



Western District Conference

# JOY MENNONITE CHURCH AUGUST 2007 NEWSLETTER

## Pastors Corner

I am now retired after fifteen years as pastor of Joy Mennonite Church. These were not ordinary fifteen years. This was fifteen years in accelerated time. Measured in real time this was the same as the time I began school at the age of six until I reached the age of twenty-one. Compared to the last fifteen years my early years was time in slow motion. I do not know in which time period I learned the most. It is now fifty years since I turned twenty-one. If I learned anything in these fifty years of my adult life I would say I came to understand that my understanding of truth is always partial, and my understanding was a growing process and never perfect or complete. I would say this in particular to my understanding of salvation and the atonement for sin.

Let me explain how I began. I grew up in the Amish church that traditionally did not concern itself about those outside their circles. However there was a movement among the Amish that saw this as wrong and believed we should become involved in mission work and in time organized mission outreach. This movement was strongly influenced by preachers like DL Moody and other revival preachers. I was moved by the influence of this movement and wanted to participate. I had no doubt that my understanding was complete and I was confident about the way to speak to people about their salvation. Salvation is a gift from God and there is nothing one can do to earn this salvation. I was deeply moved by the understanding that one can come as you are, no matter how scarred by sin your life is and God will receive you. You receive this gift by accepting Jesus as your savior for which there was a simple ritual to do just that. I do believe there is truth in what we believed and taught but it was partial and some even seriously flawed.

My understanding is still partial and will be as long as I am tied to this body of flesh but I also feel that in the forty-nine years since I went to Canada to join the mission effort there I have gained some understanding that I did not have earlier in my journey.

Our best understanding comes when we have no fear of the consequences for speaking the truth. To speak without fear describes the writings of the prophets and teachings of Jesus. The prophets spoke their understanding of truth to kings and religious leaders with seemingly no fear of the consequences of their words. The prophets declared that to pretend to worship God while practicing injustice to the poor

offends God. The prophets suggested that religious services be suspended until the practice of injustice is corrected. This is quite the opposite of encouraging people to attend religious services with the hope that religion will correct your sinful practices. Jesus echoed the teachings of the prophets when he declared that one will be accepted into God's kingdom on the basis of your acts of kindness to the poor and downtrodden.( Matthew 25)

Now the prophets declared that it is not in religious ceremony but in our choice to live our lives concerned for the poor and the downtrodden that pleases God and Jesus taught that we can choose to either respond or not respond to the suffering of the poor and that choice will determine our destiny. Should we then invite people to accept Jesus as their savior with the hope that we can disciple them later. Jesus asked one thing of his disciples follow me, referring to the works of mercy and the life of love he lived. If you seek justice for the poor you will be hated and mistreated by the those in power. This response of hatred and abuse from the powers for your efforts of justice Jesus called bearing your cross. If you want to be my disciple you must be willing to take up your cross, if you do not take up your cross you cannot be my disciple. I would conclude then that we might focus more on life's choices and following the way of Jesus rather than an easy ticket to heaven when we speak of salvation.

*Moses Mast*

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With the retirement of Moses, we now welcome our new Pastor Norman Berry, his wife Linda and our associate Pastor James Branum, whose main target will be Peace and Justice issues.

Those of us on the search committee feel we put together a pretty good team. In case you feel you may have heard these names before, you are correct. They have been part of our group for some time now.

In our early years, change was a very common thing, coming often and often unexpectedly. For the past , I guess fifteen years now things have settled down, This has been a

good thing for us. But now, there seems to be a sense of excitement around us, wondering what the future will bring for us. Wondering what direction God will be pointing us in.

We are thankful for our past and excited about our future. Please pray with us for guidance and wisdom. And ask God to make us smart enough to follow where he leads.

Thank you  
Terry

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Sept. 9 council meeting

Jacqueline Perkins will be Baptised  
A Pot luck dinner will follow.

Sept. 21 International Day of Peace

Pinwheels for peace has been organized to include children. Some Oklahoma City schools are having their art classes participate. The evening of Sept. 21 all the participants are invited to the Gold Dome, 23rd and Classen to recognize the efforts of the children. We hope to have children from our church neighborhood involved.

web site: [pinwheelsforpeace.com](http://pinwheelsforpeace.com)  
[internationaldayofpeace.org](http://internationaldayofpeace.org)

Local info: [www.una-okc.org](http://www.una-okc.org)

Sept. 23: Walk for Peace  
2:00 P.M. Episcopal Center  
Corner of 9th St. + Robinson

Sept. 23 Graduates from last spring will be honored  
A pot luck dinner will follow

Sept. 30 Guest speaker Russell Stokes  
A pot luck dinner will follow

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SPECIAL EVENT: Moses and Sadie Appreciation Dinner  
Sept. 15.2007 6-9 p.m. at the Kiwanis Park South Pavilion.  
Corner of Midwest Blvd & East Steed Midwest City. Meat  
Drinks and Table servings provided. Please bring a side dish  
or dessert

The Preaching schedule is up in the air at this moment depending on who's healthy enough when, but you can be assured that someone will speak.

In Closing

Summer is coming to a close, school is starting for the youngsters. Time certainly slips away. Take special care to enjoy your time with friends and family, it really is important. Don't put it off, you might run out of time.

Terry

*Is nuclear holocaust inevitable if the arms race is not stopped? Frankly, the answer is almost certainly yes. ...I cannot see any way in which nuclear war could be branded as being God's will. Such warfare, if it ever happens, will come because of the greed and pride and covetousness of the human heart. ...We cannot afford to neglect our duties as global citizens.*

Dr. Billy Graham