

Agape Church of Christ

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Attendance for
November, 2009

1st	104
8th	100
15th	110
22nd	105
29th	105

Advent Conspiracy:

The Hallelujah Chorus

In 2006 a handful of churches, led by ministers with a heart for those in poverty, decided to form a conspiracy. The conspiracy seemed radical. Americans were spending \$450 billion at Christmas. A holiday that began as a way to honor Jesus Christ has become a time of debt, greed, and consumerism. Many buy unneeded gifts, which they can't afford, to please people who cannot be bought. Christmas has become less about Jesus, family, and love and more about materialism.



The conspiracy was this, what if Christians gave less at Christmas and took what they saved and gave to the poor? The concept has been practiced for centuries by many people but seemed to be the only idea that could save Christmas from the merchants. The group decided to call this Advent Conspiracy and focused financial giving toward providing fresh water in countries where the majority of people were dying due to lack of clean water. If people were to give \$10 billion dollars to providing wells and fresh water, the world water crisis would be solved. Compared to what Americans spend at Christmas, this is a small sacrifice.

The few churches that participated in Advent Conspiracy in 2006 gave \$500,000. In 2007 more churches joined and gave \$3 million. Advent Conspiracy is a conscious decision to give less (maybe one gift less) and give that amount to a charitable cause. Over the years families have sacrificed together, made their own gifts, taken mission trips to locations they have helped in the past, and taught their children to give to something bigger than themselves.

In 2008 Agape participated in this ministry. We decided to give less and help Village of Hope which is part of Touch A Life Ministries in Ghana. Led by Randy and Pam Cope, Touch A Life Ministries works to free and educated children sold into slavery on Lake Volta's fishing industry. We collected over \$1500 of which 25% was dedicated to providing clean water in Ghana.

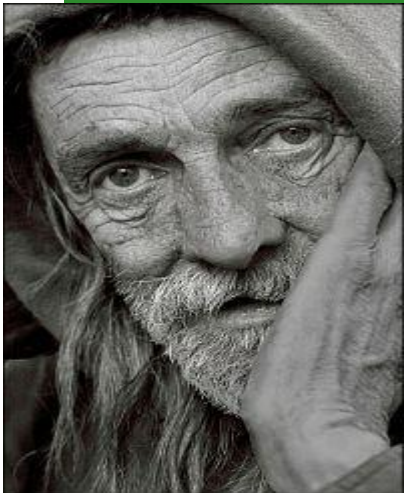
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Global Involvement



“Globally we will be giving to Touch A Life Ministry’s work in Cambodia . “
“Locally we will continue to work with Homeless Partners.”

Local Involvement



Continued from Page 1: Advent Conspiracy:

The Hallelujah Chorus

In conjunction with the Ghana work, we also participated in Homeless Partners. This ministry began with Jennie Keran at the Calgary Church of Christ in Canada. Homeless Partners involves churches partnering with homeless shelters to mobilize organizations, businesses, communities, and families to provide gifts for homeless individuals. Through personal interviews and meetings a wish list is obtained and uploaded to a website where individuals can view the list and provide a wrapped gift for those being interviewed. Typically, our homeless communities are not asked what they want for Christmas, they just receive whatever people donate. This ministry is a beautiful way to help churches, shelters, and organizations build relationships and work together. In 2008 Agape helped 75 people receive personal gifts for Christmas.

This in spite of two weeks of record setting snow, cold, and blizzard conditions which shut down the city of Portland for extended periods of time. This year Agape is again involved with both ministries for our Advent Conspiracy. Danna Nieto is working with Lori and I to help with this ministry and lead the program next year. This year Agape is again involved with both ministries for our Advent Conspiracy. Danna Nieto is working with Lori and I to help with this ministry and lead the program next year.

Globally we will be giving to Touch A Life Ministry’s work in Cambodia. TAL Ministry works in this country with human trafficking, children, and other forms of injustice. We will be integrating video clips of their work with our sermon series, *The Hallelujah Chorus: Psalms 146-150*. As we encourage Agape to give less, love more, and worship fully, we look forward to helping globally address poverty, injustice, and compassion.

Locally we will continue to work with Homeless Partners. This year we are joined by two groups. The Oregon City Church of Christ’s youth group, led by youth minister Ben Cook, will work through Anawim Community shelter in providing a wish list for the guests. Jim and Patty Roberts (of Jim and Patty’s Coffee) will lead the new church, Freemont Jesus’ People Church to work with Ken Loyd and Home PDX Ministry. Agape will work with Council for Prostitution Alternatives as well in this ministry. We are excited that other groups have joined us to help those in our community and we know that they will develop strong relationships with the area homeless ministries for many years to come.

Random Acts of Kindness (RAK)

God's Work at Agape

We are excited to see God working in these ministries. Early one weekday morning, small groups of people from Agape meet to take coffee or breakfast burritos to those living under the Portland bridges. This RAK (Random Acts of Kindness) are done to show compassion to people in our city. On Thanksgiving morning we distributed 75+ burritos but were also encouraged to see many other people from churches or families who came down to also give something hot and filling to the homeless. God is working in the hearts of many people. The human spirit is also alive and well. People should be compassionate whether or not they are Christian. I find that there are many people who care about others and feel it is the duty of humans to give to the poor. They are right. As Christians, we are called not only to do our human duty, we are expected to do this as a reflection of God. Those who refuse to show compassion to the poor have no excuse. Even more, those who claim to follow God who refuse to show compassion to the poor have no hope of eternal life (Matthew 25).

For Advent Conspiracy we are focusing on the last five Psalms in the Bible. These five begin with Hallelujah (Praise Yahweh). These psalms occur after a section of lament psalms, where the authors grieve, suffer, and seek God's comfort. The praise psalms glorify God for deliverance and comfort. In Psalm 146 David praises God for being compassionate and providing justice to the oppressed, poor, and afflicted. God is glorified by the works of justice but also by those who practice justice. Our worship leader, Frederick Berry began this series with a discussion of giving thanks for God. Old Testament scholar Dr. Kilnam Cha, who wrote his dissertation on Psalms 146-150, spoke to Agape concerning the value of these psalms in our lives. The remaining series will be posted on our sermon tab at our website.

Happy Holidays
Ron

For Additional Information

For more information concerning Advent Conspiracy visit www.adventconspiracy.org

For more information concerning Homeless Partners visit www.homelesspartners.com

To visit our Advent Conspiracy page see http://missionagape.com/?page_id=152

For more information on the history of Christmas visit

http://wineskins.org/filter.asp?SID=2&fi_key=102&co_key=1037



Women's Ministry (Intern)

“One of the greatest gifts we as Christians can give around the world is clean drinking water.”

Sister Danna Neito



This month has been a good planning month. As I talked about in my last update, we were beginning to plan for Advent Conspiracy, which is something we are doing for the Christmas season. Our goal is to encourage Agape to spend less on Christmas gifts this year and give more to an organization that we are going to send money to. Last year, Agape gave to the Touch a Life Foundation. We are giving to the same foundation this year. Last year our money went to Ghana and the Village of Hope. These last couple of Sundays, I have been able to share with the congregation what I saw and experienced while I was in Ghana at the Village of Hope. I was so encouraged to know that the church that I am now a part of sent money to a place that had changed my life in my past. I love how God works in those ways. One of the greatest gifts we as Christians can give around the world is clean drinking water. It does not take much money to drill a new well for villages in other countries yet so many human beings die from lack of clean water. This Christmas season I would encourage everyone to think outside of the box and outside of this country and help save lives with just a few dollars. Thank you all for your support of what God is doing in this place. We love and cherish you all. God bless.

Recovery Ministry

Zak & Kathy Zumwalt

The Recovery Ministry has had a great month of progress especially in our newest group. The 12 step ladies Bible study at Dignity Village has been an amazing blessing and we even get less stink-eye each time we go! Our meeting is held in the common area at Dignity Village and it is the only place with a wood stove, electricity, couches and a TV and is also temporary living for those who don't have their own structures, yet. We have the area reserved once a week for our study which is a bit of an inconvenience to some and we try to take this into consideration. When it is nice outside, we have had our meeting outdoors instead. When we meet inside, we always welcome folks to stay in the room (or join us if they are women), but there is a lot of hostility towards Christians and few people want to stick around. Many homeless people have been treated pretty poorly by Christians and we are often seen as self-righteous or manipulative or exploiting weaknesses (i.e. “If you listen to our message, we'll give you food to eat.”). I bring two other ladies with me each week and we meet two ladies who live at the village and also attend Agape. We try to spend some time before and after each study visiting with the residents and I think we are starting to build some trust with a few people. We had our largest group this last week with seven ladies! Please pray that it will continue to reach those who need it and that as we read the love letter (the Bible) from our Higher Power (12 step terms) that lives will be transformed!

Our women's abuse recovery group has missed meeting a few times due to illness and holiday, but we continue to see progress and healing in those who regularly attend. It has been great to see each of them to be empowered to make steps towards setting boundaries, building healthy relationships and seeking professional help when necessary. One of the things I am most excited about in this group is the potential for leadership. There are a couple of ladies in this group who are going to make incredible leaders in our church and I hope leaders of a future Abuse Recovery Group. As we look to the next semester for the Recovery Ministry, we are making plans to start new groups as we see needs. Right now we are considering an Eating Disorder Group, a Body Image Group, a Men's Abuse Group and a Women's Sexual Addiction Group. If you have any suggestions or have a need for any other group, please email Zak (zzumwalt@agapecoc.com) or me (kzumwalt@agapecoc.com).