



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER
DECEMBER 2003

Pastors Corner

Judea was a country under Roman occupation when Jesus was born. To live in a country occupied by a foreign power is an unpleasant experience at best and can be absolutely miserable. If we look seriously at the modern world it gives us a glimpse of the world Jesus grew up in and how it shaped his ministry. Occupation in the modern world is more likely to be a form of economic control, but powerful nations have also overthrown leaders in the smaller countries and imposed leaders to serve their interests. A common element of these imposed leaders is they have a history of criminal behavior.

Herod was king of Judea when Jesus was born. According to the Bible Dictionary by Davis, this Herod was a descendent of another Herod who had ten wives. The story of this Herod family is one of assassinations and killing of your kin to gain the right to the throne. The story of this Herod family reads like a mob family or a drug cartel. Killing the babies in Bethlehem just continues the story. The same story continues years later when Herod at his wife's request has John the Baptist beheaded. This is more than the story of killing a godly man. It is the story of living daily subjected to the terror of a criminal king appointed by a foreign power. These leaders then cannot understand why they are not appreciated. I have built a beautiful temple for you, I have constructed an aqueduct to bring us fresh water, I have improved your country in many ways and the thanks I get are your protest of my presence.

When we look at the teaching of Jesus in this context we are utterly astonished. It appears that Jesus was pressured to resist the leaders appointed by Rome, instead Jesus focused on the victims of oppression. His teachings were intended to encourage as well as to instruct how to respond to those who oppress you. The meek shall inherit the earth. Blessed are the merciful, do good to all people, the good and the evil, for that is the way God relates to us, and by doing the same you shall be called the children of God. It would seem that Jesus believed the hope to break the cycle of violence lies with the victims of violence rather than seeking to change the powerful perpetrators of violence.

Now that we have noted the focus of Jesus teaching we must also face a very sober reality, we live in a very privileged class in the world. We have not experienced the pain of oppression. Jesus did not address us directly unless it was to say, sell what you have. This does not leave us floundering, not knowing what to do; it is a matter of courage. We must resist the temptation to avoid entering into the experience of suffering by the oppressed people of the world.

Moses Mast

The Sonya Andreas Story by Dave Craighead

David Craighead is a retired journalist and still writes for the Oklahoma Conference of churches. David heard Sonya speak twice and wrote this article. We are including his article here with his permission...

Instead of suppressing terrorism, the U.S. is planting the seeds for more, a Mennonite speaker said in Oklahoma City recently. Sonja Andreas of Wichita, KS, a nurse and mother of two grown children, told about being imprisoned for three months following her symbolic protest at the School of the Americas, Fort Benning, GA, a year ago. Andreas spoke Oct. 26-27 at Mayflower Congregational Church, the Church of the Open Arms, and Joy Mennonite Church, OKC, in addition to two university classes. The School of the Americas, re-named the a Western Hemisphere Institute for Security Cooperation in 2001, is a combat training school for Latin American soldiers. The Pentagon is the primary initiator of the school.

Trainees have been brought to the U.S., but now more of the training is being done in the field – their own country.

It costs U.S. taxpayers \$20-30 million a year to operate the program, she stated. Over its 56 years, the SOA has trained more than 60,000 Latin's in counterinsurgency techniques, sniper training, commando and psychological warfare, military intelligence, and interrogation tactics.

Andreas said SOA manual instructed graduates to use torture, blackmail and assassination.

Among those targeted by SOA graduates are educators, union organizers, religious workers, student leaders, and others who work for the rights of the poor. The violence that is being done is not to protect us, but so that global corporations can continue to have access to the resources in those countries. Colombia is the most conflicted country, she commented.

Say our money there is going to the war on drugs, but going for corporate terrorism purposes. Americans of all ages, from over the U.S. and many walks of life have protested at the school for years, insisting upon its closure. Crossing a line there is a law violation.

Joy Mennonite Church
504 N.E. 16th St.
OK City, OK 73104
Ph. no: 236-4928

Organizers of the rally said don't cross the line unless you have a year and a half for court proceedings and detention. Andreas

did so and did time for walking on the grass.

One minister and a Catholic priest were among the 85 citizens arrested with her. Almost all were from outside Georgia. All wanted the school closed, and for that to happen peacefully.

Not all the protesters had a spiritual walk, something Andreas considers unfortunate because she believes religious faith helps to cope with suffering. She told the judge if he gave her nothing but probation she would violate it (a condition being a promise not to repeat her action).

Andreas drew a \$1,000 fine and was sent to a Texas prison, where she remained until this August.

Coming out of prison was more difficult than going in, because I'd made some very good friends. I had a good case of survivor's guilt.

She'd been certain she'd lose her job at her Wichita hospital by being away for three months. Co-workers, however, covered her shift and she did not lose it, a point of grace—literally a miracle.

November/December Revisited

John Otto preached at Joy Mennonite Nov. 16. John was a former pastor at the Spencer Mennonite church. We had a number of visitors from Spencer that morning.

Dec. 14 members of Joy Mennonite sang Christmas carols for the elderly and shut-ins in the neighborhood.

Coming Events

Preaching schedule: Jan. 4 Moses Mast

Jan. 11 Visiting speaker

Jan. 18 Karen Evans

Jan. 25 Moses Mast

Dec. 21 we will sing at the veteran's hospital.

Sunday, Dec. 28, 4:00, there will be a prayer vigil at the Jesus wept monument at the Murrah building site.

Joy Mennonite Church
4708 Outpost Dr.
Spencer, OK 73084-2722 (405) 236-4983
Moses and Sadie Mast (405) 771-4743

In Closing

For many people, for as many reasons, this past year has been pretty rough. But I'm reasonably sure that someone, somewhere, has had a harder time than you. So how about, in remembrance of Jesus, each of us finds someone this year who is having a hard time and do what we can to help. Just because they could use it. After all, Jesus did say something about "What you have done for the least of these you have done for me".

I wish each and every one of you a joyous and meaningful Christmas, and the best of wishes for the New Year.

Terry

Romans 8:1-11

A church that doesn't provoke any crisis,
a Gospel that doesn't unsettle,
a word of God that doesn't get under anyone's skin,
a word of God that doesn't touch the real sin of the
society around it,
what Gospel is that?
Very nice, pious considerations
that don't bother anyone;
that's the way many would like preaching to be.
Yet does such a Gospel
light the world we live in?
The Gospel of Christ is courageous;
it is the 'good news'
of him who came to transform
and take away the world's sins.

Oscar Romero¹⁵

Christ of the pilgrim road,
may your pilgrim people be
more concerned with justice
than with easy piety when so
many around us are hurting.

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage Paid
OKC OK
Permit No. 2545

Address Service Requested