

Joy Mennonite Church
Newsletter
October 2004

Pastors Corner

In this presidential campaign, faith has been promoted as a front-line issue as never before in our history. Precisely because of the enticing and intoxicating power of this religious fervor I agree faith is an important issue, not to promote but to withstand this powerful but misleading force in American politics today. We have a candidate who believes God has called him to lead this nation in these perilous times. His base of support are those who believe he is chosen of God for these times. This leader will have at his disposal an organized military and a weapons arsenal unequaled in all of human history. We have a biblical story that gives a very different understanding of how the divine connects to the ruling powers. Instead of speaking directly to the figure of power, the Pharaoh of Egypt, God goes to an outcast, a nomad in the desert, a lowly shepherd by trade, named Moses. God asked Moses to give his message to the revered pharaoh of Egypt, leader of one of the most revered superpowers of that time. I would be afraid too.

The power of the religious phenomena in America today lies in the way we twist the truth to make ourselves the hero of the story. We envision our leader as Moses leading us safely through the perils of a world turned against us. The reality is the concentration of power America has given to one man to lead us to war is comparable to the power of the pharaoh of Egypt who was regarded as divinely chosen and given unrestricted power. We cannot compare ourselves to the helpless slaves at the mercy of Pharaoh, but rather to the Egyptian superpower who used their power to impose their will on the world. Walter Wink has said, an understanding of God widespread in America today is more comparable to the early Egyptian and Babylonian understanding of God than to Jesus understanding of God.

The news media shows both presidential candidates making their campaign speeches surrounded by their supporters. The supporting crowds seem to give unconditional support to their candidate of choice. This lack of discernment shows how easily we can become captive to our ideology and be unconnected to reality. As a people of faith we must be grounded firmly enough to reality to know that no matter which candidate wins our work remains much the same. Neither one of our candidates indicate they understand the redemptive concerns and nature of God. Neither candidate indicate that they understand that every person born was born a baby in the image of God, including those named terrorists. These people also have families and loved ones and concerns for their families and loved ones. No matter how evil their deed, if one seeks the divine way

one must begin by seeking to understand their concerns, in other words, if your enemy is hungry, give them food. Neither candidate has publicly expressed interest in their concerns. They only speak of capture and kill.

The question arises, how can I vote in such circumstances. I respect those who say they cannot vote for either candidate, but this may not be the only right position to take. President Carter said, no president will be allowed to govern by the standard of the sermon on the mount. While we hold this to be true, there is also a great difference in our leaders. Some move toward the goal of a more just and peaceful world while others move away from that goal.

Two questions I would ask. How would the candidate deal with a policy decision that proves to be wrong? Will they continue to pour resources into a failed policy with the illusion that a failed policy can be overcome with more spending, or will they have the courage to change course? I would also want to know what will this candidate do to restore the respect for America we have lost with our superpower arrogance. Will this candidate show respect for the opinion of other nations, and especially respect for the United Nations? We can change our image in the world with a very simple act of listening to the concerns of these nations.

I am writing this article in our contemplation in the peace community of what we will do after the presidential election. I began this writing with the hope you would receive it before the election. Now I have been sick for about ten days and everything is behind schedule. We want to encourage everyone to keep hope and continue to work for a better world.

Moses Mast

For a pretty good while now, I've been noticing things that really rub me the wrong way about our culture, I suppose, in this country.

Do you remember when the news media was respected and trusted to bring unbiased reporting of what was going on? What happened to that?

People seem different now too. Do you remember how it seemed that people actually cared about each other? When people were actually concerned about something besides themselves or making themselves feel or look important? What happened to that?

I watched the series on TV, Amish in the City. I was amazed at the selfish, immature attitudes of the so called normal, modern young people. With their bickering, backstabbing, "me, me, me" garbage. But after some contemplation I believe they were a pretty good sampling of how much of America lives.

I have some wisdom to share especially with the younger folks who the schools worried so much about your self esteem. First, if you want to feel good about yourself, important or proud whatever you wish to call it, you must first earn it. Actually do something to be proud of. Do something that you receive absolutely no benefit from other than the good feeling you get from helping someone else. Second, in conversations volume cannot replace content. Many people talk so much without a clue, so they talk louder and louder to remain the center of attention. But it doesn't really work. Try actually knowing what your talking about, you'll have much better results.

Terry

September/October revisited:

- Joy Mennonite participated in planning an event to remember the tragedy of 9/11. It was a time of lamentation followed by stories of hope. We were reminded that in a time when war and violence dominate the news, there are also many stories of hope in the world.
- Sunday, Oct. 17 : Mark Wiens was our guest speaker, bringing us the sermon. Mark was the church planter and the first pastor of Joy Mennonite.

Coming Events:

- Nov. 5-6 The annual Mennonite Relief Sale at the Garfield County Fairgrounds in Enid, Oklahoma. There will be ethnic foods, quilt auction and craft sales.
- Sunday, Nov. 7, 2:00 PM The Spiritual walk for Peace has planned a walk to remind us that the task of building a culture of justice and peace will not change with the election.
- Saturday, Nov. 20 The annual Peace Festival at the Civic Center Music Hall in Oklahoma City, Joy

Mennonite will assist at the table for the Spiritual Walk For Peace and will also be taking donations for Mennonite Central Committee relief work.

Preaching schedule for November:

- Nov. 7 James Branum
- Nov. 14 Moses Mast
- Nov. 21 Karin Evans
- Nov. 28 Moses Mast

In Closing

If you get this before the election, be sure to vote. Also remember Veterans day coming on Nov. 11 (the day after the Marine Corp birthday). At least remember, even if you don't like or agree with the veterans, they still cared about you. Also coming soon is Thanksgiving. I hope you all get to share it with family and loved ones. But remember that it's OK to be thankful other days too.

Terry

-----As you may notice there are a few things missing from this newsletter. Due to recent computer problems everything was lost, but I should have it all fixed in time for the next newsletter.

Amanda-----

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