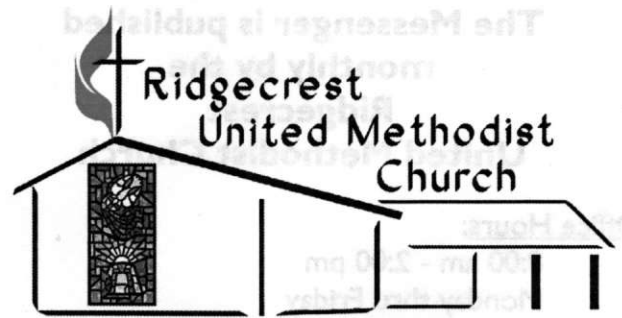


# The Messenger



Newsletter of the Ridgecrest United Methodist Church

July, 2011

## PASTOR'S POINT

I'm baack!...

The 2011 sessions of the California-Pacific Annual Conference are history. This year the weather in Redlands was quite comfortable, no warmer than 90 or so each day.

Wes and Hazel Hensley our Conference Lay Members drove their wonderful new Fleetwood RV to Redlands. Visiting them in the "Doghouse" for home-baked dessert on Friday evening was one of the high points of Conference for me. They will bring a full report during worship on July 10.

I am delighted to have been reappointed by Bishop Mary Ann Swenson to serve Ridgecrest UMC in a 7th year. Thanks be to God. These 6 years of our ministry together have gone by so quickly—to me it feels more like 3 years—proving once again that time flies when you're having fun.

In and through all that was said and done this year at Conference, one thing is perfectly clear: our presence is growing smaller in the Southern California-Hawaii area. Total membership now stands at 80,026. The overall Conference budget continues to shrink, Conference staff is being downsized, and we are looking at a redistricting study that would reduce the current 8 Districts to 5 Districts—4 on the mainland, plus Hawaii.

Having less bureaucracy isn't necessarily bad news. Bishop Swenson has declared, "Change will be seen in the breadth and depth of what we are about to do." Yet the mission field we serve is one of the most densely populated regions in America. We need the best and the smartest organizational structure, not merely the smallest, in order to achieve our mission "to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world."

One of the Conference initiatives which will have a direct impact on our ministry is the formation of Mission Areas, which are in some ways similar to the Sub-Districts or cluster groups organized in years past.

The idea of Mission Areas is to group churches together by geographic region, "to coordinate, encourage, and facilitate mutual support among clergy and laity in making a transformative impact on the people in their region."

Rev. DePano our District Superintendent has told me that he wants to group RUMC with the UM churches of the Antelope Valley: Lancaster, Palmdale, Quartz Hill and Pearblossom.

Next year will also mark a transition in the Episcopal Office of the Los Angeles Area, when Bishop Swenson retires and a new Bishop will be assigned.

So some sea changes are coming in with the tide. We can weather those changes, and we can even set sail into the wind, as long as we remember and practice 3 essential truths:

- ➔ Whose we are: we belong to God.
- ➔ Who we serve: Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- ➔ How we know: through the authority and witness of Scripture, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

RUMC is experiencing an anointed season of abundance, and we are uniquely blessed to share ministry in such a time as this. You've got to believe me when I say that there is no congregation of any magnitude at any location I would rather serve than to serve you, right here, right now.

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "DePano".

## 2011 CONFIRMATION CLASS

Amy and I are working together to provide a Confirmation Class experience beginning on Sunday, August 21 in Room 2 at 9:15 am. There will be 7 class sessions, covering the basics of Christian faith, the authority of scripture, the history of the church and the imperative of mission.

October 9 will be Confirmation Sunday. The class is open to youth who will be 11 years old during the coming school year and older.