

SOMA

A Church of the Christ

Advent Conspiracy

Last month, we introduced the Advent season with a community-wide food drive for the Marion-Polk Food Shares (there are 3 in West Salem, 2 of which are in the Edgewater District). As part of our Food Collection, we created some competition between the various LiFE groups at Soma to see who could collect the most food.

And God showed up big! Through the end of November, we have collected and distributed over 2,700 pounds of food! One group went door-to-door and collected 100 lbs. in a half hour. Another group actually involved the W. Salem Neighborhood Association to collect food at each meeting in November. And all of the groups benefited from Daryl Chun's initiative in getting a 1,400 lb. donation from Oregon Fruits (this company is located on Edgewater Street and is very involved locally). As part of the food giveaway, we hosted a representative from each Food Share at each of our worship gatherings in November, giving us the opportunity to bless them in prayer as key agencies in our community.

But Advent Conspiracy isn't over yet. In fact, it's just beginning. We continue to ask the question, "What if Christmas were known, not for consumerism, but for being a season where Christ-Followers gave freely to serve our world and local community?" In December, we'll be celebrating Advent with the following themes at worship each week:

- ◆ **Spend Less** (yes, we're asking everyone to spend less on presents)
- ◆ **Give More** (we're moving worship into the community on this night with "Serve Salem" and will be collecting blankets/socks for the homeless)
- ◆ **Worship Fully** (a chance for Soma Kidz to lead our worship time)
- ◆ **Love All** (a reminder that God brings salvation to all as a gift of his love)

So here's an invitation...participate in Advent Conspiracy with us. Spend less on presents and give the extra money to something that will meet a need in your local or global community. If you need help with ideas, let me know and I'll be happy to give you some good causes.

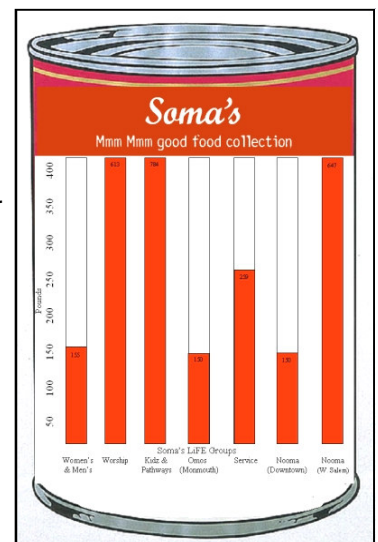
Worship fully. Spend less. Give more. Love all.

For more information about Advent Conspiracy, see www.adventconspiracy.org or email Dwayne Hilty (dwayne@somasalem.org).



Please Pray 4...

- **LIFE Groups.** Praise God for the cool leaders he has sent us! But with this, please pray for the growth and development of our LiFE groups. They are so critical to discipleship at Soma and we want to see more people connecting here and growing in Jesus.
- **New People.** As Christmas draws near and more people begin asking spiritual questions about life, please pray that more new people would continue to connect with Soma and discover Jesus in the midst of our faith community.
- **Community Connections.** We are discovering a great love for our local community and in that, many great relationships and open doors to loving people. Please pray that Soma would continue to create in-roads to our local community and see lives transformed through the power of Jesus.



Why Soma? *By Carol Billings*

When I moved to Oregon from northern California almost eight years ago, I left a lifetime of acquaintances, friends, family, co-workers, and former students to land in Dallas, Oregon where I knew exactly one person. That person was my new husband whom I had met all of six months before. I had wanted an adventure, something new and totally different. I wasn't prepared for the loneliness.

When you're raising children you have a built-in stockpile of potential friends: the parents of your children's classmates. Opportunities abound for casual conversation, shared interests, and, sometimes, deep and meaningful relationships. But my children were grown and gone by the time I moved to Oregon. I had nothing immediately in common with the folks I saw each day while I was driving around getting lost or staring out my apartment window waiting for my husband to come home. It amazed me that I could walk up and down every aisle at Safeway and not see a single familiar face. I didn't recognize anyone, and sadly, no one recognized me.

After several weeks, I found a good job and became part of a team. I began to see the same people every weekday and was well liked by some of them. My husband and I found a large church where we were both comfortable, and we even became friendly with a few people. But neither of us became particularly close to anyone.

After two years, I began to sense that my marriage was going to face some serious problems, but I had no one to talk to about it, other than my husband. Personally, I've always found it much easier to bury my head in the sand than to face a problem and the conflict that accompanies it. I think my husband shared that theory.

By the time I realized we couldn't ignore our problems, the marriage had become seriously unraveled. One year and two weeks ago, we were divorced. A few months later I found I could no longer face the fact of the empty seat beside me in church. I slipped out one Sunday morning after the service knowing that, in my fragile emotional state, I could not return. I was afraid no one noticed I was gone.

During the next several months, I visited numerous churches in Salem. This may sound like fun, but it's not especially. If it was a really small church, I felt somewhat like an alien with a large blinking red sign that said, 'Look at me!' If it was a larger church, I felt disconnected. For a while I considered driving to Portland every Sunday to combine a visit with my two younger children who attend college there, with a Sunday morning church service at Imago Dei. Gas prices went up, my kids were overwhelmed with their studies, and I figured I could listen to the sermons on the Internet anyway, so why bother.

Actually, my entire life was being taken over by an attitude of "why bother." I cannot recommend this as a lifestyle; it feeds on itself and it makes one not, shall we say, the life of the party. But God is kind and gracious, even when we're exhibiting our whiniest selves. I knew I was depressed, and I knew it wouldn't last. Most of all, I knew God had something in store for me that was better than the way I was feeling in those moments.

When I visited Soma for the first time at one of the preview services, I walked in to the sanctuary hopeful, but pessimistic, if that makes sense. My first impression was that I was the oldest person in the church. I probably was, but Dwayne's parents were there and took me under their collective wing so I didn't feel quite like the only fossil in the place. Nothing much happened during the service that night. It was obvious that this was not a slick operation, which was a plus as far as I was concerned. After the service, several young people engaged me in conversation. They were excited about the church, they were funny and intelligent, and they seemed interested in me. I was out of town for the next preview service, so it wasn't until after the official opening of Soma that I was able to attend again.

It's a few months later, and I now consider Soma my church home. If you were to ask me why, I could give you a solid list off the top of my head: great music, even if it is a little too loud sometimes; good preaching, even if it does step on my toes sometimes; friendly people, a few of whom are almost as old as I am; communion every Sunday, which is important to me. Everything on this list is valid, and yet it's not why I'm here.

Meet Carol ...

Most Important People in My Life: my family, especially Lucie, my 6-year old granddaughter and Aleksei, my 3-year old grandson.

What's in my Refrigerator: mostly apples

What I'm Reading right now: *The Enchantress of Florence*

What's on my MP3 player: Nothing, because I can't figure out how to make it work. Seriously.

My favorite TV shows: *Monk* is my very favorite, followed by *So You Think You Can Dance*, *Survivor*, *Amazing Race*, *Biggest Loser*, *The Closer*, and *Celebrity Rehab*, not necessarily in that order.

My motto: There's a price for everything.

My favorite scripture: Isaiah 43, especially the second part of verse 1 where it says: "*Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have summoned you by name; you are mine.*"



Continued on page 3

Will You Consider Making a Year-End Gift?

Looking for a creative way to make a year-end tax deductible contribution? As a new church, we can testify to the fact that your dollars really do go a long ways in reaching out to our local community.



Will you please consider making a year-end special gift to Soma's work fund?

Our work fund goes to everything from Bibles to postcard mailers and equipment, but it has a singular purpose.. To expand our reach to people who are "missing" and have yet to let Jesus transform their lives.

Check contributions can be sent to:
Soma: A Church of the Christ
PO Box 5554
Salem, OR 97304

Why Soma? *Continued from page 2*

I'm here because of the atmosphere of acceptance along with the inspiration to discipleship; the vision of community and the concrete applications of missional living; the reverence toward God and the commitment to Jesus while leaving behind the dysfunctional 'churchiness' that can leave invisible scars. I'm here because I've found that after the joyful music, the thoughtful sermon, and the invitation to communion, every service ends with God hovering and making his presence known.

Today I read on the internet that Chuck Gabriel, managing director of a financial firm said, "I don't think anyone can say we've reached the bottom (of the stock market dive). It's going to be a very gloomy Christmas." I felt sorry for Chuck Gabriel when I read that quote. I don't know about his belief system, but apparently he doesn't have a home church like Soma. As far as I'm concerned, this is going to be a great Christmas because I'm part of a group who knows that our spiritual treasure is so much greater than any material treasure we can imagine.

I'm glad to be here.



THANK YOU!!!

We are blessed to have so many of you giving financially and prayerfully to make Soma a success. **Thank you!**

Words don't really express how much we appreciate your partnership in the mission of "being Jesus to an emerging generation" but know that God is using your support to do amazing things here in Salem!

By the Numbers...

a few stats...

Nov 2.....	65
Nov 9.....	85
Nov 16.....	52
Nov 23.....	56
Nov 30.....	62
Average.....	64
Giving Total.....	\$4,286.15

450 billion

What Americans spend on Christmas each year.

10 billion

Would solve the world's water problem with new wells.

1

New Podcast link at Soma
Click [here](#) for the link.

60

The # of "friends" on [Soma's Facebook](#).. If you haven't already, join in the party.

SOMA

A Church of the Christ

PO Box 5554
Salem, OR 97304
503.689.1995

www.somasalem.org



Being Jesus to an Emerging Generation

by

**Creating Authentic Community,
Practicing Missional Living,
Engaging in Creative Dignity,
& Nurturing Spiritual Formation**