

PCBA Notes

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Mission Summit Biennial Goes Virtual *Historic "Gathering" - June 24-26*

The "Biennial," when American Baptists come together to affirm their fellowship, get updated on their ministries, and make decisions about future direction and leadership, will take place on-line this year. The three-day Mission Summit, June 24-26, will feature notable keynote speakers and a "library" of sessions especially prepared and recorded for the meeting. Planners indicate those sessions will provide "resources and offerings for prayer, worship, live workshops, inspiration, fellowship, and online fun."

The virtual plan makes it possible for many in the diverse denomination to attend the biennial gathering for the first time.

Two keynote speakers have been announced. Winterbourne Harrison-Jones, Senior Pastor of the historic Witherspoon Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, will speak on Friday evening. A sought-after speaker, he is a scholar, having done work at Fisk University, Colgate Rochester Crozer Divinity, Harvard University Graduate School of Education, and the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin.

Brianna Parker, who will speak on Saturday evening as keynote speaker, is the founding Curator of The Black Millennial Café, a resource for persons and institutions interested in "authentic millennial engagement." She earlier served as an adjunct professor and Coordinator of College Assembly at Paul Quinn College and an Associate Professor of Religion at Jarvis Christian College.

Workshops and Presentations

- Living the Gospel: US & Puerto Rico
- New Possibilities, Women in Ministry
- Rethinking Bi-vocational Ministry
- Christians vs Christian Nationalism
- In Focus: Caribbean & Philippines
- Laugh Your Way to Grace
- The Foolishness of God
- AB Home Mission Societies
- The Problem with Normal
- Financial Wellness in New Normal
- Reset and Re-imagine: Challenges, Triumphs, and New Possibilities

Selected workshops and presentations are listed elsewhere on this page. Detailed scheduling and registration information is available at www.abc-usa.org.

Radical Pictures

By Dale Edmondson, Editor

People in the Christian Church have now entered the Pentecost Season, the longest of the special seasons in the church's life. At the same time, people in the broader society are beginning to emerge from a long, wearying period of enforced isolation, changed lifestyle, and uncertainties about the future. Is there a way one transition might inform the other? A way the faith of Pentecost might provide insight as we move into the post-Covid world? Let me suggest we view a pair of pictures, radical ones, from the scriptures: the Tower of Babel and Pentecost.

The picture of the Tower of Babel's is of a people divided from each other by language, each unable to communicate with the other, smarting from a failed effort to "make a name for themselves," as the story puts it, resulting from an "Us First" philosophy which has no regard for the diversity of creation. Human differences have become a problem for them. The outcome of their action is "confusion," separation from each other, an inability to understand one another or their conflicting passions. It is a world in which one has difficulty in discerning what is true and what is not. We needn't look at this picture long before we notice something uncomfortably familiar about it. Is this a picture of our situation? A picture of our conflicted world community; perhaps of our bifurcated, divided nation; or even of our relations with "others?"

The scriptures, thankfully, provide another picture—that of Pentecost. In it, we see people from all over the human landscape representing a kaleidoscope of differences, peoples with their own language, miraculously hearing and understanding in their own language. The miracle, we note, is not that all have suddenly become a homogenous entity, but that, with all the diversity of race and tradition, they were hearing and grasping what was being said—hearing and grasping it according to their individual understandings.

A different, wonderful (yet challenging!) world.

Emergence from our period of trial may offer the opportunity for newness. Will we cherish and work toward a world in which diversity is respected and celebrated, each "in our own language," eschewing both superficial oneness and divisive isolation? If so, wouldn't the Holy Spirit—Pentecost's Spirit—have had something to do with that?

There will undoubtedly be people who fearfully rush to solidify relationships with other "like" people into tribes and fortified entities. Others, well-meaning but myopic, may strive for a "color-blind" society in which traditions and race are discounted.

Hopefully, there will be some who choose to make their own a prayer used in some of the churches of Scotland at Pentecost: "May the exuberant spirit of God, speaking words that leap over the barriers of mistrust, convey messages of truth and new understanding!"

Brief Notes

San Francisco Kachin Baptist Church, on June 13th will celebrate the 10th year anniversary of its founding and installation of the church's pastor. Most of its members originally came to the San Francisco Bay Area as immigrants, political asylees, refugees and students from Burma in 1990s. They formed a Baptist fellowship to provide communal and spiritual support within the community. After several years, the fellowship became a church, calling the Rev. Naw San Dee KD as pastor in 2011. San Francisco Kachin Baptist Church is a member congregation of ABC, USA and belongs to the Central Pacific Coast Baptist Association. From its beginning, SFKBC has had what their pastor calls "a unique blessing of partnering with Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, providing [our] community not only with a support to grow in ministry, but also a place to hold weekly worship services."

The American Baptist Ministers Council of Northern California has been meeting by Zoom during the pandemic each Thursday at 10:00. In June the Council shifted to meeting by Zoom once a month (2nd Thursdays) and every other month in-person. The first in-person meeting will be on Thursday, July 22 at 10:00 at the Berkeley School of Theology.

Grace Baptist Church of San Jose recently hosted an open air "town hall"(made available also

through Zoom) for concerned members of the community. The discussion, in which Mayor Sam Liccardo was a participant, included reference to the church's homeless ministry and ways in which the city can be supportive of the church's endeavor to serve the needs of all, inclusive of racial and sexual diversity.

Shell Ridge Community Church of Walnut Creek, located across the street from the John Muir Medical Center, has designed and installed a large sign facing outward toward the hospital which reads, "To all our healthcare heroes and Essential Workers: Thank You."

The 39th Anne Anderson Hunger Walk has been announced for June 6. The fund-raising event provides funds supporting several Bay Area organizations selected by the Hunger Task Force of Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church. A goal of \$33,000 is being sought this year. Contributions are made by sponsoring walkers either by the mile or through specific gifts. The path around Lake Merritt, on which the walkers will go, is 3.4 miles; however, some plan to extend their walk by additional miles. A listing of walkers may be secured by contacting the church, where contributions may also be sent. In a letter to potential sponsors, one walker wrote, "Few things are clearer in Jesus' gospel than feeding the hungry."

Of Interest . . .

Lauren Ng, known to people in the Bay Area for her ministry here, is now Director of Leadership Empowerment for the American Baptist Home Mission Societies. She is being recognized as a poet through publication of some of her original work, including in the widely-read journal, *Christian Century*. One of her poems was recently selected by a national publishing house to serve as the text for an illustrated children's book. Her poetic work is in harmony with the attitude she has expressed toward new forms of ministry. She has said, "We continually need to be open to fresh ideas and new directions, saying goodbye to things that don't work." Lauren works to cultivate faith-based leaders across the United States and Puerto Rico.

A Prayer for Palestine

Allison Tanner, Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church's Pastor of Public Witness, is giving leadership within faith communities on behalf of the people of Palestine. Below is a prayer she has authored for Palestinian liberation. The prayer is now being made available to others by the Alliance of Baptists.

God of Life and Love and Liberation,
we pray for all who are living with death and devastation and destruction.

We pray for Gaza and all the lives lost, communities destroyed, and families living in fear.

We pray for East Jerusalem, for those who endure settler attacks, home evictions, and constant humiliation.

We pray for people of the West Bank, 48, Refugee Camps and the Diaspora,

all who are longing for freedom, justice and equality.

We pray for Israelis who are outraged by what is happening at the hands of their government.

We pray for all who are working for a just peace in the land we call holy.

May your life-giving spirit blow through war-torn lands and places of death to birth new life. Amen.

PCBA - *"The Pacific Coast Baptist Association embraces a vision for our congregations that is faithful to our American Baptist heritage and principles, by celebrating our diversity through fellowship with one another, by sharing our resources for our common ministries, and by participating in the wider mission of the American Baptist Churches, USA."*