

in this issue >>>

Watching and Waiting

Online Communion

Prayer Needs

Zoom This Week

News in Brief



Issue

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Friday, May 1, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

EBC Update



Online Communion

We are all missing the gathered community of the church and an important part of our communal worship is Communion.

In these circumstances, it's obviously not feasible to gather around the Lord's table physically. But that doesn't prevent us from entering into a focused time of remembrance and celebration of our Lord's sacrifice in our homes.

We invite you to do so on Sunday, May 3, when our online worship service will include a time of Communion. Especially if you are able to watch our service, we would encourage you to join with us at any time after 10:30 a.m.

You may choose to do so in prayer. You may also wish to take a piece of bread and a small glass of juice to consume with us at home as an act of devotion. However you participate, we hope this service will be a blessing to you.

Watching and Waiting

"[The Lord] gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless. Even youths will faint and be weary and the young will fall exhausted; but those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength, they shall mount with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint"

(Is. 40:29-31—New RSV).

Despite the wonders of modern technology, most find being separated from people and places that we love a very difficult experience. But imagine if you had been exiled to another country by a hostile power, because that's the situation of the people whom Isaiah addresses in his 40th chapter.

In 587 B.C., the Kingdom of Judah and its capital city of Jerusalem fell to the invading forces of the Babylonians who began to lead them into exile. The people then remained in Babylon for decades, many miles from home, and they started to lose heart.

But at the beginning of Isaiah 40, God brings a powerful message of hope and promise to them. The toughest times are now over, the prophet writes, because God has exacted due punishment for their past sins.

So the future prospects are much brighter. In immediate historical terms, Isaiah 40 seems to promise the restoration of God's favour and the return of God's people from exile. And we know that these prophecies were fulfilled. Some of those in exile did indeed return to their land in the late 6th century B.C. and even the Jerusalem temple was eventually rebuilt.

But until then, they must continue to watch and wait. And it's in the waiting that God promises through Isaiah that they shall "renew their strength, they shall mount with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint."

The same is surely true today, however hard things may sometimes seem. The all-powerful and untiring God, whose resources are limitless and whose understanding is unfathomable, is our only completely reliable source of restoration in this world. So we are to wait on God. As Jesus reminds us in the immortal words of Matthew 11:28–30, we must also put our faith and trust in him.

“Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,” Jesus says, “and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.” In other words, Jesus himself offers his followers renewal and relief, if we will cast our cares on him and place our trust in him.

He won’t release us from all our problems or responsibilities, or give us a life of luxurious inactivity. Instead, he invites us to serve him, like an ox taking on the yoke of a gentle farmer, and he assures us that when we do so, we will find “rest for [our] souls” amidst all the chances and changes of life.

We are neither asked nor equipped to live the Christian life in our own strength, and if we try, we will soon run out of gas. Instead, Jesus asks us to come to him, especially at times like this, for “those who wait for the Lord shall renew their strength.” (Isaiah 40:31).

What a wonderful promise! And what a powerful truth for us all surely to take to heart as we watch, wait and pray for our current situation to change for the better.

Pastor John Oakes



Prayer Needs

- Our sick & shut-ins
- Government leaders
- Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
- Our online services
- All who are anxious, depressed or lonely
- The complete defeat of COVID-19



Zoom This Week

1. There will be a Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting today, May 1, at 7:00 p.m. Go to this [link](#) on your computer. The meeting ID is: 851 704 4556. You can also call in by phone to 778-907-2071, entering the same meeting ID when requested.
2. There will be a Zoom Women’s Prayer Meeting on Saturday at 5:00 p.m. every week. Go to this [link](#) and use Meeting ID 349 890 420, or call 778 907 2071.

News Brief

This newsletter is intended to be a source of community news and devotional materials. Please let Pastor John know of any updates, content ideas, or feedback.

- Our first six online services are now available at this [link](#) on Youtube, which can also be accessed through our [Facebook page](#) and our [church website](#). The next will be available Sunday, May 3, from 10:30 a.m.
- If you would like to join a time of prayer after the online worship service on Sunday, Pastor John will be available by teleconference from noon to 1:00 p.m. Please call 1-867-292-3030 and enter the code 1859593, when prompted.
- Our Prayer Chain remains fully functional. Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).
- Next week’s “EBC Update” will include a brief update on church offerings since the COVID-19 crisis began. Watch this space!
- Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com.