



## JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

MAY 2004

### Pastors Corner

Tradition can be a wonderful aid to us in our faith journey if we remember the principle the tradition stands for. If we forget the principle, the tradition degenerates into a burden. Recently I visited a young man and his family who left their faith tradition for what they believed is a more spiritual experience. The young man did not have fond memories of the tradition he left. This was not surprising or disappointing. However, I was surprised by the tradition he focused on, the tradition of peace. He believed emphasis on peace distracts from the more important issue, the salvation of your soul. One can acknowledge this could be true. Then he added, "I support the president of our nation One Hundred percent." This was after our presidents feet of clay had been exposed. I was keenly aware that my friend came to hold these beliefs in repeated conversations in this faith community he had chosen. The shocking truth is the faith community, or should I say organized religion can lead us to truth and can also lead us away from truth.

None of us has come to hold what we believe alone, but have been influenced, affirmed and nourished by those we have chosen to be with. One can recognize the common language used by various traditions. I am aware this is also the way I have come to hold what I believe. This may seem like a paradox, I cannot make the journey toward truth alone but belonging to a faith community is no guarantee that I am on the road toward truth. There is more that we must consider.

Let me suggest several steps. First, we must also enter our closet as Jesus said, and pray in secret. This is a time to enter our private being to meditate and reflect. We must humbly confess that our human understanding is partial. The promise of finding is made to those who seek. We must replace certainty with seeking.

Second we must have respect for truth, no matter who proclaims it. Too often we have respect for the one who proclaims the truth and reject the truth if it is not proclaimed by those we consider of the right tradition. Third, does our faith journey lead us to support the politically powerful, or do our concerns lie with the poor and oppressed. We are called to be holy as God is holy. Jesus defined this not as being perfect without any human flaws but rather as persons who share the pain

and concern of God for the suffering poor in the same way God does.

Fourth, the way we read the scriptures may be the most vital of all. To embrace what is known as the inerrancy of the Bible will force one to read the Bible selectively. To those who embrace the view of inerrancy Jesus is the most neglected of all the writers of scripture. The scriptures were written as a dialogue and to understand the scriptures we must enter the dialogue. This dialogue is the seeking Jesus spoke of. In this dialogue I hold the teaching of Jesus above the other writers.

America has been looked to as a leader to deal with the world's problems. Now it seems as if we have lost our way and the religious community has been one of the instruments that has contributed greatly to the way America has chosen. I hope what I have suggested will help make us a discerning faith community and help us find our way in these most difficult times. I hope you are having a good summer.

Moses Mast

I was pleased that so many came to tour Urban Impact on that chilly Sunday in March. I'm privileged and proud to be part of such a fine ministry, and glad that Martha and Shirley come and work so faithfully twice a week, with Martha planning to teach crafts classes, additionally. Thanks, also, to Phil Hughes who comes to help regularly. Just this past week, a woman came to Urban Impact utterly distraught and in deep crisis. She had left a drug treatment center, and had been walking the streets for a couple of days since her family refuses to let her come home, and she is not allowed to see her children. Her mother calls her "devil child," and her father threw her out of the house. She did not want to live any more. Those to whom she went for help had abused her as a child, including sexual abuse, and betrayal, and the pain was so great that she turned to drugs to cover the agony of the memories that kept haunting her. Her eyes were pleading. She said she would become a prostitute so she could pay for the drugs; the craving for the drugs was so great. I told her she would not do any such thing. She understood that she needed to do the hard work of going through

2004 MAY 05 10:30 AM

treatment and sticking with it, and when she saw that I cared about her, and did not reject her, as so many had done, she was willing to give it another try and get back into treatment. I gave her the names of two treatment centers that would be able to help her. I told her there was always hope and to never, ever give up. When she left, there was hope in her heart, and a smile on her face, and she knew that someone cared about her. She had told me God did not love her or care about her. I knew that her greatest need at the moment was to be loved and accepted, and that would give her the strength to hold on through the dark night of her soul. One of the business owners in the neighborhood, where she had tried to sell her coat for money, had told her to go to Urban Impact to get help. We are here for people in crisis, and we provide an alternative to destructive lifestyles, in a variety of ways. This reminds me of a story that I used in my sermon. It tells about Abraham and Sarah who were hosting an old man for dinner in their home. When they finished eating, the old man thanked his hosts for the fine meal. "No need to thank me," Abraham assured him. "Whatever I have given you come from the God of creation. Thank God." The old man replied, "Why would I bother to thank your God when I have my own?" And he reached into his pack and drew out a wooden idol and set in on the table. "This is the god whom I intend to thank for taking care of me." Abraham was furious. "How dare you worship a god made with hands," he shouted. He seized the man and threw him out of his home. "I'm sorry that I ever wasted my hospitality on you!" Before the old man was out of sight, Abraham heard a voice calling his name. "Yes, Lord?" the patriarch answered. "For 80 years I have protected and cared for the old man you just threw out of your house. All this time, though he has given credit to his wooden idol, I have continued to claim him as my own. Although he knows no better, Abraham, you do! Now go, find the old man, and bring him back. Make him welcome. You are to serve even those who do not understand that there is but one God!" And Abraham once again obeyed

God. The sermon was on John chapter 21, with its emphasis on Jesus' command, "Tend my sheep, feed my sheep!"

- Karin Evans

### April/May Revisited

Easter Sunday Shirley Hughes and James Branum were received as Members.

In April Ralph and Becky Ediger attended the MCC relief sale in Hutchinson, Kansas

April 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Joy Mennonite had a table to sell items for the Ten Thousand Villages at the annual National Association of Social Workers at the University of Oklahoma in Norman, Oklahoma

May 9<sup>th</sup>- Moses and Sadie Mast visited Duane and Gloria Beachey in San Antonio, Texas. Moses gave the Sunday morning message at the San Antonio Mennonite Church.

May 16<sup>th</sup>-Guests at Joy Mennonite were Darrel and Mim Mast from Hydro, Oklahoma. Mim was asked to give the Sunday morning message.

### Coming Events

On the 30<sup>th</sup> Joy Mennonite will remember our Graduates of this year. They are Amanda Hostetler, David Zerger, Kyle Bliss and Melissa Warkentine. David graduated from the University of Oklahoma. James Branum will give the message that morning.

June 18<sup>th</sup>-20<sup>th</sup> will be the annual church camp-out will be at the Little Ax site at Lake Thunderbird. Stan And Marlene Smucker will be our guest speakers.



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