



## Out and About

Nov. 19 — Columbiana/  
Northwest Pa. Cluster  
Meeting, Midway  
Mennonite, Columbiana

Nov. 22 — First  
Mennonite (Canton)

Nov. 23 — Ministry  
Development Team  
Meeting

Nov. 29 — Pike  
Mennonite in Elida

Dec. 1 — Credentialing  
Ministry Team Meeting

Dec. 2-5 — National  
Conference Minister  
Gathering



Travels and News  
from Transitional Conference Leader George O'Reilly  
Nov. 19, 2015  
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### Excuse Me

My wife and I sometimes reply to one another when some oversight or discourtesy on our part is expressed with "Sorry!" At times the phrase comes back, "You don't sound sorry to me!" Apparently at times our tone seems to mean more than our words and to negate their natural meaning.

I was pondering the word excuse and noticed the shift in meaning from the verb to the noun, the subtle change in pronunciation but the significant change thought.

"Excuse me!" we may say after bumping soundly into someone who has paused in the hall. And likely we do mean that we beg for them to excuse our behavior. But we also may have the propensity to make sly adjustments in our speech when we wish to give ourselves an excuse — a sufficient justification for overlooking some slight we have done to others, or some failure to do as we said we would.

For Jesus, the really religious were particularly good at such things. We are all aware of his instructions to "let your yes be yes, and your no be no." And he harshly critiqued the most scrupulous of the religious for dodging the clear obligation of faithfulness by declaring something else "Corban" — "more holy."

We might say that when faced with the clear teaching of the Word they searched for something that would "excuse" them — something so much more important or Holy that they would be released from following the prior obligation. (See Mark 7:1 ff.)

Rarely would do such a thing consciously, I think, but how often does our behavior reveal this common human tendency? We know the command to "Love your brother as yourself" but we find our brother's behavior so poor that we excuse ourselves from his fellowship. Or we know that the tongue is "diabolos" (James 3) — diabolical or demonic — but speak about someone, damaging their reputation because she is headed down the path and we must warn others to keep safe.

Corban. Excuse me. (Grant me an excuse.) My concerns are weighty, so my obligations must take second place.

The wise disciple of Jesus knows that no such excuse was seized by our Savior. The true man fully enlivened by the Holy Spirit from the Father excused no obedience because of the disbelief of another, took no way out for the defection of a friend or the rage of an enemy.

Never once do we hear Jesus say "Excuse me!" He only said, "Forgive!"

