

Good News



Community Presbyterian Church

August 2009

From the Pastor

The year Nancy and I moved to Gustine, our state was in the midst of a drought and our country was in the midst of an economic recession.

I remember Jo Fisher asking for prayer for rain each Sunday. And I remember a conversation I had at the back gate of our church with a man who had just been laid off. I suggested that maybe the drought and the recession were actually related and that the economy would turn around as soon as God answered our prayers for rain.

It happened. The rains came and the economy recovered quickly. And I was only mildly surprised at how few people gave God the credit for improving our economy by sending us rain.

Going back more than a decade before that, I remember when Nancy and I moved to Dixon so that I could attend UC Davis. California was in the midst of a drought and the US was in the midst of a recession.

I remember my economics professor commenting on the news that the US had the first trade deficit in years and years. He said it was a fluke and wouldn't happen again for another 30 years. I suggested to him that maybe the trade deficit was tied to our country's increased imports of foreign oil and that I didn't see a prospect of that diminishing any time soon.

The rains came and the economy recovered but that trade deficit has done nothing but grow over the intervening 30 years. Sometimes natural resources and weather patterns trump even the most brilliant manipulations of the financial system.

Right now California is in the midst of a drought and our whole world (not simply the US) is in the midst of an economic recession.

Now I know that there are many reasons for our current financial crisis, and there is plenty of blame to go around, from inflated home prices to ill-advised loans to mortgage backed securities and credit default swaps to lack of government regulation and unrealistic insurance ratings; from local realtors to Wall Street traders to Washington insiders to Chinese bureaucrats. Yes, I think all of these contributed to get us into this mess.

But may I suggest that maybe the drought in our part of the country has had a little part to play in the current economic recession, maybe as nothing more than a catalyst for the drop in home prices in the Central Valley and our huge local foreclosure rate. If this drought is somehow tied to this recession, maybe God is at least in part to blame. And maybe if God were to change the course of the weather and send us rain, even this economic recession might turn around.

Some people trust the economic recovery plans of our current administration and some people have other plans which they think would work better. Most people trust in some sort of humanly conceived and humanly implemented plan to make things better. Personally, I trust in God and think that God should be asked to help us out with this one.

So may I suggest that we pray for rain and begin those prayers now.

I know it is not the rainy season. And I don't expect it to begin raining this month. But it is not too early to begin praying that we are blessed with rain in September and October and November and December and January and February and March and maybe even April. That sounds like a lot of rain. But, O God, we'll even be happy with a flood.

Pastor Mark

Coming Up September 8



Save the date!

We'll be printing tickets and passing them out soon so that you can sell to your neighbors and friends.

We did very well last year because of all the presold tickets. So we're aiming to have all the tickets sold before we start cooking.



- 2 Alex Excatel
- 6 Ron Stackhouse
- 8 Mary Peters
- 11 Bobby Wroble
- 16 Vern Fisher
- 28 Ray Accord



- 2 Jane and Jerel Steckling
- 11 Barbara and Robert Wroble



“And so we know and rely on the love God has for us. God is love. Whoever lives in love lives in God and God in her/him. In this way love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment, because in this world we are like him. There is no fear in love, but perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love”

1 John 4:16-18

Driving home from work today I heard about several books and at least one movie coming soon that are all focused on “The end of time.” Apparently, the ancient Mayan calendar ends on the date December 12, 2012. The N.P.R. reporter sounded dramatic regarding how seriously some people have taken this information. There’s also some scientific evidence predicting an unusual amount of solar flares near that date—by which our planet could get overheated and perish.

Astrologically speaking, in December 2012 the planets in our solar system will be aligned in ... you guessed it, the beginning of “The Age of Aquarius”. Co-incidentally, there is a current revival of the musical “Hair” being produced. Aquarius’s denotation of water is predicted by some to bring an era of cooperation and flowing together, and an end to human conflict and strife.

So there you have the two conflicting secular scenarios: destruction versus nirvana.

It seems we human beings exhibit a morbid curiosity concerning the end of the world, and have been fearful and vulnerable to such predictions for generations now. Maybe we’re afraid to die or to

contemplate mass destruction. In part we want to know if the time is really soon, so we can be ready and can make sure those we love are prepared as well.

On a more personal scale, recently a friend of mine commented that he worries sometimes that his life will end before he gets it right. All of us struggle at times with similar concerns. When I was first diagnosed with cancer 21½ years ago (Who’s counting?? I am!), I was haunted by thoughts such as: How have I lived my life? Have I done enough to have it end soon? How are my relationships, with God and those I love? Has anything I’ve done really been of lasting value?

Acts 1:7 tells us: “It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority” So there—God does not want us to know when the world or our own lives will end. He wants us to trust. As we trust in God and his love, we allow that love to drive out any fear, in the present and for the future. As we truly seek to know and rely on the love God has for us, we can then share that abundant love with those around us: Simple acts of kindness; one person and one day at a time.

We are so blessed to not base our hope and predictions on Mayan calendars or sun spots or astrological signs!

GOD IS LOVE. May we embrace that enormity and make that be our sign, now and always,

Eager for a new age to dawn, with love,

Nancy

COMMUNITY PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

399 Sixth Street
Gustine, CA 95322
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Permit No. 12
Gustine, CA 95322

Sunday School, 9:00 AM — Worship, 10:30 AM

Pastor — Mark Hollingsworth

Treasurer — Dorothy Gray; Choir Director — Jim Conrad

Secretary — Med Hoover; Parish Nurse — Nancy Hollingsworth

Office Hours — 9:00-Noon, Wednesday, Thursday and by appointment

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