

PCBA Notes

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Chico's Pastor, Gail Hill, Named President of BPFNA - Bautistas por la Paz

Gail Hill, Pastor of the First Baptist Church of Chico, is the new Chair of the Board of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. Since its formation 35 years ago, the Fellowship (whose name now includes "Bautistas por la Paz") has become an internationally-respected peace organization.

Asked about the work of the Fellowship, Gail speaks first of "the organization's prophetic stance and transformational strategies," but goes on to say, "It's not enough to dream and vision without a means for the journey. . . . The end goal is transformation from death-dealing and oppression to that of life-giving and purpose. Prophet Isaiah helps us see the need to go beyond laying down our swords, for we could easily pick them up again. We must transform them into cultivating tools that nourish."

BPFNA was formed in 1984 when peace endeavors of American and Southern Baptists came together at a gathering in Louisville jointly called by an ABC pastor and a pastor recently from the progressive wing of the Southern Convention—Dale Edmondson and George Williamson. American Baptists came bringing the tradition of a Fellowship dating back to 1939 and a committed group of Southern Baptists a two-year old periodical, "The Baptist Peacemaker," which continues as a BPFNA publication.

Peace Conference Comes to California

July 6-10 - UC, San Diego

**"People Move!
Breaking Down Barriers"**

The Annual Conference of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (BPFNA-Bautistas por la Paz) will be held this year in California at the University of California, San Diego, July 6-10.

The theme of the event will be, "People Move: Breaking Down Barriers."

Border-related excursions are planned. The keynote Bible Study leader announced will be Douglas Avilesbernal, Executive Minister of Evergreen Baptist Association and author of *Welcoming Community: Diversity that Works*. Registration can be made at www.bpfna.org.

TO HERR BEETHOVEN (AT 250)

By the Editor, Dale Edmondson

Dear Ludwig,

Happy 250th birthday year! You don't know me, although I was introduced to you as a child when my piano teacher asked me learn your "Minuet in G." She also gave me a bust of yourself made of plaster-of-paris. I put it on a bookshelf in the living room, but regret to tell you, it fell off and broke its nose.

It's a great mystery! How can an 18/19th century deaf composer pour music from his soul into mine? You must know, because on one score, you wrote, "From the heart—may it return again—to the heart."

One cannot evade your passion. The person said to have painted a motto on the wall of a German opera house was right, "Bach gave us God's Word, Mozart gave us God's Laughter, Beethoven gave us God's Fire." Your passion may have emerged from a deep, life-long struggle, a struggle hinted at in the marked-over, crossed-out, re-phrased lines we see in photographs of your manuscripts.

True, a person of struggle—yet in the midst of that struggle, you held an optimism that lifts the human spirit. Certainly this was part of your understanding of God. Indeed, one might say your music celebrates the "godliness" of humanity and also the "humanity" of God! I see this in your only opera, Fidelio, telling of Florestan's liberation from political imprisonment. (Surprisingly timely for us today!) Your commitment to human freedom was evident, as well, in your impulsive act of ripping the dedication page from your Eroica Symphony when you learned Napoleon had arrogated to himself the power of Emperor!

Tell me this: in your great choral Missa Solelmnis, are you struggling with your faith in human possibilities in the concluding prayer, "Grant us your peace," when you interrupt the prayer with the rumble of drums of war, only then to have the choir cry out—almost in anguish—"pacem, pacem" ("peace, peace")? Do you believe that prayer will be answered, or are you leaving it as a question mark?

Many say your Ninth Symphony is the greatest piece of music ever composed. I find it a recapitulation of the life of the world, beginning with hollow fifths ("without form and void?") waiting for the divine spirit to "move over the face of the deep." Progressing through the formation of human thought, beauty, and struggle, we come to a disorienting dissonance, out of which a voice sings, "Friends, not these sounds!" And in response the chorus of humanity bursts out, "Freude, Freude," ("Joy, Joy"). Joy, you say, is "Götterfunken" (sparks or emanations or radiations of the divine)! Might this be what Saint Irenaeus meant when he said, "The glory of God is the human being fully alive?"

I thank God for giving "Beethoven" to us. Freude! Freude!

Presentations by Two Noted Leaders Announced

PCBA to host evening with Palestinian Activist - Jamal Jumá, a Palestinian leader in grassroots non-violent activism, will speak on Wednesday, May 13 at 7:00 PM at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church. A life-long resident of East Jerusalem, Mr. Jumá will tell of on-the-ground events in the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice and equality. He plans also to respond to President Trump's Peace Plan. Allison Tanner says congregations interested in hosting Mr. Jumá during his visit, May 5-18, may contact her at allison@labcoakland.org.

William J. Barber II, African-American Leader, to Speak - William J. Barber II, President & Sr. Lecturer of Repairers of the Breach, and Disciples of Christ pastor in North Carolina, will present a lecture in Berkeley on Monday, March 16, Berkeley (time TBD), in preparation for the scheduled People's March and Poor Peoples' Campaign. The lecture will be given at the First Church of Christ Scientist, across the street from American Baptist Seminary of the West. Dr. Barber, author of three books, is currently Visiting Professor of Public Theology & Activism at Union Seminary, New York City, and Co-Chair of the Poor People's Campaign: A National Call For Moral Revival. He is a recipient of a MacArthur "genius" award.

BRIEF NOTES

Leadership of American Baptist Churches Encourages Lenten Spiritual Practices

The national leaders of the Denomination have issued a call to American Baptists to embrace the coming Lenten season for personal Christian formation. The invitation follows a period in which members of the National Executive Council participated in preparation for "a season of repentance, reflection, and rekindling [their] relationship with Jesus." The Lenten Season begins on Ash Wednesday, February 26 and ends on Easter Sunday, April 12, 2020.

Join the Civil Rights Tour

American Baptist Seminary of the West has announced a Civil Rights Tour, June 16-21. It will include a visit to the National Museum of African American History and Culture, a meeting in Board member U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee's office, and participation in the Moral March on Washington, hosted by The Poor People's Campaign. Friends of the Seminary are invited to join them on this historic tour.

ABSW Commencement

May 16, 2:00-5:00 pm
First Church of Christ, Scientist

People

Peter Yuichi Clark, ABSW Professor of Pastoral Care and Director of Spiritual Care Services at UCSF, died on December 6 after a three-year battle with cancer. In addition to his position at the seminary and the GTU, he taught in the UCSF School of Medicine. The author of numerous books, he was also editor of a professional journal. His most recent article was a very personal one, "Two Ministers, 26 Years: A Reflection on Engaged Hope in Cancer." . . **James Merlin**, American Baptist pastor and home missionary, died on January 5 at the age of 102. A graduate of Berkeley Baptist Divinity School he served as the pastor of several American Baptists in Northern California. Although he once pastored a church in Waterford, most of his ministry was in Washington and Idaho.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee, who is a member of the Board of American Baptist Seminary of the West, was married on New Year's Eve to the Rev. Dr. Clyde W. Oden, Jr. of Los Angeles. She referred to him as "my newest constituent," suggesting he may be relocating to the 13th Congressional District which she represents. . . **David Robinson** has become the interim minister of Grace Baptist Church of San Jose. David headed the CIC Ministries of Santa Clara County for several decades, which provided spiritual needs of detained youth and incarcerated adults.

Paul Hardick has concluded several years of coordinating the work of PCBA's Ministerial Standards Committee. Having been honored by the committee for his leadership, he will continue working with the committee as a member. . . **Allison Tanner**, formerly Minister of Christian Formation at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, has changed positions there, becoming Pastor of Public Witness, a part-time position, enabling her to devote additional time to justice organizations locally and nationally.

Websites Worth Visiting

Pacific Coast Baptist Association: www.pcba.org
American Baptist Churches, USA: www.abc-usa.org
International Ministries (ABC-USA): www.internationalministries.org
American Baptist Home Mission Societies: abhms.org
Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America: www.bpfna.org
Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists: www.awab.org
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty: bjconline.org
American Baptist Seminary of the West: www.absw.edu
Evergreen Baptist Association: www.ea-abc.org
ABC Churches of the Central Pacific Coast: abccpc.com
Growing Healthy Churches: growinghealthychurches.com
Baptist World Alliance: www.bwanet.org
Seafarers Ministry of the Golden Gate: www.smgg.org