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Spirit Life

Do you like to think outside the box? Then, this may be for you. You are invited to participate in a 2-yr process of spiritual formation sponsored by Heartland Center for Spirituality in Great Bend, KS. Classes are held one Saturday per month; the next one is Nov 5. A wide range of courses are offered and can be taken individually or as part of the 2-yr program. See www.heartlandspirituality.org/spiritlife. See pg 2 for an update.



A typical Jewish tzedakah (charity) box

The Secret

By Pastor Jerry Truex

Jesus taught that when we give money to the poor, it should be secret, so secret that when our *right hand* gives our *left hand* is totally unaware of it.

Matt. 6:3-4. "When you give alms, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be done in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you." (NRSV)

Not even our closest friend, "our left hand," needs to know about our almsgiving. Giving is to please God alone. It is not for self-aggrandizement.

In the context of Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus teaching on giving exemplifies *how to participate* in the Reign of God. When Jesus introduced how to participate in the Reign of God, he said, "Beware about practicing your righteousness before others *for the purpose of* being seen by them" (Matt. 6:1). Note that Jesus is not prohibiting doing good things in public. After all, elsewhere he said, "Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven" (NRSV Matt. 5:16). What Jesus is prohibiting is doing "deeds of righteousness" *for the purpose of* being seen.

Like other Jews of his day, the underlying issue for Jesus was *kavanah*, which is the Hebrew for "right intent." Judaism teaches that one cannot please God in any way whatsoever without right intent. A prayer is not prayer, unless it is said with right intent. The same is true for giving. Right intent, the right direction of the heart, determines whether one pleases God. As an illustration, Jesus may have told this parable:

Once there were twins. They looked the same, dressed the same, and had the same amount of wealth. Every Sabbath they went to the synagogue and each put the same sum of money in the *tzedekah* (charity) box. The first twin wanted people to see his generosity and think he was a benevolent fellow. The second wanted to thank God for God's generosity and wanted to imitate God benevolence. The people saw no difference between the twins, but only one pleased God.

For Jesus' audience, the Hebrew word *tzedakah* had special importance. *Tzedakah* literally means "justice" or "righteousness," but since there is no word for "charity" in Hebrew, the word *tzedakah* does double duty. *Tzedakah* not only refers to the right and the just, but also the way human beings care for each other. Hence, the collection box for the poor became known as the *tzedakah* box.

Giving with the right intent is the issue, but to ensure the intent is right, Jesus advises us to give in secret. Why? Because then there can be no doubt who you are trying to please. Secret giving is for the One who sees in secret. We give in secret; God sees in secret. It is an intimate relationship between our self and God; that is the reward.

Church Council Recommendation

I am communicating on behalf of the Church Council of Mennonite Church of the Servant to tell you about our recommendation to the Church Life meeting on Sunday, November 13 (after church).

Context

In 2009 and again in 2010 our church had substantial increases in giving. This year there has been a decrease in giving. So we have begun to ask questions about the implications of the MCS vision for the MCS budget. How much money should we have to carry the vision forward? We are agreed that vision comes first. (In my opinion, we need very little money for the basics, but having a little more would be better than making do with less.)

Recommendation

The Church Council recommends these two statements. 1. Each of us should be clear about the vision of our church and be able to communicate that vision with confidence. 2. We should develop our ability to attract and retain people for whom our vision is good news. Are we in agreement with these statements?

Discussion

If we are in agreement with these statements, how do we as a church develop the required abilities? Do we need a consultant to help us develop these skills? (I've spoken with Clarence Rempel at Western District Conference and he's suggested three persons as potential consultants. I will do a little more digging to determine a "ballpark" figure for how much a consultant would cost. I will have this information on November 13.)

A Simple Survey

Whether or not we decide to hire a consultant, the Church Council would like to gather some information by asking each regular participant to fill out a simple survey. The survey question is, "List the top five reasons you participate in Mennonite Church of the Servant." I will bring copies of the survey on November 13, and I will share the survey results at the December 11 Church Council and December 18 Church Life meetings.

2012 Budget

We will decide on the 2012 budget for MCS at the December 18 Church Life meeting. We'll have an initial discussion on the budget on November 13. That discussion will help the Trustees (Steve and me) along with the Treasurer (Jeanette) formulate a budget proposal.

John Stoesz



Spirit Life

On October 15, Jerry, and I returned to Great Bend for another weekend of Spirit Life. As always, we began with a short worship service.

In the first session, Sister Terry Wassinger, a Dominican Sister of Peace, gave a brief history of the desert fathers and mothers, concluding with several examples of their sayings. One of the mothers said this: "In the beginning, there is struggle and a lot of work for those who come near to God. But after that, there is indescribable joy. It is just like building a fire; at first it's smoky and your eyes water, but later you get the desired result. Thus we ought to light the divine fire in ourselves with tears and effort." (Amma Syncletica)

Phil St Romain spoke about the "I" - "God" relationship, discussing the influence of Gnosticism on Christianity. To supplement his teaching, he gave each of us Evagrius's Map of Spiritual Progress, prepared by our very own Jerry Truex!

Connie Burkholder continued her discussion of discernment that she had begun last session. She explained one model of discernment: the Examen Prayer. This prayer reflects on moments of consolation (what makes us most grateful) and moments of desolation (things that make us least grateful), with the assumption that God wants us to do what brings us the greatest joy and peace. It was helpful to be reminded of this assumption.

I have really enjoyed the Spirit Life sessions; I hope you can also join us.

Vangie Truex

Prayer Requests:

1. Please pray for our church as we discern our individual roles within the church.
2. Please pray for our church as we discern how to manage our budget for the coming year.
3. Please continue to pray for Jerry and Lori Acosta and their family. May their ministry be fruitful!
4. Please pray for Erna and Russell; for their health and their move to a new facility.
5. Pray for spiritual healing of the neighborhood of the church.
5. Pray for the safety of the Occupy Wall Street protestors .

Worship in November

Theme

We will continue to focus on Virtues and Vices November 6 and 13. Both Virtues and Vices become habit through practice and determine our character. As Christians, we want to take on the character of Jesus by practicing the virtues. Let us encourage one another in mastering the virtues.

November 27 is the beginning of Advent. The theme of Advent is "Awesome deeds we do not expect!"

"During this Advent season, we invite you to meditate on God's sure coming—but often in places we would not think to look. We invite you to ponder God's awesome deeds—but often not the ones we would expect. What we celebrate and anticipate this Advent is the unexpected manner of God's coming in Jesus, and the unexpected ways God is still coming to upend our world. We join Isaiah in remembering God's mighty presence in the past and in longing for its renewal. And we prepare ourselves to be surprised, amazed, and unsettled by the unexpected appearance of our God." *The Leader*

Everence

John Stoesz and Sally Huber will be attending the fall Everence advocate meeting this month. This summer we received a total of seven sharing fund grants from Everence, with one of those still being processed. We received a total of approximately \$800 from Everence that we matched with our own funding to share with each other. The sharing fund is a real asset to our church; helping those of us who need it.

Sally Huber

Worship Leaders & Teachers

Nov 6—Worship leader, Doug; teaching by Lois; Communion; Thanksgiving potluck

Nov 13—Worship leader, Belinda; teaching by Jerry

Nov 20—Worship leader, Doug; teaching by Jerry (Thanksgiving)

Nov 27—Worship leader, Vangie; teaching by Jerry (1st Sunday of Advent)

Mothers 4 Mothers

The City Wide Baby Shower was a success! We were able to network with 25 other agencies that serve families and 35 mothers signed the book for more information. Hopefully they'll all come to a meeting and check us out. According to the prize ticket count, about 500 Moms and their families attended this baby shower.

The crafts are almost ready for the Alternative Gift Market on November 12, 9AM to 4PM at Grace Presbyterian Church 5002 E Douglas. One of our booth will be raising funds for "The Joy of Reading" books for the children of Nicaragua, sponsored by Trees for Life. The other booth will be selling pins by Lucinda (beautiful crosses), to support our own work.

We are pleased to have a new baby girl, Daisy Mae, in our midst. Her big sister Tiffany, age 4, and her Mom Sara and Dad think she's the best, most wonderful baby doll. We celebrate with them.

We sympathize with the Gaston family who lost their mother and grandmother this fall.

Our Christmas dinner will be on December 10 at 5 pm in the fellowship hall at MCS. We are working hard to plan a great party. You are all welcome to join us in this celebration.

Sally Huber

Mission Focus

Nov 6—CROP Walk

Nov 13—Hunger in Wichita

Nov 20—Immigration

Nov 27—Mennonite Housing

Reflections by Marcia

Last January I attended a meeting of people working to figure out how to move forward with the work of dismantling racism in the church and in society. We were not of one mind. On the second morning, devotions were the responsibility of a dear friend of John's and mine, Holsey Hickman. We've known Holsey for decades from our time in Dallas. Holsey is a Baptist pastor who is, in a word, a chaplain. He has a way of saying just the right thing at just the right time.

At the beginning of our second day, when tensions were in the room, Holsey led with a devotion on Ephesians 2: 8-10. "For by grace you have been saved through faith, and this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God—not the result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are what he has made us, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand to be our way of life."

As one who tends to emphasize my role as "actor" in the work for justice, I was struck by the last sentence. I had not thought about the "work" as being prepared for us by God as our way of life. It was another experience of the liberating gospel of Jesus Christ, freeing me to be who I am in the way God has given and on the way God has given, accepting the gift and leaving to God what is God's.

Servant Groups



A servant group is an intentional face-to-face group (3-12

people) who meet at a regular time (often twice a month) to grow in Christ and actualize God's reign. We have seven groups.

NT Greek Reading Group. This group focuses on reading and translating the Greek New Testament. Currently, we are working through Luke's Gospel. Each person reads a verse in Greek and then translates into English, using "whatever it takes," including computer programs (Bible Works and Logos), interlinear Bibles, and other helps. We meet on Wednesday from 1:30 to 3:00 pm at LAMC. Contact Jerry (263-0204).

Psychosynthesis Study Group. Currently, we're reading *Psychosynthesis*, by Will Partfitt and *Natural Spirituality* by Joyce Hudson. We discuss the books and

talk about the spiritual exercises we practice. We meet on the 2nd the 4th Wednesday of each month. Contact Cindy (832-0050 or Jerry (263-0204).

Servant Group: We meet for worship, study, sharing, prayer, and focus on its "outward" mission as well as bringing a religious perspective to immigration issues. This group plans to meet on the 2nd and 4th Tuesdays of the month, 7:30-9:00 p.m. They are currently studying the book: *Christians on the Border* by Daniel Carroll. For more information, contact Pat (371-8274).

Ladies Reading Group. This is a women's reading and discussion group that meets on alternate Saturday afternoons for about 90 minutes. Currently, we are studying *An Altar in the World* by Barbara Brown Taylor. We invite women who want to nurture their faith through intentional, focused discussion on faith issues to join us. Contact Vangie (263-0204).

Women's Discipleship Group. This is a women's group focusing Bible Study, discussion, and prayer. We meet on the 4th Sunday of every month after church at Cindy's home. Contact Cindy (832-0050; cgswriter@aol.com).

The Path of Discipleship. We meet to encourage each other in the life of discipleship, learning about Jesus' transformative vision of the future for present action. Currently, we are reading *Renovation of the Heart* by Dallas Willard. We meet on the 1st and 3rd Tuesday at 7:00 pm. Contact Jerry (263-0204).

Hospitality Group. Although we are not technically a servant group, our purpose is to serve people by making people feel at home at MCS. We are responsible for greeting people on Sunday morning, organizing "coffee time," inviting newcomers, organizing potlucks, and providing meals on special occasions. Contact Geneva (262-2544), Doreene (265-3848), or Vangie (263-0204).

Childcare

- Nov 6—Alex/Doreene
- Nov 13—Kierra/Sally
- Nov 20—Jenny/Geneva
- Nov 27—Jenny/Doreene



Attendance in September

Oct 2	31
Oct 9	26
Oct 16	29
Oct 23	35
Oct 30	34

MCS November

www.mcswichita.net/calendar.htm

Verse of the Month: Nov 6-20: Psalm 107:1-3
 Advent: Isaiah 64:3-4
 Song of the month: Nov 6-20: You give us the hope (SS 80)
 Advent: Lord, you sometimes speak in wonders (WB 594)

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1	2	3	4	5 <i>Spirit Life in Great Bend</i>
6 10:00 am: Worship 12:00 am: Thanksgiving Potluck	7	8	9 <i>Happy Birthday, Lois Barrett</i>	10	11	12
13 10:00 am: Worship 11:40 am: Church Life	14	15	16 <i>Happy Birthday, John Stoesz</i>	17 <i>Happy Birthday, Dyran Acosta</i>	18 <i>Happy Birthday, Adam Cameron</i>	19 2 pm: Ladies Reading Group
20 10:00 am: Worship	21 <i>Happy Birthday, Lew Enns</i>	22	23	24	25	26
27 10:00 am: Worship	28	29	30			



Mennonite Church Of the Servant

Our mission is to welcome all people into a community covenanted to follow the way of Jesus Christ through

- Practicing peace and reconciliation,
- Sharing our lives in love and accountability, and
- Bringing the good news of the reign of God to the world.

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