

PCBA Notes

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PCBA Churches, Individuals Respond to Paradise Fire

"What can be do?" was the understandable question posed by the unprecedented scope of Northern California's Paradise fire.

While individuals and churches in the area, including the First Baptist Church of Chico, have been doing what they can in terms of immediate relief and temporary housing, people living in the wider area are responding personally through contributions for this purpose. Contributions, marked "Camp Fire," and sent through "One Great Hour of Sharing" will be distributed by American Baptist Churches according to specific needs not touched by government assistance.

Those concerned to know that the full amount of their contributions reach the intended people and undertakings point out that no "overhead costs" are deducted.

ABSW to Offer Daily Reflections for Advent

Reflections for use during the Season of Advent will be provided daily by the American Baptist Seminary of the West. They are being written by members of the faculty, staff, alumni/ae, trustees, and friends. The reflections recognize the critical need for personal spiritual centering .

These may be accessed on the front page of the ABSW website under the column, "News and Announcement." People may also ask they be sent daily to their inbox by emailing cmatthews@absw.edu by November 28, Subject Line, "Advent Reflections."

"Justice Jams" Continue

Jan. 30 (6:30-8:30)

Lakeshore Baptist

The new series of public forums on community and justice issues, called "Justice Jams," continues on January 30 at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church. **"Mass Migration: What's Going On?,"** will be addressed by the Rev. Deborah Lee of the Interfaith Movement for Human Integrity. Responders and questioners from the audience will explore the subject further.

This will be the third Justice Jam, provided as a hub, for individuals and interested organizations to respond to critical community issues.

Brief Notes

The First Baptist Church of Palo Alto celebrated its 125th anniversary on September 23. Douglas Avilesbernal, Executive Minister of the Evergreen Baptist Association was the speaker, exploring the theme, "provoking one another with good deeds," a New Testament admonition. A brunch in the newly-refurbished Fellowship Hall followed the service.

A Global Baptist Peace Conference has been announced by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America for July 15-20, 2019 in Cali, Columbia. These global conferences are a continuation of a gathering in Sweden in 1988, and they have sparked effective grassroots work and inspired many individual peacemakers who continue their own creative and courageous work.

A mission support gift of \$1,000 to the College of Theology, Central Philippine University from PCBA was given in Memorial Remembrance of Alice Edmondson, former President of PCBA. The library of Central Philippine University has been the recipient of books collected and sent by PCBA, now totalling over 10,000 volumes. It was observed that Alice had volunteered at the University in retirement as an instructor in English writing.

Understanding Our Worship Tradition is the subject of eight monthly study and exploration sessions at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, led by Nancy Hall, Associate Professor of Ministry & Congregational Music at American Baptist Seminary of the West. The sessions, which include a light lunch, utilize Dr. Hall's just-published *New Manual of Worship* a revision and updating of an earlier book she co-authored with John Skoglund, a noted authority on Free Church worship.

Berkeley Food and Housing Project, one of PCBA's Mission Commitments, reports, "At our free weekday Community Meal we regularly see not only the chronically homeless, but those who are newly homeless or at risk of becoming so. . . As the housing crisis in the Bay Area continues to escalate, food insecurity is at an all-time high and many members of our community are having to make the choice between food and rent."

American Baptist Home Mission Society announces a "Volunteer Mobilization" program for individual volunteer appointments, summer service opportunities, group mission experiences, specialized service projects and disaster response. (Contact Victoria Goff, vgoff@abhms.org or 610-768-2449.)

An Open Letter to Georg Friedrich Händel

By Dale Edmondson, Editor

Dear Georg,

The Season of Advent is beginning—the season of waiting and anticipating and longing. Each time I hear your great work, the Messiah, I'm reminded that you understand what Advent is about. The music begins by joining much of humanity in its yearning for that which, hopefully, is coming but is not yet here.

Comfort ye, comfort ye my people. *How much we want and long for comfort in distressing times. . . . **Prepare ye the way of the Lord; make straight in the desert a highway for our God.** If the good things prepared for us are to be received, we must make preparations, straightening out and clearing everything that stands in the way. . . . **Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son.** Pregnancy involves waiting. A seemingly interminable nine months, anticipating God to “be with us.” . . . **He shall speak peace.** We long for it, don't we? . . . **Then shall the eyes of the blind be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped.** Do you have in mind the physically disabled or those who are spiritually unable to see and hear? . . . **He shall feed His flock like a shepherd.** If only, we say, the needs, the nourishment, of the human family could be met!*

Longing is natural to the human soul, a longing for what is not yet complete. Indeed, might we say, the Creator has placed this within us so we might yearn for what we do not yet see but which is true and right and just? Advent is the human season of the “not yet.” When all we can do is done, we can only wait.

You will never have heard of the young Jewish girl, Anne Frank. She wasn't born until 1929, She left us a remarkable diary. The circumstances in which she was writing were grim, yet she was not without hope. She wrote, “There is nothing we can do, but wait as calmly as we can until the misery comes to an end. Jews wait—Christians wait—the whole earth waits.”

This is the time to wait, to imagine, to hope, to allow ourselves to be ready to celebrate that which is coming. It involves waiting quietly and preparing resolutely. Followers of Jesus do that each time they pray “Thy kingdom come.” We wait , , , awaiting word of “good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.”

People

Irene Jennings, former ABC missionary, denominational worker, and local church secretary, died November 9 at Piedmont Garden, Oakland. With her husband, the former **Raymond P. Jennings**, she served as a missionary in Japan and later as a worker with the American Baptist Historical Society in Valley Forge. For several decades she was Secretary of the First Baptist Church of Oakland. Commenting on her, denomination leadership quotes an earlier "self description" in which she said, "Religious Liberty tops the list of why I'm proud to be an American Baptist; add to that the fact that American Baptists have 'been on the front line' for issues of justice and freedom from the very beginning. For many years we have also helped to resettle more refugees than any other denomination." Irene was in her 90s.

Sebastian Ong was installed as Senior Pastor of First Chinese Baptist Church on September 30. Born in Singapore, where he received his early education, he had been Senior Pastor of the Chinese Congregational Church (UCC) in Chinatown for more than a decade before coming to FCBC. He had studied and practiced architecture before sensing a call to ministry in 1999 after which he pursued theological studies at Princeton Theological Seminary.

Dale Edmondson, Editor of PCBA NOTES, will participate in the 75th anniversary commemoration of the "Hopevale Martyrs" in December on the Island of Panay in the Philippines. These "martyrs" were eleven American Baptist Missionaries and one child who were assassinated in 1943 by the occupying forces after they were discovered hiding out in the jungle. Dale, who has had several connections with the story during his ministry, including a visit to the site, with his wife, **Alice**, when they were teaching in retirement at Central Philippine University, has been invited to share these personal reflections during the commemoration.

Aaron Sciford, who has been serving as Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Alameda since April, 2017, was ordained to American Baptist ministry on October 28.

The Pacific Coast Baptist Association,
emphasizing historic Baptist principles,
is a group of American Baptist congregations,
clergy, and laity in fellowship since 1997