

October 6, 2013

“One God, One Faith, One Mission”

Galatians 3:26-28 , Matthew 5:9

Flo said that she wouldn't be here without the missionaries in the Philippines. I would like to say the same thing. Without the missionaries going to Japan I wouldn't be here either. I was confirmed by Phillip Luttio, a missionary from this country, sent by the former American Lutheran Church. I went to a Christian junior and senior high school, which was founded by Southern Presbyterian Missionaries in 1889. Going further back, Christianity was first brought to Japan by Francis Xavier, a Jesuit missionary from Spain, in 16th century.

The missionaries I came to know in Japan, all toiled in spreading the Gospel message tirelessly, even though the harvest we could see was not bountiful. Their work, their foot prints made a huge influence to my faith. The Christian school I attended gave me not only a good education but also faith formation.

Along with many great works, early missionaries made mistakes too by enforcing their culture upon the natives. In Africa the wearing of native clothes to church services was forbidden and, in its place, Africans were told to wear European attire.

Churches have made many mistakes in the past. Nonetheless, they have never stopped reaching out to others as Jesus commanded us: “Go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit.”

Churches in Japan made a huge mistake by submitting to the military regime during the World War II and joining the emperor worship, to “survive” as the church under the military pressure. Those Christians who didn't give in to the military were imprisoned and severely mistreated.

Churches in Germany made a mistake too by joining the fascist regime. After the war, they were the first to declare a public confession, called “The Stuttgart Declaration of Guilt,” in which they confessed guilt for their inadequacies in opposition to the Nazis and the Third Reich.

The churches in Japan finally published “CONFESSION ON THE RESPONSIBILITY DURING WORLD WAR II” in 1967.

Churches in the past made mistakes, acknowledged them, confessed their mistakes...and went forward...to carry out their mission -- reaching out to others with the Gospel message as Jesus taught us to do.

Churches in present time make mistakes too. We admit and acknowledge them, and move forward as the church of Jesus Christ, to continue our mission on earth.

The mission of Bellport UMC is this: to experience Christ's love for us and to embody God's love in the world, as it is printed on the front page of our bulletin every Sunday.

We are human. We have made mistakes in the past, whatever that might be.. We admit and acknowledge them ...and we move forward to continue to do the work Jesus left for us to do.

As our mission of the Bellport United Methodist Church, we offer our church space to the A.A. and 12-Step meetings. As our mission we have offered our space to the community—for Daisies, Brownies and Quilters. We offer our beautiful Fellowship Hall for gatherings and parties at very reasonable cost. By hosting the Parish Resource Center Bellport in our church building, we are supporting its mission—helping the churches on Long Island and beyond to do their ministries. We have supported Friendship INN, the ministry of feeding the hungry, by bringing dishes there and joining their fund-raising events. By bringing non-perishable food on the first Sunday every month, we support the local food pantry at St. Joseph the Worker Church to help those who are in need. The collection on Blanket Sunday helps those who are hit by the wake of a disaster by providing them with blankets and other emergency supplies.

Today's offering for the Long Island Council of churches helps those who need food, housing, utilities, gas, transportation, and medication. Please use the special offering envelopes, which are in your pews. As Flo spoke a short time ago, today we are also receiving donation for Rev. Grace Choi, our United Methodist missionary to the Philippines, as her partner in mission. Please leave your donation in the Piggy Bank, which will be placed in the gathering area. Next Sunday we'll dedicate our donation as our offering during the worship service.

The mission of the church continues throughout the world. One God, One faith, One mission. As we celebrate World Communion Sunday, oneness in Christ, today, let us remember that we are united in mission as the Church of Jesus Christ. Amen.