



Pastor's Column

Reverend Mark Nakagawa

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REPORT TO THE CHARGE CONFERENCE

By Reverend Mark M. Nakagawa

Senior Minister

The State of the Church

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The ministry of Centenary continues in a strong, vibrant and visible way throughout the various communities in which the congregation makes Jesus Christ known. Although we are a "community" in and of ourselves, our spiritual identity as Christians is made known throughout the many "communities" where we find our collective faith and life intersecting with others.

Our *worship* community gathers each Sunday to experience the Holy Spirit through a wide variety of worship styles that reflect a rich diversity in liturgy, music, and proclamation. Our *geographic* community begins in the immediate context of our location in downtown Los Angeles, expanding outward to the farthest corners of Los Angeles county and spreading across multiple counties in some cases.

Our *ethnic and cultural* community continues to reflect the Japanese American heritage of the pioneers who founded this church 113 years ago. However, increasing intermarriage and the changing face of the urban landscape are giving us more opportunities to welcome newcomers who bring the richness and vibrancy of non-Japanese culture into our worship family, thus creating new ways for us to appreciate and celebrate God's rich diversity!

The Holy Spirit continues to reveal new realities and possibilities for ministry that the congregation has never before entertained. Through a partnership with several governmental agencies we have established during the past three years, we have become more sensitized to the plight of the *homeless* community, which has been described as the largest in the country. Our engagement with these agencies has educated us on the issues of homelessness in far deeper ways than what we see portrayed in the media. In a similar way, our involvement with the annual conference "Peace With Justice" program has begun an interest among congregants in translating our faith into action through the *political* and *social* communities and structures of the world.

In recent years, our congregants have helped minister to people in various *health care* community settings. This is done at several specific nursing home, retirement home and convalescent facilities, as well as through specific mental health agencies and programs that our members have become involved with through their own experiences.

Finally, let me not overlook the *United Methodist* community that we are a part of, and in which we are so actively involved! Our congregants take much pride in serving the district and annual conference levels of the Church in addition to their tasks at Centenary. It is both a responsibility and a privilege that they embrace. Together as clergy and laity, we "press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus!"

Grace and Peace,

Reverend Mark M. Nakagawa