

PCBA Notes

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Allison Tanner Goes to Gatherings in Bethlehem and Jerusalem, Furthering Justice for Palestinian People

Allison Tanner of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church is scheduled to return on December 5 from gatherings in Bethlehem and Jerusalem committed to helping the international Christian community show solidarity with the Palestinian people.

She has been representing the Evergreen Baptist Association, the Alliance of Baptists, and herself as an American Baptist minister. In this trip, her plans have been to work with other leaders in the global church in planing strategies for justice, equality, and freedom.

"Housing 2.0" Justice Jam Topic - Feb. 5

Homelessness is connected to housing insecurity, affordable housing, and housing prices. These issues will be the topic at the February 5 Justice Jam, 6:30-8:00 PM, at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church. The keynote speaker will provide an update, "Where are we Now?" Several agencies responding to these concerns will be represented at informational tables.

The idea of the quarterly Justice Jam is to provide a "hub" where individuals and organizations working on justice issues can learn from each other, coordinate work, and provide opportunities for citizen engagement.

The meeting in Bethlehem was set to celebrate the tenth anniversary of a faith document sent to the international community "about ways to support our brothers and sisters in the Holy Land."

Allison will give a public presentation on her experience and activity on Saturday, December 14 at 10:30 AM at Pacific School of Religion, 1798 Scenic Ave., Berkeley. (She also was scheduled to speak earlier at the ABC Hispanic Association.)

Her itinerary was to include visits to different Palestinian theological centers that have developed in response to Palestinian circumstances. Exposure trips were planned by more than 30 organizations there working for justice and peace.

THE BAPTIST MOUSE THAT ROARED

Guest Editorial by PCBA President, Donald Ng

*As I was growing up in the 1960s, the Cold War was raging. Required reading was Leonard Wibberley's 1955 novel, *The Mouse That Roared*. The satirical novel is about how a tiny nation going through unexpected events ended up becoming the peacekeeper in preventing nuclear powers from using their world-ending bombs. I have often used the "mouse that roared" metaphor in other contexts when the odds are great to succeed or when a minority opinion becomes the truth that matters.*

The genesis of the Pacific Coast Baptist Association 20 years ago was at a time when being labeled "Baptist" was fading in importance, if not a liability; working collaboratively as a "priesthood of all believers" gave way to a corporate management model, and "soul liberty" to interpret scripture in the presence of other informed disciples was pushed aside for an emphasis on what is orthodoxy by those in positions of authority. In this time of post-modernism, PCBA came into being.

Change is inevitable. I am different by the time you read these words than the time when I wrote them. Being open to change is as much biblical as it is to welcome the Holy Spirit to breathe new life into us and into our churches for revitalization. While the world and the church in the US and around the world are constantly changing, it is also important for the church to remember our history and offer what we believe to be valuable and helpful to the present and the future. The PCBA serves in such a capacity to be one of the American Baptist witnesses in Northern California and beyond.

I imagine the future of churches in today's climate will rest more on the shared convictions we hold rather than the organized groups we belong to. Crossing borders to cooperate on common objectives would outweigh past histories or even core beliefs. PCBA is more a movement than an institution. Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them." (Matt. 18:20) As long as we come together as Christ's disciples, we are a faithful people.

Living in a sometimes dizzying, loud cacophony of noises, the Pacific Coast Baptist Association is a "mouse that is still roaring" calling people to be the Baptist witness today.

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Brief Notes

General Secretary of American Baptists, USA, Lee B. Spitzer, has begun medical retirement, and C. Jeff Woods will serve as Acting General Secretary.

The office facility of the national offices of American Baptists in Valley Forge has been sold and the offices of the various societies have moved to King of Prussia, PA where they occupy individual buildings in what some are calling the “American Baptist Neighborhood.”

The 2019 Global Baptist Peace Conference was held in Cali, Columbia as the annual gathering of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. Hortensia Picos Lee offers a stimulating report available on the BPFNA website (<http://www.bpfna.org/>). In it, she tells of meeting with a former member of the Columbian FARC, the guerrilla movement involved in the long armed conflict in that country. She reports, “[he] taught us the value of reconciliation. Reconciliation that restores and reconstructs broken relationships, which has the power to transform a past divided by hate and resentment into a present and a future with common hopes and shared spaces for building peace.”

ABSW Commencement
May 16 - 2:00-5:00 PM

The program, “Let’s Feed the Children,” was envisioned by two women in the Shell Ridge Community Church, one of whom was PCBA Board member, Wendy Neale. Now sponsored by the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa, the program addresses the need of school children for adequate food, vital for their educational progress. Providing meals during the recent Holiday period, the program arranged food for 400 students, involving 140 volunteers

Volunteer opportunities for adults are available through American Baptists’ Home Mission Society. These include individual volunteer missionary appointments, summer service opportunities, group mission experiences, specialized service projects and disaster response. Information is available through Victoria Goff at vgoff@abhms.org or 610-768-2449.

How the Baptist Joint Committee describes its ministry: “As the only national faith-based group solely focused on protecting religious freedom for all, we file briefs in pivotal Supreme Court cases, advocate for and against legislation, testify in Congress and unite with others across faiths to ensure that every American has — and always will have — the right to follow his or her spiritual beliefs.”

People

Liliana da Valle, Pastor of Grace Baptist, has announced her retirement. She and her husband, Horacio da Valle, will move to Washington State. Perhaps only “easing into” her retirement, she will now serve as Chair of the Executive Committee of the Evergreen Baptist Association. . . **David Robinson**, the just-retired chaplain of the Correctional Institutions Chaplaincy of Santa Clara County, will become Grace Baptist’s interim pastor. . . **Paul Hardwick**, former Association Minister of PCBA, is convalescing from injuries sustained in a five-car collision on November 14. . . **Jewelle Taylor Gibbs**, lay member at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, has been inducted into the California Social Work Hall of Distinction, part of the California Social Welfare Archives, sponsored by the University of Southern California School of Social Work. She is professor emerita at the School of Social Welfare, UC, Berkeley. . . **Bianca Luna** was ordained in a special service on Sunday, November 17. She is ministering as Campus Chaplain to students at San Jose State and as Administrative Assistant at Grace Baptist Church.

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From the Memorial Service of Susan Vanderburg

Susan Vanderburg, American Baptist Pastoral Counselor, died on September 14. A memorial service was held at the First Baptist Church of Berkeley, at which a number of people were present who spoke of having been helped through her counseling. Leading the service, Pastor Nancy Hall, read a prayer of thanksgiving written by Susan. Excerpts are printed below.

*O God, my God, you have grown me through infancy and childhood
and youth and young adulthood and midlife into my elder years.
You have filled and surrounded me with your steadfast loving kindness.
You have nourished me and others in our relationships.
You have delighted in my awe-filled astonishment and gratitude
for the magnificent and wondrous beauty of all your creation:
the splendor of the star-filled canopy at night,
the peacefulness of bird and butterflies in sunlit meadows,
the breathtaking majesty of mountains and canyons and seas.
And you have assured me, over and over again, that you
– who have created all of these wondrous things
and billions of other world besides –
that you still are mindful of me, your own Beloved Child.
How can that be?
May I never forget to remember who I am, your own Beloved Child,
at every age belonging to you; in health and sickness belonging to you,
in life and death and in the life beyond,
always and forever, belong to you.*