

# THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



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

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No. 7

MARCH 30, 2015

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

## EASTER OFFERING, EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5

During the Easter season, one of the special activities for children is the sometimes messy procedure of coloring eggs. The eggs are then hidden throughout the house or yard, to be discovered by the children in a hunt. Usually, every egg is found, but sometimes, several weeks after Easter, a strong sulfur odor can be detected and a lone egg is found, now rotten, in some darkened corner.



The meaning of the Easter egg goes back to before the time of Christ when people stood in awe at seeing a new and living creature emerge from a seemingly dead object. In early Christian times the egg became a symbol of that rock tomb out of which Christ emerged to the new life of His resurrection.

On **Saturday, April 4**, we will have an Easter Egg Hunt for the children of the church and the neighborhood, an **EASTER EGGSTRAVAGANZA** – 12:00 noon to 3:00 p.m. Fun for children of all ages. Come enjoy food, games and fellowship.



**EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5**, we gather to **celebrate the Resurrection Life**, as well as the personal memories and joys we have associated with Easter over the years. At worship we shall receive a special Easter Offering for our church's ministry in this city.

Please, will you do these three things on Easter Sunday?

- Be present;
- Make as generous an offering as you possibly can;
- and,
- Bring a friend or family member with you.

**An envelope is attached for your Easter Offering.** Please bring it with you on Easter Sunday or, return it to the church by mail.

Let us unite in these ways to rejoice in Christ's living love, and to witness before the world to the faith which sustains us.

## ALL CHURCH RETREAT, MARCH 7

Led by Dr. Robert Wallace on the theme from Acts 2, "Between Babel and Pentecost"



Photos by John Polite

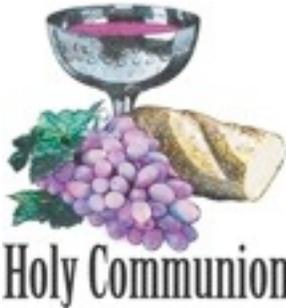
See Article on Page 3

## MAUNDY THURSDAY WORSHIP

April 2, 2015

7:00 p.m.

Francis Chapel



Holy Communion

### NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **April 13, 2015**. Material and articles for the April 13<sup>th</sup> issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. Mar. 30**.

### THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

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## FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR

Dear Friends,

As we enter the final week of lent, which has been traditionally called “Holy Week” or “Passion Week,” we remember the journey of Jesus in his last days before being crucified on Good Friday and His resurrection on Easter Sunday.



Rarely is there any “surprise” in a surprise birthday party. The tale-tell signs are everywhere—the clandestine phone calls and the secretive meetings. Besides, since you know that your birthday is coming up, you’re not at all surprised if your friends jump out from behind the sofa and yell: “Surprise!”

On April 5, we will celebrate a miracle we cannot explain why we embrace the mystery we proclaim. Life has defeated death. Right has beaten wrong. God has defeated evil and light has overcome darkness. Now we walk in the newness of life with the assurance that Easter’s Surprise comes with good news – that Jesus is right here with us. Each year we revisit the scene. It is the story of the resurrection of Jesus. Easter says with clarity that life continues despite all attempts to end it. Easter reminds us of death’s limitations. They are some things that death cannot do. Death cannot cancel the contribution that a person makes in a lifetime nor limit the years of the legacy that a life leaves behind. Death cannot mar the memories that we keep so near. We revisit a scene that reminds us that life can be beyond what we can think or imagine. You may be asking some questions, What is the Easter story? Well, I’m glad you asked.

A couple of devoted women arrive early in the morning on the first day of the week because they are consumed with what they want to do. They make their way through the darkened streets of a sleeping city. The claim among them is urgent. Their concern drives them as they

make their way to accomplish their goal.

### Why is Easter so important?

Easter makes us see death as more pervasive and serious than lifelessness in the grave. The reality of death grips those who have not yet been pronounced dead, but who live meaninglessly, cynically, unethically, unworthily and unproductively. To live dysfunctionally and disconnectedly is to be dead while still appearing to be alive.

But Jesus does not leave us in death, because the power of God that is at work in Jesus is also at work in us. The same power, by which Jesus was raised from the dead has quickened us into new life, and given us the power to live by love, serve humanity with hope and walk faithfully with joyful commitment to others. We are indeed risen with Christ to seek higher virtues and achievements.

### So why do we celebrate Easter each year?

Easter is the substance and essence of hope, the power of being, the breath of life and the source of joy. It says that life is not a cruel hoax, tragic mess or futile absurdity. Death is not the last word. Crucifixion is not the final destiny of those who live lovingly, serve faithfully and give of themselves freely. The resurrection of Christ gives to those, who will accept it, a quality of life that is full of hope, joy and blessing.

Have a Blessed Easter!

With Hope, *Norman Bullock*



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

**MARINA GARCIA**

*Deceased March 1, 2015*  
Church Member 1988-2015

## FIRST CONVERSATIONS: FROM BABEL TO PENTECOST

Nearly 30 members came together on a Saturday morning on March 7th to participate in a lively conversation about "What does it mean to BE the Church?"

Dr. Bob Wallace served as the Church Retreat facilitator on behalf of the American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest & Hawaii (ABCOFLASH). Dr. Wallace stated that in our Christian journey, we may be focused on KNOWING and DOING, but what about BEING? He posed the question, "What is God's unique call at First Baptist Church of Los Angeles?"

Psalms 107:9 states: "For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things". Dr. Wallace shared two principal themes apparent in the FBCLA member survey previously conducted: (1) members have a hunger to have a "voice" within the membership, and (2) members have a hunger to move beyond individual personal preferences to connect with God.

Ghandi said, "There are so many hungry people in the world, God had to come as Bread". Today we live in a world of competing narratives. In the story of Babel, the people built a tower to reach God and begun to believe they themselves were God but the tower collapsed amongst the noise of competing tongues. The story of Pentecost is the reversal of Babel: through the power of the Holy Spirit, God breath life into the people who heard one another through language, no longer a destructive force.

For over 200 years, the Church in America has been built on "likeness". The FBCLA member survey identified "communication" as a major issue. We would naturally have a tendency to turn to the model of Babel. We can draw inspiration from the quote, "When the church in me meets the church in you, the ground between

us is Holy Ground". The task before us is to determine which story shall we live out of? What is God's unique call?

The Church is not a building, although place is important. The Church is not exclusively about doctrine: church ought to be about "table fellowship" and being a Spirit-led community. The question is not what are my or your personal preferences with respect to leadership, but what is God calling us to BE?

The congregation has been reflecting upon the next phase of church life and needs to consider what type of leadership is required for the next phase. There are four basic roles played by a Minister: Priest, Pastor, Prophet and King (Manager). The Priest connects people with God; the Pastor ministers to the peoples' needs; the Prophet challenges the community of faith (like Nathan); and the King manages the system (like David).

Today a Minister must be conversant in all four roles but may not necessarily excel or be proficient in all four areas. He or she should be able to relate to all areas to enable, support and partner with members of the congregation to advance church ministries.

Here are stereotypical images of the Minister:

- Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
- Handholder
- Fixer
- Chaplain
- Entertainer

In the American Baptist tradition, a Minister is not a "hired hand" but a partner in ministry with the congregation which is part of the team.

So, what is the unique call of First Baptist Church of Los Angeles? What defines us and is central to the

church?

According to church organization experts, there are four types of churches: (1) "Family Church" with 50 members or less; (2) "Pastoral Church" with 50-200 members; (3) "Program Church" with 200+ members; and (4) "Corporate Church".

The Church Retreat shifted to a "brainstorming session" in which those members provided responses to the question, "What is the unique call of FBCLA?":

- Hospitality
- Live Tension Between Being A Local and Commuter Church
- Praying
- Prophetic
- Biblical
- Evangelical
- Urban Ministry
- International
- Interracial
- Ecumenical

Following an exchange of ideas, opinions, comments, it was agreed that a follow-up session would be organized to allow further focused discussion on the question, "What is the unique call of FBCLA?"

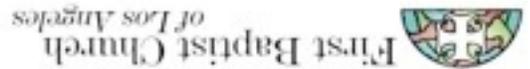
The Church Retreat closed with a prayer led by Dr. Wallace seeking God's will and discernment of First Baptist Church's call and asking the Spirit of the Living God to lift up the congregation in the present and as it moves forward with its work ahead.

A follow up to our March 7 retreat was held on Sunday, March 22 following Morning Worship where we focused more on the question, "What is the unique call of FBCLA?"

Our next Conversation will be held on Saturday, April 25 at 9:00 a.m. Our facilitator will be Rev. Charles Updike.

*Gerald Gubatan*, Church Clerk

760 South Westmoreland Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90005



### MAUNDY THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2015

**7:00 p.m.**

Communion Worship in the Francis Chapel



### EASTER SUNDAY, APRIL 5, 2015

**9:00 a.m.**

Easter Breakfast in the Robbins Dining Hall

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**“THE GOOD NEWS THAT THE RESURRECTION BRINGS”**

(Please read John 20:1-18 in preparation)

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching

– Easter Offering received –



### SUNDAY, APRIL 12, 2015

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**DR. ZINA JACQUE**, Guest Preacher

