

# THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



Published by **The First Baptist Church of Los Angeles**

760 South Westmoreland Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90005 • (213) 384-2151 • [fbcla@fbcofla.org](mailto:fbcla@fbcofla.org)

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**An American Baptist Congregation Making God's Love Known in Los Angeles Since 1874**  
*International • Intercultural • Ecumenical*

## FROM THE HEART OF THE INTERIM PASTOR

Dear Church Family and Friends,

Happy New Year! As we enter 2016, we continue to trust God in the transition. This year promises to be a year of prayer, planning and purpose. Most of us look forward to Christmas with joy and anticipation. Then, almost too quickly, the New Year abruptly arrives only a week later. How do you view the coming year? Do you look forward to fresh possibilities and renewed potential? Or do you cling to the familiarity of the waning year?

Whether we like it or not, time hurls us forward. The New Year stretches before us like a blank white piece of paper. Why not take advantage of the clean slate the New Year provides and set some goals to work toward? During the new year, we set spiritual, mental, emotional/relational and physical goals. As you set goals, be willing to take steps out of your comfort zone. During the month of January, we will focus our attention during the sermons and small groups during Sunday School and Coffee Hour/Fellowship on our call as a congregation (see below) that was drafted by the congregation during our "First Conversations" in March and April, while the Pastor Search Committee continues its work in plowing the field and preparing for the call for the next pastor of First Baptist.

***We are called to be a community of faith, a welcome table, that celebrates the rich diversity of its membership as it serves and celebrates the diverse cultural and ethnic nature of Los Angeles and surrounding communities. We are called to be deeply grounded in the Word and Witness through the power of the Holy Spirit, being a prophetic voice for justice, healing and transformation. We are called to manifest the love of Christ as we share our various sources of capital with other communities as well as being a witness to God's reign through celebrative worship and care for one another.***

In other churches where I have served, the month of January has been marked by a time of fasting and prayer. I invite you to join me on a 21-day fast beginning January 3, 2016 to seek and honor God for the New Year. "I

besech you therefore; brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). By starting the year with a corporate fast, God meets with us in very unique and special ways. His presence grows greater and greater with each day of the fast. Without fail, He always shows up!

Corporately fasting in January is much the same precept as praying in the morning to establish the will of God for the entire day. I believe that, if we will pray and seek God and give Him our best at the first of the year, He will bless our ENTIRE year! "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Fasting is a principle that God intended for everyone to be able to enjoy. It's not a punishment; it's a privilege! By making fasting a way of life, we can get closer to God and grow in our spiritual walk like never before. Fasting is one of the most powerful weapons God has given us for our daily lives. Through fasting, we can experience a release from the bondage of sin ... restoration in our relationships ... financial blessings ... spiritual renewal ... supernatural healing and so much more!

I invite you to join me and the members of First Baptist Church in this 21 day fast which will began January 3, 2016 and end January 23, 2016. To provide direction, inspiration and information about Fasting, the different types of Fasts and reasons for Fasting, we will provide opportunities for learning and growing during the Sunday School hour. Please join me in this wonderful and growing experience.

With Hope, Norman Bullock

### **CHRISTMAS PAGEANT presented by First Baptist Christian Education Ministry**

On Christmas Sunday, December 20, the children, youth and other members of First Baptist Church participated in the Christmas Pageant sponsored by the Christian Education ministry. The title of the play, "New Star," told the story of Christ's birth from the perspective of two stars – old and new. The Christmas story told in the,

## FROM THE HEART OF THE INTERIM PASTOR *(continued)*

play paraphrased the biblical account of the events surrounding the birth of Jesus Christ from the book of Luke in the Bible.

Mary, a virgin, was living in Galilee of Nazareth and was engaged to be married to Joseph, a Jewish carpenter. The angel, Gabriel, visited her and explained to her that she would conceive a son by the power of the Holy Spirit. She would carry and give birth to this child and she would name him Jesus. At first Mary was afraid and troubled by the angel's words. Being a virgin, Mary questioned the angel, "How will this be?" The angel explained that the child would be God's own Son and, therefore, "nothing is

impossible with God." Humbled and in awe, Mary believed the angel of the Lord and rejoiced in God her Savior.

### **The Birth of Jesus:**

While Mary was still engaged to Joseph, she miraculously became pregnant through the Holy Spirit, as foretold to her by the angel. When Mary told Joseph she was pregnant, he had every right to feel disgraced. He knew the child was not his own, and Mary's apparent unfaithfulness carried a grave social stigma. Joseph not only had the right to divorce Mary, under Jewish law she could be put to death by stoning.

Although Joseph's initial reaction was to break the engagement, the appropriate thing for a righteous man to do, he treated Mary with extreme kindness. He did not want to cause her further shame, so he decided to act quietly. But God sent an angel to Joseph in a dream to verify Mary's story and reassure him that his marriage to her was God's will. The angel explained that the child within Mary was conceived by the Holy Spirit, that his name would be Jesus and that he was the Messiah, God with us. When Joseph woke from his dream, he willingly obeyed God and took Mary home to be his wife, in spite of the public humiliation he would face.

At that time, Caesar Augustus decreed that a census be taken, and every person in the entire Roman world had to go to his own town to register. Joseph, being of the line of David, was required to go to Bethlehem to

register with Mary. While in Bethlehem, Mary gave birth to Jesus. Probably due to the census, the inn was too crowded, and Mary gave birth in a crude stable. She wrapped the baby in cloths and placed him in a manger.

**Old Star:** Angie Hernandez

**New Star:** Sofia Herrera

**Mary:** Nina Bullock

**Elizabeth:** Sofia Aquilar

**Joseph:** Matias Herrera

**Gabriel:** Raymond Johnson

**Wisemen:** Brian Johnson, Anthony Luong, Saul Martinez

**King Herod:** Kenneth Mercier Jr.

**Angels:** Leila Amaya, Samantha Aquilar, Gisselle Artola, Nicole Bullock

**Shepherds:** Nicholas Bullock, Lendy Martinez

**Scribe:** Zuleima Argumedo

**Music Director:** Nalis Mercier

**Pianist:** John Sturm

**Set Designer:** Jose Herrera

**CE Coordinator:** Linda Zaretsky

### NEWS SCHEDULE

The next issue of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **January 18, 2016**. Material and articles for the January 18<sup>th</sup> issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. Jan. 4**.

### THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

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**STAFF:** Norman Bullock, *Interim Pastor*; Esther Sanchez, *Administration and Building Coordinator*; James Johnson, *Josue Guevara*, *Odos Nabors*, *Custodians*; Kyle Irwin, *Organist/Choirmaster*; Sandra Rogers, *Communications Coordinator*.

**CHURCH PHONE:** (213) 384-2151

**FAX:** (213) 382-9669

**VISTA TOWER:** (213) 386-2786

**OFFICE HOURS:**

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

[www.FBCofLA.org](http://www.FBCofLA.org)

**email addresses:**

General: [fbcla@FBCofLA.org](mailto:fbcla@FBCofLA.org)

Norman Bullock: [NBullock@FBCofLA.org](mailto:NBullock@FBCofLA.org)

James Johnson: [JJohnson@FBCofLA.org](mailto:JJohnson@FBCofLA.org)

Sandra Rogers: [SandraBR@FBCofLA.org](mailto:SandraBR@FBCofLA.org)

Esther Sanchez: [ESanchez@FBCofLA.org](mailto:ESanchez@FBCofLA.org)



## FROM THE HEART OF THE INTERIM PASTOR *(continued)*

Following the Christmas Pageant, Christmas gifts were shared with children from the surrounding neighborhood in partnership with Play More, our partnership non-profit as part of our community outreach.



### PASTORAL SEARCH COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Pastoral Search Committee (PSC) met twice in December and has formulated a draft "Minister's Profile," answering the question, "What do we want in our next Pastor?"

The Committee reflected upon the congregational "First Conversations" which many members participated in through 2014 and 2015; reviewed the "Call Statement" which grew from those sessions; and considered the results of the member survey administered earlier this year. We will highlight survey results in a future newsletter issue.

The PSC will be working closely with the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, the Southwest and Hawaii (ABCFLASH) to input information from the FBCLA Minister's Profile into the American Baptist Personnel System (ABPS), a nationwide database of active American Baptist ordained ministers. This process will result in generating a pool of potential candidates based on matching "what we want in our next Pastor" with ministers who have placed their resumes with the ABPS.

Another key task which the PSC is currently working on is to create a Church and Community Profile. We need to describe who we are, where we came from, and who we envision ourselves to become as a community of faith in the future. It will also describe today's urban multicultural context in which our church ministries operate. The profile will support the PSC in its proactive outreach and marketing efforts, as well as assist a prospective candidate in evaluating whether First Baptist Church of Los Angeles is a good match for him or her and his or her family.

We anticipate that in January, we will make forward-moving progress in the search process. Please make note that at the end of January, the congregation is scheduled to consider a Church Budget for the year 2016, as proposed by the Church Council. We will need to formulate a compensation and benefits package for the new Senior Minister as part of our budgetary process. We invite your prayers as we plan for our future and identify the resources to support a prosperous and thriving future.

Please do not hesitate to contact me or any PSC Member if you have questions, concerns or suggestions. In addition to me serving as Committee Chair, the PSC also includes the following members:

Zuleima Argumendo, Daniel Choi, Gerald Gubatan (Chair), David McFadden, Shirley Parsley, Alma Pineda, Richard Rogers, and Marta Torres.

Gerald Gubatan, Chair,  
Pastoral Search Committee

### A CHURCH THAT PRAYS

Join us in the following Corporate Prayer Opportunities

- Sunday at 9:15 a.m. – Moore Prayer Chapel
- Wednesday at 6:00 a.m. – via conference call-dial in 323-645-9525 (no code needed)
- Mid week Prayer Gathering – beginning January 13, 2016 from 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon in the Moore Prayer Chapel and continuing the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month.

### FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual meeting of the Congregation and Corporation of the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, shall be held at 760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California on Sunday, January 24, 2016 at 12:30 p.m. in the Robbins Dining Hall for the purpose of adopting a budget and hearing the financial report for 2015 and progress reports from the various Ministries.

### IN MEMORIAM

The Church Family extends its deepest Christian Sympathy to the family of

**LEE HOGAN CASS**

*Deceased December 10, 2015*

Church Member 1945-2015

– and –

to the family of

**ERNESTINE ROTCHER**

*Deceased December 17, 2015*

Church Member 1977-2015

**SUNDAY, JANUARY 10, 2016**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**“THAT WAS THEN, THIS IS NOW!”**

(Please read II Corinthians 5:18-20 in preparation)

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching



**SUNDAY, JANUARY 17, 2016**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**“WHO ME? A CALL TO SERVE FOR SUCH A TIME AS THIS”**

(Please read Esther 4:12-14 in preparation)

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching