



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

PASTOR'S CORNER

Last evening we went to hear Walter Sawatsky, professor of church history and very knowledgeable about the religious events in Eastern Europe in the last century, speak about the experience of Mennonites in Russia. The Mennonite experience began as a very tranquil experience after decades of religious persecution. There developed a time of peace and prosperity that endured for more than a century. This tranquil experience ended with famine and starvation and a revolution. Their little island communities of prosperity were plundered and burned. This was followed by decades of the worst kind of violence. Loved ones were taken away and disappeared. The revolution was declared to be in defense of the rights of the working class. In time the violence that was meant to defend them was turned against them in the greatest acts of violence that any government had ever directed at its own

citizens.

What follows are my own reflections about this story. People who lived that experience in Russia tell us that their days of peace and prosperity in life was much like we know it in the western world. A question we must ask ourselves...could the violence we now use to protect our freedom and way of life be directed towards the citizens of our land? There is a development that should concern us deeply. there is in the world today a production of goods that is unprecedented. Our ability to produce far exceeds the basic needs. The ability to produce bring an accumulation of wealth that is unprecedented in history. This wealth, however, is not only not distributed evenly, it is not distributed. It is controlled by a very few people. Disparity between nations has already plunged much of the world into violence. There are indications that this disparity will reach us in a short time. What will happen is not predictable except to say we can expect violence. How severe and against whom it will be directed is probably not known. The question we face, "How can people of conscience and people of faith be prepared for these

times?" I will present some ideas that no way include all we need to think about, but perhaps are a place to start. First, we should never be so arrogant as to pretend we know what we would do if my home was plundered, my house burned, and my loved ones killed. The most helpful thing we can do is look at the stories. There were among the Mennonites people of conscience, well-grounded in their faith and a compatible life style. These people were not spared the pain, but they were not shattered like some. There was for them a kind of inner guidance that helped them make good decisions. On the contrary, those who paid lip service to their faith and practiced a very materialistic life style were shattered by the experience and made decisions that proved disastrous. Survivors of the Russian experience tell us that their insensitivity to the poor and suffering around them during the good times may have caused some of the violence to be directed towards them. Their insensitivity did not cause the violence but it left them ill-prepared for what was to come.

I am disturbed when I sense that the vision for the future by people of faith is often not

different from the national vision. It is my sense that the American goal for the future is to insulate and isolate ourselves from the poverty that plagues the world, and justify an almost unlimited use of violence to achieve this. I also find it disturbing to see the disinterest in the story of our people in the recent past. Those two generations removed seem to have little interest in the story. We need to awaken the biblical model of story telling. We must tell more salvation storied rather than offering prescriptions to be saved. God help us survive our prosperity.

Moses Mart

Quote: "The most eloquent prayer is the prayer through hands that heal and bless. The highest form of worship is the worship of unselfish Christian service. The greatest form of praise is the sound of consecrated feet seeking out the lost and helpless"...Billy Graham

Editorial... by Terry Hostetler

By some of us from Joy Mennonite Church spent the morning at the Latino center working. These work days

when we get together and work are great. I actually look forward to them, I'm even disappointed when we have a work day and I'm not able to be there. It doesn't matter what kind of work it is. I appreciate

the opportunity to be able to work and do something just because it needs doing. I know it might sound a bit odd but I work for money all the time, it's just nice to get to work just because you want to. And

what makes it even better is you get to do it with friends. What more could you ask for? There is an added bonus to all this, when you're through

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(...from front)

working you get a sincere, honest, "Thank you," from whoever you worked for, which to me is worth a whole lot more than money.

There are many new faces around church nowadays. It's really nice seeing so many young people in our midst. Your presence adds something special to our group.

Happenings...

On the subject of the work at the Latino Center, last Saturday a group helped with clean-up at this award-winning center in the south part of Oklahoma City. This coming Saturday, the 31st, more work is planned. Contact Moses if you would be interested in helping.

Joy Mennonite Church held its annual business meeting this month. Minutes are available for those who would like to pick them up. Sunday, January the 18th, Joy Mennonite broke its attendance record. Fifty-nine people (almost) all crowded into our small room for a great service! Some of the visitors were from a group called Living

Water Ministries, which meets in northwest Oklahoma City. We were blessed by their testimonies and great musical abilities. It sure felt as though the roof raised up just a little!

The adult Sunday School is working on a plan for the next few months. We finished the series, "Vision: Healing and Hope," a few Sundays ago. Some classes have been held with the young people, looking at videos of some of the difficulties our youth face today. For the next few Sundays, different members will be facilitating discussions on selected current events, and how we can relate to them as followers of Christ. We would also like to continue to meet periodically with the youth, and have them teach us! We welcome ideas from everyone.

News...

February 7th and 8th, Moses and Sadie will be attending the Pastors and Spouses' Retreat at Great Bend, Kansas.

February 17th is the "Day at the Legislature" at the state capitol. Contact Sadie if you would like to attend.

February 22nd Moses will be attending a Home Missions

Meeting and a symposium on "Proclaiming the Word," at Bethel College.

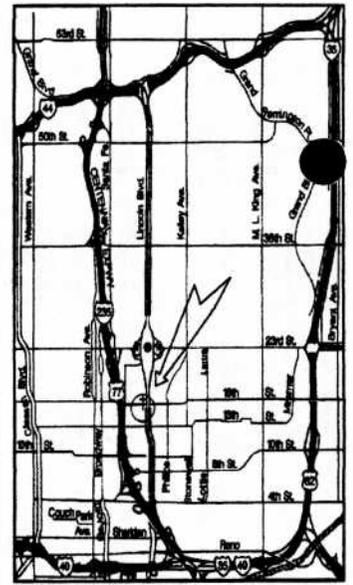
More quotes...

"A religious man is a person who holds God and man in one thought at one time, at all times, who suffers harm done to others, whose greatest passion in compassion, whose greatest strength is love and defiance of despair"....Abraham Joshua Heschel, Jewish Theological Seminary of America.

"Hunting God is a great adventure"...Marie de Floris OSB.

"I could not say I believe. I know! I have had the experience of being gripped by something that is stronger than myself, something that people call God"...

"Knowing your own darkness is the best method for dealing with the darknesses in other people"...Carl Jung



Joy Mennonite Church is located at 504 NE 16th (just west of the oil derrick on 16th.) We meet at 10:00 am on Sundays.

Everyone is welcome!

As we have recently been blessed with the gift of a great group of young people here at Joy, we would appreciate the prayers of all of our readers, that we might follow God's will and acquire the wisdom to be guides, teachers, and most of all, examples for these important people who will lead tomorrow's church and world.

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