



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER
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PASTOR'S CORNER

Seeking Wisdom

I have been reading a book recommended by the Bruderhof entitled "The Wisdom of the Sadhu".

This is a book about the teaching of

Sundar Singh, a person from India, who accepted Christianity in the early part of the 20th century. Sundar was a great teacher and affected many people by his teaching, but his first concern was not teaching others or persuading others to be Christians, but rather his first concern seemed to be to deal with his own relationship to God. He was especially concerned with what one might call the darkness in his own life. His spiritual priorities might be understood in words like unworthy, grace, longing for God, pure in heart. I contrast those priorities with how we might describe a spiritually alive person or church with words like outreach, witness, growth, successful, etc. Sundar confessed faith in Christ, but also seems to have been influenced by eastern religions that practiced meditation and reflection.

What may we learn from people like this? We seem to be a people that divide the population into good people and bad people. We, like all peoples, face many problems in our society.

We in America, do not seem to accept corporate responsibility very well when things go wrong, instead we place blame on others. We often hold individuals solely responsible for what is really a social problem. The real tragedy, however, is when the community of faith practices this kind of attitude. When Jesus was told the tragic news of people being murdered in the temple while presenting their offerings, Jesus replied, "Do not fix the blame only on certain people, are there not many others in Jerusalem who have sinned?". Or in the book of James, we read "confess your sins so that you may be healed". As a person born to parents of the Mennonite faith, I could claim that I am innocent of the sins of this country. My ancestors did not participate in the wars of this country. Mennonites and Quakers did not approve of slavery. We were not in agreement with the way native Americans were treated. We, however, reaped economic benefits from these tragedies. We could not help but form sinful attitudes, because we lived in the privileged class. I only came to know this when I was able to look back and, with the help of other people, know how we also participated in the evil that surrounded us. Let me suggest that the meaning of confessing your sins so that you may be healed: the healing of our nation can begin with people of faith confessing the darkness in our lives. Then we can be prepared to confront the darkness of our nation. Particularly, we must not evangelize as if we are the good people that you are invited to join. As someone once said, "evangelizing is one beggar telling another beggar where the bread is". This it seemed to me, was

the attitude of Sundar Singh.

The Red Bud trees are beginning to blossom, my favorite time of the year. I hope things are going well for all of you and wish for you much joy and blessings in this beautiful spring weather. *Moses Mast*

What is a Mennonite? Peter Brueckner

Years ago when I first began teaching at the University of Oklahoma, I had an older colleague who informed me that he was a Mennonite. He described the village in Russia where he had grown up

and told me about life in that community. I learned about the clothes that were worn, how women made them for their children, what foods were eaten and how they were prepared. My colleague did not omit any detail about his life in that community. Since I had not known a Mennonite previously, I was quite interested in hearing what he had to say, and it was very obvious that he was extremely proud of his cultural heritage. Even after coming to this country, he explained that he had submitted articles to a Mennonite publication in Canada. The fact that he never once made any reference to his faith or what being a Mennonite meant to him spiritually did not seem out of place with me at that time. I was not even surprised when I received a negative answer from him to my question of whether or not he was currently attending church. This was most likely because of my own upbringing in Germany.

Since I grew up in a Lutheran area of Germany, I understood my cultural heritage of which the church was a part. As my parents before me, I was baptized as an infant, confirmed as a 14-year-old after completing catechism classes, and I had expected to marry there (after the compulsory civil ceremony) and eventually be buried by the church. The church, like home, school and work, was just part of the life of the community. After all, Martin Luther had translated the Bible in the region where I grew up. Every school child had visited the castle where Luther had completed his work, and we were steeped in the history of the Reformation. Since my home happened to be in what after the war was called "east" Germany, the church also played a different role from what one would have experienced in "west" Germany. Sometimes one went to church to show his disapproval of the political regime, as we knew that the authorities did not approve of church attendance. If I had remained there, I would have continued to view being a Lutheran, as my colleague viewed being a Mennonite. It was a cultural heritage.

I cannot speak for my long-deceased, Mennonite colleague, however, I can only hope that he also began to understand that

being a Mennonite was much more than just being part of a particular culture. For myself, I have come to learn that church should not just fill an institutional slot in the fabric of the community, but rather, should provide the means for spiritual growth of each person so that we can truly become part of the family of believers which focuses on our similarities as Christians and which assists us in our striving to become more Christ-like instead of emphasizing the uniqueness of our upbringing.

March Revisited

Well, this has been a traveling month for some of our members. Cheryl Crichley and her son,

Jeffrey, spent a week in El Salvador, Peter and Kay Brueckner went to London for a week, Bill and Thea Klassen were visiting out of town, and Frank Bliss and Chris Jennings took their Senior class sons to Florida. We should hear some interesting stories in the future. Ethel Posar is home from rehab after her knee replacement surgery. She is recovering and appreciates all the thoughts and prayers during that time. Ethel has moved and her new address is available from Moses and Sadie Mast for those of you needing it.

Our March business meeting had to be postponed due to illness. We did not postpone our meal, however, and a good time was had by all.

COMING EVENTS

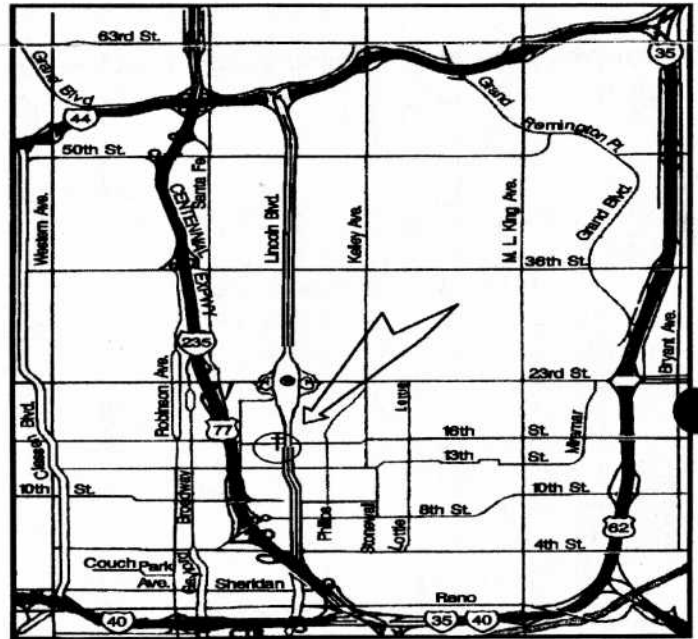
- Palm Sunday April 8th. We will be having a sunrise service at Hopefield Ranch to prepare for this week of celebration and reflection on Jesus' ultimate gift.
- Easter Sunday April 15th. We will have a sunrise service at the church. Please join us for this special time and breakfast afterward.

FINAL THOUGHTS
Deborah O'Neal

I'm not quite sure what to make of this season. One day, it is 74 degrees on my porch and then, this morning, we woke to snow falling. Ah, yes, Oklahoma weather.

Makes me think of our journey with God. Just when you think you have it all figured out and things will be much smoother from here on out, everything changes. I guess that helps us rely on God more. Friends of mine are facing some difficult times right now and, while I wish I could ease the way for them, I know they will come through this with a better understanding of themselves and their journey.

Keep us in your thoughts and prayers, please. You are all in ours.



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