i> • back cover	
The Search for Life As It's Meant to Be	3
Lauren Deville	
Tornadoes in the Night	5
Lisa Weaver	
The Turquoise Pen	8
<i>Bacon Bits</i>	
Noël R. King	
Stand up Straight	11
Ross T. Bender	
Danny and Me	17
David W. Corbin	
Passover/Passion Week 1977 Lives On	21
Jonathan Beachy	
Beneath the Skyline	25
<i>Getting a Word in Edgewise</i>	
Deborah Good	
Community Sense	29
<i>A Moment of Grace</i>	
Mark R. Wenger	
Kingsview	32
<i>What We Can Learn from Those Who Don't Go to Church—and Even from Those Who Do</i>	
Michael A. King	
Reel Reflections	36
<i>Hopeful Nightmare: A Review of "Children of Men"</i>	
Dave Greiser	
Books, Faith, World & More	39
<i>The Bible Story—Our Story: Reviews of Telling Our Stories: Personal Accounts of Engagement with Scripture and The Art of Reading Scripture</i>	

Responses

Lot

It was too much to ask—not to look back.
What woman ever left the home she loved
Without a backward glance—one last farewell?
It wasn't that she didn't want to leave,
But something of herself still lingered there
Among the dusty ashes of the hearth
That baked the daily bread—the village well,
The sunny courtyard where the children played,
The rooms where she performed day after day
The hundred homely duties bound with dreams
That shape a woman's life. Was it a sin
Just to look back? It was too much to ask.

—Ann M. Schultz, Rochester, Minnesota, submitted this poem
after reading Susan Ehst's "Lot's Wife" (*DreamSeeker* Maga-
zine, Summer 2006)

Dear Editor:

I was just reading a review of *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*, by Margaret Y. MacDonald and Carolyn Osiek, with Janet Tulloch. (The review, by Amy Oden, appeared in *The Christian Century*, October 3, 2006, 7-38). I was reminded of Susan Ehst's piece about Lot's wife (*DreamSeeker Magazine*, Summer 2006).

It didn't occur to me before that a person who was not the instigator of the move would be much more likely to take a wistful look back at what was being left than would the person who had made the decision to leave. I can see Lot setting off steely-eyed in a new direction while his wife and family trailed along behind with lingering glances back at all that they were leaving. Ms. Ehst turned Lot and his family into real people. Pretty good! —David Corbin, Lopez Island, Washington

Letters to DreamSeeker Magazine are encouraged. We also welcome and when possible publish extended responses such as this one (max. 400 words).

The Search for Life As It's Meant to Be

Lauren Deville

I've never really liked beauty magazines. I've never liked magazines at all, really, because when I used to spend hours perusing them, I'd end up feeling disgusting, like I'd just eaten two entire meals comprised of nothing but gumdrops: time had passed, but it had passed in an utterly useless way.

This, in fact, is one of my biggest hang-ups: I can't stand to feel as though I'm wasting time. I worship efficiency, and as a result, I am most depressed when I can't think of anything valuable to do with my time. I choose my daily activities, mostly subconsciously, on a sort of value point system: the more points I earn in a given day, the better I feel about myself. Through my point system I'm searching for a life better than the slipshod one I so often lead.

Beauty magazines are on the same search, I think, but in a more obvious way (to me, anyway): ostensibly selling mere clothing and makeup, the magazines are really selling an entire *life*. They are about beauty and glamour, but then again, they're not, because beauty and glamour are not the ends in themselves.

I remember nights when I thought I looked perfect; several were (for independent reasons) some of the

most miserable nights of my life. In fact, I had tried so hard to look perfect on those nights because it was the one thing I could control; I was trying to affect external events by how I looked, and it could not be done.

What does the beauty magazine say? Try harder. Buy this shade of lip gloss, and everyone will want you. Buy these clothes and look like this woman. But no, there's a deeper message: *you can have her life*, this life of romance and adventure promised only to those with a pore-less complexion.

It's just a variation of what I try to do with my efficiency game: it's all about control in search of the better life. Arranging for the life you want. That life will, let's face it, always elude you. Yet it sometimes lingers so tantalizingly close, so close you think you'll have it if you just reach out one more time. Except sometimes it so fully slips through your fingers that you abandon all hope and reach for the tub of Ben and Jerry's (if you're most young women) or a mocha and a nearby journal (if you're me).

I had a bad day today. Most of it was in my head, but I felt the need to be alone with God, and for some reason, I felt the urge to buy a beauty magazine. Why? I'm still not sure.

I was re-watching "Elizabeth-town," one of my favorite movies, and flipping through *Elle*, and searching for *something*—but for something that I knew could not be found there.

It's almost ridiculous, the contrast between high-fashion magazines like that and the real world, where people

wear sweatpants to the grocery store (uh, me included) and don't even bother to hide their flaws, because they've come to the point of either acceptance or resignation. The images in magazines like that awaken desires they cannot fulfill—desires to *be* that beautiful, sure, but more than that, because I know that wouldn't be enough, wouldn't come nearly close to what it is that I'm actually seeking.

And what is that? Life as it's meant to be, of course. Life in a world where everyone really *is* that beautiful, where youth springs eternal and girls twirl barefoot in the waves of the ocean in the arms of their dearest love, where everyone is elegant and wealthy (and *happy* as a result—the message is really about happiness). In this meant-to-be world, every moment is spent and spent well, there is purpose and fulfillment in our every activity, we are doing precisely what we are meant to do.

So the covers of these magazines promise things like "Get gorgeous in 30 days! Win back your ex! Take control of your life! Lose that flab! Land your dream job!" And it works; people buy, because the writers are playing on one of the most universal truths about humans.

We are all searching for heaven.

—*In her search for life as it's meant to be, Lauren Deville, Tucson, Arizona, has volunteered in Oaxaca, Mexico, traveled widely, and since completing college has decided to apply for medical school. She is currently a shift supervisor at Starbucks.*

We are all searching for heaven.

Tornadoes in the Night

Lisa Weaver

The setting was unfamiliar for our third grade son's first solo sleepover camp, a two-day, one-night choir retreat. Prayers, silent and otherwise, followed him in more ways than I knew. For his part, long anticipation trumped lack of familiarity as he waved cheerfully from the window of the yellow bus pulling out for its fifty-mile journey. He was well prepared—lugging an overnight bag filled by his mother with Band-Aids, flashlight, extra socks, a favorite stuffed animal, an umbrella. Kisses, hugs, and "Eat some vegetables and brush your teeth," covered the rest.

Except for tornadoes.

The sunny morning skies gradually gave way to ominous clouds and severe weather warnings. By nightfall the TV radar featured a massive storm system, seemingly fixed over our son's location.

Our son fears storms. At the smallest rumble of thunder he is first to zip downstairs to the basement and first to suggest remaining there with sleeping bags if it is night. Positioned next to me, we hold hands until either sleep or calm arrives. But this time—amid the thunder, lightning, hail, and torrential rain—he was far away. My husband and I woke continuously

through the night, worrying aloud each time.

At long last, the night passed. Eagerly I awaited afternoon, when I could pick him up and smother him with kisses. He immediately showed me all his choir music, paging through and singing each piece. We laughed as he told me about the acts in the ‘non-talent’ show, and revealed which cafeteria vegetables he chose to eat and which ones he rejected.

But by far the most dramatic story concerned the tornado warnings. *Three times* in the night the air horn sounded, and he stumbled through the dark with cabin mates and parent-chaperone to the bathhouse which served as camp storm shelter. The storm was really loud, and really scary, he reported, and lasted so long.

“When morning came, I just couldn’t believe it—I couldn’t believe I had made it,” he concluded.

His story headlined our family news for the next week. We talked through the events, amazed at both the timing and ferocity of the storm. He retold the story to his grandparents, our neighbors, and adults from church. We were happy to see his enthusiasm for choir continue unabated, and pleased with his resiliency and the potential for growth that showed itself.

Eventually the intensity of the experience diminished. A new school year began, with weekly choir practices the following week. At pick-up after the first practice, a woman approached me, verified which son was mine, then identified herself as the parent chap-

erone in his cabin during the tornado warnings. “I wanted you to know,” she said, “that I prayed with your son during the storm. When we finally got back into our beds, he was still scared, and I wanted to help him. I wasn’t sure how to ask if that was something he would like me to do with him. So finally I thought to say, ‘Does your mom pray with you?’ He said yes, so I prayed with him.”

Does your mom pray with you?

With that simple question, so sensitively asked, came a montage of memories stretching from my own warm childhood to present bedtimes with my son. I still repeat the prayer my parents said with me: “Oh Thou Tender Shepherd, hear us, bless Thy little lambs tonight. Through the darkness be Thou near us, keep us safe ‘till morning light . . .” and ending with a recitation of family names.

Countless times I have said this prayer with my son. I thought of evenings when yawns engulfed my words to the point of giggle-producing distortion, of times when stuffed animal names joined the listing of family members, or nights when my son was already half-asleep and I would whisper the words more to myself than him. I recalled saying the words together, our smiling eyes meeting. Gratitude flooded me for this pattern that I had known as a child, and that he now knew.

That night at bed I told my son about meeting the parent chaperone from the choir retreat and her story of praying with him. Had that helped him feel less frightened, I asked. “A lit-

tle,” he answered, burrowing under his cover, then popping up again like a prairie dog. I told him I was glad the other mom could help him remember how God was always with him.

Then as my son became more intent on digging tunnels in his bedcovers than chatting about serious matters, I was left to reflect by myself on a book I had just finished—*The Iceberg Hermit* (Arthur Roth, Scholastic, 1974). It recounts the experience of seventeen-year-old Allan Gordon, an eighteenth-century crewman on a whaling ship in the Arctic. The only crewman alive after the ship crashes into an iceberg, Allan survives seven years there with a polar bear cub as companion and is eventually rescued by another whaling ship.

I had described Allan’s story one suppertime. One detail particularly amused us. Before the ill-fated voyage, Allan had received a Bible from his mother, with instructions to read one page each day. Since he kept this small Bible in his coat pocket, it was with him when he was thrown from the ship and stranded on the iceberg.

That first day, amid his dire circumstances, he read one page of the Bible because “Mother told him to.” I envisioned him reaching the end of that page then stopping in mid-sentence—why read the second page when Mother had said nothing about that! We all laughed at this image, and I teased my son about always following my instructions because it might someday get him off an iceberg.

Prayer tells our children that we sense God as a current within our daily lives. . . .

That, of course, is a stretch. But it reminds us that our rituals and practices do reflect and reveal who we are and what we believe. Similarly, our religious patterns can develop and strengthen our faith, even though they are not the entity into which we should put our faith.

The prayer I say each night with my son is a family faith practice—a steady feature in our lives together. Its significance lies in its regularity of occurrence, in the comforting images created by the words, in the knowledge that Grandma and Grandpa said this same prayer with Mommy every night when she was a little

girl. I am committed to marking the end of each day this way.

Prayer tells our children that we sense God as a current within our daily lives—a current that will carry us beyond that moment of prayer into the world where we are called to faithful action and witness. I pray with my son each night and I am thankful that he has witnessed this tangible evidence of his parents’ commitment to God. As he grows, I hope he will also see the less tangible prayers in our lives—those nonverbal prayers that dwell within our hearts and emerge through our hands and feet.

—Lisa Weaver, Madison, Wisconsin, is the author of *Praying with Our Feet* (Herald Press), a recently published children’s picture book which further explores the action of prayer. Weaver cherishes time spent with her family.

Bacon Bits

Noël R. King

Truman Smith was an inspired artist. He wrote poetry.

Actually, as he would freely admit, he simply channeled it: He knew it wasn't he who was writing these odes of elegance and grace. It was his muse, or perhaps even muses, plural. He was that inspired.

People flocked to hear, buy, and read his poetry, even those who really had no use for poetry. It was something new and amazing to them, and they were more than a bit astounded to be so in thrall to something previously so alien to them.

This was awfully fun for Truman, at least for a little while. It was fun and jolly to be famous and recognized wherever he went. It was even more fun and jolly to see all the money come rolling into his bank account, which soon became bank accounts, plural.

For a whole year or so (each seasonal change seemed to give him added inspiration), the poems kept spilling out of him, to ever increasing popularity and critical acclaim. He won prize after prize and honor after honor. Life was good. Life was very, very good.

BUT. These kinds of stories always have a BUT to them, and Truman's was no exception.

One day Truman realized his quite fabulous life quite bored him to tears. He startled himself one morning during his sumptuous breakfast of bacon, scones, and tea, by realizing the extent to which this was true.

The problem was that he wasn't *doing* anything other than being a mouthpiece for his muses. There was no Truman in his poetry; it passed right through him without him having any say in the matter.

At first he had found it quite thrilling to do no work yet bring forth such extraordinary "works." It made him feel smart and good and wonderfully amazing, a true treasure to society even. Others assessed him as being even more wonderful than he did himself, if such a thing were possible.

It *was* a lovely feeling, to be so adored both from the inside and out.

But. . . . As he was crunching his breakfast this particular morning, reflecting on his newly acknowledged dissatisfaction with this kind of life, regardless of all its seeming wonders, he tried to write a poem in his head to bacon.

His muses were not interested in bacon and refused to pay attention.

But I WANT to write about bacon! he cried to them silently inside his head. *I LOVE THIS BACON!*

He crunched his bacon, louder, louder, louder, willing them to pay attention, begging them to understand, slobbering wildly over all his desperate yearning.

"That does it!" cried Truman once again, this time out loud. "I've had it with muses! This is my life, my words, my whatever! It's time to live, live, LIVE!"

Still, his muses couldn't be bothered. There was a sunset in Maui to attend to and then some fluffy clouds in the sky over Borneo.

With dawning dismay, Truman finally understood that his muses only cared about getting their own work out; they didn't care one whit about important things like perfectly crisp bacon or changing old batteries or spraying WD-40 on things just because you can. They just didn't care about real things in a real person's life.

"That does it!" cried Truman once again, this time out loud. "I've had it with muses! This is *my* life, *my* words, *my* whatever! It's time to live, live, LIVE!"

He got a little carried away (and a bit incoherent) in his protestations, but perhaps that is to be expected in such cases.

Truman's next poem was about the dead spider he found behind his bed, in a pale little pile of dust. Then he wrote about an astoundingly jarring pothole that broke both of his right tires, and a poem about blue toothpaste smears on white towels, and one about the sadness of melted ice. Then he wrote an entire seven-poem series on bacon.

Truman was unstoppable. He had never been so happy in his life. He even changed his last name from Smith to Jones so that nobody would remember his previous, muse-filled days or that he had once channeled

his muses' stupid old poems for them.

Unfortunately, none of Truman's new, real poems survived in their entirety upon his passing away some 10 years ago. His daughter—you know, the famous Jones who became a household name last year with the publication of her poem, "Borneo, My Borneo"—affectionately used all of her father's most-prized bacon pieces/works/odes as an under layer for the new wallpaper in the very large kitchen of her new, very large French mansion.

"Oh Daddy!" she smiled as she

spread the sticky glue paste on a scrap of pen-filled paper and then slapped the poem upside down on the wall. "It's too bad you never had any talent. If only you could see me now. You would be so proud."

She paused as she wiped her forehead with the back of her hand. "But don't you worry, you silly old thing, you dear old dad. I'm carrying on the family name for both of us."

—As circumstances warrant, through her Turquoise Pen column Noël R. King, Scottsville, Virginia, reports on strange and wonderful things, including trouble with muses.



Stand up Straight

Ross T. Bender

"Stand up straight, Ross." That was my wife Ruth, expressing her concern about my posture. Recently I had had a tendency to lean forward as I stood or walked. While Ruth was keenly aware that something was different about the way I presented myself to the world, I was too busy pursuing "important" matters to notice that something had changed.

It was about this time as well that a professor colleague at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary asked me if I had contracted Parkinson Disease. My immediate response was "No, but thanks for asking."

Why would he ask me a question like that? He told me he had noticed a change in my gait, that I tended to shuffle as I walked down the seminary corridors.

In the meantime, I became aware that my handwriting had changed; it had shrunk to a tight scrawl, and I found it hard to move the pen across the page. It was hard to write, even to sign my name. Strangely, my ability to type was not affected. Even today, over a decade later, I still find it easier to type than to write.

My education about Parkinson Disease (PD) was about to begin. My wife, my colleague, and my fingers had finally succeeded in drawing my attention to the fact that something was the matter with my body. I needed to see my doctor to find out for certain what it

was. I obviously didn't know much about PD, and I didn't know anyone who had it.

My family doctor referred me to a neurologist who put me through some tests, including an MRI, to see whether my carotid arteries were blocked. They weren't. None of the other tests revealed much information either. The only unpleasantness I can recall from that visit to the neurologist was the hour-long stay (it seemed much longer!) in the MRI tube where I couldn't see anything and wasn't permitted to move my body. I imagined it must be something like being deposited in a drawer at the morgue with the drawer being closed, head first, feet last.

Since the tests were inconclusive, no clear diagnosis emerged. I learned that PD is hard to diagnose and that the only sure way to make a diagnosis is to perform an autopsy. I decided I didn't need to know that badly.

Some time later, however, I made an appointment with a doctor in the Neurology Department of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minnesota, with the counsel and the help of my cousin, Dr. Arthur Kennel, now a retired Mayo Clinic cardiologist. The neurologist at Mayo, Dr. Joseph Matsumoto, examined me and stated unequivocally that PD was causing these changes in my body.

He assured me that my personal physician had put me on the correct medication but recommended that the dosage be increased. He further stated that he was optimistic about the new therapies even now on the near horizon and that there is guarded

hope in the medical community that PD can be slowed down and perhaps soon even stopped in its tracks.

The symptoms with which I learned to cope included rigidity of movement, lack of balance, weakened voice, cramped handwriting, difficulty in dressing (especially in doing the buttons), getting in and out of my car, and getting out of a sofa or easy chair. I began walking with a cane and later bought a walker. This made it much easier to get around and to carry small objects such as my mail.

I recently reread the letter sent by Dr. Matsumoto to my family doctor, reporting on his findings and diagnosis. There are heavy medical terms in his letter I will not mention here mainly because I don't know what they mean. In any case he stated with respect to most of them that there was no sign of them in my body.

Two recommendations were (1) that I reduce the amount of protein for breakfast or lunch, since it has the effect of nullifying the effectiveness of my medications; and (2) that I begin a regular exercise program. One observation I am eager to share, for obvious reasons, was this: "The patient has had no change in memory or thinking." I must admit that assessment is several years old and the evaluation may have to be updated. I did notice that the "loss of memory jokes" weren't as funny as they used to be.

I had noticed that the effectiveness of the original medication prescribed by my physician and increased by Dr. Matsumoto was less than when first prescribed. Six months after reporting this change, I

was given a second prescription which together with the original dosage had the desired effect.

I had good days and not-so-good days. On the good days (when I remembered to take meds on time), I could move around well. On other days I remembered keenly the meaning of the term *movement disorder*.

Before her death in December 1997, Ruth had encouraged me to move to Greencroft Retirement Community as soon as an apartment became available and it was possible to sell our home on Hampton Circle in Goshen, Indiana. We had earlier signed up on the waiting list—a list that stretched out for several years. Then word reached us that the retirement center was planning to erect Juniper Place, a three-story apartment building that would be ready for occupancy within the near future. There would be no waiting list; it was first-come, first-served.

My children came to help me prepare for the move. I was deeply gratified as I observed the way they transformed themselves from a collection of individuals into a smoothly functioning operation. They each brought their own distinctive personalities and skills to the task and wove them together so the result reminded me not so much of a machine as of a ballet.

The move from Hampton Circle to Juniper Place (the first of several to

follow) involved considerable downsizing and disposal of the worldly goods we had accumulated over the years. Some things traveled home with my children or were shipped; some were donated to the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) thrift shop or Goodwill Industries; some were sold at auction; and some were buried in the county landfill.

Some were hastily deposited in the Archives of the Mennonite Church.

On the good days (when I remembered to take meds on time), I could move around well. On other days I remembered keenly the meaning of the term *movement disorder*.

During my first foray to the Archives to assess what should remain there and what should go elsewhere, I found some odd items. Among these were a book of cat cartoons published by the *New Yorker* magazine, a tourist guide to the state of Idaho, many birthday cards from over the years, and a Ph.D.

dissertation submitted by my son, Michael, to the science faculty of Indiana University.

Greencroft is a Continuing Care Retirement Community (CCRC). CCRC refers to the fact that Greencroft has facilities ranging from independent living through assisted living to several types of long-term health care.

Juniper Place is one example of independent living. I did not actually own the apartment assigned to me. What I bought was called a "life lease." When the time came for me to vacate the apartment, a dollar amount agreed upon at the time of the original contract was returned to me.

There were several types and sizes of apartment layouts. Mine, for example, had one bedroom plus a study, a living/dining room, and a full kitchen. A stacked washer/dryer unit was included in the large bathroom. There was a heated basement garage accessed via an elevator. Residents were free to design our own versions of independent living through a contract with the management to provide, for example, housekeeping and laundry services.

Juniper Place residents are not only Mennonites but also Brethren, Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Catholics, and more. Despite the diversity in personalities, vocational backgrounds, religious persuasions, education, and life experiences, there is a spirit of friendship and camaraderie among the residents. This stimulating group of people enjoys dining together, sharing information about their families, and talking about health concerns along with other issues of the day.

The three years I lived there went by quickly, and I adjusted to my new life reasonably well. That is, my creature comforts were provided for. I did what I could to manage on my own and what I couldn't do I was able to arrange for in other ways.

I continued many aspects of my previously busy and well-scheduled life. For example, I was appointed to the Ethics Committee of our residents' organization. I spent time at my computer and even had several articles published. I drove my car until it

became clear to me and my family that the time was coming for me to turn in my keys. Our discussion in the Ethics Committee of this traumatic (for many) issue had prepared me for this decision.

I was able, with the help of friends, to attend worship services at College Mennonite Church, although my schedule of outside activities was greatly reduced. I taught a few Sunday school classes, but again I found myself cutting back significantly on what had been an enjoyable part of my life. I began declining invitations from friends to join them for a meal in their homes or in restaurants.

All these changes were so gradual that I was able to keep going and to hold out quiet hope that I could keep on keeping on for a long time. I tried to keep active to the fullest extent of my waning energies. Some of my friends continued to encourage and compliment me for maintaining a positive attitude; others, though they did not say this in so many words, might well have been thinking that I was living in denial.

And then I fell and broke my shoulder.

My time of relative independence ended on the spot where I fell. The ambulance transported me to the hospital, where for several days I lay on my back and waited for whatever it is that people in such a predicament wait for. I was treated with care by the hospital staff, but I have little clear memory of the sequence of events

My time of relative independence ended on the spot where I fell.

during the time I spent there or of the complications I endured.

One memory, however, stands out: a visit from my daughter, Anne, and her children, Melanie, age six, and Eric, age four. Melanie had expressed her concern for me, especially whether I would be given a needle, whether it would hurt, and whether I would cry. When the nurse came to my room, guess what she had in her hand? Like a shot (pun intended), Melanie came to my bedside and held my hand, ready to protect me from the pain of the needle or even from the nurse, if need be.

It was a fine example of TLC, and I have no doubt whatsoever that it made a vital contribution to my recovery. In addition, Melanie left her watchdog (actually her watchmoose) to watch over me. There it still sits, high over my bed several years later. Its little assistant, Eric's teddy bear, sits quietly beside it. I am well protected by these faithful little guardians of my body, soul, and spirit.

From Goshen General Hospital, I was transferred to Greencroft Healthcare. The main agenda here was to participate in therapy—physical, occupational, and speech. This is hard work.

My new routine began with a bang before I had barely settled in. A healthcare center is not the place to sleep in the morning. I started out the day with the speech therapist, for whom I developed a high degree of respect as I became better acquainted with my diaphragm. I also learned that I could sing when I was barely able to speak.

Then I played some interesting games with the physical therapist, which initially involved some physical pain. I was convinced that my feet weighed one hundred pounds each and would never carry me across the floor. But eventually they walked and taught me to walk. I was truly impressed by what skills these therapists have and how they can heal.

This way of life continued for several months. I still recall the day when a committee of five or six of the Healthcare staff met to share their evaluations of my progress. I was allowed to sit in the circle and at the end to make my comments, which I did with feelings of trepidation. With great relief I heard them say that I was qualified to "graduate" from Healthcare.

This decision was only the first step of a three-step process. Step two was an interview with the administrator from Evergreen West, one of the assisted living buildings at Greencroft. I may have been qualified to leave Healthcare, but did I qualify to move into assisted living? Step three was to hope that an apartment would be available when I needed it.

Meanwhile, we were trying to make decisions about that next move. It was hard to plan for the move to assisted living when we were uncertain when I would be released from Healthcare, whether I would be admitted to assisted living, and if an apartment would be available. One thing was certain: returning to Juniper Place was no longer an option.

It seemed a monumental task to get me moved out of my apartment at

Juniper Place and into my smaller apartment at Evergreen West when it was all I could do to keep up with my therapies. Each of my children came and went, sometimes with overlapping visits, with Juniper Place serving as the command center by day and motel by night. But I realized that it was time to say good-bye to my apartment, and absorb the reality that my world was again shrinking, little by little.

PD is no respecter of persons. Whenever I ask, “Why me?” back comes the question, “Why not me?” Why has PD visited Muhammed Ali? Michael J. Fox? Janet Reno? Pope John XXIII? Or Billy Graham? Each is representative of a large and diverse population. Not that it is a great honor to be a member of such an exclusive club, but it helps to know that you have not been singled out for such a dubious distinction.

As I struggled with this twofold question (Why me? Why not me?) I became increasingly aware that a host of sufferers asks it with me. I must enlarge my perspective if I am to gain any insight and to experience some measure of healing. My vantage point has been largely egocentric. It has to do with *my* problem, with what is happening to *me*, how I am coping in *my* world, and what *I* must do to be healed.

If God does not intervene in these events, why not? Does God not care enough to get involved in *their* pain,

in *our* pain, or in *my* pain? Or is God too busy? Or too weak? Or too far away? And where does that leave us? There is a big difference between discussing these questions in a seminary classroom and wrestling with them by yourself when you are lying on your back in the dark in the middle of the night.

One Sunday morning I was asked by the worship service planners at College Mennonite Church to read a short line as part of the call to worship. The line was as follows: “I am healed.”

Afterward on reflection I felt uneasy about having said it and wished I had declined the worship committee’s request. It would perhaps have been closer to the truth if I had spoken the words “I am *being* healed.”

My body has let me down here and there. But when I complain about this it turns to me and asks, “What have you done for me lately?”

My efforts at improving my health must be carried out with the realism that PD is a progressive disease. But I believe I have a choice to think of myself not as an invalid but as a whole human being who has medical problems with which I must learn to cope. I am still a person created in the image of God. I have much to learn and even to offer others.

—*Ross T. Bender, Ph.D., is Dean Emeritus of Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminaries; www.rossbender.org/sermons.html*

Danny & Me

David W. Corbin

I got a letter today from an old friend I’ll call Danny. During junior high and high school, Danny and I did pretty much everything together. I haven’t seen Danny for a number of years. I think the last time was in 1991 when he came to my father’s funeral. We exchange Christmas cards but haven’t communicated much other than that, so today’s letter was unexpected. One time, he wrote to say that he and his wife Lyn were planning a trip up our way, but when the time came, he didn’t stop by. Danny still lives in San Diego. Anyway, now Danny says he has cancer. Danny and I sure had a lot of good times together.

Memory #1—Danny’s Pop

Danny and I inherited a longstanding and enjoyable argument from our parents. Danny’s pop always bought GM cars; my family always bought Fords. For a while, my dad drove a Henry-J, but that experience only solidified our Ford stance. Danny’s dad didn’t simply buy GM cars; he paid cash. When I was 15, Danny’s pop had saved enough to buy a new Cadillac. When the day came, he walked into the showroom, plunked down a big wad, and drove one home.

During the long years while he saved up, Danny’s family drove an old green Chevy. Once the Cadillac arrived, Danny and I claimed the Chevy. (His mom



used it too but only to go to the grocery store and things like that.) Under our care, that Chevy sparkled. We added dual exhausts and heavy-duty rear shocks that raised the back bumper way up. The problem, of course, was that we couldn't drive.

Although we were both signed up for the school's driver ed. class in the fall, this was only spring. It was about that time that Danny and I discovered learning to drive doesn't really require a class. It was actually quite simple. In fact, we took turns driving all over.

This worked well until one afternoon when we passed a police car going the other direction. The police car turned around, which prompted us to make a quick right turn onto the next quiet street. We ripped down half a block and pulled into an open garage door. Then we sank down in the front seat and waited. After a bit, we began to worry about when the people who normally parked there might get home. Finally we backed out, drove cautiously back to Danny's house, and put the car away for a while.

Memory #2—The Beach

Getting to the beach was a daily occurrence for Danny and me. Neither of us had surfboards, but we got pretty good at body surfing. A great thing about body surfing is that it doesn't require planning. You don't have to have a board or wetsuit to surf. If you happen on a beach with a good body surfing break, you can just hop right in. It's nice to have a towel, but it's certainly not necessary.

Again, there were family differences when it came to beach use. My

family went to the beach occasionally, always lugging a lot of equipment. For many years, we had elaborate beach picnics every Fourth of July and Labor Day. These large family picnics were organized by my mother.

To begin, someone got to the beach by 7:00 a.m. to secure a fire ring and start coals, often in early morning fog. By 8:00 a.m. we were all feasting on melon, steak, eggs, fried potatoes, and donuts. (Donuts were important because one of my sisters worked at a donut shop.) As a rule, everyone was quite full, tired, and sunburned by noon so we'd pack up and leave as the crowds started to arrive.

Danny's family treated the beach differently. Between June and October, Danny's parents cooked at the beach almost every Friday night, and I often got to come too. After dinner, everyone gathered around the fire to poke at it and talk.

While poking a fire is always fun, my most vivid memory of these occasions is of Danny's mom. Danny's mom was a vivacious and friendly hostess. She always wore a bright flowered one-piece bathing suit that displayed a very nicely shaped body. She was also quite short. At some point, I noticed that her bathing suit was actually bigger than she was, at least the top of it. Standing beside her, I could spy beauty in the cavernous bulge that was the top of her suit. This was even better than donuts.

Memory #3—"Veni, Vedi, Veci"

All during school, Danny and I took a lot of the same classes. Since my parents were teachers and knew

which teachers could actually teach, my mom and dad generally set the schedule for both Danny and me. My mom thought that it was important to get a good grounding in language and so signed us up for Latin in the ninth grade.

Neither Danny nor I did very well at Latin that year, partly I think because on this occasion my mom selected the class based on the subject rather than the teacher. When we got to high school and second-year Latin, things came to a head.

This time, the class was taught by a wiry little chalk-covered guy with sparse grey hair who actually knew Latin. Danny dropped out after a few weeks, but I stuck it out and ended the semester without getting an F. What was good about this class was that it was taught in a third-floor classroom. From this classroom, it was possible to tell whether or not the surf was up.

One October day, I noticed what appeared to be great surf. Danny and I hurriedly discussed options and made a surreptitious exit to the beach. We hadn't been in the water long when we noticed blue lights flashing around Danny's Chevy. We trudged back to the car to discover a couple men in blue trying to see what was inside. Of course, they also wanted to see IDs. Further, they wanted to look in our lunch bags sitting on the front seat.

It turned out that a corner grocery in the area had just been robbed by two guys in an old green Chevy. The robbers had left the scene with the cash in a couple brown paper bags. Once the officers had viewed our tuna

sandwiches, they told us to get back to school and left. Actually, the surf wasn't very good any more, so that's what we did.

Memory #4— Camping at San Clemente

One June day, Danny and I and a kid named Jimmy Defalco decided to go camping. My dad let us borrow his car. This time, we'd be driving a fiesta-red Ford with the big Thunderbird V-8 engine with overdrive and dual exhausts. We grabbed sleeping bags and took off, planning to buy food when we got where we were going.

We headed up Highway 101 looking for the perfect beach. Since this car had so much more power than Danny's old Chevy, I decided to see how fast our Ford would go. I got it to 105 before it blew a head gasket. I was pretty worried, but a brief perusal assured us the car was running fine. It just made a lot of noise.

We proceeded on up to San Clemente. When we got there, the sun was bright, there was a good breeze off the ocean, and the surf was up. About 4:00 p.m., the fog came in, so we bought potato chips and hot dogs and brought them back to the beach. This was not a beach at which people normally camped, but we hollowed out an area protected from the wind and assumed no one would mind. The Santa Fe line went right behind us, which was also great. We found some probably unwanted wood next to the tracks and broke it up for a fire to cook our hot dogs.

**I got it up to
105 before it
blew a head
gasket.**

We had already cooked them before the first contingent of cops arrived to tell us to put out the fire. We were full and warm, so it didn't matter. Before the evening was over, we had been visited by six kinds of cops, including the Highway Patrol, Santa Fe RR security, and two kinds of military police. (Camp Pendleton is close, so both Navy Shore Patrol as well as some Marine MPs wanted to know what we were doing.)

The last group of cops was apparently from the State Park security. They were very nice and glad to hear that we were enjoying ourselves, but, they informed us, it was illegal for anyone to stay on the beach after midnight, so we might be thinking of moving along soon.

We filled in the hole, burying the remnants of our fire, and drove off. There is a state park in San Clemente at which you can camp, but the gate was closed when we got there, so we just slept in the car and drove home in the morning. It was a great trip.

Memory #5—Slideshow

At some point, Danny discovered that his dad had a secret collection of peepshow keychain holders. Each plastic viewer had a shot of a different woman in a revealing costume. We determined that these photos needed a wider audience. We also discovered that the plastic holders could be taken apart so that the slides inside could be placed in regular slide frames.

Danny's house was on a steep hill, the road in front running down to a stop sign. Down the hill was a two-story house, one wall of which had no

windows. This made it an ideal screen on which to project our slides. Once we had focused a shot, we'd turn off the projector light until a car was coming. Then we'd flash one of these amazing slides on the side of the house to entertain the passing motorist.

When we had finished each show, we put the plastic key chain holders back together and replaced them carefully under Danny's dad's socks. I'm sure he never realized what a wide audience his treasures had.

I's been a while now since I got Danny's letter about his cancer. I'm recovering from cancer surgery myself and just returned from my three-month follow-up. As the surgeon was filling out my chart at the end of the visit, he smiled and said that for all the previous visits he had entered "Cancer" in the treatment summary. This time the treatment summary read, "History of cancer."

The activities of our lives regularly change, whether we notice or not. The red line down my belly is a regular reminder that I'm missing more than a prostate. Some experiences I won't ever have again. I think I missed the demarcations of change while growing up with Danny. Surfing and camping proceeded into other more interesting things, so I didn't pay much attention to the things I left behind. I could still go surfing or camping if so inclined. It seems a good time to say hello to Danny again too.

—David W. Corbin and his wife live on an island off the Washington coast. There they raise sheep, work at the post office, run a preschool, and sell homemade jams.

Passover/Passion Week 1977 Lives On

Jonathan Beachy

Long before the rooster first crowed, sometime after midnight, and before his last crow timed to the sun's appearance, I awakened for the umpteenth time. It was Friday of Passover/Passion Week, April 7, 1977. Sixty miles from the nearest all-weather road and two hundred miles by air from the nearest reliable medical service, it might as well have been half the distance to the moon and the sun. With neither vehicle nor neighbors with more than an oxcart, and no planned radio communication, hope seemed about to be overpowered by despair.

After seven months of a totally uneventful pregnancy, some twelve hours before, my wife Ruth had started losing blood. Our very competent nurse-midwife colleague advised us to keep calm but to be aware of the life-threatening possibility of uncontrollable hemorrhage if indeed, as it appeared, the placenta had become detached. That the night was long and incredibly dark, no lights other than the glow of distant dying cooking fires of our indigenous neighbors, made it no less frightening.

About an hour before daylight, I lit a kerosene lantern, turned the antenna of my ham radio to the south, and turned on the battery-powered radio. Two hundred miles was too close to expect communication on the only active bandwidth, but I had no options.

"*Mayday, Mayday, Mayday . . .*" I called and waited. Soon I received an answer to my universal distress call. An operator in Hong Kong, halfway around the world wanted to help, but could not. A few more calls, and another operator, this one nearly 1000 miles away in Uruguay, volunteered to make a long-distance call if no one else responded.

And then, the impossible: a "ham" in Asuncion, our hoped-for destination, also heard me. He called friends. Within a short while, soon after daybreak, on the most revered holiday in Paraguay—when no one works or is in town—a single engine plane was on its way.

It arrived and we were off. During years of traveling in such craft, I had never seen one with retractable landing gear, but somehow this had it. Not only that, a north wind pushed us to the south, so lacking drag from the landing gear, and pushed by the wind, we landed in record time.

From the airport we traveled quickly to the hospital, where we went directly to an emergency C-Section. Ruth's life was spared as we passed through a series of "impossible" barriers. Rebecca, for unex-

plained reasons, had become detached prematurely from her mother, and was gone.

The grief of that Friday did not leave us immediately overwhelmed. We grasped little more than what Lisa, our two-year-old firstborn, did of what had happened. We were just glad to have each other. Months later we were thoroughly warned to avoid

Out of the pain we lived that day, three beautiful children, Heidi, Joel, and Peter eventually joined our family.

any further pregnancies and started pondering the possibility of adopting a child. When Heidi became part of our family eight months later, the gap started filling, and the likelihood of our leaving Paraguay soon receded. Now, years later, we stand in awe of the consequences, at times still too awed to comprehend.

Out of the pain we lived that day, three beautiful children, Heidi, Joel, and Peter eventually joined our family. They linked us more firmly to their country of origin. Out of the distance and aloofness that is so possible and easy in a strange culture came close and enduring ties to our adopted country. Out of having no family members close to us came many families, and incredible love, and the awareness of how precious and needed all our loved ones are.

Out of the grief for our loss, and through our adoption processes, we became sensitized to others who grieve the loss of abandonment. We became aware of the anger and pain of not belonging or connecting. Through prison chaplaincy, we

learned that severely dysfunctional families, which often produce adoptable children, could also create potential criminals who never knew healthy love. We learned that arms which once longed to hold a child could now offer hugs, a safe place to cry, and the beginning of wholeness for prisoners and their families.

As we left Paraguay, nearly 30 years after that painful Friday, we were overwhelmed with demonstrations of appreciation, hugs, and tears of hundreds of people we would never have met if that pivotal event had not occurred. We believe that even now there is much more still to unfold out of that painful Friday. For truly, after the darkest most difficult night, the

dawn of hope and God's light has and will come again and again. So be it, and may it ever be.

—Starting in 2005, Jonathan Beachy has lived in San Antonio, Texas. For most of his professional life as a registered nurse, he has been privileged to accompany persons misunderstood and rejected by the society that envelops them, including indigenous communities in Paraguay and prisoners in both Paraguay and USA. Currently a correctional health nurse, he delights in seizing the moment to share hope, defy despair, and assault the darkness, in the firm belief that transformation by God's love is possible for all.

The Stench

My cell phone clock says it 8 a.m.—
Local time in Paraguay,
Local time in Pennsylvania as well
In far off U.S.A.
Two places, two peoples,
Two climates, two cultures,
Two realities, one stench.

Today my cousin will be darning
Her husband's socks,
And he will be cutting grass to make
Bales of hay to feed his milk cows.

The moist and penetrating odor
Of manure from the stable floats on the air,
Loaded with the hums of a thousand insects;

He fans himself with his flax straw hat,
The one made by my other cousin, to be part of
His Sunday clothes, but since it
Is pretty worn out, he uses it during the
Week to protect himself from the sun.

For the past hour, I have been standing,
And sitting here, restless, and alone,
In the anteroom of the offices
Of the Supreme Court.

They summoned me here today to meet
With those who make up the Court, to
Talk to them about prison facts—
Professionals who profane their office,
And make it as earthy as
The manure my cousin spreads on his
Fields as fertilizer in far off Pennsylvania.

But the abuse perpetrated by trusted persons,
The fondling and exploitation of naïve young men
Stinks so horribly that not even hurricane winds
Could drive away the odor.

So, I stand here, between the two worlds,
Trying to keep the stench from overpowering me,
Screaming at the winds of denial in both worlds. . . .
But even as I scream, in the midst of rage and
Pain, comes the awareness that manure
Is redeemable, useful to me and others,
Even to my far-away cousin.

Will he find it useful? Maybe, maybe not. . . .
Someone has to tell him, and others; someone has to
Do more than scream, to believe that
New scents can blow on new winds.

—*Jonathan Beachy*

Getting a Word in Edgewise

Deborah Good

On March 20, 2003, I was arrested for the “unreasonable obstruction of the entrance to a building.” It was a cold day, the morning after our president officially declared war on Iraq. I think I wore a black trash bag, holes cut for head and arms, to shield myself from the rain. Some of my friends wore duct tape over their mouths and carried signs that shouted silently at our government, “Why aren’t you listening?”

There were more than 100 of us in all, arms and convictions linked in small chains of people power. We sat ourselves down, symbolically blocking all the entrances to Philadelphia’s Federal Building because we believed business should not go on “as usual” for a government that was dropping bombs on a nation of people who had already suffered enough.

Many essays could be written about the tragedies that have ensued, but this is not one of those essays. Even more could be written about the politics being debated in Congress as I write, about the relevance (or irrelevance) of pacifism, and about the tyranny of fear. But this is not one of those either.

During the fall and winter months leading up to my arrest on that wet March morning, millions had

crowded into streets, plazas, and central squares all over the world. On a biting January day, we'd marched in D.C.—hippies and soccer moms chanting side by side. *This is what democracy looks like! This is what democracy looks like!* We called, again and again, for “No War in Iraq.” *Non. Nein. Nyet. La. Nem. Nee. No.*

Apparently, we were not loud enough.

This column is about my friends' duct-taped mouths in front of the Federal Building, and about the struggle to be heard. It asks whether democracy is really possible—in Congress or around the dining room table. It is about voice.

What *does* democracy look like? “Democracy literally means the rule (or *kratos*) of the crowd (or *demos*),” writes Rebecca Solnit in *Orion* magazine (“More Perfect Union,” November-December 2006). “But it seldom means that the rule is by *all* the people, the whole *demos*.”

According to the same article, if we do the math, only about one fifth of our country's population actually voted for our currently unpopular president in the 2004 elections.

I expect few people would argue that everyone's voice is truly and fairly represented in our country's “democracy.” There are simply too many of us, with too many different opinions. What's more, the whole system is tainted by an impressively unequal distribution of money and power in

This column is about my friends' duct-taped mouths in front of the Federal Building, and about the struggle to be heard.

our country—and the strategic use of both to influence decisions.

In one of our democracy's less glamorous moments, Maryland Republicans bussed homeless men from Washington and Philadelphia to polls in their state. They paid them \$100 apiece to hand out deceiving election propaganda targeted at black voters. (Don't believe me? Search the Internet for “homeless men, Maryland election 2006.”)

I also learned recently that the decision to lengthen daylight savings time this year came about partly because of the push to save energy (a good thing), but also because of a strong lobby including the Sporting Goods Manufacturers Association and companies selling everything from barbecues to baseballs!

Many instances of lobbyists' influence on congressional decisions are not this amusing and harmless. The anti-Castro lobby has been loud and money-laden enough to keep an unethical embargo (or *bloqueo*) in place for more than four decades, made more restrictive in the nineties with the Cuban Democracy Act and the Helms-Burton Act. The blockade has been overwhelmingly condemned by the United Nations every year since 1991, and yet remains stubbornly intact.

“Honestly,” writes Solnit, “I don't know how democratic a system is even possible on the scale of 300 million. . . . Real democracy, not representative, or misrepresentative

democracy, is much more possible on the smaller scale of a functioning community. And maybe only possible on that scale.”

In my opinion, Solnit is too optimistic. I am still trying to find a “functioning community” that truly allows for the *rule of the crowd*. Whether in churches, office meetings, or simply around the supper table, some voices always hold more influence than others when decisions get made. Is it really possible to include all of us equally?

My mom tells me that years ago, when our younger family would eat supper together, we crowded the air with stories and laughter and argument. Then, into the clamor, my tiny three-year-old brother would add his voice. He would shout as loudly as he could, as though he was yelling across the playground—or as though the Redskins had just scored a touchdown. Mom puzzled over these shouting episodes until it occurred to her that Jason was simply trying to get a word in edgewise. It was his way of saying, *Make room for me, too!*

Sometimes it's the loudest person who gets heard. Sometimes it's the one who has been around the longest, the one with the most money, or the one with the scariest weapons; maybe the youngest or the whitest, the sexiest or the one in a leadership position. Sometimes it's the man, sometimes the woman, sometimes the one with the Ph.D.

I am part of a quirky, imperfect, and committed group of people in my

neighborhood. We meet on Sunday mornings, and sometimes in between—and we call ourselves West Philadelphia Mennonite Fellowship.

“Probably more than any other church I have attended, this congregation ‘agrees to disagree.’ Our theologies crisscross and butt up against one another. Our hopes for a new pastor vary like ice cream flavors at Baskin Robbins. One member of the pastoral search committee recently compared our congregation to dogs on leashes, panting excitedly while pulling their poor dog-walker in ten different directions.”

I love this variety—and have been taught to love diversity ever since I was a kindergartner in the multicultural world of D.C. public schools. But when it comes to making decisions as a group, whose voices carry the most sway? And how is a community—or a nation-state—to hold onto the people who find certain decisions unacceptable?

The Mennonite church has a history of splitting over coat buttons and Sunday school. Today, several Mennonite congregations are asking themselves whether their sense of justice will force them to leave their regional denominational body, Lancaster Conference, as long as women are not allowed ordination. And I must decide, personally, how long I can participate in a denomination that is not openly welcoming of my gay and lesbian friends. Controversial decisions—whether about ordination or going to war—leave some of us feeling silenced.

This is the part of the column

where I'm supposed to offer the alternative that actually *does* work—the answer—and then wrap things up nicely and send you on your way satisfied. But I don't have an alternative, an answer, a suggestion for how we can give equal room for everyone's voice.

This is what I do know: It is empowering to talk and be listened to, and the more we allow for honest conversation at the level of family and church and community, the less we will split ourselves apart.

I also know this: Not everyone can have their way. Sometimes we have to back down a little and give others

room to speak. And other times, in the name of justice and conviction, we must force our way into the racket. Simply trying to get a word in edgewise, we must shout, strategically and at the top of our lungs, *Non. Nein. Nyet. La. Nem. Nee.* No!

—*Deborah Good, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, is a writer, editor, and middle school classroom assistant. As she writes pieces of her father's and grandparents' life stories, she is reflecting on the power of words and good listening—and on their limitations. She can be reached at <deborahagood@gmail.com>.*



A Moment of Grace

Mark R. Wenger

You don't turn fifty without feeling the preciousness of time. That's about how old I was when we moved back to the community where I attended high school and where my parents still live independent, active lives. Mom is eighty-four; since January 2007 she has started hanging out regularly at Curves. Dad is eighty-eight, running a bountiful vineyard and orchard. He finished the winter pruning ahead of schedule.

What makes me think I have any business talking about time, now that I'm around them more regularly? Not too much, I suppose, except for the fact that time is more than the accumulation of seconds, weeks, and years. Time is more than birthdays, calendars, and counting. "How do you measure a year?" asks the song in the Broadway musical "Rent." 525,600 minutes? In sunsets, midnights, cups of coffee, laughter, and strife. How do you measure a year in the life? How about love? Ah, yes, that's the answer. Measured in love. Seasons of love.

I remember my Greek teacher many moons ago pointing out the distinction between "chronos" and "kairos." *Chronos* is clock time that never stops counting. "Ninety years without slumbering, tick-tock, tick-tock. His life seconds numbering, tick-tock, tick-

tock.” But *kairos* is time-concentrated. Kairos is time as opportunity; it’s the marriage proposal, the time of risk, the weighty moment when the universe stands still and quiet. You can hear a whisper.

Kairos. That’s the time with Mom and Dad that is precious to me now that I’m on the backside of fifty.

For example, Friday lunches with the two of them. I don’t remember exactly how the routine began. With an invitation or suggestion probably. Anyway, for the past year, one of us will phone the other on Thursday evening or Friday morning and check whether it suits. More often than not it does, and around 12:30 p.m. I drive over to their home about three miles away. We sit down over food to talk about family news, church politics, health, and whatnot.

Last week, however, was unusual. Mom phoned on Tuesday morning saying that it didn’t suit Wednesday, Thursday, or Friday. Might it work for me drop in on short notice? “Sure,” I said, “that’ll be terrific.” I knew she’d rustle up some food a whole lot better than the brown bag lunch I’d stashed in the office refrigerator. I wasn’t disappointed.

But it wasn’t the food that turned this lunch into a *kairos* occasion. Somewhere in the course of the meandering conversation, Mom pulled out a book she’d just finished: *Chameleon Days—An American Boyhood in Ethiopia* (Mariner Books, 2006) by Tim Bascom. My sister had loaned

the book to Mom. In a moving narrative Bascom writes about his memories of traveling to Ethiopia with missionary parents when he was just five years old. Within a week or two of landing in country, his older brother was dropped off at boarding school.

The following September Tim himself was delivered to boarding school for first grade. Stoic and strained, his parents drove away, the metal gate clanging behind. It would be Christmas before they’d see each other again.

“I began to cry,” writes Tim. “I sobbed so hard my shoulders ached. I felt like something big and monstrous was bursting out of me, like I might explode into a thousand wet pieces.”

Alarmed, his older brother Jonathan put his arm on Tim’s shoulder and told him it was going to be okay. “Really,” he said. “It only lasts for a while.”

My mother had finished the book the night before our Tuesday lunch. Bascom’s story had touched some deep memory, pain, and regret within: that of leaving her own young offspring—my brothers and sisters and me—at boarding school and driving away to the mission station many miles distant. Mom’s eyes filled with tears as she recounted closing the book and weeping about how this early separation may have scarred her progeny. Dad had sat down beside her. One by one they had named their eight children and narrated the trajectory of each life—as a measure of reassurance.

Kairos. That’s the time with Mom and Dad that is precious to me now. . . .

I sat across the table while Mom talked. I carry my own searing memories of boarding school, particularly third grade. My parents know that; I have a hunch that’s why Mom invited me over for lunch and told me about the book.

Time was slowing down, concentrating, the usual banter was gone. I revisited the trauma of third grade, the witch of a teacher who tore into me, the actual physical longing I bore to be at home with Mom and Dad rather than at boarding school.

I recalled the confusion I felt as a boy. My younger brother was being schooled at home at the time as a special arrangement; why, oh why, I pleaded and sobbed, couldn’t they do the same for me? Life had shut down for me that year. Nothing would ever be the same again. I looked at the world through dark sunglasses—all the contours of friendships, school, and play were tinted in gray. Looking back now, with the eyes of experience, I recognize all the symptoms of childhood clinical depression. I had no idea at the time what to call what I was feeling.

Over lunch I played back to Mom and Dad some of that wretched year. They had heard the story before, but memory was refreshed and feelings brought to the surface. I paused.

Dad spoke up quietly. “Mark,” he said, “we would do it differently now. We would keep you at home and teach you there. We hope you can forgive us.” Kairos.

I’ve not blamed my parents for sending me to boarding school as a youngster. It’s what virtually every

missionary family with children did. Parents who home-schooled were considered eccentric, risking both their missions assignment and the well-being of their children. So, forgiveness didn’t seem right. There had been no malice or intentional mistreatment. And truth be told, my parents expended more effort and money than most to get us children home as often as possible.

Forgiveness didn’t quite seem to fit, but Dad’s words of acknowledgment—and wishing something had been different—were nonetheless balm for my soul. I thanked him. “That means a lot to hear you say that,” I said. Then before too long I got up to go, needing to get some tasks off my desk at the office. But it had been quite a lunch, unexpectedly grace-filled. And I carried the book *Chameleon Days* with me to the car.

In less than forty-eight hours I’d read the book from cover to cover; time and again I was carried back to scenes of my childhood. Donkeys bouncing along under mountains of straw; boarding school adventures under the woodpile; climbing trees for escape; the spicy food of *injera* and *wat*; wild animals as pets; the sounds and smells of long ago. But somehow, as I devoured the book, I read it with more freedom and joy for having shared lunch with Mom and Dad on Tuesday. You don’t turn fifty without feeling the preciousness of time.

—Mark R. Wenger, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, is Director of Pastoral Studies for Eastern Mennonite Seminary at Lancaster.

What We Can Learn from Those Who Don't Go to Church—And Even from Those Who Do

Michael A. King

As my poor congregation is probably sick of hearing, I suspect God called me to be a pastor because otherwise I wouldn't go to church. I find it all too easy to grasp the appeal of not going to church and often harder to actually want to go to church as opposed to feeling a duty to go to church. In the end, I do affirm churchgoing. There are all kinds of biblical and theological rationales for "not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some" (Heb. 10:25 NRSV).

Still I get in my own bones why this can be a discipline hard to commit to, so I want to ponder what can be learned from those who don't go to church as well as from those who do.

I haven't done it again, except on vacation, which somehow feels different, but about two years ago I took a sabbatical Sunday. I worked out with my congregation that on this particular Sunday I simply

wouldn't be at church. I could have gone to another congregation, but I didn't do anything with my mini-sabbatical except stay home and drink coffee and read the newspaper. The rest of my family went to church. I stayed home. And loved it.

There was something about those peaceful hours I don't remember fully experiencing any other day of the week. Sunday morning is different. You don't have to go to work. You don't have to do chores. You pretty much are free to do what you want to do to catch up with yourself after the week's frenzies. This, I think, is why so many people sleep in Sunday mornings. Or hang out in pajamas. Or take long walks, birdwatch, go fishing, or in one way or another worship in the temple of nature.

So I get it, I hope. I get why so many people, even committed Christians, so often skip church to meet God or the peace for once present in their own souls on this special morning not like any other. And I think we who go to church or who help shape and lead congregational life need to get it. We need to work at understanding in our own bones that many people don't skip church just to be ornery or disrespect God or demonstrate their preference to go to hell rather than heaven.

Oh, I'm sure there are people who don't go to church to thumb their noses at everything holy. But they're not who I want to focus on; I want to ponder what we learn from people like me, from us who may not always be able to get ourselves to church unless it's our job.

The first thing I suggest learning is that this temptation not to go to church is not automatically a sign that we're spiritually dead or disinterested. In fact, it may even be a sign that we're spiritually hungry but not always able to get the food we need by going to church. Don't, so to speak, criminalize us. Instead, maybe even consider admiring us.

And that leads to my second suggestion for dealing with sporadic churchgoers. If we have understandable reasons for not going to church, then the church can learn from those reasons. From those who find spiritual nurture other than by going to church, the church can learn more about people's spiritual hungers and whether or not the church is helping to meet them.

For example, many of us hunger for spiritual food that feeds who we really are rather than encourages us to put on church selves that hide who we really are. In a recent issue (Winter 2006/07) of the *Leader*, a Mennonite worship resource, Joel Short tells of how Pasadena Mennonite Church has worked at this:

My first Sunday at Pasadena Mennonite . . . I started crying during the congregational prayer time as a woman named Nancy prayed. Hearing the sweet humility and simple faith in her voice, I felt free to truly enter into worship. Months later, in a membership class, I heard . . . then-pastor Jim Brenneman declare, "At PMC we don't want to play church." I knew what he

meant. My participation at Pasadena Mennonite confirmed the suspicion I had formed that first Sunday as I prayed with Nancy, our prayer leader: a commitment to embodying sincere, authentic, and humble worship guides this worshipping community. (p. 2)

So what then is key to Pasadena Mennonite worship? Short says,

In practice this means that PMC's services are not slick or flashy. They don't even always start on time. Our community often tries new things because we know, as Worship Commission Chair Melba Moore says, "There is no one right way to structure a worship service." (p. 2.)

The Pasadena goal, then, is simply, depending on who's leading and who's there, for God's presence to be celebrated in whatever ways fit that particular morning and group. *Not playing at church*—but bringing our true selves into contact with our true God. That does strike me as a lesson we can learn from the many who skip church not to skip God but to really meet God.

But now let me flip my comments, not against those who skip church but to ponder—including for the sake of my own tempted-to-skip-church self—what may be lost as well as gained by skipping church. Yes, I think the church can learn from those of us who skip church. I mean that.

Still those who skip church can also learn from those who go to church.

So what are these learnings? And what are they if we focus on the human benefits of going to church, since often simply quoting Scripture or doctrine, important as such teachings are, is not what motivates trying out church attendance?

Well, one thing that kept haunting me as I thought of the person in me who loves not going to church Sunday mornings is the suspicion that Sunday mornings are special even when you don't go to church because those who do go to church have carved out that space as special. I suspect that if one day everyone in the world stopped going to church, it wouldn't be long before Sunday morning as a time that feels wonderful for sleeping in, reading the paper, taking walks would feel less special. Because all the things that crowd in the rest of the week would little by little crowd into that Sunday morning space.

We already see this happening Sunday afternoons. They once were mostly set aside for not working or shopping—but now are less and less so as blue laws that kept businesses closed on Sundays have been abolished and a great place to see your fellow churchgoers after church is at a local supermarket, Wal-mart, or restaurant.

So what I'm saying is that those of us who don't go to church risk getting a free ride off those who do. Do we cherish the special feel of Sunday mornings? Then at least sometimes, to do our part in preserving the spe-

cialness, we do need to go to church. This is a key thing regular churchgoers can help teach us.

A second key thing they can teach, I believe, is the importance of putting something in the piggybank for when you need it. Many of us who don't go to church often are just fine not going; I mean it when I say that often enough people don't go to church because they rightly sense that their spiritual hungers are for food better than church offers. Still I can't overemphasize how often, both as pastor and person, I've seen non-churchgoers suddenly find themselves in deep trouble with nowhere to turn—because they never put anything in that piggybank called having a supportive spiritual community.

When loved ones die, when our own lives fall apart, often our non-churchgoing ways of finding spiritual food don't satisfy. Now we need to wrestle with where God is or isn't and do so not alone or only with friends or family but also with a larger commu-

nity. And not just any community, but one dedicated to learning about who God is by regularly assembling together and learning about God through scriptural teachings, singing God's praises, and sharing each other's spiritual journeys. Often then we wish we had been all along putting money in the spiritual community support piggybank so now we'd have some to take out.

So let the churchgoing saints not forget to learn from the non-churchgoing saints what more nurturing food the church may need to offer. And let the non-churchgoing saints not forget to learn from the churchgoing saints that there are reasons to assemble together and keep Sunday mornings holy.

—*Michael A. King, Telford, Pennsylvania, is pastor, Spring Mount (Pa.) Mennonite Church; owner, Cascadia Publishing House; and editor, DreamSeeker Magazine.*

When loved ones die, when our own lives fall apart, often our non-churchgoing ways of finding spiritual food don't satisfy.



Hopeful Nightmare

A Review of “Children of Men”

Dave Greiser

Has there ever been a happy movie about the future? Despite sunny claims made for advances in medicine and technology, films about humanity’s future are uniformly bleak and depressing. Governments are collapsing or oppressive, street life has devolved into violent chaos—even the sky is always gray.

“Children of Men,” loosely based on the 1992 novel of the same title by mystery writer P. D. James, is the latest exercise in future-angst. “Children” paints a picture of the world as it might be in 2027. Great Britain is the last civilization on earth, and it is quickly moving toward chaos. Its Department of Homeland Security (really!) rounds up refugees and stores them in cages in the remote countryside. In London, terrorist groups of various sorts detonate bombs. Evidence of out of control pollution is everywhere.

Worst of all, for reasons never explained in the story, there has not been a live human birth in nearly twenty years. With a despairing humanity on the brink of extinction, television commercials advertise pain-free suicide kits for those so inclined (“Quietus . . . *you* decide when”).

A shaft of hope is injected into this dystopian nightmare. A young woman named Kee (played by

Claire-Hope Ashitey) has become pregnant. Members of the terrorist organization FISH, led by Julian (Julianne Moore) plan to spirit Kee past security and out of London to an off-shore location where a shadowy group called The Human Project is frantically seeking a cure for infertility.

Julian and her allies hijack her former lover—and former activist—Theo (played by a wonderfully cynical and scruffy Clive Owen) to secure travel documents for Kee’s safe passage. A simple conversation at gunpoint convinces Theo to return to his activist past.

Thus is the story set up in a rather pedestrian first 30 minutes. The remaining 90 minutes contain some of the most riveting and realistic chase scenes I have seen recorded on film.

“Children” is directed by Mexican director Alfonso Cuarón (“Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban”) with cinematography by Emmanuel Lubezki. The cinematography relies heavily on handheld camera techniques and long, uncut scenes that convey a you-are-there immediacy to the action. Rather than relying on the usual Hollywood pyrotechnics, Cuarón’s chase scenes are gritty, low-tech, and occasionally darkly humorous. My favorite scene involves Theo and mother-to-be Kee attempting to flee armed terrorists in a car that refuses to start.

Along the way, we are introduced to more memorable characters. These include an aging hippie friend of Theo’s (Michael Caine, in a lovably

humorous role) and refugees who are capable of surprising and selfless acts of courage.

“Children of Men” is one of those films that would seem to bear up well under repeated watching. Based on a single viewing, I would say that the strongest elements of the film are its plot, its visual techniques, and its editing. There were moments along the way in which I was scarcely breathing, and there are many unexpected turns of events, befitting a master of plotting such as P. D. James.

But I want to see the film again to scrutinize the story’s metaphorical elements. “Children” seems to be a cautionary tale after the fashion of “1984,” or even “Twelve Monkeys.” It warns of the world just round the corner for societies that ignore the environment and marginalize outsiders. Scenes of garbage-strewn London streets, open sewer pipes, and smog-filled skies are almost heavyhanded. Shots of caged refugees and body-strewn roadsides conjure up similar memories of Nazi Germany and even of Abu Graib.

Parallels between Kee and the biblical Mary are not subtly drawn. Why is it, for example, that each person who discovers she is pregnant responds with a not-quite-blasphemous “Jesus Christ!” Plus director Cuarón often frames Theo and Kee in shots that seem obviously evocative of the Holy Family.

In the religion section of this morning’s *Wichita Eagle*, I read yet

Parallels between Kee and the biblical Mary are not subtly drawn.

another accounting of the mainstream film industry's "rediscovery of faith." While I won't discount the significance of Hollywood's new renderings of "The Nativity Story" or "The Passion of the Christ," I confess to having much less interest in those films than in films in which I find myself "overhearing" hints of the gospel. "Children of Men" makes no pretense at being a religious story. Yet even in

its gritty imagery and fearful predictions, the hopeful good news cannot be hidden.

—*Having finally located the movie theaters of central Kansas, Dave Greiser returns to his duties as "Reel Reflector" for DreamSeeker Magazine. He is the new Director of the Pastoral Ministries Program and a faculty member at Hesston College.*

Black Holes

We draw large black dots in the shapes of faces
on the stimulation cards in the hospital newborn nursery.
"These black-against-white symbols catch their attention,"
the head nurse informs us.

We place the black dotted cards inside the isolates
and their newborn eyes catch and hold them—
those large black dots, just as she said they would.

The sight of them stirs a far-off memory in me:
Was it my own mothers eyes? So dark were those eyes,
those first black dots into which I gazed,

eyes which were weeping often, even then,
my aunt told me, weeping they were,
over some unnamed fear she had for me.

Did those fears transfer from her eyes to mine?
Did those black dots of fear imprint my soul?
Or is it genes, which curse my peace,
inherited imbalances which
cause my own black fears today?
I wonder.

—*Freda Zehr, Wilmington Delaware, is a free lance writer and member of Frazer Mennonite church in Malvern along with her husband, Vernon Zehr, a retired minister. She retired from twenty years as a medical secretary and has been active in volunteer work, prison mentoring, and racial diversity training.*

The Bible Story— Our Story

Daniel Hertzler

Telling Our Stories: Personal Accounts of Engagement with Scripture, edited by Ray Gingerich and Earl Zimmerman. Cascadia, 2006.

The Art of Reading Scripture, edited by Ellen F. Davis and Richard B. Hays. Eerdmans, 2003.

Each of these books grows out of a similar concern: how to make the Bible relevant to the twenty-first century. But they use contrasting methods. The first is based on a weekend colloquy of two dozen Mennonites. For the second, an ecumenical group of pastors and biblical scholars met periodically over four years. The Mennonite strategy is notable: get a group together representing a common tradition and listen to what they will say.

Did the Mennonites accomplish in a weekend what took the ecumenical group four years? Almost, they did. But since we have both books we may consider them together and draw insights from each one.

Persons were invited to the colloquy with the understanding that they should be free to express their convictions without being criticized. The fact that the

Bible has been foundational for the Anabaptist tradition yet the source of endless disagreements among us was no doubt in back of the strategy. The reader will find some contrasting opinions expressed. Yet evidently a good time was had by all.

Among the more interesting accounts is that of Jo-Ann Brant, who grew up in the United Church of Canada but joined a Mennonite congregation after they put her on a committee. She now teaches at Goshen College in Indiana.

Brandt confesses that “when I began to read the text for and with my students, my preoccupation with the questions of historical criticism gave way to a growing awareness of the habits of the heart that the stories instilled in me. I began to replace notions of faith as an epistemological position with faith as trust, and I began to find affirmation of core Anabaptist convictions about nonviolence, justice, simplicity, mutual aid, and communal accountability” (55).

Contrasting perspectives are stated by G. Craig Maven and J. Denny Weaver. Maven recounts his background study in conservative Reformed theology and affirms that “I am still comfortable with the concepts of infallibility and inerrancy. But I recognize that these are faith statements. These are choices I have made which cannot be reasoned to nor reasoned out of” (180).

On the other hand, J. Denny Weaver says, “I assume that the Bible is true—not infallible nor inerrant—but true.” He continues, “Second, the Bible’s interpretation will generally

make sense in terms of the world in which we live.”

One exception he makes, however, is “the resurrection of Jesus. The resurrection of Jesus does not fit into the categories of knowing and testing in our modern world, but the Bible speaks about resurrection, and it is the basis of our faith. I believe in the resurrection” (243).

Earl Zimmerman’s story is long and involved. He grew up in an Old Order Mennonite community in Pennsylvania, was thrust out of it through an experience in alternative service during the Vietnam War. He found his way toward a satisfactory personal faith through the writings of Guy F. Hershberger, John Howard Yoder, and Dietrich Bonhoeffer which “convinced me that Jesus’ way of peace was central to the gospel.” But he also remembers with appreciation “Grandpa Sensenig’s insistence that we begin our study of the Bible with the Sermon on the Mount” (225).

His pilgrimage led him eventually to doctoral study at Catholic University and teaching at Eastern Mennonite University. He holds that “if we truly honor the authority of Scripture, we will not see it as a one-way conversation. Indeed, we can and must talk back to Scripture” (229). How many Mennonites have been free to say this publicly, except perhaps in a Sunday school class, as in “Jesus didn’t mean that”?

Nevertheless, in a brief “Conclusion” chapter the book warns against a too easygoing view of the storytelling experience. “What makes biblical storytelling normative is if, after testing

in the community of faith, it corresponds with our Lord’s story, with the story of Jesus.”

It goes on to say, “The issues of militarization and homosexuality, which served as catalysts for the experiment in telling our stories, remain with us. To follow Jesus, to be a social embodiment of Christ, is in the final analysis, always political and frequently painful” (257). But the editors hope telling stories can be a beginning and they commend the book—of course—to others who may wish to undertake a similar process. And we should.

If all of this and more can be accomplished in a weekend, what can be done over four years? The authors of essays in *The Art of Reading Scripture* provide comprehensive generalizations not likely to grow out of a weekend’s consultation. The four-year process was identified as “The Scripture Project.” It brought together a group of scholars with a variety of scholarly specialties “seeking to explore, to exemplify, and to nurture habits of reading Scripture theologically,” hoping “to recover the church’s rich heritage of biblical interpretation in a dramatically changed cultural environment.”

The group came to believe “that reading Scripture is an art—a creative discipline that requires engagement and imagination, in contrast to the Enlightenment’s ideal of detached objectivity.” If indeed the interpretation of Scripture is an art more than a

science, several things follow. For one, it is difficult. For another, it “has the potential for creating something beautiful.” In addition “we learn the practice of an art through apprenticeship to those who have become masters” (xv-xvi).

The book begins with “nine theses on the interpretation of Scripture.” These, we are told, are based upon the essays which follow rather than the other way around. But in reading the book we begin with the theses. The first of these is that

“Scripture truthfully tells the story of God’s action of creating, judging, and saving the world” (1). This is a bold statement coming from a group of scholars. It is followed by others that clarify and illustrate this assumption.

Also, each of the nine is followed by proposed discussion questions. The final question, following the ninth thesis, is “To what standards of accountability are we called to keep our readings faithful to the God of Jesus Christ?” (5). Excerpts from some of the essays will illustrate what the group was able to propose over four years.

In “Teaching the Bible Confessionally in the Church,” Ellen F. Davis acknowledges her debt to historical study of the Bible but indicates her intention to do more than “study the Bible as if its aim were to give us insight into ancient ideologies and events.” She proposes that the aim of a “confessional reading of the Bible” is “first of all, to tell us about the nature of and will of God, to instruct us in

If all of this and more can be accomplished in a weekend, what can be done over four years?

the manifold and often hidden ways in which God is present and active in the world; and second, to give us a new awareness of ourselves and our actions, to show us that in everything we have to do with God" (11). If some of us thought these things were obvious, it is of interest to see them coming from a scholar.

Richard Bauckham takes up the postmodern objection to a metanarrative, the effort to devise a "comprehensive explanation" for all reality. He draws on the work of Jean-Francois Lyotard, who holds that "Metanarratives are necessarily authoritarian and oppressive, since they can subsume difference only by suppressing it" and holds that "order is always false and so oppressive."

Bauckham grants a certain credulity to Lyotard's critique of modernism, but observes that it offers no effective answer to the oppression of "consumerist individualism and free-market globalization. . . . It enriches the rich while leaving the poor poor, and it destroys the environment" (47).

In response Bauckham offers the story of the Bible as a metanarrative. His presentation includes eight points, the first of which is that "what justifies the term *metanarrative* is that the biblical story is a story about the meaning of the whole of reality. . . . The particularity of the claim is offensive to the modern metanarrative of universal reason; the universality, even more offensive to postmodern relativism" (48).

His second point is that "the biblical story accounts for history in terms

of the freedom and purpose of God and human freedom to obey or to resist God" (48). He notes the threat posed by totalitarianism against which he holds that relativism is not an effective response. "The challenge to the church in the postmodern context is to reclaim the biblical story in a way that expresses its noncoercive claim to truth without imposing premature eschatological closure" (53).

Davis comes again with "Critical Traditioning: Seeking an Inner Biblical Hermeneutic." She is concerned with difficult texts. "What can we do in the church with difficult texts which do not seem to accord with a well considered understanding of the Christian faith?" (163). She proposes that "A living tradition is a potentially courageous form of shared consciousness, because a tradition, in contrast to an ideology, preserves (in some form) our mistakes and atrocities as well as our insights and moral victories. It also preserves side-by-side the disagreements that are still unresolved in the process" (169).

As an example, she mentions the account of the Israelite conquest of Canaan and suggests that the bad Canaanite stereotype which we typically assume is not clear from the accounts. For example, the spies entered Canaan through a Canaanite brothel and Rahab, the madam, is found reciting the Israelite perspective in Joshua 2:9-11. Her name, incidentally, as reported by Davis, is not one you would give to your daughter.

The more familiar example of Traditioning is Jesus' interpretation of the Levitical commandment to love

one's neighbor with the parable of the good Samaritan. This is old material to us, but was no doubt shocking when Jesus first gave it.

Richard B. Hays has a chapter "Reading Scripture in Light of the Resurrection." In it he takes issue with Spong, Bultmann, and Funk—who are inclined to psychologize the resurrection of Jesus.

In response he asks, "But what if God really did raise Jesus from the dead?" He expounds texts from the Gospels of John, Mark, and Luke which "connect the resurrection with a reading of Scripture" (220, 221). Hays holds that "the resurrection of Jesus will remain a mute, uninterpretable puzzle unless it is placed firmly within the Old Testament story of Israel. . . . The good news of Luke 24, however, is that the story does not end in incomprehension and hermeneutical failure, because the one who rose from the dead teaches us anew how to listen to Moses and the prophets" (232).

Hays responds to the tendency for New Testament scholars to seek to be objective about the faith and asks, "What would biblical criticism look like if we sought to develop a consistent critical approach from within the community that knows itself to be given life by the resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth?" He proposes that such an approach would be as disturbing to New Testament scholars as Jesus upsetting the money changers in the temple or his put down of the Sad-

duces regarding the resurrection (238).

As I reflect on these two books, I find *Telling Our Stories* more readily accessible. A Sunday school class could use it. But *The Art of Reading Scripture* in its own deliberate fashion provides useful background. If indeed the

reading of Scripture is a difficult art which needs to be learned, we are in danger of taking it too lightly.

In my Sunday school, Bibles are given to fourth grade children. This is a sign that we consider the Bible an important resource for them. Indeed we do. Even though some of the stories in it would not be appropriate for prime time television, we are

free to affirm that the Bible is our story and we want them know it. Having read it ourselves as children, we conclude that it will not harm them.

Yet we are well aware that the Bible can be abused freely. When we reflect on the issues raised by these two books, we can only ask who is sufficient for the task of biblical interpretation. We know in our hearts that we must do it. Should we be approaching this task with fear and trembling?

—Daniel Hertzler, *Scottsdale, Pennsylvania, a longtime editor and writer, contributes a monthly column to the Daily Courier (Connellsville, Pa.).*

I find *Telling Our Stories* more readily accessible. . . . But *The Art of Reading Scripture* in its own deliberate fashion provides useful background.

Saturday Night—Sunday Morning

I scrubbed my kitchen floor today,
not one of those “a lick and a promise” scrubs,
a real down on my hands and knees job.
“To get all the corners clean,
you must get down on your knees,” Mama always said.

Her house always had that clean,
just-scrubbed look on Saturday night.
The old blue linoleum’s worn-through spots,
shone dark and glossy with wax.
The oily smell of furniture polish
blended with all the odors of cleanliness.

“Cleanliness is next to godliness,”
I often heard her say on Saturday
Thoughts of God came easy on Saturday—
so close to Sunday morning—
and thoughts of food.

The two cackling chickens, duly chased and caught,
their heads severed by her own hand.
I could not watch.
Their feathers singed now by the lit fire,
her hands deftly moved their plump bodies
through the flaming newspapers.

Their bodies scraped and cut up,
they rested now in the ice box,
waiting to be fried tomorrow.
The freshly baked pies waited too,
and the chocolate cake on the pantry shelf.
Was an abundance of food also next to godliness?
It felt that way on Saturday night.

Papa loved company for Sunday dinner.
Faraway relatives would be invited:
“Come up for Sunday dinner, Alma is a wonderful cook”
(as indeed she was).
But sometimes she dreaded it.

She told me once, one hot
August Saturday afternoon
(as we again prepared for
Sunday dinner on my birthday),
how he had invited his cousins from Lancaster
just two weeks before my birth.
Fifteen years later, distress still lingered
at the memory of that day.
“I didn’t feel good that summer, it was so hot.
And you—you were such a large baby—
I thought I could not get dinner for all those people”

The women folk cousins were sorry for her,
she said, when they saw her body, large with child.
“We did not know,” they said,
“Michael should have told us.”
She seemed to find comfort in their sympathy.
She smiles now, remembering.
“But I was always glad I did afterward—
Papa so loves company”

Saturday night—Sunday mornings often
followed by Sunday afternoon headaches.
The dark green blinds pulled against
the afternoon sun—it hurt her eyes.

I slipped upstairs, to comfort her—away
from the company where only the murmur of
the voices below interrupted the silence in her room.
She lay on the bed, her forehead
covered with a wet wash cloth,
her long thick black hair
(released from the pins that bound it)
billowed like a dark storm cloud
across the pillow.
Pain etched furrows in her
porcelain white skin.
I rubbed her temples,
the way she always liked.

“Is the pain better yet, Mama”?
 A tear slid from the corner of her eye
 to the pillow beneath.
 “Yes, it helps a little.” She patted my hand now;
 “You have a good way with your hands—
 for such a little girl.”

Saturday nights, Sunday afternoons.
 Soon it will be Monday,
 sweet Monday.
 —*Freda Zehr*



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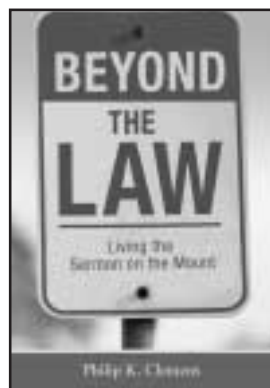
Or perhaps you already subscribe to *DreamSeeker Magazine* and are an author interested in being published in *DSM*, as a growing number of writers are. Then what? Indeed a key part of the *DSM* vision is to support the work of gifted writers—without whose inspired contributions the magazine, of course, could not exist. However, the limited space available in a quarterly magazine does not allow us to accept numerous unsolicited articles, particularly once we make space for articles by regular columnists and those we solicit. However, we do want to publish some unsolicited writing, aim to treat all unsolicited submissions respectfully, and accept as many of them as we can. To submit, send queries or articles by e-mail to DSM@CascadiaPublishingHouse.com or to the Telford address above. (Note that unsolicited articles submitted by mail without SASE are unlikely to be returned.)

Even as we can only publish a modest number of unsolicited articles, we do very much encourage feedback, including short letters for publication and occasional longer response articles (350-400 words).

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**What is Palestine-Israel?
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Sonia K. Weaver presents some of the questions Mennonite workers in Palestine regularly receive from supporters in Canada, the United States, and beyond, along with straightforward answers. Commissioned by Mennonite Central Committee.
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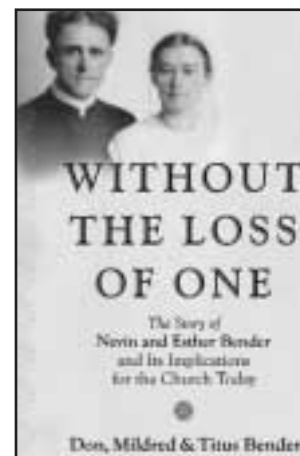
**Beyond the Law
Living the Sermon on the Mount**
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**Lasting Marriage
The Owners' Manual**
Harvey Yoder emphasizes areas of relationship maintenance often ignored in other similar books. These include the importance of a solid support network of friends, family, and congregational family; and the need to take seriously Jesus' teaching about a joyful and simple lifestyle.
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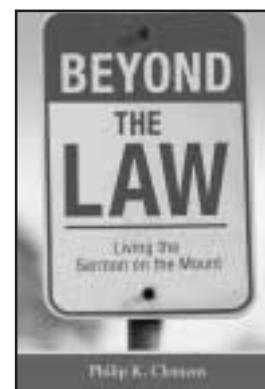
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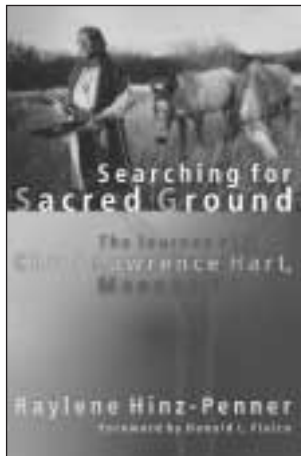
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Perspective

Moon lit
April morning
early
You plod
to the kitchen
and caffeine
then stand
at the back door
and watch the light
snap on in houses
You open the door
and listen to the racket
the birds are making

To you it's cacophonous din
To God
it's Mozart.

*—Ken Gible, Greencastle, Pennsylvania, is
a retired Church of the Brethren pastor.
These days, instead of writing sermons, he
writes poetry (mostly) and other stuff.*