

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



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

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

FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR'S PEN

Dear Friends,

A few weeks ago, I had the pleasure of visiting some of the members of First Baptist Church of Los Angeles who reside at Plymouth Village, a retirement community in Redlands, CA. I always look forward to my visit to Plymouth Village. The members who reside there – Dr. & Mrs. John Townsend, Janet Roberts and Jane Wilson – are always warm hosts and I enjoy so much the fellowship that we have together. They are always nice enough to host me for a meal while I am there.

On this particular visit, I wanted to share something with Dr. John Townsend, Pastor Emeritus, who had served as pastor of First Baptist for over thirty years, of what I had been thinking about. I am a church history enthusiast and upon being called as Interim Pastor of First Baptist Church, I began to peruse the tremendous history of the church and the fact that this church was the trend setter in many church initiatives that today define the prophetic church and what many define today as missional churches. Some of the ministries that I observed from reading the history and speaking with members, especially between the 1960's and early 1980's were transformative. Some of those ministries included:

- The Good Neighbor Center – a ministry for senior adults including education, travel and fellowship
- Affordable housing for low-income seniors
- Neighborhood Programs for children
- Providing a refuge and home for Cuban refugees that carried to other ethnicities including the Korean and Filipino population among others
- Developing assimilation ministries to the diverse cultures and population of members that came to First Baptist
- Providing English as Second Language (ESL) classes

These are just a few of the ministries that First Baptist developed and championed before many other churches knew what it meant to be involved in urban ministry.

During my conversation with Dr. Townsend, who championed many of these initiatives during his pastorate, I expressed to him my desire to re-tell the story of First Baptist, not just to “pat ourselves on the back” but to leverage what has been done in the past to reignite our passion for ministry and understanding the witness of this congregation and what can be done through the power of prayer and the Holy Spirit. Dr. Townsend has shared a lot of resources with me that will help us to refocus our ministry and plan for the future leveraging the work and ministry of First Baptist across the years. More will come about this initiative. Yes, we at First Baptist have a story to tell!

With Hope, *Norman Bullock*

FIRST CONVERSATIONS: WHAT IS FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH'S UNIQUE CALL?

Marking an increase in participation by 10 church members, nearly 40 members came together after the morning worship service on March 22nd as a follow-up to a previous session held two weeks earlier exploring the question, "What Is First Baptist Church's Unique Call?"

Dr. Bob Wallace presented a draft statement formulated by him and Dr. Norman Bullock based on the comments, input and observations compiled at the March 7th session. The statement was presented in English, Spanish and Korean:

DRAFT STATEMENT

First Baptist Church of Los Angeles

Our Call as a Congregation

“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 communities as well as being a witness to God's reign through celebrative worship and care for one another.”

Nuestro llamado como una congregación

“Estamos llamados a ser una comunidad de fe, una mesa de recepción, que celebra la diversidad de sus miembros como sirve y celebra la diversidad cultural y étnica de Los Ángeles y las comunidades circundantes. Estamos llamados a ser profundamente basada en la palabra y el testimonio a través del poder del Espíritu Santo, ser una voz profética para la justicia, sanación y transformación. Estamos llamados a manifestar el amor de Cristo como compartimos nuestras varias fuentes de recursos con las comunidades de fe, como un testigo al Reino de Dios a través del culto de adoración y al cuidarnos el uno al otro.”

(continued on Page 3)

WITH APPRECIATION

Many thanks to my church family for your cards, letters and prayers upon the passing of my brother. Your kind expressions of support are deeply appreciated.

– Bernice Thomas

Dear friends at FBC Los Angeles,

Thank you so much for your generous gift supporting our ministry in Mexico. Our CICEM churches are healthy and growing. The Baptist Seminary of Mexico is moving into the future with on-line and extension classes with a new vision. We praise the Lord!

In Christ,

Chuck and Ramona Shawver

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

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FIRST CONVERSATIONS (continued)

휠스트 뵤티스트 교회의 회중으로서의 소명

우리는 LA 와 주변 지역 사회의 다양한 문화와 여러 소수 인종들을 섬김으로서 그들의 다양성을 존중하며 지역사회의 신앙체로서 또한 모든 다양한 사람들을 환대하는 처소가 되도록 부름받았습니다

우리는하나님의 말씀에 깊이 뿌리 내려 지며 정의에 대한 선지자적 소리를 내며 치유하며 변화시키는성령의 권능을 증거하기위해 부름 받았습니다.

우리는 예배를 통해 그리고 서로 서로를 사랑하는 것을 통해 하나님의 통치하심을 증거하며 우리가 가지고 있는 여러가지 자산을 믿음의 공동체들과 나눔으로서 하나님의 사랑을 나타내기 위한 소명을 받았습니다.

Lively small group conversations followed allowing those members present to react to the draft statement and affirm whether it accurately reflected their perspectives about the church's identity today.

Dr. Wallace opened the discussion and invited people who wished to share their thoughts and comments with the larger group. Several stepped forward and spoke in front of the gathering - offering a heartfelt and honest exchange of opinions, ideas and perspectives.

Overall the general sentiment was that the draft statement indeed captured a sense of the church's core identity. However, there continues to be room for additional input and fine tuning. Hence, the Council of Ministries will take up the working statement at its next meeting on April 21st, then may forward its recommendations to the full congregation for its consideration.

Dr. Norman Bullock and Gerald Gubatan, Church Clerk

Future First Conversations

The next gathering will be held on **Saturday, April 25 from 9:00 a.m. to 12 noon** in Robbins Hall. Our facilitator will Rev. Charles Updike.

Rev. Updike serves as Pastor Emeritus of First Baptist Church, Glendale where he previously served for six years as the Senior Pastor, where he the century old traditional congregation toward renewed passion for its mission to be a thriving ministry with emphasis in worship, discipleship, outreach, pastoral care and community involvement. Further, he developed children and youth ministry through redesigned Vacation Bible School and summer outreach ministries. He also launched outreach ministries into the community and partnered with community groups to serve others. He partnered with American Baptist Churches of Los Angeles, Southwest and Hawaii (ABCofLASH) in relocation of regional offices to the campus of the church property. Previous to First Baptist Glendale, he served as pastor of First Baptist Church of Gaithersburg, Maryland, where he led this diverse culturally inclusive congregation of 1200 persons for 27 years.

With Hope,
Norman Bullock

NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **April 27, 2015**. Material and articles for the April 27th issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. April 13**.



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

MARIA ELSA HERNANDEZ

Deceased March 29, 2015

Church Member 1985-2007

COMMUNITY OUTREACH NEWS

First Baptist Church, Los Angeles (FBCLA) Partners with Cross Cultural Action

One of the parables Jesus told the chief priests and elders of the people was about a wedding banquet that a king prepared for his son. The king invited many people to the banquet, but when the day came, they refused to come. Some went off to their fields, some went about their business, and some even killed the servants who told them to come. The enraged king finally told his servants to go out into the streets and gather all the people they could find to fill the wedding hall.

This parable might remind you of the program that has been held here at the First Baptist Church for over the last year. This program, LOVE & JOY, was originally provided as a lunch service for ANY senior in the community, but it seems now that it has become a program for one ethnic group only. So this writing is meant not only to inform everyone that this program exists, but also to tell everyone why it exists.

There is one humble wish for us, that is that the program would be one way for us to practice the love and the humility our Lord Jesus Christ showed us.

The LOVE & JOY lunch program for seniors in community, is held on the third Thursday of every month from 11:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. There is nothing one has to do in order to attend to this lunch, no dues to pay, or any requirements to fulfill other than to bring oneself and one's spouse if available, or as many of one's friends as possible. There are three strong churches with many members in this one building who could be the guests simply to attend. Given all that, it should be a lot easier to fill this banquet room than it was to fill the hall in the parable.

The fact that there are three different ethnic churches present in this space should tell us that there is a unique calling which only this environment can answer to accomplish His will, especially in this ethnically diverse city. "Let us love one another and serve to each other through Him".

There was a time that people used to debate between the words, "melting-pot" or "salad bowl" when talking about integrating different ethnic groups or cultures into society. Some people disliked using "melting pot" because it didn't seem to allow each individual group's identity to survive, and preferred

the metaphor of a salad bowl because it allowed separate identities to survive together. No matter which metaphor was used however, the ultimate lesson to be learned was that we all had to learn to live together in harmony, and overcome the conflicts caused by our own cultural differences. However, this lesson seems to be lost for many people because these kind of conflicts keep occurring.

However well transform our lives, and no matter that we think we are invited into heaven as its citizens, unless we are transformed by God's words, we won't even notice when His wedding banquet will be held. This is not only a matter for our individual lives, but for society. No matter how we describe integrating into society, whether as a melting pot or a salad bowl, we will always run into conflicts and problems unless we practice the lessons Jesus gave us for our daily lives. This is the very reason and purpose for the LOVE & JOY program.

We should be thankful for the LOVE & JOY program because it provides a place where we can practice this lesson, whether as a guest or a host. As hosts, volunteers learn how to cooperate with one another and how to be molded by one another. There are many different ways to do something as simple as eating an apple; some bite them with the peel on, some slice them, and some prefer to bake them into other foods. Each way is legitimate but different, so it is natural to have some friction when these different ways come together. It isn't an easy task to gather individuals from different backgrounds to prepare one table in the same space. For many people therefore, this program is an opportunity to discipline themselves to cooperate and harmonize with different people, rather than to see this as a simple opportunity to serve others. The grace of the Lord is upon everyone through His words and makes them feel joy and happiness while they work.

As guests to this humble banquet, all one needs to do is to bring other guests, no matter whether they seem like they've been invited by the Lord or not, whether they have black hair, speak a different language, or whether they prefer to eat apple slices rather than whole, so that one has a chance to show one's

companions how to wear wedding clothes just as they do. It is only natural to become forgetful as we age, and no one knows when they'll be called on by the master of our lives, so it is a crucial matter for some seniors to be reminded that they know Him and rest in faith.

The lunches that are prepared by our volunteers are unique in many ways: they are 100 % home-made, fresh and healthy, without additives. Since our volunteers are well trained with the foods of different cultures, they are certain that they can satisfy our guests' appetites. In addition to a Bible quiz and the messages of the month, there are always a few meaningful programs such as a praise dancing, singing, and instrumental music, as well as arts and crafts lessons that seniors can enjoy as a hobby. Anyone can add a program so long as they follow God's teaching within the timeframe.

While this lunch program is organized by CROSS CULTURAL ACTION, a non-profit organization, it could never have been possible without sponsorship from the First Baptist Church. If you have paid close attention to our program, you would have noticed that the lunches are all produced from the church's kitchen. First Baptist Church has been there from the start, not only by allowing use of the dining hall and kitchen facilities, but also in offering all necessary services.

If there is one other reason for the LOVE & JOY program to exist, it is the desire to enlarge His kingdom by paving the road with humble effort.

Can we make every third Thursday a special day for seniors in this community? Let us bring our friends who have never heard the Gospel and help them be His children. Let's not worry about language barriers even though there are three major ethnic churches in this place. The shepherds the Lord assigned as His servants will feed guests with God's words and will guide them, so long as we invite them there. Let's use the program to acquaint our neighbors within these communities where the Lord resides.

Let us use ourselves to make positive contributions and examples within our diverse communities. If we do that, this old church building won't ever be seen as a faded memory, but will instead glow with the glory of the Lord for the whole world to see. Amen.

Submitted by Eunsook Park

760 South Westmoreland Avenue
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SUNDAY, APRIL 19, 2015

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“ARE YOU A THERMOMETER OR THERMOSTAT CHRISTIAN?”

(Please read Revelation 3:14-22 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching



SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2015

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“GETTING THE RIGHT FIT”

(Please read Ephesians 4:1-16 in preparation)

DR. CHARLES UPDIKE, Preaching