



Joy Mennonite Church Newsletter

January 1996

Pastor's Corner

Last month when it was time for the newsletter, we were in Central America. Ever since the refugees from the Mesa Grande refugee camp returned to El Salvador, we have been wanting to visit them in their new settlements. Everything seems to have gone well at Joy Mennonite while we were gone, in fact so well that next time the church will probably ask us to take a leave. A special thanks to Robert and Nancy Koehn. People expressed great appreciation for their ministry the one Sunday.

In El Salvador we visited six different settlements of returned refugees. Life for them is hard. They grow their corn and beans and have an almost constant diet of corn tortillas and beans. They have enough chickens running around to have chicken maybe once a month. So they have meat only on special occasions. Several times a family butchered a chicken while we were there. Imagine how we felt when it appeared that half the chicken was on our plates. While life is hard for everyone, it is especially hard for women whose husbands deserted them. They have to plant their own fields. One such person told us she had three kilometers to her field. She and her children have to plant the crops and then carry the harvest home on their backs. One statement we heard repeatedly: "Life is hard but we are so happy

that the violence is over and we are free."

A disappointment for us, the church did not seem to be doing well. There is not the lay involvement that we had seen in the camp. Lack of leadership seems to be a problem. But ever worse is the factions in the leadership that seek to win the loyalty of the people with certain favors. Then there are connections to political factions that work the same way.

Another important lesson: people still speak fondly of Mennonites. It was the Honduran Mennonites who brought food and clothing to these people when they were driven from their homes by the military. What really impressed them, these people helped them without trying to convert them to their church. They believed their motive was love and not a desire to dominate. The gospel is proclaimed when we serve without seeking to dominate. What we see now is a church seeking to dominate by serving. Sounds familiar. God forgive us and lead us to the proclamation of the Christmas message -- Peace on earth (the end of domination), Good will toward men (the end of strife for the top position).

We wish all of you the joy of the season and pray that the spirit of Christmas will be with each of us throughout the new year.

Moses Mast

A Personal Struggle

Have you ever noticed how we respond to people who live a lifestyle very different from the norm? Many of us criticize and judge them. It's so easy to deny and disregard things we don't understand. We don't have to really deal with the issue because it always happens to others. Never to us. Then it happened to me! It was in my family! My brother is gay! I loved him and wanted to continue to love him. No longer did the old cliché "you can love the person and not the behavior" work for me. I had to deal with my brother as honestly as my heterosexual mindset would let me. My game plan was to listen to my brother as intensely as I could and speak with caution and hopefully with a compassionate attitude. I soon realized how naive I was. Even though I had several gay friends whom I spent

quite a lot of time with, they must have been arm-length relationships. I just didn't know that gay people were genetically born gay and that could not be changed. I didn't know that gay people strive for monogamous relationships. I used to believe that it was impossible for gay relationships to be as intense as heterosexual ones. I'm sure I don't fully understand all the pressures society places on gay relationships.

To my brother, I apologize for the slow pace at which I learn things. I am not proud of my stubbornness and times of tunnel-vision. I have learned so very much because of my relationship with you. You have made me a better person. I still do not have complete understanding, but I'm committed to listen as best I can and love you.

Ralph Ediger

Writer Profile: *Who is this Ralph Ediger? For openers, Ralph is a farm-raised native of Kansas. The first of five children, Ralph was born in Inman where he attended school and was a member of Hoffnungsau Mennonite Church, a rural church east of Inman. He graduated from Bethel College in 1968 and has taught in the Oklahoma City school system for 28 years.*

He raised two children of his own and in 1986 married Becky Austin, the mother of four boys. As with his family of origin, this family is a very close-knit family.

Cherished philosophies and values that Ralph acquired from his father abide with him still; among others, a major one is his strong belief in service to others. He volunteered in service with Hopi Indians in Arizona and spent two years with the VS unit here in Oklahoma City. He is still active when he can (often) in reaching out with MDS. He was a member of the Menno House Repair Board for 20 years, serving six years as its president, and was on the VS Advisory Board until the unit shut down in 1992.

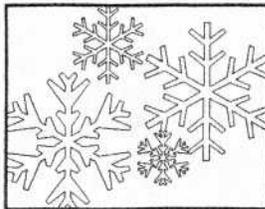
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Fellowship News:

Moses and Sadie Mast returned home from Central America on Dec. 5.

Our annual Christmas Caroling Party was held Dec. 10. We enjoyed a light meal and treats together before going caroling at several homes to the east of our church.

The west side Neighborhood Association held their caroling party at our church on Dec. 12.



On Dec. 31, we celebrated Bill & Thea Klassen's 40th wedding anniversary during our worship service, and shared a cake during our fellowship time. We wish them many more years together!

Worship News:

Ralph Ediger gave the message on

Dec. 3, as Cheryl Crichley had a last minute conflict and couldn't be here.

A smaller group than usual met for worship on Dec. 24, since some of our members were out of town visiting relatives. Instead of Sunday School, the group went to sing carols for Ruth Miller and her son.

Jerry Kaiser, pastor of our sister church, Inman Mennonite, Inman, KS, will be speaking to us on Feb. 25.

Coming Events:

Our annual business meeting will be Saturday, Jan. 13. Larry Brashear, Meno, OK, will be speaking to us on discerning our gifts for use in the church, starting at 10am. We will have a noon meal together, followed by the business meeting. Pray for God's leading as we choose new officers and committee members.

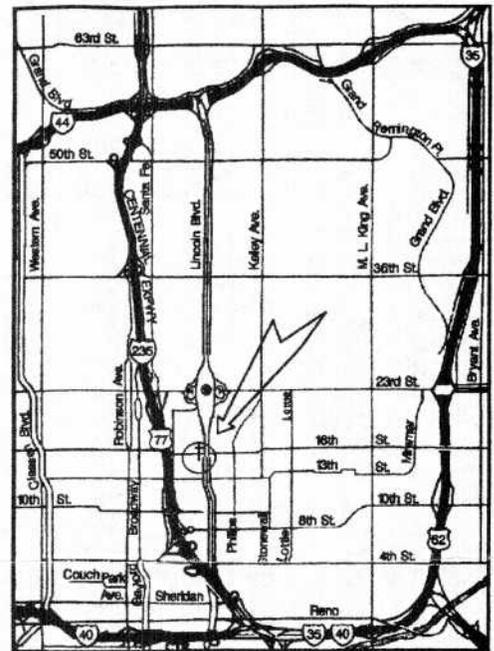
Reminder:

February Newsletter items are to be given to Mike or Darlene Powers by Jan. 24.



Worship Service:

Every Sunday at 10 O'clock A.M.



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

Dates To Remember:

- Jan. 6 Epiphany
- Jan. 13 Annual Church Business Meeting, 10am
- Jan. 15 Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Jan. 28 Mennonite World Conference Sunday
- Feb. 25 First Sunday of Lent
- Feb. 25 Jerry Kaiser preaching

Newsletter Contributors: Moses Mast, Pastor's Corner; Ralph Ediger, Writer; Bill Klassen, Profile & Mailing; Darlene Powers & Sadie Mast, News Items; Mike Powers, Publisher.

(Profile -- continued from front)

With high moral standards he participated in nuclear and Vietnam protest movements.

He recalls when 30 years ago, church was held in the same building (the former VS unit house) where we now worship as Joy Mennonite Church.

Friendship with Ralph revealed similarities that made us naturals for being prayer brothers.

Bill Klassen

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