

Seminary in Sri Lanka, Church of Christ in Thailand and a major Habitat for Humanity building project in Indonesia that is coordinated by Disciples missionaries, Tim and Diane Fonderlin.

To date, Disciples through WOC have provided \$1,447,496 in tsunami response. This includes \$161,000 to CWS for initial emergency shipments; \$379,000 to CWS Indonesia; \$253,000 for the Habitat/Disciples build in Indonesia; \$240,000 to ACT for partners in Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and Somalia; and \$397,000 to Disciples church partners.

Since the tsunami struck, the outpouring of generosity and concern from Disciples across the whole church has been remarkable. This includes \$2,275,700 in direct gifts to WOC. This has enabled Disciples to respond quickly and strongly to immediate relief activities and now, to ongoing recovery and rehabilitation efforts that will continue for the next several years.

Long-term plans by our partners aim at strengthening local capacity to alleviate the suffering of the most vulnerable tsunami survivors. These plans include building resilient communities by assisting people in re-establishing livelihoods and becoming self-reliant; construction of permanent housing, schools, clinics and churches; and on-going provision of health and nutrition services, water and sanitation services, psycho-social care, and child development support.

Week of Compassion is deeply grateful to all our congregations, members and friends for their concern for the tsunami survivors and for their trust in WOC to be a channel for that concern. 100% of all designated tsunami gifts have gone or will go for our responses to the earthquake and tsunami. Below are links to a number of recent stories from ACT partners that offer helpful and hopeful insights into the church's response to this crisis.

*Christian churches in Canada have had a long history of faithful support of this disaster relief fund of Church World Service and the whole Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Canada and the United States. Through your contributions, **YOU ARE THERE**, helping in every part of the world. Thank you, on behalf of all whose lives you have blessed. (Tom Rutherford)*

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While We're NOT on Moderation...

Into a World of Herods, God Sent a Newborn Baby...

by Ray Cuthbert

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ – the Lord of the Church!

It was into a world filled with Herods that God sent a newborn baby to make a world of difference.

In the church, we have a tendency to believe that we are talking about an ideal world. When we cannot achieve something that we hear in a sermon or that we read in the scriptures, we say to ourselves, "Oh well, that was just the ideal – no one really expects me to accomplish that, anyway."

I do not believe that the scriptures were written for the ideal world. The scriptures were written for the real world. If there had been no evil in the world God would not have had to sacrifice his only begotten Son. When God sent Jesus into the world God did so knowing exactly the kind of place that Jesus would be coming to. The scriptures put it this way, "The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who lived in a land of deep darkness-- on them light has shined." (Isaiah 9:2)

When we excuse ourselves from the demands that God might place on our lives, we are putting God into the land of fairy tales – a land where we think that the impossible is normal, but it has nothing to do with the world we live in!

God has **everything** to do with the world we live in! We can all recite John 3:16. What is it that God loved so much that he sent his only begotten son for? **The world!** It is this world, the real world. This world, which is filled with ambiguities and evil and disappointments, is the one that God loves so much. That is why he sent his only begotten Son.

God sent a newborn baby to make a difference! Why? Because God was willing to enter into the world in the same way that you and I enter the world – as defenseless little creatures who are absolutely dependent on someone else to sustain our lives.

God wanted to be in a position in a relationship with you and I so that God could say, “There’s nothing that you must face that I have also had to face.” Part of facing life in our world was facing the overwhelming evil of someone like King Herod.

God is not naïve! God knows that we face temptations, and trials and apathy and hard-heartedness in life. God did not send a little baby into a palace, but into an animal’s feeding trough!

Jesus, Mary and Joseph were refugees – fleeing to Egypt to escape evil when the baby Jesus was too helpless and defenseless to stand up to it.

God entrusted a tiny, fragile little life into our hands. Mary and Joseph were our representatives in God’s mission of love for the world.

If we really understand Christmas – it is God’s gift into the *real* world – not a world filled with fairy stories and happy endings.

God’s angels are saying to our fearful world, “Do not be afraid, for I am with you.”

Please remember always and everywhere to pray for your congregation, and for the wider church of which we are a part! Please pray for your minister and for our Regional Minister!



Register For Upcoming Church Transformation Conference

Register online by Jan. 12 for the 2006 Conference on Congregational Transformation, "Journeying the Good News Road." It will offer a great variety of resources and help leaders to design what will work for their congregations.

Click For Info >

Registration extended to Jan 12; room reservations to December 19 at reduced rate.

A Week of Compassion Update

One Year After the Tsunami

Friday, December 16, A.D. 2005

In a little over a week, on the day after Christmas, December 26, 2005, the world will mark the first anniversary of a disaster of unimaginable proportions - the earthquake and tsunami that struck in the eastern Indian Ocean and impacted more than a dozen countries from Indonesia to Somalia.

The massive quake, measuring 9.15 on the Richter Scale, unleashed a wall of water that reached speeds of 500 mph and heights of 80 feet. As many as 230,000 people were killed. Some 2 million people were made homeless. Damage to basic infrastructure (roads, bridges, water and sanitation systems, schools, health facilities, etc.), as well as the fishing industry and agriculture, has been so severe that it will take years to restore. The economic impact on the poor and the emotional trauma experienced by tens of thousands of survivors, especially women and children, is overwhelming.

However, within hours of the disaster, Disciples church partners were responding - including the grim task of removing and identifying bodies, assessing needs, and organizing immediate relief efforts. Soon, emergency food and water distribution, temporary shelter, and basic medical care began. Later, more long-term recovery programs were underway, including water and sanitation, more permanent housing, income-generation projects, and psycho-social care.

Given the scope and scale of such a disaster, the relief, recovery, and long-term rehabilitation programs would obviously face monumental challenges and difficulties, and thousands of people remain without permanent housing and struggle to survive. Yet, despite the obstacles, our church partners have been able to assist tens of thousands of survivors.

Disciples through Week of Compassion are supporting the efforts of nine ecumenical partners through the Action by Churches Together global network, including Church World Service in Indonesia, Churches Auxiliary for Social Action (CASA) in India, National Council of Churches in Sri Lanka, and Norwegian Church Aid in Somalia. WOC is also supporting the efforts of several Global Ministries partners - among them are the Church of North India and the Peace Trust in India, Jaffna Diocese and Christian Theological

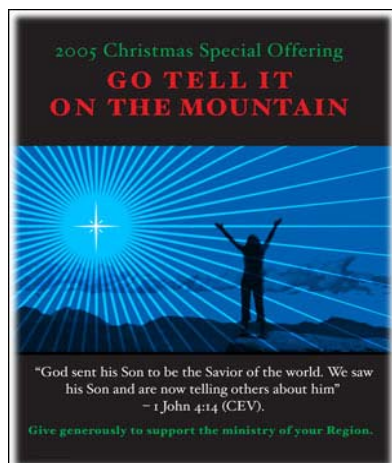
Go Tell It on the Mountain . . . That Jesus Christ Has Come!!

The Christian Church in Canada and the US has 30 regions. Canada is one of those regions, with churches from Dartmouth, Nova Scotia to Edmonton, Alberta, approximately 3200 miles. Each Region of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) is part of the vital work of Christ in our world today.

This Region . . .

- ◆ **Assists congregations in claiming their unique mission**
- ◆ **Shares resources for worship, education, stewardship, and outreach**
- ◆ **Revitalizes existing congregations**
- ◆ **Plans new congregations**
- ◆ **Nurtures candidates for ordained and licensed ministry**
- ◆ **Gives counsel in times of a ministerial search process**
- ◆ **Provides pastoral care for clergy and congregations**

Please give generously to the Christmas Offering for the benefit of your congregation your sister congregations and the common ministry of our Region.



Our Christmas Special Day Offering supports the Ministries of the Canada Region!



A PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH

For such a time as this, O God, you have called your church to be at its best:

To be faithful in proclaiming historic truth against the erosion of faith;

To be courageous and our willingness to honor new truth you may show us;

To be quick to see new opportunities, and prompt to respond to new challenges by which we may be your prophetic, redemptive and reconciling presence in the world.

Give us, we pray, the mind of Christ to discern your will for your church in these difficult days.

And give us the resolve of Christ, to bear on our shoulder those crosses of sacrifice which will bring healing and Ministry to those who suffer injustice or other evidences of human sinfulness.

Most of all, we pray, give us the heart of Christ, to reach out compassion that lead to those sisters and brothers — faraway and near at hand — who are as much loved by you as we are.

We pray for the peace that passes all understanding to conquer our restless and rebellious hearts. Help us always to remember that the church is yours — not ours— and that if your gracious spirit governs the church, that spirit will bear in-house the food of love, joy and peace.

As we seek to bear in the life of our church the marks of Christ, help us to remember his word: "by this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Unite us in our common commitment to the lordship of Jesus Christ, that what the world sees in the class is not the vision or discord, but our magnificent obsession to allow all that we are and have, to glorify him and fulfill your will, here and everywhere.

Come Lord Jesus; guide, and power and hold our church to your heart. We pray in your blessed name. AMEN.

December 1991
C. William Nichols
Former General Minister and President
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)



Shock Treatment

It's getting harder and harder all the time to find anything that shocks us much anymore. After watching the news reels of the past few months, we could be tempted to think we've seen it all already.

But imagine the shock and the rumors when they heard about Mary's story. Given today's mores, it's not much of a shock, but back then . . . ! How the news must have flown! All the good stuff of rumors and gossip! So young! And how the story grew — barely sixteen, we think; meanly born herself, they say; thinks God has chosen her for great responsibility, did you hear? Sounds like a daydream, if you ask me.

God is going to turn everything upside down, she says; the rich and the powerful put down and the weak and the powerless lifted up. Now there's a pipe dream, if I ever heard one! Where did she get all this nonsense? Now that's what I call foolishness. Look at the world we are living in; talk about out of touch with reality! Absurd, I'd say.

This is pretty radical stuff to be coming from a child, but wait a minute: doesn't it say somewhere that a little child shall lead them? Perhaps that's what we need more of these days — childlike confidence that takes God at God's Word.

We know more about this now. It's harder now to dismiss it as a childlike dream because it all came true. They could say that then, because they didn't know Jesus; we do! 2000 years of history should count for something. God's preposterous promises are no less so today than they were then, except that we have had all this time to carefully listen to the Advent story. We have had all this time to observe the life of Jesus lived out in thousands, no millions, of those who believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God. We've had all these years

to listen to the Spirit's voice, even today.

We know about Jesus and his proclamation and how he practiced the same truths that Mary believed in. We know about Jesus and how he trusted God so boldly. Jesus taught by example how to live in trust and love and obey God.

We have come to believe that the promises are for us. And, we have also come to believe that the responsibility is ours — ours — to tell the story, to live the life. Each of us has chosen to be God's special witness to the very same things that Mary believed in.

God turned the world upside down through the witness of a mere child. God turned the world upside down through the witness of her Child who died that all should live — the world turned upside down in relation to everything we think we know. In this very day, the world is being turned upside down in and by the lives of those who are his "children of faith," who believe today as radically as did Mary.

Would that we could live — would live — from this day forward with such radical faith in God and Jesus the Christ, the Bethlehem child. What would the year 2006 be like?

F. Thomas Rutherford
Regional minister

A Celebration of History and Christian Service

West Lorne Church of Christ (Disciples) has set January 8, 2006 as the day for their final service of worship, at 3 p.m. The congregation has had a long history in West Lorne, with preaching being held in West Lorne and Eagle as early as 1825. The first formal services were held in 1887, with a building being erected in 1905.

You are invited to attend their closing celebration January 8, 2006 at 3 p.m., or to send words of greeting and blessing to them, in care of, Mrs. Erla Walker, Chair of the Congregation, P. O. Box 303, West Lorne, ON N0L 2P0.