

THE BEACON

MOHLER CHURCH OF THE BRETHREN

July/August 2026



Keeping the Main Thing the Main Thing

Paster Cody Schwanger

I read a clever poem once, which, as all good poems do, manages to speak to several things at once. The poem written by Sam Walter Foss "The Prayer of Cyrus Brown" is simple, and humorous and is as follows:

"The proper way for a man to pray,"
Said Deacon Lemuel Keyes,
"And the only proper attitude
Is down upon his knees."

"No, I should say the way to pray,"
Said Rev. Doctor Wise,
"Is standing straight with outstretched arms
And rapt and upturned eyes."

"Oh, no, no, no," said Elder Slow,
"Such posture is too proud:
A man should pray with eyes fast closed
And head contritely bowed."

"It seems to me his hands should be
Austerely clasped in front.
With both thumbs pointing toward the ground."
Said Rev. Doctor Blunt.

"Las' year I fell in Hodgkin's well
Head first," said Cyrus Brown,
"With both my heels a-stickin' up,
My head a-pinting down;

"An' I made a prayer right then an' there -
Best prayer I ever said,
The prayingest prayer I ever prayed,
A-standing on my head."

It is a great poem. Part of its cleverness is that it gets us to laugh at ourselves while also receiving the truth tucked inside it.

Theology matters. Right practice matters too. I do not want to suggest otherwise. What we believe about God matters, and how we worship, pray, serve, and order our lives before Him matters. But there is also a danger that good and helpful practices can slowly become something they were never meant to be.

In the life of the church, we can get wrapped up in all sorts of issues that are important to us. Some of these practices, preferences, and theological emphases become so familiar that they begin to feel like part of who we are. And when that happens, something meant to point us toward God can quietly become a marker of our own identity instead.

Worship Times

Sunday School
9:00 AM

Worship Service
10:10 AM

Isaiah 60:1

*"Arise, shine; for
the light is
come, and the
glory of the
LORD is risen
upon thee."*

From there, the risk is similar to what the poem suggests. We can begin to bicker over the smaller things while losing sight of the greater thing. We can become so focused on the form of prayer that we forget the purpose of prayer itself.

Prayer is important. Understanding prayer biblically is important. Even learning different patterns or rhythm of prayer is useful when they help direct our hearts and minds toward God.

For instance.: there is the prayer practice known as *lectio divina*, often called “divine reading”. *This form of prayer involves slowly reading a passage or verse of Scripture and then prayerfully reflecting on how the text directs the heart toward God.. There is also the practice of praying the hours, or praying at set times throughout the day, such as morning, midday and evening.*

The list of styles and forms of prayer could go on and on. The point is that many of these practices came into existence with the purpose of helping people turn their attention toward God. When theology and church practice help orient us toward Christ, they can be good and useful gifts.

But we should be careful not to get stuck in the weeds. At the end of the day, what matters most is that a person prays - not that he or she has mastered the exact posture, pattern or preferred method of prayer.

The poem helps us where Cyrus Brown in his simple and humorous way is reminding us that the “proper” way to pray is not finally measured by the position of the body, but by the turning of the heart toward God.

Cyrus Brown may not have had the approved posture but he had the right instinct. In his trouble, he turned to God. And maybe that is a lesson worth carrying beyond prayer itself.

This same danger shows up in many areas of church life. We can take good things - styles of worship, favored traditions, ministry methods, theological emphases, even personal convictions - and slowly begin treating them as if they are the main thing. What began as a tool to help us love God can become a test by which we measure one another.

The goal of prayer is not to perfect a posture but to turn the heart toward God. The goal of worship is not to defend our preferences but to honor Christ. The goal of theology is not to win arguments but to know and love the Lord more faithfully. The goal of church life is not to protect every personal comfort of cherished heritage but to be formed together as the people of God. So perhaps the invitation is simple - keep the main thing the main thing.

Let prayer lead us to God.

Let doctrine lead us to worship

Let tradition lead us to attentive hearts.

Let service lead us to love.

Let all that we do point us again to Christ.

And when life turns us upside down, whether literally or otherwise, may we remember what Cyrus Brown remembered: the most important thing is not whether everything looks proper from the outside but whether the heart knows where to turn.

CHURCH HISTORY

50 years ago:

1. The Mohler Congregation met in their regular council meeting on Tuesday, July 20th 1976 at 7:30 pm. with Moderator Walter Hackman, Sr. presiding. Brother Harry Ritter led the congregation in a devotional period.
2. Brother Paul Brubaker of the District Ministerial Commission supervised a congregational vote to determine whether Galen Hackman shall be ordained to the Christian Ministry. The congregation voted to have Brother Hackman ordained and this ordination service will take place on Sunday, September 26th.
3. The ballot for election of new members to church commissions was accepted by the congregation. The results were as follows: Missions & Service – Dolores Long and Janice Weaver, Stewardship & Finance – Warren Leininger and June Haldeman, Trustee Commission – Alvin Henly and Earl Auker, Auditor – Arlene Nolt, Church Cleaning Committee – Eli and Janice Martin, Christian Education Commission – Fianna Auker and David Heffley, Sunday School Superintendent (Second Assistant) – Tom Noll, Annual Conference Delegates – Willis and Florine Heisey, Ralph and Miriam Heisey (Alternates), District Conference Delegates – Harry Ritter, Galen Kunkle (Alternate).
4. Brothers Ralph Heisey, Willis Heisey and Irvin Graybill were appointed to serve on a Pastoral Committee to study the congregational needs for a pastor.
5. It was voted to have the church pay travel expenses for the men going to the Mississippi Disaster area for one week of work service (week of August 16th).

100 years ago:

1. Springville Congregation met for council in the Mohler House this 2nd day of August, 1926 with Elder I.W. Taylor presiding. Elder Amos M. Martin opened the meeting with song No. 249 and also read part of the 3rd chapter of Colossians followed by prayer.
2. First in order was the matter concerning the light to be placed in the ladies toilet at the Mohler House. The committee reported it is placed.
3. It has been reported by the trustees of the Cocalico House that the building of the stone drive around that house has as yet not been begun and is therefore yet in the hands of the trustees.
4. An election has been held for an Elder in Charge which resulted in the re-election of Elder I.W. Taylor for two years.
5. Sister Kathryn Wenger (wife of Isaac Wenger) was received as a helpmate to the ministry.
6. Regarding Brother William Keller's case with the Reddig estate, the church decided that they be notified to appear at our next council and to give him one week time to accept Article 8 of minutes of March, 20th, 1926 and if so to settle matters before Love Feast.
7. The church decided that Brother Daniel Frantz be disowned on account of his wayward life which he led for years.
8. The church granted Sister Fannie Frantz the right to use the law for demanding support or anything she would have a legal right to demand.
9. An admonition was given against the parting of the hair at the side by the sisters and since painting and powdering is so prevalent among women, the sisters were also admonished not to indulge in the same.

125 years ago:

1. Council opened August 3th, 1901 at 1:00 pm with Elder Israel Wenger presiding.
2. Emma Mellinger asked to be reclaimed and it was requested of her that she humbly confess that she did wrong in not hearing the church, and that she be willing to drop her life insurance as soon as possible, which she did and was reinstated.
3. Brother Joseph Buch acknowledged having been at Ephrata on the 4th of July and that it was wrong and promised not to go there again and he was forgiven by the church.
4. It was decided to pay the balance of bill of Brother Henry Wolf for the coffin of Sister Kauffman.
5. It was agreed to make a change at the Brick Meeting House grounds and a committee of three brethren: Isaac Keller, Aaron Gibbel and Wayne Zwally with the trustees to constitute that committee was appointed to look up the matter and report to next council.
6. Brethren Moses Price, Isaac Eberly and Henry Burkholder were appointed a committee to go with the trustees of the Blain-sport Meeting House, to examine the condition of the house and make an estimate of the cost of repairing it and report next council. (Henry Burkholder was the great-great grandfather of Mike Shupp.)



Independence Day Prayer



Margaret Cagle

Lord, on July fourth we'll celebrate
Independence Day in our nation
You gave us the truth to set us free.
You sent Jesus to die for our salvation.

We thank you for the precious freedom
That we have in our nation today.
We know this country's not perfect,
But we honor our nation, the USA.

We thank you for the Founding Fathers,
Who for freedom took a brave stand.
Many placed their very lives in peril
To start a free country in a new land.

I thank you for the brave soldiers,
Who gave their lives to keep us free.
They gave their ultimate sacrifice
For freedom for Americans like me.

As we shoot fireworks and celebrate
With patriotic concerts and parades,
We thank you for all your blessings
And your great love that never fails.

As we gather with our loved ones
For picnics and barbecues and fun,
We want to thank you for everything,
Especially for sending your only Son!

CROCHETING WITH A CAUSE

With patient hands and caring hearts, women gather strand by strand to crochet warm blankets for needy families. Every stitch tells a story of kindness, teamwork, and compassion as many hands work together toward one beautiful purpose. Though the process takes time and dedication, the result is far greater than yarn alone — it becomes comfort for the hurting, warmth for the cold, and a reminder that a community working together can accomplish wonderful things.

