



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

Pastor's Corner

Recently we were at a carry-in dinner for a Pastors for Peace caravan. As we prepared to eat, we gathered around the table and people expressed things they were grateful for. What could seem strange as we prepared to eat, no one mentioned food. It was not that we were not grateful for food but at the moments the greater concerns were other than food. There was a bus packed with things for the poor of Mexico and Central America. It represented the concern and commitment of many people. The theme of gratitude expressed around the table

was the opportunity to link with the loving concern of many people.

This shift of priority from personal fulfillment to the well-being of others stands in contrast to the self-centered focus common in our beloved country. This self-centered focus is spilling over into the church. Prayer requests often focus on the personal comfort of family and friends. The same self-centered focus can be observed in the Thanksgiving service where people name the things they are grateful for. This should not be interpreted to mean we are not concerned about those close to us because many others have it worse. Living in a prosperous country does

not spare us the burdens of life that need our prayers. Just because others are worse off does not mean our concerns do not matter.

What disturbs me more about the narrow-focused prayers are the attitudes about prayer and the purpose of prayer. The narrow-focused prayer seems oblivious to the great pain God must feel for all the suffering going on in the world. Prayer is not meant to inform God or persuade God to act. The purpose of prayer is to connect with God. By connect I mean I begin to feel about things the same way God does. I care about the things God cares about. I feel the same pain and joy. The biblical language is "have the

mind of Christ."

When we connect with God and have the concerns of God we do not pray less for family and friends but we pray differently. We are not less grateful for the personal comforts of life but express this gratitude more fervently when we share God's concern for the pain and suffering present in our world. We will pray more fervently for those close to us if we are aware and concerned about humanity, be they near or far away.

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Editorial... by Damon Tabor

In writing this article for the Joy Mennonite newsletter I must ask myself, "What do members of the church and readers of the newsletter have to learn from me?" I am nineteen years old, the second youngest member of Joy (the youngest being my wife who is only a month after me in age.) So it would seem that there is not a vast amount of knowledge that I can impart on my audience. When I was asked to take my turn with the newsletter I said yes, however

I knew it would be a special challenge for me.

I did not attend church regularly as a child. Somehow, the ideas of what some call "fundamentalism" became impressed on me. I was turned off to Christianity, and as a result, turned off to Christ. I was turned off because of the attitude of absolutes. The idea that Christians are the only ones who know and live the path of righteousness was very discouraging to me. This is the Earth that God made. I would rather consider

everyone a child of God. My attempts at arguing this point fell on closed ears. Like Ray Capps said, "Without hearing me out you've drawn the line, that's dogma just a different kind."

I believe that everything I knew of Christ came from man and was wrong or at least misrepresented. All the ideas that I associated with Christianity do not hold true for me today. I was as familiar with the Bible as most people, meaning that I knew the popular verses and stories. It was not until I read

Jesus' words for myself that I realized that I could be a Christian. I read of a love of not only those who love you, but of those who do not love you and even of those who hate you. My perspective of Jesus changed. Instead of being a part of conventional wisdom, to me he was one who challenged conventional wisdom of his day. The Jesus I know challenges the conventions of our day as well. This was the Jesus that I could believe in.

Concerns...

Recently, after her trip to Kansas, Ethel Posar was in the hospital for more than a week with double pneumonia. We were all quite concerned about her, and join her in praising God that she is now recovering.

Condolences...

We were saddened to hear of the sudden death of Del Shoemaker's 44-year-old daughter from Chouteau, Oklahoma. Despite their own health problems, Del and Martha drove all that way by themselves. Our hearts go out to this family.

News...

Several members and friends of Joy helped to move Kim Dobbins, a friend of the Brueckners, into a new home. She expressed her thanks, and we wish this family well.

The Brueckners have gone to visit their daughter in Indiana for the holidays, and Ralph Ediger has gone to visit his mother and siblings. We pray for safe journeys and good times with family!

The Fall Peace Festival was a

great success here in Oklahoma City on Saturday, November 22nd. Several members helped to staff the Joy table, which was shared with the Hemispheric Reconciliation group and Pax Christi. There were many things, even at this one table, to see and do. There were items from Thousand Villages for sale, a computer program to interact with on conflict resolution, and items on display from Laos, which had been made from bombs and artillery shells. Many signatures were gathered on a letter, generated by Hemispheric Reconciliation, to ask President Clinton to sign the accord to ban land mines. The United States is one of only a few countries which have not signed. This letter will be available at Joy in the future for others to sign. Please contact us if you would like to have one, which you might consider copying and distributing.

Several members attended the Mennonite Relief Sale in Fairview.

A simple, fruit and nut supper was held at Joy on

Sunday, November 23rd, in the evening. Everyone's favorite song requests were sung with great gusto!

Holidays...

With the holidays approaching, there will be a flurry of activity here at Joy. Decorating the church will happen on Sunday, December 7th, after regular services. This is always a fun time.

There will also be carolling at Joy (and probably eating!) sometime this season, although the dates are not yet confirmed. The more voices the better, so if you would like to do some good, old-fashioned, neighborhood Christmas carolling, contact us to find out when!

We wish to extend to everyone a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year! This is the time of year when we make the only contact we have with some people all year long. May all of our contacts be meaningful and heartfelt, as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, and contemplate the mystery of the season.

