

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

PILGRIM PEOPLE
serving God
by serving others

SEPTEMBER 2020

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR NERSES BALABANIAN

Be Still, and Know I am God

Psalms 46

Luke 19:11-27

Lately I realized how many things happen around me over which I don't have any control. This concept is not new, but it hit me lately. The explosion in Beirut, the pandemic in the US and around the world, the California fires and the smoke... you name it. One after each other came and hit us. Ok, so we don't have control over many things.

The Word of God is also teaching us: ***"Be still, and know that I am God.***

***I will be exalted among the nations,
I will be exalted in the earth!"***

(Psalm 46:10 ESV)

Wait a minute, Lord. You want me to stay still. Do you want me to freeze?

The Hebrew word for "be still" is *raphah*, which means: to sink, relax, sink down, let drop, to let go, stop striving...

The picture is clear: surrender to God. He is in control the situation.

Does this mean we don't do anything? Do we just sit on the chair and do nothing?

Please read Palm 46. It starts with

worship and prayer: ***"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble."*** (v1)

The entire psalm is describing how God is in control in the midst of trouble.

Now, that is comforting. It gives me hope every day by trusting in Him and worshipping Him.

Going back to the main verse: "Be still, and know that I am God." Knowing God is not just an intellectual exercise. It is not just pushing information into our heads. It is a close, intimate relationship with our God. That is why worship, prayer and adoration is part of knowing God. Reading His Word, contemplating on His Word, practicing what Christ taught us help us know God. God will transform our lives daily to be like Jesus. Thus relax, stop, surrender, give the control to God and know Him.

Now it does not end here. "Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among nations."

God will do His part. But He also gave us responsibilities. There is a famous quote: "Know God and Make Him Known". This slogan motivated me

to be an ambassador of Jesus in this world.

Lately Kevin and I have been preaching from the parables of Jesus. There was a nobleman who was planning on going away to a distant country to be crowned as a king. However, before going away he called his servants and gave them ten *pounds*, or *minas* (three months' wages) and asked them **to put the money to work**. The nobleman commanded the servants to invest the minas he entrusted them until the day of his return. "Put whatever is given to you to work; one day the nobleman will return as a king and will ask you for your inventory. Are you ready?"

Not everyone was happy with this. There was some opposition. "But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, '**We don't want this man to be our king.**'" (14) Not everyone will like us; we will be criticized or even ridiculed. That should not stop us from serving the Lord.

In this pandemic time, sometimes we feel we are paralyzed. There is the

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Badveli Nerses Message:

Be Still

Continued from page 1

danger of doing nothing. I fall in that trap as well. The “nobleman”, the “king”, the Lord Jesus is asking us to invest whatever is given to us. So the question is, “When is the right time to invest for the Lord?”

The answer is now, yesterday, tomorrow...

How does the story end?

The King, the former Nobleman came back, and asked his servants to come and see Him.

We read:

“Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it.”

The King will ask for the inventory. “What did you do with the minas? How much business have you done?”

Or

“What did you do with your church ministries? Did you work hard to represent Christ in the marketplace, in the world?”

All the servants received ten minas.

One of them gained ten more. The King was pleased with that. Please listen carefully to what He said:

“Well done, my good servant!” his master replied. Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.” (16)

“Good Job, for being faithful and trustworthy.”

- **The world teaches us about success.**
- **God teaches us about being faithful, trustworthy.**

God is searching and examining our hearts. He is looking if His servants are faithful in His fields.

This is what we see in the parable. Another servant made five minas. The King was also pleased about that.

Please notice: it is not how much one makes, but it is putting the “minas,” the abilities God gave in the first place, in action.

Let us summarize:

We live in an upside-down world. Be still, surrender, stop, relax, breathe, be silent and come to God.

He is in control. Get to know Him daily, and use your talents (minas) so that His name will be glorified.

“Be still, and know that I am God. I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth!” (Psalm 46:10 ESV)

MODERATOR'S REPORT

And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him.

(Col. 3:17, ESV)

Let me begin by greeting you in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. I pray that you are keeping safe and healthy during these unprecedented days of the pandemic of COVID-19. Our consolation is that God is our refuge and strength in times like these (Psalm 46:1).

Prayer: It is in these times that we need to be in serious prayer. Therefore, I would like to challenge ALL OF US, as the PACC Congregation, **to pray fervently for God's continued protection, guidance and wisdom for our pastors, church leaders, congregation and our nation.**

Church Ministries: We thank the Lord that the church ministries continue through the various boards and committees. As we begin the new church year this month, I pray for Badveli Nerses and Badveli Kevin, as they untiringly provide leadership and opportunities for continued worship and connection. I pray for the leadership of the various ministries as they remain committed with excitement and joy.

Board/Committee Elections: As previously reported, in accordance with California CDC Guidelines for the COVID-19 pandemic, we were unable to hold the customary congregational meeting (stated in the bylaws) for the purpose of electing new board and committee members. Therefore, on a one-time basis, the election was conducted through mail-in ballots.

It is my pleasure to announce that the proposed slate of officers, board and committee members was unanimously approved. I wish to take this opportunity to express my sincere gratitude to the outgoing board and committee members for their diligence and dedication in fulfilling their duties. It was my honor and pleasure to work with these committed individuals. I would also like to welcome and look forward to working with the newly elected church leaders as we serve God together through our church.

In closing, the Council wishes to remind the Congregation of the opportunity to support the church ministries through your donations. If God leads you to contribute, please refer to the PilgrimChurch.com website, where you will find a sub-menu called “On-line Giving”; or if you prefer you may send in your check by way of U.S. Mail.

As it is, there are many parts, but one body.

(1 Corinthians 12:20 NIV)

– by Moderator Edward Saliba

2020 ANNUAL GIVING RECAP

*For where your Treasure is,
there your heart will be also.*

(Matthew 6:21)

The graph shown indicates the budgeted amount for annual contributions. The current month indicates where we should be at this time, based on the budget. The final amount shown is the actual contributions we have collected through July 2020. We continue to maintain collections at 86% of the budgeted amount. We have certainly defied the summer slump this year! My prayer is as we resume back to normal in the near future there will never be a summer slump again! Our thanks and worship to our Heavenly Father shines through.

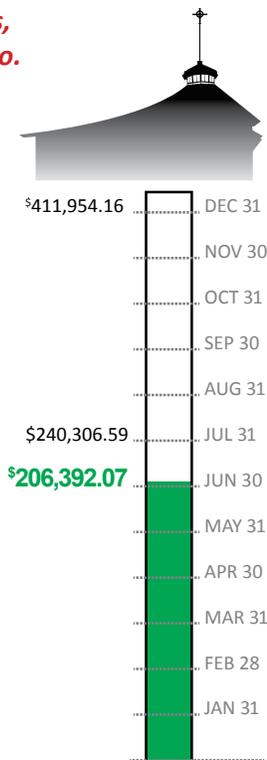
We are also appreciative to our congregational members as well as to our dear friends of Pilgrim for continued support for the projects

that arise. The Board of Trustees has been persistent in addressing the many concerns that have risen during the last couple of years. Projects related to the age of our buildings, new technologies that require implementation and needed improvements to accommodate our growing congregation have been met with generous help from all. These projects are beneficial and moving us forward to further serve our amazing God!

As the calendar turns to September thoughts of fall come to mind. I try not to let the challenges of the times dim the joy of coming cooler days, the holidays and celebrations together. They may be different this year but let us keep in mind this is only a season in our lives. Take advantage of the difference in our lives and routines because we will return back to normal and opportunities that exist now will be gone. Be thankful for what we do have and implement changes during this time that our normal schedule prohibits. Most of all continue to be in the Word and know that while chaos may surround us our God is constant, never failing and is always there. God's got this!

Have you not known? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He does not faint or grow weary; his understanding is unsearchable. He gives power to the faint, and to him who has no might he increases strength. Even youths shall faint and be weary, and young men shall fall exhausted; but they who wait for the Lord will renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint. (Isaiah 40: 28-31 ESV)

— by Treasurer Patrice Ruble



PACC MEN'S FORUM

On August 12, the Men's Forum went to the Evangel Home for a Back To School barbecue. We handed out backpacks to all the kids filled with all the supplies needed for their new school year. We served hamburgers, hotdogs, Vicki's chili beans, potato salad, drinks and ice cream.

Everyone was thrilled and appreciated our hospitality. God's grace and love was surely at our side.



OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD 2020

Pilgrim Church is participating in **Operation Christmas Child** once again this year. Shoeboxes and instructions will be available after church each Sunday starting on Sunday, September 20 or can be obtained by calling the church office. Fill a shoebox and make the difference in the life of a child through the POWER of a SIMPLE GIFT.

WITH SYMPATHY

We are deeply saddened of the passing of:

Frances Ajoian Scheadewitz on June 23

Our condolences to the Scheadewitz family.

Well done, good and faithful servant.

You have been faithful over a little;

I will set you over much.

Enter into the joy of your master.

(Matthew 25:21)

A Brief History of Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church

PART II

In July 1953, Reverend Harry M. Missirlian arrived to assume the leadership of Pilgrim Church. The church was now growing, and the Baby Boom caused a substantial increase in the number of children at the church. Beautiful as it was, the current church building lacked the space and modern amenities to adequately serve the growing congregation anymore.

Farsighted members recognizing the need for a new church location away from the downtown area, spearheaded the move to buy land in the northern part of the rapidly growing city. Pilgrim Church was able to purchase eight and a half acres of land just south of Dakota on First Street.

Fundraising for the new church began and the entire congregation – from the youngest, who saved coins in church-shaped piggy banks, to the oldest – gave generously to make the new church a reality.

Richard Manoogian, who grew up in the church, was chosen as the architect. Manoogian's desire was to create a design that incorporated everything a minister felt needed to be part of church life.

On October 11, 1959, the groundbreaking ceremonies took place on the site of the new church with much rejoicing. Construction began in the fall of 1960 and cornerstone laying ceremonies took place on December 4, 1960. During the construction of the buildings, women, men and children of all ages helped with shovels and brooms in hand. The first building to be completed was the social hall, with the administration and educational buildings following shortly thereafter. The first service was held at the new location on June 16, 1961, in the social hall, which served as the temporary sanctuary.

Ten years later after the groundbreaking ceremony, the construction of the sanctuary was



Left:
Cornerstone laying ceremony, 1960

Below:
Sanctuary construction



started. Manoogian designed the sanctuary using contemporary materials but also incorporating Armenian architecture in its design to reflect the culture of the worshippers.

The blending of culture and faith was also reflected in the free-flowing pattern of the stained-glass windows illustrating the life of Christ on the north windows and the history of the Armenian people on the south windows. Two other stained-glass windows salvaged from the M street church were now in the narthex of the new sanctuary.

No detail was too small for Manoogian. The design of the acoustics was carefully coordinated with the pipe organ design to obtain the maximum reverberation time compatible with excellent hearing quality for the Word of God.

On March 15, 1970, the beautiful sanctuary was completed and dedicated with a joyful service. Also,

in 1970, the church realized that its youth program needed a full-time director. Karl Avakian, then a high school teacher and seminary student, but later a pastor and still later the Minister to the Union for the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America, became the first Youth Director.

From the time Pilgrim Church first began to occupy the First Street location, an electronic organ was used. The church dedicated a new pipe organ for the sanctuary on January 31, 1971, a few days after the seventieth anniversary of the founding of the church. Donations from 1956 to January 1971, in memory of two hundred and forty-two parishioners, paid for the organ.

Rev. Missirlian retired in 1980 to become the first Minister to the Union of the AEUNA and received the title of Pastor Emeritus.

*To be continued in the
October Progress*



An Open Letter to Middle School and High School Parents

The year is getting started, AND distance learning seems odd, AND we don't really see an end to this "shelter in place", AND the church is meant to be a community, community means people together – how do we do church and more specifically our student ministries? Which leads to the question, when does Youth Group (UthGrup) start up again, AND in the back of my mind, I'm asking, "What will it look like?" The necessity of Social Distancing, as well as gathering outside presents hurdles that I've not completely figured out how to jump over.

Here is what we do know:

We are making some changes to the program, dividing up Middle School and High School, each will now have their individual meeting day.

High School students will be meeting from 3:30pm to 4:30pm Sundays, beginning September 13, 2020;

Middle School students will be meeting from 6pm to 7pm on Fridays, beginning September 18, 2020.

- Until the church is able to open up completely and we have the okay from the Council, we will be meeting outside of the buildings. This will require students to bring their own chairs, bibles, pencils, notebooks, etc.
- We will be taking attendance and expecting parents to inform the church should anybody in the family become ill, so that I can inform the other families.
- At present, we will only be meeting for one hour, however, when things open up and we can gather more freely we will expand on those times.
- Finally, for the year we are going to be focusing on the Prophet Jeremiah, and the changing times through which he was called to be faithful to God and declare God's call on the lives of the people. Ultimately, leading to his vision of a new covenant which came about in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

We hope that your student can join us Friday evenings for middle schoolers; or Sunday afternoons for High Schoolers.

Grace and peace,

Rev. Kevin Kasper, Associate Pastor

Sunday School Update!

Hello Amazing Parents!

How are you? I realize this Back to School season looks unlike any other we've seen or anticipated. Helping your children adjust to Distance Learning and all that comes with it can undoubtedly lead to some struggles. I am praying for you. I am praying for your family. You can do this! **"I can do all this through him who who gives me strength."** (Philippians 4:13)

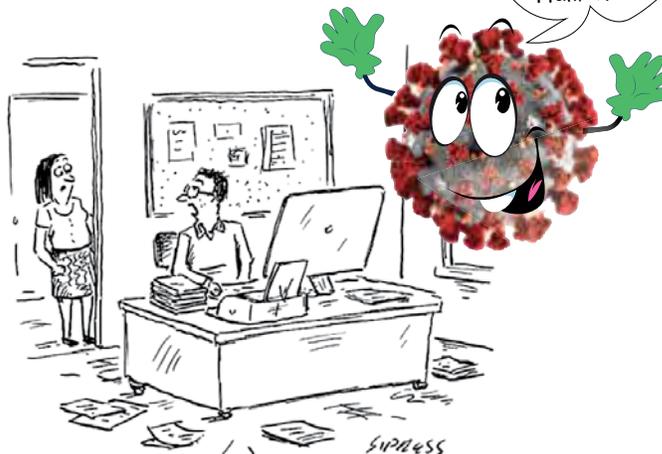
I'm excited to tell you that Krista Kasper has agreed to serve as Assistant Superintendent. Between the two of us, we have 25 years experience in home education. This includes not only our children, but many others we've had the privilege of teaching over the years. Together with the Children's Ministry Team, we are committed to serving the children of PACC and their families. We have an outstanding year planned ahead. You will not want your children to miss out! We are going to take advantage of the beautiful outdoors while we study the Gospel of John in its entirety. The more your children are able to be here on Sundays, the more complete picture of the Book of John they will have! Appropriately, will be incorporating gardening into this time. Many thanks to Gene Kezirian who has begun to install raised garden beds especially for the children. There is so much to look forward to during our time together! I look forward to seeing your children at "The Garden."

Blessings,

Melinda Eritzian

To our dear families with younger children, we haven't forgotten you! As soon as we are able to accommodate children 0-5 years and utilize the nursery and have classes for ages 3-5 years, we certainly will!

A little more COVID-19 Humor!



"I can't remember—do I work at home or do I live at work?"

PILGRIM
Armenian
CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

3673 North First Street
Fresno, California 93726-6870

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

OUTDOOR WORSHIP SERVICE

Sunday mornings • 9:00am

Masks Mandatory. Social distancing

and CONTINUING...

ONLINE MORNING WORSHIP

Go to PilgrimChurch.com

Click on the link to watch

the online Sunday Worship • 10:30am

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Fall Sunday School

begins September 13 • 9:45-10:45am
for Grades 1st-6th

Come join us in
"The Garden"
at the west lawn
where we will
"GROW"
closer to Jesus.

