

## **CRIBB<S> NOTE – FEBRUARY 10, 2008**

This is quite a time in America as the political winds continue to blow. There is a combination of excitement and uncertainty. Yet, people are expressing a great desire for something new. They long for a change. There is a sense of starting over and mapping a way out of the mess that invades almost every aspect of our lives. Around the world people are watching to see what America is doing and where we are heading. It is my prayer we are marching toward neighborliness and compassion.

Beyond the politics, this week is the Chinese New Year; 4706 – the Year of the Rat. According to Chinese legend, people born in the Year of Rat are “leaders, pioneers, and conquerors. They are charming, passionate, charismatic, practical and hardworking.” Anyone paying attention to current events may say we need all those qualities to help guide us through this special period. But, we need more than temporal leaders to steer this nation.

**Lacking in American culture is an acknowledgement of God.** During the recent Church Vitality event sponsored by the Southern California Nevada Conference of the United Church of Christ, we were told 60 to 80 percent of the population is not affiliated with any faith group. Among persons 20 years old and younger, a solid 80 percent have never entered a church; not even for a wedding. That is astounding to those of us who grew up in the church and participate in weekly worship. Such statistics provide a snapshot of a nation turned deadly because it lacks reverence for life and Creation. **That may help to explain our propensity to be violent and our romance with war.**

The current winds blow a gale force of trouble and disappointment. People wonder who will lead them to safer shores and help resolve many of the conflicts and conditions that weigh them down. But dependence on leadership driven by ego and ambition is dangerous and foolhardy. Much more is required.

Someone may say rather lightheartedly the Year of the Rat is timely since it seems rats have been running governments these past recent years. Rats that gnaw at the souls and hearts of sensitive and caring people have trampled over human rights and ignored the wasting bodies in their wake. We need more than rats who seek to enlarge the treasuries of corporate giants at the expense of human labor.

So, we begin this Chinese New Year with a great desire for new leadership and hope change will come that brings greater concern, opportunities, and vision to the multitudes and not just a few people.

That is the background into which we welcome today's preacher. John “Jake” Pomeroy is co-pastor of First Congregational United Church of Christ in Pasadena. He and his co-pastor/wife, Marlene, are sharing this Sunday in an exchange of pulpits with San Marino Congregational UCC. This is Just Peace Sunday, a designation First Church Pasadena has had and honored since 1986. We are pleased to have Jake with us and pray what he brings today will encourage us to move deeper into the arena of social justice action.

-Pastor Art Cribbs