

WEST SALEM MISSION

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DECEMBER 2020



Dear Friends,

After a tumultuous 2020, we are probably all glad that this world is not our home.

The phrase “*enjoy life, because we get to live only once*” is not our motto! We have an anchor that keeps our soul steadfast and sure while the billows roll!

As the world wakes up to desperation and discouragement, God’s children wake up to the assurance of new mercies and another eventful day in the school of Christ.

I love being a Christian! Even though it has been hard at times, the view from the mountain of faith gets more breathtaking each day. We can see the promised land from afar!

It won’t be long and we’ll be reunited with our loved ones, glowing in our immortal bodies, and eating the fruits of the Tree of Life. We will soon be where the saints are rewarded for their faithfulness. We can’t turn back now!

When West Salem Mission began in 2015, the only future we could see was through the lens of faith. Our critics were plenty, and the evidence for our success found only in the promises of God (*and that was sufficient*). God has blessed and we have grown steadily. So far this year, we have had seven baptisms. More have committed to baptism, as soon as their Bible studies are completed.

A special thank you to those of you that have supported our ministry during this past year! To express my gratitude with words only seems insufficient. We have gotten a lot done in a few years in the area of becoming established. “*Thank you*” so very much!

We are looking ahead and thinking about long term goals. Two longterm options we are considering are education and possible entrepreneurship. We’ll keep you all in the loop as we go forward.

We will be working hard to get your tax-exempt receipts to you in January 2021. If you have any specific date by which you need yours, please don’t hesitate to let us know.

I grew up behind horses. For me, to sit down to read, write, and do desk work has been more rewarding, yet harder, than just about anything else that I have ever done. I love to write, but sometimes I wish I could do it while feeding the sheep, or running a chain saw (*thank goodness for audio books*).

I have had to learn a lot about discipline and organization in order to be efficient at what I do. *This Amish boy needed a lot of grooming!*

I’m blessed to be surrounded by a support group like you all, and a local board that coaches me in this process.

In this edition, you will find the encouraging testimony of Martha Raber. Her journey was a hard one, but she came through. We would love to fill our church with honest, low maintenance, “salt of the earth” kind of people like her!

In closing, I wish you all a blessed time as we remember the birth of Christ this holiday season. May you each have a healthy and prosperous 2021!

In His Service,

Andy Weaver

President, *West Salem Mission*

West Salem Mission's 2020 Camp Meeting was widely attended, with individuals and families coming from many different states.

Thank you for helping make this a success! We were blessed by our speakers Steve Wohlberg and Chad Kreuzer.

Next year's camp Meeting is scheduled for the last weekend in August (*August 26-29, 2021*). John Bradshaw is scheduled to be our keynote speaker. ***You are all invited!***



**For more information & pictures,
log onto our website at
www.westsalemmission.org**

GARAGE/ STORAGE BARN

The new garage/
storage barn
combination is
nearly finished on
the outside.

We will be able
to use this much-
needed building for
an outside dining
area during events
such as camp
meeting.



West Salem Mission

is a nonprofit 501(C)3 organization.

If you have a specific burden on your heart,
please feel free to earmark your financial
contributions.

Education • Evangelism • Camp Meeting • The Needy

Contributions marked as tithe will be forwarded to
either our, or your, local conference.

OUR CURRENT PROJECT

We are planning to re-model this 27x40 foot block
building as funds are available. We plan to put trusses
on top, and
cut holes in
the sides for
windows.

We will re-model
it to make a
nice Amish-type
schoolhouse,
with the goal to
open the school
for the
2021-2022
school year.

**Thank you for
supporting this
project!**



Martha Troyer/Raber's Testimony



I was born and raised on an Old Order Amish dairy farm just outside of Bunker Hill, Ohio. I was the youngest child in a family of 7-1 boy and 6 girls. I was sheltered by my dear parents and community from many of the evils in this world, yet quite acquainted with many of the troubles and temptations familiar to us all.

I attended a one-room typical Amish private school for eight years where I learned to speak, read and write the English language, as well as simple math and German.

Unlike some of the more conservative Amish churches, our schools played sports such as baseball, softball and volleyball.

Once we were old enough, we got jobs at some local business. Living in the heart of Ohio's largest Amish community—known for their good work ethics and entrepreneurship—made finding a job close by not all that difficult. My first job outside the home was at HW Chair; an Amish business. I was 16 years old.

When I was 18 years old I took baptismal classes and was baptized into the Old Order Amish church. I felt good about my decision and had every intention to walk

in the footsteps of my parents for the rest of my life.

My green thumb eventually led me to having my own greenhouses. Between our heavily populated Amish community, and tourists, I did pretty well with it. During the winter months I went to Sarasota Florida and worked as a waitress. Eventually my sister and I bought a house there, and we didn't apologize when it was time to go each year! I loved the sunshine state when central Ohio was frozen over in January!

To an outsider, this may sound like the perfect community to grow up in, and in so many ways it was, yet at times it felt like something was missing. We were religious, but everything was so formal. There were times that I felt really burdened about the spirituality of myself and my family. We lived by many good moral and even Christian principles. Yet at times, I wondered whether we were really ready to meet God?

With great fear I told God one day that He has my permission to do with me whatever He wants in the process of bringing us, as a family, closer to God. I wished I had assurance of salvation, some assurance that there was hope for me too! I thought it was true that driving a car or flying in an airplane is damning, but I questioned, how did we arrive at that conclusion? I didn't mind my plain dress and wasn't looking to embrace the world or buy an airplane, I was just looking for consistency, and wanted to experience the best Christianity has to offer.

It seemed like too many in our community left the Amish faith and got sucked into the world. Amongst those was my friend, Vernon. He eventually settled down a bit and started attending a local Mennonite church.

A little while after their parents died, his brother Abe went off the deep end too! Soon the local grapevine was buzzing... Abe is attending a Seventh Day Adventist Church and Vernon is following suit. I believed the things that were being said about their new church, and it wasn't good. Still I considered them as my friends.

One day I felt inspired to confront them about some of the beliefs that they reportedly held. I took my time and got a text message together for them (we were allowed to have flip phones). Their responses were reasonable and even a bit thought-provoking, and it seemed to me like they were still normal people.

One evening, Vernon stopped by my house and we chatted for hours. They were clearly happy and settled

where they were at, and I was not happy where I was at. Yet, I was not interested in what they were following. Looking back I think traditions and political correctness had a bit too much influence in my judgment of truth. By the end of that long and eventful evening I knew what Vernon really wanted.. he knew I was unhappy, and he was sure he found something that would make me happy too if I embraced it. In addition, he was looking for icing to put on his own cake! Though he said that he will put the Fourth Commandment ahead of our relationship. The Fourth Commandment? What is that, I wondered? I went to Florida and we stayed in touch.

I got into my bible a little later and found the Fourth Commandment.. the SABBATH! Oh boy! But I was soon assured by my relatives and friends that the Sabbath is irrelevant.

I'm still a little confused why some people say keeping the Sabbath is bondage and legalism, but Sunday keeping is not? Especially since everyone that contributed to the writings of the Bible, including Jesus and all the prophets and apostles kept the Sabbath... and we will keep it in eternity; Isaiah 66:23. But it's irrelevant now? I doubt that!

I learned more that winter about the Bible than I had learned in my entire prior life! Vernon kept throwing out more Bible truths, and I always researched his claims. He earned my trust pretty fast. I was getting answers!

March rolled around and it's time to head back to our Ohio home. I was a bit nervous! It seemed like most of my siblings were convinced that I had lost my ability to think intelligently. The next few weeks were incredibly difficult for both Vernon and myself. We were not always treated very kindly.

Some of the phone calls were brutal and even felt unchristian. Looking back, I think my family and friends felt challenged and humiliated by some of my recent religious decisions. Perhaps the family felt betrayed. Emotions were on display for all of us; My Dad, (the Bishop) never said a word to me about my newfound beliefs. He was getting old and had health challenges and was not looking for any more controversy.

Vernon took me along to church at the West Salem Mission one Saturday. I felt welcome, but oh so much information in one day! I couldn't grasp it all. Not

to mention the mixture of cultures. There are many different flavors of Amish these days, and a certain amount of prejudice between them is not uncommon. I had to learn to look at people the way Jesus looks at them. My attendance became more regular as time went on.

Eventually I sold my greenhouse since a lot of my sales were on Saturday and I assumed I'll be living in Vernon's house before another growing season comes around.

It wasn't long until Vernon and I were engaged for a Thanksgiving 2019 wedding. Since I was never baptized by immersion I was re-baptized in July 2019, along with a few others, and never looked back.

Our wedding day came... November 28, 2019. My siblings attended my wedding; for which I was very grateful, my parents did not attend.

Soon after my wedding my Dad's health turned to the worst quite suddenly and he passed away peacefully. I feel honored for having been one of his daughters.

Not long after the death of my father, I was officially excommunicated by the local Amish church. However, my family doesn't treat me that much differently, and I'm grateful for that.

My life has changed so much in two short years; we have learned to swim against the current and still be happy.

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***Blessed are they that do His Commandments that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city (Revelation 22:14). I'm blessed!***  
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I do not fault my family for having struggled with this whole situation. It was indeed a wild ride! Sometimes God leads us in a direction that is difficult for others to understand at the time. But like the saying goes, sometimes the truth seems stranger than fiction.

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*Vernon And Martha Raber live in Strasburg Ohio. Vernon is a truck driver, and Martha is a home-maker and self-employed seamstress.*

*Vernon serves as head Deacon and Martha teaches children's Sabbath School at the West Salem Anabaptist SDA Church.*