

Joy Mennonite Church

PASTOR'S
CORNER

People ask "how is your church doing?" This is kind of an open-ended question but I think they want to know something like "are there any new people coming? Are you growing?" In general, they are inquiring about the church as an institution.

We find ourselves focusing on the institution. We want respect. We want to be seen as successful. We want the neighborhood to take us serious. When we have a visiting speaker we hope everyone will show up, and some visitors would help. We want to leave a good impression. When we get really honest it doesn't sound too spiritual, does it?

The early church, and also the Mennonite church in its first years, were not known as one of the successful institutions of their time. These churches did not own or control property, often not even a meeting place. They met in someone's toolshed or under a tree. People focused not on being a successful institution but on how to remain faithful in their trials. This changed, and the church became a successful institution, owned and controlled property, built beautiful buildings. We know what happened to spiritual growth during these times of success.

What might an evaluation form by Jesus look like? Richard Rohr, a Catholic priest, says Jesus never envisioned the church as the institution it has become. He believes Jesus envisioned small house fellowships. Jesus spoke of the few that would be on the way, of the two or three gathered. The great symbol of the institution, the temple, would be destroyed, and the hearts of the believers would form the dwelling place of God. Jesus might want to know how many cups of tea you shared with a lonely person, how many guests did you invite to share your table with no thought of sharing at their table, how many persons did you befriend in prison. But then, if we



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are keeping record we have missed it again. Jesus said those who did these things didn't realize it. They acted naturally out of new hearts. Someone said to me not long ago that growth is not that important, meaning the question of faithfulness should be our focus. Maybe we really need to learn how to do a truly spiritual year end evaluation.

Moses Mast



Dear Friends,
Themes of Thanksgiving and Christmas flood us with reminders through the last two months of the year that God has been truly great and gracious, loving and compassionate, expectant and forgiving; that most of us have been blessed with abundance and affluence unequalled anywhere. But even here in America all that is in the midst of unemployment and illness, poverty and homelessness, hate and violence, crime and injustice, all on the rise today. "Down the stretch" in the old year one reads of heroics, or acts of benevolence, but as time passes into the new beginnings of 1 January of a new year, those permanent needs have not been met, and those problems have not been remedied. For many the new year will just be another chapter in their pain, suffering and frustration, and you and I will have shelved our awarenesses, and our concerns will have been put on the back burner for now. Whew - survived another season of really not effectively doing anything. You readers are obviously also survivors, and who might we know that is "hanging in" only by a thread?!!
We have not sufficiently responded to Jesus in our interaction to mankind's dilemma, nor do we respond to editorialists with conscience who try to give it to us straight.



Through December we found out several things: The love and bonding within our fellowship, the commitment of all those in our fellowship, and the talents and abilities that are available within our fellowship. Thanks from all to all.

Much of the above was visible at the workday, preparation and decoration, and hosting of the neighborhood Christmas Tea Party on Sunday, 12 December, at the church. While young people from the neighborhood and our church fellowship played games and partied with cookies and other snacks, the adults combined into quite a choir with "neighbors" conducting and accompanying for a good old-fashioned Christmas carol sing. The rainy weather outside only slightly dampened the spirit of street caroling and fruit plate distribution to shut-ins in the neighborhood.

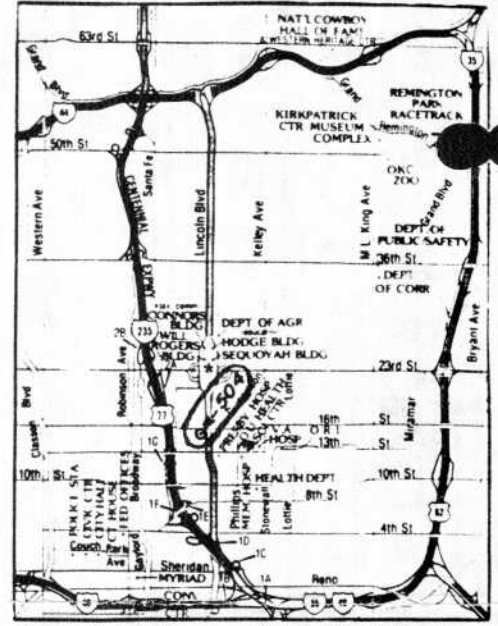
We are attempting to make church activities truly family experiences. Bring your children into our church family.

In the great tradition this is the season for New Year's resolutions. Let no one throw cold water on it or be disparaging about that, but if the season adds undue pressure, just to conform when you are not ready, remember - you must be comfortable with your resolve whatever it may be and be able to completely be self-supportive and believe in it.

DATES TO REMEMBER

Fri., 31 Dec. '93 New Years Eve
 Sat., 1 Jan. '94 New Years Day
 Sat., 15 Jan. '94 Martin Luther King's
 Birthday (observed on Mon., Jan. 17)
 Mon., 14 Feb. '94 Valentine's Day
 Mon., 21 Feb. '94 Presidents' Day

WORSHIP SERVICE
EVERY SUNDAY AT 10 O'CLOCK A.M.



Church Address: 504 NE 16th St.

Today is Christmas Day, and in a very few days we will dismantle most of the audio-visual remnants of the season. Will our spirits be resilient enough to bounce back after our celebration of giving and receiving loot, and retain the spirit of Christmas through all the coming year? After our first hurdle for Martin Luther King Day to show tolerance, charity, understanding and love, we will still have the rest of the year to test and live our faith.

Trust you all had a warm and wonderful Christmas. So, best wishes to you all for 1994, and love more and/or just love better.

Bill Klassen

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