

# THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



Published by **The First Baptist Church of Los Angeles**  
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SEPTEMBER 14, 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,

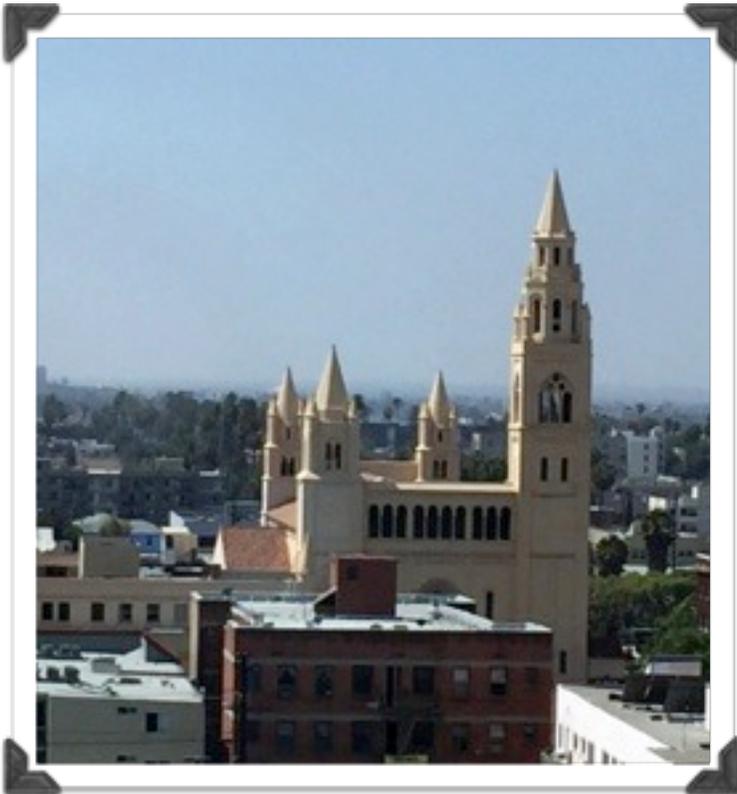
The season of autumn is near. In just a couple of weeks, September 23, the autumn equinox will mark the arrival of the season of fall, traditionally seen as a period of changes leading to the dark of winter. In *Holidays and Holy Nights*, Christopher Hill points out that for Christians who observe the liturgical year, autumn is actually the beginning of the cycle. In an excerpt, he suggests that "the dynamics of the fall of the year have the sweep of a great symphony or an epic poem." First Baptist church in many respects is at the beginning of a new cycle. During the Homecoming Meeting on September 13, a Pastoral Search Committee was selected and confirmed and now the spiritual discerning process will begin as they pray and work contemplatively toward the call of the next Shepherd of First Baptist Church of Los Angeles.

During the month of September, we have been journeying through the book of Nehemiah in both the Pastor's Sunday School Small Group Class and in our worship experience through the preached word, "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). As we look at what the rebuild might look like in the context of ministry and witness of FBCLA, it is important to know that although the rebuild might seem insurmountable, it is not impossible. For we know that with God, all things are possible. Will you trust God in the transition with me as we rebuild the walls in preparation for the next phase in the life and ministry of this historic congregation?

On Sunday, September 20, we will be celebrating two special days – Ebenezer Sunday (see newsletter for more info) and National Back to Church Sunday.



(Continued on Page 2)



*First Baptist, taken by Allison Rogers from the 5<sup>th</sup> floor of the Southwestern Law School Library (historic Bullock's Wilshire building) at Westmoreland Ave. and Wilshire Blvd.*

## HIGHLIGHTS IN THE HISTORY OF OUR CHURCH BUILDING

October 31, 1926 – laying of the Cornerstone (laid by Weymouth Crowell – trustee, treasurer and builder of the church building). The building was designed by noted architects, Allison and Allison.

June 26, 28, 29, 30 and July 1, 1927 – Dedication services and programs – The Francis Chapel is named in honor of Dr. James A. Francis, Senior Minister at the time the building was built.

September 6, 1944 – Ceremony of "Burning the Mortgage"

July 1, 1961 – Dedication of Moore Prayer Chapel

November 26, 1961 – Dedication of the Glenn J. Brown Youth Center

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

Back to Church Sunday is a campaign strategically designed to help churches reach out and invite everyone to try church again. This powerful movement encourages church attendance by inspiring and empowering church members to invite their neighbors, friends and loved ones to a special Sunday service designed just for them. This year we will join over 30,000 congregations across the country in encouraging church attendance. What a wonderful opportunity for us to spread the love of God by inviting someone to church.

With Hope, Norman Bullock

### NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **September 28, 2015**. Material and articles for the September 28<sup>th</sup> issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. September 14**.

### THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

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### Seven Reasons Why We Should Not Abandon the Term "Church Member"

Earlier this year in January, the Pastor's Adult Sunday School Class read and reviewed the book, *I Am a Church Member* by Thom Rainer. Thom Rainer is president and CEO of LifeWay Christian Resources. As many of you know, Thom Rainer is one of my favorite authors. In his recent blog, he posted a response to one of the many questions that readers have asked in response to reading the book - "Do you think the term 'church member' is still relevant?"

Rainer's response to that question was, "Yes I do." The responses were very interesting and timely based on our current context as a church, so I decided to share the responses with you.

1. **It is biblical.** One of the best descriptions of church membership is in 1 Corinthians 12. The Apostle Paul specifically uses the term "member" at several points in the chapter. For example, in 1 Corinthians 12: 27, he says: "Now you are the body of Christ, and individual members of it."

2. **It is a perfect metaphor for belonging.** Read the same chapter, specifically verses 15 to 20. Look how many times Paul uses the word "belong." To be a member of the body of Christ, the church, is to belong to an incredible gift given to us by God.

3. **It is a perfect metaphor for contributing.** As Paul describes the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12, he highlights the diversity of gifts of the members, and emphasizes the absolute mandate for every member to function and contribute. There is no place in the church for noncontributing members.

4. **It is a perfect metaphor for caring.** Because church members all belong to the same body, they are motivated and mandated to care for one another. Paul states this truth clearly: "So there would be no division in the body, but the members would have the same concern for each other" (1 Corinthians 12:25).

5. **It is a perfect metaphor for unity.** Church members are members of something greater than themselves, the body of Christ. Once again, we are reminded of this truth in 1 Corinthians 12:27: "Now you *are* the body of Christ, and individual members of it (emphasis added).

6. **It is commonly understood by most people.** Some churches use terms other than church member to describe those affiliated with their congregation. My purpose in writing this article is not to disparage them, but to advocate for a term that is both biblical and clear. Most people do indeed understand the basic meaning of church member.

7. **It does not yield to culture.** We have abandoned too many things in our churches in order to accommodate culture. While we recognize that some people will think of membership in the sense of country club membership, we in the church need to reclaim its biblical intent. Church membership does not mean we get perks and privileges because we "pay our dues." It means we give, sacrifice, and serve.

The essence of church membership is the sense of belonging to something so much greater than any one of us individually. We are thus motivated to give, serve, love, and care. The biblical understanding of church membership is an incredible concept. It is not a term we should abandon.

What do you think? Send me your responses: [nbullock@fbcofla.org](mailto:nbullock@fbcofla.org)

### Ebenezer Reunion and Emphasis Sunday

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

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

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 Conference – 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
- 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 an additional General Volunteer Information meeting on Saturday, September 19 at 10:00 a.m. here at First Baptist Church.

**ABCOFLASH ANNUAL MEETING ~ OCTOBER 2-3, 2015**



at **Evergreen Baptist Church SGV**,  
323 Workman Mill Road,  
La Puente, CA

***"In Your Wildest Dreams ~ Imagine a Church With God's Spirit Poured Out"*** Acts 2:16-21

**October 2-3, 2015**

The critical component that is lacking seems to be "an imagination of church through the eyes of the Holy Spirit." This imagination requires us to think outside the carefully crafted categories of ministry we have envisioned. This year's annual meeting committee has assembled gifted speakers. They will share their insights and creative ways of doing shepherding outreach among our rapidly growing population of non-believers and unchurched.

**IN MEMORIAM**

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

**STUART W. LAPP**

*Deceased August 22, 2015*

Church Member  
1942-1962; 1980-2015

**HISTORIC BUILDING HIGHLIGHTS (continued from Page 1)**

- 1961 – construction began on Newman Lounge
- 1963 – the elevator was added
- 1966 – Sanctuary organ was rebuilt
- 1970 – Francis Chapel organ was installed
- 1973 – Vista Tower Residences was built
- April 9, 1981 - Building was declared City of Los Angeles Historic-Cultural Monument #237, described as "...a notable work of eclectic architecture."
- 2001-2002 – Extensive plumbing repairs



*Pen and Ink drawing, done in 1977, by Hyke Winston, then a member of the Good Neighbor program*

760 South Westmoreland Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90005



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 20, 2015**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**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)*

**"STAYING THE COURSE . . . DON'T GIVE UP!"**

*(Please read Nehemiah 13:1-12 in preparation)*

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching

**12:30 p.m.**

Hispanic Heritage Luncheon in the Robbins Dining Hall



**SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 27, 2015**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**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)*

**"FINISHING WELL"**

*(Please read Nehemiah 13:14 in preparation)*

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching