

JMC Community News

A newsletter for members, attenders and friends of Joy Mennonite Church

Easter, April 24, 2011 Issue #2



Congregational News

Joy Mennonite Church Podcast is now live

If you missed a recent sermon, you can listen to it online via our new church podcast. You can find it by searching for "Joy Mennonite Church" on iTunes or by going to joymennonite.wordpress.com.

News from the Garden

Our new front-yard church garden is starting to fill up with. We currently have sweet corn, tomatoes, peppers, radishes, collard greens, potatoes, onions planted. Moses says there is room for a little more, so if you have a favorite vegetable plant, please feel free to plant it (just ask Moses where is a good spot to plant it).

Also please feel free to bring flowers to plant in the peace pole garden bed, as it is looking a little bare this spring.



Pastoral Search/Visioning Committee Report April 8th

As a committee, we agreed that there are still some issues needing to be resolved before we're ready to search for, interview and accept a new pastor. These issues include but are not limited to: defining OCC's relationship with joy, church structure/organization, care of the property and rental business and continuing in the process of reconciliation.

While our congregation continues to work through these issues together, we propose an extended, intentional interim time.

Our recommendation to the congregation is that we extend Zach's Intentional Interim Pastor position for 9 months with a very specific job description. We as a committee will work at creating a comprehensive job description stating what Zach would be responsible for and what he would not, which the congregation will be given the chance to approve.

We would also lead the congregation in deciding who will be responsible for specific things that Zach shouldn't have to do.

We will continue to discuss the direction we see our congregation going and prayerfully evaluate during this time.

The end of the 9 month period will give the entire congregation, our committee and

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JMC Community News

Edited by James Branum

DISCLAIMER: I try to include stories, opinions, and information that would be of interest to our members and reflect Mennonite values, however, inclusion of a story or link in this email does not necessarily mean that it is endorsed by Joy Mennonite Church.

Contact us: If you have news, photos or other items that you would like see in the next issue, please email us at:

joymennonite@gmail.com

**Joy Mennonite Church
504 NE 16th St.
Oklahoma City, OK 73104**

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Zach an opportunity to re-evaluate. At that point we can further discuss what we liked our didn't like about the Interim period.

Zach can use the 9 months to decide how he would feel about being a pastor at Joy Mennonite. Hopefully a bit more time and intentionality will help us be able to see God's leading and understand the direction our congregation wants to go.

Pastoral Search/Visioning Committee Report March 30th

The following are the commonalities the Pastoral Search Committee found among the interviews performed.

- We like the idea of organic growth rather than having to "sell" the idea of Joy Mennonite Church to people.
- We enjoy the fact that Joy Mennonite has a friendly, casual, comfortable, non-judgmental atmosphere.
- We would appreciate more structure in the process of becoming a member of the congregation.

- We believe strongly in the importance of Peace and Social Justice. Member care is also important to us.
- We would like to develop a more efficient way to give announcements during the worship service.
- In general, we are in favor of having a pastor at some point, though we are still undecided as to the specific job description of that role.

In light of our discussion on Sunday, the Pastoral Search committee would like to propose a new system for handling announcements during our worship service. Announcements will be read by the worship leader. If any member/attendee has an announcement they would like to be included, please submit a short description to the worship leader before the service. These submissions may be given during the week as a quick email to the worship leader, or before the service as a quick note card addition or a quick note jotted for the worship leader.

As a committee we hope that this new method will provide a more efficient way for our congregation to share information while still focusing on the point of the service, which is to share and worship together.

Preaching & Worship Schedule

Many of the upcoming slots are yet to be filled. Please see Paul Reggier or put your name on the list on the kitch bulletin board if you want to be worship leader or to preach on one of the open Sundays.

- * April 24, Easter
Worship leader: Ralph Eddiger
Preacher: Zach Gleason
- * May 1, Easter 2/International Workers Day
Worship leader: ?
Preacher: Aaron Baker
- * May 8
Worship leader: ?
Preacher: ?
- * May 15
Worship leader: ?
Preacher: ?
- * May 22
Worship leader: ?
Preacher: ?
- * May 29
Worship leader: ?
Preacher: ?

Thursday Night Book Discussion Group

Our Thursday book discussion group has started on a new book, *Death of the Liberal Class* by Chris Hedges. The book was recommended by Maryann Mertens and thus far has been thought provoking.

New participants in the group are always welcome. We normally have a simple meal starting at 6:30 p.m. with the discussion starting at 7.

Goodbye to Gypsy

In the last issue of this newsletter, I mentioned that I was looking for a home for one of my dogs (Gypsy). I am happy to report that I have since found a new home for her. Gypsy now has a new home with two other dogs

and a woman who is involved with the local peace community.

MCC Relief Sales

Quite a few members of our community traveled to Newton for the Kansas MCC Relief Sale. There are lots of pictures and other news about the sale online at <http://kansas.mccsale.org/>. Also coming this fall is the Oklahoma MCC relief sale on November 4-5.

**“I firmly believe
that our salvation depends on the poor.”**

- Dorothy Day



April 2011 Prayer requests

April 3

Ask God to grant spiritual strength and physical protection to members of Colombia Mennonite Church, a Mennonite Mission Network partner. Colombian brothers and sisters risk their lives as they work for peace by promoting human rights and supporting displaced people.

April 10

A Mennonite Mission Network family who has served long-term in the Arabic world asks for God’s protection over Egyptian Christians. Pray that these stress-filled times may become great opportunities to share the good news of Jesus’ healing and hope.

April 17

Mennonite Mission Network requests prayer for Service Adventure participants in Raleigh, N.C. – Tim Gautsche, Alex Goering, Khalicia Leichty, Debora Sanchez, and leaders Leah and Todd Gusler – as they minister through Habitat for Humanity, Ten Thousand Villages, food ministries, urban farming, computer refurbishing, and preschool care.

April 24

Linda Oyer of Mennonite Mission Network has ministered from a base in Paris, France, for more than two decades. Linda writes, teaches, preaches and facilitates contemplative spirituality and spiritual direction throughout French-

speaking Europe. Pray for wisdom and strength to continue her ministry, and healing for her eyes.

A prayer for brothers and sisters in Japan

O God of the universe,

We feel so helpless
When the ground shakes and skyscrapers tumble,
When the “Peaceful” Ocean annihilates our cities and
devastates our farmland,
When our sources of light and power become poison-
spewing darkness,
When all our structures crumble,
And our loved ones are dead.

We realize that our trust has been misplaced.
We turn again to you, the Author and Finisher of our
faith.

We take refuge in your strong embrace
And, there, transformed, find the courage
To open our arms to our hurting world
And join in your work of redemption.

Be hope to those still trapped in rubble, and send help
quickly.
Give strength and comfort to the rescuers who encoun-
ter so much horror.
Calm the terror of those who have witnessed the un-
thinkable.
We pray especially for the children.
Help governments and relief efforts to be efficient and
effective.
Give us generous hearts, and preserve us from compas-
sion fatigue.

Amen

News from the WDC & MCUSA

Explanation for anyone new to Joy

Joy Mennonite Church is member congregation of the Western District Conference (WDC) of Mennonite Church USA (MCUSA). WDC is composed of more than 60 congregations in Nebraska, Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas and Colorado. We also are part of the Oklahoma Convention, a group of Mennonite Churches that administers the Oklahoma Mennonite Retreat grounds in Hydro.

WDC Church Planting Consultation

YOU ARE INVITED!

WHAT: "Breaking New Ground: A Church Planting Consultation"

WHEN: Friday, May 27 (4 p.m.) – Saturday, May 28 (3 p.m.)

WHERE: Cambria Suites, 4401 SW 19th St, Oklahoma City, OK

WHO: Any member of the Western District Conference who has a heart for developing new churches – for church planters, church planting support committees, sister congregations, pastors, and members who have a desire to be a part of an intentional church planting initiative. We hope to have one representative from every WDC congregation.

FOR MORE INFORMATION: www.mennowdc.org/Church_Planting_Consultation_05_2011.pdf

Registration deadline: May 12.

WDC Annual Assembly

Looking ahead... put the dates July 29-30 on your calendars. The WDC Annual Assembly will be at Bethel College and Bethel College Mennonite Church, North Newton, KS. Start planning for this highlight in the life of our area conference. Churches may send one delegate for every 30 members or fraction thereof.

Bethel College April Newsletter

The Bethel College *Thresher* can be read online at www.bethelks.edu/bc/news_publications/thresher_eview/

[index.php](#)

It's time to start thinking about sending a delegate to the Pittsburgh 2011 MCUSA Convention

WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR VOICE! It is time to start thinking about choosing your congregation's delegates for the Delegate Assembly at Pittsburgh 2011.

NEVER HAD DELEGATES? For those congregations that would like to send delegates to the Pittsburgh 2011 Delegate Assembly, but have not sent a delegate to one of the last four Mennonite Church USA conventions (Atlanta 2003; Charlotte 2005; San Jose 2007 or Columbus 2009), we would like to make it easier for you to participate.

For you, we are offering to waive the registration fee for your delegate(s) to attend Pittsburgh 2011! For more information about how to obtain a waiver of registration fees, please contact our office 574-523-3048 or e-mail Carol Epp: CarolE@mennoniteusa.org.

April is Child Abuse Prevention Month.

Use this copy-ready bulletin insert prepared by the Dovesnest Collaborative. Marlene Bogard, WDC Minister of Christian Nurture is a member of this group and encourages all WDC congregations to help education raise awareness of childhood abuse and neglect. You can find



Camp Mennoscah is a special place. Help celebrate camp and care for its future by joining fellow campers and former music directors for a Camp Sing at Memorial Hall at Bethel College, in North Newton, KS on May 1, 2011 at 6:30 PM. A free will offering collected at the event will go towards the construction of a new camp pool. Funds will go through WDC Vision 2012.

it online at: http://www.dovesnest.net/files/Bulletin_insert_April2011.pdf

WDC Library News

Want to find out what Marlene Bogard deems her favorite 75 books in the Resource Library? It's a nice colorful document - with lists for adults and for children. See: www.mennowdc.org/Top_75_for_adults.pdf and www.mennowdc.org/Top_75_for_Children.pdf P.S. It's the Top 75, because this year, the Resource Library is 75 years old!!!! Come by to purchase your very own commemorative 75th birthday tote bag (see attached picture) for \$8. Happy Birthday to all of us, for supporting a great place for resources!

AMBS Summer Open House

The AMBS summer Open House event for people to experience a taste of seminary life is Monday, July 18.

Please encourage someone you know with gifts for ministry to visit us—learning to know faculty and students, and getting up-to-date information about how affordable seminary study can be. More information and an invitation to send on to someone else are at www.ambs.edu/open-house

New Book of Gene Stotzfus' Writings

Create Space for Peace: 40 years of Peacemaking, available in March 2011, is a collection of writings from Gene Stotzfus' articles, speeches, and letters about his journey of Christian peacemaking.

You can buy it online at www.createspaceforpeace.info



Mennonite World Conference says worldwide prayer and long-term response needed for Japan

From: www.mwc-cmm.org

News Release
18 March 2011

Strasbourg, France – Mennonite World Conference is making plans to walk and work alongside Japanese Anabaptists in the wake of the earthquake and tsunami devastating the northeast of Japan.

An intercontinental teleconference on March 16 brought together MWC officials and representatives from Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, and Brethren in Christ churches and agencies, including Mennonite Central Committee.

Immediate action is a global call to prayer for the people of Japan. A brief worship resource for churches, including a map that locates Anabaptist churches in Japan, is available on the MWC website (www.mwc-cmm.org).

Response from both MWC and service agencies is likely to focus on long-term efforts and relationships rather than emergency relief. Food and water, urgent needs, can be procured locally. Distribution is the major chal-

lenge. MWC Deacons Commission leadership will consult with Japanese leaders in considering a solidarity visit, possibly in May or June.

Teleconference participants were grateful for a March 16th early morning message from Nobuyasu Kirai, Japan Mennonite Christian Church Conference (Hokkaido) chair, and Takanori Sasaki, chair of the Japan Mennonite Fellowship composed of several Anabaptist-related churches. The group agreed that careful consultation with these and other leaders in Japan is highest priority as the global church community seeks to identify ways to walk and work with the Japanese churches as they address the needs of the Japanese people.

A working group led by Deacons Commission chair, Cynthia Peacock (Kolkata, India) and secretary, Bert Lobe (Kitchener, Ontario, Canada) and including representatives from churches and service agencies in the MWC community will take further steps and provide updates as plans develop.

- MWC Staff

Opinion

A tribute to the Sisters of St. Benedict of Red Plains Monastery

Editor's Note: The Benedictine Sisters played a huge role in the early days of the peace movement in Oklahoma and were the founders of the Oklahoma City Peace House.

By Bob Waldrop

March 5th, 2011

From BobWaldrop.org, Used with permission

This week's March 6th Sooner Catholic carried bitter-sweet news — the Red Plains Benedictines, who merged their community with the Mt. St. Scholastica Benedictine in Atchison, Kansas — will be leaving Oklahoma and relocating to Mt. St. Scholastica this fall. I left the comment below in the guestbook for their monastery, to share just a little of the profound influence the Sisters had on me. Their impact on me of course is imperfect, which is not due to any lack of effort on their part. My feet of clay remain, my loud and sometimes (?) uncouth mouth remains one of my least redeeming features and sends me to the confessional more often than almost anything else these days, nevertheless, they are not responsible for my own short-comings which are many, all my faults are my fault.

In any event, they have sown seeds of spirituality that daily grow into trees whose leaves are for the healing of nations.

One of their primary ministries has been presenting the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Annotation 19 retreat to lay people of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. This is sometimes called the "Retreat in Daily Life", and is the same retreat that Jesuit novices receive at the beginning of their novitiate, only instead of getting it all in a 30 day retreat, the experience is spread over 9 months or so while the retreatant continues his or her regular daily activities.

To the Sisters of St. Benedict of Red Plains Monastery. . .

I wanted to take this opportunity to leave a small reflection about the role of Red Plains Monastery and its sisters, especially Sister Marie Luecke, in my own life. In the fall of 1994, I knocked on the

door of a white frame house across the street from the Cathedral and met sister Marie Luecke, to apply to enroll in the Retreat in Daily Life. We had a long conversation. I was very different from her, hadn't cut my hair or beard in a while; she reminded me of my grandmothers in some ways.

Thus began my spiritual walk through the Retreat in Daily Life with her. I still have the 3 ring binder with all of the information she gave us, and in preparation for writing this note, I reached up and pulled it off the shelf and looked through it. I found cards from her — Christmas and Valentines — and my own notes that I made through the pilgrimage.

There can be no doubt that everything good that I have done since then flows out of those experiences over the fall, winter, and spring of 1994-1995. Everything. From founding the Oscar Romero Catholic Worker House, to the Oklahoma Food Cooperative, my ministry as a pastoral musician, and the various irons in fires I am juggling now, including the latest little brainstorm — the Oklahoma Center for Worker Cooperatives, about which more will be said in coming months — all of this comes from the spiritual lessons that I learned with Sister Marie and that I have attempted, however imperfectly, to apply in my own life.

I rejoice and give thanks to God for the faithful ministry of the Sisters of St. Benedict of Red Plains Monastery, now of Mt. St. Scholastica in Kansas. I will miss seeing y'all at Mass at Epiphany Church, and running into y'all at various events, meetings and miscellaneous functions. I have always felt upheld in your prayers, and know that the fervent prayer of the righteous is powerful. I pray that God will continue to fill your lives with grace, beauty, and wisdom, and count it as one of the defining moments of my life that I have known and learned from you.

Robert Augustine Waldrop

Miss a recent sermon at JMC?

Catch it on the Joy Mennonite Podcast!

Find it by searching for "Joy Mennonite" in iTunes or by going to Joymennonite.wordpress.com

Creation Care

MCC Aims to Shrink Carbon Footprint

By Chad Umble and Linda Espenshade

April 20, 2010

From: creationcare.mcc.org

AKRON, Pa. – Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) is committed to shrinking its carbon footprint by 20 percent over the next 10 years, thereby reducing its contribution to climate change.

The commitment arises from MCC's Care for Creation Task Force that has identified air travel and inefficient buildings as the primary sources of MCC's carbon emissions, often referred to as a carbon footprint.

There are 12 MCCs in Canada and the United States with multiple offices, many with staff members who travel by air regularly to carry out programming. Carbon emissions from air travel and inefficient buildings are primary contributors to climate change, many scientists say.

The task force, which has been meeting for about two years, is committed to helping MCC's staff in Canada and the United States make environmentally conscious choices, both personally and organizationally.

Its commitment dovetails with part of MCC's purpose statement, "MCC envisions communities worldwide in right relationship with God, one another and creation."

"One of the reasons why these kinds of changes are important is that the people we are called to serve are being disproportionately impacted by climate change," said Dan Wiens, MCC's water and food coordinator and co-chair of the task force. "This is because they have fewer resources to cope with a changing climate, and they tend to live in mid-tropical zones, where climate change is more extreme."

On Jan. 1, MCC partnered with Sustainable Waterloo, a nonprofit that helps organizations reduce their carbon footprints. To Sustainable Waterloo, MCC will be accountable to meet its goal of reducing carbon emissions by 20 percent over the next 10 years. The organization provides computer-based tracking tools, analyzes data and creates reports for MCC.

"Tracking carbon output is like doing financial accounting," said Susan Wenger, administrative assistant to the MCC executive office and co-chair of the task force. "To be good stewards, we need to monitor what we emit and determine where we have room for improvement."



Arli Klassen, executive director of MCC, has committed to ride 1,000 kilometers (621 miles), instead of driving to work. She is among 38 MCC staffers in Canada and the United States who have committed to biking or walking to work, totaling 24,122 kilometers (14,998 miles). The Care for Creation Task Force encourages staff to participate in environmentally friendly activities like this. (MCC photo by Silas Crews)

In 2009 and 2010, MCC made travel cutbacks for budget reasons. These cutbacks may be continued as a way to meet the goals for reduced carbon outputs, Wenger said.

West Coast MCC reduced travel 17 percent last year and 50 percent in the previous year through rigorous tracking of travel, said Sheri Plett Wiedenhoefer, executive director.

Wiens said the MCC Canada and MCC Manitoba office in Winnipeg is increasingly scrutinizing air travel to see if it is actually necessary. "We're not only thinking about the time and the finances involved in travel, but also the carbon."

The Winnipeg office is also reducing its energy use with a new geothermal heating and cooling system. The system, which has been operational for about a year, cost \$450,000 to install compared to an estimated \$370,000 for a traditional heating, ventilation and air-conditioning system. Melaney Reimer, director of administrative services for MCC Canada, said the investment should begin to pay off soon through reduced monthly costs.

Geothermal heat works because water is circulated

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OCC News for March-April 2011

OCC (Oklahoma Center for Conscience) is proud to be fiscally sponsored by Joy Mennonite Church. This brief report will tell about some of our recent activities for JMC members. For more in-depth information on OCC's work, please pick one of our quarterly newsletters, or talk to James Branum, Aaron Baker, Stephan Warner, Danielle Furstenburg, or Moses & Sadie Mast.

Father John Vrana given the first annual Mertens award at OCC Fundraising event.

More than OCC supporters and friends met together for a night of celebration April 2 at Mayflower Congregational Church. The occasion was the awarding of the first annual Mertens Peace Award (named after Art and Mariann Mertens) to Father John Vrana.

We also were able to share quite a bit about the work and mission of OCC, as well as raise funds for our ongoing work (a little over \$1000!).

Going to Albuquerque in May

Moses, Sadie, Rena, James and possibly others will be traveling in May to attend the GI Rights Network annual conference in Albuquerque.

James' recent speaking/training events

In April James presented a CLE (continuing legal education) seminar on US Army AWOL policies at Thurgood Marshall School of Law. He also attended the South Cen-

tral Yearly Meeting (the Quaker regional conference) to share about the work of OCC and to help organize a coordinated effort of peace churches in our region on behalf of PFC Bradley Manning, who was recently moved from Quantico to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas.

The Colton Turner case

James is currently involved with a Christian conscientious objector case at Fort Carson, Colorado (see page 14 for a more detailed account of this case).

Mayflower Congregational becomes OCC sponsor

We are thrilled to report that we have a new sponsor to add to our list of organizations funding and supporting the work of OCC. Mayflower is well known in Oklahoma City, indeed across the state and beyond, due to the prominent voice of its senior pastor, Robin Meyers, whose sermons, speeches and writings have struck a chord with progressive Christians.

We are grateful to Mayflower member Kenneth Meador, who facilitated the sponsorship. Kenneth, who is a veteran of three tours in Iraq and is now a student at OCC, has become a valued member of OCC's steering committee, and a frequent participant in our vigils and other actions, including this year's OKC Martin Luther King Day Parade.





**April 9 Rally
for Peace and
Justice at
Oklahoma City
University**



**Photos from OCC's night
to award the first annual
Mertens Award to Father
John Vrana**



Opinion

It's Time to Take a Stand

by **James M. Branum**

This opinion piece represents the views of the author and does not represent the official stance of Joy Mennonite Church.

We have a long tradition in our church of being willing to discuss difficult issues. This essay is written as part of that tradition.

I believe it is time for our congregation to take a proactive, public stance in affirmation of our gay brothers and sisters in Christ.

I've been a member of this congregation for seven years. During this time the issue of LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender) equality has been formally raised on at least two occasions. In both instances, we agreed that while church membership was open to all, we would not state this publicly out of concern of how our decision might affect unity in the Mennonite Church.

I don't think we can hold to this stance in good conscience anymore.

The issue of Scripture

The Mennonite tradition is a Christian tradition that uses a Christ-centered method of Biblical interpretation; this is important since the canonical Gospel accounts do not show Jesus ever discussing homosexuality.

The epistles do, however, speak about homosexuality (see Romans 1, I Corinthians 6, I Timothy 1 and Jude 1), however it would appear that these texts have more to do with the values of the culture of the Roman Empire in the First Century than anything else. Moreover the texts seem to be speaking more about exploitative forms of sexuality, rather than the kind of loving covenantal gay relationships that are common today.

Unfortunately, many Mennonites take the few references to homosexuality in the New Testament very literally, while at the same time assume other scriptures in the same texts are not to be taken literally. For instance, almost all Mennonites today believe that the teachings of the epistles on the issue of gender are cultural in nature and are not commands to be literally followed today. Because of this understanding, women are not "silent in the

assembly" (see I Corinthians 14:34) in most Mennonite churches. And within the broader denomination, women are permitted to teach and have authority over men (a seeming violation of I Timothy 2:12). In fact our current MCUSA Moderator-elect is a woman.

I think Mennonites made the right call on the subject of gender. We rightly understood that Jesus' call for radical love requires that we reject the literalistic interpretation of the epistles, and instead read those texts through the eyes of love.

I think it is time that we apply this same understanding to our excluded gay sisters and brothers.

My own history on this issue

I haven't always believed in LGBT equality. Growing up in a small town Church of Christ, I was taught that homosexuality was an abomination. While some people would say we should "love the sinner, but hate the sin," I must confess that I mostly focused on hating the sin.

When I went to college, I fortified my homophobia with religious and political zealotry. During my years at SWOSU, I encountered openly gay people for the first time. Still I held to my prejudices. In particular I remember one young gay man from a political science class. I flippantly told him that he could be changed with God's help. He responded that he once wanted to change, but that it was impossible. He had prayed for years, and had even be sent to de-gayification therapy by his Christian parents, all without success. Sadly I wasn't yet ready to give up my prejudices, but I did have to admit that my platitudes weren't doing him any good at all.

After I transferred colleges to study theology, I came to the conclusion that the "gay problem" could only be solved by love; I thought that gay people could and should change, but this would only happen when they had truly, deeply experienced the love of God and God's people. I tried to remember that the most important part of ministry to gays was to love the sinner first and foremost.

A few years later I moved back to Oklahoma. I was still a homophobe when a friend invited me to watch the movie, *The Laramie Project* with her.

This true-to-life movie (originally a play) was set in Lara-

mie, Wyoming in 1998. Matthew Shepard, a young gay man had been murdered because of his sexual orientation and the community was shook. Locals responded in different ways, some with love and others with hate. The climax moment of the film was the ending where locals found a creative and beautiful way to combat the hate speech of the notorious anti-gay Westboro Baptist Church who had come to protest.

What stuck with me from the movie was a statement by a local Laramie pastor. If I recall correctly, the pastor said, "I only hope that poor Matthew accepted Jesus into his heart before he was killed." These condescending words sickened me for their thinly veiled judgment. But I also knew that this pastor was saying something I might have said a few years ago, and that he even probably thought he was "loving the sinner..."

In that moment I understood something else, that to "love the sinner..." was one stepping stone away from the more extreme version of hate. Sexuality is something that is deep in our psyche, so to attack a person's sexuality is to attack a large part of who they are.

I wept because I realized how hurtful my words and thoughts had been up to that point.

A short time later, I joined Joy Mennonite. Since then I've struggled with how we can live out the radical values of Jesus in the context of a homophobic denominational structure.

Why must we be public

In past conversations, several of our members have said that we should not take a preemptive pro-gay stance, but rather should wait until a gay prospective member comes to us. I think the intent was well-meaning (why cause unnecessary dissension for an issue that isn't in front of us?), but also unrealistic. Members of the gay community largely believe that the "default position" of Christianity is that of exclusion. Gay people assume that they are either not welcome, or that if they are welcome, they are only welcome as second-class citizens who can't marry and can't serve in church leadership.

I have a story to tell that helps to illustrate this. A few years ago I attended Oklahoma City's Gay Pride festival (a weekend celebration of LGBT equality). While there, I was browsing the literature table of one of the local gay friendly churches. I saw a man walk to the table. The man turned to a friend who was a few feet away and said, "Come here! I think you'll like this." The man's friend walked to the table, but when he saw what it was, his face sunk and he turned away. That moment spoke volumes to me. You could tell that this man must have

been hurt by Christians in the past.

This is the kind of hurt we are called to mend. We are called to be ministers of reconciliation and part of this is reaching out to those who don't think they belong in the Kingdom of God.

Our role as a prophetic voice in MCUSA

Currently the issue of homosexuality is hotly debated in our denomination. While there is a truce of sorts in certain areas of the church, in other parts of MCUSA the forces of exclusion are strong.


One example is the recent expulsion of Randall Spaulding from the bi-national Mennonite Church worship council.

According to GayMennonite.com, Randall was told in an email by Terry Shue, director of leadership development for MCUSA that "Your competency in this role has never been in question, it is solely the fact of your ongoing relationship with another man which we find to be incompatible with serving in this role." This of course is even more distressing since Randall had already been defrocked by the Southeastern Conference for being gay. *(for more information on this story, see <http://bit.ly/dNsXQ5>)*

Or let's look at our own conference. While WDC (Western District Conference) has permitted congregations to be at variance on this issue, ministers who preside over the weddings of lesbians and gays are required by our denomination to have their credentials reviewed. In March, Joanna Harader (pastor of Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence, Kansas) had to answer for the crime of officiating at a wedding of two lesbians. While thankfully the leadership commission (in a split vote) ruled that she could keep her credentials, Joanna will have to go through this same rigamarole the next time she is called to perform a gay wedding. *(see <http://bit.ly/fEnmtF>)*

And in other conferences, pastors ARE having their ordination credentials stripped for performing gay marriages.

The tragic result of our church's policies is that at least some gay young people will not answer the call to ministry. It will mean that our next Mennonite hymnal will be missing the contributions that Randall Spaulding would have brought to the table. And it means that the church is not really being the church.

I realize that Joy Mennonite Church has little influence in MCUSA or even our conference. We are a tiny church that stands at the margins of any kind of Mennonite institutional power. But our God is the God of lost causes. It is our job to do what is right no matter 

what the consequences.

Conclusion

It is for these reasons that I am asking our congregation to start the process of becoming an affirming church. A starting point might be to adopt a "Welcome Statement" similar to the one used by Peace Mennonite Church in Lawrence:

We welcome into the full life of Peace Mennonite Church all who seek to follow Jesus' way of peacemaking and compassion. We rejoice in the diverse characteristics each person brings to our community, and we embrace differences in race, gender, sexual orientation, physical ability, mental ability, economic status, marital status, and age.

I would also ask that we not "hide our light under a bushel." We must be public about our stand: to our community here in Oklahoma City, and to the broader Mennonite denomination.

This of course is a first step. We will have many more steps in speaking and acting on behalf of justice and LGBT equality, but I pray that we will start walking.

Come now, you rich people, weep and wail for the miseries that are coming to you. Your riches have rotted, and your clothes are moth-eaten. Your gold and silver have rusted, and their rust will be evidence against you, and it will eat your flesh like fire. You have laid up treasure for the last days.

Listen! The wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out, and the cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord of hosts. You have lived on the earth in luxury and in pleasure; you have fattened your hearts on a day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the righteous one, who does not resist you.

- James 5:1-6 (NRSV)

**A 'NO' UTTERED
FROM THE DEEPEST CONVICTION
IS BETTER THAN A 'YES'
MERELY UTTERED TO PLEASE,
OR WORSE, TO AVOID TROUBLE.**

- MOHANDAS GANDHI

Social Justice**Learn—Worship—Act –Advocate**

The WDC Immigration Task Force (of which JMC member Cheryl Crichley is a member) asked that the article below from PeaceSigns be forwarded to WDC churches. (PeaceSigns is a monthly e-zine looking at the news through a Christ-centered lens. A service of Mennonite Church USA Peace & Justice Support Network, www.MennoniteUSA.org/peace.)

Throughout history, how a people have responded to injustice has come to define them. Think of Christians in Hitler's Germany, in the U.S. South before the Civil War, in South Africa during the apartheid regime. With hindsight, we think we see clearly the injustice of the situation, yet at the time, people struggled tremendously to hear God's will, understand how to relate to the law of the land and their neighbors, and to be the church together.

Perhaps we are in a similar time in the United States as we consider immigration. How should Christians balance the right of a country to secure its own borders with our economic and trade bullying that dominate the world and make it nearly impossible for some people to earn a living in their own country? How do we balance the biblical call to love and care for the stranger with the busyness of our lives? Balance our respect for the law with our historical understanding that not all laws are just?

To help us explore whether God is calling U.S. Christians to speak publicly on the immigration issue, we can follow these steps: learn - worship - act - advocate (direct links and more ideas are available on the PJSN website)

Learn

- Build relationships with newcomers in your community.
- Use Missio Dei #19, Immigration and the Bible, as the basis for Sunday school class study and sermons. Download from www.MennoniteMission.net/Tools in either English or Spanish. Printed copies for group discussion (also in English or Spanish) can be ordered from store.thirdwaymedia.org.
- Plan congregational learning tours in your community, including immigrant neighborhoods, churches, and workplaces, as well as government offices that serve immigrants.
- Read newspapers or magazines, join national immigration rights organizations, or contact church agencies that work with immigration issues.
- Join study tours to the U.S./Mexico border, refugee

camp, or detention centers to learn more about U.S. immigration and refugee policies.

- Participate in anti-racism training.
- Research your church building becoming a sanctuary for the undocumented.

Worship

- Pray, in both your personal and group prayer times, that God open your eyes to the plight of immigrants in your community and how God would have you respond.
- Devote time to listening to God and to others, through liturgy, Bible reading and silence, during worship times.
- Partner with immigrant congregations to plan church services or community events.

Act

- Offer church facilities and volunteers for documentation services, English classes, ethnic celebrations, or other outreach programs.
- Engage in mutual aid to offer food, shelter, clothing, and other resources to immigrants.
- Provide funds to assist church members who are undocumented to start documentation.
- Provide scholarships for persons to take the immigration training classes.
- Post a banner outside your church building, saying "God's love has no borders." Contact First Mennonite Church of Lincoln, Nebraska, (402)467-1526 or <http://www.fmclincoln.org/immigrationbanner>

Advocate

- Advocate for just and humane policies for immigrants and refugees by contacting local, state, and national elected officials.

You may also choose to join the periodic immigration conference calls for information and networking. Contact SusanML@mennoniteusa.org

Ideas from:

Mennonite Church USA Statement on Immigration 2003
PJSN website: <http://peace.mennolink.org/immigration.html>
Letter from Iglesia Menonite Hispana to Mennonite Church USA regarding position on Phoenix

PFC Colton Turner—Conscientious Objector

Note from James: Most of my clients seek a discharge for reasons other than conscience, so I'm especially excited when I get to help a true conscientious objector.

Courage to Resist is helping on this case to raise funds for the legal defense and with publicity. This article previously appeared on the website. Since this was first published Colton has been removed from the deployment roster, but is also still engaged in his struggle for a discharge. Please pray for him to stand strong and not lose heart in this difficult process.

By Bob Meola, Courage to Resist. April 13, 2011

U.S. Army Pfc. Colton Turner is a twenty year old conscientious objector. Presently the Army is playing mind games with him and has been acting less than honorably in processing his application for Conscientious Objector classification. On April 11th, after nearly six months of stalling and failing to properly address Turner's request for recognition as a C.O based upon his Christian faith and sincere beliefs, and instead responding to him in inappropriate ways, the Army issued Turner a whole new set of gear—the kind that is issued to a soldier who is about to be deployed. Turner received a new bulletproof vest, an assault pack, pocket knife, ammo pouches, grenade pouches, and a seatbelt cutter among other things. According to his attorney, James Branum, on April 11th, "It is unclear at this time what the command's intentions are, but it appears that they may be planning to ignore the alleged AWOL and instead pressure Colton to go on a deployment and fight in violation of his conscience." Turner's defense team hopes to dissuade the command of this idea as Colton is resolved that he cannot deploy. But as of today, April 13th, Turner is now on a deployment list.

The week prior to being issued the deployment gear, after repeated refusals by Turner's commander Captain to return phone calls to attorney Branum regarding Turner's case, Branum was twice hung up on by Turner's 1st Sgt. who said he would only talk to a military lawyer, not a civilian lawyer, ignoring Turner's rights, under the Constitution and under military regulations, to use a civilian attorney. Branum had been trying to ascertain what the command's intentions were after Turner was told during

the prior week that he would be facing an Article 15 charge based on his alleged AWOL. It would be up to Turner whether to accept an Article 15.

Article 15 refers to a section of the UCMJ that permits a commander to punish a soldier for violations of the UCMJ, without it going to a full court-martial. The maximum punishment possible in an article 15 varies based on the rank of the prosecuting commander, but normally a soldier can receive extra duty, loss of pay, loss of rank, and restriction to post as punishment in an Article 15. However, a soldier can only be punished in an article 15 if he or she consents to the process. If a soldier refuses to consent to an article 15, the commander is left with three options - (1) proceeding with a court-martial, (2) ignoring the offense and keeping the soldier in the Army, or (3) chapter the soldier out of the Army (normally under the grounds of "patterns of misconduct."

Also it is important to note that an article 15 does NOT count as double-jeopardy, meaning that a soldier could be tried in a court-martial for an offense, even if that soldier had already been punished through an article 15 for the very same offense.

In this case, Colton decided to accept an article 15, but only if he knew he was going to be discharged afterwards; otherwise Colton planned to reject the article 15. Colton's civilian attorney, James Branum, tried to contact Colton's commander, Captain Heidenreich, but he never would answer his line, so instead, the attorney called First Sergeant McClurkin on April 7th. Branum hoped to simply inquire as to the command's intentions as to what they would do after the article 15, but 1SG McClurkin refused to speak to the attorney and hung up on the phone. The attorney phoned McClurkin a second time but was told by the 1SG that he would only talk to military attorneys and that the civilian lawyer could not call him anymore. The attorney pressed the issue but the 1SG refused to speak further and hung up on the attorney a second time. Since that time, Colton has received no further information about the possible pending article 15.

Turner was raised on a farm in Prospect Hill, a very small community in Caswell County, North Carolina. The town consists of a store and a gas station. When Colton was



nineteen, he joined the army. There was no job market in Colton’s community. Colton began having visits to his school by U.S. Army recruiters when he was in the ninth grade. “They [recruiters] never mentioned the negatives,” said Colton. The recruiters didn’t talk about PTSD, people getting dismembered, having limbs blown off or the horrors of war.”

The recruiters had posters and pamphlets in Colton’s high school, in the town of Yanceyville, all the time. They showed up in person about every month or every other month. In the tenth grade, Colton sat in on a recruitment session. The recruiters set up in the cafeteria at lunch and asked kids, “Do you want to join the army?” When I talked with Colton on March 22nd, he said, “They’d ease into it. They’d ask, ‘Do you play sports?’ They’d try to get on a buddy level with you first. When they realized I was an adventurous person, they said the army had a lot of adventure. If I said I liked football, they’d say I could play football in the army. If I had said I wanted to be a veterinarian, they would’ve said I could be a veterinarian in the army.

“They made a presentation in my classes—in my tenth and eleventh grade math classes for about an hour and a half. There were about twenty to twenty-five kids in the classes. The recruiters talked about the great career choice it is—to go into the army. They’d say you can do this and you can do this. People asked about the pay and the GI Bill for colleges. One guy asked, ‘Did you ever have to kill anybody?’ The soldier said he had to kill people in Iraq and some kids got real interested in hearing more about that. He[soldier] tried to steer away

from that . They never brought up the wars—even at the recruiting station.

“The army recruiters called me on the phone in tenth and eleventh grade. I think I was about sixteen at the time. Around eleventh grade, I started thinking of signing up. I couldn’t afford college on my own. I thought I’d be doing a great thing for m country—that it would be honorable to serve my country.

“They called me early in my senior year. I had enough credits to graduate early—in January after one semester of twelfth grade. Welding and automotive technology were my favorite subjects. I thought I could get welding experience and schooling in the army and then use the GI Bill to go to college. “I said I’d meet with them. They came and picked me up Septemberish and took me to the recruiting station in Burlington, North Carolina and I joined the Delayed Entry Program .

“I stayed in touch with them. They promoted me from an E-2 to an E-3 because I got another boy to sign up. I started as an E-1 and they made me an E-2 because I memorized the rank structure. They gave me stuff to hand out to try to get others to join.

“I was a walking billboard for the U.S. Army. They gave me t-shirts key chains, coffee mugs, ink pens, water bottles, folders, all with army branding on them. They all said ‘U.S. Army’ in ACU [Army Combat Uniform] colors of tan and light green in camouflage pattern on the items.

“I started running a mile with them and doing push-ups with them once a week to get ready for basic training—to prepare me physically. From January to April, I still saw them once a week. My basic training started in April [2010]. They had me take the oath in September [2009] but that wasn’t real. I took it again in April right before I left for basic training at the MEPS station [Military Entrance Processing Station] in Raleigh, North Carolina. They had me show up at the recruiting station on April 20th. They put me on a shuttle bus with two or three others and took me to the MEPS station.

“They put me in a hotel overnight. They did a lot of paper work and background checks. I got to officially pick my MOS [Military Occupational Specialty]. I wound up being a 13Fox—13F—a forward observer for artillery. I don’t know how that happened. They said, ‘This is what we have opened right now.’ The choices were pe-



troleum supply specialist, infantry, forward observer, and maps and satellite imagery. They said they didn't have a slot open for welders at the time.

"I stayed there overnight and then I went on to basic training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma on April 21st or 22nd. I was there for nine weeks. It wasn't as bad as it was made out to be. We had an EST thing—a simulation trainer. I was with five or six other people. It would tell you, as if you were patrolling the Iraqi border, 'A van drives up and moves over. You must decide what to do.' They gave us M-16s modified to shoot like a laser at the TV screen. It's kind of like laser tag. Everyone started shooting to kill. I had an issue. The guy got out of the van with an AK-47. But a woman and kids got out and started running in the opposite direction. Everyone with me—all the soldiers—shot the guy with the AK-47. But they shot everybody else too. They intentionally aimed lots of shots, dead on, at the woman and kids too. They were accurately placed rounds. I'd say five rounds hit the woman and kids. Sometimes there were twelve of us. It was between six and twelve of us all the time.

"It bothered me that they got hit. They weren't bothering anybody and I thought that if we weren't here, this wouldn't be happening. We used it [simulation trainer] once in basic and once in A.I.T. [Advanced Individual Training]. I thought it was barbaric. The right answer to anything the sergeant said was, 'Kill!' After basic training I spent six weeks in A.I.T.—also at Fort Sill.

"The trainers were combat experienced. They were like the devil. They loved violence. They loved killing. You could tell when they talked that they were crazy. They just wanted to kill people and animals. They were going over hand to hand combat and teaching us how to kill with bare hands—how to approach vehicles and kill people in vehicles. It was a more stressful situation for me than basic training was. Basic was more motivational. The instructors in A.I.T. were a breed of their own. They abused the soldiers. They could've gotten in trouble if they'd pushed it a little more.

"We would call in 155 mm. artillery rounds. They said everything within a certain distance is dead. You'd use it to base where to fire the next round. It would be three rounds before we hit our target. I'd think about if it was real, we'd be hitting people we weren't targeting. The army calls that collateral damage. I call that a problem.

"After A.I.T., I went back to North Carolina for HRAP, the Hometown Recruiting Assistance Program, for two weeks. I went to the recruiting station. They took me to my high school to tell kids how cool it was to be in the army. I was thinking that I didn't like this. I didn't want to be in the army and I didn't want to take part in the war and I didn't want other kids to sign up.

"Basic training and A.I.T. made me think about things and I didn't want to be in the wars. I saw a couple of my friends. They asked how I liked it. I gave them facts. I didn't give them my real opinions. I had the recruiters standing right there. Later on, people texted me and I told them how I felt and I told them they wouldn't want to do these things. I told them they'd have to do illegal things and they wouldn't want it on their consciences that they killed innocent people who didn't need to be killed.

"I had two weeks leave including a couple of days on duty in the recruiting station just sitting there. Six to ten people walked in with questions in those two weeks. They'd ask about basic training and I gave them the facts—the pay, the food.

"September 1st or 2nd, I flew to Colorado to the in-processing center at Fort Carson. I got to my unit. There was more paper work and some free time for a number of days. After 5:00 P.M., I had time to look at a computer. I had decided during HRAP I wanted out of the army. I was back home looking at things with a different light. I didn't want to kill people. I wanted to get out.

"Over the internet, I learned about Conscientious Objectors. I was searching for how to get out of the army. I found all the ways out. When I read about C.O.s, I found out that was exactly what was going on with me. I didn't know the words for it, but it fit me. It was exactly why I wanted out and it was the route to go. I am a C.O.

"I hadn't been in Ft. Carson a week before I was filling out a Conscientious Objector application. I answered all the questions to the best of my ability. I stumbled upon a website about Chas Davis. He was a C.O. He'd gotten out and wrote about how it went. He wrote a journal about how it went—a short story explaining the entire process and how things worked out for him.

"Around late September or early October, I got in touch

with the GI Rights Hotline. They put me in touch with the counselor. I sent him a copy of my C.O. packet. He read it and said it was good but he thought I should say more than I did. I wrote more and they said it was good. Then I got in touch with a military chaplain and explained what was going on with me. He was pretty supportive and saw that I was sincere. He advised me to make sure my application was right the way I wanted it to be before I turned it in and before I mentioned it to anybody else because once the chain of command knew what I wanted, they would probably start giving me a hard time and that probably if I had a boot lace untied or if the uniform was a little dirty, they wouldn't say something to somebody else—but they would to me, if I was a Conscientious Objector.

"I turned in my C.O. application on October 22nd. I had a JAG and a chaplain read over it and made sure I had my ducks in a row. I told my Staff Sgt. about it right before I turned it in—maybe two or three days before. I said I needed to talk to him. He asked me what about. I told him I didn't want to be a part of this war anymore. I told him I had a strong feeling against fighting and that I didn't want to kill people and I thought it was the wrong thing to do. He told me—he said that if that's what I wanted, that's that. He said, basically I had my thoughts and he had his and he wasn't gonna say anything about mine. He wasn't gonna judge me for what I believed if I didn't judge him for what he believed. But in actuality, he seemed a little bit mad about it. And that later showed up. We—my staff Sgt. and me—turned in my C.O. packet on October 22nd.

"Sixteen days later, it was sent back to us saying the 4187 form was outdated. That was a request for personnel action form. They use that form for a lot of things. Many things require that form. I had printed that form myself. That made me wonder if they were taking me seriously because they took a half a month to tell me a piece of paper wasn't correct. We didn't hear anything for a long time. November 8th, the packet came back denied. They should have told me that the form was wrong right away.

"My Staff Sgt. went on line and printed out the updated form and we turned it in about one half hour to an hour later. During the sixteen days whenever I asked the Staff Sgt. what was going on, he said the Commander and he would call me when the Commander wanted to

talk to me. I asked my Staff Sgt. again after we re-submitted it. Time went on and on and it was always the same answer from my Staff Sgt. when I asked what was going on. I asked at least once a week—sometimes twice a week and up to but not more than three times a week.

"Sometime between first submitting it and November 8th, I asked my Staff Sgt. if I could make my appointments with the chaplain and with mental health. Those two appointments are required to see if you are sincere about being a C.O. He said, 'Yeah, sure. Go ahead and make the appointments.'

"On November 10th, I had an appointment set up with the brigade chaplain—a chaplain pretty high up the chain—not the one I'd talked to already. I went to that appointment. He said I was sincere and he wrote me a letter saying that I was sincere and should be recognized as a conscientious objector. That later was submitted by my Staff Sgt. and added to my C.O. packet.


"I had my mental health appointment and had my evaluation on November 16th. The evaluation came back saying I was sane and aware of what I was doing. That letter was also submitted to my packet—my CO file.

"From that point to mid-December, I wasn't told anything. I was in the dark. I kept asking to speak with my Commander and getting the same response.

"At one point, my Staff Sgt. finally told me, 'Turner, quit asking me about your crap. That's exactly what it is to me—crap. I don't really care about your crap.' That was sometime in late November.

"It bothered me that I wasn't being allowed to speak with my Commander. They were violating the open door policy. It was implied that if I went to the Commander by myself, things weren't going to come out good. It was implied by my Staff Sgt. and others in my squad that if wouldn't be good—those people outranked me. They strongly implied that it would not be in my best interest to go to the Commander by myself. It made me think I'd be harassed and punished somehow if I did.

"I was a little shocked that I didn't have anybody on my side and that I was basically being ignored.

"We went into the field for field exercises for about two weeks. I was assigned a noncombatant role in the 

kitchen and I didn't have to carry a gun." One day, while not on KP duty, "I'm sitting in the TOC [Tactical Operations Center], which is a room full of computers and electronics and a Sgt. asked me to log into this computer system. I asked to speak with him in private. I told him, 'You are aware that I put in for C.O. status and I'm not participating in combat duties or training.' [The] Sgt. (name deleted) pretty much flipped shit and threw a tantrum. He said, 'I don't give a shit about your conscience. You're gonna do what you're told. You're gonna log targets.'

"I said, 'Sgt. _____, I'm not logging targets into that computer system.' He continued screaming and yelling. Chief Warrant Officer (name deleted), Second Class defused the situation. He came over and got Sgt. _____ to calm down.

"Then Sgt. 1st Class (name deleted) came over and said, 'Turner, sit at the door and check people's I.D.s when they come in.' I did that. It wasn't combat.

"Later that day, Sgt. _____ and Staff Sgt. (name deleted) came into the T.O.C. and had me go with them into a room and they gave me a negative counseling statement. It was paperwork—basically a warning ticket for 'failure to obey a direct order.' They threatened me with an article 15—a non-judicial punishment where they take money and rank from you and make you do extra duty. I refused to sign the statement. I explained that I was within my rights as a Conscientious Objector to not follow that order [to log targets into the computer system].

"Later, my first Sgt. was going to counsel me on my C.O. file. He said he was requesting a 1-AO classification, meaning I would remain in the military as a noncombatant. I had applied for a 1-O status, which is a discharge as a Conscientious Objector. It was clear on my application. So, this hurt my morale. I was being screwed with. This was mid-December. He should have come to me to counsel me regarding my C.O. classification a day or two after I turned in my application. I said that's not right. I am requesting a 1-O separation from the army. I refused to sign the general counseling statement. Signing it would have meant that I was agreeing to the 1-AO. So, he said, 'See you later.' And that was it.

"From the time I put in for the C.O. classification until the time I went AWOL, I received numerous negative counseling statements for minor infractions that nobody else

was getting recognized for. I was feeling stressed and betrayed by not being allowed to speak to my Commander and then having the 1st Sgt. be dishonest with me about the 1-AO instead of the 1-O and being written up on negative counseling statements constantly. Once I was feeling betrayed, I was feeling stressed. We got back from the field exercise and it was Christmas leave time.

"I put in for eight days leave starting on December 22nd. It ended on the 29th. I packed up all of my stuff. I went home on leave. I knew that they weren't trying to help me and they were delaying my process. I was too stressed to be there any longer and when I went on leave, I knew I was supposed to return from it, but I just couldn't do it.

"I stayed gone from December 29th until I turned myself in Monday, March 21st. I decided it would be best to go back and get this over with and they'd separate me out, for being AWOL as long as I was, or they'd actually process my C.O. packet. I came back having a lawyer this time.

"If they decide to chapter me out, for being AWOL, I'm prepared to accept that, because of my beliefs, if they won't play straight and fair and acknowledge that I deserve a 1-O classification as a Conscientious Objector.

"I've lost faith in their sincerity to properly process me as a Conscientious Objector at this point because of the lengthy amount of time that went by when they were intentionally not doing right by me.

"My C.O. beliefs as a Conscientious Objector are consistent with my understanding of Christianity. It took me a little while to understand it. I always said I was a Christian. But the military made me understand it when I turned to the bible for answers about war and it reinforced what I was feeling about not killing.

"At this point, I know I'm a Conscientious Objector and I don't feel that I need the army's approval to say that."

James Branum is the attorney representing Colton Turner in his struggle to be discharged from the army as a Conscientious Objector. On March 25th, Mr. Branum had this to say regarding, Colton:

"Colton is someone who did his best to play by the rules. He was seeking to be discharged under the law. He only

left [went AWOL] after discovering that the army wasn't playing by the same rules."

Branum also said, "I've represented many clients of different faiths who have sought C.O. status. But as a Christian, I'm always glad to see people of my faith who seek this status. I hope that more Christians in the military take seriously Jesus' nonviolent teachings.

"The army regs on Conscientious Objection make it clear that a C.O. applicant is to be given duties that conflict as little as possible with their beliefs. Specifically, they mention that the applicants are not to be forced to use weapons in training. The order for Turner to enter targets into weapons systems is a very clear violation of this reg."

Courage to Resist supports Colton Turner's right to be recognized and discharged by the army as a Conscientious Objector, condemns the denial of due process he has received from his command, and will support a decision by him to refuse deployment.

For ongoing updates on the case of PFC Colton Turner, please go to www.couragetoresist.org

Continued from page 7—MCC

through the building from wells drilled on either side. The water radiates heat in the winter to warm the building and absorbs heat in the summer to cool it, Reimer explained.

In Akron, Pa., energy efficiency has been a long-term priority. Since 2003, the maintenance department has installed better insulation, new windows, energy-efficient appliances, twist fluorescent light bulbs and automated lighting and a redesigned heating system, among many other improvements.

Darren Kropf, the Creation Care program coordinator for MCC Ontario, said that since many of MCC's global partners are feeling the first effects of climate change, MCC needs to make responsible energy choices that don't threaten their capacity to provide for themselves.

"Give people a fish, they eat for a day. But teach them how to fish, they have food for a lifetime. Let's also ask: 'Is anyone polluting the lake?'" Kropf says.

Chad Umble is a freelance writer from Lancaster, Pa. Linda Espenshade is MCC news coordinator.

HELP WANTED

The JMC Community News is missing something very , very important....

YOUR VOICE

We need more voices in this publication, particularly from our own community. Please consider writing something for the next issue.

Submissions could include...

- 1.Opinions
- 2.Bible Studies
- 3.News from our congregation
- 4.Recipes
- 5.Poetry
- 6.Black & White Art
- 7.Pictures
- 8.Discussion of current events
9. Letters to the editor

Please send your submissions to:

joymennonite@gmail.com

We encourage diverse viewpoints.

JMC Community News

A newsletter for Joy Mennonite Church



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