

“The Least” We Must Do

Terry Read, SCMC President

Put thy trust in that Spirit which leadeth to do good; yea, to do justly, to walk humbly, to judge righteously; and this is my Spirit.

-Doctrine & Covenants 10:6

Every time I'm at Costco (probably once a month or six weeks) and I see the parking lot full of cars, lines that are plenty long, and crowded aisles, I wonder, "is there really an economic downturn?" But then I quickly remember that despite my anecdotal impressions in the wholesale marketplace, these really are tough times. The signs are all over. And not just in newspaper headlines and television reports. If you're like me, there's other anecdotal evidence that's quite real: friends or family who've had to face crises such as home foreclosure, prolonged unemployment or underemployment, homelessness, serious illness, or in some cases, all of these. (and there's no telling if many of the folk at Costco may be in some kind of denial about their own finances and keep using credit to mask their deficit)

Whenever disaster strikes—whether natural, economic, or otherwise—even if all are affected, it is the most vulnerable who are hit the hardest. Yes, I am “underwater” on my house value, but I'm not wondering how I'll get my next meal. Several of my expenses have risen, but I don't have to worry whether I can get quality medical attention should I become ill. Yet these are stark everyday realities for more of our neighbors than we probably know or want to know.

In the U.S. political arena, there is widespread debate—though much of it not especially constructive—on ways to respond to the ongoing economic crisis and the expanding national debt. As people of faith and ones who follow Jesus



Christ, we have a moral imperative to consider the impact any decisions or responses will have to the poor and vulnerable, to consider proposals “from the bottom up.”

“Responding to hunger and poverty is not a partisan issue . . . it is a moral issue that people of faith, across the political spectrum, agree upon,” said the Rev. John McCullough, director of Church World Service, the humanitarian arm of the National Council of Churches. (Community of Christ is a member of the National Council) This recognition of the Christian gospel imperative and the urgency to respond in ways that transcend political agendas led a group of Christian leaders to join churches and faith organizations in a “Circle of Protection”, a call for just and compassionate action in

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resolving our current budget and economic crisis. The statement declares, "As Christian leaders, we are committed to fiscal responsibility and shared sacrifice. We are also committed to resist budget cuts that undermine the lives, dignity, and rights of poor and vulnerable people. Therefore, we join with others to form a Circle of Protection around programs that meet the essential needs of hungry and poor people at home and abroad."²

As our church responds with its resources to crises in places struck by various disasters throughout the world (\$35,000 in aid, funded through your contributions to the Abolish Poverty, End Suffering mission initiative, is providing flood relief in Central America, famine relief in Africa, and

earthquake relief in Turkey), we must also remember the poor and marginalized in our own communities and sometimes our own neighborhoods (perhaps folk who live close to your church). During a season when charitable giving and action increase, though often only temporarily, and in a political climate when expediency will often overshadow real human need, let our voices not be still and our actions be vigilant on behalf of "the least of these". Let us look more closely for the faces of those who are often obscured by the veneer of holiday shopping and syrupy sweetness of empty Christmas carols. After all, we only need to see the face of Jesus in the faces of our poor or lonely or sick or imprisoned neighbor. When we do that, what will be "the least" we must do? 🌲

¹ www.circleofprotection.us

² To read the entire statement, view the more than 50 signatories, or join yourself, go to <http://www.circleofprotection.us/>

Seven Meaningful Things You Can Do for People without Homes

adapted by Carol Kostura (Anaheim Congregation) from an article by Jim Palmer, President of the Orange County Rescue Mission

Over the coming Christmas season, you may encounter men and women who are homeless near restaurants and shopping centers and you may wonder what you should and/or could do for them.

1. **Show them respect.** Take a minute to talk to a homeless person. Even a smile or eye contact can help break down their sense of isolation and worthlessness.
2. **Don't give them cash, but . . .** Cash won't solve the problem. It can be used to buy drugs or alcohol or it can enable someone to continue a self-destructive pattern. Instead, give gift certificates to local restaurants or even invite a person to join you for dinner at that restaurant.
3. **Pray for them.** God loves all people, no matter how hardened and hopeless they might be—and asks us to love them, too.
4. **Realize that people without a home are not all the same.** They come from all kinds of situations and walks of life, from young to old, frightened to street-wise, healthy to mentally ill.
5. **Encourage people to get help.** Point persons in need toward shelters, food, and other help.
6. **Get informed.** Learn about homelessness and the problems faced by those in this difficult situation. You'll equip yourself to be part of the solution, not just an observer.
7. **Give.** Your money, talents, and time can go a long way toward transforming people's lives through various organizations who serve the poor in the area. 🌲



In this picture is a veteran without a home who lives in the Santa Ana Civic Center.

Communities of Joy

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SwIMC and SCMC New Financial Officer

Ryan Sharp, Escondido, CA

Let me start by saying what an honor it is to be selected for this job. I know that many of you do not know me and Terry asked me to write a piece that will introduce myself and provide a little about my background.

I grew up in eastern Washington (Kennewick, WA) and attended church and youth functions in the Richland Congregation as well as in the Boise, ID area. I attended Boise State University and while there served as a counselor to the pastor and district youth minister.

After meeting my wife, Sarah (Rastle), at the Congregational Leaders Workshop held at Graceland in 1999, I moved to San Diego and transferred to Cal State San Marcos. While finishing up my degree in mathematics, I served as Co-Pastor for the Vista congregation, and later as the financial officer for Vista. At a regional level, I served as a Jr. High Youth Leader, Young Adult Minister, and as the Spiritual Growth Minister for the Southwest International Mission Center. I have also served on the Human Rights Team for the World Church.

After obtaining a degree in mathematics, I began work as a high school math teacher, and Head Cross Country/Track and Field Coach at a brand new school, Mission Hills High School (San Marcos, CA). While in my first two years of teaching and coaching, I also finished my Master's in Education. I poured myself into my work and my teams and used this time to refine my leadership skills and vision. I had a vision of a large, successful running program that kids could use to help offset the cost of college. All three goals were achieved, with an 80% scholarship rate among our seniors on varsity, claiming 3 team titles and 52 individual titles in 6 years (also attending the state meet every season), and raising team sizes from 25 to 70 in Cross Country and from 80 to 180 in Track and Field. I also was part of a faculty that took an economically disadvantaged school and raised our API score from 672 to 839 in 5 years, the highest growth of any school in San Diego County. Last year we achieved the honor of a California Distinguished School (very rare for a high school to be awarded).

As you can probably tell, I loved my time teaching and coaching. However, I felt the Spirit calling me to a different path. What I initially thought would be a 3-4 year journey towards full-time church work, ended up taking 3-4 months.



I have a wonderful daughter, Fiona, who will turn 2 in March. My wife Sarah attended Graceland University, grew up in Escondido, and is currently working as a Massage Therapist. My parents are Loren Sharp, who grew up in Boise, and Debbie Sharp (Hunt) who grew up in Albuquerque. They currently live in Paso Robles. My mother is a retired elementary school librarian who gave me my love of reading. My father is a nuclear engineer who gave me my love of numbers and running. I have one brother, Craig Sharp, who is a biomedical engineer for Abbott Labs and works as a volunteer with Engineers Without Borders. He lives in San Francisco.

As I approach my new role as Mission Center Financial Officer, I have a lot of ideas that I want to implement to help bring the mission of the church into focus and to make the lives of our congregational leaders easier. My main goal is to be a support to you. If you have a question, please do not hesitate to contact me, and I will do my best to get you an answer, or the help you need to resolve your issue. I want to be a valuable resource for you, because what you do, as disciples of Christ, is so important to the mission of the church. I want to make it a priority that I will assist with anything that I can to make your life easier so that you can better focus on mission and ministry. I look forward to meeting all of you—our wonderful ministers and faithful members—during my traveling preaching schedule this year.

Hmmmm . . . what else should I say about myself . . . should be something cool and interesting . . . I know! Let's play *Five Truths and a Lie*, you pick which statement is not true about my life:

1. My brother and I played in the National Pinochle Tournament in Las Vegas
2. I have a personal record in the mile of 4:16 (converted from a 1500m time of 3:58)
3. I own a large orange cat named "Puppy"
4. I once drove 20 hours in 2 days just to play a game of four square at the "4 corners"
5. I have run over 28,000 miles in my life (longer than the circumference of the earth)
6. I have an unhealthy obsession with high quality pens and pencils (I once spent \$400 for 60 pencils when I heard that my favorite model had been discontinued) 🌲

Answer: The lie is 3. . . I have no pets.

Canoga Park Opens Its Doors for Annual Halloween Party

Barbara Jones, *Canoga Park Congregation*

As it has for the past several years, Canoga Park once again spread the peace of Christ and opened its doors to congregations, friends and neighbors, creating a safe environment for children and families to enjoy this festive holiday.

Almost everyone comes in costume and looks forward to this annual occasion when Jon Sweeting and his mother Barbara prepare a beautiful and delicious pasta dinner that is always enjoyed by all! There is a bake contest and all delight in tasting the various delectables!



Edye Holmes and others artistically decorated and converted the front of the church to a life-sized Halloween diorama, creating a great ambience for family photos and fun!

Several visitors were welcomed from other Community of Christ congregations, who came to share in the festivities and many planned activities. Both young and old enjoyed the costume contest, pumpkin carving and other activities. Music was handled and creatively selected by DJ Eric Mussell.

This annual party brings God's community into fellowship with one another, sharing in the spirit of celebration. 🌲



Sondra Plonte's fall theme worship center enhances the worship experience at the Hemet-San Jacinto Congregation.

Temple City Children's Day

Arlene Pike, *Temple City Congregation*

Under the direction of Eileen Anderson, the children of the Temple City congregation presented a Children's Day program on the 14th of June.

Isaac, Korina and Kristy Fugate read scriptures and told stories of Moses, Samuel and "The Little Servant Girl."

At the close of the service High Priest Donald Pike offered a prayer of blessing on the children. 🌲



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

DECEMBER

- 24 Christmas Eve Service, *Simi Valley*
- 25 Christmas
- 31 New Year's Eve

JANUARY

- 1 New Year's Day
- 2 New Year's Day Holiday
- 13-15 Mission Weekend for Disciples & Congregations, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 15 Racial Justice Day
- 16 Martin Luther King Jr. Day
- 21-22 SwIMC/SCMC Journey Takers
- 28 SHAMROCK Event: Winter Wonders

FEBRUARY

- 2 Groundhog Day
- 3-5 Junior High Snow Camp, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 12 Youth Ministries Day
- 17-20 Senior High Snow Camp, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 18-20 Winter Retreat, Northern Congregations, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 20 Presidents Day
- 22 Ash Wednesday, *Services at Simi Valley & Orange*
- 25-26 LEADS, *Temple City*

MARCH

- 4 World Hunger Emphasis
- 11 Daylight Savings Time Begins
- 17 St. Patrick's Day
- 17 SHAMROCK St. Patrick's Day Event
- 17-18 SwIMC/SCMC Journey Takers

2011 in Review: Youth and Children Ministries

Kyle Logan, SCMC Youth and Children Minister

The year is coming to an end and as I look back over the calendar of events, memories flood my mind with moments that have changed me forever. Whether it was talking to a youth about his life and how he struggles to stay out of gangs or watching an 8 year old discover Jesus for the first time, I can feel the spirit moving among our youth and children here in Southern California.

Our Senior High youth have traveled near and far this year. They had Snow Camp at Buckhorn in February, Hunger Challenge at Hemet in March, Journey Takers Caravan that went to Seattle, WA in June, Spectacular at Graceland University in Lamoni, IA, and Campout at San Mateo in November. There have also been Journey Taker weekends scattered throughout the year where youth have shared their ministry with local congregations.

The Junior High ministry has been in a rebuilding process this year and we have grown greatly in numbers, as our youth have been diligent about inviting their friends to camp. Snow Camp in February at Buckhorn started out the year and the attendance at future activities continues to grow. Hunger Challenge at Hemet was a blast and we had our largest camp yet in November when we went camping at San Mateo.

Our Children's Ministry continues to grow as we have shifted our focus from mission center wide activities to more of a congregational level. With Kidtricity happening at different locations in the mission center as well as Peace Camp, Junior Camp and Christmas Day Camp, all are invited but the main push is from the local congregation. This has helped keep families connected to the activities that are happening around them.

My prayer since I have been in Southern California has been to allow God into this ministry and teach us how to build the peaceable kingdom. We have much to learn but I feel that we are on the right track. During this Advent season I am reminded to look at Jesus Christ, the ultimate Peace Maker and follow in his foot steps . . . May we all do the same. 🌲



YOUTH



Community of Christ Scripture

FEBRUARY 25-26, 2012

LED BY
Mark Euritt

CENTER FOR CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES
9468 Broadway – Temple City, CA

FREEWILL OFFERING FOR LUNCH/SNACKS



COST: \$20 plus materials purchased on your own (requirements below)

TO REGISTER, CONTACT: Tonia Cooper – tonia@cofchristla.org or 714-847-5731

COURSE DESCRIPTION: The course focus is scriptures unique to the Restoration movement, from its beginnings in the early nineteenth century to its present identity as Community of Christ.

There are three primary aims:

1. To understand the historical contexts in which these scriptures originated and developed during the time frame of 1822 to the present;
2. To appreciate the various usages to which these scriptures have been put during the course of the church's development to the present time;
3. To become aware of problems and issues pertaining to each of these indigenous scriptures arising from the current missional imperatives of the Community of Christ, in the setting of its emerging multi-cultural population.

REQUIRED TEXT:

Handy, Lowell K. The Educated Person's Thumbnail Introduction to the Bible.
St. Louis: Chalice Press, 1997.

REQUIRED READINGS:

A series of 16 readings*

REQUIRED VIEWING:

2 video presentations* (available on www.cofchrist.org)

ADDITIONAL SUGGESTED TEXT: (please bring if you own)

Borg, Marcus. Reading the Bible Again for the First Time. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 2001.
This text is recommended for reading but not required.

NOTE: Please bring scriptures and assigned text and readings to class.

*Readings and video links can be obtained from Tonia Cooper by contacting Tonia@cofchristla.org.

The Best Gifts

Denise Leichter, SCMC Senior Health & Advocacy Minister

SHAMROCK had a busy fourth quarter with lots of fun, new knowledge, good ministry and always, great FOOD and gifts!

The Simi Valley Congregation did an outstanding job of hosting a large crowd from many congregations in October. The Josings provided personal testimonies of caring for loved ones at home and the value of hospice services. Duane from Fall Prevention offered great advice on personal safety, mobility, balance and adaptive equipment. Mark Richards did an online webinar about SendOutCards and their ministry to others and financial support to SHAMROCK. There are also many stories that I share about home and hospital visits to our members and friends that affirm the value and power of this ministry.

We just had our Festival of Lights in Ventura with another big crowd and the beauty of the congregation and hosting members made everything so very special! The stories and Candles of Advent, Christmas and congregational traditions, Chanukah with the lighting of the menorah and Hebrew prayer by my mother-in law (her attendance an answer to prayer), new knowledge about Kwanzaa and lighting of those candles by a guest representing the African-American culture, and historical and personal stories of the Las Posadas by Sergio Juarez. We had 7 members of the La Nueva Esperanza en Cristo Congregation with us, a beautiful piñata made by their members, translation and resources provided in Spanish and a beautiful closing worship.



Festival of Lights in Ventura.

We did some talking about the hard topics of grief at the holidays along with Dementia and Alzheimer's Disease, but many people commented on the value the information provided. Did I mention FOOD? . . . traditional foods of many celebrations and the gift of fudge tins by Dawn Josing and



A day of Tricks and Treats was enjoyed by the SHAMROCKS at the Simi Valley church.

homemade hand lotions coordinated by Dee McDonald. We are also donating gifts to the Tecate Children's Celebration through the generosity of attendees.

Our second Festival of Lights at Hemet-San Jacinto (December 17) occurs as this edition goes to print, but I am sure it will be another day of blessings with a total of nearly 60 seniors in fellowship at both events.

A special thank you to Jean David for her creative work all year long, and Linda Espiritu Santo and Sherry Southland for keeping the birthday and holiday cards going throughout the year.

PLAN AHEAD . . . on Saturday, January 28th we will have our next event in Temple City at the Center for Christian Ministries. It will be a "Cloning" Celebration! ALL Seniors, SHAMROCK Advocates, Pastors, Outreach Coordinators and Pastoral Care Leaders are invited to attend 10:00am - 2:00pm. The special formula to clone me (?) is being worked on now, and we will send you home with wonderful resources to expand this ministry locally. This will be an event not to miss!

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year! May the lights of the season carry us into the New Year with great hope. Do not doubt that even with dim sight, reduced hearing and slower movement, the seniors have the vision and hearing to see and hear the voice of God clearly, and lead us on the pathway to end suffering of others and leave SHAMROCK Blessings and Love with many along the way. 🌲

YOU ARE THE BEST GIFT OF THE SEASON!

Love ya,

Denise



Priesthood and Leaders Workshop: Develop Disciples to Serve and Pursue Peace

Led by the capable and sensitive ministry of Sandee Gamet, Peacebuilding Specialist for the World Church, and Pam Luce, Peacebuilding Specialist from Central Lake, Michigan, 28 participants gained valuable new insights into their individual communication styles. This is especially helpful in settings like our congregations, where we must work together closely in sharing the ministry and mission of the church. Participant evaluations testified to the success of the weekend experience. Special thanks go to the Inland Empire and Orange Congregations for their strong representation at the workshop. 🌲



Joyful Noise Workshop in Southern California



Do you:

- ♪ **SING** in your congregation?
- ♪ **CARE** about the church's songs?
- ♪ **PLAY** an instrument (including clapping your hands—that's percussion!)? Then come *sing* and *play*!



Come and familiarize yourself with the new hymnal's musical styles, worship planning techniques, theological content, topics, and more.

Announcing a *Joyful Noise* Workshop on **Saturday, June 2** here in southern California (location TBD). Hymnal Project Director Lauren Hall and Quorum of High Priests President Jane Gardner—also a longtime worship leader in the church—will lead the workshop.

Don't miss this great opportunity to preview parts of the new hymnal and learn how to better implement its music into the worship life of your congregation. This is a **FREE** event. Watch for more details.

Mission Center Conference: Press On

Blessed by the marvelous ministry of Apostle Scott Murphy, our annual mission center conference drew together about 75 attendees. Both Scott and our Journey Takers (Senior High youth) led in worship, sharing testimonies and urging the congregation to “press on” in the spirit of the Apostle Paul’s challenge to the Philippians.

With a terrific meal prepared by members of the Simi Valley Congregation, participants joined in the afternoon for the legislative session which included approval of our generosity-based mission center budget.

In addition, Scott also presented updated information about the upcoming 2013 U.S.A. National Conference. Scott’s PowerPoint presentation can be found at www.cofchristla.org. Special thanks for the conference support go to the Temple City Congregation, pastor Darrel Kelty and Shari Tidmus along with Shaunna Webb from the Orange Congregation. 🌲



New Congregational Financial Officers recognized: Heather Smith (Welcome Home); Enrique Juarez & Alberto Huesca (La Nueva Esperanza en Cristo).

Eric Hurtado (La Nueva Esperanza en Cristo) shares in worship.

Baby Jesus Word Search

Find all the words in the word list. Words are hidden in straight lines, going frontwards, backwards and diagonally.

WORD LIST

- | | |
|-----------|-----------|
| ANGEL | KING |
| BABY | MANGER |
| BETHLEHEM | MARY |
| BIRTH | MERCY |
| DONKEY | PEACE |
| GIFT | REST |
| GLORY | SAVIOUR |
| GOD | SHEPHERDS |
| HEAVEN | SON |
| HOLY | STAR |
| INNKEEPER | VIRGIN |
| JESUS | WISEMEN |
| JOSEPH | |



O	B	B	G	E	P	O	S	S	O	N	R	Y	Y	O
C	P	I	E	I	V	H	V	G	V	E	X	B	S	O
T	Z	E	R	T	F	D	C	I	P	N	A	R	P	V
O	G	Z	A	T	H	T	O	E	R	B	Q	H	H	U
C	B	O	C	C	H	L	E	N	J	G	M	T	R	O
G	C	N	A	C	E	K	E	S	K	O	I	J	H	M
O	Q	F	I	E	N	N	N	H	A	E	S	N	I	A
D	R	S	P	N	E	E	J	L	E	V	Y	E	E	R
K	E	U	I	M	V	H	E	Y	Y	M	I	Q	P	Y
I	S	Y	E	A	R	G	R	C	U	J	H	O	E	H
N	T	S	E	E	N	O	R	Y	F	C	E	L	U	J
G	I	H	G	A	L	E	E	C	A	R	Z	S	C	R
W	A	N	H	G	M	Q	T	C	I	J	W	G	U	Z
I	A	H	O	L	Y	S	T	A	R	M	P	K	J	S
M	M	J	U	C	D	S	H	E	P	H	E	R	D	S

Our Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As we receive the blessings of sharing another Advent season, we remember the birth of our Lord as an event for all people. Though the birth we celebrate is not embraced by everyone, Jesus' message and love is intended and offered for all. Thank you for the ways that you extend that love in your lives – we have experienced those blessings in countless ways and are privileged to serve both with you and on your behalf. May this Christmas inspire you anew to be a herald of the good tidings of peace, joy, hope, and love that were born in that lowly manger scene, news so powerful it can turn the world upside down.

The Southern California Mission Center Staff

Carol, Denise, Katie, Kyle, Linda, Linda, Rickie, Ryan, Sergio, Tonia, Zac, Terry

Canoga Park Takes Manna Bags to a New Level

Barbara Jones, Canoga Park Congregation

As part of our community outreach program, Canoga Park Congregation has been making and sharing Manna Bags with our local communities for several years now. The whole congregation participates in gathering the contents for the bags, most often filling them in community with each other. Christ's Kids (our children disciples) have come to understand the need of the homeless and they willingly and lovingly participate in the whole process.

It was suggested there is a real need for outreach in the most dire of areas, on a street called San Julian, otherwise known as Skid Row, in downtown Los Angeles where the dispossessed and disparate literally live in cardboard boxes on the street.

We saved several boxes of clothing from our annual yard sale, packed them into Pastor Glen and Joy Harris' van, along with all of the Manna Bags our congregation made, including some donuts and cookies, and started on our way to distribute everything. There were four of us, Glen and Joy, Charlotte Jones from the Burbank Congregation and myself. We embarked on our mission to share with those most needy, many who are drug or alcohol addicted, several suffering from mental illness and others just plain down and out on their luck.

We didn't know what we would find, how truly desperate and in need the people we served would be. Within seconds of our arrival, people quickly organized themselves into a line and within about ten minutes we had distributed

all we had brought. It was shocking how quickly and with no struggle or altercations everything was given out.

It was a very humbling experience to serve these people who were all very appreciative of anything they received and so open to God's blessing as we passed out our Manna Bags. Sadly, we didn't have enough to go around, we could never have enough, a tough fact to have to realize. It hurt having to leave without being able to serve more. A man who was too late to reap any benefits expressed, "But I'm hungry!" It was heart wrenching!

As the weather turns to winter on San Julian, the need is greater than ever. It is cold and damp, especially at night. Besides the food in the Manna bags, there is a need for socks and warm hats, old jackets or sweaters, bedding such as blankets and old quilts, large sheets of plastic to protect their possessions from the elements. They also need hygiene products, such as soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes, and first aid products such as Band-Aids and Neosporin.

We're going back again to serve these people. We're gathering now to create more Manna bags, hopefully enough to go back before Christmas. This time we'll also make and pass out peanut butter and jelly sandwiches as an instant nutritional treat.

"There, but for the grace of God, go I" we thought. We were the ones truly blessed by this experience, sharing the Peace of Christ. 🌲



The Spirit of the Lord is pon Us...

Do you want to deepen your understanding and passion for Christ's mission?

Do you want your congregation to increase its pursuit of Christ's mission?

Are you looking for ideas and inspiration for fulfilling Christ's mission?

Friday, January 13 • 7:30 PM thru
Sunday, January 15 • 12PM
Child Care (ages 11 & under)



Community of Christ

Southern California and
Southwest International
Mission Centers
present

2012 Mission Weekend
for Disciples and
Congregations
January 13-15
Buckhorn Camp

- Guest Ministry:
Larry McGuire
President of Seventy
- Youth Track (ages 12-17)
- To register:
www.cofchristla.org
- Cost: \$85-adult • \$65-youth
• \$35-child (4-11) • Free (und. 4)

Invite People to Christ



Abolish Poverty, End
Suffering



Pursue Peace on Earth



Develop Disciples to
Serve



Experience
Congregations in Mission

