

This month we have a guest article from Melissa Warkentine, written for her 9th grade English class. Melissa is a very bright girl with many questions about her search for truth in her life. This article may raise some questions in your own life.

**The Death Penalty,  
What Does It  
Solve?  
by Melissa  
Warkentine**

People say that I don't understand. What if it was my family member that was killed for no other reason than who he is or what title he was given? Why not kill his murderer? Get your revenge! They killed my loved one, so I should want nothing

more than to have his murderer dead. That is how many people feel about the death penalty around this area. Kill! Kill! Kill! Young students make hostile comments about Timothy McVeigh, "Timothy McVeigh! I think he needs to rot in hell, drop one ton blocks of cement on his head!" And then they start laughing about the whole thing. Like it is one big joke. They think that having him dead is the solution to so many different things. "It is a deterrent" the adults say. According to The American Civil Liberties Union it isn't. In the late sixties, when there were an average of 6,000 murders a year, the United States Supreme Court struck down the death penalty as unconstitutional in the way it was administered. Six years later, when it was re-instituted in the early seventies the number of average annual murders had jumped to over twice as many as before, nearly 16,000 victims per year.

Let's look at this from the view of a Pacifist Christian and the belief that killing is wrong. The Bible talks about this in many different chapters, Exodus 21:13 states, "Thy shall not murder." What is so unclear about that? It is a law above all other laws. So, if it is illegal to kill one person, what makes it acceptable to kill that person because they first murdered. Christians say that they wish to use Jesus as an example, they want to follow his teachings. Jesus never wanted someone put to death. In fact he challenged the idea many times through out his life. In Matthew 5:21 Jesus teaches listeners about anger, "You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, 'Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.' But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment." This is God's job and only He, as the ultimate judge can sentence the ultimate punishment, death. Jesus died for everyone's sins, is that not enough? Must we condemn someone else to death because they killed your brother first? If this is so, then why did God give up his son for us? And more, why did Jesus give up his life if we are going to ignore all of his teachings just to sentence another to death because of a wrong doing? Six years ago a very angry man took the peace of everyone's heart and much hate has accumulated for

this "American Terrorist". Six years ago a man by the name a Timothy McVeigh built a seven ton bomb and planted it in front of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building. It was very destructive and killed 168 people, some of which were small children, as well as wounded 500 others. At that time I still lived in Kansas, but the hate for this man was everywhere. I admit my feelings for this man were very hostile. But I never wished him dead. Yes, I do agree what he did was wrong, cruel, and uncalled for, but sadly people like this are all over the world. Killing them does not solve anything. Do we kill them because it makes us feel more safe? Does it make us feel like we are making the world that much better because this one mass murderer is now dead? One argument, based in morality, commonly used against the death penalty, is that it is an affront to the sanctity of human life. This is thoughtlessly worded, then slapped on a bumper sticker: "We kill people to show people that killing is wrong". Semantically, however this is correctly put as: "We execute people to show that murder is wrong". What a strong statement that is. People make that statement all the time. But what I find to be so shocking is that those who support it, have no clue how many executions are taking place every month. In January, in the state of Oklahoma alone, there were eight executions. Although we, the people, are killing murderers, we are unaware of how often it is really happening. McVeigh has recently written a book, in which he has stated many things to make people mad. He does this for attention. In fact, he has stated in his book that he is angry that all of the attention is going to the people who are dead and not so much to him. Negative attention is better than none at all. How many years are we going to let this go on? Even after he is dead the hate will still be there.

Every year we take time out of our busy schedule to have a memorial service to remember the victims of the bombing. But what goes through our minds during that 168 seconds that go by? Many of us at school did not personally know any of the victims but we have been showered with the hate for this man. So the whole 168 seconds we sit and think about it, we do not remember the people who are dead. We think of McVeigh and how sick he is, how much we want him to die. We are no longer remembering them, we remember what happened. We are giving the attention to McVeigh that he wants.

Now they are talking about broadcasting his death on television. That is giving him exactly what he wants, more publicity. Even then, the people who watch, it will not get vengeance, because all they will see is a mass murder going to sleep and a doctor will then pronounce him dead. What a punishment! They say death is the ultimate punishment. I do not agree with that. Last summer I had the experience of going through the prison in Gushing. That is an experience that I will never forget. Prison is hell for the inmates. They can't do

anything, they are always watching their backs. Inmates are robbed of things as simple as a new pair of shoes. They have to worry about whether they will wake up in the morning or not. For them, death isn't a punishment. Many of these prisoners are sentenced to life, so death is an escape for them. They can't handle the torture they receive, so they commit suicide. What does the public care about this matter? They feel it is good~ it is all for the better because now they have one less psycho to worry about. If we are to advocate the death penalty, we have to prove three things. That it is morally correct, that there is a valid moral reason for it, and that is practically the best option. We should not endorse practices that are not moral. If there is no true reason to do something then simply don't do it. I strongly believe that the death penalty is not a deterrent to murders in the United States of America or anywhere else, for that matter. I believe that killing a murderer is being no better than he was when he first murdered a victim.

### May Revisited

If April showers bring May flowers, what do May showers bring? In a lot of Oklahoma homes, no electricity. This past week showed us weather at its worst and best. The sunshine after the storm is always welcome and the rainbows were spectacular. The return of our lights Weds. was also welcome.

Our May business meeting was well attended and several items were settled to satisfaction. Soon, Joy Mennonite will be on the Internet. More information will be forthcoming on our venture.

Bill & Thea Klassen have returned from their travels. From the looks on their faces, they had the time of their lives. Peter & Kay Brueckner are back also, but are going to be leaving again shortly to visit their grandchildren in Indiana.

Cameron Bliss and Chris Jennings, Jr. celebrated their graduation from Chandler High last Friday. It doesn't seem quite possible that these boys are now young men, but they are.

Moses & Sadie Mast were in Enid last month for a meeting for delegates to Nashville 2001, the Mennonite Church USA assembly in July.

### COMING EVENTS

- The annual Joy Mennonite campout is June 2nd this year. Hopefully, the weather will cooperate and not be so hot as in years past. We have spaces reserved at Redrock Canyon state Park and the young people will be having a special activity for the older set Sat. evening. Guest speakers this year will be Bob & Nancy Koehn.
- June 9th will be a day of departure for the Bliss family. Hayley Bliss Anderson will be leaving for Germany to join her husband, Travis. We will all miss her and wish them both the best in their marriage. Scott Bliss will be leaving that day also to travel on a mission trip to Mexico. Scott has a calling to mission work and we will keep him in our thoughts and prayers. His trip is paid for, but money for project supplies is always welcome. Contact Moses or Sadie for details.
- June 9th is also the Ice Cream Festival in downtown Chandler. Charlotte Warkentine at Creative Crossings will have a Ten Thousand Villages booth set up for the festival and would enjoy seeing everyone that could attend. Any one who would like to volunteer to help her out that day, can contact her at (405)258-6767.
- You may have noticed the absence of the map in this issue. After much discussion, it was decided to delete the map. We hope this will not inconvenience anyone. Directions to the church will be available on-line and from the Masts.

### JOY MENNONITE CHURCH

504 NE 16TH OKC OK 73104

Sunday Services 10:00am Sunday School 11:30 am

All are welcome, please join us as you are able

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