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itness

December 2020

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Greetings in the Name of our LORD !

Waiting Rooms

Luke 2:21-38, Psalm 37:1-9, 2 Peter 3:8,9



These are days of waiting: we await a vaccine....we await the return to a “non-lockdown” life....we wait for the economy to normalize....for the election to finalize....for injustices to be addressed....we await Christmas....we wait for the blood test results. How do you feel about waiting? Do you enjoy a nice, long wait?

Here I sit in the waiting room. A receptionist took my name, recorded my information and I sat—in the waiting room. There is a reason it’s called a waiting room not an examine room, or a consultation room, or a treatment room. The task at hand is the name of the room: **Waiting Room**. In the waiting room we understand our assignment is to wait. Some do it better than others. On this day

the woman next to me is huffing, puffing, sighing, and checking her cell phone every other second. She is obviously not happy to be waiting so long. It's funny how being in a waiting room time moves like an Alaskan glacier. Life is in slow-mo and we don't like it much. We are a giddy up and go generation, yet if we don't learn to wait better, ulcers, anxieties, and innumerable other aggravations are likely to appear.

Lewis Smedes puts it like this: *"Waiting is our destiny. As creatures, who cannot by themselves bring about what they hope for, we wait in the darkness for a flame we cannot light. We wait for a 'not yet' that feels like a 'not ever'."*

When we turn to the Bible, God who is all powerful, all wise and all loving, calls us over and over to wait. Psalm 37:7 *"Be still before the Lord, and wait patiently for him."* Wait for the Lord, the Psalmist goes on, *and keep to his way and he will exalt you to inherit the land.*

God comes to Abraham. Abraham is 75 years old and God says, *"Abraham, you're going to become a father. You'll be the ancestor of a great nation."* But it won't happen today, it won't happen tomorrow. You know how long it was before that promise came true? Twenty-four years. Think about being 75 and being told to wait another 24 years to become a parent. That's a long wait.

Again **God told Israel**, his people, that they'd be a nation, able to leave the slavery of Egypt and be independent, but they had to wait. And then **God told Moses** he would lead the people to the Promised Land, but first they had to abide in the wilderness for 40 years. Again, there came the great promise that the Messiah, the Savior, the Redeemer would come. They waited generation after generation, century after century when God seemed silent. Then, strangest of all, when the Messiah came, he was recognized, not by the masses, but by a few.

So the Messiah came, and Jesus lived and taught. His disciples kept waiting for him to bring in the kingdom the way they expected, to right all the wrongs, but he was crucified. At one post-resurrection appearance Christ is ready to ascend, and so they ask again, *"Are you going to restore the kingdom? Is our waiting over now?"* Jesus had one more command, in Acts 1. He says, *"Don't leave Jerusalem, but wait."* So they did. They waited in the upper room, and the Holy Spirit came.

But that didn't mean the time of waiting was over for the human race. Paul writes in Romans 8:22-25 *"We know that the whole creation has been groaning in labor pains until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly while we wait for adoption, the redemption of our bodies. For in hope we were saved. Now hope that is seen is not hope. For who hopes for what is seen? But if we hope for what we do not see, we wait for it with patience."*

We wait and we wait. Forty-three times in the Old Testament the people are commanded to "Wait on the Lord." This theme runs through the Bible to the very last words in Revelation.

All right, God we get the message. We will hang on and hang in there. We're waiting for You. But here is the obvious question: why? Why does God make us wait? If God is all powerful and all loving, why doesn't He answer us *now*? The complete answer to that is far above my "pay grade." There is mystery tied to this question beyond my comprehension. But this I know—what God does in us while we wait, is often as important as what we're waiting for. Paul says while we wait for God to set things right, we suffer. But the **suffering produces perseverance**, and **perseverance produces character**, and **character produces hope**. (James 1:2) God produces qualities in us while we wait. Biblical waiting is not just waiting for what we want. Biblical waiting is part of the process of **becoming** who God wants us to be.

Waiting requires a **humble heart**. Waiting by its nature is an art only the humble can do, at least with grace. To wait is to recognize I am not **in control**. I am not **calling the shots**; the timing is not up to me. Waiting reminds me that **I am the creature not the creator**. But when we're waiting, we're not just waiting around. We're waiting on God. And God is doing something within us.

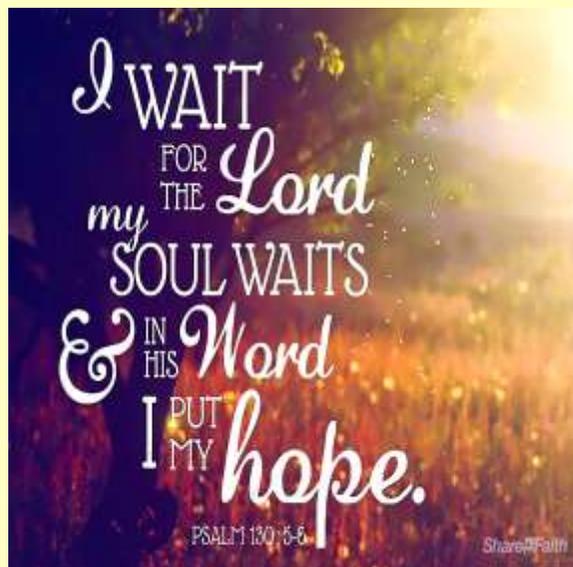
And it's so often amidst this Humble Trust that I find myself praying the Serenity Prayer—*"God grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change—the courage to change the things I can, and the wisdom to know the difference."* The Power of that prayer is in its Humble Trust. GOD IS NEVER FRANTIC. GOD NEVER PANICS. GOD IS NEVER IN A HURRY. That sometimes irritates those of us who are in a hurry, but God never is.

In Scripture we find the most wonderful promise attached to waiting on the Lord. But remember what we wait for is often not as important as what happens inside us when we learn to wait in patience. But the One we wait for will be worth the wait.

Isaiah 40:30-31 *"Even youths will faint and be weary and the young will fall exhausted. But they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings like eagles. They shall run and not grow weary. They shall walk and not faint."*

He told me to tell you!

Faithfully,
Pastor Robert Zimmerman





COMMUNION SUNDAY

We will continue to hold Communion on the first Sunday of the month. You will be given the elements (uniquely packaged) along with the bulletin when you arrive Sunday.

January 1st
Memorial for Rosie Bucy

2020 Giving to Love Gift

In this most unusual year, take a moment before 2020 closes on December 31st to give to American Baptist Women's Love Gift. Since the Great Depression of 1932, these gifts play a vital role in continuing the work of American Baptist Churches at home and abroad.

Any time you see me this month simply hand me a plastic bag of coins & bills when you empty your Love Gift box, or take the coins to your bank and exchange them for bills. Of course you could also hand me a check or cash in an envelope labeled for Love Gift.

Your giving through November 2020 is just over \$200. Thank you, everyone for being a blessing.

Marie Mohn, ABW Love Gift Coordinator

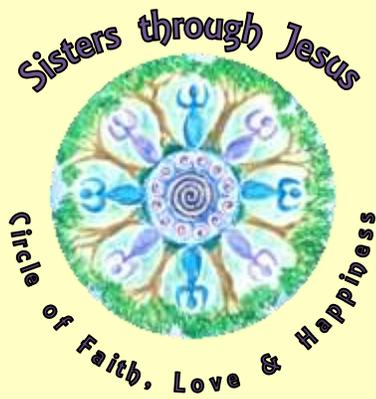
Sweet Symbol

Author Unknown

A significant symbol of Christmas
Is the simple candy cane.
It's shape is the crook of the shepherd
One of the first who came.
The lively peppermint flavor is
The regal gift of spice.
The white is Jesus' purity.
The red is sacrifice.



The narrow stripes are friendship.
And the nearness of his love.
Eternal, sweet compassion
A gift from God above.
The candy cane reminds us all
of how much God cared.
And like His Christmas gift to use
It's meant to be broken and shared.



ABW Ministries

Our next ABW meeting is
February 4th, 1:00 pm
No meeting in January

ABW projects report:

Luopads: we have delivered 388 luopads in November

Without access to feminine hygiene supplies, women in developing countries can't leave their homes. In many of these cultures, women are shunned during this sensitive time each month and most girls are forced to miss 20% of the school year.

Teddy Bear project:

15 handmade Teddy bears arrived in Alaska for the Cordova **Bidarki Holiday Bazaar**

One of a kind gifts for friends and family; support local businesses and fundraising organizations;

5 bears were given to the East Hempfield Police Department for children in distress.

And some to House of His Creation

Samaritan Purse Operation Christmas Child Shoeboxes

29 were sent this month



This will be the 3rd year that Westgate's American Baptist Women will be supporting Water Street Rescue Mission during its holiday food drive.

December 6th, and 13th-Westgate ABW will collect donations for the Angel Tree project. Due to Covid-19, we are asking for **monetary contributions** only. These funds will go to the Rescue Mission and the Mission to purchase bulk orders of can goods. The funds you donate will help feed the homeless and families in our community struggling to make ends meet.

During the Thanksgiving and Christmas Season, Water Street will need 120,000 lbs. of food!

All donations are greatly appreciated. Thank you!
Many thanks to those who have helped through the year.

Blessings,

Pat Rust and the Ladies of ABW

Is 2020 over yet?



Hope for Today Hope for Tomorrow



Support RMMO this December

The Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) originated in the mid-1930s, when American Baptist congregations received a Communion Fellowship Offering on the first Sunday of each month to support retired ministers, missionaries, their widowed spouses and elderly clergy within their churches. In 1977, American Baptist Churches USA launched RMMO to continue this appreciation of God's service.

This year, to honor this tradition and acknowledge the current circumstances, we chose Hope for Today, Hope for Tomorrow as our theme. This theme encompasses the true strength and dedication of ministers, missionaries and their widowed spouses who have devoted 15 years or more to ABCUSA.

Patently waiting for
2021.

Treasurer's Report-

Month Total	Nov.
Budget Income	\$10,595.00
Non-budget income	\$3,147.36



Birthdays & Anniversaries for December



11/27/2010 Rich & Laura Schramm



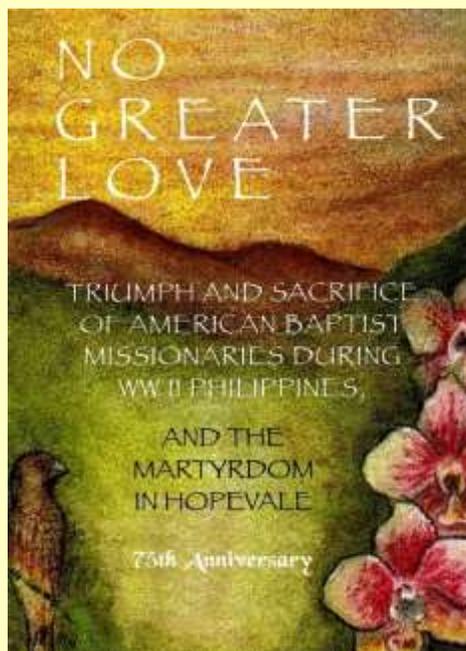
11/14 Martha Herdwig
Nancy Williams
11/15 Hannah Tebie
11/22 Richard Adams
11/25 Kayleen Martin



Baptist Potpourri

Announcing the ABCUSA Hopevale Commemoration

Sunday, December 2020 / January 2021



In response to the 75th Commemoration (in 2018) of the Hopevale martyrdom in the Philippines in which missionaries of the American Baptist Foreign Mission Society (now International Ministries) died heroically for their faith, the Convention of Philippine Baptist Churches (CPBC) approved a resolution to designate the Sunday nearest to **December 20** (the anniversary date of their deaths) as Hopevale Commemoration Sunday. This action of the CPBC Board was inspired "by the thought that we need to preserve faith stories and traditions that connect us to the Hopevale event so that we will not lose track of its rich meaning and significance in our lives as Baptists. Furthermore, we want to inspire and educate future generations on the life, faith, struggles, hopes, and triumphs of our Hopevale Martyrs, so that they may become faithful to the heavenly vision of doing God's mission in the world."

Accordingly, CPBC has invited the American Baptist Churches USA to join them in this annual observance, which demonstrates the strong bonds of spiritual friendship between us. The ABCUSA Board of General Ministries (BGM) blessed this initiative in March 2019. In commemorating this anniversary each year, ABCUSA is affirming, along with Filipino Baptists, our common missiological identity and our mutual support and solidarity in doing God's mission.

The ABCUSA Office of the General Secretary (OGS), in partnership with American Baptist International Ministries (ABFMS), the American Baptist Historical Society (ABHS) and the Green Lake Conference Center (GLCC), has produced a variety of resources, featuring written and video accounts of the Hopevale story, missionary biographies, bulletin inserts and a Hopevale poster.

Recognizing that December 20 is just before Christmas and thus many churches may not be able to dedicate a portion of the Sunday service closest to that date for Hopevale, we are encouraging churches to commemorate it at whatever event or service that fits their schedule best in December or January.

Please note: there is no offering connected to this commemoration. It is meant to serve as a historical memorial event, and to inspire new generations of American Baptists to be faithful witnesses for Jesus Christ. The Hopevale story is inspiring, calling us all to a higher level of sacrificial devotion and service.

continued

IM Responds to Record-Breaking Hurricane Devastation in Central America.

Two back-to-back category 4 hurricanes, with 120-mph to 140-mph wind gusts, hit Central America in November. Hurricane Eta struck the northern coast of Nicaragua on November 3. Two weeks later, Hurricane Iota made landfall near Haulover, Nicaragua, only 15 miles south of where Eta had come ashore. This is the first time in nearly 170 years of record-keeping that two Category 4 hurricanes have struck within 15 miles of one another in a period of only two weeks.

This unprecedented occurrence has caused massive devastation in Nicaragua, Honduras, and other parts of Central America in the form of landslides, floods, roadway collapses, power outages, communication interruptions, crop destruction and significant loss of life. For communities already struggling to respond to the economic and health challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ability to remain safe and socially-distant when seeking refuge with family or at shelters increases vulnerability. The World Food Program expects that continued flooding will impact the incoming harvest, severely strain subsistence farmers, and extend the emergency into mid-2021.

IM'S PRESENCE AND RESPONSE

With heavy but determined hearts, IM is responding to this crisis with solidarity, love, and practical aid. IM has released initial One Great Hour of Sharing (OGHS) emergency relief grants totaling \$8,500 to partners in Honduras and Nicaragua who are responding with food, clothing, blankets, water filters, medicines and other needed supplies. Additional relief funds will be released as contributions are received for OGHS-Central America Relief.

IM Global Servants Dilia Zelaya (Honduras), Ingrid Roldán-Román (Panama), and Ricardo Mayol-Bracero (Guatemala) are safe, and are checking in with families that are served by IM partners in the affected region.

Please join us in prayer for the children, families, and IM global servants and partners in Central America who have been impacted by these devastating hurricanes. We know that God is near to the brokenhearted and through Christ we can find peace that surpasses understanding.



Solutions For Churches & Communities

Kairos Spiritual Direction Training

A two-year certificate program based on the Ignatian model that teaches the art and practice of spiritual kinship and companioning.

What is Spiritual Direction?

Spiritual direction or companioning is the practice of accompanying someone one-on-one along their spiritual journey. A trained spiritual companion will help you discover and explore where God is working in your life, and what God is asking of you. Spiritual directors listen deeply and help notice the mystery of God's presence in your life.

While it may be appropriate to discuss personal and/or relational struggles, a spiritual director is not a therapist. Spiritual kinship is not about fixing problems. Instead, it's about working with the Spirit to discover, surface, name, and engage in what God is doing on your unique spiritual journey.

