



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER  
JANUARY 2001



## PASTOR'S CORNER

### How do We tell the Story ?

Our celebration of Christmas centers around childhood fantasies that continue to delight us all our lives. I love the season, I love the atmosphere that surrounds Christmas. I love the

way we are concerned that everyone should have some joy, especially the children, the unfortunate, and the poor. We tend to focus on the delightful experiences of life. Our festival stories are a blend of historical and legendary stories. There is the scene of Santa Claus kneeling before the Baby Jesus in the manger. This blending of the religious and the secular should not surprise us or greatly concern us. We should be more concerned when believers seek to use the stories of our national festival to interpret the mystery of the divine taking on humanity.

Here is an example of how we can do this. The greatest delight of Christmas is the exchange of gifts. When we were young, it was the receiving of a gift that thrilled us. When we grow older, it is also the giving of gifts. We have heard it said many times that Jesus was God's gift to us and the greatest of ALL gifts. This is a beautiful thought and perhaps not without merit. However, to begin with the earthly experience of receiving a gift from a friend and the joy we both experience, is not a good place to begin to understand the profound mystery of the divine taking on humanity. The gospel does not describe this event as a delightful experience, but rather as an act of love accompanied with pain. The comparison to a wonderful gift does not take me where the gospel is calling me. The early church focused on Jesus as the Word, a message from God, a calling to a commitment to participate with God to form a new people on earth.

I would suggest that we enjoy the festival of Christmas and that we may even stop complaining that we have taken Christ out of Christmas. We can simply cease looking to our national festival to interpret the event of God becoming human. That must be done in the faith community.

We wish for all of you, much joy in this season and much happiness and success in your efforts to live the life God has called you to in the new year.

### CHRISTMAS MEMORIES AND ANTICIPATIONS

Some of our congregation are sharing their favorite memories and coming events this Christmas.

Scott Bliss - My favorite part of Christmas is knowing that Christ was born.

Beverly Bliss - Pre-Christmas shopping. Finding just the right gift for each person.

Kyle Bliss - Waking up Dad and "dressing" him so we can open presents.

Frank Bliss - Sleeping in and being "helped" by my kids.

Moses Mast - Giving gifts, especially to my twin grandsons, Brett and Brent.

Deborah O'Neal - Feeding family and friends. We always seem to have a houseful.

Jessica Warkentine - Going back to Kansas to see family and friends.

Jeremy Warkentine - Giving and getting presents. No, I think I enjoy giving presents more.

Melissa Warkentine - Sitting around my Grandmother's house singing carols. Visiting family and friends, but the best part is coming back home.

### The Sticks and Stones of Society

At this time of birth and new beginnings, some disquieting facts have come to this editors attention. This month, Oklahoma will tie Texas in scheduled executions, tied with a

state with six times the population. Oklahoma was second in the nation for the year. These facts are presented for individual thought and reflection.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson will be in OKC, January 4, to assist in drawing attention to the nine executions scheduled for this month. He will be speaking at the Fairview Baptist Church, 721 N. Rhode Island. He will also participate in the vigil at the OKC capitol that evening. This information will not reach most of our readers before that time, but this is a concern for many of our members.

Cheryl Crichley shares this for further consideration - We realize differences of opinion and, at times, strong feelings can exist on social issues within Mennonite congregations, in spite of a common Confession of Faith. I feel, however, that it is our duty as Christians to consider carefully the upcoming executions of eight people here in Oklahoma, at the rate of two per week in January 2001. There is an ecumenical movement, called "For Whom the Bell Tolls," among people working for a death penalty moratorium, to have churches ring their bells for two minutes at 6:00pm on each of the days a person will be executed in their state. Churches without bells may drape their doors in black, tie black ribbons around trees, or put up signs. In this way, people of the church and the community can at least be aware that this is will occur, and may choose how they wish to feel about it. The dates for executions in Oklahoma in January are the 4<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>, 23<sup>rd</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, and 30<sup>th</sup>. For more information, please contact Cheryl Crichley at 405-672-4734, email - [storyweaver@swbell.net](mailto:storyweaver@swbell.net)

## December Revisited

Many things were happening this past month at Joy Mennonite. On the 3rd, we celebrated the beginning of Advent. The

following Sunday, the 10th, was recommitment Sunday. Karin Evans was welcomed as a new member of the Joy Mennonite family. She brings a fresh perspective to our discussions and we are happy to have her in our group.

Our caroling party and potluck, on the 24th, was a great success! Lots of fun was had by all and the singing and fellowship really put the recipients in a festive mood. The impromptu dance on one ladies front porch made this a party to remember.

The weather has been quite interesting these past weeks, to say the least. We seem to have "weathered the storms" well, but need to remember others in prayer that we may not see every day. Those of our faith family who are traveling and those not quite as active as in the past really appreciate your prayers.

## COMING EVENTS

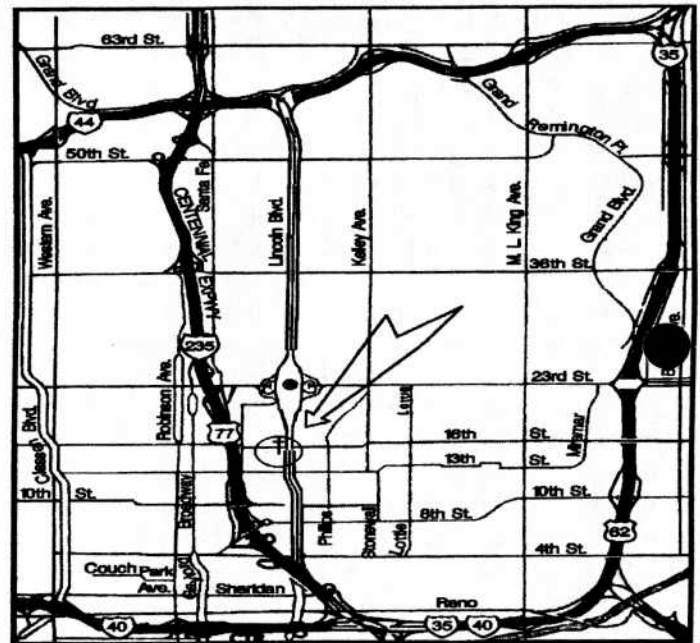
- Kyle and Brandt Bliss will be competing in a wrestling tournament the weekend of the 6th. We wish them success.
- January 21, we will be having our monthly business meeting and a potluck.
- January 28th is World Fellowship Sunday. Please take a moment that day to think of those around the world in their journey with the Lord.
- We look forward to hearing Peter Brueckner speak again this month. This is always an enjoyable and thought provoking event.
- Karin Evans will bring the message on Feb. 4th, when Moses and Sadie Mast will be at Pastors and Spouses Retreat in Kansas. All who would like to attend are invited to hear our newest member.
- Paul Wingard, a friend of Joy Mennonite, is recovering from an accident in which he was injured very badly. His family would truly appreciate your thoughts and prayers during this trying time in their lives.

## FINAL THOUGHTS Deborah O'Neal

Traditionally, part of the new year's celebration has been the singing of "Auld Lang Syne". One line of this song has really struck me this year., "Should old acquaintance be forgot and never brought to mind". While working on this newsletter, I realized there are many on our mailing list who are old friends of Joy Mennonite that I have never met and possibly never will meet. Please allow me to say that I thank each and every one of you for the invitation into your lives through this newsletter. I hope to serve you all well in the coming months.

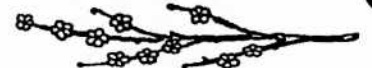
Contributions to the newsletter may be sent to the address listed or e-mailed to: mennomomg1@aol.com

I look forward to hearing from our readers and wish you all a happy and prosperous new year.



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