

Denice K. Leslie
Kham Dy Yang
Team Pastors
September 17, 2006
Dedication Sunday;
Sanctuary Renovation and Stained Glass
Combined English/Hmong Service
Scriptures: Acts 1: 6 – 11, Matt. 28: 16 – 20
(THEME: Calif-Nev. Conf. Vision Statement)

Passion in Jesus Christ—

-Compassion for All

In today's gospel lesson Jesus commands us, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember I am with you always to the end of the age."

Today is a little piece of God's "kingdom" for us as Memorial United Methodist Church. Yes, I said KINDOM, not Kingdom. Look around you: our surroundings are fresh and lovely and our congregation full and diverse. This is the way the world is supposed to look. This is the way God made it to be! We are all God's children and we live in a beautiful world! Alleluia! Can I hear it back? **Alleluia!** Thank you Jesus. **Thank you Jesus.**

Thank you God that you have brought us all to the unity of this day and made us one in Christ. We are one in the Lord. Can I get a second on that? Say it with me: We are one in the Lord! **We are one in the Lord!**

And we reflect our California-Nevada Conference's vision. (First Transparency):

Passion in Christ—Compassion for All

Our understanding of what it means to have passion for Christ and compassion for all begins with having a ***Passion for the Mind of Christ*** (Second Transp.)

Our vision challenges us as a congregation to move toward a future in which we as are a Spiritual Transformation Center.

What does that look like? It looks like this: each of us as disciples of Jesus commit to growing and deepening our own faith life through the disciplines of prayer, presence, gifts and service—and learning more from each other, from scripture and from the example of Jesus for the purpose of changing others lives by making disciples.

But what is the heart of the mind of Christ? Humility before God and neighbor.

The Apostle Paul tells us in his letter to the Philippians: *Have this mind in you that was in Christ Jesus: who though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness.*

And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—eve on a cross.

We are called to live our lives not thinking more of ourselves than others—remembering that not even Christ elevated himself but chose to serve.

And in his letter to the Romans Paul tells us: *"Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God..."*

So having the mind of Christ means learning a new way of living and being in the world and using our good minds to distinguish what is good and what is not, what is God's way and what is not after the example of Jesus.

When we are filled with Christ, when our minds are focused on him and his way our lives will be transformed and we will be able to embody his transforming love in our ministries—reaching out and transforming lives, transforming the world.

How many of you were at the Rally for Sunday School this morning? Make a commitment right now to the renewing of your mind this new church school year.

Our second understanding of what it means to have passion for Christ and compassion for all is to have:

Compassion with the Heart of Christ. (THIRD transparency) Our vision challenges us as a

congregation to service through outreach ministries: face-to-face, hands on, with the poor, the least, the outcast and the hungry.

For Jesus teaches us: “*....for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me. I was sick and in prison and you visited me,*” And when we respond, “*When Lord, did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger and welcome you, naked and gave you clothing, or sick and in prison and visited you?* And the King answered: “*When you did it to the least of these, MY FAMILY, you did it to me.*”

Did you know our youth group and Youth Director Connie Alfaro were featured in the Povorello House newsletter for their faithfulness in service to the poor and hungry? They go once a month, on the first Saturday, down to Povorello to serve lunch to the poor.

We need to follow their example with our own hands on ministries to the needy around us. Pauline Middleton feels strongly that its time for us to do something as a congregation for the homeless sleeping around our facility other than call the police.

Yes, the police fortunately have a good program for picking up the homeless and doing their best to connect them to the services they need, not just moving to the edge of town. That is good news. But what about us? How can we show them Jesus love? Our purpose is to Show and Tell Jesus Love Everywhere—How about a Covenant of Hospitality with the homeless that says we will treat them with respect, offer them what we can to meet their needs from our thrift store and food pantry AND put our efforts into building a “way station” here in Clovis for the homeless:

If our homeless population isn’t large enough to attract the grants needed to build a homeless shelter then how about a small place where they can shower, eat, rest and then move on to another shelter? A place we supply with sleeping bags, blankets, cots, toiletries, food stuffs, small amenities and bibles? We could write a grant proposal for such a project.

Don’t wait—follow the passion of your heart and speak to me today if you feel this is your heart burst ! We’ll build a team and do it.

The third understanding of what it means to have passion for Christ and compassion for all means doing what we are doing today:

Celebrating Our Diversity and Unity in Christ.

Our conference vision challenges us to continue building on the strong foundation we have been laying in this congregation between one another as Christians from diverse backgrounds. Now Pastor Yang and are yokemates in the work of the Lord with you. We celebrate our teamwork together!

Today we celebrate the covenant we have together between us as Hmong and English speakers—as well as give thanks for the growing cultural diversity within our membership other than Hmong or Anglo.

Jesus tells us in Acts we will be his witnesses “*to the ends of the earth.*” Next month I will be participating in the Western Jurisdiction Korean Mission for an evangelism experience in Korea October 19th through the 27th for the purpose of studying Korean Spiritual Formation and its affects on the growth of Korean churches through the ministries of evangelism, prayer and various worship experiences at the teaching church Bupyung Methodist Church. This will prepare me to prepare us all for something new God is bringing our way:

Pastor Young Kim of our Fresno Korean Church and I have been in conversation and our church Council has approved the formation of a Joint Futures Task Force to explore the possibilities of our future together as congregations here at Memorial. Would you serve on this task force? Jesus calls us to be his disciples not only here in our Jerusalem Clovis but in all of Fresno Judea Country and California/Samaria and to the ends of the earth. When I return we will be forming this Task Force. Listen. Pray. Speak to me or Pastor Yang.

Yes, we speak different languages, have different cultural heritages, but we are one in Jesus Christ. One in our passion in him and our compassion for all.

Our final understanding of how we are passionate for Christ and compassionate for all is in (FIFTH Transp.)

Extending Christ's Invitation to a Joyous Life
by becoming better known in the Clovis community. Have we considered any ways in which we can serve our community? Finding the joyous life is key to sharing the joyous life. How does one do that?

Wasn't it President John F. Kennedy who said, "Ask not what your country can do for you but what you can do for your country"? Today, our challenge members of Memorial is to: "*Ask not what Jesus can do for you, but what you can do for your Savior.*" It's in answering this question that you will find faith—that you will find purpose and direction and meaning for your life. That you will find an unexpected joy. As John Wesley once said, "Act as if you have faith and you will have faith."

Abundant life rests in giving your life away. It rests in interacting with others. And that doesn't mean you have to go "over there" somewhere because the mission field begins right out here—out the front door. There is salvation waiting out there—not in here—it begins once you leave here and go out there. That's where Jesus is. That was his resurrection message delivered by the angel at the empty tomb. The angel said, "...tell his disciples ... that he is going ahead of you to Galilee, there you will see him, just as he told you."

This is a beautiful sanctuary, but if we never leave it to do his will it is not much more than a mausoleum for navel-gazing pew-potatoes.

Contagious churches need to be grossly infected with the love of God and out there mixing it up with the world if we want the contagion of the good news to infect people's lives---OURS as well as OTHERS.

We gather today with real thanksgiving for all we have received.

We gather today as Memorial United Methodist Church—united in our unity in Christ. United in our purpose to Show and Tell Jesus' Love Everywhere. And united as Methodists with the

churches of our California-Nevada Annual Conference in our Passion in Jesus Christ and Compassion for all. (SIXTH Trans.): Together we are:

The People of the California-Nevada Conference

Diverse in Cultures

Diverse in Geography

E Tou Daung Yesus

(Together): ONE IN CHRIST.

Let all the people say Amen. **Amen.**