

HOPEww & Benevolence Service Team Report

Contributed by Mark Templer and John Causey
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“All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor.” —Gal 2:10.

The brothers and sisters on the HOPE worldwide and Benevolence Service Team have been tirelessly serving for the past year to build stronger bridges and two-way communication between the churches and HOPE worldwide.

The committee surveyed the churches for feedback about HOPE worldwide; it has created a church resource page on the HOPE worldwide website to help disciples and churches; it has commissioned a wonderful theological essay *Pure Religion: Biblical Perspectives on Serving the Poor* by Robert Carrillo, Evangelist, San Diego Church of Christ; and it has given many great suggestions to HOPE worldwide about how to work together more effectively with the churches and disciples.

The committee has met very consistently (10 times after LA, 4 times since Kiev) and has representation from all over the US, with over 20 people in attendance on typical calls. We recently have been encouraged to add more international participation to the committee, with members from Japan, Southeast Asia, and the UK (besides India), with China soon to follow. A list of committee members is attached below. The committee has also helped commission HOPE worldwide to encourage more united spiritual activities by its employees, with a global day of fasting for employees on October 2, 2008, and another one scheduled for April 26, 2009. In addition, HOPE worldwide employees and friends started out 2009 with a multi-nation, 7-day 24-hour prayer chain from January 1st-7th, 2009. In these times of economic turmoil and trouble it is the poor who will suffer first and most, and we are all praying for God to help us to help them.

The committee also has promoted two-way feedback between the church leaders and HOPE worldwide both to “spread the word” about service opportunities, as well as to understand from the churches how HOPE worldwide can better work with the members. This partnership helped promote successful service on a number of occasions, including 1500 campus students at the ICMC in July 2008, service to victims of Hurricanes Ike and Gustav later in 2008, and a successful Martin Luther King Day partnership with the Red Cross that received national attention on January 19th, 2009.

Moving forward, the committee has chosen April 26th, 2009 as a “remember the poor Sunday” where churches can teach about the Scriptural basis for helping the poor, as well as sharing about the work of HOPE worldwide without asking for a specific collection or donation. Please be looking out for further announcements about this on the HOPE worldwide, Disciples Today, and ICOC HOTNEWS websites.

At the inspiring International Leadership Conference in Kiev in October, 2008, there was a meeting of the delegates of all the churches. At this meeting the HOPE worldwide and Benevolence Committee had a chance to talk about our collective efforts to help the poor. After J.P. Tynes (South Carolina) prayed, several other men of God from around the world shared about God’s heart for the poor, the service of the disciples, and how HOPE worldwide ties it all together. These included Robert Carrillo (San Diego), Douglas Arthur (Boston), Dinesh George (Bangalore, India), Mike Taliaferro (San Antonio), Bruce Williams (LA), John Causey (LA), and Randy Jordan (Philadelphia).

Key points of the conference:

- Without the church there is no HOPE worldwide. Thanks to all of you for your service and sacrifices over the years. God is glorified through you.
- The last several years, HOPE worldwide has started each year needing God to do a miracle to sustain our efforts. Each year, God has done the miracles to keep HOPE worldwide alive and doing even more for the poor. But we'd like to move to a more sustainable plan for church support, so that we don't have to count on a miracle to maintain what we are doing.
- Disciples connecting on a heart level with the neediest people on earth for the glory of God differentiate HOPE worldwide from every other charity on earth.
- Church giving to HOPE worldwide has dropped over 80% over the past 5 years. Less than 50% of churches in our fellowship today provide funds for HOPE worldwide's global needs.
- With over 90% of revenues going for program expenditures, HOPE worldwide has been widely recognized as a leader among charities in operating efficiency.
- HOPE worldwide has just completed a successful leadership transition. The Gempels were honored for years of noble service. Randy Jordan stepped up to serve as CEO. The poor need us now more than ever.
- Programs such as "Seasons of Service", a national partnership with the Red Cross and the fantastic joint effort involving 1500 students rebuilding New Orleans' hardest hit neighborhood on the Fourth of July are raising the profiles of both the churches and HOPE worldwide.
- Randy Jordan's new leadership team is focused on continuing proven programs such as Youth Corps while expanding new and exciting initiatives with the churches.
- HOPE worldwide is within striking distance of eliminating its operating deficit and raising funding for an exciting future.
- The sustainability plan approved by the delegates asks two things:
(1) churches not currently providing unrestricted funding for HOPE worldwide prayerfully consider a free-will offering at Thanksgiving as a first step in supporting HOPE worldwide and (2) all churches together commit to supporting HOPE worldwide in the amount of \$1.4 million annually beginning in 2009 to provide for a sustainable level of operations. This works out to a little more than 1.5 times each church's normal weekly contribution, or \$1 per member per week.

In 2008, the churches for the first time since 2002 increased their giving over the previous year by 14%, with \$949,000 given to HOPE worldwide as unrestricted giving. The committee is hoping to encourage more and more churches to engage in giving globally to the work of HOPE worldwide to achieve the goal of sustainability.

Coordinators and Church Leaders have been requested by the Committee and the Delegates to spread the word and contact churches in their regions to facilitate working together to achieve the goal of HOPE worldwide. The Committee is very thankful to the churches and all the saints for their tireless efforts on behalf of the poor. We pray that together we can achieve even greater things in the coming year.