

# The Shalom

## MINISTRIES CHAMPION



Volume 3, Issue 2 February 2008

Your source for all the latest in Shalom Ministries News **Cham-pi-on n.** an ardent defender or supporter of a cause.

### Why Organize?

Getting myself organized takes a lot of my time. It seems I spend time opening mail, filing stuff, returning phone calls, and preparing stuff. Doing this is more than fulfilling “administrivia”. Getting organized at the beginning of the day and the end of the day makes the rest of the day more effective.

That’s an important principle of urban mission. We can focus on responsible economic development, or creative church planting, or a prophetic peace witness, but until we’ve organized, all we are doing is projects. The key to transformational urban mission is actively organizing urban communities.

Of course, the challenge of community organizing is that it is deceptively simple in execution: Meet people, listen to their passion, link them with people of similar passions, and try to get out of the way of what they create!

Shalom Ministries has been working from a community organizing methodology since the mid-1990’s, when we realized that the congregation was God’s urban missionary agency, and God’s calling to us was to come along side the congregation, listen to them share their passion, offering training, coaching, and consulting to help them attain their mission passion, and then getting out of their way as they fulfill God’s missionary call.

We learn from and participate with other community organizing efforts. We are a member of One-LA, (<http://onela-iaf.org/>) a metropolitan organizing project in Los Angeles County, sponsored by the Industrial Areas Foundation. Through our membership in One-LA, Shalom Ministries projects an Anabaptist-Mennonite voice into efforts around immigration, housing, education, and the environment.

We team up with Partners for Urban Transformation (<http://www.piut.org/>) and Project Advance Academy (<http://www.projectadvanceacademy.org/>) which uses community organizing as a means to work at reducing relative poverty in North America, and absolute poverty in the Global South. It seems that listening to the poor, and giving them opportunity to create their own solutions – tends to work; as opposed to simply offering the charity of the crumbs of our middle class plates.

Our work at Shalom Ministries continues to develop and evolve. Our passion is a cadre of urban leaders empowering churches in the cities of our world to fully embrace God’s unique purpose. We work to achieve that passion not by having a shelf full of programs, but by engaging in relationships and discovering together how God wants to work in our midst. It takes more time on the front end to build the relationships, and you may actually have more “failures” – because not everyone always wants relationships. But, for those willing to go on the journey, the shared effort of conversation and transformation is truly a gift from God.

Pray for us here at Shalom Ministries, as we continue the journey of building relationships with leaders who have fallen in love with Jesus and the church. Pray for us, as we walk with those leaders and empower the communities they lead to embrace God’s global, urban mission.

*Jeff Wright,  
President/COO*

## Waging Truth

In the 7th chapter of John, the Jerusalem crowd tells Jesus that he must be demon-possessed because he has accused them of “looking for an opportunity to kill” him. They emphatically deny his accusation, saying, “Who is trying to kill you?” (vs.19-20) A few verses later, they say among themselves, “Is not this the man they are trying to kill?” (v.25) By the end of chapter eight, they actually try to kill Jesus, but he slips away (v.59).

Confronting lies and murder is risky business. Not confronting such evil is, however, also dangerous and, in the long run, may result in even greater destruction. Left unchecked, the spirits of deceit and murder will corrupt and overwhelm whole societies.

In these days of endless war and its multiplying justifications, we find ourselves battling these same spirits. The worldly powers that wage war and injustice have always relied on sophisticated systems of deceit to perpetrate their crimes, but we have witnessed in these last few years something more brazen: The lies are more blatant, their speakers more arrogant. A quick search on Youtube will produce multiple videos showing clips of administration officials flatly contradicting themselves as they deceive a whole nation to wage war.

Against such an assault on truth, we must continue to stand firm. In John 7-8, Jesus models for us how to stand firm. He does not allow the deception to define reality but persists in reframing reality according to God’s truth.

Jesus moves according to God’s schedule rather than when others think that he should: He does not go to Jerusalem when his brothers urge him to but instead goes in his own “time” (7:1-10). He does not let the authorities arrest him because it is not his “hour” (7:29).

Jesus also redefines his death as going somewhere that the Judean leaders “cannot come” (7:32-36). He refers to his crucifixion as a victorious event in which he is “lifted up” (8:28). Throughout all of this, Jesus stubbornly sticks to his message, shining his light in the darkness, even though he is ridiculed and even attacked.

In these times of mass deception, let us also define our reality according to God’s truth. Let us move in God’s timing, not merely reacting to events. Let us discern in the Spirit what our lives are about rather than allowing them to be shaped by nationalism, materialism, and militarism. And let us continue telling the truth, relentlessly confronting lies and murder. The truth we speak, the lives we live, and the actions that we take are the seeds that we sow in the world, and their fruit will be born in God’s time.

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Through events such as the Palm Sunday Peace Parade and efforts such as the Iran Study Group, the Peace Center @ CAL continues to speak the truth in these desperate times. We do so not because we are assured of any short term effectiveness, but because we are faithful to God's call, and in that faith we are assured that our efforts will bear fruit in God's time.

*Bert Newton  
Director of Peace Center  
Shalom Ministries*

### ***Palm Sunday Peace Parade***

*You are invited to join this year's Palm Sunday Peace Parade. The Peace Center wishes to include as many churches and other Gospel-based groups as possible.*

*The Palm Sunday Peace Parade is a public worship and witness event where we put Palm Sunday back in the streets where it began. This parade began back in 2003, when the Iraq war started, as a way to witness publicly against the war and for God's Reign of Peace.*

*The parade begins at Messiah Lutheran church with a time of worship. We then march less than a mile down to the Paseo Colorado mall with signs, drums, kazoos, flags and many palm branches. At the Paseo (actually on the big public sidewalk in front of it), we sing and pray for God's Reign of Peace. The event is very family friendly, and children often play an integral part.*



*Photo courtesy Bert Newton*

### **School for Urban Mission 2008 course offering**

**Kingdom of God in the City** seeks to engage urban practitioners in their role as God's agent for missional transformation in the city by exploring human relationships from multifaceted experiences. Special consideration will be given to the ethics of the Kingdom of God, exploring Christian responses to urban problems and tools for confronting the powers of the city. Drawing on Biblical, historical, and applied sources, students who complete the course should be able:

To clearly articulate an ethic of the Kingdom of God for the city.

To critically reflect on what a Christian response to urban problems might look like in the city.

Be better equipped to confront the powers in the city.

**Instructor** Valentina Satvedi

**First class** will meet February 9, 2008

**Course Sessions** will take place from **9 am to 1 pm** on the campus of William Carey International University located at 1539 East Howard Street, Pasadena CA 91104.

To **register** for this course please contact our office at (626)727-8100 or send an email to

[urban.anabaptist@gmail.com](mailto:urban.anabaptist@gmail.com)

## **Annual Winter Assembly Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference**

The Annual Winter Assembly of the Pacific Southwest Mennonite Conference was held recently! The event took place on Friday and Saturday, February 1-2, 2008, and was co-hosted by Family Mennonite Church and Royal Dominion Family Chapel located respectively on 6520 and 6505 S, Normandie Ave, Los Angeles, CA 90044.

The theme for assembly this year, based on Philippians 3:12-14, is "**Pressing on Toward the Goal.**" The Assembly opened on Friday, February 1 at 7:00 pm with a worship service at Family Mennonite Church where David Greiser of Hesston College provided the keynote address "*Pressing on to Equip Leaders.*" .On Saturday, February 2, the first conference business session started at 9:00 am at Royal Dominion Family Chapel with a keynote address by Pastor Virgo Handojo of JKI Anugerah on the topic "*Pressing on to Build Multi-Cultural Relationships.*" The second conference business session started at 1:30 pm with a keynote address from Pastor Steve Penner of First Mennonite Church of Reedley on the topic "*Pressing on to Develop Mission Strategy.*" Following the assembly, the Concert for the Nations took place coordinated by Brother George Makinto.

Look for other details and pictures in our next issue

## **Peace Out: The Shalom Ministries Champion Signs Off**

The Shalom Ministries Champion is a monthly venue for sharing the good news about Shalom Ministries. You are invited to submit articles for consideration to the editor. Articles should be sent no later than the 10th of the month for possible publication in the next month's newsletter. We look forward to hearing from you and wish you and yours peace. Send your submissions via email to [urban.anabaptist@gmail.com](mailto:urban.anabaptist@gmail.com).

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