

Changing the Climate

By Terry Read, SCMC President

“For we do not proclaim ourselves; we proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and ourselves as your slaves for Jesus’ sake. For it is the God who said, ‘Let light shine out of darkness’, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. But we have this treasure in clay jars, so that it may be made clear that this extraordinary power belongs to God and does not come from us. We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not driven to despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying in the body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be made visible in our bodies. For while we live, we are always being given up to death for Jesus’ sake, so that the life of Jesus may be made visible in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you.” II Corinthians 4:5-12

DOWNWARD TRENDS. PLUMMETING RATES. ALL TIME LOWS. DIFFICULT TIMES. CAUSE FOR DEEP CONCERN. To anyone listening to the news these days, these phrases sound very familiar. Yet, the same phrases could also be used to describe the current growth of the Community of Christ here in our area and throughout the United States and Canada. To put a finer point on these less than encouraging descriptions: in the first nine months of 2008, we recorded 35 deaths in the congregations of our mission center as compared to seven baptisms. If only this was an isolated statistic.¹

So why do I lead with such discouraging news? Two reasons, one of which is obvious: 1. Even though difficult to hear, we need to be aware of our situation. Jesus did not fail to grasp the signs of his times and to apply to those situations God’s eternal wisdom, often through parables that pointed to a new understanding. 2. (And more importantly) It’s because the Spirit desires to turn this trend around. God’s Spirit, we are told in scripture, is reaching out to numerous souls *right now*, and calling faithful disciples to follow this lead, bearing witness of God’s longing for each one, and connect to those souls.

Two recent experiences reveal the presence and urging of the Spirit. We just shared last weekend in a local retreat with members of our priesthood and other servant ministers. There was a sense of urgency, enthusiasm, and renewal as we spent time in worship and learning, and



especially in congregational groups who determined action items to support mission that can be put in place right away or very soon. The week prior, Michele McGrath, SCMC Financial Officer, and I shared with colleagues in the church from around the world during which we considered the Community of Christ’s *enduring* values and principles along with basic beliefs, recently developed through consultation among church leaders and key voices from around the international church². The Spirit was evident as we explored these values and principles together, recognizing how they both bring assurance and tremendous challenge.

These two experiences bolstered my hope that God is with us in our ministry. Like the words of Paul, I feel the *life of Jesus*

“at work in us”! Despite downward trends and the ongoing struggle for growth, the Holy Spirit is at work among us.

As many are aware, we continue to pursue the provisions of Growing the Community of Christ, our mission center church growth plan. In this quest, there is always cause for despair and frustration. Where’s the growth? Our numbers continue to diminish. Yet, upon closer look—or perhaps it’s the leading of the Spirit—one can see the evidence of growth: the presence of the Spirit working in the lives of persons directly related to our ministries in the church. While it’s true that one clear measure of growth is numbers of baptisms, it is just as clear that it is not the only measure. More important than numerical growth is the passion of our

¹ It should also be mentioned that, while this is most certainly the current trend in the church, it is not peculiar to our church. In fact, Christianity in the United States has been on the decline not only in recent decades, but throughout the 20th century: In 1900 there were 27 churches for every 10,000 U.S. citizens; in 1950, there were 17; in 1996, there 11 – from George Gallup, *Church in the World Today*.

² This work on the church’s identity, mission, and message will be shared with the church in the coming months.

witness and discipleship and our devotion to works of peace and justice. In this spirit, I want to celebrate passion for witness and a clear resolve for outreach and ministry beyond ourselves taking place in the mission center. Such efforts create "a climate for growth"—the atmosphere that allows growth, spiritual and physical, more air to breathe, more possibility to emerge.

Where is "climate change" occurring in our mission center? Likely, in more places than I am aware, but here are a few to lift in celebration, hopeful that their example will encourage your hope and passion for the work of transformation toward which God continually points us.



ANAHEIM - Due in no small way to a dedicated outreach coordinator, Greg Barentine, the Anaheim Congregation has engaged the

church growth plan from the beginning. Plans are being developed for the hiring of a part-time minister to direct the congregation's outreach. In addition to the priesthood being challenged to share in the effort, seminars have been held for the congregation on hospitality and bridging ministry, designed to enable outreach to those who have stepped away from the fellowship of the church. Further, additional worship services and sermons have pointed to the plan and the larger emphasis on mission.

UPLAND - Thanks to the influx of persons from the former Covina Congregation, to the addition of new families, and to the energy associated with both, numbers of participants at Upland are continually on the rise. A recent prayer meeting brought over 20 attendees! Not to be lost in that encouraging number is the practice that has developed at those regular meetings for prayer: a meditation period at the beginning of the service where 20 minutes of silence is devoted to *listening* to God's Spirit. Could it be that this intentional practice actually leads persons to this community? As part of an active pastoral care ethic in the congregation, the youth both contribute to and are supported in activities of community-building and fundraising. Each month the young people lead the congregation in worship. Further, every Sunday one adult and one youth share in the ministry of hospitality, greeting each of those who gather for worship. This also includes frequent sharing of table fellowship through the traditional potluck as well as morning snacks. In addition, prayer services one time each month are held at the residence of a homebound person.

BURBANK - Making our church buildings into sanctuaries of Christ's peace requires an ongoing devotion. The Burbank Congregation has been especially engaged in this endeavor of late as they have worked to enhance the physical appearance

of their church home, helping to create a greater sense of welcome for the neighborhood and for guests. Repairs to the roof, new landscaping, and interior painting have all been done in recent weeks.



INLAND EMPIRE - With hospitality at the heart, a core group of ministers in the Inland Empire Congregation have launched a new visiting ministry. After deliberate preparation through training (2 workshops held, led by Mike Hewitt and Terry Read), this group of about 8-10 persons is ready to begin. Not simply a "visiting program" this ministry's aim is not only to deepen connections between sisters and brothers in community but also to integrate the value of hospitality in all aspects of the congregation's life.

How is your congregation creating or experiencing "a climate for growth"?

SIMI VALLEY - Karen Bradish made a decision earlier this year about her life. That decision led her back to Jesus and to the church who had initially helped her find the Lord. It led her to attend Reunion where she found the familiar community of God. And it also led her to the Simi Valley Congregation where she found sisters and brothers ready to support and empower her journey of reconciliation. Such work of the Spirit in the life of one disciple can bring a renewed sense of vitality in fellow disciples.

Communities of Joy

Deadline for the next issue of *Communities of Joy* is November 19.

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Peace In Progress

The new Buckhorn Peace Center is well underway. After an initial delay, the construction is proceeding on schedule according to board member and project coordinator, Tom Hawthorne. As more than 100 gathered for a benefit concert featuring musician Karl Anthony and his band, the profile of the new building, adjacent to the chapel was apparent. Anthony, a friend of Buckhorn, offered to perform the benefit upon learning of the purpose of the new multipurpose building: peace.

Cahill & Delene perform prior to Karl Anthony.

Riddle Answer 2: He is "Mist"!



Peace Center in progress.



Karl Anthony.

Looking for Your Help: The New Hymnal



Work is already underway on the new Hymnal Project, slated to produce a new hymnal (in two parts) by World Conference 2013. Input from any and all church members is being sought. Please take the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of this sacred resource. Take the hymnal survey (through December 31, 2008) and provide feedback on what you would like carried forward into the new resources. The survey can be accessed from the Hymnal Project webpage: www.cofchrist.org/hymnal/default.asp.

In addition, existing songs new to the Community of Christ can be submitted for consideration. Send any text and/or tune that speaks to the church's identity, message, and mission by April 15, 2009. For specific guidelines on the open submission process, please visit: www.cofchrist.org/hymnal. Plus, you can submit a name for the new hymnal.

2008 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MISSION CENTER CONFERENCE

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 2008

TEMPLE CITY

What Matters Most

GUEST MINISTRY:

Apostle Susan Skoor



Worship - Fellowship - Conferring - Learning

Registration and Gathering will begin at 9:00AM

CONFERENCE MINI-WORKSHOP:

How to Select Effective and Appropriate Materials for Christian Education

Upland Annual Play Day

By Jan Albin

After morning worship on August 24th, the young and the young at heart of the Upland congregation dove into a huge mound of watermelon. After three minutes of frantic eating, Alex La Veaux came in first place. Second place was awarded to Crissy Crider, and eight-year-old Samantha Bailey came in third. After the clean up, we broke for a pizza party. It was amazing how much pizza was consumed after all that watermelon!

A lively game of ball darts was won by Carey Harris, second place to Jay Harris, and third place to Corey Crider.

Then we moved outside for the water balloon toss. Everyone concentrated on the toss, but a water balloon fight soon ensued! We all finished wet and smiling! It was a fun, cool way to end a hot day.



Riddle Answer 1: With a Pumpkin Patch!

A Note From Linda . . .

Hello Friends!

Fall is here! Pumpkins and scarecrows are everywhere and school is well underway! I hope the many memories you have from summer camp and SPEC are keeping you warm this fall as temperatures drop!

As you think about the coming holidays, don't forget to add youth activities into your fall calendar (see Upcoming Events). We have lots of fun things planned for you to participate in this fall and winter.

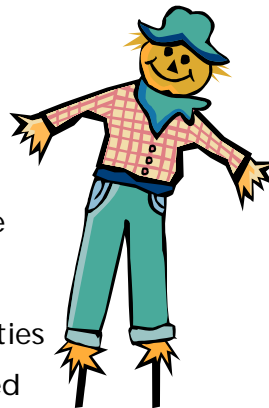
Also, please make sure that you let your pastor know your name, address, phone number, and age so that I can update my mailing list for the coming year! I don't want you to miss a thing!

I hope to see you very soon my friends!

Love and blessings,

Linda Read

Congregational Support Minister & Children/Youth Minister
909-606-8636 / 909-631-0393



International Youth Forum: Don't Miss Your Chance To Attend!

What is IYF?

IYF refers to the **International Youth Forum**. This event is an international gathering where youth from around the world come together to celebrate and claim their place in the **Community of Christ**. Held every four years, IYF is truly a once-in-a-lifetime event you don't want to miss! Our Mission Center will send two youth representatives to Bangkok, Thailand, May 24-30, 2009. If you are 18-22, you are encouraged to apply. However 16-18 year olds will be considered as well. You should have received the application by mail. If not, please contact Linda Read at 909-606-8636 or contact your pastor as they have information as well.

There will be another IYF in **Independence, MO USA**, July 21-24, 2009 for all youth that have completed grades 9, 10, 11, or 12. It precedes SPECTACULAR, July 25-August 1, 2009, so please get these dates on your calendar! The theme for IYF is "One" and there are study materials at www.cofchrist.org. Please check them out!



MISSION: NOW

Nearly fifty people from around the mission center (representing 14 congregations) gathered the weekend of October 10-12 in La Mirada for a weekend focused on the urgency of our mission. With guest ministry from Becky Savage of the First Presidency, whose message—*Be a Voice, Not an Echo*—began the event, participants shared in sessions of learning, dialogue, congregational discussion, and worship. The SCMC Church Growth Plan served as the backdrop for the weekend's activities as we spent time together discussing mission in our various roles

(disciples, Aaronic ministers, elders, high priests) and in our congregational groups.

Becky shared in a sending forth service on Saturday evening, posing the question, *"What's the one thing you commit to do for God's mission NOW?"*



Envision, Equip, Empower and Engage Women in Ministry

By Denise Leichter

Highlighted by ministry from varied sources, 21 special women ranging from 20 to 70+ gathered in retreat from 9 congregations at Buckhorn for a weekend of replenishment and renewal. The weekend included a peace concert, creating worship centers and pathways, a visit from a Native American storyteller and basket weaver, new thoughts about Ecumenical and Interfaith Ministries, and an exploration of a children's peace pavilion.

Diane Barnett and Clora Kanawyer from the Sierra Pacific Mission Center and the Fremont Congregation came to share the story of their Children's Peace Pavilion, inspired by and a satellite of the well known pavilion at Community of Christ headquarters. In addition to the thought we in southern California could develop such a pavilion, several of the women gained helpful ideas for incorporating peace exploration in their congregations.

Jacque Nuñez, who has become a friend of the church through Buckhorn, shared the inspiring story of her pathway to Jesus Christ, using her art of basket weaving, a skill passed down through her family heritage. She spoke of how her people have sacrificed greatly in the name of Christ. In the closing service, Jacque offered a blessing for the women and we blessed her.

The weekend coincided with the benefit concert for the Peace Center (currently under construction) performed by Karl Anthony, singer and songwriter, and his band. As a result the women were treated to a stirring presentation of inspired music and movement, all pointing to peace. Because the concert drew around 100 persons, the women of the retreat were happy to include some of the additional women in their activities. The food, servant ministry and sharing time with Buckhorn Staff were outstanding.

The women who attended were deeply grateful for the experience. One participant commented, *"I'm sure glad we had this—though the numbers weren't as high as we wanted, it was a very special and healing time for me."*



Denise Leichter, director of the retreat, shares "equipping" thoughts.

Southern California & Southwest International Mission Centers announce...

"Section 163 and the Congregation"

A RETREAT FOR ALL INTERESTED DISCIPLES AND ESPECIALLY FOR CONGREGATIONAL LEADERS AND PASTORS.

featuring the ministry of



Stephen M. Veazey, *President* Community of Christ

January 16-18, 2009
Buckhorn Camp

The weekend will also include the dedication ceremony for the new Peace Center

For more information, contact Terry Read – tread@cofchristla.org or 909-606-8636

Riddle Answer 3: Dead End!

Community of Christ

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Save the Date:

January 11, 2009

Pursue Peace

A Service of
Invitation and
Sharing of the
Peace of
Jesus Christ



WHAT: A Service of Invitation and Sharing of the Peace of Jesus Christ

WHERE: In your congregation!

This will be a worship service we'll share in across the mission center and yet in our own congregations. It is being designed as a service to which anyone can feel comfortable inviting a friend (or stranger) to share in the peace of Jesus Christ. Materials are being developed and will be shared with pastors and worship planners in the coming weeks. More details to come.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October

27-28 Bridge Builders Fall Fiesta, Canoga Park

November

2 Daylight Savings Ends

2 Leadership Meeting, Electronic

7-9 SPEC Calizonia Retreat, Chula Vista

15 Mission Center Conference, Temple City

17 Offices Closed

27 Thanksgiving

27-28 Thanksgiving Holidays, Offices Closed

December

6 Primary/Junior Christmas Day Camp, Temple City

25 Christmas

24-26 Christmas Holidays, Offices Closed