
HOPE HEADLINES

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The Season of Kindness

From time to time, I am reminded of the “culture of meanness” in which we live. It isn’t hard to see when you decide to look for it. This week as I write this, the news surrounding “Black Friday” will likely include stories of the meanness people will display as they crowd through the doors in an effort to buy, buy, buy. People being nearly trampled in doorways, fistfights breaking out in the aisles over sale items, and clerks at the checkout berated by unhappy customers are common news stories.

Of course, meanness is all around us throughout the entire year as well. Parents mistreat their children in public and in private. Kids act cruelly to each other in school and on the street. Employers and workers violate all standards of common courtesy in order to get ahead and/or make more money. Politicians tell lies, fudge the facts, and demean and degrade others (and themselves) in order to gain an advantage. And these examples don’t even include the obvious meanness of violence between people and wars between nations. And, as if the real meanness around us isn’t enough, we children and adults may choose ways to entertain ourselves with meanness: from Jerry Springer to Grand Theft Auto, from gossip to racist jokes, from Twitter and Facebook bullying to Big Brother and other reality shows on television.

The great tragedy of this “culture of meanness” is that it is hardly affected by who we are, what we profess to believe, and the season of the year. Nearly all people choose to be mean, sometimes. Christians are just as bad, or worse according to some studies, than non-Christians. And, as the news too often indicates, Thanksgiving and Christmas do not seem to make any difference.

Jesus came into a world of meanness as well. The pregnant Mary had to escape to her Aunt Elizabeth’s home in order to avoid the shame and ridicule of her own community. The innkeeper and his guests were not willing to forgo their own comfort in order to provide a

room for a young woman on the verge of childbirth. And after Jesus was born, his family had to flee from the death threats and cruelty of Herod. To be sure, there were kindnesses: Aunt Elizabeth, the shepherds and wise men, and some unknown person in Egypt who must have welcomed the new family and helped them find a place to stay.

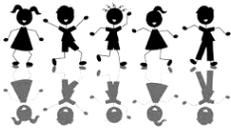
It seems ironic that in the season of thankfulness, in the season of giving, in the season when we worship and celebrate the coming of Love into this broken world, we too easily forget our many blessings, God’s generous gifts, and the power of love to change people’s lives and the world. But that is the message of Christmas; a message we hear and sing in our Christmas music, a message we send in our Christmas letters and cards, and a message we intend when we give gifts and share feasts.

Let us make this Advent and Christmas season a season of kindness. Let us take a moment to examine our lives, our relationships, and our behaviors; and choose kindness over meanness, people over things, relationships over privilege and power, love over self-interest. Let us choose kindness over meanness and be Christ to our families, our friends, and our world.

~~Mike Bogard



Friends



Hope Friends Kid

The kids had a great start with learning to serve others in September and October. Our first two themes were Serving Family and Serving Friends. The kids assembled MCC School kits, as well as decorated and stuffed boxes with activities for kids at St. Francis Medical Center. We have taken a break to practice for the Christmas program, but will start back up on January 8. After the new year, we will be focusing on Serving Neighbors, Community, and Jesus. The tentative service projects for the remainder of the year are making money banks to collect money for a local charity that the children vote on, making cards to go in the Bags of Blessings, and again decorating and stuffing boxes for children possibly at a homeless shelter. Once again, I can't do this alone. Please think about how you can serve the children by helping out, either by donating supplies or volunteering to help out on one of the Wednesday evenings. There will be a sign-up for craft/snack supplies and volunteers in the fellowship hall. ANYONE is welcome to help out. Thanks to those that have helped me out already and thanks for everyone's continued support.

~~Angela Bontrager

Discipleship News...



Discipleship

Mark your calendars for the Children's Christmas Program December 8, at 6:30pm. A special thank you to Patty Neufeldt & Lisa Jaberg, and Mark Bartel for taking this on, and providing leadership for this year's program. We need volunteers to provide cookies for after the program. Please sign up on the bulletin board if you can help. All extra cookies will be used for January Sandwich Saturday.

In January, the Covenant Class will be led by Pastor Mike, and the Disciples Class is still planning, so please look to your bulletin for more info.

The downstairs should be getting new carpet and baseboards in December, so be on the lookout for that! The High School youth and sponsors have repainted their room so if you have a few minutes you might go down and take a look!!! The east room was repainted by David Young (thank you!), and the bathrooms will be repainted as well.

Flamingo Results

The results are in and the HS Youth group made almost \$1,300 on our flamingo fundraiser and it was all



profit. Approximately 25% of the donations were from outside of our church. Thank you so much to all of you who participated or donated to our fundraiser. We had a great time and we hope you did too.



Do I know you?

Dave, Lori, Katrina and Elisha Miller

Dave works for Cargill as a senior systems analyst, where he designs and maintains sales programs for the computer systems. Lori works at Cargill as a communications specialist, where she supports three Cargill businesses with internal communications strategy and tactics. Katrina is a sixth grader at Christa McAuliffe Academy and Elisha is a fourth grader at Seltzer Elementary.

Dave started attending Hope when it met at McCollum Elementary, about 1985. Lori started attending Hope 16 years ago, when she and Dave were dating. Both girls were dedicated at Hope.

Dave enjoys woodworking and watching Katrina and Elisha play sports. Lori enjoys reading and working out at the Y. Katrina plays volleyball, reads constantly, and especially enjoys her vocal music and drama classes at school. Elisha enjoys doing crafts, being active and playing with her friends.

In 2008, we moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota for Dave's job. The three years we lived there changed our lives in unexpected ways. We found a wonderful church in Emmanuel Mennonite, where we were blessed to worship with several former missionaries and with people who came from many countries. The church intentionally moved its meeting space into an impoverished, crime-ridden area of south Minneapolis so it could minister there. We cherish our three years at Emmanuel and still keep in touch with the church.

Justin and Tiffany Regehr

Justin is a High School Math Teacher/Coach at Conway Springs High School, and Tiffany is a Nurse Aide at Harper Hospital

Justin has been at Hope since birth, and Tiffany has been attending since they started dating, but officially 1 ½ yrs since their marriage.

In their free time Justin enjoys reading, watching basketball, and working with "3 Boys and a dad". Tiffany enjoys reading, watching basketball, cooking and doing crafts. Tiffany is originally from Moundridge, KS. They both attended and graduated from Bethel College, and they are currently living in Conway Springs.

December events

December 3 – Mid-Kansas Jazz Ensemble and Bethel College Jazz Combo I, 7:30 p.m., *Krehbiel Auditorium*

December 4 – Sing along to Christmas portions of Handel's *Messiah*, 11 a.m., *Bethel College Mennonite Church*, with Bethel College soloists, conductors and instrumentalists; scores provided, and all are welcome. (Adam Voth will be conducting a portion of this)

December 6– Christmas Gala Jazz Concert with Bethel College Jazz Ensembles I and II, 8 p.m., *Krehbiel Auditorium*

December 7 – Nativities Past & Present (part of Five Places of Christmas), sponsored by the Bethel College Women's Association, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., *Fine Arts Center*

December 8 – Lighting of the Green at Bethel College, 8 p.m. on the Green; refreshments follow in the cafeteria



Health Corner

A recent study shows that the more TV you watch in the evenings, even if you are active during the day, the greater your risk of developing metabolic syndrome. Symptoms of metabolic syndrome are abdominal fat, blood sugar and insulin abnormalities which lead to diabetes.

To clean kitchen sponges, which are bacteria breeding grounds, microwave the damp sponge for one minute or run it through the dishwasher.

The smell of chocolate has a measurable calming effect on the brain.



New from our Mission Partner – Mary Raber

In October, Mary wrote: "I'm not living in my own apartment anymore. I've moved to the Odessa Seminary campus, which means I'm back to dormitory living—not bad, in its way. For one thing, we're slightly outside the city limits, and I love the view of the evening sky from the tall upstairs windows. I also love not having to get up in the morning to catch the bus. But I have to get used to having more

people around. "The first two weeks of December, I will be teaching a course in Armenia on women in the church. Fortunately, just before I left the United States, someone gave me a copy of *Courageous Women of the Bible* by Linda Gehman Peachey, so that's going to be my main resource for a daily Bible study. Well, that takes care of about an hour a day; all I need to do now is organize the remaining 50 hours! "I would really appreciate your prayers for this teaching venture. In some ways, teaching is the easy part—or at least the most straightforward. I've found that a visiting instructor often becomes a counselor as well. Since I'm there only temporarily, sometimes people feel it's safe to tell me things about their fears and frustrations that they wouldn't tell the people they work with every day. Please pray for the effectiveness of the teaching, of course, but also that I would be a patient and helpful listener as the need arises. "Thank you for praying for the summer camps organized by Trinity Baptist Church. I'm told that the one for children was hard work this year, but the one for visually impaired adults was the best ever. Pray that all campers would remember what they heard and experienced during the summer. "Thank you for remembering to pray for the developing Master's program at Odessa Seminary. When the students come together now, it really feels like a group; relationships have formed and ideas are starting to coalesce. We're ready to admit a new group of students in the spring, which is wonderful, but which will also add to the administrative burden as we try to locate and schedule instructors. "I appreciate your prayers for my family in St. Louis, especially my elderly parents."

Clarence's Clarion Call - "Who am I, Sovereign Lord?" by Clarence Rempel, WDC Conference Minister

Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?

The breakfast II Samuel 7 Scripture reading from Rejoice was perfect for preparing my spirit for Thanksgiving and Advent. "Who am I that you have brought me this far?" The prophet Nathan had just reminded King David of his humble beginnings – "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture, from tending the flock."

I identify with those rural beginnings which for me were tending chickens and cattle, not sheep and goats. I am amazed at the rich educational opportunities I have had in Christian formation experiences in Bible college, in theological development in seminary, and in exposure to flourishing churches all across the United States in D.

Min. studies. I am amazed at the beautiful partnership in life and ministry with Amanda that God has granted. I am delighted with my four children, two inlaws, and two grandchildren with whom I will feast this Thanksgiving. I am exceedingly grateful for the most meaningful life vocation of shepherding God's flock (I Peter 5:2). I am amazed at having a role in God's cosmic redemption plan of reconciling all peoples to God's self and to each other and of restoring all of culture and creation to God's shalom. "Who am I?"

Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?

King David's question was evoked by what we now recognize as a Messianic promise. "Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (II Samuel 7:16). That promise seemed hopelessly lost in 400 years of kingless survival in exile and back in Palestine until the angel surprised Mary of Nazareth. "You will conceive and give birth to a son, and you are to call him Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David....his kingdom will never end" (Luke 1:31-33).

Mary also seemed to wonder, "Who am I? How can this be that I would be the mother of Messiah?" She quickly recovered her voice of thanksgiving. "My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my Savior, for he has been mindful of the humble state of his servant....the Mighty One has done great things for me....His mercy extends to those who fear him from generation to generation" (Luke 1:47-50).

May you know God's saving mercy and restorative blessing this Thanksgiving and Advent as you reflect on this question:

Who am I, Sovereign Lord, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?



LIVING NATIVITY

The Tabor Mennonite Youth Fellowship (rural Newton, KS) will share their annual living nativity, Night in the Barn, on **December 21 and 22** from 6:00-8:00 p.m. The llama that gives kisses, the big cow with her little calf, the sheep wearing bells, and the donkeys that share their love of people—these are a few of the critters who will assemble in the barn of Maynard Knepp and Carol Duerksen between Goessel and Hillsboro. The come-and-go event will feature unique perspectives from the innkeeper and a shepherd, and

Christmas carols. Visitors are welcome to gather around a bonfire and enjoy hot drinks as part of the evening's activities. Admission is free and donations to the youth group will be accepted. Directions to Night in the Barn: From Goessel: 3 miles north on Hwy 15, 4 miles east on 150th, $\frac{3}{4}$ north on Falcon. From Hillsboro, 4 miles south on Indigo, 3 west on 150th, $\frac{3}{4}$ north on Falcon. From McPherson, Hwy 56 to Hwy 15 south, 5 miles on Hwy 15 to 150th, 4 miles east on 150th and $\frac{3}{4}$ north on Falcon. (Follow these directions and not GPS directions.) For more information, call 620-367-8432 or 620-386-0709.

Job Opening

Evening manager at Newton Et Cetera Shop, a community thrift store benefiting Mennonite Central Committee. Qualifications: Availability 4:00-8:00 p.m. . Monday-Friday, skilled communicator, good with people, ability to multi-task, competent computer & technical skills, values in line with Mennonite Central Committee. College graduate preferred. Ability to lift 25 pounds and stand 2-3 hours recommended. Bilingual or cross-cultural experience, cash register skills are helpful. Experience in promotion & advertising, design, or retailing a plus. Begins January 6, 2014. To apply, email a letter expressing your interest in the position and a resume with job history & three professional references, to newtonetc@sbcglobal.net by December 16.