



# The Beacon

The Newsletter of First Baptist Church of Salt Lake City—  
March 2016 Vol 10 Issue 2

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*\*Throughout 2016, Pastor Curtis will be presenting articles on progressive theology.*

## **Progressive Theology 101: God**

What exactly do we mean when we talk about God? Like most people I grew up with a particular image of God that I think is probably typical. God is a being out there; in heaven or somewhere beyond the world. I could not help but picture God as a man; a person who looked down from above (often with displeasure). God was an authority figure who shows right and wrong and holds us to it. I thought of God as loving, but also strict, like a particular kind of father. God was willing to intervene under certain circumstances, activated by prayer or providence. God was just but merciful in doling out blessings and woes but God was pretty much moving the chess pieces around the board. I would ask God for things, big and small, and if things went my way, it was God's will for my life. However, if I asked for things and they didn't happen, it was not in God's will. Furthermore, when hard things happened--death, tragedy, disaster--it was often felt that this was also God's will somehow and that if we could see things the way God did it would make sense.

This difficulty with this view of God is that it basically turns God into a puppet master who is making everything happen. While that means that God blesses and protects me in particular circumstances it conversely means that God is choosing not to bless or protect others. If God saves my life from a deadly crash, he is choosing to allow all the other deadly crashes to happen. This kind of God is also a bit punitive, in spite of all the grace talk. God metes out blessings or punishments based on our behavior or "the plan." I posit that this kind of god, while familiar, is not quite the way we really experience the reality of God. While it is natural for us to personify God, God is not a person. So what is God if not these things?

Another way of looking at God (one that is just as biblical) is to understand God not as something that is separate from the universe but, as Marcus Borg describes it, "an encompassing sacred reality around us and within us." This is affirmed in the Book of Acts where Paul describes God as "the one

in whom we live and move and have our being.” (17:28). Ireneus, an early Christian Theologian writing around 200 CE wrote, “God contains everything and is contained by nothing”. In other words, everything is in God, but God is more than everything. Within the Orthodox tradition, God is described as being transcendent and immanent. Transcendent meaning that God is more than the universe, immanent meaning that God is everywhere within the universe.

If this is the reality of God, then talking about God as intervening doesn’t especially make sense. Intervention is not necessary because God is already there. God’s divine presence is everywhere. God does not intervene, but God moves with purpose, as the Bible testifies. And there is a connection between ourselves and God. Our relationship to the sacred, our openness to the divine, our participation with the holy makes possible things that otherwise might not be possible.

So what does this mean for us on a practical level? I think it means that our expectations of how God operates in the world and in our lives is different. Rather than seeing God as manipulating things or fixing things, we begin to see God as a constant companion who comes along side on our journey. Rather than changing the circumstances of the world, God provides spiritual insight and connection so that we can change those circumstances. Rather than being a God who has made things happen out of His will, whom we either credit or blame, God transforms us from the inside out, equipping us with all we need to get through the difficulties of life.

I pray that this is thought provoking and, as always, feel free to talk to me about anything this might stir up for you.

Grace and Peace,  
Pastor Curtis

#### **March at FBC:**

- Mar 1: Beers and Bros at Fiddler’s Elbow at 6:30 pm
- Mar 6: Sunday Seminar following worship in Keck Hall
- Mar 10 : AB Women meeting at noon in the Library
- Mar 13: Foundation Annual Meeting following worship in the Library 1 pm
- Mar 15: Council of Ministries meeting at 5:45 pm
- Mar 18: Third Friday Bingo at 7 pm
- Mar 20: Palm Sunday
- Mar 24: Maundy Thursday
- Mar 25: Good Friday Service at 7 pm
- Mar 27: EASTER SUNDAY!
  - Easter Breakfast served 8:30 to 10:30 am
  - Easter Worship at 11 am
  - Easter Reception and Easter Egg Hunt following worship
- Mar 28: Office Closed

**Happy Birthday to:** Mar 2: Carol Wood. Mar 6: Sandra Clegg. Mar 7: Dustin Trent. Mar 12: Don Urry, Christopher Nelson. Mar 14: Christian Ellis, Kevin Wood. Mar 18: Peggy Keiffer. Mar 19: Matt Klassen. Mar 20: Carol Butler-Guilkey. Mar 21: Diane Cover. Mar 22: Lily Wood, Audrey Ken yon. Mar 25: Jurgen Beirwolf. Mar 27: Bertha Reyes. Mar 28: Bruce Burnett. Mar 29; Carlyn Chester Mar 31: Erika Roth.

**First Sunday Seminar:** Join us March 6 in the library to listen to a speaker from the Utah Aging speak about aging well, and to receive a list of tools and resources available as we age and for the care givers taking care of us. Estate planning, care giving, mentoring/ volunteering and end of life care are just a few of the topics to be discussed. Bring questions and join in this very important conversation of how to age well.

**ABWomen will** meet in the Library on March 10th at noon for lunch and a short meeting. All women are welcome

***Daylight savings time begins Sunday, March 13. Remember to turn your clocks ahead or you will arrive just in time for the closing hymn!***

**The 2016 Foundation Annual Meeting** will be held in the church library at 1:00 PM on March 13, 2016. This meeting will be for the election of Shirley Rogers as a Foundation Trustee for a three year term. There will also be quick review of 2015 Foundation activities and financial reports. The Foundation 2016 Budget will be presented for approval. The final order of business will be a drawing for \$20 Gift Certificate to the Olive Garden.

**Holy Week and Easter at FBC:**

**Palm Sunday—March 20:**

Palm procession with our kids and the beginning of Holy Week. Worship begins at 11 am

**Maundy Thursday—March 24:** Plans are underway for a Seder Dinner—watch the bulletin and Eblast for details.

**Good Friday—March 25:**

That sacred of days as we recall Jesus' crucifixion and his sacrifice for us. Service at 7 pm

**Easter Sunday—March 27:**

Our traditional Easter Breakfast will be served from 8:30 to 11:30 in Keck Hall.

Easter Worship begins at 11 am

Easter Reception and Easter Egg Hunt for the kids following worship

**Help us decorate the church for Easter:** Easter Lily Order Form: Please return to the office by MARCH

20th. Given by \_\_\_\_\_ in memory  
of \_\_\_\_\_ and/or in honor  
of \_\_\_\_\_ Plants are \$10.00 each Mention of the dedications  
will be made in the Easter Bulletin. Then you can take your lily home with you following Easter  
worship.

**AB GIRLS Spaghetti Dinner/Silent Auction** will be Sunday, April 17. If you can donate an item for the  
auction, contact Karen Carter. Tickets go on sale March 6. Bid sheets will be up April 3 and 10 in Keck  
Hall.

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