

**“Called to Make A Difference”**

Isaiah 58:6-12, Matthew 5:13-16

February 9, 2014

Rev. Jeong Park

Fair Oaks United Methodist Church

On behalf of Fair Oaks United Methodist Church, I would like to welcome our Cub and Boy Scouts to our church. The Girl Scouts are also actively gathering at our campus, too. We will recognize them on the second Sunday in March. Recently, I heard that the Boy Scouts celebrated your anniversary. Do you know what anniversary year this is for your Scouts? (104<sup>th</sup> anniversary) The scouting program started in 1910 for the purpose of providing educational experience, building character values, maintaining healthy lifestyle and offering service. We thank the leaders of the Scouting ministries for your commitment and care for our young people. We are so proud of the young Scouts here today.

As a part of the United Methodist Church, our Fair Oaks Church is pleased to sponsor and support your good ministry at our church campus. When I read the statistic report on the scouting program, as of 2012, 6,700 United Methodist congregations served over 300,000 young people through more than 10,000 Cub Scout packs, Boy Scout troops and Venturing crews. The United Methodist Church is the second largest Christian denomination in the number of congregations that host Boy Scouts of America groups. The United Methodist Church hosts more Cub Scout packs than any other religious group.

This morning, we are celebrating Boy Scouts ministry as extension of our Methodist Church ministry. I have two questions: One is for the Scouts and the other for our congregation. The first for the Scouts is what can our church and the Christian faith offer to support and strengthen your Scouting mission? The second question for the congregation is what can our Fair Oaks Church learn from the Scouting ministry?

Boy Scouts, do you remember your Scout promise? Listen again:

**“On my honor I will do my best.**

**To do my duty to God and my country and to obey the Scout Law;**

**To help other people at all times;**

**To keep myself physically strong, mentally awake, and morally straight.”**

Do you remember the words of the Scout Law?

**“A Scout is trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent.”**

I found a couple of spiritual principles from your Scout promise and law: First, spiritual relationship with God; Second, kindness; Third, compassionate heart to others; Fourth, courage. I would say that Scouting ministries have been one of our best leadership building programs in our nation and now all over the world. Speaking of leadership, I want to introduce an example of leadership in the Old Testament. In the Bible, there are many great names who have shown their excellent leadership as God's faithful servants. Surprisingly, these are common principles among many great leaders in the Bible. Briefly, I want to introduce one of great leaders in the Old Testament. That person is Moses. Jewish people believed that Moses is the most important leader in their history. Let us think together what reasons make him one of the great leaders in Jewish history?

Moses was an Egyptian prince. He was raised in Pharaoh's family and he fully enjoyed the blessings of a luxurious life. There was no reason to leave the palace, but when he saw the pain and suffering of the Hebrew slaves, he became compassionate to these weak, poor people and decided to leave the palace. He was courageous to risk his own life in order to release the Hebrew slaves from slavery. Moses knew his weakness and limitation, but when God called him to lead his people, he dedicated himself to leading his people towards the Promised Land. In Numbers 12, it says that Moses was very humble, more so than anyone else. Throughout the Bible God chooses and uses those who are humble, who see themselves as servants of God. Jesus teaches the same thing when, on the night before his crucifixion, as his disciples are arguing over which one is "the greatest," he says, "the truly great among you will be your servant." He proceeded to illustrate this by washing their feet. Moses and Jesus' leadership are based on spiritual connection with God, humbleness, kindness and courage. Our first Scripture reading reminds us of principles God used in choosing Moses, and it also closely correlate with the Scout promise, "To help other people at all times". I want to assure you that what you have been doing in your Scouting program is not only offering educational and leadership building activities, but also you are practicing spiritual principles. Contemporary English Version summarizes in a simple way, "I'll tell you what it really means to worship the LORD. Remove the chains of prisoners who are chained unjustly. Free those who are abused! Share your food with everyone who is hungry" This is what our Church in the Christian faith offer to you, the Scouts, to strengthen your spiritual principles in your Scouting journey.

Let's think about the other question. The question was what our Fair Oaks church can learn from the Scouting ministry? Our church deeply appreciates benefiting from many Eagle Scouts' projects on this campus. The ramps and

walkway provide people with disabilities access our facility, and a patio for future fellowship place. Your service makes a difference to our church and our community. Each project provides Scouts with the opportunity to practice spiritual principles such as spiritual relationship with God, kindness, compassionate heart to others, and courage.

Our New Testament reading describes the role of salt and function of light. The salt is a metaphor of your duty and responsibility to transform yourself and your environment into a better place. Can you imagine salt without its taste? It will never happen! In other words, if you are salt, you have your own unique gift and talent to make a difference. What you do through your Scouting programs is to enhance yourself as an individual and as a member of community to be the salt to make a difference. In the same way, we are the light of the world. Eugene Peterson paraphrases our New Testament reading in a different way. He says, “You’re here to be light, bringing out the God-colors in the world.” Both our Scouts and our congregation are called to make a difference to be the salt and light here on the earth.

Dear Scouts and Fair Oaks congregation, trust and believe you are the salt. As salt enhances the flavor of food, we are called to be the salt of the earth for transformation of the world. In a sense, all church ministries like worship and the Scouting activities are spiritual disciplines preparing ourselves to be the salt and light to transform our surroundings into a better place. I hope we continue to listen and act upon God’s call as participants of God’s movement by using our spiritual practices in the transformation of our church, community, and the people all around the world. **You make a difference.** Amen.