

TROAS TO TURNERS CREEK

BY PHIL SWARTZENTRUBER

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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.

Before Jesus returned to heaven, He commissioned His followers to go and make disciples of all nations. He finished His redemptive work of dying on the cross and provided all that was needed for the worldwide Church to be built. He instructed His followers to wait in Jerusalem until they were endued with power from on High (Luke 24:49).

How would the gospel move from Jerusalem to Turners Creek, Kentucky?

Acts 1:8 tells us that after the Holy Spirit came, Jesus' followers would be witnesses beginning in Jerusalem and going to the ends of the earth. Then in Acts 2, the Holy Spirit came, and Jesus, through His followers, began to build His Church. But, how would the gospel move from Jerusalem to Turners Creek, Kentucky?

Acts 9 records the conversion of Paul. After his conversion, the Lord sent Paul to take the gospel to the Gentiles. Acts 16 records the early part of Paul's second missionary journey. They went through Phrygia and Galatia but were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia. The Holy Spirit did not permit them to go into Bithynia, so they came to Troas. While there, Paul had a vision of a man saying, "Come over to Macedonia to help us."

Under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, they sailed west and came to Philippi. While there, they were put in prison. I've wondered if they questioned their decision to go west. We don't have any indication they did. We do know that in response to their midnight prayer and praise service, God opened the prison doors. The jailer and his family were saved. Eventually, the gospel continued westward through Europe and to America.

In 1910, a group of churches came together to form the Conservative Amish Mennonite Conference (now Rosedale Network of Churches), with a commitment to reach people with the gospel. In the 1940s, there seemed to be a restlessness in the conference; a sense that God was calling them to missions. So, in 1946, three men were sent south to find a place to do mission work.

They stopped in Columbia, Kentucky, to spend the night. The next morning, they felt led of the Spirit to turn east. One of the three men, my grandfather, Eli, wrote the following about their trip, "Some of the experiences we had, in a definite leading of the Lord, seem almost too sacred to put on paper. And God forbid that we should take any honor to ourselves." After visiting some surrounding counties, they came to Jackson in Breathitt County, where they were informed that Turners Creek was a needy place. They visited Turners Creek and sensed that this was where God was leading them. As a result, a church was planted on Turners Creek, and from there, the gospel has spread throughout Eastern Kentucky and beyond.

One of the men from Turners Creek, whom Eli met on that early visit, was John C. Turner, who was not a believer. They became good friends. John C. accepted the gospel message, was saved, and became a leader in the church at Turners Creek. Plans are presently underway for David C. Turner, a great-grandson of both John C. Turner and Eli Swartzentruber, to become senior pastor of Turners Creek Mennonite Church.

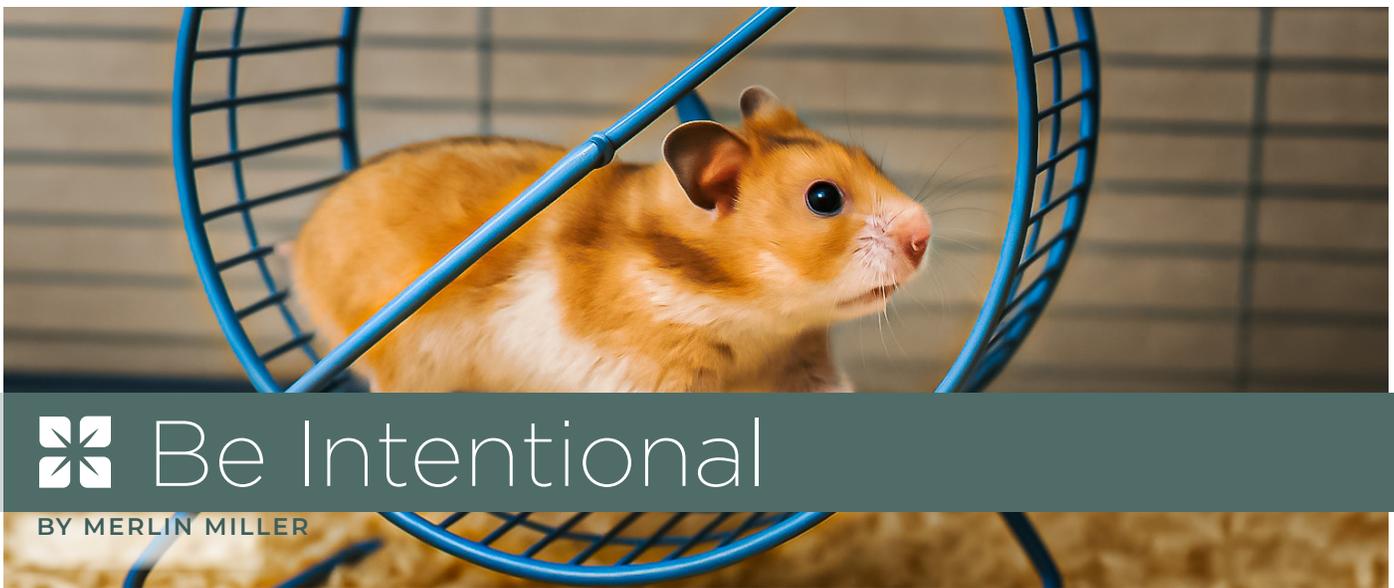
I think about that pivotal moment at Troas when Paul obeyed the Macedonian call and took the gospel west toward Europe. I also think about the moment in Columbia, Kentucky, when three men representing Rosedale Network of Churches listened to the Holy Spirit and turned east to take the gospel to Turners Creek.

Seventy-nine years later, the church on Turners Creek is alive and well. God is at work making disciples and raising up people to continue his work. I leave you with this question: *Am I listening to the Holy Spirit, and am I willing to take the gospel wherever the Lord leads me?* 

Photo credit: Phil Swartzentruber



Phil is a retired public school teacher and a retired pastor of Turners Creek Mennonite Church. He is currently a substitute teacher and preaches as the Lord gives opportunity.



Be Intentional

BY MERLIN MILLER

In Scripture, we find this biblical exhortation: “And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him” (Col. 3:17 ESV).

This verse speaks of being intentional with every facet of our lives. *Whatever you do, in word or deed* gives parameters with very little left outside of them. When we consider that what we do and say is an overflow of what we think in our head and hold dear in our heart, there is nothing that is outside of this charge: *do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus*.

To be intentional requires intent.

As Jesus’ followers who were given a mission from the Head of the body we are a part of, we are commanded by Scripture to be intentional in our lives. We are commanded to seek first His kingdom, and we are given the top priorities of that kingdom: love God with all that we are (and love others as ourselves) and make disciples in whatever context we find ourselves in. This may be an obvious statement, yet it should be clearly noted: to be intentional requires intent.

Being intentional is not just nice-sounding rhetoric that once we’ve given assent to this biblical mandate, it allows us to feel good about ourselves and move on, assuming it’s taking place. Being intentional requires defining our intent, ruthlessly assessing whether our current lifestyles and relationships allow us to fulfill that intent, repenting of those things that are standing in the way, and pursuing a relationship with the Lord Jesus with a single-minded focus. Surely nothing can be done in the name of the Lord Jesus if we do not know the Lord Jesus!

At least two questions come to my mind when thinking about this. First, am I living my life with intent? Unfortunately, it is far too easy to step into the hamster wheel of life, be consumed with the busyness it brings, move from one scene to another, and forget that all of this is temporary. Not only is it temporary, but it is stunningly fleeting in light of eternity. According to Ephesians 2:10, I have a purpose for being here on this earth, and so do you! If God has an intent for each of us, then how sad for us if we fail to realize that, or to walk in that. Second, if I am living intentionally, do I have the correct, God-honoring intent? Is my aim to secure a nice life for me and my family? Is my aim to be

successful in my career or in the hobbies I’m pursuing? Is my aim to have a good reputation among my peers and gain their respect? Is my aim to leave a financial legacy for those coming behind me? Is my aim to raise moral, well-behaved children?

I trust you can see that my questions are not highlighting things that are necessarily wrong in and of themselves. But once again appealing to the temporary nature of this life and this earth we call home, we must keep in mind Jesus’ exhortation to “lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matthew 6:20). Somehow our intentional living, our doing *everything in the name of the Lord Jesus* is to convert the words and actions of our daily lives into the eternal fruit of more souls in glory, worshiping their Creator.

No doubt there are countless applications of what it means to live intentionally, and to list any is to surely miss something important. If you want some practical instruction on this topic, I would suggest reading the surrounding context of our verse in Colossians 3. We can find opportunities for being intentional with internal things inside of us, as well as being intentional with external relationships around us. Jim Elliot, an American missionary killed in Ecuador in 1956, wrote in his journal this quote: “Wherever you are, be all there! Live to the hilt every situation you believe to be the will of God.” May our love for Jesus spur us on to being intentional in everything we do! 

Photo credit: Ai-generated



Merlin is married to Heidi and the father of seven children. He serves as pastor of Riverview Christian Fellowship in White Pigeon, Michigan. When not busy in ministry, he enjoys running and reading.



Anabaptism and the Church of the Nazarene

BY JAY MAST



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.

The Church of the Nazarene is the largest Holiness denomination in the world, with almost three million global members. They were created by a series of mergers and affiliations of various Holiness groups in the early 1900s, unified specifically around a common belief in Christian perfection.

The Wesleyan-Holiness Movement reaches back to the influence of John Wesley in the mid-1700s. Wesley himself was influenced by German Pietists and the Moravians at Herrnhut, who believed that the Christian life is one that should be evidenced by personal piety and victory over sin. Christian perfection is possible; otherwise, Christ would not have said, "You therefore must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. 5:48 ESV).

Wesley taught that while a Christian experienced justifying grace in conversion (being made right with God), a second work of grace was needed to entirely eradicate original sin and perfect a Christian in love. He carefully articulated that this second work of grace did not mean an entire absence of sin or mistakes, but should be thought of as perfect love for God and others and an absence of intentional sin. Wesley's influence led to transformed lives, considerable reform within the church, and an entire system of methods to aid Christians in living those holy lives. His followers became known as Methodists.

By the early 1800s, many Methodists in the United States became concerned that they had lost their focus on being entirely perfected in Christ. And so, a movement was born with a fervent insistence on the necessity of a *second work of grace* in every Christian's life to free it from sinful depravity and lead to holy living. Initially, this revival borrowed mostly from Wesley's Christ-centered views of Christian perfection, but eventually the language became Holy Spirit-centered, with certain leaders intertwining Christian perfection and the baptism of the Holy Spirit as the same singular event. The language and thought of Christian perfection have evolved over time, but terms such as *entire sanctification*, *baptism of the Holy Spirit*, *the second work of grace*, *holiness*, *perfect love*, etc., are all connected to this *second work of grace*.

These teachings gained a considerable following in the United States and around the world. They are seen especially in the revivals and camp meetings of the 19th and 20th centuries. From out of that basic impetus to focus on Christian perfection has arisen a litany of churches and denominations, including the Church of the Nazarene.

As Anabaptists, we are also committed to the idea that we can live holy lives, victorious over sin, and empowered by the Holy Spirit for good works. This view of the holy life is very similar to the Christian perfection promoted by Wesley, albeit without the need of a distinct, second, subjective experience.

Dr. Myron Augsburger, a Mennonite educator and leader, sums it up this way: "For the Anabaptists, the Christian life meant discipleship in the freedom of Christ, an identification of the total life with Jesus Christ, and a commitment to walk in the Spirit. Holiness is not seen to inhere in the object itself but in its relation to God. And so, for them, holiness of life meant discipleship, an obedience to Christ, a separation of the life of the believer from the world in an active pursuit of the priorities of the Kingdom of Christ." Victorious Christian living comes out of a life that is completely submitted to Christ and filled with His Spirit.

With such a huge emphasis on holiness (and other similarities such as a rejection of determinism), Anabaptists and those in the Methodist-Holiness tradition were naturally going to find each other. Some present-day denominations, such as the Missionary Church and the Brethren in Christ, are a result of Mennonites internalizing the holiness ideal of a second work of grace that leads to Christian perfection.

Today, many Anabaptists believe that a second work of grace is needed in a believer's life. I first heard of this concept at 21 years old when a Mennonite pastor insisted on its necessity and called it the "baptism of the Spirit." While this belief does not preclude one from being Anabaptist (as holding to a Nazarene view on violence and engaging in warfare might), it is also not an idea that has ever achieved large-scale acceptance among Anabaptists. 

References:

- [The Complete Guide to Christian Denominations](#)
- [Concern for Holiness in the Mennonite Tradition](#)

Photo credit: [Pexels: Kristin Mücke](#)



Jay lives in Hicksville, Ohio, with his wife, Renita, and their four children. Besides serving as senior pastor of Hicksville Mennonite Church and adjunct faculty at RBC, he enjoys extended walks with family, disc golf, and traveling.



City Challenge: An Invitation

BY JARED

When I was a youth group leader, I always loved to watch how quickly community developed during student mission trips. A byproduct of that community (and one of the things I most appreciate about youth ministry) is seeing the transformation that takes place in the life of each young person.

As director of Short-Term Programs (STP), I get to see this transformation happen in the students who come through Rosedale International (RI)'s City Challenge program. There is something incredibly life-giving in seeing the same students who arrived at the Rosedale International Center (RIC) feeling unsure or unenthusiastic, leave on Friday afternoon full of smiles and endless stories to share at home on Sunday morning!

This past summer, the leader of one of the youth groups who joined us for City Challenge shared with me that his students received exactly what they needed through their experience. I believe that our program is truly special; **I'd like to summarize what we do in Columbus for five or six weeks each summer and invite you to join us.**

Students arrive at the RIC on Monday afternoon and are quickly oriented to the fast-paced rhythm of our program. The next three and a half days are packed with opportunities to experience and participate in local ministry. These include times of worship and teaching, neighborhood prayer walks, service projects, work with community nonprofits, and a city-wide prayer challenge.

Our job as STP staff is to guide your students as they process these experiences. The preparation that goes into the City Challenge program is noteworthy; most notably, Phil and Lexi (program facilitators) put countless hours into creating an environment that is welcoming to all groups, no matter the size or dynamics. They also train the RIC interns, who play a huge role in City Challenge each summer.

Every two years, our staff develops a new curriculum that gives participants tools to live a life in obedience to Jesus's calling. We are looking forward to year two of "Fishes and Loaves," a curriculum centered around Jesus feeding the 5,000. We hope that as students wrestle with this story during City Challenge, they will come to the realization that Jesus can do incredible things with whatever they bring to Him—regardless of how large or small they believe their offering to be.

Our team has experienced many highs and lows since the pandemic a few years ago. **But regardless of any changes, one thing remains consistent and undeniable: Jesus works in this place and in the lives of the students and leaders who serve here.** Through City Challenge, youth groups build deeper connection with each other and their Creator, broaden their perspective on missions, and return home with tools to transform their friends, families, schools, and communities.

I invite you to join us in Columbus for City Challenge 2026. Registration is currently open for the following weeks: June 8-12, June 15-19, June 22-26, July 6-10, and July 13-17. You can register your group at rosedaleinternational.org/cc. Spots are filling up fast, so don't wait—we hope to see you in Columbus real soon! 🙌

Photo credit: Rosedale International



Jared serves as director of Short-Term Programs at Rosedale International. He lives in Plain City, Ohio, with his wife, Sarah, and their three children



From the Archives

This month, we mark the passing of a man whose life was closely linked to Rosedale Network and its biblical training institute for the better part of five decades. Willard Mayer (1926-2025) led or assisted with the ordination or licensure of 100 RNOG ministers between 1958 and 2007. He began teaching at what is now Rosedale Bible College in 1952, and with only a few exceptions, taught every year until 2001. Check out a few pages of the notes and lists he left behind in this edition of [From the Archives](#).