

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



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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

As we continue this transitional journey as a congregation of believers in Christ, I continue to encourage you to trust God in the transition. Let me first reiterate my thanks and appreciation to you for your confidence and trust in me by calling me as your Interim Pastor back in September 2014. It has been a joy and a pleasure to serve you and to witness with you the redeeming presence of God in our lives as you prepare for the next chapter in the life of this historic congregation of committed believers in Christ. First Baptist is a historic, urban, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-generational congregation. These are components that we should embrace. During 2015, the focus of my leadership was on discipleship and training of with our leaders, staff and members:

- As a follow up to the “First Conversations” facilitated by consultants through the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii (ABCFLASH), we held further focus groups on our call as a congregation;
- We held a church-wide eight week learning opportunity on “Discovering, Developing and Deploying Our Spiritual Gifts” which was followed by a Spiritual Gifts Questionnaire/Assessment.
- Not the least of these learning and growing opportunities, were opportunities to deepen the prayer life of our church. There are now three corporate opportunities for prayer at First Baptist – Sunday at 9:00 a.m. in Moore Prayer Chapel; Wednesdays with a Prayer Conference Call-In at 6:00 a.m.; and the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays at 11:00 a.m. in Moore Prayer Chapel. We must remember that prayer is the key that unlocks the key to God's presence, favor and direction in our lives.

The focus on 2016 while I am your Interim Pastor will be on what we as a church are doing in the community. We will still offer simultaneously opportunities to develop and deepen our capacity but as we reflect on our call as a congregation (drafted in April 2015), we must embrace the

aspects of the missional church that the mission/call statement so eloquently refers to.

In preparation for that, the Pastor's Sunday School Class has focused on the aspects and characteristics of a missional church and what makes us a missional church. Scripture tells us that as clay jars we display the glory of God. It is not about us, but his all-surpassing power (II Corinthians 4:7). Using the theme of disciples being God's vessel as clay jars, we have used as a learning companion, the book *Treasure in Clay Jars: Patterns in Missional Faithfulness*, (Lois Y. Barrett et al.) which calls congregations to continue forging a missional identity in the 21st century. We will continue this study through the beginning of Lent.

The word “missional” denotes every member of a congregation living as a missionary and minister in the contexts where we find ourselves. Rather than thinking in terms of a church's mission, the concept presented in the book encourages Christians to think of their identity as a “mission with a people.” The book provides eight patterns of missional congregations that serve as an outline for the following eight lessons in this series. We will cover these patterns in the weeks to come.

The following chronicles some of the highlights in the life and scope of ministry of First Baptist Church since our Homecoming Meeting in September 2015.

September 2015

On September 27, we bid farewell to Rev. John Polite on his last Sunday as the Director of Worship Arts. Members of the church provided tributes to JP which were followed by a reception in his honor after the service. The Personnel Committee is now in the process of interviewing candidates to serve in the capacity of Interim Director, Worship Arts. We have to have this process finalized by the end of February 2016.

Building for the Future Campaign

On Homecoming Sunday, we initiated the “Building For the Future Campaign” as a tangible response to the

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preaching series on "BUILDING AND REBUILDING GOD'S WORK, GOD'S WAY" during August and September. The campaign, which ran through December 2015, was two-fold. The first portion related to our giving in a tangible way.

Each year, we collect a special offering at Homecoming for our church's continuing ministry. This year, I requested your support as we strived to reduce our 2015 operating deficit so we could have a clean slate as we move closer to the calling of the next pastor of First Baptist while continuing to invest in our Christian Education and Youth ministry, complete upgrades to

the audio system and purchase translation equipment.

I asked that each of you give at least \$141 in the Homecoming Offering and further asked that members pledge/contribute \$500 towards the continuing ministry of FBCLA with the initial \$141 coming on Homecoming Sunday and the remainder coming by December 31, 2015. Our goal was \$15,000 for this campaign. While our Finance Team continues to crunch the numbers for the Annual Finance Report, the preliminary totals show that we received \$8,067 for these efforts.

The second phase of the campaign concerns our building for the future with an emphasis on the further development of our ministries and the addition of new ministries as the needs arise.

NEWS SCHEDULE

The next issue of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **February 15, 2016**. Material and articles for the February 15th issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. Feb. 1**.

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Cora Marte - Philipines
Josh Kim – South Korea

Filipino Ministry Emphasis Sunday

In celebration of Filipino American History Month and the rich cultural heritage of First Baptist Church, we celebrated Filipino Ministry Emphasis Sunday on October 18 when we recognized members who are of Filipino American heritage. Members of the Filipino Ministry also led us in worship. We honored Alice Valdevieso Gubatan as its first Filipino member who joined First Baptist Church of Los Angeles in 1956 as a young woman seeking a graduate education at USC and then raised four children who were all dedicated and baptized here.

November 2015

Sunday School Emphasis

On Sunday, November 15, members of the Christian Education ministry, Sunday School teachers, parents, students and other stakeholders met to brainstorm and discuss ways to enhance and build our Sunday School. The focus group talked of the challenges of First Baptist Church in reaching our community and began the task of developing a strategy to reach internally and externally about the benefits of Sunday School. Our mission is to encourage and promote the teaching and studying of the Bible. As we apply the wisdom of the Bible, we will be able to lead others to Christ and grow spiritually.

Some of the suggestions included:

- Involving young adults
- Holding teacher training workshops
- Developing strategies to reach the children in our neighborhoods including: community

October 2015

Stewardship Emphasis Month

During the month of October, as a congregation, we engaged in various opportunities through our worship, teaching and preaching on stewardship. In the Pastor's Sunday Bible class, we explored generosity matters dealing with the theme "Live Free," based on Galatians 5:1, which were stewardship resources published by the Ecumenical Stewardship Center, a partnering ministry of ABC-USA. There were four sub-themes: "Free From the Money Trap," "Free To Be Rich," "Free From the Uncertainty of Riches," and "Free to Take Hold of Life."

Procession of the Nations

To conclude Latino Heritage month, members of the church participated in the Procession of the Nations carrying flags of their native countries, demonstrating the cultural diversity of our members. Participants in the procession included:

Jose Herrera – Christian

Angie Loasiga, Zuleima Argumedo along with children and youth of First Baptist: Nina, Nicholas and Nichole Bullock, Gisselle Artola, Britney Chacon – United States

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

outreach, evangelism, after school activities

- Evaluating our current curriculum
- Holding a Lock-In for our Youth
- Offering English as Second Language (ESL) and Spanish Classes

Cathedral Choir Appreciation

We gathered on November 8 as a congregation to affirm, celebrate and say “thank you” to the Cathedral Choir for their enhancement and contribution to the worship experience at First Baptist Church each week.

During the worship service, special thanks was given to the choir and its Choirmaster/Organist, Kyle Irwin.

Choir members: Norman Dilley, Gerald Gubatan, Kim Johnson, Noriko Mizuhara, Teresa Negrete, Marty Nelson, Laura Parker, Penny Pilkenton, Richard Rogers, Vance Smith, John Sturm, Erin Wilson

We also recognized the long standing service of Denie Sturm who recently retired after serving for many years in the choir.

2015 John H. Townsend Award

The John H. Townsend Award, given in honor of the Rev. Dr. Townsend who served as Senior Minister at First Baptist Church for over 35 years, retiring in 1997, was presented to John and Denie Sturm who have served the church faithfully in many capacities within the church.

December 2015

During December, we celebrated Advent and on Christmas Sunday, we witnessed an excellent presentation of the story of the birth of Christ by our Christian Education Ministry. Following the Christmas Pageant, in partnership with Play More, we distributed over 80 gifts and toys to the children in the neighborhood surrounding the

church. We also adopted the Equitas Academy Charter School #2 (located at 8th & Hoover) as a school that we will support with gifts during the Christmas season to five disadvantaged students selected by the school leadership. We are also sharing our parking lot with the staff of the school during the week. This is one of the many partnerships that we are endeavoring to make as we seek to be more of an intentional partner to our community.

As we reflect on the goodness of God in blessing and sustaining this congregation of committed believers in Christ, we are reminded that the primary purpose of our lives is to glorify God. But glorifying God is not in its essence, the common practice of singing worship songs or thinking mystical thoughts. We glorify God as we reflect his revealed nature through our everyday lives. We reflect Christ as we are transformed in character, values, beliefs, and behavior. This

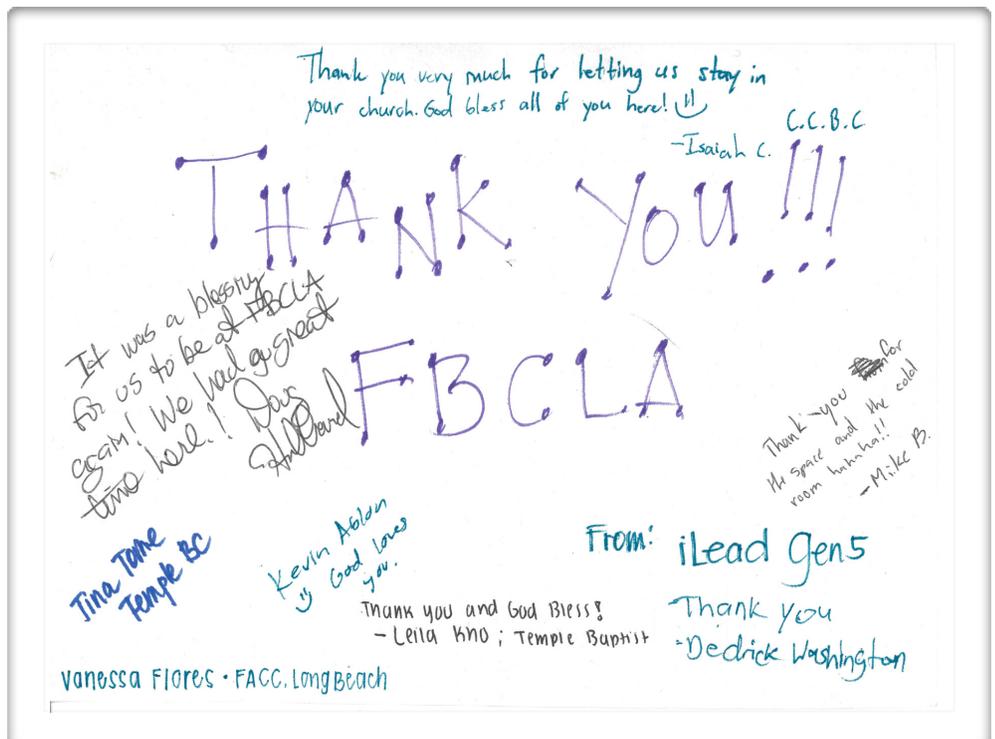
inside out transformation fits our new identity in Christ and makes us authentic. We are becoming who we really are. And as a church, we are becoming who we really are.

I invite you to come and share the journey!

NOTICE OF SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING

A Special 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, **February 21, 2016 at 12:30 p.m.** for the purpose of **considering the 2016 annual budget.**

—Gerald Gubatan,
Church Clerk and
Shirley Parsley, Moderator



760 South Westmoreland Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90005



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2016

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“BROKEN POTS”

(Please read II Corinthians 4:7-18 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2016

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“SATISFIED TOO SOON”

(Please read Matthew 17:1-9 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching