

CRIBBS NOTE – September 9, 2007

People of faith often face a very difficult dilemma. At once, we seek to do justice but are tempered by an overwhelming desire not to offend anyone. We strive to be nice instead of prophetic. We don't want to cause trouble. We want to be liked and accepted by people around us. So often, we keep silent so as not to draw attention to ourselves.

People of faith often feel things deeply, but we mask our sensitivity. We pretend to be alright even when our hearts ache and our conscience is challenged. We do our best to make a good impression without betraying our true expression. We are well practiced at emotional calisthenics that would otherwise strain our souls if we revealed the truth. And, so it goes.

Yet, whenever we allow evil and injustice to go on without assault, our decision not to engage gives the adversary another opportunity to roam the earth unmolested and unthreatened. In fact, our absence from the game of critical contention puts us either on the sidelines or in the cheering section of those who enter the field and meet the foe head to head. Being silent or afraid does not exclude us from the reality of cosmic struggle. It goes on and we are not exempt from its impact.

So, what are we to do amid the timeless battle for the human soul? How do we respond to the cries that reverberate from every corner of the world, echoing from generation to the next, screaming a wretched howl caused by the agony of long suffering? Do we really believe such conditions do not concern us? Do we really think the lives of others have no bearing on us? Can we truly exist comfortably while God's children are hurting under the burden of brutal, excruciating pain?

"How long, O God, must your people suffer?" asked the prophets. "How long must we cry out?"

One way in which we answer the calls for help is to make clean water available to people who risk their lives every time they take a drink of contaminated water.

According to Fortune Magazine, "More than a billion people lack access to drinkable water. Nearly 5,000 children die each day from waterborne illnesses such as diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid. The economic impact is also staggering—\$170 billion in losses from water-related diseases."

Of course, this is preventable. We have the technology to make clean water available everywhere in the world. But do we have the will to make it happen?

Here at San Marino Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, our board of deacons decided to step forward and join "Water for Children Africa," a grassroots organization in Southern California, in providing water tanks to schools and villages in Africa. Vickie Butcher, executive director of "Water for Children Africa," has a goal of placing 41 water tanks that can purify six thousand gallons of water, in several African nations.

As a congregation, we have dedicated the month of September to "Water for Children Africa." This is a moment in which we can say, "We heard the cries of God's children and we made it possible for them to drink safe water." Through your support we can give much needed water tanks to our brothers and sisters who are at risk.

In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., "It is time to break silence." Together, we must live up to our calling as followers of Jesus Christ and become incredible witnesses of God's love. Given the extreme cases of human torment, we have no choice but to put our lives in places where people have all but given up and lost hope. We must speak on their behalf as advocates for change and new life. We can no longer be timid or afraid. We have to do what is necessary, right and just. Anything less is unacceptable and unworthy.