

MIDWEEK MESSAGE
July 3, 2013

Words to Consider: *“Jesus showed no undue loyalty to his religion or to his country but radically critiqued both of them whenever they demanded to be ‘worshiped.’”*

Richard Rohr

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ **SUNDAY, JULY 7, 10:00 AM**, Worship: “Oh Freedom!” intergenerational worship followed by our annual picnic.



FBCPA ANNUAL PICNIC! Everyone! Come join us for the fun **THIS Sunday, July 7**, after worship! The Outreach Team has planned a great event for us. They will furnish the hamburgers, hot dogs, buns, condiments and beverages. You are invited to bring whatever else you'd like to make the perfect picnic. There will be fun games to go with the fabulous food. Feel free to wear your picnic clothes to worship. Invite friends, colleagues, family members, neighbors or strangers off the street to join the festivities.

- ❖ **BIBLE STUDY, Tuesday, July 9** at the home of Thelma Parodi, 543 South El Monte Avenue, Los Altos, at **10:30 AM**. Let Pastor Rick know if you need a ride.

UPCOMING AND ONGOING EVENTS



The **SPECIAL OFFERING FOR JULY** is for two EHP programs – their **Summer Food Program** and their **Back to School Program**. EHP is providing nutritious lunches for children ages 4 – 18 who attend their weekly Summer Food Program. The kids participate in a program of arts and crafts, hands-on learning in the vegetable and fruit gardens, and a reading program. They also provide new backpacks, school supplies, and clothing, including school uniforms as children head back to school. Along with our friends at Covenant Presbyterian and with the assistance of our own children and youth, we plan to purchase backpacks and fill them. Your donation of cash, new backpacks and school supplies will be greatly appreciated. Our goal for this offering is **\$500**.

The **SPECIAL OFFERING FOR JUNE** was for **One Great Hour of Sharing**. We have received **\$878** toward our goal of **\$1000**.

PEACE CAMP, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America summer conference, **July 15-20, 2013**, Gonzaga University, Spokane, Washington. This year's theme is **"Entertaining Angels: Peacemaking through Radical Hospitality."**

IN THE WORLD



'New Jim Crow' turns back civil rights

By Bob Allen (Associated Baptists Press) June 24, 2013

Four decades of America's "war on drugs" has brought on a "New Jim Crow," creating "a growing under-caste" primarily of people of color, and turned back many of the hard-won advances of the Civil Rights Movement, an acclaimed civil-rights lawyer and legal scholar told American Baptists gathered for their biennial national meeting June 21-23 in Overland Park, Kansas.

Roy Medley, general secretary of the 5,200-church American Baptist Churches USA, said planners invited Michelle Alexander, former law clerk for U.S. Supreme Court Justice Harry Blackmun and author of *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness*, to the group's first-ever Mission Summit in tribute to the denomination's historic concern for both personal faith and social justice that prompted Northern Baptists to support the abolitionist movement prior to the Civil War.

"We've invited Dr. Michelle Alexander, because of that rich tradition that we have of concern for justice, to speak to us about an emerging issue in our country, a new social challenge that is also related to race and to poverty, as we consider the issues around mass incarceration, those who are coming out of prison and how many of them lose their rights as citizens as they come out," Medley said. "How do we deal with that New Jim Crow aspect of our social life in this country?"

Alexander, an associate professor of law at Ohio State University, said today's prison system, instead of reducing crime, functions as "a system of racial and social control." She called for a "new abolition movement" that shifts from punishment to a restorative and rehabilitative approach to non-violent crime.

"Rather than having ended the racial class system, we have simply revised it by targeting black men through the war on drugs and decimated communities of color in the United States," Alexander said.

Alexander said statistics show that drug use is no higher for black and brown minorities than for whites in suburbs and on college campuses, but “the drug war has been waged almost exclusively in communities of color.” Rather than focusing on kingpin drug dealers, she said, police are rewarded for going after “low-hanging fruit” by pulling over and shaking down people on the streets in poor communities.

In most states a convicted felon loses the right to vote, technically extended to African-Americans by passage of the 14th Amendment and enforced by the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Checking “yes” to a box on a job application asking if you have ever been convicted of a felony automatically disqualifies job seekers, particularly if they are African-American.

Jobless men trapped in segregated communities in some places cannot get food stamps, Alexander said, adding up to a system that seems geared toward sending released convicts back to prison.

She termed it “a new system of racial and social control that would certainly have Dr. King turning in his grave.”

Alexander said when she first started working on her book, mentors and colleagues tried to discourage her, saying it would harm her career. Recently, however, she said she detects a budding movement to end mass incarceration.

“I believe a movement will emerge in the United States, and the question is will people of faith be leaders or will they be on the sidelines waiting for others,” she said.

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Joys:

- ✚ Birthday joys: belatedly to Marcia Heydon (June 29) and Anthia Halfmann (July 2); Betsy Anderson (July 8)
- ✚ Lois Ville for a marvelous women’s brunch last week
- ✚ Michael Holmes for his grandmother, Marcia Heydon, on her 91st birthday
- ✚ Sachiko Berry for Paul Tuan who continues to improve after surgery
- ✚ Charlie and Ruth Clark on the occasion of their 10th wedding anniversary
- ✚ Nana Spiridon for Lisa who just graduated from her 3 year program
- ✚ For the music of Ruth Winter

Concerns – New:

- ✚ For Laura Garcia recovering at home from shoulder surgery
- ✚ Carolyn Shepard for Dorothy Aker who had surgery today at Sequoia for a broken hip
- ✚ Lois Ville for her Aunt Lynn in Woodland who is suffering from atrial fibrillation
- ✚ For Kathy Gillam and her husband, Dick, as they travel in France and Italy
- ✚ For Dan and Laurie Cudworth as they travel to Hawaii to celebrate their anniversary
- ✚ Sachiko Berry for Corey Syverson who will be having surgery for a torn ACL on 7/5
- ✚ For the family and friends of former FBCPA choir director, Tom Gray, who died last week in Gilroy
- ✚ Pastor Rick for Charlotte Jackson who had hip surgery at Stanford this week
- ✚ For Lynn Hunwick who fell and injured his leg

Ongoing:

- ✚ Bob and Lucille Towner as Bob was hospitalized over the weekend and is now back at Manor Care in Sunnyvale
- ✚ Laura Garcia for Janice and other family members with health concerns
- ✚ For Joanne Jones who is suffering from back pain
- ✚ For Patrice and Richard Heath as she lives with terminal cancer
- ✚ For Oleta Proctor with ongoing health concerns
- ✚ For Don and Mary Granholm, Ruth Clark, Earl and Virginia Knechtel, Carl Schilling, June Lee
- ✚ For Dan and Sarah Chetti and their mission work in Lebanon
- ✚ For Dan Buttry and his mission work as a global peace advocate
- ✚ 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, JULY 7, 2013

Oh Freedom!

Reading for the Week: **GALATIANS 5.**

After his awkward, self-identified allegory of Hagar and Sarah (Galatians 4:22-31) in which freedom was connected with the idea of being an heir (4:30-31) and both freedom and heir connected with being the child promised to Abraham and Sarah, Paul seems to draw breath only to issue his ringing call in a resounding repetition of words in 5:1. In the word order of the Greek text you would hear this: "For freedom us Christ has freed."

The sentence is enveloped in freedom language and we are with Christ inside that envelope. Freedom surrounds us and will continue to shape our lives. Our reading moves directly from that declaration and clarion call (“stand fast and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery) to the words of freedom in verse 13.

Again Paul makes the strongest possible emphasis on the “you” plural address. Again he frames the sentence with words describing the addressees: “You all,” “brothers,” “You all have been chosen for freedom.” He repeats the confident assertion of 5:1 by making personal and direct and clear, that “you all” have been chosen for freedom indeed, but Paul moves on very quickly to define the freedom.

It is not a wild, abstract freedom from restraint. Paul’s freedom does not create the culture we have become -- at least not in his mind or on purpose. Paul proclaims the freedom with the passive voice of having been chosen by an implied agent, God. To be chosen by God for freedom, to have been freed by Christ is to have been freed from the dire results of life lived apart from God. It is also a call into freedom that in some ways mirrors God’s own, that is a freedom dedicated to serving others in love (Sarah Henrich, Commentary on Galatians 5:1, 13-25, workingpreacher.org).

Prayer: *O God, you set us free in Jesus Christ with a power greater than all that would keep us captive. Grant that we might live gracefully in our freedom without selfishness or arrogance, and through love become slaves to the freedom of the gospel for the sake of your reign. Amen.*

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICK

There was no Midweek Message last week as I was in Kansas City for the American Baptist Mission Summit. Many I heard commented that this was the best biennial meeting in many years. I went early for the theology conference, held at Central Baptist Seminary. The theme was “Baptists and the Spirit: Living into God’s Future.” It began with a fine address by Central’s President, Molly Marshall. It was good to see my mentor, David Bartlett, there along with other friends and colleagues. One of the joys of these events is seeing old friends.

The Mission Summit itself started with a stirring address by author and attorney, Michelle Alexander. You can see a report on her address on “The New Jim Crow” above. There were fine programs with excellent speakers at the MMBB luncheon, BPFNA and Coalition for Baptist Principles breakfasts and the Roger Williams Fellowship dinner. Worship was well coordinated by Brad Berglund. We celebrated three historical events – the 150th anniversary of

the Emancipation Proclamation, the 200th anniversary of the arrival of missionaries Ann and Adoniram Judson in Burma and the 375th anniversary of the First Baptist Church in America (Providence, Rhode Island.) One night we had a "battle of Burmese choirs" from opposite sides of the convention hall. Two different choirs of Burmese-Americans and refugees from different ethnic groups, each over 300 strong, sang beautiful Burmese songs of praise. A centerpiece of the Mission Summit was a series of facilitated "table conversations" in which participants shared their dreams and concerns for the ongoing mission of the ABC-USA.

On Sunday, June 23, I participated in the gathering of the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists at Crossroads Church in Kansas City, Missouri. We led the morning worship service, with the AWAB Executive Director, Robin Lunn, preaching. After a typically delicious KC barbecue we witnessed a powerful documentary entitled, *God Loves Uganda*. The film portrays the homo-hatred and abuse of lgbtq folk in that central African country, which has legislation pending that would make lgbtq identity a capital offense. Part of the sad state of affairs is that this terror is being fueled by Christian fundamentalists from the USA, in particular the members of a KC mega-church called the International House of Prayer. I hope we may be able to show this movie in the coming year. It deserves to be seen widely.

Thanks to those who filled in in my absence. This Sunday is the church picnic. The theme for our intergenerational service is "Oh, Freedom!" We will use the 5th chapter of Galatians as a text, which includes Paul's famous proclamation, "For freedom, Christ has set you free." But what is the nature of this freedom and how do we live it out? Paul has timely suggestions in this chapter about freedom and "fruits of the Spirit."

Come this Sunday at 10 AM dressed for the picnic and ready for celebration. Bring someone along to share the morning with you.

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

Pastor Rick

