

Kathy Goering Reid, SMCHA Annual Meeting at First Mennonite, Pretty Prairie, Sunday, March 11, 2018

“Schweitzer Culture and Peace in our Homes”

“Jesus loves the little children, ALL the children of the world.
Red and yellow, black and white, they are precious in His sight.”

After years of pastoring in the General Conference Mennonite Church as well as the Church of the Brethren churches, Kathy Goering Reid has spent the last nine years as Director of the Family Abuse Center, a 64-bed emergency shelter, in Waco, TX. She spends much of her time working at ways to prevent abuse and domestic violence through education and prevention activities. Why does she do that?

Kathy gives credit to the importance of grandparents (Katie and Edward Wedel and Mary and Henry Goering) and her parents and a healthy upbringing for her current attitudes. Eight ministers came out of the Joe Wedel part of her family. She remembers her Grandma singing “Jesus loves ALL the children of the world” which meant that ALL people deserve respect and care. Three important values from family and community were:

1. Education. Kathy’s parents were adamant about her getting a good education.
2. Service. Grandparents served in Gulfport, disaster work, Hopi mission schools; her parents in Paraguay where she was born and Heifer Project.
3. Compassion for humanity, a fundamental value--unspoken respect and recognition of each person’s worth and dignity

From her work experience, Kathy shared frightening statistics: 1 out of 4 little girls (1 of 7 boys) molested before age 18. One out of three women suffered from domestic violence; 50% homeless are women. If gun is in the house, murder of someone is three times more likely. Women show up at their center with literally nothing. However, 80% go back for economic reasons; they can’t meet the needs of their children by themselves. Kathy also sees a huge increase in trafficking in the last ten years. We can’t begin to understand.

Should we think the Church is free from these problems, a study in Winnipeg churches revealed a higher incidence of abuse in the Church than national average.

Neuroscientists scan brains of children to discover that abused children have development problems that may result in mental illness, problems in school, behavioral problems, and even shorter life span.

What we Mennonites have to offer is our healthier upbringing and the values we practice in homes and church and service and sermons and our realization that God is love. Many hurting people do not have home life, maybe no father figure, don’t go to church and don’t know they are loved by God.

We who believe that no person deserves to be beaten or live in fear of their lives are challenged to share with others what we have practiced in our own homes, churches, and community by showing compassion.