



# JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

## Pastor's Corner

When we pick up the church periodicals it seems the issue of homosexuality is a concern throughout the church. Some define this as taking a biblical stand on this issue. I believe in order to deal with this issue in a Christian and just way we must understand that the cultural war brewing in America is spilling over into the church. Homosexuality is an issue we like to avoid at the congregational level and ask conferences to establish a blanket rule.

We should not avoid the issue at the congregational level. We must avoid the tactics of the cultural war. A cultural war is when society is divided over an issue and each side believes they are absolutely right and the others absolutely wrong. Consequently, they do not speak to each other because they do not believe the others have anything to say to them. They speak at each other but not with each other. Each side seeks to intimidate the

others. Violence is sometimes used but not widely approved. It is more common to rally people to their point of view and isolate the opposition. It is a battle for the minds of the population. There is an attitude of keeping people of opposite views out of their lives. To do this we seek to deny the others participation in our institutions and in the national life of our country.

It concerns me greatly when people who I believe to be sincere use the Bible as a book of absolute answers to the hard questions of life, and in that way enter the conflict by the same tactics of the cultural war. The Bible is a book in dialogue and to understand it's truth we must enter that dialogue. In fact, we often do so without realizing it. Let me give an example: When Samuel anointed Saul to be King of Israel he told Saul that God has commanded the massacre of the Amalekites, including the women and children, to avenge the cruel slaughter of Israel when they were poor wandering slaves fleeing Egypt. (1 Samuel

15).

Samuel was a poor peasant prophet. He had no power or property to protect. He was known as a man of integrity and filled with the Spirit of God. How can such a person say that God commands the massacre of women and children? What we know about humanity is that we are capable of inflicting unbelievable cruelty on others that causes undescrivable pain. Out of that pain even a Godly person may say, "Of course God commands us to avenge this cruelty." The New Testament picks up the dialogue when it says, "Vengeance is mine, says the Lord," (Romans 12).

In the same way, by my sexual orientation I may say, "Of course homosexuality is a sin," and then select scriptures to support my view. If we are going to bring the issue of homosexuality to the church in Christian dialogue rather than participate in the cultural battle I believe we must follow a different set of rules.

First, the Bible is not a book of absolute answers to the hard questions of life. The biblical understanding is we will find the truth when we search for truth with all our heart. Second, the scriptures also teach us the arrogant will not find God, and God's truth, only the humble. It is arrogant to believe my understanding is absolute and all those who do not agree should be expelled. Thirdly, we must resolve not to intimidate anyone for their understanding and convictions. Only then can we enter Christian dialogue!

Lastly, we must understand that collectively we do not know the answers to the questions of homosexuality. We can choose to deal with the question through Christian dialogue or by the common methods of the cultural war in our secular society.

*Moses Mast*

## EDITORIAL by Terry Hostetler

So far this summer has been the busiest time I can remember in recent years. It

started with graduation, my son and two nephews and a niece all graduated this year. To those of you who came to Jake's graduation, I would like to say, "Thank you," your presence made it a

"special occasion" for us all. Next, a new grandchild came into our lives. The little fellow didn't start out quite the way you might hope for. He got shipped over to "Grandpa's house," because

his mom had developed complications, then a couple of days later he developed complications and had to be admitted back into the hospital himself, the next day his "daddy" was arrested

and held in jail. That seemed like a pretty poor situation for a baby to find himself in. He did recover, I believe God was responsible for that, his mother also recovered, and eventually his daddy got bailed out, (It's uncertain at this point how long he'll stay out). He had about a three-week stay in the hospital. During this time I saw so many things that amazed me. I saw from some people just how petty, selfish, and low-life people can be. I saw others who had some pretty major problems of their own, simply drop everything in order to be available to sit with this child at the hospital. I felt it important that someone stay there with him all the time. I knew the hospital would take care of him, but felt it important that we have "family" with him. Thankfully, most of the members of our family agreed, so between Grandma, Grandpa, and several aunts and uncles, we managed to keep "our baby" surrounded by family. Everyone pitched in, helping not only with staying at the hospital but with the basic

business of running our home, cleaning, cooking and just taking care of each other. It did give me a proud feeling seeing the way my family pitched in, in a time of crisis.

I would like to also add, that I don't believe I have ever seen a group of doctors and nurses more caring and dedicated than those we dealt with in the infant care unit at Children's Hospital.

One thing I have really been concerned about this summer is our young people. It seems so many of them are floundering around with no direction or in some cases in the wrong direction. This truly worries me. I really don't have a clue what to do about it. But I have to wonder, have I done enough? I realize that while we can teach our youngsters right and wrong, and we can show them the path, we cannot force them to take the right path. But that doesn't make me feel any better. Most of our own young people rarely attend church. I think we need to seriously work on this. Perhaps we could start a class for teenagers and young adults where we could

talk of modern problems but look to the scriptures for guidance, maybe someone of our own young people would want to teach the class. I've heard so many times how the Bible doesn't relate to "now" or "our problems." This is only an idea, and it's just a start, and it may not work, but we'll never know if we don't try. And it certainly won't work if we can't get the young people to attend. If anyone else has any suggestions please speak up, I really don't want to see our youngsters go the wrong way. Maybe if we work together we can do something to provide them with a better foundation to combat the lures of drugs, alcohol, and modern life in general.

As Terry said in the above article, this has been, and continues to be a busy summer for all! Bill and Thea Klassen will be visiting Turpin Mennonite in Turpin, and Eden Mennonite in Inola this month, to give presentations about the Oklahoma Convention of Mennonite Churches, which will be held in September.

Some of the following calendar items have been very recently arranged, and details may be sketchy at present. The address to Ron and Judy Perkins' new home will be announced in church, or you may call 236-4938.

Sat., Aug. 16, 6 pm....at the new home of Ron and Judy Perkins: Housewarming for the Perkins, and good-bye potluck for the Powers family

Sat., Aug. 23, 2pm...the bowling party has been rescheduled! Windsor Lanes, at 4600 NW 23rd

Joy Mennonite Church Meets at 504 NE 16th (just west of the oil derrick on Lincoln Blvd., south of the State Capitol.) We meet at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday.



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