

PCBA Notes

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Ministers Gathering Weekly

It began as a support gathering for ministers facing the challenges of the Pandemic. The Zoom meetings have now developed into a weekly occasion for presentations on crucial issues concerning people and their communities, as well. Many types of ministries are represented in the meetings—pastors, hospital chaplains, hospice chaplains, seminary faculty, interim ministers, organizational representatives, etc. While originally set up for Northern California clergy, people in other states are now joining.

The group's use of Zoom makes it possible for people in many places to share insights and challenges. These contributions lead to discussions sometimes continuing to the next session.

Recent occasions have included presentations on theological responses to the impact of Covid 19, the challenge of Christian Nationalism, the ministry of Arizona's Rainbow Acres ranch-style community for developmentally disabled, an introduction to the online "Good Faith Media," an approach to the issues of reparations, the devotional writings of Walter Rauschenbusch of the Social Gospel Movement, future directions for the Berkeley School of Theology (formerly American Baptist Seminary of the West), and White Privilege within American Christianity.

Ministers not presently participating who would like to do so are invited to contact Council secretary, Charlotte Myers, cmyers987@gmail.com.

SEEKING COORDINATOR WEBSITE AND DIGITAL COMMUNICATION

PCBA is looking for a volunteer manager for its website and digital communications. The responsibility includes

- maintaining the website, <https://pcba.org/>
- maintaining email lists of members, friends, and subscribers to the e-version of PCBA NOTES
- transmitting notices and the e-version of the NOTES
- managing a postal address label file.

Those interested should contact Dale Edmondson, PCBA Communications Chair, at edmondsons62@comcast.net.

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Seasoning

By Dale K Edmondson, Editor

The shortening days alert us that the winter solstice is not far away. It's a time of dramatic change: the days reverse their decline and begin again to expand. It will be the beginning of Winter, when, even as the days grow longer, they grow colder. People in ancient traditions found in the solstice an identification with the processes of nature. People in the Christian tradition find it pointing to an event when "in the fullness of time" God's wish for humankind burst onto the human scene, their long yearning for light in the midst of darkness finally being answered. The season of Advent will begin soon, urging reflection and renewal as we move toward the season of Christmas—it's a time of longing that gives way to incarnation.

Life is composed of seasons, isn't it? Seasons belong to the order of life, "summer and winter, and springtime and harvest," as the hymn-writer puts it. There's a dependability, an orderliness, about seasons that point, for some, to the structure of life itself. "For everything there is a season," the Hebrew scriptures assert. For birth and death, planting and plucking, weeping and laughing, mourning and dancing—on and on it goes—recycling, "as the swift seasons roll," to quote Oliver Wendell Homes.

But there's another way to describe life: rather than being "circular," life can be "linear." It starts somewhere and goes somewhere. It involves a journey. There's a journey, an odyssey. Life has an end, a goal, a consummation, a denouement. John Bunyan wrote about the pilgrim's "progress." There's a "once" and a "now" about it: "Once I was blind, but now I can see." Once there was a garden and now a celestial city.

How can we understand the conflict between these two perspectives? Which is closer to the truth, "seasons" or "journey"? This conundrum reminds one of the challenge physicists faced in trying to describe light: is it composed of waves on a spectrum or of particles called photons? Quantum theory (which I confess not fully to understand) holds both are true. In like manner, might life consist of both season and journey?

*Perhaps life that is full requires both. Perhaps it needs to be both "purpose-driven," moving onward, and also impacted by a reassuring presence of things that are familiar, recurring, dependable. Ours is a turning world, where day inevitably follows night, where seedtime issues in harvest, and winter gives way to resurrection. This is our context. If our life were only journey, our eyes **only** on the prize, wouldn't we encounter tedium, exhaustion, blandness? Indeed, tastelessness, like salt that has lost its savor? Doesn't life, don't we, require seasoning?*

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BRIEF NOTES

Shell Ridge Community Church Helps Others in Special Needs - "SRCC" has responded to several situations of special need during the difficulties of the Pandemic. Among these, providing food and funds for the Winter Break Program in which it partners with Temple Beth Hillel to feed 400 children and the families in the Richmond/Pinole School Districts and assisting with the education of a seminarian and his family in Cali, Colombia, a need made evident through the BPFNA Peace Camp held in that country.

"Baptist Peacemaker" - The periodical of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America (BPFNA - Bautistas por la Paz) is celebrating in 40th year. The current issue may be seen at <https://www.bpfna.org/> In reviewing its history, it points to its mission statement: Witnessing to God's peace rooted in justice; working together until it comes.

AWAB's "Welcoming Spirit" news-letter is also available online at <https://awab.org/>.

Hymn-Writing Class - A group of members of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church have just completed a several-week course on writing hymns, prayers, and litanies made possible by a grant offered by the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Carolyn Winfrey Gillette and Dan Damon, both noted and published hymn writers, met with the class, discussing principles and use of elements of worship and guiding class members in creating their own work. The class plan called for a concluding gathering in which pieces created through the class would be shared.

Berkeley Food and Housing Project Thanksgiving Meal - The Berkeley Food and Housing Project, a supported organization of PCBA, determined it important to proceed with the annual Thanksgiving Community Meal at its Dwight Way Center in Berkeley, saying "Everyone who is hungry will be welcome!"

American Baptist News - <https://www.abc-usa.org/>

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I find it relevant that "seasoning" comes from the Old French word for the "seasons." They're fundamentally connected. Seasoning, as any cook knows, is even more than stimulating; it's transformative.

Let us welcome the Winter solstice with its gift of dependability and continuity and the remembrance of seasons past. At the same time, let us celebrate the invasion in our life—once and for all—of that which is new and enlivening and redeeming!

People and Churches

The First Baptist Church of Palo Alto has announced the impending sale of its facilities to Grace Presbyterian Church of the same city. First Baptist, which has been pastored by Rick Mixon for the past 14 years, is one of the oldest congregations in Palo Alto. It concluded its regular worship ministry with the service of July 31, 2019, but has continued since that time to meet monthly, winding up administrative details. Since the last regular service, Dr. Mixon has continued to offer written words for online worship. The new congregation has expressed interest in honoring First Baptist's history and in preserving any appropriate items in its cache of historical material.

Rick Mixon has been called as Interim Pastor of the Fairview Community Church of Costa Mesa, as of November 16. The Fairview congregation is a member of the Pacific Coast Baptist Association. Rick has served two previous interim ministries, the First Baptist Church of Granville, OH, and Dolores Street Baptist Church of San Francisco. He is also Visiting Professor of Pastoral Care at Berkeley School of Theology (formerly, "American Baptist Seminary of the West").

Sandra Lee has been named to a American Baptist denominational task force on Anti-Racism, where she will head one of its three sub-groups.

ABC BIENNIAL GATHERING

The 2021 biennial gathering of American Baptists, known as the "Mission Summit" will be a virtual event, June 25-27, owing to the limitations presented by the Corona Virus. The Biennial had been scheduled to be held in Puerto Rico. Plans will be made to gather there in 2023. In a letter to members of the denomination, the Executive Committee of the Board of General Ministries said, "Although we would love to gather in person, we realize that even with social distancing and other safety protocols that we just could not keep you as safe as we would like if we continued to plan for an in-person meeting."

Editorial Collection

10th Anniversary - PCBA NOTES

A collection of editorials from PCBA NOTES has been made in recognition of the publication's tenth anniversary. An online version is available at <https://pcba.org/> and a printed copy by emailing a request (including ones postal address) to editor@pcba.org.