



Pastor's Column

Reverend Mark Nakagawa

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Dear Centenarians:

The current global economic crisis we are experiencing offers a “teaching moment” for us as United Methodist Christians.

Our United Methodist denomination has an agency that is dedicated to the mission of providing church construction loans. In fact, the consultants from this agency assisted Centenary UMC over 20 years ago during the period when we were planning to build our present day buildings and structures.

This particular agency has a long history within the church; It was started sometime during the years of 1929-1931. As you know from the history books, those were the years of the “Great Depression,” to which so many people are comparing our current global economic and financial situation by way of analogy.

The spiritual and theological significance of this agency’s “genesis” at that particular point in history cannot be lost on us: While the world was falling down, the United Methodist Church committed itself to go in the opposite direction.

Our present times offer us, as the Church, to give people hope and faith in the midst of their despair and fear. Indeed, I really do believe we are in a period of time articulated by the Greek word “kairos,” a specific time given to us by God to undertake a specific purpose.

Now, that is not to say that God is the cause of the financial calamities the world is facing! It is to say, however, that we as the church have been given an opportunity to teach the world the importance of discerning and defining the material and spiritual values that give meaning to our lives.

This is also an opportunity for the church to lift up the importance of good stewardship in using all of the resources (financial, natural, human) that God gives us to manage wisely in our own lives, and for the welfare of others.

Throughout my ministry I have often heard the comment that “the church needs to run like a business.” Now, I will be the first to say that there are certain aspects of business management that lend themselves well to running a church (such as planning and forecasting).

At the same time, the church can offer valuable examples to the business community on stewardship, thrift and prudence, so that the next Enron or Worldcom doesn’t take place in addition to everything else that we are experiencing at the present time.

Let us always be mindful of the role that we are called to carry out as good stewards of all that God has given us and entrusts us with, in the way of our worldly riches.

They are not ends in themselves, but a reminder of the spiritual importance and responsibility we have as God’s beloved people.

Grace and Peace,

Reverend Mark M. Nakagawa