

Pasadena Covenant Church
Justice Sunday
January 14, 2007

Jeremiah 29:4-7. Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, to all the exiles whom I have sent into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ⁵Build houses and live in them; plant gardens and eat what they produce. ⁶Take wives and have sons and daughters; take wives for your sons, and give your daughters in marriage, that they may bear sons and daughters; multiply there, and do not decrease. ⁷***But seek the welfare of the city where I have sent you into exile, and pray to the LORD on its behalf, for in its welfare you will find your welfare.***

Hello my name is Shola. I have been a member of this church for 3 plus years. I am not a citizen and I do not live in the City of Pasadena. I work for a nonprofit that has an excellent track record in developing and managing affordable housing for persons that are homeless with a mental disability.

Why is my background significant? Because like many of you, I do not live in Pasadena and like many of you I am already involved in helping the poor and disaffected and like many of you I believe that Pasadena Covenant is the Church Community that God has placed me in.

My faithful companions are long term members of the church, newer members of the church and of course multi-generational: Brenda Thomas, Brian Wright, Christine Anketell, Donna Sider, Don Bosch, Emilie Still, Gaithri Fernando, Lela Giwa, Mike Still, Rob Filback, Suren Anketell, Tyler Watson and Wayne Aoki.

Charles Barker, Jim Tyberg, Marilyn Peck, Mary Barkman, John Barkman and Laurie Cornell are not members of the Peace and Justice Ministry Team but they provided support and in John and Jim's case, support, unclosed minds and necessary agitation.

Just over a year ago, I was asked to chair the Peace and Justice Ministry Team. The immediate charge before the committee was to present our vision for our area of ministry and in particular to make a recommendation to the Vision to Action Committee on the Bad Weather Shelter. Should Pasadena Covenant continue to host the Bad Weather Shelter? Or was God saying that it is time for the church to lay down this burden?

Why did I say yes? Well, Jim Tyberg asked. But that's another story...suffice to say that God does order our steps...Am I qualified? No... but God does indeed order our steps and all He really requires is the Yes we are able to give... And as always He never lets us down; He pre-equips and equips us for each step of faith that we embark on.

Is there any validity to a Justice Ministry within one's Church life? Is a Justice Ministry an appropriate form of Christian Outreach? Is it as valid as Evangelism and Missions? We believe that the answer is a resounding yes. We believe that Missions, Evangelism and Justice Ministries are the basic tenets of a holistic approach to reaching the World for Christ. We believe that a Justice Ministry is fundamentally a ministry of Reconciliation. We believe that Peace and Justice is about responding holistically to our call to serve the least of these and to seek the welfare of the city God has placed us in. We believe that Peace and Justice is about Seeking God, Sharing God and...Transforming our Community.

Our vision predates the current members of the ministry team. It is born out of approximately 18 months of intense work and prayer. It is intended to help guide Pasadena Covenant Church in continued and deepened outreach to Pasadena, the City that God has placed this Church Community in. It is an outgrowth of our desire to be obedient servants of God by sensitively interpreting God's vision for a new season of Peace and Justice Ministry among our congregation.

Three themes emerged and remain constant throughout this process:

1. We have heard the clarion call to effect justice. We perceive this movement within the evangelical church body at large and within our local community. We also recognize that interest in justice and community outreach ministries such as the Bad Weather Shelter, is consistently high among the reasons for joining and for continual church attendance at Pasadena Covenant.
2. We sense that God's spirit is nudging our church toward a deeper investment in our local community. We share a desire to see our church move forward in re-affirming our response to God's call to "understand how our community hurts." This will involve a learning process as we grow in understanding God's heart for the disenfranchised around us and the possible ways God may use Pasadena Covenant Church to work for the *shalom* of Pasadena.
3. We desire to lead our congregation in a multi-year strategy to deepen its understanding of and engagement in a Justice Ministry. We envision a congregational wide effort to discern Pasadena Covenant's unique signature and how our abundant talents can be used to seek the welfare of this City. *By the way, I am using talents as in the parable of the talents and not in the Hollywood sense of the word talent.* Seriously, we want to see Justice Ministry acknowledged as an integral part of the culture of Pasadena Covenant Church. We want to see Justice Ministry acknowledged as an integral part of the culture of Pasadena Covenant Church.

4 Wednesdays ago, as I handed out blankets to Pasadena residents at the Bad Weather Shelter, I thought to myself. Well this is not bad. No one was rowdy, they were polite, they knew the system, how many blankets everyone got and what happened when. In short I did not feel uncomfortable. And they looked and I hesitate to say this but they looked fine. They were clothed, fed and dry. Good. ***Then the shoe dropped. No, not good! When did this become the norm? By hosting the Shelter, we show much needed compassion to those in dire straits but 18 years later the numbers have increased and we are no longer just serving men but also women and children.***

Our recommendation on the Bad Weather Shelter is three fold:

- 1) Pasadena Covenant should affirm its call to love the least of these by solidifying our commitment to the Bad Weather Shelter. In fact there is a strong affirmation within the committee that hosting the BWS affords Pasadena Covenant an opportunity to be transformed by loving and serving the least of these.
- 2) That Pasadena Covenant should establish a Shelter Ministry whose guiding principles are to jealously guard the dignity of those we serve at the Shelter and to ensure that Pasadena Covenant's outreach to the Homeless is transformative. And as we act out of the stream and flow of God's Grace and meet practical needs and effect change, we create opportunities for those we serve to be reconciled to God - to know the joy, grace, eternal hope and victory of true Life in Christ.
- 3) That Pasadena Covenant should build on what God has done and is doing in our congregation by leveraging our institutional influence within the City of Pasadena and investing our corporate talents to seek the welfare of the City by learning to affect Justice based on the issues of Homelessness.

We believe that we are on the right track because our vision honors the journey of faith that has brought Pasadena Covenant thus far; and asks for nothing more than a holistic approach to the way Pasadena Covenant reaches out to the least of these. We believe that as we reach out to our community as God directs and find Christ in the least of these, we are transformed and reconciliation occurs between God & Man; Man & Man and Man & Social Systems. God's right order is established within our City and Shalom reigns.