

**Central Christian School Chapel – February 6, 2019**

**Memories that shape me....**

**by Bill Seymour**

**A talk given at Central Christian School, Kidron, OH**

These are rough notes. The reader will need to fill in voicings and transition words.

Norbert Rios.

scary other. reputation for being mean and tough.

brown. only one brown in the school. He was half my size. I was afraid of him.

I was 14. For some reason, I had a moment of clarity. "What if I would just speak to him like a human being?"

So I did. I talked to him like a normal human being. He talked to me like a normal human being. I wasn't afraid anymore. And we continued talking to one another as human beings.

Norbert was not a bully to me. I don't know if he was to anyone.

There were bullies. I was fat and I stuttered and I was sensitive. I was pretty gullible, too. In one club, kids poke pins in my rump. At church, kids called me names. mean names. I remember what it is to be told how unworthy I am.

Martha Tate.

Her name I remember. There were a couple of boys in my school whose names I cannot remember. I joined in the bullying of these kids. Not like some, but I remember trapping one kid in my home room in the corner just to intimidate him. My heart breaks thinking about it. Sigh.

The social part of school was hard. I had a close friend and then friendly relationships with some others. Playing on the tennis team for a couple years helped. Being in band helped. Being in choir helped. And, in high school I wasn't as large as I had been prior to 8th grade. I think I was just a little smaller than I am now. But as HS progressed my stutter got worse, and being made fun of for stuttering felt like death to me. Still does. Nothing gets my inner rage going more than being made fun of for stuttering.

When I was 17, I was playing the part of Peter in a short musical in a group. This is the group through which I learned about Jesus and in which I became a Christian. It was November of 1981. The role of Peter including singing solos and speaking some lines. There were a few other characters and the choir behind me.

We were giving our performance in Ledyard, Connecticut. A little white church in the center of that quaint little town. There was a little boy, maybe 7 or 8 years old on the front pew. The show is about one hour long. My stutter was terrible that night. I don't know how anyone understood anything I said. This little boy made fun of me the whole night.

No one stopped him.

People heard him, certainly.

He went on and on and on.

You know in some movies when someone hits a situation that scares them and the film shows things slowing down and getting big and blurry with obnoxious faces coming at you? That's what this memory is like to me. (continued on next page)

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(continued from page 1) At the end of the show, I felt like crumpled up piece of paper. I sat in a room. I don't have a clue what was happening around me. I don't know if I ran off and hid or if I just kept going until we filed off. No clue. I know I ended up in a room.

In walked a white-haired man. He was the pastor of the church. He probably apologized for the kid's behavior (in the kid's defense, he had some mild mental disability of some kind and I could tell or at least suspect this while the performance was going on) and I'm sure he said some other things.

Then he told me a story.  
I don't remember the story.  
Sorry. Thanks. See you later.

I don't remember exactly what he said. What I remember is my response to it and a little of what he said. He told me he had stuttered for 50 years (and oddly has stopped). And at some point someone had sat him down, encouraged him, and told him not to let the stutter stop him from doing anything or to define his life.

He said it better. With nicer words, a genuine sense of caring backed by a gentle, furrowed brow. I knew he was a pastor. This means he had to talk to people and in front of people. A lot. It's part of the gig. He said more. This is all I remember. I don't know his name. We never had contact again.

As I reflect on my life, outside of hearing Jesus call my name, this is the singularly defining moment of my life. Stuttering is still there. It still stinks. Badly. It makes me change words which makes for strange phrasing from time to time. It comes and goes. Some days I stutter a lot. Others not at all. There are people whose names I can't say without a 5-second lead in. This was a factor in choosing names for our children.

It still hurts to my core when someone makes fun of it. I am pastor of Orrville Mennonite Church. 9 out of 10 times, when I am introducing myself to someone new and I have to say that—I stutter on both Orrville and Mennonite. Uggggh!!! I had to have therapy a couple of times along the way in college.

However, because a person took an interest in me for just a few minutes, I was able to move past that terrible day. I was able to pursue life work which included speaking to people and in public. I have been continually willing to put myself in front to speak even it meant stuttering. And I have been able to tell my story to several young boys who stutter.

Thank you God, for that guy. And for your mercy and your love. Amen.

**WINGS Update**—One room of Orrville Mennonite Church was thoroughly cleaned during WINGS this past month. Several kids were "hired" to make it shine. They agreed to work for bookmarks that (thankfully) they imagined were \$10 bills. A few "hours" (or 2 minutes) later, several more kids were "hired" to help clean the room. Then, after more time had passed another group of kids were "hired" to help. By that time, most of the room was clean and there wasn't much left to do, but the newly hired group cheerfully agreed to work for whatever was right and started picking up tiny lint pieces off the floor. Not long after that, it was time to end the clean up. All the kids gathered in line, eagerly awaiting their "pay". The older kids group watched as everyone was given a \$10 bookmark . . . even those hired last! This was not fair according to the kids hired first! They had done most of the work and had worked longer! They all sat down and we discussed heaven and believing in God. We talked about if it was fair that those who choose to believe in Jesus right before they die would get to go to heaven just like those who believe for their whole lives. The kids readily agreed that it was and started to understand what Jesus was saying with his Parable of the Vineyard. The younger kids group didn't need a discussion. As soon as they got "paid" and were asked if it was fair, they said "Of course it's fair! Everyone worked! Everyone had fun helping together! Everyone deserves to be paid!" They got it right away! They already knew Jesus was generous and merciful! No wonder Jesus wants us to come like children!

The next parable helped us see that we need to be like Jesus and be generous too! As we learned about the Parable of the Rich Man who wanted to build bigger barns to store all his abundant crops, we talked about what he could have done differently and looked at how we could stop worrying about ourselves and be generous and kind to others. As we continue on with Jesus' parables, we will look at just what it costs to follow Jesus as we study the Cost of Building a Tower.



Also this month, we spent some time letting our creativity flow! Our annual Pinewood Derby Race is coming up in March, so we spent a Tuesday night creating our cars! There were Hershey bar cars, a Jigsaw Puzzle car, a few Golden State Warrior cars, rainbow cars, a universe car, and even a police car! Stan Kamp, Willie Miller, and John Kauffman generously spent the evening with us cutting out the designs from blocks of wood and then, it was painting time! Soon, we'll be setting up the track and getting ready to cover our ears with loudly cheering children excitedly watching their cars try to speed faster than their friends! We can't wait!

Please keep praying for us all as we deal with some difficult relationships between kids and work hard to show them Jesus! Thank you! ~ Sara Anderson, WINGS Leader

## General Announcements

- ◆ **Central Christian School presents *Tarzan the Stage Musical*** on Friday and Saturday, March 15 and 16 at 7:00 p.m. Tickets may be purchased online by visiting [www.ccscomets.org/drama](http://www.ccscomets.org/drama) or call 330.857.7311. We hope to see you there!
- ◆ **MCC's Sharing With Appalachia People (SWAP) program is seeking volunteer groups and individuals.** Summer will be here before we know it, so make your summer plans now to join SWAP in Kentucky or West Virginia. Don't miss out on your chance to serve with this home repair ministry while learning about life in Appalachia. Groups or individuals can volunteer to serve for week-long opportunities. For more information about bringing a group to SWAP, visit [swap.mcc.org](http://swap.mcc.org) or contact Angela Maggard at [AppalachiaAdmin@mcc.org](mailto:AppalachiaAdmin@mcc.org) or 606-633-5065.
- ◆ **Open Arms Hispanic Ministry is hosting TACO TUESDAY**, a fundraising banquet on March 12, at the Kidron Park Community Center. The meal will begin at PM and will feature a catered taco bar. A program of Open Arms ministry highlights will follow. A free-will offering will be taken. Please RSVP by March 8, to [OAHM.rsvpify.com](http://OAHM.rsvpify.com), to reserve your place for TACO TUESDAY! If you have questions please email [919kss@gmail.com](mailto:919kss@gmail.com) or call [330 464 1135](tel:3304641135)
- ◆ **OrrVilla Retirement Community invites you** to a poetry reading by award winning poet, Joanne Lehman as she shares her latest collection entitled "Fountain Nook" on Monday, March 4th at 2:30 p.m. at Maple Terrace. Also, on Thursday, March 7th at 7:00 p.m. at Maple Terrace, Willie and Rodi Longenecker will present "Grace Again". The pair travels yearly on a Midwest tour sharing inspirational music and photos.



## Annual Thank You Notes from Those We Support

- ◆ **From Mennonite Central Committee:** We are grateful for your generous support of the work of Mennonite Central Committee, as we provide hope, healing and comfort around the world in the name of Christ. Thank you, friends and supporters at Orrville Mennonite Church, for the ways you contribute to the work of MCC through volunteering time, creativity and energy at thrift shops, relief sales, meat canning and in assembling material resource kits. We were also blessed by your financial support of \$2,335 in 2018. Keep us in your prayers, and we collaborate with our 508 partners in 57 countries who are sharing God's love and compassion through relief, development and peace in the name of Christ. To read about specific partners and projects, please visit [mcc.org](http://mcc.org)!  
With sincere thanks, Sarah Geiser, Church Relations Associate, MCC Great Lakes
- ◆ **From Mennonite Central Committee:** MCC Great Lakes staff thank you for your donations of material aid during 2018. Your generosity reminds people that their needs are not forgotten....our international partners on the ground relay stories of deep gratitude from people who are on the receiving end of these supplies...(OMC donated 19 comforters and 65 school kits in 2018.) Sincerely, Sarah Geiser
- ◆ **From Mennonite Mission Network:** Thank you, Orrville Mennonite Church, for giving \$10,270.00 to Mennonite Mission Network in 2018! Your donations, prayers, and enthusiastic participation play a vital role in our global church. Together, we more fully experience God's kingdom on earth.

Thank  
you

## Additional Thank You Notes

- ◆ **From Camp Luz:** Thank you for your generous contribution of \$100.00 to the ministry here at Camp Luz. Your support make it possible for us to continue the important ministry that God has called us to—*Sharing Christ and helping people grow in their faith*. Thank you, Andrew Michaels, Camp Director
- ◆ **From Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale:** We want to thank you for your contribution to the Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale. It is your continued support that makes our sale a success. On behalf of the needy around the world who will be helped by Mennonite Central Committee, we thank you. ~ Ohio Mennonite Relief Sale Committee
- ◆ **From Mennonite Mission Network** (for 2019 contributions): Contributions for Missions, Peace & Justice Support Network and MEDA received totaling \$3,693.33. Thank you! You are making a difference in the world! ~ Karla Minter