

MUSTARD SEED

Volume XXI, Issue 4

April 2012

KALONA MENNONITE CHURCH

MYF MALL WALK



The MYF human scavenger hunt at Coral Ridge Mall was quite the event. There were 37 MYF'ers hunting for 8-10 KMC characters and we mean "characters." There was a pregnant woman (Brenda Christiansen), a little Russian lady (Janette Slaubaugh), a big bald-headed tattoo man (Brian Christiansen) and an Amish lady (Mary Fern Chupp) that was shopping on a Sunday, no less. As Robert K. Yoder would say, "Oh my"!

Inside this issue:

Emptying My Vessel	2
Library Notes	3
What's Happening	4
Beyond Ourselves	5



Emptying My Vessel



God is more important to me today than He was a year ago.



Once again we are in the season of Lent and Easter. It has struck me differently this year, because of all of the things that have happened since the last Easter Season. Reflection on the past year reminded me of one Lenten Season where we started the Season with six (or seven) candles lit and then each Sunday one less candle was lit leading up to Good Friday. It made an impression on me. Christ's sacrifice wasn't a sudden decision and it wasn't easy.

A year ago, during Lent, I felt compelled by God to give up some of "my time" to spend some extra time memorizing His Word. Little did I know that God was preparing me for things to come. There have been times over the past year where my life has felt like those candles for Lent. Every so often one of them was no longer lit. People I love have died. There have been health challenges, work challenges, mental stress challenges and more. Often it hasn't seemed fair and often I have wondered how we would manage to keep on going, but like Resurrection Sunday God has always had a way.

God is more important to me today than He was a year ago. It really shouldn't surprise me, but in some ways it does, because when I look back at the year I see myself telling God over and over again that I don't know if I can handle any more struggles. Then I would wonder why I had previously asked God for more of Him in my life if it meant I would have more and more challenges in my life. Was I out of my mind?

How long and hard can it be to empty everything out of a vessel? For the Holy Spirit's power to work at His optimum capacity within me I have to allow Him to empty me (the vessel) of everything that is not pleasing to Him. 2 Timothy 2:20-21 says, "*But in a great house there*

are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of earth; and some to honour, and some to dishonour. If a man therefore purge himself from these, he shall be a vessel unto honour, sanctified, and meet for the master's use, and prepared unto every good work." That sounds reasonable enough. It sounds as reasonable as my trying to clean up a cluttered room in my house. Some things are really easy to throw out, but other things have emotions tied to them. I may never use them again, but part of me doesn't want to get rid of them.

The same is true in allowing the Holy Spirit to clean up my life. Even though I truly want it done, because I know, on some level, it is for the best, there are areas where I fight the process. I cling to them, like a child clings to a beloved treasure they do not want to let go, even though it can cause more harm than good. And yet God keeps working with me until I let go. My child's health is in God's hands. My staying awake all night worrying shows God I don't trust Him like I should and doesn't help her at all. God will provide everything I need. Panicking because we have lost so many employees, through death and retirement, isn't trusting God. God has great plans for my life and He loves me and protects me always. Indulging in comfort foods, "poor me" times, etc. is just plain sinful when it says that I am not leaning on God in full confidence, but rather feel I am at the mercy of the world. God's Spirit is moving in Kalona Mennonite Church. My sorrow for the losses, divisions and other challenges at Church doesn't change God. God is emptying my vessel, so more of His power can operate in me.

Yes, the last year has been hard, maybe, even more than hard.

(Continued on page 3)

(Cont. from page 2)

But God is so good! I have seen His Spirit move in incredible ways. I have seen people come to salvation that I never dreamed would open up their hearts to God. God has provided amazingly and abundantly. My dependence on Him has grown and this has only happened as my dependence on myself and others have shrunk. A pretty hard process for someone as independent and hard-headed as I am.

I am reminded of the story in the Bible of the woman who anointed Christ's feet with expensive perfume. It cost a lot, but the aroma of that vessel being emptied was pleasing to God. It reminds me of the sacrifices in the Old Testament that when given properly and with the

right heart, the aroma was pleasing to God.

Emptying my life (my vessel) to make more room for God to work is hard. Sometimes I wonder how empty does God want me to be. Yet as I release these things I am seeing more of God. God is so incredible! Like the candles at Lent, it was difficult to see the lights go out (to let things go), but a more intimate relationship with God is so worth it. Christ died so the Holy Spirit could live in us, so we could have a deeper intimacy with Him. We just need to keep emptying our vessel and give Him more and more room. It won't be easy, but it will be totally worth it. *As always, in pursuit, Dawn Wyse*



God has provided amazingly and abundantly.

LIBRARY NOTES

Have you been in the Library just to browse lately? No? Then it is time you go and find a good book to read or a good DVD to watch.

Check out some kids books and read to your children or grandchildren. There are books to help you grow in your Christian life, to encourage you in your parenting skills, to help you through the aging or grief process, or to learn more about our Mennonite background. There are memoirs and autobiographies, books of humor, books about some of your favorite sports 'heroes', and

even some large print books. Don't forget to check the "New Books" shelf.

New Guidepost Series have been donated to the library. Fiction readers, you will want to read them all. And look on the fiction shelves to find some very good books that have been there a long time.

Come on in to the library to say hello and then check out something new! You'll be glad you did!
Shirley Hochstedler, Librarian



WHAT'S HAPPENING



Enjoy the beauty
of spring and
have a
wonderful April.

So, what is March Madness? Is it all about basketball or is it the weather we have been having lately. Well, whichever it is we have been enjoying both the basketball and the weather. Now for the news.

We received a report from Canada that Dave & Mary Groh have done some more moving. However it was just 5 doors down the hall to Apt. 202. They are now closer to the laundry facility and the elevator and now have a 2 bedroom apartment, which gives them more space. Just remember that if you plan to go and visit that you will need a passport. I am sure they would be glad to see their KMC friends. Or you can just call them and they would be glad to visit.

Another little Pickard was born into this world on Sunday, March 18th. Josh and Julie Pickard, who live in Minneapolis, welcomed their second son, Bennett Andrew Pickard weighing in at 6 lbs. 13 oz. & 20 inches long. Carter is the big brother and the proud grandpa is Mr. Larry Pickard. Congratulations!

Well the time has come and Ed V. Miller plans to retire from The University of Iowa on Thursday, April

5th. He has worked at the hospital as a medical technologist since 1971. Now Carol is getting a bit worried having him home every day, so if you need any help fishing, mushrooming or golfing, call 656-2965 and get Ed out of the house.

There is a confirmed report of a morel mushroom that was found in the Kalona area by a couple of KMC'ers on March 27th! This would be about 3 weeks ahead of schedule and the earliest recorded find in at least 40 years. One would probably have to ask Harvey Yoder if he knows of any earlier finds!

This column is a bit "thin" this time because all my April fool's jokes got censored. Probably just as well---I really didn't need a visit from the Elders!

Well that about does it for this time. Enjoy the beauty of spring and have a wonderful April.

So long for now,

Ed V. & Carol Miller



BEYOND OURSELVES



Think about making a relief kit for the MCC Middle East effort.



Now that the war in Iraq is officially over, I have a tendency to drop it from my prayer list. However, to now forget the many people that this war has killed, or the many lives it has devastated should be unthinkable. Let's continue to keep these brothers and sisters in our prayers, and also the many of our brothers and sisters that had to fight in this war. Their lives too are in desperate need of rebuilding and of God's healing love. Continue to challenge yourselves with a daily prayer for God's healing in their lives. I must work at this oftener, and make a purposeful effort to keep it on my daily prayer list.

Think about making a relief kit for the MCC Middle East effort that is being started to avert a similar Middle Eastern humanitarian crisis in Syria. Instructions for MCC relief kits can be gotten at <http://www.mcc.org/kits/relief>. There are also instructions for the kits on the table in the foyer. If you make a relief kit it can be left in the KMC foyer and it will be taken to the Crowded Closet for MCC to pick up.

The following article, taken from MCC's website, gives you more information about how MCC is responding to the current Middle East humanitarian crisis in Syria. *Dave Koerner*

WINNIPEG, Man. – Alarmed by the continuing violence in Syria and consistent reports that unrest is likely to escalate and spread to neighboring countries in the coming months, Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) has begun preparing for a

humanitarian crisis in the region.

About 20,000 Syrians have already fled to Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan and the flow of people is increasing, said Rick Janzen, a director of MCC's programs in the Middle East.

MCC has launched a \$500,000 Middle East Crisis appeal to assist partner organizations as they provide humanitarian aid and build peace. At this point MCC's response includes:

1. Emergency assistance – food, medicine and non-food items for Syrians affected by violence and in need of basic supplies.
2. Relief kits – people in the U.S. and Canada are encouraged to assemble kits and drop them off at their nearest MCC office or warehouse.
3. Building peace – grassroots, community efforts that encourage conflict prevention.

Janzen, who travels often to the Middle East and visited Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Palestine in early February, said he was startled by the heightened fears of sectarian violence and political unrest across the Middle East.

“Everywhere we went, we heard outlooks for the future that were devastating and ominous,” said Janzen, who lives in Winnipeg. “Now is the time to put our peace theology to work; our partners are calling on us to support their efforts at conflict prevention and peacebuilding.

(Continued on page 6)

KALONA MENNONITE CHURCH

902 6th St.
P.O. Box 819
Kalona, IA 52247
Phone: 319-656-2736

Editor: Shirley Hochstedler

Design & Layout: Janice Hostetler

Articles for the Mustard Seed may be submitted to Shirley Hochstedler at shirleyh@kctc.net or placed in the Mustard Seed mailbox.

We are on the web:
kalonamennonitechurch.com



(Cont. from page 4) “One of our partners from Lebanon looked us squarely in the eye and asked: ‘Are you peace ambassadors or not? If you are, this is the time to act.’”



**Mennonite
Central
Committee**

A significant part of MCC’s re-

sponse will assist partner organizations in Lebanon to expand efforts that strengthen conflict prevention strategies and disaster preparedness. This includes training women peacebuilders, media training, and encouraging dialogue among young leaders, trauma training and more.

MCC has been working in the Middle East for more than 60 years and currently supports peace and development work in Egypt, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Iran, Syria and Palestine and Israel.

Gladys Terichow