

**MIDWEEK MESSAGE**  
**December 4, 2013**

Words to Consider: *"The true meaning of Christmas is expressed in the sharing of one's graces in a world in which it is easy to become callous, insensitive, and hard. Once this spirit becomes part of one's life, every day is Christmas, and every night is freighted with anticipation of the dawning of fresh, and perhaps holy, adventure."*

Howard Thurman

**THE WORK OF THE CHURCH**



- ❖ **MEN'S BREAKFAST, 8:00 AM, Wednesday, December 4,** at Hobe's Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All the men from our Church family are welcome.
- ❖ **CHURCH CHOIR Thursday, December 5 at 7:30 PM** in the Parlor. All are welcome to join in song (and fun).
- ❖ **SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 10:00 AM Worship for the whole family:** *"Let Us Build a House where Prophets Speak and Words Are Strong and True"* Doug Davidson preaching. **11:30 AM** Adult Spiritual Formation: *Tracks in the Straw*, Ted Loder, led by Pastor Rick
- ❖ **ALL CHURCH HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE, Sunday, December 8, 1:30 to 4:30 PM** at the Spiridons, 2047 Edgewood Drive, Palo Alto
- ❖ **BIBLE STUDY, Tuesday, December 10, 10:30 AM** at the Terraces of Los Altos at Janet Maxwell's apartment. The address is 373 Pine Lane, #2106, Los Altos. Let Pastor Rick know if you need transportation.

## UPCOMING AND ONGOING EVENTS

Retired Ministers & Missionaries Offering



The **SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING FOR DECEMBER** is our annual **thank you offering for retired ministers and missionaries**. This year's theme is "Thank You for..." all the myriad ways in which these folk have served Christ's church in every corner of the globe. We give in gratitude for the years of sacrificial service that many of these leaders have provided, often at very low levels of income. It is a way of saying "thank you" for the blessings they have brought to the church and our lives. We have received **\$281** toward our goal of **\$750**.

### **ECUMENICAL HUNGER PROGRAM, ADOPT A FAMILY FOR CHRISTMAS AT FIRST BAPTIST**

*From Thelma Tuttle:*

***Again this year the members of First Baptist Palo Alto will be participating in E.H.P. CHRISTMAS FAMILY SHARING.***

***First Baptist Church is adopting 4 families this Christmas. Look for the basket in the church entryway and take a tag (or two or three) to purchase a gift for a neighbor in need. You can also make food contributions to this project. This is a great opportunity for you, your children and/or grandchildren to share some time shopping, wrapping and celebrating gifts and prayers for others. Suggested donations include: gift certificates for Sears, Kohl's and grocery stores; non-perishable food staples; personal hygiene items and toiletries; detergent. E.H.P. will also tell us of any other Christmas events in which we might participate.***

- ❖ **CHURCH COUNCIL** meets **Thursday, December 12 at 5:00 PM** in the Parlor.
- ❖ **SENIOR CHAT** **Friday, December 13 - Julie Groves**, executive of **Therapy in your Home** will share with us about the help we can receive when we need Occupational, Physical, or Speech Therapy in our homes. Held in the Fireside Room of Covenant Presbyterian Church, 670 East Meadow Drive. For information, Dona Smith-Powers, Coordinator (650) 494-3093.
- ❖ **ISING GIRL CHOIR: Friday, December 13, 7:00 PM: "Be the Joy"** A festive concert of holiday favorites from around the world in our sanctuary.
- ❖ **4:00 PM** Christmas Caroling and Chili Supper

## IN THE WORLD

### AMERICAN BAPTIST NEWS

**Cyclone & Flood Relief in India:** A strong cyclone and the resulting flooding of two major rivers caused the destruction of homes and belongings of about 100 students at the Balasore Technical School in Orissa, India recently. BTS responded with a program of relief making an appeal for funds for rupees 8 lakhs which was complemented with housing aid from the government. This is the 3rd year that FBC PA has received money from BTS for our outreach program and this year's gift of \$1,600 was redirected back to BTS for flood relief along with a gift of \$570.

"From: ramesh kumar To: HUNWICKS, Thursday, November 28, 2013 11:01 pm  
Subject: RE: ORISSA CYCLONE REQUESTING FOR RELIEF

This is to confirm the receipt of your Check for \$570 towards Cyclone relief. WE will use the money for the affected students of our institution.

Further this is to bring your kind notice an additional dormitory has been constructed over the Prayer hall of the BTS Hostel Old Building and named after Dr. Aier to honor his dedicated service and contribution made to BTS during the past 18 years.

In the mean time I have been invited by BIM to participate in the 200 years celebration of ABFMS Ministry to be held in Myanmar beginning from 4th December. **We will also have consultation with Myanmar Baptist Convention for partnership to start up Vocational institution with ABFMS support also we will have our Property Team Meeting.** I am leaving on third along with Dr. Aier. Please uphold me in your prayers for the program as well as my travel to Myanmar."

**Vellore Indian Hospital to Aid Victims of Typhoon in the Philippines:** The Foundation of the Vellore Christian Medical College and Hospital in South India announced that Vellore CMC is sending a volunteer team of 10-12 doctors and nurses to treat victims in the Philippines. They have been working directly with the Philippine Consulate in New Delhi, and will provide aid where ever and to whomever it is needed. Vellore CMC, a mission partner with ABCUSA, was founded in 1900 by American missionary Ida Scudder and "is one of the top-ranked medical colleges in India with national and international reputations", (according to Wikipedia).

**New Missionaries Endorsed or Reinstated:** Missionary families and singles have been newly endorsed for service in five countries: Jeni Pedzinski will go to Cambodia; the Williams family, the Rice family, and Kathy Charland to the Democratic Republic of Congo; the Witmer family to Thailand; the McCurdys to Dominican Republic; and Dr. Sheryl Jones has been reinstated for South Africa. Sharon Buttry will join her husband Dan as part-time Global Consultant. You can read about these new missionaries at [www.internationalministries.org](http://www.internationalministries.org).

## JOYS AND CONCERNS

### Joys:

- ✚ Richard Heath with gratitude for the concern of this congregation for himself and Patrice
- ✚ Melanie Ramirez for the good experience of Patrice's funeral service with the opportunity to learn more about Patrice – "where love is, God is"
- ✚ Pastor Tripp for a good Thanksgiving visit with Cathleen Falsani
- ✚ Dan Cudworth for a good Thanksgiving with his family in Long Beach

- ✚ Carolyn Shepard for the ways in which Patrice touched her life
- ✚ Kathy Gillam for a lovely time this week with her daughter, Julia and her friend, Micah
- ✚ Lynn Hunwaick for Ramesh Kumar who has been invited to consult on setting up a vocational school in Myanmar

**Concerns – New:**

- ✚ For Richard and the family and friends as they grieve the death of Patrice
- ✚ Pastor Rick for Pastor Bruce Chittick of Burton Community Church who continues to be hospitalized with heart problems; for Marcia Patton recovering at home from hip surgery
- ✚ Thelma Parodi for her daughter, Lee, who will have back surgery January 8
- ✚ For all those affected by typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and southeast Asia
- ✚ For the lives in service of all our retired ministers and missionaries in the ABC-USA
- ✚ Pastor Tripp for Cathleen Falsani who will have surgery this week
- ✚ Carolyn Shepard for Michael Holmes as he finishes work on his masters at SJSU this week
- ✚ Lois Ville for her brother, Lew, who is having back surgery on December 10 and her friend, Barbara, who is having hip surgery on December 12

**Ongoing:**

- ✚ For Bob Towner at Manor Care in Sunnyvale and for Lucille
- ✚ Laura Garcia for Janice and other family members with health concerns
- ✚ For Don and Mary Granholm, Ruth Clark, Earl and Virginia Knechtel, Carl Schilling
- ✚ For Ruriko Uda's congregation, Izumi Parktown Church, in Sendai , Japan
- ✚ For Ramesh Kumar and the ministry of Balasore Technical School in India
- ✚ For our sister church in Corinto, Nicaragua
- ✚ For refugees and all victims of war and disaster everywhere
- ✚ For the well-being of our church: wisdom and guidance for our leaders and its future
- ✚ For the economies of which we are a part (global, national, state, local)
- ✚ For the care of the earth
- ✚ For the peoples of the world striving for freedom and dignity
- ✚ For peace in a war-torn world, food for the hungry, homes for the homeless, justice for the abused and oppressed, and hope for the future
- ✚ For those affected by indiscriminate acts of violence and for the adoption of measures to heal our communities of all the many ways these make us less safe and less free

**SUNDAY, DECEMBER 8, 2013**

*Second Sunday of Advent*

*"Let Us Build a House where Prophets Speak and Words Are Strong and True"*

*"The Beginning Is Near"*  
*Doug Davidson Preaching*

Lectionary reading for the Week: Psalm 72:1-7, 18-19; Isaiah 11:1-10; **MATTHEW 3:1-12**; Romans 15:4-13. (Focus scripture for this week is in bold.)

How, then, can John's message of judgment be good news for the listeners? Actually, John's imperative, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near," dominates the Gospel of Matthew. Jesus begins his preaching ministry with this message (4:17), and later his twelve disciples are commissioned to "go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'" (10:7; cf., 28:16-20). It is, for Matthew, good news for both believers and unbelievers, for it proclaims that God's reign with the sovereign power of heaven over the earth has come near us. Matthew alludes that it is now time to think in a new way about our lives and world order, since the nearness of God's reign awakens us to see our world from God's point of view. The leaders of society should no longer oppress people to secure their power and privilege, because God's sovereign power will reign over the world. Meanwhile, the powerless will no longer suffer oppression, because, in the kingdom of heaven, all who bear fruit worthy of repentance will become the children of God, the descendants of Abraham, regardless of their class, gender, race, and ethnicity. From beginning to end, this good news of the kingdom of heaven is the major theological theme of Matthew.

The good news, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven has come near," is indeed the joyful message for the church. It is, however, a challenge for the believers to think concretely about what sins they should repent. Contrary to Luke (3:10-14), Matthew is not specific about what to repent and how to bear fruit of the Spirit, but he provides us with at least two clues. First, in the previous chapter, he indicts the violence of Herod that "killed all the children in and around Bethlehem who were two years old or under" (2:16-18) against God's salvific plan in Jesus Christ. Where were the religious people, especially, the religious leaders of the society, when such an unjust act was taken by the political leaders? In our contemporary context, churches and their leaders might be indifferent to politics and make every effort to secure their so-called religious freedom or their prestigious status in society rather than give to the public a prophetic voice against injustice.

The second clue that Matthew provides us with is that, like his church, many of our churches are racially and ethnically homogenous communities. Like his church, our churches need to overhear John's sarcastic criticism of the Pharisees and Sadducees: "Do not presume to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our ancestor; for I tell you, God is able from these stones to raise up children to Abraham'" (v. 9). John's words are a reminder that God is free to choose anyone to be the children of God to replace the church with. Unfortunately, Christians tend to be exclusive by considering that they are the only children of God and that they would be exempted from God's judgment. However, Matthew calls our contemporary churches, most of

which are racially and ethnically homogenous, to repent of their racial and ethnic prejudice and feelings of religious superiority, and he urges us to bear fruit worthy of repentance. (Eunjoo Mary Kim, "Preaching Matthew 3:1-12," December 8, 2013, goodpreacher.com).

Prayer: *Laboring God, with axe and winnowing fork you clear a holy space where hurt and destruction have no place, and a little child holds sway. Clear our lives of hatred and despair, sow seeds of joy and peace, that shoots of hope may spring forth and we may live in harmony with one another. Amen.*

### A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICK

We made a great start to the Advent season this week. Thank you to all the stalwarts who showed up Saturday morning for the Hanging of the Greens. Together we managed to beautify the sanctuary in preparation for this season of preparation. On Sunday Pastor Tripp spoke to us of the longing in our lives for something new and wonderful to come among us, we had lots of music, candles were lit and we gathered in communion around God's welcome table. In Adult Spiritual Formation, we spent time with the profound and lovely reflections on the season from the pen of the great mystic, theologian and educator, Howard Thurman.

This Sunday our theme is "Let Us Build a House where Prophets Speak and Words Are Strong and True." Our ABSW intern, Doug Davidson, will be preaching on Matthew's account of John the Baptist crying, "In the wilderness, prepare a way..." There will be more music, including a trio from iSing Girl Choir, and more ritual, including the lighting of the second Advent candle (for peace) by the Douglas Ha family. In Adult Spiritual Formation, we will look at some touching writing for the season from Ted Loder. The day will culminate with the always delightful Open House, hosted by the Spiridons. It will be a great day to be here and to share with others. Invite someone to join you.

May God's new thing flourish within us and among us.

Pastor Rick



## FROM PASTOR TRIPP

It's not too late. If you are online at all, we're also going to try a little photographic meditation. Take a photo and post it on the church Facebook page and any other favorite social media platform with the hashtag #rethinkchurch or #redpoinsettias and we'll be sure to feature them in the Midweek Message and the church bulletin. You'll see here that each day of December has a theme! It has the potential to be fun and beautiful.



GO

### Advent photo-a-day [Dec. 1-25]

1 go	12 hope	23 neighbors
2 bound	13 justice	24 joy
3 peace	14 gather	25 light
4 time	15 rejoice	
5 flood	16 strong	
6 awake	17 free	
7 ready	18 mercy	
8 wisdom	19 patient/patience	
9 delight	20 good news	
10 holy	21 prophet	
11 steadfast/steady	22 sign	

#rethinkchurch  
#rethinkadvent  
rethinkchurch.org



GO



BOUND



PEACE

# *ADVENT TO EPIPHANY 2013*

## *AT FIRST BAPTIST PALO ALTO*

*“Come, Let Us Go Up to the Mountain of the Lord, to the House of God...” Isaiah 2:3*



### *Sunday, December 8*

*“Let Us Build a House where Prophets Speak and Words Are Strong and True”*

**10 AM** Worship and Sunday School for Children and Youth

**11:30 AM** Adult Spiritual Formation: *Tracks in the Straw*, Ted Loder

**1:30 to 4:30 PM** All Church Holiday Open House at the Spiridons,  
2047 Edgewood Drive, Palo Alto

### *Friday, December 13*

**7:00 PM** iSing Girl Choir: “Be the Joy” A festive concert of holiday favorites from around the world

### *Sunday, December 15*

*“Let Us Build a House where Hands Will Reach Beyond the Wood and Stone”*

**10 AM** Worship and Sunday School for Children and Youth

**11:30 AM** Adult Spiritual Formation: *Kneeling in Bethlehem*, Ann Weems

**4:00 PM** Christmas Caroling and Chili Supper  
Singing songs of the season to friends and neighbors

### *Sunday, December 22*

*“Let Us Build a House where All Are Named, their Songs and Visions Heard”*

**10 AM** Worship and Sunday School for Children and Youth

**11:30 AM** Christmas Brunch and Pageant - bring finger food to share

### *Tuesday, December 24*

**5:30 PM** Christmas Eve Service

A brief service of candles and carols for the family