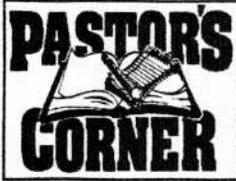


Joy Mennonite Church

The tragic bombing in Oklahoma City stays on our minds. At first we asked, "How could anyone do this to us?" Now it appears the responsible persons are some of us and we ask, "What has happened to America?" Has something died in our soul? Such a terrorist act can only be committed by one with a seared conscience. How could a person grow up in our midst and commit such a horrendous act against his own people?



When Channel Nine of Oklahoma City broke their continual coverage of the bombing, they aired a documentary of the history of Native Americans. The first story of this documentary

was the massacre of Indians at Wounded Knee. The criminal profile of the bombers of the Federal Building and the American Army generals are the same. It is one who can blow people away and rationalize that it is right. The perpetrator cannot feel the pain of the victims. Acts like the massacre at Wounded Knee and the bombing in Oklahoma City have happened many times in our history and only the victims feel the horror.

People and nations continue to perpetrate violent acts of retaliation against each other. By their very nature, acts of retaliation target innocent people. The victims of this violence ask the same question that people of Oklahoma City are asking, "How could anyone do this to us?" One can only perpetrate such violence and justify doing so by searing one's conscience and refusing to feel the pain of the victims, and denying that it is evil.

I cannot say that it is so, but I ask myself if it may not be because our collective conscience is seared and we have practiced and taught our children for many years that violent retaliation is the best way to respond to wrongs committed against us and that is how finally one of us perpetrated this violent act as the way to deal with his grievances against his own people.

Where should the community of faith focus after such a tragedy? We understand the immediate attention we need to give to the victims of this crime. We must help people process their grief and pain. Rage and anger are normal human responses. We must not look past the present human suffering and expect the new creation immediately. But as people of faith, we believe there is a way to a new creation. We remember Jesus who was unjustly condemned to die and he prayed, "Father, forgive them, they know not what they do." We who are followers of the crucified Christ are called to break the cycle of violence. We believe in the redemptive power of God. This tragedy gives us a glimpse of how God is in power, never violating the principle of allowing human persons to choose between good and evil, but then out of the great tragedy of evil, God can make the world a little more like the one God desires.

The wish to destroy the perpetrators of this crime, on the one hand, is quite normal. On the other hand, this wish denies the redemptive power of God. We cannot expect that we can immediately be at the moment to forgive, but people of faith believe that moment will come. The greatest moment in the life of nations who experience great tragedies, is the moment when there is the collective will to forgive. The greatest modern example is South Africa. Without this moment, South Africa could never have experienced the great changes that occurred there.

Let us affirm with great conviction: We believe in God; We believe in God's redemptive power; We believe in God's rule of the world; We believe the world now is and will be what God wants it to be. Let us as people of faith direct people to that great moment to believe in redemption and to forgive, and then true healing can begin, and the foundation is laid for a new city.

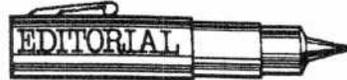
Moses Mast

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(405) 799-7836

Church Telephone No.:

May 1995



Dear Friends,

"Soap box" time again, and I would like not to look at it quite that way, but rather as a continuation of some measure of self-appraisal that has appeared occasionally in this column.

In our 1995 post East euphoria -- that good feeling of revitalization, that we were really beginning to understand and believe God's Easter promise of salvation for us -- we become apathetic and fail to recognize the roots of some of our personal, social and political problems.

Oh well, Easter is less than a year off now until our annual (last month I said "reflection and medication") injection. In the meantime, we have gotten psyched up over celebrating Christ's birth at Christmas. That way we have a live body once again to take us through the crucifixion process next Easter.

Sarcastic -- maybe, but our commitments rarely get to the point of truly acknowledging that Jesus survived the crucifixion last year and all the years before, and yet we remain sinners. Our cycle of penitence seems developed to peak at Easter, slide along through the year (unless we experience tragedy or disaster), and be ready for lent once again to jar us loose.

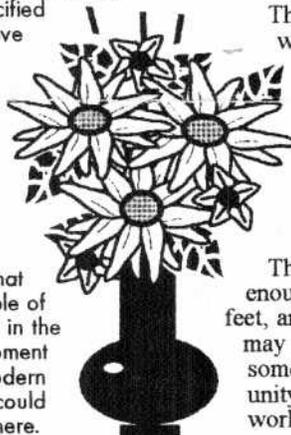
We have all watched, maybe in growing fear, the increase in street and/or other violence, and we seem powerless to approach a solution constructively. We hear of crime -- rich on rich, poor on poor, white on white, black on black, oriental on oriental, and any combination thereof, so it is not surprising that last month's tragedy could be countryman against countryman, but it says something about each one of us and our relationship to the influences that are researched, studied, and debated as causes (or effects) of us living in a world run amok, i.e. deterioration of family and moral values, departure from the church, free sex, divorce, drug and alcohol abuse, crime and violence on TV.

The organized church must shake its collective head at how war, power, greed, hate, self-centeredness, and other forces of evil seemingly are much more effective in inflicting death, pain, suffering and devastation than are peace, love, tolerance, forgiveness, prayer, and compassion for others in eliminating or alleviating it. Our "lobby" must not be as rich or have as much effective exposure. I am truly discouraged at how limited we appear to be.

The recent bomb blast in Oklahoma City was severe enough and loud enough to wake some and get others to their feet, and the ensuing prayer festivals have suggested that this may be the spark to kindle brotherly love and fellowship -- some indications are definitely visible in the bonding and unity we have all witnessed in our behalf from around the world.

In our motions to pick up these pieces, there are many agencies needing assistance -- please support generously those of your choosing or persuasion, and in so doing, love each other from the heart, also.

Bill Klassen

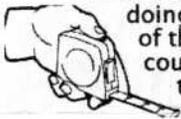


FELLOWSHIP NEWS:

Sadie Mast attended a volunteer appreciation dinner at Eddie Warrior Correctional Center for those who bring children to see their mothers at this prison.

Virgil Regehr, Inman, KS, met with Ralph Ediger and Moses and Sadie Mast to discuss transportation possibilities from the Will Rogers Airport to the Wichita '95 conference.

Many of our members turned out for our workday, April 1st, cleaning at the church, and also working at a neighboring senior citizen's home, rebuilding her back porch. Moses later finished the job, as well as doing repairs at the house of the Guatemalan refugee couple. We are fortunate to have a carpenter for



a pastor!

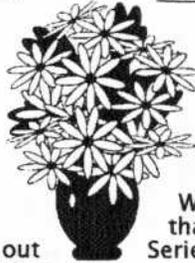
One of our charter members, Peter Brueckner, a native of East Germany, became a US Citizen on April 14, after living in the United States for over 30 years.

The outpouring of love and concern we have received from many of our friends and families around the country since the April 19th bombing has been greatly appreciated. Our church's house was not damaged, although we are only about one-and-a-half miles from the bomb site. (See map.) Sunday, April 23, we canceled S.S. and had an extended time of sharing and prayer during our worship service, followed by a potluck meal and more sharing. A few of our members knew of people that died in the tragedy. One friend narrowly escaped, but her six co-workers all perished. Later in the week, Sadie helped organize people to serve food at the Red Cross locations for rescue



workers at the bomb site. Several of our members were part of this necessary effort.

SS NEWS:



The Anabaptist/Mennonite History class will continue in May, on Sunday evenings at 5:30pm, after a break for Easter and other cancellations in April.

We wish to thank the churches that have donated Foundation Series SS materials and leftover story papers: Faith Mennonite, Newton, KS; First Mennonite, Halstead, KS; and Hope Mennonite, Wichita, KS. Others wishing to donate items please call Darlene Powers at (405) 787-6433.

COMING EVENTS:



Sunday, May 21, we are planning a picnic lunch at Will Rogers Park. All are welcome to join us for food, fun, and fellowship!

World Neighbors will be having a bike ride on Saturday, May 27. Money raised will be used for projects in Bolivia. Persons interested may contact Cheryl Critchley, 672-4734.

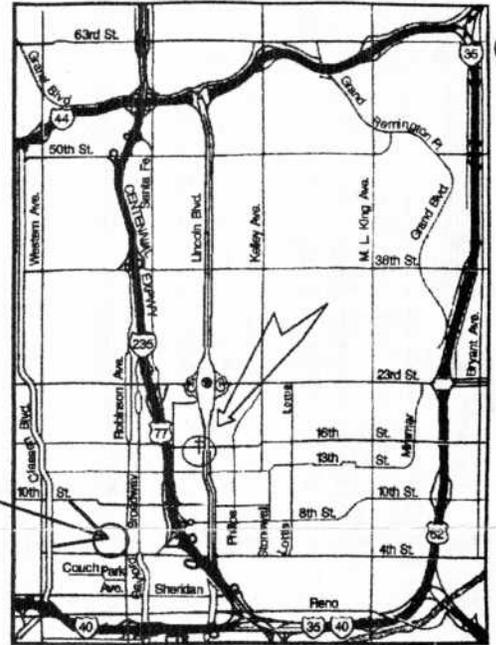
Wichita '95  Wichita Watch: Put love into action by signing up to help build one of 20 new homes for low-income families with Mennonite Housing and Habitat for Humanity, Wichita. It's all part of Wichita '95 in Kansas, July 25-30.

Many students will be graduating this month, and we wish to offer our congratulations to all of you!



Worship Service

Every Sunday at 10 O'clock A.M.



Church Address: 504 NE 16th St.
(just west of the oil derrick)

DATES TO REMEMBER:

- May 14 (Sun) Mother's Day
- May 21 (Sun) Church Picnic
- May 27 (Sat) World Neighbors bike ride
- May 29 (Mon) Memorial Day
- June 18 (Sun) Father's Day
- July 25-30 GC/MC Joint Conference, Wichita, KS



OKC-AREA READERS: If we have not heard from you lately, and you wish to continue receiving this newsletter, please call and let us know.

ALL CHURCHES receiving this newsletter please feel free to post it. Thanks!

MOSES & SADIE MAST
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