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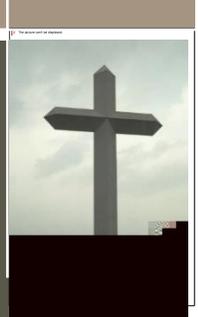
FIFTEEN

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Thursday, July 30, 2020 – Ebenezer Baptist Church, Vancouver

# EBC Update



## News Brief

- ❖ **New for Children:** Ebenezer is now offering a weekly half-hour Sunday School on Zoom at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday. Please contact the church office or Sharon Tobert for more details.
- ❖ **Online:** Our services are all available here on YouTube. They can also be accessed through our Facebook page and website. The next will be August 9 at 10:30 a.m. Pastor John will be speaking on “What Price Jesus?” (Mark 10:17–31). We resume public worship on September 13. Please watch this space for further details.
- ❖ **Prayer Chain:** Confidential prayer requests can be made by phone or email to Sharon Iseli (604-244-1636) or Freda Ross (604-326-5123).
- ❖ **Pastoral Care:** Pastor John can be reached in the event of an emergency at any time on 604-779-2356. His email is: [seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com](mailto:seniorpastor@rockofhelp.com).
- ❖ **Devotionals:** Copies of Our Daily Bread are freely available by request from the church office.

## “Let Justice Roll”

*“Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps. But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!” (Amos 5:23–24)*

For many Christians, the church’s—any church’s—main focus should be on helping bring change to people’s individual lives. It is not our business to seek social transformation or improvement. We should leave that to the politicians, they argue, and not be distracted by such worldly affairs.

The problem with such a position is that Jesus and the apostles had a great deal to say about the importance of caring for the poor and the needy and of reaching out to the socially oppressed and marginalized. The Old Testament takes political and economic affairs so seriously that it lays out detailed guidelines for them. And the testimony of the prophets is consistently to call the people of Israel to observe such scriptural standards.

Our reading from Amos is a classic case in point. Amos was a humble shepherd from the southern kingdom of Judah who was called to intervene prophetically in the affairs of Israel in the 8th century B.C. So he probably delivered his words of warning and exhortation in the court of King Jereboam II about 2,770 years ago.

And what was his message? It is very simple. “Seek good, not evil, that you may live,” he says, as he brings God’s Word in verses 14 and 15 of Amos 5. “Then the Lord God Almighty will be with you, just as you say he is. Hate evil, love good; maintain justice in the courts. Perhaps the Lord God Almighty will have mercy on the remnant of Joseph.”

In other words, the people of Israel are to honour their religious commitments and live true to God’s expectations. But they are not just to do this in their personal affairs, such as they are.

They are to "maintain justice" elsewhere, in the public sphere, like the law courts. For God's concern is with their whole society, not only their private lives.

The strength of God's feelings about how Israel conducts its business perhaps emerges most clearly in Amos 5:21-24. If there's one occasion when people tend to rest secure that they are doing the right thing, it is when they worship. We may not always enjoy our religious services or believe that they are exactly what God has in mind. But we generally assume that it is good to worship God.

But listen to what God says through Amos. The prophet has already warned that when God comes to judge Israel, they will not enjoy the experience. But verse 21 following could not be much stronger. "I hate, I despise your religious feasts; I cannot stand your assemblies. Even you bring me burnt offerings and grain offerings [as sacrifices], I will have

***"God is interested in the whole of our world, not just the church, and God asks us to play our part in helping bring our society more in line with biblical values."***

no regard for them. Away with the noise of your songs! I will not listen to the music of your harps."

I don't know how we'd feel if God said those words to us. We certainly wouldn't be very encouraged, I suspect. And why does God bring this message to Israel? The answer, I think, lies in one of the most well-known Old Testament verses. "But let justice roll on like a river," Amos prophesies in verse 24, "righteousness like a never-failing stream!"

"But let justice roll on like a river, righteousness like a never-failing stream!" So there we have it again! God wants to see an Israelite society ordered according to biblical standards. And God feels so strongly about these requirements that even the people's religious observances become obnoxious, unless they are met.

We obviously don't share the precise situation of Amos' listeners. We do not live in a theocratic state like ancient Israel, and we are not



called to make animal sacrifices. We belong to the heavenly society of the church, to the Body of Christ, and Jesus has already made the only sacrifice necessary to earn our salvation and achieve God's full forgiveness and acceptance.

But the words of Amos 5 can still speak to us about how much God values social justice and about the kind of worship that God truly requires of us. For God is interested in the whole of our world, not just the church, and God asks us to play our part in helping bring our society more in line with biblical values.

God is looking for more than just the worship of our mouths. God asks us to "walk the talk."

**Pastor John Oakes**

## Major Prayer Needs

1. Our sick & shut-ins
2. Our online services and Zoom outreach
3. All who are anxious, depressed, or lonely
4. Government leaders
5. Doctors, nurses and care workers, especially those from our own community
6. The complete defeat of COVID-19



1. All Ebenezer children are welcome to join a weekly half-hour Sunday School on Zoom at 11:00 a.m. every Sunday. Please contact the church office or Sharon Tobert for more details.
2. Pastor John and Kirsten invite all Ebenezer youth and young adults to a weekly Zoom online fun night on Saturdays at 7:30 p.m. Every evening includes games and quizzes. For access, go to this link and enter Meeting ID: 851 704 4556.
3. The Friday Zoom Bible Study and Prayer Meeting is now on summer break and will resume in September.
4. The Zoom Women's Prayer Meeting, hosted by Rhea Ravanera, generally meets Saturdays at 5:00 p.m. For further info, please contact Rhea (604-537-0738). Access is through this link, using meeting ID 349 890 420, or by phone at 778-907-2071.

# EBC Update

VBS REPORT –  
JULY 13–17, 2020

The children's summer programme at EBC was a blast! We had six children who attended the week-long program that was run in the evenings. Each day we would spend time singing worship songs, learn about a Bible character who lived for God and memorize Scripture verses. The children learned five verses over the course of the week and each child was able to recite all of them on the last day.



Please continue to pray for all the children and leaders who took part!

After the time of worship, we would go outside and play games. The children loved playing tag with pool noodles and going on scavenger hunts. On Friday the children were delighted to have a water gun fight and water balloon toss. After games we would have snack and then craft. We were able to re-use many crafts from previous VBS's. Over the course of the week the children made glow-in-the-dark bracelets, tin can telephones and wax candles. They also planted seeds and did splatter painting. We were so honoured to lead the kids' summer programme this year and are so grateful for all your prayers and support!

Meg Tobert and Charissa Ratum





## The Sick and the Suffering

**We pray for** all our sick, shut-ins and bereaved, and for all who care for them. We especially lift up members of the Ebenezer community who have been home- or hospital-bound for some time, including:

Elsie Baum  
 Waldemar Becker  
 John & Frieda Hait  
 Lavina Hait  
 Ileen Konnert  
 Irene Maas  
 Ann Ramsden  
 Diana Reichert  
 Jose & Elena Ronsano  
 Pearl Weiss

**We remember** the family and friends of the recently deceased:

Douglas Gordon Reichert (July 18, 2020).

**May they find healing and wholeness, comfort and peace, in Christ.**

## Our Building and Neighbourhood

**We pray for** our long-term building users and renters, some of which currently cannot use our facilities because of COVID-19, including:

Faith Chinese Baptist Church  
 Montessori Children's House  
 Overseas Chinese Bible Fellowship  
 Bible Study Fellowship

**We lift up** our neighbourhood and all who live and work in South Vancouver.

**We thank God** for the opportunities we have to serve and to reach out to our neighbours and we ask God's help and guidance to do so.

## Church Leadership

**We lift up** our church leaders:

### PASTORAL STAFF

Senior Pastor, Dr. John Oakes  
 Director of Music, Grant Gwynn

### BOARD OF ELDERS

Bill Konnert (Moderator), Rajender Kumar, John Oakes, Rhea Ravanera, Loren Stark, Sharon Tobert.

### BOARD OF DEACONS

Elfrieda Brose, Nominations  
 Graham Gertz, Stewardship and Trustees  
 Noel Pocardolacion, Ushers and Welcomers  
 Freda Ross, Missions  
 Jennifer Sinclaire, Christian Nurture  
 Christina Whitman, Women's Ministries

## Young People and Families

**We pray for** all our families, young adults, youth and children, as they prepare for the Fall and we ask God's guidance and blessing for our young people's church programming and its leadership.

## BC Baptist Association Churches— July–August Prayer List

**We intercede for** different churches and leaders every week in the BCBA of NAB, including:

July 05	Ebenezer Baptist, Vancouver
July 12	Faith Chinese, Vancouver/Surrey/Tri-Cities
July 19	Immanuel Baptist Church, Vancouver
July 26	Vancouver Zion Church
August 2	Pilgrim Church, Vancouver
August 9	NAB Interim Executive Director
August 16	Faith Baptist, Vernon
August 23	Open Door Fellowship, Barrière
August 30	Grace Gospel Church, Cawston