

Awakening

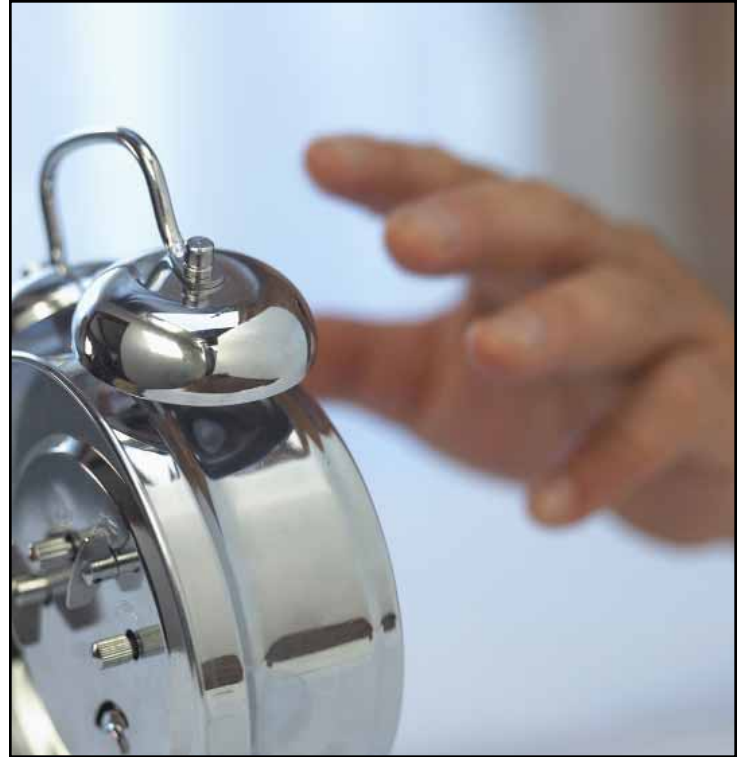
by Terry Read

I'm told that I am a heavy sleeper. Okay, so there's more evidence to support that than simply my wife Linda's opinion. I once slept through a drive-by shooting that occurred directly across the street from our house. And once, for an especially early work project, a co-worker came to pick me up, rang my doorbell at 4:00AM only to hear my clock radio blaring the song, *Leavin' on a Jet Plane*, and these lyrics: "I'm standin' here outside your door, I hate to wake you up to say 'goodbye'". But those are different stories. Suffice to say that it can be difficult to wake me from slumber.

The cliché "it was a wake-up call" is frequently used to describe some incident that brings sudden awareness to a condition previously ignored or taken for granted. People often describe a non-fatal heart attack in this way, they have been awakened to make more healthy choices in diet and exercise. I recently was "awakened" by the crash of my computer hard drive. Ugh! I have only begun to realize the extent of the loss. But because of the "sin" of my inattentiveness, repentance can only mean seeing this crisis as a reminder of the importance of consistently backing up all irreplaceable material and then acting accordingly.

Sometimes the reminders I receive are gentler, if no less urgent. The recent launch of *Growing the Community of Christ*, our new church growth plan is such a prompting. Actually, given the loss of another Community of Christ congregation this last year, perhaps this reminder is not so gentle. It's actually a pressing matter. Through this initiative, I am called and challenged to renew my commitment to share the good news through invitation, hospitality, and acts of kindness that reveal the peace of Jesus Christ in my world. This call comes not primarily because our church's numbers are diminishing—the call would sound just as insistently if the numbers were multiplying. The call comes because God's mission in the world continues—in me and through me, in you and through you, in us and through us.

For me, one of the essential pieces for continuing awareness of God's Spirit comes through making and taking time for God. When I daily practice prayer and meditation, my heart is in greater alignment with God's desire for my life, my actions more in tune with the Spirit's promptings, leading me in ways that increase the joy and light of the world. When I fail to do so, my spirit is more prone to become oblivious to the voice of the Spirit, despite its myriad ways of communication. I can actually go through life in a state of



spiritual "sleep." The Apostle Paul thus challenges those who follow Jesus to be "alive to God in Christ" (Romans 6:4). My commitment for 2008 is to increase this habit in my life. I hope that you pursue a similar endeavor. Together, our attentiveness can awaken a **new** energy—in ourselves and in others.

To what truth is the Spirit endeavoring to awaken you?

Life Is Simple

*We are living in a world that is absolutely transparent
and God is shining through it all the time.*

This is not just a fable or a nice story

It is true.

*If we abandon ourselves to God
and forget ourselves,*

we see it sometimes

and we see it maybe frequently.

God shows Godself everywhere,

In everything,

In people and in things and in nature and in events.

*It becomes very obvious that God is everywhere and
in everything and we cannot be without God.*

It is impossible.

The only thing is that we don't see it.

—Thomas Merton (undated)

found in a South African monastery and reprinted in
Weavings: A Journal of the Christian Spiritual Life July/August 2002

Launch of Growing the Community of Christ

REPORTS FROM AROUND THE SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MISSION CENTER

An estimated 500 persons participated in the launch of our new church growth plan as congregations shared in common worship throughout the mission center on January 13th centering on the theme, *Catch the Vision! Respond to God's Call*. Using worship resources specially prepared for the day, our congregations launched what we hope is a new day for the sharing of the gospel in the Los Angeles area. The launch culminated a six-week preparation period marked with personal prayer and devotion and including inserts in each congregation's weekly bulletin. Below are reports from various congregations on their experience from the shared launch.

ANAHEIM-BASILEIA

Greg Barentine, Reporting

The Anaheim and Basileia Congregations shared in launching the mission center church growth plan in our congregations. We had about 35 people in attendance with worship participants from both congregations. The worship service included sharing of the "Grasper" story, preaching from Luke 15 about seeking God, prayers by three of our Evangelists, "stones of remembrance," and the litany of expectations. The presence of the Spirit among us was evident as we shared together in this special worship service.

Some specific comments:

- The resource material sent to the worship planners was excellent and well thought out. It gave us an ample number of creative resources to choose from.
- As planned, there were a number of participants involved in the service which made it a team effort— which participation in the church growth efforts will require to be successful.
- We are blessed with an abundant number of evangelists, and selecting three of them to offer the special prayers was powerful. To have them all standing in front of the congregation, as each shared their prayer, gave a powerful message to the congregation of the unified support our spiritual ministers will give to the launch effort.
- Greg Barentine's sermon was right on target and evidence of his call as a high priest/missionary.
- There was a powerful Spirit as we presented the "stones", symbols of God's presence with us as we launch this important journey.



Carol Kostura



Gail Biller



Linda and Greg Barentine



Gary Beebe, Pastor

See more photos at

http://www.cofchristanaheim.org/church_growth_plan_launch.htm

Continued on Page 3. Growth Launch

Communities of Joy

Deadline for the next issue of *Communities of Joy* is March 10.

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Growth Launch, Continued from Page 2

HEMET-SAN JACINTO

Glenn Johnson, Reporting

The Hemet Congregation responded warmly to “Catch the Vision! Respond to God’s Call” as we helped launch the Southern California Mission Center Church Growth Plan. All of the recommended common worship elements were used. High Priest Betty Ryan led praise hymns and offered a beautiful prayer of invocation that welcomed God’s Spirit into our worship. Pastor J.R. Sutton shared greetings from SCMC President Terry Read.

During the sermon, Glenn Johnson passed out popcorn as a metaphorical illustration of how the fire of the Holy Spirit transforms lives. He said: “Forrest Gump says, ‘life is like a box of chocolates, you just never know what you’re going to get.’” Well, Jared Munson turned candy into an invitation. You can turn popcorn into an invitation to a Bible study. You can transform your families’ lives and your congregation by sharing your stories and issuing an invitation to come to church, to come and see what God has done for you. Together with all the Saints in the Southern California Mission Center: we can grow! We can revitalize our congregations. We can plant new churches. We can bring back lost generations to Jesus Christ. We have a plan. We have an army of grandparents. Reach out and share the peace of Jesus Christ as we dedicate our lives anew believing in the power of just two or three witnesses.” George Plonte also shared movingly about his experiences with church planting during the Disciple’s Generous Response. Evangelist Fred Hamilton presided at the service, reading the selected scriptures from the Doctrine and Covenants, and offering a Pastoral Prayer. The “Stones of Remembrance” and “Litany of Expectation” proved a memorable and beautiful part of the service.

Other congregations reporting participation in the launch worship service, including positive experiences: Santa Barbara, Ventura, Canoga Park, Ruah (Young Adult Fellowship), Orange, Burbank, Gardena, Costa Mesa, Upland, La Nueva Esperanza en Cristo.



Allie Crownover reads "Grasper" during Costa Mesa launch service.

FEBRUARY	
6	Ash Wednesday
8-10	Jr. Hi Snow Camp, Camp Buckhorn
8-10	Christian Ministry Colloquy Graceland University, Lamoni, IA
14	Valentine’s Day
15-18	Sr. Hi Snow Camp, Camp Buckhorn
16-18	Congregation Retreat, Canoga Park, Simi Valley, Ventura
18	Presidents’ Day, Offices Closed
MARCH	
9	Daylight Savings Begins
14-16	Priesthood Retreat, Postponed
16	Palm Sunday
17	St. Patrick’s Day
21	Good Friday
23	Easter
APRIL	
5	Missionary Workshop
11-13	Youth Hunger Challenge
26	SCMC Special Event: <i>Unity in Our Community</i> DATE CHANGED

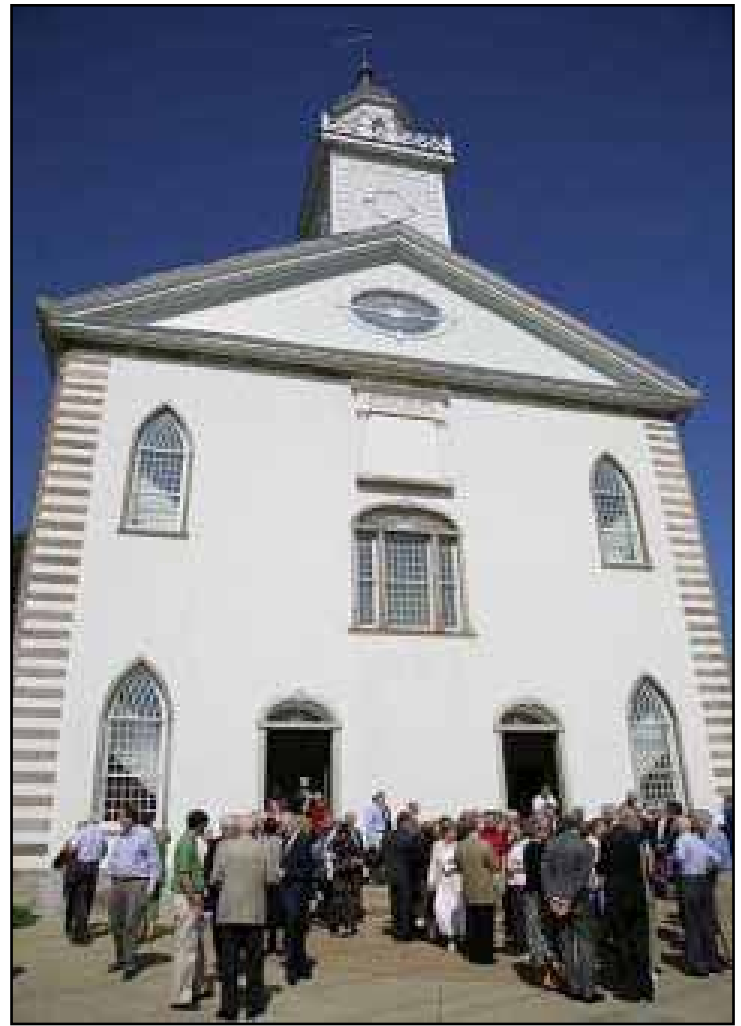
SCMC's 2nd Annual
Unity in Our Community
"The Earth is the Lord's"
Saturday, April 26, 2008
11:00 AM - 3:00 PM
Temple City
Food
Music
Games
Prizes
Opening Worship - 11:00 AM

Historic Sites Internship/Fellowship Positions

Learn and share the history of the church. Summer 2008 intern and fellow positions are available at the Joseph Smith Historic Site in Nauvoo, Illinois, and at the Kirtland Temple in Kirtland, Ohio. Compensation includes six semester hours of college credit, a weekly stipend, training and housing. These positions are especially well suited for history, education, or religion majors. Students with business, information technology, communication, or music backgrounds are also needed. For more information or application, contact Lachlan Mackay, Historic Sites Coordinator, at (217) 453-2246 or LMackay@CofChrist.org.

Called to Serve

Please consider answering the call to serve by volunteering at Community of Christ Historic Sites. Guides are needed to help share the story of our early attempts at community building in Kirtland, Ohio and Nauvoo, Illinois. Help is also needed with retail sales, building and grounds maintenance. Training and housing are provided. Serve for two weeks to two years. Enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers are the backbone of our success at historic sites. For more information please contact Lachlan Mackay, Historic Sites Coordinator, at (217) 453-2246 or LMackay@CofChrist.org.



Recent dedication of Kirtland Visitor and Spiritual Formation Center.

Riddle Answer 3: I love you a ton!



The Southern California Mission Center is now accepting applications for the following positions:

YOUTH MINISTER: Will work closely with mission center staff and congregational leaders throughout the Los Angeles area in developing and facilitating ministry with children and youth.

Qualifications: minimum 2 years youth ministry experience (professional or volunteer); Bachelor's degree preferred; current, active affiliation with Community of Christ; strong personal testimony of Jesus Christ; commitment to continuing education and spiritual growth; demonstrated ability to communicate clearly and effectively with others; heart for all children and youth.

CONGREGATION PLANTER/PASTOR: Will lead the start of a new congregation in the Los Angeles area. The Planter/Pastor is the key leader who will direct the congregational team in all ministries, designing the new group to propagate another new group within a few years. The Planter/Pastor is responsible for the development of personal and program ministries that touch the lives of individuals and families at their point of need, always helping to "disciple" persons in the cause of Jesus Christ.

Qualifications: pastor or similar experience (professional or volunteer) required; knowledge of and experience of planting required; Bachelor's degree preferred; current, active affiliation with Community of Christ; strong personal testimony of Jesus Christ; commitment to continuing education and spiritual growth; demonstrated ability to communicate clearly and effectively with others;

Please send resumé with references not later than April 10 to: SCMC Personnel
P.O. Box 4077
Huntington Beach CA 92605-4077

UPCOMING EVENTS

SNOW CAMPS

- Junior High February 8-10
- Senior High February 15-18
- Youth Hunger Challenge April 16-19

AGE GROUPS FOR CAMP	
If in September of the calendar year you are "IN"	
K – 2 nd grade = Primary	3 rd – 5 th grade = Junior
6 th – 8 th grade = Jr. High	9 th – 12 th grade = Sr. High

Mission Center Family Activity






Unity in Our Community **April 26**
 Make plans NOW to attend! Grab your parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends and come! There will be all kinds of fun things to do: fun booths, great food, and lots of fellowship! Jump in the "Moon Walk", get some cotton candy and a snow cone, win prizes at the coin toss booth, fish for fun prizes and follow the "ancient" treasure map to find "sacred" treasure! Last year was a huge success come and join with the community as we create some UNITY!!!

See you at Temple City on April 26nd!

Valentine Riddles

Answers are located in the newsletter.

1. What do you call a very small valentine?
2. What does the teenager who loves his car do for it on February 14?
3. What did the boy elephant say to the girl elephant on Valentine's Day?

 Knock, knock!
Who's there? 
 Ima.
Ima who? 
 Ima hoping I'll get lots of Valentine cards and candy on Valentines Day!

Secret Message

Here's another secret message! Use the Key to figure out what it says! Don't forget, if you are the first to call me at 909-606-8636, YOU WIN A PRIZE! Everyone has a chance to win since this is a new year. Prizes will be awarded to age groups: **Children**, 10 and under; **Youth**, 11-18; **Adult**, 19-60, and **Wonderfully Wise**, 60+!

9 6 25 15 21 11 5 5 16 20 8 5 13 15 19 20 9 13 16 15 18 20 1 14 20
 " 12 1 23 6 15 21 14 4 9 14 19 3 18 9 16 20 21 18 5 ,
 12 15 22 5 25 15 21 18 14 5 9 7 8 2 15 18 1 19 25 15 21 18 19 5 12 6 ,
 25 15 21 1 18 5 4 15 9 14 7 18 9 7 8 20 10 1 13 5 19 2:8

KEY

A=1	B=2	C=3	D=4	E=5	F=6	G=7	H=8	I=9	J=10	K=11	L=12	M=13
N=14	O=15	P=16	Q=17	R=18	S=19	T=20	U=21	V=22	W=23	X=24	Y=25	Z=26



Happy Valentine's Day

A Note From Linda . . .

Hi Friends!

I can't believe that Christmas is over and that 2008 is really here! So many great things happened in 2007, I can't wait to see what 2008 will bring. I must say that we brought in the New Year right this year! There were 30 youth and adults that gathered for the SPEC New Year's Retreat in Temple city between Christmas and the New Year!

We learned a lot about our blessings and how even in the midst of truly hard times we can find not only our blessings but that God is with us every step of the way. I'd like to thank everyone who attended—youth and staff alike—for each one who gathered made the weekend so much more special.

We had a couple of special guests that shared their unique perspective to our study, service projects and experiences. Sherry Southland and Yvonne Compton came and shared their experiences of being homeless with us. Sherry took us (with the facility director) on a tour of the shelter where she spent 7 months this past year. They generously shared their stories and then answered our questions. It was a wonderful gift that they shared with the campers, letting each of us get a glimpse of not only what it is like to be homeless, but what kind of things we can do to make a difference in our world where homelessness and poverty are growing everyday.

Before we went to the shelter, we put together approximately 250 "Manna Bags" to bring food and comfort to those we met on the streets of our home cities. (We are selling these for \$5 with all funds going to the SPEC fund) These handy bags can be left in your car and given to those who need them when each of us encounters others in need.

All in all, we had a great experience! During our retreat's closing worship, Sarah Sharon, a youth from the San Diego area, responded to the question "What then must we do?" in response to what we had learned over the weekend and she said with assurance, "I must no longer tolerate the little injustices that I see everyday. I must speak up on behalf of others!" May each of us find our voice and speak out with LOVE for others in this new year and always!

Again, please join us for upcoming retreats and camps on the calendar. You won't be sorry! We not only have fun together but we share an opportunity to stretch and grow with our God and each other.

Love and blessings to each of you this year and always,,

Linda Read

Congregational Support Minister & Children/Youth Minister

909-606-8636 • 909-631-0393

Communities of Joy!



Canoga Park Congregation celebrated in the blessing of Claire Abigail Mussell. She was blessed by her Grandpa Leonard Mussell and Sharyl Macone.



Canoga Park Christ's Kids have been saving their money to buy food for the congregation's food share box. Each communion Sunday they deposit their food donations as part of their offering as well as pick up the congregation's offering. They are learning how important it is to share with those who have less.



Several members of the Costa Mesa Congregation gathered at Sea Cliff Healthcare facility in December where Laveta Bergan (who will be 102 on April 29th) resides since her fall last spring. The members serenaded Laveta with Christmas carols and her favorite song "Amazing Grace".

Riddle Answer 2: He gives it a valen-shine!



Betty Ryan contributes to the worship services at the Hemet Congregation by creating new and inspiring worship centers each month. In December, the Advent season was represented with beautiful poinsettia and candles that represented Peace, Hope, Joy, and Love. These visuals greatly contributed to our Advent experience as we journeyed to the manger.



Dorothea and Byron Garver of the Orange Congregation also joined the group for singing. Dorothea was also a patient at Sea Cliff recuperating from a recent surgery.

Community of Christ

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OR CALL 714•847•5731.

Auction Benefits Outreach International

by Dean Crawford

After their monthly potluck in January, the Hemet-San Jacinto Congregation held an auction to benefit Outreach International. Various items were contributed by members of the congregation. Pastor J.R. Sutton, a professional auctioneer, along with his brother-in-law, Russ Pope, also an auctioneer, conducted the sale. Almost \$500 was raised!

2008 SCMC REUNION
"A Community of Peace"
June 21-27, 2008
Buckhorn Camp - Idyllwild CA

All Ages — Family Camp

Great Food Recreation
Worship Fellowship
Classes Fun for All

Guest Ministry:
Dave & Dustee Heinze Matt & Tere Naylor

Come Join Us!

The poster features a background image of a group of people walking on a dirt path in a wooded area. The text is overlaid on this image in various colors and fonts.

J.R. Sutton and Russ Pope, Auctioneers.