

2009 Christmas Special Offering
MINUTE FOR MISSION

O Come, All You Faithful

“Let us go over to Bethlehem as fast as we can and see for ourselves what God has revealed to us”

Luke’s words ring loudly in my ears like the song of great joy of the angels who had just sung to the shepherds on the hillside that night so long ago. There they were doing their hard work, often boring work, often tough work not expecting anything new or different or exciting. Suddenly, their whole life changed as God revealed to them the most exciting news they would ever hear- the birth of Jesus. Out of nowhere they experienced new life, new hope, new vision and new work to be done. They could not get there fast enough!

Sometimes the mission and ministry of our local congregations seem like the work of the shepherds-hard, boring, endless...and even sometimes hopeless. How exciting when God is revealed to us in new ways that take our breath away and the work we do for God suddenly has new hope and new vision.

Recently I feel like I have been traveling to Bethlehem over and over again! In the partnership of regional and local congregational leadership for transformation and renewal, there is new life everywhere in our churches. By focusing on mission and outreach and simply sharing anew the “good news” of God’s love, God is being made incarnate again and again.

...One church has a new relationship with a re-entry house for men coming out of prison. Every Sunday six men attend worship with them and have become a full part of the congregation. One woman goes to their home each week to share in Bible study; she is their adopted “house mother.”

...Another church has become committed to the dozens of homeless people who had been sleeping on their grounds for years. They have welcomed many of them into membership as brothers and sisters in Christ and are amazed that others are coming to join as well because “you are walking the way of Jesus.”

...Another church has focused on its widely diverse ethnic community and become committed to the neighbors who live just beyond “our doorsteps.” Now the pews look like the United Nations...or Pentecost!

...Still another church who went through major crises just a few years ago, with a new minister and a new passion for those who need a place of love and grace has welcomed 41 new members in the last year.

It is a blessing and privilege to share in this partnership of ministry-Local Congregations and Regional Church. (There’s lot of partnership with the General Church as well). Bethlehem keeps popping up in my rearview mirror.

Christmas offering is the one offering in the year that fully supports YOUR REGIONAL MINISTRY. Give generously as you support a ministry that helps congregations see for “themselves what God has revealed.”