



Joy Mennonite Church Newsletter

PASTOR'S CORNER

The political conventions of our major parties are over for the year 2000. Both parties tried to convince the American people that the future of America is best placed under their party's control. It seems to me the crucial issue is not which party wins the election, but that we have in place a good system of checks and balances for whichever party wins. My bias leaves me greatly concerned that if we invest too much power in the Republican Party without the necessary checks and balances to restrain those we give power with our votes, then the economic interest of the wealthy will govern our land rather than the needs of all America's citizens. However, having a bias may be the problem, as if we elected the other party we have no such problem. Too many American people believe electing the right person and party will guarantee the future. Both of our parties are influenced by

money. Both parties are committed to win at whatever cost, monetary costs or moral choices. The great concern for the people of America in the elections of the year 2000 is that people of wealth are going to influence the elections and then also the way we will be governed. Our candidates for president claim to be persons of faith in God. Maybe we should not judge them personally but understand that the system in which they operate is corrupted with power if it is not restrained. It is no wonder then that biblical teaching instructs religious leaders not to be like the political leaders of our land. This teaching was greatly emphasized by Jesus, but this understanding reaches far back into Israel's history. When Israel was a young nation they were ruled by religious judges. The difference between a judge and a king; the judge did not have a military to enforce his decisions. When Israel clamored for a king the great prophet and judge, Samuel, warned them, a King with the power of his army will take the best of the economic

resources for himself and the king will force the best of our labor force into his services.

It is generally believed a country cannot govern without the power to enforce its laws and the power to protect its people. There is probably an element of truth in this concept, but not the whole truth. I do not know exactly where the truth lies. It may help us to understand that during the reformation period the church also believed that its survival depended on the power of the state to enforce its decisions. Even the great reformer, Martin Luther, could not conceive how the church could survive without the power of the state to enforce the rules of the church. The great reformers believed the use of capital punishment by the state was a way to deal with the heretics the church identified. Many of these reformers did not believe the people would voluntarily support the church with their time and money, without the power of the state to tax them. We now know that is not true. We now know that the times and places when

people were powerless to protect themselves or their property, were the times and places where the teachings of Jesus really took root and the church grew into the faithful body of our lord. We also have modern examples like the church in Ethiopia. We know from these examples that leaders can lead without power to enforce, but only appeal to right and truth and people will follow and be built in the finest institutions of any country. The church should not invest too much in political power but take serious its responsibility to be salt and light, which I interpret to be like checks and balances. Some of those in our nation who offered good checks and balances had their credibility marred by immoral conduct. Our Lord called us, and the apostles echoed his words, that we should live lives above reproach so that our Father in heaven will be glorified. We hope to see some of you at the Oklahoma convention in Inola. We wish for all of you the peace of God and joyful happy living.

Moses Mart

Editorial
By
Henriette Schott

When I left Oklahoma in June 1999, I met my mom and a friend of mine in Chicago in

order to travel around with them. The first thing I said to her at the airport was: "Hi, mom, I'm different", and I couldn't even talk to her in German for the first couple of days. It took me some time to

realize that my year as an exchange had been over (by now I can't believe that another year has passed already!). I had gotten used to life in Oklahoma and I felt like I never wanted to leave. Of course, I was looking forward to

seeing my "old" friends again and for some reason I thought things would still be the same as if I had never left - but they were not. When I returned to Bonn it was hard to see how friends had changed or had found new

friends they were now close to. Often, I felt like a stranger. Studying for school wouldn't bring me the grades I used to get; in fact, they are much worse now, because twelfth and thirteenth grades are much harder than the others, and in most subjects they were based on the stuff that had been taught in eleventh grade, the one I had missed. So it was just as hard to readjust to life back in Germany as it had been at first in Oklahoma.

Well, at least one of my hobbies is still the same: Badminton. I used to play on a team and they were glad to have me back since there were lots of tournaments going on. We did pretty good this season.

I didn't really go back to wheel gymnastics because I couldn't catch up with the others. Our coach wanted us to participate in competitions but I didn't have enough time to practice really hard. So I felt uncomfortable just coming there for fun and not paying full attention to it. Being a referee would be the best way to keep in touch with the team and not feel

bad about missing practice, and so I took a course and passed several tests. On Christmas eve we had a performance, "The Jungle Book". They decided I should be Balu (do I really look like a bear?), and we had fun even though it was kind of hard to spin in my gymnastic wheel in a big heavy costume! I also spent a lot of time working at a department store in order to get enough money for my driver's license which is pretty expensive and difficult

to get in Germany - and for the trip back to Oklahoma this summer. I finally got my license, one week before I was supposed to leave for Oklahoma.

Only two months after I got back to Germany I got the chance to go to Israel, as a participant of an exchange program our school has with one in Tel Aviv. We stayed with host families for some days but traveled around the country most of the time. It was interesting for we had a really nice guide who told us a lot about different places and events. Swimming in the Dead Sea was the funniest part because it was such a strange feeling floating in

the water almost like an airbed.

For New Year's Eve I went to Berlin and stayed with some friends. There were many people from all over the world and so it was really crowded downtown. But we had fun anyway, dancing on the streets and wishing everybody we passed a happy New Year.

In spring I took a test called APIGL that would allow me to go to college in the US as my English was good enough to get along there. I still don't know whether I passed it or not...

Maybe it is good that we have 13 grades in Germany since I still don't know what I want to do after school. But one thing is for sure - I will come back to Oklahoma again!

News

Saturday August, 12th a group from the Mennonite Brethren church of Edmond and a few from Joy Mennonite worked to remove a large elm tree that had split in half and fell on the owners house and

half on her neighbors house. These people say "thanks."

September 24 at 6 PM there will be a potluck at Joy Mennonite and a program to hear the stories of bombing victims families and survivors who went to Kenya to hear the stories of victims families in Nairobi.

The Oklahoma Convention will take place on September 16 and 17.

Welcome home to the Klassens who were in Colorado and to the Brueckners who spent the summer in Indiana.

Welcome to Kai Jacobsen, an exchange student from Norway who is staying with the Bliss family.

Welcome to Nathan Corbett, the Brueckner's grandson who will be attending Oklahoma University.

Sunday noon on September 3rd a potluck will be held at Joy Mennonite to celebrate the return and arrival of these people.

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