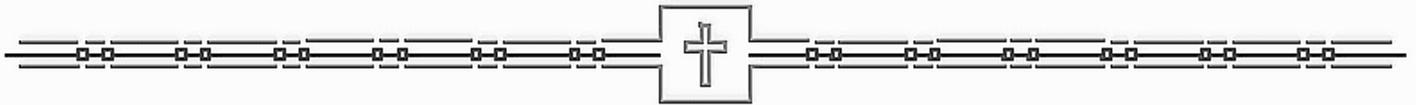


E-MANUAL

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THE INCARNATION OF GOD IN CHRIST...

"...is similar to when a great king has entered into some large city and taken up residence in one of the houses there. That city is thus deemed worthy of high honor. No enemy or bandit any longer descends on it and subdues it. On the contrary, it finds itself entitled to total protection because the king has taken up his residence in a single house there: so, too, has it been with the Monarch of all. For now that he has come to our realm and taken up residence in one body among his peers, from this time forward the whole conspiracy of the enemy against humankind is checked, and the corruption of death, which before had prevailed against them, is

done away with. For the human race would have gone to ruin if the Lord and Savior of all, the Son of God, had not come among us to meet the end of death...he was made man that we might be made divine. He manifested himself by a body that we might receive a conception of the unseen Father. He endured the hubris of humanity that we might inherit incorruptibility." by St. Athanasius, 4th C. AD., *On the Incarnation*

"How can the Godhead be in the flesh? In the same way as fire can be in iron: not by moving from place to place but by the one imparting to the other its own properties. Fire does not speed toward iron, but without itself undergoing any change it causes the iron to share in its own natural attributes. The fire is not diminished, and yet it completely fills whatever shares in its nature. So is it also with God the Word. He did not relinquish his own nature, and yet 'he dwelt among us.' He did not undergo any change, and yet 'the Word became flesh.' Earth received him from heaven, yet heaven was not deserted by him who holds the universe in being...." by St. Basil the Great, 4th C. AD.

—Submitted by Pastor Mathew Swora

Mennonite Disaster Service Letter



November 26, 2012

" Advent is near. It's a time in the Christian church symbolized by "waiting" and "hoping" for the Light that would come into the world, the birth of Jesus Christ.

MDS is grateful for your congregational contribution to long-term disaster recovery in the Gulf States following Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The enclosed MDS report summarizes a seven-year commitment to recovery, an effort made possible, in part, through your gifts.

As the Gulf Coast recovery illustrates, disaster forces people to wait months and years in hope for a community restored. In 2012, more than 3,000 MDS volunteers

brought the Light into places where disaster caused discouragement and despair. Equipped with tools of hope and a resilient spirit, volunteers restored homes and stood alongside grieving disaster survivors.

MDS invites your congregation to stand in solidarity with disaster-affected communities. Please remember MDS volunteers, and hold disaster survivors in God's Light, through prayer. Your contributions make it possible for MDS volunteer labor to be given freely to homeowners with unmet needs.

Your congregational gifts offer life-giving hope to those who wait. Thank you!

Sincerely,
Kevin King
Executive Director

Mennonite Disaster Service is a volunteer network of Anabaptist churches that responds in Christian love to those affected by disasters in Canada and the United States. While the main focus is on clean up, repair and rebuilding homes, this service touches lives and nurtures hope, faith and wholeness.



Update on Hurricane Sandy

"Rampaging wind drove a wall of water in the city (New York)," reported the NY Times (Nov. 3, 2012), causing "catastrophic flooding and destroying entire neighborhoods. Staten Island, which even in good times is often referred to as the city's forgotten borough, took a particularly hard hit." Hardship is growing, and the region is "close to a breaking point."

Responding

Within days after wind and rain subsided, MDS and leaders from the New York City Council of Mennonite Churches and the New York Disaster Interfaith Services met to map out unmet needs and MDS involvement. Clean up work has begun with day volunteers in Staten Island. Volunteers bring a vital life-giving message, "You are not forgotten!"

Restoring

- Pray for those affected by Hurricane Sandy
- Follow the progress of Hurricane Sandy recovery on the MDS website, mds.mennonite.net
- Add an extra gift designated *Hurricane Sandy* to your year-end contribution

"The Lovers, the Dreamers and Me:" What I Learned From A Frog

by Mathew Swora



If you're wondering where this tongue-in-cheek essay is coming from, and where I'm going with it, suffice it to say that something in my recent Clinical Pastoral Education jogged the following memories and reflections about what I learned from a famous frog.

I was well beyond grade school when Sesame Street burst onto the scene. So my initial knowledge of Cookie Monster, Big Bird and Oscar the Grouch was all secondary, through younger children in the neighborhood. But Sesame Street became a force in my life when our daughters were in preschool through the primary grades. Once home from school or a play date in the afternoon, they'd get a snack, and then I'd start on dinner prep. During those three years, I was the primary homemaker, and loved it.

I confess: afternoon public television for children often served as a babysitter. For our daughters, too. While I was chopping vegetables or cooking rice in the kitchen nearby, I could overhear Mr. Rogers saying, "I like you just the way you are," and that would be worth a week of therapy. Then would come the (barely) controlled chaos of the Muppets on Sesame Street, often with humor that passed right over the children's heads and hit me square in the funny bone.

"I'm Flakey" said one of the Seven Dwarves (who should each be counted only once, or you'll never know how many dwarves you have) to the Snow White Muppet.

"I'm sorry to hear that," she dead-panned. That was in the show brought to you by the number seven.

Of all the Muppets, the one who most caught my attention was Kermit the Frog (not to be confused with Kermit the Gorf, nor Kermit the Forg, nor Kermit the Grof, who all came into The Wonderful World of T-Shirts at the same time to get their personalized t-shirts, so pay attention to the order of letters, children! See <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fKNJLeVncug>).

In the midst of all the chaos, compulsions and craziness of the Muppets, Kermit is the most sane and adult among them. He is a self-defined leader. But he's not emotionally disengaged. What parent cannot identify with his characteristic sigh and grimace, even his occasional semi-stifled half-scream at the outrageous

antics going on around him? Or even his occasional fainting spell when things get unbelievably outrageous?

And yet Kermit always remains respectfully engaged with his fellow Muppets, always interested, hopeful and willing to be helpful. That made him the perfect correspondent and journalist to interview famous characters from current events, nursery rhymes and fairy tales, such as when he interviewed the Miami Mice in the show brought to you by the letter M. Or Peter Piper, plus his brothers Porter and Potter, his sister Piper, and his papa, Papa, plus their dog Pepper, their pig Porker, their parrot Polly, in the show brought to us by the letter P.

His genuine interest in his fellow Muppets gave Kermit a realistic appraisal of Muppet nature, even while it appears to have earned him their trust, even with leadership, however little Muppets can actually be led. His motivational speaking skills, especially his prodigious prowess pronouncing parallel, plural consonants, keeps his fellow Muppets engaged, focused and enthused when confronting shared tasks and challenges, like when Kermit led them to Hollywood in *The Muppet Movie* (1979). Yet it is just as true that the other Muppets helped Kermit on this journey as much as he helped them. That is true leadership, when all participants can revel in what everyone did, together.

There's no doubting the depth of Kermit's capacity for love, in spite of all that he often has to endure. He's married to a pig, after all, and a rather high maintenance, self-absorbed one at that ("Mor?" she would ask). Yet theirs is one of the longest-lasting celebrity marriages in Hollywood.

Kermit is a visionary, who often sees things that the other Muppets barely grasp. Though diminutive in stature, as most frogs are, Kermit has the capacity to see beyond the more immediate and pressing preoccupations (some might call them "obsessive compulsions") of his fellow Muppets with such matters as cookies, paper clips, oatmeal, trash or rubber duckies. When necessary, Kermit exercises the courage to challenge personal and group behavior whenever it is self-defeating, distracting or destructive, such as when Kermit asked Cookie Monster, "Are cookies all you think about? Don't you ever think of other people?"

Cookie Monster replied, "Yes! Other people's cookies!"

Cue the sigh.

All these qualities make Kermit a very spiritual frog,

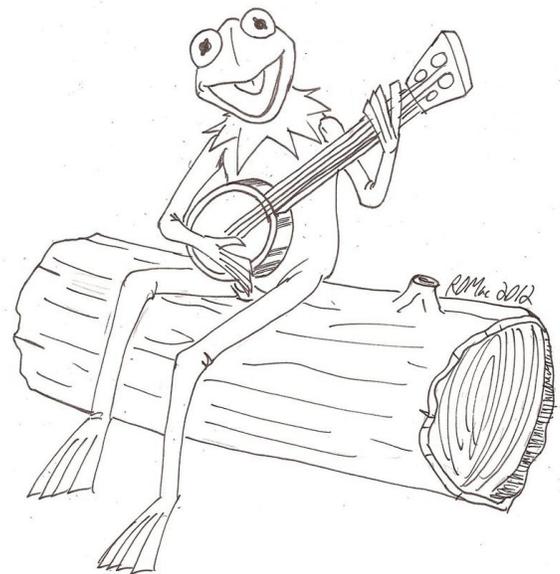
as frogs go. One could say that he is even something of a prophet. Like Samuel in the Old Testament, Kermit has heard a voice from beyond the confines of the usual Muppet preoccupations, calling him personally to a task, an identity, a dream. We hear it in his most famous song, *The Rainbow Connection*:

"Have you been half asleep and have you heard voices?
I've heard them calling my name.
Is this the sweet sound that called the young sailors?
The voice might be one and the same.
I've heard it too many times to ignore it.
It's something that I'm supposed to be.
Someday we'll find it, the rainbow connection.
The lovers, the dreamers and me."

And yet, like a true prophet, Kermit's hope and faith are not matters of mere wishful, magical thinking. His realism is as great as his values and aspirations. In the same song he also asks,

"Who said that every wish would be heard and answered
When wished on the morning star?
Somebody thought of that and someone believed it.
Look what it's done so far."

In spite of all the chaos around him, Kermit remains true to his own calling and identity, however hard being green might be. He maintains the artistic and recreational practices that rejuvenate his spirit, such as banjo playing, singing and tap dancing. We could learn much from such a frog. Even if he really is only a construction of cloth, wood and wire. And of some very random, yet fertile, imaginations.

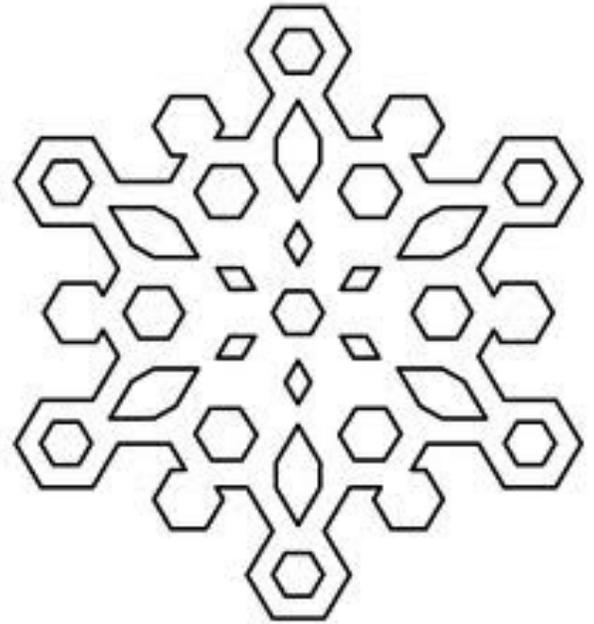


A SYMBOL CAN SAY IT ALL

Emmanuel Mennonite Church will have it's own SYMBOL this Advent to focus our action on water justice. Our traditional Christmas tree will be decorated with glittering snowflakes made by our junior youth as symbols of water in Minnesota. We will watch our tree grow in beauty as our special offering grows.



The size of the snowflake will represent the amount of the donation. Please make your checks payable to "Emmanuel Mennonite Church" and write "snowflakes = water" on the memo line to distinguish from your regular tithes.



Emmanuel's water fund will also have the additional significance of being designated for an upcoming water project. in HAITI through Mennonite Central Committee, in honor of Becky Swora's recent work there.

