

CHURCH OF THE SERVANT  
(on Munjoy Hill)

NEWSLETTER  
June 1985

Sacrifice

Servanthood

Simplicity

Pastor's Message

Greetings Friends and Neighbors,

This is the first issue of our church newsletter (to be printed several times a year. We hope you find it interesting and inspiring.

A little over two years ago, my wife Jewel and I moved from New Jersey to Munjoy Hill with a dream of starting a Christian community. When we arrived, we didn't know a soul in the neighborhood. We quickly discovered, however, that Munjoy Hill was a friendly place. We have enjoyed getting to know many of you during the past two years. Munjoy Hill is truly beginning to feel like our home and our neighborhood. Our son Jonathan, born just five months ago, will grow, play, and go to school here. We want Munjoy Hill to be a great place for all of our children to grow and experience life together. We're happy to be a part of the Munjoy Hill neighborhood.

During the past two years our dream has become a reality. Church of the Servant, a Christian community, has been quietly growing. The Apostle Paul said to the young church in Corinth, I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God made it grow (I. Cor. 3:6) Two years ago, Jewel and I and a few others began planting, others came and watered, but we all know that it was God who gave the growth.

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SUNDAY SCHOOL

We at Church of the Servant welcome you to join us for Sunday School and church service. We have Sunday School classes for all ages. They offer a variety of activities geared to meet the spiritual, creative, and personal needs of children in order to nurture and encourage growth and learning. A range of activities includes Bible study, story telling, and craft time. Classes begin at 11:00, immediately following our 9:30 AM worship service.

Also at 11:00, we have discussion and study groups for adults on a variety of topics and concerns. We hope you can join us on Sunday!

Sandy Skinner

THE ROOT CELLAR

A drop-in Center for young people ages 10-19

Munjoy Hill has a large number of children and teenagers and most of them need something to do. The Root Cellar emerged from the needs of these young people as expressed by the community of Munjoy Hill. The Root Cellar offers supervised activities, games and snacks. It is open on Friday and Saturday evenings from 6:30-11:00, with an average of 25-40 kids each night. They come to have fun, to be with their friends, but also because they know that there are understanding and sympathetic staff members who care about them and will listen to them.

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Church of the Servant  
101 North St. Portland, Maine Tele: 774-8578  
(Mennonite Affiliated)

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History of the church - back page.

Pastor's Message cont.

In I Cor. 3, St. Paul also says that the church at Corinth would continue to grow as long as it was rooted firmly in Jesus Christ. Because the Church of the Servant was so planted and rooted, it will send forth new shoots on Munjoy Hill and in the greater Portland area. May the Holy Spirit strengthen us so that we might produce fruit in due season.

St. Paul goes on to tell the Christians in Corinth that they are simply servants, fellow workers with God. Mark also says that Jesus, who gave his life as a ransom for many, was the greatest servant of all (Mk. 10:43-45). He called his disciples to follow him in serving others. For this reason, a church rooted in Jesus Christ must have a servant's heart.

The Church of the Servant would like to invite you to worship, serve, and grow with us. Our Sunday morning worship begins at 9:30 and is very informal. There are classes for children of all ages. Small groups meet for prayer, bible study, and service throughout the week. For more information or if we can serve you in any way call 774-8578 or 761-0668.

Grace and Peace,

Bruce Martin

The Root Cellar cont.

The staff includes concerned people from various churches and fellowships who are committed to helping teenagers. They bring a variety of experiences and educational backgrounds and are eager to share their love and lives with kids.

The Root Cellar also has an Advisory Council consisting of representatives from churches and businesses in the Greater Portland community, bringing leadership, vision and prayer support.

The Root Cellar staff seeks to reach out to youth with the message of love that Christ shared with us. Jesus came to heal hurts, mend broken relationships, restore peace to the family, and to help people of all ages with the struggles they face. If you would like to become involved as a staff member, or if you can help us in any way, feel free to call Les Hochstetler at 774-0519. You are also very welcome to stop in and see for yourself what the Root Cellar is all about.

"And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power together with all the saints, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ..." (Eph. 3:17-18).

Les Hochstetler

Despite the towering intellectual and technological achievements of twentieth-century science, its spell over us has been irreversibly weakened. There are at least two important reasons for this. First, scientist and layman alike have become acutely aware of the limits and shortcomings of scientific knowledge. Second, we realize that our perpetual hunger for spiritual understanding is real and undeniable. It can neither be defined away by subtle logic, nor be satisfied by viewing the universe as sterile, mechanistic, and accidental.

Roger S. Jones  
Physics as Metaphor

We are a Servant Church! Our worship of God expresses itself not just in our Sunday morning services, or in the Christian principles with which we pursue our vocations and raise our children but in the ways in which we reach out to bring Christ's love and concern to our neighbors. Many of the members of our church are engaged in community service.

From Andrea Buettner:

I spend one evening a week working at the Community Pregnancy Center on Forest Avenue in Portland. This Center educates women about abortion and especially the alternatives to it. Its most important function, though, is to provide whatever assistance is needed to support women in completing their pregnancy. That assistance takes many different forms. It always includes love - and also baby clothes, baby furniture, housing, food, and assistance in contacting adoption agencies if the woman chooses that option. Frequently, these needs can be met through city and state and private agencies but, if not, we have found that the local churches (the body of Christ) have been very generous. We also have support groups for women before and after the birth of their children.

My reason for becoming involved is very simple. I believe that life begins at conception -- and every single life is precious and has a special purpose. Therefore, I want to do what I can to preserve life.

I feel that it's just possible some day that I could meet a child on the street who is alive because God put me in the right place at the right time with the right words.

From Paul Miller

For the past six months, I have been working with Joan Gauche of Sentencing Options to establish a Victim Offender Reconciliation Program. This program will involve a face-to-face meeting between a juvenile offender and his/her victim to air feelings and facts and come to some agreement on a form and amount of restitution to the victim with the aid of a trained community volunteer. The Maine Community Grant Foundation has given us a \$2,500 grant and we hope to start the program in the fall.

The Victim Offender concept gives communities a chance to begin addressing their own problems; holds the juvenile offender accountable to the victim and the community; decreases the alienation felt by victims who are involved in the criminal process; increases the self-esteem of the juvenile offender by providing the opportunity to assume responsibility for his/her own actions; reduces community apprehension about crime through personal involvement in the criminal process; and restores the financial losses that result from criminal behavior or enables the offender to make appropriate community service. The program needs: volunteers who would be willing to be trained in mediation, and who have a concern for young people; prayer that the Probation and Parole Dept. will see mediation as a valid tool; and funds for the program. If interested, call Joan Gauche at 772-9548 or Paul Miller at 774-0519.

From Gayle Hochstetler

I volunteer one day a week at Logos Bookstore. As a book lover, my work there has been a real joy. Also, the owners, John and Linda Leddy, have often been a source of encouragement to me. Their vision of Logos is to create an atmosphere in which the non-Christian can feel comfortable, as well as to serve the Christian community. There's an emphasis on ministering to the customer's spiritual needs as well as the need for material things.

Often, as customers express the need for a certain book, they begin to talk about what's going on in their lives. I really listen to where they are and rely on the Holy Spirit to make me sensitive to their needs, moods and feelings. I feel I've been able to help bear the burdens of some of our customers and, oftentimes, have been strengthened in my own walk of faith.

- NEEDED -

A good, durable stereo for the Root Cellar. If you have one you can donate or know of someone who does, contact Les Hochstetler at 774-0519.

"The poor you'll always have with you..." (JN 12:8). What did Jesus mean by this statement? Why must there always be poor people? Must there always be "top people" and "bottom people?"

During our weekend of VS Retreat in Travelers Rest, South Carolina, we reflected on these questions. Phil and Charlotte Baker-Shenk from the Sojourners fellowship in Washington, D.C. were our resource persons. They guided us into areas of thought that disturbed our "top people" perspectives. We were asked to read chapters 4, 5, and 6 in the book Upside Down Kingdom by Donald Kraybill. We were to especially notice who was on the bottom in Jesus' day. It is really surprising to find that things haven't changed much. The same people are on the bottom today, for the same basic reasons. Phil pointed out that oppression by top people is what keeps bottom people on the bottom. And, that the basic reason for oppression is sin. He defined sin in several ways: 1) a broken relationship with God; 2) the opposite of what God wants us to do or be; 3) loving someone or something more than loving God; 4) loving self more than your neighbor; 5) constipated love (I John 3:17).

One area Phil pointed out that was new to me was that of corporate sin. I had previously thought of sin as personal or individual, not as a group responsibility. And if, in fact, there is group sin, then there is also corporate accountability before God and man for that sin. The seriousness of this hits hard if you consider yourself one of the top people, thus one of the oppressors.

Top people have a need to stigmatize bottom people. By thinking of them as groups and giving them a name, such as "lazy" or "niggers" or "bag ladies" they become less human than ourselves. This dehumanizing causes people to become non-persons. Is it not easier to kill or mistreat someone when you can regard them as less human, less capable of feeling than yourself? To get close to bottom people would be to recognize they are like us in their humanness (or we are like them).

We examined some of the characteristics of oppressed people. 1) Ambivalence or self-doubt; 2) Self-depreciation (they begin to parrot the negative things the oppressor says about them; 3) Mistrust of their peers; 4) Horizontal violence (they begin to take out their frustration on each other because the oppressor is just too big to take on; 5) Passivity (adapting themselves to their situation and regarding themselves as hopeless; 6) Magical belief about the power of the oppressor's "topness"; 7) Emotional dependence on the oppressor; 8) Real fear of freedom (fear of backlash and fear of losing their dependence on the oppressor.)

Jesus responded to bottom people by being born among them. He was born of scandalized parents and became a political refugee (his flight into Egypt at a very young age). He grew up in Galilee which was regarded as the "place of the peasants." As he grew older, he began making choices that reflected his "bottom people" perspective on life. He left his home and took on a poorer way of life. He was persecuted and killed as a political radical. He often broke the rules of both the religious establishment and the secular society of his day. He became very unpopular for his claims that in God's Kingdom, the bottom people are top people and vice versa. He even dared to speak to society's "top crust" about their disregard for the poor.

What about us? What can we do? Who are we? First of all, I feel we must recognize ourselves as top people in many areas. Then we need to ask ourselves if we're willing to risk some of our "comfortableness" to identify with those at the bottom. By befriending some bottom people, we will begin to get more of their perspective on life. We need to get close to them, learn what life is like for them, yes, even experience it with them. We need to cry, pray, and laugh with them - possibly even help them in their battle to come out from under oppression.

cont.



May VS Retreat cont.

If we have truly repented, we have joined the Upside Down Kingdom. We must take seriously Jesus' message in Matt. 25:31-46 to care for our brothers and sisters who are in need. I leave with you the question of what you can do. As you pray and meditate, ask the Holy Spirit to reveal your areas of "topness" and show you ways of coming closer to the bottom.

The purpose of Phil and Charlotte's teaching wasn't to lay a guilt trip on anyone, but to give us an awareness of how the problems of sin, oppression, and poor people are related. Although it is true "we'll always have the poor with us," that isn't an excuse for us as God's people to take on an attitude of indifference. As we are humbled by this awareness, let us use our lives to give more joy to someone else's.

Gayle Hochstetler

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O Lord, We come to you as your disciples came, eager to learn from our Master. We confess that we have much to learn -- yet even as we desire to be taught, we deny that we need teaching.

Some of us long to further your Kingdom through acts of charity and service; we are full of creative projects and bold plans, but sometimes empty of the wisdom it takes to wait upon You to reveal the way. We need to learn patience.

Some of us are quick to claim credit for our own ideas and accomplishments, but slow to see value in the work and opinions of others. We need to learn humility.

Some of us are bruised reeds, feeling awkward and inadequate in the presence of others, fearing that we may never be anything more than what we've been. We need to learn again how to give our trust to one another and to You.

Some of us are anxious people, always worrying about our futures, so much that we miss the simple joys and promising opportunities You put before us each day. We need to learn the peace of mind and spirit that comes only from a daily surrender of our lives to You.

Some of us have become too complacent in our faith; rather than challenge ourselves, we leave Christian maturity to others; we cling to what is secure and comfortable, and cease to grow as a result. We need to learn both to accept responsibility and to accept change.

Some of us are so taken up with immediate needs and problems that the larger mission of the Church is forgotten; we need our vision cleared and our hearts stretched to include all those who suffer, in whatever place, in whatever sense.

We need to learn compassion.

We recognize that each of us has our own path to follow as we make our pilgrimage toward wholeness. Keep us from letting our different paths become more important than our common destination.

Be our wise Teacher, Be our sure Guide,  
Be our inward Healer, and our outward Light. AMEN

Mary Lou Van Denend

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### How does a church begin?

The term customarily used for establishing a new church is "planting." Most people never have the opportunity to experience the wonderful joy and excitement that comes from helping to "plant" a new church. We are so accustomed to seeing those imposing cathedrals and large church complexes we forget that a church is not a building, it is a group of people -- just as simple as that -- a group of people gathered together to worship and to extend friendship to one another. Those people can meet together in a cathedral or they can meet in someone's livingroom, or under a tree, for that matter (as Jesus did). The only essentials needed are a few people and their faith in Jesus Christ.

Church of the Servant is a new church, "planted" less than two years ago after some people from Munjoy Hill had contacted the Eastern Mennonite Board of Missions. In response to the need for a pastor, Bruce Martin, just completing study at Princeton Seminary, moved to Portland with his wife Jewel to join with Wes & Cheryl Mills as the first leaders of the new church. At first, worship services were held in the Mills home but, after a few months, with only 5-7 adults and a lot of faith in the future growth of the church, a decision was made to look for a building. Through the assistance of Jim Price, a neighbor and realtor, a 3-story apartment building was found and purchased with the financial assistance of the Mennonite Board of Missions. And in July 1983, a small but very joyful group of people met on the lawn for a prayer meeting in thanksgiving for God's guidance and leading in the establishment of His church.

Renovations began with work teams from Mennonite congregations from Augusta, Maine, and Pennsylvania. Teams of men and women, teenagers to retirees, would come to Munjoy Hill for a week at a time to help erect scaffolding, scrape wallpaper, hang sheetrock, build, paint, rejuvenate and restore the old building.

While major construction was going on downstairs, the small band of worshipers met in the apartment of the Pastor and his wife on the third floor of the building until, in October of 1983, the first-floor meeting room was ready for Sunday morning services with an attendance now grown to 20-25 people. At that time, too, a major decision was made about the outreach of the new young church. Rather than door-to-door evangelization of the neighborhood, they decided instead to be a worshiping community of love and service and, in being that, people would be drawn to the church and to Christ. Over the next 6 months, the church began to slowly grow through word of mouth and to develop a sense of mission and community. A beautiful and moving Covenant Service was held in November 1984 as part of the bonding and unity that was developing among the membership, now at 60-70 on Sunday mornings.

As the church grew, further renovations were made in the spring of 1985 to provide a nursery and Sunday School classes, with most of the work being done by the members of the church -- whose skills as carpenters and painters are almost as great as their enthusiasm for the church and the fun and fellowship of its Saturday "workdays."

So that's how Church of the Servant came to be part of Munjoy Hill. We're happy about our growth and hope there will be more. But the kind of growth we really yearn for is not the kind that comes through numbers. Growth and maturity in our spiritual lives and servanthood is what we are about. Most of us meet weekly in small discipleship groups to help one another in our walk with Christ, and for bible study.

We're very informal -- no pews to separate us from one another -- only a simple, caring, welcoming community gathered to worship our Lord and to fellowship with our neighbors.

Do join us some Sunday morning!

Virginia Hodson  
Editor