



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

April ~~FEBRUARY~~ 2004

Pastors Corner

In a lecture entitled, when God goes to war, Rabbi Hirschfeld said, after the destruction of the world trade center many Muslims sought to distance themselves from the Muslim religious extremists who were blamed for this heinous act. This kind of violence is not part of the Muslim belief. However, Rabbi Hirschfeld said, it is an element of the Muslim religion, just as it is also an element in the Jewish and Christian religions and we must own it as the way to deal with it. Religion has two faces, it can be and often is the great inspiration to seek truth and practice righteousness. Religion may also be the great deceiver and our sacred writings give us stories of persons living righteous lives inspired by their faith. These same writings also give us horrible stories of violence justified by our religion. When we deny this element of religion we rob ourselves of the opportunity to repent, confess and be healed.

Religious extremism grows out of an arrogant belief that my understanding of God and my interpretation of Gods' word to humanity are absolute and inerrant. The focus has been on the Muslim extremists because they have declared war to eliminate the infidels from the earth. They declare this war is an order from God.

Before we feel too self-righteous we should know that those who suffer violence from the western world also see the religious extremists in the Christian religion. We are aware there are Christians who share this trait of the extremist, absolute certainty of their understanding and interpretation. Most of us however do not think we are extremists, and we probably are not. We may be better defined as indifferent. Indifference is described in scripture as luke warm, causing God to want to spit us out like undesirable food. Indifference is understood by those who suffer injustice as not caring about their condition. Indifference nourishes the cause of the extremist. Indifference may best be understood as half the world suffering from the violence of the powers fighting each other for control of the earth, and the other half focused on maintaining their religious life. We come together to sing and pray, oblivious of the other half who may be living among us or in distant lands, but in the global community still our neighbor. When the focus is

wrong, Jesus said, do not try to patch the old, you need new wineskins. In the same concern Jesus said, you must be born again. Did you know that Amos and Micah, prophets in the Old Testament, were born again believers? These prophets preached the futility of the sacrificial religious system that neglected the divine concern of justice for the poor.

One can understand how difficult it is for us to focus on problems we do not experience. As Jesus said, how hard it is for the rich to enter the kingdom. If Jesus were to visit our worship services, listen to our prayer requests, hear our beautiful hymns and wonderful sermons, what would he say to us? Could it be true that we are religious but indifferent to the things that concern God the most? New wineskins and new birth represent a new way to practice religion and do worship. None of us in this affluent country can point our finger at the other. As the songwriter said, not by brother nor my sister but it's me o Lord, standing in the need of prayer. I find great encouragement from being with others who focus not on verbalizing beautiful prayers or nice speeches, but humbly seek to focus on the divine concerns of God for the earth and all humanity. We wish for all our readers the new spring like invigorating life-giving presence of God in your lives.

Moses Mast

I heard a preacher on the radio talking some line about Mary Magdalena was actually Jesus' wife. I listened for a good spell, but I never figured out if he thought it to be a good thing or bad, or whether he actually believed it or not. I thought about this for awhile and came to this conclusion. What difference would it make? Would the fact that Jesus married make his teachings any less important? Not to me. We know so little about his daily, private life. But simply because we know he was alive, we must figure he had a life. I

had never given his everyday life much thought, but now I thought about it. I still don't know anything, but I hope he had good life.

The teachings of Jesus have lived on these many years and hopefully will continue to do so for many more. I've heard people say that it's so difficult to follow Christ's teaching, but I wonder if sometimes we don't make it harder than it needs to be. I may tend to over simplify, but I figure it boils down to love God, then love and respect for all people. If God can love us all, I figure we can give it a shot as well. If you run into trouble you can always refer to the ten commandments, they will steer you in the right direction.

Terry

February/March Revisited

In February Nancy Sanchez, a human rights worker from Colombia, spoke at Joy Mennonite.

On February 19, 2004 Ethel Posar passed away.

March 21st Joy Mennonite took a tour of Urban Impact, the place where Karin Evans works

Guest speaker for March was Caroline Wavai. Caroline is from Nairobi, Kenya and was injured in the bombing of the U.S. Embassy in Kenya.

Coming Events

March 28 Jerry Stein, a reservist with Christian Peacemakers will be speaking in Oklahoma City.

April 11th is Easter Sunday

Good Friday services: call Sadie for information.

In Closing

Easter will be here soon, I'm looking forward to it for many reasons. Easter Sunday will be a "celebration" service, including having new members join our church and we will be having communion.

I am also looking forward to a day of family and friends. I hope all of you are planning for as good a day as I am.

Terry

After her husband, James Posar died in 1996 Ethel joined the Joy Mennonite Church. Ethel was the kind of person every pastor needs in the congregation. Most Sundays she would say, that was a good sermon and then she would turn to others and solicit a good word from them. I often thought of her as the congregations' encourager.

Moses Mast

Jesus has said very clearly:

I am the love to be loved
I am the life to be lived
I am the joy to be shared
I am the bread to be eaten
I am the blood to be drunk
I am the truth to be told
I am the light to be lit
I am the peace to be given.
Jesus is everything.

Mother Teresa.

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Joy Mennonite Church
4708 Outpost Dr.
Spencer, OK 73084-2722 (405) 236-4983
Moses and Sadie Mast (405) 771-4743