

Communities of Joy!

Southern California Mission Center

June/July 2005

Mother's Day at Ventura



The Ventura Congregation mothers were greeted by the children and a handmade banner following the Mother's Day service.

Mother's Day at Hemet



The Hemet-San Jacinto Women attended a catered Mother's Day Luncheon May 7th, sponsored by the Women's Ministry Team, which is led by Bessie Scott-Campbell. Awards were given for the oldest mother (Georgia Rose - 88), and the youngest mother (Robin Bridenbecker - 47). The award for the mother with the most children went to Sharon McMillen.

World Conference Ordains New President

Thirty-five SoCal MC representatives joined 6,000 delegates and visitors at the Community of Christ 2005 World Conference on June 2-5 at the church's international headquarters in Independence, Missouri. Representatives of the church's 250,000 members traveled from approximately 50 nations to come together for worship and to provide for ordination of the new president and calls of other church leaders. During this historic event, the 2800 Conference delegates overwhelmingly approved Stephen Veazey as Prophet-President of the church. A full-time minister since 1983, Veazey had served as a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles (the lead missionary quorum of the church) since 1992 and President of the Council since 2002.

Other changes to the leading quorums of the church included the retirement of Peter Judd from his position as a counselor in the First Presidency. David Schaal, a member of the Council of Twelve Apostles since 2002, was called to fill this vacancy. Schaal and Kenneth Robinson, a counselor in the First Presidency since 1996, were accepted by the Conference as members of the First Presidency.

Vacancies were created in the Council of Twelve with Veazey and Schaal's move to the First Presidency and the release of Apostles Kenneth McLaughlin and Gail Mengel in harmony with their desires to serve in other ministerial roles. To fill these vacancies, the following individuals were called to serve as Apostles: Stassi Cramm, formerly a counselor to the Presiding Bishop, and ministers Ronald Harmon Jr., Rick Maupin, and Susan Skoor. Cramm's call created a vacancy in the quorum of the Presiding Bishopric that will be filled by minister Paul Davis.

Dia de Madre at La Nueva Esperanza



Talent Show at Orange



The good Saints of Orange gathered to share their many talents on May 1.



July 20-23 **IYF**
at the Temple

July 23-30 **SPEC**
Gracel and U

AUGUST 7-11 JR HI CAMP
AUGUST 11-14 JUNIOR CAMP **BUCKHORN**

Goodbye to Good Friends in SCMC

As you have perhaps heard by now, I have been called to serve as a member of the Presiding Bishopric and have accepted the call. I was ordained a bishop at the recent World Conference and began working in my new office immediately. We will be moving to Missouri by the end of June.

My family learned of this call less than a month ago. As I wrote to the pastors, Jeanne and I had been prepared by a number of "interruptions of the Holy Spirit" over the last few months to expect that something like this might happen, so we took the time to think through what it might mean for our family, ourselves, our church family in Southern California, and the church at large. When the call came, we were able to respond quickly.

Jeanne and I decided when we were married that we would say yes to both the Holy Spirit and the church. A big part of saying yes to questions before they are asked is trusting that those in charge will make good decisions in the realm for which they are responsible. In this case, I have had an overwhelming assurance that what I am being asked to do is the right thing. Though my whole family would have preferred to stay where we are for some time longer, we have been able to say yes with clear minds and hearts.

I love the Southern California Mission Center. I have found sanctuary and the worship of good Saints in each of our congregations. You have cared for me and my family, as we have worked together in our mission. We are very sad to have to go, so soon after arriving--almost exactly three years.

Mike Hewitt, Denise Leichter, and I have been in contact with our new apostle, Susan Skoor, concerning my replacement as SCMC President. We expect to be able to announce an interim appointment shortly.

Thank you very much for all that we have done together and for all the many acts of kindness you have shown my family.

Yours, Paul Davis

Susan Skoor Ordained Apostle, Assigned to Western Field

The recent World Conference approved a call to apostle for Susan Skoor, of Sacramento, California. Apostle Skoor was assigned to serve in the Western USA Field, which includes SCMC. She will attend part of the SCMC Reunion, from Monday, June 20, to Thursday, June 23, for those of you that would like to meet her. The following was included in the letter of counsel released by the church and in accompanying biographical information:

Susan D. Skoor is called from her current assignment to serve as an apostle and as a member of the Council of Twelve. Susan's unwavering willingness to respond as a servant minister according to the needs of the church is a testament to her devotion to Christ. Her broad experience in congregational and jurisdictional leadership will be a blessing to the church wherever she provides apostolic leadership. Susan has unusual insight into the ways of Jesus Christ, the compassionate healer and peacemaker. This aspect of her ministry will continue to blossom as she responds to the call to be an apostle who bears the message of peace and salvation to all who will hear.

Skoor was previously assigned to the Sierra Pacific Mission Center as financial officer. She holds the priesthood office of high priest. Prior to becoming a full-time minister, Skoor served Seattle Stake Office of the Community of Christ as secretary, office manager and executive assistant. She also has served as Seattle Stake youth director.

Born in Saint Joseph, Missouri, Skoor graduated from Lakenheath American High School in Great Britain. She holds a degree in biology with a minor in chemistry from Saginaw Valley University and a master of arts in religion from Graceland University. She is involved in the Jewish/Christian Clergy Institute in Seattle. Skoor, who was raised in an Air Force family, experienced a variety of cultures: American, French, Japanese, Spanish, and English.

She is married to John B. Skoor. They have two adult daughters, Marie and Christie. Her interests include writing, hiking, reading, art and cultural events and nature.



Outgoing SCMC President
Paul Davis



Apostle Susan Skoor

World Church Tsunami Relief Efforts Raise \$405,000

I wish to thank all of those who generously supported Tsunami Relief for countries of the Indian Ocean area through Oblation and World Hunger contributions in January and February of 2005. As a result of your unprecedented support, the World Church has provided \$405,000 to meet the immediate and long-term needs of children, families, and communities and help rebuild the lives of survivors devastated by the December 26, 2004 tsunami. Along with immediate relief support, these dollars are also being distributed through Outreach International to support a school-rebuilding and school-to-school linkage program, in association with other groups.

I know that some of you donated to other world relief

agencies in the first few days after December 26th, when the World Church approach to tsunami support had not yet been finalized and publicized. This means that the level of our group support was even more outstanding than it first appears. It is indeed heartwarming to know that we generously supported those who live far away from us, knowing that we will never likely meet them in person. Thank you so much for your willingness to be involved promptly in helping our world overcome this great tragedy. We should be pleased that we played a part in helping support world relief efforts in this time of great human suffering.

Mike Hewitt
Financial Officer

"My Experience at IYF in Hong Kong Will Be with Me Forever"

Jessica Lohmann, Travis Norwood, Trent Norwood, and Denise Leichter traveled with a delegation of young adults from the United States to Hong Kong for an International Youth Forum in May. Here is their report:

Sunday, May 22nd We were met by Apostle Jac Kirkpatrick at the Hong Kong airport and took buses to the YMCA grounds where we were met by the smiling Philippine delegation with the greeting Mabuhay! We all settled in to our new multicultural dorm villages. The first challenge was guessing "What is it?" when dinner was provided and learning to eat with chopsticks (the utensil for the week).

Monday The day started with Tai Chi at 0630 overlooking the China Sea. The campers had their first experience with monsoons and learned to carry an umbrella at all times, or get very wet. The girls learned that we were going to have a "bad hair week." Presiding Evangelist Danny Belrose brought the opening morning session "Why Now" and we all learned to listen attentively while translations were occurring simultaneously in 11 languages. The Philippines and the USA were on stage that afternoon for the cultural exchange time. The USA modeled a USA campfire and we had a great time. We introduced the camp to s'mores one night during the week...yummy!!! Apostle Dave Schaal facilitated the evening celebration and the youth were involved in the ministry with music, prayers, and testimonies.

Tuesday Steve Shields provided the orientation for our outing off campus for the entire day. We enjoyed moving around Hong Kong by train and ferry and A LOT of walking! The shore and skyline are fabulous and we saw great parks and an aviary rain forest which was very colorful. Our evening ended with exploring Taize worship with Gary Logan using silence, spontaneous songs of praise and reflection, candles, and spiritual serenity. Prayers of Petition were offered for Danny Belrose to learn to eat with chopsticks!

Wednesday We started by considering "Why Together" with Apostle Schaal. South India, Andra Pradesh, China, Korea, and Okinawa were on the Cultural Stage today. The color, music, and dance from India were spectacular and the stories from China were courageous. In the evening service led by Apostle Kirkpatrick we heard powerful and emotional stories of how our members and church leaders in countries where Christianity is not the dominant religion live out their discipleship in danger and oppression. We heard personal stories of the tsunami impact on Sri Lanka and the joyous rebuilding with support from the Community of Christ contributions and local members' hard work. The theme around food still remains "What is it?" and "Rice, again?"

Thursday With the theme "Why Here" we had another half-day trip to see a Taoist Temple, parks, and the Tsang Clan family compound, then on to Hong Kong's first outdoor amusement park...Snoopy World. To get to the amusement park, we transited through a HUGE mall and suddenly everyone was scrambling for McDonalds, Starbucks, and 7-11. We all made it back though and had an awesome "Giftedness Night" with singing, dancing, poetry, laughter, and thunderous applause for the special talents of our worldwide family.

Friday A day of miracles and special blessings. Today we witnessed the blessings of missionary work in China when one of our campers, Lee, was baptized in the ocean and confirmed by Steve Shields and Charles Xu. We were able to share with him in his first communion and pray for his courageous discipleship back in rural China. The closing worship and communion was very special and the heartfelt and tearful goodbyes went well into the night.

Saturday We began the cultural exploration (and shopping) for the US delegation for the last three days of our trip. We went to The Peak, saw many temples and monasteries, saw the largest seated Buddha in the world, explored the Tai O fishing village, Stanley Market, Light Show on the Harbor, used many trains, ferries, buses and did lots of walking to enjoy the culture and shopping of this community.

Jessica Lohmann reported that "The experience at IYF Hong Kong was amazing! There are no words to describe how wonderful and life changing this experience really was. For 5 days over 100 people from 9 countries shared stories, memories, and God's love. The workshops were great and gave all of us participants a chance to learn and share each other's cultures. Some of the classes I participated in were: Human Rights and Jesus; Core Values of the Community of Christ; Sex, Culture & Jesus, and Walking with Jesus. In

"I now have friends from seven different countries including Korea, China, India, Fiji, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka."

each class I learned a variety of things, including customs of other cultures, how to become closer to the Holy Spirit, and how our differences make us stronger. But not all the learning took place in the classrooms of the YMCA. Many of the wonderful experiences I had and things I learned came from free time where we really got to learn about each other and share our cultures. In just 5 days every individual had been transformed for the better. You could tell this by the tears in the eyes and multiple hugs people were receiving on the last night from people who were strangers just one week ago."

Trent Norwood shared that "My experience at IYF in Hong Kong will be with me forever. I learned so much about different parts of the world that I might not have learned otherwise. The group of kids was awesome. I met many people from the USA and around the world. The ministry during the week was so diverse with dancing, singing in many languages, and just having fun in the name of the Lord. What I witnessed during the week was very surprising to me. The love that these people have for God is so strong. I now have friends from Fiji, Nepal, three parts of India, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, China, and Korea. I believe that the church should continue working hard in these areas because the love is so strong there. The only downside is the long distance now between me and my new friends, but if I try, the contact will still be there. I'd like to thank my home congregation for their support for this trip." Love In Christ, Trent

Travis Norwood wrote "I don't really know where to begin. I guess I'll start by saying that attending IYF Hong Kong was the most memorable and fun experience in my life. I now have friends from seven different countries including Korea, China, 3 parts of India, Fiji, Nepal, the Philippines and Sri Lanka. I have created some friendships that will last

(Continued on page 4)

New Co-Missioned Pastor Rickie Miller Has a Blast

By Rickie Miller

What a wonderful idea! Training for pastors. The Co-Missioned Pastors Initiative: training in leadership education, ministerial formation, spiritual care, theology, renewal (WOW), church history, resources. CPI appeared to have everything I was desperately looking for, but it turned out it had even MORE.

It was a BRUTAL schedule. I headed out on a Friday at 4:30 AM to fly to Kansas City. I had never been to Kansas City in my life. It's so FLAT! I was picked up at the airport by a lifelong church member, Duane. He works for the church and has lived in Missouri most of his life. The love and devotion for his family, his church, his neighborhood, and his God poured off him like raindrops. And I was pretty dry.

Duane and I headed out to Lake Doniphan, the Cadillac of our campgrounds. It was named after General Doniphan. Anyone out there in this Mission Center ever hear of General Doniphan? I LOVE church history. I'm a first generation convert—this stuff is like gold to me. I got to tell my congregation all about the general when I returned to Simi. Back in the olden days, Missouri Governor Lilburn Boggs put out a bounty on the members of our church. I had to stop and explain the word "bounty" to the kids in the congregation. Now I had their attention.

This governor (not Arnold Schwarzenegger, I told them) assigned the task to a general in the Missouri militia, General Doniphan. He refused to carry out the order to hunt down the members of our church. General Doniphan refused because he felt it was an unchristian act. We named this beautiful place after him. I heard that before I even got to the retreat.

We had three full days (7:30AM-9PM) of study and worship. It was intense training, with every goal of the program introduced. We received training in leadership, fidelity to the gospel of Jesus, missionary witness, hospitality, and instruction on how to change the direction of the congregation without compromising the ideals, values, and heritage of the church. Change the direction to GROWTH.

I have a favorite sermon I use when I'm working on Isaiah's scripture, "Here am I, Lord, send me." In the sermon, there's a story about when I was a little girl. New to public school after years of tutoring, I found the isolation of an over-

weight, bookish boy in my class disturbing. No one in the class would speak to the child, so one day I sat down next to him at lunch. To make a long story short, we became friends. The girls in the class, of course, took that opportunity to shun ME. One day, a large amount of costume jewelry was found on the playground, and the girls spent the day looking for the "jewels" scattered on the asphalt. On the sidelines, I didn't find much, and no one spoke to me. At the end of recess, the overweight boy walked up and silently poured an entire cupful of these jewels in my hands right in front of these girls.

One day my daughter (age 6 at the time) befriended a little Korean boy none of the other children would play with (runs in the family). The girls shunned her. So, I told her my story of the jewels. She folded her arms across her chest and said, "Hmmp. I didn't get any jewels." I told her, "Yes, you did get jewels, and when you're older, you'll know where to find them." Several weeks later, on her birthday, the Korean boy presented her with a turquoise and coral pendant that he made himself, in the shape of a stork (good luck in his country). I looked at Melissa and said, "Look. More jewels." This story often comes up between us as more "jewels" are found on our path with Christ over the years. "Look, Mom, a jewel."

At the end of the retreat, we twenty-five pastors had gained some perspective, some strength from one another. A sense of purpose, a deeper connection with our church and with each other. We found some jewels. Since the conference, the Simi congregation has participated in the local street fair and held an outreach night, and have three more planned. We're moving again. That in itself was jewels enough, but through the retreat, I can truly say the pastors and their congregations found a support system—found friends, other jewel seekers. For me, there were a couple of gals from right here in California, an elderly pastor from Canada, and a young, energetic pastor from Ontario with a great sense of humor, Russ.

Asked to meditate on the weekend that last day, I was wandering through the trees and found a handful of blue polished jewels on the path left by some children from last summer. Gave one to Russ and told him the story before he went home to his wife and little girl. Her name is Jewel.

(Continued from page 3)

Hong Kong IYF Amazing Experience

a life time. I'm extremely happy, yet sad at the same time. I know I will keep in contact with these people, but I may never see them again. During this week I have experienced the Holy Spirit in so many ways. I was amazed to see how spiritual the international members of our church are. I feel so much closer to Jesus and I know that I have made an enormous step forward in my walk with Christ. Thank you so much for this opportunity. I will never forget it. This has meant so much. Thank you also to my home congregation." Love in Christ, Travis

Jessica and Trent were able to celebrate 18th birthdays in Hong Kong with many new friends. We will all watch the news more carefully for world events where our friends live. We came to realize that economic and living conditions do not impair the ability to be touched by the Holy Spirit and celebrate life on a new pathway with Jesus Christ. Family

has a new meaning for all of us, and we will return to the USA with a new resolve to live out our faith and beliefs in new ways and with greater HOPE for HUMANITY.

Thanks to the SCMC and many others for making this experience possible for Jessica, Trent, Travis, and myself. The rewards for your generosity are already paying off in profound ways.

Submitted by Denise Leichter

Join the BRIDGE
BUILDERS
Sept. 26-27, 2005
**LET THE SPIRIT
BREATHE**
in a class guided by
Evangelist Gail Biller

FREE! FREE! FREE!

Yours for the asking.
Just pick them up.
Twenty church pews.
Good blue upholstery.
You've seen them in
the sanctuary at Anaheim.
Contact: Mary Mitchell
(714) 897-5691 or
e-mail: marynmitch@aol.com