



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER
JANUARY 2002



PASTOR'S CORNER

The story of Mary and Joseph and the birth of Jesus takes place in a context so foreign to our comfortable American lives that we find it difficult to interpret the story or comprehend

the redemptive concerns of God. Particularly we find it hard to understand that God chose to live the human experience among the helpless and powerless people of the world. Mary and Joseph were poor peasants from the out back part of Palestine, away from the centers of power, both political and religious. They were not considered influential persons, certainly not someone you would choose to shake up the religious world.

The story tells us that Jesus was born in a stable. We may not have an exact modern comparison, but under a bridge might be close. Maybe it is because we do not know many of this homeless class, but I do not know anyone from the homeless class that are like Mary and Joseph. In the impoverished nations of the world one finds persons without education, who are degraded by the more elite class. But among this mass of people are gifted and intelligent persons. To be relegated to a stable to give birth must not be seen as an isolated incident but treatment the lower class lived with daily. To interpret the story we must not take Mary and Joseph out of this class as we are so apt to do.

The story tells us that Mary was chosen by God to be the mother of Jesus and Joseph to be the father. Both Mary and Joseph heard God speak to them through angels and through dreams. Let us try to understand that those who hear the divine voice, whether through angels or dreams are spiritual giants. They are paying attention. Their concerns mesh with the concerns of God for the world. When our concerns do not mesh we do not hear. It was a spirituality one can only learn in a life of helplessness and powerlessness. These are the ones who look to God.

Let us try to understand the harshness of life in Palestine during this time. Palestine was under the rule of a foreign occupational government. Because of the resentment of a foreign ruler occupational governments feel compelled to be firm and tough. We get a glimpse of what this is like in the story. Mary, who is about to give birth to her first child is forced to make the journey to her town of origin to register for paying taxes. We can only imagine how badly Mary wanted to be with family and loved ones to give birth to her first child. We can imagine Mary pleading for an exception but the authorities saying if we make an exception we will lose control. The system of taxation takes precedence over a mother and an unborn child. This we must see not as an isolated incident but as a glimpse into the

harshness of life under foreign rule.

Another part of the story that is difficult to interpret is the massacre of the children. In fairness to the Romans, they were not void of a conscience. They recalled governors for actions far less than this murderous act. Whatever really happened we do have a picture of how people of power act when their power is threatened. The story tells us that when King Herod heard the news that a baby was born destined to be king of Israel he became trapped in his fear, so afraid he lost his sanity and ordered the killing of all the children of Bethlehem under the age of two.

To this day rulers of the world live in fear of losing power and when they are sufficiently threatened they lose their sanity and order the elimination of those who threaten them and their kingdom. The sad thing is the religious community joins their national leader to eliminate the one who threatens our place of power in the world. Just like Herod, the way to the one who threatens us is the killing of countless innocent victims. Let us not forget that God chose to live his human experience among the helpless and powerless people of the world. I pray that we will all have a blessed and meaningful holidays.

Moses Mast

REMEMBERING JOY MENNONITE CHURCH

Joy Mennonite Church was born while Thea and I were stumbling around without a church home in New Jersey.

What a surprise it was near the end of 1990 to return to Oklahoma City and find a General Conference Mennonite church had sprouted up in our absence. The charter service was in October of 1990 but the deadline for charter membership had been extended to 31 December. We just made it under the wire.

That was truly the beginning of a wonderful chain of experiences, mostly but not limited to personal relationships with people. Our fellowship was never like a marathon - hundreds gathered, running, and competing; rather, a small, intimate group of believers who needed to work together to "sail our ship". And nearly everyone held a position or accepted responsibilities for some function of/at Joy Mennonite Church. Maybe a stupid analogy, but at one point our pastor, Moses Mast (a carpenter/builder) had twelve followers (card-carrying members).

Members have come and gone, and at this writing only four remain from the original dozen. Down from a high of 18, it stands at 14. The nearly monthly carry-in dinners only added to the fellowship of love and friendship that was such a vital part of our experience at Joy Mennonite, so it is with some pain that Thea and I have returned to Hutchinson, KS.

God never gave up on me, coaxing me into closer walking patterns in my life with Him. God bless and keep all of our friends at Joy Mennonite Church. Bill Klassen

The people at Joy Mennonite Church became our best friends in Oklahoma. They became our family when we lived away from family (mine in Canada, Bill's scattered over the United States with many cousins in Kansas). Moses and Sadie Mast were and are the soul of JMC and have provided deeper meaning to our faith and a closer walk with God. I will always cherish the almost eleven years we were able to attend and be part of that church in Oklahoma City.

There were and are many other dear people who have helped us in many ways (Frank Bliss with his computer knowledge, Grace Roley with her gentle manner, Ralph Ediger in getting us acquainted with the church in the first place, Martha Shoemaker always ready to help where she can, etc., etc.). And then the great finale when the church people were there to help us with our move to Hutchinson, KS (Debbie O'Neal with her expert loading, Ralph and son Jarrod lugging the heavy furniture, Moses and Sadie, Terry Hostetler, Frank and Kyle Bliss, and Becky Ediger giving emotional support) - thank you all so much for your love and kindness to us. We will never forget any of you!

Thea Klassen

December Revisited

December has been a busy month. We said goodbye to Bill & Thea Klassen on the 2nd. Moses & Sadie Mast were in Clinton, OK on the

10th for Oklahoma Pastors and Spouses Mtg. On the 23rd, we had our annual caroling party after a potluck dinner at the church. We have had many visitors this month and look forward to seeing these new friends more.

January Events

Jan. 1st - New Years Day. New year, new resolutions. Resolve to find your "neighbor" this year - where ever they are.

- Jan. 3rd - VORP (Victim/Offender Reconciliation Program) Mtg. at Golden Corral 1501 SW 74th OKC Lunch on your own Contact Sadie Mast for more info: 771-4743

- Jan. 28th - A time of meditation and prayer for peace for the world and ourselves at Joy Mennonite from 12:00 -1:00 pm. Everyone is invited to attend
- Our worship leader for Jan. will be Ralph Ediger and the sermon roster is as follows: Jan. 6th & 13th- Moses Mast, Jan. 20th - guest speaker Chester Slagell, Jan. 27th - Karin Evans

Final Thoughts Deborah O'Neal

Last Christmas we were thinking about all the things we didn't have. This Christmas we are thinking about all the things we do have.

Last Christmas we were counting our money. This Christmas we are counting our blessings.

Last Christmas we thought a man who could rush down a football field was a hero. This Christmas we know a man who rushes into a burning building is the real one.

Last Christmas we thought it was enough to celebrate the holidays. This Christmas we know we must also find ways to consecrate them.

Last Christmas we were thinking about the madness of the holidays. This Christmas we are thinking about the meaning of them.

Last Christmas we were getting on one another's nerves. This Christmas we are getting on our knees.

Last Christmas we were giving thanks for gifts from stores. This Christmas we are giving thanks for gifts from God.

Last Christmas we were thinking how good it would feel to be affluent. This Christmas we are thinking how good it feels to be alive.

Last Christmas "peace on earth" is something we prayed for on Sunday mornings. Now it is something we pray for every day.

**JOY MENNONITE CHURCH
504 NE 16TH OKC OK 73104**

**Sunday Services 10:00 am Sunday School 11:30
All are welcome, please join us as you are able**

MOSES & SADIE MAST
4708 OUTPOST DR
SPENCER OK 73084

Moses & Sadie Mast 771-4743
Spencer, OK 73084-2722 (405) 236-4938

4708 Outpost Dr
Joy Mennonite Church



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