

JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER

February 1997

Pastor's Corner by MOSES MAST

When we join the Mennonite Church we promise to give and receive counsel. We are expected to care about each others' well-being, physical as well as faithful living.

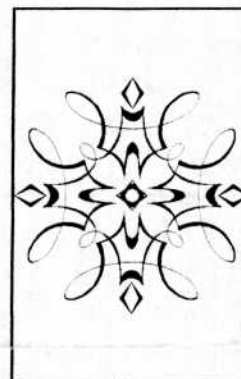
We are living in a time when it is not as common for people to look out for each other as it once was. Modern technology has made us self sufficient and independent. We do not practice community because we do not need our neighbor. I would like to suggest something for us to think about. May it be

that our lack of mutual accountability lies not so much in the lack of commitment to my neighbor but the way I do not sense that I need my neighbor.

In the sermon on the mount, Jesus described the kingdom person and then said, "You are the salt of the earth and the light of the world." To liken them to salt was to say that these are the people who will keep the earth from going to ruin and light referred to these who would show the way. The people Jesus described were the poor in spirit, that is people who live with a humble attitude, who in their inner being are not proud, people who

weep, the meek, people who crave righteousness like we crave food, people who are merciful, people who forgive others readily, because they know their own need of forgiveness.

The people of the kingdom are not superior persons, but persons who have come to their senses and acknowledge their need for others. Being a disciple of our Lord is not so difficult if I choose to listen to others and let them walk the road with me.



Thanks to
Mike Powers
for the next
article....

(Mike is currently working in Kansas, but was kind enough to contribute to the newsletter...)

Meditation

by Mike Powers

Recently, Moses explained in one of his sermons how Matthew 13:24-30 ("The Parable of the Weeds") illustrates God's love. As so often happens for me, a seemingly minor point about that parable also

caught my attention, and has seemed to grow in importance as I've thought about it since then.

As you may recall, in this parable a farmer sows good seed in his field, but his enemy sows weeds. When it becomes apparent what has happened, the servants are told not to try to pull the weeds, lest they also uproot the wheat. Rather, the weeds and the

wheat would be separated at harvest time. While there are several important points to be learned from studying this parable, there is one that is so subtle that we often overlook it as being too obvious. If you think just a little, you note that the farmer's focus was on the wheat, not the weeds. In other words, his purpose was not to have a field free of weeds --

perhaps that could have been achieved by plowing the whole field under and starting over. Rather, his purpose was to grow wheat, and the wheat already sown was so important that it was better to tolerate some weeds than to risk losing even one stalk of the wheat.

It may seem like
(Continued...)

belaboring a point, but I think that understanding this difference in focus is extremely important. Remember that part of the context here in Matthew is Jesus' conflict with the Pharisees, who were nearly obsessed with avoiding religious "contamination" and what they understood as sin, and whose attitude would have been much more inclined toward purging the weeds than in being so concerned with every

last grain of wheat. In fact, I would even suggest that this very difference in outlook or in focus is one of the marks of those we most consider to be "model" Christians. I am certainly not suggesting that we ignore the evil in the world, or pretend that it doesn't exist. But we can't fall into the trap of focusing on it. Being assured by faith of God's ultimate victory through Jesus Christ, we must proclaim that there is also good in the world, and that we have been called as witnesses to the ultimate Good News.

What we focus on is important! I would challenge each of us -- and myself most of all because unfortunately it is nearly the hardest thing for me to do -- I would challenge us to be aware when our focus has strayed from where it belongs. Give yourself permission to look beyond the problems or the sin and actively look for God's presence as well. Perhaps eventually we can even learn to understand how Paul could write Philippians 4:4-9. Quoting from verse 8 (of the NIV): "...whatever is true,

whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable -- if anything is excellent or praiseworthy -- think about such things." What we focus on can make all the difference.

 We look forward to an article from Ralph Ediger in March!

Mark your calendars... Stanley Sheuk, from Indiana, who is giving lectures in the South Central and Western District Conferences will be with us at Joy Mennonite on Thursday, February 6th. There will be a potluck at 6:00pm, and at 7:00 he will speak on "What Does the Lord Require?".....The Fourteenth Annual "Day at the Legislature" will be Wednesday, February 19, 1997. This event is sponsored by the Conference of Churches...March 7-8 is the Habitat for Humanity Southwest Regional Meeting. The keynote speaker will be John Perkins from Jackson, Miss. See

Sadie for more details... **under construction**...Please know that this is not meant to be the "new look" for your newsletter, but rather is the result of the "changing of the guard" in publishers. After some of the difficulties of distance and technology are conquered, I hope to return to you most of your familiar features and graphics. Your patience is appreciated...Cheryl Crichley

Joy Mennonite Church meets at 10:00am, just west of the oil derrick at 16th and Lincoln.

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