

President's Letter, March, 2009

The Global Economic Challenge

Dear Friends around the globe,

These last few months have been a challenge to everyone worldwide. The economic downturn has provoked deep difficulties for so many people whether it is a threat to their financial futures, or a threat to their very existence. It is hard to watch the news and hear about lost jobs, droughts, natural disasters and political upheaval. That kind of suffering is never easy to contemplate, but in the frame of these times, the picture seems just a little bleaker.

I know of no organization in our UU universe that is not contemplating cuts to programs, services and even staff. At the very least everyone is tightening their belts...and their grip on their wallets.

The ICUU is continuing to work as best we can to live up to our obligations and even trying to increase revenue from new sources. In a way, we are an organization that has very little and so has lost very little. However, we are dependent on national groups for the substantial share of our core operations budget, and that puts us in a precarious position. That said we do – and will continue to do - the best we can with what we have.

It is easy for people to draw into themselves in these tough economic times. It is natural to want to protect yourself and those closest to you in hard times. It is easy to make our communities smaller, to lessen our concern for our neighbours, to build walls which we imagine will protect us. It is an understandable attitude.

I want to suggest a different way, a different choice. These days my family and I are choosing the path of optimism. The bad times will not last forever and so we are choosing to risk living generously. Sure, we have to watch ourselves. My wife and I have an obligation to our daughters. But we also know that there are many who are worse off, some dangerously worse off. The ways in which we can help might be small, but we are choosing to give that help when we can.

Whether rich or poor, how we live is up to us. We can live with love or we can live in suspicion. We can live with generous hearts or we can live in fear. We can live out our Principles or we can live only for ourselves. The choice is ours.

In faith,

Rev. Brian Kiely
President, ICUU