

PCBA Notes

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Concern Expressed for Burmese Baptist Congregations Military Coup in Myanmar

American Baptists in Northern California have expressed concern for members of the San Francisco Kachin Baptist Church, meeting at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, and the Oakland Burmese Mission Baptist Church, meeting in the First Baptist Church of Oakland, regarding the recent military coup in Myanmar. Pastor Naw San of the Kachin congregation, describes it as turning people's world "upside down."

Leadership of the American Baptist Churches has issued a "Call to Prayer" for the Burmese people and for peaceful ways of resolving conflict. C. Jeff Woods, ABC Interim General Secretary advises he has sent a letter to President Biden asking "support for Burma's democratic institutions, their urging of the military to honor the results of recent elections and adhere to democratic norms and the rule of law, and their calling for the release of the detained elected officials."

Service Observes 25th Anniversary of Disfellowshipping

"Ours the Journey" was the theme of the virtual worship service of January 27 marking the 25th anniversary of the disfellowshipping of five American Baptist congregations, four from the Bay Area.

Sponsored by the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists, the service was introduced by Brian Henderson, National Coordinator. The disfellowshipped congregations were represented by Esther Hargis of First Baptist, Berkeley; Kay Wellington of San Leandro Community Church; Jim Hopkins and Allison Tanner of Lakeshore Avenue, Oakland; Dick Taylor of New Community of Faith, who sent a letter; and David Ball and Kim Keethler Ball of United Church of Granville, Ohio.

Music was offered by the Music Staff of First Baptist, Denver; D. Mark Wilson, former Pastor of McGee Ave Baptist Church; an ensemble from Lakeshore Avenue; and Nancy Hall of First Baptist, Berkeley. A hymn, "Affirmed by our Maker," written for the event by Dale Edmondson, was introduced. Also participating was Rick Mixon, a founding member of American Baptists Concerned, a predecessor organization of AWAB.

The Hymn, "Affirmed by Our Maker" - Available at www.pcba.org

What Caring is All About

By Dale K. Edmondson, Editor

On November 22 a tragic event took place at the shelter program at the Grace Baptist Church of San Jose. There was a multiple stabbing and two deaths. The program, known as Grace Solutions, has been sustained by the congregation for many months and has been especially vital during the pandemic for those without homes.

David Robinson had been the interim minister for eleven months at the time of this happening. His response, both to the community and to the congregation, makes clear what caring as followers of Jesus looks like. While the matter was still under investigation, he said, "This is what faith is all about. Faith is risking it all. We risk knowing both the rewards and the reality that there will be problems, pain, and conflict. We are called to this radical hospitality for those who need it the most. This is our Call, our purpose, our mission, and the way we love Jesus."

David then asked for prayers: for the injured guests and staff, for the perpetrator, for the guests and staff who had been traumatized, for the congregation, the community, and those deeply affected. He added, "Incidents like this is why we do the work we do." Reminding people of the twenty-fifth chapter of Matthew, he quoted from Jesus' parable, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me."

Lest any had missed his point, he made it clear: "As a church community, we will continue to be with those that suffer. We will continue to advocate for better mental health and substance use services. We will continue to provide love, food, clothing, and shelter to those in need. We will continue to visit those in prison."

The members and congregations of the Pacific Coast Baptist Association assure the daring, but committed, people of Grace that we celebrate their ministry and pray for God's continuing blessing on their endeavor.

Support for Grace's Shelter Ministry

Contributions for this on-going work may be sent to:

Grace Solutions

484 E. San Fernando St

San Jose, CA 95112

BRIEF NOTES

The Seafarers Ministry of the Golden Gate assembled and distributed a substantial number of "Christmas at Sea" gifts this past season. Even though the Port of Oakland does not permit seafarers to get off their ships while in port, the ministry organized a socially-distanced drop off for ditty bags for distribution at Christmas. Four hundred fifteen completed ditty bags were received, and, making use of financial donations, another 450 ditty bags were completed.

The Board continues to meet regularly, monitoring the situation. They look forward to resuming personal visits and hospitality as soon as the Covid pandemic permits.

Berkeley Food and Housing Project, long a supported organization of PCBA, has taken major steps to address housing needs during the pandemic. In January, they opened the new Rio Vista Veterans' Residence, providing a permanent home for six formerly homeless local veterans. They have completed the addition of a second floor at a Berkeley Way site, with construction underway for a new large facility in 2022.

Member congregation, Fairview Community Church, Costa Mesa, one of the founding members of the Pacific Coast Baptist Association, has called Rick Mixon as Interim Pastor.

The "Mercy & Justice Team" at Shell Ridge Community Church has begun a monthly speaker-discussion series on race relations from multi-ethnic perspectives, open to all and without charge. The initial presentation, on African-American Perspectives, was given by Michael-Ray Mathews, Deputy Director for Faith in Action and a visiting professor of public theology at Berkeley School of Theology.

Scheduled ahead in the monthly series are "Asian-American Perspectives" with Katie Choy-Wong and Timothy Tseng on Wednesday, March 24, 7:00 PM and "LatinX Perspectives" by Doug Aviles-bernal, Executive Minister, Evergreen Association of Baptist Churches on Thursday, April 22 at 7:00PM.

Future sessions in the monthly series include Native American Perspectives and Muslim-American Perspectives.

A Zoom link will be provided on the day of the event: www.shellridgecommunitychurch.org

Baptist Peace Fellowship

News & Events

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PEOPLE

George Oliver to Become Grace Baptist Pastor

The Rev. George Oliver will become the new Pastor of Grace Baptist Church on April 1. The congregation reports he is experienced in social action leadership, community outreach, music, worship reform, public advocacy, and interfaith involvement. They say Mr. Oliver's ministry emphasizes expository preaching with social consciousness. He been involved with peace issues, which have included leadership as Summer Conference Coordinator for the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

He is a graduate of Andover Newton Theological School and has been Senior Pastor of Christ's Community Church in Chicopee, Massachusetts and has also served as Interim Senior Pastor of the First Congregational Church in Natick, MA and as Minister of Worship and the Arts at Union Baptist Church, Cambridge.

In a letter to the congregation, Mr. Oliver writes, "The Black church nurtured and formed me more than my education, and I owe a debt to the Church, which molded my identity to defy every statistic about what a poor, black boy from a single parent home with a deceased father should be. I saw what difference churches make and never shrink from my belief that God ordained the church not merely to save souls, but to save lives, just like it saved mine."

Allison Tanner - Chaplain at the Georgia Election

Allison Tanner served as a Poll Chaplain in Georgia's special election on January 5. As Pastor of Public Witness at Oakland's Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, she was one of many volunteering in this endeavor to offer a non-partisan ministry of presence and support at polling sites in the state. The purpose of the endeavor was to encourage and assist any trying to vote and to document any concerns around access to voting. Upon returning, she reported, "I experienced much that was deeply inspiring and much that was deeply disturbing."

She spoke of community support in helping elderly voters and some who have never previously voted as well as efforts to intimidate certain voters on technicalities which could have been remedied or through hostile demeanor.

In summing up her venture, Allison said, "I only spent one day visiting a few polling sites, but it gave me a taste for the amazing work being done in Georgia, the courage and commitment of the community to stand together, and some of the powers at play in limiting access to polling sites, drop boxes and the ability to vote. . . We continue to fight for what this country can become - and the people of Georgia, primarily the black community who exercised their rights to vote, organize and support one another, are leading the way."