



Communities of Joy

DECEMBER 2009 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MISSION CENTER

SOME UPCOMING EVENTS:

- **Messiah Sing-A-Long**
December 6, 5PM - Upland
- **Birthday Party for Jesus - (K-5)**
December 12, 10AM-4PM - Temple City
- **SCMC/SwIMC Mission Event - Risky Business**
January 15-17, 2010 - Buckhorn
- **LEADS: New Testament Studies with Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith** - February 27-28, 2010 - Temple City

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Conspiracy of Kindness by Linda Read

John walked the downtown streets at night, not because he was attracted to the activities that routinely occurred, but because he was drawn to God's people. A wise follower of Jesus Christ, John moved among that world of loneliness and loss marked by homelessness, substance abuse and prostitution to shine light in the darkness. One night he approached a man in a bar who didn't care too much for John's presence. Ever the graceful and gracious soul, John engaged the man by simply introducing himself. The resistant man identified himself with a snarl as "Rocky". "You have the same name," John responded, "as one of Jesus' closest followers...well,

at least his nickname. Because of his faith, the Lord told that disciple that he would build his church upon 'the rock.'" Rocky couldn't help but smile.



That's the kind of presence that John offered to all, especially to those who were down and out. He would lighten the burden or brighten the dreariness of one of the world's forgotten. I've

often challenged myself to reflect light the way that John did; he passed away a few years ago, but the little time that I knew him (we worked together in an ecumenical association and ministry) left an indelible mark on my heart and soul. Yet for many, John would not make a remarkable impression. His gift of kindness was not rare; he simply shared it with rare generosity.

When I follow that example, I invariably sense the power within that kindness: how a simple act of generosity can cascade like water into a thirsty world and send wave after wave of refreshing goodness. Even people who only passively observe these acts of kindness are

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Singing Gloria, Living Gloria* by Michele McGrath

At our home, no matter what decorations we put up, no matter what surprises we hide, no matter what get-together we attend, no matter what meal we plan, it just doesn't feel like Christmas until we make a very difficult decision: which CD's will we place in the player? The likely candidates this year? Perhaps the *Andy Williams Christmas Album* or *Elvis' Christmas* in a nod to nostalgia, since my husband Mike and I grew up with these albums, respectively. An album of various

holiday classical music, including Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*. Maybe Ottmar Liebert's *Poets of Angels* for dinner music. More recent favorites include Jewel's *Joy: A Holiday Collection*, a compilation album by Christian artists called *City on a Hill*, and The Brian Setzer Orchestra's *Boogie Woogie Christmas*, guaranteed to encourage lively after-dinner dancing. A gift from last year, yet unwrapped - *A Charlie Brown Christmas*. And my most recent purchase, a funky blend of world music called *Holi-*

day World Beat (wait, I'll listen to that one in the car).

For so many of us, music is such an important part of the holidays. The words of Handel's *Messiah* ring in our ears (and maybe even roll off our tongues, if we join the Upland Congregation for their annual *Messiah Sing-A-Long* on Dec. 6th!); its scriptural promises just as much a part of our Advent as mom's German Spritz cookies. Each year we look forward to hearing anew Isaiah's words proclaiming the

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Tenor

and ev-'ry moun-tain and hill... made low; the crook-ed...straight, and the rough plac-es plain,

the crook - ed straight, the crook - ed straight, and rough plac-es

plain, and the rough plac-es plain.

Building Bridges Together to the Rock by Charlotte Jones



Barbara Jones leads the art class

“...the Hodads wove their music to bring enjoyment and fun, at one point fiddle player John Hatton even jumping up on one of the tables!”

“Building Bridges Together to the Rock” was the theme of the 2009 Bridge Builders Fall Fiesta, held at the Canoga Park Congregation October 26-27. True to the spirit of community, 27 Bridge Builders from different congregations met for fellowship to build on the scripture Matthew 7:24: “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock.” (NRSV)

A beautiful worship center by Edye Holmes graced her worship that opened the Fall Fiesta. At the first class, Bishop Brad Shumate, our guest minister, enlightened us on financial matters, providing an overview of the church’s estate planning tools. Attendees were excited to make “Artist Trading Cards” in the art class introduced by Barbara Jones (Canoga Park).

After lunch, unfinished art work, fellowship, rest, or other free choices filled the afternoon. Under the direction of Lavona Davis (Anaheim), with help from Mary Noble (Anaheim) and others, beautifully decorated autumn tables awaited us for

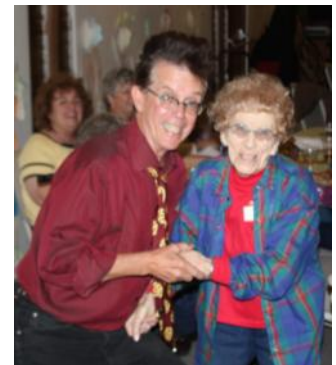
the banquet.

The Hodads, a band of talented and enthusiastic musicians under the direction of John Hatton (from Canoga Park Congregation), entertained us before and throughout the evening banquet. Pastor Glen Harris of Canoga Park welcomed us to the church, a place we were grateful to use. Following a blessing by David Saxton we broke bread together. After singing “Weave”, Diane Shirota related a life experience that wove into a tapestry for us the meaning of being a bridge builder, as an individual and as part of the whole group as God would see it. Brad then especially blessed us with a testimony regarding his calling to and motivation for ministry. SCMC President Terry Read concluded the evening with an inspiring sending forth.

Throughout the evening the Hodads wove their music to bring enjoyment and fun, at one point fiddle player John Hatton even jumping up on one of the tables! We ended the evening to a rolling “Jesus Is the Rock”, as the band played and we clapped. It was a celebration we all felt had reached the Rock as we joined together touched by the

Spirit of fellowship and love.

Tuesday morning Mary McGoon (Inland Empire) offered ministry with her piano music before and during our final communion service. SCMC Financial Officer Michele McGrath presided with an invocation by Mary Hampton (Inland Empire). Brad again shared his ministry leading us into communion with Joy Harris (Canoga Park) blessing and serving the sacraments. Michele asked us when had we seen the face of Christ in someone and led us in a time of sharing with a personal testimony. At the close we felt we had been fed spiritually as a Community of Christ. After a noon meal we concluded, carrying with us



John Hatton dances with Theda Pitt



Conspiracy of Kindness continued from page 1

often moved to do likewise.

In his book *Conspiracy of Kindness: A Unique Approach to Sharing the Love of Jesus* Steven Sjogren writes, “Whenever people see the love of God in action a hot button is touched deep inside them. I’m convinced they feel God’s presence and see that God is real...” Our two hands become the hands of God; our kind acts become the acts of God to soothe and encourage God’s children.

Simple acts of kindness and simple ministries of love will be at the heart of our new congregation in Covina. As our Young Peacemaker Club continues to learn and teach peace, new op-

portunities will come forth to bless this community. Our neighborhood “Free-Cycle” effort will start this month, hopefully providing gifts and other useful items to neighborhood families at no charge.

This Christmas let us allow grace to flow through us to those we meet and seek, no matter how unreceptive they may appear to us. We never know when our kindness will start a torrent of good.

Simple Ideas to Sow Seeds of Love in Your Neighborhood

In the morning sow your seed, and at evening do not let your hands be idle; for you do not know which will prosper, this or that, or whether both alike will be good.

- Ecclesiastes 11:6 NRSV

1. On trash day in the neighborhood around the church, roll everyone’s trashcans up to their garages (after pickup).
2. Watch for real estate signs. Take something baked to acknowledge the family’s move. Then do the same for folks moving in!
3. Go door to door to remind folks to change the batteries in their smoke alarms, taking batteries to share as needed.
4. Give away free scotch tape during the weeks before Christmas.
5. Share Advent Calendars with neighborhood!

Youth Ministries Complete Busy Fall by Kyle Logan

This fall has been busy for Children and Youth Ministries. Journey Takers was in Anaheim in October. The youth had a blast passing out flyers in the neighborhood for the congregation's Trunk n' Treat, navigating Anaheim on their Halloween



Marilee & Melissa Gribbon at Upland Trunk n' Treat

hunt, and providing ministry for the Sunday service.

If you want to know what the youth at Journey Takers did on the Halloween hunt...ask them the next time you see one.

Trunk n' Treat happened in 3 different congregations this year, and they all were a hit. I had the opportunity to attend the one at Anaheim and over 600 people attend! The night was filled with shrieks as well as laughter as the kids made their way from car to car. If you are interested in hosting a Trunk n' Treat next year at your congregation let me know and I will help with the logistics.

The first weekend in November was the Boys/Girls retreats. Both were a smashing success. The boys roughed it out at Lake Perris and learned how to survive the world by being men of God. They made shelters on the first night and spent part of Saturday building rafts then set sail on a race across the lake.



The boys "survive" by cooling off in Lake Perris

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Singing Gloria, Living Gloria

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Suffering Servant who will be Savior of the World.

It is interesting to realize that the Jews to whom Isaiah was originally speaking would have heard these promises far differently than we do. When we hear the scriptures promising one "who will bring forth justice to the nations" (Isa. 42:1-4 NRSV), we hear them as speaking about an individual. We hear the birth of Jesus Christ foretold. But Isaiah's intended Jewish audience would have probably understood the Suffering Servant not as just an individual, but as a reference to God's chosen people collectively, that is, all Israel: "You are

my servant, Israel, in whom I will be glorified. I will give you as a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth." (Isa. 49:3, 6b NRSV)

How would our understanding of Advent be broadened if we imagined ourselves, as a part of God's chosen people, to be called to bring justice and light to the world? What if we are called not just to wait and watch, but to actively engage in bringing light to the world at this darkest time of year? What would that mean? Once again Isaiah shares the heart of God with us:

Is not this the sort of fast that pleases me: to break unjust fetters, to undo the thongs of the yoke, to let the oppressed go free, and to break all yokes? Is it not sharing your food with the hungry, and sheltering the homeless poor; If you see someone lacking clothes, to clothe him and not to turn away from your own kin? Then your light will blaze out like the dawn and your wound be quickly healed over. Saving justice for you will go ahead, and the LORD's glory come behind you.

(Isaiah 58:6-8 NJB)



"How would our understanding of Advent be broadened if we imagined ourselves...to be called to bring justice and light to the world?"

This year, may you spend less time shopping for that perfect present, and spend more of the present with family and friends. May you serve fewer calorie- and carb-heavy meals to each other and serve more at a local charity. May you spend less money on gifts for those people who have everything, and give money to those who have nothing. Let's really be a light in the darkness this Christmas. Let's make a difference this year. Hallelujah!

* "Singing Gloria, Living Gloria" from the song *Gloria*, by the Smalltown Poets, from their 2006 album *Listen Closely*, Ardent Music LLC

For more ideas, visit: www.buynothingchristmas.org





Glenn Johnson shares in an activity with Bruce Tarbutton

More than 60 people from our two mission centers gathered at the Hemet-San Jacinto church for *Magnify*, this year's priesthood and leaders retreat. With guest ministry from Apostle Susan Skoor, participants were guided through *A Sacred Trust*, an exploration of the essential nature of ministerial boundaries.

In addition to this main topic, mini-seminars were offered on *My Plan of Ministry*, an overview of a new discipline for priesthood ministers, *Min-*

istry Among the Grieving, exploring the basics of ministry following the death of a congregant or friend of the church, and *Hands On: the Sacraments*, a nuts and bolts look at the physical and logistical elements of the church's sacraments.

The weekend concluded Saturday evening with a "Generosity Summit", a presenta-

tion expressing gratitude to the membership for generous support of the church's ministries and an inspirational closing worship led by Michele McGrath.



Apostle Skoor leads a session on Sacred Trust

2009 SCMC Conference

Gathered under the theme *We Share* folks from around our mission center gathered for our annual conference November 14 in Temple City. Beginning with worship - the sacrament of the Lord's Supper, the conference shared in inspired singing and reflection, with a message given by Linda Read. Following communion, conferees engaged in the Pre-Legislative session, an opportunity for informal dialogue regarding the conference agenda. After sharing in a delicious lunch of chicken, rice and

beans complete with flan for dessert prepared by folks from La Nueva Esperanza en Cristo, attendees returned for the legislative session. Blessed by a spirit of cooperation and mutual respect, the assembly accomplished the conference agenda, highlighted by:

- ◆ Approval of Sharyl Macone's call to High Priest
- ◆ Approval of 2010 SCMC Budget
- ◆ Election of SCMC Delegates to 2010 World Conference (31)
- ◆ Approval of Dissolution of Golden West Tower
- ◆ Approval of "Legal Marriage and the Sacrament of Marriage" for consideration by the 2010 World Conference

Conference Bulletin and Minutes are posted on www.cofchristla.org



Special Recognition for Jim and Jan Albin



Lindsee Pace shared her experience at IYF-Asia



Rex Boos leads spirited singing



SCMC Conference in Session

Youth Ministries continued from page 3

The girls were pampered by spending time enjoying a spa night, participating in "Top Chef" where they worked in teams to cook meals, and in a photo shoot to see the true beauty they hold within themselves. The theme, "Beautiful You", focused on one's inner beauty as seen through God's eyes.



How about this group of "Angels"?

As 2009 winds down, exciting things are on the way. The new year marks the beginning of two new activities for Junior and Junior High. Junior High will have **JaM Sessions** (Jesus and Me) and for the Juniors, we'll begin the new **KIDTRICITY**. Watch for them. They are coming to a congregation near you.

If you would like to find out more info about what is going on in Children/Youth Ministry and to see more upcoming events check us

out at youth.cofchristla.org (the site www.journeytakers.com is no longer working). As always if you would like to help out in any way with children/youth ministry, please contact Kyle Logan at klogan@cofchristla.org or 909.562.9308.

Upcoming Events

- December 5-6 - Journey Takers @ Ventura
- December 12 - Birthday Party for Jesus 10AM-4PM (all elementary students K-5) - Temple City - Cost: \$20
- February 5-7 - Junior High Snow Camp @ Buckhorn - Cost: \$75
- February 19-21 - Senior High Snow Camp @ Buckhorn - Cost: \$75

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

Riddle Me This

See if you can figure out the answers to these riddles. The answers will be posted on the website - www.youth.cofchristla.org.

1. What do you call a fairy that hasn't taken a bath?
2. Which word in the dictionary is spelled incorrectly?
3. Why are Teddy Bears never hungry?
4. What did the chewing gum say to the shoe?
5. Why was the belt arrested?
6. What did the beach say when the tide came in?
7. What did one potato chip say to the other?
8. Why couldn't the sailors play cards?
9. What is the best thing to do if a bull charges you?
10. Which football player wears the biggest helmet?



Pastor Mark Richards with Journey Takers at Orange

Joint SCMC/SWIM Mission Event January 15-17, 2010 - Buckhorn

January 15-17, we have the opportunity to find out about "Risky Business" in an exciting weekend of witnessing, learning, growth and fellowship at Camp Buckhorn with great guest ministry. This witnessing retreat is a joint venture of Southern California Mission Center and Southwest International Mission Center.

Apostle Susan Skoor, Presidents of Seventy John Wight and Gina Norton, Carla Long from Sierra Pacific Mission Center, and Carman and Joan Thompson from Canada East Mission Centre will share their expertise in the areas of witnessing opportunities, sacraments, small group ministries, and young adult ministries. Modeled after the Missionary Wowie held earlier this year in Santa Cruz, the weekend will provide different tracks with hands-on activities and learning experiences.

According to one of the planners, Holly Norton, "The weekend will allow choices for participants to build their personal focus and education in the spectrum of witnessing opportunities and techniques as well as give congregations a chance to brainstorm and refine goals for 2010. The hope is that all who come will not only feel informed and

empowered to witness, but leave with obtainable actions for the year to come." Set aside the weekend of January 15-17, 2010, to participate in the "Risky Business" of sharing together in the wonder of God's mission for us as we find ways to witness of God's love for us all.

SWIMC & SCMC PRESENT

Risky Business

Witnessing Retreat

GETTING OUT FROM BEHIND THE SHADES TO REVEAL OPPORTUNITIES OF GRACE



January 15-17
@ CAMP BUCKHORN

Guest Ministry by:
 Susan Skoor
 John Wight
 Carla Long
 Gina Norton
 Carman & Joan Thompson

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

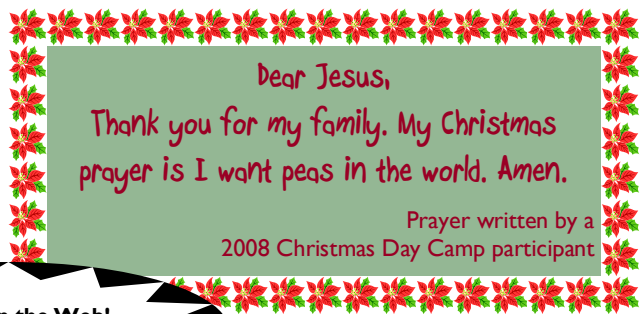
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 JANUARY 15
 PLEASE SEND ARTICLES/PICTURES TO:
 tread@cofchristla.org or 15657 Ladera Vista Drive,
 Chino Hills, CA 91709

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Thanks to John Michael Sullivan (See Luke 2:1-16) 12-23-2005

AT LEAST WE CAN SAY THAT HE WAS BROUGHT
 UP IN A STABLE HOME



Dear Jesus,
 Thank you for my family. My Christmas
 prayer is I want peas in the world. Amen.

Prayer written by a
 2008 Christmas Day Camp participant



Visit us on the Web!
www.cofchristla.org

Messiah Sing-A-Long

How many opportunities do you get to be part of the famous "Hallelujah Chorus"? Well, here's one: SCMC's *Messiah Sing-A-Long* on Sunday, December 6, 5PM at the Upland Congregation, 1111 W. 14th Street in Upland. Rex Boos, now in his 50th year of music ministry in the Los Angeles area, will lead the chorus with accompaniment once again from the amazing Elbert McAlister (along with stirring solos from Rex's talented family). This is a wonderful event for all and will add immensely to your Advent season.

Come share in the singing and the holiday treats and, this year for the first time, do a little "holiday shopping": we will collect an offering that will be used to purchase something from the new Outreach International Gift Catalog. You may help buy a goat or some chickens for a family or village. What better way to celebrate the meaning of this season of joy

and giving than to share in festive song, warm fellowship, and generous giving for the world's poor.



Upcoming Events

- ◆ Temple School: Aaronic Ministry **December 5**
 Instructor: Michele McGrath - Hemet-San Jacinto
- ◆ Journey Takers - Ventura **December 5-6**
- ◆ Messiah Sing-a-long - Upland **December 6**
- ◆ Birthday Party for Jesus (K-5) **December 12**
- ◆ *Risky Business* (Buckhorn) **January 15-17, 2010**
 Guest Ministry: John Wight, Carman & Joan Thompson, Carla Long
- ◆ Temple School: Caring Ministries **Jan. 23&30, 2010**
 Instructor: Mary Hampton - Hemet-San Jacinto
- ◆ Junior High Snow Camp **February 5-7, 2010**
- ◆ Senior High Snow Camp **Feb. 19-21, 2010**
- ◆ LEADS - New Testament **Feb. 27-28, 2010**
 Instructors: Tony and Charmaine Chvala-Smith
- ◆ Women's Retreat **March 12-14, 2010**
- ◆ Youth Hunger Challenge **March 26-28, 2010**
- ◆ 2010 World Conference **April 10-17, 2010**
- ◆ Unity in Our Community **April 24, 2010**
- ◆ Buckhorn Work Week **May 3-9, 2010**
- ◆ LEADS - Mission/Evangelism **May 22-23, 2010**
- ◆ SCMC/SWIM Reunion **July 9-16, 2010**