

To Merge or Not to Merge?

By Terry Read, SCMC President

That is . . . actually NOT the question. Okay, yes it is an important question that we face and one that we will decide later this summer. We invite the participation of all of our members and friends in this decision (for more information about resources, information, and opportunities for dialogue, please visit www.cofchristla.org/merger).

But what is **the** question? In reality, it's one that nearly each of us has already answered, but somehow still and always looms before us. *Will we follow Jesus?* Or, more specifically, *Will we follow Jesus into God's mission for us?* Or, even more specifically, *Will you follow Jesus into God's mission for you?*

What is it about mission that seems to be elusive for us as a people? What is it about invitation that causes it to be a fairly rare occurrence among us in our congregations? What prompts us to more often be passive and quiet in the face of God's clarion call to "go into all the world and make disciples of all . . . "?

In my teen years, I sold shoes in a retail store. It was a great job. The pay was better than average, the working conditions good, and my boss and co-workers were fine people. We were compensated on an hourly basis with the added incentive of commission on total sales, with a slightly higher rate on non-shoe items like handbags and leather care products. Our team frequently had friendly competitions for the most sales and most commissions made. I did fairly well in these contests, applying my friendly personality, subtle selling style, and general determination

to the challenge. I didn't really think of myself as a salesman, though selling was our constant endeavor.

One day we were told of a new sales policy that I immediately disliked. It was called "The Designated Second Pair," or DSP and it called for each of us on the floor to show and sell not only the pair of shoes requested by the customer but to also sell him or her a *second* pair, even if one pair was all they wanted. I felt uncomfortable with this initiative, seeing it as tampering with the customer's comfort level (and certainly mine!). If a person wanted two pair of shoes, I maintained, she would ask for two pair (of course, many tried on several pair). If someone wanted running shoes in addition to dress shoes, he'd say so.



Over the years, when pressed by various ministers in the church to witness of the Lord Jesus, to invite friends, neighbors, even strangers to come to church activities, my mind used to go back to the DSP. My emotional reaction was often similar to the one I had at Thom McAn: Let's not be in the business of making people uncomfortable, of trying to give them what they haven't asked for. I didn't want to be seen as overzealous, didn't want to risk pushing someone away. I didn't want to try to sell something to someone they didn't want. The problem was . . . I was mixing witnessing with suggestive selling, confusing mission with marketing. Of course, I'm not the only one to ever make that mistake, but the truth is—God doesn't ask me to sell shoes . . . or anything else for that matter. Christ calls me to **bear** witness—with my life, my words, my deeds—not of something a person may or may not want, but of the only true source of joy, love, hope and peace in the world! I can't explain exactly why (other than my own spiritual blindness), but this was and is a revelation to me.

So as we explore the question before us this summer of whether we merge our mission centers, let us not forget the most important question. Its answer won't be made in a conference legislative session, but in the hearts, minds, bodies, and spirits of each one of us—today and every day. ■



Gasoline

By Michele McGrath, SCMC Financial Officer

In the artificial darkness self-imposed by my tightly closed eyes I pondered, “What does it mean to hold things in common? To not have any needs?” I was participating in a group discernment process¹ as part of a series of Town Hall meetings being held across Southern California and Southwest International Mission Centers to consider the proposed merger (see www.CofChristLA.org/merger for upcoming dates and locations) and we were considering Acts 4:32-5:11. Yes, *that* scripture from Acts—the one about people giving up control of their possessions to provide for the needs of the group.

I used to think this was just a story—more of a parable than a history of the early church, a “there once was a man . . .” kind of story with a morale at the end that was really the point. To understand the morale, you need not believe the story could or did happen. Or maybe this story did actually happen, but it could only happen in ancient times, not today, not here, not now . . .

That was before I met people who’d had gasoline poured on their faith.

I gave someone a ride to visit a friend. They were two friends, both struggling financially. One was a new disciple, newly clean and sober, newly baptized, but struggling to make ends meet as she cared for her boyfriend’s young son. The other was just struggling, having recently returned to the area with her three children, the youngest not yet one, and out of money. The recently baptized friend, filled with joy at her newfound life in the church and armed with all the diapers she currently owned (4), asked if we could stop by so she could share her abundance (enough diapers to get through the day) with her friend who had no diapers at all.



I was astounded by this level of generosity. I like to think of myself as a generous person, but never have I come close to giving 50% of what I have. On the contrary, I tend to make sure my cupboard is stocked, my credit cards are paid off, and my 401(k) plan fully funded before I consider my annual giving.

We like to believe we are generous people, people of integrity. Aristotle said, “We are what we repeatedly do. Excellence, then, is not an act, but a habit.” Could the same be true for generosity? We believe we are generous people, but could it be that we are only generous people if we are repeatedly, habitually generous?

We know that here in Southern California, despite the current economic crisis that has hit our state and our key industries particularly hard, we can still count ourselves among the richest 1% of people in the world. We imagine our world mission tithes, generously given, funding ministers and church planters who will share the gospel all over the world in ways that will, as with my generous friend, improve their very lives and the lives of the communities in which they live. However, the reality is that in Southern California, our collective World Mission Tithes are not even sufficient to support the ministers and ministries we receive right here.

This is a difficult time for the church. As I write this in mid-June, many Community of Christ staff around the world are being told their positions have been eliminated in order to achieve a sustainable World Ministries budget. What if we become the very best selves, the very best church we believe ourselves to be? What would happen if we made generosity—a true, deep generosity that is willing to give up something good for something that is even better—a way of life, a daily habit, a very part of who we are? Imagine the gasoline that would pour on the flames of our witness! ■

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- Aristotle

¹Ten weeks of weekly discernment materials are being provided as part of the process of considering the proposed merger of the two mission centers, SCMC and SwIMC. They can be used in a variety of ways, including individual devotions, small group study, or Sunday class. Check them out at www.CofChristLA.org/merger/discernment.

Communities of Joy

Deadline for the next issue of *Communities of Joy* is July 15.

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Peace Center Open House

With more than one hundred persons attending and over forty individuals serving as hosts, the new (and nearly completed) Buckhorn Peace Center provided the main attraction for an Open House on May 9, 2009. Guests were invited to take a self-guided tour of the camp with the aid of a "Peace Passport" with selected stops that featured activities expressing various ways of peacemaking. These expressions included the folding of peace cranes (an origami activity), making a prayer flag (with a prayer for peace), contributing to a stained glass art piece that will be displayed in the center, and partaking of a "peace treat". Visitors also participated in team building and cooperative activities including a maze led by Buckhorn partner the Boojum Institute, a provider of experiential education through outdoor adventure.



Each guest was also given a necklace featuring a slice of authentic Buckhorn wood embossed with "Peace of Buckhorn". The possibilities for sharing the peace of Jesus Christ through this beautiful new facility are both challenging and exciting. 🌲



Tom Cooper and Ken Norton hang Prayer Flags, each with a prayer for peace.



Tonia Cooper assists guests including Tom Hawthorne with Prayer Flags.



*Participants
navigate the maze
hosted by the Boojum
Institute.*

LEADS Students Explore Church History and Diversity

By Sherry Southland

Church History in the Community of Christ, the first course in the new LEADS series, was facilitated by Mark Scherer, World Church Historian, at the Center for Christian Ministries in Temple City in late February. Thirty-nine students participated in the class which featured lively discussion, interesting anecdotes, and provocative information concerning the church's remarkable history. Controversial aspects were explored with gentleness and affirmation of each perspective. The class evaluations demonstrated the high level of quality attained through Mark's leadership where each respondent felt the 15 hour course to be well worth their time and effort.



Terry and Linda Read taught *Our Diverse Community* at Temple City during the weekend of May 16-17. Diversity comes in many forms: ethnicity, abilities, culture, sex, sexual orientation, and language to name a few. How do we embrace diversity? How do we develop community amid diversity and bring the ministry of reconciliation among our relationships with those who are different than us? How do we envision

the future and celebrate diversity? These were some of the challenging questions raised in the two day experience among the twenty-five participants. We must first develop an awareness of diversity and its beauty as part of God's creating impulse. It was a class that opened us up to looking at diversity in a different and positive way and challenged us as a community called to be a people of peace.

The Southern California Mission Center is presenting the series of LEADS classes (Leadership Education and Discipleship Studies) designed to help ministers magnify their calling. It began in February of this year, and will continue through November, 2012 and beyond on a repeating cycle. It is open to anyone wishing to explore, enrich, or develop new skills in their ministry. Two certificate tracks are included in the certificate program: 1) the Leadership Track which include thirteen classes plus two supplemental classes (215 hours), and 2) the Ministry Track that consists of nine classes plus two supplemental classes (155 hours). In addition, classes are also open to any students wishing to choose courses by subject. Track students may make up a certain number of courses through arrangement with the program director and instructor.

Faith Formation in the Congregation, presented by Sue McLaughlin of the Community of Christ Seminary will be offered the weekend of September 19-20, 2009. The cost is \$20 for the course. Reading materials may be extra and will be assigned by early August. Please contact Carol Kostura, LEADS Coordinator for registration applications, or any questions you may have about the LEADS Program. Deadline to register for this class is September 8. ■

Jr. Hi Camp Snapshots



Campers sport their new bandanas that show their true colors.



My God is so Big!



Greetings,

To kick off the summer camps this year we started with Jr. High and Freshman camp which was a blast. Even though we were small in numbers, we were strong in spirit. Stephen Hatch (Southwest International Mission Center President) provided guest ministry as campers looked at Jesus' life to identify the principles he used to teach others about peace. Campers learned about their color personality styles and how to work best with other personalities in order to "bridge" the gap.

At camp we did some CRAZY FUN activities! Campers went into town and purchased outfits from a thrift store to dress up for our "True Colors" Fashion Show. Campers also learned to work as a team through different obstacles and games throughout camp. The closing worship was held at Fulmer Lake as campers retraced the ministry of Jesus through a scripture walk and ended with a communion celebration. I can't wait for next year's camp!

Primary Camp (K-2nd grade) is coming soon—June 27-28 at Temple City. If you haven't registered yet or would like to know more information please contact me. Next up in the summer camping fun is **Reunion**, which is July 11-17. Then, for all the senior high out there we have **IYF** and **SPEC** which is July 20-August 1 (IYF for those completing grades 9-12; SPEC for those completing grades 10-12). Don't miss this opportunity to worship, befriend and have fun with youth from all over the world. If you have not registered yet, you need to ASAP. Contact me right away because time is running out. Then, to finish off the summer camping fun, we have **Junior Camp** (grades 4-6), August 14-16 up at Buckhorn. The theme for this camp is *Fruit Loops for Jesus*. As always, when you come to camp be ready for some CRAZY FUN adventures.

If you ever have any questions, feel free to contact me at 909.562.9308 or email me at klogan@cofchristia.org and don't forget to visit the SMC youth website www.journeytakers.com.

PEACE,

Kyle

Kyle Logan, Youth Minister
Southern California Mission Center

DOUBLE TROUBLE

There are lots of words that sound funny because their two syllables repeat. Can you think of all of these and more?

Nana
Tutu

Dodo
Muumuu

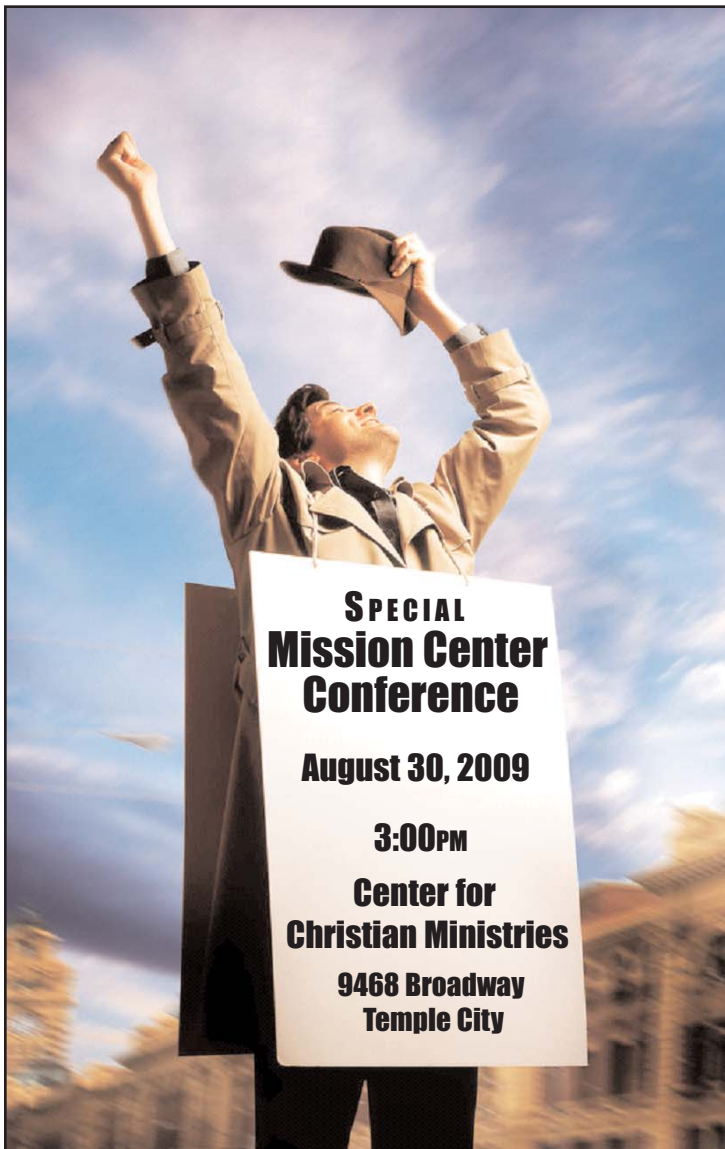
Mama
Tartar

Murmur
Yoyo

See how many double-words you can come up with and then give meanings for them.

Example: Yukyuk means a spinach dish for lunch.

When you have come up with some words and their meanings, email them to me at klogan@cofchristia.org and I will post them on the youth website @ www.journeytakers.com then you can vote which is the best one.



SPECIAL Mission Center Conference

The mission center leadership announces a Special Conference for the Southern California Mission Center on Sunday, August 30, at 3:00PM at the Temple City Center for Christian Ministries, 9468 Broadway in Temple City. Please make plans to attend this important gathering. The primary agenda item for this special conference is consideration of the proposed merger between our mission center and the Southwest International Mission Center (SWIM).

To aid in the decision making, a discernment process is underway that invites each member and friend of the church in the two mission centers to intentionally listen for the guidance of the Spirit. A weekly resource is provided to all pastors and leaders (as well as posted on the website). In addition, “town hall” gatherings have been scheduled (three having already occurred in June; remaining schedule below). We invite all to join in the preparation for the conference by participating in the discernment process as well as the opportunities for dialogue, and attending this special conference.

Sunday “Town Hall” Cluster Meetings will be held at these congregations at 3:00PM:

- ▶ **June 28, El Cajon**, 115 Cajon View Drive, El Cajon
(target congregations: Chula Vista, El Cajon, Clairemont, Escondido, Vista)
- ▶ **July 19, Long Beach**, 3525 Elm Avenue, Long Beach
(target congregations: El Segundo, Gardena, La Nueva Esperanza, Long Beach, Temple City)
- ▶ **August 9, Las Vegas**, 5401 West Oakey Blvd., Las Vegas
(target congregations: Desert Hot Springs, Las Vegas, Ridgcrest, St. George)

IYF Asia: Diversity—God’s Greatest Blessing

Lindsee Pace (Costa Mesa Congregation), Sharon “Sam” Metcalf (Santa Barbara Congregation), Erin Higgins (Orange Congregation) and Linda Read traveled from Los Angeles with 21 other USA youth and adults to Bangkok, Thailand on May 23 to join the entire International Youth Forum-Asia delegation of over 125 people representing 11 nations and speaking 13 languages. The second IYF Asia (the first took place in 2005 in Hong Kong) brought together youth from India, Sri Lanka, Korea, Japan, China, the Philippines and the United States. Gathered under the theme, *One*, the 5 day event featured a variety of classes, recreation and multicultural worship. Described by participants as “amazing”, “fantastic”, and “life-changing”, this event revealed the peace of Jesus Christ in the midst of the rich diversity of ethnicities, nationalities and races. As one young USA participant said of the IYF experience, “this is the real world that God intended.”



Linda Read and Kory Rillos lead a camp song.



Part of the USA delegation on the beach in LA before departure.

A Great Day Under the Sun

With the largest attendance yet, the third annual Unity in Our Community proved to be yet another tremendous celebration of God's creation and sacred friendship. Over 400 participants, many of them children, shared in the festivities which included beautiful music, delicious food, and a variety of activity booths including a merry-go-round (thanks to Roy Dalton of Canoga Park), a giant Wall-E jumper, a KidPrint service (provided by the Arcadia Masonic Lodge), and Outreach International's "rice pool." We also had a visit from the Los Angeles County Fire Department Station 47.

One of our new booths was a Freecycle "sale," patterned after the Internet network that connects givers with receivers. Some "shoppers" requested additional such opportunities.

Featured singer Karen Etheridge and the Canoga Park band, John Hatton, Bill Severance, Roy Dalton, and Sterling Smith, provided great music. Tony Austin, Ventura Congregation pastor, served as the Master of Ceremonies. SCMC was well represented with 13 congregations sponsoring booths. The cooperative spirit of unity and hospitality was very evident. Kids and adults played, ate, and basked in the sunshine and goodwill that permeated this event. ■





3rd Annual Buckhorn Golf Tournament Tops Previous Efforts

With 34 players (slightly down from last year's event) on the links, and a host of additional donors (both of prizes and money), the 2009 Buckhorn Golf Tournament registered another success. Over \$3,700 was raised for the new Peace Center, besting the 2008 amount by nearly 50%. The two years combined have contributed well over \$6,000 to the project. This year's donors included both of our mission centers, the El Cajon Congregation, Jerry and Lois Giddens, Tom and Dorothy Hawthorne, Rick Nelson, John Yamashita, Bruce MacRae and UPS, John Sundell, Dale Babb, Bill Worthen, Norio Morita, Moreno Valley Ranch, Woods Valley Golf, the San Diego Zoo and the Los Angeles Dodgers. Volunteers: Erin Logan, Michele McGrath, and Mary Andy. Once again, the tournament was capably and lovingly coordinated and directed by Steve Tignor. ■

Children's Day Picnic Reunites Covina Congregation

As with many congregations, Children's Day always meant a picnic at the Covina Community of Christ. But after the congregation closed in July 2007 the tradition was just one of the countless pieces of history held in the collective memory of its members. That is, until Eileen Anderson, longtime Covina member, put together a "reunion" for the former congregation. More than forty friends gathered for a BBQ picnic on the lawn at the Covina church— currently being rented to an Adventist Congregation and the site of our new congregation to be started later this year. The day was warm, and the hearts warmer. Laughter and memories flowed freely as all reflected on the good days spent sharing in worship and fellowship on Cienega Avenue. ■



Former Covina members enjoy fellowship in the shade.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

JUNE

27-28 Primary Camp, Temple City

JULY

- 4 Independence Day, Offices Closed
- 11-17 SCMC Reunion, Buckhorn Camp
- 21-24 International Youth Forum, Independence, MO
- 25-8/1 SPECTACULAR, Lamoni, IA

AUGUST

- 14-16 Junior Camp, Buckhorn Camp
- 22 Family Beach Day
- 30 Special SCMC Conference, Temple City, 3:00PM

SEPTEMBER

- 7 Labor Day, Offices Closed
- 19-20 LEADS
- 22 First Day of Autumn
- 25-27 Hispanic Ministries Retreat, Buckhorn Camp



**SCMC invites you to the 1st Annual
Beach Day Celebration @ Huntington Beach**

Come Anytime or Stay All Day
Fun for ALL Ages! Lots of Prizes
Directions and more info to follow

- 2PM - Meet/Set-up @ Huntington Beach
- 3PM - Volleyball Tournament
- 4PM - Sand Castle Contest Judging
- 5PM - Family Beach Races with Prizes
- 6PM - Dinner
- 7PM - Kite Flying
- 8PM - Beach Hacky-Sack Footy
- 9PM - Campfire and S'mores

*Please bring
your own
dinner.*

*Supplies for
S'mores will
be provided.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION CONTACT KYLE OR ERIN LOGAN @ 909-562-9308
OR KLOGAN@COFCHRISTLA.ORG, ERIN_LOGAN@HOTMAIL.COM



What's better than a "Stay-cation?"



What's *real* community like?



How do we share our values
without wiping out our budgets?



Reunion 2009!

July 11-17, Buckhorn Camp

Register NOW at

www.cofChristLA.org/reunion