

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



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DECEMBER 7, 2015

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,

Christmas is almost here. Can you believe it? It seems like only yesterday, we were ringing in the "new" year. At this time every year, we're exhorted by pastors, books, TV holiday specials, and our consciences to "remember the true meaning of Christmas." But amidst the hectic pace of holiday preparations, that's much more easily said than done. Advent is a time of joy, new beginnings, and most all, expectations. We are now in the middle of Advent, heading into the 3rd Sunday and are eagerly anticipating the coming of the Messiah and the promise that he holds for this holiday season.

For those of us in modern society, mid-December is a time to complete our Christmas shopping as we wind down preparations for the holiday season. It is a time to anticipate the reunion of friends and family and a time to prepare for a joyous season of celebration and reflection. As we continue through this wonderful season of the year, it is also important to remember those who struggle to find meaning in this season, those who live in doubt and hopelessness, those who cannot see the importance of the Messiah and the promise he brings to us all. Please join me as we share the love of Christ during this Christmas season.

With Hope, *Norman Bullock*

2015 John H. Townsend Award to John and Denie Sturm

The John H. Townsend Award is given in honor of the Rev. Dr. Townsend who served as Senior Minister at First Baptist Church for over 35 years, retiring in 1997. It is bestowed upon a 30+ year member who has demonstrated excellence in Christian service.

This year, the award was given at our Thanksgiving luncheon following table fellowship and sharing of gratitude from members, young and old.

The 2015 recipient has served loyally in many capacities throughout the years. Our honoree has served as a Sunday School teacher, whether the Middler's-Junior's Class or the Partner's Class. Our honoree has actively played a role in a variety of ministries, including the Stephen's Ministry, the Missions and Evangelism Ministry, the Spiritual Gifts Ministry and the American Baptist Women's Ministry. Each year, our honoree has led the distribution of Easter Lily and Christmas Poinsettia Flowers to our shut-in members continuously for the last few decades. Our awardee has participated in the Cathedral Choir as a singer for a good 40+ years, and as a pianist, has graced many special programs with musical talent.

Technically this year's award is not being given to a sole individual; the recognition is actually being extended to a married couple who the congregation lovingly sees as one.

Hear the words of Dr. Townsend who wrote this note to our honorees:

Dear Denie and John:

Carol and I were very pleased to learn that you are this year's Townsend Award recipients. Not only have you both been long-time members of First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, but you have given a great investment of time, energy, and prayerful support to all that you do. It is fitting that you be recognized as a team for you have worked together in a wide variety of service activities and ministries.

Thank you for your faithfulness and loyalty, for going the second and third miles in meeting the challenges of urban ministry, and for setting an example for the believers--as the Apostle Paul said--in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity. May God continue to give you strength for your tasks and joy in being a part of our church's witness. We are grateful for you.

Sincerely, *John and Carol Townsend*



Gerald Gubatan, Norman Bullock, Denie and John Sturm, Shirley Parsley and Richard Rogers

Christmas Sunday December 20

Christmas Sunday at First Baptist, December 20, will be centered upon the gracious gifts of God. In turn, we shall have occasion to present our own gifts in the special Christmas offering to be received during worship on that day. Measure your gift by others you give at Christmas time. This offering deserves to be as large as the gift presented any other friend or loved one – for it is a gift to Christ, our Lord.

(Continued on Page 2)

CHURCH OFFICERS

Moderator, **Shirley Parsley**
Church Clerk, **David McFadden**
Treasurer, **Ann Brodie**

Council of Ministries – At Large

Gerald Gubatan
Alma Pineda
Richard Rogers
Marta Torres
Linda Zaretsky

Spiritual Gifts Ministry

John Sturm, Coordinator
Maria Juarez
Ben Marte
Kenneth Mercier
Santiago Morales

Note: The Council of Ministries (Board of Trustees) is made up of those in **bold print**. The Council meets the 3rd Sunday of every month at 12:30 p.m.; all members are welcome to attend.

NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **December 21, 2015**. Material and articles for the December 21st issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. December 7**.

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

Some Gifts to Give

Some gifts you can give this Christmas are beyond monetary value: Mend a quarrel, dismiss suspicion, tell someone, "I love you." Give something away-- anonymously. Forgive someone who has treated you wrong. Turn away wrath with a soft answer. Visit someone in a nursing home. Apologize if you were wrong. Be especially kind to someone with whom you work. Give as God gave to you in Christ, without obligation, or announcement, or reservation, or hypocrisy.

– Charles Swindoll,
Growing Strong, pp. 400-1

Please use the attached envelope and bring it on December 20 or mail it to the church.

Thank you for generously sharing!

Earlier that day our Christian Education ministry through the Sunday School will present its **Annual Christmas Program** in Robbins Dining Hall at **9:30 a.m.** Please come and support our children and youth of the church.

Pastoral Search Committee Begins Its Work

At the last congregational gathering on Home-coming Sunday in September, church members endorsed the appointment of the Pastoral Search Committee: Zuleima Argumedo, Daniel Choi, Gerald Gubatan, David McFadden, Shirley Parsley, Alma Pineda, Richard Rogers and Marta Torres.

Since then, the Committee has met three times, including one in which I was elected to serve as the Chairman and one orientation session led by Dr. William Thurmond of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii (also known as "ABCOFLASH"). The Committee learned about the key steps in searching for a Senior Minister, including access to the American Baptist Personnel System, a database of ordained clergy throughout the United States.

The Committee is currently working on formulating a "Minister's Profile" identifying the qualifications, experiences, skills, talents, abilities and core competencies we believe the congregation would like to see in our next

Senior Minister, particularly in light of the unique "call" of our church embodied in the statement created following the multiple congregational workshop sessions held over the course of several months since last Spring, 2014.

At its next meeting on December 9, 2015, the Committee will be reviewing the results of the church-wide survey which you may recall filling-out a few months ago. Please see me if you did not complete the survey. The input from the survey will assist the Committee in finalizing the Minister's Profile so that ABCOFLASH can then assist with accessing the nationwide database to identify potential candidates.

Other tasks to be completed in coming weeks include creation of a "Church Profile" and a "Community Profile." All these elements will be assembled to develop a comprehensive description of who we are at First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, what is the church's community and neighborhood context in an urban setting, how do we envision our future and who would be the ideal candidate who can effectively partner with the congregation to advance our future vision.

A lot of work lies ahead for the Committee in coming weeks, so please pray for us and our work! I believe we are on the cusp of entering a new phase in church life. Your moral support and ongoing prayers are critical as we press forward.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions or concerns. On behalf of the Committee, I intend to provide regular informational updates to the congregation.

In Christ, *Gerald G. Gubatan*
Chairman, Pastoral Search Committee

Sunday School and Christian Education Ministry

On Sunday, November 15, members of the Christian Education ministry, Sunday School teachers, parents, students and other stake-holders met to brainstorm and discuss ways to enhance and build our Sunday School. The session was facilitated by Dr. Bullock and Linda Zaretsky, Christian Education Coordinator. The focus group talked about the challenges of First Baptist Church in reaching our community and began the task of developing a strategy to reach internally

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

and externally about the benefits of Sunday School. An article was shared from a recent *Wall Street Journal* issue that interviewed members of the Christian Education ministry at Riverside Church in New York and analyzed how churches are rethinking Sunday School. According to John Roberto, a religious-education consultant based in Naugatuck, Conn., the churches that are adapting have had to “create a whole new system for faith forming and faith nurture, acknowledging that Sunday school worked for 100 years, but it’s just not going to work anywhere near where we remember it in 2015.” “If the church fails, if the church dies, it will be because we haven’t done a great job of helping people understand why they matter to the church and why the church matters to them,” Mr. Wright, a minister of Christian Education at Riverside Church said. “That starts now.” In addition, Riverside and other churches have added more technology, movement, visual art and candid discussions on Scripture, all led by children. These are all areas that First Baptist will be exploring as we seek ways to grow our Sunday School. Stay tuned for our next Focus Group in January 2016.

Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering



Thank You For...

The Grace of Giving

“But since you excel in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in the love we have kindled in you — see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”
— 2 Corinthians 8:7

In this passage, Paul lifts up the generosity of the Macedonian churches in his desire to encourage the Corinthian church to do the same. Despite their hardship, the churches in Macedonia willingly gave above their means. Paul urges the Corinthian church to give generously in an act of grace that reflects the loving kindness that God has bestowed on them. God’s grace in our own lives moves us to the grace of giving to the ministers and missionaries who have en-

couraged our faith and served so faithfully.

The roots of RMMO go back to the mid-1930s, when American Baptist congregations received a Communion Fellowship Offering on the first Sunday of each month to support retired ministers, missionaries, their widowed spouses and elderly clergy within their churches. In 1977, American Baptist Churches USA launched the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) to continue this appreciation of God’s service.

First Baptist’s offering makes it possible to provide emergency assistance in times of crisis and to send a “Thank You” check to those who are eligible. Through your generous giving in 2014, ABC-USA raised \$1,128,257. The goal for 2015 is \$1.2 million. **We will receive RMMO on January 3, 2016.** You will also have the opportunity to contribute through-out that month. Please help us reach our goal of \$2,500.

IN MEMORIAM

The Church Family extends its deepest Christian Sympathy to the family of
THOMAS R. PRETTYMAN
Deceased November 11, 2015
Church Member 1946-2015

THANK YOU

We are amazed and thrilled to be the recipients of the Townsend Award. Still can’t quite believe it. So many memories of happenings over the last 49 years as well as wonderful people who have been a part of our loving Church Family. We are so grateful to have been honored by this award.

Our Love, *John and Denie Sturm*

My deepest thanks to everyone for their expressions of concern and support, prayers and cards during this time of recuperation after my fall and broken arm. Please keep me in your prayers as I continue with physical therapy and recovery. I am grateful for all of you.

Sandra Rogers

THANKSGIVING LUNCHEON, NOVEMBER 22



Gaspar Garcia and his brother Antonio Barrajas served as the main chefs assisted by Nelly Ruiz.

Special thanks to Ann Brodie and the many volunteers who prepared the food, decorated the dining hall and organized the program.



Expressions of thankfulness were made by the congregation including some of our young people.



760 South Westmoreland Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90005



THIRD SUNDAY IN ADVENT, DECEMBER 13, 2015

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“DON’T WORRY, BE JOYFUL”

(Please read Philippians 4:4-7 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching

– Lighting the Advent Candle of Joy –



**FOURTH SUNDAY IN ADVENT
CHRISTMAS SUNDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2015**

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“HOW TO HAVE A MARY CHRISTMAS”

(Please read Luke 2:1-14 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching

– Lighting the Advent Candle of Love –

– CHRISTMAS OFFERING –