

PCBA Notes

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Area Churches Develop New Methods of Ministry for Challenging Times

How are our churches ministering in the midst of the COVID pandemic? Creatively and faithfully, according to a recent survey. Many provide online worship and are finding new ways to encourage community while socially distanced from each other.

First Baptist in Berkeley (Nancy Hall, Pastor) each week emails members and friends worship-at-home materials with a full order of worship providing elements of the service with each piece of music linked to a YouTube version. The church plans to begin an online Zoom service in June.

Worship services for **Grace Baptist Church, San Jose** (David Robinson, Pastor) are recorded during the week, both the pastor's sermon, other elements of the service, a video for congregational prayers, and a Sunday School lesson. Grace continues to maintain its emergency sheltering ministry for about 40 men and women.

Beth Eden Baptist Church, Oakland (Dwight Webster, Pastor) advises they are "gathering online" and **Chico's First Baptist Church** (Gail Hill, Pastor) emphasizes "practicing care for our community, and praying for each other at home."

"New occasions teach new duties."

James Russell Lowell

Shell Ridge Community Church in Walnut Creek (Mike Burch, Pastor) and **Napa Crosswalk Community Church** (Peter R. Shaw, Pastor) both provide live online coverage of Sunday morning worship and make available a variety of mid-week opportunities. Crosswalk invites people to "subscribe to their YouTube channel."

Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church in Oakland (Jim Hopkins, Pastor) offers a nearly daily on-line presence, with various groups and study and exploration sessions utilizing Zoom. Task forces which direct various ministries meet online in their decision-making.

Allen Temple, Oakland (Jacqueline Thompson, Pastor) continues its 40-plus ministries reliant on virtual connections, including live-streamed worship and a variety of online study groups.

APOCALYPSE

By the Editor, Dale Edmondson

"Apocalypse." That's what some are calling the COVID 19 pandemic. They have in mind the images of catastrophic judgment popularly associated with that word. I find the word descriptive of our current situation, as well, but in the underlying meaning of the word, "unveiling." It's an unveiling that brings to light realities we've either not noticed or chosen to ignore. It forces me to grapple with three of them in particular: our misunderstanding of connectedness, economic inequity, and racism as our original sin.

First, our misunderstanding of connectedness. Few can argue today that we're not connected. The Internet, globalization, and the world-wide spread of a virus make this clear. Although we make various attempts to act as a connected world community, I'm concerned about how we understand our connectedness. Hebrew-Christian thought assumes a corporate humanity of persons-in-community, a body with many members. To declare oneself independent of others is to go counter to the Divine intention.

Against this understanding is the modern idea of the Social Contract. In it we view ourselves as inherently independent—individuals who, in our "wisdom," surrender some independence for the good of the whole. We create community, rather than affirm it as part of creation. In the midst of our intending good, this assumed independence leads us to competition, arrogance, and struggle for power.

Second, our economic inequity. This is clearly demonstrated in the stark disparity of medical resources available in the "developed" world and those available to people who live where they struggle to survive. In our own country, health outcome is determined by zip code. Inequity is not new, but it's increasing at an exponential rate.

Many people of conscience feel uncomfortable about this but don't seem to know how to address such a monumental issue. Amos and other prophets of the Eighth Century BCE railed against it: those with ivory couches and summer homes in a land of great poverty. Bernie Sanders may have been an "unlikely" leader, but he spoke uncomfortable truth to power. Maybe his story tell us there's a role for both prophet and one who governs. William Sloane Coffin described those roles succinctly. When addressing power he said, "It's our job is to say 'Let justice roll down like waters,' and it's yours to figure out the irrigation system!"

Finally, racism as our original sin. Racism pervades our societal actions and decisions. Disturbingly, racism emerges in our actions toward "others." We hear appalling reports of hostile acts toward people of Asian descent growing from the twisted fear of a connection

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BRIEF NOTES

Introducing the Interfaith Council of Alameda County -

ICAC is a vibrant new organization of faith-based congregations, faith-based organizations, and spiritually minded individuals that reflects and represents the broad and diverse interests of the interfaith community.

Although founded recently, already ICAC has stood in opposition to racial and religious bigotry, violence and hatred, voiced opposition to a Muslim ban and support for a ban on assault rifles, stood in vigil in remembrance of victims of mass shootings, played a significant role, including focused meetings with the Oakland mayor and with several county supervisors, in organizing congregations to address the needs of the county's homeless population, promoted county-wide interfaith events, and participated with local community organizations in the distribution of food to the less fortunate.

For more information:

<https://www.interfaithac.org/>

Berkeley Food and Housing Project Responds to COVID 19

- The BFHP, a PCBA-supported ministry has responded to the pandemic crisis by providing safe space for 81 clients at its Dwight Way Center, offering three meals daily at the shelters as well as community meals; offering safe space for 21 clients at its Russell Street Residence; dispatching Team Hope members to clients living on the street, providing hotel rooms to shelter in place; and through its Roads Home program providing outreach to vulnerable veterans.

BFHP has developed from an earlier church-sponsored emergency ministry involving South Campus churches, including the First Baptist Church.

Guidelines for "re-opening" churches

- American Baptist Churches has recently published guidelines to assist congregations thinking through the complexities of "re-opening."

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between the virus and people's racial heritage. How sad to see this racism expressing itself in elementary school in the belittling of Chinese children as the "bringers of disease!"

COVID 19 impacts us in different ways. One of the ways for me has been as apocalypse, an unveiling. Not of "unknown" things, but of all-too-true realities, often ignored, which demand the response of people of conscience. Most certainly those who follow the way of Jesus.

People

Carolyn Matthews, Long-time Administrative Assistant to the President of American Baptist Seminary of the West and Vice President of Advancement retired from these positions in May. She is currently serving as Minister of Christian Education at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church.

. . **David Bartlett**, former faculty member of ABSW and former Pastor of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church is represented in the publication this Spring of *The Collected Sermons of David Bartlett*. David has also been a professor at Yale Divinity School and Columbia Theological Seminary.

David died in 2017. He was the author of 18 other books, two of which he coauthored with his wife, Carol. . . **Willis Shotwell**, former professor of New Testament at Berkeley Baptist Divinity School (now ABSW) died at the age of 99 on April 24, succumbing to the COVID 19 virus. He was an active member of Shell Ridge Community Church.

Keeping Up with American Baptist Ministries

The faithful work of American Baptists in this country and around the world is carried out through the two organizations, American Baptist Home Mission Societies and American Baptist International Ministries. Updates on their work are now available online.

To learn of our work nationally, go to <https://abhms.org/> - Educating people for ministry through congregational life and social justice endeavors, chaplaincy and specialized ministries such as disaster response and disability ministries as well as work with healing communities in immigration and refugee resettlement are among programs sustained by Home Missions.

For updates on our world ministry, go to <https://abhms.org/> - Invitation to Christian discipleship has always been a basic mission of international ministry. Theological education and emphasis on justice, peace, and quality of life in areas such as abolition of trafficking and persons and global slavery have long been linked with it as well as ministries of economic and community development and health and wellness.

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