



THE SPIRE

December 2013

MIXON MUSES

Advent is a time of preparation. Like Lent before Easter, Advent is a time to get ready for the joyous celebration of Christmas. Christmas is much more than the sights, sounds and conspicuous consumption that have come to characterize the “Holiday Season.” Christmas is not that “Holiday Season.” Christmas is a celebration of God coming near in the form of a human infant. It is the soul of a sacred season in which incarnation of the holy is both remembered and experienced again as a living reality. It is a time for taking stock of our own lives; it is a time to consider what it would be to have Christ born in us once again.

In the best of all possible worlds, babies don’t come as a complete surprise. The birth is eagerly anticipated and the preceding days are filled with preparation for the coming child. Advent is that time of preparation for the birth of Christ. The ancient story says that the baby Jesus was born in a stable and laid in a manger. Even if Joseph had tried to phone ahead for reservations, the accommodations in first century Bethlehem would have been minimal and healthcare virtually nonexistent. The preparation for the birth of Jesus was apparently adequate, but clearly improvised. Now, all these centuries later, we need not improvise. The liturgical calendar allows us enough time to get ready for the birth as it comes around each year. We have time to prepare for the coming of Christ in this new church year.

In her beautiful Advent hymn, “People Look East,” Eleanor Farjeon encourages us to “Make your house fair as you are able, Trim the hearth and set the table. People, look east and sing today: Love, the guest, is on the way.” It is such a magnificent way to describe what is about to happen, “Love the guest is on the way.” The King of Love is coming, is coming to your house, to your heart.

What must you do to prepare?

Every year, the Spiridons host a lovely open house during this season for the whole congregation (as did Soo Kim and Doug Lee not long ago.) Putting on a party like that takes time and energy before the guests arrive. Preparations are critical for the party to be a success.

For many years my former partner and I hosted a holiday open house for 150 people on a Sunday before Christmas. It was a joyous occasion. We loved having our home filled with family, friends and colleagues. But it took a lot to plan and prepare for the party. He would start early in December decorating the house from top to bottom, front to back, side to side. Over time I developed a menu of favorites that kept me busy in the kitchen. When the doorbell rang on the given Sunday afternoon the feast was on, but the whole thing would have been a disaster without preparation. The full affect, the desired outcome, the shared community, came into being because we spent a lot of time and energy preparing.

I know Advent preparation is not quite the same thing, but I also believe the parallel is there. The party was about joy and love – love for the people in our lives and the joy of sharing our home with them. Christmas is also about love and joy, but a deeper love and grander joy than a good party. If we put that amount of our resource into planning a party, what would be needed to prepare for the Christ, the King of Love, the Savior of the World.

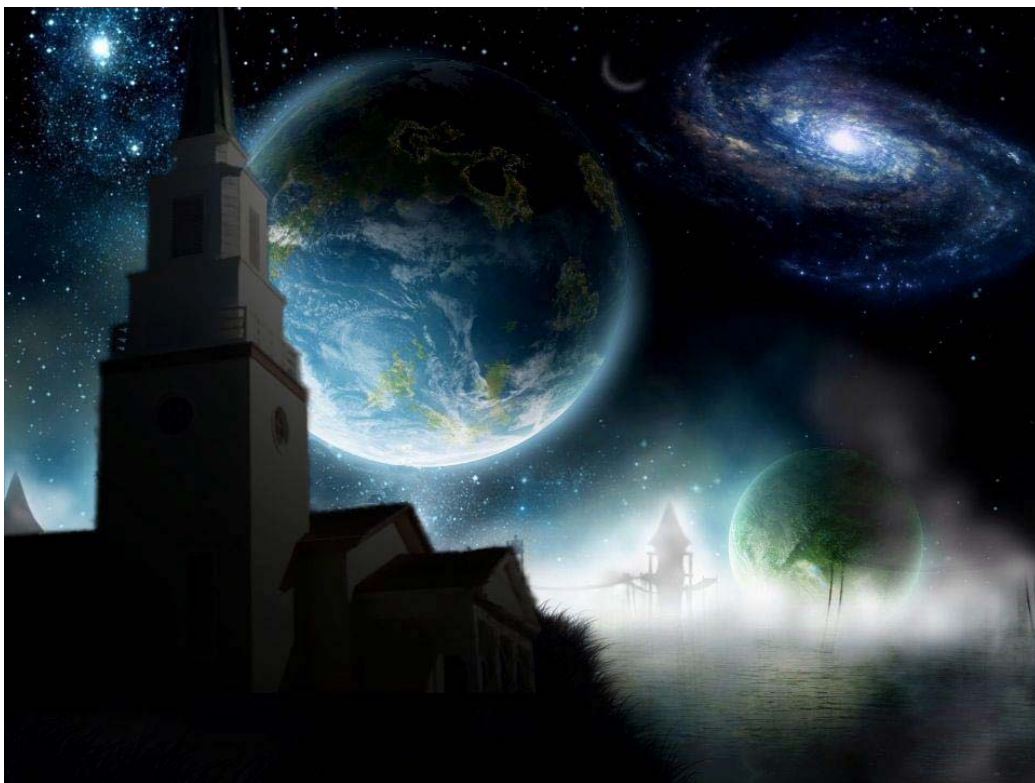
I know love and joy can be spontaneous, but in the seasons of the church year, the love and joy of Christmas call for preparation. I am very excited about Advent at FBCPA this year. Led by our intern, Naomi, we have been preparing for this season for some time. Naomi, who interned this summer with Marcia McFee in her Worship Design Studio, brought creativity and grace to this process. We had a wonderful Advent to Epiphany Worship Brainstorming Party, involving 20 members of the congregation preparing for our Advent/Christmas/Epiphany celebration. The theme for this season is drawn from the

prophet Isaiah (2:3), "Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of God...." There we will engage in building that house of God as a place where Christ might come and dwell with us, bringing peace and good-will to all creation.

Starting Saturday, November 30 at 9:00 AM we will begin to build our house and make it ready by "Hanging the Greens" (decorating the sanctuary.) Then on Sunday, December 1, we will share the first of four worship services that will help us to make our hearts ready as well. Preparations are in order; love the guest is on the way.

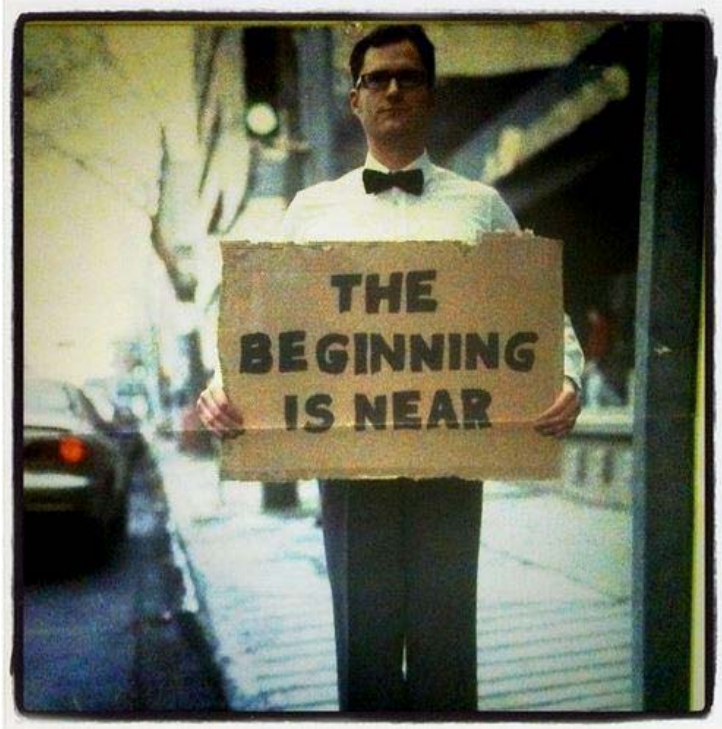
Pastor Rick

THE HEAVENS ARE TELLING....



ORIGINAL ART BY OSCAR RAMIREZ

Christian Formation and Family Life



Friends of God,

Advent may be my favorite season of the Church year. The longing, the waiting, the hope, the anticipation, I connect so deeply to the spirituality of it all. I love the music, "O Come, O Come, Emanuel" and the other ancient melodies of Western Europe feel like home to me. I wonder what melodies feel like home to you this time of year. Is it something from another place and another time like mine? Or is it something more contemporary?

What music feels like home?

Advent also challenges me. We'll hear from all four preachers this sea-

son (I'm preaching the Sunday following Thanksgiving, the First Sunday of Advent) and each sermon will have a challenge wrapped up in it somehow. The readings we chose for the season ask us to wake up. They ask us to prepare. They speak of peaceable kingdoms and the coming of the Day of The Lord. Advent is a challenging season. We're not waiting for Christmas morning in some warm fuzzy sense (though, I do love that, too). No, we're waiting for the Apocalypse, the "in-breaking" of God.

That's what "apocalypse" means, you know - "in-breaking." It means "revelation," the "aha!" of recognizing the divine.

Perhaps you have noticed a little literature around the church about how Advent is a conspiracy and the Apocalypse is something into which we are invited to participate. Mercy. Justice. Reconciliation. Jubilee. These are all apocalyptic.

This season, we're invited to be apocalyptic. We're invited to try it on, this kind of waiting that brings forth justice and peace, the kind of expectation that assumes God Is Here With Us. We are citizens of the Peaceable Kingdom.

So, as you read about the various events scheduled, the worship services, the Christmas Caroling, and the movie the kids are making, imagine these as apocalyptic practices.

We are all longing for a home. That home is the Peaceable Kingdom, the Time of God. It is a place and a people. We will sing ourselves into that home this year.

Peace and All Good Things,

Pastor Tripp

COMMUNITY SPIRITUAL FORMATION

(11:30 in the Parlor)

There is a lot happening this month in our community spiritual formation! Our usual schedule is changed. The children and youth will be staying with us in worship every Sunday of Advent. We're lighting the Advent Wreath, learning new songs and singing familiar ones. We'll learn all about the Chrismon Tree and find new ways of giving to the world around us.

We're making a movie!

The children and youth are working hard on a Christmas Pageant. This year, it's a movie. Yes, we've already started filming and everyone will have a chance to be in it. Oscar and Daniel are leading the way. Clara and Hegene have starring roles. Even Hugh will don a Grinch mask. It's the most wonderful time of the year and the Baby Jesus has gone missing!

So, prepare yourself.

Adult Spiritual Formation

Pastor Rick will be leading a series during Advent. It will be a time to explore our spirits deeply, to share with one another. Each week will highlight a different reading from Christian spiritual literature. We hope you will stay after church and join in.

Peace and All Good Things,

Pastor Tripp



LOOKING FORWARD....

Adult Spiritual Formation in January:

VISIONS OF JESUS

“Two thousand years ago, an itinerant Jewish preacher and miracle worker walked across the Galilee, gathering followers to establish what he called the ‘Kingdom of God.’ The revolutionary movement he launched was so threatening to the established order that he was captured, tortured, and executed as a state criminal. Within decades after his shameful death, his followers would call him God.”

--Reza Aslan, *ZEALOT: THE LIFE AND TIMES OF JESUS OF NAZARETH*

Please join us for our Adult Spiritual Formation hour during the month of January as we consider the topic, “Visions of Jesus.” Beginning with the engaging portrait that Reza Aslan offers in his provocative new book, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*, we will consider how different views of Jesus’ life and teachings point toward different understandings of what it means to be a disciple of Christ. We will examine Aslan’s image of Jesus as a radical political revolutionary whose goal was to liberate his people from Roman occupation. We will also look at the cultural controversy that has arisen surrounding this Muslim religious scholar’s authorship of a book about Jesus. In addition to examining Aslan’s portrait of Jesus, we’ll also consider our own images of Jesus, and how they shape our faith and our understanding of God. We’ll also review the unique glimpse of Jesus that emerges in each of the four Gospels, giving attention to the nuances, variations, and differing emphases that characterize each biblical author’s sketch of Jesus’ life. Please plan to be with us for worship and stay for the second hour for conversation about how a closer consideration of the “historical Jesus” can enliven and transform Christian faith and discipleship in the twenty-first century.

--Doug Davidson

THE WORK OF THE CHURCH



TUESDAY BIBLE STUDY is held on **Tuesdays at 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.

CHURCH CHOIR REHEARSAL is held **each Thursday at 7:30 PM** in the parlor. New voices are always welcome to join.



MEN'S BREAKFAST, every **first and third Wednesday at 8 AM**, at Hobe's Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo Alto. All the men from our Church family are welcome.

WOMEN'S BRUNCH meets the **fourth Thursday of the month at 10 AM** at Hobe's Restaurant, 4224 El Camino Real, Palo. All women of our church community are invited. Please join us.



CHURCH COUNCIL will meet again at **5:00 PM on Thursday, December 12.**

ALL ARE INVITED!— FBCPA CHRISTMAS EVENTS—ALL ARE INVITED!:

- * **ALL CHURCH HOLIDAY OPEN HOUSE AT THE SPIRIDONS—Sunday, December 8 from 1:30—4 PM.**
- * **ISING GIRL CHOIR CONCERT: "Be the Joy" Friday, December 13 at 7PM**
- * **CHRISTMAS CAROLS & CHILI SUPPER, Sunday, December 15 at 4PM**
- * **CHRISTMAS BRUNCH—Dec. 22nd after worship.** This is a potluck! Please bring something to share with the congregation. There will be music and a Christmas Pageant. If you would like to volunteer to help set up, clean up, or to be helpful in general, please contact Pastor Tripp Hudgins at tripp@anglobaptist.org.

FBCPA HOSTS SEASONAL ACTIVITIES BY OUR FRIENDS

DECEMBER 7th:



SOLI DEO GLORIA CONCERT—5PM:

A Jazzy Little Christmas.
Newly-arranged versions of
Christmas favorites! Includes

arrangements of carols by Bob Chilcott
and Michele Weir as well as our Artistic
Director Allen H Simon, and features
Chilcott's *A Little Jazz Mass*. Put a little
rhythm in your Christmas!



DECEMBER 8th:

BAY CHORAL GUILD CON- CERT—4:30 PM:

*A Renaissance Christ-
mas*, features *Missa O*

magnum mysterium by Tomás Luis de
Victoria, a work of haunting beauty and
great emotional appeal. We accompany
this melodic four-part Mass with a set of
richly textured polychoral motets by Gab-
rieli, Praetorius, Lassus, and other mas-
ter composers of the 16th and 17th cen-
turies.

DECEMBER 13th:

The iSing Girlchoir presents

2013
2014
SEASON

Be the joy.

A festive concert of holiday favorites and
carols from around the world.



Friday, December 13, 2013, 7PM
First Baptist Church of Palo Alto
For tickets visit: www.isingsv.com

Jannah Delp-Somers & Shane Troll, Artistic Directors

The iSing Girlchoir

DECEMBER 14th:

SILICON VALLEY BOYCHOIR – 5PM: *ILLUMINATIONS*



JANUARY'S SPIRE DEADLINE is FRIDAY, DECEMBER 13th!

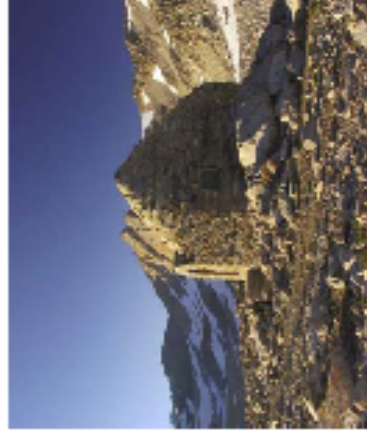
Oleta will be working from home the following week as a precaution for her surgery
that Friday, so please get your entries in ahead of time if at all possible.

THE ANNUAL MEETING WILL OCCUR ON FEBRUARY 2, 2014

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



Saturday, November 30

10:00 AM Hanging of the Greens - decorating the church for children, youth and adults

Sunday, December 1

"Let Us Build a House where Love Can Dwell and Safely Live"

10 AM Worship and Sunday School for Children and Youth

11:30 AM Adult Spiritual Formation: *Moods of Christmas*, Howard Thurman

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

Sunday, December 29

"Christmas Continues"

10 AM Worship for the Family

Sunday, January 5

"Have you Seen the Star?"

10 AM Worship for the Family



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 send us notice of any other Christmas events in which we might participate.

Also, if you are online, join us for 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 also discover 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



Holiday Peace and Social Justice Craft and Info Fair

Sunday, December 8

11:00 am – 2:00 pm

First Presbyterian Church, Fellowship Hall, 1140 Cowper Street, Palo Alto

Celebrate the great work being done by organizations in our community and around the world!



Help promote fair trade while doing your holiday shopping!
Learn about great social justice & peacemaking organizations!
Reduce your carbon footprint this holiday season.
Enjoy free holiday snacks & beverages.

Have fun!

Sponsored by
Peninsula Peace and Justice Center
www.PeaceandJustice.org



SENIOR CHAT

*At Covenant Presbyterian Church
670 East Meadow Drive, Palo Alto*



Senior Chat is so blessed with good presenters, for we live in an excellent area to access a wide variety of resources. Please join us and receive good mental, physical and spiritual stimulation - all of which is known to keep us young. We are a friendly group with a variety of participants from different groups in the area, and we welcome you at 10:00 in the Fireside Room of Covenant Presbyterian Church. No RSVP is necessary and if you need more information, call Rev. Dona Smith-Powers at 650-494-3093.

Topic for December 2013

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.

For more information, call:

The Reverend Dona Smith-Powers, Coordinator (650) 494-3093



Happy Birthday this month to:

Paul Tuan

December 15

Joanne Jones

December 31

DECEMBER BIRTHDAYS



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Council Meeting Minutes, November 14, 2013

Moderator Carolyn Shepard opened the meeting at 5:01 PM. Pastor Rick excerpted from a sermon by Doug Davidson about the transfiguration described in Mark 9, noting that transfiguration is available to each of us when we realize we see God.

Present: Jane and Jin Chin, Dan Cudworth, Marilyn Hunwick, Pastor Rick Mixon, Eleanor and Hugh Satterlee, and Moderator Carolyn Shepard.

Rick reported that Patrice Heath is not doing well and that Bob Towner's situation is stable, but with a poor prognosis.

The Interfaith Thanksgiving service will be held in our church on Tuesday, November 26th at 7:30 PM followed by a potluck dessert in the Fellowship Hall.

Jin reviewed the distributed treasurer's report, noting that pledge income is about \$1,000 below the prorated budget, withdrawal from Special Funds is \$15,000 less than budget, and tenant contributions is almost \$10,000 ahead of budget. Expenses to date are about \$16,500 below budget at this point in the year. Jin distributed a page of General Information from the duties of our church treasurer.

Jane reported several small items: Oleta is negotiating with the PACCC about where and how to relocate theirs and our refuse containers to facilitate parents dropping off and retrieving their children and also providing cosmetic improvement.

Recent recommendations from an arborist are that the Ginko tree in front of the church be removed as being ill-placed in the shade of a neighboring maple tree, the Oak tree on NITC property be trimmed back to reduce danger to the church roof and the clogging of downspouts on the back of the church. The estimated expense of \$3,900 was approved by the Council.

Buried drain lines from downspouts have filled with roots over time and required rooting out. This work was accomplished in conjunction with the patio project to preclude difficulties later. The approximately \$1,200 cost for this was also approved.

The Eucalyptus tree in front of the fellowship hall was pronounced dead and has been removed at an expense of \$2,040.

Confusion on the part of the County Assessor about the tax exempt status of the Peninsula Peace and Justice Center, resulting in a tax bill to the church, is being resolved. Taxes paid will be refunded when the tax status of the PPJC is clarified.

Investment of \$30,000, 10%, of the funds yielded by sale of the Annex, in micro-finance was discussed. It was decided to ask Ron Tuttle, Special Funds Treasurer, to consult with Andy Loving, a stock broker knowledgeable about such investments and other ethical investment instruments, to develop a path for our investment. The result will be approved by the Council before proceeding.

Plans for January when Rick is on Sabbatical were discussed. Rick will be present the first week and Pastor Tripp will be in charge the following three Sundays. Salaries will have to be adjusted as last year. Hugh moved and Marilyn seconded that projected pay rates for 2014 be used. The Council agreed.

The streamlined proposal to improve the church sound system has been reviewed and approved by Chip Clark, Hugh and Rick. The Council agreed to a motion by Eleanor to proceed. The \$16,000 cost will be covered by "investment profit" accumulated in the Lucile Lundquist Fund. The contractor will purchase the equipment when funds are made available to him, assemble the equipment off site, and install it over a weekend.

The patio project is proceeding well and is about half finished.

Task Teams: Congregational Life – Hospitality time after Sunday services are covered through December. Plans are underway to increase contacts with members not able to attend church regularly.

Mission: -- Funds to help with flood relief in Orissa (India) have been provided by returning the mission offering of \$1,600 from the Balasore Technical School which has been provided to our church for mission activities here, along with a donation of \$570 (\$300 from budget Discretionary and from \$270 from individual gifts). Nominating Committee: Eleanor asked for help identifying new members for the committee and for the various jobs in the church.

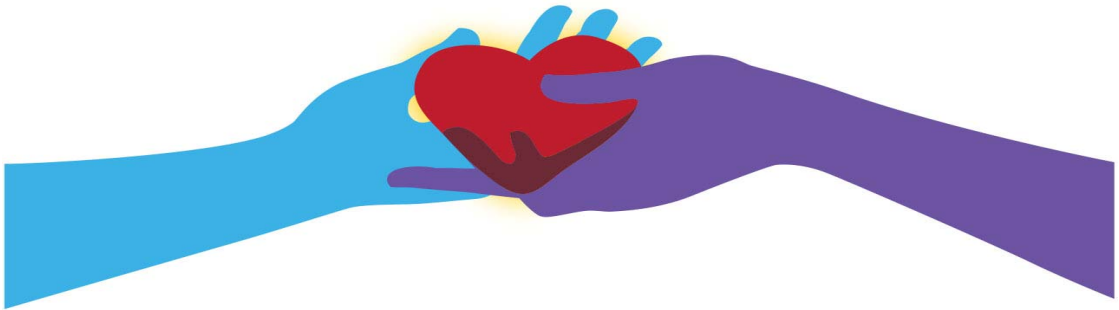
The next Council meeting will occur on Thursday, December 12th, at 5:00 PM. The following meeting is planned for January 9, 2014, and the Annual Meeting for February 2, 2014, following the Sunday service.

Carolyn closed the meeting at 7:23 PM with a short prayer asking especially for comfort and care for our very ill members, and for comfort and relief for storm victims in the Philippines.

Submitted: Hugh Satterlee, Clerk



RETIRED MINISTERS AND MISSIONARIES OFFERING



Thank You For...

The **SPECIAL MISSION OFFERING FOR DECEMBER** is our annual **thank you offering for retired ministers, missionaries and widowed spouses**. Since 1935, American Baptists have contributed to special offerings received in their churches for retired ABC ministers and missionaries or their widowed spouses. In 1977, American Baptist Churches USA launched the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) to continue this tradition of thanks.

RMMO provides financial support for these servant-leaders who have helped build our churches. But it is about much more than that. Through RMMO, American Baptist Churches have an opportunity to highlight their congregations' thankfulness for all the ways spiritual leaders have contributed to their lives as Christians.

Today, RMMO is a tangible way for the American Baptist congregations to say "Thank you for ..." the commitment, service and spiritual guidance of retired ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses. The offering supports those who have devoted 15 or more years of their lives to God's service by providing emergency assistance in times of need and a thank you check at the end of each year. We hope you are inspired to make RMMO and its culture of gratitude a part of this blessed season of giving. Our goal this year is **\$750**.

Minister: Rev. Randle (Rick) Mixon
650-327-0561; FAX 650-327-1562
Email: fbcpaloalto@sbcglobal.net
Web Site: www.fbc-paloalto.org

December Mission Offering:
American Baptist Retired Ministers
and Missionaries
Our Goal is \$750



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF PALO ALTO
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