

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ...



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"Seeking While You Wait - Modeling A Future Full of Hope" Jeremiah 29:4-7

Tabernacle Community Development Corporation (TCDC) seeking the welfare of the City (San Francisco) by building affordable housing, and serving as the City's only faith based, nonprofit developer. With this instrument 5 founding local church pastors offer a model of hope.

In the following reflection on Jeremiah XXIX. 4-7 please receive a window into the thinking and work of TCDC in the Bay Area.

"SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY" are the words of God calling a people into ministry while exiled in the city of Babylon. Followers of Jesus, contemporary Christian communities sprinkled around our Nation's urban areas, are called by a Mighty God into the same ministry: "Promote the welfare of the city where I have sent you!" As one reads the entire text, Jeremiah 29: 4-7, seeking the welfare of Babylon looks like a ministry of justice. Jesus' people are ever seeking justice as a sign of hope.

At a time when inner city neighborhoods are devastated by the ravages of negative socio-economic conditions, Followers of Jesus have regretfully bifurcated the revelation sent to Jeremiah -- "promote and pray" (7)-- and come to rest primarily in the ministry of "prayer." Promoting the welfare of the city through a ministry of justice has been severed from the weekly liturgy of the Followers of Jesus. Church program calendars are replete with prayer circles dotting the fellowship without any apparent opportunity for faith working by love. Absent are opportunities for service through evangelism and mission. Weekly church bulletins feature invitations to join the prayer band, or engage the Bible Study, but offer few invitations regarding ministry to the parish, the poor, the powerless. Gone is the ministry of "the church militant," seeking the Kingdom come on earth. The contemporary urban Christian community is all about "the church triumphant," celebrating the fulfillment of God's plan in the establishment and maintenance of the church.

"SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY," billowing across the air ways of today's urban neighborhoods, calls the Followers of Jesus to renewed ministry as a sign of hope. Ministry, today's 2 or 3 gathered together to become an extension of the incarnation begun in Jesus. Ministry, today's congregation becoming the means for maintenance of worship, edification of believers, and redemption of the neighborhood, city and world. Ministry, Jesus' followers making God real in the unusual settings of modern urban life. All Followers of Jesus are ministers!

"SEEK THE WELFARE OF THE CITY" reminds the faithful followers of Jesus that a new day, a better day is coming. Until the omnipotent God acts to redeem history, Jesus' people are to watch, work and pray. "Build, plant, harvest and live toward the reign of heaven," says the Holy One of Israel. That is the nature of true godliness for Jesus' followers living today.