

PCBA Notes

Published by Pacific Coast Baptist Association

Fall, 2021

Vol. 11, No. 3

ROBERT WILKINS TO HEAD SEAFARERS MINISTRY

The Seafarers Ministry of the Golden Gate has announced that Robert Wilkins will head the respected historic 75-year old organization.

Mr. Wilkins is well known in the Bay Area. He was President and Chief Executive Officer of the YMCA of the East Bay for over 19 years. He is an ordained American Baptist minister and served as the Pastor of Young Adults at Allen Temple Baptist Church for 11 years. He is the Founder and Managing Partner of the HIIP Group, Ltd., a management consulting firm. Currently, he is Chairman of the Board of Beneficial State Foundation, an Executive Board member of SPUR, the urban planning research and action organization, and Visiting Professor of Practical Theology at Berkeley School of Theology (formerly the American Baptist Seminary of the West).

His appointment includes being Program Director of SMGG and Executive Director of the International Maritime Center, an ecumenical body that oversees the center where the ministry is located.

The Seafarers Ministry, located at the Port of Oakland provides a ministry of Christian hospitality to seafarers and port workers in the SF Bay area. Founded in San Francisco, it is now located at the Port of Oakland. Its work has included visits to seafarers who may not be able to leave their ships, as well as providing spiritual support and services to all who have need. Seafarers are welcomed at the International Maritime Center where they can Skype or use phone cards to call home, play games, or visit. Transportation to local venues is also provided. Seafarers' contracts often require them to be on ships and away from home for 6-9 months at a time.

Owing to Covid restrictions many of the in-person services of the center have needed to be restricted temporarily. Responding creatively to the circumstances, the Ministry has worked with other organizations at the port to set up a Seafarers Vaccination Project in which several hundred seafarers have been fully vaccinated. During the pandemic seafarers have had their terms of service extended for over a year because they have not been able to leave the ships. Vaccinations will allow crews to resume normal transfers and be able to go home. Being vaccinated will also allow seafarers to safely get off the ships in some ports around the world.

People

Terry L. Burch, long-time area representative of American Baptist Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board, died on August 5 at his home in Walnut Creek. 2021. Terry had joined the staff of MMBB in 1964 after serving two pastorates in New Jersey. In his position with the pension board, he advised pastors about their medical and retirement benefits. Born in Alton, Illinois on September 18, 1930, he was educated at Washington University in St. Louis, University of Pennsylvania and Eastern Baptist Theological Seminary. The American Baptist Seminary of the West awarded him an honorary doctorate of laws and letters in 1987. He was a member of Shell Ridge Community Church. He is survived by his wife of 66 years, Elizabeth, his three daughters Mollie Peters, Sarah Sullivan, and Mary Gousev along with his grandson Alexander Gousev and granddaughter Shannon Sullivan. Memorial gifts may be made to the Contra Costa Food Bank, Winter Break for Kids c/o Shell Ridge Community Church, or a charity of ones choice.

KD Naw San Dee, Pastor of San Francisco Kachin Baptist Church, reports a concern of his congregation, saying, "The opposition/shadow government in Burma [has now] declared war against the military . . . and many of us are on edge again." He states, further, than many in his congregation have lost family members in Burma owing to Covid. His own father, a leader of Baptists in that country, is in recovery from the virus. The church meets in Oakland at Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church.

Internationally-known religious song writer and performer, **Ken Medema**, has become a member of Shell Ridge Church and has begun contributing to the church's music. He is particularly known for improvisations he develops on the theme of a sermon he is hearing or a worship service he is attending. He travels widely in the United States, Canada, and Europe for religious concerts and events and is the head of Briar Patch Music.

In August, **Don Ng** and his daughter, **Lauren**, walked the Camino Portuguese from Tui, Portugal to Santiago, Spain. Don reports, "On an average of 15 miles a day, we as peregrinos (pilgrims) reflected on our purpose in life, prayed for those with needs and became renewed by the hospitality we received on the way. We arrived at the Catedral de Santiago where St. James, one of Jesus' disciples, is buried." Don is retired Pastor of First Chinese Baptist Church of San Francisco and is President of PCBA. Lauren is Director of Leadership Empowerment for the American Baptist Home Mission Society.

Tables in Our Lives

By Dale Edmondson, Editor

They call it “downsizing”—deciding what to take and what to leave when you move to a smaller residence. I downsized recently. In the process, I had to assess the importance of certain pieces of furniture. Tables, I found, had a special place in my memory.

T*here was the dining table. It had welcomed many family gatherings, but what surfaced when I reflected on it were our times there with guests. We’ve come to know many people in breaking bread with them, members of our congregations as well as others. Sometimes they came carrying ordinary day-to-day experiences with them, and other times deep grief or great joy.*

There was an international dimension to the table: visiting scholars from around the world! Twice-yearly potlucks had sprung from the English-as-a-second-language class Alice taught in our living room. It was for the wives of men doing advance work in Berkeley at the University of California. The husbands knew English, but many of the wives did not. Wouldn’t it be natural for the families, including children, all to come together at the table? To us, such occasions were gifts, deepening our sense of the diversity of the planet and forming friendships to be maintained over the years.

Some table guests were simply friends—people dear and meaningful to us. We concluded they must have found our dining chairs comfortable, given the way conversations extended into the night. This was a table of hospitality.

T*he round oak table in the kitchen is where we gathered as a family, morning and evening. There were no expansion leaves for the table, but the number who sat there could expand, as, for example, when Anna came from Sweden to live with us as an exchange student.*

Experiences, hopes, and concerns were shared at that table. A son, nine years old, could tell excitedly about seeing a tornado while on a cross-country trip with an uncle and cousin; a daughter, seven years old, could muse she wanted to be a doctor when she grew up, only to halt mid-sentence to say, “But I can’t be a doctor; I’m a girl!” (The insidious influence of social injustice begins its work early!) And here, Alice could say how much beyond “teaching” she sees is needed by challenged teenagers struggling to create life in a fragmented society. This was a table of intimacy.

W*e must sometime say farewell to tables once important to us. But, can’t there be a table that will remain with us unfaithfully? We find such a place at the center of the faith tradition of*

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BRIEF NOTES

The Evergreen Association will hold its annual meeting on October 8-9. Originally scheduled for Olympia, Washington, it will now be an on-line event. Registration at <https://www.ea-abc.org>.

The Fall issue of The Welcoming Spirit, newsletter of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists is now available at <https://awab.org/newsletter/>.

First Chinese Baptist Church of San Francisco has voted to remain a congregation of Growing Healthy Churches and at the same time to support all members who wish to participate in the ministries of the other two Regions serving Bay Area churches. In arriving at this decision, some termed it, "A thoroughly Baptist action."

Berkeley School of Theology Begins 150th Year - A convocation in September launched a one-year celebration of the 150th anniversary of Berkeley School of Theology (formerly American Baptist Seminary of the West).

Shell Ridge Community Church is engaged in double endeavors focused on its future ministry—a Futures Task Force to consider how it can best "advance its mission and be a good steward of its resources" and an Anti-Racist Task Force.

Berkeley Food and Housing Project has begun construction of the largest affordable and homeless housing project in Berkeley's history. It expects to welcome tenants next summer.

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those who follow the way of Jesus. It was in the homes of early disciples, in the catacombs of persecuted believers, in the cathedrals of Europe, in the meeting houses of New England, and in neighborhood churches we're familiar with. It's a long table; it reaches back to the table where Jesus ate one last night with his disciples and extends ahead to the heavenly feast of God's people at the end of time.

Some have attempted to "preserve" its purity by "fencing" it. Others have prescribed pedigrees for those who can preside at it. I've wrestled over the years with how open that table should be, and a picture of the heavenly feast points me toward an answer. It's of "a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages," and it's large enough to include the "other sheep" whom Jesus claims as his own. I thank God for the festive table of heaven and its welcome, "Come, gather together for the great supper of God."

Might we do well to fashion our current tables of fellowship on this hopeful vision?