

Reverend Mark M. Nakagawa strongly believes in the New Testament statement that “faith without works is dead.” This faith statement has been a constant guide throughout his ministry. His vision for Centenary United Methodist Church is that its ministries touch the lives of people wherever they are, from the urban core of Los Angeles and beyond; wherever it’s members live out their daily lives.

He sees Centenary as a vibrant presence in the Little Tokyo area. In the “new urbanism” that defines much of downtown Los Angeles, he sees exciting opportunities for worship and ministry, involving newcomers and regulars alike, building a stronger faith community. In the marginalized populations on our streets, he sees opportunities to reach out in Christian service and mission. To keep abreast of all that is happening in area, he is an active member of the Little Tokyo Community Council, which represents all sectors of the community.

Rev. Mark is a graduate of UCLA and the Pacific School of Religion in Berkeley. He served pastorates in Sacramento and West Los Angeles before being appointed as Senior Minister to Centenary in 2000, the congregation in which he was raised as a child and youth.

In 1985, Rev. Mark was the first third-generation Japanese American to preach in the church sanctuary of the renowned International Christian University (I.C.U.) in Japan. He was also among 60 religious and community leaders asked to participate in the first national leadership roundtable organized in 1993 by the administration of President William J. Clinton.

Throughout his ministry, Rev. Mark has served the United Methodist Church on many levels beyond the local parish. For eight years, he was Chairperson of the Asian American Language Ministry Committee of the General Board of Global Ministries. He is a past Board Chairman of the National Federation of Asian American United Methodists, as well as of the National Japanese American United Methodist Caucus.

Presently, he continues his 15-plus years of service on the United Methodist Federal Credit Union Board of Directors, having been a past Board Chairman and Vice-Chairman.

In 2006, Rev. Mark was selected to represent the office of Bishop Mary Ann Swenson (California-Pacific Annual Conference) in a Christian-Muslim collaboration that seeks to strengthen relationships between the two faith communities. That group, The Christian-Muslim Consultative Group of Southern California, serves as an important educational bridge in a region that is generally regarded as having the most religious diversity of any in the country.

When he is not involved with myriad numbers of church and community responsibilities, Rev. Mark enjoys spending time with his wife and child, along with their two dogs, a hamster and a tank full of tropical fish. Because he is an avid reader and sports fan, current events and sports analogies often find their way into his sermons and written articles.