



STORIES OF REDEMPTION



BY SARA MAST

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Throughout 2024, the feature articles are devoted to hearing stories of God’s redemption within our Rosedale Network churches. We pray these stories fuel your love for the Lord and lead you to greater service in His Church.

~Kelsey Jurkovich, Publication & Literature Committee

God’s Preparation & Orchestration

Until a short, few months ago, we were severely uneducated on topics related to neurosurgery, emergency trauma units, Intensive Care Units, and trauma-related paralysis. We had no reason to know or care very much about the workings of hospital, emergency room, or ICU care. We were simply living our lives as dairy farmers—trying to discern God’s calling on our lives and the ways He was drawing us into a sanctifying relationship with Him.

All of that changed on November 1, 2023, around 10:30 am. Mitchell was at a doctor’s appointment, at which he had a simple blood draw done for routine lab work. As he was getting ready to leave, he passed out, hit the counter in front of him, and fell backward, hitting his head on the floor. He then had a two-minute-long seizure and became incoherent and combative with the staff. The staff at the doctor’s office quickly called 911 and he was transported by rescue squad to the nearest trauma unit at UPMC in Cumberland, Maryland.

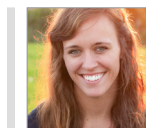
Long story short, Mitchell sustained a skull fracture which severed a major artery surrounding his brain. Mitchell was hemorrhaging into the space between his skull and the membrane surrounding his brain. This created immense pressure on his brain, to the point that his brain was collapsing and beginning to shift. In less than an hour, he had pooled over 600 milliliters of blood (that’s over 2.5 cups). He was rushed into a 3+ hour surgery, where they performed an emergency craniotomy and placed a drain. He spent four days in the ICU and one day on the regular nursing floor.

You may be questioning how this story connects to the idea of a “Redemption Story.” Redemption, by definition, is the action of being saved from sin, error, or evil, or the action of regaining something in exchange for payment. In our story, the clear line of events that had to be perfectly aligned to end as it did, point us to believing God orchestrated every part of what

happened. It is easy to ask, “Why us? Why such a random, freak way of being injured?” Yet, we are starkly aware of how different our circumstances would be if God had not put every segment where it needed to be. Typically, Mitchell would have been life-flighted to WVU for this type of injury, but time was of the essence in saving his life. It would have taken too long to get him into surgery if he had been flown. The attending ER surgeon was semi-retired, but he “happened” to be working that shift and was the area’s best neurosurgeon. I received a message three days *before* the accident from a relative telling me, “God placed you guys on my heart to pray over tonight. Words that came to mind were peace, comfort, guidance, strength, wisdom, and ease of heart and mind in the upcoming week.” How could we deny that she was being prompted to pray for this very situation? We truly believe that God redeemed Mitchell from a certain death and was preparing our hearts and minds.

We come back to the, “Why, God?” As difficult as the beginning of November was for our family, we learned some impactful truths. We saw, firsthand, how the body of Christ, both near and far, comes together when God prompts them. Our family was the recipient of house cleaning, barn help, harvest help, child care, gifts of words of truth, cards, and messages. God gave us an incredible platform to proclaim His truths and mercy.

We have long held onto a quote from David Jeremiah: “A man of God in the will of God is immortal until His work is done.” We are thankful that God’s work is not done in Mitchell and that his story can be passed on to those who need redemption. 🙏



Sara and her husband, Mitchell, are from Grantsville, Maryland, and have four children. Mitchell is the herd manager for Scenic Vista Farms while Sara is a homemaker and also works on the farm.



Radical Trust

ROSEDALE NETWORK



Reflections from the 75th Annual Pastors Conference—Dayton Mennonite Church, Virginia

Plenary Sessions – Myron Roggie

The plenary sessions at Pastors Conference 2024 were divided into three periods of history with three different speakers, each with the overall theme, “Radical Trust.”

Marcus Yoder, executive director of the Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center and the Ohio Amish Library in Berlin, Ohio, was the speaker for the first session, titled *Jesus in Our Past*. He shared his personal life experiences and his deep understanding of our Anabaptist history, including several details of the figures involved and shifts that were occurring before and during the Reformation. At the heart of each of these figures and shifts was the motivation of radical trust in Jesus. Although the motivation was correct, Marcus was quick to share that not all our Anabaptist forefathers or shifts in the past were successful in fulfilling the teachings of Jesus. Some we would like to forget due to the deviation and devastation linked to them. Marcus reminded us to “remember them lest we make the same mistakes.” Marcus also reminded us that our early Anabaptist forefathers who were martyrs for their faith had no idea that their “story” would ever be told. They lived, and died, with a radical faith in Jesus as their motivation, not fame or earthly glory. These people were followers of Jesus at the very core of their existence. Radical trust in Him was the obvious byproduct of that heart relationship.

The second session was titled *Jesus in Our Present*, presented by Conference Pastor Darren Peachy. Darren began by sharing and celebrating examples of how Jesus is working and changing lives, in and around us. The rich history we have of Jesus meeting and touching people who radically trust Him has not ended somewhere in the past but continues strong and vibrant today, and we should celebrate each time we hear another example. These celebrations do far more than just get us excited; they draw us together as followers of Jesus and help us maintain focus on what is truly important. There are, and always have been, challenges and distractions to moving forward in unity in our individual churches and as a network of churches. Focusing on Jesus, and what He is presently doing in

us and among us, draws us together when other forces seek to divide. Jesus is worthy of our radical trust!

Executive Director Brian Hershberger shared the third session, *Jesus in Our Future*. Brian framed his thoughts around our understanding of the Trinity—we believe in one God existent in Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. He acknowledged that as human, earthly beings, our minds cannot grasp anywhere near the fullness of this truth. He stated that as a network, we have done well in pushing into the Father and Son aspects of the Godhead. He challenged us not to back away from pressing into those but to “pull” more heavily into the Spirit of God in our future. Brian recognized that this may be challenging as we all have some experiences or “baggage” that we bring to this topic that may or may not be helpful. He encouraged us to be alert to when and where in scripture the Holy Spirit is referenced and the outcome of the situations recorded. We have nothing to fear in seeking more of the Holy Spirit’s presence and influence in our lives, our churches, and our network in the future. He, the Spirit, will guide us into all truth.

Myron serves on the pastoral team at Naumburg Mennonite Church in Castorland, New York. He and Julie have two young adult children and one grandchild.

Women’s Fellowship Meeting – Emily Mast

I was encouraged by Lindsey Martin’s talk to us ladies on Thursday morning, inviting us to radically trust God with the silent pain that we can carry in our stories. What do we do with this pain? How do we minister when we carry our burdens and feel like no one understands what we are going through? Can we see our wilderness as an invitation for intimate friendship with God?

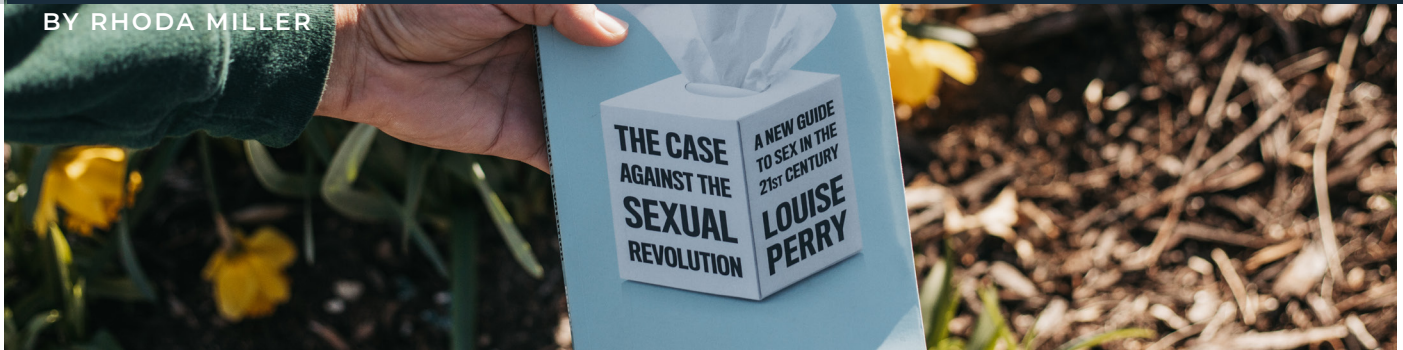
The silent pain that God sends us can accomplish its purpose when we have complete dependence on God. It gives us a pure love for people, void of needing their affirmation, but loving them through the eyes of Jesus. Silent pain creates humility

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The Failure of the Sexual Revolution

BY RHODA MILLER



This year, RBC is running a series of articles in the Beacon examining books that might be especially helpful to the life of the Church. We hope you will benefit from these book descriptions and suggestions.

The Case Against the Sexual Revolution

by Louise Perry

My family was zipping down the road, headed to New York City in a minivan. I scrolled through my Kindle to *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution*, a book I had come across in a podcast. I was intrigued by the author, a non-professing Christian, who came out with some very conservative Christian-sounding statements about marriage and motherhood.

I find myself drawn to books by nonbelievers who state my beliefs in more scientific and statistical ways. Why? Because I believe all truth is God's truth no matter how we arrive at it, and I love to be surprised where I find it.

As we traveled, I read quietly to myself, at times reading excerpts to my husband, Keith, who was driving. I was drawn in, reading more and more until I ended up reading the whole book out loud to him on our 10-hour journey. My four boys, ages 11-17, catching bits and snatches of the book, were slightly scandalized, suggesting that I need to expand my vocabulary outside the realm of "sex." The book is probably not the best family read-aloud, but it was too good for me to put down!

We are other than each other.

I was pulled in by Perry in her comparison between the lives of movie star Marilyn Monroe and *Playboy* publisher Hugh Hefner. "The course of these two lives shows us in perfect vignette the nature of the sexual revolution's impact on men and women" (16). Hefner lived a long, decedent life seemingly never paying for his excesses, while Monroe's life was cut short by misery and substance abuse.

Perry shows us how the "liberating" of women that happened during the last 50 years was anything but freeing: "The story of the sexual revolution isn't only a story of women freed from the burdens of chastity and motherhood, although it is that. It is also a story of the

triumph of the playboy—a figure who is too often both forgotten and forgiven, despite his central role in this still recent history" (20).

Why do so many women desire a kind of freedom that so obviously serves male interests? What do we lose when we prioritize freedom above all else?

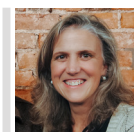
Perry treads boldly where others have feared to go. Just glance down through her chapter headings: "Men and Women are Different," "Some Desires are Bad," ... and finally, "Marriage is Good."

I believe that men and women are different, and yet, as we breathe the air of the contemporary sexual revolution, it's all too easy to think that men and women are the same—or at least should be valued in the same way. When we married in 1994, I believed that I could do almost anything a man could do, but I still wanted my husband to do "male" jobs like taking out the trash. We competed over who should drive, who should change the light bulbs, and who should cook. The list went on. We were a liberated couple, trying to equally divvy out the family tasks, making sure that we were free from stereotypical roles and seeming inequalities. It was a wearisome task.

During this time, Keith gave a talk to the youth group we were leading. He compared a milk jug to a wine glass and talked about treating women as the "weaker vessel" (1 Peter 3:7). I never liked being the "weaker vessel." I wanted to be strong, yet as I heard him talk about treating the wine glass with care and dignity, I began to feel valued as *other than*, not *the same as*.

Perry has a chilling quote, "...almost all men can kill almost all women with their bare hands" (50). Men and women are different at a cellular, biological level.

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Rhoda lives in Rosedale, Ohio, after serving in Central and Southeast Asia for 22 years. She and her husband, Keith, own and operate Millers Furniture in Plain City and attend Shiloh Mennonite Church along with their four sons, ages 11-18.



The Rains Will Come

BY ROSEDALE INTERNATIONAL



Two Updates from Africa

“I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow. So neither the one who plants nor the one who waters is anything, but only God, who makes things grow. The one who plants and the one who waters have one purpose, and they will each be rewarded according to their own labor. For we are co-workers in God’s service; you are God’s field, God’s building” (1 Cor. 3:6-9 NIV).

The “language” of agriculture is one that Jesus and His disciples used often to describe the gospel to a culture of farmers, shepherds, and fishermen. Today, Rosedale International (RI) workers on both the east and west coasts of Africa carry on this tradition. Luke and Gloria have just begun their time on the field—taking first steps of faith and trusting God to bless their work in the land and its people. Devin, near the end of his first term, sees God’s faithfulness in a successful farm and fertile spiritual soil.

Luke, Worker in East Africa:

The company owner and I drove for about an hour to find the animals as they grazed.

The company I work for is a for-profit farm that hopes to regenerate grazing lands through intensive management of animals. Our family arrived here at the very end of the dry season; everything is dried up and dusty, and no vegetation is growing.

Before we arrived, the company decided to move the animals off the farm to let our land rest and keep it from degrading during the dry season. Now even these lands are running out of grass, and we will have to make tough decisions about what to do with the animals. Local animal producers face these challenges each year—an example of how important it is to regenerate the land so grasses can last through the dry season.

For weeks, our shepherds lived off the farm while looking after the animals. Their camp consisted of a fire ring, a structure just big enough to sleep in, two animal corrals made of thorny branches, and some equipment scattered about. The owner and I brought liver and bread for breakfast, and we sat with the shepherds to eat. Other herdsmen brought their herds of goats and camels through the same area, and they stopped to

join us for breakfast. The nomadic life can be lonely, but the communal aspects of this culture still shine through.

Today, our shepherds woke up at 4 am, packed up camp, and marched the herd back to the farm. Others drove out to collect the 18-20 goat kids, who rode back to the farm in the back seat of the car. We bought hay to supplement the animals’ food until the grass starts growing again. Spreading hay over bare patches of ground is a land restoration strategy—the animals will come to eat there, poop there, and stomp uneaten organic matter into the soil. Hopefully, their poop will contain grass seeds that’ll sprout when it rains.

Now we’re back into land management mode, and hoping the rains come soon. The margins here are slim, and a few more weeks of rain could make the difference between famine and flourishing.

Devin, Worker in West Africa:

Our chicken house finally has residents—2,000 layers and 200 roosters! It will take about 21 weeks for them to lay eggs at a consistent rate. The cost of the chickens themselves, their vaccines, and the food they will eat in that time is a total investment of over \$10,000, but based on our experience with previous flocks, we will recuperate that investment in three months of selling eggs.

The farm where I work was initially a small project started by another worker. Now, it’s a healthy church and growing farm. We have seen substantial growth in the past two years—from installing our own feed mill to building this new chicken house. We’ve used profits to start a health clinic and fund different aspects of the church.

The ultimate author of this success is God, but I am also grateful for our director and my co-workers. Each morning, we meet

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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.

Radical Trust, Reflections from Pastors Conference

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in us when we feel truly seen by God, and believe that He also sees other people's pain. The silent story that we carry can create confidence and holy boldness in us when we surrender to the story that God is writing and radically trust Him with our pain.

Emily is married to Phil and the mother of four children. She lives in northern Virginia, homeschools her children, and is a member of Dayspring Mennonite Church.

Fellowship and Community – Roxie Roth

Pastors Conference has become a time that I look forward to attending, meeting new people, sharing with them, and finding out that others are going through similar experiences. It is encouraging to know that we have godly friends who are walking a very similar journey in life, and we can reach out to them for encouragement, wisdom, and support.

A highlight has been meeting up with our Checking In group. This is always a time of encouragement and sharing where this journey has and is taking us. We are blessed to be able to be open and honest with each other and to spend time praying for each other.

I also enjoy the women's meeting; it is a time of refreshment and encouragement, catching up with friends and making new ones. God has been so faithful and has shown up at each Pastors Conference with just what my heart needed. He is so good!

Roxie enjoys serving along with her husband, Brad, at East Fairview Mennonite Church. Her favorite thing to do is spending time with her children and granddaughter.

Breakout Sessions – Lowell & Rachelle Eastman

After coming home from Pastors Conference 2024, my wife and I were very grateful and blessed from the week of fully experiencing God's goodness. Rachelle and I have grown to enjoy the opportunity to gather and spend time with friends, make new ones, rest, and be spiritually encouraged at these gatherings. We appreciated the variety of breakout sessions that were available this year. I was glad to see the options from growing and being encouraged in our ministry with breakout sessions like *Walking with a New Believer* and *Shift from Doer to Equipper* to church ministry options for youth leaders and *Effective Small Groups*, to growing God's body with church plants or personal care sessions on *Marriage & Ministry*. While not everyone attends every session, it still gives many places to rest and recover or be stretched and strengthened for being used in building God's kingdom here and now. Many thanks to Pastors Conference planners and the individuals who were willing to be resource speakers for this year's event. 🙏

Lowell & Rachelle live in Fairview, Michigan, where Lowell pastors full-time at Fairview Mennonite Church and Rachelle does a bit of substitute teaching. They enjoy working together to build the Kingdom.

The Failure of the Sexual Revolution

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I believe that we find freedom when we explore the nuances of these differences. We are *other than* each other. We are male and female created in the image of the triune God.

I have chosen to live under God's commands—in a free, yet not-free state of being. I try to choose His ways. Perry's book affirmed the sacrifices I have made as a woman and a mother. She writes, "The logic of individualism collapses upon contact with motherhood" (231).

My journey in *The Case Against the Sexual Revolution* strangely led me to a deeper understanding of the triune God in all His complexity and mystery. In Perry, I found a sister-in-truth, if not yet in faith. She led me to see a fuller and more complete picture of who God is.

Give it a read and let me know what you think! 🙏

The Rains Will Come *continued from page 3*

to pray over the day and pray that His name will continue to be lifted up through our work. Many mornings, my mind goes to the stories of God pouring out His blessing on the herds of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. The local worldview is much closer to that of ancient Palestine, and my neighbors interpret such blessings as God's presence and approval.

The original founder no longer runs the farm, but his spirit of ministry has carried over to the current director. He and the pastor work together to expand the business and invest the profits into furthering God's kingdom. This presents an opportunity for me to partner with the farm and reproduce this idea in other locations. As my first term comes to an end, we are prayerfully laying the groundwork for this next step. Please pray for us as we look to buy land and find the right people with whom to partner.

God's hand is at work through RI on both sides of the African continent. Praise Him for blessing Devin's endeavors, and join us in praying that Luke's efforts will one day see this same rejuvenation and growth, both in the land and the people. 🙏