

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

ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING OFFERING, JUNE 2

SHARING BRINGS JOY! The phrase rolls easily off the tongue, but it is no trite cliché! Rather, it expresses profound spiritual truths – truths about a loving and caring God – truths about a joyous generosity that circles 'round and dances into and through the human experience as we relate to others and to the Holy One! This year concludes the One Great Hour of Sharing three-part emphasis on this dynamic theme.

Sharing brings joy to us. Generous giving, practiced as a regular spiritual discipline, teaches us about joy. We learn to see ourselves as vital parts of a cooperative sharing effort which expresses God's love for the world. We see the delight of recipients and experience our own gladness. Grateful for God's extravagant gifts, the great happiness of others, and our experience of such delight, we discover we want to be more generous, and so we are drawn into the circular rhythm of sharing that brings joy upon joy.

Sharing brings joy to others. For 64 years, recipients of One Great Hour of Sharing assistance, relief, and support have known comfort and joy through your sharing:

- families displaced by natural disaster or political unrest rejoice to receive food, shelter, and the comfort of a safe place to begin rebuilding their lives;
- a woman who has had to walk miles for potable water for her family smiles as she draws water from a clean well near her home;
- children arrive excitedly for the first day of class at the village's new school.

Sharing brings joy to God. We know that God is always in the midst of our joy, but we also know that



"God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). Can you imagine God's joy when we share? Can your mind's eye see those things that cause rejoicing in the heart of the Divine? Scriptures tell us what brings God joy: steadfast love, justice, and righteousness, says Jeremiah (9:24), and the well-being of God's people (Psalm 35:27b). Certainly any manifestation of agape love, such as a generous hand outstretched to help others (Matthew 22:37-40), brings gladness to God.

Joy-filled sharing makes possible the well-being of God's people. Joy-filled sharing shows that our hearts and hands are open – open to giving that fosters restoration of shalom – open to generosity that speaks of God's love. This is surely a delight to the Holy One! When we see ourselves as part of all God's children everywhere, we learn to be less fearful of a sense of scarcity that can inhibit our generosity. We come to understand that others who happen to be in need are not simply recipients of our charity, but sisters and brothers with whom we are called to live justly and share abundantly. Knowing we willingly share reminds them of who they are: beloved children of the Creator, family of us all, each one a person of sacred worth, also imbued with possibilities for sharing joy.

As you make your offering to One Great Hour of Sharing, remember the many ways your gifts bring joy – to you as God's precious child, to all of God's other cherished children, and especially to the Holy One.

May your worship be joyful. May your sharing be delightfully abundant. May God be made glad by your cheerful generosity!

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*Note: Council of Ministries (Board of Trustees) is made up of those in **bold print**. The Council meets the **3rd Tuesday of every month at 7:00 p.m.**; all members are welcome to attend.*

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LAUGH OUT LOUD PROGRAM, APRIL 14, 2013



A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones. (Proverbs 17:22 NRSV)

Our newest member, Ibrahim "IBO" Brewer (above), a professional comedian, shared his comedic talents on April 14 by telling jokes and inviting participation by audience members, young and old, who soon found themselves roaring with laughter and rolling in the aisles – counterclockwise from top right: Abigail Cabral, John Sturm, Penny Pilkenton and Alice Gubatan.



MINISTER'S MESSAGE

Here's an old, old tale:

One day a poor peasant named Gordius arrived in an ox cart at the city of Phrygia. As legend has it, an oracle had predicted that their future king would come into town riding in a wagon, and upon seeing Gordius, the people made him king. In gratitude to Zeus, Gordius dedicated his ox cart to the Greek god and tied it up in the temple with a very elaborate knot. Another oracle predicted that whoever could untie this "knot" would be ruler over all of Asia. None mastered this until Alexander the Great visited Phrygia in 333 B.C., who, upon seeing the knot, drew his sword and simply cut it in half. Was that cheating? Well, the ends of the rope had been spliced back together, so there was no way to untie the knot. Alexander's solution was the best and most realistic one they had at the time.

In today's society we have many "knots" that seem unsolvable, so how do we untie them? How do we untie the growing debate about our growing debt, quality education in public schools, and affordable healthcare? At some point the church needs to draw its sword of truth and cut the knot. We have a sword of social justice that we can call upon to speak to the issues of the day. May we be bold and draw our sword of prophetic witness for Jesus Christ.

– Carlton A. Rhoden

NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **June 10, 2013**. Material and articles for the June 10th issue should **arrive** in the church office two weeks before publication, or no later than **9:00 a.m. on May 27th**.

BE TOMORROW'S BLESSING

Dear Friends:

First Baptist Church of Los Angeles was founded in 1874. Throughout its history, First Baptist has been noted for its outstanding ministry, its dedication to home and foreign missionary endeavors, and its Christian witness in an urban area. Now as members of this wonderful interracial congregation it is our responsibility to continue serving the Lord through its ministry.

Part of being good stewards comes from our support in giving our tithes and offerings. Currently, we are facing difficult moments due in part to our decline in membership. However, scripture tells us in Colossians 3:23, "Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men." Our goal as members should be to continue working hard using our resources as good stewards in unity for the Lord. Our resources include prayer, patience, humor, friends, creativity, faith and determination.

We urge all of you to make a commitment to Christ our Savior and to fill out a pledge card. We also ask that you participate in one of our stewardship meetings taking place at First Baptist.

In Christian Love, The Stewardship Committee:
Ronald Tigerino, Ann Brodie, Shirley Parsley

BRINGING JOY IN NEW JERSEY AFTER HURRICANE SANDY

When Hurricane Sandy slammed the New Jersey shore with fury and destruction, it reshaped the coast and impacted countless lives. Two million people lost power, thousands of homes were flooded and countless trees were felled. Miraculously, none of the 284 churches of the American Baptist Churches of New Jersey (ABCNJ) region suffered catastrophic damage, but dozens experienced flooding, broken windows and leaking roofs. Many individuals lost food, while others lost automobiles. Families were forced to relocate, churches held services in the cold and congregations sought to serve their communities.

ABCNJ, in cooperation with American Baptist Home Mission Societies, immediately mobilized to help pastors, churches and communities to recover. Two One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) grants totaling \$70,000 were made available. While one-third of the assistance provided churches with cleanup and rebuilding help, approximately two-thirds enabled churches to help people in the communities. Grocery gift cards, cleaning supplies, clothing, generators and building supplies contributed to the recovery of members, neighbors and friends. In the midst of calamity, joy abounded!

"We do not have words to adequately express our gratitude to you and to the ministry of One Great Hour of Sharing for your generosity to us in the wake of Hurricane Sandy," writes an ABCNJ church family. "When we give a gift to an ABC offering, never do we imagine ourselves potential recipients. Praise the Lord to be members of the family of God!"

A Haitian family, newly arrived in the United States, was one of hundreds of New Jersey families that OGHS blessed. The father, a minister, admitted that the aid he received left him with "an unforgettable memory."

The Rev. Dr. Robert Prescott Ezickson, senior pastor of First Baptist Church of Long Branch—an ABCNJ shore church—shares, "I want to again convey the deepest gratitude for your generous assistance through the One Great Hour of Sharing funds that you approved for our church." By distributing OGHS supported assistance, the church was "able to be the presence and love of Jesus Christ" to people in deep need.

When you contribute to OGHS, you help those affected by natural disaster. Someday, that aid may be returned to your community or your own family.

760 South Westmoreland Avenue
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COMMUNION SUNDAY, JUNE 2, 2013

10:00 a.m.

Worship in the Francis Chapel:

“TOGETHER WE CAN”

Sermon Series on the Book of Nehemiah

#1: “A BROKEN HEART”

(Please read Nehemiah 1:1-4 in preparation)

REV. CARLTON A. RHODEN, Preaching

– *One Great Hour of Sharing Offering received* –

11:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages



SUNDAY, JUNE 9, 2013

10:00 a.m.

Worship in the Francis Chapel:

“TOGETHER WE CAN”

Sermon Series on the Book of Nehemiah

#2: “SHARE YOUR CONCERN”

(Please read Nehemiah 2:1-3 in preparation)

REV. CARLTON A. RHODEN, Preaching

11:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages