

CRIBB<S>NOTE – August 9, 2009

We welcome to the pulpit the Reverend Dr. Carlos Correa, minister for environmental justice and program coordinator of Centro Romero, a joint mission of the United Church of Christ Justice and Witness Ministries and the Southern California Nevada Conference. Carlos brings an extensive background in justice work to Southern California.

With a PhD in psychology, Carlos shares a passion for protecting and preserving God's Creation. He serves on international boards of directors for environmental organizations in Latin America and the Caribbean, including the Amazon Defense Fund and the Red Vida Brazil, an environmental network dedicated to the defense of the natural resources in Amazonia and the rights of the Brazilian indigenous people. He is also a board member and leading facilitator of "Selva Negra," the largest environmental advocacy group in Mexico.

As program coordinator of Centro Romero, named after our former Conference Minister Dan Romero and located in San Ysidro, California, Carlos works on both sides of the Mexico-United States border to help interpret many of the challenges and conditions people face everyday in that international corridor. In September, he will lead a study group on behalf of the United Church of Christ to San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, which your pastor will attend. The complications associated with immigration policies stack up along the border but originate hundreds of miles away both north and south.

Our congregation has provided financial support to Centro Romero. The important work of that ministry helps to inform people on both sides of the border about opportunities to learn the issues that create hardships for families and individuals who are directly affected by the lack of compassionate, comprehensive immigration policies and fair trade agreements.

As a Christian community, we have an obligation based on our faith tradition to be directly involved in the lives of persons who suffer and struggle because of injustice. What we do not know can be dangerous to people who are harmed by insufficient resources to remedy their plight. The governments of the United States and Mexico must do much more to address the causes of poverty and economic disparity in their respective countries.

The prophetic voices throughout the Bible and the Gospel messages that reveal the teachings of Jesus Christ remind us of our responsibility to be an alternative presence. Our faith instructs us to show hospitality to sojourners, including foreigners, who come into our midst. Jesus tells us "to love our neighbor" and to care for the stranger.

Often, public policy is contrary to God's intent for all people. So, it is up to us to advocate and act according to God's will. That is the alternative presence we must provide where we are and for us to do what we can to make the positive difference these times require.

We are grateful to have Carlos Correa in our sanctuary. Let us receive him with open minds, hearts, and ears. Let us pray together for the ministry he performs; and let us dedicate ourselves to join him in solidarity with others who depend on us to do what is right, just, and good to improve the quality of life on both sides of the border.

Carlos, thank you, for being at San Marino Congregational United Church of Christ.