



JOY MENNONITE CHURCH NEWSLETTER  
FEBRUARY 2003



## PASTOR'S CORNER

### The Voice of Silence

The gospel of Mark tells us, when Jesus was arrested and accused with false charges, that He remained silent. Since the silent walk for peace Jan.

18<sup>th</sup>, I see this story in a different light. Silence is a voice. Silence can actually be heard. Silence can be more powerful than words.

In planning an event for Oklahoma City, to join those across our nation to plea for a non-violent solution in Iraq, someone wisely suggested a silent walk around the Murrah building site that was bombed. The theme was a spiritual walk for peace. My wife, Sadie, attended a planning session and said there is a spiritual energy here, it would be good for us to join them.

The plan was a silent walk with four stops along the way for religious leaders to offer a spoken prayer. The word was put out that banners should be in the spirit of prayer rather than protest. People came far beyond our expectations. We walked on soil and pavement saturated with memories of a horrible day when one bomb was one bomb too many. Silence is natural around this site. One feels as if one is walking on sacred ground. We prayed that this would never happen to us or anyone anywhere again.

I would like to share a prayer I offered, a prayer put out by Pax Christi, one that my wife carries in her purse.

#### Prayer for World Peace

By Joan D. Chittister, OSB

Great God, who has told us

"Vengeance is mine,"

save us from ourselves,

save us from the vengeance in our hearts

and the acid in our souls.

Save us from our desire to hurt as we have been hurt,

to punish as we have been punished,

to terrorize as we have been terrorized.

Give us the strength it takes

to listen rather than judge,

to trust rather than fear,

to try again and again

to make peace even when peace eludes us

We ask, O God, for the grace

To be our best selves.

We ask for the vision

To be builders of the human community

Rather than its destroyers.

We ask for the humility as a people

To understand the fears and hopes of other peoples

We ask for the love it takes

to bequeath to the children of the world to come more than the failures of our own making.

We ask for the heart it takes

to care for all the peoples

of Afghanistan and Iraq, of Palestine and Israel

as well as for ourselves.

Give us the depth of soul, O God,

to constrain our might,

to resist the temptations of power,

to refuse to attack the attackable.

to understand

that vengeance begets violence,

and to bring peace - not war - wherever we go.

For You, O God, have been merciful to us.

For You, O God, have been patient with us.

For You, O God, have been gracious to us.

And so may we be merciful

and patient

and gracious

and trusting

with these others whom you also love.

This we ask through Jesus,

the one without vengeance in his heart.

This we ask forever and ever. Amen.

*Moses Mart*

### Journey

By Sue Laws

I went to work one morning as I usually did. Before I left the house, I kissed my husband goodbye and told him I loved him. He kissed me back, told me he loved me, and said he would see me later. What I didn't realize at the time was that it would be an eternity until we would meet again.

My husband, Gary Laws, passed on to a greater joy sometime during the day of Oct. 29, 2001. As I set about taking care of the details that had to be done so that his last wishes were carried out, I neglected to look at the objects that were on the table next to his chair. Oh, yes, I dusted them and picked them up from time to time, but I did not look inside them.

In his youth and through much of his adult life, Gary had problems with drugs and alcohol. It wasn't so much that he was a bad person, but more that he was searching for a life that would allow him to let go of the old life. It wasn't an easy task, but he managed to do just that. When we married, Gary made the decision to go into rehab. He quit drinking, quit smoking, and got a permanent job working commercial construction. He

loved life again. We worked together building that new life -- then came the diagnosis -- he had cancer.

Our lives changed dramatically. Visits to doctors, many hours of radiation therapy, being cancer free, having it reappear. It was like being on a roller coaster. Through all the trials we would pray together daily. After Gary's death, I came to realize that while his body was not to be healed, his soul was healed. That has been a great blessing to me.

The hardest thing that Gary had to deal with on his road to accepting Jesus as his Savior was "How can God forgive me for all the wrong I have done in the past?" I just told him what I had learned when I was young, "Just ask Him." When he finally did, he was at peace with whatever plans the Lord had for him.

Gary wished to be cremated and have a memorial service at least a year after his death. I really didn't understand that second request, but I honored his wishes and on Nov. 23, 2002, a memorial service was held at the church. On the one year anniversary of his death, I decided to take the day off from work. As I was sitting in Gary's chair, I suddenly felt the need to open the books on his table. I'm so glad I did. The books were "The Path of Freedom; The Path of Power; The Path of Peace; and The Path of Waiting" all by Henri Nouwen. Gary had marked several passages for me to read and I would like to share two with you.

'Please tell everyone who has hurt me that I forgive them from my heart, and please ask everyone whom I have hurt to forgive too.'

'In case I die, tell everyone that I feel an immense love for all the people I have come to know, also toward those with whom I live in conflict. Tell them not to feel anxious or guilty, but to let me go into the house of my Father and to trust that there my communion with them will grow deeper and stronger. Tell them to celebrate with me and be grateful for all that God has given me.'

I know that Gary is home with the Lord and that we will be reunited someday. Until that time, my life goes on and I hope to continue to grow in Christ.



**Joy Mennonite Church**  
4708 Outpost Dr  
Spencer, OK 73084-2722 (405) 236-4938  
Moses & Sadie Mast 771-4743

#### Upcoming Events

Feb. 9 & 16 - Moses Mast. Moses and Sadie have plans to attend the Pastor / Spouse Retreat of WDC at Great Bend, KS the weekend of Feb. 21 - 23.

March 2<sup>nd</sup>, Robert Nolt, Conference minister for the OK churches will be our speaker. March 3<sup>rd</sup>, the Oklahoma Pastor/ Spouse meeting will be held at Joy Mennonite.

Hey, go check out our web-site, we have added some new stuff and more pictures. If you would like to contact us to add things or comment, go to [www.joy.ok.us.mennonite.net](http://www.joy.ok.us.mennonite.net)

#### Final Thoughts Deborah O'Neal

As I sit here writing this, the TV is on - still relaying information about the space shuttle tragedy. I have seen so many tragedies. President Kennedy's assassination, Kent State, the Challenger disaster, the OKC bombing, and now this. My son, Jack, asked if someone blew up the space shuttle. When I said no, he said "But people died, someone must have killed them." In his eight years, this is the way people die - someone kills them. How do you explain that accidents happen and no one can tell when? Anna, at four, said that the shuttle broke and that all those astronauts are in heaven with God. That they were doing their job and that they were good guys and were helping other people. I wish I was four.

I wish that there was no blame to be laid at any person's door for any death. I don't think it's right that children believe that killing is the only way that people die.

Like my bumper sticker says "Pray for peace, work for peace"

**JOY MENNONITE CHURCH**  
504 NE 16<sup>TH</sup> OKC OK 73104  
Sunday Services 10:00 am Sunday School 11:30  
All are welcome, please join us as you are able

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