

# THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



Published by **The First Baptist Church of Los Angeles**  
760 South Westmoreland Avenue • Los Angeles, CA 90005 • (213) 384-2151 • [fbcla@fbcofla.org](mailto:fbcla@fbcofla.org)

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AUGUST 31, 2015

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

### FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR'S PEN

The Interim Journey of First Baptist, Los Angeles:

#### ***Trusting God in the Transition***

Dear Church Family and Friends,

The end summer is upon us. A reminder that summer is ending occurs when we celebrate Homecoming. As we prepare to celebrate the 141st Church Anniversary during Homecoming Sunday on September 13, it affords us the opportunity to pause and thank God for all that God has done for us. We pause to celebrate our church's past and gather to embrace the glorious future that God has planned for us. Every year in the U.S. 4,000 churches close their doors and go out of business. Remembering what the Lord has done in the past is important. Joshua 4:6-7 says, "In the future, when your children ask you, 'What do these stones mean to you?' you should tell them." As the nation of Israel crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land for the first time, 12 stones were selected from the river as a memorial of God leading the Twelve Tribes of Israel into their land.

Homecomings originated from college football games. It was a game to get the alumni back on campus – beginning in 1911. Three universities claim the first homecoming: Baylor, Illinois and Missouri. "Jeopardy," the TV show, declares Missouri held the first homecoming where alumni came back for a parade and football game. The first church homecoming was celebrated shortly after this in an African-American congregation in North Carolina.

The greatest impact of Homecoming is when those persons who have strayed away from the church return to restore their fellowship with the Lord; these are people who had previously received Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, but strayed away from the church. This reminds me of our theme scripture, Luke 15:11-32. In this passage, the son who left home to find work and a better life, who spent his inheritance on sinful living, comes back home. Prior to his homecoming, there was no communication between him and his family. Those who traveled to the distant land did not know him, and many assumed that he was dead or in prison. However, his father never gave up. Then one day this prodigal, estranged and wayward son returned home. Upon his return, the father welcomed him and held a celebration saying, "this is my son who was dead, but is alive again."

As we celebrate Homecoming, let us realize that one day we were prodigal children who were lost in our sins, or we had strayed away from the church. God welcomed us back as we came to God; God welcomed us back to the family. This parable is a picture of God. God is the Father who waits outside late in the night for God's children to return. When we returned home to God, there was a celebration of the angels in heaven, and there was jubilation in the congregation. Let us celebrate Homecoming as a new beginning in our lives.

Church ministry changes. The events and programs that were effective in 1974 likely aren't effective 41 years later in 2015. Churches need a "whatever it takes" attitude for reaching their community. Recently I was talking with a member of another church whose attendance was declining. He predicted in a few years their church would close, but they wanted to go out gracefully. How sad. This man has already given up on God's desire to revitalize their congregation.

As we gear up for the pastoral search process, I invite you to take this time to celebrate our church's past, but also push toward the marvelous opportunity for ministry that God has granted FBCLA for the future. As some of you know, I have been doing some research over the summer digging deeper into the history of FBCLA. I have had some interviews with some of the long-time members of FBCLA and will share with the congregation my musings during Homecoming Sunday.

Our Homecoming celebration is one of the best ways to reach our community. I encourage you to invite your friends, families and former members to Homecoming. It is be a grand time of fellowship; and don't forget to stay for lunch afterwards. No homecoming service is complete without food.

Peace & Blessings, *Norman Bullock*

**HOMECOMING and 141<sup>st</sup> CHURCH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION: "Building God's House, Building God's People, Building Our Future"**

We are approaching the 141st Anniversary and Homecoming of First Baptist Church of Los Angeles which will be celebrated on September 13, and this is the perfect time to celebrate what First Baptist has meant to you over

*(Continued on Page 2)*

The **Homecoming Meeting** of the Congregation and Corporation of the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, shall be held at 760 South Westmoreland Ave., Los Angeles, California on Sunday, **September 13, 2015 at 12:30 p.m.** for the purpose of hearing reports, election of officers, election of pastoral search committee and the transaction of such other business as may properly come before such meeting.

— *Gerald Gubatan*,  
Church Clerk and  
*Shirley Parsley*, Moderator

### NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **September 14, 2015**. Material and articles for the September 14<sup>th</sup> issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. August 31**.

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## FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR'S PEN (continued)

the years. As we celebrate our 141<sup>st</sup> anniversary of ministry in Los Angeles, we invite you to be present with us. Worship will be at 11:00 a.m., followed by our Homecoming Meeting and Anniversary Luncheon at 12:30 p.m. in the Robbins Dining Hall (Adults \$8; Children 12 and younger \$5). It will be a great day of fellowship, worship, and celebration. It is also the time we honor the "Man of the Year" with the Oliver deWolf Cummings Award. We hope that you will join us.

We also invite you to participate in our **Homecoming Offering**, which will be received during worship on Homecoming Sunday. This is a tangible way in which you can express what First Baptist has meant to you.

**An envelope is attached** for your use; please bring it with you on the 13<sup>th</sup> or mail it to the church office.

We look forward to this day when together we lift our voices in praise, prayer and worship. . .celebrating what God has done and is doing in our lives and in the life of the church.

### EBENEZER REUNION and EMPHASIS SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20

National Hispanic Heritage Month is the period from September 15 to October 15 in the United States, when people recognize the contributions of Hispanic and Latino Americans to the United States and celebrate the group's heritage and culture. During this time, First Baptist Church will recognize the many accomplishments of Hispanic and Latino Americans to this congregation. September 20 will be Ebenezer Reunion and Emphasis Sunday. Members of the Ebenezer Ministry will lead us in worship. There will be a celebration luncheon at 12:30 in Robbins Hall. All former and present members of Ebenezer are invited to join us. We are planning an Ebenezer Reunion Choir to share during the Morning Worship on that day.

### SPACE FOR GRACE – CALL FOR VOLUNTEERS

*Space for Grace* (S4G), sponsored by American Baptist Home Mission Societies (ABHMS), is a national gathering inviting God's healing grace

on the journey to justice. This experience **seeks to restore the human connection among all people** by gathering intentionally diverse voices committed to exploring different perspectives about contemporary issues that affect congregations and communities across the United States today.

The event will be held here in Los Angeles at the LAX Hilton Hotel on November 4-7, 2015. Preachers, speakers and musical artists from across the country—Brian McLaren, Susan Sparks, Ralph Warnock, Marvin McMickle, Ken Fong and Jacqueline Thompson, to name just a few—will bring God's Gospel of grace to life. From sunrise to sundown, *Space for Grace* will feature opportunities for memorable and meaningful worship, engagement and reflection that participants will carry home as better reflections of God's kingdom because of the *Space for Grace* experience. The S4G gathering will conclude with a banquet on Saturday, November 7, celebrating the 24-year ministry of Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, ABHMS retiring executive director. (Please refer to the website [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org) for registration and other info about S4G and click on the *Space for Grace* banner).

An event like this requires hours of planning and coordination. The staff of the American Baptist Home Missions Societies has been hard at work to ensure a memorable *Space for Grace* experience. Our Interim Pastor, Dr. Bullock is serving as Local Arrangements Committee Chair. A very integral part of ensuring a successful S4G Conference is the coordination of volunteers who come alongside of the ABHMS staff in connecting the dots of logistics and event coordination. A clarion call is being extended for volunteers to serve. Some of the areas that volunteers will be needed include:

- Hotel – guiding S4G attendees to the various areas throughout the hotel where events will be held
- Welcome Reception – Guiding registrants to the Innovators Hall

## ALL-CHURCH CELEBRATION OF AURORA OROZCO'S BIRTHDAY, AUGUST 16



### FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR'S PEN *(continued)*

- Registration/Administration – providing assistance at all times for registration
- Spiritual Hospitality – Offering to attendees at locations throughout the conference to grace-full hospitality and compassionate guidance
- Workshop/Plenary/Workshops – serve as ushers for each worship and plenary session.
- Workshops/Learning Experiences – greeting participants and serving as liaison keeping time and distributing evaluations

Once volunteers have been identified, there will be training and orientation provided by ABHMS prior to the S4G Conference. There will be two general Volunteer Information meetings – Thursday, August 27 at 10:00 a.m. and Thursday, September 10 at 1:00 p.m. The informational meetings will be held here at First Baptist Church.

### PROPOSED BYLAWS AMENDMENT

The following Bylaws amendment is being proposed by the Council of Ministries to be considered by the Congregation at the Homecoming Meeting on September 13, 2015. If approved, the size of the Pastoral Search Committee will be reduced from nine (9) to seven (7) members

#### **ARTICLE XI - CALLING A SENIOR MINISTER**

##### **Section 2. Membership and Election.**

- When the Senior Minister is to be called, a committee of not less than **seven (7)** ~~nine (9)~~ members, who represent a cross section of the church's membership, shall be nominated. At least one member of the Council of Ministries shall be among those nominated.

760 South Westmoreland Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90005



**COMMUNION SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 6, 2015**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Francis Chapel

**SERIES: "BUILDING AND REBUILDING GOD'S WORK GOD'S WAY"**

*(Lessons from Nehemiah on Building and Rebuilding the  
Community of Faith on Purpose for God's Purpose)*

**III. "PUTTING FIRST THINGS FIRST"**

*(Please read Nehemiah 9 in preparation)*

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching



**HOMECOMING SUNDAY and 141<sup>st</sup> ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION,  
SEPTEMBER 13, 2015**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Francis Chapel

**SERIES: "BUILDING AND REBUILDING GOD'S WORK GOD'S WAY"**

*(Lessons from Nehemiah on Building and Rebuilding the  
Community of Faith on Purpose for God's Purpose)*

**IV. "HOMECOMING: REVIVING, RENEWING AND  
RESTORING THE WALLS FOR THE FUTURE"**

*(Please read Nehemiah 12:27-43 in preparation)*

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching

– Homecoming Offering received –

**12:30 p.m.**

**ANNIVERSARY LUNCHEON AND HOMECOMING MEETING**

in the Robbins Dining Hall (\$8 adults; \$5 children under 12)