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servicing **SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA ECUMENICAL COUNCIL**

# Together

celebrating Christian unity . . . respecting diversity

**Volume 11 Number 1 April 2010**

## **I CAN SEE** **Luke 4:18**



The year is off to a rousing start with the birth of a national health care movement and the start of serious challenges to impediments to peace in Israel/Palestine. At home and abroad movements

toward a just society are good news to the majority who depend on compassionate public policy.

In addition to my enthusiasm about those two break-throughs, from a personal perspective the first two months of the year were significant because they brought a relief from cataracts and the insertion of new lenses in the middle of my eyes. The sudden change, from one day to the next, feels like a miracle. I can see clearly once again. I wasn't blind, but the world had become blurry and gray. Now everything sparkles with bright colors and the small details which had faded off the screen.

Luke, the physician, was well acquainted with the problem of poor sight and lifts up early in his gospel (4:18) the familiar phrase iterated by Isaiah and reiterated by Jesus proclaiming their commitment to the "recovery of sight to the blind." These well-known words suddenly are filled with real meaning. Scripture is forever fresh because the reader is new every day. One of the great surprises of life at my age is the

realization that exciting new experiences continue to unfold. I can remember as a youngster wishing I could be 20 years old so I could be as confident and settled in my life as those adults around me appeared. The passing years have cleared up that blurry perception, as well. Thankfully I'm still not settled, and I've seen that confidence depends on the situation.

So now the phrase, 'recovery of sight,' takes on new significance and I can use the metaphor in the political and spiritual realms with more awareness of the implications. In these days of political divisiveness, the search for clarity of vision is increasingly important for any hope of reaching a happy consensus. I believe it is possible to see nuances of color and of detail out there in the marketplace, which should encourage us all to discover some common ground and allow society to function effectively.

A wide variety of sources of news and opinion will go a long way to sharpen our vision and allow us to generate our own ideas on any subject. Given that every news outlet has its editorial bias, a solution is to consult a dozen or two dozen sources regularly. Another aspect of the process is to consult the foundation documents on which rest our fundamental values, meaning scripture, prayer and the classic interpreters in the arts and letters. I don't think the goal is line for line agreement, but informed dialog which respects each other's integrity.

May these coming months bring you adventures you haven't imagined and a warm sense of satisfaction that at least you saw what was happening around you.

Rev. Albert G. Cohen, Executive Director  
Southern California Ecumenical Council

## An Appreciation for Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord: Colleague and Friend

One of the stalwart members of the Southern California Ecumenical Council family for the past dozen years has been our colleague and friend Gwynne Guibord. She has faithfully planned and participated in virtually every aspect of the Council's life and action since she became a member of our Board in 1996. The current budget crisis wracking a number of denominations has required Gwynne to relocate her ministry within Southern California and consequently leave the SCEC Board.



The decision is not hers, but the impact falls on us and on her. One of our members wrote this minute for our last Board meeting. "For more than a decade within SCEC we admired her perseverance, discipline and insight in matters of ecumenicity. Furthermore, we admire her sincere love for her brothers and sisters of different faiths within the interreligious communities of Southern California." We will miss you Gwynne. Indeed we will.

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### Renewal L.A.

An event celebrating the solidarity of interfaith action in Creation stewardship

SAVE THE DATE! Sunday, April 25, 2010;  
5:00pm - 7:00pm; St. John's Episcopal Cathedral,  
514 West Adams Boulevard (at Figueroa)  
Los Angeles, 90007

California Interfaith Power and Light and the producers of "Renewal" are coordinating an interfaith event to celebrate Earth Day. "Renewal L.A." will include short statements by leaders of major faith traditions on why creation stewardship is important to their faith tradition, and ways in which our congregations and households can put caring for the Earth into practical action. A special focus will be placed on climate change and environmental justice. It will also include the showing of the critically-acclaimed documentary "Renewal", which highlights eight stories of major faith traditions and their grassroots

actions on creation stewardship. There is plenty of parking and refreshments will be served. "Renewal L.A." will show the power and strengthen the voice of the interfaith environmental community in Southern California. If you are looking for a way to celebrate the 40th anniversary of Earth Day and put your faith into action, this is the event you are looking for. All are invited!

### GIFTS IN 2009

PERSONAL GIFTS: Sally Bingham, Gene Boutilier & Barbara Troxell, Kenny Bowen, Charles Brockway, Frank Brounger, Richard Cain, Elizabeth Cain, Elizabeth Clarke, Kenneth & Barbara Coates, John & Jean Cobb, Albert Cohen & Faith Sand, Areta Crowell, Marie Durlinger, Ken & Katherine Ellis, Charles & Nadine Elswick, Hermann & Louise Engelhardt, Jane Fislser Hoffman, Antonio & Virginia Flores, Ben & Carol Fujita, Ray Gallie, Dagmar Grefe & Julie Porter, Lucy Guernsey & Wayne Halleen, Gary Herbertson, Larry Hixon & Sheryn Scott, Hans Holborn, John & Judith Huber, Katy & Mark Hyman, Henry Johnson, Demetra Kalatzis, Natalie Kennedy, Mary Ellen Kilsby, Ross & Gloria Kinsler, Paul Kittlaus & Janet Vandevender, Carol & John Kostura, Nancy Lafey, Paul & Patty Lance, Hildegard Lindsay, Hedwig & Robert Lodwick, Beatrice Loesch, Ian & Janice MacMillan, Dorothea Malina, Harold & Patty Martin, Ken & Doris McLain, Darrel Meyers, William & Ruth Miller, Peter & Emma Moore-Kochlacs, Mary Anne & Rod Parrott, Linda & Sam Pillsbury, Terry & Linda Read, Tom & Elaine Reed, Rosemary & Herman Reuther, Dick & Jackie Roberto, Cornish Rogers, Rich & Wendy Romano, Jean Schaefer, Rob & Sue Settlege, Don & Linda Shelton, Pat & Keith Shirey, Diane & Paul Shirota, Hallam & Yasuko Shorrocks, Barry & Betty Smedberg, Donald Smith, Alexei Smith, Ron Sparks, Roslyn Towler, Alan & Leilani Weirick, DarEll Weist & Diane Kenney, Sally Welch & David Berkedal, Shelmadine Wellington, Erika Wilson, Rene & Tom Wilson.

AGENCY GIFTS: Church Women United, San Marino Congregational Church UCC, Seaside Community Church UCC at Torrance, United University Church at USC

DENOMINATIONAL GIFTS: American Baptist, Armenian Church, Community of Christ, Disciples of Christ, ELCA Evangelical Lutheran, Episcopal, Presbyterian USA, Society of Friends, United Church of Christ, United Methodist

Help keep the ecumenical conversation alive with a gift to the Southern California Ecumenical Council. See last page.

## Report: Celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity January 2010

This year the Reverend Alexia Salvatierra (right) was the keynote preacher at our annual celebration of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. The ecumenical worship service in January was hosted by the Greater Community Baptist Church in Pacoima and sponsored by the Southern California Ecumenical Council. It lifted up two parallel themes close to the heart of our calling as a council of churches.

Reverend Salvatierra highlighted the Gospel message to care for the stranger in the community. As the Executive Director of Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice for many years she has been a leader in the Southland of efforts to provide pastoral care for immigrants in our neighborhoods. A part of that ministry has been to support changes in government policies which would be more humane in their impact.

The other focus of the event highlighted the international theme of the year, "You are Witnesses of These Things". In June Christians in Scotland are hosting the centennial of the Edinburgh Missionary Conference, which celebrated the outpouring of missionary efforts by the European and North American churches and led to the birth of the modern ecumenical movement.

Our January service was led by Southern California church representatives from a dozen denominations including United Methodist, Baptist, Presbyterian, Episcopal, Lutheran, Greek and Armenian Orthodox, Roman Catholic,



Disciples,  
United Church of Christ and Community of Christ.

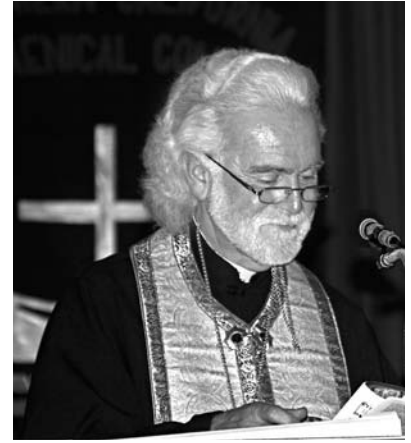
Each year SCEC identifies a person in Southern California whose life and ministry are an example of ecumenical service to the church community. This year the Gene Boutilier Award for Distinguished Ecumenical Service was presented to the Reverend Alexia Salvatierra. Her citation reads in part, "you dramatically challenge, inspire and organize people who want to seriously apply their faith to the ethical challenges of injustice."



The Choir from the Greater Community Missionary Baptist Church in Pacoima



Bread for the Journey at the close of the service. Father John Bakas, St Sophia Greek Orthodox Church and Honoree Alexia Salvatierra, ELCA, Executive Director of CLUE-CA



Prayer offered by Father Alexei Smith.



**Seated** left to right: Rev. Albert Cohen, SCEC; Father Arshag Khatchadourian, Pastor, St. James Armenian Orthodox Church; Rev. Dr. Gwynne Guibord, The Episcopal Church; Father John Bakas, Pastor St. Sophia Greek Orthodox Church; and Rev. Kenny Bowen, Ecumenical Representative for Lutheran Bishop Nelson and President, Southern California Ecumenical Council

**Standing** left to right: Father Alexei Smith, Ecumenical Officer, Roman Catholic Archdiocese, LA; Mrs. Lucy Guernsey, SCEC, Presbyterian Church (USA); Rev. Darrel Meyers, Presbyterian Church (USA); Bishop Dean Nelson, Southwest California Synod, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America; Mr. Terry Read, Executive Minister, Community of Christ; Rev. Larry Hixon, Treasurer, SCEC, Christian Church Disciples of Christ



Left: Rev. Gene Boutlier, representing the National Farm Worker Ministry reading the award honoring Rev. Alexia Salvatierra; The Rev. Albert Cohen, SCEC Director.

## Angels Among Us

There are angels, who walk among us, helping, sharing, shining light  
Precious angels here among us,  
Guide us through, we'll walk with you and everything will be all right.\*

Not long ago I met an angel. Not an otherworldly being, but an angel nonetheless. The kind my friend Edith Wallace sings of in her song, "Angels Among Us"\*. Rosie is her name, short for Rosarita. Rosie is a volunteer with the Scalabrini Fathers in Tijuana, Mexico, where she works seven days a week at the Casa del Migrantes. Every night at the Casa, up to 200 men (the Scalabrinis also run a shelter for women and children) have a bed with clean sheets, a shower, and a hot meal. Each of these men is a migrant, a person in search of a place with a better life than that which they have left behind. Some are looking for their own sake, but most seem to seek something better for their families, their children. Some have just been deported from the United States and have nowhere to go. Some are heading north, chasing the possibility of something better but also knowing the risk of arrest, deportation, or worse. But the Casa del Migrantes exists just for them, to provide a temporary oasis in a desert of lost hope and loneliness. Rosie and the other staff (only two of whom are paid) extend the open arms of hospitality and the warmth of compassion.



They offer not judgment, but a possibility of redemption. Each of the men must abide by the clear and strict rules of conduct for the Casa which includes a specific work assignment.

Members of SCEC's Immigration Task Force recently traveled to the Mexico-U.S. border to better understand the issue of immigration from "the other side." Our group (Reverend Kenny Bowen, Reverend Al Cohen, Barry Smedberg, Father Alexei Smith, and I, all of SCEC) shared a meal with the men - piping hot stew - giving us the opportunity to hear stories of migration, a common thread at the table. I sat next to Sergio, a 34-year-old young man who told me that he had been deported the previous night. When I asked him how long he had been in the U.S., I didn't expect his answer: 32 years. He had been forced to leave behind his parents, siblings, and two daughters. I'm not certain of this but despite my surprise, I don't believe Sergio's story is uncommon.

In the evening and night we spent there, I saw the dejection in the eyes of many of the men. But I also saw a lightness, a gratitude for the gift of shelter in a storm that softened their brittle hearts perhaps in a way that would allow the Spirit of God to enter and open a way for a new path. The presence of the Holy Spirit is no accident. Not only do Rosie and the other members of the Casa staff do their work in the name of Jesus, they also pray together daily for the presence of God's Spirit. And that presence is evident.



Rosie is the kind of person whose generosity of time and spirit restores faith in humanity. But lest you think she is a softie, a "bleeding heart", she is resolute in her commitment to the Casa's mission, managing the well-thought-out organization of the daily routine and commanding a profound respect from each of the hundreds of men who come through every month. Kindness is not about being a pushover.

Hebrews 13:2 admonishes the church: Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by doing that some have entertained angels without knowing it. In the complex and heated issue of immigration, could it be that the solutions lie in the biblical values of hospitality and justice? I know of an angel who is undoubtedly entertaining some of her own kind.

Terry Reed, Executive Minister, Community of Christ and chair of the SCEC Immigration Task Force

\* - from "Angels Among Us", words and music by Edith Wallace; not to be confused with the song of the same name by Alabama

This newsletter is published by the Southern California Ecumenical Council, located at 195 South Hill Avenue, Pasadena, CA, 91106, phone 626-578-6371, fax 626-578-6358, email [sceec1@sceec1.org](mailto:sceec1@sceec1.org). Website [www.sceec1.org](http://www.sceec1.org). Rev Kenny Bowen, President; Rev. Albert G. Cohen, Executive Director; Janet Vandevender and Paul Kittlaus, Editors. Celebration photos by Wayne Halleen

## SCEC a member of UN Council of Organizations

The United Nations Association of the USA established in 1944 a Council of Organizations whose goals are:

- 1) to provide information about the UN to Council members so they can inform their constituencies
- 2) to build community among the organizations
- 3) to promote UN policies and US compliance with them
- 4) to participate in UN activities.

Southern California Regional Council of Organizations (SCRCO) includes SCEC. Suzanne Burger

represents SCEC on this council and recently updated the SCEC Board about current priorities for the regional council. The advocacy agenda includes strengthening the US-UN relationship, advancing human rights and international justice, renewing the UN, building consensus on climate change, achieving the Millennium Development Goals, and promoting arms control and disarmament.

SCRCO provides opportunities for public education and advocates responsible US participation in the UN and other multilateral institutions. This network of organizations strengthens our voice on many issues of common concern, enabling SCEC to be heard on issues of priority to us.

### SCEC OFFICERS – 2010

<i>President</i>	Rev. Kenny Bowen, Lutheran ELCA
<i>Vice President</i>	Rev. Carol Kostura, Community of Christ
<i>Secretary</i>	Fr. Arshag Khatchadourian, Armenian Church
<i>Treasurer</i>	Rev. Larry Hixon, Disciples of Christ
<i>Past President</i>	Mrs. Lucy Guernsey, Presbyterian (USA)
<i>Member of the Executive Committee</i>	
<i>At Large</i>	Mr. Ken Ellis, United Methodist
<i>Week of Prayer</i>	Fr. Alexei Smith, Roman Catholic
<i>Immigration</i>	Mr. Terry Read, Community of Christ
<i>Faith and Order</i>	Rev. Dr. Ray Kibler III, Lutheran ELCA

“SCEC has been a blessing in the life of Los Angeles Religious Communities. May SCEC continue to listen and support the denominations entrusted to her care. May the priestly prayer of our Lord Jesus Christ become a beacon of light for SCEC throughout her centennial journey: ‘Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name—the name you gave me—so that they may be one as we are one.’” John 17:11

Fr. Arshag Khatchadourian, Armenian Church

### Pacific Network for Mission Education

(PNME) and San Francisco Theological Seminary Southern California Extension (SFTS) present a conference on The Changing Face of Mission.

The conference will be on Saturday, April 24, 2010 from 8:30 till 2 at Pasadena Presbyterian Church, 54 North Oakland Avenue (at Colorado and Madison) in Pasadena.

Keynote speaker will be the Rev. Roger Roghan, ELCA, who has served in El Salvador and Egypt. Worship preacher will be the Rev. Dr. Charlene Jin Lee (PCUSA) from SFTS.

Worship, lunch, coffee, fellowship with old friends and new acquaintances, spiritual growth. Cost: \$20.

Contact Barry Smedberg (Smedberg@earthlink.net) or 818-994-4485 for reservations.

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*A gift to SCEC will help keep the ecumenical hope alive. There are 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 an extra issue of “Together”. Gifts of any size are important. Thank you for considering this invitation. Please use enclosed envelope or go to [scecl@scecl.org](mailto:scecl@scecl.org)*