

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS



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An American Baptist Congregation Making God's Love Known in Los Angeles Since 1874

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FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR

Despite its rich history in the church, many of us don't observe Lent. Maybe it's time to reconsider. This special 40-day period before Easter is a unique time for us to take inventory of our lives, commune more intimately with God, and clear out those things that may distract us from our commitment to him. During this Lenten Season, I want to encourage you to keep your eyes on Jesus during our **"Journey To the Cross: Seeking Jesus"**. During Lent, we encourage your journey with us by:

1. Walking with us daily through the scriptures highlighting the disciplines Jesus practiced (you will receive a bulletin insert each week delineating those scriptures)
2. Selecting a food item, drink or practice you will abstain from.
3. Selecting a spiritual practice or activity you will adopt.

The goal is to join together corporately, on one accord as we prepare our hearts, minds and spirits to experience anew the power of the resurrection not just on Easter Sunday but everyday as we live as witnesses to that power in the world.

Lent is a season of forty days, not counting Sundays, which begins on Ash Wednesday and ends on Holy Saturday. Lent comes from the Anglo Saxon word *lencten*, which means "spring." The forty days represents the time Jesus spent in the wilderness, enduring the temptation of Satan and preparing to begin his ministry. Lent is a time of repentance, fasting and preparation for the coming of Easter. It is a time of self-examination and reflection. In the early church, Lent was a time to prepare new converts for baptism. Today, Christians focus on their relationship with God, often choosing to give up something or to volunteer and give of themselves for others.

During this Lenten season, I invite you to join many of us who are fasting. Fasting is a spiritual discipline designed to deepen our relationship with Jesus Christ. We do not fast to lose weight; we fast to be empowered by Jesus Christ. As we seek to renew our relationship



with God, God will reveal God's purpose and plan in your life if you dare fast, pray, study and learn the power of quiet time. Jesus had to steal away from the crowd and spend time with his Father in the mountains, to pray, study, reflect, meditate, and center his spirit. If fasting and prayer were the disciplines of Jesus, should not this be followed by us? Join with us this season and witness a breakthrough as we fast, pray, study, reflect, meditate and learn the power of quiet time.

Question: I have never fasted before? Answer: Consult your doctor first!* Fasting is not the removal of all food from your diet. Fasting is learning to discipline your mind, body and spirit to remove "something" you know hinders your ability to function at your highest capacity, from your life or diet. Question: is fasting biblical? Answer: Fasting is biblical. Throughout the Old and New Testaments, fasting was used by the people of God to prepare for a spiritual challenge, hear God's voice before making a major decision, and for removing destructive forces in your life.

Fast #1 - Fasting to confront destructive forces

- March 1 – March 7 Eat all your meals before 6:00 p.m.
- March 8 – March 14 Eat only two meals before 6:00 p.m.
- March 15 – March 21 - Eat only one meal a day before 6:00 p.m.
- March 22 – March 28 Drink only juices, water and/or tea
- March 29 – April 4 Eat only fruits and vegetables before 6:00 p.m.
- April 5 – April 15 Slowly begin to add meat to your diet

Fast #2 – The Daniel Fast (Taken from the book of Daniel). When Daniel was captured by the Babylonians, he asked of the Babylonians if he, along with Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego, could fast eating only fruits and vegetables so they would be prepared to confront the Babylonian king.

- March 1 – March 7 Eat all meals before 6:00 p.m.
- March 8 – March 14 Eat only two meals a day before 6:00 p.m.

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- March 15 – March 21 Eat only fruits and vegetables before 6:00 p.m.
- March 22 – March 28 Eat one meal a day before 6:00 p.m., meat may be added.
- March 29 – April 4 Eat two meals a day before 6:00 p.m., meat may be added
- April 5 – April 15 Eat three meals a day before 6:00 p.m.

Fast #3 - Removing certain foods or items from your diet or life. One type of fasting is to remove certain foods from your diet, such as fried foods, sweets, sodas or refined sugar and/or flour. *Please seek the advice of your primary care provider/doctor before beginning a fast that involves restricting food/calories and/or medication. Your doctor can help you design a fasting plan that protects your health and well-being. This is extremely important if you are pregnant or have a medical condition.

Lenten Devotional - Week 1

Isaiah 55:1-7 (ESV)

*Come, everyone who thirsts,
come to the waters;
and he who has no money,
come, buy and eat!
Come, buy wine and milk
without money and without price.
Why do you spend your money for that
which is not bread,
and your labor for that which does not
satisfy?
Listen diligently to me, and eat what is
good,
and delight yourselves in rich food.
Incline your ear, and come to me;
hear, that your soul may live;
and I will make with you an everlasting
covenant,
my steadfast, sure love for David.
Behold, I made him a witness to the
peoples,
a leader and commander for the
peoples.
Behold, you shall call a nation that you
do not know,
and a nation that did not know you shall
run to you,
because of the Lord your God, and of
the Holy One of Israel,
for he has glorified you.
Seek the Lord while he may be found;
call upon him while he is near;
let the wicked forsake his way,
and the unrighteous man his thoughts;
let him return to the Lord, that he may
have compassion on him,
and to our God, for he will abundantly
pardon.*

In these verses, the Holy One of Israel is crying out through Isaiah, pleading with his people on the eve of destruction to return to the true fountain of life. It is an emphatic call to come without barrier to the eternal spring of living waters. Verses 2 and 3 make clear that this water is the word of God. The invitation is to drink deeply: to receive the word, reason with it, delight in it, to listen to it like they had never listened before. "Listen diligently" (v. 2) is literally, "Listen-listen!" a call for undivided and sustained attention. Ultimately, this word is meant to save them (v. 3), transform them (v. 7), and make them a blessing to the entire world (v. 5). They are being called into

communion with their compassionate God (v. 7). But they refuse to hear him (6:9).

Lent is a time for us to admit the same tendencies displayed by Isaiah's audience. For reasons conscious and less conscious, we are prone to neglect God's word, and ultimately, God himself. Given enough time apart from the Scriptures, a kind of spiritual amnesia sets in, where we forget the taste that is sweeter than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb (Psalm 19:10). Lent is an invitation to see Christ as the woman at the well came to see him — as the pure, limitless satisfaction for our thirsty souls. It is our invitation to return to that well and drink deeply. Whoever drinks of the water that I will give him will never be thirsty again. The water that I will give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life (John 4:14).

Prayer

Gracious Lord, in compassion you call us. By your mercy, open our ears to hear your voice, and hearing you, to return. Remove the scales from our eyes and unveil for us the wonders of your word. Your glories are revealed there. Be our delight. Be our satisfaction. Awaken in us a new sense of expectancy, as those who put their trust in you will never be put to shame. Glorious LORD, we are yours. In Christ's Name, Amen.

Lenten Small Group

During this time, there will be opportunities for learning and growing together with the formation of a Small Group/Book Club that will explore the book "40 Days of Decrease" by Alicia Britt Chole. The chapters are set up with a retelling of part of the passion story, a reflection on that, a recommended fast for the day, some background information on the history and current practice of Lent, a small Scripture passage to

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FROM OUR INTERIM PASTOR (continued)

read for the day (starting in John 12 on day 1 and ending with John 21 on day 40). The fasts are not merely physical things, such as food or electronics or purchasing, but they also include fasting things such as regrets, collecting praise, rationalism, religious profiling, and criticism, among others.

Each day offers a meaningful consideration of Jesus' journey through reading and reflection and then issues a challenging daily fast. Instead of social media, chocolate, and designer coffee, *40 Days of Decrease* calls communities to a Lenten fasting of apathy, injustice, resentment, hypocrisy, and more for the love of God. After all, in the same way self cannot satisfy self no matter how long it feasts, self cannot starve self no matter how long it fasts. Decrease is only holy when its destination is love. We thin our lives to thicken our communion with God.

We will also gather for other opportunities to draw us closer to God during this time. You are invited to participate in this unique model together as a collective body. You can obtain the book via iBooks, Kindle, Amazon.com, ChristianBook.com, Barnes & Noble, and Target. Stay tuned for more info. Our first gathering will be a Conference Call on March 9 at 7:30 p.m. to discuss the book "*40 Days of Decrease*." You can join the call by dialing (323) 645 -9525.

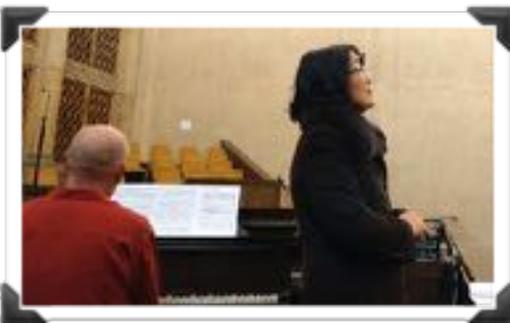
With Hope,



Norman Bullock

Play More

Play More, our partnering non-profit organization, is in need of volunteers to canvass our neighborhood, distributing flyers promoting Play More Community Activities on Saturdays here at FBCLA and for general volunteers to assist with the various opportunities offered. This is our community center program to keep children safe, off the streets and engaged in sports, crafts, and special projects. The hours of operations are 9am to 1pm in the church gym on Saturdays. In addition to offering a healthy environment to flourish and grow, we serve lunch each week. If you are interested in volunteering, please contact Lisa Thomas at (213) 384-2151.



Left: Joy Cho, soprano, recently sang "The Lord's Prayer" accompanied on the piano by Kyle Irwin during the February 12th worship service.

Right: Rev. Charles Shawver (seen here with Blanca Morales) a retired American Baptist missionary to Mexico and longtime friend of First Baptist Church, served as guest preacher on February 19, 2017, speaking on the topic "When Kings Break Bad" and challenging parishioners with the question, "While the Bible teaches us to respect and obey our civil leaders, what do we do when our leaders lead nations astray and are not always in alignment with God's purpose and justice?" Rev. Shawver closed by citing Micah 5:24: "But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an ever-flowing stream."

**MARK YOUR CALENDAR
MARCH EVENTS**

- March 1 - Ash Wednesday Service, Francis Chapel*
- March 4 - Equip Leader Training at First Baptist Church, Glendale*
- March 5 - Focus Group – "Experiencing God" in Robbins Dining Hall following Worship*
- March 18 - Diaconate Meeting, Robbins Dining Hall*
- March 19 - Church Council Meeting in the Babcock Room*
- March 26 - Understanding & Embracing Our Culture in Robbins Dining Hall*
- March 31 – Apr 1 - CTMA Impact Convention at the Pasadena Convention Center*
- March 31 - Family Movie night, 7 p.m. in Robbins Dining Hall ("Risen")*

NEWS DEADLINE

The next issue of *The First Baptist NEWS* will be published on **March 13, 2017**. Material and articles for the March 13th issue should arrive in the church office two weeks before publication, or **no later than 9:00 a.m. February 27**.





First Baptist Church
of Los Angeles

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PERIODICAL

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COMMUNION SUNDAY, MARCH 5, 2017

9:30 a.m.

Church School Class for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“SEEKING THE GOD WHO IS SEEKING US”

(Please read Matthew 6:33 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching



SUNDAY, MARCH 12, 2017

9:30 a.m.

Church School Class for All Ages

11:00 a.m.

Worship in the Sanctuary

“A CHALLENGING JOURNEY AHEAD”

(Please read Mark 1:12-13 and 2 Corinthians 4:8-11 in preparation)

DR. NORMAN BULLOCK, Preaching