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## Serving and saving: faith-based child care success

### Come Unto Me—motto for Lutheran congregation’s child care programs

**C**ome Unto Me. Those comforting words of Christ are etched into the stained glass window above the sanctuary doors leading into Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church in Bellflower. But these days, those words are flanked by other signs: Kool Kids Program, and Whee Care Child Care Program, soon to expand from 45 to 65 infants and toddlers.

Holy Redeemer is a church on the move. But three years ago, when Pastor Dan Knudsen was called to the church, the church was at a crossroads. In order to afford a full-time pastor, the church council told Pastor Knudsen that they would have to sell some of their property or else close the church. Financially, the 100 member church, all but 5 of whom were seniors, just couldn’t make ends meet.

Pastor Knudsen, no stranger to communities and churches in transition, told the council two things. One, he said, there must be another way; we must listen and respond to how God is calling us to be in ministry. Look at the great facilities we have — an education building that isn’t even being used! Second, if you don’t like kids, you don’t belong on this council, because God has called us to love and serve the children of this community, especially those that live at or below the poverty line. The church council agreed to explore other options.

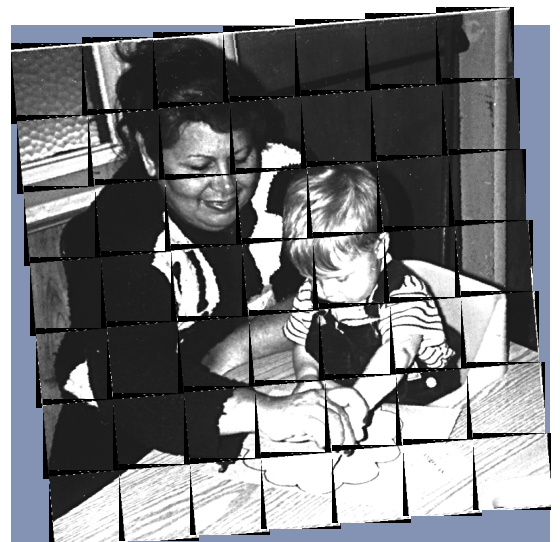
And in the spring of 1997, nothing short of a miracle occurred. The local YMCA wanted to expand its infant and toddler child care

program, using State Department of Education grant money, but had no space. Holy Redeemer had lots of space and the will to serve the community...but lacked financial resources. What a great match-up! In May, the Whee Care Center opened with 20 babies. Today it has 45 infants and toddlers, with a waiting list of 350. A new infant care center is scheduled to open in January, after renovations to the church parsonage (which sits on-site) are completed.

Pastor Knudsen explains his four-win philosophy which has enabled Holy Redeemer and the Los Cerritos YMCA to develop such a powerful partnership in the following way. “First, the kids win, because they are receiving top-notch care. The student-teacher ratio is 3:1, with additional family service support, nutrition counseling, and parenting guidance built into the program. One infant came to us malnourished because she hadn’t been receiving the proper diet. She’s gained weight and is developing well.”

“Second, the parents win. Many of our staff are former welfare recipients, who are enrolled in school in addition to working here, so that they can blossom in a career, not just find

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## Proposition 22 and same-gender marriage: Promoting civility during the primary election

One of the most controversial issues California voters face in the March 7, 2000

statewide primary election is Proposition 22, which seeks to define/limit marriage. The California Council of Churches anticipates the dialogue within the body politic on this issue will be heated on all sides. The Council also believes that the religious community, in all of its diversity, needs to play an active and constructive role in this statewide discussion.

The Council has produced a study guide to help congregations understand Proposition 22 and to engage in dialogue. This study resource does not take a position on the Initiative, but is intended to spur individual and group reflection so that members of your congregation can ask the deeper questions raised by our religious traditions and can better articulate their

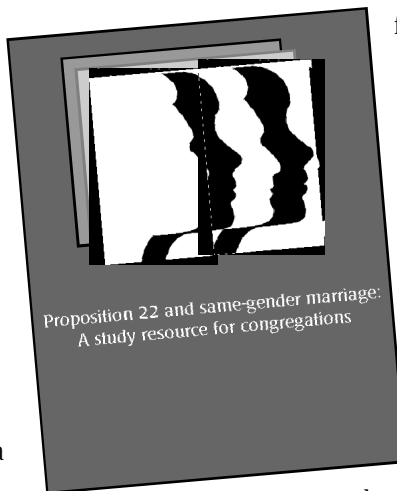
own views on the subject.

This unique resource is framed in two one-hour discussion sessions. The first session deals with the social and political context of Proposition 22, details the positions of the proponents and the opponents, and discusses the reasons this measure is on the California statewide ballot. Session two is a biblical and theological exploration of the meaning of marriage.

This study can be used in a number of ways: as two one-hour adult education classes, as the program for an evening potluck supper, as a women's or men's group study resource, or as background for sermon preparation.

The Proposition 22 Study Guide was mailed just after Thanksgiving to every

*Continued on page 3*



## Christian vocation and good citizenship

**VOTE 2000**

During the year 2000 election cycle, California voters will face a host of issues on both the March and November ballots. The California Council of Churches is committed to helping pastors and congregations better understand these issues and more fully participate in our democratic processes.

The Council has developed a useful resource for congregations that we are again making available, *What Your Congregation Can Do Before the Elections*. Included are three non-partisan planning guides, "Organizing An Adult Education Forum on the Ballot Propositions," "Conducting a Voter Registration Drive," and "Holding a Candidate Forum in Your Congregation." Each of these offers a

concrete and constructive framework to increase your congregation's awareness and participation in this election cycle.

This four-page resource is available at no charge by sending a self-addressed, stamped envelope to our Sacramento office. You may also download it from our website at [www.calchurches.org](http://www.calchurches.org)

Elections are opportunities for people to faith to exercise an important part of our Christian vocation. We at the California Council of Churches are committed provide the necessary resources to help you with that task.

Scott Anderson Executive Director

# Empowering youth and adults to be peacemakers in California

*The ultimate weakness of violence is that it is a descending spiral, begetting the very thing it seeks to destroy. Instead of diminishing evil, it multiplies it...Returning violence for violence multiplies violence, adding deeper darkness to a night already devoid of stars. Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*

—Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr.

According to the Children's Defense Fund, each day 135,000 American children carry guns to school. As a consequence, every day guns injure 30 students, three of whom die:

- In Pearl, Mississippi on October 1, 1997, Luke Woodham, 16, murdered his mother, his former girlfriend, and another student.
- Michael Carneal, 14, opened fire on a student prayer meeting, killing three girls in West Paducah, Kentucky.
- On March 24, 1998, Mitchell Johnson and Andrew Golden of Jonesboro, Arkansas ambushed their middle school classmates, killing four along with a teacher.
- In May 1998 Kip Kinkel of Springfield, Oregon, murdered his parents and decided to shoot up his high school, killing two students.
- This past spring, Dylan Klebold and Eric Harris killed 12 students, one teacher, themselves, and wounded 23 other students at Columbine High School in Littleton, Colorado.

What can the religious community do to help curb youth violence?

The California Council of Churches, in collaboration with the American Jewish Congress, has just updated its popular intergenerational study guide, *Creating a Caring Community*. This five session resource brings senior high youth and adults together in a local church to talk about the problems of youth

violence, consider what the scriptures have to say, develop peacemaking skills, understand the public policy debate around violence prevention, and plan for concrete action at the local level to help curb youth violence.

The five one-hour sessions include:

- Violence: What it is and why it happens
- Violence: Confrontation and Conflict Management
- Violence: Biblical and theological perspectives
- Violence: Proposed solutions
- Violence: Taking the next steps in your local congregation and community

*Creating a Caring Community* will be mailed to every congregation in California in early January. Twenty facilitator training workshops will be held throughout the state in 2000 to equip youth leaders, pastors, and church educators to effectively utilize this resource in local congregations. Thanks to the California Wellness Foundation for a generous grant to support this project.

Additional copies are available for \$5 from the Council's Sacramento office. The complete study guide can also be downloaded from our website.

If you would like a list of facilitator training workshops around the state, send us an e-mail at [cccinfo@calchurches.org](mailto:cccinfo@calchurches.org). JS

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congregation on the Council's mailing list. Additional copies are available through our office for \$5 each. Bulk orders will receive a special rate. Call or e-mail your request to us. The guide is also available on our website at [www.calchurches.org](http://www.calchurches.org)

Council staff along with the staff of the Northern California Interreligious Conference are leading a series of facilitator training workshops around California to equip congregational leaders to use this resource. A schedule of workshops is available through the Council office. JS

**PLACE COVER  
INSIDE BOX**

*The California Council of Churches, in collaboration with the American Jewish Congress updated its popular intergenerational study guide, *Creating a Caring Community*. It will be mailed to every congregation in California in January.*

'any' job. Many supportive services are built into our program, so parents can receive counseling and support as they transition from welfare to work. And, they know that their children are safe and happy and they don't need to worry about them."

"Third, the community wins. We're not just in the child care business; we're in the community development business. We employ 31 people, all of whom earn a living wage with benefits for those full-time. As an employer in our community, we are helping those in our community develop budgets, save money, and contribute back to the community. We hope to start a credit union someday, using other congregational credit unions as models. And, our United Methodist neighbors have asked us for ideas as to how we might partner to serve even more of our community."

"Fourth, the church wins. We are serving those at or below the poverty line in our backyard, providing much needed services to our children. And, by being good stewards of our building, we are able to generate resources, which enable us to be in ministry. Our Kool Kids program is a one-day-a-week program run by Holy Redeemer members, targeting some of the kids at the local elementary school. Thanks be to God for our partnership with the YMCA, which offers us the opportunities for service and salvation!"

For more information about the Wheel Care Center at Holy Redeemer Lutheran Church, contact Pastor Knudsen at (562) 867-0714. JS

# Justice Calendar Seekers

California Interfaith Coalition Legislative Issues Briefing  
Tuesday, March 21, 2000  
Library Galleria, 828 I Street, Sacramento

The California Interfaith Coalition, which includes the major faith-based advocacy groups at the State Capitol, will be holding its annual legislative issues briefing on March 21. The conference includes a thorough review of hot-button economic justice issues before the State Legislature this year and training for visits with legislators and staff in the afternoon. Earlybird registration by March 10 is \$35, which includes lunch and the conference briefing packet. The registration fee after March 10 is \$50.

Informational brochures and registration forms are available by calling the Council of Churches at 916-442-5447 or may be downloaded from our website at [www.calchurches.org](http://www.calchurches.org).

## Help us work for justice all year long.

Enclosed is a tax-deductible contribution to help the California Council of Churches continue its work for justice in our community.

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To: **Inside:** Empowering youth and adults to be peacemakers in California. (see page 3).

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