

“Blessed to Be a Blessing”
Genesis 20:15-18, Colossians 1:9-12
April 7th, 2013
Rev. Jeong Park
Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

In prayer and hope, our church has been preparing for our stewardship campaign. The term stewardship refers to the domestic service and management needs of an organization. In a similar way, the biblical view of stewardship is understood as “Utilizing and managing all resources God provides for the glory of God and the betterment of His creation.” Obviously, our church is one of the resources that God has given to us. We have responsibilities to manage our property, finances, and our ministries as well.

This month, we are going to have four special themed Sundays. We begin our campaign today remembering the blessings that God has provided us in the past and present and we envision the continuing blessings of the future. First of all, we give our thanks to God for this faith community, church campus and His wonderful guidance for over a hundred years. I reviewed our church history which began in 1895 when L.B. Hinman, preached the first sermon in Fair Oaks. Then in 1897, the Methodist Episcopal Church in Fair Oaks was organized. And in 1899, the same group built a Methodist church in Fair Oaks village.

Over the years, God has provided us so many blessings. Jim Allen told me a story that one time our church had vision to build a new sanctuary on the front parking lot in the 1970’s. I found the blueprint in our office building basement. I don’t mean to challenge us that we have to keep the same vision, but I felt our church’s vision and dream at those times. As you watch Power Point slides, it will be the first picture. Many people have come and gone through our Fair Oaks church community and we hope and pray that our mission and blessings will continue. Please watch the presentation reflecting our blessings. Three church members will then share their experiences with us.

POWER POINT SLIDES /THREE SPEAKERS

Let’s think about our church as a ship in the ocean over the last one hundred years. There have been many blessings and challenges, ups and downs and in the meantime, people have left, stayed and joined. Most of all, it is a great blessing that our ship has not stopped nor sunk but cruising towards the future. I believe it was possible because we trusted Jesus Christ, our captain, and you are his faithful followers.

Our Old Testament reading is the story about Abraham and his son Isaac. We have to remember an important thing before we celebrate God's promise and blessings for Abraham. He had to go through a difficult test first. He was asked to sacrifice his son and present him as a burnt offering to God. Abraham says "yes" with trust and confidence. The point of this story is not Abraham's unloving attitude as a father, but focuses on his overwhelming and radical obedience. The essence of faith is trust and confidence when we meet challenges. According to an Old Testament scholar, Walter Brueggemann, at the beginning, God is the tester, but at the end, God is the provider. One more thing is that the same God promises life and also commands death. The lesson that we learn from this story is that "God provides". We require faith as intense as God tests.

We can relate our church's test and challenges as in the story of our Old Testament reading about Abraham and his son Isaac. Our ship has gone through an angry sea and has been severely tested but has survived. And we expect our church to have many more challenges in the future. But we hope our church continues to be a blessing to a next generation. In Our New Testament reading, Apostle Paul gives us good advice on how we can go through our difficulties. He says, "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father." I hope that we take this stewardship campaign as a great opportunity to strengthen our faith that God will be with us and guide our journey. Let us have trust and confidence in our Lord, Jesus Christ. Amen.

P.S. Now, as we think about the future of our church, I would like you to read over the results of our survey that you completed on the yellow handout survey form and Pathway to renewal survey session. Please take them with you and think about them home. On May 19, our spiritual coach will come back and lead us another session for discussion.