

MIDWEEK MESSAGE
September 4, 2013

Words to Consider: *“Human life gains the greatest part of its richness from the capacity for ecstasy, by which I do not mean the alleged experiences of the mystic, but any experience of stepping outside the taken-for-granted reality of everyday life, any openness to the mystery that surrounds us on all sides.”*

Peter L. Berger

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ **MEN’S BREAKFAST, 8:00 AM, Wednesday, September 4**, at Hobee’s Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All the men from our Church family are welcome.
- ❖ **ISING**, Silicon Valley’s choir, just for girls, in grades 2-12, who love to sing, kicks off its program year, **Wednesday, September 4** and **Thursday, September 5**, at FBCPA. For more information, www.isingsv.com.
- ❖ **PATIO TASK TEAM, Friday, September 6 at 10:00 AM** in the Parlor.
- ❖ **CONGREGATIONAL LIFE TASK TEAM, Friday September 6, 2:00 PM** in the Parlor.
- ❖ **PALO ALTO PHILHARMONIC Baroque Concert, Saturday, September 7, 8:00 PM** in our sanctuary, featuring music of Bach, Gabrielli, Handel, Purcell, Schutz and Vivaldi. Tickets: \$20 General, \$17 Senior and \$10. For more information, www.paphil.org.
- ❖ **RALLY DAY, Sunday September 8, 10:00 AM**. We will worship, kick-off the church’s educational year, officially welcome our interns and share a potluck cook out in **celebration of our 120th anniversary** as a congregation. Hamburgers, hotdogs, buns, condiments and beverage provided. Bring a side dish, salad or dessert to share. If you have photos or memorabilia you would like to share or a story about what FBCPA has meant to you over the years, please tell one of the pastors or contact the church office.
- ❖ **BIBLE STUDY, Tuesday, September 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

- ❖ **CHURCH CHOIR** will resume its weekly rehearsals at **7:30 PM** in the Parlor on **Thursday, September 12th**. All are welcome to join in song (and fun).
- ❖ **SENIOR CHAT, Friday, September 13: "Memory Issues"** is a subject we all will face - in one way or another. Duanni Hurd is President and co-founder of StarLight CareGivers. She has a MA in Communication and has had over 13 years of experience with major technology companies before stepping aside to pursue her passion of serving with the vulnerable. Outf her own and her husband's experience and struggles with grandparents and parents' needs they now desire to enhance the quality of life for seniors and their family members. She will share about early detection for memory issues, including Alzheimers, and how to care with people and caregivers who struggle with this issue. Held in the Fireside Room of Covenant Presbyterian Church, 670 East Meadow Drive. For information, Dona Smith-Powers, Coordinator (650) 494-3093.
- ❖ **BAPTISTS LUNCHING TOGETHER, Wednesday, September 18, Noon** – **"The Groves of ABHOW: Development of Dementia Care and the Miracle that Brought it to Life,"** Kay Kallandar, Vice President of Strategic Development, American Baptist Homes of the West. Grand Lake Gardens in Oakland. Lunch is \$8.00. For reservations contact Joan Thatcher, (510) 350-7008. If you would like a ride let Pastor Rick know.
- ❖ **SPIRE DEADLINE** for October is **Monday, September 23**.



September's Special Mission Offering will be for **InnVision and the Opportunity Center**. The center functions as a service to the wider community by providing a creative response to home-less related problems and offering opportunities for the community to respond to those needs. Its highest concern is to provide a positive and caring environment that respects the dignity of every person. To date we have received **\$105** toward our goal of **\$600**.

Our **August Special Mission Offering** was for **HABITAT FOR HUMANITY GREATER SAN FRANCISCO**. To date we have received **\$535** toward our goal: **\$600**. We have also received **\$760** on our goal of **\$600** for the back to school program at **EHP**.

IN THE WORLD

One-third of Syrians are displaced, UNHCR says: The number of Syrian refugees increased by 1 million people in six months, with the total at or exceeding 2 million, says the United Nations refugee agency. The refugee rate and the 4.5 million internally displaced in Syria means one-third of the country's population is affected by the civil war. "It clearly demonstrates that we are witnessing a conflict in constant escalation," UNHCR head Antonio Guterres. New York Times (9/3)

Why a moratorium against nuclear testing continues to be crucial: Last Tuesday was International Day Against Nuclear Tests, when the United Nations raises awareness of the impact of nuclear testing and the moratorium against them. The moratorium has been violated (e.g., North Korean missile tests in recent years.) That's why it's important to highlight "the continuing threat they pose to our health and survival and the imperative that we rid the world of them," says John Loretz, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War. Inter Press Service (8/27)

Microfinance helps restore dignity to the impoverished: Microfinance needs to be reconsidered as one of the tools to alleviate poverty, writes Jean-Marc Debricon, executive director of Green Shoots Foundation. Microfinance can enable "the impoverished to see themselves as 'worthy,' " and helps "restore what poverty had snatched away from them, their dignity," he argues. Thomson Reuters Foundation (8/28)

Child recruitment continues in DR Congo: Recruitment of child soldiers in the Democratic Republic of Congo is ongoing, says UNICEF. Many of the recruits are boys that rejoined military groups after being released from them. "The economic hardships the first time I was reunited with my family were so hard that I decided to go back to fighting," one child soldier says. Inter Press Service (8/29)

Saudi Arabia passes groundbreaking domestic-violence legislation: Domestic violence is being recognized as a criminal offense in Saudi Arabia after the country's Cabinet passed legislation stipulating that domestic violence and other forms of abuse are punishable by law. Gender abuse has been considered a private matter in Saudi Arabia, not a public one. Thomson Reuters Foundation (8/28)

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Joys:

- ✚ Birthday joys: Dustin Ha (September 7), Michael Holmes (September 9)
- ✚ Chip Clark with thanks for the residents of his apartment complex
- ✚ Paul Berry with a reminder from his time in Haiti that sometimes it's as important for strangers to reach out to their neighbors as for neighbors to reach out to strangers

Concerns – New:

- ✚ Lynn Hunwick for Ramesh Kumar who had surgery on his brain tumor this week
- ✚ For Syria, Mali, Sudan and South Sudan, Somalia, Central African Republic, countries which were listed in the September 2, 2013 Christian Science Monitor as the current five most urgent humanitarian crises in the world
- ✚ For Thelma Parodi who is experiencing some neck or back problems

- ✚ For the residents of the Terraces at Los Altos as they go through a time of transition
- ✚ For Betsy Anderson who is recovering from hand surgery
- ✚ For those fighting the Rim Fire, and other wildfires in the West, and all who affected by the fires
- ✚ For the work of the Opportunity Center and InnVision

Ongoing:

- ✚ Bob and Lucille Towner as Bob continues at Manor Care in Sunnyvale
- ✚ Laura Garcia for Janice and other family members with health concerns
- ✚ For Joanne Jones who is recovering from back surgery
- ✚ For Patrice and Richard Heath as she lives with cancer
- ✚ For Oleta Proctor with ongoing health concerns
- ✚ For Don and Mary Granholm, Ruth Clark, Earl and Virginia Knechtel, Carl Schilling
- ✚ 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, SEPTEMBER 8, 2013

RALLY DAY

"We've Come this Far by Faith"

Lectionary reading for the Week: Psalm 139; Jeremiah 11:1-; Luke 14:25-33; Philemon.

Focus scripture for this week: **HEBREWS 11:1-3, 29-12:2**

Faith is better understood as a verb than as a noun, as a process than as a possession. It is on-again-off-again rather than once-and-for-all. Faith is not being sure where you're going, but

going anyway. A journey without maps. Paul Tillich said that doubt isn't the opposite of faith; it is an element of faith.

I have faith that my friend is my friend. It is possible that all his motives are ulterior. It is possible that what he is secretly drawn to is not me, but my wife or my money. But there's something about the way I feel when he's around, about the way he looks me in the eye, about the way we can talk to each other without pretense and be silent together without embarrassment, that makes me willing to put my life in his hands, as I do each time I call him friend.

I can't prove the friendship of my friend. When I experience it, I don't need to prove it. When I don't experience it, no proof will do. If I tried to put his friendship to the test somehow, the test itself would queer the friendship I was testing. So it is with the Godness of God.

The five so-called proofs for the existence of God will never prove to unfaith that God exists. They are merely five ways of describing the existence of the God you have faith in already.

Almost nothing that makes any real difference can be proved. I can prove the law of gravity by dropping a shoe out the window. I can prove that the world is round if I'm clever at that sort of thing—that the radio works, that light travels faster than sound. I cannot prove that life is better than death or love better than hate. I cannot prove the greatness of the great or the beauty of the beautiful. I cannot even prove my own free will; maybe my most heroic act, my truest love, my deepest thought are all just subtler versions of what happens when the doctor taps my knee with his little rubber hammer and my foot jumps.

Faith can't prove a damned thing. Or a blessed thing either. (Frederick Buechner, "Faith," *Wishful Thinking*, frederickbuechner.com).

Prayer: *God of Abraham and Jesus, you invite your people to contemplate heavenly things and urge us toward faith in you. May your coming among us find our doors open, our tables set, and all your people ready to greet you. Amen.*



A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICK

This week marks the church's "back to school" days. Sunday will be our annual Rally Day when we transition from the more relaxed days of summer to the energetic bustle of autumn. Apparently the weather does not plan to cooperate as it promises to be warm this weekend and summer is likely to linger for a few more weeks. Still, we will be gearing up for a full church year of educational opportunity for children, youth and adults.

We are particularly blessed to have two fine interns coming to work with us this "school year" and they will both begin this Sunday. Be sure to give a warm FBCPA welcome to Naomi Shultz (from Pacific School of Religion) and Doug Davidson (from the American Baptist Seminary of the West.) Pastor Tripp and I are both excited to be working with these students and trust that you will, too.

Sunday's focus will be on Hebrews 11 and the theme "We've Come this Far by Faith," as we celebrate the "great cloud of witnesses" whose legacy is FBCPA. We will celebrate our 120th anniversary in worship and at a potluck cook out afterwards. We've been digging in the archives and have found some pretty interesting historical material to share with you. Thanks especially to Marilyn Hunwick, our chief sleuth. We will also consider what it means for us to take faith and hope from our forebears in order to "run the race that is set before *US*."

Come at 10 AM for worship and stay for the potluck cook out afterwards. Bring someone along to share the day with you. See you then.

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

Pastor Rick

