



HOUSTON VISITING CHRISTIAN SCIENCE NURSE SERVICE, INC.

Our mission is to heal through practical, operative Christian Science.

May 2024

Self-forgetfulness, purity, and affection

“Erected 1962” was etched into the concrete cornerstone of the modest brick structure that was our Christian Science branch church. I remember when it was under construction. Gram drove my mother and me by it to point out its progress. As a Christian Science practitioner and church board member, Gram was instrumental in prayerfully supporting this expanding idea of “Church” in our small town.

This was the place where I attended Sunday School and became comfortably acquainted with all the grownups who were Gram’s church friends. Among my favorites were Clarence and Gladys Brehm. They were simple, down-to-earth Pennsylvania farmers.

During the gratitude-sharing portion of the first Thanksgiving service held in our new church, eight-year-old me gave my very first testimony. I popped to my feet and blurted out, “I’m grateful to God and all His creation.” Then I sat down.

Oddly enough, I felt both terrified and elated at what I had done. Then embarrassment struck—and stayed. I dashed to the car as soon as church let out and sat in the back seat, hiding. Only Mr. Brehm seemed to notice. He came to the car window (which I respectfully cranked partway down), looked me in the eye, and said in a quiet, kindly voice, “Good for you.” Then, with a grave little nod, he walked away.



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Through all my growing-up years, I attended Wednesday evening meetings with Gram. Of course, testimony

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time was my favorite part. I especially looked forward to hearing from Admiral Perkins, whose deep, booming voice made the windows rattle.

Near the end of one service, Mr. Brehm stood up. When he spoke, the windows stayed still. In a gentle voice, at a pace unhurried and deliberate, with a tone strong and determined, Mr. Brehm told how he and his wife had turned to God in prayer when a drought jeopardized their crops. Some of their neighbors, he said, had already suffered financial losses.

He explained that he and his wife simply gave gratitude to God. They reasoned that divine Mind had provided the wisdom to know which crops to plant—and when. Therefore, they could completely trust that this same intelligent Mind was nurturing and maintaining each of those crops.

Assured that God already knew their need, Clarence and Gladys—as Gram called them—turned away all worried, fearful thoughts and allowed in only these deeply grateful thoughts. The need was instantly met. It rained that day—just enough to save their crops. (Come to think of it, what was left of the neighbors' crops must've been spared, too!)

On another Wednesday evening Mrs. Brehm arose from her seat. Having never heard her testify, I paid close attention, which is why I still remember what she said and even how she looked.

She gazed slightly upward so as to focus on what she was about to say and avoid eye contact with the congregation. Her words came out slowly, as if she were waiting for God to tell her what to say. With great depth of feeling, she related how one day, when she was standing by a gate helping her husband herd calves into the barn, a young bull who was sprouting small protruding horns abruptly swung his head around just at the moment she knelt down to retrieve a dropped glove. When she glanced up, one of the horns gouged her in the eye.



Photo by iStock

In a soft, tender tone, Mrs. Brehm said she instantly saw the baby bull as God's harmless, blameless spiritual idea and saw herself as inseparable from God's love and thus uninjured.

I noticed Gram, seated next to me, was looking down at the pew rack,

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expressionless, when Mrs. Brehm recounted how she had called a practitioner to pray for her. I knew what she would say next, for Gram was my practitioner, too, whenever I was in need of a healing. It was thus no surprise to hear from a fellow patient that all pain and all trace of the incident had quickly vanished!

Later, I learned from several of my Sunday School teachers, including Admiral Perkins, that Gram's spiritual treatments—her realization of God's goodness and allness—had likewise healed them of various ailments and injuries over the years.

One summer Sunday afternoon the Brehms invited us to their house for homemade ice cream. They were their usual attentive and unpretentious selves, making me feel so at ease around them.

While Mrs. Brehm set the table and the adults were talking, I studied two framed photographs of solemn farm folk dressed in their Sunday best. Her husband called across the room to tell me who was who in the photos. One was of his parents and his six siblings; the other was of Gladys' family. All the relatives looked as kind-hearted and modest as I knew the Brehms to be.

As I was lapping up the last spoonful of that delicious ice cream, Mr. Brehm turned to Gram and said, "I'd love Christian Science even if it didn't heal." His words, and the sweet sentiment behind them, will never leave me. They remind me of Mrs. Eddy's simple statement: "Self-forgetfulness, purity, and affection are constant prayers" (*Science and Health* 15:26–27).

The little church of my childhood has long since been torn down. There may be only a few folks around today who remember it. Yet its vibrancy and efficacy were never contained in a brick-and-mortar building, any more than God's being—or ours—is physical, finite. That beloved church, just like God's love for us and our love for God and Church, is forever.

Likewise, the simple goodness of the Brehms endures. The effect their selfless lives had—and still have—on others is reminiscent of one of my favorite Bible stories:

There was a little city, and few men within it; and there came a great king against it, and besieged it, and built great bulwarks against it: Now there was found in it a poor wise man, and he by his wisdom delivered the city; yet no man remembered that same poor man. Then said I, Wisdom is better than strength: nevertheless the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are not heard. The words of wise men are heard in quiet more than the cry of him that ruleth among fools. Wisdom is better than weapons of war: but one sinner destroyeth much good. (Ecclesiastes 9:14–18).

Humbly turning to God for healing—for direction and protection and salvation—is also the work of Christian Science nurses around the globe. Susie Petersen, our *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse, lovingly attends to calls for practical Christian Science care and in so doing benefits not just the client and their family but the entire community. Yes, like the Brehms and the poor wise man, Susie brings God’s blessings to all who may be feeling besieged . . . by a crop-threatening drought or a bull’s horn or men’s spears.

Lovingly,
The HVCSNS Board of Directors and our
Journal-listed Christian Science nurse, Susie Petersen

Financial Assistance Available

Any Christian Scientist relying upon the services of a Christian Science practitioner and/or a *Journal*-listed Christian Science nurse may obtain financial support by applying to the [National Fund for Christian Science Nursing](#) (NFCSN). You may contact The Principle Foundation, which manages this fund, by emailing info@nfcsn.org or by calling (800) 873-2843.

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“Take my life, and let it be consecrated, Lord, to Thee”
Christian Science Hymn 324