



La Tijera United Methodist Church's Newsletter

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JANUARY 2018

Birth of a Child by Frederick Buechner



THE GATHERING, AN HOUR OF MUSIC, MEDITATION, SILENCE, PRAYER, AND MUSIC IN THE STYLE OF TAIZE (CHANT-LIKE) WILL MEET ON SUNDAY, JANUARY 7TH AT 6:30 P.M.

In the letters of St. Paul, which are the earliest New Testament writings, there is no suggestion that the birth of Jesus was accompanied by any miracle, and in the Gospel of Mark, which is probably the earliest of the four, the birth plays no part. So a great many biblical scholars would agree with the skeptics that the great nativity stories of Luke and Matthew are simply the legendary accretions, the poetry, of a later generation, and that were we to have been present, we would have seen a birth no more or less marvelous than any other birth.

But if that is the case, what do we do with the legends of the wise men and the star, the shepherds and the angels and the great hymn of joy that the angels sang? Do we dismiss them as fairy tales, the subject for pageants to sentimentalize over once a year come Christmas, the lovely dream that never came true?

Only if we are fools do we do that, although there are many in our age who have done it and there are moments of darkness when each of us is tempted to do it. A lovely dream. That is all.

Who knows what the facts of Jesus' birth actually were? As for myself, the longer I live, the more inclined I am to believe in miracle, the more I suspect that if we had been there at the birth, we might well have seen and heard things that would be hard to reconcile with modern science. But of course that is not the point, because the Gospel writers are not really interested primarily in the facts of the birth but in the significance, the meaning for them of that birth just as the people who love us are not really interested primarily in the facts of our births but in what it meant to them when we were born and how for them the

world was never the same again, how their whole lives were charged with new significance. Whether there were ten million angels there or just the woman herself and her husband, when that child was born the whole course of history was changed. That is a fact as hard and blunt as any fact. Art, music, literature, our culture itself, our political institutions, our whole understanding of ourselves and our world—it is impossible to conceive of how differently world history would have developed if that child had not been born. And in terms of faith, much more must be said because for faith, the birth of the child into the darkness of the world made possible not just a new way of understanding life but a new way of living.

- Originally published in *The Hungering Dark*.

Dates to Remember . . .

01/01—New Year's Day!

01/07—Worship at 9:30 a.m. Communion will be served and we will renew our baptisms.

01/07—The Gathering at 6:30 p.m. —an hour of music, meditation, silence, scripture, prayer and music

in the style of Taize.

01/12—Movie Night at La Tijera at 7:00 p.m.

01/14—Worship at 9:30 a.m.

01/15—Martin Luther King, Jr. Day

01/18—Ad Council meets

at 6:30 p.m.

01/21—Worship at 9:30 a.m.

01/28—Worship at 9:30 a.m.

02/03—West District Train-in Conference, 8 am to 2 pm at Holman UMC

West District Training Conference



On Saturday, February 3rd from 8:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m., at Holman United Methodist Church (3320 W. Adams Blvd., Los Angeles 90018) it's the West District's Training Conference!

The West District Training Conference features worship, your choice of two workshops, lunch, and fellowship. This is a time to be refreshed and renewed.

You can get an early bird price for the entire day (including lunch!) of \$15.00 per person by registering before January 12th. Regis-

tration will be \$25.00 per person after the 12th.

There will be Church Business workshops: Human Resources, Serving as a Trustee, Tables Report Training, and Best Practices of Effective Church Financial Systems.

Personal Enrichment: Real Leadership, and Prayer & Spiritual Discernment.

Congregational Ministry: #youthworkersuperhero, Soul Power, Ways to Help People with Disabilities Belong, Worship Art, and

Beyond Welcome.

Church & Community: Let's Talk About the "T" in LFBTQI, How Can the Local Church Respond to Hate Groups?, Domestic Abuse, and Beyond Cultural Competency and Diversity.

On-line registration ends January 26th. There will be on-site registration on the 3rd for \$25.00 (cash or check only).

Bring canned goods for our Food Ministries! To Register, please visit www.westdistricttraining.com/

"For a new year to bring you something new, make a move, like a butterfly tearing its cocoon! Make a move!" - Mehmet Murat Ildan

Highlights of Engagement in 2017

2017 was another busy year for La Tijera UMC. Here are a few of the ways we engaged in outreach ...

PATH West Los Angeles

We continue our partnership with PATH West Los Angeles (People Assisting the Homeless) and prepare and serve breakfast to the clients of PATH West LA on the third Sunday of every month. We celebrate the birthdays of the residents of PATH West Los Angeles each month, and participate in PATH's "Bring Them Home" campaign which provides the "home necessities" for those transitioning into permanent housing.

Suicide Prevention & Awareness Programs

We were once again a proud sponsor of the 2017 Alive & Running 5K for Suicide Prevention & Awareness Programs at Didi Hirsch Mental Health Services. Team La Tijera UMC raised \$4,600.00 for suicide prevention programs!

LAX Food Pantry

18 holiday meals were donated to the LAX Food Pantry this Christmas for families in need.

Westside Food Bank

In October we participated in the Westside Food Bank's Annual Hunger Walk. We helped raise over \$103,000.00 to fight hunger in our local communities.

The need for food assistance keeps rising- together we will continue to make a difference.

Reconciling Ministries Network

We continue to support the rights and inclusion of our LGBTQ population in the United Methodist Church through the Reconciling Ministries Network through our donations and justice work.

Your generosity also supported The United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR), Disability Ministries, Native American Ministries, Human Relations programs, and Imagine No Malaria!

La Tijera UMC—a small church with a mega heart!

What Makes a Hero? Small Group Study

“What Makes a Hero?” offers us an image of what it looks like to be victorious over trials and temptations. Looking at pop culture heroes and others through the lens of faith, author Matt Rawle shows how Jesus turned the concept of hero on its head. In keeping with the theme, “Pop in Culture,” this DVD/Book study examines how good vs. evil, right vs. wrong, and overcoming adversity are fundamental to how Christians understand salvation. Heroes help us discern the

good, fight for what’s right, define identity, execute justice, spark revolution, and save lives.

Rawle enters the Gospel story to tell quite a different victory story—one obtained through humility, obedience to the cross, and an empty tomb. How does Jesus redefine what it means to be a hero?

This six week DVD book study topics will include:

- Good, Evil and God
- Right, Wrong and Holy

- Us, Them, and the Body of Christ
- Have, Have-Not, and the Kingdom of God
- Old, New and Covenant
- Life, Death, and Resurrection

This study will begin on Monday, February 19th at 7:00 p.m. and will continue through Monday, March 26th . To reserve your book, please RSVP to: info@latijeraumc.org . Books are \$10.00, but no one will be turned away.

Documentary Movie Night on January 12th

On Friday, January 12th at 7 p.m., we are gathering together to view the documentary, *The Abolitionists* (2016).

The bold title reflects how seriously its main characters take the problem of child sex trafficking and their mission to liberate its victims. Dubbed Operation Underground Railroad, the mission is led by Tim Ballard, a former Homeland Security special agent who fought sex traffickers at home and abroad for a decade before deciding that he could do it better as a private citizen. *The Abolitionists* follows Bal-

lard and his team as they travel overseas and pose as sex tourists, outwitting pimps and liberating their modern-day slaves. With millions of children being prostituted worldwide, the team’s 57 rescues (so far) are a drop in the bucket. But watching Ballard’s grassroots justice is gratifying and inspiring .

January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Month. Human trafficking is the violation of human rights in which lives are traded, sold, exploited, abused and ruined. Between 14,500 and 17,500 people

are trafficked into the U.S. each year. There are approximately 20 to 30 million slaves in the world today.

This film is rated PG-13 for mature subject matter and content. We recommend this documentary for high school students through adults.

After the film, we will talk about modern day slavery and share our thoughts about the film.

Popcorn and snacks will be provided—come together on the 12th to learn more about human trafficking—and things we can all do to combat its rise.



An Imaginary Feast for PATH

After worship on December 31st, we gathered together to not only celebrate the imminent arrival of a new year, but to hold an Imaginary Feast!

In place of a fabulous United Methodist Potluck, La Tijera put together an Imaginary Feast. Instead of spending money on preparing a dish to

share, or spending money on going out to a fancy New Year’s Eve Day lunch, we helped someone move off the streets into permanent housing through PATH (People Assisting the Homeless). We donated the money saved, and helped a veteran, a family, or an individual living on the streets move one step closer to ending their homelessness.

Over 118,000 people are homeless in California. We know that right here in

Westchester, homelessness is increasing at an alarming rate and our support of PATH is helping to move people off of the streets and into a home.

We enjoyed a catered meal by El Pollo Loco, cheered in the new year, and raised \$180.00 for PATH.

Happy New Year!

La Tijera United Methodist Church

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We are a Reconciling church!

ALL are welcome here.



From Lyda . . .

It's late at night and I can't sleep. It's New Year's Eve and my mind won't still enough for me to fall asleep. A story shared by Father Greg Boyle, the founder of Homeboy Industries, keeps running through my head.

Father Boyle tells of his work with gang members and shares that "In my 30 years of ministry to gang members in Los Angeles, the most significant reversal of course for me happened somewhere during my sixth year. I had mistakenly tried to "save" young men and women trapped in gang life. But then, in an instant, I learned that saving lives is for the Coast Guard. Me wanting a gang member to have a different life would never be the same as that gang member wanting to have one. I discovered that you do not go to the margins to rescue anyone. But if we go there, everyone finds rescue."

He tells of his work in getting Louie, a gang member with a substance abuse problem, into a rehab program. After Louie's brother suicided, Father Boyle picks Louie up from the rehab center to take him to his brother's funeral.

While they are riding in the car, Father Boyle writes, "... once in the car, he [Louie] launches in. 'I had a dream last night—and you were in it.' In the dream, he tells me, the two of us are in a darkened room. No lights whatsoever. No illuminated exit signs. No light creeping from under the door. Total darkness. We are not speaking, but he knows I am in the room with him. Then, silently, I pull a flashlight from my pocket and aim steadily on the light switch across the room. Louie tells me that he knows that only he can turn the light switch on. He expresses his gratitude that I happen to have a flashlight. Then with great trepidation, Louie moves slowly toward the light switch, following closely the guiding beam of light. He takes a deep breath, flips the switch on, and the room is flooded with light. As he tells me this, he begins sobbing. 'And the light,' he says, 'is better than the darkness.' As though he had not known this was the case.

We cannot turn the light switch on for anyone. But we all own flashlights. With any luck, on any given day, we know where to aim them for each other. We do not rescue anyone at the margins. But go figure, if we stand at the margins, we are all rescued. No mistake about it."

Father Boyle's words played over and over again in my mind. "...we all own flashlights. We do not rescue anyone at the margins ... but if we stand at the margins, we are all rescued."

I pondered the story of the magi following a star to the Christ-child. Starlight led the magi to discover the birth of a new hope, a gift to the world, a gift given not just to a few, but to all people, a baby who would be called the light of the world.

We are called to follow that light ... to take our flashlights and hang out at the margins until we are all rescued. Epiphany is a reminder that the light of God's glory calls us to shine our flashlights in inclusive love, compassion, radical welcome, and to shine our lights on all that unjust and corrupt in the world.

As I begin to fall asleep, my heart is filled with hope for the new year ... a new year that will find us all with our flashlights shining as we meet each other in the margins ... where everyone finds rescue.

Happy New Year.