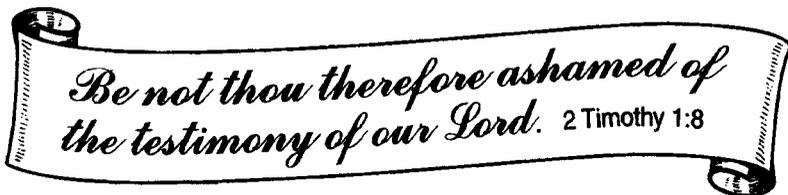


# THE EASTERN MENNONITE TESTIMONY

SELECTED ARTICLES FROM THE MONTHLY PUBLICATION  
OF  
THE EASTERN PENNSYLVANIA MENNONITE CHURCH  
JUNE 2009



The Eastern Mennonite Testimony is the official organ of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. That publication seeks to promote the historic Anabaptist-Mennonite faith and practice. The Testimony is published monthly by the Publication Board of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. Subscriptions are free. Forward subscriptions and contributions to Eastern Mennonite Publications, 40 Wood Corner Road, Ephrata, PA. 17522 U.S.A. Telephone (717) 733-7988 Fax: (717)733 2757.

**NB.** Only limited extracts from The Eastern Mennonite testimony are published on this website. No addresses or personal details will be published for privacy reasons. The views expressed in the articles are those of the individual authors.

Editor: [anabaptistmennonites.org](http://anabaptistmennonites.org).

## *“Labourers Together”*

This issue of the Eastern Mennonite Testimony marks the end of another five-year era of its publication. The Testimony has now been printed for forty years as the official organ of the Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church. Eight editors have completed five-year periods of editorship. These five-year periods are a continuation of the precedent set by the first editor. No doubt each subsequent editor, although having been blessed for serving, has appreciated the wisdom of this practice.

We are thankful that Brother Bruce has consented to take up the editorial work, beginning with the July 2009 issue. Brother Elvin will be serving as assistant editor in place of Brother Darrell. We are confident that these brethren will enter the work with the burden that it be to the glory of God and the strengthening of the church. We wish them the Lord's blessing in their labors.

Forty years seems short to those of us who remember the first issue of the Testimony and the new beginnings indicated by the title of the first editorial, "In the Beginning." Time is surely passing on! Many of those who wrote articles for those early issues have since passed on to their eternal reward.

From an eternal perspective, those forty years have been very short indeed. Compared to eternity, forty years is as a vapor. The burden of all those involved in the work is that this periodical be a positive spiritual influence for maintaining the faith and for helping souls prepare for their eternal abode.

The work of preparing a church periodical has many parallels to that of building an effective and faithful church. Following is a brief review of the work that emphasizes key Bible principles that we must follow.

"The body is not one member, but many" (1 Corinthians 12:14). This work, like all Christian labor, is the labor of many. The limited period of editorship helps to bring broader influence to the work and provides a safeguard to prevent the Testimony from becoming the voice of one individual rather than being the voice of the church. Also, many besides the editor are involved in the preparation of the Testimony. During the last five years, more than one hundred forty writers contributed more than two hundred sixty articles and editorials. The news and program sections have been faithfully organized by the assistant editor. Numerous mission letters and com-

mittee reports have been prepared under the direction of the church extension correspondent, and the writer of the reminders to "Pray" has made his monthly contributions.

Church life, too, is effective as it is the work of many members fitly joined together in united effort and united zeal to serve the Lord. As each fills the place where the Lord has placed him, the entire brotherhood will benefit.

"Every purpose is established by counsel" (Proverbs 20.-18). Reviewing articles is a key part of producing the Testimony. The associate editor, three bishops, and three members of the Publication Board are assigned to review the articles and letters for doctrinal soundness and general content. In addition, copy editors edit all that is printed. Thus the work of the writers and the editor is reviewed repeatedly before being printed.

Church life, too, is safest and most effective when every member is open to the concerns of every other member. Openness to brotherly criticism is a key to maintaining the faith both as individuals and as a group. Unless we are open to this counsel, neither we nor the work will prosper.

"We are labourers together with

God" (1 Corinthians 3:9). Much effort needs to be exerted in preparing the Testimony. However, only as God blesses these efforts will they prosper.

Church work, too, is God's work as He works through men. We are called to labor diligently in the work. The success of the labor is dependent on God's blessing. We need to give first ourselves and then our best efforts for the Lord's work. If the work prospers, it is because He has prospered it.

"The coming of the Lord draweth nigh" (James 5.-8). All that we do must be done in light of the coming of the Lord. We are five years nearer to the return of our Lord than we were at the beginning of this period of editorship and forty years nearer than when the first issue of the Testimony was printed. That first issue included an article that began, "Keep looking up—Jesus is coming soon!"

Jesus is coming soon! Some day "the trumpet shall sound" (1 Corinthians 15:52) as the Lord returns for His bride. The last Testimony will then have been printed. May we each labor in the work of the Lord, knowing that, if we labor in the Lord, our labor will not be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58).

—GEA



## A Biblical Approach to Ordinations

The Christian church needs properly authorized leadership for its preservation and power. We are thankful that the Bible gives precedents that can be built upon with confidence that the Lord is guiding His body in this important work. The passing of time and the growth of the church require ordinations to keep the ministry properly staffed.

God has designed that the mantle of responsibility be passed from shoulder to shoulder as age and need require. The Bible gives us two precedents to follow. In Acts 1:20-26, the disciples filled the void left by Judas Iscariot. The qualifications were laid out and two were appointed. Since the church needed only one brother for the work, they placed the whole matter before the Lord by using the lot. "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen."

Later, in Acts 6:1-6, the apostles faced another need and gave this direction: "Look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business."

The prayers made on these occasions radiate the heartbeat of an ordination. The apostles believed it

was God's way of revealing His will to His church. Since God knows what the demands of the office will be and since He

knows what a man will become, we are glad to leave the final disposition in His hand. We are to follow the directives as well as we know and then trust God for what we do not know.

Ordinations are ventures of faith. Rest and unity in the brotherhood are great necessities. A great deal of confidence needs to be shared among the members of the congregation. A high level of trust is necessary between the congregation and the existing ministry. Ordinations should not be expected to solve obvious problems in the congregation.

To pull together, the whole church must take the proper steps. The involved ministry and the local congregation are the primary parts of this process. One of the most critical aspects of this process is the need for confidence between the ministry and the congregation. Each must trust the sincerity and concern of the other. The kingdom of God suffers when unity is lacking.

Usually it is best for the local ministry to become aware of the need for more ordained help. More

specifically, it is better if an ordained brother realizes that he needs help rather than needing to be told this. The local ministry need to be in agreement about the need and the timing. After the request is taken to the broader ordained body for their approval, the request and recommendation by the ministry is brought to the congregation for their voice. The need for help should be shared and the congregation called to prayer about the matter. After a time of seeking God's will, the voice of the congregation needs to be taken. Strong support needs to be shown before proceeding.

When the counsel of the congregation is favorable, the Lord's further direction needs to be sought. During this time, which could be several months, the qualifications laid out in the Scriptures need to be considered. Brethren need to be looking deeply into their own hearts, not with the prospect of being called to the work, but with concern that they are in God's will. Ordinations are not like a political campaign, where office is sought. Rather it is a time when God's will is sought, not man's.

Because the brethren in the congregation know that one of them will be called, how should they feel during this time? Humility should be allowed to do its work in helping each one to feel unworthy—

and yet to be willing if the Lord calls. Humility will also enable those who are not called to be strong supporters of those who are called.

As ordination time draws closer, specific qualification messages that focus on the qualifications the Scriptures outline are in order. The number of nominations required for a brother to be part of the class needs to be made public. Also, the responsibility of the existing ministry to give oversight to the entire process needs to be understood.

Then follows the nomination service, where brethren are encouraged to share a brother's name who, they believe, is qualified to be considered. Nominating a brother should be a very confidential matter that is not discussed with other brethren. It is a time to have the heart and mind open but the mouth tightly closed. Discussing and trying to discover what others are thinking detracts from the sacredness of the ordination and reduces it to mere human calculations.

At the nominating service, the names of those receiving the specified number of nominations are shared. A meeting, often called an examination meeting, is planned so the bishops and the local ministry can meet with those named and discuss the necessary matters of the work. If the brotherhood have any questions or concerns about anyone

named, they are encouraged to share it with the ministry. Upon acceptable examination, those nominated, if more than one, are eligible to share the lot.

What is the leaders' responsibility regarding the nominations given? Do they need to answer for who shares the lot? We believe leaders do have responsibility in the matter because the qualifications in the Scriptures were given to church leaders, indicating their special responsibility in the matter. They also may be aware of matters that would handicap the named person in fulfilling the office. Nominations should not be eliminated lightly.

Some feel every name should be made public and should be sifted in the examination process. There are different sides to that as well as different approaches. But it hardly seems fair to give such exposure to persons that the leadership knows beforehand are not qualified.

The ordination day is a solemn day. It is serious because of the tremendous effect on the life of the church, the commitments that are made, and the change it will bring to the life of the ordained brother and his family.

The service is a time of worship: praise, adoration, and seeking and submitting to the divine will of God. The Word is preached and many prayers are offered. If there is a class, the lot card is placed in one book among the books needed. After each book is taken, the brother in whose book the lot is found is ordained to the work. Commitments are made that can be kept only by the fear and power of God.

The success of the ordination depends on the entire congregation. As all past thoughts and opinions are laid aside and God's revelation is accepted, the Lord of the church can continue working out His will to His own glory!

*Brother David.*



## *COPING WITH ECONOMIC STRESS*

We can expect increasing uncertainties and difficulties in light of the recent changes in national and global economics. Trillions of dollars are being pumped into ailing financial systems. Rumbblings are increasing for a global remedy to bail out weak currencies.

One of the prophetic earmarks of the end time is a worldwide economic structure. A worldwide ruler will impose global economic influence and requirements. Those who refuse to comply will do so at the cost of their lives (Revelation 13:7, 15-17). In order for "the beast" to gain such worldwide control, the present economic structures of the world will need to falter and collapse. A worldwide crisis will pave the way for a worldwide economic order and ruler. Today is the time to renew our trust in God and to firmly anchor our economic concepts in the Word of God.

Some economic crises are imposed on us beyond our control, while others may develop because of personal management problems. We cannot, for example, control the level of inflation, the rate of government deficit spending, or the international trade balance. However, we can, in part, control our personal financial affairs. Too many economic crises are self-

imposed, resulting from unwise use of God-given resources. The free flow of money in our age tends to make us careless and irresponsible in economic management.

The Bible says much about acquiring, spending, and saving money. The rich man of Matthew 19 allowed his possessions to keep him from inheriting treasure in heaven. He went away sorrowful because his possessions had a deadly grip on his heart and life.

The following Bible principles will help us to maintain a balanced economic outlook in life.

**1. Stewardship.** God is the owner of all. All that we possess is a gracious gift from Him. We are entrusted stewards who must someday give an account for our management of God's resources (Deuteronomy 8:18; 1 Corinthians 4:2).

**2. Contentment.** The world is restless and dissatisfied. The wants of people far exceed their needs. The commercial advertising of our day is geared to making people covetous, so enticing them to buy more. Pampering the carnal nature with financial resources is sinful and also economically devastating (1 Timothy 6:6; Isaiah 55:2).

**3. Thankfulness.** Thankfulness helps us to be content when the supply of goods is low or even at a

bare minimum. Unthankfulness promotes carelessness in economic management because the goods being handled are not precious to us (Deuteronomy 8:7-20; Proverbs 12:27).

**4. Separation.** The practice of separation in economics will keep us from following the expensive fads and fashions of our day. It will also keep us from entering business involvements that are highly speculative and generally very risky. Many economic crises in personal and business life are a product of violating the principle of separation (2 Corinthians 6:17).

The present economic climate tends to remold our economic concepts and values. To a point, some of this is necessary. We must, however, reckon with the spiritual and economic hazards that accompany the reconditioning process.

In past years, people saved money by waiting to purchase a needed item until they could afford it. This is still a good concept. It enhances the spiritual values of patience, stewardship, and contentment, and is also economically sound. But inflation has produced the unsound "buy now" concept because later the item may cost more. Furthermore, the assumption is that the debt incurred can be paid back with inflated dollars. This practice has drawn people into economic hardship.

Why are we faced with economic difficulties today that are much greater than the former generation faced? The answer is often related to the change of lifestyle. Many of our dollars are being spent on items that formerly would have been classed as unnecessary or luxurious.

Rearing a family is expensive and does demand financial sacrifice that at times causes hardship. We must remember that God looks favorably on childbearing and family life and will therefore provide a way. Sacrifice is a needful part of parenting and keeps active our love and loyalty to our children. An abundance of money would not be good for a growing family.

The desire to reach a certain financial status is very destructive, both spiritually and economically. How many dollars do we spend seeking the attention of others? This will be revealed in our purchase of home furnishings, cars, and clothing. Many times this spending mania begins in the time of youth before the burden of family responsibility begins. The scramble for prestige calls for excessive spending that soon develops into a life pattern.

Some economic crises exist because of home management problems. The old saying 'A penny saved is a penny earned' still applies. Thriftiness is becoming a ne-

glected and forgotten art in our age of affluence. The way we manage what we have is equally as important as what we earn. The higher paying job is not the answer to a life of economic comfort. The answer is rather found by adjusting our purchasing and lifestyle to our income.

The lack of discernment in spending for farm and business purposes has brought many people to financial disaster. There is a vast difference between spending money and investing money. Wise investments are determined by their potential to produce income and profit.

The problem of mismanagement often becomes an issue when the best or the newest of essential items is purchased. A young farmer needs a tractor, but he does not need the newest and the best. The man with a small business needs a service truck, but a good used one will fill the need. The temptation to begin a business at a high level of production and expense is very hazardous, both spiritually and economically.

The Bible counsels the borrower about his obligation to the lender (Proverbs 22:7). An irresponsible attitude toward debt is wrong. This age of easy credit is geared to keep people spending with little concern about payment. The possibilities reach from the small-dollar item in the department store to the five-

digit items in the showroom and the six-digit investment in the real estate office.

Every loan or business venture should be analyzed on an individual basis. The return on investment should be sufficient to cover realistic interest and principal payments under normal circumstances. Depending on inflation to increase both the value of the investment and our income in order to maintain our financial solvency in the future is very risky. We should rather make conservative projections, making allowance for unexpected conditions such as economic recession, rising interest rates, and the loss of production.

Inflation has increased the value of properties and other assets beyond their actual value. This provides a means of collateral that is somewhat erodable. Inflated assets look good on paper, but they reveal very little about the actual management and production abilities of a person.

Nothing can substitute for hard work in keeping bills paid. This is true for the laborer who earns wages as well as for the businessman or farmer. Sleep lovers, sale addicts, shopping-trip enthusiasts, and "road runners" run a high risk of economic failure.

As economic stresses arise, we must pursue a remedy that will reduce the stress and hopefully allow

us to continue a satisfying life. Although no rigid set of remedies can be proposed, the following considerations are guidelines that apply in a general way in times of economic hardship.

We must maintain complete trust in the providence and care of God. The temptation to depend on earthly securities or government handouts increases in times of economic stress. The enticements of insurance begin to sound very attractive. We must remember that God is speaking to us in times of crisis and desiring to draw us closer to Himself. If we seek to cushion ourselves from God's touch by depending on earthly securities, we will lose the blessing.

We must be ready to adapt our lifestyle according to the situations we face. The comforts of our modern age are pleasant, but we can live happily without many of them. When money is scarce, phone bills must be kept to a minimum, the second car may need to be sold, travel will need to be limited, and older clothes and house furnishings will need to suffice. Periods of economic rigidity are good self-discipline and, if met faithfully,

will generally pave the way for a more relaxed economic situation in the future.

We must seek the counsel of the brotherhood.

When making an investment, we should seek advice, especially if the venture is new and requires considerable financing. Someone else reviewing our plans may soon discover some weaknesses or pitfalls that we have overlooked.

If financial problems arise, a number of honorable methods can be employed. Brethren can be appointed to work with the problem. The success of this method is dependent on the person's willingness to accept help. We should welcome the counsel of the brethren. The outcome of the present distress will affect the testimony of the church.

Let us remember that all of our money and possessions are perishing. The record of our achievements must be weighed on the scale of eternal values. Let us labor for the eternal riches. "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).

*Brother Eby.*



## **Ambassadors for Christ (Part 4) Helping Fellow Christians.**

An ambassador is assigned to a foreign country as a representative of his own nation and people. One of his responsibilities is to protect and assist his fellow citizens who are also living in the foreign country. He senses a kindred spirit with those of his native country.

We too should sense a kindred spirit with the people of God. We have the same Father. We are only pilgrims traveling through a strange land, representing and seeking "a better country." How can we help our fellow pilgrims arrive safely to our home in glory?

By living a faithful life. An upright life that exemplifies God's sufficient grace for each situation speaks volumes. How often we have been inspired by observing another faithful saint! May our lives be the inspiration that other travelers need to press onward and upward.

By letting them know that we care. While Apostle Paul was at Rome, he wrote, 'At my first answer no man stood with me, but all men forsook me' (2 Timothy 4:16). What a discouraging feeling! A friendly letter, a telephone call, and a card are a few of the many ways we can show others that we have an interest in them. May it be said of us as of Timothy, "For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state" (Philippians 2:20).

By sharing words of encouragement. Does our conversation always pass the test of being virtuous? We should ask ourselves, "Will my words brighten another's day, or will they dampen his spirits?" "A man hath joy by the answer of his mouth: and a word spoken in due season, how good is it!" (Proverbs 15:23).

By helping to bear their burdens (Galatians 6:2). If we know that a brother has a building project, instead of saying, "Just let me know if you need help," we might consider saying, "I can help you on Saturday; would that be a good time for you?" Sisters can make a tasty dish or offer to iron clothes for a busy mother. Doing such deeds takes our minds off our own problems and fulfills one of Jesus' commandments.

By assisting them with their financial needs. As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith" (Galatians 6:10). Giving of our money is a practical way of assisting each other. We should count it a privilege to have the opportunity to share with our brethren in their times of need.

A great reward awaits the faithful ambassador. "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Revelation 2:10).

*Brother Glenn. (End of series)*

## *Above The Trembling Elements*

Above the trembling elements,  
Above life's restless sea,  
Dear Saviour, lift my spirit up,  
Oh, lift me up to Thee!

I am not weary of Thy work,  
From earth I would not flee;  
But while I walk, and while I serve,  
Oh, lift me up to Thee!

Whatever falls of good or ill,  
Thy hand, Thy care I see,  
And while these varied dealings pass,  
Oh, lift me up to Thee!

And when my eyes close for the last,  
Still this my prayer shall be,—  
Dear Saviour, lift my spirit up,  
And lift me up to Thee!

—Anna L. Price



### PRAYER POINT

*“The effectual fervent prayer  
of a righteous man availeth much”*

*Thank God for the many answers to prayer,  
Especially in granting life, healing, safety  
And VICTORY over sin.*

*Pray that God will direct and spare us from  
Moral breakdown in today's evil society.*

