



## Thoughts From the Pastor's Desk

As your pastor, and as required by the United Methodist Church, each year I must fulfill a Continuing Education (CE) obligation. This is accomplished in a variety of ways. One of the ways is the attending of continuing education events or conferences. Since I have been in Florida, one CE event I try to attend is the Leadership Summit, hosted by Willow Creek Community Church, South Barrington, Illinois.

When Willow Creek first started hosting these Leadership Summits back in 1994, it was held at Willow Creek. As a result, to attend I had to go to Illinois. But more recently, due to the popularity of these conferences, satellite sites have been established not only around the country but the world as well. One of this year's satellite sites was in Palm Beach Gardens. So on August 6th and 7th I was at Palm Beach Community Church listening to various talks on leadership.

The Leadership Summit was the brain child of Bill Hybels, senior pastor at Willow Creek. Each year he starts and ends the summit or conference. The faculty always includes world class leaders from the world of religion, business and even politics. This year's faculty included Dr. Wess Stafford, CEO and President of Compassion International, former British Prime Minister Tony Blair, Dr. Gary Hamel, Visiting Professor London Business School, and David Gergen, Political Analyst for CNN, to name a few.

For those of you who don't know anything about Bill Hybels, besides being the Senior and founding Pastor of Willow Creek Community Church, he is also an avid sailor and he captains his own sail boat and has raced in sailing regattas. His talks always use illustrations about sailing or being on the water and this year was no different. Bill began by talking about waves, and waves during storms. He also spoke about what is referred to as a "rogue wave."

Rogue waves (also known as freak waves, monster waves, killer waves, and extreme waves) are relatively large and spontaneous deep ocean surface waves that are a threat even to large ships and ocean liners. Once thought by scientists to exist only in legends, rogue waves are now known to be a natural ocean phenomenon. Anecdotal evidence from mariners' testimonies and damages inflicted on ships have long suggested they occurred; however, their scientific measurement was only positively confirmed following measurements of the "Draupner wave", a rogue wave at the Draupner oil platform, in the North Sea on January 1, 1995. During this event, minor damage was inflicted on the platform, confirming that the reading was valid.

Freak waves have been cited in the media as a likely source of the sudden, inexplicable disappearance of many ocean-going vessels. One of the very few cases in which evidence exists that may indicate a freak wave incident is the 1978 loss of the freighter MS München. In February 2000, a British oceanographic research vessel sailing in the Rockall Trough west of Scotland, encountered the largest waves ever recorded by scientific instruments in the open ocean, with a swell wave height of 61 ft. and individual waves up to 95 ft.

For many, right now we are in a rogue wave economy and don't know what end is up. Yet during this most difficult of times there is also a time of opportunity for the church, as great opportunities to do ministry are presenting themselves every single day.

Let me share a couple of thoughts that I gleaned from Bill's talk. First, we have the opportunity to live out the Acts 2 church. We have an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those in and outside of the church. Acts 2:42-47 reads, "<sup>42</sup> They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. <sup>43</sup> Everyone was filled with awe, and many wonders and miraculous signs were done by the apostles. <sup>44</sup> All the believers were together and had everything in common. <sup>45</sup> Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. <sup>46</sup> Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, <sup>47</sup> praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved."

Wouldn't it be nice to be able to meet the needs of those who are really struggling right now? To really be the church as it was described and practiced in the Bible? Just a thought...

And second, during these times of a rogue wave economy, we need to continue to walk by faith, trusting in God. Yes, we need to keep an eye on costs, but not forgoing essential ministries because of costs. Wouldn't it be great to do it? How about instead of using our Christmas offering this year to make sure our apportionments are paid in full, we increase our giving to get them paid by October. That way we could give our Christmas offering all away to feed the hungry through CROS Ministries and Boynton Beach Food Pantry. Just a thought...

How about praying on this, for I believe we have the opportunity to make a difference during these rogue wave economic times. After all, don't we serve the one who calmed the waves? And can't we accomplish great things, not by might nor by power, but by His Spirit? Let me know what you think. Till next month ...

Grace and Peace,

*Pastor Rich*