



Community Of Hope UCC

July, 2011

Worship Services every Sunday at 6:00pm

*The future
depends entirely on what
each of us does every day;
a movement is only
people moving.*

- Gloria Steinem

Dear Companions,

A couple of months ago, I attended a clergy retreat sponsored by the Kansas-Oklahoma Conference of the United Church of Christ. Our retreat leader was the Rev. Dr. David Greenhaw, President of Eden Theological Seminary in Chicago. At that retreat, Dr Greenhaw talked about the need, especially among mainline Protestant churches, to re-claim the historical roots of Christianity that developed out of the teachings of Jesus. He said that we needed to remember that Christianity was started as a “movement”, not an “institution.”

I shared at that retreat some of the ways in which Community of Hope is functioning with that kind of understanding. When I returned from that retreat, I was even more intrigued by that concept of being a ‘movement’ rather than an ‘institution’ and have been focusing on that in my personal prayer life as I look at the ways in which Community of Hope is trying to change the world.

Recently, I encountered the above quote from Gloria Steinem and it helped me see how we might be able to explain to others the movement of which Community of Hope is a part. As Ms Steinem pointed out, a movement is, really, nothing more than people moving.

And that is what being a “companion on the journey” means: we are journeying—we are moving. Sometimes we move together, sometimes we move in different directions, but, at our core, Community of Hope is about movement. Whether it’s the spiritual movement of a community in worship, the physical movement of a community working in a garden together, or any of the other ways we move together, we understand that our call as a faith community is to be moving.

During the month of July, we will be having a series of community roundtables to talk about how we wish to move into our future as a community. (See the article elsewhere in this newsletter.) Please check the schedule of roundtables and attend the one that is most convenient for you. If you are unable to attend one of the roundtables but wish to share your thoughts about how Community of Hope can continue moving into its future, please call me or send me an email (pastor@cohope.com).

Blessings on your journey!

Rev. Bob Lawrence, Pastor



MY TRIP TO WASHINGTON, DC

by Rev. Bob Lawrence, Pastor

As many of you already know, I was able to attend the Human Rights Campaign's Clergy Call Conference May 22-24 in Washington, DC. This conference happens every other year and is a chance for clergy from across the USA to gather and lobby our federal legislators on issues of importance to the LGBTQ communities. I was able to attend because I received a scholarship from the HRC that covered my hotel expenses. (I paid for airfare, meals and incidentals myself—no funds from Community of Hope were used.)

The keynote speaker for the event was Melissa Harris-Perry, a frequent contributor to MSNBC and The Rachel Maddow Show. Dr Harris-Perry is a dynamic voice on the systems of power and privilege in the USA. Her speech was very informative and inspiring.

I also attended other gatherings and workshops designed to prepare us for our visits with our state's congressional delegation, and I was able to connect with clergy colleagues from across the USA in our common goal of bringing about God's kin-dom. (Clergy from all 50 states attended the conference.)

As you might expect, my lobbying efforts with the Oklahoma congressional delegation was not as exciting and empowering.

I lobbied our delegation with a clergy colleague from Norman, who is an active military chaplain. The four issues we were lobbying for were pre-selected by the Human Rights Campaign and were:

- Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA)
- Respect for Marriage Act (repeal of DOMA)
- Student Non-Discrimination Act (SNDA)
- Safe Schools Improvement Act (SSIA)

I was able to meet with legislative aides for five of the seven members of Oklahoma's congressional delegation: Senators Inhofe and Coburn, and Representatives Sullivan, Lankford, and Cole. Although Representatives Boren and Lucas were not able to find time in their schedule to meet with us, I was able to stop by their offices and drop off information about the four issues we were addressing.

While meeting with the aides, I was able to share the stories of some of the companions at Community of Hope who have been personally impacted because the issues we were lobbying for have not yet been



approved by our elected officials.

Although we were treated with respect in all of our meetings, one of the legislative aides made sure we understood that “The Senator does not support these issues.” Luckily, this was the first office we visited, so I was able to use my response to her comment in all of my subsequent meetings: “I realize the Senator (or Representative) may not support these issues. I am not here to debate them. I am here to let you and the Senator (or Representative) know that there are many religious leaders and other people of faith who do support these issues, and who would like our Senator (or Representative) to support them as well. “

It was a wonderful visit and I am so blessed to have been able to attend this conference. I was honored to be carrying the stories of the companions at Community of Hope with me as I traveled the halls of Congress. It was very humbling to, once again, be entrusted with the stories of this community as we attempt to “speak truth to power” in our goal of changing the world.

NICARAGUA NEWS

by David Hoot

Because of scheduling conflicts, Community of Hope will not be sending a team to Nicaragua this year. It was a combination of events that resulted in this situation: I procrastinated about making a reservation at the Peace House in Chacraseca, more groups are visiting Chacraseca this summer, and by the time I figured out a week to travel there was no vacancies. Also, the people who had expressed an interest in going this year each had different availabilities and that, again, created a scheduling challenge. Sooooo, we will plan better for next year, setting the dates for the trip early in the year, and make our reservations at the Peace House.

Leslie Penrose, with JustHope, is planning a Solidarity Summit in Chacraseca later this year. The plan is for at least one representative from each of the groups that partner with Chacraseca to attend the Summit. Leslie has seen over the last year that some of the group projects overlap or duplicate, while others even compete against each other. The Summit would be a way to coordinate group projects so that the community of Chacraseca benefits to the maximum extent. I plan to attend the Summit and represent Community of Hope. While we will not be sending a team to Nicaragua this year, we will still honor our financial commitments to our companions in Chacraseca. We have already sent the funds to build a new home for a family and will send the funds to sponsor 143 primary school scholarships later in the year.





**Please be sure to join us
on Sunday, July 31 at 6pm
for a celebration
in honor of
Rev. Lizette Merchan's
ministry among us.**

**This will be
Lizette's last Sunday as she begins a
new chapter in her life. There
will be a reception following worship.**

Contact Community of Hope Staff:

Rev. Bob Lawrence: pastor@cohope.com
Rev. Lizette Merchan: revlizette@cohope.com
Tracy Megli: music@cohope.com
Julie Tate: admin@cohope.com



Our vision is to be a community of faith, committed in the way of Jesus to the struggle for justice, compassion, and life-giving spirituality for all people; and our mission is to witness, in and through our life together, to the good news that the way of God is in our midst...and the journey is our home.