

Monologues

Three Anniversary Monologues

By Larry Glick

1. Brethren Beginnings: Surrendered to God

Greetings, brothers and sisters in Christ. My name is Alexander Mack and I would like to share with you a little about my early life in Germany. I was born in 1679, the eighth of eleven children, and grew up in the town of Schriesheim with my parents, brothers and sisters. My father and two older brothers ran the mill in Schriesheim, and we were faithful members of the Reformed Church.

While I was surrounded by a loving and caring family, many of my childhood memories are centered on the fact that my life in Schriesheim was filled with the fear and disruption of war. On several occasions we were so unsure of our safety that we, like most people in town, left to hide in the nearby hills until it was safe to return to our homes. I can still remember well the time I was about thirteen years old, hiding in the hills and looking in horror at the night sky as it turned bright with the color of fire. Nearby Heidelberg was completely destroyed by the French army that night. By the time I was eighteen, half of my life had been spent under a cloud of war and I yearned for a time of peace—peace for our world and peace for my soul.

So too, today, in the twenty-first century, wars and various forms of violence rage throughout your world. Many people suffer because of the conflict; some of them are children. As we surrender our lives to God through our discipleship in Jesus Christ, we are called to know, to learn, and to live “the things that make for peace” (Luke 19:42).

2. Brethren Beginnings: Transformed in Christ

Greetings Brothers and Sisters in Christ. My name is Alexander Mack and I would like to share with you how some of my Christian friends and I felt called by Jesus Christ to establish a new religious group in Germany. In 1701, I was 21 years old and recently married to Anna Margaretha Kling. Our families were both from Schriesheim and active members of the Reformed Church. At this time in Germany, there were many people who felt the official state churches—Catholic, Lutheran, and Reformed—had lost their zeal for the faith and that the Christian church needed spiritual renewal and transformation in Christ.

Anna and I began to explore some of the alternative religious groups that were active around us. One group was called Pietists. Pietists believed that the renewal of the Christian church would take place as individual Christians were renewed through personal devotion to God, including intentional Bible study, prayer, and fellowship among believers. We were also inspired and influenced by the Anabaptists who stressed obedience to God’s word, building up the Body of Christ through love and nonresistance, and a willingness to witness to God’s grace and peace, including nonconformity to a sinful world.

A value common to both Anabaptists and Pietists, and to the development of our new group, was a significant understanding of being joined together with God and with each other. The German term was *Gemeinde*—a special community of sharing, support, and unity that was bound together and transformed in Christ.

In today's church you are faced with great challenges as you do the ministry of the church, care for one another, and serve the needs of the world. May you be transformed in Christ by "bearing with one another in love, making every effort to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3).

3. Brethren Beginnings: Empowered by the Spirit

Greetings, Brothers and Sisters in Christ. My name is Alexander Mack and I would like to share with you a story of the baptism of a small group of Christians in Germany 300 years ago. Beginning in 1703, my wife Anna and I attended religious gatherings of Christians who felt that God's spirit was leading a renewal of the church. In 1706 we moved from our home in Schriesheim to Schwarzenau because the authorities there were more tolerant of dissenting religious views. For the next two years we had many meetings in our home where our group studied the Bible, prayed earnestly and sought the mind of Christ, particularly in understanding why believer baptism was so important.

In August 1708 we gathered early one morning on the banks of the Eder River, not far from the stone bridge in the center of the village. There were eight of us. In addition to Anna and me, there were Andreas and Johanna Boni, Georg Grebe, Johannes and Johanna Kipping, and Lucas Vetter—such devoted disciples of Christ and wonderful friends. There was a sense of quiet tension and anxiety as we gathered. But our resolve was strengthened as we sang some of our favorite hymns and read Luke 14 from the Bible, including Jesus' instructions to count the cost of following him.

That morning the other four men drew lots to see who would baptize me, and we promised never to reveal his name. I remember entering the river with him and feeling an amazing sense of God's peace as I was surrounded by this gently flowing stream. He baptized me in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Then I baptized him and the six others. We sang another hymn, received the blessing, and then returned quietly to our homes.

For the eight of us, this act of believer baptism brought with it great risk as well as great joy. We knew we might lose our homes, be persecuted, imprisoned, or worse. But we also felt a special sense of joy and empowerment to live out our convictions as we entered this faith covenant with God and with each other.

Now, 300 years later, as Christ's disciples serving the world in the twenty-first century, may you be, as we were, "surrendered to God, transformed in Christ, and empowered by the Spirit.

Three Anniversary Monologues

By Robert D. Kettering

1. Ted Studebaker: Man of Peace in the Midst of War

1. I can't believe somebody actually wrote a song about me. They make me sound like a hero or some great Christian martyr. I was only a simple farm boy from Ohio who tried to live by the teachings of Jesus.

My name is Ted Studebaker. Many of you have probably never heard of me. You older folks may associate my last name with an automobile that bore my family name ... Studebaker. Yes I am distantly related to the makers of Studebaker cars.

The Studebakers were Brethren as far back as the Brethren movement itself, all the way back to the early 1700's. One of my ancestors, John Clement Studebaker, was a Brethren blacksmith in Ashland, Ohio. In the mid 1800s, his five sons started the Studebaker Company, which made wagons, wheelbarrows, bobsleds, bicycles, fancy carriages, and eventually automobiles and racing cars.

2. During the Civil War some of the Studebaker wagons were built for the US military, which prompted the Brethren deacons to visit the company, asking the Studebakers to stop construction of wagons for military purposes because it wasn't consistent with the Biblical peace witness of our Dunkard Church, as we were known back then.

3. That's enough about my ancestry. I'm here today to tell you a little bit about my witness for Christ. My story begins in September 1945 when I was born in the small farming town of West Milton, Ohio.

I was the seventh child born to my parents who lived on a 140-acre dairy farm just south of West Milton. We were a typical dairy farm family. Along with my other brothers and sisters we had many chores to do on the farm and learned how to work hard and long. We boys helped dad take care of the animals and crops. I really enjoyed farm life; it was a good life even though we did not have much money. We found riches in other things.

4. One of my fond childhood memories was singing around the piano as a family. Mom played the piano and taught us many songs and hymns. We even learned to sing harmony. Dad always sang bass. Several of my brothers and I learned to play the guitar.

We were a close family. We had a farm pond that provided many hours of picnics, swimming in the summer, and ice skating in the winter. My brothers and I built a raft and had such fun swinging from a rope tied onto a limb of a sycamore tree and then diving head first into the pond. No wonder my favorite exclamation was "Life is great. Yea!"

5. Life was great for me as a kid growing up on a farm as part of a close-knit loving family. But part what made our family so great was our commitment to Christ and the church. The West Milton Church of the Brethren was like a second home for me. Our parents dedicated each of us to the Lord and took us to church and Sunday school every week without fail. As a teenager, I took an active part in youth activities and church camp at Sugar Grove.

6. Between the influence of my family and my church, I learned what it meant to be a follower of Jesus. As early as the fifth grade I had expressed a desire to someday do some volunteer work to help other people. I participated in Future Farmers of America and 4-H projects. I raised chickens, hogs, and a steer, and had a real interest in machinery and how to maintain it. In fact, I was only nine years old when dad taught me how to drive our little Ford tractor with a harrow behind, going up and down the fields of our farm.

7. When I wasn't helping out on the farm or spending time with the youth of the church, I enjoyed participating in sports, especially football.

By the time I was in the eighth grade, I started saving money so I could go to college. After graduating from high school, I enrolled at Manchester College, a Church of the Brethren school in Indiana, graduating in three years by taking classes in the summer. Then it was on to graduate school in Tallahassee, Florida, where I majored in social work.

8. My life sounds rather ordinary up to this point, maybe even boring to some. But the late 1960's were turbulent times in America. We were a nation at war. Many of our young men were being drafted into military service to fight a futile war in a place far away, a country known as Vietnam in Southeast Asia.

The United States was terribly divided over the war. Protests were held on many college campuses. Some who protested the war burned their draft cards or fled to Canada to avoid the military draft.

9. Even though I was a pacifist and would have no part in war, I knew I wanted to speak out and do something positive and constructive as a Christian witness. I found it satisfying to play my guitar and give expression to my prayers for peace. I often played "Blowin' in the wind" and "Ain't gonna study war no more."

But playing the guitar and singing about peace were not enough to satisfy this inner calling I felt. I wanted to do something positive for peace and openly witness to my Christian faith. I registered with the military as a conscientious objector to war based on the values by which I was raised and the Biblical teaching of my church. Then I chose Brethren Volunteer Service as my alternative to fighting.

10. I wrote the following in describing my faith:

"If friendship really is the biggest problem of life, then what the world needs is more dedicated people to witness and follow Christ's example. More people need to help feed the hungry, to heal the sick, to shelter the homeless, to give their time, knowledge and ability and to share unselfish

love and concern for others. The dehumanizing process of war concerns me deeply. What can I do about man's inhumanity to man?"

11. All through my childhood I had heard about alternative service and Brethren Volunteer Service. I knew what I had to do. I knew clearly what Christ was calling me to do. I wanted to go to Vietnam and make a difference—not with bullets and a gun but with a shovel and a hoe. God had prepared me, a farm boy who knew how to work the land, for this mission. I volunteered to go to Vietnam not with the U.S. Army but as part of God's peaceful army.

12. I signed up with Vietnam Christian Service for two years as an agricultural worker in a Christian mission. Vietnam Christian Service was affiliated with Church World Service.

I worked with the Montagnard hill tribe people in Vietnam. These poor mountain people needed help after years of war and devastation of the land. I helped them bring greater crop yields, acquire a Rototiller and a rice polisher to separate the rice from the chaff in a matter of minutes, and I initiated a poultry production project. Through it all I was able to help these mountain people realize greater food production. I truly felt I was fulfilling the command of Christ to feed the hungry and be a positive witness for Christ.

13. When my two years were up, I signed on for another year. This was not just an escape from the draft, this was not an assignment for a coward. I felt called by Christ to help these people literally beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, to lay down swords and shields and study war no more.

At one point in my service I said, "I have never heard of a president pinning a medal on a pacifist. These are the sacred glories reserved for those who can kill, maim, capture or destroy the most; and the more human lives involved, the more glorious the award seems to be. What a contradiction of values! How can a great society be so inconsistent and incoherent?"

14. During my third year at the mission, I married a beautiful young Asian Christian Service worker from Hong Kong who I met at the language training center in Saigon when I first came to Vietnam. Her name was Ven Pak. We were married in April 1971 at the Koho Tin Lanh Church, just a block away from our mission post.

15. While serving in Vietnam I wrote many letters home to my family and to the members of my church who so strongly supported me. Here is an excerpt from a letter I sent to my home church:

"Second only to my family, you as representatives of the West Milton Church of the Brethren are responsible for my thoughts and actions concerning conscientious objection to the military, my pacifist views, and my volunteer service. Without the church, I might find myself in a uniform as part of a giant military machine whose reason for existence seems based on economics and a big myth. The meaninglessness, the wastefulness, and the non-necessity of this war is outweighed only by its inhumane effects, both here and in the States."

16. The church published my letter in the *Troy Daily News* of Troy, Ohio. This prompted a letter from someone in Troy to write to me. Here is an excerpt from that letter:

“I read your letter which was printed in the *Troy Daily News*, and to say the least, was very disappointed. I do not know what the Christian Service Organization you work with stands for, but after reading your criticism of our nation and our government, I wonder if it is indeed ‘Christian.’ Your comments that the war is immoral sound exactly like the song and dance of the communists. If you are indeed trying to do some service to mankind in Southeast Asia, then please, for the sake of the Vietnamese, and for God’s sake, get your views straight. ... Study the word of God. Search out the scriptures.”

17. On April 25, 1971, I wrote a reply to that letter. I closed with these words:

“I do not feel the enemy is right any more than I feel the U.S. Military is right. I believe strongly in trying to follow the example of Jesus Christ as best I know how. Above all, Christ taught us to love all people, including enemies, and to return good for evil and that all men are brothers in Christ. I condemn all war and conscientiously refuse to take part in it in any active or violent way. I believe love is a stronger and more enduring power than hatred for my fellow man, regardless of who they are or what they believe. I know I am a fortunate man and life is great to me.”

18. Only hours later, at 1 a.m. on April 26, just one week after my wedding to Pakdy, the silence of the night was broken by communist B4O rockets that struck near the back of our mission house. The four occupants of our house ran for the bunker on the bottom floor. My wife and I and two other female workers made it to the bunker safely; but I remembered something I wanted to retrieve from my room.

The Viet Cong threw explosives against the back door and then charged into the house. They caught me in my bedroom and, after a brief series of questions, the communists knew I was an American, and as such an enemy. Before I could explain that I was not their enemy, they determined I should be executed. After all, the only Americans they had ever known were their enemies.

The prayer I had prayed many times raced through my head: “Keep me ill at ease and restless God, as long as I can see need in the world. Help me to understand the true meaning of love and brotherhood and open up my heart to the rewards and joys of service.”

2. *John Kline: Martyr Missionary*

1. *Guten morgen, meine lieben bruder und schwestern!* Good morning, my dear brothers and sisters. Please pardon my greeting to you in German. In the mid 1800s our congregations used mostly German in worship. In fact our denomination back then was known as the German Baptist Brethren. English was a second language for me, for I mostly spoke German.

I come to you this morning by the grace and peace of our God and in the name of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. My name is John Kline, elder John Kline, from the Shenandoah Valley in

Virginia. I am blessed to be with you this morning and to share in a humble way about my life and my ministry as a member and elder of the German Baptist Brethren.

2. My great grandfather was George Kline who came to America from Germany in the 1730s and was baptized by the Brethren at Amwell, New Jersey. The roots of my family run deep among the Brethren.

I was born on June 17, 1797, in Dauphin County, not far from here, where I spent most of my childhood years. In 1811 my father decided to move our family to the fertile fields of the Shenandoah Valley in Virginia, a few miles north of Harrisonburg.

In 1818, at the age of 20, I married Anna Wampler and we made our home in Broadway, Virginia. We bought a piece of property near the Linville Creek and built a large brick home. We made it large for two reasons. First, we hoped to have a large family, and secondly, it would serve as a meeting place for the congregation, because Brethren in our area back then met for worship and love feast in homes and barns.

3. The only child Anna and I ever had died at birth and we were unable to have any other children. We do not know why God chose not to bless us with more children, but we trust in his providence.

Our home may not have provided a place for a large biological family, but it did provide a place for our church family to worship. There was an entry hall that had two large rooms on either side. The walls were made of hinged panels so we could make one large space, big enough to accommodate over 100 people for worship.

4. The church called me to be a deacon in 1827 and then to ordained ministry as an elder in 1848. Our congregation was known as the Linville Creek German Baptist Brethren Church. I was both a preacher and a farmer. The Lord blessed our farm, which allowed me the opportunity to share the gospel with Brethren congregations far and wide.

In addition to preaching, my ministry also included writing about the beliefs and practices of the Brethren. I was an advocate for providing educational opportunities for our young people, and I also studied the medical practices of our time. I was very concerned about the health of our people and some of the procedures being used by doctors. Sometimes doctors treated fevers by making a cut in the patient's elbow and draining a pint of blood; the sick were often confined to a room and allowed no fresh air or food of any kind for extended periods.

I began to learn of alternative botanical treatments from Dr. Samuel Thomson in Vermont and began using herbs such as boneset, ginseng, ladyslipper, snakeroot, May-Apple, and goldenrod to treat people with illnesses. This way I was able to minister both to the physical and spiritual needs of neighbors in our community as well as those I visited on my preaching trips.

5. Those preaching trips were the very heart of my ministry. I believed that God had called me to be a missionary and I used my missionary travels to preach that our salvation from sin was the

most important step for an individual. We receive the free gift of salvation through our confession of sin and repentance from love of self, turning instead to love of God and neighbor.

I preached that we must love the Lord and accept Jesus as the way, the truth and the life, for apart from Christ there is no salvation. This new life in Christ finds meaning through our acts of baptism, feetwashing and the Lord's Supper. I believed and taught that God loved us all, and that we are called to love our neighbors from far and near.

6. I traveled through many states in our divided nation during the Civil War, sharing the good news of Christ to congregations in the north and south, those in the Union States and those in the Confederate States. When most denominations divided their churches along the Mason-Dixon line, such as the Methodists, Presbyterians, and Baptists, I helped keep the Brethren as one church that knew no division, north or south, Union or Confederacy.

I kept careful records of all my travels, recording dates and places I visited, homes where I stayed, and miles I traveled. In my almost thirty years of ministry, I covered nearly 100,000 miles, most of those on horseback, and nearly 30, 000 of those miles on my famous horse Nell, who accompanied me here this morning and is waiting for me.

In those many travels I found myself preaching, holding church council meetings, conducting love feasts, weddings and funerals, and serving several years as moderator of the Annual Meeting of the Brotherhood, which you call Annual Conference.

7. By the time I was 60 years old, my travels had taken me to many places and blessed me with many relationships. I met and worked with many of the leaders of the Brethren and was given numerous assignments at our Annual Meeting.

In those days, Annual Meeting was always held on the weekend of Pentecost, right around this time of year in late May or early June. In 1861 I was called to be the moderator of our entire brotherhood and was called to the same position for the next three years.

8. The years 1861-1864, when I was Moderator of our denomination, were perilous times for our country. It was the time of the great rebellion, the Civil War. The Brethren, along with Quakers and Mennonites, consistently opposed slavery throughout our history. I was greatly saddened that my home state of Virginia saw fit to break with the Union and join the Confederate States, the slave states. During these years I tried my best to not only hold our beloved brotherhood together, but also to register our church's objection to slavery and armed conflict. I tried hard to be a peacemaker, advocating God's peace and love to all people—north and south, Union and Confederate, slave and free.

I wrote to Virginia Governor John Letcher, who lived in the Shenandoah Valley and who I considered a personal friend. I explained to him our religious views about loyalty to the established government, our opposition to slavery, and our view of Biblical nonresistance that forbids us to bear arms and support the military.

God apparently used me for such a time as this to be a light for Christ amidst the encroaching darkness of the Civil War. The Virginia Legislature enacted the Exemptions Act for Brethren and Mennonites who were conscientiously opposed to bearing arms and fighting in war. The law that was enacted required every conscientious objector to pay an exemption fee of \$500 plus a two percent tax on personal property. For many this financial obligation was steep, especially for our young men, so I personally helped raise thousands of dollars to assist our young men who could not afford the fee but felt strongly they could not fight in a war.

9. As fighting increased in the Shenandoah Valley, both sides often brought wounded soldiers to our farm. Sometimes the men were in gray uniforms, sometimes in blue, but I always gave medical care to all without discrimination. They were all God's children for whom Christ died.

One time, I was awakened late at night by a neighbor who asked me to come to his home to help a soldier. The soldier was in the Confederate Army but hurt his leg in a fall as he was trying to escape to the North. He was in hiding. I fixed a frame to hold his leg and gave him medicine for the pain. It was a very dangerous thing for me to do, but he needed help and I could not refuse. What would Jesus do? I helped the poor lad without question.

10. More and more my neighbors saw me as a Union sympathizer. In April of 1862, Confederate officers came to my home and arrested me and placed me in custody at the court house on the square in Harrisonburg along with soldiers who were trying to escape to the North.

Conditions in the jail were wretched—very cold, wet, and filled with stench. Some of the prisoners with me feared they would be shot as deserters. Each day I tried to encourage them and I actually preached a sermon to them about how Peter and Paul had also been imprisoned and yet maintained their faith in God and relationship with Christ. God in his mercy saw fit to release all of us from that jail and return us to our homes.

11. As I said, my Christian convictions placed me in immediate conflict with many of my neighbors who supported the Confederacy. I know it was a difficult time for them, too. Some had lost children and relatives in battle, while we Brethren and Mennonites were not serving in the army. I cried for them and the bloodshed all around us.

Truly these were times that tried men's souls. My neighbors saw me constantly traveling back and forth from church meetings in the north and suspected I must be a Yankee spy. I really tried to be faithful to God and committed to Christ, sharing his gospel of peace with people in the North and the South. I was a man caught in the middle of a great struggle but sure that Christ was calling me to be an ambassador for peace. I know the worry also took a great toll on my beloved wife, Anna.

12. In 1864, during the Civil War, I once again was called to be the moderator of the Annual Meeting, this time near Hagerstown, Indiana. In spite of protests from a nephew regarding my travel across both the southern and northern army lines, I made the trip with God's protective care and presided over the meeting.

At the closing session on May 19, I preached from Acts 4:13, which records the story of Peter and John before the Jerusalem Council, having been recognized as companions of Jesus. I concluded my sermon with these words:

Possibly you may never see my face or hear my voice again. I am now on my way back to Virginia not knowing the things that shall befall me there. It may be that bonds and afflictions abide me. But I feel that I have done nothing worthy of bonds or of death. And none of these things move me; neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I may finish my course with joy, and the ministry which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.

I returned home to Virginia on June 1. My friends warned me that my life was in danger and that I should stay close to the farm. I did so for a couple of weeks. Then, on June 15, I wanted to get some new shoes for my horse Nell. On my way back I stopped at the Emswilers to treat an illness of Sister Emswiler and also to repair a clock. Afterward I needed to quickly saddle up Nell and travel on over the ridge about four miles to my home. Anna was waiting for me there. I asked a pardon for my haste.

Post Script: On June 15, 1864, John Kline was shot from his beloved horse and fell to the ground mortally wounded. Those responsible for his slaying approached his body and fired several more shots into his chest at point blank range.

Nell returned home on her own without Brother Kline. When his body was found, it was reported that he died with a smile resting on his face. He had finished his course with joy and what he had seen in a mirror dimly here on earth, he then saw face to face, his Redeemer and his Lord, Jesus Christ, who said, "Blessed are the peacemakers for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

Thank you Lord for your faithful servant, John Kline, a martyr missionary.

3. Savior of My Soul: In Remembrance of John Naas

1. One thing grieves me so much on the earth: so few are saved. Oh, what am I to do, because so many people are dying and going to miserable destruction? Who can help but be concerned?

Alas! How can it happen that so many go to ruin alike from all ranks? A few enter into life, but numberless are those who are outside. Oh, what can be the cause?

Very easily this is answered, for men full of envy live not as pleases God, but follow only their own lusts, as if they did not know that the way to heaven is narrow.

Oh, what vanity is to be seen! Behold how proudly men pretend to go about, each wanting to be the greatest. Pride increases every day, and men strive only after great honors. Can one go thus to heaven?

2. Ah, *guten morgan*. Sorry, good morning. I need to speak English; I thought I was alone. I'm translating the words to a hymn I wrote some time ago, which became a favorite hymn among the Brethren of my day.

The words of those verses reflect my passion for saving lost souls. Few people in my day had any faith in Jesus our Lord and his wondrous salvation. The faith of many in the state churches of Germany had grown cold. Many people in the churches of the Reformed faith, followers of John Calvin, and those of the Lutheran Churches had lost their zeal for the Lord.

They became caught up in satisfying the lusts of their flesh, following worldly ways, seeking status and fame, puffed up in pride, forgetting the words of Jesus who said the broad way leads to destruction. But it is through the narrow gate that one enters into the bliss of heaven.

3. I was a lover of the truth. I wanted to more fully follow Jesus in my life and obey what the Bible taught, but I could not find the truth I sought within the Reformed Church in which I was raised.

I heard of people gathering in small groups for Bible study and prayer and spiritual edification, common people from Reformed and Lutheran Churches who identified themselves as Pietists. It was through my association with these seekers of truth that I found the Brethren and became one of the early preachers within the Brethren *gemeinschaft*.

I am sorry. I am getting a bit ahead of myself. I didn't even tell you my name. I was born Johannes Naas in 1669 in the town of Nordheim near the city of Worms where Martin Luther was condemned as a heretic in 1521. My hometown of Nordheim is located in the Palatinate area of Germany in the province of Westphalia.

The government officials of Nordheim were not favorable toward the lovers of the truth and had little tolerance for those of us branded "religious dissenters" because we wanted no part in the established churches.

My wife, Anna Margaretha, and our five children had to flee our town of Nordheim and seek a safer refuge. We relocated in the Marienborn region to the town of Düdelsheim.

4. The ruler of this territory was named Charles August, an intelligent, well meaning man whose devout Reformed faith made him conscientiously concerned about the religious beliefs of his subjects.

The government records indicate that I and John George Schmidt and Julian Stumpf were accepted as settlers, provided we paid our taxes, strove toward honest and quiet conduct, and caused inconvenience to no one.

5. In 1711 a preacher by the name of Alexander Mack from a nearby town of Schwarzenau came with a few others of his persuasion to shed light upon the gospel truths of our Lord and Savior. Mack and his followers taught that to be obedient to the word of God and the ordinances of our Lord, we must repent of our sins and be baptized in the manner of the early apostolic church, that is by total immersion in a flowing stream.

Mack met in our home with other seekers of the truth and read the words of Jesus from Matthew 28: “Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

Using scripture, he explained to us the importance of a baptismal experience as a believer. Acts 2 says that when the people heard Peter preach following Pentecost, they asked, “What should we do?” Peter said to them, ‘Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ so that your sins may be forgiven.’”

I desired to be obedient to our Lord’s commands, so Mack baptized me and my wife, and we sought to win others to our new found faith. We quickly learned that this outward expression of faith by baptism was not tolerated by Charles August.

The Ruler believed everyone was free to conduct his own devotions in his own house. He even allowed small private gatherings for Bible study and prayer, but public religious exercises such as baptisms were not tolerated.

6. The Brethren quickly realized that with my education, knowledge of the scriptures, and passion for the Lord, I should be a minister for our small group. And that’s how I was called to be a minister in the congregation at Marienborn.

Our numbers were growing, and in 1714, I carried out baptisms in the brook at Düdelsheim that led to our banishment from the region within eight days. One of the men I baptized was Gottfried Neumann, a former Lutheran theologian from Leipzig who eventually joined Count Zinzendorf and became one of the leading hymn writers among the Moravians.

7. Our small congregation settled in the town of Krefeld where there was greater religious tolerance. It proved to be a fertile ground for our evangelistic efforts and a base for evangelistic tours to surrounding provinces. Truly the fields were ripe for harvest.

In 1715, on one of those evangelistic tours, I was accompanied by Brother Jakob Preiß (Price), and we were met by a recruiting officer for the King’s army. He reckoned by my age and stature that I would make a good soldier in the Prussian army.

I refused his offer, but he pressed on and would not take no for an answer. He and his fellow recruiters seized me, wanting to force me into the Prussian army. I tried to explain my opposition to bearing arms because of my loyalty to Jesus, but to no avail. They ridiculed and tortured me. They eventually hung me by cords around my big toe and my thumb, but I would not compromise my Christian convictions.

Eventually they hauled me before the king where I was asked why I would refuse to bear arms and be part of the military. I said, "My captain is the great Prince Immanuel, our Lord Jesus Christ. I have espoused his cause and cannot and will not forsake him." Realizing they would get nowhere with me, they released me.

Through the ordeal the words of Jesus in Matthew 5 came to my mind over and over again: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven."

8. The Lord blessed our congregation in Krefeld and added many to our number who were being saved. It has been said that wherever I went my messages commanded marked attention and men and women cried out to be saved.

But our unity of spirit would soon be ruptured by a severe conflict within our fellowship at Krefeld. One of our members by the name of William Hacker married the daughter of a local merchant who was not a member of our fellowship. Marrying outside the fellowship so enraged some members of our congregation that several demanded William Hacker be placed under the ban and expelled from the congregation.

Peter Becker and I and the majority of the church wished to take a more conciliatory approach and asked that Hacker only refrain from taking part in communion. The conflict became so intense that several members left our fellowship and I became very discouraged. My wife became sick and died in 1725. I married again in 1727 to a widow named Margaret Hauch.

9. This church conflict led many in our group to migrate to America, having been encouraged by the Brethren in Germantown who had already resettled in the New World. At the urging of Alexander Mack, I sailed to America with a group of Brethren in 1733 on the ship Pennsylvania Merchant, arriving in Philadelphia on September 29.

I kept a journal of the voyage across the ocean in which I detailed all the events of our departure from Plymouth, England, on July 21. I sent the journal to my son, Jacob William, who was in Switzerland, encouraging him to join us in America.

The living conditions on board ship were poor. Several died, including some small children who were buried at sea. We navigated through some fierce storms and strong winds, which made most of the people on board quite seasick. I often thought of Paul's journey by ship and the shipwreck he endured. Would this be our fate as well, or worse?

On August 3, I fell from a ladder and was almost knocked unconscious as I hit the deck of the ship, injuring myself so badly I had to lie on my back for 14 days before I could get up and walk again. But praise be to God, I recovered fully with no lasting effects.

10. When we arrived in Philadelphia, Alexander Mack, Sr., and a group of brothers and sisters came out to greet us in small boats, bringing us fresh food and water. Their hospitality warmed our hearts.

We stayed among the Brethren in Germantown briefly, because I felt called to preach throughout this new world and awaken lost souls. Then in the fall of 1733, after much prayer and encouragement from the Germantown congregation, my wife and I, along with the families of Anthony Dierdorf, Jacob More, Rudolf Harley and John Peter Lausche, ventured across the Delaware River into New Jersey and decided to establish a congregation at Amwell, about 38 miles northeast of Philadelphia.

11. Even in this new world we were not free from conflicts and strife. Conrad Beissel, the leader of the Ephrata Cloister movement, was seeking to make inroads at Amwell and entice some of our members to join his group. I opposed the proselytizing efforts of Beissel but wished to remain on friendly terms with him despite our differences.

My passion was to awaken lost souls for the kingdom of God and the community of faith, preaching the word, teaching the ordinances of our Lord, baptizing repentant souls and encouraging the brothers and sisters. I helped start new churches in Berks, Bucks, and Montgomery Counties in Pennsylvania.

12. Because of my powerful preaching and evangelistic zeal, people said I was the German version of George Whitefield, the great revivalist who brought about the First Great Awakening in the New World. I have sought no such accolades, only to be a humble servant of our Lord and Savior.

The Lord blessed the congregation at Amwell to such an extent that the Amwell congregation gained a reputation as the spiritual birthplace of more members of the Brethren than any congregation in the Brotherhood.

Others have commented that my leadership was characterized by a mild and charitable spirit. I sought to be faithful to our Lord and labored tirelessly for the kingdom of God until God called me to my eternal home on May 12, 1741. My life's mission was summed up in the words of the hymn I wrote, "Savior of my soul." May these words speak to your soul this day.

Surrendered, Transformed, Empowered: A Journey

By Mary L. Helfrich

Character: one woman who ages throughout

Scene: A boulder sits in the center of space with room to walk around it. A stool faces the audience, front right. A hoe, a basket, a watering can, and gloves are out of sight behind the rock.

[Young woman enters with a scarf tied at her waist like a belt. She walks with a youthful step, and is eager and energetic. She walks to front center and looks out at the congregation.]

What a wonderful world! It's beautiful! [*Pointing east*] Did you see that sunrise? There was a little bit of pink on that line of clouds close to the horizon, and darker pink up in the sky. The sun came up so slowly, then so bright! There was gold everywhere. It takes my breath away, mornings like these. Everything is so clear. I can see forever.

I can see the fields out there, Lord. [*Shading her eyes with her hand*] The fields are ripe for the harvest. They're beautiful. The wheat is dark gold. The cotton over there [*pointing*] is pure white, and those beans [*pointing elsewhere*] are dried and brown, and that rice [*pointing again*] is golden. Over there, the ears of corn are heavy and drooping.

[*Excitedly*] Lord, I want to help with your harvest. I've been raised in your church. I've given my life to you. I'll go wherever you want me to go! I'll do whatever you want me to do! I'm young. I'm healthy. I'm loved. I want to love others the way you want me to love them.

[*She smiles, looks out, rocking back and forth on her feet in anticipation. She hears something. A puzzled look comes on her face.*] You want me to stay here? But this field has this big rock in it. [*Looking out to God, she points to the rock behind her and backs up toward it*] You want me to love this rock? [*She walks up to the rock and tries hugging it several ways, awkwardly*] Nice rock. You have value, I'm sure. Let's see what you'd like to do. Maybe you'd like to soften some of your edges and roll along. You know, get with the plan, do something productive. [*Tries pushing the rock, but it won't budge. Tries pushing from a different angle with no success. She makes several more efforts and scrapes her hand in the effort.*] Ouch! [*Backs off*] That hurt! Stupid rock. [*Looking out*] Lord, this rock is so unlovable. Here I am standing out here in the hot sun [*takes the scarf from her waist and puts it on her head to protect herself from the sun*] and look what I get. I've tried being friendly. I've tried being firm, and he hurts me. [*Walks back to the rock and slaps it, feeling more pain, of course.*] I've had it. [*Stalks off and sits on the stool. She meditates for a moment, then speaks.*]

"Love your enemies ... pray for those who persecute you." [*Looks out at the audience in frustration. She sighs and walks slowly back to the rock and touches it gently.*] Okay, let's see. [*Addressing the rock*] How are you today? I'm fine ... [*pause*] Can I help you with anything? Oh ... [*Pause; suddenly and angrily to the rock*] How dare you say that about my family! You ugly thing! What? How can you think that about my church, about me? [*Pause*] You can't mean that! That's a terrible thing to say. God loves you, now you must love others. Love! Yes, that's what I said [*shaking her finger at the rock and moving away*].

[*Addressing God again*] Lord, isn't there somewhere else I could be working? This rock won't move. He won't listen. You heard him, the awful things he says and does. I'm dying of thirst here. He has a heart of stone. And his mind is pretty dense, too. He thinks he knows it all, that he's perfect, that we're all wrong. "Love?" he says. "What has weak, wishy-washy love got to do with it?" He's awful! Do I have to love him?

[*Walks back to stool and sits, meditating*] I do want to follow you, Lord. Is this what you want me to do? You know I'd rather be a missionary out there [*pointing toward the congregation*]. I'm good with people. I could help with your harvest out there. [*Pause. She looks back at the rock and points at it.*] Is that the cross you want me to bear?

[Sighs, letting the scarf drop down around her shoulders like a shawl. She is now a little stooped and stands with the hoe as if it were a cane] Lord, I'll go where you want. I'll do what you want. Just give me strength. *[Walks back to the rock. She picks up a hoe and begins to work around the rock. She circles it once or twice, humming. She wipes her brow, smiles, and lays down the hoe and picks up the basket. She pretends to cast seed on the ground, finally throwing some seed on the rock. Happily she picks up the watering can and pretends to water at the base of the rock, finally sprinkling the rock gleefully. She walks back to the stool and sits.]* I can do all things through you, Lord. And you'll make all things work for good. *[Pause]*

[Walks back to the rock and gently caresses it. Coming front and center] Lord, what a beautiful world this is, full of your glory and love, even now, late in the day. I so wanted to serve you, Lord, out there *[pointing toward the congregation]* in your fields. I wanted to be a missionary and bring your good news to those who had never heard it. But instead, I've spent my life here with this rock. He hasn't changed his ways. He hasn't become more loving. I've prayed for him, you know. I've tried everything I could think of. I've cried. I've waited. He's still the same old rock.

[Moving forward to center front] But look, Lord. There are flowers here, *[pointing down and around]* growing all around. Your fields are here. You are here. I love you, Lord. I want to love others the way you want me to, and I'll keep trying to love him *[pointing at the rock]* as best I can. *[Pats the rock again]*

[Returns to front and center] Your sunset, Lord, is beautiful. *[Pointing west, then out and up]* The oranges and pinks. Your fields are ripe for harvest. Use me, Lord. *[Picks up the hoe and works in front of the rock, facing the congregation. Freezes with head bowed. Then walks off stage]*