



The Mustard Seed

Under the Watchful Eye of God

In the *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, there has been much discussion recently on the pros and cons of using cameras to catch people who violate traffic laws. People who drive through Cedar Rapids are now very aware of the fact that they are being watched from the cameras above. This has left many people feeling uncomfortable and wondering if we will become a society where our every move will be tracked and recorded.



We are also installing more cameras in our schools to oversee parking lots, hallways, classrooms, lunchrooms, and auditoriums. For our children, it is interesting that their behavior is now being shaped more and more by the “eye in the sky” so to speak. Every action can now be brought up for review on the video screen. Only time will tell how all of these video cameras will impact our society. In the Bible, we are told that we are under the watchful eye of God,

Psalms 34:15, “The eyes of the Lord are on the righteous, and His ears are attentive to their cry...” This watchfulness of God feels entirely different than being under the eye of the camera. The camera can feel cold, calculated, uncaring, and austere. God’s watchful eye, on the other hand, feels loving, caring, protecting, and freeing.

May we be thankful that we are under the loving, watchful eye of God who has our best interest in mind. As the song says, “His eye is on the sparrow, and I know He watches me.” In other words, God watches over us to keep us safe and to keep us from falling into destruction. I appreciate this kind of watchfulness from the eyes of a caring God. These are the kind of eyes I want to watch over me, for it is only when we live under the watchful eye of God that we are truly free.

Scott Swartzendruber

Special Points of Interest

- > Church at its most basic is just brothers and sisters in Christ connecting to each other, in His name
- > I would like this Christmas that you allow me to enter into your life. I would like that you recognize the fact that almost two thousand years ago I came to this world to give my life for you, on the cross, to save you.

Inside this issue:

In Pursuit	2
The Faithfulness Continues	3
Beyond Ourselves	4
Library Notes	6
Church & Ministry	7
Jesus Letter	8
Poem	
Word Search	9
Calendar	10



A “Mini Mustard Seed” will be printed in January, which will include the January Calendar. Look for the full size Mustard Seed again in February.

In Pursuit

Advent is always a time we look forward to at our house. The kids love to light the candles each night. Though at times, I know, it has been more their fascination with fire than with the advent season itself. We have two other advent traditions as well. There is a flannel board nativity scene that has only one rule- baby Jesus cannot be put on until Christmas day. The third is a quilted Christmas tree my sister made that has 25 ornaments to be buttoned on. The star is put on Christmas day.

These three things have helped us to look forward to the advent season. It isn't unusual for one of my kids to ask about getting the advents things out around Thanksgiving. They want to prepare and are looking forward to the season of advent.

I have been reflecting on advent the last couple weeks. The memories of the advent candles on our family table growing up are near and dear to me. I also remember longing for one of those candy advent calendars some of the stores had that contained those cheap waxy chocolate candies behind each door. It amazes me now why I would have anticipated eating that now, but I know without a doubt that I would have thoroughly enjoyed them. Now, it would take a Godiva advent calendar to get me to have a similar enjoyment. My husband Curt says I am a chocolate snob and that may be true, but I do think my taste buds are much more discerning now than when I was as a child.

This got me to thinking. If my taste buds have matured over the years, then has my relationship with God also matured and deepened the way that I now experience the advent season. This led me to look at how the people in the Bible anticipated the coming of the birth of Christ.

The Magi in Matthew 2 show incredible dedication and desire to seek out Christ. They were willing to travel long distances without knowing where they would end up or how long it would

take to get there. They studied, asked questions and appear to have been willing to do whatever they needed to do in order to see Christ. They even brought gifts for the Christ. They were completely prepared.

When the Magi reached Christ they were thrilled with ecstatic joy. They worshipped Christ and presented gifts to Him. It makes me wonder, am I prepared as I pursue my relationship with God? Will I be filled with ecstatic joy and worship Him in a way that is worthy of Him? I am in awe also, that the Magi were willing to see their dream as the direction of God and to be obedient. How often do I cast off the guiding hand of God as something of no significance? This is a very humbling thought.

Herod is the other side of this story. He too sought Christ, but his motives were selfish. He too prepared. He called in those who had studied on the subject. He tried to use the Magi as a means to find Christ. He was seeking Christ. The trouble was that Herod's motive was to preserve his status, his identity and his position. He even willingly killed many in order to preserve himself. This too gave me pause. Are my motives in seeking Christ always pure or does my self-centeredness drive my motives at times?

The shepherds' reaction in Luke 2 brings delight to me. When they heard the news they were all fired up. They said "Let's go! Let's see!" And they did. Not only that, they glorified and praised God. They were so full and overflowing with all they saw and heard that they spread the news everywhere they went. There are times I feel full of the awesomeness of God, but most often I don't make the effort to share that awesomeness with those around me. Too often I fail in this area. The shepherds' response to God is an example I need to strive toward.

Simeon and Anna at the temple in Luke 2 are great reminders to me to never give up on God's timing. They



"There are times I feel full of the awesomeness of God, but most often I don't make the effort to share that awesomeness with those around me."

In Pursuit cont.

anticipated Christ for a long time. They were sensitive to God's working in their lives. We are told the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon. When he saw Jesus, he recognized Christ for who He was and gave praise to God. Anna never left the temple. Anna was a prophetess, which means she heard from God and was called to speak this Word. She worshipped God day and night, fasting and praying. I cannot imagine the dedication that Anna had. Anna gave thanks to God and spread the Word to all who were looking forward to the redemption of Israel. Often I am missing the magnitude of what hope Christ has placed in our world. It is huge. He deserves my continual worship. I should be constantly speaking of the redemption that is available to each and every one. What do I need to do to have the dedica-

tion that Simeon and Anna had in pursuing Christ?

I don't have the answers at this time, but I will keep on pursuing Christ. As I seek God I am confident He will help me to grow closer to Him through the Holy Spirit and the Word of God. I praise God that my advent relationship with Him is now deeper than the cheap waxy chocolate advent relationship I used to have with Him. It was good for me then, but would be disappointing for me now, because my relationship has grown. Alas, I am not near the Godiva level yet, but I think I am closer to the Dove chocolate level. Thanks be to God for helping me grow. May your relationship with God continue to grow this advent season. God has great plans for each and every one of us.

In pursuit, Dawn Wyse



The Faithfulness Continues

As our MYF year continues, I'm constantly reminded of God's faithfulness! Throughout the weeks, we've continued to have a large, diverse group, and it's been so obvious that God is at work in the youth of our community. It's been so encouraging and exciting to hear people talking about MYF during the week, and to know that kids who've never really had a place in church are getting to hear the gospel and enjoy each other during MYF.

We've continued our GOSPEL Journey with Dare2Share Ministries, and have almost made it through the whole acronym, going through what each of the letters stands for to fill people in and to remind ourselves. Almost anyone who's been able to come each week could tell you the following: G—God created us to be with Him; O—our sins separated us from God; S—sins cannot be removed by good deeds; P—paying the price for sins, Jesus died and rose again; E—everyone who believes in

Him and Him alone will have eternal life. This week we will learn what our final letter stands for!

Since I last wrote, we've also done our annual service project at the Crowded Closet. While there, we helped with everything from sorting clothes, to vacuuming, to putting things on shelves and racks. With over 20 of us there, we got a lot done. We're so blessed to have an organization like that where we can work and know our efforts are going to benefit the Kingdom of God while giving us a fun evening together. There was even enough time for several of us to pick out matching shirts and wear them to school Thursday!

We also need to thank all of you for helping to make our soup fundraiser meal a success. As I've mentioned before, we could never do all that we do without a supportive church family, so thank you again!

Nicole Murray

“Throughout the weeks, we’ve continued to have a large, diverse group, and it’s been so obvious that God is at work in the youth of our community.”

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L-

Beyond Ourselves

Through out the last century, North American Mennonites have had and continue to have strong Christian service programs. This has been our way of expressing what Jesus has done for us and our way of spreading His gospel. It has been a way to put into action what the Lord taught us in Matthew 25. Menno Simons expanded on this text when he wrote "True Evangelical Faith" listing 17 ways to do this. Among the 17 are:

- clothe the naked
- feed the hungry
- comfort the sorrowful
- shelter the destitute
- do good to those who harm you

These programs began with Mennonite Central Committee and later included Civilian Public Service, PAX, 1-W, and present day voluntary service programs.

In the coming months, I want to have KMC persons who have participated in these programs write about their experiences, in hopes to see how these programs affected their faith journeys and how they showed Jesus to the world.

The first major conscription law in the U.S. was initiated during World War I and did not accommodate men whose Christian convictions would not allow them to participate in the military, even in a non-combatant role. Thus, during World War I, men who would not participate in military service were many times held in Federal prisons under extremely abusive conditions.

As World War II was approaching, leaders of the historic Christian peace churches (Brethren, Mennonite, and Quaker) worked with the U.S. govern-

ment to create a program that would accommodate these men in their Christian convictions, and a program that would benefit the nation. From this came the Civilian Public Service (CPS) program. Types of work that CPS men did varied from soil conservation, fire fighting in our national parks, agricultural labor to fill the void left from men in the armed forces, psychiatric hospital work, and medical research volunteers.

The cost of maintaining the work camps and the programs for the CPSers, and the needs of the CPSers was the responsibility of the congregations and the campers families. The majority of the camps were ran by or administered by the government.

Any compensation that was made by CPS campers above their monthly stipend was not to help the war effort in any way. CPS participants were very adamant about this. In cases where the men earned pay this money was held in a fund by the government to be used after the war, thus, to avoid helping the war effort in any way.

There were approximately 12,000 men who chose to participate in this program. Of this number, just under 7,000 were of Mennonite, Amish, Brethren, or Quaker background. The remaining approximately 5,000 were from various other denominations including Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Catholic, and Lutheran.

Five current members of KMC held these Christian convictions and participated in the CPS program. (Willard Yoder, Robert K. Yoder, Emil Ropp, Stan Swartzendruber, and Dale Swartzendruber.) There will be short articles in the coming Mustard Seeds in the following months from these five men.

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Beyond Ourselves cont.

WILLARD YODER

Home congregation Lower Deer Creek Mennonite.

Length of CPS term October 1942 to March 1946

I left in October 1942 from Iowa City on the train, with a group of boys, to head for CPS camp #57 at Hill City, South Dakota. I was 22 years old and did not know what to expect. I was anxious to have a new experience from farming. So it wasn't all that difficult since there were numerous boys from the Kalona area there.

I traveled to Nebraska several times before going to Hill City. There were men from many denominations and several states in the camp. We had several campers that kept the others entertained with their performances.

At first I operated a cement mixer, later I drove a truck to haul clay and shale to build a dam. At times during winter months the men would be working in 40 degree below zero temperatures.

The best part of my experience was when my time expired at Hill City and then I went to Fort Collins, Colorado and drove a crew truck for an irrigation project.

I was released from duty in March 1946, anxious to get back to farming on the home farm.

All in all the CPS days continue to linger in my thoughts and I occasionally relate them.

ROBERT K YODER

Home congregation Lower Deer Creek Mennonite Church

Length of CPS term October 1944 to September 1946

I was first at CPS camp #57, Hill City, South Dakota (the Black Hills). This camp was part of the Bureau of Reclamation and helped build the Deerfield Dam. I was 20 years old

when I was drafted and left home. Prior to this I traveled very little, only with my family to visit relatives in Indiana.

That first winter our work consisted of cutting timber and brush in the "Deerfield Lake Basin" and burning brush, sometimes working in 30 degree below zero weather.

In the spring we spent several months laying rip-rap by hand on the downside of the dam.

From mid 1945 until March of 1946 I worked in the camp kitchen as a waiter and eventually as a cook.

In March of 1946 I was transferred to the clothing center in Newton, Kansas and worked there until I was discharged in September of 1946. Work in Newton was primarily packing and bailing clothing for relief shipments.

Most of my fellow camp members were 20 to 35 years of age and from the Mid-Western states coming from agricultural backgrounds.

They were predominately from Old Mennonite, Conservative, Mennonite, General Conference Mennonite, Brethren, Hutterite, and Amish churches. A few were from Methodist, Baptist, and Jehovah Witness churches.

The most difficult part of entering CPS was obtaining my Conscientious Objector form from the Johnson County draft board and the ensuing 4-E classification. My father and I were summoned to appear before the draft board to respond in person to answers on my C.O. questionnaire. My father was forbidden to make any comments during this session. I felt that this was an intimidation tactic. When the board by their questioning were not able to "trap me", the chairman said, "well at least he is honest" and we were dismissed. I later had to report to Camp Dodge in Des Moines for a physical and throughout that day was



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The Mustard Seed

Beyond Ourselves cont.

given many opportunities to change my status and join the military.

At the time I was leaving home, my oldest sister also was leaving for school and my youngest sister was going to high school. My leaving was one of many changes my family was experiencing and this may have made my leaving for CPS a little less traumatic.

I met people in CPS who had very different life styles from me but yet were Christians all the same.

The best part of my CPS experience was the many good friends I acquired and the physical beauty of the Black Hills area.

The most difficult part of my CPS experience was realizing that I had become an adult who had some differing views from my parents. And though I respected them and appreciated their lifestyle, my life would be different in many ways from theirs. Suddenly I was an adult who could have opinions of my own and share them.

My CPS experience made me see the importance of tolerance. Both of me being tolerant of others and of others being tolerant of me.

It also made me see the wider church as less conservative and more open to change, particularly in areas of music.

Library Notes

The Library staff has been busy! Lots of books have been going out and coming in! We are excited to see the library used so much. It is also exciting to be able to add new books to the library.

New books by favorite authors have been added. Don't miss Unlocked, the latest by Karen Kingsbury and the second book in the Father Tim series by Jan Karon, In the Company of Others. The third book in the House of Hope Yada Yada series, Who Do I Lean On? by Neta Jackson is also here. Other fiction titles include Strangers in Their Midst by Patricia Rushford, Mark's Story by Jerry Jenkins and Tim LaHaye, (a novel about the growth of the early church), and A Long Way Home by Kristin Eckhardt.

Choosing to See by Mary Beth Chapman, wife of Steven Curtis Chapman, bears her heart in the story of Maria, and the way God moved in their lives after her death. Dancing With Max by Emily Colson, daughter of Chuck Colson, chronicles the story of her life with Max, her autistic son. Without a Word by Jill Kelly, tells the story of their son who never uttered a word, and the dramatic way he changed the lives of those around him. Don't miss Blind Hope by Kim Meeder,

Broken on the Back Row by Sandy Patty, My Heart's at Home by Jill Savage, Mothers Have Angel Wings by Carol Kent and The Five Love Languages of Teenagers by Gary Chapman. The Large Print of Death and the Life After by Billy Graham has also been added.

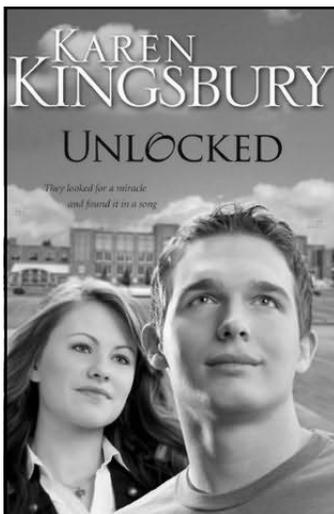
We have added two great family DVD's: Mandie and the Secret Tunnel and Mandie and the Cherokee Treasure. Check them out.

There are two new Shalom Readers Club books: Uncle Jed's Barbershop and Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt. Other childrens titles include: Big Sister, Little Sister: A Treasure Beyond Measure; What's Happening to Grampa (explaining Alzheimer's to children), Berenstain Bears and the Messy Room.

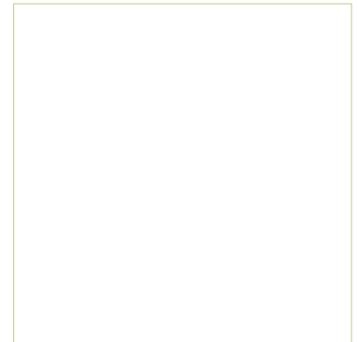
Do you like to read Christmas stories in the month of December? Stop by the library to see what is available. If you are looking for a specific book or want to be put on a waiting list for a very popular book, speak to a librarian. She will be able to help you.

If you have a book, video or DVD that has been out for a very long time, please see that it is returned soon so others can have use of the materials also.

Shirley Hochstedler



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security reasons.**



An assortment of Christmas tracts can be found in the tract rack that is located on the registration table in the foyer. Put these tracts in your Christmas cards, letters and gifts to share the reason for the season.
Gayle Garner

Jesus Letter

Dear loved ones,
As you well know, we are getting closer to my birthday. Every year there is a celebration in my honor and I think that this year the celebration will be repeated. During this time there are many people shopping for gifts, there are many radio announcements, TV commercials, and in every part of the world everyone is talking that my birthday is getting closer and closer.

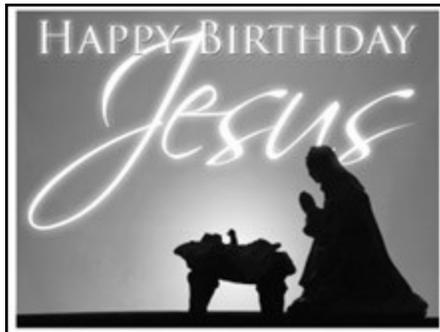
It is really very nice to know, that at least once a year, some people think of me. As you know, the celebration of my birthday began many years ago.. At first people seemed to understand and be thankful of all that I did for them, but in these times, no one seems to know the reason for the celebration. Family and friends get together and have a lot of fun, but they don't know the meaning of the celebration.

Remember that last year there was a great feast in my honor. The dinner table was full of delicious foods, pastries, fruits, assorted nuts and chocolates. The decorations were exquisite and there were many, many beautifully wrapped gifts. But, do you want to know something? I wasn't invited. I was the guest of honor and they didn't remember to send me an invitation. The party was for me, but when that great day came, I was left outside, they closed the door in my face and I wanted to be with them and share their table.

In truth, that didn't surprise me because in the last few years all close their doors to me. Since I wasn't invited, I decided to enter the party without making any noise. I went in and stood in a corner. They were all drinking; there were some who were drunk and telling jokes and laughing at everything. They were having a grand time. To top it all, this big fat man all dressed in red wearing a long white beard entered the room yelling Ho-Ho-Ho! He seemed drunk.

He sat on the sofa and all the children ran to him, saying: "Santa Claus, Santa Claus" .. as if the party were in his honor!

At 12 Midnight all the people began to hug each other; I extended my arms waiting for someone to hug me and ... do you know ... no one hugged me. Suddenly they all began to share gifts. They opened them one by one with great expectation. When all had been opened, I looked to see if, maybe, there was one for me. What would you feel if on your birthday everybody shared gifts and you did not get one? I then understood that I was unwanted at that party and quietly left.



Every year it gets worse. People only remember to eat and drink, the gifts, the parties and nobody remembers me. I would like this Christmas that you allow me to enter into your life. I would like that you recognize the fact that almost two thousand years ago I came to this world to give my life for you, on the cross, to save you. Today, I only want that you believe this with all your heart.

I want to share something with you. As many didn't invite me to their party, I will have my own celebration, a grandiose party that no one has ever imagined, a spectacular party. I'm still making the final arrangements. Today I am sending out many invitations and there is an invitation for you. I want to know if you wish to attend and I will make a reservation for you and write your name with golden letters in my great guest book. Only those on the guest list will be invited to the party. Those who don't answer the invite will be left outside. Be prepared because when all is ready you will be part of my great party.

See you soon.

I Love you!

Jesus

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December

December takes on festive airs,
Angels walking unawares,
In and out our common doors,
Christmas carols in the stores.
Bright eyed children gaily clad,
Being, oh, so nice to dad.

Christmas concerts in the church.
Glowing logs of oak and birch
Burning in the polished grate;
Shining apples on a plate,
Popcorn balls and taffy squares,
Loops of tinsel on the stairs.

Mother busy all day long,
On her lips a happy song
As she beats and stirs and bakes
Fat old-fashioned Christmas
cakes,
Raisin cookies, doughnuts, ham,
Golden tarts with berry jam.

December is a joyful time,
Christmas bells that gaily chime,
Rosy cheeks and eyes aglow,
Starry skies and fields of snow –
'Tis no wonder that she wears,
Happy looks and festive airs.

Edna Jaques
Submitted by Ida Yoder