



Communities of Joy

OCTOBER 2009 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MISSION CENTER

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Young Adult Retreat: ENOUGH**
October 2-4
San Onofre - San Mateo Campground
- **SCMC/SwIMC Leaders and Priesthood Retreat**
October 16-17
Hemet-San Jacinto
- **Girls and Boys Retreats**
November 6-8
- **SCMC Conference**
Saturday, November 14
Temple City
- **SCMC/SwIMC Mission Event - January 15-17, 2010 - Buckhorn**

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Sacredness of Creation by Apostle Susan Skoor

My husband, John, and I always loved nature. Walking along a sandy beach or forest path, we celebrated God's creativity and the world's beauty. Then one night, while walking on a beach, a giant wave swept over us and pulled John and his sister, Debbie, into the ocean. Debbie and I survived; John did not.

Although I continued to feel God's Spirit through those dark days, I no longer could trust or enjoy God's creation. Beaches were not places of peace and beauty. Waves frightened me with their pounding violence and unpredictability. About a month and a half after John's death, at the urging of a good friend, I tried a retreat in the Colorado mountains to begin a journey of healing.

It started with a series of mishaps. Distracted by my thoughts, I rear-ended a car stopped on the freeway. I spent

the rest of that day dealing with insurance and repair estimates. The next day, snow barred access to the cabin. Alone and miserable, I wandered snow-



Photo by author's daughter, Marie

covered parks and sat on a snow bank watching ice swirl in a black stream. I thought of the ocean wave that killed my husband, and shivered.

"This water is life-giving," I repeated. "It nourishes the trees, provides life for fish and microbes." Unbidden, a new thought came: "It's also death-

dealing. If a dam broke, a wall of black water and crushing ice could destroy everything. Nature is life-giving and death-dealing... And so am I!"

I remembered the car accident. On a journey of renewal, I had unintentionally become an instrument of harm. All created things have potential to be both life-giving and death-dealing. Creation is like that. It nourishes and destroys, just as human beings both support and damage one another. God does not initiate natural disasters. They are part of the cycle of life and death built into creation. But God's grace is extended to all. My journey of healing had begun. For two years, I confronted the ocean in many forms: Alki Beach, Seattle, Washington; the Oregon coast; Tahiti; and Australia. Finally, at the 2009 Hawaii Reunion, I waded into the ocean, up to my neck—and the fear dis-

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All Those in Favor? Terry Read

When I first became a pastor one of the couples in the congregation gave me a card to keep in my wallet. It was addressed to "Our Pastor" and beneath it read, "God loves you and so do we." I'm not one for sentimental cards and gifts but that card is still in my wallet.

Although I served seven years as a pastor (a short term, I realize compared to many), I rarely if

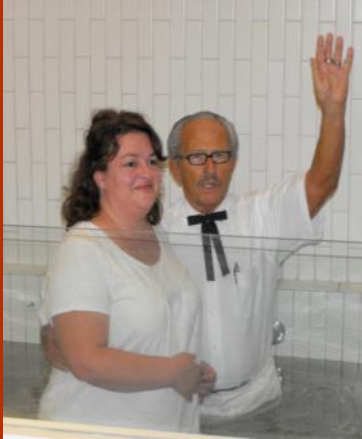
ever felt alone. Here I'm not speaking of God's abiding presence, although in my better moments I was definitely aware of my constant Companion. What I mean is that I received so much support from the members of the congregation, from the other servant ministers and leaders, that the role of pastor did not overwhelm or burden me nearly as much as I once imagined it would. Of course, there were

moments when I felt the weight of the needs of the faith community in a most intense way, but it was always with the assurance that the weight was shared with other strong shoulders.

Likely during the next several weeks between now and the end of 2009, your congregation will hold a business meeting in which the pastor or co-pastors for the coming year will be elected or re-

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New Life in Hemet-San Jacinto



Tina Rana is baptized by Dean Crawford

Tina Rana was baptized and confirmed a member of Community of Christ on Sunday Aug. 16, 2009 at the Hemet-San Jacinto Congregation. After a wonderful sermon of preparation by Cecil Robbins, Tina made her covenant in the waters of baptism assisted by Dean Crawford, and after a brief interlude, was confirmed by Dean Crawford and Cecil Robbins, with Cecil as spokesman. Max Rana

placed his hands on his wife's shoulder as she was being confirmed, and she said later that it felt like there were many hands upon her head during the confirmation prayer. The service was followed by our monthly potluck where we enjoyed wonderful food, including a beautiful cake, decorated with the message "God Bless Tina." We also had karaoke music, and Nap Mushegan sang a couple of

solos in honor of the occasion. Tina was given some wonderful gifts, and welcomed into our congregation with congratulations and hugs. It was a grand celebration enjoyed by all.



"I would like to request that the [Church] lift up the needs of [Honduras] in our prayers."

Urgent Prayer Concern: Honduras

From Art Smith, Assistant to the Apostle, Central and South America Field:

In a time of great political uncertainty in the country of Honduras, home of Apostle Carlos Enrique Mejia and many congregations of the Community of Christ, I would like to request that the [Church] lift up the needs of this nation in our prayers. Many have been

following news from Honduras in the media in their respective countries. People in Honduras have been coping with curfews whose hours seem to change every day, sometimes 9pm to 5am, sometimes 6pm to 7am, sometimes 24 hours a day confined to their homes. Roads have been closed and opened again. Demonstrations thank-

fully have been mostly peaceful but with enough violence and tension to create fear as to what tomorrow's demonstrations might bring. Basic civil liberties have been suspended by presidential decree and then restored. The populace remains divided as to what should have happened, what should be happening and what should happen.



Sacredness of Creation continued from page 1

solved. Beaches once again are places of renewal and beauty, as well as power and destruction. Nature reminds us of our vulnerability and the close link between life, death, and resurrection. Nature touches us with beauty, teaches us about diversity, and makes visual the cycle of loss, grace, and recov-

ery. God's creation humbles us, so we find our place not as conquerors and masters, but as participants in a network of interdependent organisms flourishing only in the Creator's hand. **In the beginning, God created and called it all good.** The story of creation in Genesis 1 affirms the good that God

placed in all created things. God's Spirit moved over a watery chaos, and by God's Word, the Creator established order and life. Like the chorus to a mighty hymn, the story presents one central theme, "And God saw that it was good." Understanding the basic goodness built into creation

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Youth Ministries Launches New Program Kyle Logan

The month of September was the start of Journey Takers. Journey Takers is the new monthly SCMC Senior High activity. The program is designed to gather high school youth from around the mission center to study the scriptures, participate in community outreach projects and plan the worship for Sunday morning, all while having a great time together.

Our first Journey Takers was September 19-20 at the Orange Congregation. 14 youth from various congregations joined in community for a wonderful two days

together. The youth joined in games, provided ministry at a children's hospital behind the church, studied the scriptures, and prepared a spirit-filled service utilizing their collective gifts and talents.

We also had a wonderful cook-out and campfire at the Richards' house where the youth had the opportunity to share the struggles on their journey. We have started with a good foundation and I am excited to see what lies ahead. Overall, the weekend was AWESOME and I am excited for the next Journey Takers activity! If you

know a Senior High youth or if you are one, we invite you to the next Journey Takers at Anaheim Congregation on Oct. 24-25.



Journey Takers activity at Orange

Upcoming Events

- Boys/Girls Retreats - Nov. 6-8 Jr. Hi/Sr. Hi (grades 6-12) Girls: Temple City; Boys: Lake Perris Cost - \$50
- Journey Takers @ Ventura - December 5-6
- Birthday Party for Jesus - Children's Day Camp (all elementary students) - Temple City - Cost: \$20

CONTACT KYLE LOGAN FOR DETAILS
klogan@cofchristla.org
 909-562-9308

All Those in Favor? continued from page 1

-elected. In many of our congregations, this will perhaps be a mere formality, the decision of who to lead having been made by the simple willingness of the incumbent to serve another year. But I want to suggest that we fully recognize the significance of raising hands to indicate support for one of our own who is willing to carry the sacred mantle of spiritual leadership on our behalf. It is a vote that we owe at **least** as much attention as will

be asked of us as voters by campaigns concerning November ballots. And when we exercise the right and responsibility of membership in the church and raise our hands in support of a brother or sister who is willing to serve by leading, may that signify our commitment to uphold that minister in intentional and consistent prayer if not as well with our hands and feet in carrying out the ministries of the congregation, within and without.



"It is a vote that we owe at least as much attention as...campaigns concerning November ballots."

Sacredness of Creation continued from page 2

impacts how we treat one another and the world. Some Christians give up on this world and think only of the afterlife. Some rejoice when a hurricane or earthquake causes devastation, because they think it heralds Jesus' return.

Community of Christ proclaims something different.

This is the world God created—the world God redeemed through Jesus' love and compassion. God

continues to yearn toward this world and love it. We are called to help God restore broken, sad places to their intended goodness and wholeness. We call it "bringing forth the cause of Zion," the kingdom of God that Jesus proclaimed. **Spirit and material, seen and unseen, are related.**

During the first two centuries of the rise of Christianity, alternative ways of understanding Jesus' teach-

ings developed. Some religious groups, now known as Gnostic, were based on the ideas that: 1) salvation depends on gaining secret knowledge known only to a few; and 2) the physical world is evil, the spiritual world is good, and the two are completely disconnected. They believed an evil god



This article from the Enduring Principles Commentary Series - reprinted from cofchrist.org



Guest Ministry for
Magnify
Apostle Susan Skoor

All congregational leaders and priesthood members are invited to share in learning and dialogue with fellow ministers October 16-17 at the Hemet-San Jacinto Congregation. We will gather under the theme, "Magnify", taken from Section 163 in which we are called to magnify our "callings through spiritual growth, study, exemplary generosity, ethical choices, and fully accountable ministry..."

Participants will share in

and complete a course led by Apostle Susan Skoor entitled, "A Sacred Trust" which explores vital information on boundary issues for ministers (this training is also part of the LEADS curriculum). In addition, mini-workshops will be offered: Good Grief: Ministry Among the Grieving; Sacraments: A Hands-On Approach; and Priesthood Faithfulness: My Plan of Ministry.

The event will begin on Friday evening, October 16 at

7:00 and the first session for "A Sacred Trust" will begin at 7:45. We will conclude the following evening after dinner with a Generosity Summit led by Apostle Skoor, concluding with a sending forth worship. Cost for the activity is \$50 - please contact Tonia Cooper not later than October 14 to register (tonia@cofchristla.org or 714-847-5731). Please join us in this endeavor to magnify our callings for ministry as servants of Jesus Christ.

*"...it's pretty
tough to beat a
week of Reunion
at Buckhorn
Camp."*

2009 SCMC Reunion

If you like joining together with sisters and brothers in faith, enjoying breath-taking beauty of creation, nutritious home-cooked food, and communing with God through it all, it's pretty tough to beat a week of Reunion at Buckhorn Camp. Once again we gathered in sacred community to learn, play, sing, pray, laugh, cry, eat, and worship together.

This year marked the first time to enjoy the new Peace

Center, completed earlier this year. We enjoyed recreation, an intergenerational concert and dance (featuring the Hodads) and our closing worship in the spacious and beautiful new facility. This year also marked the possible beginning of a new tradition with a camp community service project. 20 campers trekked to the Idyllwild Help Center to share in grounds care, cleaning, and other chores. The executive director tearfully explained

that we were an answer to prayer.

We were blessed through the week by the ministry of Tom Mountenay, retired appointee minister and former director of the church's



Co-Missioned Pastor Initiative. Tom brought his considerable experience in leading a daily class on Congregational Life. Preaching ministry included Tom, Tony Austin from the Ventura Congregation, and mission center officers Michele McGrath and Terry Read. The closing worship featured the leadership of our youth under the direction of Kyle and Erin Logan.



Participants in
Reunion
Service
Project at
Idyllwild
Help Center



Sacredness of Creation continued from page 3

created the physical world and a different, holy god created the spirits, which became trapped in created things. As a result, some Gnostics renounced all physical things to concentrate on the spiritual. Others went to excess in eating, drinking, and immoral living, because they believed what they did in this life was unrelated to the spiritual world. Gnosticism died out as a movement, but Gnostic ideas still challenge us today.

Community of Christ affirms that spirit and element cannot be separated. "...Spirit and element, inseparably connected, receiveth a fullness of joy; and when separated, man cannot receive a fullness of joy" (Doctrine and Covenants 90:5e). God the Creator made both physical and spiritual reality, and they are to be equally cherished. They are intertwined in a joyful wholeness that can be expressed only when we fully embrace both aspects of our nature. Thus, we refer to our bodies as the temple of God, and strive to be wise stewards over our physical well-being. The natural world is a treasure, no less important to God than the spirit that flows through all creation. **We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.**

Genesis 1:28 tells us to "subdue" and "have dominion" over creation, words that have led to misunderstanding and violence

against nature. Wars ravage the land and cause famine, sickness, and poverty. Wealthy nations squander basic resources of water, oil, land, and air, while others die for lack of these resources. Those of us who rely on petroleum products (petrol, plastics, and synthetics) have become complacent about this nonrenewable resource. The recent global recession reminds us that "unrestrained consumption" cannot continue without devastating consequences. As always, it is those who have least who suffer most.

The earth lovingly created as an environment for life to flourish, shudders in distress because creation's natural and living systems are becoming exhausted from carrying the burden of human greed and conflict. Humankind must awaken from its illusion of independence and unrestrained consumption without lasting consequences.—

Doctrine & Covenants 163:4b

If we are made in God's image, then we are to act as the Creator might act toward a beloved creation. We must halt insensitive pillage of the world's resources. We must replace superiority over creatures of the earth with equality among all parts of creation. Recognizing our interconnectedness prompts us to keep the world in balance. It's easy to speak of the sacredness of God's creation and the need for wise management of natural re-

sources. It's harder to make lifestyle changes. Choices that seem small can create great change, if we act together.

Affirming the sacredness of creation means taking responsibility for the earth God gave us, and preserving it for future generations. It's a spiritual challenge as much as a physical one. Make it a matter of prayer—and make a difference today.

God is still creating to fulfill divine purpose.

Creation is an ongoing process. God creates all that exists, and sustains all that is. The ancient Jews' belief in God's unceasing creation is reflected in their rhythm of days. Day began with sunset, a meal and bed, while God continued creating through the night. When morning came, the day was half over. They rose to join in what God had begun. How beautiful! God recreates each day, each moment, physically and spiritually.

As Christians we affirm that God's creative work continues in new life. We wake each day with the promise of resurrection. God gives us space and time to be in relationship with the Divine for renewal and life-giving activity. We join God wherever the divine work is in progress, to touch lives with hope and joy, and to fulfill God's divine purpose.

"It's easy to speak of the sacredness of God's creation... It's harder to make life-style changes. Choices that seem small can create great change, if we act together."



2009 SCMC Conference • We Share

Please plan to join us for our annual mission center conference on Saturday, November 14, at the Center for Christian Ministries, 9468 Broadway in Temple City. We will center our thoughts on the theme, *We Share*, which will also be the theme of the upcoming 2010 World Conference. Our conference will feature the election of World Conference delegates*, consideration of any proposed

legislation and the 2010 SCMC Budget. We will share together in worship, in pre-legislative dialogue, and in the business of the mission center along with table fellowship. Come and *share* with your brothers and sisters from around the Los Angeles area.

REGISTRATION	8:30
PRAISE SINGING	9:15
COMMUNION WORSHIP	9:30
PRE-LEGISLATIVE SESSION	11:00
LUNCH	12:15
LEGISLATIVE SESSION	1:15

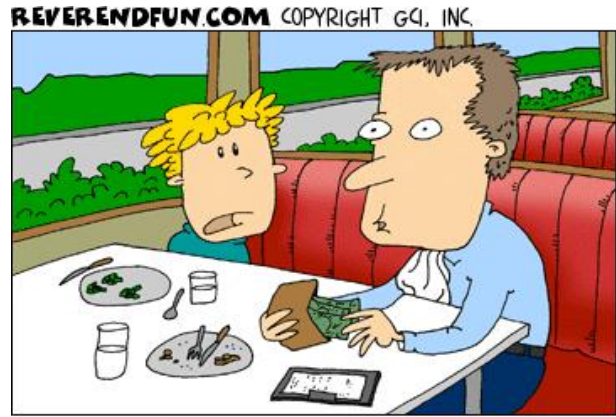


*If you desire to have your name placed on the ballot for WC delegates, please contact Tonia (714-847-5731 or tonia@cofchristla.org) by November 6.

Southern California Mission Center
 P.O. Box 4077
 Huntington Beach CA 92605-4077
 Phone: 714-847-5731
 E-mail: tread@cofchristla.org

Sharing the Peace of Jesus Christ

DEADLINE FOR NEXT ISSUE OF *COMMUNITIES OF JOY*:
 NOVEMBER 15
 PLEASE SEND ARTICLES/PICTURES TO:
tread@cofchristla.org or 15657 Ladera Vista Drive,
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HOW COME THE WAITRESS GETS 15% AND GOD ONLY GETS 10%?

From the Youth Minister...
CODE BREAKERS

By looking at a phone and using the numbers and letters try to figure out the codes below.

463 56837 968 968 273 47328 4283 2 6423 329

Now see if you can make one and send it in to me (klogan@cofchrista.org - 909-562-9308) and I will post it on the website.

Happy 50th, Ventura

In a day filled with sacred reflection - looking back and ahead - the Ventura Congregation shared a glorious day of celebration, marking the 50th anniversary of their church home's dedication. More than 60 worshipers participated in the activities which included a worship service recalling the history of the congregation and featuring a visual remembrance of the fifty plus years of faithful presence. Following this time of sacred reminiscence, the congregation then worshiped the Lord centered on the theme, "God's Future" with the challenge given by Pastor Tony Austin and music ministry offered by the children and youth bell choir. The late dismissal (the second service did not conclude until after 1PM) caused one participant to remark that our ancestors from 50 years ago would be "proud of us."

The activities were capped off by a tri-tip barbecue lunch including birthday cake provided by the congregation and their many willing helpers.



Upcoming Events

- ◆ Young Adult Retreat: *Enough* **October 2-4**
 Guest Ministry: David Schaal San Onofre Campground
- ◆ Leaders Retreat: *Magnify* **October 16-17**
 Guest Ministry: Susan Skoor Hemet-San Jacinto
- ◆ Journey Takers - Anaheim (Gr. 9-12) **October 24-25**
- ◆ Bridge Builders Fall Fiesta **October 26-27**
 Guest Ministry: Brad Shumate Canoga Park
- ◆ Leaders Meeting (electronic) - 3:00PM **November 1**
- ◆ Girls and Boys Retreats (Gr. 6-12) **November 6-8**
 Girls - Temple City Boys - Lake Perris
- ◆ SCMC Conference: *We Share* **November 14**
- ◆ Journey Takers - Ventura (Gr. 9-12) **December 5-6**
- ◆ Messiah Sing-a-long - Upland **December 6**
- ◆ Birthday Party for Jesus (K-5) - Temple City **December 12**
- ◆ SCMC/SwIMC Mission Event **January 15-17, 2010**
 Guest Ministry: John Wight, Carman & Joan Thompson, Carla Long
 Buckhorn
- ◆ LEADS - New Testament **February 20-21, 2010**