

I was sitting in Capitol Park in Sacramento, looking out at green space and all the government buildings that surround it. The buildings are so big and solid looking. They are beautifully landscaped with plants and public art. And I was thinking that a lot of time and careful planning and money went into all those buildings.

But then I also thought, what's inside them? Hard-working people, for sure, but also hard-edged politics. For a long time, the state of California has been stymied by partisan rancor, budget stalemates, and ballot wars. So, while these buildings convey an awesome sense of unity of mind and purpose and will on the outside, we all know or think we know what's going on on the inside.

The problem is that the architects of these buildings had a master plan; sadly, our politicians don't. But what is sad when it happens in government is sin when it happens in church. So,

as we are about to embark on a new effort at renovating and rebuilding this church, I want us to think about the Master Plan and hear what Paul was saying to the church in Corinth.

"According to the grace of God given to me, like a skilled master builder I laid a foundation, and someone else is building on it." Paul is talking here about how he started the church.

Well, back in 1874, A.M. Bailey, the first appointed pastor, laid a foundation for a Methodist congregation in Willow Glen. Over the years, many pastors and lay people have built on that foundation. And in 2007, the campaign to renovate Woodhaven and Kohlstedt Hall began. As you know, the recession hit hard just as the campaign was getting underway, and that made it impossible for us to complete the project.

Six years later, there's some new people, a new pastor, and at last, a new sense of possibility in the economy. But this pastor has a very keen awareness that we are never starting from scratch. We're always building on the work of others, and

we are always benefiting from the wisdom—hard-earned for sure—of those who have gone before.

"Each builder must choose with care how to build on it."

We reconsidered the original plans, and we chose with care how we might make the project more manageable and more financially feasible. But even more important than how to build is the question: on what do we build?

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." I want to make this clear to everyone in the congregation: we are not renovating our buildings just so we can generate rental income. If that is a side effect of our rebuilding, so be it. God bless it. But that's not the foundation we are building on.

I say this because I've been the pastor of a very small church that got 70% of its income from rent. That meant that they could afford a full-time pastor, but it also meant that they didn't need one. The truth is that the organizations that rented

from the church had more life in them than the congregation did. I tried to tell them, we are not called to be rental agents. We are called to be Gospel agents. That's true of any size church. So this whole project has to rest, not on what we can bring in, but who we can send out to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world.

That's our United Methodist mission statement. Now, what does that look like in Willow Glen? Our own mission statement says that we are "God's family growing through caring, sharing, and serving." And years ago, you embraced the concept of being "God's family" when you hired Susan and then Lisa to minister to children, youth, and families. Likewise, for years, you have embraced "caring" and "sharing" through cradle-to-grave programming: Woodhaven Preschool, Sunday School, Crosswalk, VBS, the joint youth ministry, summer camps, Disciple Bible, prayer and study groups, new member classes, Caring Hands and various other caring ministries.

Since the last Mexico Mission trip, you have newly embraced "serving" through the Building Hope group and regular Change the World and 5th Sunday service projects, the Open Table program, all in addition to the ministries that you participate in through the UMC: UMCOR, Heifer Project, Advance Specials; Special Sunday offerings, Apportionments, Annual Conference programs, etc.

All this is just great. But, let me tell you, your potential is even greater. You see, we haven't yet fully embraced the "growing" aspect of our mission statement. Yes, we put some effort into growing spiritually, into personal transformation. But we are called to make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the WORLD. So, we can't be satisfied with each of us growing individually. We also need to grow numerically. There are just too many people in our neighborhoods who are hungry, too many people who are hurting. And you know what Jesus says about folks who pass

hurting people without loving them, without offering God's love to them. If we don't share what we have, we'll lose what we have. It's as simple as that.

Praise God that we have the human resources (the staffing and the lay leadership) we need to share the love and grow the body. All we need are the material resources. We need money and we need buildings, buildings that will not barely sustain what we're doing but enable us to do more. If I'm hearing anything, it's God calling us to do more.

The current state of our main programming building is holding us back from being "God's family growing." The space is unattractive, dirty, and not adequately equipped for ministry. If we are intent upon making disciples and being "God's family growing through caring, sharing and serving," this situation is unacceptable. Most of us would not let our families live in these conditions. Why would we expect God's family to grow in them?

In a moment, the Mission Possible Team is going to present to you a Master Plan for the building renovations and debt repayment that we talked about at our congregational meeting back in March. They have put a lot of prayer and hard work into it. The guiding principles of this plan you have seen. The particulars you have not seen. This is a work in progress. But even more important than having a Master Plan is having a Master Builder. And it ain't us. In the words of Archbishop Romero, "We are workers, not master builders; ministers, not messiahs." So we look to our Master Builder to help us guide and shape this Master Plan, laid on the good foundation of faith, Jesus Christ being the chief cornerstone. And all of God's people said: "Amen!"