

Dear Friends,

The tables are turning, and those who were once the principle contributors to mercy ministries may now be the recipients. That is why we at CEP and MNA believe that this is such a crucial time, perhaps now more than ever, for churches to develop ministries that are effective and pertinent to our nation's current climate. As we plan for the upcoming 2009 Mercy Ministries Conference, we are doing our best to diligently tailor our conference to suit the context that churches are facing today. In addition, and in God's providence, we are able to make this conference possible for a registration fee lower than all previous Mercy Ministries Conferences.

We are asking you to make a decision that may be a bold step of faith during these tight financial times, and make the investment of time and money which will make a vital and lasting impact on your church and community. Will you send someone from your church? We believe the chosen speakers and the theme of the conference are for such a time as this. As you are reading this letter maybe you are saying, "we don't have a mercy ministry" or "we don't have a mercy staff member." Let us be bold in saying that now is the time to undertake the charge of forming, developing and adapting a mercy ministry for your church and community. We know this is not a light task in the undertaking, but we also know we have a God who can prepare us for all things. We hope that you join with us as we seek to be merciful as we have been shown mercy by our Lord.

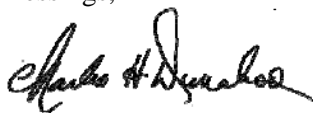
As our nation enters into a time of economic and political instability we will all face new challenges and circumstances in the months ahead. Most of us have already tightened our budgets and asked ourselves how we can be better stewards of the limited resources that the Lord has given us. We, as Americans, are making more sacrifices than anytime in the past several decades. Things that before were taken for granted, or never given a second thought are now the subject of thorough scrutiny and evaluation. And as our nation and the world continue down the path of instability, the church, more and more, needs to carry the burden and responsibility of being the salt and light of the world.

How will we respond to this call? The way that we respond to God's calling will need to change as our circumstances change. For many years now, churches have invested heavily in developing ministries for the underprivileged segments of our population, such as immigrants and inner-city residents. Most of the time the recipients of our mercy ministry efforts have been outsiders, people that are not part of our congregation. But in today's environment, it may be more likely that we will need to provide mercy ministry not only to communities surrounding our churches, but also inside our churches.

The 2009 Mercy Ministries Conference will seek to address some of these new trends and issues. For example, in his workshop "I Need a Job," David Spickard will be teaching us a biblically-based strategy used by many churches and community organization across the country to go beyond temporary hand out assistance to help prepare individuals for success at work. Steve Corbett will walk us through a variety of principles and decision making steps involved in having transformational diaconal and mercy ministry policies in his workshop entitled "Benevolence Policies: Going Beyond Relief and Into Development."

We pray that you will join us and your fellow laborers and we seek to live out the calling that the Lord has charged us with. Please visit our website www.pcep.org/mercy for more information and to register.

Blessings,



Charles Dunahoo, CEP Coordinator



Jim Bland, MNA Coordinator