

PILGRIM'S PROGRESS

PILGRIM PEOPLE
serving God
by serving others
APRIL 2024

A MESSAGE FROM PASTOR NERSES BALABANIAN

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor 4:7)

Have you ever thought of yourself as a jar of clay?

Paul who suffered, was beaten, and persecuted, knew that his body was made of clay. Jars of clay are very fragile. You look at them; you think they are firm. But a small accident, and they will shatter into pieces.

Jesus' body, the earthly body was also a jar of clay. Jesus was beaten badly and tortured by the Roman soldiers. He was executed in the worst way, crucified on a cross. He was resurrected and he was given a new body, a new “jar”. His resurrection is the most important event in history. This event conquered death. Death was swallowed. Sin was defeated. Satan was conquered.

Here is the Good News of Resurrection Sunday: Jesus Christ is our treasure.

Jars of clay reminded me of some beautiful pictures and stories from the Bible.

They brought back to my mind the **wedding of Cana**. Jesus was invited to the wedding. So were his mother Mary and other friends. As the wedding went on, the wine ran out. It was very embarrassing not to have enough wine for the wedding guests. Mary, the mother of Jesus asked him to do something by saying, “they have no more wine.”

Jesus asked for some **jars of water** to be brought to him.

“Nearby stood six stone water jars, the kind used by the Jews for ceremonial washing, each holding from twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus said to the servants, ‘Fill the jars with water’; so they filled them to the brim.” (John 2:5-7)

These jars were huge, and the amount of water was tremendous. Besides the miracle of turning water into wine, there is a theological point in this story.

Those jars of clay had a ceremonial meaning. They held hundreds of gallons of water for the ceremonial washing and the cleansing of sins. Every Jew had to be washed with water before going to prayer. **Jesus is the New Covenant.** Jesus is replacing those huge jars of water with the New Wine, the New Covenant. Jesus is the new wine. Through



his sacrifice on the cross, the shedding of his blood, we have a new beginning, salvation from sin. **The stone-made jars found a new meaning in Jesus.**

I think pottery is a great way to make artistic vessels. Have you seen how the artist works with the wet clay to mold it, shape it, and eventually give it a beautiful shape?

Isaiah describes God as the ultimate pottery artist.

“Yet you, LORD, are our Father. We are the clay, you are the potter; we are all the work of your hand.” (Isaiah 64:8)

Acknowledging that God is our Maker, our Creator is very important. We are the clay. Therefore, Paul says,

“But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.” (2 Cor 4:7)

Let me move to on another story of jars, the story of the **Prophet Elijah and the Widow at Zarephath**.

There was a drought. God instructed Elijah to visit this widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. Elijah arrived at this house and asked for food. The widow said, “We have almost nothing in our jar. We are preparing our last meal then we are going to die.”

God used Elijah to teach them that when God touches empty jars (jars of clay), new things will happen. Elijah said to her, “Go make the food.” Elijah told her what God had promised:

“The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.” (1 Kings 17:14) and indeed,

continued on page 2

2024 PACC EVENTS

Christian Women of First Street	April 4
Genocide Commemoration	April 21
Genocide Commemoration, Wednesday Night	April 24
Mother's Day	May 12
Memorial Day Picnic	May 26
Graduation Elevation.....	June 2
Congregational Meeting.....	June 9
Summer Student Mission Trip	June TBA
Father's Day.....	June 16
Vacation Bible School	July 28-Aug 1
Rally (Renewal) Sunday	Sept. 8
Harvest Banquet.....	Oct. 12
Thanksgiving	Nov. 24
Congregational Budget Meeting.....	Dec. 1
Christmas Worship Celebration.....	Dec. 22
Christmas Eve Service.....	Dec. 24

Bible Study Opportunities

OFFERED WEEKLY

Sunday

Sunday School for Children
(Nursery available)
.....9:15-10:15am

Monday

Fruit of the Spirit Ladies.....6:30-8pm

Wednesday

Ladies Morning10-11am
UthGrup, High School6-7pm
College 7:30-8:30pm

Thursday

Young Adult.....7-8pm

Friday

TGIF Bible Study with Breakfast for Men7-8am
Journey to Resilience 10am
UthGrup, Middle School 6-7pm

OFFERED MONTHLY

Apr. 6: Tabitha Circle 10:30am

Apr. 17: Dorcas Guild Circle (Overflow Room)12:45pm

Apr. 20: Home Builders (Overflow Room) 6pm

New Jars

Continued from page 1

“the jar of flour was not spent (used up), neither did the jug of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by Elijah.” (1 Kings 17:16)

There is a treasure in the earthly, fragile, empty vessel.

My last example is from Thursday night in the Passion Week when **Jesus washed the disciples’ feet.**

It was the Passover meal. Usually slaves washed the feet of the guests. The water came in a vessel. Jesus changed the roles. He poured the water in the vessel, and the Lord of Lords, and the King of Kings knelt and washed the dirty feet of his disciples.

When Jesus touched the vessel, not only water flowed out, but also humility, grace, love, and servanthood. There is a treasure in the jars of clay.

Here is the Good News of Resurrection Sunday: Jesus Christ is our treasure.

Paul adds: ***“We always carry around in our body the death of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus may also be revealed in our body.” (2 Cor 4:10)***

Because of the cross and resurrection, our earthly vessels, our jars of clay will carry in our body the suffering of our Lord. Persecution will not stop, as long as we are in this world. Unfortunately, the evil will bring about suffering. Yet, when we suffer for Jesus, we carry in our body the “death of Jesus.” That is one side of the coin. Paul says, ***“...so that Jesus will be revealed in our body.”***

The resurrected Christ will be revealed in us every day as we suffer.

He will be revealed in our businesses, in our homes, in our daily activities.

Something will change in our earthly, fragile, muddy jars of clay. The treasure of resurrected Christ will be revealed in our lives.

I read a story from the days when East Germany lived under an oppressive regime. A young man deeply involved in the life of a church community was seized

by the Communist authorities, and never returned. Sometime later, another young man, well known as a hardened leader in the Communist-organized youth movement, began attending youth meetings and worship services at the same church. The congregation’s suspicions were aroused, and the pastor took the fellow aside and asked why he was coming. The young man replied by asking, “You know the fellow from your church who was seized and taken away?”

“Of course,” responded the pastor. “I knew him well, but we have not heard from him since.”

“Well,” said the visitor, “I saw him when he was being harassed and tortured. Not only did he refuse to betray his friends, but through it all he never showed any bitterness toward his tormentors. Even in the hour of death, there was no anger towards those who were about to kill him. Instead, he spoke of Jesus Christ, forgiveness, and God’s love.” The young man concluded, “And when I saw him die, I knew I must come, in spite of what it will cost me, to learn of his Christ and the love for our enemies that strengthened him in his last hours.”¹

It is Resurrection Day. It is the day that proves that the earthly vessels, the jars of clay will fade away, and the everlasting treasure of Jesus Christ will appear in us.

I will finish with the encouraging words of Paul:

“Therefore we do not lose heart. Though outwardly we are wasting away, yet inwardly we are being renewed day by day. For our light and momentary troubles are achieving for us an eternal glory that far outweighs them all. So we fix our eyes not on what is seen, but on what is unseen, since what is seen is temporary, but what is unseen is eternal.” (2 Cor 4:16-18)

Thanks be to God, who gives us victory through faith in our Lord Jesus Christ!

¹ Donald Shelby, Bold Expectations of the Gospel, quoted by Joel D. Kline, Who’s Holding on to Whom?

MODERATOR'S REPORT

At the March 19 Council meeting, the Bylaws Committee presented and received approval from the Council of proposed amendments to the church bylaws. It has been many years since the bylaws were amended, and since that time, the church has continued to progress. For example, meetings online have become a normal method for conducting business. The Bylaws Committee has prepared amendments to allow for meetings to occur in an online format if necessary. The amendments also update meeting requirements for many of the committees and have provided clarity to the voting structure of the Council. In addition, the expenditure of funds by the Board of Trustees has been increased to adjust for the increase in the costs of goods and services that has occurred over the last several years.

These are just a few of the amendments church members will be considering at our upcoming annual meeting on June 9. It may seem like focusing on bylaws takes us away from focusing on our spirituality; however, bylaws allow us to have order as we conduct the necessary business of the church. 1 Corinthians 14:33 states, ***“For God is not a God of disorder but of peace – as in all the congregations of the Lord’s people.”*** I hope all members will take the time to participate in the June 9 annual meeting to review and consider for approval the proposed amendments to the church bylaws. – Moderator Cristel Tufenkjian



JOIN US FOR SUNDAY SCHOOL!

In Sunday School, we spent the weeks leading up to Palm Sunday learning two different songs and practicing for a special program on Palm Sunday. During the program, the Sunday School children blessed the congregation by singing these songs, waving palm branches, and reading different passages from the Bible which they worked hard to practice. We are so grateful for the teachers and assistants who helped organize and prepare the children during this program. We will not be meeting for Sunday School on Easter Sunday, but we are looking forward to having our annual Easter Egg Hunt after the service. On Friday, April 12 at 4:00pm, we are looking forward to our Ponies and Pizza event where we will visit our mission, Rapha Ranch! At the ranch, we will be meeting the horses, learning how to care for them, learning more about the ministry, doing a craft, and eating pizza. All children must be accompanied by a parent, grandparent, or guardian at this event. Please RSVP to Julia Eritzian, Christian Tufenkjian, or Pam Jeffries by April. We are blessed to have so much to look forward to in the next few weeks.. – Julia Eritzian



ANNOUNCEMENTS WITH SYMPATHY

Gina Yegine Petrosyan – March 8, 2024

*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)*

**2024 AEUNA & AEYF
BIENNIAL
CONFERENCE**

**UNITE
&
IGNITE**

1 CORINTHIANS 12:12

JUNE 27-30

HYATT REGENCY SFO
SAN FRANCISCO, CA
BIENNIAL2024.ORG
@AEUNA_BIENNIAL_2024

Badveli Aram Babajanyan's Visit

On February 27-March 3, Pilgrim Church enjoyed the visit of Badveli Aram Babajanyan, the pastor of our sister church in Gyumri, Armenia. His visit was a busy but blessed time for all of us.

Badveli Aram led Bible Study for the Wednesday Morning women's group as well as the Men's TGIF Bible Study group. He shared the mission of the Gyumri church with the High School and College Bible Studies. He said he was very impressed by what goes on in all these groups as he met men and women of all ages who loved the Lord and were growing their faith.

Also, Badveli finally met in person with the members of the monthly Zoom Prayer Group after over two years of virtual meetings.

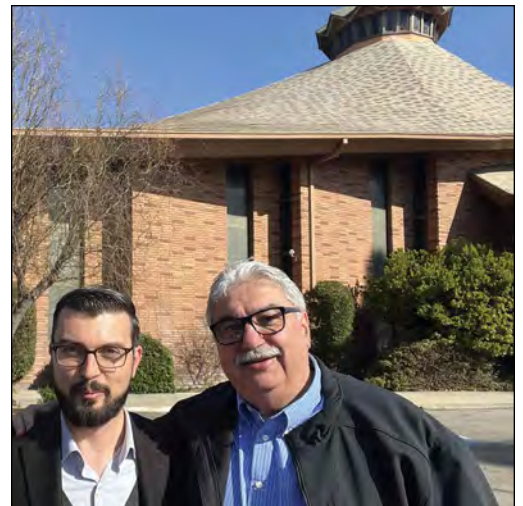
He visited the Charlie Keyan Armenian Community school and several of the Fresno landmarks which have been especially significant to the history of the Armenian community here. Last but not least, a visit to Costco was one of the most interesting of US experiences!

As our youth group is planning on going to Gyumri for their annual mission trip, Badveli Aram had an important meeting between the leaders of the project Badveli Kevin and Sedrak Israyelyan regarding the details of the trip.

Before heading to LA, Badveli Aram preached on Sunday morning. During the service all the pastors in the congregation came forward to lay hands and pray for him, his family, and his ministry. After the service, he gave us a report of the church life in Gyumri in the Social Hall and answered the questions of the audience.

We will continue praying for the ministry of our sister church. May God bless them abundantly.

— By Sevan Balabanian



PILGRIM *Armenian* CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

3673 North First Street
Fresno, California 93726-6870

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

In-person 10:30 am

Online at 10:30 am

On our website: pilgrimchurch.com

Non-Profit Org
US Postage
PAID
Permit No. 41
Fresno, CA


July 5 – July 19, 2024

Join Us!



**AMAA
Summer
Internship**


EXPERIENCE ARMENIA,
EXPERIENCE FULFILLMENT



**2024 ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
COMMEMORATION PROGRAM**

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 24 | 6:30PM
FRESNO STATE ARMENIAN GENOCIDE MONUMENT

Keynote Speaker
Stefani Booroojian
KSEE24 Anchor & Reporter



**ARMENIAN GENOCIDE
COMMEMORATIVE COMMITTEE
FRESNO**

agcfresno.com
instagram.com/agccfresno
facebook.com/agcfresno