



The Rev. Dr. Arlene K. Nehring
Pastoral Message
September 2011

On a Mission

A horde of Eden Church members and Cherryland parents and friends helped with the K-2 language assessment at Cherryland Elementary School last month. Every day for a week, I stood in front of the school entrance with my registration table, sign-in sheets, and volunteer badges, and I welcomed and guided 20-25 assessors to the reading center where the assessments were conducted.

Because it's rare to see a pastor standing in front of a public school in the Bay Area, I attracted lots of stares and fielded several questions about my identity and purpose.

One memorable conversation was with a Kindergartener named Kevin, who was so excited about school that he talked my ear off every day about the things that he was learning in Kindergarten. Kevin's mothers were equally warm, but more subdued. They explained that Kevin bounced out of bed every day at the crack of dawn, and asked eagerly, "Is it time to go to school now?" "Wow!" I said. "I wish we could bottle that enthusiasm." Kevin's mothers smiled knowingly.

Another memorable conversation involved a brief exchange with a woman whom I only saw once. I had just begun to lead a volunteer crew across campus when a professionally dressed woman in her 60s passed us on her way out the door, and said with the kind of conviction that I have only heard uttered by a Baptist preacher, "You ladies look like you're on a mission!" "We are!" I said, as we walked swiftly toward the reading center.

The memory of those schoolyard conversations has stayed with me, because, like Kevin, I have great enthusiasm for what we are about here at Eden, and because I feel that we are always on a mission. The only unique aspect about our Cherryland Elementary School activities was that strangers were commenting on them, and on us.

With the memory of these experiences in my heart, I pause now—more frequently than in the past—and wonder, "Can others tell that we're on a mission? Do we beam with Kevin's enthusiasm? Are the good works that we perform so purposeful that others see what we are about, and give glory to God?"

I hope so.

Arlene