

Congregations as Signal Communities

- Transforming the World

Andrew Bolton



Community of Christ

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The hope of Zion is realized when the vision of Christ is embodied in communities of generosity, justice and peacefulness.

Doctrine and Covenants 163:3a

As a small congregation we cannot do everything.

But if we do just one ministry of compassion well in our neighborhood we are doing something very important indeed. It is the beginning of the transformation of the world.

Anon

Be not daunted by the enormity of the world's grief.

Do justly, now.

Love mercy, now.

Walk humbly, now.

**You are not obligated
to complete the work,
but neither are you free
to abandon it.**

- from the Talmud (based on Micah 6:8)

Introduction

*We Proclaim Jesus Christ and
Promote Communities of Joy, Hope, Love, and Peace*
(Church Mission Statement)

As an apostolic people we are called to establish
“signal communities of justice and peace
that reflect the vision of Christ.”
(Doctrine and Covenants 163: 5a adapted)

From our earliest days as a movement we sought to create signal communities in Fayette, New York, Kirtland, Ohio and Independence, Missouri. We called it “building Zion”—attempting to live out what Jesus called the kingdom of God. Today we might call it living in anticipation of the reign of God on earth by being authentically the community of Christ in a local neighborhood, but with a global awareness.

A signal community is different from the culture and society in which it is present. It honors the worth of each person and is held together by voluntary commitment in sacred covenant. In covenant we embrace each other and the Divine. All are called to participate in being a signal community. A signal community is also in harmony with nature, for creation is sacred also.

God calls us to participate in a signal community, and we participate through faith, repentance and baptism. We are shaped in a signal community in worship and fellowship, particularly as we meet around the communion table. As we share bread and grape juice we evaluate our own commitment to the Divine and each other, as we remember the Hebrew story of slaves being freed, and the Nazarene who was unjustly executed by the Romans. We go out to create genuine, non-violent community that embraces economic justice, honors all persons equally, and respects creation. We begin in our familiar neighborhoods, work places, and schools.

The purpose of this resource is, firstly, to help a congregation on its journey to becoming a signal community. Secondly, to help a congregation transform its neighborhood through holistic mission that includes compassionate ministries, discipleship formation, and working for peace and justice. Both can happen at the same time.

This resource is informed by and draws upon the recently completed text by the First Presidency “We Share Identity, Mission, Message and Beliefs” (December 2008). Particularly helpful are the concepts of Vision of “Restoring God’s Shalom”, the Journey of Transformation (Worship, Formation, and Praxis), and the new “Enduring Principles” statement.

I pray you will be blessed in your journey of following Jesus so that together you are a signal community.

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What is a Signal Community?

A signal community is just four simple things:

- (i) *Vision*
- (ii) *Worship*
- (iii) *Formation*
- (iii) *Action*

We will examine each of these in turn.

1. Vision for a Signal Community

The vision necessary for forming a signal community is God's vision for a saved, redeemed world where no child anywhere goes to bed hungry, cold or afraid. God's vision is a world where God's peace is fully restored on earth. God's dream of a world at peace, with no more hunger or violence, is what inspired Jesus, and in turn has inspired the building of the Temple dedicated to the pursuit of peace in Independence, MO, USA. Our name, Community of Christ, is our identity and calling. As a Christ-centered community, our mission is to promote communities that signal the Peaceful Reign of God on Earth (the cause of Zion). In forming signal communities we are inspired by God's vision as expressed in the life, teachings, death and resurrection of Jesus. Key ideas here include the following:

1.1 We Share in the Peace of Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6). Jesus promised his first disciples peace and makes that same promise with us today:

“Peace I leave with you;
My peace I give to you.

I do not give as the world gives.
Do not let your hearts be troubled,
And do not let them be afraid.”
(John 14:27 NRSV)

This gift of peace is the presence of the Holy Spirit which comes as we form a relationship with Jesus. We then extend this relationship with others who are hungry, desperate for this deep peace that comes through Jesus Christ.

The Letter to the Ephesians expresses how Christ's atonement has created peace between us:

For Christ is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.
(Ephesians 2:14 NSRV)

What does peace really mean for Jesus? The word Jesus used for peace is the Hebrew/Aramaic word *Shalom*. This is a richer, fuller word than the word peace in English. Peace in English usually means either tranquility or the absence of war or conflict. However, *shalom* means, in addition, health, no poverty, right relationships, justice, and authentic community. The inclusion of justice in the definition of *shalom* is very important. Whenever the worth of persons is violated then there is injustice. Thus the Bible proclaims justice for the poor, the widow, the orphan and the stranger. Biblical scholar Chris Marshall states that one way or another, justice is to be found over 1,000 times in the Bible.¹ There is no peace without justice. So when Jesus promises us *shalom*, it is a big peace, a full peace, an everything-is-right peace.

The Hebrew word *shalom* is found 200 times in the Old Testament.² There are vivid pictures of *shalom* drawn by the writers of the Old Testament – the story of a peaceful, harmonious, and good creation (Genesis 1); beating swords into plough shares and learning war no more (Isaiah 2:2-4); the coming of the Messiah bringing economic justice; and a world where wolf and lamb and child live in peace and violence has ended (Isaiah 11). It has been said that to love *shalom* and pursue it is the heart of Judaism.³ The New Testament was written in Greek and the word used to translate *shalom* is *eirēnē*. *Eirēnē* is found 100 times in the New Testament and in every New Testament gospel and letter except 1 John.⁴ The very nature of God is clearly seen as peace in the New Testament. Peace is the mission of Jesus.⁵ For Jesus, there is no peace or *shalom* without economic justice and dignity for the poor and the outsider. There are around thirty examples of teaching against retaliation and vengeance in the New Testament.⁶ Peace, as *shalom*, is a central message of the Bible.

In conclusion consider this passage of scripture:

Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God's *shalom*, invites all people to come and receive divine peace in the midst of the difficult questions and struggles of life. Follow Christ in the way that leads to God's peace and discover the blessings of all of the dimensions of salvation.
(Doctrine and Covenants 163:2a)

Christ's peace is heaven on earth; it is the condition of Zion.

1.2 Imagine the Reign of God on Earth – Zion

In a fallen world with great poverty, violence, unfaithfulness and suffering, there are rich biblical images of hope, of a better way to live, of the sacred breaking into human history.

God's purposes in creation are for good, for blessing. The opening chapter of Genesis summarizes each day of creation with the sentence "And God saw that it was good." Five times for five days of creation this is written. Then on the sixth day humans, male and female, are equally created in the image of God and the account ends "it was very good." (Genesis 1:31). It is thus possible to speak of original blessing in the great story of biblical creation.

Although violence, poverty and pain in childbirth come with the Fall, God does not forsake a creation and humanity so tenderly crafted. God continually reaches out after us.

God loves the Hebrew people in Egypt and does not abandon them in slavery. The *Torah* (Law/Teaching) given on Mount Sinai through Moses includes the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). The *Torah* functions as a new constitution for a new people who are to be different. The rights of the poor and the stranger in particular are to be protected. Prophets like Amos and Isaiah and speak passionately and furiously for justice when the people of Israel stray and betray their calling to be a righteous people. Justice shall indeed roll down like waters (Amos 5:24). With searing judgment also comes hope-filled promise: swords shall be beaten into ploughshares and war shall be no more (Isaiah 2:2-4). The wolf shall lie down with the lamb and a little child shall lead them and no one shall hurt or destroy on God's holy mountain (Isaiah 11:6-9). The church seal has been visual theology for us in Community of Christ since 1874, inspiring our imagination with hope of heaven on earth through the coming of the Messiah.



Our name, Community of Christ, beckons us to follow and be shaped by Jesus and so we turn to the New Testament. According to Mark, the earliest written gospel, Jesus began his public ministry with these words:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came to Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God, and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news."
(Mark 1:14-15 NRSV)

John is arrested. There is danger, but in this crisis Jesus picks up the prophetic baton and declares that despite the cruelty and power of the Roman empire the kingdom of God is coming, and it is good news.

In the opening pages of the New Testament one quickly comes to the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). At the heart of the Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer, in the middle of which are these words:

Your kingdom come,
Your will be done,
On earth as it is in heaven.
(Matthew 6:33 NRSV)

There is no clearer or simpler way of stating the coming reign of God. Similarly, in Luke Jesus is portrayed beginning his public ministry by reading in the Nazareth synagogue from the scroll of Isaiah:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19 NRSV cf Isaiah 61: 1-2/58:6)

The Holy Spirit is here inseparably connected with good news for the poor, release of the captives and freedom for the oppressed. Looking back, this passage from Isaiah has ancient echoes of the “burning bush” and Moses’ call to free the slaves from Egypt. This is another occasion of Spirit calling to liberate suffering humanity from economic, political and social oppression. Looking forward to Acts 2, also written by the author of Luke, we have Pentecost. The Holy Spirit comes in power to the early church community and people from different lands understand the disciples praising God in their own language. Peter challenges the crowd with their participation in the crucifixion of Jesus. 3,000 repent and ask to be baptized. The chapter concludes with all the believers sharing all things in common. This time the Spirit of the Lord is upon a *people* to be good news to the poor.

Holy Spirit is inseparably connected with Holy Justice for the poor. Spiritual and material life come into right alignment together and there is wholeness and rightness in the coming kingdom of God.

It is the story of the early church in Acts 2 that, more than any other, shaped the beginnings of the Community of Christ in the early 1830s. Acts 2 inspires and is the model for IV Nephi, the climax of the Book of Mormon story, where the people enjoy peace and justice lasting 200 years. For 200 years “Zion community” is normal Christianity.⁷

In December 1830 this now famous definition of Zion was given in Fayette, New York:

And the Lord called his people Zion,
Because they were of one heart
And one mind, and dwelt in righteousness;
And there was no poor among them;
and Enoch continued his preaching in
righteousness unto the people of God.
(Doctrine and Covenants 36:2h-i)

This is another way of summarizing Acts 2.

Community is thus defined in our beginnings as a spiritual condition with no one in poverty. Zion is justice for the poor. It is what the Hebrews call *Shalom* – a wholistic peace in community with right relations between all and harmony with nature. It is this vision of Zion, the kingdom, the Reign of God, that we hunger for.

In the presence of the Resurrected One we are enabled to sense that no evil, injustice or violence will have the last word. God's love will. Goodness will. A world safe for every little boy and every little girl, of every race, is yet possible. By God's grace working through us it shall be. We begin in our local neighborhood.

1.3 God Creates Sacred Space Through Us

The recognition of sacred space is also part of the biblical story. Sacred space is recognized in the opening chapter of Genesis, as the Spirit of God, the Divine Wind, moves over the face of the waters, resulting in a creation that is good, good, very good. In the encounter with God in the burning bush story, Moses is commanded to take off his shoes, for he is standing on holy ground and does not know it. His holy task is to be an instrument of God in freeing the Hebrew slaves from captivity (Exodus 3:1-10). The Ark of the Covenant and then the Temple also exemplified sacred space among the people of Israel.

The early Latter Day Saints were also a Temple-building people. Kirtland Temple in Ohio was dedicated in 1836 and remains, in its singular beauty, sacred space to many today as they encounter the Spirit of God there. The Temple built in 1993 in Independence is dedicated to the pursuit of peace, reconciliation, and healing of the spirit.

The purpose of a sacred Temple dedicated to the pursuit of peace is to remind us that followers of Jesus are a holy people, who, as a *living* temple (II Corinthians 6:16), are dedicated to the pursuit of Christ's peace. There are echoes of this concept in the Letter to the Ephesians in the New Testament:

So [Jesus] came and proclaimed peace to you who were far off and peace to those who were near; for through him both of us have access in one Spirit to the Father. So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are citizens with the saints and also members of the household of God, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus himself as the cornerstone. In [Jesus] the whole structure is joined together and grows into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are built together spiritually into a dwelling place for God.
(Ephesians 2:17-22 NRSV)

For members of the Community of Christ, the Temple in Independence is sacred space to create a holy people, disciples who follow Jesus in creating peace. As already mentioned the Temple is dedicated to the pursuit of peace, reconciliation and healing of the spirit. But this is not all. The Temple is also for the strengthening of faith and preparation for witness (Doctrine and Covenants 156:5a-b). The pursuit of peace is inseparable from witness and discipleship formation.

The task of the Temple as sacred space is to inspire every believer, every congregation, every gathering of God's people around the world, to be dedicated to the pursuit of peace, witness and discipleship formation.

Finally, sacred space is safe space, sanctuary for the bruised, the broken hearted and the oppressed. It is where struggling humans, no matter what they have done, or what has happened to them, find in our midst the tender welcome and compassion of Jesus, and the safety of God's abundant grace.

1.4 We Act Believing a Few Can Make a Difference

Be courageous and visionary, believing in the power of just a few vibrant witnesses to transform the world...

Understand that the road to transformation is the path of the disciple.

Doctrine and Covenants 161:3c-d

Never doubt
that a small group
of thoughtful committed people
can make a difference.
Indeed it is the only thing
that ever has.

Margaret Mead, Anthropologist⁸

A few can make all the difference in the world. We are not overwhelmed by the enormity of our task and that there are so few to help. We remember that the Jesus-movement began with just a few. Jesus, in telling the parable of the mustard seed, speaks of how the smallest seed can become a huge tree.

Just after the USA had entered World War I in the fall of 1917, Elbert A. Smith, a member of the First Presidency, was inspired to say the following at a communion service in Lamoni, Iowa:

Again, at this time, you are admonished that you be not unduly concerned because you are few in number as compared with the world. That is not your concern, but be concerned only that your righteousness shall be very great. For a few righteous [people] can accomplish very much, and a little leaven leaveneth a great lump.⁹

Mustard seed, yeast, a righteous few—all can transform the world. But to do this we must be as different from the world as a seed is from soil and yeast is from dough. The words that are translated righteousness in the Bible, both in Hebrew and Greek, can also be translated as justice.¹⁰ We must be a people who hunger and thirst for righteousness in our lives and for justice in our world. We must be as passionate as Jesus in this task. Then even the smallest congregation can share in the joy of transforming the world by acting locally in the neighborhood.

2. Worship

2.1 We Worship Rightly

a) We Worship the God of Peace

The very nature of God is peace.¹¹ Jesus embodies God's *shalom*.¹² Jesus was understood by the early Christians as the Prince of Peace (Isaiah 9:6) who taught "Blessed are the peace-makers." (Matthew 5:9 NRSV). We are drawn by the Holy Spirit to love and adore the God of Peace (Isaiah 55:12) To worship the God fully revealed in Jesus is to be committed to making peace on earth.

b) We Engage in Authentic worship

A doubting Thomas touches the reality of the resurrected Jesus and exclaims, “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28). Thomas worships.

Worship flows from encounter with the Divine.

Moses experienced the Divine in the burning bush and was called by name. He was commanded to take off his shoes for he was standing on holy ground. He was afraid. Then he was called to go to Pharaoh and bring God’s people out of slavery, a job he was reluctant to take. But he went.

Isaiah’s calling as a prophet is told dramatically in this way:

In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the LORD sitting on a throne, high and lofty; and the hem of his robe filled the temple. Seraphs were in attendance above him; each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And one called to another and said: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory." The pivots on the thresholds shook at the voices of those who called, and the house filled with smoke.

And I said: "Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts!" Then one of the seraphs flew to me, holding a live coal that had been taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. The seraph touched my mouth with it and said: "Now that this has touched your lips, your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out." Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for us?" And I said, "Here am I; send me!" (Isaiah 6:1-8 NRSV)

Here encounter with the holiness of God creates an awareness of personal and societal sin – Isaiah confesses that he is “a man of unclean lips who lives among a people also of unclean lips.” Forgiveness is given and then Isaiah is called and sent to be a partner in God’s purposes. In this encounter we can see the following model for worship:

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Praise | Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory |
| Confession/repentance | Woe is me! I am lost, for I am a man of unclean lips, and I live among a people of unclean lips; |
| Grace/forgiveness | yet my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts! /Your guilt has departed and your sin is blotted out. |
| Proclamation | Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? |
| Commitment | Here am I; send me! |

If any element is missed then worship is not fully authentic or transforming. The Hebrew prophets spoke fiercely about authentic worship. Piety and spirituality must not be separated from justice making. Micah proclaimed:

[God] has told you, O mortal, what is good;
and what does the LORD require of you
but to do justice, and to love kindness,
and to walk humbly with your God? (Micah 6:8 NRSV)

Amos speaks against false piety as follows:

I hate, I despise your festivals,
and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.
Even though you offer me your burnt offerings,
I will not accept them;
and the offerings of well-being of your fatted animals
I will not look upon.
Take away from me the noise of your songs;
I will not listen to the melody of your harps.
But let justice roll down like waters,
and righteousness like an ever flowing stream. (Amos 5:21-24 NRSV)

Jesus began his ministry by reading these words from the scroll of Isaiah in his home synagogue in Nazareth:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To let the oppressed go free,
To proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. (Luke 4:18-19 NRSV)

This act of proclamation in synagogue worship by Jesus shows how pursuing justice cannot be separated from authentic spirituality. The Holy Spirit empowers us without ambiguity to be good news to the poor etc. There is another side to this. On our own we will burn out. Service, witness and pursuing peace and justice is demanding and can be full of disappointments and setbacks. In our own strength we will not be able to complete or fulfill our calling. Worship enables us to return to the presence of the Holy to be healed, renewed and empowered onwards in mission.

c) We Recognize the Problem of Idolatry

The word 'worship' is derived from the Old English word *weorthscipe* which means to ascribe worth, reverence, respect. *What* we worship, revere or respect is the central issue of our lives. Idolatry is reducing God to a thing – a stone or wooden idol. God is so awesomely more. Idolatry is also the act of cheapening humans, reducing a person to a number or statistic, an object or a thing. Only true worship of God truly ennobles all humans and all life. To worship God truly is also to "worship" or value others equally.

The last hundred years alone have shown the terrible fruits of false worship. Worship of the nation results in the degradation of outsiders who can be bombed or shot or exploited. Worship of power distorts governmental budgets by military expenditure rather than expenditure for schools, poverty, or health. Worship of one race results in discrimination,

persecution and even genocide of other races as happened in the Holocaust. Worship of money and wealth impoverishes others as we step on them to get what we want. Worship as consumers finds us in supermarkets and shopping malls, the cathedrals of capitalism, caring nothing about the migrant that picked the fruit for almost nothing, the sweat shop workers that produced the fine clothes, or the environmental degradation that it took to make the product or get it to the shelves.

Worship is discerning what matters most, what truly is important. (Doctrine and Covenants 163:11b).

d) Worship Changes Us So We Can Change the World

Jesus is the way, the truth and the life because he embodies the true Spirit of worship. This is expressed, for instance, in healing, speaking up for the poor, loving his enemies or hugging and blessing a child. Nowhere does Jesus sacrifice another because of his own ego or because of the ego of others. To intentionally honor and serve each human we meet is to engage in authentic worship of God.

Authentic worship in our congregations begins before the service starts – in the quality of our welcome to all, no matter race, or age, or culture, or social class or gender and no matter what they may have done. Worship continues in the retelling of the great stories of God’s love found in the scriptures. The Herald House book *Worship Resources* follows the Revised Common Lectionary and leads us in a three-year cycle through the Bible systematically and comprehensively. In worship we also hear contemporary testimony and inspired preaching and sing wonderful hymns to bring us closer to this great love. We open ourselves to the needs of others in the presence of God’s great love. That is in part the role of preaching. The offering is an opportunity to make a “down payment” on our commitment to love others with all our hearts, strength and mind. The sacraments help us personally sense God’s great love at key decisions and times in our lives, and perceive that each sacrament has something to say about peace and justice. Authentic worship is getting our priorities, our values, right. This saves us from idolatries that abuse others and ourselves. True worship liberates us to see the worth of all persons, including ourselves, in the sight of God.

In authentic worship we are changed and want to change the world. So we leave the gathering to go into the world to witness and serve.

3. Formation

What is formation? Christian formation is becoming disciples of Jesus in community for the sake of the world. It is a process, inspired by the Holy Spirit and with the help of others, to ‘guide our feed into the way of peace.’ (Luke 1:79 NRSV) It is a journey where we willingly allow ourselves to be made into disciples of Jesus. The first step is covenant.

3.1 We Covenant Together

God has gifted human beings with the ability to make choices. Human choices make a difference.¹³ Sensing God's call we voluntarily choose to make an agreement or covenant to both follow Jesus and engage together in the cause of Zion or the reign of God on earth.

This covenant is voluntary, a freely chosen commitment made in baptism and renewed in every communion service. It is out of our covenant with God and each other that we form community, and become Community of Christ. This choice, this commitment sets us on a new journey of hope filled possibilities for ourselves and others.

3.2 We Learn Together

Disciple means student or apprentice. We are students of Jesus, apprenticed to him as the master craftsman of kingdom living. It is very important to begin by getting to know Jesus through studying the gospels including giving particular attention to the Sermon on the Mount. Regular bible study is transforming of understanding and attitudes. Regular congregational worship is important. Participation in camps and reunions are life changing experiences and a foretaste of heaven on earth.

In the fellowship of Community of Christ we also learn the following values or "Enduring Principles" (see APPENDIX pages 64-65) and allow them to shape us from the inside out:

a) We become aware of the 'Sacredness of Creation'

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 and Covenants 163:4b)

Creation is a wonder. Life is a sacred mystery for which we give thanks and seek to respect in other living things. Yet humans are on the edge of catastrophe through climate change, the threat of nuclear weapons, consumerism and so on. The present crisis cannot be solved by one nation. It will take all of us in the human family working together.

b) We begin to advocate for the 'Worth of All Humans'

Humans, male and female, according to the first chapter of Genesis, are created in God's image. (Genesis 1:27) The image of God is in all of us, no matter how hidden or marred. There is a spark of the sacred in all of us.

The central story of Christ's life, teaching, crucifixion and resurrection is summarized and reaffirmed in a revelation given in the first days of the Latter Day Saint movement. Restated in modern English it reads as follows:

‘Remember the worth of persons is great in the sight of God;
for I, the Lord your Redeemer suffered death in the flesh;
wherefore I, God, suffered the pain of all,
that all might repent and come to me.
And I, God, have risen again from the dead,
that I might bring all to me on conditions of repentance.
And how great is my joy in the person that repents.
Therefore you are called to cry repentance to this people.’
(D & C 16: 3c-e, English modernized)

God in Christ has a passion for restoring the lost worth of all persons. We are called to participate in that task. Humans are sacred. There are no exceptions. No one is beyond the great redeeming love of God. We can exclude no one for God does not.

In the biblical and also in the Community of Christ tradition there is especial concern for the poor. The latest guidance to the church includes the following:

God, the Eternal Creator, weeps for the poor, displaced, mistreated, and diseased of the world because of their unnecessary suffering. Such conditions are not God’s will. Open your ears to hear the pleading of mothers and fathers in all nations who desperately seek a future of hope for their children. Do not turn away from them. For in their welfare resides your welfare. (Doctrine and Covenants 163:4a)

c) We practice ‘All Are Called’

All are called according to the gifts of God unto them; and to the intent that all may labor together, let him that laboreth in the ministry and him that toileth in the affairs of the men of business and of work labor together with God for the accomplishment of the work intrusted to all. (Doctrine and Covenants 119:8b)

All are called, the simple and the clever, the learned and the uneducated, black, brown or white, or any shade in between, all ethnicities, successful business people and the poor, men and women, old and young. All are called.

We are called to be part of a growing social movement increasing in numbers and capacity to change the world. Everyone is needed, and everyone can do something of significance in the cause of transforming the world.

d) We learn to ‘Pursue Peace (Shalom)’

Depart from evil, and do good;
Seek peace and pursue it. (Psalm 34:14 NRSV)

The temple shall be dedicated to the pursuit of peace. It shall be for reconciliation and for healing of the spirit... inspired by the life and witness of the Redeemer of the world. (Doctrine and Covenants 156:5a,e)

The ‘pursuit of peace’ is a very old biblical concept – perhaps 3000 years old. The phrase is only found once in the Old Testament but is found four times in the New Testament (2 Tim. 2:22; 1 Pet. 3:11; Heb. 12:14; Rom. 14:19). In Doctrine and Covenants 156, the phrase

‘pursuit of peace’ is given new life and new attention. Rabbis have noted that out of the 313 Jewish commandments only two have the language “pursue” in them. One is ‘Seek peace and pursue it’ (Psalm 34:14) and the other is ‘Justice, and only justice, you shall pursue’ (Deuteronomy 16:20). The use of “pursue” in both these commandments raises them above the others in importance. In a world where people pursue violence and greed, God is calling a people to pursue peace and justice. This means we have to train and become skilled in the ways of justice and peace.

e) We experience ‘Grace and Generosity’

Generously share the invitation, ministries, and sacraments through which people can encounter the Living Christ who heals and reconciles through redemptive relationships in sacred community. (Doctrine and Covenants 163:2b)

Faithful disciples respond to an increasing awareness of the abundant generosity of God by sharing according to the desires of their hearts; not by commandment or constraint. Break free of the shackles of conventional culture that mainly promote self-serving interests. Give generously according to your true capacity. Eternal joy and peace await those who grow in the grace of generosity that flows from compassionate hearts without thought of return. Could it be otherwise in the domain of God, who eternally gives all for the sake of creation? (Doctrine and Covenants 163:9)

To share generously is to respond to the grace of God and feel compelled to extend that grace to others. We share generously when we invite others into the peace of Jesus Christ, through ministry and the sacraments and by funding the mission of the church locally and world wide. We give of our time, our giftedness, and our money in the cause of Zion, the mission of Jesus. God’s people are not stingy because God is not stingy!

Discussion Questions

1. When have you experienced the peace of Jesus Christ? What happened?
2. When did you first hear the call of the kingdom of God, Zion? How does this inspire your imagination? How does having an alternative vision enable us to address with courage the injustice and violence in our neighborhoods around us and in the world?
3. To what extent do you believe that a few can make a difference? What needs to happen so a few can indeed make a difference?
4. Using the Isaiah model of worship on pages 11-12 what are the strengths and weaknesses of worship in your congregation? How has worship empowered you in service, witness and peace and justice making?
5. What have been significant moments of ‘formation’ for you as a follower of Jesus? What are growth steps ahead of you in the journey of discipleship?
6. Review the Enduring Principles on pages 64-65. Which of the enduring principles are very evident in your congregation? Which still need to be more fully embodied?

4. Action that we take as a Signal Community

- MISSION AS JESUS DID MISSION

Jesus took action. Jesus had a mission to pursue. He sent his first disciples on mission. The Holy Spirit led the early church in mission. Today, as signal communities we pursue the mission of Jesus to bring compassion, to bring the opportunity of personal change, and to change the systems that foster violence, oppression and threaten the environment.

The mission of Jesus can be summarized as follows:



Compassionate Ministries - feed the hungry, heal the sick, be with the grieving
(Matt. 15:32, Matt. 14:14, Luke 7:13)

Witnessing/Discipleship - witness of Jesus and the worth of all persons,
make disciples and baptize and grow the movement
(Luke 4:18, Mark 1:17, Matthew 28:19-20)

Work for Peace and Justice - to proclaim good news to the poor, to liberate the
captives, to set at liberty the bruised
and oppressed (Luke 4:18-19)

The mission of the Community of Christ is the mission of Jesus – to share, in word and deed, the whole gospel of Jesus for all human needs spiritual, physical, social and material. The mission of Jesus and hence the church is holistic evangelism.

Therefore, to be an effective follower of Jesus means understanding that Jesus had a strategy for transforming the world, and then to participate in that strategy. Jesus always began by making people whole and then seeking to heal and mend the world, beginning with the village. Jesus' ministry of transformation is rooted in compassion. This compassion

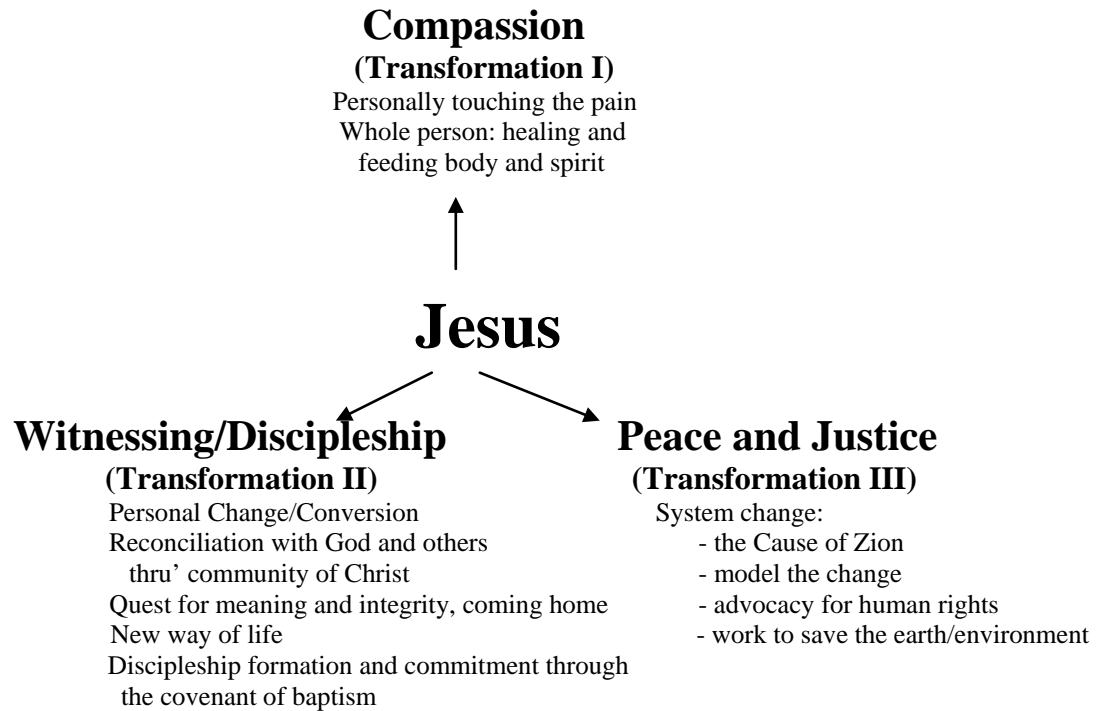
reaches out to touch people where they are hurting, to call them to discipleship, and together to transform the world from injustice and violence to the reign of God.

As hate unleashes hate and anger triggers anger, so love releases the power to love. As love releases the power to love so compassion releases the power to be compassionate.

To understand that Jesus' strategy for mission is rooted above all in compassion is to see that hurting individuals are important. People in pain should not be ignored or abandoned. Discipleship formation is about us realizing our full worth and creating the capacity in us for sustained compassion toward others. And if peace and justice ministries are also rooted in compassion then we will act to save and redeem, not to destroy or violate others, as we seek the just transformation of institutions and systems.

Jesus' integrated model of mission can be developed further as follows:

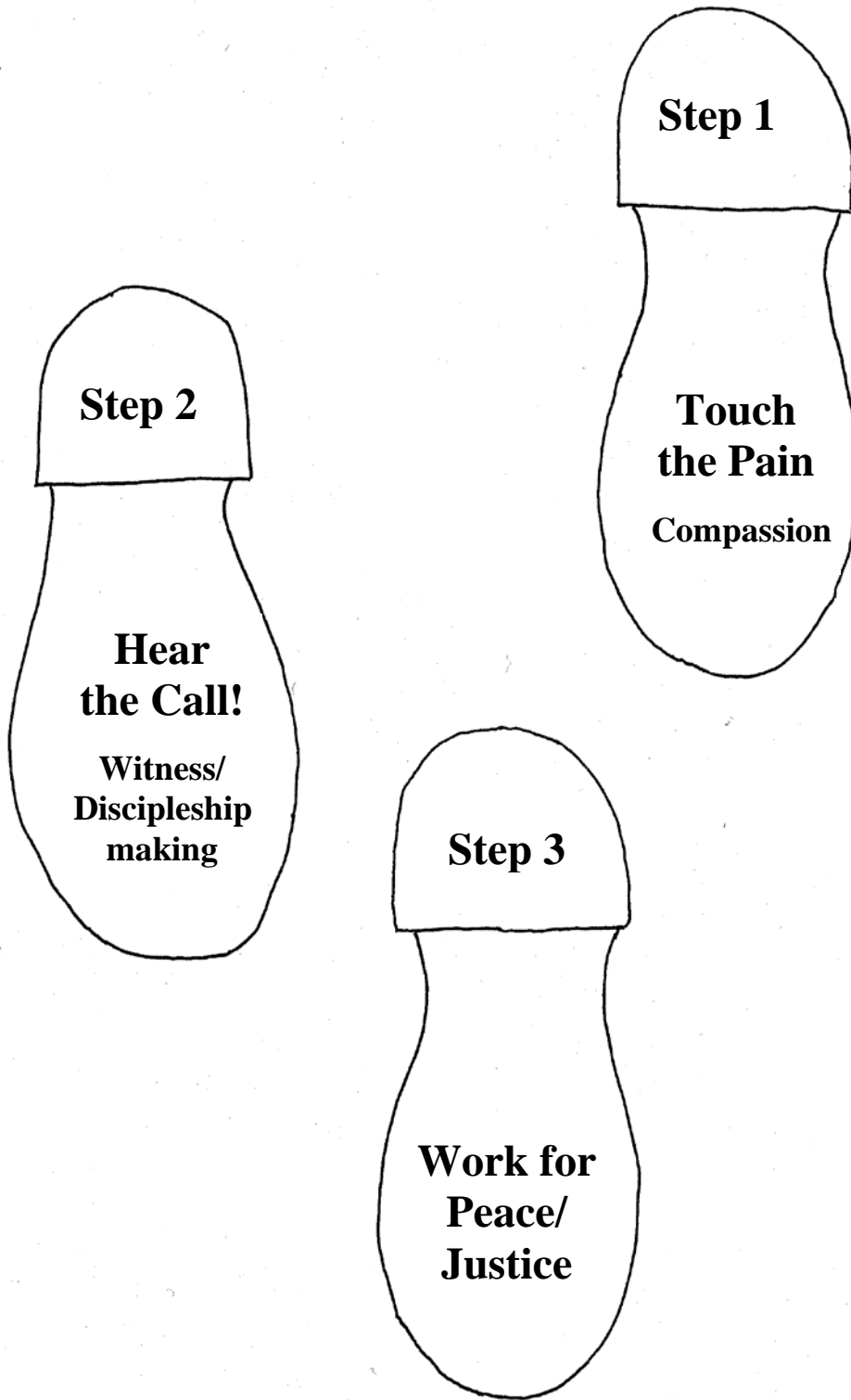
Compassion for the whole person: body, spirit, relationships



In this model, Jesus is the center, for we are describing the mission of Jesus. The mission of Jesus is also about reclaiming the worth of all persons. It is also illuminating to put the worth of all persons at the center of this model.

Another way of showing this is to consider this as three action steps to transform the world. We can describe this as follows on the next page:

Three Action Steps to Transform the World



Each of these steps will now be considered in turn as key aspects of the holistic mission of Jesus. It is important to think of them more as steps of a dance, back and forth, than simply a journey.

REVIEW EXERCISE

What is your congregation doing currently in terms of:

| Compassionate Ministries | Evangelism/ Discipleship Formation | Peace and Justice Ministries |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | |

1. What are the strengths of your congregation?

2. What areas of ministry does your congregation need to consider implementing?

3. What happens if your congregation's mission is lacking one or more of the above dimensions (compassion, witness/discipleship, peace and justice)?

Action Step 1: Compassion to Touch the Pain

Compassion

Transformation 1

Touching the pain.
Charity as loving outreach.
Relief in the present crisis.
Human caring touch.

Ministries

Food Bank
Soup kitchens
Clothing centers
Personal Counseling

Visiting

- shut ins
- elderly
- prisoners

Homeless shelters

Women's refuge

Voluntary service

- Tutoring children
- Taking elderly shopping etc
- Youth programs
- Meals on wheels

Experience of grace – unconditional loving kindness

"I am loved, respected, a person of worth."

MISSION AS JESUS DID MISSION: **Compassionate Ministries**



I have compassion for the crowd, because they have been with me now for three days and have nothing to eat... (Matthew 15:32 NRSV)

When [Jesus] went ashore, he saw a great crowd; and he had compassion for them and cured their sick. (Matthew 14:14 NRSV)

[Widow whose son had died] When Jesus saw her, he had compassion for her and said to her, "Do not weep." (Luke 7:13 NRSV)

The astonishing thing about Jesus is his compassion for the hungry, the sick, and the grieving. Jesus gently touched people where they were hurting. Those so touched by Jesus found new dignity as persons of worth. This sets in motion the first step of transformation. Being loved releases the power to love others. Experiencing compassion from another releases the capacity to be compassionate towards others.

Everything Jesus does is rooted in compassion: the healing touch, the call to become a disciple, the challenge to change unjust systems. If discipleship-making is not rooted in witnessing compassion it becomes alienating and legalistic. If peace and justice ministries are not rooted in a compassion that includes enemies, then it becomes violent and a betrayal of the reign of God. Compassion, always compassion.

We are a volunteer "lay" movement rather than a paid, clergy-led movement. As ministers and disciples we are in society along side others as neighbors, workmates, and students. Every day we have the opportunity to be ministers and to gently touch the hurting places in the lives of others. Our own experiences of hurt and healing become means by which we can listen with empathy to others.

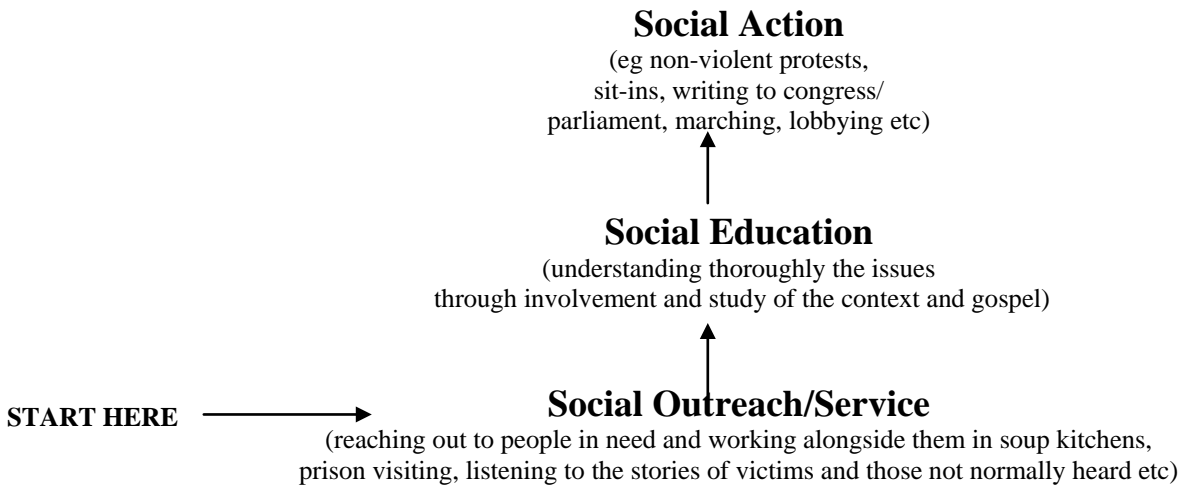
As a congregation we can reach out to others who are hurting. As a small congregation we cannot do everything. But if we do just one ministry of compassion well in our neighborhood we are doing something very important indeed. It is the beginning of the transformation of the world.

Our compassionate ministry is without strings. It is an act of unconditional love. However, some of those touched and who have found healing will want to join with us. As they sense their calling we should welcome them with open arms. In compassionate ministry we are offering a long term mutual relationship. And at the right time this includes an invitation into closer fellowship and a deeper experience of salvation.

Starting with Social Service rather than Social Action

Compassionate ministries are not controversial. Most church members will support such ministries. The questions asked are practical ones - about time, resources, skills and priorities. Peace and Justice ministries in contrast can be controversial at times. So it is better to start with social service than social action. It is helpful to understand the service/social action pyramid (see below). This begins with service at the bottom of the pyramid and culminates in social action at the top of the pyramid. It is really important to build from the base upwards. Service, regardless of politics or ideology, has broad support and is not divisive. Everyone can take part. Social education comes from being involved as the context is understood and the specific betrayals of the worth of persons or violations of creation begin to reveal themselves. The final step is one of social witness and action to the powers that be and other perpetrators of injustice. Working up the pyramid from service to social action develops and maintains unity, increases understanding and gives an authority to the social action or witness that otherwise we would not have.

Service/Social Action Pyramid



We start with social outreach and service. But we then go on to ask, ‘Why are people poor, homeless, without health care?’ This leads then to peace and justice questions.

Resources for the Practice of Compassionate Ministries

1. Reading

A really excellent and easy to follow resource is:

Acting on Your Faith – Congregations Making a Difference, Victor N. Claman & David E. Butler with Jessica A. Boyatt. (Boston: Insights, 1994).

This resource has many ideas and success stories from churches and synagogues in the USA. It includes simple practical guidance on how to select and launch an outreach project. Remember you do not need to work alone. Working in partnership with other organizations

can make it much easier as well as increase effectiveness. Partnerships described in this resource include those between synagogue and church.

Churches That Make a Difference – Reaching Your Community with Good News and Good Works, Ronald J. Sider, Philip N. Olson & Heidi Rolland Unruh (Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Books, 2002)

With many practical examples this book articulates a holistic vision of mission that includes compassionate ministries.

2. Support for Congregational Projects that work in the Community of Christ

Tangible Love is a fund to support congregational compassionate ministries as well as peace and justice ministries. Tangible Love funding comes from Oblation offerings received at Communion and through the offering envelopes. In addition, the church's World Hunger offerings can also help support congregational hunger projects.

If your congregation wants to initiate a project of ministry in partnership with others in the neighborhood, then Tangible Love and World Hunger can help you in the following ways:

a) Funding for up to three years is available for congregational projects.

Details are on the web at www.cofchrist.org/tlove for Tangible Love and at www.cofchrist.org/hunger/ for World Hunger.

b) Help to get further funding from other sources through other grant writing is now also available for those in the USA. See details at www.cofchrist.org/grantwriting/default.asp

Further details are available by contacting Michelle Booth, 1001 W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050. Tel. (816) 833-1000, ext. 2216, or mbooth@CofChrist.org

3. Prison Ministry

Prison ministry is just one form of compassionate ministries that we are seeking to foster. We are forming a support network and a resource for those involved in this ministry. For more information contact Roy Schaefer, The Temple, 1001 W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050. Tel. 816 833 1000 ext. 2364. Email: rschaefer@cofchrist.org

In addition, in the USA the church is recommending a program run by Prisoner Visitation and Support (PVS), a volunteer visitation program to Federal and Military prisoners throughout the USA. Training and support are given. More details are available through: www.prisonervisitation.org Tel. (215) 241 7117 Email: pvs@afsc.org

Discussion Questions

1. When have you experienced genuine compassionate ministry? What made it genuine?

2. In church mission why is beginning with compassionate ministries important?

3. Consider these words of Jesus: “For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.” (Matthew 25:35-36) Who might we encounter when we reach out in compassionate ministries? How does this scripture bring new dignity to those who are hurting and we reach out to in compassion?

Congregational Check List for Step 1: Compassionate Ministries

1. List the compassionate ministries you are already involved in as individuals in the neighborhood, at work, in school, etc. Celebrate what you are doing as individuals.
2. Now list the compassionate ministries you are sharing in as a congregation. Then review how these are helping fulfill your congregation’s calling and mission.
 - a) What has gone well? What are the stories that have been encouraging?
 - b) What have you learned?
 - c) What could be done better?
 - d) Are you offering as a congregation long term relationships with the people you serve?
3. If you do not have a congregational expression of compassionate ministries, then consider doing the following:
 - a) ask 1-3 people who are keen on this and are trusted to take the lead to research possibilities including reading *Acting on Your Faith – Congregations Making a Difference*, Victor N. Claman & David E. Butler with Jessica A. Boyatt. (Boston: Insights, 1994).
 - b) bring back a proposal, including a budget, for consideration by the pastor and then the congregation.

Remember if we do even one congregational ministry of compassion well we are doing something very important. We are being Christ’s body in the world, touching people with help, hope and new dignity. We begin to make Christ’s compassion believable in the church’s neighborhood. We build trust.

Action Step 2: Hear the Call! – Discipleship

Witnessing/ Discipleship

Transformation II

Personal change, hope.
Reconciliation – God, others
Quest for meaning, integrity,
coming home.
New way of life.

Ministries

Witnessing Support
Groups

12 Step Programs

Home Missionary
Meetings

Visiting

Worship

Socials

Camps, Reunions

Youth groups

Men's groups

Women's groups

Covenant

Discipleship Groups

Baptism/Confirmation
with mentoring in

- witnessing
- stewardship
- service
- peacemaking

Ordination

Experience hope and power to change

“I can be different. I can make a difference.”

MISSION AS JESUS DID MISSION: **Make Disciples of all Nations**



“Follow me, and I will make you fish for people...” (Mark 1:17 NRSV)

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Often we are shy about inviting others into deeper fellowship. Sometimes we feel we should just engage in compassionate ministries and leave it at that. When I was a young adult working in Germany I experienced harassment and was sometimes treated second class because I was a foreigner who spoke bad German. When I came across the church fellowship, to my surprise, I experienced kindness and welcome. I was definitely treated with compassion. However, if that is all that had been shared with me I would have been so cheated. Instead, I was invited to experience more, to go deeper, to hear a call personally that went beyond their invitation and came from the One who calls all to participate in the reign of God. At the same time it was my decision. No one could have forced or pressurized me. I would have resisted that. It would have stolen the joy of the freely-made personal commitment I eventually made a year later in baptism. I am so grateful that I was invited to go further, that people shared their testimonies. It was the beginning of a transformed life that has brought so much meaning, hope and joy. It has opened the way to receiving the deep Spirit of Peace that Jesus promised (John 14:27).

Jesus was not just compassionate. He called others to follow. In the gospel of Mark Jesus begins his public ministry by proclaiming the good news of God:

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God has come near; repent, and believe in the good news.” (Mark 1:15 NRSV)

Then immediately he called others to join him as disciples. Peter and Andrew, James and John were the first called (Mark 1:16-20). Jesus was starting a movement that began with these four apprentices. Jesus called a community into being. Discipleship is about entering and being formed by a new kind of community – one centered in Jesus. The last words of Jesus in Matthew’s Gospel command the Twelve to go and make disciples of all nations.

Making Disciples

“Love releases the power to love” said Aleah Koury, the first Community of Christ apostle I every heard preach. I was a young adult seeker in Germany at the time and Brother Aleah’s very

simple sermon has spoken to me all these years. “Love releases the power to love” is a simple summary of the gospel. It is a profound definition of the process of becoming a disciple.

The last words of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew to the eleven apostles are:

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19-20)

Making disciples implies conversion. For some people conversion is controversial. What does conversion really mean? It is important we understand this.

Conversion for Jesus was a new beginning that was as dramatic as being born again.

Jesus answered [Nicodemus], "Very truly, I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God without being born from above." Nicodemus said to him, "How can anyone be born after having grown old? Can one enter a second time into the mother's womb and be born?" Jesus answered, "Very truly, I tell you, no one can enter the kingdom of God without being born of water and Spirit. What is born of the flesh is flesh, and what is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be astonished that I said to you, 'You must be born from above.' (John 3:3-7 NRSV)

Being born again is about starting all over again. The imagery here of being born of water and Spirit also evokes baptism and confirmation. The first time I was born, I was born British. To be reborn means to become a citizen of the kingdom of God, to see all humans as fellow citizens and the whole earth as one's concern.

Jesus is talking about a radical change of character. Paul, the pioneer missionary to the Gentiles, wrote thus to the Philippian and Roman churches:

Let this mind be in your which was also in Christ Jesus...(Philippians 2:5 NKJV)

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect. (Romans 12:2 NRSV)

Paul in these two letters thus echoes the dramatic change that Jesus proclaims and which he experienced in his own extra ordinary conversion on the road to Damascus (Acts 9: 1-30).

Alan Kreider, a scholar of the early Christian church, in his work on the nature of conversion, reports that:

‘As I read the records of early Christians, I am struck by the way in which conversion involved not just change of belief but also of belonging and behavior.’
Kreider goes on to quote another scholar, Thomas Finn, who states that: “the task of conversion was to reshape an entire way of living and system of values.”¹⁴

Kreider describes how in the early church it could take at least three years of preparation of classes several times a week with their sponsor before a candidate might be baptized.¹⁵ The re-socialization of a person was an important part of conversion. This all changed, except for the

monastic tradition, after the Roman Emperor Constantine became favorable to Christians around 312 AD. Within a hundred years Christians moved from being a persecuted group to a group that was privileged. Indeed, you were persecuted if you were not Christian.¹⁶

There is a very significant difference between proselytism and conversion. Jesus said this forcefully about proselytism:

“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.”
(Matthew 23:15 NKJV)

E. Stanley Jones, a Methodist missionary in India in the early 20th century, argued that proselytism is a change of group without a change of character, a change of label, not a change of life. Those who are keen to proselytize are concerned about numbers, about boasting how fast their particular religion is growing. Full conversion is about a life that is of the standard of the kingdom of God on earth.¹⁷

Christians have traditionally understood conversion as a two stage process: 1) Justification 2) Sanctification. Justification is the beginning of conversion. While we are yet sinners we discover we are loved by God in a deeply personal way. This is through the Holy Spirit and the loving actions of those who follow Jesus. If in trust we accept this love then we are and feel forgiven. Our salvation has begun. St. Paul calls this justification by faith. (Romans 5:1-2)

Sanctification is allowing this love to work in us so our capacity to love grows. Sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Love, working in us and through fellow disciples. If we are faithful—hang in—then we begin to bear the fruits of the Spirit, “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control” (Galatians 6: 22-23). Sanctification is becoming like Jesus. Justification and sanctification has been taught from the earliest days of the Community of Christ. (Doctrine and Covenants 17: 6a-e). Sanctification involves “Formation”, being willing to be made a disciple. In proselytism there is no formation, no discipleship making, no sanctification, no justification, simply a change of label.

God’s *shalom* on earth is not possible without changed people. One changed person can have a dramatic effect in relationships around him or her. To give a simple example—when my father stopped drinking, that had a huge effect for good in my family.

A Growing Christian Movement

Making disciples also grows a movement. The growth of the early church was not an accident. Jesus was very deliberate in establishing a growing movement that found a presence among every human group in all nations.

The growth of the Jesus movement in the early church is recorded as follows in the New Testament:

Growth of the New Testament Church

- 1 Jesus
- 4 Calling of first disciples (Mark 1:16-20; Matthew 4:18-22/Luke 5:1-11)
- 12 Calling of Apostles (Matthew 10:1-4/Luke 6:12-16)
- 70 Sending of Seventy in Pairs (Luke 10:1-12)
- 120 After ascension (Acts 1:15)
- 3,120 Pentecost (Acts 2:41)
- 5,000 Peter and John preaching (Acts 4:4)

Vigorous growth continued in the first three centuries of Christianity. Research by sociologist Rodney Stark estimates that the early church grew at about 40 percent per decade and by the year AD 300 Christians made up around 10 percent of the Roman Empire. Fifty years later they would have been 50 percent of the population in the Roman Empire. It is not surprising that the Roman Emperor Constantine, who ruled 306-337, sought successfully to win Christians as allies.

Christian Growth Projected at 40 Percent per Decade¹⁸

| Year | Number of Christians | Percent of Population^a |
|-------------|-----------------------------|--|
| 40 | 1,000 | 0.0017 |
| 50 | 1,400 | 0.0023 |
| 100 | 7,530 | 0.0126 |
| 150 | 40,496 | 0.07 |
| 200 | 217,795 | 0.36 |
| 250 | 1,171,356 | 1.9 |
| 300 | 6,299,832 | 10.5 |
| 350 | 33,882,008 | 56.5 |

^aBased on an estimated population of 60 million

In the nineteenth century the Community of Christ also grew very vigorously. Growth in the last decade up to 2001 is shown as follows:

| Area of the World | % Growth 1992-2001 |
|--------------------------|-------------------------------|
| North America | - 8.7 |
| Haiti, Caribbean | +31.9 |
| Latin America | +30 |
| Europe, British Isles | - 7.9 |
| Africa | +64.6 |
| Asia, Orient | +50.3 |
| Pacific | -10 |
| Overall | 2.85 |

(based on Membership Enrollment Trends
Research Office, Community of Christ, April, 2002)

The growth in many developing nations often exceeds this rate while the rate of growth in the developed nations has been negative. This is why we must attend to witness and discipleship formation in North America, Europe and Australia in particular.

It is also encouraging to look at the entry into new nations by the church over our history:

| Time Period | Number of nations |
|--------------------|--------------------------|
| 1830-1844 | 5 |
| 1860-1899 | 5 |
| 1900-1959 | 2 |
| 1960-2008 | 42 |
| Total | 54 |

Making disciples, growing the church, creating a movement, is an essential strategy to advancing the just and peaceable reign of God on earth. Tom Sine refers to Jesus' strategy here through the parable of the mustard seed (Mark 4:30-32).

Jesus let us in on an astonishing secret. God has chosen to change the world through the lowly, the unassuming and the imperceptible. Jesus said 'With whom can we compare the Kingdom of God, or what parable shall we use for it? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which when sown upon the ground is the smallest of all seeds on earth; yet when is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade.'¹⁹

From small, weak beginnings, the followers of Jesus can become a great movement for good in our world through becoming disciples of Jesus.

Implications for the Local Congregation

The mustard seed secret is begun in a small group of people who begin a congregation. It does not matter how small the congregation is initially - it can grow. It is to the local congregation that friends are invited to come and see. All races and ethnic groups are to be welcomed for all are called. It is in the local congregation that disciples are made or formed. Disciples are disciplined learners who come to know Jesus and the teachings of Jesus. They are followers who allow the Holy Spirit to work in their lives and change their hearts and minds so that they are born again into a new identity. This new identity is no longer described by gender, class, race or nationality but is defined by being a follower of Jesus. Baptism means to be immersed. This immersion includes not only water but also the great stories and teaching of the scriptures, including the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew chapters 5-7). Experiencing forgiveness means immersion in a life of change and repentance.

Together disciples in a congregation form a new kind of community where the stranger is welcomed, enemies are loved, conflicts are worked out, the hungry are fed and the covenant of marriage is wisely entered into and faithfully kept. Christians are to be a new kind of

people for a new kind of world. We seek to become holy people, in holy community, to create a whole, just world. Being made into disciples is a lifelong project for each of us, but the world cannot be transformed without personal change. As the proverb says, “You cannot make a silk purse out of a pig’s ear!” Or as Jesus better put it, new wine needs new wineskins (Mark 2:21-22). This means a new Spirit needs a new life in the making, otherwise its work comes to nothing.

Resources for Practical Discipleship Making

a) A Witnessing Community

The following is a key resource for congregational leaders to implement:

A Witnessing Community: A Basic Guide to Congregational Missionary Ministry is a beginning approach to missionary ministry that promotes the emergence of a Christ-centered and person-oriented congregation. It is built on the principle that people rather than programs or structures win people to the gospel. The emphasis throughout this guide is on the creation of inviting and caring congregational ministries. It outlines the four stages a congregation goes through in becoming a witnessing community. It is filled with ideas and suggestions for creating missionary opportunities.

Contact jurisdictional leaders for names of skilled people who can help you introduce this program in your congregation.

In addition, Missionary Ministries has introduced the *Witnessing Disciple Series*—a collection of missionary resources designed to assist members in their witnessing efforts and to address the questions of members and friends in the discipleship process. Each resource can be ordered separately or collectively in a ready-to-use, missionary tool kit and is available from Herald House.

Seek and Follow: Christ in Community is a combination of resources designed for small-group inquirers’ meetings. Included in this resource is a three-part **video** highlighting stories of individuals in the Community of Christ at various stages of their discipleship (seeker, finder, disciple). A **facilitator’s guide** to accompany the video and other tool kit resource is available. Also available is a variety of printed resources designed to offer additional support to individuals at the seeker, finder, and disciple stages. Each element of this packet is designed to stand alone, or can be used in combination to provide on-going discipleship training. These resources are:

- *First Steps*—a ten-session, intergenerational, small-group study designed to answer questions of *seekers*. A variety of activities and scripture support are provided in each session of this facilitator’s guide.
- *Seekers and Disciples*—a five-lesson **student booklet** designed for use with *finders*—individuals whose interest in the church is beyond the initial stage of

seeking. An expanded **facilitator's guide** containing scriptures, discussion questions, and reproducible student pages is also available to guide the learning process.

- ***Understanding the Way***—a twelve-session guide that explores doctrinal topics to help readers gain a deeper understanding of the theology and beliefs of the Community of Christ. Each session includes supportive scriptures and significant questions that are answered in this resource but designed for further exploration by the *disciple*.

Can I Get a Witness! is the exciting new witness support group resource designed for use in a small-group format covering at least six sessions. Each session is designed around three components: personal scripture study and reflection, small-group sharing and support, and a mission or action plan. The elements of this resource are structured to prepare, encourage, and support witnessing disciples in their calling to share the invitation of Christ's message with their friends.

Empowered to Witness has been created to guide and reclaim the ministry of the elder as missionary in the Community of Christ. It provides a historical review of the elder's missionary calling, an overview of the ministry of the missionary elder, and it addresses the skills necessary to be effective in this calling. *Empowered to Witness* will assist pastors in discerning direction in calling individuals not only to the ministry of elder, but specifically to that of missionary elder with a functional missionary assignment.

Of Water and Spirit: Preparing Children for Baptism and Confirmation in the Community of Christ is an eight-lesson resource that provides adults the materials they need to prepare children (around age eight) for baptism and confirmation. Topics covered in activity-based lessons include: our relationship to God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit; baptism, confirmation, and other church sacraments; basic beliefs and church history; the nature, study, and use of scripture; commitment as a disciple (generous response); responsibility for sharing our witness; and relationship to others and responsibility for promoting peace and justice in community (Zion). A **student journal** that provides activities and room to record class discussion ideas, photos, and names is also available to assist the student's learning.

Of Water and Spirit: Deepening the Journey is a youth discipleship journal designed for teenagers interested in baptism and living out their discipleship in the Community of Christ. Topics covered include: God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit; church scriptures; church history; the sacraments; serving God; discipleship in the community; and sharing our witness and resources in the Community of Christ.

Witnessing Tracts—a set of four informational brochures designed to be used individually, collectively in a set, or in combination with other witnessing tools. Each set contains one of each of the four tracts and a personal witnessing card. The tracts include:

- ***Faith and Beliefs***—outlines the basic tenets of the church.
- ***The Sacraments***—highlights the church's eight sacraments.
- ***Core Values***—what connects and guides the Community of Christ.

- ***Being a Disciple***—a look at membership in the Community of Christ.

Personal Witnessing Card—a small business card that contains basic “talking points” about the Community of Christ. It is designed to be customized with personal or congregational information, and can be shared with seekers and friends as a tool of invitation.

Courageous Witness: A Teenager Shares Jesus is a booklet authored by Jared Munson of Chattanooga, Tennessee. It offers a collection of testimonies from the perspective of a teenager involved in front-line missionary ministry. This is a great resource for everyone, but has particular relevance to teenagers and young adults engaged in mission.

For ordering the above materials contact Herald House. Contact the Missionary Ministries Office 1-800-825-2806 or 816 833 1000 at extension 2240 for assistance on other questions.

b) Covenant Discipleship Groups

Covenant Discipleship Groups are one way for congregations to engage in an intentional and spirit-centered emphasis on the Path of the Disciple and the mission of the church. The group members support one another in practicing inner and outer spiritual disciplines that deepen their relationship with God and their response to God’s compassionate call. Covenant Discipleship Groups create a spirituality of mission and witness that flows out of an abundant life in the Spirit.

To schedule a covenant discipleship group facilitator training in your congregation or mission center contact: Spirituality and Wholeness Ministries Office, Community of Christ, 1001 W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050. Tel. 1 800 825 2806 or 816 833 1000 x2365, Email cbrock@cofchrist.org

c) Starting a Young Adult Group

An excellent practical resource is Kelly Phipps, ***Starting a Young Adult Group*** (Herald House).

d) Christian Education

There are many resources available, including the following published by Herald House:

Children: Power and Light Curriculum Series

Based on the *Revised Common Lectionary*, the **Power & Light Curriculum Series** is a multi-age curriculum that coordinates lesson topics with the weekly themes provided in the Community of Christ *Worship Resources*. for more details see: www.cofchrist.org/onlineresources/PowerLight/default.asp

Purchase copies of *Power & Light* available from Herald House is possible through:
Toll Free: (800) 767-8181 Local: (816) 521-3015 E-mail: sales@HeraldHouse.org

More information on Children's resources can be found at:
www.cofchrist.org/ChristianEd/default.asp#adults

Adult Christian Education:

Sermon on the Mount – Foundations for an International Peace Church, Andrew Bolton, is an introduction to the Sermon on the Mount. It has gone through three printings.

Scripture, Tradition and My Life, Editor: Kelly Phipps. Although this excellent resource was written primarily for young adults, other age groups will find it valuable.
Adults: <http://www.cofchrist.org/ChristianEd/default.asp#adults>

For other adult education resources see: www.cofchrist.org/ChristianEd/default.asp#adults

A whole new generation of discipleship curriculum is beginning to be developed for adults and children. Watch out for announcements.

Discussion Questions

1. Who witnessed to you effectively so that you became a part of the fellowship?
2. What is your congregation doing in terms of evangelism and discipleship making? List specific results.
3. If this ministry is not an active part of your congregation, what have been the consequences?
4. What are specific steps for your congregation to consider in order to become a discipleship congregation?

Congregational Check List for Step 2: Discipleship

1. Who in the congregational leadership team is taking responsibility for evangelism/discipleship? Who else assists and supports?
2. Has your congregation started implementing *A Witnessing Community: A Basic Guide to Congregational Missionary Ministry*?

Action Step 3: Work for Peace and Justice

Peace/Justice Transformation III

Action with the poor and oppressed. Removing the causes of injustice, violence...
System change. Release.

Ministries

Congregation models just and reconciled community. Models locally the change wanted globally.

Congregation works cooperatively with others in neighborhood to create a community good for all children...

Raises awareness of issues and enlists others in system change.

Speaking truth to power - advocacy with politicians, corporate leaders etc locally, nationally, and internationally about human rights and the environment.

Experience Zion/the Kingdom/Reign of God

"We can be different. We can make a difference."

MISSION AS JESUS DID MISSION:
Work for Peace and Justice
Part 1: Perspectives



Had I but one wish for the Christian churches ..., I think it would be that they came to see the difference between charity and justice. Charity is a matter of personal attributes; justice a matter of public policy. Charity seeks to alleviate the effects of injustice; justice seeks to eliminate the causes of it. Charity in no way affects the status quo, while justice leads inevitably to political confrontation.” William Sloane Coffin²⁰

INITIAL EXERCISE

1. Think of a time you suffered injustice?

What feelings do you recall as you remember the event? Write these down here:

Share your feelings. In a class setting brainstorm on a flip chart or white board.
What do you learn about your feelings about being a victim? Are they strong or weak?

2. When have you been unjust?

What feelings do you recall? Write these down here:

Share your feelings. In a class setting brainstorm on a flip chart or white board.
What do you learn about your feelings about being unjust to another? Are they strong or weak?

3. Defining Justice and Peace

To continue the earlier discussion on justice and peace.

How would you define Justice?

How would you define Peace?

Discussion about your definitions of Justice and Peace:

1. If you are studying this resource with others, share your definitions. Look back at pages 5-6. What else do you need to add to your definition?

Is there a positive connection between the justice and peace? What is it?

Reviewing Peace and Justice

Contemplate Zion, the reign of God on earth. Every thing is right and just. There is no one hungry or homeless or in poverty. The elderly are cared for and respected and continue as strength allows to make a contribution and to be heard. Every child grows up whole and unafraid, knowing joy, confidence, a sense of giftedness and calling. Each child grows up speaking at least two languages and is skilled in meeting others who are different. Couples choose each other wisely and with care. They covenant to live faithfully to each other. Work does not divide them from each other or their children but is a means for sustaining life and is a service to others. People live in harmony with nature and in ways that are good for the next seven generations of children. Conflict is still inevitable, but people are skilled at working these out and are committed to doing so. Swords have been beaten into ploughshares, armies have been abolished, lions lie down with the lambs in societies that are good for all children.

Justice is the process of restoring damaged or broken relationships. It includes accountability, addressing evil, crime, poverty, genocide and putting things right. Truth is the companion of justice and after they have done their task they join with reconciliation to bring healing and peace.

Peace, as said before, is a limited word in English; it often just means the absence of conflict or war. This might be defined as negative or lesser peace. A positive or greater peace includes social justice as well as resolved conflicts. As Martin Luther King said, “True Peace is not merely the absence of tension, but it is the presence of justice and brotherhood.”²¹ Peacemaking in the Jesus tradition is not peace at any cost. For example, there can be no peace with racism, sexism, poverty, violence, or oppression.

The Hebrew word *shalom*, or its Greek translation in the New Testament *eirēnē*, means this fuller, positive, greater peace. *Shalom* is a wholistic peace that includes salvation, justice, health, authentic community and reconciliation with each other, with nature and with God.²² Perhaps the best English translation for *shalom* is not peace but the Latter Day Saint word Zion. Zion has been defined as a place, process, and condition. *Shalom* is Zion as a condition – authentic community with just and reconciled relationships.

Justice-making is the process by which zionic relationships are created. It is the overcoming of oppression and exploitation. Justice, in the biblical sense, is redemptive and restorative, not destructive or revengeful. God came in Jesus to save not destroy (John 3:16-17). Therefore God’s justice is restoring broken relationships, not damning to punishment for ever and ever.²³

Zion, *shalom*, is the end or purpose for which God created in love this immense universe. Zion was in the heart of God at the very beginning. The crucifixion reminds us starkly of the powers of evil against Zion. Resurrection reminds us that God's justice shall triumph. Zion shall yet be.

Signal Communities Model God's Intention in the World

The Sermon on the Mount talks about being a City built on a hill, that is light, a demonstration, a model, a signal community of how God wants all humans to live together. (Matthew 5:14-16). As Gandhi said, "We must model the change we want to see in the world."²⁴

The powerful witness of the early Jerusalem church was in part because the first Christians lived all things in common (Acts 2:44). They did not just talk about economic justice; they demonstrated it was possible. In the beginning years of the Community of Christ, the church attempted to live out zionic communities in cities which were centers of gathering for the early Saints. Despite the failings of these early attempts the fact they were tried still quickens our hopes and inspires our imagination to try in our own day.

There are many significant examples of courageous "zionic" communities that have made a difference in the last hundred years. Gandhi's Ashram communities, first in South Africa and then in India, were bases from which non-violent campaigns for justice were launched against the British authorities.²⁵ The Bruderhof community was born in the chaos of post-World War I Germany. Living all things in common, they successfully resisted giving in to the NAZI regime and were expelled in 1937.²⁶ Today they have about eight communities in the USA, England and Australia. Andre Trocme and his congregation led the village of Le Chambon to save over 5,000 Jews in NAZI occupied France during World War II.²⁷ The Intergrierte Gemeinde community grew out of the White Rose student resistance movement to Hitler during World War II. Based in Munich, Germany they have a simple discipline of eating one meal a day with some other community members.²⁸ A Catholic community, they work at just relationships with Judaism. Clarence Jordan founded Koinonia in 1942 in Americus, Georgia, USA. Jordan, a farmer and New Testament scholar, wanted the communal farm to be a demonstration plot for the kingdom of God, integrating Blacks and Whites. They suffered a great deal of abuse. Out of this community, Habitat for Humanity was born.²⁹ The Catholic Worker movement, founded by Dorothy Day in the Great Depression, is an inspiring example of meeting Christ in the poor and witnessing against the violence in society through acts of civil disobedience.³⁰ Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston, Chicago, Illinois is the oldest urban Christian intentional community in North America, founded in 1958. Their housing projects offer safe and comfortable accommodation at a very reasonable rate to the poor.³¹ Without the Black churches the US Civil Rights Movement in the 1950s-60s could not have done anything of significance.³² The L'Arche community movement places adults and children with developmental disabilities at the center of community. Founded by Jean Vanier in France in 1964, there are now approximately 130 L'Arche communities in over 30 nations around the world.³³

For nearly all these communities, the Sermon on the Mount is very significant. Each example demonstrates what ordinary people can do when they become committed Christians.

The task of every congregation in the Community of Christ is to model authentic community through its fellowship, to give a foretaste of Zion, to make the Reign of God believable because it is seeable. To talk of peace and justice ministries in the world is simply hypocrisy if there are not peaceful and just relationships in our congregations. The Lord's supper (communion) helps us be genuine community by helping us center on what we are called to be.

The Sacrament of Communion - Creating a Transforming Community

Trust in God does not mean blind faith in human institutions, be they schools, businesses, churches or government. As New Testament scholar Walter Wink says "The Powers are good, the Powers are fallen."³⁴ Christians are called to have their eyes open to sin in themselves and evil in human institutions. We need to have critical thinking minds at work. We cannot afford to be naïve about evil. As an accurate diagnosis of illness by a doctor enables the right treatment to be given, so sin has to be recognized before the gospel cure can be applied. Recognition of sin in ourselves keeps us humble and enables us to recognize the importance of mercy and forgiveness for all. At the same time the quest for justice must be unremitting. The wages of sin is death and the salary of injustice is war and poverty.

The story of Exodus, the liberation of slaves from Egypt, reminds us that God is on the side of those who suffer oppression. This story helps us be suspicious of government, empire and power. It helps us listen to the story of those who suffer. We are to be suspicious of systems that enslave and impoverish.

The cross of Jesus likewise helps us be critical of violence, especially that carried out by government. Jesus was innocent. He did not deserve to die. His crucifixion is thus a judgment against those who carried it out. Such authorities have lost their legitimacy that can only be restored by accountability and change.

The sacrament of communion brings Exodus and the Cross together. The first communion was inaugurated by Jesus at a Passover meal remembering the ancient Hebrew story of freedom from slavery. It was also the night before he died. He asked the apostles to repeat the communion meal in memory of his suffering (Luke 22:14-20). So the story of Exodus is deepened by the story of the crucifixion. In the sacrament of communion we are confronted by the inhumanity of ourselves and others and our participation in injustice.

Being self-critical opens us to the amazing grace of God in Christ. It also enables us to be justly critical of human systems that degrade others. We see this in the story of Jesus cleansing the Temple – a story told in all four gospels. The holiest of Jewish institutions had become corrupted by the greed of the religious elite that used it to rob the poor. Jesus' eyes were open to seeing this injustice, and then he challenged it.

We too must speak truth to power clearly and forcefully. In doing so we are sheep among wolves and must be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves (Matthew 10:16). Sheep and doves are not like wolves and eagles that tear and maim. We should commit no violence as we confront the injustice and violence of others.

Communion is a sacrament for forming genuine Christian community. We come together around the communion table to share its grace so that our eyes are opened to see our own sin and the Powers that are fallen. We leave the Lord's Supper to change the world. Communion pushes us beyond Band Aids ministry. In the words of Walter Wink:

The Powers are good,
The Powers are fallen,
The Powers will be redeemed.³⁵

Band Aids are Not Enough

Band Aids are not enough to fix a fallen, hurting world. They are an important part of compassionate ministries. They meet the immediate crisis. But they often only treat the symptoms of the problem, not the cause of the problem itself. Charity alone will not bring Zion. Consider the following stories:

The Samaritan Story II – a “missing” chapter from Luke

There was a Samaritan who traveled regularly along the road from Jerusalem to Jericho. On one journey she came across a Jew all beaten up and dying of thirst and loss of blood. She was a compassionate woman. So she stopped, administered first aid, and took the victim in her Honda Civic to the local hospital. Since the victim did not have health insurance she said that she would personally pay.

Unfortunately this was the beginning of a trend and it happened time and time again. Being a compassionate person she stopped each time but it was beginning to get expensive and the blood on her car seats unsightly. So she got some friends and went and met with some of the thugs doing all the robbery and asked them to stop. They said they would be pleased to if only they could. They did not like beating people up – the blood was messy for them as well. However, robbery was the only way they could survive. They had been unemployed and without welfare for five years now.

Being an enterprising woman she set up a gas station and restaurant business on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and employed the thugs. The thugs, now assured of a livable wage, turned over a new leaf and stopped beating people up and robbing them. The problem was solved.

The Village at the Bottom of the Mountain

The village nestled at the bottom of the mountain was not only picturesque but full of devout Christians. Unfortunately the road coming down the mountain to the village had a dangerous hair pin bend that was so sharp that many accidents happened.

The villagers, being devout Christians, wanted to do something for the injured. So they had bake and rummage sales and raised money for an ambulance. Then they staffed the running of the ambulance with volunteers ready day or night to hurry to do their duty.

Then one day a child asked, “Would it not be better to fix the dangerous bend?” That thought had not occurred to the villagers before. At first there was some resistance. People liked their ambulance mission and wanted it to continue. However, in the end wiser voices prevailed and money was raised to fix the bend. After that, no more accidents happened and in the end the village sold the ambulance.

Peace and justice ministries is fixing the root problem. *Radix* is the Latin word for root. The word radical comes from the Latin for root also. A “Radical” is an activist who seeks the root cause of a social or political problem. The followers of Jesus are called to be Christian radicals. This is what it means to engage in the cause of Zion.

The distinctive contribution of Peace and Justice Ministries compared with Discipleship and Compassionate Ministries in terms of poverty can be described as follows (see next page):

| | Compassionate Ministries | Discipleship | Working for Peace and Justice |
|----------------------------------|---|---|---|
| Response to need | Charity | Teaching Stewardship | Justice (worth of all persons) Advocacy |
| Kind of Salvation | Saved from immediate crisis – through meal, shelter etc | Personal salvation from sin/alienation begins through faith in Christ and joining with sisters and brothers in Christ. Personal change continues through sharing in the community of disciples and includes learning how to be a steward. (Process of justification and sanctification) | Social salvation – changing systems that create victims to ones that do not. |
| Kind of Ministry Provided | Service | Support, teaching, worship, witness | a) Be a signal community to model change wanted in the world. b) As a congregation together engage in action, witness. |
| Locus of Ministry | To the individual through soup kitchen etc. | In the fellowship of the congregation. | With children and their families in the neighborhood. In the streets, in congress, city hall, etc. |

Children’s Ministries

The worth of children is one of the central insights of the Christian tradition. When the first disciples were arguing among themselves as to who was the greatest, we see Jesus place a child in the middle of them and, hugging the child, say, “Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me” (Mark 10:33-37). The worth of children is reaffirmed in the Community of Christ by the church logo portraying a little child leading us in the quest for peace.



We are called together as a church to promote the holistic well being of all children everywhere by working both for their protection and their development. A world safe for children of every race, culture and nation is a world good for all people. Thus engaging in children and youth ministries is the most radical ministry that can be done. Understanding the 40 Developmental Assets helps make this clear.

The Forty Development Assets are described on page 45. The more assets a child has from their family and community, the less chance they have of going wrong. Research at the *Search Institute* in Minneapolis, USA has looked at four behaviors: alcohol, illicit drug use, sexual activity and violence. The “at risk” factor is estimated in percentages terms as follows:

| Number of Assets in a child’s life | Problem use of alcohol | Illicit drug use | Sexual activity | Violence |
|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------------|
| 0-10 | 53% | 42% | 33% | 61% |
| 11-20 | 30% | 19% | 21% | 35% |
| 21-30 | 11% | 6% | 10% | 16% |
| 31-40 | 3% | 1% | 3% | 6% |

It is has been said that it takes a village to raise a child. The 40 Developmental Assets describes what is critically important for the healthy development of youth. They are a way of describing what is needed to recreate the village to raise a healthy, balanced child. The 40 Developmental Assets provide a framework to measure how near or far a neighborhood is from Zion or *shalom* for children. Remember the church does not need to provide all the assets. The congregation’s task is to add to the assets in a neighborhood, and work with others to also increase the assets available for children.

Attending to children’s needs now prevents so many problems later. It is fixing the bend in the road. In addition, ministering to children unites rather than divides us.

40 Developmental Assets

Support

1. **Family Support-** Family life provides high levels of love and support.
2. **Positive family communications-** Young person and her or his parent(s) communicate positively, and young person is willing to seek advice and counsel from parent(s).
3. **Other adult relationships-** Young person receives support from three or more non-parent adults.
4. **Caring neighborhood-** Young person experiences caring neighbors.
5. **Caring school climate-** School provides a caring, encouraging environment.
6. **Parent involvement in schooling-** Parent(s) is actively involved in helping young person succeed in school.

Empowerment

7. **Community values youth-** Young person perceives that adults in the community value youth.
8. **Youth as resources-** Young people are given useful roles in the community.
9. **Service to others-** Young person serves in the community one hour or more per week.
10. **Safety-** Young person feels safe at home, at school, and in the neighborhood.

Boundaries and Expectations

11. **Family boundaries-** Family has clear rules and consequences and monitors the young person's whereabouts.
12. **School boundaries-** School provides clear rules and consequences.
13. **Neighborhood boundaries-** Neighbors take responsibility for monitoring young people's behaviors.
14. **Adult role models-** Parent(s) and other adults model positive, responsible behavior.
15. **Positive peer influence-** Young person's best friends model responsible behavior.
16. **High expectations-** Both parent(s) and teachers encourage the young person to do well.

Constructive use of time

17. **Creative activities-** Young person spends three or more hours per week in lessons or practice in music, theater, or the arts.
18. **Youth programs-** Young person spends three or more hours per week in sports, clubs, or organizations at school and /or in community organizations.
19. **Religious community-** Young person spends one or more hours per week in activities in a religious institution.
20. **Time at home-** Young person is out with friends "with nothing special to do" two or fewer nights per week.

Commitment to Learning

21. **Achievement motivation-** Young person is motivated to do well in school.
22. **School engagement-** Young person is actively engaged in learning.
23. **Homework-** Young person reports doing at least one hour of homework every school day.
24. **Bonding to school-** Young person cares about her or his school.
25. **Reading for Pleasure-** Young person reads for pleasure three or more hours per week.

Positive Values

26. **Caring-** Young person places high value on helping other people.
27. **Equality and social justice-** Young person places high value on promoting equality and reducing hunger and poverty.
28. **Integrity-** Young person acts on convictions and stands up for her or his beliefs.
29. **Honesty-** Young person "tells the truth even when it is not easy."
30. **Responsibility-** Young person accepts and takes personal responsibility.
31. **Restraint-** Young person believes it is important not to be sexually active or to use alcohol or other drugs.

Social Competencies

32. **Planning and decision making-** Young person knows how to plan ahead and make choices.
33. **Interpersonal competence-** Young person has empathy, sensitivity, and friendship skills.
34. **Cultural competency-** Young person has knowledge of and comfort with people of different cultural/racial/ethnic backgrounds.
35. **Resistance skills-** Young person can resist negative peer pressure and dangerous situations.
36. **Peaceful conflict resolution-** Young person seeks to resolve conflict nonviolently.

Positive Identity

37. **Personal power-** Young person feels he or she has control over "things that happen to me."
38. **Self-esteem-** Young person reports having a high self-esteem.
39. **Sense of purpose-** Young person reports that "my life has purpose."
40. **Positive view of the future-** Young person is optimistic about her or his personal future.

An excellent book accompanied by a video to begin with is: Eugene C. Roehlkepartain, *Building Assets in Congregations – A Practical Guide for Helping Youth Grow Up Healthy* (Minneapolis: Search Institute, 1998)

More information is available from the Search Institute on their excellent web site: www.search-institute.org/

Discussion Questions

1. In what ways is your congregation already a foretaste of Zion?
2. What does communion mean for you? What are its peace and justice messages? How can communion shape us into a very different kind of people?
3. Are Band Aids enough? What is the distinctive contribution of Peace and Justice ministries to the congregation's mission?
4. What happens when we ask these simple questions of a congregation, neighborhood and nation:
 - Can all children, boys and girls of every color, grow up whole and unafraid in your congregation and neighborhood?
 - Is the earth blessed or cursed by our stewardship of the environment as we hand it on to our children, grandchildren and great grandchildren?
5. Does asking questions about the welfare of children help us get into peace and justice ministries in a way that motivates and unites members of the congregation? Does the church logo provide a useful example?
6. Can we be led into peace and justice ministries by evaluating our neighborhood, city, nation and world by how good it is for children?

MISSION AS JESUS DID MISSION:

Part 2: Practical Peace and Justice Making

*The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil
is for good people to do nothing.*
Attributed to Edmund Burke³⁶

*Only the present is real, and what a person does not do now,
nor start to do, will never be done in all eternity.*
Gustav Landauer³⁷

It does not matter what peace and justice project a congregation engages in. There just needs to be a consensus that the project is relevant. All issues are connected, whether it be racism, sexism, war, poverty, human rights, prison reform, the death penalty, pollution, the environment etc. There is certain to be some peace and justice issue on the doorstep of the congregation. It may be very obvious or emerge out of the compassionate ministries that the congregation engages in. It is locally that practical peace and justice making should begin, if at all possible. However, there is inevitably a global dimension to peace and justice issues, and while congregations should work at the local issues first, they should also engage in national and international questions as they arise.

What is important is that every congregation begins by having one peace and justice project. It does not have to be big or complicated. It might just be two or three people forming, for example, an Amnesty International group and committing to write letters on behalf of prisoners of conscience and then connecting local human rights issues. It is good that just one person does something. It is better to have at least one other person join you so you have fellowship and support. Where two or three are met in Christ's name there he is in the midst of you (Matthew 18:20).

The first act of engaging in peace and justice ministries is listening to victims and opening our eyes to their pain. As God told Moses in the burning bush experience "I have observed the misery of my people...I have heard their cry...I know their sufferings." (Exodus 3:7) It is important that any project grows out of first of all understanding the need. Having individuals tell their story in worship services can be very moving and very motivational for congregations. We can then look to partnering with others as we sense our own call to do something.

Our task with the Holy Spirit is to create sacred spaces, villages of sanctuary, islands of *shalom* where all humans are honored, where violence and greed are overcome. We then work to connect these to form continents of goodness till the whole world is won. This involves many risks. Set backs are certain. But the final victory is God's – revealed as Jesus washed the feet of the disciples, as Jesus forgave those who crucified him, and in the surprise of resurrection.

Some ideas for beginning are listed below.

1. Children and Youth Ministries

Children's ministries are the first practical peace and justice project that should be considered. Ministry with children is not controversial and enables us to easily combine, in a wholistic way, compassion, peace and justice, and, with the consent of parents, discipleship formation. Children's ministry also enables us to work with families more effectively. The following are some possible programs:

Children and Youth Activities

For Scripture Study and Bible Club for children and youth Forefront Ministries recommend a range of materials. The Power & Light series for children and the World Community program are excellent resources. In addition, recommendations for Vacation Church School are also available.

For more information on all these resources see www.cofchrist.org/ChristianEd/default.asp#adults

The resource Peace 24/7 has excellent ideas for youth on peace and justice action. See: www.cofchrist.org/onlineresources/peace247/default.asp

Young Peacemakers Club

The Young Peacemakers Club began in 1992 with an all-volunteer staff and seven children in Sioux City, IA, USA. Since that time, Young Peacemakers Clubs have been started all over the world by people who believe that each life makes a difference

The skills of peacemaking have been promoted by this global grassroots effort to over 120 countries in such diverse settings as schools, churches, homes, community centers, resettlement camps, and as a special focus in other existing organizations.

Through Young Peacemakers Club, children learn about the many aspects of peace and build the positive life skills which define the actions of a peacemaker.

This program, founded by church member Kelly Guinan, is now a UNESCO project for the International Decade of the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace.

For further information including downloadable resources, see <http://www.peacesupportnetwork.org/ypclub.cfm>

Violent Toy Trade-ins etc

The Children's Peace Pavilion has led an annual violent toy trade-in each year at the Temple. More information on how to do a violent toy trade-in and other projects can be found through the Lion & Lamb Project. The mission of The Lion & Lamb Project is to stop the marketing of violence to children. They do this by helping parents, industry and

government officials recognize that *violence is not child's play* – and by galvanizing concerned adults to take action. Unfortunately the Lion an Lamb Project has ended but some information remains on their web site: <http://www.lionlamb.org>.

PeaceMobile

The PeaceMobile is a traveling children's museum which focuses on peacemaking. The exhibits are of the highest quality and the interaction and networking within the community is what makes the PeaceMobile most effective. The PeaceMobile goes to where the children live, and transforms any area, such as a school cafeteria or library basement, into a culture where peace can be explored and lives can be enriched.

The PeaceMobile began in Omaha, NE where it served over 52,000 children in its first two years of operation. Since that time, other PeaceMobiles have been developed around the world following the original template.

The PeaceMobile is complemented by the establishment of Young Peacemakers Clubs where the skills introduced at this exciting children's museum can be practiced within the child's support structure.

For further information, see <http://www.peacesupportnetwork.org/peacemobile.cfm>

Bridges to Understanding

Bridges to Understanding is a teaching tool which engages children and their families through interactive experiential learning. It is used whenever and wherever people want to explore peaceful resolutions to conflict. It has been designated as a UNESCO Project for the International Decade of the Global Movement for a Culture of Peace.

For more information, see <http://www.peacesupportnetwork.org/bridges.cfm>

Peace Support Network

The Community of Christ Peace Support Network is an intentional linking of people throughout the world who believe in peace and who want to make peace a reality.

The purpose of the Peace Support Network is to build a global movement which provides individuals the opportunity to join together based upon passion, calling, and that which resonates within them, rather than be constrained by the limitations of circumstance and geography.

The services of this web site are free, open to everyone, and rely on the contributions of people who are willing to share their stories in the adventure of peacemaking. This exchange of information engages a creative power so expansive that all have the chance to build peace through the five major content areas of peace with God, self, relationships, society, and the planet. There are many helpful resources listed. More information: www.peacesupportnetwork.org/ email: peacesupportnetwork@gmail.com

Roots and Shoots – The Jane Goodall Institute

Jane Goodall, world famous chimpanzee scientist and environmentalist, received the Community of Christ International Peace Award in 1999. The Jane Goodall Institute has a Roots and Shoots program that enables young people to work together on environmental issues. Roots and Shoots groups can be for different ages. There are groups for elementary school pupils as well as groups for college students. Roots and Shoots is also an international movement; see www.rootsandshoots.org/contactus/global

For further information about the Jane Goodall Institute see www.janegoodall.org.

2. Poverty

Congregational projects that begin as Compassionate Ministries (see pages 22-25) can develop an advocacy dimension as participants begin to understand the causes of poverty, homelessness etc.

There are many ways that congregations can engage in advocacy for the poor. Most countries have organizations that help inform people about poverty and how they can advocate in the political process of their country. A superb organization in the USA, called Bread for the World, is an excellent example. A very practical organization is Habitat for Humanity – now an international organization.

Church members can also participate in advocacy for the poor through the World Hunger Fund, Outreach International, World Accord in Canada and SaintsCare in Australia

It is also worth exploring Fair Trade shopping and Ethical Investment.

Bread for the World – Advocacy for the Poor in the USA

Bread for the World is a USA Christian citizens movement seeking justice for the world's hungry people by lobbying decision makers in the US congress. Bread for the World stands in a long biblical and prophetic tradition of those who speak out boldly for the poor. The Community of Christ has worked with Bread for the World for over 26 years and continues to support its work with an annual grant from the church's World Hunger Fund.

A key part of the work of Bread for the World is the Offering of Letters Campaign. Congregations in the United States are encouraged to include an "Offering of Letters" element in their worship. This Bread for the World program consists of asking church members and friend to send brief, focused, hand-written letters to members of Congress, urging them to support legislation that addresses hunger-related issues. These letters have been shown to have a profound effect on legislators. The Federal Government has far more dollars that can be used than any church could raise. A list of Community of

Christ congregations in the USA engaged in this program, plus information on how to plan such a program, can be found at www.cofchrist.org/hunger/offeringofletters.asp

Individual members and friends are also members of Bread for the World and participate in writing letters on their own.

For further information please contact: Bread for the World, 50 F Street, NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC 20001, USA. Tel. 202-639-9400 / 800-82-BREAD / Fax 202-639-9401 www.bread.org

Habitat for Humanity International

Habitat for Humanity International is a nonprofit, nondenominational Christian housing organization. They welcome all people to join them as they build simple, decent, affordable houses in partnership with those in need of adequate shelter. Since 1976, Habitat has built more than 125,000 houses in more than 80 countries, including some 45,000 houses across the United States.

Church members have been participants in Habitat in a variety of ways in this ministry.

For information contact: Habitat for Humanity International, 121 Habitat St., Americus, GA 31709, USA Tel.: (229) 924-6935 Web: www.habitat.org

World Hunger Fund

Members and friends of Community of Christ congregations have had an opportunity to donate to The World Hunger fund since 1979. The World Hunger Committee currently meets under President Emeritus Wallace B. Smith as chair. The Mission of World Hunger is:

Sharing our abundance, we seek to make a difference in a world where far too many are poor and hungry. Our three-fold mission is to support a program of ministries to hungry persons throughout the world by funding agencies and projects seeking to provide relief and release, educating about hunger-related issues, and encouraging individual church members to advocate with governmental representatives on behalf of the hungry.

It is possible to donate to World Hunger along with Oblation through the weekly offering envelopes. The first Sundays in March and September have been designated as times to offer focused ministry during the oblation on thoughts about hunger related issues--both local and worldwide. On these particular Sundays, all undesignated offerings are allocated to the church's World Hunger Fund. Worship resources for these Sundays are available on the web at: www.cofchrist.org/hunger/emphasis_sundays.asp

Congregations from around the world can apply for funding of congregationally-based hunger projects already referred to on page 24.

Further details are available by contacting Michelle Booth, 1001 W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050. Tel. (816) 833-1000, ext. 2216, or mbooth@CofChrist.org
Web page: www.CofChrist.org/hunger

Outreach International, USA

Outreach International was organized by church members in 1972 and continues to have a close working relationship with the Community of Christ.

Outreach International has a passion for the poor. Outreach staff believes that people in poor communities can overcome the ruin that poverty can bring, and that through their own action their lives can be transformed. Outreach International is committed to responsible and sustainable development. In partnership with charitable people around the world, Outreach International works to build lives and transform communities, create conditions in which children not only survive but also flourish, and create just and stable democratic societies.

Outreach empowers the poor to advocate for themselves.

There are many ways of being involved in Outreach, including the calendar club, site visits in different countries, and so on. A program for youth called “Hunger Challenge” involves a Fast to increase awareness and to raise money for the work of Outreach International.

For more information on how individuals and congregations can become involved please contact: Outreach International, PO Box 210, Independence, MO 64051 USA. Tel. +1 816 833 0883 or +1 888 833 1235 (toll free in USA). Email: info@outreach-international.org Web: www.outreach-international.org

See the Outreach International Sustainable Good blog at <http://blog.sustainablegood.org/>

World Accord, Canada

Established in 1980 by church members, World Accord is a not-for-profit, non-governmental, international development organization, in Canada. It works with partners in Canada and overseas to provide sustainable education, training and self-help programs for the poor in the developing world. World Accord supports community groups who work at the grassroots level to provide services that will help participants to improve their standard of living in a sustainable manner.

There are all kinds of ways for congregations and individuals to be involved with World Accord. For example, the Stratford Congregation in Ontario has a Saturday morning breakfast that brings in many people from the neighborhood and raises funds for the local women’s shelter in Stratford and for the CORDI Women’s Shelter in India.

In addition there is an annual fast retreat called Fastathon that is great to be involved in.

For further information please contact: World Accord, 1C-185 Frobisher Dr., Waterloo, Ontario N2V 2E6 Canada. Tel: (519) 747-2215. Toll Free: 1-800-525-3545
Email: waccord@worldaccord.org Web Page: www.worldaccord.org

Saints Care, Australia

SaintsCare Ltd is a non-profit company that supports the church's objectives through organised compassionate ministries. For further information contact:
SaintsCare National Office, 12 Taylor Street, West Pennant Hills NSW 2125
Australia. Tel: 1300 889 855 / +61 2 9871 7400. Email: enquiries@SaintsCare.com.au

Personal Consumption

“Live simply that others might simply live” is another way of saying that “Repression of unnecessary wants is in harmony with the law of stewardship and becomes my people.” (Doctrine and Covenants 147:5b). We have a stewardship as consumers and also as investors in terms of what we choose. We can support good businesses, shop responsibly and wisely and invest for retirement in companies that not only do not profit from tobacco and alcohol but also do not profit from armaments, worker exploitation, human rights abuses, degradation of the environment etc.

- **Co-op America/Green America**

In the USA an excellent organization to begin finding out more on this subject is Co-op America. They have an excellent web site at www.coopamerica.org. Members of Co-op America, among other things, receive an excellent newsletter, Co-op America Quarterly, and the annual National Green Pages (listing thousands of ethical businesses). For further information contact Co-op America, 1612 K Street NW, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20006. Tel. (800) 584-7336

- **Fair Trade**

"Before you've finished your breakfast this morning, you'll have relied on half the world"
- Martin Luther King²⁴

Fair trade is enabling poor farmers and craftspeople in poorer countries to receive a decent price for their goods in richer countries. In our shopping and consuming it enables those of us in rich nations to move beyond charity to economic justice-making. Consider having fair traded coffee or tea at church pot-lucks to raise awareness, as Rod Downing of the Vancouver congregation has suggested.

Many excellent organizations are involved in this expanding work. Oxfam is one of them. For further information on fair trade in the USA, Canada, the UK, Australia and New Zealand contact: www.oxfam.org/en/campaigns/trade

- **Ethical Investment**

As you save for a rainy day or retirement, have you thought about having an ethical screen on your investments? Traditionally the church has screened out investments in tobacco, gambling and alcohol businesses. How about considering screening for investments in the defense industry? More positively, how about investing in companies that have good labor practices and good records on human rights, the environment, indigenous rights, product safety etc.?

Co-op America has a service called Social Investment Forum through which you can find out more information: 1612 K Street NW, Suite 650, Washington, DC 20006
Tel. (202) 872-5319, www.socialinvest.org

Investment selection and management can be a difficult process. It can often be very helpful to obtain the services of a CERTIFIED FINANCIAL PLANNER™ or other financial services professional to assist you in this process.

3. Human Rights

Human rights are a secular way of restating the worth of all persons in a comprehensive way. To be found in the forefront of recognizing the worth of persons is a call to all engaging in advocacy and support for human rights.

Human Rights Newsletter Rod Downing (recipient of the Community of Christ 2007 International Human Rights Award) produces an email newsletter on behalf of the Community of Christ Human Rights Team. His newsletter, "In the Forefront," includes some helpful links for information and opportunities to make a difference for human rights worldwide. To subscribe, email Rod Downing at rdowning94@shaw.ca with "In the Forefront: Subscribe" in the subject line. See" www.cofchrist.org/humanrights/hr-newsletter/default.asp for the latest newsletter. The newsletter updates human rights issues of concern to members and friends and includes action suggestions.

Amnesty International Among the many human rights organizations, Amnesty International is the largest membership-based organization. Founded in London in 1961, Amnesty International is a Nobel Prize-winning grassroots activist organization with over one million members worldwide. Amnesty International is dedicated to freeing prisoners of conscience, gaining fair trials for political prisoners, ending torture, political killings and "disappearances," and abolishing the death penalty throughout the world.

Amnesty International's vision is of a world in which every person enjoys all of the human rights enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other international human rights standards.

Amnesty is organized in many nations and details can be found at www.amnesty.org
Contact information is available for the following countries:

Amnesty Australia: Private Bag 23, Broadway, NSW 2007, Australia.
Tel.+ 61 2 92 17 76 00, www.amnesty.org.au

Amnesty Canada (English): 312 Laurier Avenue East, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 1H9,
Canada, Tel. 613 744 76 67 Email: www.amnesty.ca

Amnesty UK: 99-119 Rosebery Avenue, London, EC1R 4RE, UK
Tel. 020 7814 6200, www.amnesty.org.uk

Amnesty USA: 322 8th Avenue, New York, NY 10001, USA Tel. 212 807 8400
www.amnestyusa.org Email: admin-us@aiusa.org

The Human Rights Committee for the Community of Christ has a web page:
www.CofChrist.org/humanrights

An excellent Temple School course is also available: Wayne Ham, Editor; PS 230
Introduction to Human Rights. Tel. 816-833-1000 and ask for Temple School Courses.

4. Community Organizing

Outreach International has been very successful in using its participatory human development process (PHDP) in poorer nations to create community that empowers the poor. Outreach is also experimenting in working with congregations and their neighborhoods in North America.

For more information contact: Outreach International, PO Box 210, Independence, MO 64051 USA. Tel. +1 816 833 0883 or +1 888 833 1235 (toll free in USA)
Email: info@outreach-international.org Web: www.outreach-international.org

The Pacific Institute for Community Organization (PICO) serves a national network of congregation-based community organizations.

PICO's mission is to assist in the building of community organizations with the power to improve the quality of life of families and neighborhoods. PICO carries out its mission through leadership training seminars; the recruitment of and development of professional community organizers; and on-going consultation and technical assistance. Through the PICO network, people learn to participate in and influence the political system and democratic institutions. Those who were previously ignored, excluded, or apathetic become involved. People's stake in our society is made real. Family life is strengthened. The once-torn fabric of neighborhoods and communities is rewoven. At the very heart of this mission is the process of helping people to help themselves. Local organizing activities within the PICO Network are guided by the principles and concepts found in the Congregation-Community Model of Community Organization. Congregations of all denominations are the building blocks of the community organization. The members of a local congregation and those living in the neighborhood join together in a powerful expression of unity that transcends racial, ethnic, and income

differences. PICO seeks to involve all elements of a community based on the following principles:

- Respect for human dignity
- Creation of a just society
- Development of the whole person

PICO has a network of offices for further information available on the web at: www.piconetwork.org

Further reading: Dennis A. Jacobsen, *Doing Justice – Congregation and Community Organizing* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001).

5. The Environment

The church logo of a lion and lamb being led by a child is inspired by Isaiah 11. This passage portrays harmony between humans and the natural world. Stewardship of the environment is part of creating *shalom*. We thus have a particular reason as the Community of Christ for engaging in combating environmental degradation, global warming and pollution. It also is the poor who suffer the most from a polluted environment.

Eco-Justice Ministries is an independent, ecumenical agency that helps churches answer the call to care for all of God's creation, and develop ministries that are faithful, relevant and effective in working toward social justice and environmental sustainability. A free weekly e-mail newsletter, *Eco-Justice Notes*, is available that pulls together the strands connecting pastoral ministry, current headlines, ecological awareness and a commitment to justice and peace.

For further information: Eco-Justice Ministries, 400 S Williams St, Denver, CO 80209. Tel. 303-715-3873 Email: ministry@eco-justice.org Web: www.eco-justice.org

Evangelical Environmental Network (EEN) advocates for the environment from a biblical basis. They also produce an informative magazine called *Creation Care* (they offer a free introductory copy). They raised a lot awareness about the gas/petrol consumption of vehicles through their campaign “What would Jesus drive?” EEN can be reached via email at by phone, or by postal mail at EEN, 4485 Trench Rd, Suite 850, Suwanee GA 30024 678-541-0747 Web: www.creationcare.org

6. Advocacy

Speak out for those who cannot speak, for the rights of all the destitute.
Speak out, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy.
(Proverbs 31:8-9 NRSV)

Compassion constitutes a radical form of criticism, for it announces that the hurt is to be taken seriously, that the hurt is not to be accepted as normal and natural but is an abnormal and unacceptable condition for humanness.
Walter Brueggemann²⁵

In nations with more authoritarian governments, advocacy – “speaking out for those who cannot speak” - is much more difficult and can involve a great deal of risk that courageous people nevertheless will still take. Moses was advocating for the Hebrew people in such a regime in Egypt. Gandhi and Martin Luther King led non-violent protests against governments who were at times violent. In functional democracies citizens have a great freedom for advocacy at minimal cost. In Canada a letter to a Member of Parliament does not even have to have a postage stamp.

Letter writing is one form of advocacy. So are emails, faxes and telephone calls. As has already been mentioned, Amnesty International and Bread for the World work by members contacting politicians. Advocacy, however, can be on a whole range of issues at local government, state or provincial, as well as national government level.

Why write or contact a politician on an issue of concern? Writing to a politician is a form of witness; it is speaking truth to power. It is the stewardship of citizenship. When a politician receives a letter they think “A thousand other people also are thinking like this.” It is not difficult to do. A good letter includes the following:

1. Be brief. Keep a letter to one page. A handwritten letter is often better than typed or form written or email. But any kind of contact is better than nothing.
2. Be courteous. When possible thank them for something they have done that you approve of. You are heard better and you can begin to build up a respectful relationship.
3. Say what legislation or stand you want your representative to take.
4. Give reasons.
5. Ask a question so that they have to reply. Make sure you include your address.

Arranging to meet face to face at the local office of the political representative can also be effective.

Some national contact information:

Australia

The Right Honourable____
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600, Australia
Tel. 02 6277 7111
www.aph.gov.au

Canada

The Right Honourable____
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, Ontario,
K1A 0A6
www.parl.gc.ca

United Kingdom

The Right Honourable____
House of Commons,
London, SW1A 0AA
Tel. 020 7219 3000
www.parliament.uk

The United States

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500
Tel 202 456 1111

The Honorable____
US House of
Representatives
Washington, D.C. 20515
Tel. 202 224 3121
www.house.gov

The Honorable____
US Senate
Washington, D.C. 20510
Tel. 202 224 3121
www.senate.gov

There are many organizations that work on informing their members on issues. Amnesty International and Bread for the World have already been mentioned, but others include Oxfam, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth etc.

Mennonites and Quakers (Friends) both have offices in Washington DC and produce helpful newsletters, excellent web pages, and email updates on legislation before the US Congress. For further information contact:

Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL), 245 Second Street, NE, Washington, DC, 20002-5795 USA. Tel: (202) 547-6000 Email: fcnl@fcnl.org Web: www.fcnl.org They produce the excellent Washington Newsletter ten times a year that is free on a trial basis from FCNL.

Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Washington Office, 110 Maryland Ave. NE, #502, Washington, DC 20002. Tel: 202-544-6564; e-mail: mccwash@mcc.org Web: www.mcc.org/us/washington. MCC produce an inexpensive bimonthly newsletter called the Washington Memo that discusses major issues before the US Congress and suggests possible action.

Congregational Check List for Action Step 3: Working for Peace and Justice

1. Have you decided on a person to take the lead in helping the congregation engage in Peace and Justice Ministries? Who else might be willing to work with and support this person?
2. If the first act of engaging in peace and justice ministries is listening to victims, and opening our eyes to their pain, decide how can you do that in your congregation for your neighborhood? Perhaps in a testimony or talk in a worship service? What peace and justice issues are close to home for members of the congregation? Is someone a union member, or has suffered racism etc?
3. Review children's ministries done by the congregation. How can this be strengthened? How can children's ministry naturally connect with peace and justice ministries? Remember a congregation is doing something significant by simply adding one or two assets in the lives of some children.
4. With what other organizations might the congregation partner with in the neighborhood to improve the welfare of children there?
5. Out of all the possible peace and justice projects the congregation might engage in, which one should the congregation start with or develop? Which one would have broad support and help unite the congregation? How can it be integrated with service and discipleship formation?
6. How might a chosen peace and justice project find expression through worship services? Lent and Easter and Advent and Christmas have strong peace and justice themes. How might intentionally living more simply in Lent create support and time for peace and justice ministries – especially to do with the environment? How can false accusation, miscarriage of justice, torture, wrongful imprisonment and execution connect with the passion and crucifixion stories of Jesus and the contemporary work of Amnesty International? In Advent, as the Jesus birth stories are covered, see what peace and justice actions can connect with the slaughter of the innocent boys, homelessness, being a refugee in Egypt, and angels singing peace?

Integrating: Bringing Mission Together.

Key Ideas:

- Each congregation is to be a *living temple* pursuing peace, reconciliation and healing of the spirit informed by the life of Jesus.
- A vision of Zion, the Reign of God on earth, enables us to critically evaluate the world as it is. With imagination inspired by a vision of Zion we realize the world does not have to stay the way it is.
- Authentic worship cannot be separated from justice making.
- Jesus had a strategy for transforming the world. It has three parts: compassionate ministries, evangelism/discipleship and working for peace and justice. Using this three part strategy, the smallest congregation can begin to change the world by reaching out to its neighborhood.
- A congregation cannot do everything, but if it does just one ministry of compassion in the neighborhood, it is doing something very significant.
- Ideally what we are offering in compassionate ministry is a long-term relationship that includes an invitation to closer fellowship and a deeper sense of salvation.
- Implement first *A Witnessing Community: A Basic Guide to Congregational Missionary Ministry*.
- Band Aids and charity are not enough. Personal change is not enough. Peace and Justice ministries is about system change. Asking what is happening to children can enable us to ask critical questions of our neighborhood, city, nation and world.
- Every congregation can begin by having one peace and justice project. It does not matter what it is – all issues are connected. It does not have to be big or complicated. It might just be two or three people doing something with the support of the congregation. If it grows out of a service project or a need identified locally that is excellent.
- It is suggested that children's ministries be the primary practical peace and justice project that should be considered by a congregation. Ministry to children is not controversial and enables us to easily combine in a holistic way compassion, peace and justice, and, with the consent of parents, discipleship formation. However, some congregations may feel led to begin ministries in their neighborhood with other age groups.
- We join in the Divine passion for restoring the lost worth of all persons through compassion, conversion and changing systems and institutions that create victims. In pursuing the sacredness of all creation, compassion, evangelism/discipleship and peace and justice are integrated in mission that transforms the world.

CONCLUDING REVIEW EXERCISE

1. Analyzing a Congregational Story

Read the following congregational stories, evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each congregation in terms of holistic mission: compassionate ministries, evangelism/discipleship and peace and justice ministries:

1. **Leicester congregation, England** has a membership of about 25 people and meets in a tin hut church on a busy road in a lower middle/working class area. On a typical Sunday the numbers meeting for worship fluctuate from 9 to 20. They meet weekly for church school and worship and run a children's and youth program for the neighborhood on a Tuesday evening. They also did a Christmas dinner program for those who would be on their own at Christmas for ten years, which resulted in people coming to the congregation. Their example also inspired a Community of Christ congregation in Adelaide, Australia to do a weekly evening café for people in their neighborhood. The Leicester congregation is trusted by parents and others in the neighborhood and has been able to help in some difficult circumstances. The congregation in the last five years has celebrated 7 baptisms of both children and adults.

2. **Beals, Maine, New England Mission Center, USA** has an average attendance on about 25 each Sunday. In the last five years there have been about 6 baptisms. They focus on giving ministry to the elderly and to grieving families and visit the sick. In terms of evangelism they have a Solid Rock Café and a touring Christmas program.

3. **South India Mission.** This consists of three congregations, one with 400 members, another with 80 members, and a third with 20. A woman being abused by her husband fled for help to the pastor's wife, Rupa Kumar, in 1991. Rupa had no idea what to do except take her in with her three children. She said to herself "If I don't do this, there is no justification for my survival in this world." From this has developed a very successful women's shelter program that equips the women with work skills and counsels abusive husbands. A multi-faith task force was developed to achieve this. The women also started the Tamil Nadu Slum Dwellers Federation. The church at the moment can not do any baptisms because of recent legislations to prevent Hindu's converting to Christianity.

4. **Liberty Street congregation, Independence, USA,** is a middle class congregation with an attendance of about a 100 on a Sunday morning out of a book membership of 252. In the last five years there have been 19 baptisms. Its outreach ministries include a Solid Rock Café for youth, a partnership with Outreach International, a community Share program which delivers good quality food for a good price, and in June and December they collect goods for needy kids. Also for some time about eleven people have gone to the local battered women's shelter to cook the Saturday evening meal once a month. They have a story time and singing for the children in the shelter. The women from the congregation fellowship with the shelter women during the meal and then do a craft after the meal with them. Some of the women have asked to come to church but they need a ride. This has now been arranged.

5. **Tuality Congregation, Tigard near Portland, Oregon, USA** has grown by a third in the last few years by people moving into the area. About 150 attend on a Sunday morning. They have a good youth program including a Solid Rock Café. The congregation participates in Portland Rescue Mission serving the homeless on a Saturday night. They participate in the Oregon Food Bank and received a commendation for their service. Other ministries include involvement in a beach clean-up program, baskets for the homeless at Easter and adopting families at Christmas. They also support a teddy bear program with the local fire department for kids who lose their homes. As part of a potluck program in homes they send cards to Amnesty International prisoners

of conscience in the summer and around Christmas. In the last five years they have baptized 18 people, mostly children.

6. **Stratford Congregation, Ontario, Canada** has approximately 220 members with about 80-90 attending regularly. There are some youth programs including Peace Makers Clubs and Vacation Bible Schools. Baptisms average about three a year. One interesting outreach ministry is running a Saturday morning breakfast twice a month to raise funds for women shelters. It is well supported by the neighborhood and has had good publicity in the media. The food is donated, so all funds raised from the breakfasts are able to go to the recipients: the local women's shelter and the CORDI Women's Shelter in India, through World Accord. In doing this, the Stratford congregation is building community, while engaging the neighborhood locally and in India.

7. **Guildford Congregation, Australia** is located in the very linguistically and culturally diverse area of western Sydney. Church neighbours speak dozens of different languages, such as Arabic, Mandarin, Greek, Tagalog, Korean, and Spanish. There are 41 people on the membership roll, and about 20 attend weekly worship. The women of the congregation meet fortnightly for "craft and conversation." Their meetings are held in the church sanctuary and often coincide with community playgroup meetings held in the church hall, which promotes regular interaction with the young mothers and children. The congregation collects second-hand clothing and food for hampers for a local migrant women's domestic violence refuge and a local primary school. Recently they established a partnership with the New South Wales Nigerian Association, which seeks to unite local Nigerian-Australians from many different tribes and who speak varied dialects. The congregation also applied for and successfully received a \$97,000 state government grant over two years to establish a community café program that will bring older people together to combat social isolation, build community, and celebrate cultural diversity. In the last five years there has been over five baptisms.

Choose one congregation nearest your own in size. What would you suggest that the congregation do to improve their mission strategy? List your ideas here:

2. Working at a wholistic mission in your congregation.

Evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of your congregation's current mission and with this information plan what your congregation is going to do in the future in each of the following areas:

| Compassionate Ministries | Evangelism/ Discipleship Formation | Peace and Justice Ministries |
|---------------------------------|---|-------------------------------------|
| | | |

a) How can these three aspects of mission be integrated to support each other and make it more effective, efficient and easier to do?

b) Make a list of the gaps that persist?

c) How could you initiate conversation and action to improve the overall mission of the congregation? Share some simple first steps?

3. Celebrate your Success

As you implement an integrated mission program for your congregation please celebrate your success stories by contacting the author below. It would be very helpful to share your stories with others.

Andrew Bolton, Council of Twelve, The Temple
 1001 W. Walnut, Independence, MO 64050, USA
 Tel. 816 521 3025 Email: abolton@CofChrist.org

APPENDIX

We Share Enduring Principles

Grace and Generosity

- God's grace, especially as revealed in Jesus Christ, is generous and unconditional.
- Having received God's generous grace, we respond generously and graciously receive the generosity of others.
- We offer all we are and have to God's purposes as revealed in Jesus Christ.
- We generously share our witness, resources, ministries, and sacraments according to our true capacity.

Sacredness of Creation

- In the beginning, God created and called it all good.
- Spirit and material, seen and unseen, are related.
- Creation's power to create or destroy reminds us of our vulnerability in this life.
- God is still creating to fulfill divine purpose.
- We join with God as stewards of care and hope for all creation.

Continuing Revelation

- Scripture is an inspired and indispensable witness of human response to God's revelation of divine nature.
- God graciously reveals divine will today as in the past.
- The Holy Spirit inspires and provides witness to divine truth.
- In humility, individually and in community, we prayerfully listen to understand God's will for our lives, the church, and creation more completely.

Worth of All Persons

- God views all people as having inestimable and equal worth.
- God wants all people to experience wholeness of body, mind, spirit, and relationships.
- We seek to uphold and restore the worth of all people individually and in community, challenging unjust systems that diminish human worth.
- We join with Jesus Christ in bringing good news to the poor, sick, captive, and oppressed.

All Are Called

- God graciously gives people gifts and opportunities to do good and to share in God's purposes.
- Jesus Christ invites people to follow him by becoming disciples who share his life and ministry.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We respond faithfully, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to our best understanding of God's call.

Responsible Choices

- God gives humans the ability to make choices about whom or what they will serve. Some people experience conditions that diminish their ability to make choices.
- Human choices contribute to good or evil in our lives and in the world.
- Many aspects of creation need redemption because of irresponsible and sinful human choices.
- We are called to make responsible choices within the circumstances of our lives that contribute to the purposes of God.

Pursuit of Peace (Shalom)

- God wants shalom (justice, reconciliation, well-being, wholeness, and peace) for all of creation.
- Jesus Christ, the embodiment of God’s shalom (peace), reveals the meaning of God’s peace in all aspects of life.
- The vision of Zion is to promote God’s reign on earth, as proclaimed by Jesus Christ, through the leavening influence of just and peaceful communities.
- We courageously and generously share the peace of Jesus Christ with others.
- Led by the Holy Spirit, we work with God and others to restore peace (shalom) to creation.
- We celebrate God’s peace wherever it appears or is being pursued by people of good will.

Unity in Diversity

- The Community of Christ is a diverse, international family of disciples, seekers, and congregations.
- Local and worldwide ministries are interdependent and important to the church’s mission.
- The church embraces diversity and unity through the power of the Holy Spirit.
- We seek agreement or common consent in important matters. If we cannot achieve agreement, we commit to ongoing dialogue and lovingly uphold our common faith in Jesus Christ and the mission of the church.
- We confess that our lack of agreement on certain matters is hurtful to some of

Blessings of Community

- The gospel of Jesus Christ is expressed best in community life where people become vulnerable to God’s grace and each other.
- True community includes compassion for and solidarity with the poor, marginalized, and oppressed.
- True community upholds the worth of persons while providing a healthy alternative to self-centeredness, isolation, and conformity.
- Sacred community provides nurture and growth opportunities for all people, especially those who can not fully care for themselves.
- We value our connections and share a strong sense of trust in and belonging with one another—even if we never have met.
- Some disciples are called and ordained to particular priesthood responsibilities and ministries for the sake of the community, the congregation, and the world.
- We are called to create communities of Christ’s peace in our families and congregations and across villages, tribes, nations, and throughout creation.

(Extract from: ‘We Share Enduring Principles’ in: First Presidency, We Share Identity, Mission, Message, and Beliefs, (December 2008, pp.5-8))

Notes

1. Chris Marshall, *The Little Book of Biblical Justice – A fresh approach to the Bible’s teachings on justice*. (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 2005), 11
2. Willard M. Swartley, *Covenant of Peace – The Missing Peace* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 28
3. Willard M. Swartley, 32
4. Willard M. Swartley, 42 and also see footnote 54
5. Willard M. Swartley, 212-213
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