

# THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



Published by **The First Baptist Church of Los Angeles**  
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APRIL 11, 2016

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

## FROM THE INTERIM PASTOR'S PEN

As we shift our journey from the cross, to the resurrection and pivot toward Pentecost, I am reminded by author Macrina Wiederkehr who wrote: "We are called to help others experience Resurrection, to help them break out of their tombs. Of course, that means we'll have to break forth from our own tombs first. We'd look kind of silly preaching from the inside of our tombs, wouldn't we?"

Easter is an uncompromising hope, isn't it? Do we understand the power of that or are we trying to share the good news still stuck in our tombs of not enough, of lacking, cowering in fear? When really, the Resurrection is an uncompromising hope—against every odd, against every perceived failure, against earth's deepest despair. When our imaginations can begin to sense the edges of that uncompromising hope not just on Resurrection Sunday but every day, then, then, we can begin to comprehend Easter's Good News.

During this season of Easter, it is my hope that First Baptist will sense something of an uncompromising hope—despite the challenges you sense and the realities you face. Our God is seeking to make things possible in seemingly impossible circumstances. The greatest act of courage for Peter and the women that first Easter day was to look into the empty tomb. So give it a try. Stare headlong into Easter's empty tomb and what do you see? What does the resurrection look like to you today?

### FIRST Conversations

The Follow Up to our Town Hall held on March 13 will be held on Sunday, April 24 at 12:30 p.m. in Robbins Dining Hall. During this forum, we will continue the dialogue which commenced at the Town Hall and address questions like: Who are we as a church, what brought us to this place, why do we exist? What does faithfulness to God in our context look like? What is the future we want to create? What are the resources we will need to achieve that future? How do we move toward that future together, with unity, purpose and joy? Where do we need to change in order to grow? These are some of the right questions that need to be asked as the

process of calling the next pastor continues. These are the things we must ask *now*—and, which as a congregation, we must answer.

I close with a prayer of encouragement for the church at Ephesus from the Apostle Paul in Ephesians 3:14-21:

**14** When I think of all this, I fall to my knees and pray to the Father, **15** the Creator of everything in heaven and on earth. **16** I pray that from his glorious, unlimited resources he will empower you with inner strength through his Spirit. **17** Then Christ will make his home in your hearts as you trust in him. Your roots will grow down into God's love and keep you strong. **18** And may you have the power to understand, as all God's people should, how wide, how long, how high, and how deep his love is. **19** May you experience the love of Christ, though it is too great to understand fully. Then you will be made complete with all the fullness of life and power that comes from God.

**20** Now all glory to God, who is able, through his mighty power at work within us, to accomplish infinitely more than we might ask or think. **21** Glory to him in the church and in Christ Jesus through all generations forever and ever! Amen.

With Hope, Norman Bullock

### Have You Discovered, Developed & Deployed Your Spiritual Gift(s)?

On May 21, from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, the Spiritual Gifts Ministry (SGM) will sponsor a Spiritual Gifts Symposium here at First Baptist where we will explore the biblical basis of spiritual gifts. Continental breakfast will be served.

A spiritual gift is a special ability that God gives, according to his grace, to each member of the body of Christ to be used for the development of the church.

According to research presented by Charles Schwartz in *Three Colors of Ministry* (ChurchSmart, 2004):

- 80% of Christians don't know what their spiritual gifts are
- 20% are not using their gifts in ministry-related tasks
- 51% are happier after discovering gifts
- 72% are happier when discovered gifts are applied to concrete tasks within the church

(Continued on Page 2)

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**Note:** *The Council of Ministries (Board of Trustees) is made up of those in **bold print**. The Council meets the 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday of every month at 12:30 p.m.; all members are welcome to attend.*

## THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

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

1. Every Christian has at least one spiritual gift.
2. Gifts and call go together.
3. Christians complement each other.
4. Each Christian may have a different "gift mix."
5. There are different degrees of giftedness.
6. There is a difference between spiritual gifts and the fruit of the Spirit.
7. There is a difference between spiritual gifts and universal Christian responsibilities.

### "What happens at the table... Real People. Real Questions"



April 30th – 4:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.

@ Chevy Chase Baptist Church

Young Adults are invited to engage in honest conversations about life, faith, and the church. FREE dinner with RSVP! (\$5 @ door). Email [Deneen Ray](mailto:DeneenRay) or [connect@abcoflash.org](mailto:connect@abcoflash.org) or call 818.839.6078

### Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Key Ingredients on the Journey

As we continue our journey from the resurrection to Pentecost, I want to share with you some excerpts from the preaching series, "Journey to the Cross: Remembering Jesus" from the sermon on Forgiveness and Recon-

ciliation. Through our journey today, I am hopeful that we might gain insight into what prevents you from being the husband you want to be, the wife you long to be, the mother or father you know is inside you, the creative person you were born to be –the most successful version of you possible! But tension in relationships hinders that success. As does the failure of people to truly understand one another. Thus, says Jakes, we need to embrace the big idea of forgiveness, of "letting go of the past and finding the grace to forgive". Forgiveness is a "supernatural power that's unleashed when we let it go."

In *A Forgiving God in an Unforgiving World*, Ron Lee Davis retells the true story of a priest in the Philippines, a much loved man of God who carried the burden of a secret sin he had committed many years before. He had repented but still had no peace, no sense of God's forgiveness.

In his parish was a woman who deeply loved God and who claimed to have visions in which she spoke with Christ and he with her. The priest, however, was skeptical. To test her he said, "The next time you speak with Christ, I want you to ask him what sin your priest committed while he was in seminary." The woman agreed. A few days later the priest asked., "Well, did Christ visit you in your dreams?"

"Yes, he did," she replied.

"And did you ask him what sin I committed in seminary?"

"Yes."

"Well, what did he say?"

"He said, 'I don't remember'"

What God forgives, He forgets.

Forgiveness is essential if we are to grow into the fullness of who God created us to be. We are made in his image and share his capacity to love and extend forgiveness.

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

Forgiveness is not about weakening you but strengthening you. Forgiveness is about moving on – letting it go.

For many of us, it is hard to let go:

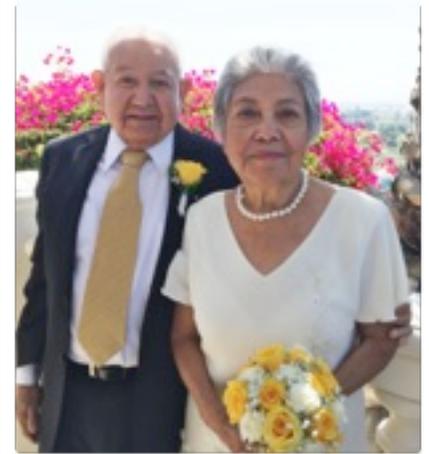
1. Unforgiveness comes when we believe that our future has been taken from us
2. Unforgiveness comes when we believe the betrayal has not been sufficiently atoned.
3. Unforgiveness comes as a defense mode to protect the bruised inner self which is often hidden from view or even our own awareness
4. Unforgiveness comes when we feel we have been deceived
5. Unforgiveness comes when personal trust has been violated
6. Unforgiveness comes from opportunities lost.

Unforgiveness means we desire to hurt the people who have wounded us. It's like the little boy who was sitting on a park bench in obvious agony. A man walking by asked him what was wrong. The boy answered, "I'm sitting on a bumble bee." "Then why don't you get up?" the man asked. The boy replied, "Because I figure that I am hurting him more than he is hurting me!" The healing and reconciliation process begins when we get up off the park bench. God will only heal our wounds when we stop inflicting pain on the one who hurt us.

In Matthew 18:21-35, Jesus points to the importance of forgiveness in the business of loving each other. Peter initiates the discussion when he says, "Lord, how many times shall I forgive my brother when he sins against me? Up to seven times?" The Jewish rabbis taught that you should forgive someone three times, but after that there was no forgiveness. Peter thought he was being large of heart

by going beyond the normal bounds of forgiveness, so he was probably shocked when Jesus said, "I tell you, not seven times, but seventy-seven times." In our daily lives, we often withhold forgiveness after just one offence, let alone seventy-seven times. What follows is a parable of the Unforgiving Servant that many of us are familiar with. I know the parable sounds a bit over the top, even unbelievable. But before you dismiss such a dramatic detail as cotton padding added to Matthew's gospel to raise the word count, might I ask you a question? Have you been as merciful to others as God has been to you? When you and I consider how much God (who knows everything there is to know about us) still forgives us, covers us, and keeps us, how can we find within ourselves the audacity to condemn others? This should give us all pause as we consider our relationships with others. There is no love without forgiveness, and there is no forgiveness without love.

### Happy 50th Wedding Anniversary to Jose & Maria Torres



On March 26, family and friends of long time members of First Baptist, Jose & Maria Torres gathered at the Coco Palm Bolero Terrace and Restaurant to witness the renewal of wedding vows and a reception following for the wonderful couple. May God continue to bless Jose & Maria!



### IN MEMORIAM

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

**LETA HALLATT**

*Deceased April 4, 2016*  
Church Member 1973-1999

### NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **April 25, 2016**. Material and articles for the April 25<sup>th</sup> issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. April 11**.

### FROM OUR MAILBAG

Dear Friends:

What a surprise for me when the front door was opened for me on Monday morning after our Easter get together with family! Thank you so much for the beautiful Easter lily plant.

I miss you all – and I think of all the years I have been able to participate in the activities and I am thankful.

Thank you, First Baptist.

Sincerely, Eunice S. McGee

760 South Westmoreland Avenue  
Los Angeles, CA 90005



**SUNDAY, APRIL 17, 2016**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**“A CONVERSATION ABOUT COMMITMENT  
AND A DIALOGUE ABOUT DEVOTION”**

(Please read John 21:15-19 in preparation)

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching



**SUNDAY, APRIL 24, 2016**

**9:30 a.m.**

Church School Classes for All Ages

**11:00 a.m.**

Worship in the Sanctuary

**“ALL IN”**

(Please read Ephesians 6:10-18 in preparation)

**DR. NORMAN BULLOCK**, Preaching