

SOJOURNS

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The Newsletter of the Sonnenbera Mennonite Church

February 21, 2010

NEWS FROM THE TEXAS SNOWBIRDS

Greetings from the Texas snowbirds, (it should be snowless birds). However that is what we are called around here. It has been a good winter, time is moving fast and we will be heading home by the end of March. The weather has been cooler and rainy this winter but much better than the alternative as we keep a close tab on your weather. This week it is supposed to be in the low 70's with a chance of a few rain showers.

We seem to find plenty of things to do. Music events take up some of our time. We attend quite a few Jams. Ask me when we are home what they are. We also go to concerts, both family groups and gospel. Musicians have found this is a nice place to perform and enjoy the warmer weather during the winter.

We have two grapefruit trees that we picked a couple weeks ago. They needed to be picked. Birds were helping themselves by pecking a hole in them and then the ants would get in and they would fall down. We also have a lemon tree that is loaded and will soon need to be picked. We have lemonade on hand all the time, plus Rozella makes a mean lemon pie she is noted for around the park at a carry-in or for a church event.

All the parks here have an all-purpose building and we have a group of church people with a campground pastor who leads worship on Sundays and a Bible study on Wednesday evenings. We also meet on Sunday evenings in a home to sing hymns for an hour and then we have a snack and fellowship for another hour. Our pastor is Curt Bentham. Please pray for Alta, his wife, who is very ill. She is not expected to live long as she is so weak and has heart and low oxygen problems. She has been in the hospital five times in the short time we have been here.

Last Saturday we went to the Rio Grande Valley Bible Institute for their annual Mennonite Relief Sale, a small sale compared to Kidron's. They were short on quilts this year, but the buying was down also. I brought six rugs made at MCC Connections with us and Marilyn Shetler will be glad to know that they sold really well. Four of them were sold at auction and brought over twice the amount they sell for at Connections. Louie and Marilyn Lehman (Louie is Freeman's brother) were there helping as they do every year. They spend the month of February volunteering at the college, helping with numerous jobs.

There is a 50-60 mile radius here in the valley, as they call it, that has park after park up and down the interstate

and small town after town where snowbirds or winter Texans live for the winter to get away from the cold north. Much like Florida, this area has less humidity and more wind as we are close to the gulf. We are also close to Mexico and many people speak Spanish. We do get into Mexico several times a year by walking across the bridge. Business and restaurants thrive during the winter months. I know they really miss us when we are gone. I have been getting a round of golf in every week, read a lot of books and help neighbors here in our park, which is rather small compared to some others.

I would like to thank Ed Taylor for putting the bulletin and the church services on line as we listen every week and keep in touch as best we can that way. Blessings to all. See you soon. John & Rozella Lehman

LENT 2010—Holding On & Letting Go

Lent is an opportunity to draw near to God, to ponder God's words to us in scripture, to hold close what we value, and to identify with Jesus in His mission. Jesus' self-giving on the cross is a powerful metaphor for our call to turn away from the temptation to make ourselves the center of the universe and choose instead a life of sacrificial love in the world.

This year's texts focus particularly on calling back believers who have fallen away. In these passages we see two parallel invitations: 1) to hold on to what is most important; and 2) to let go of what is peripheral or gets in the way of further growth.

Sometimes we release the ungodly ways of the culture we so easily take for granted, or we let go of familiar religious beliefs because they are more human creation and habit than essentials of the faith. At times, it is sin that gets in our way. We may hold on to our pride rather than apologize, or clutch resentment rather than forgive. Sometimes we must let go of something that is truly good in order to continue to grow and develop as God wishes. Jesus is our model, the one who made himself usable for God by letting go of his very life, entrusting himself to the height and depth, breadth and width of God's love.

The human tendency is to wander away from our home in God, yet God longs for reunion with all who have strayed. As we remember the story of the prodigal son, we can examine and confess the reality of our lives. As we see God's longing and acceptance, we are drawn into celebrating our relationship with God who takes such delight in our return.

HAITI RESPONSE—MCC Update

Thank you for joining MCC as we work alongside Haitian communities facing unimaginable destruction. Your recent donation of \$3,390.10 reflects a generous compassion for the people of Haiti. It mirrors the sort of Christian compassion MCC workers are witnessing as their Haitian neighbors and friends reach out to help each other in any way they can. Because of your generosity MCC is undertaking a multimillion dollar, multi-year response to provide emergency assistance and long-term rebuilding and trauma support. Thank you for entrusting MCC with your gift.

MCC's material aid is gradually arriving in Port-au-Prince, despite challenges. The Port-au-Prince port is still only operating at about 10% of the capacity it had before the earthquake. Alternate ports are available, but delivery is hindered because of distance or because the ports are not equipped with cranes to facilitate easy unloading. Airlifts are prohibitively expensive so they are used sparingly.

Canned meat was transferred to trucks that were escorted to Haiti by United Nations (U.N.) personnel. Delays were encountered as trucks from many organizations waited, sometimes for days, to unload supplies. The MCC Haiti staff was able to start collecting the meat on Wednesday, February 3. Assemblée de la Grace, a Mennonite church on the outskirts of Port-au-Prince, distributed more than 1,000 cans of meat to church and community members, many of whose houses were destroyed in the earthquake. Five other MCC partner organizations distributed portions of the shipment. Meanwhile, two more shipments of meat, are scheduled to arrive at the port of St. Marc, Haiti, on February 18 or 19.

Relief kits, heavy comforters and other supplies also are on the way and will continue. Already sent are two shipments that contain 2,688 relief kits, 4,591 comforters, various medical supplies, 250 tarps and 192 boxes of water bottles, flashlights and deodorant.

MCC also expects to supply about 9,000 tarps before the rainy season begins in April. Previously, MCC sent 1,000 water filters and about \$53,000 in cash to MCC Haiti and its partners to be used in the first days of relief efforts.

Twenty medical boxes, designed to supply 800 adults and children for two to three months, currently are being distributed in Haiti. The Haiti Response Coalition, a new MCC partner in Port-au-Prince, was grateful for the supplies that "were exactly what was needed for the mobile clinics currently serving several camps of internally displaced people." In addition, 5,000 first aid kits purchased by MCC will be distributed to families.

As of February 12, 2010, contributors have given an estimated \$8.3 million, the majority of which will be used for rebuilding once the initial crisis has passed. An MCC assessment team is scheduled to convene in Haiti on February 22 to evaluate the situation and make recommendations for ongoing work.

LIFE AT SONNENBERG

NEW BOOKS IN THE CHURCH LIBRARY

- Raising Unselfish Children in a Self-Absorbed World, Jill Rigby
- The Anatomy of Hope, Jerome Groopman
- Leaving Home, Garrison Keillor
- Lies Women Believe, Nancy Leigh DeMoss
- Allegheny Gospel Trails, Virginia Crider
- The Joy Factor, Jep Hostetler
- It's My Life, Janine Schwab, Editor
- Acres of Hope, Patty Anglin
- When Victims Marry, Don & Jan Frank
- A Slice of Pineapple, Mary Uchida

The library staff is working hard to catalog and place new or donated books on the shelves. However, we are unable to adequately evaluate all the materials in a timely manner. We will be more likely in the future to add a book to the library collection if you (the donor) could share a brief book review when you leave a book in the library. Just write a short paragraph or two telling how you have been blessed by the book, or something interesting about the story that would make someone else want to read it. Thank you.

Bob Eshleman, Adult Librarian

NEWS & NOTES

CENTRAL CHRISTIAN SCHOOL - 330/857-7311

2010 AUCTION: Central Christian School's annual auction will be held next Saturday, February 27. There will be a pancake breakfast hosted by Central's softball team from 6:30 to 9:00 that morning and the auction will begin at 9:00. The auction has been matched 100% up to \$90,000 revenue. Your support in helping Central to meet this goal would be much appreciated. For a complete list of auction items, check Central's website: www.ccscomets.org.

CONCERT AT ORRVILLA: Willie and Rodi Longenecker from Ontario will present "Grace Again," a gospel music program with slides, at OrrVilla Retirement Community, on Monday, March 1, at 7:00 p.m. This concert is free and everyone is invited. Refreshments will follow the program. For more information, call 330-683-4455.

GRIEF SUPPORT: The Care Committee at Kidron Mennonite is organizing a seminar/support group to help persons deal with the loss of a loved one (spouse, child, parent, sibling, friend), providing a place to meet with others who understand what you are feeling, helping you work through your grief from a Christian/Biblical perspective. If you, or someone you know, is adjusting to a loss, we hope you will attend. If interested, call Lois Nussbaum, at the Kidron Mennonite Church office (330-857-3461).

The next issue of Sojourns will be printed for Sunday, March 7, 2010. Please submit any items for this issue by Thursday, March 4, 9:00 a.m. Thanks!