



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER  
MARCH 2001



## PASTOR'S CORNER

### Healing for Oklahoma

After the executions of last month, there is a great need for healing among the people of Oklahoma. Every execution represented a victim of a cruel murder. We can only imagine the grief and pain of family and loved ones. State executions are, in a sense, a public participation in the grief and pain of those who have lost a loved one. Sadly, however, it is participation in that first stage of anger and a deep desire for revenge. From the testimonies of those who have lost a loved one in a senseless murder, the first response is anger and the desire for revenge. If the anger lasts too long, it turns into hatred and can consume the person with deep desires to do exactly what the murderer has done. Now that we have publicly participated in doing to the criminal what the criminal has done, killing them, all of Oklahoma is in need of healing. Our society is not well and this is showing up in various ways.

There is a vision of healing for undeserving people in the book of Revelation (Rev. 22). This vision speaks of a river of the water of life flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. The Lamb was also the victim of an unjust execution. On each side of the river was a Tree of Life, bearing fruit continually, not the normal once a year, but every month. The leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations. To give interpretation to this vision, one remembers the words of the One called the Lamb in this vision. The fruit bearing ones are those connected through the branches to the roots that reach the water. In contrast, the leaves are said to be for the healing of the nations. These are not the people who have confessed faith in the Lamb. But, just as the leaves will shade ALL those who come to stand under the tree seeking refuge from the sun, so in life those who do not believe, those who have not confessed faith in the Lamb, can come under this very tree that is continually bearing fruit and find healing.

The fruit is to be interpreted as those who have confessed faith in the Lamb and are following the Lamb's way of life. It is a life that believes in the transforming power of God. They live, believing God has forgiven them and they are ready to forgive those who sin against them, as we pray in the Lord's prayer. This vision in Revelation believes that the nations of the world, those who do not embrace the way of life manifested in the Lamb, can find healing in the presence of the believing community - just come and stand under the tree where the fruit is continually growing. While those who govern Oklahoma will not act on what church leaders are saying, I am greatly encouraged that there is such a tree in Oklahoma. After a plea for a moratorium on the death penalty was voted down, fourteen bishops, pastors and church leaders publicly gave their faith

positions against the death penalty.

Hope you had a nice Valentines day. Keep listening to the Lamb and stay connected to that life giving river.

*Moses Mart*

### If I Forget... Karin Evans

Last year, I had the privilege of singing in the choir for the dedication of the National Memorial on the fifth anniversary of the bombing of the Murrah Federal Building. President Clinton participated and shook hands with each choir member and we each received a rose. We were a 168-voice choir, representing each of the 168 persons killed. One of the choir members made laminated pictures of each victim, and we wore their images around our necks during the ceremony.

I had pulled several pictures out, and among them was the picture of a young woman killed in the bombing whose name I remembered well: she was the first person asked for when I answered the phone for family members the day after the bombing - looking for the missing. Days later, I saw her name and picture in the paper; she had been killed. She was only 27 years old. I wore her picture around my neck during the dedication ceremony.

This year, the same choir performed for the dedication of the National Memorial Center Museum on February 19, and I was asked to in the choir again. This was very meaningful for me. Rabbi David Packman gave the invocation, using Psalm 137: "If I forget you, O Jerusalem, let my right hand wither! Let my tongue cling to the roof of my mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not set Jerusalem above my highest joy." He then applied these words of the children of Israel to God saying to us, "If I forget you, O Oklahoma City, let my right hand wither....." These words were very comforting, reflecting the great strength and triumph over tragedy that is now manifest in Oklahoma City by the presence, power and love of God shown in so many ways since the dark day of the bombing. President Bush used the Apostle Paul's appeal to overcome evil with good, and my thought at that moment was, we must apply this teaching in ALL situations, always keeping in mind that high as the heavens are above the earth, so are God's ways higher than human ways, and God's thoughts are higher than human thoughts. Let us apply this beautiful principle in dealing with enemies, whether domestic or foreign!

The choir's anthem, "To Remember", closed the ceremony, just like last year. The choir director was one of the composers of this anthem. Here are the words we sang with much emotion and conviction: "We come here to remember those who were killed, those who survived, and those changed forever. May all

who leave here know the impact of violence. May this memorial offer comfort, strength, and peace, hope and serenity. Alleluia! Alleluia!" These are the same words ,with the exception of the Alleluia, that are found on the National Memorial gates to the area where the Federal Building once stood.

May we, who call ourselves Christians, always remember that violence is not only that which is done with guns and/or explosives, but ANYTHING that diminishes another person, whether it be an attitude, a lifestyle, a word against a person, abuse of any kind, gossip, poverty, oppression, and the list goes on and on! Violence is also anything that interferes with another person's growth and personhood. In the spirit of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, let us practice nonviolence which brings about true justice and righteousness! Peace be to you.

**February Revisited**

What an amazing month we have had! Moses and Sadie attended Pastors and Spouses retreat the first weekend in Feb. Karin Evans brought our message that Sunday, be sure to catch her article in this edition.

Those of you unable to attend on Feb. 11th, missed an incredible service. Our young people gave the ENTIRE service and surpassed ALL expectations. My son is still talking about their message about traveling different roads in your journey with God. We hope to include the sermon in a future issue. Scott and Kyle Bliss and Jessica and Melissa Warkentine were the co-producers of a service that will be talked about and pondered for years.

Paul Wingard is back home with his family . Praise God for His many blessings and please continue to pray for this family. It's amazing what God can do when believers call His name.

**COMING EVENTS**

- Ethel Poser will be having knee surgery Feb. 27. Please remember her in your prayers.
- Business meeting will be held Mar. 25. We will have a potluck dinner then also. Join us for a delicious meal and great conversation.
- Martha Shoemaker has been feeling under the weather lately and would appreciate your thoughts and prayers.

- Grace and Chester Roley are still in our thoughts . We miss them and they miss us. They really enjoy hearing from church members and any calls and letters are valued.

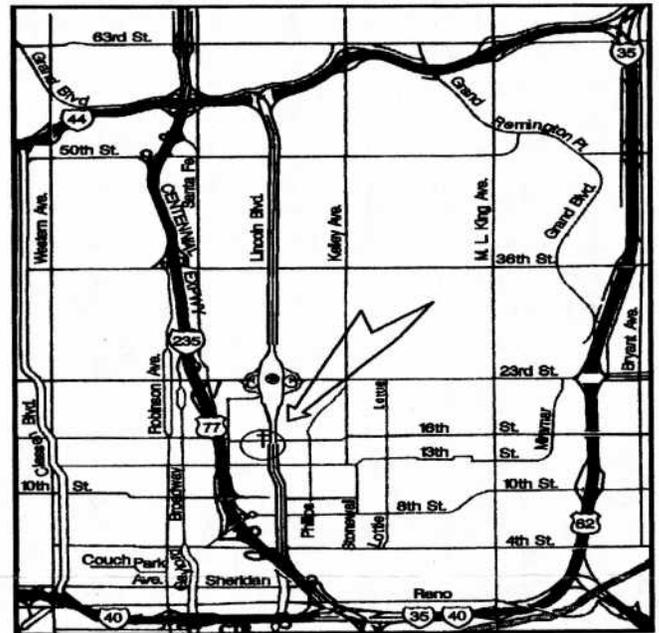
**FINAL THOUGHTS**

This is the beginning of Lent. I ran across an excellent explanation of the meaning of the Lenten season recently and thought I'd share. My

son thought Lent was what came out of the dryer , so I found this at an appropriate time.

Lent is the forty days (not counting Sundays) before Easter. This is the time when Jesus was in the desert after His baptism. During this time He was tempted, offered chances to be the wrong kind of messiah. He turned them all down. While in the desert, He was without many comforts of daily life. He had lots of time to ponder his past and future actions and his relationship with God.

This is a season for each of us to increase our prayer time, for each to think about who we are, how we treat others, and to reaffirm our faith in Jesus.



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