

“We Are Called”

Micah 6:8, 2 Timothy 1:9

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Most of you know John Lennon’s song, “Imagine” (1971). In his song, he asked people to imagine a place where things that divide people did not exist. He dreamed that would be a much better place. The words go like this: “Imagine there's no heaven No hell below us Above us only sky Imagine all the people Living for today. Imagine there's no countries. Imagine all the people living life in peace. You may say I'm a dreamer But I'm not the only one I hope someday you'll join us And the world will be as one”. As he sang this song, he may not have been a realist, but a dreamer who dreams unrealistically. But we Christians may be dreamers like John Lennon in a different way.

Last Sunday on the day of Pentecost, we reflected on Pentecost people as the first church people inspired by the Holy Spirit and started dreaming God’s dream. The church’s mission was to transform people’s lives into children of God and invite them to begin a holy life in Christ. Holiness doesn’t mean a materialistic, luxurious or noble life, but a life for sanctifying our lives to serve others following Jesus’ teachings. Simply speaking, two things: To love God and to love our neighbors. That’s it! This is about discipleship, too! Therefore, the purpose of our worship is to meet with God and to serve our neighbors for a positive change in the community and the world. This is what Jesus asks us to do. We Christians are called as God’s dreamers. This morning, I invite us to think about our Church’s mission for God’s world.

Do you know about our Annual Conference’s global mission project, “Imagine No Malaria”? During the 2013 Annual Conference Session, our conference initiated and set a goal to save lives in sub-Saharan Africa by raising \$2 million. Last year, our annual conference raised just over \$500,000 short of the goal. Looking forward to 2015, our Bishop and cabinets launched the \$100K Challenge to raise \$100,000 in each of our four districts by June 1st Monday, tomorrow. When I saw the conference report, our Bridges District’s challenge as of May 27, is about \$35,000. Next Sunday, District Superintendent Rev. Schulyer Rhodes is coming to share his vision with us as our spiritual Bridge’s leader. Our council voted to make a special offering supporting the Imagine No Malaria campaign.

Why has our Conference set a mission goal to help “Imagine No Malaria in Africa”? Let me briefly share some facts with you: **Fact One:** In 2010, there were an estimated 219 million cases of malaria causing 660,000 deaths, mostly among African children younger than five. **Fact Two:** Every 60 seconds, malaria claims an innocent life in Africa. **Fact Three:** Malaria is a life-threatening disease caused by parasites that are transmitted to people through the bites of infected female Anopheles mosquitoes. **Fact Four:** Malaria symptoms appear seven days or more (usually 10–15 days) after the infective mosquito bite. The first symptoms include fever, headache, chills and vomiting. If not treated within 24 hours, malaria can progress to severe illness often leading to death. **Fact Five:** More than 85% of the world’s malaria deaths are in Africa. **Fact Six:** The United Methodist Church has more than 300 hospitals, clinics and health posts in Africa, all part of a comprehensive program to fight this killer disease.

One of our proud Methodism theologies is ‘social sanctification’, which means ‘never stop doing good works’ as a part of your holy life. This always has been an integral part of our Methodism. When the earthquake happened in Nepal, the death toll was more than 7,000; 3.5 million people are in need of food assistance. UMCOR has received nearly \$317,000 in online gifts donated for Nepal’s emergency. Ellen Frosch, co-chair of our Finance ministry reported our special Nepal offering was \$838. Personally, I was deeply moved by your generous heartfelt support.

Why do we love our neighbors and care about people all over the world? Let’s look at our first Old Testament reading. Micah told the people, “What does the LORD require of you but to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with your God.” The point is to do what is fair and just to our neighbor, be compassionate and loyal in our love. Jesus taught the same. Our Church mission statement explains our understanding of love as following Christ’s example by caring, accepting, supporting and being kind to ourselves and others. Two years ago, in February 2013, we received some inspirational comments from small group surveys when we asked you to share your understanding of mission in our community. Most importantly was “Live in Christ’s love, sharing that grace with the Fair Oaks community and world through acts of welcome, compassion and generosity within Fair Oaks United Methodist Church and outside, growing by sharing the good news of Jesus.”

Why do we do this good work? Why do we have to love our neighbors and live a holy life? What is the reason? Our second New Testament reading gives us a clue. It is about our calling. The Apostle Paul reminds us that Jesus Christ taught us about this: Do not rely on works alone, but remember Jesus’ purpose

and grace. We are the people of God who are called to do justice, love kindness and humbly work with God. David Hass, director of The Emmaus Center for Music, Prayer and Ministry composed a contemporary hymn, "We Are Called". I invite us to sing together after my message. The words go like this;

"Come! Live in the light! Shine with the joy and the love of the Lord!
We are called to be light for the kingdom, to live in the freedom of the city of God!
We are called to show our mercy to all those in fear!
We are called to be hope for the hopeless, so all hatred and blindness will be no more!
We are called to act with justice.
We are called to love tenderly.
We are called to serve one another, to walk humbly with God."

We Christians are people of God who experience God's grace through Jesus Christ and are honorably called to be God's partners to dream God's dreams. Truly, we are all dreamers! Our Methodism founder, John Wesley encouraged his Christian fellows to, "Do all the good you can. By all the means you can. In all the ways you can. In all the places you can. At all the times you can. To all the people you can. As long as ever you can". I hope that we all continue to serve well and consciously help and love our neighbors in Jesus' name. Amen.