

JMC Community News

A newsletter for members, attenders and friends of Joy Mennonite Church

April 22, 2012 Issue #4



Congregational News

Stefan Warner Baptized

We were so proud to baptize Stefan Warner on March 11th. We had a packed time of worship, with many family and friends in attendance (including several members from Church of the Open Arms, where Stefan is currently serving as Director of Christian Education).

Western District Conference Annual Gathering to be in Oklahoma City this year.

The gathering will be July 6-8 at the Magnuson Hotel & Meridian Convention Center, in Oklahoma City. More information can be found at www.mennowdc.org

Congregational Life Committee is at work

See page 9 For more information on the work of this committee.

Garden News

The church garden continues to look good. We have some pictures on page 2, including one of the youth group from Church of the Open Arms who came to help us double dig some of the beds.

OCC Exemplar of Conscience Award Night

The Oklahoma Center for Conscience invites all members and friends of Joy Mennonite Church to attend our annual Exemplar of Conscience Award ceremony. The event will happen at 7 p.m. on May 12th at Mayflower Congregational Church. This year we are honoring all conscientious objectors who had a connection to Oklahoma (i.e. were from Oklahoma, did their alternative service in Oklahoma, or even did time in prison in Oklahoma for refusing to serve in the military).



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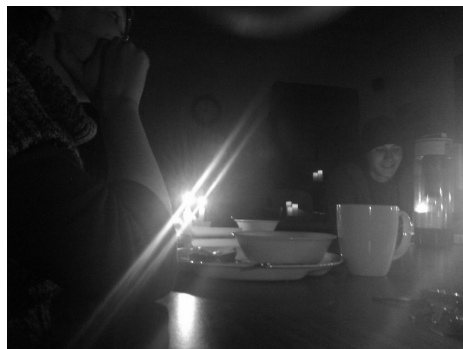
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Read our archive of past JMC Newsletters at:

JoyMennonite.org



JMC Community News

Edited by James M. Branum

DISCLAIMER: I try to include stories, opinions, and information that would be of interest to our members and reflect Mennonite values, however, inclusion of a story or link in this email does not necessarily mean that it is endorsed by Joy Mennonite Church.

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All newsletters are archived at
www.JoyMennonite.org.



The Church Garden



OCC nominates Bradley Manning for the Nobel Peace

Accused whistleblower deserves the prize for casting light on war crimes committed in Iraq, nomination states

The Oklahoma Center for Conscience and Peace Research (OCCPR) announced on Tuesday that it has nominated US Army Private First Class Bradley Manning for the Nobel Peace Prize.

In its nomination, OCCPR stated that it chose Bradley Manning because of his alleged role in leaking documents and other evidence of war crimes, corruption and lies related to the US wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, including the notorious "collateral murder" video (downloadable online at www.collateralmurder.org) which US forces firing on unarmed Iraqi civilians, members of the press and children.

"Bradley Manning should have received full whistle-blower protections for his actions but instead has served 19 months in prison without a trial, including 10 months spent in solitary confinement," said James M. Branum, OCCPR Legal Director.

"We understand that PFC Manning will be placed on a military show-trial, where his guilt will be determined by a 'jury' hand-picked by the very command that is accusing him. We have no doubt that, absent international pressure, PFC Manning will be found guilty and sentenced to life in prison or possibly even given the death penalty, without a hint of justice ap-

plied in his case. We have made this nomination in the hopes that it might lead to renewed attention and concern given to his plight."



OCCPR has exhibited its support for Manning since news of his arrest was first announced, holding a number of rallies and advocacy events on his behalf. "Because Bradley is an Oklahoma native, we feel a special responsibility to show that there are Oklahomans who support him, seek his freedom and will continue to work for his cause," said Rena Guay OCCPR Executive Director. "We have spoken to media from around the world about our interest in the Manning case, because the whole world is watching what the United States will do to someone who they believe has exposed secrets about war crimes, diplomatic doublespeak and policy hypocrisy."

OCCPR was founded in 2004 and works to increase understanding of conscientious objection and resistance to war. Its founders include religious and veteran groups; its fiscal sponsor is Joy Mennonite Church of Oklahoma City.



Nations, Not Just Individuals Must be Held Accountable for War Crimes

Opinion by Moses Mast

The incident of the soldier from the U.S. army leaving the military base in Afghanistan and murdering sixteen Afghanistan citizens, nine of them children, is shocking news to the American people. This is just not American. We might say we could understand this from our enemies, Muslims or North Korea, but that this, we insist, does not represent America. Indeed it may not represent mainstream America but if we look at history it does represent a nation at war, all nations, and America is no exception. Stories of wartime massacres abound. We even have atrocities in the Bible, acts that we would not expect from the Hebrew people. It would seem that any nation that becomes more powerful than their neighbors can easily fall into the trap of committing an atrocity.

There is a certain progression of events in these atrocities. First, there is the act of violence, then comes the cover up, and then comes a person who exposes the truth (sometimes called a prophet or a news reporter), and then finally comes the outcry accusing the truth teller of being a traitor.

This particular atrocity in Afghanistan could not be hidden, so the outcry seeks to put the blame on one person so that we as a nation could be absolved from all responsibility for this horrendous act. The United States has a history of war crimes that we should be able to learn from, especially in Vietnam where we committed numerous atrocities of war. The one the news media focused on was the My Lai massacre. where a whole village was murdered. There were several news reporters who tried to look beneath the surface to try and understand how such a crime could be committed. One wrote, "It takes a nation to make a massacre." His analysis concluded that it was more than the soldiers who did the killing, or even their superiors who gave the orders. The nation that seeks the reason to go to

war and wins support for the war, the army that trains its citizens to fight, the congress that funds the war, and the citizens who elected that congress... all these bear a responsibility for what happens in the stress of war itself. This reporter said, "There is no justice if the only people accused of murder are the people we send off to war."

In the story of the My Lai massacre there is also the story of three helicopter pilots who tried to halt the massacre and protect the wounded. They were able to fly some out to safety. They did this at great risk to their own lives. Later they were recognized and decorated for this heroic deed, but being recognized brought them more trouble from angry citizens and several congressmen who denounced them as traitors.

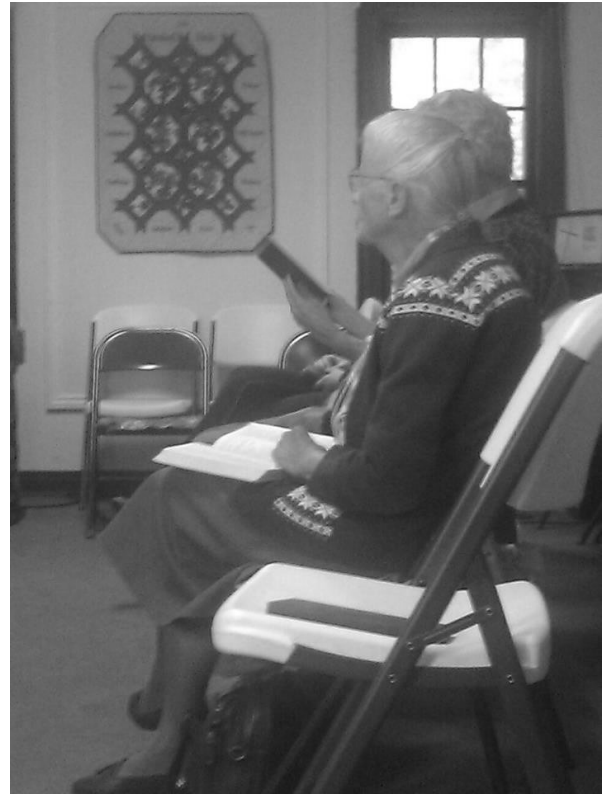
Stories like this seem to repeat themselves. We see the pattern in the case of Bradley Manning who exposed the war crimes in Iraq. The public reaction should not surprise us; it is exactly as one would expect. We can be hopeful that, just as in Vietnam, the truth will be acknowledged some day. In the meantime what is expected of those who protest the war and support the truth teller? We must still acknowledge that if we live in the United States and experience the economic benefits that we as a nation fight for, then we must do more than protest. It is difficult to know how I as one person can effect any change worth mentioning but I will try and name a few ways we can act.

- 1) Be truthful and honest about what I contribute to an excuse for war.
- 2) Take the risk of supporting the truth tellers who expose war crimes.
- 3) Follow the global standard of living and eliminate the need to take from others to enrich myself.
- 4) Share the earth's resources.
- 5) Support just immigration laws

There must be more one could say. I hope this will stimulate others to say more. We all need to be a part of the conversation.

Past issues of the church newsletter can be found at:

www.JoyMennonite.org



News from MCC:**Open your arms: A reflection and invitation**

The MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator reflects on the importance of the church welcoming strangers



Saulo Padilla, MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator, visits with his mother, Amparo Marroquin de Padilla, in Guatemala City in December 2011. and how that embrace touched his own life.

By Saulo Padilla

We all have the call to welcome the stranger.

This is what I tell congregations when I speak as the MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator. I talk about how the Old Testament and New Testament tell us to welcome strangers in our midst and to make sure they have what they need, that grain should be left that they can glean.

And I also speak about my own experience of being the stranger — and how the church took care of me.

I was 15 years old when we left my home country of Guatemala for Canada. And when we arrived, the church was the first body to embrace us. I know personally the church can do the work of embracing. And I know it's important.

You need somebody to embrace you in the pains of being away from home.

I was born in Guatemala City in 1970, right in the middle of Guatemala's civil war. But for the first eight years of my life, things seemed normal. My father was studying veterinary medicine. My mother was a homemaker. There were five of us children.

Then on Oct. 20, 1978, life took a turn.

On that day during heavy protesting in Guatemala City, my dad, who was part of those protesting, was kidnapped. When he reappeared a few days later in a hospital, I remember going there to see him. I was 9 years old at the time, and I could not recognize my dad. He had been tortured. He had broken bones in his face.

At that time in Guatemala, the death squads were all over the place, and my dad was afraid that they were after him. Eventually, he gave up his idea of a veterinary clinic, sold the equipment he had gotten together for it and went to Mexico.



In 1980, Saulo's mother Amparo Marroquin de Padilla and her children, from left, Herman, Mauricio, Saulo, Nancy and Mayra, went temporarily to Mexico.

In 1980, we joined him there, getting a visa for three months. But he remained in Mexico, going to Canada as a refugee in 1981, while we returned to Guatemala.

My mom and brothers and sisters and I remained separated from my dad until 1986, when the Canadian government accepted us to come to Canada as immigrants.

When I speak about my experience and what it's like to migrate, I speak about a new birth.

Like the pushes and pulls in the womb, there are these push and pull factors of immigration. They happen inside the motherland, the womb, pushing you toward leaving and pulling you toward a new place. Then suddenly you just go out of the womb and end up somewhere else.

And in so many ways it feels like you're a new baby, and you have to be trained again in life and how to encounter these new environments.

We landed in Canada on Feb. 19, 1986.

When we left Guatemala, it was about 25 degrees Celsius (77 Fahrenheit). In Canada it was probably -25 Celsius (-13 Fahrenheit). At the airport, we were taken into this room where there were lots of jackets and hats, boots, snow boots and gloves. Once we walked outside, we figured out why they were giving us all these things to wear. It was kind of like walking into a freezer.

Everything was different in Canada. When my mother used to go out and shop at Safeway, a grocery store, she could not find black beans or the flour she used to make tortillas. She had to figure out what she could make out of what she could find. You had to be clothed differently. People start talking to you and you don't understand a word they're saying.

How well you do and whether you thrive depends on the people that receive you. If they receive you in a way that's nurturing to you and gives you opportunities to develop, then you have more chances of being productive in that new environment.

The body that welcomed us was the church.



Saulo Padilla, far left, and other youth wear white on the day of their baptism at the First Hispanic Mennonite Church in Calgary, Alberta, in 1986.

After we reunited with my dad in Calgary, Alberta, we began looking for a congregation. Students that my brother and I knew from English classes invited us to a youth group meeting.

That was at the First Hispanic Mennonite Church in Calgary.

We didn't know what the Mennonites were, but when we arrived at this church, well, they were singing the same songs that we were singing in Guatemala in some of the services.

So we felt very much at home, and they welcomed us very, very well.

The church was a mixture of refugees and immigrants, many fleeing war in El Salvador, Chile, Nicaragua. So it seemed like a lot of them understood the role of welcoming the strangers suffering from these issues as well.

We needed that embrace.

While reuniting with my dad was very good, being separated from him for several years meant we had to get to know each other again. I had grown up. The last time I saw him was in 1980. I was 10. I got to Canada, and I was 15 already, and a lot of things had changed me and changed him. This was true with my brothers and sisters too. We had all changed.

The relationship between my dad and my mom, after the years of separation, was kind of rough at the beginning and continued to deteriorate. They both had changed a lot. Eventually my mom and dad decided they couldn't live together anymore. The weather, the relationship with my dad and so many other things had caused a deep depression with my mom, and she had lost a lot of weight. She was sick enough that she went back to Guatemala City with my younger sister. At that time, we couldn't keep in touch with phone cards, cell phones or through the computer like we do today; phone calls cost \$4 or \$5 a minute, and she had to go to a neighbor's house or phone center to call.

I probably felt the embrace of the church the strongest after my mom returned to Guatemala.

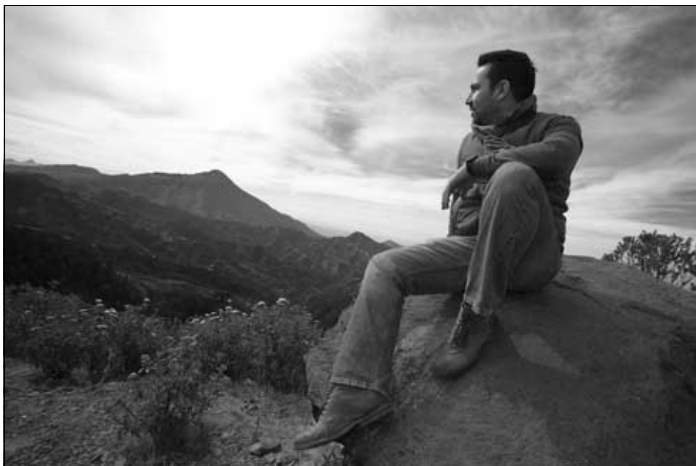


From left, Mauricio, Saulo and Herman Padilla stand with their father Adolfo Padilla in Calgary, Alberta, in May 1986.

My dad traveled quite a bit for his job. My brothers and I would spend two or three weeks at a time by ourselves. People in the church would invite us home to eat at their place or stay with them. The mothers in the church, I think, kind of saw us as their children too and were taking care of us.

Our youth leaders did an amazing job of guiding us during this time. I saw quite a few young people getting into trouble with drugs and alcohol. I think it was the care of

people in the church that helped us stay in the church and not take those routes.



During a December 2011 visit, Saulo Padilla gazes at the landscape and mountains of western Guatemala, the region of the country where his father was raised.

I know in society so many times people tend to push strangers out and don't know what to do with strangers.

But I think of this community that received me when I

was going through all these experiences and how they were able to embrace me. I think of the stories of Mennonites coming from Russia, from Europe, brothers and sisters welcoming each other. And I think of the churches I see now throughout the U.S. that are welcoming people with stories very much like mine.

I know the church can do this work.

Saulo Padilla is MCC U.S. immigration education coordinator. Padilla's continued involvement with the First Hispanic Mennonite Church in Calgary, Alberta, led to an invitation to Goshen (Ind.) College's Hispanic Ministries program. After graduating in 2005, Padilla earned a master's degree in theology and ethics from Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary in Elkhart, Ind. He now lives in Goshen, Ind. He and his wife, Vilma, are active in Iglesia Menonita del Buen Pastor. Photos on pages 15 and 17 are by Melissa Engle, a freelance photographer in Lancaster, Pa. Family photos were provided by Saulo Padilla.

Learn more

Find resources and learn more about MCC's work with immigration in the U.S. at immigration.mcc.org.

Give a gift - Welcoming newcomers

Share the gift of assistance and welcome through MCC's work in refugee resettlement in Canada or immigration in the U.S.

\$30 helps a refugee child get to school the first week after arriving in Canada.

\$30 covers the cost of an immigration consultation fee for one person or family in the U.S.

Give online at donate.mcc.org or contact your nearest MCC office.



Congregational Life Committee Questionnaire

All members and regular attenders of Joy Mennonite Church are encouraged to fill this out. You can then put the form in the box in our building or you can give it one of the members of the committee. (Members of the committee will also be doing interviews with members of the church in the coming weeks as well).

Name:

Committee Member:

What does being a Mennonite or Christian mean to you?

Why do you come to Joy?

What do you hope to gain/learn from your church community experience?

What skills or talents do you have that you would like to share with the community?

Is formal church membership at Joy important to you? What would it signify?
(Mennonite/Conference/local vs regional)

What are some positive or negative aspects of Joy? What would you change?

What visions and/or goals do you have for Joy?

Which of these issues is most important to you? peace, social justice, helping the marginalized, creation care, worship, community, evangelism, education, member care, forming relationships with like-minded groups

What are your thoughts on our building? Would you support finding a different worship space? Would you support becoming a "network of house churches" if the opportunity arose?

Do you have any ideas on how we could improve at starting church on time?

What are the current ministries of Joy that you identify with? Are there new ministries you'd like Joy to consider?

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