

# **Englewood Christian Church**

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## **“An Open Letter of Appreciation, Encouragement and Exhortation to the Members of CCDA”**

### **Appreciation**

We write this letter with the utmost appreciation and thanksgiving to God for the years of Kingdom service of the CCDA. From your beginning in the mind and heart of John Perkins, you have challenged the Church in the United States in our care for the poor, our responsibility for modeling economic justice and our pursuit of racial equality and inclusiveness. Your voice has been indeed the “Voice of Calvary”.

### **Encouragement**

A quick survey of the class schedule for the CCDA Institute for 2005 shows the very exciting directions pursued by CCDA. We encourage you to continue the dialogue concerning partnerships between urban, suburban and rural congregations. When partnerships are entered by equally valued partners, the results will manifest the “natural reconciliation” of all things in Christ and will be void of the diseased relationships built on trading guilt relief for financial/material resources. Also, we encourage you to hold fast your commitment to “church-based” activity which is wholistic in scope and utilizes “empowerment” as a primary process. Finally, we encourage you to become more and more familiar with the insights associated with the Asset Based Community Development approach and the theological convictions which support such an approach.

### **Exhortation**

Although appreciative of your many successes and your valued Kingdom service, we do want to express our serious concern in a few matters:

- First, your language of transforming communities may be more than just a semantic problem; it may lead to a failure to recognize God alone as the transformer of communities, cultures and people (Rom. 7:14-25, Matt. 19:16-26 esp. v.23-26, I Cor. 2, etc.). This failure may lead us to substitute our own utopian visions for the authentic Kingdom God is bringing.
- Second, the concept of being “church-based” must include more than just an institutional skeleton holding individual Christians together in some visible way. The Church *is* the body of Christ; inside her life together broken people find hope and healing and the world glimpses the embodiment of God’s wisdom in Christ (Eph. 3:9-11; Col. 2:3).
- Third, local congregations are the continuation of the incarnation (Matt. 18:18-20). If relocation serves the purpose of the local church in a particular neighborhood (as it almost always does), then relocation is advisable. However, moving families into struggling neighborhoods without the context of a local church is of minimal value (and may actually be inadvisable).
- Fourth, the redistribution of wealth should be a natural outcome of church members who hold all things in common within churches which are authentically inclusive of the poor. The economic practices of a local congregation maturing into the “fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:11-13) will stand in contrast to the economic activities in the world and in the neighborhood.
- Fifth, drop the felt-need concept; it is not compatible with asset based community development. The Church is blessed with everything needed to live out God’s wisdom (Eph. 1:3-14; 2:4-10; II Pet. 1:2-4; Matt. 6:25-34) in neighborhoods. Focus on using rightly all that with which God has blessed us, and the real needs will naturally be satisfied (and the illegitimate needs will be exposed for what they are...symptoms of human sin).
- Finally, encourage churches to live faithfully as intentional communities of God’s Kingdom which operate in contrast to all other communities. Challenge our churches to **be** God’s good news in Christ for the poor, the rich and everyone in between.

Grace and Peace,

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