

# PASTOR'S CORNER

Every Friday from 12:00 - 1:00 is a time of prayer at Joy Mennonite Church. The idea for a weekly time of prayer comes from the Sojourners group. This is a group that

meets monthly to share concerns of peace and justice. As news of the war in Afghanistan filters back to us, we are concerned about some of the things we hear. America is using bombing as a safe way for us to reach and destroy the terrorist, but in this way many innocent people are killed or made refugees. We are concerned that our leaders do not pay attention to the pleas from within the country to stop the bombing.

We are facing a situation we have not faced before. We were attacked by a religious fanatic who preyed on victims of injustice and took advantage of their hopelessness, persuading them to fight not for justice, but to kill and eliminate from the earth those he identified as infidels. They were like a gunman on a killing spree. One can understand the urgency for intervention.

Now it appears there are more victims of the terrorist acts in Afghanistan than in America. I also know how much greater is the pain I feel when a fellow citizen suffers than when it is a foreigner far away. This is when I realize I am not of the same mind as God. This is when I must pray to connect to the mind and concerns of God for the whole of humanity.

I know one cannot compare the actions of an organized terrorist organization with a lone gunman but there are some things we might learn if we look at how we have responded to a gunman's attack. First, it makes a difference if it occurs on our soil and it is our people who stand between us and the criminal. We do not bomb a facility that trains a terrorist if it is on our soil. When a person in our country loses his senses and enters a factory with a gun and begins to kill, we call the police to intervene. We do not bomb the factory. We do not form an alliance with other criminal elements that would harm others who happen to be in the way in their effort to capture the gunman. We are not driven by vengeance to acts of retaliation, but all our energy is directed to prevent further death or injury.

We cannot claim to know the answers to the complex situation we now face. That is why we turn to prayer and why we urge others to turn to prayer. Some tell us they are praying for our soldiers. We urge them to also pray for those who die and are made refugees by this conflict. We also urge us to pray as Jesus taught us to, for our enemies.

Prayer will change us. It will change the fear that drives our actions, opening our eyes to a suffering humanity, suffering that is even greater than ours. We would urge all of us to abandon the use of prayer as a power to change things we want

changed. We urge everyone to permit communion with God in prayer to change us and bring us in harmony with the concerns of God for all humanity, and rely on God to do the changing.

Peace and blessings to all our readers. Fight the good fight, be strong in adversity, let your light shine in this dark world.

*Moses Mart*

## **This Year's Christmas Story** **Cheryl T. Crichley, 2001**

Dear Jesus of the manger, babies continue to be born  
At the worst of all possible moments,  
In the least appropriate places.  
Today they make their first cries heard In refugee camps, amidst  
just so much other crying, Instead of celebration,  
Born into uncertainty and fear and desperation.  
Or along the road, fleeing for the safety  
Their mothers' hearts tell them they will not find.  
A stable was not so bad,  
Where you slept with the gentle animals.  
Thank goodness it was then.  
Shells are falling there now, where you were born.  
You might be hurt or killed today,  
Collateral damage, but worth the cost.  
Too bad, they didn't mean to.  
No, they could not harm you, You were the child of God.  
Yet I am a mother And I want to stand in front of you  
In front of them, And say, aren't they all?  
Aren't they all the children of God?  
I want to run out before the tanks,  
To hold out up my hands to the falling bombs,  
To plead with the suicide bombers  
To cry out, wait, you must stop, These are the children of God,  
The victims as well and the destroyers.  
The guilty as well as the innocent.  
I want them all to be warm and well fed,  
To have hope for tomorrow,  
And security instead of fear.  
To peer out of their doorways and tents  
To see light that is beautiful and comforting  
And hear music to turn their tears to joy.  
To hear words, Fear not, For I bring you good news. ...  
There can be Peace on Earth,  
Goodwill towards all.  
When I talk of these things I am told that I do not understand,  
So please tell them what happened two thousand years ago.

This has been a full month. Jan. 1st, Menadue and Peter Storandt were died. We welcome Peter to our circle friends and offer sincerest best wishes. We had business meeting on the 13th as gotten a bit smaller and we are being challenged in new ways. All prayers would be gratefully accepted as we prepare ourselves for the next phase of Joy Mennonite Church. Moses Mast was in Newton KS on the 18th for Missions meeting. On Jan. 20th, we had a very thought-provoking sermon from Chester Slagel about listening for God. One question that really hit me - are we interrupting God when He speaks to us? A potluck dinner followed our morning service with lots of good food and conversation. That evening, we had a dialogue with Carolyn Yoder & Nancy Sider from Eastern Mennonite University in Harrisonburg, VA and Susan Urbach, survivor of the OKC bombing. We talked about what was helpful in talking with survivors of trauma and also about what should be avoided. These dialogues with various groups around the country will be used in teaching others what needs to be addressed in communicating with people who have suffered a tragedy in their lives.

#### February Events

Unfortunately, I published the wrong date for our weekly prayer meetings last month. These meetings are every Friday from 12-1 pm starting Jan. 4. Everyone is welcome to join and we hope to see you there. I know many of our readers are not able to attend and urge all of you to take a little time out at lunch on Fridays and remember our mission.

Hopefield Ranch is starting a Sunday afternoon get together on the 2nd Sunday of every month from 3:30 - 5:30pm. This will give us an opportunity to stay in contact with friends and make new friends in and around the Chandler area. If you live in that area, why not give Frank & Beverly Bliss a call and join us. This is planned as a family get together and the more the merrier. Blisses phone number is 405-865-2570.



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Our worship leader for the month of February will be Cheryl Crichley and the preaching schedule is as follows : Feb.3 &10 Moses Mast, Feb. 17 - Roy Evans, and Feb. 24 Karin Evans.

Roy Evans is preparing a series of Sunday school lessons for us on the book of Phillipians to be followed by a series from Robert Baker. We look forward to these new lessons and invite you all to join us.

#### Final Thoughts Deborah O'Neal

God sent me some new friends this past week. I'm learning to expect the unexpected every day. Jack, my husband, and I were doing some badly needed plumbing work which involved digging a VERY large hole in our back yard mostly by hand. While we were digging, a couple walked down the street and offered to help. They have worked at excavating for years and knew what we were trying to do. Tim and Carrie pitched in, dug like mad, helped fix the problem, answered thousands of questions from our children and became immediate friends. Tim told me they hadn't planned on walking down our street but just "felt" it was where they needed to go. Now they live across the street from us. Thanks God.

I consider that a miracle. What do you think is a miracle in your life? Does it have to be something huge before you know that it's God? Or can it be the tiny spider web on the bottom of the porch rail? Webster defined it as a remarkable thing. I believe God gives us remarkable things to see, hear, taste, touch and live every day. Sometimes you have to look hard, but believe me they are there. Listen for God, look for God in everything you do and every where you go. He's listening and looking for you all the time. Take care and come see us.

**JOY MENNONITE CHURCH**  
504 NE 16TH OKC OK 73104  
Sunday Services 10:00 am Sunday School 11:30  
All are welcome, please join us as you are able

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