

Communities of Joy!

Southern California Mission Center

February 2005

“The Church Present and Future” with Apostle McLaughlin Linda Espiritu Santo Speaks to Our Mission



On Saturday, February 26, Southern California Mission Center will hold a Gathering for Evangelists, High Priests, Bishops and companions with Apostle Ken McLaughlin. Mission Center Council members, and Ministerial Staff are also invited. The gathering will be held at the Center for Christian Ministries in Temple City from 11:15 AM to 2:30 PM.

Apostle McLaughlin will speak on the theme, “The Church Present and Future.” The cost is \$10 per person, including lunch. For more details, contact Hiroshi Matsushita at 714-731-3224 or Hiroshi-M@comcast.net.

“Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world.”

D&C 161:3c

This week Paul, Hiroshi and I will attend a workshop for Missionary Coordinators from all the Mission Centers in the Western Field. This is an opportunity both to understand the role



from the perspective of the whole church and to share with each other the specific needs and direction of our own mission centers. We are called to proclaim Jesus Christ, and it is important that we each take time to consider what this really means in our lives. True witnessing by each of us will not come from the direction of a missionary coordinator, but will flow out of us because of the transforming love of Christ in our lives. If our lives have not been transformed or we have buried that new life beneath the layers of time, then each of us needs to begin to once again seek that transforming love. There is no program that will work without the fire of God’s spirit—the passion of God’s love.

What is your vision of the need for Christ in the world? May we all be prayerful that we will be guided by the Holy Spirit in seeking God’s direction for our congregations and for our mission center. May we be courageous and visionary in our testimony and proclamation of Jesus Christ.

Listening Circles Training

In coordination with his other leadership development duties, Hiroshi Matsushita will begin to implement Listening Circles training for SCMC. Listening Circles are designed to create opportunity for dialogue on difficult issues in the church. Hiroshi is working with Sandee Gamet of World Church to set up the first training date next fall. Hiroshi continues to be responsible for SCMC Temple School, Youth Worker Registration, and MEADS West.



What the Kingdom of God Looks Like

By Paul Davis

I worship with a new congregation every Sunday.

That is a statement each of us might make, if we had God’s eyes to see what is happening around us. What I mean is, I am in a different physical location every Sunday, worshiping with a different set of people. But those of us who think we are going to church in the same location, with the same people, every Sunday, do so only by pretending that God is not transforming us all, all the time.

If you were in church last Sunday, you probably heard the blessings Jesus speaks in Matthew 5: “Blessed are those who are poor in spirit. Blessed are those who mourn. Blessed are the gentle. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for justice. Blessed are those who show mercy to others. Blessed are those whose hearts are clean. Blessed are those who work for peace. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of their struggle for justice.”

These blessings are so well known that they might be compared to our weekly worship—words that we have heard so many times that we have forgotten that what we are talking about is our entry into God’s kingdom. As I enter into worship each Sunday in a new place, with new people, I experience each time the surprise that the best hour of the week is beginning—the hour with the best chance of changing people’s

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Youth Ministry Calendar

- Feb 12-13 Junior Hi Winter Extravaganza at Buckhorn
- Feb 19-21 IYF/Spec Rally at Buckhorn
- Jul 20-23 International Youth Forum at the Temple
- Jul 23-30 SPECTACULAR at Graceland

FEBRUARY IS THE MONTH OF LOVE FOR OUR YOUTH!

Please join us for the following special retreats:

- Junior High (7-8th grade) Retreat February 12-13 at Buckhorn. 9 AM Saturday to noon Sunday.
- Senior High (9th-12th grade) "Calizonia" IYF/SPEC Retreat at Buckhorn. 9 AM Saturday to 11 AM Monday (President's Day).

If you haven't already registered, call Denise right away at 818-996-4961.

Hong Kong IYF candidates please submit your application to Denise Leichter by 2-13-05. SCMC is sending two young adults (High School seniors through 20 years old) to IYF in Hong Kong in May. Information was mailed to every congregation and potential youth representative. If you need more details contact Denise at DeniseLeichter@earthlink.net or 818-996-4961.

WE STILL NEED REGISTERED YOUTH WORKERS FOR ADULT STAFF. Call Denise now...so no one gets left behind!

Do you know someone who would like to become the full-time youth minister for the SoCal MC? We are starting to look now! If you know of someone, or you are that someone, please contact Paul Davis or Denise Leichter.

What the Kingdom of God Looks Like

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lives for the better. When Jesus spoke his blessings, those who heard him were not at that moment all perfectly gentle, peace-making, and pure-hearted. What Jesus was doing was telling us what God's kingdom looks like. In God's kingdom, there are people who show mercy to others. There are people whose hearts have been so cleansed by knowing the love of God that they have become undivided in their devotion to loving others. There evidently is conflict still in this kingdom, because there is still a need for peace to be made, and there are those who make it, not merely by being peaceful, but by struggling for justice. There are those who, while working for peace, find a way to be gentle with those who disagree. There are those who have a poverty of spirit—that is, they are aware that they need more of the Spirit, that what Spirit they have is not owned by them, that where they stand is in a position of humility before God.

Jesus was speaking to a new community that day. The kingdom of God comes into being first because the King is merciful, works for peace, is willing to be persecuted in his struggle for justice—and second because some of us, from time to time, from place to place, become those who are blessed by these blessings.

I worship with a new congregation every Sunday.

World Hunger Aid for South Asia

Members and friends are challenged to donate generously to the Oblation and World Hunger Funds during January and February to allow greater response on behalf of the church to the South Asia tsunami. All contributions to these funds above the average for these two months will be used for further aid. Contributions to these funds can be made using Mission Tithes offering envelopes or by mailing a check or money order to Community of Christ World Headquarters, ATTN: Oblation/World Hunger Challenge for South Asia, 1001 W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050.

Sergio Juarez Visits Honduras

In January I had an opportunity to visit my brothers and sisters in Honduras to develop evangelism resources that will help Hispanic young people become disciples of Jesus Christ. I was invited by the World Church's International Resource Center because they believed my experience in working among young people would be helpful. We met at the Buena Fe Retreat Center which is used by the Community of Christ to provide social and health services to people in the community. It's a beautiful place about 40 miles south of San Pedro Sula in a small valley surrounded by hills. It's rustic and far from civilization but with good accommodations and people who are very friendly and simple. Yes, they have a lot of physical needs but with hearts so big that touch you so deep. From my classroom I could see cows, sheep, and horses grazing nearby. It's a little bit humid and hot, with some mosquitoes, but it is a wonderful place to visit.

We met everyday from 8 AM to 6 PM and had some homework in the evening. We finished on Thursday but I had to stay until Sunday so I went to San Pedro Sula to stay in the house of one of my classmates, Ronald. We visited several congregations and house groups. I am so happy to see how they are working in the name of Jesus Christ. I will tell you one of my experiences.

Pastor Rigoberto Martinez is leading one of the several growing congregations, the Choloma congregation. He invited me to give the message at the first meeting of a new small group. We went walking to this house and on the way we saw several men already visiting and inviting people to the meeting. We arrived 10 minutes early and there were already 6 persons waiting. I thought that was going to be all, since the roads were muddy and it was dark, but after we started singing many started coming. We ended up with 36 persons for this first meeting.

I asked the pastor, "Why do so many people come to this church?" He said our church is one of the smallest ones in Honduras and there are many mega-churches here. One of the reasons is that in the church they find security and strength to keep going. In spite of their physical and health needs, they find strength in Jesus' love and hope. I thought about it and told him that, before, I felt blessed because many, if not all, of my needs were met, but now I see that blessings come in different ways. Now my question is this: Who is more blessed, the one in need of physical things that finds strength in Jesus, or the one in need of Jesus that finds strength in physical things? **Greetings, Sergio**

LeRoy Blankenship Concert Cancelled

Due to health problems, LeRoy Blankenship has had to cancel his appearance at Upland February 19-20. The concert may be rescheduled in the fall.

Upcoming Events

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| Feb 6 | Cong. Leaders Mtg. on Support Formula |
| Feb 25-28 | Apostle Ken McLaughlin visits SCMC |
| Apr 10 | Congregational Leaders Meeting at CCM |
| Apr 16 | Aaronic "Family Ministries" at CCM |
| Apr 24 | SCMC Conference at CCM |
| May 3-8 | Camp Buckhorn Work Week |
| Jun 18-24 | SCMC Reunion at Buckhorn |