

# A SLAVE OF CHRIST

BY JAMES WENGERD

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## ***Sermons in Rosedale Network of Churches***

*Continuing a multi-year theme of hearing how God is at work in our churches, the 2025 Feature Beacon articles focus on preaching within Rosedale Network of Churches. Each article features a recent sermon by a Rosedale Network pastor. May we all be encouraged by the faithful teaching of God's Word.*

I am reminded of a quote I read many years ago by Bruce Thielemann, "To preach, to really preach, is to die naked a little at a time, all the while knowing, that you must do it all over again next week."

This could be said of the Apostle Paul. Paul put everything on the table and never held back from the truth of Scripture.

Paul's letter to the Romans is arguably the most influential letter ever written. It is certainly the most significant letter in the history of Christianity. Romans has initiated conversions from Augustine to Barth, established doctrines, and even started a few reformations.

This is how Paul begins his powerful letter: "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, called as an apostle, having been set apart for the gospel of God" (Rom. 1:1 LSB). From this opening verse, we see the messenger and the message.

### ***The Messenger***

Paul does not begin with his credentials; he does not introduce himself as "a Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:4ff). Rather, he begins with, "Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus." Slaves are duty-bound only to their owners or to those to whom total allegiance is pledged. Paul has credentials; Paul is somebody! However, he leads with, "I am a slave."

I greatly appreciate many of the traditions of my Mennonite heritage, especially the emphasis placed on servant leadership: "...you are slaves of the one whom you obey" (Rom. 6:19 paraphrase).

First Paul says, "I am a slave of Christ Jesus" and second, "I am a called apostle."

In a general sense, an apostle is simply one who is sent out as a messenger. God does not call the qualified, He qualifies the called. Bruce Demarest writes in *The Cross and Salvation*,

"God's call is the means by which He makes men who are entirely unqualified into instruments of His will."

Paul starts with, "I am a slave" and "I am a called apostle." Then he says, "I have been set apart." Paul understands his role in line with the Old Testament prophets. Although there are no longer apostles in the strictest New Testament understanding of apostleship (2 Cor. 12:12), all followers of Jesus are to be apostles in the sense that we are to be His ambassadors.

Paul completely accepted his calling and recognized by whom he was called. He also understood the message given.

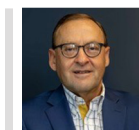
### ***The Message***

"...set apart for the gospel of God."

A Greek lexicon would simply define gospel, *euangelion*, as the good news—to tell the good news. It is where we get the word "evangelical." This term has fallen on hard times, but the message remains unchanged. Evangelicalism holds to the belief that the essence of the gospel consists of the doctrine of salvation by grace alone through faith alone, in Christ alone, as revealed by Scripture alone, and for the glory of God alone! "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not of works so that no one may boast" (Eph. 2:8-9).

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Photo credit: [Tima Miroshnichenko: "A Man Writing on the Notebook"](#)



James is married to Cheryl and has two children and two grandchildren. James serves as pastor of Holly Grove Mennonite Church in Westover, Maryland.



# Valentine's Day

BY IVAN YODER

Valentine's Day shows up on our calendars in the middle of February. If you are married, and even if you aren't, there are usually some mixed emotions surrounding the holiday. These emotions can vary from anticipation to dread and bring anxiety or joy. I find some irony in the timing of this day—here in central Pennsylvania, February is generally a cold dreary month. During this cold dreariness, a celebration of love stands in contrast to the grayness of winter.

My wife and I love being married. There are some days when that statement is easier to make than others, but it is true. It wasn't always that way. We have come to see that in years past, our relationship resembled winter in many ways. Through the grace of God, He has redeemed and brought life to something cold and bleak. Through His redeeming work, God has given us a desire to see marriages in the church not just survive, but experience more. We are deeply saddened when we see Christian marriages struggle to live in the fullness of what God desires. Marriage can be a visible picture of God's redeeming love. This puts Christian couples directly in the crosshairs of Satan's efforts to undermine the gospel.

## Loving my spouse requires a heart of humility modeled after Christ.

Jesus didn't preach many sermons on marriage. To the best of my knowledge, He never hosted a marriage weekend. Yet, He calls us to follow His example in all our relationships, not just marriages. Looking at His example, we can easily see how he lived in a relationship with every person He met. His words and actions contrasted the issues that are often at the forefront of tensions within marriage.

There are many hurdles to thriving marriages, but if we are brutally honest, a few of the most common are pride, unforgiveness, and lack of investment. Jesus, in humility, "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant" (Phil. 2:6b-7a ESV). Thriving marriages begin with humility. How many times in my relationships is my determination to avoid being wrong only surpassed by my desire to be right? How can I serve my spouse

daily? This is a question that is easier to ask than to live out. Loving my spouse requires a heart of humility modeled after Christ.

The apostle Paul continues Jesus's teaching on forgiveness in 1 Corinthians 13:5, where he writes that love keeps no record of wrongs. What a tremendous and costly Valentine's Day gift for my spouse, to keep no record of wrong—intentionally discarding the balance sheet, which is so easy to keep in our minds. This not only demonstrates true forgiveness but also reflects how God views and relates to us.

Jesus invested deeply in His close relationships; think of His communication with the Father, His intentional investment in His disciples. Our marriages deserve and require more investment than a day amid winter. Last month, Brian wrote about redeeming our time and encouraged this investment in our marriages. It is never too late to redeem our marriages and to begin to live in the fullness of God's heart for marriage.

Gospel-centered marriages thrive by understanding God's purpose for marriage and living out the fruit of the Spirit, day by day. What an incredible witness to a broken world we have by living in authentic thriving relationships. For too long, the church has been a cover for unhealthy and stagnant marriages. We hesitate to share when we struggle in marriages because we fear what others may think.

Jesus calls us to walk and live in the light, which certainly applies to marriages. When we bring things into the light, Satan begins to lose his power to disrupt and destroy our relationships. May we all reflect the light of Christ in all of our relationships—especially in our marriages—and not just on a "day" that reminds us to love as Jesus loved, but every day, while it is called today. 🙏

Photo credit: [Valentin Antonucci: "Two Person Holding Pinkies"](#)



*Ivan is moderator-elect of Rosedale Network of Churches and lead pastor at Locust Grove Mennonite Church. He and his wife, Pam (who serves part-time in women's ministry), are the parents of two adult children.*



# Anabaptism and Anglicanism

BY REUBEN SAIRS

## **Anabaptism and Other Denominations**

*On this 500th anniversary of the beginnings of the Anabaptist movement, Rosedale Bible College's Beacon articles look at a wide variety of denominations within the household of faith. We hope to foster a humble, rooted, appreciation for how the gospel has come to us and to consider how Jesus might be calling us forward.*

I became a Christian as a teenager from what was an unchurched background. There was family history—mostly distant and infrequent contact with the Episcopal Church—but I was an outsider in any Christian gathering. On the other hand, if I had a picture of a church, it was very Episcopalian.

My early years as a disciple were spent in an unusual combination of evangelically minded Episcopalians and Jesus freaks. Episcopalians are one expression of the worldwide communion of Anglicans. Episcopalian refers to their church government, by bishops. Anglican references the geographical/cultural side of the church—England, and its primary leader, the Archbishop of Canterbury. One strong identifier of the Anglican world is the *Book of Common Prayer* and the normal liturgical worship. I still love that worship, and if it were up to that issue alone, I would have probably never found my way to the Mennonites.

There has been a lot of uproar in the Episcopal Church. As time progressed, it became extremely liberal theologically and as such, has become one of the most liberal expressions of Protestantism. This trend drove a lot of believers out. Many former Episcopalians who still treasure this expression of church have developed new Anglican lines of affiliation and hold to a historic orthodox faith—that of the creeds, etc. I'll call them all Anglicans for simplicity's sake.

Who are they? Anglicans are the principal expression of faith coming from the English Reformation, which trails the continental one by just a few years. The Reformation in England is tied to the sordid stories of Henry VIII and his many wives, but there is also a strong tradition of brave leaders and martyrs. Its theology is quite similar to Lutheran theology, but its history and emphases are all its own.

Anglicans practice infant baptism; Anglicans have priests and a claim to apostolic succession; Anglicans have cherished rituals and, very often, the Eucharist is the high point or focus of

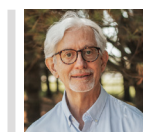
worship. To those unfamiliar with this kind of church, Anglicans might seem very similar to Catholics. You should remember that though there are parallels, Anglicans are Protestants and interpret what they do in Protestant terms. There are yet other offshoots, and in one sense that includes Methodism, but there are smaller groups of Charismatics and Reformed subgroups. Some of these branches lean more toward Catholicism.

For a formal expression of Anglicanism, one can turn to the Thirty-nine Articles that are in the back of the *Book of Common Prayer*. Some of these articles kick back against the Roman Catholics; one seems to be aimed at the Hutterites or similar Anabaptist groups. Some lay down a belief in predestination, but that can be a long study with no certain end.

Most of us know about the Pilgrims and Puritans. The Pilgrims came first. Think Mayflower, Plymouth, Bradford, first Thanksgiving paintings. They never joined the established Anglican Church in their day and had already fled to Holland (there's a great Mennonite connection there that is interesting to read about). The Puritans were rigorists who thought that residual Roman Catholicism and laxity in the Church of England needed to be purged. They were not the same as the Pilgrims in style, approach, or thinking.

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Photo credit: Reuben Sairs



*Reuben serves as professor and director of library services at Rosedale Bible College, and as associate pastor of London Christian Fellowship. Reuben and his wife, Vicki, have three adult sons.*



# Entry Point: Internship

BY ROSEDALE INTERNATIONAL

After the disbanding of Rosedale Network’s voluntary service program, Rosedale International (RI) implemented a loose internship structure for young adults interested in supporting our work at the Rosedale International Center (RIC). As our City Challenge and REACH programs grew in the following years, the need for a true intern program grew with them. In 2007, RI staff began developing the internship program to include discipleship, ministry, and leadership of Short-Term Program (STP) activities.

Today, RI offers seven unique intern positions that provide a space for young adults to “learn how to live missionally and sacrificially in a local context” and emphasize “leadership development, communal living, engaging the nations that have come to us, and supporting those who feel a call to go to the nations.”

## I see internship as an entry point to missional living and discipleship.

We recently welcomed our 2025 interns to the RIC. This team of young adults has jumped into their work with excitement and tenacity.

**Jill**, prayer coordinator, leads weekly prayer times with the intern team and spends time in personal intercession for Rosedale International. Come summer, she will coordinate and lead all prayer-related events for City Challenge and REACH. **Tanner**, food services assistant, works with Judah to budget, grocery shop, plan and prepare meals, and keep the kitchen clean and in order. **Claudia** and **Melissa**, hospitality assistants, partner with Darryl to coordinate events at the RIC and keep the building clean and welcoming for guests. **TJ**, administrative assistant, completes administrative and organizational projects for Lizziann. **Deanna**, community outreach coordinator, is responsible for building connections with Columbus-based ministries. She will coordinate outreaches and service projects for City Challenge and REACH participants.

In addition to fulfilling these core roles, our intern team spends the first months of their term in orientation and training. They receive teaching on leadership, stewardship, community

outreach, public speaking, and Discovery Bible Study. They take the Perspectives Course to gain an understanding of the global Church. They spend time in worship and prayer each week and invest in local Columbus ministries.

As the Short-Term Programs schedule picks up in early summer, our interns gain an opportunity to apply these skills. “We ask our interns to model the culture we want our participants to engage in, which means they are given a lot of influence,” Kara, personnel facilitator, explains. During City Challenge and REACH, interns take an active role in leading prayer walks, outreach and service projects, and breakout sessions. They work to intentionally build relationships with participants and offer guidance in times of discussion.

When REACHers depart for their outreach locations in early December, the internship program winds down with a time of debrief. Our desire is that each intern ends their time with RI having built a deeper relationship with Christ, acquired leadership experiences, and grown into confident leaders who engage the world.

“I see internship as an entry point to missional living and discipleship,” says Jared, Short-Term Programs director. “In a world that is becoming more and more disconnected through many different distractions, my prayer for our participants is that they would learn how to recognize the voice of God in their lives—again, or for the first time.

“I hope our interns reach a level of vulnerability with themselves and others that allows them to build trust and relationships at deeper levels than they ever have before. I hope that by the end of their time with us, they could truly commit themselves to a life dedicated to the service of Jesus and others!” 🙏

Photo credit: *Rosedale International*



*RI is the mission arm of Rosedale Network of Churches, working to take Jesus to the ends of the earth by fully engaging Rosedale Network churches in maturing and multiplying disciples, especially among the least reached.*

**A Slave of Christ** *cont'd from page 1*

This is the good news! This is the message of Paul. This is the message of Romans. This is the message of Scripture.

This is Paul, called on purpose and for a purpose, and that purpose is you and I!

Slaves of Christ Jesus.  
Set apart as messengers.  
Sent to take the message of good news to the ends of the world.

In our biblical literature class at Hesston College, we were taught to keep three questions in mind as we read Scripture: What is the sin problem? What is God doing to solve the sin problem? And how faithfully are God's people cooperating?

We know the sin problem.  
We understand what Jesus has done to solve the sin problem.  
Are we being faithful messengers with the good news entrusted to us? 🙏

**Anabaptism and Anglicanism** *cont'd from page 3*

Besides the reforms and critiques of the early English settlers to America, the Anglican communion in the new world suffered over loyalty issues during the American Revolution. The church ultimately backed American independence. Anglicanism, especially in the English version, does not believe in the separation of church and state.

I loved the worship in my first church. In my later teen years, I aspired to be a priest and maybe even an Episcopal bishop. I was blessed with great teaching, leaders with integrity, and a focus on the scriptures and evangelism. I loved the approach to discipleship that treated believers like adults who must make their own decisions and accept the consequences. They were never patronizing, controlling, or infantilizing.

I was mostly happy in the Episcopal world and was married in it, but I never joined. I guess I didn't have a future as a priest after all! I didn't believe in infant baptism, but I loved the liturgy. I also longed for a stronger sense of community, mutuality, and discipleship with a group orientation. I wanted worship that paid more attention to the immediate needs of the congregation. I believed in nonviolent discipleship as a normative requirement.

I made the best choice I knew how to make when I was in my mid-twenties and I found my way to the Mennonite world. Oh my... 🙏