

THE SPIRE

February 2010

MIXON MUSES

I have to admit that it is sometimes difficult to be a Baptist. In the words of an old spiritual we sang in college glee club, "I'm a Baptist bred and a Baptist born, hallelujah! And when I go I'm a Baptist gone, no hiding place down there, hallelu!" I always liked this spirited number, partly because it was about me...sort of. I was born Baptist, from a long line of Baptists. My parents went to Baptist schools and my father pastored a Baptist church. More than once I have written or said that being Baptist is in my blood.

To me, that means things like soul liberty, absence of creed, personal profession of faith at an age of comprehension and accountability, congregational autonomy, and separation of church and state. Most of my heroes and mentors – my father, Paul Stagg, Jitsuo Morikawa, Betty Miller, Dick and Shirley Jones, Edwin Dahlberg, Olive Tiller, Martin Luther King, Jr., Rod Romney, Walt Pulliam, Stan Hastey, Jeanette Holt – to name a few, have been Baptist. I'm a Baptist bred and a Baptist born.

But then I turn on the news and I want to run for cover. I wish there was a hiding place down here, now, today. A group of Baptists – not American Baptists, but Baptists from America (that is the United States of...) from my home state of Idaho, are arrested in Haiti for attempting to take Haitian children out of the country without proper documentation. I know the story is still unfolding. These people may have been operating from noble motives, but that does not excuse their failure to adhere to the laws of Haiti. As far as I know this was not an act of civil disobedience against an unjust law. It appears to be a careless and arrogant disregard for Haitian law, at a time when the government of that country is most vulnerable, that puts this group under suspicion of human trafficking. This should not be at all surprising when one considers that, even before the earthquake, impoverished Haiti was a prime target for trafficking in children. As Jim Hopkins notes, "...it seems clear that any group or person desiring to help Haiti needs to understand that Haiti is not helped by disrespecting Haitian law or Haitian families."

Even before this story broke, we had to endure another diatribe from Southern Baptist televangelist, Pat Robertson, who said of the earthquake that Haiti has been "cursed by one thing after another" since they "swore a pact to the devil." This ranks with his obser-

vations that the attack on the World Trade Center was God's punishment for moral decay in the USA, represented by the ACLU, abortionists, feminists and gays; and his musing that Hurricane Katrina served as similar punishment. It's hard to be a Baptist in the face of such mindless grandstanding in the name of God.

And then, to cap it off, here are the congregants of Westboro Baptist Church in Topeka, Kansas, (my other home state,) led by its founder, Fred Phelps, demonstrating in our own back yard. The Phelps family was in Palo Alto last Friday, protesting at Gunn High School and Stanford. In an act of incomprehensible insensitivity, the Westboro folk, whom the San Jose Mercury News characterized as "a traveling theater of religious extremists," came to Gunn "to flay the most unlikely victims: school children already traumatized by the five recent suicides of Gunn-associated students." It just makes me want to weep. They then went on to Stanford to demonstrate at the Taube Hillel House (the University's center for Jewish life.)

In many ways, I'm glad I wasn't there on Friday. I have seen and heard enough hate in my life time to ensure for me that it is evil. I once saw Fred Phelps from a distance, demonstrating at a gay pride parade. It made my stomach churn. If evil has a face, it must look something like that. Hate twists God's beautiful creation and makes it abhorrent. But more strongly, I regret I was not there because I want those kids, my neighbors, my city, the wide world to know that there are other kinds of Baptists. Baptists who stand with them for freedom of expression, human diversity and human possibility, in the hope that truth will set us all free, free to be decent, compassionate human beings. We serve a God whose name is Love and only that which is born of love is also of God.

In a recent Christian Century, Debbie Blue, writing about the 12 chapter of 1st Corinthians, reminds us that "Paul says God chose all of us: sick beautiful and broken people, Mother Teresa, Gandhi, desert mystics, evangelical sergeants, church ladies, bishops, and even me. He seems to think it is important that we love each other, that we somehow allow love to trump division." Any division? Even with these "other" Baptists who are giving us a bad reputation, making our work so hard? I think so. I think real love is indivisible. I think that's what we want to say to children and youth, to friends and neighbors, to our community and the big wide world. Love has come. It's

here. It's now. Either we embrace it or we kill it. You can't really shave it off in small increments and it still be love. Love in the face of hate seems so weak; love confronting evil seems so inadequate - at least on the surface. You have to go deep, down to its very roots, to realize that nothing can defeat love in the end, for God is love.

So, I'm a Baptist and I'm a lover. At our very best, I believe those two things go together, hand in glove. It may be hard work, but I still want to show the world that that's the way it is.

Pastor Rick

From the Director of Educational Ministries & Family Life



Our children and youth put together twenty-five bags of supplies to be sent to Church World Service, in response to the terrible earthquake in Haiti. The kits are standard hygiene kits distributed by emergency teams in crisis situations. They include a small towel and washcloth, a comb, a toothbrush, nail clippers, a bar of soap and band aids, sealed in a plastic bag. CWS adds toothpaste and mails off the packages to places of need. One report I received said that an UMCOR supply site (United Methodist

Committee on Relief) had emptied their warehouse of kits in a mailing to Haiti. So, ours will be used soon.

If you want to make a special donation to help cover the cost, just note "Hygiene Kits" on your donation to the church. The kits cost about \$8 each, and then \$2 per kit is needed for postage/handling by CWS. It was a good experience for the kids to have a chance to make a response to those in need. I hope to continue with a mission focus in our youth and children's ministry, knowing that our giving to others in need is a major part of our Christian walk.



On Friday, February 5 at 6:00 p.m. parents and children will be gathering for dinner and a program at the church. After some 'family time' the kids will have an activity, and the adults will

spend time dreaming and planning for our ministry with children at 1st Baptist Church. Any ideas you have and your willingness to help with our long-term ministry in this area is welcome—please contact Pastor Linda.

--Linda Pickens-Jones

New Books!

We are building our library of children's books! Two of the newest are a children's picture book [Listen to the Wind: The Story of Dr. Greg and Three Cups of Tea](#) and a young adult reader book based on [Three Cups of Tea](#), by Greg Mortenson. These books provide an excellent access for young people to understanding the work of Mortenson, whose newest book [Stones Into Schools](#) was just reviewed in the Adult Forum. There are also two new picture books about Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., one of which is his "I have a dream" speech, with each page illustrated by different award-winning artists, [I Have A Dream](#), by [Martin Luther King, Jr. and Coretta Scott King](#). The second is [Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#) by [Doreen Rappaport](#) and Bryan Collier. Some are already checked out, but will be found in the library on the Children's Ministry shelf.



THE WORK OF THE CHURCH



ADULT BIBLE STUDY every **Tuesday at 10:30 AM in the Parlor.**

We study the lectionary texts for the following Sunday. Everyone is welcome to join us for this lively exploration of biblical texts.

MEN'S BREAKFAST, Every first and third Wednesday at 8:00 AM, at Dinah's Poolside Restaurant, 4261 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All the men from our Church family are welcome.

CHOIR REHEARSAL each **Thursday at 7:30 PM** in the Parlor.

OUTREACH TASK TEAM, February 5, 1:00 PM in the church parlor.

A NIGHT FOR FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN AND YOUTH, Friday, February 5, 6 to 8 PM. Come eat, laugh, share and plan together for children and youth ministry at FBCPA. Dinner will be provided. Please let Pastor Linda know if you are planning to attend.

The Spiritual Care Service at Stanford Hospital and Clinics has a great need for **INTERFAITH VOLUNTEERS** to visit with patients and families. These volunteers will be well trained and once training is complete, the volunteers should be willing to commit 2 hours a week for at least a year. The next training starts February 22. There are also volunteer opportunities in the **No One Dies Alone Program** and the **Advanced Directive Preparedness Program**. Call (650) 723-5101.

FYI... The Lenten Season is upon us once again! Wednesday, February 17th is **Ash Wednesday!**

FEBRUARY BIRTHDAYS

Happy Birthday this month to:

Rick Mixon	February 1
Eileen Conover	February 16
Janice Garcia	February 20
Betsy Koester	February 22
Madison Oatley	February 26

ADULT FORUM

Dates and Topics

- February 7: **The Case for God** – Karen Armstrong's latest book presented by Jo Ford & Betsy Koester, Part I.
- February 14: **The Case for God** – Karen Armstrong's latest book presented by Jo Ford & Betsy Koester, Part II.
- February 21: **Celtic Spirituality** – Dona Smith-Powers, presenter.
- February 28: **Celtic Spirituality** – Dona Smith-Powers, presenter.

words of WORSHIP

WORSHIP THEMES FOR FEBRUARY 2010

“COME BUILD A CHURCH”

With Soul and Spirit

A Church Whose Mission Is:

- | | | |
|-------------|--|-----------------------|
| February 7 | To Worship God | Luke 5:1-11 |
| February 14 | To explore together faith in Christ | Luke 9: 28-36 (37-43) |
| February 21 | To serve those in need | Luke 4:1-13 |
| February 28 | Chaplain Louann Roberts from Correctional Institutions
Chaplaincy preaching | |



SENIOR CHATS



**At Covenant Presbyterian Church
670 East Meadow Drive, Palo Alto**

We start a new year with Senior Chat and have good topics and presenters to explore. Please join our welcoming fellowship each second and fourth Fridays from 10:00 - 11:30 in the Fireside Room of Covenant Presbyterian Church (even if you're not a senior). No RSVP is necessary. If you have questions, call: Rev. Dona Smith-Powers 650-494-3093.

Topics for February 2010:

February 12: Breathing Well

“Breathing Well” will be our topic with Janet Ghanem, project director with Breathe California of the Bay Area. She will give us the latest information about fighting lung disease in all its forms and working with communities to promote lung health. The organization has services to help people to have better air quality in the home and is available to do an assessment on an individual basis.

February 26: Lifetime Milestones

“Lifetime Milestones” will be led by Julie Kramer, a health care professional with Manor Care. She believes that it is a very affirming and healthy process to consider the unique paths that each of our lives has taken. Also, if it is shared it can be a gift to our friends, children and grandchildren, giving them a sense of “where we’re coming from...”. Join us for this enjoyable and personally satisfying session.

AMERICAN BAPTIST NEWS

News about American Baptist response to the Haiti Earthquake:

International Ministries (IM) is closely coordinating earthquake response activities with the Haitian Baptist Convention and the Christian University of Northern [Haiti](#). IM partners in the north of Haiti are providing medical care and relief supplies at the partially finished hospital at Quartier Morin as Haitians leave Port-au-Prince for safer locations.

[Dr. Steve James](#), IM missionary in Haiti, and IM’s Christian partners, including the Haitian Baptist Convention and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, are collaborating to provide medical care and relief supplies at Christianville, the quake epicenter approximately 20 miles southwest of Port-au-Prince.

Kristy Engel, IM missionary and pediatric nurse practitioner in the Dominican Republic (DR), is creating medical response teams who are traveling from La Romana, DR to serve for one-week periods in Port-au-Prince. One group, which includes Ketly and Vital Pierre, IM missionaries to Nicaragua, traveled into Haiti on January 16 to provide emergency care at three clinics and to distribute six truckloads of food and medical supplies.

IM missionary Madeline Flores-López and her Dominican partners are continuing to treat quake victims being brought to the Contreras Hospital in Santo Domingo.

Across the Windward Passage, in nearby Cuba, Rev. Osbel Gutiérrez, pastor of the la Cuarta Iglesia Bautista (Fourth Baptist Church) in Santiago de Cuba has been ministering to the Haitian students in his church; the number of Haitian students in the city is in the hundreds. He and his church console and encourage these students, many of whom have lost family members and some, their entire families. Rev. Gutiérrez has already pledged himself to help in an American Baptist relief effort.

Jose Norat-Rodriguez, IM area director of Iberoamerica and the Caribbean, states: “We are witnessing a monumental effort that is marked by a historic collaboration between IM global partners and missionaries from a variety of countries.”

US \$235,000 has already been received by American Baptists. (IM) partners in Haiti have requested one million dollars for the short and medium term response to the earthquake. IM has released \$65,000 from One Great Hour of Sharing funds in response to the needs in Haiti. To give toward ongoing earthquake recovery make checks payable to First Baptist Church and write “Haiti Earthquake Relief” in the memo section. [A new tax relief law allows contributors giving to this relief, until March 1, to take a tax deduction on 2009 tax returns.](#)

From American Baptist News Service and IM web page. Daily postings are at: www.internationalministries.ABCUSA.com

SPIRE DEADLINE

Please note that due to programming restraints and responsibilities, the submission deadline for the monthly SPIRE is the Friday BEFORE the last Friday of each month. Last minute materials will not be included. Thank you for your cooperation.



Special Offering for February

Our Goal is \$600

Please help those who are incarcerated and their families by giving generously to our special offering this month. The funds donated this month will be split between C.I.C. and Friends Outside.

C.I.C. (Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy of Santa Clara County) work directly with those who are incarcerated in our various county jails and juvenile facilities. Jesus tells us that when we visit those in prison we visit him, and the various chaplains from C.I.C., are our missionaries who go where others fear to go or cannot go, bringing a redemptive message of hope, forgiveness, and Christ's love to angry, frustrated, hurting, rejected people. Many specially trained volunteers also work alongside the C.I.C staff, meeting one on one with inmates to pray and offer a listening ear. Other volunteers lead worship services or Bible studies to help men, women and children behind bars remember that they are created in the image of God and, as God's children are worthy of God's love.

Friends Outside on the other hand, focus on working with the families and children impacted by incarceration. They try to bring support, family driven education and hope for a brighter future. The "Steps Ahead" program at Friends Outside provides in-home visitation services to children 0-5 and their caregivers who have been impacted by incarceration.. The goals of this program include empowering parents to promote their child's strengths, coach parents in positive parenting techniques, promote early literacy and preschool-readiness, and assist families in restoring their sense of responsibility and self-reliance. Other programs provided by Friends Outside include camping and tutoring for youth, jail services, a clothes closet, and the "Adopt a family Holiday Drive".

Our goal for these worthy causes is \$600.00. We hope you will help us attain our goal.



Diane Kirton

Holiday and Season's Greetings Received from Friends Near and Far

Christmas 2009

Christmas greetings to the congregation were received from several out-of-towners:

David & Christy Deer in Seattle with **Lillian** (now in Kindergarten) & **Daniel** (3 ½);

Dilvan Moreira & Patricia Brancalhone with **Andrew** (2) in Brazil with many photos (posted);

Fred & Ann Hillier in Redmond, Washington, with a tribute about their late daughter-in-law Christine;

Ashaolu Family in St. Paul, MN, with Jibola (Minn. State) reporting his Dad was with them for Christmas;

Charles Lavenson in San Luis Obispo ("My best regards to everyone at FBC PA);

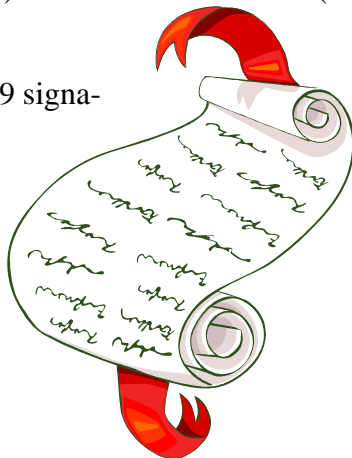
Gunnar & Bengta Götestam in Trondheim, Norway with news of their 9th grandchild and many photos; (Gotestams also made a recent 10-day visit to Palo Alto)

Lisa, Gus, Austin (12) and **Caldwell** (11) Lowell Taylor ("We miss our friends at First Baptist. The boys have taken to acting so we are doing a lot of ferrying to rehearsals, and keeping busy.")

Carol Tanner from Denton, TX ("..a long-ago former member of PAFBC with many fond memories of my years at First Baptist...son **James** (37) married and **Tad** (25) waiting to apply to Law School");

Balasore Technical School, Balasore, Orissa, India, with 29 signatures of staff.

These letters, cards, and accompanying photos are in a file in the church office if you wish to see them.



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Council Meeting Minutes

January 15, 2010

The meeting was called to order by Moderator, Lionel Kirton, at 1:05 PM. Rick asked each member of the Council to offer their own thoughts as to what keeps them going and interested in the church. He then offered a short prayer to begin the meeting.

Attendance: Jane and Jin Chin, Mary Granholm, Lionel Kirton, Rick Mixon, Hugh Satterlee, Carolyn Shepard and Thelma Tuttle.

Rick distributed a “position paper” by Oleta on rental policies and procedures, much of it from her prior experience. Discussion indicated that Council policy should guide further development of a consistent and useful standard to guide rental activities and control of tenants. The Council decided that a small committee consisting of Jane, Lionel, Oleta, Rick and Hugh should tailor the material for use by the church. This committee will meet Friday, January 22 at 10:00 AM.

Work is still needed to eliminate the obsolete and duplicative website under Earthlink. This task now requires one sit by a speakerphone until the proper technician comes online. Rick will multitask on other things while sitting by the phone to get this done.

Oleta is managing access to the office copier to assure proper logging of use.

The staff (Oleta, Linda, and Rick) held a planning meeting on Jan. 14th. Staff believes this all-day gathering was useful in expanding intra-staff communication

Jin reviewed the Treasurer’s report for the year 2009. The budget for 2009 was under spent and rental income more than budgeted so that it was not necessary to draw the entire budgeted amount from Special Funds. Expenditures for the year were \$220,357 with an additional \$11,225 for non-budgeted mission giving.

Jane, for Finance, recommended, and the Council agreed, that Laura Garcia and Paul Tuan be appointed as auditors for 2009.

Jane then reviewed a \$242,910 (as of Jan 15, 2010) budget proposal for 2010, based on

requests and historical precedence. The Council agreed.

Carolyn indicated that the Mission group had met to adjust their budget for 2010 and also that coordinators for “Moments for Mission” are lined up through February.

Considerable discussion ensued about how to channel contributions to help with the terrible situation in Haiti. Rick recommended that contributions should be made out to FBC Palo Alto with a notation designating it for International Ministries-Haiti Relief. The ABC has effective programs and personnel in place which can most quickly and effectively channel contributions to where they will do the most good.

Rick reported on status of activities of the Nominating Committee. Candidates have not yet been identified for one of the co-moderator and one of the at-large positions on the Council or for the Stewardship Coordinator in the Finance Committee.

Lionel led a discussion about the agenda for the Annual Business Meeting on January 31st, which will include passage of the budget for 2010, election of officers for 2010, distribution of the annual report and associated discussion.

Rick indicated that a number of pastors of Palo Alto churches involved with “Teen Support” will meet at our church in the continuing effort to address the problem of teen suicides.

Members of the Council, each in their own way, expressed their thanks to Lionel for his leadership for the past 18 month period.

Rick offered a prayer at the close of the meeting. Lionel adjourned the meeting at about 3:40 PM.

Submitted, Hugh Satterlee, Clerk



Ecumenical Hunger Program
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Duf Sundheim

January 7, 2010

First Baptist Church Palo Alto
305 N. California Ave.
Palo Alto, CA 94301

Dear Friends,

The board and staff of Ecumenical Hunger Program acknowledge with many thanks your gift of \$1130 on 12/20/2009. Please know that you are helping us to make a difference in the lives of those whom we serve.

We are grateful for the broad community support which makes it possible for us to help families in crisis. Contributions such as yours, allow us to provide food, clothing and other resources to those most in need.

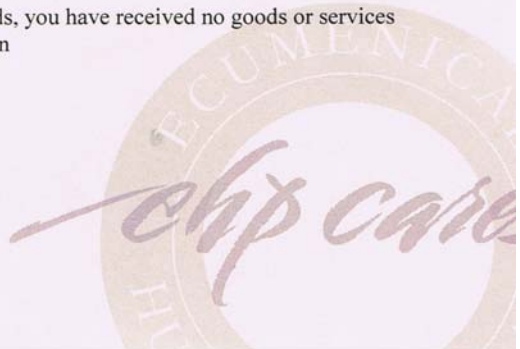
Community cooperation and client self-sufficiency continue to be our mission, and we appreciate your effort in helping us realize these goals.

Sincerely,

Lesia Preston
Executive Director

*Thank you for
your continued
support.*

*For your income tax records, you have received no goods or services in exchange for this donation



Minister: Rev. Randle (Rick) Mixon
650-327-0561; FAX 650-327-1562
Email: fbc-paloalto@sbcglobal.net
Web Site: www.fbc-paloalto.org

The February 2010
C.I.C./Friends Outside Special Offering
Goal is \$600

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF PALO ALTO
305 N. California Avenue
Palo Alto, CA 94302-4105

Address Correction Requested