

## Pastor's Column



In the last month several things have happened that have brought me great joy. As the article on the next page chronicles, the Math Olympics started. As we made our plans for the Math Olympics, we had no idea how many students from Vallejo Middle School would show up, if any. Personally, I thought if we got a dozen kids on the first day the program would be wildly successful. When 26 students showed up the first day, I was overjoyed beyond words. Then, on the second Wednesday, we were positively shocked when 42 kids came through the doors! God has certainly blessed us with so many kids. Not only that, but each of the first three Wednesdays we have had over a dozen adults come and help. Not only is the Math Olympics making a difference in the lives of the children who have chosen to participate, it also seems to be making a difference in the lives of the adults who have chosen to give of their time to make it a success.

The success of the Math Olympics brings to mind the scripture in which says, "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion for them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest." The children who have come to us for the Math Olympics are like those sheep who need caring shepherds to guide them. The adults who have volunteered to be those shepherds are like the laborers. My prayer is that both more sheep (children) and more laborers (adult volunteers) will get involved.

Another thing that has made me glad this past month is that a friend called out of the blue one day and paid me a huge compliment. Some of you may remember the International Preachers who came to preach to us in the summer of 2002 when I was in summer school for my doctorate. One of them was a woman named Deetje Tiwa Rontinsulu from the country of Indonesia. I had not heard from Deetje in many years when she called a few weeks ago to say that she had received a call to become the pastor of a Presbyterian church in San Francisco. I was thrilled to know that she would be living in the area, but she went on to say that she wanted me to preach at the worship service when she would be installed as the pastor. I was very happy to do so on the afternoon of All Saints Day, November 1<sup>st</sup>.

Her call brought back memories of inviting all my doctoral classmates over to our home for lunch back in the spring of 2002. The only ones who came were the International students. All of the Americans made excuses, saying they couldn't come (which reminds me of another scripture!). After that, one of them began calling me the Patron Saint of International Students, but their gift to me was far greater — for my international friends taught me far more about being faithful to Christ by their lives and ministries. Being a Christian in other countries can be much more challenging than our experience here in the United States. I told Deetje I was happy to preach to her new congregation. I will tell them what an amazing Pastor God has called to their church and it will be joy to do so.

As always, God is good — all the time! I look forward to seeing you in worship!

**Grace & Peace,**