

CRIBB<S>NOTE – August 3, 2008

Our family is grateful for the time you have given us to rest, relax, read, reflect, and return with glad hearts to this congregation. Vacation is a wonderful gift; a time needed to recreate a spirit of joy for life. We spent our time exploring parts of California, Nevada, and Arizona. Only a few days were we separated as I slipped away to Texas to be with a dear friend and mentor in celebration of his birthday, retirement, and the anniversary of his move from New York to Texas 20 years ago.

We are thankful for the generous blessings shared by members and friends of this great church during our first year in San Marino. You have allowed us to make a rather smooth transition into an unfamiliar environment that challenges almost every aspect of our lives. We have been socially and culturally stretched. You made it possible for your pastor to enter school and study seriously in pursuit of a long time desire to complete an advance degree in theology and ethics. Thank you!

These are interesting and terrible times for too many people in this region, across the nation and around the world. There is a great hunger for justice. People are starving for food, water and opportunity to eke out a living. Corruption is rampant and innocent victims are damaged daily. These are days that require a re-doubling of our faith commitment to honor God with our lives by unselfishly and courageously engaging the challenges before us. We are required to think clearly about how we can work together toward the resolution to reduce human suffering.

During this past month, our family visited communities that represent the range of abundance and economic disparity. There is an uneven distribution of resources that create wealth for some and despair for others. Public and private segments of American society are experiencing a special period of blatant abuse and neglect. The cries of those most affected by contemporary conditions go unheard and unheeded. How can we as a church community respond to them? In what ways will we take inventory of our gifts, talents, and resources to provide some alternatives?

The legacy of the United Church of Christ is one of intervention during times of crisis. In the 19th Century, our denomination's predecessors established health and educational institutions across the United States to meet medical and academic needs not addressed by the government. 50 years ago, the UCC provided leadership to assist the formation and advancement of the Civil Rights movement and gave support to Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.'s fledgling organization, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

Today, we are blessed to step into the Public Square with a vision to organize a coordinated effort to blunt the impact of neglect. Following the example of Jesus in obedience to his instruction, we can advance our faith's mandate to feed the hungry and inspire the lives and souls of those who have been discarded, forgotten, ignored, and left out.

We have been given this moment to seek the welfare, peace, and prosperity of the nation by creating dynamic, new relationships among those who know the agony of human indecency and dismissal. Let us imagine the possibilities and work together to give a fresh start to our brothers and sisters who long for hope and change. This is our time to share from our abundance and invite others to join us at the table of plenty.

