GOD'S MISSIONARY
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from the

editor



Dr. Brian Black

Peace on Earth Good Will to Men

Just outside the little town of Bethlehem that first Christmas night the angels proclaimed one incredible message when they said, "And on earth peace, good will toward men" (Luke 2:14). Yet, somehow life does not always seem that way. Many people suffer and face difficulties and heartbreak. It is during these times that a person must trust God. Throughout all our difficulties, God is still working. The birth of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, is our great promise of hope. He is working to undo the consequences of sin and suffering into which evil has plunged our world. One day God will undo all the damage for each one who personally knows God, and furthermore, God has plans to one day bring real peace and restoration to this world. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow vividly captured the emotions of despair and trust in his personal life.

> Throughout all our difficulties, God is still working.

Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, one of America's greatest poets, listened to the bells on Christmas day proclaim again the joyful message. His life, however, was in dark despair. In 1861, his second wife tragically died when her dress caught fire. Longfellow attempted to save her but was severely burned himself and permanently disfigured. He was physically unable to even attend his wife's funeral. This

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event left him mired in deep grief and depression. Over a year later, on Christmas Day, he wrote in his journal: "A merry Christmas' say the children, but that is no more for me."

Then in 1863, during the American Civil War, Longfellow's oldest son, Charles secretly left home and joined the Union Army without his father's blessing. In November of that year, Charles was severely wounded in the Battle of Mine Run. He had been shot through the left shoulder, with the bullet exiting under his right shoulder blade. Upon hearing the news, Longfellow set out for Washington, D.C. He arrived before his son was able to be transported back to the hospitals in the Washington area.

The nation at the time was mired in the despair of the Civil War. It seemed that there was no end to the war in sight. Train car after train car dropped off one load after another of severely injured and dying men for the hospitals in the area. Longfellow saw and experienced the horror of the war first hand while waiting for his son to arrive. When Charles Longfellow did arrive, his father was informed of the seriousness of the wound and warned that he might become paralyzed. Charles was taken back to Massachusetts and did recover, but it took months.

It was against that backdrop of emotional turmoil of personal sorrow and civil war that Longfellow heard the bell from a nearby church on Christmas morning and wrote the words to the song, "I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day." Longfellow was stirred to the depth of his emotions by the ringing of the bells. The promise of peace on earth and goodwill to men contrasted sharply with the emotions both he and the nation were experiencing. This song effectively captures the contrast of human suffering and the promises of God. In his despair he was able to see beyond himself to see that God is still in control.

I heard the bells on Christmas Day
Their old, familiar carols play,
And wild and sweet
The words repeat
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And thought how, as the day had come,
The belfries of all Christendom
Had rolled along
The unbroken song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

Then from each black, accursed mouth
The cannon thundered in the South,
And with the sound
The carols drowned
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

It was as if an earthquake rent
The hearth-stones of a continent,
And made forlorn
The households born
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!

And in despair I bowed my head;
"There is no peace on earth," I said;
"For hate is strong,
And mocks the song
Of peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:
"God is not dead; nor doth he sleep!
The Wrong shall fail,
The Right prevail,
With peace on earth, good-will to men!"

Till, ringing, singing on its way,
The world revolved from night to day,
A voice, a chime,
A chant sublime
Of peace on earth,
good-will to men!

Where the Mission Still Matters

By Dan Durkee

God's Missionary Church, Inc. is a connection of churches, camp meetings, mission works, and a Bible College and Christian Academy that is committed to spreading the message of scriptural holiness. George Straub, Truman Wise, Paul Miller, Arthur Thomas, William Rachaeu, and host of other church leaders had a vision that if God's Missionary Church was to continue for generations to come, it had to birth its own. There were other schools at the time across the landscape, but God's Missionary Church wanted its own school to instill who they are and what our mission is all about.

It was during the 1965 Conference, 61 years ago, that the possibility of beginning a Bible School was brought to the conference floor and then went to the top of the hill to pray, claiming the farm ground for God's work and a school. The general board was authorized to buy the ground for the conference, during the ensuing year. It was July 31, 1966, 60 years ago, that our ground-breaking service took place and many witnessed the seal of God's divine approval. That same day the first $25,000 was raised which is about $300,000 in today's money. Out of that vision, Penn View Bible Institute was born; first as an academy and then as a college. Penn View is spiritually blessed and sanctioned by God to fulfill the Great Commission! Penn View is financially blessed to be operating debt-free today because of the generous and timely support of God's people everywhere. It takes nearly $8,000 a day to operate the school.

Penn View is currently experiencing growth with our largest college enrollment in 20 years. Young people are coming to prepare to become Christ-like servant leaders. They are enrolling in spiritually, academically, and practically qualified 4-year & 2-year degree programs as well as 1-year certified programs such as:

- Bachelor of Arts in Biblical Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Ministerial Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Missionary Studies
- Bachelor of Arts in Ministry to Hispanics
- Bachelor of Arts in Ministry to Muslims
- Bachelor of Arts in Child Evangelism
- Bachelor of Arts in Christian Education – Elementary
- Bachelor of Arts in Christian Education – Secondary English
- Bachelor of Arts in Christian Education – Secondary Social Science
- Bachelor of Arts in Music Education
- Bachelor of Science in Intercultural Healthcare
- Associate of Arts degree in General Studies (2yr)
- Certificate in Bible Studies (1yr)
- Emergency Medical Responder (EMR)
- Emergency Medical Technician (EMT)
- Advanced Emergency Medical Technician (AEMT)

Penn View is blessed with the faculty, staff, campus, and facilities that support our young people to become what God's want them to be. Improved housing, equipment, educational facilities, vehicles, and campus roads all speak to the glory of God. Penn View continues to place graduates in the ministry to fulfill the mission of Jesus; to seek and save that which was lost. We need pastors, missionaries, teacher's, musicians, children's workers, EMT's, and biblically-based ministry-minded layman and woman who want to make their life count. Penn View is a place where the Mission STILL Matters. If it matters to you, enroll and support today!



Christmas on the Battlefield in World War I

By Brian Black

December 1914, during the First World War, one of the most remarkable events in military history took place. In the midst of a terrible war, British and German soldiers laid down their weapons, climbed out of their muddy trenches, shook hands with their enemies, exchanged gifts, and even played games together. This brief moment of peace remains a powerful reminder of the Christmas message of peace and goodwill toward all people.

By Christmas 1914, the First World War had been raging for several months. British and German soldiers faced each other across a stretch of devastated earth known as No Man's Land. They lived in cold, wet, muddy trenches, surrounded by the constant threat of death.Christmas was approaching, but there was no gathering around warm fires with their loved ones, the soldiers faced the daily grind of a miserable war.



Many of the soldiers on both sides had grown up celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace. Although they wore different uniforms and spoke different languages, they shared many of the same Christian traditions. On Christmas Eve, something remarkable began to happen along parts of the Western Front. German soldiers placed small Christmas trees and candles on the edges of their trenches. Then they began singing Christmas carols. Across No Man's Land, British soldiers listened in amazement as some recognized the melodies of the same hymns which were sung in their own churches. Gradually, British soldiers began singing in return. These hymns softened the atmosphere of suspicion and fear.

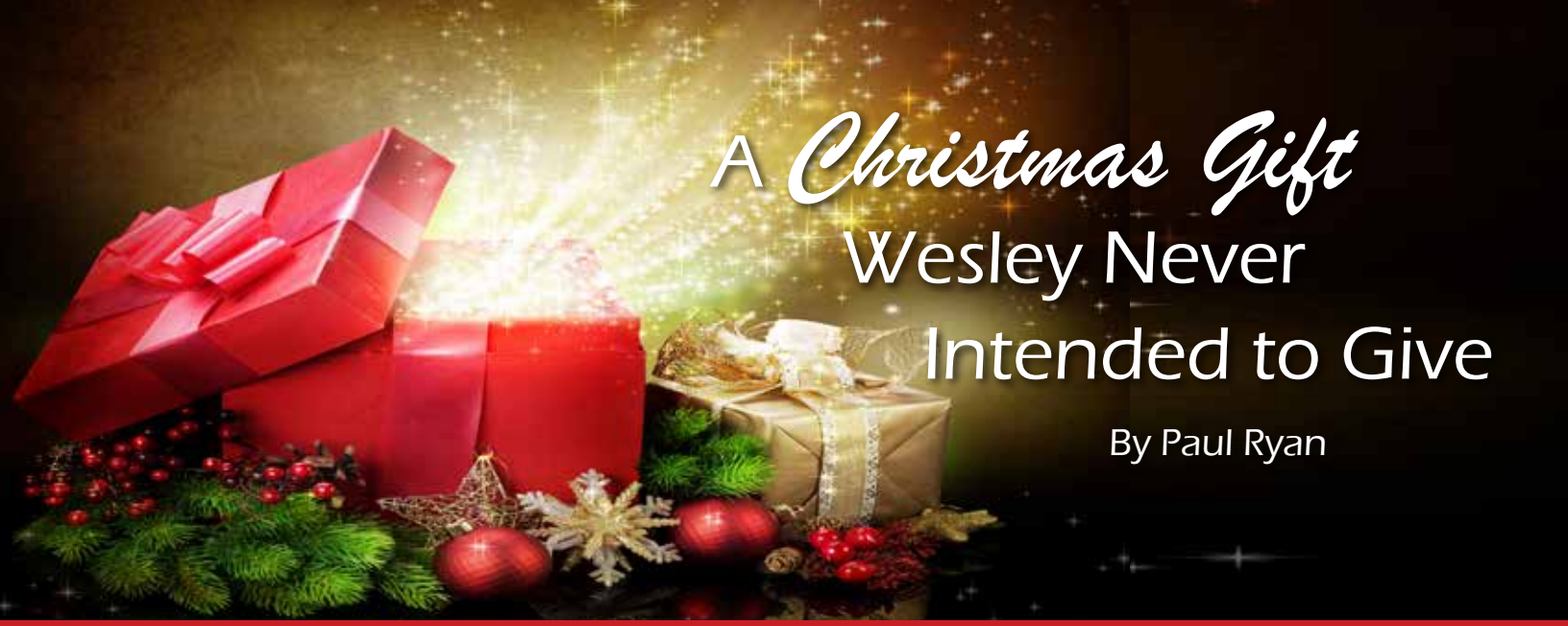
When Christmas morning arrived, German soldiers called out greetings of merry Christmas to the British, and others waved their hands in a friendly greeting. Although cautious eventually, men from both sides climbed out of their trenches and walked between the lines into No Man's Land. The enemy soldiers shook hands, smiled, and exchanged Christmas greetings with one another. For a short time, the battlefield became a peaceful Christmas gathering rather than a killing ground.

As the truce spread through certain sections of the front, soldiers exchanged small gifts. Men who had been trying to kill one another only hours earlier now stood together in conversation. They talked about their families, their homes, and their lives before the war. They realized that the men on the opposite side were not simply enemies but ordinary human beings with hopes, fears, and loved ones of their own. In some places, soldiers even organized informal games of football (soccer) in No Man's Land.

What an unbelievable scene as antagonistic British and German soldiers played laughing in a game of friendly competition while kicking a ball across the frozen ground where bullets had recently flown. Others were able to use the opportunity to recover and bury fallen comrades. Fighting continued in other parts of the front. Nevertheless, where the Christmas truce occurred, it revealed something extraordinary about the meaning of Christmas.

This brief truce brings to mind the words of the angels in Luke 2:14, proclaiming glory to God and peace on earth good will to

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A *Christmas Gift* Wesley Never Intended to Give

By Paul Ryan

The Christmas Conference of 1784 marked the formal moment in history when John Wesley gave a most reluctant Christmas gift—one he had never intended to give when Methodism began: the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Before 1784, American Methodism existed as a movement, and a movement only. It claimed no separate denominational identity. Previously a revival movement within the established Church of England for the propagation of holiness and national renewal, it became a separate, distinct denomination. America and the world have not been the same since.

Wesley, wholeheartedly a son of England and a faithful minister in the Church of England, never intended to separate from that church; in fact, he himself never did. His seeming reversal happened because the American Methodists often lacked access to baptism and Communion.

Twenty-four years before the Christmas Conference, a 1760 edition of his tract Reasons Against a Separation from the Church of England appeared alongside his brother Charles's Hymns for Methodist Preachers. Wesley looked upon the Methodists "not as the authors or ringleaders of a particular sect or party." That was "the farthest thing from our thoughts." They were simply "messengers of God to those who are Christians in name but heathens in heart and in life." Their purpose was salvation and revival within the Church of England.

His reasons for maintaining that unity were biblical, personal, historical, and ecumenical. But the American Revolution changed the relationship between Methodist itinerant preachers and the Church of England. The King of England no longer governed the independent states. What had tied America politically to England had disintegrated, and its religious relationship was changing too.

This historical change alone did not abrogate Wesley's convictional ties to his mother church. His heart was that of a pastor, and his people were in spiritual need. The Revolution resulted in the departure of many Anglican clergy, though some remained. Methodist circuit-riding preachers were still evangelizing and building up believers through class meetings. But these lay preachers could not administer the sacraments: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

This left a need unable to be filled in many communities. The people were hearing the Gospel and growing in holiness, but often lacked access to the sacraments the Lord himself had prescribed.

Wesley was an Anglican priest in the Church of England. He could baptize and administer Communion, but ordaining other ministers belonged to bishops. There had been no resident Anglican bishop in the colonies. Wesley's concern was how to provide ordained ministers for the growing American flock.

He had humbly written to the Bishop of London asking him to ordain a man who could serve in America. The bishop's response was that there were "three ministers in that country already." Wesley's reply showed his frustration at the lack of spiritual interest from his mother church. He wrote that some English ministers knew "something of Greek and Latin," but "no more of saving souls than of catching whales."

These circumstances and concerns led to the southern controversy in America. Northern Methodist preachers kept firmly within Wesley's instructions to focus on evangelism and holiness. Southern preachers also shared those concerns, but in 1779 some had ordained one another as ministers to be able to baptize and administer Communion.

This controversy almost resulted in schism in American Methodism. Francis Asbury traveled to Virginia and met with the southern preachers. Asbury was appointed by Wesley himself to lead the Methodists in America. He was the only one of Wesley's English Methodist preachers still serving the American Methodist movement at this time. He remained when his fellow English Methodist preachers left either during or after the Revolution. Asbury wrote of "some heaviness of mind" and being considered "an enemy of the country." Yet he concluded, "However, all this is but a trifle to suffer for Christ, and the salvation of souls."

In 1780, the southern Methodists agreed to suspend their ordinations and administration of the sacraments for a year while awaiting Wesley's advice. This kept some semblance of unity. One year's waiting stretched into four.

In 1784, Wesley finally acted. Convinced that bishops and presbyters were of the same order, he believed he could ordain ministers for America. He set apart Thomas Coke as superintendent, ordained Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey, and appointed Coke and Asbury joint superintendents. Asbury's ordination would take place in America. Wesley called them superintendents; the title "bishop" came later.

Looking back in 1785, Wesley wrote, "These are the steps which, not of choice, but necessity, I have slowly and deliberately taken."

Freeborn Garrettson was the young circuit rider tasked with gathering the scattered Methodist preachers in Baltimore, Maryland, where the Christmas Conference would be held. Garrettson was "sent off, like an arrow, from north to south, directing him to send messengers to the right and left and to gather all the preachers together at Baltimore on Christmas Eve."

Nicknamed the Paul Revere of Methodism for this faithful, revolutionary ride, Garrettson has been described as an "excellent young man," full of "meekness and love, and yet all activity." The willingness, energy, and effectiveness of youth is a theme throughout early American Methodism. Garrettson's habit of rising regularly at 4 a.m. made Thomas Coke, the joint superintendent appointed by John Wesley, say, "He makes me quite ashamed."

Garrettson's account details his history-making ride. He writes: "I set out for Virginia and Carolina, and a tedious journey I had. My dear Master enabled me to ride about twelve hundred miles in about six weeks, and preach going and coming constantly." Ever the holiness evangelist, some circuit riders even complained that Freeborn preached too much on this journey. If he had not preached, they would have been notified sooner and been able to attend the Christmas Conference.

About sixty preachers gathered at Lovely Lane Chapel on Christmas Eve. This was a remarkable accomplishment. Coke, again commenting in his journal, writes:
"On Christmas Eve we opened our Conference, which continued ten days. I admire the American preachers. We had near sixty of them present. The whole number is eighty-one. They are indeed a body of devoted, disinterested men, but most of them young."

Over ten days, they organized the Methodist Episcopal Church, elected Coke and Asbury superintendents, and ordained ministers. Asbury had insisted upon election by his fellow preachers before accepting ordination. He wanted the preachers' consent rather than simply accepting Wesley's appointment. Asbury knew that being elected as a superintendent, rather than just appointed by Wesley, would foster more unity and zeal among the Americans, with their strong democratic spirits. This Christmas gift would be received through their common agreement.

Asbury's journal captures the spiritual concern behind it all: "My soul is deeply engaged with God to know his will in this new business."

The need for baptism and the Lord's Supper, leadership for God's people, and unity among the preachers and people turned a revival movement into a formal church. Wesley's reluctant gift ultimately arose from his concern for souls and his Protestant conviction that God's Word is the final authority in doctrine and practice.

Let's remember this season the Christmas that almost two and a half centuries ago gave to us the Methodist Episcopal Church. May those fires of evangelism, holiness, and revival that spread through the fledgling nation of America rekindle our churches and nation today.



Thy word is a lamp unto my feet,
and a light unto my path. PSALM 119:105

The Unassumed Is the Unhealed

Why the Incarnation Belongs at the Center of Holiness

By Shane Walter

The Christmas season is rapidly approaching, and with it our attention turns to the story of the incarnation. Soon our churches and homes will resound with the strains of hymns ancient and modern whose words cause us to reflect on the humility of God as he assumed our humanity for us and for our salvation. The lyrics of Christmas hymns may get lost in the season's festivity, but they are rich indeed. "Oh, holy child of Bethlehem, descend on us we pray; cast out our sin and enter in; be born in us today." Or "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing." They invite us to ponder the awesome reality that "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld his glory, glory as of the only begotten of the Father" (John 1:14).

The incarnation belongs at the center of the doctrine of holiness. Indeed, apart from the Word made flesh, little hope exists for the possibility of holiness in this present life. Every Christian eventually meets the question, is the life of holiness possible? Wesleyans have long answered with a resounding, yes. This biblical truth is variously called full salvation, perfect love, entire sanctification, or Christian perfection.

That confidence can sound naïve unless it rests on something sturdier than human potential. It does. Our hope is not in human nature but in what grace can do. Some object that believers cannot live truly holy lives because they are human. That objection assumes human nature cannot be healed, and the incarnation says otherwise. John writes, "As he is, so are we in this world" (1 John 4:17). Hence, Christmas contains the germ of holiness.

An Ancient Axiom

In the fourth century a bishop named Apollinarius decided that when Christ assumed a human nature it only meant that he inhabited a human body but that the divine Word took the place of a rational human mind. The church called on another Bishop, Gregory Nazianzen, to confront this teaching and set the record straight. His defense gave us one of the most beautiful axioms of the ancient church: "that which he did not assume, he has not healed; but what is united to God is being saved."

Gregory immediately perceived the problem with Apollinarius' faulty doctrine. Only what Jesus assumed in the

incarnation stood the chance of being healed. If Christ never took on the human mind, Gregory warned, then the mind would remain beyond his saving reach. After all, Eve saw and desired the fruit before she touched and ate. If Jesus only took on a human body, then actual sins like adultery, fornication, stealing, murder, and lying could be healed; but the underlying desires and hidden sins of the heart—pride, malice, bitterness, lust, envy, and idolatry—would remain beyond the grasp of grace.

The Chalcedonian Definition declared Jesus Christ to be perfect in divinity and perfect in humanity. "He is truly God and truly man, of a rational soul and a body. He is like us in all respects except for sin. In the last days he was born for us and for our salvation from Mary as regards his humanity." As the Christmas hymn declared, "Word of the Father, now in flesh appearing." Christmas calls us to celebrate the holy humanity of Christ, and in so doing, the gracious possibility of our own sanctification.

Christ Sanctified Our Nature

John Chapter One offers a beautiful exposition of the incarnation. John commenced at the very start: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). He was the light that shined into the darkness of the world and was not conquered by it (John 1:5). He came in the likeness of sinful flesh and instead of being contaminated by it, he cleansed it (Rom 8:3–4). That same light enables all believers to conquer the darkness rather than being conquered by it.

By verse fourteen, John has risen to the height of his argument. "And the Word became [was made] flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." The invisible Word took visible form so that our human eyes could witness holy humanity lived among us. He embraced the entirety of the human experience. He entered the world through normal human channels. He matured both physically and intellectually. He experienced the entire range of human emotions, weeping without self-pity, loving without lust, and growing angry without malice or hatred. He surrendered his human will to the divine will in the Garden. Living in our fallen humanity, he sanctified and healed it.

The High Priestly prayer closes the gap between humanity and holiness even further where Christ prays, "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (John 17:19). The author of Hebrews tells us that the Son learned obedience by the things he suffered, and being made perfect, became the author of our salvation (Heb 5:8–9). Christ's obedient life was not only a demonstration or example of how Christians can be holy, but a true sanctifying and healing of that humanity such that all believers can also live holy, obedient lives in this life in the power and communion of the Holy Spirit.

The Optimism of Grace

As we enter this Advent season and turn our hearts to the message of the incarnation and the stories and hymns with which we are so familiar, let us also celebrate the fulness of grace that was brought to us in the Person of Jesus Christ (John 1:16). Optimistic grace is not optimism in what we can become naturally. It is an optimism rooted in the holy humanity of our Lord Jesus when he entered our world, assumed our human flesh and nature, and sojourned among us for thirty-three years. Holiness is not confidence in human nature; it is confidence in what human nature can become through Christ who heals us.

The message of Christmas is that the Son assumed our whole humanity, healed it from within, and now shares that healing with his people. He not only came to die for our sins, but to live a life of obedience that enables believers to partake of the divine nature (2 Pet 1:4) and to be holy as he is holy (1 Pet 1:15, 16). May this Christmas season be a renewed call for us to be conformed to the image of the Son.



Christmas on the Battlefield in World War 1
continued from page 5

men. It was a incredible contrast between that heavenly message and the terrible war surrounding those soldiers! Yet, for a little while, the message of Christmas seemed to come alive on the battlefield.

Sadly, the Christmas Truce did not last. Military commanders on both sides disapproved of soldiers becoming friendly with the enemy. As Christmas passed, orders were given, and the fighting resumed. The following years brought even greater suffering, and there was no comparable truce on the same scale, but for a moment it showed the power of Christ to bring peace to a war stricken world. One day the Prince of Peace will return to this earth and bring a lasting truce that truly fulfills the peace promised by the angels at the birth of Christ.

Travel notes with the president



JEREMY FULLER

August 3 - PCC Clean Up - Removed Carpet from Conference Parsonage.
August 4 - Phone conversations with Phil Ledger, Keith Bunch, Kevin Forney, Blake Cassady, & Philip Brenizer.
August 6 - Conducted Board Meeting with the Duncannon Congregation to begin the Pastoral Search for my Successor as Senior Pastor.
August 8 - Officiated the Wedding of Jeffrey Self and Emmaus Roberts at Beavertown Church. Congratulations to this wonderful couple. I pray they will have many years of anointed pastoral ministry together.
August 9 - Participated in the Installation Service for Rev. Jacob Mason at the Chambersburg Church as Assistant Pastor. God is blessing the Hamilton Heights Church under the joint ministry of Rev. Joel Sickler and his family and Bro. Mason. Preached in the evening at Duncannon.
August 10 - Phone conversations with Daren Fisher, Keith Bunch, & Solomon Shaffer.
August 11 - Sent the first conference wide e-mail. Phone conversations with Rhoda Martin, Shane Hunter, Solomon Shaffer, Andrew Durst, Greg Hobelman, & David Dicken.
August 12 - Phone conversation with Matt Kilgore
August 10-15 - Led Vacation Bible School at the Duncannon Church.
August 16 - Preached twice at the Duncannon Church.
Augst 17 - Presented a brief devotional at the Penn View Faculty Orientation Meeting.
August 18 - Phone conversation with President Dan Durkee.
August 19 - Led Prayer Meeting & Bible Study at Duncannon.
August 20 - Worked on advertising for Future Pastor's Conference & visited Sis. Grace Baum before her surgery.
August 21 - Attended the PVBI Welcome Rally. We pray this will be the best year ever for Penn View.
August 22-24 - Traveled to Rome with my family and Rev. Keith Bunch. We had a men's prayer breakfast. We then had a strategic meeting about the future of the New York District. We traveled to Star Lake on Sunday morning. Bro. Bunch preached. I conducted the service and Faith and I sang. We traveled back to Rome and met with the congregation that evening for a meal together and fellowship. We traveled back to PA on Monday. It was a great trip.
August 25 - I attended and participated in a Youth Crusader's Board Meeting. I also had a phone conversation with Matt Kilgore.
August 26 - I attended the funeral service for Miss Jenna McNaughton who died unexpectedly in an ATV accident on her father's farm. We pray for comfort for this entire family. Had a phone conversation with Jamison Plank about recruitment and visited Grace Baum in the nursing home before conducting prayer meeting in Duncannon.
August 27 - Faith and I attended June Straub's graveside service. Pastor Phil Brenizer and Pastor Jonathan Arnold did a great job comforting the family and eulogizing a life well lived. We pray for the families who knew and loved her. Later that afternoon we enjoyed a wonderful meal with Bro. & Sis. Martin. Sister Rhoda is a great cook and host. We enjoyed their fellowship and had productive conversations about

the work of the conference.
August 28 - Phone conversation with Mr. John Neville of Milford, OH about a property acquisition with a potential partnership for the Milford congregation.
August 30 - Preached Sunday morning in Duncannon. Hosted Missionary Tabby Cooley in the evening service. She is a first-class missionary. May the Lord reward her abundantly for her faithful and devoted service to hundreds of children and teens across the years.
August 31 - Participated in a Home Mission's Board meeting. Rev. Keith Bunch has my enthusiastic support as takes the helm of this department for our conference. Please hold him up in prayer as he works to raise support and guide the churches under his care.
September 1 - Participated in a World Mission's Board meeting. Rev. Jose Cancio is my friend and a great missionary leader. Please pray for him as he leads an expanding vision into new fields of service.
September 2 - Chaired my first General Board meeting as conference president. It was a productive meeting. Thank you, Brethren, for your devotion to God's Missionary Church. Visited in the nursing home and led prayer meeting and Bible Study in Duncannon.
September 3 - Faith and I flew to Florida.
September 4 - Preached in the morning chapel service at Hobe Sound Bible College. We met with the ministerial department for lunch. Rev. Matt Maloyed is doing a great job leading this institution. We are very proud of him and his family. We traveled back to Sun City for a Rally Service. Rev. Matt Ellison preached a tremendous message on the importance of PRAISE in our services. He's a great friend and pastor. We appreciate his ministry.
September 5 - Preached in the morning session. Pastor Jeff Stratton is doing a great job as Lead Pastor of the Florida Church. A highlight of the day was the installation of Rev. Micah Howie as Assistant Pastor to the Florida C[1]hurch. He is a great young man, and we have confidence in God's leadership in this decision. We closed the day with a communion service.
September 6 - I preached at the Summerfield Church in the morning. We shared a meal together with the Stratton family and some special guests of their family. Sis Stratton is a great cook and hostess. We traveled to Kissimmee for the evening service. I preached and we were blessed to be able to spend some time with the Hartman family after the service in the parsonage. We are encouraged with the vision of the pastors to reach their communities for Christ.
September 7 - We flew back to PA
September 8 - Participated in a PVBI School Board meeting. President Durkee's faith and vision are a tremendous inspiration to me personally. Pray for him and the administration as they continue to lead our Bible School forward this year.
September 9 - Visited in the nursing home. Led Prayer Meeting and Bible Study in Duncannon.
September 10 - Participated in a Video Shoot for the Jacob Martin Legacy and Ministry Production we are working on. More details are
to be released soon.
September 11 - Attended the IHC service at New Columbia. Rev. John Whitaker preached on Holiness. It was a blessed time together.
September 12 - Met with Pastor Paul Ryan at the Lancaster Church. Faith and I met with a young couple in the evening for supper and pre-marriage counseling.
September 13 - Preached twice, on the Lord's Day, in Duncannon.
September 14 - Office Work - including too many phone calls, text messages, and emails to mention.
September 15 - Met Rev. Solomon Shaffer for Breakfast to discuss the work of the conference. Attended PVBI school revival and enjoyed the anointed sermon preached by Rev. Frank Heidler about loving others as we love ourselves. There was a great response to the altar after the preaching. Faith and I spent much of the afternoon and evening in ICU with the family of Grace Baum.



September 16 - I was back in the hospital to visit Sister Grace who was 92 years of age. This would be my final visit with her before her home-going. She told me, "Bro. Jeremy, I've seen the gates!" I have, no doubt, she did. It was a privilege to be her pastor. She lived well and she died with the victory. God be Praised! I conducted prayer meeting and Bible Study in Duncannon that evening.
September 17 - My family and I traveled to Milford, OH to meet with Pastor Steve Harvey and the Milford congregation to look at a property. We spent the night at the Harvey's home. Thank you for the lodging and sweet fellowship.
September 18 - We traveled to Archdale, NC. We enjoyed being apart of the IHC there. Bro. Don Raines preached an excellent message and the Hardy Family sang.
September 19 - I met with Rev. David Light and the ministers and their wives of the National Association of Holiness Churches. The purpose of this meeting was to extend the right hand of fellowship to consider joining GMC. They are disbanding. We were pleased to have a number of ministers fill out applications and believe there will be more that do so in the days ahead. We enjoyed a wonderful meal together later in the day.
September 20 - I preached twice at the Pilgrim Holiness Church of Archdale. We appreciate Rev. & Mrs. Derald Hunt. We have been to this church to minister several times and always appreciate being back with them. May the Lord bless them for their kindness and hospitality to our family.
September 21 - Traveled back to PA.
September 23 - Conducted Prayer and Bible Study in Duncannon.
September 24 - Attended the viewing for Sister Grace Baum.
September 25 - Preached the funeral for Sister Grace along with Rev. Dennis Ritchey. We thank the Lord for good Gospel seed that was planted. I estimate that around 275 people were in attendance.
September 26 - Met with several families both in my office and in their homes. Also, visited in the nursing home.
September 27 - Preached twice in Duncannon.
September 28 - Office Day.
September 30 - Conducted Prayer Meeting and Bible Study in Duncannon.

The Best Christmas Ever

—Grand-Ole Fishwrapper Stories, Vol. III

A store owner was doing some last minute Christmas shopping with his young son when he saw another store owner with whom he had been friends for some time. The two of them exchanged greetings and spoke with each other about what a financially profitable season it had been for their respective stores. The small boy over heard his father say, "this has been the best Christmas ever."

As the store owners parted company, the father and son continued their shopping, but the father noticed his son had become very quiet. He inquired as to his son's silence, and his son replied, "Dad, you just told Mr. Johnson that this was the best Christmas ever."

His dad replied, "I did, son. The economy is great, and people are really spending."

"O.K." the son replied, "It's just that I always thought the first Christmas was the best one."

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JANUARY 21–31, 2027