

MIDWEEK MESSAGE
November 20, 2013

Words to Consider: *"Jesus looked deeper than the oppression of Israel by the Rome to the fundamental roots of oppression itself. He sees this as the love of prestige, power and wealth that causes people to seek domination and to lord it over each other. Unless this fundamental lust for domination is overcome, a successful war of liberation will only replace one domination for another. Jesus seeks to model, in his own life, a new concept of leadership based on service to others, even unto death. This is the model that he wishes to impart to his followers. In the new community based on the life of service to others, the lust for domination is overcome at its source."*

Rosemary Radford Reuther, *To Change the World: Christology and Cultural Criticism*

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH

- ❖ **MEN'S BREAKFAST, 8:00 AM, Wednesday, November 20**, at Hobe's Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All the men from our Church family are welcome.
- ❖ **BAPTISTS LUNCHING TOGETHER, Wednesday, November 20, Noon** – **"How Regions Can Help Churches Be at their Best"** with Executive Ministers Marcia Patton, Evergreen Association, Steve Bils, ABC of Central Pacific Coast (Northern California and Oregon), and Tim Brown, Growing Healthy Churches. 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.
- ❖ **CHURCH CHOIR Thursday, November 21 at 7:30 PM** in the Parlor. All are welcome to join in song (and fun).
- ❖ **WOMEN'S BRUNCH** will be **Thursday, November 21 (not 28) at 10 AM** at Hobe's Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All women of our church community are invited. Please join us.
- ❖ **GRATITUDE POTLUCK, Friday November 22 at 6:00 PM** for folk of all ages in the Fellowship Hall. Join us for an intergenerational potluck dinner and celebration of all for which we have to be grateful. Bring a dish to share. You may also bring turkeys and canned food for Ecumenical Hunger Program that evening. Invite a friend, family member, colleague, neighbor or stranger to join us in this time of celebration!
- ❖ **"FOUND FAITHFUL, IN LITTLE, WITH MUCH, WITH ALL" – STEWARDSHIP SUNDAY, November 24, 10:00 AM.** We will bring our 2013 pledges as well as our food

offerings for EHP as part of a service of thanksgiving. **10:00 a.m. Worship: *Made Strong*** & Sunday School for Children and Youth. **11:30 a.m. Adult Spiritual Formation:** Contemplation of the book, *Pastrix* by **Nadia Bolz-Weber**, led by Pastor Tripp. Rev. Bolz-Weber is a Lutheran pastor in Denver, CO. Her memoir is capturing the attention of many. It is a New York Times bestselling spiritual memoir. Some suggest hers is a voice for our present time. Copies are available. (Note: the book contains adult language.)

- ❖ **BIBLE STUDY, Tuesday, November 26, 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.
- ❖ **INTERFAITH THANKSGIVING SERVICE, Tuesday, November 26, 7:30 PM** in our sanctuary. This year's theme is "**Pathways to a Grateful Heart: Inspiring Each Other to Expressions of Gratitude.**" If you can help with the reception afterward, please let Pastor Rick know. We could use help with set up, clean up and refreshments to share.

UPCOMING AND ONGOING EVENTS

- ❖ **HANGING OF THE GREENS, Saturday, November 30, 10:00 AM.** We will decorate the church for the Advent to Epiphany season. There will be activities for all ages. Coffee, juice, fruit, doughnuts for extra enticement. Help make our Advent to Epiphany Worship Brainstorming a technicolor reality.



SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING FOR NOVEMBER is for **Ecumenical Hunger Program**. Our church has been involved with this very worthwhile program for many years by contributing food, clothing and other household items. Church members volunteer their time, and we give monetary support through this annual offering. To date we have received **\$399** toward our goal of **\$600**. In addition to the special offering, we are again collecting turkeys, hams, roast or whole chickens

as well as other items as part of November's gratitude focus.



IN THE WORLD

MITRI RAHEB SPEAKS SATURDAY AT CALVARY BAPTIST CHURCH IN WASHINGTON. BAPTISTS URGED TO 'WAGE PEACE' IN ISRAEL (ABPnews/Bob Allen)

Theology is part of the problem of instability in the Middle East but can be part of the solution, a Palestinian theologian said Nov. 9 at a conference titled "Waging Peace in Palestine and Israel" sponsored by the Alliance of Baptists. Mitri Raheb, 51, senior pastor of Evangelical Lutheran Church in Bethlehem, was 5 years old when Israel began its occupation of West Bank territories seized during the Six-Day War of 1967.

He said he remembers his mother wanting to flee for safety to the nearby Church of the Nativity, but his father saying he would rather die in his home than live as a refugee. "When war is waged against you and your people you don't run away, but you stay steadfast," Raheb said was the lesson he learned that day.

With 16 books the most widely published Palestinian theologian to date, Raheb said during the past 30 years he has received several offers to move somewhere else but always decided to remain as a minority Christian in the town where the Bible says Jesus was born. "Leaving to me means giving up on peace," Raheb said. "It means surrendering to the power of the empire. It means running away from your calling. This is why we continue to be in Bethlehem."

Raheb studied abroad in Germany in the 1980s at a time when more politically aware Palestinian students around him were absorbed by the conflict. He found their ideas interesting but stuck with his study of theology. Following his studies, Raheb found his education had not fully prepared him for ministry in a setting where the sounds of gunshots outside the building would drown out his preaching, and numerous church members were placed in prison under "administrative detention." "You cannot actually wage peace until you listen to the people," he said, "people on the ground, people on the grassroots level, to hear their stories, to feel their pain, to look into their eyes, to read between the lines."

One of Raheb's first projects, in 1992, was to open a guest house to get people to come and listen to the stories of the Palestinian people. Many building projects followed, creating infrastructure for a hoped-for future that he compared to the Old Testament prophet buying a piece of land when Jerusalem was under siege by the Babylonian army in Jeremiah 32.

In 2009, Raheb returned to theology with a group of other Christian leaders that published *Kairos Palestine: A Moment of Truth* declaring Israel's military occupation of the land "a sin against God and humanity" and countering Christians who defend it by quoting Scripture. "Unfortunately, theology is part of the problem, not part of the solution," Raheb said Saturday. "While the international community keeps sending Israel all these hardware toys for free, the seminaries and the theologians are providing the software for occupation to continue."

Raheb said that is why he began organizing theological conferences in 2005. "In 1948 we did not lose our land alone," he said. "I think more importantly what we lost in that year was our narrative." "We almost started to believe that we are aliens in the Holy Land, and that this land

belonged to someone else," he said. "I didn't see a lot of theology that is questioning that. All this talk about the Jewish people coming back, what do you mean by 'coming back?'"

Raheb said he believes early on he was influenced too much by European theology but is now working on a new narrative. "I am back to Jesus," he said. "I came to realize, actually, that what Jesus and I, or what Jesus and the Palestinians, share is that Jesus was born under Roman occupation, and we grew up under occupation."

He "grew up under occupation," Raheb said. He "lived his life under occupation, and he was crushed on the cross under occupation." Raheb said he now reads the New Testament as a story about how to live under occupation. "I started describing the Bible as nothing but the story of my forefathers," he said. "'they confiscated the land, but the narrative they should not be able to confiscate."

"More importantly, I see the role of the church in waging peace," he told an audience at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington convened by the Alliance of Baptists' Justice in Palestine and Israel Community. "This is why I think this conference is so important. Jesus knows you cannot conquer the empire but through the Kingdom."

Raheb said Israel is afraid of the actions of Palestinian Christian leaders "because they know we have access to the pulpits" and "we are part of an entity that is larger than the empire."

"That is why I think the role of the church today is more important than ever," Raheb said. "We have to focus again on the role of the Kingdom."

JOYS AND CONCERNS

Joys:

- ✚ Birthday joys: Jane Chinn (November 20,) Charlie Clark (November 21,) Corinne Fung and Susan Low (November 24)
- ✚ Belated birthday joys: Ron Fredlund (November 15,) Steven Shepard (November 16)
- ✚ Dona Smith-Powers for all those who visited and cared for Patrice and Richard Heath
- ✚ Mary Martin for the celebration of Ron's birthday and for having Ron in her life
- ✚ Melanie Ramirez in anticipation of all those who will sign up to provide friendly contact within our congregation
- ✚ Lynn Hunwick for June Lee's daughter, Debbie, who is in India working on issues of domestic abuse and peace
- ✚ Dan Cudworth for son, Blake, who pitched a complete game Saturday as his team won two games
- ✚ Carolyn Shepard for Steven on his 24 birthday and for Soo and Doug's open house
- ✚ Thelma Parodi for 3 days with her sister, Elise, at her "healing place"
- ✚ Joanne Jones for the presence of Ron and Mary in worship and for Thelma's reading scripture

Concerns – New:

- ✚ For Richard and the family and friends, including our own community, of Patrice Heath who died on Monday

- ✚ Pastor Rick for Diane Gibson whose sister died last week in Denver; for Pastor Bruce Chittick of Burton Community Church who continues to be hospitalized with heart problems
- ✚ Janet Maxwell for the family and friends of Gordon Smith who was shot and killed last week in Santa Cruz; for Lee Weaver who is in hospice care at the Terraces
- ✚ Thelma Tuttle for her brother-in-law, Nick, who had hip surgery on Monday
- ✚ Dan Cudworth for Oleta as she faces surgery November 22
- ✚ Thelma Parodi for her daughter, Lee, who will have back surgery December 8
- ✚ For all those affected by typhoon Haiyan in the Philippines and southeast Asia
- ✚ For the work with those in need of food, clothing, shelter and opportunity provided by Ecumenical Hunger Program
- ✚ Lynn Hunwick for the people of Balasore and Orissa, India, in the aftermath of a severe cyclone and flooding

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



FROM PASTOR TRIPP

ADVENT IS UNDER WAY!

What? How can it be? It's not even Thanksgiving yet and we're talking about Advent? You betcha. The kids and I are working on the pageant. It's going to be a cinematic short entitled "The Adventures of The Grinch, Nope, Dan Who Misplaced and Generally Neglected Our Holy Savior and Messiah, Christ Jesus (Amen): Episode I". We're having a good time. Be ready to participate. Filming will be ongoing!

Second, 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.

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

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2013

Reign of Christ Sunday

"Made Strong"

Lectionary reading for the Week: Psalm 46; Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 1:68-79, 23:33-43; **COLOSSIANS 1:9-20**. (Focus scripture for this week is in bold.)

The Colossians Hymn should be the triumphant password of Christians everywhere -- not celebrating oppression or exclusivism, for that would be to take this hymn entirely wrongly. Instead, we ought to celebrate Christ more, celebrate him in ways that invite others to meet him and want to be excited. Christians don't always have the most celebratory reputation, but Paul can't seem to find superlative enough language to celebrate the work of Christ on the cross in putting all things right.

And that is what we should celebrate. Because of the cross, we can live in great confidence and joy that all the things that are so wrong will be made right and that Christ has already begun putting all things right. By inviting us into his kingdom, we are partners and co-inheritors of all things made right, and so we should work for justice and the righting of wrongs; we should work for peace and reconciliation, but we do these things because we know that all of this will be done in Christ.

Because of the confidence expressed in this celebratory hymn, Christians can work harder and longer for justice than any others, because Christ is our model. Christ, who went to the cross, began the work of making peace there, and that is a work he will complete. And so we know we are on the "winning side" of this struggle, so we press on with joy and confidence, celebrating each victory in Christ's name and mourning each act of oppression as an affront to Christ on the cross. Peace is our goal, and our leader went to the cross to secure it as the definite outcome. Let us be a people shaped by celebration, confidence, joy, and most of all, peace, because we know who Christ is and we are confident in his victory. As Julian of Norwich affirmed, "All shall be well, and all shall be well and all manner of thing shall be well." (Mariam Kammell, "Commentary on Colossians 1:9-20," November 24, 2013, workingpreacher.org).

Prayer: Shepherd of Israel, hear our prayer as your Son heard the plea of the criminal crucified with him. Gather into Christ's holy reign the broken, the sorrowing, and the sinner, that all may know wholeness, joy, and forgiveness. Amen.

A NOTE FROM PASTOR RICK

We remember with love and gratitude our sister, Patrice, who died on Monday. Hers was a long and difficult struggle through which she passed with love and grace. We are thankful that she was part of our community. We also say thanks to all those who cared for her in these

last days. Please keep Richard in your thoughts and prayers as he grieves her death. Services are pending; we will let you know as we know when and where.

Thanks to Doug Davidson for leading an excellent Adult Spiritual Formation class last Sunday as we considered Jesus and the "Revolution of Love." This Sunday we will finish our consideration of *Patrix*, the memoir of the spiritual journey of Nadia Bolz-Weber. Pastor Tripp will lead the session.

Sunday promises to be a full day. It is not only "Reign of Christ Sunday," celebrating the end of the liturgical year, it is also pledge Sunday and the day we dedicate the food offering we've collected throughout the month for Ecumenical Hunger Program. As we were told Sunday, EHP will have an extra burden this year providing for the hungry and homeless in East Palo Alto. Please give with as much generosity as you can to help our sisters and brothers in need. Staples as well as any and all the ingredients for a Thanksgiving feast would be most welcome.

"Found Faithful – in Little, with Much, with All" is our stewardship theme this year. We have been reminded that gifts large and small matter. While recognizing that each of us lives with limits, it is also important to remember how blessed we are. Support of our congregational budget is crucial to our continuing to minister to one another and to the wider world. Please pledge as generously as you are able. There are exciting days ahead for FBCPA.

"Made Strong" is our theme for Sunday. In the beautiful passage from Colossians that is Sunday's text, the writer offers these words of hope and promise – "May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light." Is this not a word of good news for us as we look to God's future? Bring someone with you to share the joy of this day.

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

Pastor Rick

