

The Meeting Place

From the Editors

A poor economy and the Christian



In this issue, we have articles about the current economy, MYF activities, and a reflection from a missionary in our church. Thank you to everyone who submitted articles.

We will continue to provide a voice for this congregation as long

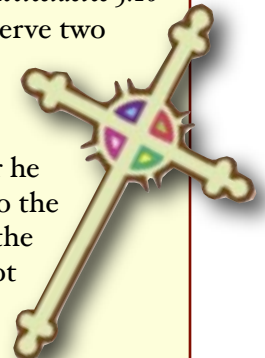
as there are individuals willing to write. Our next publication will be out July 1st. Submissions will be due June 25th. More to follow on topics and themes.

Wisdom
 I stand most humbly
 Before man's wisdom
 Knowing we are not
 Really wise:
 If we were
 We'd open up the kingdom
 And make earth happy
 As the dreamed of skies.

Langston Hughes
 Whoever loves money
 never has money enough;
 whoever loves wealth is never
 satisfied with his income.
 This too is meaningless.

Ecclesiastes 5:10
 No one can serve two
 masters, for
 either he will
 hate the one and
 love the other, or he
 will be devoted to the
 one and despise the
 other. You cannot
 serve God and
 money.

Matthew 6:24



TOLEDO MENNONITE CHURCH MISSION STATEMENT

Our Mission is:

- to know and love Christ
- to be a caring family of God
- to minister to a needy world



“They continually devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles, fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to times of prayer.”

Acts chapter 2, verse 42

OUT IN THE FIELD

I spent a couple of months on a short term assignment with MCC (Mennonite Central Committee) in Tanzania (East Africa). My role was to examine some possibilities for agricultural plots along a dry riverbed near Dodoma, Tanzania.

Josh Ewert, who is at this location on a three year assignment with MCC has built two sand dams across a riverbed. During the rainy season the dams hold water so that during the dry season from August to December local farmers and villagers can get water. Josh is from Michigan and a graduate of Goshen College (2007).

The dams actually fill up with sand which holds the water and purifies it so that it is clear and drinkable. Josh and the Dodoma Mennonite Church wanted to build an agricultural plot near these dams to grow fresh vegetables and fruit during the dry season.

I helped by getting the local villagers to commit to the idea and give us an area for this plot. As of now, the plot has not been started but we have access to some ground to begin the process.

I also met and worked with Amos Muhagachi, the pastor of the Dodoma Mennonite Church and had a wonderful experience worshipping with them during the two Sundays there. It was a very exciting and vibrant church with lots of programs including the sand dam project, a health care outreach to the community, and a large children's program on Saturdays, where over three hundred children come for Bible lessons and a meal in the afternoon.

The Dodoma Mennonite Church has asked us (TMC) to be prayer partners with them and has invited a group from our congregation to come and worship and share with them next year. They have housing and a welcoming committee waiting. Anyone interested?

Steve Elzinga

MYF ACTIVITIES

Our high school-aged youth group participated in many fun activities this year, and we have more scheduled for the future. We've done service activities: packaging candy for those hard-working college students and sponsoring a dinner for the Social Committee. We've done social activities: risking our lives on a dangerous sledding trip, exchanging secret Santa gifts during our Christmas party, and almost watching a Billy Graham film. And finally, we've had a faith night with Ketsana Phommalee, who shared her amazing story with us.

In addition to these activities, our youth group plans on attending the Mennonite Youth Convention in Columbus, Ohio this year. Already we've raised some money by sponsoring a Super Bowl Party. . The youth group would like to thank the congregation for the generous donations we have already received thus far.

Other activities include curling with Mike Peeters, a faith night with Marty Daly, and possibly even finishing a movie together.

Ellie Cook



A RESPONSE TO THE CURRENT ECONOMIC CRISIS

This issue of The Meeting Place reflects a few of the responses of those who provided answers to the question of what our church's role might be in the current economic crisis. There are no easy answers, but plenty of people willing to point fingers out in the world about us.

As Christians it is the time to watch carefully. It is a time to be especially alert to the needs of others. "As the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without deeds is dead." James 2:26. We are especially blessed, as a church, to have the blessing of being able to put our trust in the strong God, who is always there, and who loves us enough to die for us. We also have the security of having each other in fellowship. We must be sure to "carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."

Galatians 6:2. We can stand steady and strong together in God's love. No one will be left out. "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." Matthew 24:35.

We as a church must be there. We are the hands and feet of God to do His work; if we are willing, we can do a lot of good work in the kingdom. Many are so involved in various personal ways of working and giving already. Hopefully, we can all become involved in new ways to help others. Now is definitely the time.

Anonymous

QUESTION OF THE MONTH

How has the current economic situation affected you?

- We have not had to make big sacrifices, but we have made some. We are more careful about how much we want to spend and how often. There was not a Christmas bonus at work this year. The hours available at work have also been cut back.

- Less financial assurance. Otherwise, life is fine. So we have less luxuries. Big deal.

- I now eat a lot of rice and beans. Having two children in college does not help either.



- I have had to use my IRA to live on. It is almost gone. Taxes and my living expenses are eating my Social Security. I have not been spending except for food and church.

Do you think Christians and the Church should respond to the economic situation in any new way? If so, how?

- Yes, help those in need by whatever means: finances, food, or help in whatever way.

- Look for tangible ways to give to others.

- Thank God we've got it so good. We are upset, yet we've got cars, cell phones, big screen TV, cable, etc. Poor kids in

Haiti have no food, education or parents (war, AIDS, etc.).

- Maybe we should try to become even more active in helping supply food or items for the food bank or shelters.

Responses Anonymous

The Church will need to respond to the economic crisis in many ways. The global economic "meltdown" and recent job losses in the millions, will affect almost everyone's income, and the Church's income could be reduced by half.. A recent poll shows nine out of ten Americans feel threatened. This would include people whose entire future is in jeopardy, who have lost their health, their homes, their livelihood... and thus feel socially stigmatized and isolated, demoralized and fearful. The Church might want to reach out and include these people, who could contribute in many ways if not financially.. Also related to the economic crisis is a problem which looms over clergymen especially, the phenomenon of desperate people asking for charity and the need to discriminate between those physically starving and those driven by a drug habit and potentially dangerous. One pastor shows an intelligent approach by physically accompanying charity-seekers during their grocery shopping and paying for their groceries (but not luxury items or drugs). Another pastor demonstrates real compassion by conversing with charity seekers (over the phone or in person) long enough to establish some of their needs and figure out which

agencies need to be contacted, and he may even agree to intervene on their behalf. It is crucial to bear in mind President Obama's plea to all of us to instill an attitude of "sacrifice for the common good." What forms will this sacrifice take in the Church? Will we be able to give up some of the "comforts" and "conveniences" we've grown used to in order to survive? Will the trustees and others who oversee church budgets, be able to curtail expenditures, even while they are searching for new sources of donations?

Anonymous

CHURCH AMONG ERODED FIELDS

I read that in Iowa -- great agricultural state
Field topsoil has eroded at alarming rate
(Compared to the soil on forested ground);
Half the original soil's no longer around.

As witness, a country church stands proud
In the middle of farm fields, all well plowed;
The church-yard, once level with the fields, is now
ten feet higher, an island among yields
Of corn or soy, or wheat and hay
Where ten feet of rich topsoil washed away.

Perhaps every church is an island as well;
There are seeds to sow, and stories to tell,
And praises to sing, and whispered prayers
As we sift the grain from the chaff and tares;
We share our strengths, 'remoralize'
And then, descend with clearer eyes
To eroded fields needing work and care;
Let's imagine that God has sent us there...

Susan Claire Searles



GODLY WISDOM

"Say not, why were the former days better than these? For it is not from wisdom that you ask this. Wisdom is good with an inheritance, and advantage to those who see the sun. For the protection of wisdom is like the protection of money, and the advantage of knowledge is that wisdom preserves the life of him who has it. Consider the work of God: who can make straight what he has made crooked? In the day of prosperity be joyful, and in the day of adversity consider: God has made the one as well as the other, so that man may not find out anything that will be after him."

Ecclesiastes 7:10-14

"I am the LORD, and there is no other, besides me there is no God; I equip you, though you do not know me, that people may know, from the rising of the sun and from the west, that there is none besides me; I am the LORD, and there is no other. I form light and create darkness, I make well-being and create calamity, I am the LORD, who does all these things."

Isaiah 45:5-7

Have you caught yourself wishing we weren't in an economic slump? Have you said to yourself, "It was better when ...?" According to God this isn't wise. I think the best analogy I can suggest is this: You listen to two very different pieces by J. S. Bach. Both of them have been expertly crafted. Both of them were designed completely from start to finish to be exactly as they are. You could easily get away with saying you like one more than the other, but you would not be correct in saying one was better than the other. Even more ridiculous would be to say that one was definitely written by Bach, but the other must have been written by a servant of Bach because I like it less.

I think this is something like the wisdom in these verses. Have you forgotten who holds all things together? Have you forgotten who is the sovereign Lord of all creation? "I am who I am" is sovereign. The universe is His creation. Things happen by His design. He makes well-being and creates calamity. If God was in control of the times

when things were going well, then He is also in control of the times that are difficult.

In Christian circles, you often hear people attributing hard-times to Satan, but Satan is simply another creature. He has no power over God. In the fullness of time, God will deal with Satan. What power Satan perceives to have in this world is a shadow, a farce. He is not allowed to cause Job great suffering without the permission of God. We give Satan too much credit if we attribute to him anything other than the lies he tells and the false sense of rule he perceives for himself. Satan's attempts to crush us are worked for our good provided that we love God and are called according to His purpose.

Be at peace in this time of economic difficulty. The great I AM is working His perfect will in all situations. Are you comfortable in calamity? I am not either, but I am trying to be comfortable in the grip of God's grace.

KID'S THOUGHTS

Three-year-old, Reese: "Our Father, Who does art in heaven, Harold is His name. Amen."

A little boy was overheard praying "Lord, if you can't make me a better boy, don't worry about it. I'm having a real good time like I am."

One particular four-year-old prayed, "And forgive us our trash baskets as we forgive those who put trash in our baskets."

HELP ME

I volunteer to format and publish this newsletter. Unfortunately, most of my time has been consumed by typing responses into the computer. I would like to see all submissions to the newsletter in a digital form. The most convenient way to deliver content would be through email. From there it is a simple task of copy, paste, and format.

For all further submissions, please send them to mjfolkerts@me.com with the subject containing: Newsletter Submission. I will be setting email filters to move these emails to a particular folder. Emails not sent with the appropriate subject or handwritten submissions might not be included in the newsletter because of oversight or time restraints. If you do not have access to a computer and cannot submit your articles via email, please contact Dru or I for alternative methods. Thank you for your help in this matter.

Michael Folkerts

Calendar

TBA (May) Bartsch family will be selling everything.

For a complete list of dates and events go to the [Church Calendar](#).



Editors

DRU CUNNINGHAM



Dru provides the newsletter with leadership and planning. She also contributes written materials.

MICHAEL FOLKERTS



Michael provides the newsletter with its design and publishing. He also deals with the technology of dissemination.