

A Long Time Coming

Terry Read, SCMC President

More than forty years ago two RLDS ministers were invited to New York City to the offices of the leading ecumenical organization in the country. During that visit a more permanent invitation was offered. Even though the two ministers could not accept the offer to take up office space there at the organization's headquarters, a relationship began. Last month that relationship, after more than four decades, reached a milestone: at its centennial General Assembly in New Orleans, the National Council of Churches in Christ unanimously elected Community of Christ into membership.

In his address to our World Conference last April, special guest Michael Kinnamon, the National Council's General Secretary, spoke of the strength of being unified as churches in the cause of Christ: "[We are a] community of

Christian communions who, because of [our] shared faith in Jesus Christ, covenant with one another to manifest ever more fully the unity that is our gift (not our achievement, but our gift) in Christ, and, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to engage in mission together to the glory of God. As I tell our church leaders, this is not really an organization you have joined; it is a covenant you have made with 35 other churches in order to visibly express something of the reconciliation that God has accomplished. There are lots of organizations around that do things for the churches, but a council of the churches is a different animal. Its essence is not an office in New York but the relationship of the churches to one another." Because of his own experience growing up with RLDS friends, he also spoke personally: "I know who you are! And I know, therefore, that you have gifts to bring to the rest of us—including a sense of being "on the margins," which makes you particularly sensitive to others who have been marginalized and misunderstood."

There was a time in our church not all that long ago when the prospect of joining an organization like the National Council of Churches was fraught with misunderstanding (at the very least). Concerned members worried that to do so would mean the "watering down" of our beliefs and identity

let alone to associate with those who were believed to be "wrong" and "an abomination" (quotations from Joseph Smith's 1838 account of his divine vision in the Palmyra grove). In the last several decades, however, a shift began to emerge in our attitude toward ecumenism. Increasing numbers of church members (as well as leaders) expressed undeniable value in the relationships they shared with persons of other churches. We became more and more enriched by these associations—not only interpersonally, but increasingly through intentional connection to ministerial associations and fellowships of churches.

As someone who grew up learning that "the great and abominable church" referenced in the Book of Mormon was interpreted by some as an allusion to the Roman

Catholic Church, I have found over the years that some of my richest relationships in the nurture of my faith included not only Methodists, Lutherans, Anglicans, and Disciples of Christ, but also Roman Catholics. I have experienced firsthand the unity in Christ inherent in these associations which seek to widen and deepen the cause of Christ. This is evidenced by the infinitely stronger witness for justice and peace that can be made through this unity. As Kinnamon stated at World Conference, "[together] we have arrived at an astonishing number of shared commitments—

including a commitment to say "No!" to racism in all its forms as a denial of God's image, a commitment to express God's special concern for the poor, a commitment to declare the preciousness of God's creation, and a commitment to bear witness (as the World Council of Churches once put it) that "war is contrary to the will of God." Far from a "watering down" of our beliefs, these commitments resonate deeply with the values and mission of Community of Christ.

While joining the National Council of Churches does not require that we surrender any part of our identity, we dare not think that we will somehow stay the same. While the object of such a relationship is not to remake us into the image of another church as Kinnamon maintains, but the

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hope is that "every church is changed as a result of its encounter with others. All churches need to deepen their life in Christ; and it may just be that the witness of others, as well as our witness together, helps each of us grow in our knowledge and love of God." Our church has come a long way from the previous understanding that we were "the one true church" to now taking our rightful place among the larger Christian community. But this is just one milestone, albeit a most significant one. Far more important is the mission of Jesus Christ that ever lies before us.

Here in our area, we enjoy a rich tradition of ecumenical participation including having our ministers serve as president of Christian councils (specifically the Southern California Ecumenical Council and the California Council of Churches) and I am personally privileged to represent our church on the boards of these two organizations. I invite you to share in worship with our brothers and sisters of other churches when we join in the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity next month. Please come to the Ecumenical Worship Service for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity on Sunday, January 23 at 3PM, at Claremont Presbyterian, 1111 N. Mountain in Claremont.

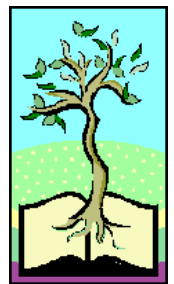


Apostle Dale Luffman expressing gratitude to the delegates at the General Assembly: "We're all having a hard time holding back the emotion because our hearts are all filled with gratitude for the grace and compassion of this body. We are here because

of you and because the Holy Spirit at work in our lives and at work in your lives and at work in God's world. We know that our witness is informed by your witness, and we hope that our witness will be in partnership with yours. We join with you as brothers and sisters, saying simply, thanks be to God."

Go Deeper

Are you ready to GO DEEPER on your spiritual journey? Are you willing to invest yourself in an opportunity to engage with the scriptures, with community, with your life challenges and most of all with the Spirit of God to sink your roots down deeper into the stream of living water in your soul?



"They will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit." -Jeremiah 16:8

Join us for a semester long journey combining Scripture Study (theological formation and faith building) and the spiritual practice of "Remembrance" (spiritual formation, healing and transformation). This study will begin the last week in January and meet once a week through June—tentatively on Thursday evenings though this could possibly change upon request. Location is to be decided based on interest. For more information or to join this journey, call Heather Weeks at (919) 368-4025 or email at Lyranita@gmail.com.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JANUARY

- 14-16 "Pray-Discern-Act" Mission Event w/Ron Harmon & Robin Linkhart, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 16 Racial Justice Day
- 17 MLK Day
- 22-23 JourneyTakers, *Santa Barbara*
- 28 Shamrock Event, *Costa Mesa*

FEBRUARY

- 4-6 Junior High Snow Camp, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 13 Youth Ministries Day
- 11-13 Senior High Snow Camp, *Buckhorn Camp*
- 14 Valentine's Day
- 19-21 Winter Retreat, Northern Congregations *Buckhorn Camp*
- 21 Presidents Day
- 26-27 LEADS: Christian Theology w/Don Compier

MARCH

- 6 World Hunger Emphasis
- 9 Lent Begins
- 9 Ash Wednesday Service 7:00PM, *Simi Valley*
- 12 Hockey Night, *Ontario Rain*
- 13 Daylight Savings Begins
- 17 Shamrock St. Patrick's Day Event
- 18-20 Youth Hunger Challenge

Communities of Joy

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2010 SCMC Conference

Gathered under the theme, "Poised to Fulfill God's Ultimate Vision", conference attendees were led in worship by the Journey Takers, our young people. These ministers offered an inspiring series of testimonies, songs, and readings springing in part from their experience on this year's Journey Takers' Caravan. For the 2011 Caravan, a silent auction led by the youth and their leaders produced more than \$1,400.

The conference also featured a one-hour workshop highlighting Seasons of the Spirit, a lectionary-based Christian education curriculum for congregations endorsed by the Community of Christ. It is offered for all ages and can be explored further beginning at www.spiritseasons.com. For reviews by Community of Christ users and ministry specialists, go to www.cofchrist.org/discipleformation/spiritseasons.asp.

Conference participants were treated to homemade tacos and tamales prepared by La Nueva Esperanza en Cristo. The legislative meeting featured passage of our first generosity-based budget, developed over several months with congregational input. This input included each congregation's determination of their financial contribution to the budget. An amendment to increase support for youth ministry contingent on sufficient investment return was approved as part of the budget. In addition, Glenn Johnson and Tom Cooper were elected by the conference to serve as members of an Advisory Team for the 2012 USA National Conference. 🌿



The Other Side

Linda Read, Church Planter-Pastor

God we thank you for this opportunity to share. We know that you love all of your children in equal measure and we pray as we go out into your world today that those who need your love, care and this community of love, find their way into our path—that they find their way home to You.“ Amen.

One of the wonderful blessings of being involved in outreach ministry is the amazing collaboration that can happen between God and us. At Welcome Home, we feel that God is leading people to us. We always try to remember to pray our disciple's prayer when we go out into the streets or have events that invite the neighborhood to "Come Home" to our little congregation. We have been blessed with so many new friends that have wandered onto our path and chosen to spend time in sacred fellowship with us.

One of these travelers is Ricky. I call Ricky our resident theologian. Actually he is our Bible story specialist! Ricky knows the Bible backward and forward. My theology is a bit different than Ricky's, but there is room for all of us at God's table. Because Ricky knows the stories of the Bible he is a wonderful asset to our Tuesday Night Soup Study gathering as well as to our congregation as a whole. He is also a very good plumber. Once when Ricky needed a little gas for his van he asked me if there was any work he could do for us at the church in exchange for some gas money. He offered to fix our drinking fountain at the church that hadn't worked for ages. When I went with him to the plumbing supply store for parts, I learned of Ricky's ability. While he was off checking out part numbers I asked the owner if he knew about Ricky's plumbing skills. He told me Ricky was a great plumber who had just had some tough breaks. Ricky is a hard worker; he doesn't want a hand out, he is just looking for a hand-up.

Last Sunday Ricky had a great day and so did we. In fact we had a wild day! Our "All for Free/Free for All" (yard sale where everything is free!) was moved inside due to the pouring rain. We had three new people attend our worship service which featured the question: "What is our Christmas Gift to the Community?" Our answer: "An Action of Love." Partway through the service we all got up out of the pews, got in cars and vans in the pouring rain and went to our Neighborhood Assisted Living Community to sing Christmas Carols during their dinner. It was great!

Now, Ricky doesn't sing so he held the hymnbooks for Douglas and Paul who played guitar while we sang to our senior friends and neighbors. He said it was the first time he had ever been caroling. It was the first time for others as well! We got back to the church, soaking wet—but smiling from ear to ear, to a shared meal of turkey, dressing, mashed potatoes, gravy, vegetables of all sorts, Peggy's yummy cranberry salad, rolls and, of course, pie. Ricky helped serve the stuffing and gravy.



Welcome Home members enjoy table fellowship.

After the meal was over, and we were all cleaning up, Ricky came to me with tears in his eyes. "I love being a part of this church," he said. "The people here really love other people, no matter what." Then he said, "Thank you for letting me be on this side." At first I didn't understand—"this side"? Then he explained. "When you are in prison you are always the one being 'served', when you are homeless, you are always the one being 'served'. Tonight, you gave me the chance to be on the other side—the side that serves."

Ricky provided great ministry on Sunday. We are all blessed that our new brother, beloved child of God, friend, Bible story specialist, theologian, plumber, dish doer, drinking fountain fixer, floor scrubber, and now 'stuffing and gravy server' chooses to be a part of our community. Because of Ricky, or rather because Ricky has responded to God's continuing invitation, Welcome Home is richer and more able to be a blessing of love to our community, where others are ready to be invited into a new "home" of God's love and welcome. 🌿

"A small cathedral outside Bethlehem marks the supposed birthplace of Jesus. Behind a high altar in the church is a cave, a little cavern lit by silver lamps. You can enter the main edifice and admire the ancient church. You can also enter the quiet cave where a star embedded in the floor recognizes the birth of a King. There is one stipulation, however. You have to stoop. The door is so low you can't go in standing up . . . You can see the world standing tall, but to witness the Saviour, you have to get on your knees."

Max Lucado



An Amazing Year for our Youth and Children

Kyle Logan, SCMC Children and Youth Minister

The year has come to an end, and I must say 2010 was a busy year for children and youth ministry.

Our Senior High youth took part in Journey Takers, Sr. High Snow Camp, Hunger Challenge, Journey Takers Caravan, Reunion, SPECTACULAR, and Girl's and Boy's Retreats. Our Junior High youth shared in Jr. High Snow Camp, Hunger Challenge, Reunion, Junior High Camp, and Girl's and Boy's Retreats.

The children participated in KIDTRICITY (our new traveling children's program), Reunion, Primary Camp, Junior Camp, Family and Friends Beach Day, Trunk n' Treat, and this month, Christmas Day Camp.

As you can see we have had a great time with our children and youth in the mission center and, of course, all these ministries will continue in the coming year. My special focus for 2011 will be children's ministry – supporting existing congregational children's ministry and helping to develop more, as well as expanding Kidtricity and continue to develop leadership in our youth.

During this Holiday season I hope and pray that we all may remember the Christmas Story and how a child came to us to lead the way. May we uplift our children and youth during this time of year and support them in their endeavors. May we continue to spread the love of God and the message of Christ during this Advent season to all who enter our lives.



Hunger Challenge.

Kyle
Kyle Logan

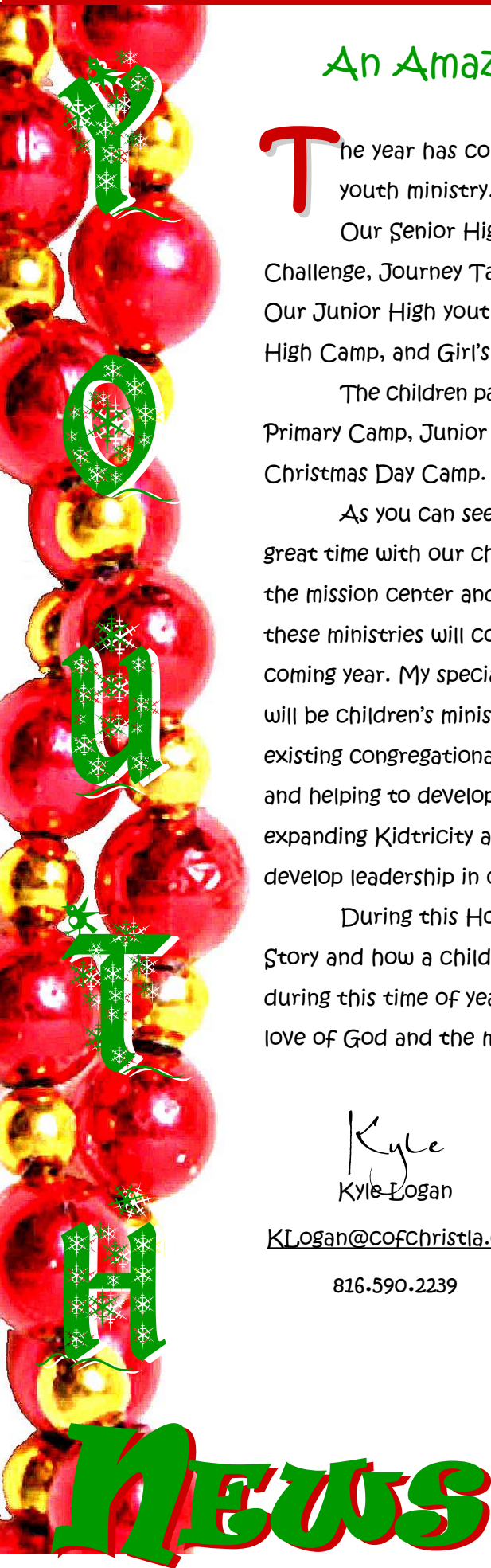
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Upcoming Activities

2011

- | | |
|-----------|--------------------------------------|
| JAN 1 | New Year's Day |
| JAN 22-23 | JourneyTakers, Santa Barbara |
| FEB 4-6 | Junior High Snow Camp, Buckhorn Camp |
| FEB 13 | Youth Ministries Day |
| FEB 11-13 | Senior High Snow Camp, Buckhorn Camp |
| MAR 18-20 | Youth Hunger Challenge |





Trunk 'n Treat at Welcome Home.



Boys Retreat.



Painting at Canoga Park with Journey Takers.



Doing dishes at Sr. High Snow Camp.



1. What do elves learn in school?
2. What's the difference between the Christmas alphabet and the ordinary alphabet?
3. What Christmas Carol is a favorite of parents?
4. Why does Santa have three gardens?
5. What do snowmen eat for breakfast?
6. What do you get when you cross a snowman with a vampire?
7. What kind of bird can write?
8. What did the ghost say to Santa Claus?
9. How do sheep in Mexico say Merry Christmas?
10. What does a cat on the beach have in common with Christmas?



Answers: 1. Elf-Abet 2. The Christmas Alphabet had no L (Noel) 3. Silent Night 4. So he can Hoe, Hoe, Hoe 5. Frosted Flakes 6. Frostbite 7. A Pen-Guin 8. I'll Have A Boo Christmas Without You 9. Fleece Navidad 10. Sandy Claus

SHAMROCK Ministries

Denise Leichter, Senior Health and Advocacy Minister

BRIDGE BUILDERS FALL FIESTA

The Anaheim Congregation did a tremendous job of hosting our event and it was a year of transition honoring all the past events of the Bridge Builders. Charlotte Jones and Diane Shirota shared wonderful memories and pictures.

Terry Read, Southern California Mission Center President, facilitated a review and discussion of D&C 164. Denise guided those in attendance through the new Shamrock website, and an assortment of resources for multiple issues important to Seniors and their families.

The banquet was prepared by caterer Sally Adkins and the talent of the Orange Praise Band (Dan Abbott, Georgia Higgins, Ken Kensler, Lisa Lowry) provided nearly 40 people a night of good fellowship.

Mary Hampton organized the worship service on Thursday that included the talents and testimonies of many special people in attendance.

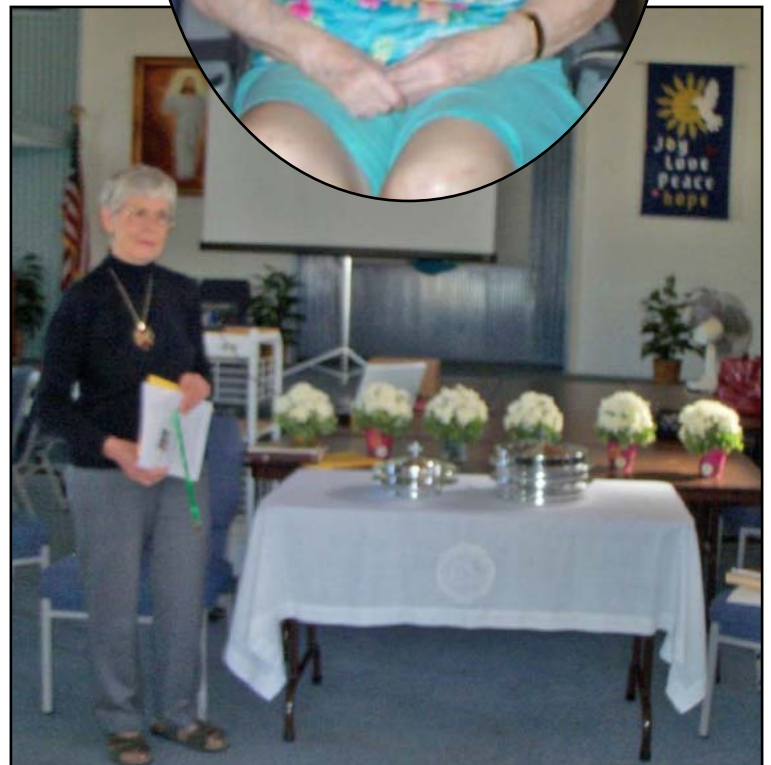
It is a blessing to share in the fun, food, and growing fellowship of the SCMC seniors. I look forward to launching a full calendar of events and congregational visits in 2011.

☘ JANUARY 28: Save the Date

☘ MARCH 17: St Patrick's Day Celebration

In 2011 SHAMROCK has added opportunities to expand our visits and communications due to the Western Apostolic Field grant and a Tangible Love Grant. Please communicate with me for any needs you might have personally, or within the congregation for collaborative Pastoral Care.

Denise Leichter, SCMC Senior Health & Advocacy Minister
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News From Around SMC

INLAND EMPIRE



After seeing a report that contributions were down for a local service agency—the Riverside Area Rape Crisis Center—we collected funds and donated \$345.10. In addition, we contributed small toiletry items and continue to collect these for the Center.

WELCOME HOME

Here at Welcome Home we continue to invite the neighborhood to the church every month with our All4Free/Free4All (our version of FreeCycle)—picture a yard sale where everything is free. So far, at least one new family whose come to the All4Free has also stayed with us for church. Join us for any of these gatherings on the third Sunday of every month at 1:00PM.

And please join us on any Sunday afternoon—we have Sunday School at 3PM and worship at 4 and we always finish with table fellowship, otherwise known as dinner. We would love to have you with us.

WHAT'S HAPPENING IN YOUR CONGREGATION?

Send us your good news and happenings.
The next Communities of Joy deadline is March 1.

SIMI VALLEY

Simi Valley Congregation reports two happenings, one where they benefitted others and one where others benefitted the congregation.

First, the church building was lent to the American Cancer Society Relay for Life team to prepare gift bags for the hundreds of participants in the October 2010 event.



Then, the television show "Clean House" used Simi Valley's parking lot for one of their shoots, bringing the congregation enough money to pay part of the needed roof repair.



SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA AND SOUTHWEST INTERNATIONAL MISSION CENTERS
presents

Pray | Discern | Act

A Mission Event for Disciples and Congregations

January 14-16, 2011
Buckhorn Camp - Idyllwild, CA

GUEST MINISTRY:

- Apostle Ron Harmon, *Northeast USA Mission Field*
- Seventy Robin Linkhart, *Missionary Coordinator*

COST: \$95⁰⁰

TIME: 8PM Friday, January 14 — 12PM Sunday, January 16

This Event has a Youth Track. Child Care available for ages up to 11.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND REGISTRATION FORM:
<http://cofchristla.org/Pray-Discern-ActFlyer.pdf>



| Time for Mission in Action |

Community of Christ