



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER FEBRUARY 2004

Pastors Corner

We learned to know James Branum at the spiritual walk for peace events. James comes to convictions for peace, not from his religious tradition but from his personal conviction. James has been attending Joy Mennonite for the last few months. James has been called upon to preach at JMC several times.

Moses Mast

Moses asked me to write a guest column this month so I thought I would share a little about how I came to Joy Mennonite church.

My first encounter with anyone from Joy Mennonite was on the corner of NW 23rd and Classen at one of the peace vigils during the early spring of 2003, where I met Sadie. This was one of the first peace vigils I had attended in Oklahoma and I really didn't know anybody there, but Sadie's friendliness made me feel welcome. As we talked that afternoon I remember that she told me that God does care about how people are treated on earth and that as important as salvation is, it is not the only thing God is concerned about. That idea stuck in my mind through the rest of the spring, especially after the war in Iraq began in earnest.

Through out the rest of the year I continued to run into Moses and Sadie at peace events and was always blessed by visiting with them and I later came to visit Joy Mennonite on a couple of occasions.

At about this same time I began to feel like it was time for me to find a new church home. I loved my old church family and always will but I also saw that there was something missing from that church's mission: a strong belief that the church is meant to be light in the darkness, a body that was not afraid to swim against the tide of the dominant culture when seeking to follow the teachings of Christ. Without this conviction, it was hard to see what the point of being a church was even about.

So as I began to attend Joy Mennonite I discovered that this was a loving group of people with strong convictions but also with differing perspectives and opinions. In fact I came to see that this little community was composed of all kinds of people with all kinds of differences but everyone seemed to be very tolerant of those differences. I definitely felt right at home in this environment.

I also started to do a good bit of reading on Anabaptist beliefs and history, which convinced me that this stream of Christian thought, was much closer to my own beliefs than any other church I had previously considered. I especially was drawn to the historic Anabaptist emphasis on the separation of

church and state. I very much love my country (as I think we all do) but I also believe that when my patriotic loyalties conflict with the teachings of Christ, I must obey Christ. I was glad to find a church that was unafraid to speak of the teachings of the Prince of Peace in a time of war.

As I've continued to worship here with this community I've continued to learn more and more about what it means to seek the Lord and to seek to do his work here on earth. I've also been learning that God doesn't force anyone to do the right thing and neither should we, but instead our job is to sow the seeds of truth. This rejection of power as a means to achieve an end is something that I had never considered before. (I still have a long ways to go in living out this conviction in my daily life though.)

In the end though the most important thing I've found at Joy Mennonite is a true spiritual family. Every Sunday I feel loved by those around me and I have the chance to show love to others. This has been a tremendous blessing to me and I hope that I can return it to each of you.

James Branum

Resolutions by Judy Perkins

Here we are again, at the beginning of a new year! Actually, one twelfth of the way through it. Once again I was faced with New Year's resolutions. Should I make some New Year's resolutions or should I just forget it? Most of the time the resolutions I make are forgotten within a few weeks or maybe even a few days!

The word resolution comes from 'resolve' and means to make up one's mind or decide firmly. There are the common resolutions, such as I want to lose weight, find a different job, eat healthier, get organized, exercise more, stop procrastinating the list can go on and on. Most people make New Year's resolutions because there are things in their life that they want to change.

The New Year came and I was still indecisive about any New Year's resolutions. Then one evening during my alone time I was reading from 'My Daily Bread', the scripture was 1 John 2:6, "whoever says, 'I abide in him,' ought to walk just as he walked." The devotional for this day was "The World is Watching". The story told about two true situations:

In a small town a restaurant decided to close on Sunday nights because the staff refused to work for the after evening church crowd. This crowd, who came from church, was rude, messy

and left small tips.

In another town, the manager of a store that sold concert tickets reported that some of the rudest people she had ever met were several who had bought tickets to hear a well-known Christian singing group.

The following Sunday we had similar discussions. Do other people; strangers, fellow workers, neighbors, children, sisters, brothers, see the love, kindness and compassion that should be in all of us that claim to be Christians? Maybe this should be my goal for the New Year.

A new year, a new beginning, and a fresh start! It's a time for reflection about where you have been and where you want to go next. Last year held many experiences and emotions for all of us. We celebrated, we mourned, we laughed, we cried, we succeeded, we failed, daily experiences we went through. Who knows what this New Year will bring? Whatever it brings we know that we can trust in the Lord and depend on Him to help us through it and to accomplish all He wants us to.

I'll close with something I read recently that made me smile:

Smiling is Contagious

*Smiling is contagious; you catch it like the flu,
When someone smiled at me today, I started smiling too.
I passed around the corner, and someone saw my grin
When he smiled I realized I'd passed it on to him.
I thought about that smile, and then I realized its worth,
A single smile, just like mine, could travel round the earth.*

*So, if you feel a smile begin, don't leave it undetected
Let's start an epidemic quick and get the world infected!*

-Unknown

May God bless you throughout this New Year and may his love shine through you in your everyday walk in life.

Judy Perkins

December/January Revisited

Dec21: Guest speaker was Bill Klassen, a former member of JMC now living in Hutchinson Kansas. After the service and potluck we sang Christmas carols at the Veterans hospital

Dec. 28: a group sang Christmas carols for Ruth Miller after the church service.

Jan. 11: James Branum was our guest speaker.

Jan. 25: JMC observed Mennonite World Conference Fellowship day.

Coming Events

Feb. 20-24: Nancy Sanchez Mendez will be in Oklahoma City and speak at various places. For info call Sadie Mast at 771-4743.

JMC is beginning a series of messages twice a month for the book of "God's Story, Our Story" by Michelle Hershberger. Our purpose is to instruct for baptism and to remember our vows of baptism.

March 7: Carolina, a victim of the bombing in Nairobi a few years back, will be speaking.

In Closing

Debbie, who has handled our newsletter for quite some time, has taken her children and moved to Virginia. We would like to thank her for all her efforts and wish her and the kids a great new life.

I'd also like to mention my friend Jack, who is also dealing with some major and unwanted changes in his life. We also wish for him the very best of whatever life has to offer. You're not alone Jack, you still have friends.

Amanda Hostetler, has taken over the duties of getting our newsletter together and I would like to thank her for that. Her efforts are also very much appreciated.

Terry