

THE FIRST BAPTIST NEWS

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An American Baptist Congregation Making God's Love Known in Los Angeles Since 1874
International • Intercultural • Ecumenical

AMERICAN BAPTISTS RESPOND TO DEVASTATION IN HAITI

Dear American Baptist,

The news from Haiti has been grim: the most impoverished country in the Western Hemisphere is now struggling with the aftermath of an earthquake that has destroyed its capitol city, killed thousands, and left thousands of others without shelter, food, or clean water.

American Baptist International Ministries has been working to contact our Baptist brothers and sisters in Haiti, coordinating our response and urging American Baptists to give generously. You can keep updated on the situation by referring to their link on this website, www.internationalministries.org website and the BWA website.

To our brothers and sisters in Haiti and our brothers and sisters of the ABC Haitian Alliance within the United States, we pledge our continued prayers and support now and throughout the recovery.

From our own experience with the hurricane devastation in New Orleans, we know both the urgency and the difficulty of responding where the infrastructure has been destroyed. Haiti's situation is only compounded by its pre-earthquake challenges. Baptist World Alliance immediately dispatched several well-trained search and rescue teams. International Ministries missionaries Dr. Steve and Nancy James rushed back to Haiti, their country of service, to provide essential medical treatment to the tens of thousands of sick and wounded. We need to be in prayerful support of the James family, and the Haitian Baptist Convention as they minister as the hands and feet of Christ. The longer term redevelopment efforts, as in New Orleans, will stretch into the future and will require us to "not grow weary in well doing."

For some persons, this terrible tragedy will raise theological issues. We reject the suggestion that this earthquake was God's punishment for a pact made with the Devil. Jesus, himself, when confronted by his disciples concerning the situation of the man born blind, rejected the notion of a punitive God who had imposed this affliction in retribution for sin. There are many, many beloved brothers and sisters in Christ in

Haiti who faithfully serve God who have been devastated by this event. In a broken world of tragedy where natural and human-generated disasters such as war are a part of our lives, we believe that our crucified Lord is ever-present among those who suffer through the presence of the Spirit and through the presence of the church serving as the hands and feet of Christ.

Our hearts and our prayers are with Haiti and our dear brothers and sisters in Christ there and here in the United States.

Centered in Christ and United in Mission,

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary, ABC/USA

International Ministries missionary Kristy Engel traveled from La Romana, Dominican Republic to Port-au-Prince and arrived safely on January 19. She is part of a 75-person group that includes some 30 medical personnel. Kristy is giving administrative coordination to three clinics that the team is running.

The team took six trucks bearing food and medicine for use in the clinics and for donation. The non-medical team members will distribute the food at a location separate from the clinics.

Kristy was planning to lead a second medical group into Haiti on January 26th and another on February 2nd. Those trips will contain many American physicians, nurse practitioners, nurses and EMT's. They are not at this time taking non-medical volunteers.

Requesting prayer for safety and strength, Kristy says, "This will be a very difficult voyage for all of us on both an emotional and physical level." Finances are likewise greatly needed to cover the cost of the medicine and the transportation across the border and back.

Kristy's final word of encouragement is: "Do what you can, with what you've got, in the moment you're given. That's all that we're called to do."

GREETERS NEEDED ON SUNDAY MORNINGS

We are in need of people to be a part of a ministry of hospitality. Each Sunday, we want to have members of this ministry at the doors to greet visitors, give materials, and make a personal contact with each new person. This is a significant part of our outreach and we ask you to consider if this is where you have gifts to give.

Alpha Sorensen will lead a training meeting for church greeters on Sunday, February 7 at 12:30 p.m. For more information, contact Elizabeth Bonilla or Bob Wallace.

NEWS SCHEDULE

The **next issue** of the *First Baptist NEWS* will be published **February 15, 2010** and will cover services and events through February 28, 2010. Material and articles for the February 8th issue should arrive in the church office **no later than February 3.**

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MINISTER'S MESSAGE

On Saturday, January 16, a small number of our church leaders met with Rev. Robert Wilkins to discuss and establish a ministry enhancement plan. This was a moment to think about our congregational direction in a very practical manner. We used as our starting point the church's mission statement, which says that the purpose of the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles is to make God's love, as revealed in Jesus Christ, known in proclamation and worship, service and outreach, and fellowship and celebration. We are committed to being International, Intercultural, and Ecumenical.

We spent time on the 16th discussing "how" a congregation lives this out considering all the cultural, financial, and spiritual shifts in our world and local community.

On Sunday, March 28 (Palm Sunday) I want to discuss with you all what we have discovered. I feel

that God is leading us in an exciting area of ministry, so please mark your calendars and bring a dish because we will also share a "potluck" meal. If you have any questions, please ask me and I'll be happy to share with you what God can do.

—Carlton A. Rhoden



IN APPRECIATION

It is with a deep sense of gratitude that I take this opportunity to express my thanks to all of you. Your many cards, visits, calls, flowers and above all your prayers, helped to make my recent hospitalization somewhat less traumatic. I will be forever grateful for your being in my life.

— Florence Slade

DEDICATION OF INFANTS, January 3, 2010



Maya Rhoden (left), born April 5, 2009 with god-mother Sharon Woods, and mother Nikki.

James and JinHee Lee (below, from left) with son Joseph, born September 13, and Kathy and Chris Lee with son, Matthew, born November 11, 2009, during the dedication service with Pastor Carlton Rhoden.



MINISTER'S AND MODERATOR'S MID-YEAR PROGRESS REPORTS TO THE CONGREGATION AT THE ANNUAL MEETING

From the Senior Minister:

*Great is Thy faithfulness, O God
my Father,
There is no shadow of turning
with Thee;
Thou changest not, Thy
compassions, they fail not;
As Thou hast been, Thou
forever wilt be.*

These are seriously difficult financial times. Across our nation, homes are being foreclosed upon, job losses continue to rise, retirement income is declining, and businesses are closing their doors. Nevertheless, you have remained faithful and committed to the First Baptist Church of Los Angeles. Thank you very much! I must let you know that many churches are struggling with the state of the economy, as well; we are not alone in this.

As you look at our proposed budget for 2010, you will see reductions in our expenditures. Giving has declined from the previous year and so we are making the necessary adjustments. But, I must say, we are operating most effectively with minimal resources.

Now that I have given you the challenges, let's turn our attention to our accomplishments. These past few months have seen quite a few blessings. We celebrated our 135th Anniversary as a congregation with a wonderful service and program. We received the gift of a beautiful painting of our neighborhood and church from artist, Paul Edwards. We met our goal for our sister church in Nicaragua of \$10,000. In fact, we exceeded our goal, raising nearly \$12,000. We continue to settle into our new organizational structure and are seeing the benefits of its flexibility.

First Baptist, God has been faithful, providing for us in many

ways. I want to encourage us to remember the history behind this wonderful building. Remember that shortly after this grand building was erected, the Great Depression hit, causing many to lose faith. But, the folk of First Baptist, Los Angeles continued. They understood that God was ultimately in control and that God blessed the faithful. Let us continue to be faithful and know that the giving of ourselves and our resources is not in vain, but we are leaving our mark for someone yet to come.

– *Carlton Rhoden, Senior Minister*

From the Moderator:

The second half of 2009 has gone very quickly. We are still getting accustomed to our new church organization. We've had a number of challenges, some of which are mentioned below.

As this is written, we still don't have an organist or a Minister to Youth. The organist position had been filled and then the person changed her mind. The Minister to Youth search continues.

Richard Rogers was elected Clerk at the Homecoming Meeting. Cora Marte had very graciously volunteered for most of the year as recording secretary. Denise Dilley also came on the Council of Ministries as the new Worship Core Ministry Coordinator. The rest of the Council remained the same until the end of the year when we had resignations. Vivian Silla resigned as Christian Education Coordinator and Ann Brodie stepped down as Treasurer, to become the CE Coordinator. Both had served during the transition and had done commendable and beyond the call of duty service. The Treasurer position has been filled by Shirley Parsley.

Much of what has been done during 2009 has been done through the ministries. That will be reported elsewhere. That is the beauty of this new system. As time goes on, we will be seeing more and more Spirit based activity.

By the time of the Annual Meeting, the leaders will have met with Rev. Robert Wilkins to continue the planning work that we started in 2009. Gerald Gubatan chaired a committee to Follow-Up to Norman Bullock's Congregational Assessment and this meeting in mid-January is part of that effort.

The 2009 award recipients were:

- Cristina Arrazola, Hollinger, "Woman of the Year" Award;
- William Vance Smith, Cummings "Man of the Year" Award;
- Liliana Tigerino, Reichter Award for Christian Education; and
- Ernestine Rotcher, Townsend Award for outstanding service over 30 years.

– *David McFadden, Moderator*

COMMUNITY TRAFFIC MESSAGE

The Los Angeles Police Department–West Traffic Division would like to keep you safe...Safety Tips for Parents in Preventing Accidents in Driveways (Part 2):

- Never leave vehicles running or the vehicle keys accessible to children
- When backing always know where children are and keep them in full view away from your vehicle
- Look to the rear and back very slowly with windows down so you can hear children who may suddenly appear
- SUVs and trucks have especially large blind spots, so use extreme care whenever backing

760 South Westmoreland Avenue
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SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 7, 2010

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m. WORSHIP:

“LOVE COVERS”

(Please read John 15:9-17 in preparation)

REV. CARLTON A. RHODEN, Preaching



SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 14, 2010

9:30 a.m.

Church School Classes for All Ages

11:00 a.m. WORSHIP:

“CHAINS OF LOVE”

(Please read 2 Corinthians 3:12-4:2 in preparation)

REV. CARLTON A. RHODEN, Preaching