



## Pastor's Column

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Reverend Mark Nakagawa

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Dear Centenarians:

For the past three years, I have had the privilege of representing Bishop Mary Ann Swenson on the Christian-Muslim Consultative Group of southern California (CMCG).

Mainline Protestant Christian denominations, Roman Catholics, and members of Muslim faith communities originally convened the group. We now also have among us a representative of the Sufi and Mormon faith communities.

The group was formed with the primary purpose of educating Christians about Islam, in response to the overwhelming negative portrayals of Muslims and Islam in the mainstream media and especially the 'religious right' (which is so often 'wrong', not just about Islam, but everything).

Most recently, we have released an impressive curriculum that seeks to foster Christian-Muslim understanding. I am hoping to involve Centenary in sharing this curriculum in conjunction with other congregations (Christian and Muslim), so that all of us can expand our sensibilities and sensitivities towards people of different faith backgrounds.

The current month offers a unique opportunity to appreciate the religious pluralism and diversity that defines our neighbors and us. Currently, the Muslim community is in the midst of Ramadan, the holy season of Islam. The Jewish community finds itself in preparation for Rosh Hashanna (the Jewish New Year) and Yom Kippur (the day of atonement).

For mainline Protestant Christians, we will celebrate our unity in Jesus Christ on World Communion Sunday, October 4<sup>th</sup>. As the name implies, this is the one Sunday on the Christian calendar when we recognize our common communion as disciples of Jesus Christ, regardless of our denominational differences.

Through the elements of Holy Communion that embody the life and ministry of Jesus, we find a common identity as his disciples, and our ministries as life-giving expressions of that identity.

We live in extremely exciting and volatile times, with religion and religious issues often being interrelated with current events that are shaping our communities where we worship, live, work and otherwise come together.

I interpret these events as God's presence in our lives, with God continuing to reveal the presence of the Holy in our common everyday experiences. I encourage you also to think along these lines, so that you will come to see and appreciate God working in your life in new, different and challenging ways.

Grace and Peace,

Reverend Mark M. Nakagawa