



Joy Mennonite Church Newsletter

PASTOR'S CORNER

Funerals can be a very spiritual experience. It is often a time when our hearts are softened and we lay down our differences and focus on helping one another deal with the grief and pain of loss. Soon after the new year Emanuel Bontrager, my wife's brother in law, passed away. He was a minister in the Amish church. This funeral was very special.

The Amish, for reasons they may no longer understand, do not have buildings set apart for religious worship. They meet in their homes and when the congregations gets too large for their homes, the congregation divides to form two congregations. However, for funerals and weddings they need more space. There would have been churches glad to grant them the use of their facility but instead with the help of neighbors and church members they

prepared the machine shed for the funeral. All of this trouble may look foolish until you stop and think about it.

In our modern world when someone passes on we call the professionals who take charge of making funeral arrangements. At the appointed time we go to the funeral, we offer our condolences, and we go home. When Emanuel died the arrangements were not predetermined. The family and a few of the church members got together to consider the options. The neighbors said, "we can prepare the shed for the funeral." The next day about thirty men came and lined the machine shed with plastic so it could be heated. Most of the church members spent most of the week preparing for the funeral and then putting everything back in place after the funeral. This kind of bother and devotion to simplicity is not foolish. The Amish may not understand the principle that made them reject the use of sacred places and shrines. They, however, experience the power of a

community coming together and everyone is involved in laying to rest the one who has died.

The funeral service was an inspiring service. I felt I began to understand something I had not understood very well. The Amish have some very gifted preachers. They however interpret the scripture very literal. To consider the context is likely to be understood as an effort to reject what the word says. To reject literal interpretation is considered rebellion against God. When I heard them preach and understood the people they were speaking to and the spirit in which they were speaking, I understood that how you interpret scripture is as important as what you bring to the scriptures. These were a people who were committed to love and obey God, committed to love their neighbor and committed to love even their enemy.

This commitment is not something we get from the word, but something we bring to our reading and interpretation. It is a

kind of universal understanding independent of religious affiliation or tradition. It is like the Ten Commandments, except for the Sabbath laws certain references to profaning the name of God, these commandments were a universal understanding of right and wrong before they were recorded in our sacred scriptures. The understanding I felt that day was that while they interpreted the scriptures very literal, and I look at the context each of us can come with the commitment to love God and our neighbor and indeed all humanity and this commitment will guide us to the truths that are really important. I hope things are going well for all of you in the new century. I hope the new century will bring you hope and not despair, anticipation for the future and not regret for things lost in the past. God be with all of you.

-- *Moses Mast*

Editorial...

By Terry Hostetler

It bothers me, people are always coming up with

stuff. Does it say in the Bible this or that is a sin? Like if its not specifically written out, that this particular act is sin, then its okay. Nowhere in the

Bible does it say that it is a sin to kick my neighbor's dog. So it must be okay. Does that make sense? Of course not. Some do this of course to justify

their own problems. Others try to use the Bible to condemn other people. I have some advice here to save you time and effort.

Use your head, if you think its wrong then don't do it. In Luke chapter 12 Jesus say's, "when you see a cloud rising the west you say its going to rain and it does. And when you see the south wind you say its going to be hot and it is. Hypocrites you know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and sky. How is it that you don't know how to interpret this present time. Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?" Then in Luke chapter 17 he says, "Things that cause people to sin are bound to come." And a little further on he says "If your brother sins, rebuke him, if he repents forgive him. If he sins against you seven times a day and seven times comes back to you and say's I repent - forgive him." He also mentioned in Luke 17, "Woe be to those who cause others to sin." And he warns in Luke 12 "Do your best to reconcile with you adversary on the way to the magistrate, otherwise he may charge you and you will be jailed and fined."

In the New Testament time, Jesus was always being criticized for doing miracles on the Sabbath, or speaking with more authority than someone felt he had a right to, or being with the wrong people. But in the verses he's telling us to "judge for ourselves what is right" - or use your own common sense to know what's right and wrong. And then to

be forgiving if someone does you wrong and in the same sentence to be repentant when we do wrong. Problems are bound to happen. When they do, use you head about it - do what seems to you, to honestly be the right thing. The Scribes and Pharisees who so often criticized Jesus knew "the laws" the rules they were supposed to live by. Very rigid and unbending rules, much like many in the religious community would put on us today but remember his words, "Why don't you judge for yourselves what is right?"

agreed to help Charlotte purchase the initial inventory. Charlotte is also encouraged to involve other churches from the Chandler community.

We continue to remember in prayer Chester and Grace Roley.

On Tuesday February 1, 2000, Del Shoemaker passed away. Condolences to his wife Martha.

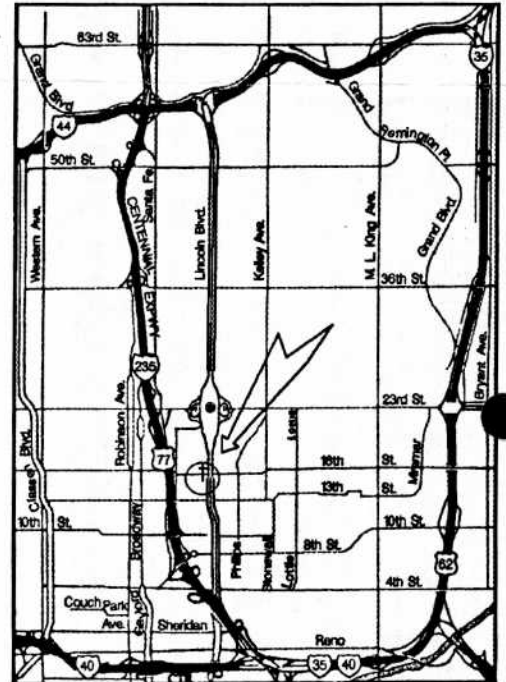
Things to remember

Feb. 13th Sweetheart banquet at the church after church services. Men are preparing the meal and doing cleanup afterwards.

Feb. 20th Youth and adults together for Sunday school hour. Adults will share of their experience of marriage.

News

Charlotte Warkentine is putting a booth for Ten Thousand Villages at a store in Chandler. Joy Mennonite



Joy Mennonite meets at 504 NE 16th. Services are at 10am.

Address Service Requested

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