

*CRIBB<S>NOTE – June 29, 2008*

There is a lot of talk going around about change. In this political year, it is the buzz word in almost every candidate's campaign. People say they want change to happen. What do we mean by that?

Here at San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ, we also talk about change. The very fact you have called a new pastor who brings a very different tradition to this church is quite evident members here want change. Or, do we?

Sometimes, it is easier to talk about change and believe we are making it happen because of our conversations, rather than actually engaging a process that pushes us into new and uncertain directions. Perhaps, the real deal is to change the newest persons among us to make them just like us. Or, we may believe we are perfect in every way and the only change that is really needed is to convince all others they need to get onboard with our program and the way we do things.

The Bible is filled with calls for change. The term that recurs most often is "repent." Many of us tend to bypass that word and don't spend a whole lot of time dwelling on it. When it does come up, most often it is in reference to other people who "need to repent."

Repentance is the best change we can make. It means making an honest assessment of our lives and determining to do things differently. We confess when, where, and how we have gone wrong, and commit ourselves to turning our lives around. To repent is to make big changes. We stop doing what we are so well practiced at doing and begin new patterns of behavior that put God first and others ahead of ourselves. That is real change.

Too often, we are forced to face stuff that never should have happened. Across the United States, for example, we spend disproportionate amounts of money to fight crime and stop violence. We exhaust our treasuries and human resources to concentrate on activities that should not occur. Imagine how much real progress we could make as a nation if we focused our attention on more positive and urgent needs. We really do need to repent.

We make the mistake of thinking we make progress when we take action to deal with bad behavior like racism and prejudice. It is not progress at all because to address such nonsense means we have to retard our potential and back up to undo the harm we have caused each other. If we had loved one another as Jesus taught, we could move forward and advance humanity toward higher goals. We need to change.

Change begins with each of us right where we are living. Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote, "You must be the change you wish to see in the world," best describes and instructs how true change happens.

While we may be encouraged by calls for change among the political candidates vying for our votes, we need to be clear about what they mean and what kind of change we desire. More importantly, we need to prayerfully seek to know what change God wants

us to make. It may very well be God expects us to repent and start making our change from a biblical or theological perspective.

Inherent in real change is the unfamiliar and uncertain process that may make us profoundly different from everything we thought we knew about ourselves. As my pastor, the Reverend Dr. Cleo Malone, always says, "You can't be safe and saved at the same time." We are called to be the change we "wish to see in the world." There is nothing safe about being the change agent. Let's make that change!