

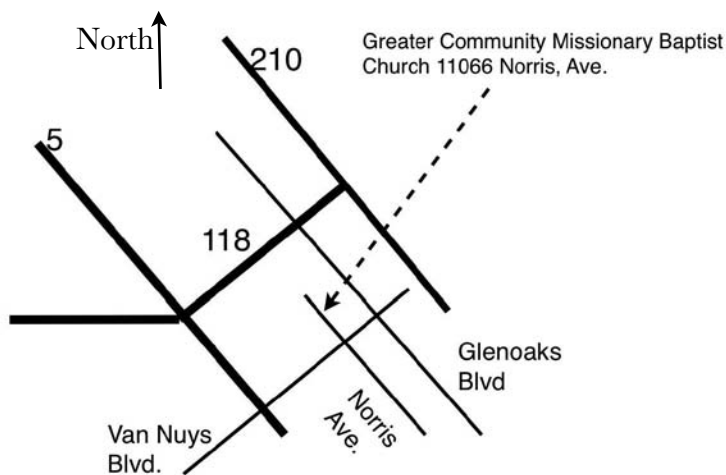
Volume 10 Number 2 December 2009

You Are Witnesses of These Things

Luke 24:48

World Prayer for Christian Unity to be celebrated in the San Fernando Valley
 January 24, 2010 4 PM

The Greater Community
 Missionary Baptist Church
 11066 Norris Avenue, Pacoima, California

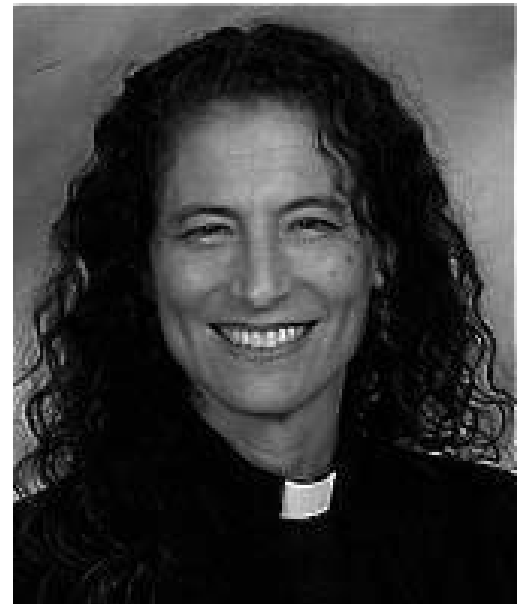


(Not to scale)

From highway 118 take the Glenoaks Blvd. off-ramp, drive south to Van Nuys Blvd., then west to Norris Ave. Turn right.



Rev. Dr. Dudley D. Chatman,
 Host Pastor



Rev. Alexia Salvatierra, Executive Director of Clergy and Laity United For Economic Justice will deliver the message and receive the Boutilier Award for Distinguished Ecumenical Service.

Ecumenical Prayer Service Celebrates Annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

On Sunday January 24, 2010, the Southern California Ecumenical Council, representing 18 denominations and 1200 congregations, will convene an ecumenical celebration of the Word of God for the Los Angeles region.

The service, which will be held as part of the area's observance of the annual Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, will take place at the Greater Community Missionary Baptist Church in Pacoima beginning at 4 PM.

Reverend Alexia Salvatierra, Executive Director of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice, will deliver the message. A choir assembled from several local churches will provide special music.

Begun in 1908, the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is celebrated each year in cities and towns across the country and around the world. This year participants in the service in Pacoima will include United Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, Disciples, Greek and Armenian Orthodox, United Church of Christ, Community of Christ Christians and Roman Catholic.

The theme for this year's observance was chosen by Christians in Scotland to reflect their upcoming centennial celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, considered the start of the modern missionary movement. Representatives of the Pontifical Council for the Promotion of Christian Unity and of the World Council of Churches prepare the international texts. We have modified this year's liturgy to include our focus on the Gospel call for us to care for the newly arrived neighbors in our communities.

The Southern California Ecumenical Council and the Greater Community Missionary Baptist Church sponsor the Pacoima service. The public is invited.



Director's Reflection

As the Southern California Ecumenical Council, it seems appropriate for us to live up to our name and expand our horizons as far as possible.

For this reason a group of us have recently gone south of the border to see how the church community is ministering to those migrants who are hoping to join the vast, complex world of immigrants from dozens of countries who make Southern California their chosen homes. There are many in our California church communities who are helping these migrants deal with the obstacles they have to overcome once they get here--and by sharing with one another across our faith divisions, we can make this ministry even more

effective as we help these folks face the challenges of participating and settling in this land.

From mountains to desert, from city to farm, from wilderness to symphony hall--the land is as diverse as the people. And what a grand mixture we enjoy! For this reason, we take advantage of the wide diversity in our annual Prayer for Christian Unity celebration each January and worship each year in a different city, hosted by a different faith tradition, featuring a different Gospel message. This year on January 24 we will be in Pacoima at the north end of the San Fernando Valley. Our host congregation belongs to the National Baptist Convention, and our preacher is from the Lutheran tradition. It will be a grand gathering across many faith traditions and we look forward to sharing this with as many of those interested in the ecumenical work of our churches as will accept our invitation to join us.

By definition, the councils of churches, and SCEC in particular, are places where we explore the ministries that are being developed to meet new challenges. For this reason we are currently bringing together church leaders to deal with those affected by the "moral injuries" and the social crises which are a result of decades of war. We also continue the study of the ecumenical documents, prodded by theologians steeped in the ancient texts as they collide with modern imperatives. And we are constantly facing the deepening ecological crisis which puts God's creation at more profound risk. These are exciting and challenging days for those in ecumenical work and we are honored to be part of the daily work done by your Southern California Ecumenical Council.
Al Cohen



From Your Board President...

Dear Friends in Christ,

As we approach the beginning of a new year with the Season of Advent, we are reminded of our beginnings as the Church. When the Word became flesh and dwelt among us. When the words of promise as written by the prophets were fulfilled and God's flesh was given in a manger, on a Cross, the Empty Tomb, and in the power of the Resurrection -- a living promise of Jesus' Presence with us always.

As I ponder our last year together, I celebrate how many of you helped in making the Quest of Unity possible in your gifts and talents. It is always a joy to look around the table of SCEC and see in a glimpse that Unity for which our Savior prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane. The joy and excitement of opportunities and possibilities that come to the table are greeted with enthusiasm as can only be attributed to the Holy Spirit among us.

As I look to the coming year, I am excited about our trip to the border and what fruits it will produce. I am excited about our time of togetherness around the Word as we worship together during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. I am excited about what other opportunities that our Lord has in store for us as the Southern California Ecumenical Council in building bridges between the various traditions of Christendom, seeking justice and peace, and walking humbly with our God.

One theologian put it this way: "It's a good time to be Church!" Amen! It's a good time to be SCEC! Won't you join in the Quest for Unity as called by Jesus, our Lord?

Sincerely yours in Christ,
Pastor Kenny A. Bowen, Board President
Ecumenical Representative for Bishop Dean Nelson,
Southwest California Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

CA Interfaith Power and Light Partners with Congregations on Energy Efficiency

There is an interfaith environmental group in town that is just waiting for your call.

California Interfaith Power and Light (CIPL) works with 500 congregations of all faiths in the state of California on energy efficiency, energy reduction, sustainable energies and legislation advocacy. CIPL is one state affiliate of the Interfaith Power and Light movement in 30 states, which works with 10,000 congregations nationwide. Originally conceived as Episcopal Power and Light in the late 1990's, its original mission was to buy sustainable energy from Green Mountain Energy Company. In 2000, it morphed into CIPL with a focus on interfaith efforts to lessen the threat of global warming. Al Cohen, a CIPL Steering Committee member, as well as the Southern California Ecumenical Council were instrumental to its founding.

In its 9 years of existence, CIPL has been a leader in the faith community to put faith principles of creation stewardship into action. It has kept up with major developments in the sectors of energy efficiency and sustainable energies. Its flagship on-line energy efficiency store, Shop IPL, offers congregational facilities and members the latest low-energy use models in lighting, batteries, water-conserving aerators, and other items. In 2009, CIPL put an emphasis on solar workshops, developing an expanded network of solar providers and educators, and revised its Solar Guide for congregations interested in PV installation.

"This is very exciting and worthwhile work to be involved in," says Allis Druffel, CIPL's Southern California Outreach Director. "I can address a group of Episcopalians one day, Unitarians the next, and the next talk theology with

a Jewish rabbi. The solidarity of the interfaith community in this issue is very inspiring." Allis became involved in the issue of creation stewardship primarily because she sees the connection between environmentalism and so many other important issues facing our world today, such as local and global hunger, drought, famine, immigration, civil conflict, and the violent grab for resources. "I was very involved in Fair Trade, civil conflict and hunger issues. So I decided to start working on what I perceive as an 'umbrella issue' for all of these."

A particularly exciting development in the life of CIPL and the whole Interfaith Power and Light movement happened early November. Leaders from 9 major religions were convened at the behest of the United Nations and Prince Philip's Alliance of Religions and Conservation at Windsor Castle. Representatives from Baha'ism, Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, Judaism, Shintoism, Sikhism and Taoism unveiled programs that "could motivate the



Susan Stephenson, the Rev. Sally Bingham receive commendation from Prince Philip and Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General of the UN on behalf of Interfaith Power and Light.

largest civil society movement the world has ever seen," said General Kjørven. The event was attended by The Rev. Canon Sally Bingham, CIPL's president, and Susan Stephenson, CIPL's executive director, who were presented with a commendation from Ban Ki-moon and Prince Philip recognizing the work of Interfaith Power and Light.

This meeting is a reflection of the work that is happening in the global interfaith community, but is also a hint at the massive power that will be unleashed. As the world convenes for climate talks in Copenhagen, and state and national climate legislation goes forward, CIPL congregations will be present to support, advocate and to pray.

To sign up with CIPL, go to its website at www.interfaithpower.org and hit the COVENANT button. To learn more, contact Allis Druffel, the Southern California Outreach Director, at (310) 752-3436, or allis@interfaithpower.org.

The Christian-Muslim Consultative Group's "Standing Together Study Guide"

Members of The CMCG developed the concept for Standing Together in response to a collective realization that there did not appear to be any study guides on Islam and Christianity that were developed by teams of Christians and Muslims working in partnership on the same materials. In that sense, Standing Together represents a unique collaboration that reveals the richness and vibrancy of these faith traditions and teachings. The goals of Standing Together are:

To bring Muslim and Christian neighbors together to come to know one another as people and to break down the dehumanizing stereotypes that keep us apart and fearful of one another. We live in the same neighborhoods; our kids go to school together; we see each other in the supermarket. However, we often don't know each other very well, if at all, since it is rare for Christians and Muslims in the



Jihad Turk and Gwynne Gibord

United States to socialize formally or informally. With Standing Together, the members of The CMCG hope to bridge relationships and bring communities together.

To create opportunities for faithful Muslims and Christians to engage with one another about beliefs and practices. Of course, it is always possible to pick up a book or watch a television program and get the same information; but with Standing Together, face-to-face interactions develop a deeper, first-hand knowledge of the ways in which our faith traditions are both similar and distinctive. Furthermore, in the process of this dialogue, we can clarify our knowledge about our own beliefs and traditions.

To lay the foundation for possible future projects that local groups might choose to do together to enhance the well-being of all our members and communities. The members of The CMCG (see webpage: www.thecmcg.org) have found ways to partner on many projects of common interest beyond the original intent of the organization, and share fellowship with one another as our bonds of friendship deepen. It is our prayer that dialogue group will also experience the abundance of more profound relationships together.

It is also important to know what Standing Together is not. It is not an opportunity to try to convert each other. As

we talk about our own faith tradition, we speak from experience and knowledge, and in a way that honors the experience and knowledge of all the members of the group. We come to the dialogue assuming disagreement on some matters. We must be open to hearing the perspective of the other side. We must listen to the unexpected ways in which we may be more alike than different. We can be renewed in our understanding of what makes us who we are and in the faithfulness of our Creator, Stand Together.

The Standing Together seven-session study guide with an accompanying DVD, both for \$45.00, order form can be downloaded on the website: www.thecmcg.org

The order form with accompanying fee can be sent to: The Christian-Muslim Consultative Group located at 137 North Larchmont Boulevard, Suite 689, LA 90004. Checks are payable to SCIC with CMCG written in the memo line. If you have questions please contact Reverend Canon Dr. Gwynne Guibord at drggiuibord@aol.com or (323) 309-4061.

VETERANS AND FAMILIES: CHURCH CAMPUS COOPERATION

You've seen the banners in numerous communities, naming men and women currently serving in the Armed Forces. They mostly volunteered for, and serve, just one term of enlistment; and they're coming back!

Over 1 3/4 million have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan, and 200,000 of them are women. Over 90,000 Americans have been killed or medically evacuated for wounds, injuries, or illnesses. Claims with the Veterans Administration (VA) for medical conditions arising from these Middle Eastern wars now exceed 450,000, and the VA is behind in processing over 1,000,000 claims.

More difficult to add to these staggering statistics are the incalculable spiritual and psychic costs sustained by these veterans and their families. This damage is less visible, but can still be as crippling and disabling. Most recognize that the government is doing more than before to assist those coming home from war. However, it is also known that the most important factors in helping transition to peace are social support and timely intervention when there are problems.

Congregations and other religion-based groups are uniquely poised to do what government agencies cannot begin to do, i.e., provide the veteran or his/her family members with a sense of community and address the religious and spiritual needs that frequently arise. Many veterans are more willing to speak with a religious figure than anyone else, and many therapists are either uncomfortable with, or prohibited from discussing, matters of faith and belief. Lastly, a one hour appointment with a paid practitioner is a poor substitution for a community of belief.

In combination with others, we seek to raise the level of



awareness of, and response to, the serious needs of some returning veterans. SCEC can lead the way in helping local churches initiate events and activities that directly benefit a growing population of need. In the Spring, SCEC collaborated with Pasadena City College in a program that brought over 250 Southern California educators together. Rev. Cohen recently delivered a prayer for the campus Veterans' Week. This fall, Fuller Theological Seminary and SCEC collaborated to sponsor two gatherings to help local churches learn more about what they can do to ease the pain and difficulties of those returning from war. In January a planning group will meet to further chart our next course. Those wishing to be part of the planning, or to learn about future developments, should contact SCEC at (626) 578-6371 or scecl@scecl.org

Dr. Harold F. Martin, Associate Professor of Psychology
Pasadena City College

Resources for Veteran's Ministry

The following persons have participated in the two meetings and offer their services to augment the pastoral ministries of the congregations:

- The Soldier's Project – see

<www.thesoldiersproject.org> and contact Rev. Willetta Helene at WHMFCC@yahoo.com .

- Psychological Services of Fuller Theological Seminary – see <http://barbaraminer.com> and contact Dr. Barbara Miner at 626-584-5509.

- Community Resource Coordinator Program – program organizing in process – contact Dr. Bill Metzdorf at wcmetzdorf@aol.com .

- Set Free for Veterans – group meetings for veterans at Faith Community Church in West Covina – contact Rev. Kelly DuPee at kdupee@602faith.com .

- Creating A Healing Society – contact Rev. Dr. Ronald Sparks at horus2@met.com

- Boots to Books – academic course at Pasadena City College taught by Associate Professor of Psychology Dr. Harold F. Martin (who is a combat veteran) – for information call (626) 585-7251 or (626) 585-7888.

- We are building a file of helpful books and websites. We are planning to meet again on February 5, 2010. Should you want to be involved with us in encouraging our society to come to grips with this serious challenge contact Rev. Albert Cohen at (626) 578-6371 or scecl@scecl.org

- Acknowledgement is given the Board of United Ministries in Higher Education in Southern California who are funding this project.

Faith and Order Report by Ray Kibler

The Faith and Order Commission meets each month. On average, eight to twelve participate on any given fourth Friday from 11:00 AM up to 2:00 PM. Sixteen persons on the formal roster, including two students, plus the Executive Director, represent but are by no means are limited to SCEC member churches. At the same time, not all SCEC member churches yet participate. Participation is open to all Christians who will agree to our mission statement and aims.

Our mission statement is:

In recognition of our unity in Jesus Christ, the aim of the Commission is to proclaim the oneness of the church of Christ and to call Christians to the goal of visible unity in one faith in order that the world may believe.

Our aims are:

- 1) To promote prayer for unity
- 2) To seek one Eucharistic fellowship, expressed in worship and in common life in Christ
- 3) To receive, study, and respond to Faith and Order documents, and make these available to local communities
- 4) To engage contemporary and fresh expressions of church, e.g. emerging church
- 5) To encourage seminaries and schools of religion to engage in Faith and Order studies
- 6) To provide theological perspectives on concerns and issues raised by the Southern California Ecumenical Council
- 7) To broaden the representation of the Christian community

To this end, our current projects are:

a) to develop and complete a one page “Word to the Churches” titled, “Doing Mission and Evangelism Ecumenically,” to be released early next year. Our conversations on this are lively and fun! We may follow this project with a companion Word on mission and evangelism in our interfaith world as we continue to study texts that address this concern.

b) to study “receptive ecumenism.”

c) to seek to develop, with Fuller Seminary, a conference here in Southern California that will interpret “Edinburgh 2010,” the international theological consultation to be held in the United Kingdom that will be a retrospective of the 1910 Missionary Conference.

We requested and promptly were granted a place at the table of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. (NCCCUSA) Faith and Order Commission. Like our Commission, that Commission includes representatives of NCCCUSA churches, but it also includes many others who do not represent churches but rather agencies such as the American Bible Society or various theological societies. We are the first local/regional ecumenical Council to be

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represented, solely, by intent. I, the Chair of our Commission, participate on our behalf. As such, I was urged also to participate on the Ecumenical Networks Standing Committee representing both our Commission and the NCCCUSA Faith and Order Commission. This Committee's purpose is to link together not only the various components of the NCCCUSA but also the agencies of Local/Regional Ecumenism (LRE) that include especially councils of churches such as our Southern California Ecumenical Council (SCEC).

The November 9-11, 2010 NCCCUSA General Assembly, in New Orleans, will become an ecumenical assessment of a hundred years of modern ecumenism. Kinnamon invites all ecumenical partners, especially state and local councils of churches such as our SCEC, to claim this assessment as their own. He urges our participation in this task and in this next General Assembly. Again and again, Kinnamon stated that the ecumenical movement no longer operates according to a "from the top down" model toward LRE, as was the case in its founding, but rather is carried out by global and national expressions in interdependence and accountability with LRE. In relationship with the NCCCUSA, our Faith and Order Commission might help serve as a model for this.

In conclusion, Kinnamon asks, what is the theology of conciliar life? He invites conversation on this. Our Faith and Order Commission surely will accept his invitation.

SCEC Leaders Cross the Border

"What to do?" This is the question Father John Baptist Scalabrini asked when he pondered the plight of migrants in his native Italy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. He would answer that question by establishing a ministry especially for immigrants and refugees – a ministry that has grown internationally and today includes Casa del Migrantes in Tijuana, Mexico (a ministry of the Scalabrini Fathers).

Five members of the Southern California Ecumenical Council visited Casa del Migrantes among other sites in early December as part of a visit to the U.S.-Mexico border specifically to broaden and deepen understanding of the current immigration issue as it occurs at along our southern boundary. Earlier in 2009, the Council had appointed a task force on immigration to develop a position statement and call for action concerning immigration as it impacts our varied faith traditions in the Los Angeles area.

Our guide for the three-day journey – Bill Bruggeman, director of Transformational World Opportunities (TWO) –

provided an experience complete with visits to two ministries and two cooperatives in Tijuana as well as a visit to the beach where the border wall extends



into the Pacific Ocean. TWO, a ministry of the Pacifica

L to R A. Smith, K. Bowen, T. Read, A Cohen, B Smedbert, Bill Bruggeman in Tijuana Dec. 2009

Synod of Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, specializes in offering various experiential opportunities in the Tijuana-San Diego area. Bill, a retired Lutheran pastor, tailored the visit to our purpose and timeframe, arranging for two overnight stays in the different centers of ministry in Tijuana.

The visit to the border – joined by council members Kenny Bowen, Albert Cohen, Barry Smedberg, Father Alexei Smith, and Terry Read – provides one of the means whereby the task force seeks to gain a balanced understanding of this issue as it is faced by our nation and our denominations. We also plan to visit local area ministries and efforts that engage immigration daily, all in pursuit of "what to do?"

Watch for a detailed report on the border visit and the ongoing work of this task force in the next issue of Together

A resource from the last SCEC board meeting:

Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center, Jerusalem

Wave of Prayer

Each week at 12:00 in Jerusalem Sabeel holds a Communion service that is open to the community. It is a time to join together to celebrate the eucharist, to discuss how the scriptures apply to our lives today, and to pray for the specific needs of this region. Our hope is that in our respective time zones, individuals and groups around the world will pray together at 12:00 on Thursdays, in solidarity with Sabeel in Jerusalem and with "Friends of Sabeel" worldwide. Starting in Australia, passing through Palestine, and continuing on around the world we pray for Peace with Justice and focus on specific issues each week.

Daily prayers are available at: <http://www.sabeel.org>

A gift to SCEC will help keep the ecumenical hope alive. There is precious few lively ecumenical conversations and collective witnesses to the word and work of Jesus Christ. SCEC is alive with this hope and this reality. A gift of \$500 will make it possible for us to publish another issue of Together. Gifts of any size are important. Thank you for considering this invitation. Have a blessed Christmas.