



## Out & About

Feb. 4 — Cluster Meeting at Zion Mennonite, Archbold

Feb. 9 — ACA Planning Meeting

Feb. 11 — Cluster Meeting at Berlin Mennonite

Feb. 16 — Cluster Meeting at Leetonia Mennonite

Feb. 18 — Ohio Conference Prayer Time

Feb. 18 — Cluster Meeting at Oak Grove Mennonite, West Liberty

Feb. 19-20 — Pastor-Elder Retreat at Camp Buckeye

Feb. 22 — Cluster Meeting at Lee Heights Community Church, Cleveland

Feb. 25 — Cluster Meeting at Pike Mennonite, Elida

Feb. 28 — Preach at West Clinton Mennonite, Wauseon

Feb. 29 — Leadership Team Meeting



Travels and News  
from Transitional Conference Leader George O'Reilly  
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### *Embracing the Hope we really don't want*

I have come to value more and more Paul's emphasis on Hope in the midst of personal and corporate anguish. There are simply times when despite the effectiveness of Christ's work for His body that we simply will not receive what we know is rightfully ours in this life.

Galatians 5 is an intense argument for embracing a Hope we actually do not want — the Hope based in our confident knowledge that what we desire most deeply will only come at the fullness of time. Having argued strongly with the Galatians against any false hope in attaining the righteousness they want in corporate or personal living by "adding just one law" to the Good News of Jesus, Paul states, "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope" (Galatians 5:5 — NIV). Paul is rebuking the notion that any contrivance of human effort in "law keeping" (your law, my law) will succeed in bringing righteousness to completion in God's people in this time.

It matters not whether your preferred notion of righteousness is the "personal purity of the Judaizer" or the "saving justice" of humanist endeavor. Adding human effort to Christ's work does not finally bring wholeness, but only a growing dependence on efforts of merely human capacity which lead to further "works of the flesh" of contentiousness or self-indulgence.

Further, the Freedom won for us by Christ is also Hope-based in this age. We cannot release ourselves to this freedom wholly except as we live in the Holy Spirit. For left only to our impulses we lapse into self-indulgence. It can be the self-indulgence of judging others or of using others. All "works of the flesh" are basically human effort undermined by human weakness. "Legalness" and "lawlessness" are two sides of the same coin — "living in the flesh." Believers dare not take up human approaches alone to their personal pursuit of righteousness or saving justice or freedom in Christ.

This can create considerable anguish for us because we know in our very souls these things are rightly ours. Christ has won for us personal and corporate righteousness and justice. Christ has delivered us into personal and corporate freedom. But Paul says to us not to imagine we can bring in this age these things to completeness on our own. Turning from human strategies and efforts, we must strive to "walk around in," "run the race in," "live day by day in" in the Spirit. And even here our excursions into the Spirit's power can in some sense only whet our appetites. For the work of Christ is finished, but it is not yet completed. And that is true in us as well.

So Paul says that we should lay hold of the Hope we really don't want — the eager expectation of the time of completion and wholeness — for ourselves, our people, our world.

We have often attempted to make this hope ours, now, by our own efforts — by starting the next outreach, by reading the new devotional, by taking up a new discipline. These may be fine indeed, but we bump up against again and again the incompleteness of this time, and especially of our community and ourselves.

Paul would admonish us to embrace the Hope we really don't want. Live with eager expectation even in the midst of the anguish of this life. Love your neighbor even though his spiritual practice is unpredictable, love yourself even though you know the flesh about as well as the Spirit — maybe better. Live in Hope! Not in the hope that you will finally "get it right," that we will "finally make it right," but in the Hope that "Christ will finally put it right." Live in the Hope we really most often don't want. And wait there eagerly! May the Spirit empower us to truly wait in Joy!

