



**Joy Mennonite Newsletter**  
**December 2005**

**Western  
District  
Conference**

**Pastors Corner**

A core belief of the Christian faith is that one cannot atone for our sins. Traditionally, we have understood this in a mystical sense, believing we are accountable to God for our deeds, whether they are good or bad. Because we cannot atone for our sins God accepts us by forgiving us our sins if we confess our sins. For those who feel a weight of guilt for sins they have committed this is a powerful proclamation. To be told that one can begin life anew with your sins forgiven is truly good news for those who carry a weight of guilt for their sins. For others, while we would not dare say so, we may feel quite righteous and confession is just part of the ceremony.

Another way of understanding our inability to atone for our sins is to acknowledge that we cannot atone for a bad deed by doing a good deed. This is true, not just because God is offended and will not bargain with such a trade off, but is best understood in the human experience. In the human experience we cannot atone for a bad deed by doing a good deed. An example, if we should kill a person, no amount of good deeds can make amends for that deed. The only meaningful things one can do is confess, repent, and regret what we have done and do what we can for those we have harmed, but still know that we can never make up for the bad deed with a good deed.

We hear complaints that the news media does not report the good deeds of our military in Iraq. We acknowledge this is probably true because the good deeds are more ordinary and the news media prefers the sensational. I do not doubt that our soldiers perform many good and compassionate deeds. Our soldiers are like people everywhere. Within people everywhere is a sense of compassion, when we see people suffer we want to help. It would be arrogant for us not to understand that our soldiers are people too. However there is still Falluja, unjust incarcerations, prison abuse, and all the other abuses that accompany war. If we believe we should be welcomed and accepted for our good deeds then

we do not understand the principle of atonement. We cannot just fault our soldiers. The failure lies within all of us. When disaster strikes in foreign countries Americans have been generous with aid. America has also invaded other countries twenty-two times since World War II for our national and corporate interests. Then we wonder why so many people in the world hate America. What a difference it would make in our relationship with the nations of the world if we just remembered the principle of atonement, we cannot atone for our bad deeds with good deeds.

We wish you blessings and peace in this season of the year.

-Moses Mast

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Letter from Laura Culbertson: hoping to go to Iraq as a delegate with Christian Peacemaker Team.

Since the day my country went to war on Iraq I've felt that I should do something. In the months that followed up to the war I'd become quite politicized, speaking out publicly against the war at the university of Oklahoma where I was a student. I took a class on nonviolent direct action. I organized events on campus. People began to refer to me as an activist, but I did not feel like a peace activist. I cried every night over the violence that was defining the lives of so many half ways across the globe. As I mentioned above, I felt as if I should be doing something, but I wasn't sure what. I still felt useless.

Through Sadie Mast I met my first CPTer, Jerry Stein, who spoke on campus about his work in Baghdad outside of Abu Ghreb prison. I remember thinking, now this work is really something, and about a year later after meeting my 3rd CPTer, Sadie asked me-why don't you do this? Why not join a CPT delegation, and I had the answer to my question.

Best,  
Laura

Laura Culbertson is scheduled to go to Iraq as a delegate with Christian Peacemakers in Feb. 2006. However with the kidnapping of four members of the Iraqi team these plans may be uncertain. The cost of traveling abroad has risen dramatically since the price of fuel has risen so much. The cost of a delegate to Iraq is now \$3000. If anyone would like to help Laura with this expense you can send it to Joy Mennonite, ear marked for CPT

CPT website: [www.cpt.org](http://www.cpt.org)

### Recent Events

**Nov. 6-** Don Vaught, executive director of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches preached at Joy Mennonite. In the Sunday school hour Don spoke of the services the conference provides for the churches.

**Nov. 20-** as a surprise for Ralph Edigers Birthday, Ralph and Becky's six children and their families attended Sunday morning services at Joy Mennonite. We all shared Ralph's joy for their presence.

**Nov. 27-** Members of Joy Mennonite sang at the Veteran's hospital. The hospital staff had told us it would be better to sing at other times than Christmas when they have too many groups.

Terry Hostetler had surgery this past week. Terry is doing fine.

We ask for your prayers for the Berry family. Norman and Linda Berry's son has been in treatment for cancer. They thought he was doing well.

**\*Update:** I was informed this week that the Berry's son visited the doctor again and now it appears the cancer has not returned, for this we are thankful, but please continue praying.

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### Coming Events

**Dec. 11-** members of Joy will go Christmas caroling in the neighborhood and at a nursing home where one from the neighborhood is staying.

**Dec. 18-** in the evening members of Joy and anyone caring to attend will gather at the Warkentines home for a Moravian love feast.

### Preaching schedule:

**Dec. 4-** Moses Mast

**Dec. 11-** Moses Mast

**Dec. 18-** Norman Berry

**Dec. 25-** James Branum

### In Closing:

I'm hoping that all of you are praying for the CPT workers who are now being held captive. Pray for God to wrap his arms around them, to keep them from harm, but also for their faith to grow knowing that God is with them.

I'd also like to take a moment to send our congratulations and best wishes to Bill & Thea Klassen on their upcoming 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary. That's quite a wonderful accomplishment.

We wish you all a wonderful and meaningful holiday season.

-Terry

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