

PCBA Notes

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LAKESHORE'S PASTOR SAYS "PUT DOWN YOUR GUNS."

Jim Hopkins, Senior Pastor at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, issued a call in a television interview at the start of the year for people in Oakland to "put down their guns." Contacted by KTVU to comment on the New Years Day homicide, he said, "The first reaction has to be one of grief and lament. And certainly a foreboding for, here we go again, after 134 homicides last year."

Jim has been deeply involved in the city's Ceasefire program, described as a "data-driven violence-reduction strategy" coordinating law enforcement, social services and the community. The interview highlighted the major goal of the program as reducing gang homicides and shooting by offering counseling, jobs, one-on-one meetings and multi-agency enforcement action.

The Ceasefire endeavor has been impacted by the pandemic, owing to restrictions making it difficult to do the outreach needed. "I've got to fall back on what's worked before," Jim said. "There's evidence when the Ceasefire philosophy works, is implemented, is trust, the number of homicides goes down significantly."

On February 17, the Ceasefire Call-in took place once again, meeting in Barnett Hall at Lakeshore Church. In a message to the congregation, Jim asked that members "hold all the participants in prayer, trusting that peace can take root in our city. Words of Jesus to keep in mind are 'Peace I leave with you. My peace I give you. I give to you not as the world give. Don't be troubled or afraid.'"

"ALTERNATIVES TO INCARCERATION IN ALAMEDA COUNTY"

*Wed., Mar 9 (6:30-8:00)
A Monthly Justice Jam*

A hybrid event (Zoom & In-Person
at Lakeshore Ave. Baptist Church)

- An educational session about
- alternatives to incarceration
 - conditions at Santa Rita Jail
 - re-entry strategies.

Speaker - Wendy Still
Recognized Authority

Zoom Link:

<http://bit.ly/JusticeJamMarch9-RSVP>

Our Daily Bread?

Open Letter by Editor Dale Edmondson

My Dear Jesus,

I'm writing about the prayer you gave us. I've found it increasingly challenging to pray it. My concern surfaced one day when I was praying came to the words, "Thy kingdom come . . ." I stopped there, wrestling with the words. "Can I pray this truly," I asked, "without committing myself to advance the realm for which I'm praying?" Going further, I asked, "Isn't this coupling of entreaty and commitment descriptive of how your whole prayer is to be prayed: seeing that God's will is done, finding forgiveness, forgiving others, avoiding temptation, and safeguarding oneself from all that would destroy our souls?"

This was a new insight—but one presenting a new problem, one bound up with the words, "Give us this day our daily bread." They didn't apply! I already had food I needed. So, when would voice that petition, I would just "touch it lightly" and swiftly move on. (Some might say, I mumbled it!)

Then I noted something I'd overlooked. The pronouns, "our" and "us." Throughout the prayer they are plural. It's clear that your prayer is a corporate act, not an exercise in individual piety! This means that even when I pray your prayer alone, I'm not independent. I'm praying with a host of others. The prayer assumes I'm part of humankind, and that bread is a basic need of humankind. "Give us this day our daily bread"—to pray this is to commit oneself to feeding others.

Feeding the hungry is close to the heart of your Gospel. Was it to make sure we didn't forget this that you told the parable about the judgment at the end of history? The divine judge announces, "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink." Amazingly, in this parable you don't make a distinction between my brother and sister and the Divine! We are all bound up together.

Who, then, is this "us" the prayer calls us to feed? Some are close to hand: twelve million children in our land of abundance are "food insecure" and more than twice that number of adults! How can one come away from a deep reading of the scriptures without the conviction that food is a right of everyone born into our world? Sadly, hunger is a global reality with tragic consequences. We hear a doctor in Nicaragua say malnutrition affects the brain development in children and that one in five in his country will have lasting effects in his or her ability to function mentally. We see televised images of emaciated dying infants in hospitals in Afghanistan. We look at Yemen, South Sudan, Malawi . . . the list continues . . .

Yet what impact can an individual have in the face of such odds? The gift of community is that we extend ourselves when we join others.

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BRIEF NOTES

Shell Ridge Community Church in Walnut Creek, which has partnered with Temple Beth Hillel for seven years, in December served 520 children and their families in 12 schools in the West Contra Costa County School District. During the holidays children do not receive breakfast and lunch at school. Motivation for this ministry, in addition to the human need, is bolstered by studies that show children cannot learn well when they are hungry.

The Berkeley Food and Housing Project, a 1970's outgrowth of local congregational ministry, is nearing completion of a multi-storey housing, feeding, and educational complex. This facility, together with the Project's program, will serve the needs of people in Contra Costa and Alameda Counties. Open house for the new facility is anticipated in May.

The Annual Ministers Council Retreat will be an in-personal gathering at Redwood Glenn, April 25 - 26. Speakers will be Don Ng and Lauren Ng addressing the theme fostering connection and community through the power of stories. The plan will be to engage in participatory own stories and "the various narratives within our local context." It is anticipated this will lead to building trust, establishing meaningful connections, and aspiring toward culturally competent ministry impact.

An Interfaith Virtual Vigil was held on February 11-12 in observance of the 80th anniversary of Executive Order 9066 for the internment of Japanese persons in the United States, both none-citizens and citizens. The vigil stood against expressions of hate toward Asian American and People of the Pacific Islands.

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We might think of our congregation's food pantry and the organizations we support, as well as our denomination's ministries, along with organizations like OxFam, Bread for the World, and such. It's a no-boundaries endeavor. We can feed others through political support of the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization and other bodies. Desmond Tutu, one of your true disciples, rightly said, "When people were hungry, Jesus didn't say, 'Now is that political, or social?' He said, 'I feed you.' Because the good news to a hungry person is bread."

The prayer you gave us, isn't the comfortable prayer I once thought it was. It is one that confronts me, links me with the whole of your family, awakes my conscience, and causes me to join in your redemptive work.

People and Churches

Phillip Meads, Jr., Board Member of Pacific Coast Baptist Association died on November 22. Phil was a long-time member of the First Baptist Church of Oakland, where his family before him had been a part of the early days of that historic congregation. Phil is succeeded by his wife, Gladys Meads, and by two daughters and a son.

Continuing PCBA's "Books for the Philippines" project of many years, **Greg Ledbetter** has shipped a major part of his theological library to Central Philippines University for use in the University's library and School of Theology. Since the program's inception, PCBA has now shipped well over 10,000 volumes. During a visit to the University for its Centennial Celebration in 2005, **Dale and Alice Edmondson** were present at a service of dedication of books that had been sent. The University was founded by the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society and is highly ranked among the nation's educational institutions.

Jim Hopkins observed the 20th anniversary on January 27 of his call to the ministry of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church. Concerning this, he told the congregation, "I give thanks today for the ways in which you have nurtured me, allowed me to lead you, and encouraged God's Spirit to flow through us as a congregation."

Faith Ledbetter, a long-time American Baptist laywoman and church musician, died on January 19. She was the widow of Jim Ledbetter, former Regional Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Oregon and mother of Greg, Karen, and Tim.

Grace Baptist San Jose Celebrates Organ Centennial and Pastoral Anniversary

Sunday, March 6 will have a double reason to celebrate. It will take note of the centennial of its pipe organ, a Robert Morton Theatre Organ, formerly in the city's silent film Liberty Theater, and the first anniversary of the coming of their Pastor, George Oliver.

Centennial programming will begin with a "Service of Song," featuring guest speaker and internationally known concert tenor Dr. Gregory Hopkins; and performances by Angela Watson of New York City; Grace Baptist Church's organist and jazz pianist Franz Robért; Grace's Minister of Worship and Arts, Benton Stokes; and percussionist and former band leader for Tower of Power, Ron E. Beck. The church plans to host concerts with nationally-known performers throughout the year to commemorate what they call a "last of its kind instrument."

In George Oliver's first year, the congregation faced tragic losses in the homeless shelter they maintain and threats at Easter from White Nationalist groups. The congregation, supportive of their pastor's justice outreach, is ready to celebrate his coming and to look ahead.