

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

Volume LXXXV

No. 1

JANUARY 1, 2017

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

THE WORK OF CHRISTMAS BEGINS



When the song of the angels is stilled,
When the star in the sky is gone,
When the kings and princes are home,
When the shepherds are back with the
flocks,

When the work of Christmas begins:

To find the lost,
To heal those broken in spirit,
To feed the hungry,
To release the oppressed,
To rebuild the nations,
To bring peace among all peoples,
To make a little music with the heart..

And to radiate the Light of Christ,
Every day, in every way, in all that we do and
in all that we say.

When the work of Christmas begins.

– Howard Thurman (adapted)

FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR

Happy New Year! As we enter 2017, we continue to trust God in the transition. Most of us look forward to Christmas with joy and anticipation. Then, almost too quickly, the New Year abruptly arrives only a week later. How do you view the coming year? Do you look forward to fresh possibilities and renewed potential? Or do you cling to the familiarity of the waning year?

Whether we like it or not, time hurls us forward. The New Year stretches before us like a blank white piece of paper. Why not take advantage of the clean slate the New Year provides and set some goals to work toward. During the new year, we set spiritual, mental, emotional/relational and physical goals. As you set goals, be willing to take steps out of your comfort zone.

In other churches where I have served, the month of January has been marked by a time of fasting and prayer. I invite you to join me on a 21-day fast beginning January 2, 2017 to seek and honor God for the New Year. "I beseech you therefore; brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1). By starting the year with a corporate fast, God meets with us in very unique and special ways. His presence grows greater and greater with each day of the fast. Without fail, He always shows up!

Corporately fasting in January is much the same precept as praying in the morning to establish the will of God for the entire day. I believe that, if we will pray and seek God and give Him our best at the first of the year, He will bless our ENTIRE year! "But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33).

Fasting is a principle that God intended for everyone to be able to enjoy. It's not a punishment; it's a privilege! By making fasting a way of life, we can get closer to God and grow in our spiritual walk like never before. Fasting is one of the most powerful weapons God has given us for our daily lives. Through fasting, we can experience a release from the bondage of sin ... restoration in our relationships ... financial blessings ... spiritual renewal ... supernatural healing and so much more!

Another reward of fasting has to do with your future. God has given you a vision, a divine dream for your life. When you fast, you open up the blessings and opportunities He has provided for you to pursue that dream. As you fast, pray for God's direction and guidance. Focus your faith on your dream and God will show you how you can turn your vision into a reality. Begin pursuing your divine dream today and make the rewards of fasting part of your lifestyle. (Continued on Page 2)



Guest harpist, Ms. Liesl Erman performed during the worship service on December 11, 2016, the Second Sunday in Advent. Following the service, she invited the children up to see the harp. Ms. Erman is a Board Member of the American Harp Society, Los Angeles Chapter.

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

USPS 194-440)
Annual Subscription Rate:
\$10.00 per year

Published biweekly by First Baptist Church,
760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles,
California 90005. PERIODICAL POSTAGE
PAID AT LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to
First Baptist Church NEWS, 760 South
Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California,
90005.

All copy for the NEWS should be typed or
written plainly and reach the Church Office no
later than **9:00 a.m. MONDAY, two weeks**
prior to publication.

STAFF: Norman Bullock, *Interim
Pastor*; Esther Sanchez, *Administration
and Building Coordinator*. James
Johnson, Josue Guevara, Odos Nabors,
Custodians. Kyle Irwin, *Organist/
Choirmaster*. Sandra Rogers,
Communications Coordinator, Lisa
Thomas, *Interim Building Facilitator*,
Cynthia Felton, *Interim Worship Arts
Director*.

CHURCH PHONE: (213) 384-2151

FAX: (213) 382-9669

VISTA TOWER: (213) 386-2786

OFFICE HOURS:

Monday-Friday 9:00 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.

www.FBCofLA.org

email addresses:

General: FBCLA@FBCofLA.org

Norman Bullock: NBullock@FBCofLA.org

Cynthia Felton: CFelton@FBCofLA.org

James Johnson: JJohnson@FBCofLA.org

Sandra Rogers: SandraBR@FBCofLA.org

Esther Sanchez: ESanchez@FBCofLA.org

Lisa Thomas: LThomas@FBCofLA.org

FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR (continued)

I invite you to join me and the members of First Baptist Church in this 21 day fast which will begin January 2, 2017 and end January 22, 2017. To provide direction, inspiration and information about Fasting, the different types of Fasts and reasons for Fasting, we will provide opportunities for learning and growing during the Sunday School hour. Please join me in this wonderful and growing experience. If you are unable to participate in the full 21-day fast, please consider a one day, three day, or a seven day fast.

Ask the Lord to show you areas to target during your time of fasting and prayer. Start with a clear goal and make a commitment to stick to your fast. Be ready to grow in your walk like never before as you seek the Lord through the Biblical principles of prayer and fasting. Remember, "He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him!" (Hebrews 11:6)

As we connect with God in the newness of the year and develop our discipline of prayer and fasting, below is a resource in developing spiritual growth. In this issue, we will deal with the first two steps – starting with proper attitudes and selecting a specific time. In the next issue, we will cover choosing a special place and following a specific plan.

STEPS TO SPIRITUAL GROWTH

Daily quiet time is necessary for spiritual growth, then how do you go about having one? You may be motivated to do it but may not know how.

You need to consider **four essentials elements of a good quiet time:**

- Start with the proper attitudes.
- Select a specific time.
- Choose a special place.
- Follow a simple plan.

START WITH THE PROPER ATTITUDE

In God's eyes, why you do something is far more important than what you do.

On one occasion God told Samuel, "The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16:7, NIV*) It is quite possible to do the right thing but with the wrong attitude.

This was Amaziah's problem, for "he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord but not wholeheartedly." (2 Chronicles 25:2)

When you come to meet with God in the quiet time, **you should have these proper attitudes:**

- **Expectancy** - Come before God with anticipation and eagerness. Expect to have a good time of fellowship with Him and receive a blessing from your time together. That was what David expected: "O God, You are my God, earnestly I seek You." (Psalm 63:1)

- **Reverence** - Don't rush into God's presence, but prepare your heart by being still before Him and letting the quietness clear away the thoughts of the world. Listen to the prophet Habakkuk: "The Lord is in His holy temple; let all the earth be silent before Him." (Habakkuk 2:20; see also Psalm 89:7) Coming into the presence of the Lord is not like going to a football game or some other form of entertainment.

- **Alertness** - Get wide-awake first. Remember that you are meeting with the Creator, the Maker of heaven and earth, the Redeemer of men. Be thoroughly rested and alert. The best preparation for a quiet time in the morning begins the night before. Get to bed early so you will be in good shape to meet God in the morning; He deserves your full attention.

- **Willingness to obey** - This attitude is crucial: you don't come to your quiet time to choose what you will do or not do, but with the purpose of doing anything and everything that God wants you to do. Jesus said, "If anyone chooses to do God's will he will find out whether My teaching comes from God or whether I speak on My own." (John 7:17) So come to meet the Lord having already chosen to do His will no matter what.

SELECT A SPECIFIC TIME

The specific time has to do with **when you should have your quiet time** and how long it should be. The general rule is this: **The best time is when you are at your best!** Give God the best part of your day - when you are the freshest and most alert. Don't try to serve God with your leftovers (leftover time). Remember, too, that *your* best time

CHILDREN'S CHRISTMAS PROGRAM, DECEMBER 18

The Christian Education Ministry held its annual Children's Christmas Program and Pageant on Sunday, December 18 at 9:30 a.m. This year's pageant was entitled "A Christmas to Believe in" and told the Christmas story with two narrators, one of whom doesn't believe in Santa or Christ being born to a virgin. After hearing and seeing the whole story of the birth of Christ, Mary asks her several times if she believes yet and at the end of the story, she really does believe. A great cast of both adult teachers and youth and children was very inclusive and greatly received:



- Director: Linda Zaretsky
 - Assistant Director: Angie Loaisiga-Hernandez
 - Narrators: Lydia Grande Ruiz, Sofia Herrera
 - Mary: Sofia Aguilar; Joseph: Felton Johnson
 - Elizabeth: Samantha Aguilar; Zachariah: Saul Martinez
 - Gabriella: Lendy Martinez; King Herod: Matias Herrera
 - 3 Wise Men: Barack Johnson, Kenneth Mercier II, Joshua Lon-Almeida
 - Angels: Leila Amaya, Adrienne Carroll-Suh, Gisselle Artola, Bella Matsuki
 - Shepherds/Townspeople: Jose Herrera, Ann Brodie, Zuleima Argumedo, Angie L. Hernandez
 - Musicians: John Sturm, Nalis Mercier, Gerald Gubatan
 - Refreshments: Marta Torres
- My appreciation to everyone for their hard work and participation.
 – Linda Zaretsky, Coordinator Christian Education Ministry

FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR (continued)

may be different from someone else's. For most of us, however, early in the morning seems to be the best time. It was Jesus' own practice to rise early to pray and meet with the Father: "Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house, and went off to a solitary place, where He prayed." (Mark 1:35).

In the Bible many godly men and women rose early to meet with God. Some of these were:
 Abraham - Genesis 19:27 Moses - Exodus 34:4
 Job - Job 1:5 Hannah and Elkanah - 1 Samuel 1:19
 Jacob - Genesis 28:18 David - Psalms 5:3, 57:7,8
 (See also Psalm 143:8; Isaiah 26:9; Ezekiel 12:8.)

Throughout church history many Christians who were used most by God met with Him early in the morning. Hudson Taylor said, "You don't tune up the instruments after the concert is over. That's stupid. It's logical to tune them up before you start."

The great revival among British college students in the late 19th century began those historic words: "**Remember the Morning Watch!**" So we need to tune ourselves up at the start of each day as we remember the Morning Watch.

If Jesus is really in first place in our lives, we ought to give Him the first part of our day. We are to seek His Kingdom first (see Matthew 6:33). Doctors tell us that the most important meal of the day is breakfast. It often determines our energy levels, alertness, and even moods for the day. Likewise, we need a "spiritual breakfast" to start our day off right. Finally, in the morning our minds are uncluttered from the day's activities. Our thoughts are fresh, we're rested; tensions have not yet come on us, and it's usually the quietest time. One mother sets her alarm clock for 4 a.m., has her quiet time, goes back to bed, and then rises when everyone else in the household gets up. Her explanation is

that with kids around the house all day, early morning is the only time when it is quiet and she can be alone with God. It works for her; you need to select a time that will work for you.

You might even consider having two quiet times (morning and night). Dawson Trotman, founder of the Navigators, used to have code letters for his night quiet time: HWLW. Whenever he was with a group of people at night or home with his wife and the conversation seemed to be ending, he would say, "All right, HWLW." HWLW stood for "His Word the Last Word;" and he practiced that through the years as a way of ending a day with one's thoughts fixed on the Lord (Betty Lee Skinner, *Daws*, Zondervan, 1974, p. 103).

With Hope,

Norman Bullock

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH ANNUAL MEETING

The Annual meeting of the Congregation and Corporation of the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles, shall be held at 760 South Westmoreland Avenue, Los Angeles, California on Sunday, **January 22, 2017 at 12:30 p.m.** for the purpose of adopting a budget and hearing the financial report for 2016 and progress reports from the various Ministries.

Following the Annual Meeting, a ministry fair will be held to introduce, inform and recruit members to the various ministries that FBCLA offers.



First Baptist Church
of Los Angeles

760 South Westmoreland Avenue
Los Angeles, CA 90005

PERIODICAL

JANUARY 1, 2017

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

PAGE 4

SUNDAY, JANUARY 8, 2017

9:30 a.m.

Church School Class for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“TRUSTING GOD’S TIMING – WAITING FOR YOUR MOMENT”

(Please read Habakkuk 2:1-3 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching



MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR. SOCIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY

SUNDAY, JANUARY 15, 2017

9:30 a.m.

Church School Class for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“DARING TO DREAM”

(Please read Genesis 37:5-20 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching