

“... being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.” *Philippians 1:6 (NIV 2011)*

Have you ever wondered what God is up to?

We trust that He is the Sovereign of the universe. He rules over everything. Romans 8:28 boldly states that “in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, who have been called according to His purpose.” Sometimes this assurance helps and sometimes it frustrates us because we don’t agree that our circumstances could ever be classified as “good.” We don’t understand what He’s doing!

This is frequently the case when we think about prayer. We pray about something. Even if we’re patient, all appearances can give us the impression that He’s ignoring us, saying “no,” or making us wait without any explanation. It’s that last expression that probably frustrates me the most: no explanation. At least, that’s how I feel.

I know, of course, that God does not owe me any explanation for when, how, or why He does what He does. He has given His One and Only Son as the atoning sacrifice for my sins—the highest and greatest sacrifice imaginable! Yes, I know He loves me. He’s clearly smarter than me. He’s wiser and understands, unfathomably and infinitely, more than I do about what is “good” for me or His purposes.

But sometimes I still wonder.

This lengthy quote by C.S. Lewis helps when I lose perspective:

“Imagine yourself as a living house. God comes in to rebuild that house. At first, perhaps, you can understand what He is doing. He is getting the drains right and stopping the leaks in the roof and so on: you knew those jobs needed doing and so you are not surprised. But presently he starts knocking the house about in a way that hurts abominably and does not seem to make sense. What on earth is He up to? The explanation is that He is building quite a different house from the one you thought of—throwing out a new wing here, putting on an extra

floor there, running up towers, making courtyards. You thought you were going to be made into a decent little cottage: but He is building a palace.

*“The command ‘Be ye perfect’ is not idealistic gas. Nor is it a command to do the impossible. He is going to make us into creatures that can obey that command. ...He will make the feeblest and filthiest of us into a god or goddess, a dazzling, radiant immortal creature, pulsating all through with such energy and joy and wisdom and love as we cannot now imagine, a bright stainless mirror which reflects back to God perfectly (though, of course, on a smaller scale) His own boundless power and delight and goodness. The process will be long and in parts very painful; but that is what we are in for. Nothing less.” (C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, New York: MacMillan Co., 1952, p. 160).*

If God will stop at nothing to make each of His children into perfect reflections of Himself, imagine what He has in mind for His church, His body, His bride! “... a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.” (Ephesians 5:27)

I can’t believe that all of this simply happens on the last day when He appears. I believe He’s working this reconstruction project throughout our lives and welcomes our cooperation. I want to cooperate with Him, even when it hurts, don’t you?

This is especially true when we think of unanswered prayer. Last month, I made a joke in church, “Thank God for unanswered prayers!” I laughed because I am grateful that He did not answer many of my prayers. But the more I think about it, there are more than a few that still have me puzzled. I believe He is working everything for my good and the glory of His kingdom, but it still stings.

That’s why we’ll be looking at *When Jesus Says “No”* in our English sermons during Lent. I invite you to join us in seeking God, to try to understand Him and His ways just a little more clearly as we approach our Easter celebration of the resurrection. I believe we’ll love Him and trust Him more fully!

●●●●● Family Life News ●●●●●

The Armenian Studies Program at California State University, Fresno will hold its *32nd Annual Banquet at 5 p.m. on Sunday, March 22, 2020, at Fort Washington Country Club in Fresno.* The gathering will recognize graduating seniors receiving a Minor in Armenian Studies and recipients of ASP Scholarships. In addition, the banquet will honor the Leon S. Peters Foundation and recognize Dr. Arnold and Mrs. Dianne Gazarian on the 30th Anniversary of the Berberian Endowed Chair in Armenian Studies at CSUF. More information is available by calling (559) 278-2669.



“Bold Love” is the theme of the *2020 Biennial General Assembly of the Armenian Evangelical Union of North America and Convention of the Armenian Evangelical Youth Fellowship.* The convocations will be held June 25-28, 2020 at the Crowne Plaza Philadelphia in King of Prussia, Pennsylvania. The theme of the biennial gathering is drawn from Hebrews 4: 16. For more details, please visit www.aeuna.org/2020-biennial-assembly.



The Session and congregation extend heartfelt congratulations to *George Vartanian* on recently earning his *Occupational Therapist Registered (OTR) Credential from the National Board for Certification in Occupational Therapy.* George is a graduate of the University of California, Irvine and Stanbridge University.



DEACON'S CORNER

“How Great Thou Art” is one of my favorite songs. The writer of this song, Carl Boberg, must have been filled with the Holy Spirit when he wrote this, which was originally a poem.

One day a Swedish editor was walking home in the bayside town of Monstera Bay, Sweden. A big storm of lightening and flash thunderclaps shook the air and Boberg went running for a shelter. When the storm calmed down, Boberg rushed home and opened his windows to let in the fresh bay air. The beautiful site of clear skies and the church bells sounding, stirred something deep in his soul. Boberg sat down and wrote O store Gud – [O Great God] a poem that later became “How Great Thou Art.”

When we experience the storms of this life, we need to remember that our Lord Jesus, with a shout of acclamation, will come and lead us home. Joy will fill our hearts. Then we will proclaim, “How Great Thou Art.”

●●●●● Sela Ghazarian



Gilbert Hovsepien, founder of Send Me Out Ministries, shared his family story, faith journey, and music with the congregation and community at the February 16 worship services. A native of the Islamic Republic of Iran, Gilbert was raised in a persecuted Christian family and church community. In 1994, his father, Reverend

Haik Hovsepien, was kidnapped and murdered by extremists.

The persecution continued when Gilbert entered mandatory military service and was beaten and imprisoned for possessing an Arabic Bible. He responded by sharing the Gospel message with the Muslims around him. Gilbert said at the 11 a.m. service, “I asked God to help me forgive my enemies. I forgave them by God’s Grace. I give all the credit to God; I just obey Him for where He leads me.” Gilbert added, “Where there is persecution, there is grace. Where there is more persecution, there is more grace. Not forgiving is like drinking poison and hoping the other person will die.” The California-based Send Me Out Ministries uses international media to strengthen the persecuted Church and to present the Gospel to Iran and beyond. Gilbert explained that six out of ten countries with the fastest-growing Christian churches are Islamic countries. More information about Gilbert’s ministry is available by calling (818) 497-7047 or visiting SendMeOut.org.



WOMEN'S MINISTRY NEWS

The Gathering Presents:
Cooking with Kohar



On Saturday, January 25, The Gathering committee was joined by 50 women to learn about the art of sini kufta making! The incredible cooking demonstration was conducted by **Kohar Kojayan**, and she did a beautiful job of incorporating her

knowledge about making kufta and asking for helpful hints from the audience. The Gathering strives to make each event multigenerational, and, for this event, we had ladies of all ages attend, give advice, and share their experiences about cooking with their families. Kohar mentioned many times that, "When cooking, especially when it's kufta, do it as a community because it will be that much more special and taste that much better." Everyone that attended this event was encouraged constantly with Kohar's words, "Don't be intimidated about cooking! Just go for it and try because it's about gaining experience and enjoying yourself. That's what cooking is all about, so don't be scared to do it. I encourage everyone to cook and go out of your comfort zone."



Kohar also surprised the attendees with a special Armenian dessert, kadayif! Once she concluded her demonstration, the ladies that attended were able to enjoy a wonderful kufta lunch that had been prepared prior by some outstanding women who volunteered

their time and effort. As everyone enjoyed their lunch and dessert, we were blessed with a devotional by Sela Ghazarian. She shared how the power of prayer has been instrumental in her life, and how God is able to show us His plans when we make time for Him and focus on His voice.

The Gathering Committee would like to thank everyone who participated and volunteered their time for this event. We will not have an event for the month of February, but our next event will be at FAPC on March 21 at 10:00 A.M. where we will be painting eggs with artist Sona Atoyan. We hope to see you there!

●●●●● Joy Rubio



YOUTH MINISTRY NEWS



This year at Camp AREV the theme was **FOCUS**. We talked about focusing on Jesus, casting aside the weights that hold us back and running to win.

Though there wasn't much snow, we had a lot of fun playing games inside and out, staying up late together, and worshipping God. As usual, the students wanted to stay a whole week long at camp, and we can't wait to go back during Spring Break and in July!

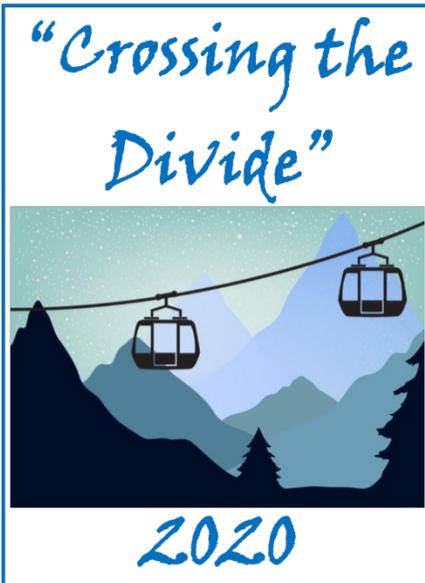
●●●●● Stephen Goodale



SAVE THE DATE!

We can't wait to tell you when **VBS** is this year... so we won't! We are proud to announce that this summer we will be having **VBS August 3rd through 7th at 9-11:30 am.** Come join us in the mornings to learn about Who God is, what He has done for us, and how we can love and serve Him! We can't wait to see you there!

MEN'S MINISTRY NEWS



“Crossing the Divide” was the theme of the 2020 FAPC Men’s Retreat. Thirty-three men between the ages of 12 and 70+ gathered at Hartland Christian Camp in the Sequoia National Forest on February 21-23. *Ken Perez of Menlo Park* was the keynote

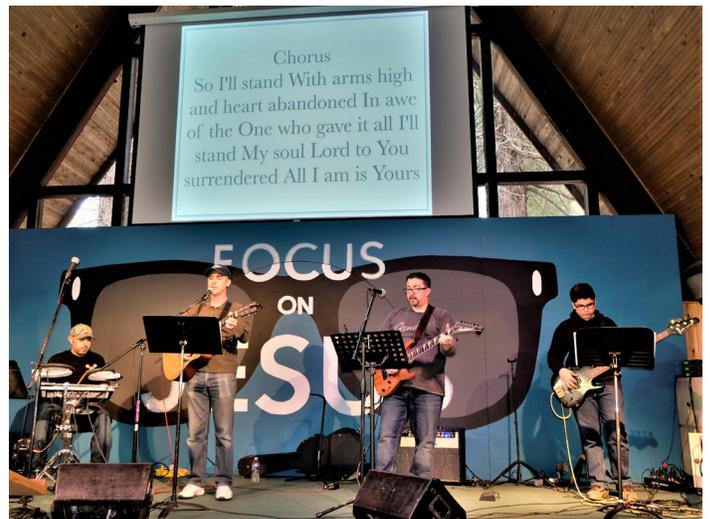
speaker for the 21st Annual Men’s Ministries weekend. A native of Alabama, Ken grew up in Bakersfield and was educated at Stanford University and the UCLA Anderson School of Management. He is currently Vice-President of Health Care Policy at Omnicell, Inc. in Mountain View. The retreat included four praise and teaching sessions in Sequoia Chapel, three prayer gatherings, personal testimonies by Andre Arifin and Steven Baker, three blocks of fellowship/gym/games time, and cuisine ranging from a Friday evening New England Thanksgiving dinner to a morning omelet bar with accompaniments.



On Friday evening, Ken recounted his faith journey and added, “I’m in a relationship with God and He is personally directing my life.” He shared the “Romans Road to Christ” by explaining the truths of Romans 3:23, 6:23, 5:28, and 10:9. He also shared Jesus’ “I Am” statements from the Gospel of John: (1) Bread of Life; (2) Light of the World; (3) Door of the Sheep; (4) Resurrection and the Life; (5) Good Shepherd; (6) The Way, Truth, and the Life; and (7) The True Vine. On Saturday morning, Ken spoke

on “Crossing Into the Business World and Being Mentored,” citing theologian John Stott as one of his many mentors. He explained that Jesus is calling us to make disciples, a process that requires faithfulness, availability, and teachability. Ken asked, “Are we Biblical and Christ-Centered? Are we graciously passing along what we’ve learned?” At midday on Saturday, the retreat guests participated in their first-ever drone-based group photo, courtesy of *Kalem Kazarian*.

In Session 3, Ken joined with longtime friends *Jeff McCollach, Paul Haroutunian, and Badveli Greg Haroutunian* for a panel discussion on the importance of male friendships and accountability in Christ. The panelists asked, “Are we walking alone or do we have a brother or two walking with us? Don’t trust yourself; share with brothers in an accountability relationship . . . to cope with blind spots.” Ken explained, “We must build a bridge of relationship to withstand the weight of truth.” On Sunday morning, Ken shared his final message, “Crossing over from Individualism to the Fellowship of the King.” Citing Acts 2:42-47, Ken urged the men to (1) meet regularly to stay current with one another; (2) build God-centered and Christ-focused relationships; (3) build up and encourage one another (Hebrews 10:24-25); (4) challenge and hold each other accountable in love; and (5) generously and sacrificially serve and care for one another.



FAPC Men’s Ministries extends special thanks to retreat Praise Team members for their multilingual ministry in music: *Frank Kazarian, Jesse Dunbar, Ara and Hagop Catchatoorian, Sevag Afarian, and Reverend Razmig Minassian*.

MEN'S MINISTRY NEWS

MEN'S RETREAT 2020



●●●●● Family Life News ●●●●●

The 72nd Annual Fresno-Clovis Prayer Breakfast took place on the morning of February 26 at the New Exhibit Hall in Downtown Fresno. With an attendance of 2,700, the Breakfast was considered the second-largest in the nation, behind the National Prayer Breakfast in Washington, D.C. Retired Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, Larry Powell, served as Master of Ceremonies. Breakfast Co-Chair, Sylvia Plumb, delivered the opening prayer. Dr. Fitzalbert Marius, of Family Community Church, led the Pledge of Allegiance and Dee Johnson followed with a rendition of “God Bless America.” Members of the “His Little Feet” dance ensemble offered praise music. Pastor Jim Franklin of Cornerstone Church shared the growing movement of “24/7 Prayer: Fresno Clovis Prays.”

Local governmental leaders extended greetings via video and those present were recognized by group. Four servant leaders extended prayers for our cities and community. They included Gerre Brenneman (Director Emeritus of Evangel home), Pastor J.R. Coleman (The Word Community Church), Pastor Eli Loera (Family Christian Assembly), and Deacon Edward C. Valdez (St. Anthony of Padua Parish). Reverend Alistair Begg, Senior Pastor of Parkside Church near Cleveland, Ohio, shared the keynote address, a meditation on Daniel 3 and the lives of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Pastor Begg explained, “There must be a radical shift in Bible-believing people in the United States. . . . Our ethical capital is low. The wind appears to be blowing hard in favor of secularism. . . . The American Church is now discovering what it is like to be exiles (1 Peter 1). . . . We’re not used to it; we don’t like it.”

Pastor Begg asked the audience two simple questions: “What does it look like to live as a Christian in a society that doesn’t like what Christians believe?” How do we prepare our children and grandchildren to live in this type of society?” Pastor Begg reminded the guests that “the God of the Sixth Century B.C. is still the same God” and pointed out how Daniel and his friends lived their lives. First, they were focused on God even though they were living in exile. Second, they were faithful to the end. Third, they were fearless in the face of idolatry. He added, “The Lord God Omnipotent reigns; it is so and we may trust Him entirely.” H. Spees concluded the Breakfast with a benediction, commissioning guests to “be part of the fight and NOT BACK DOWN.” Anne Graham Lotz, President of AnGel Ministries, will be the keynote speaker at the 2021 Fresno-Clovis Prayer Breakfast. Please visit FresnoClovisPrayerBreakfast.com for details.

Daylight Saving Time returns to California on **Sunday, March 8, 2020**. Remember to turn your clocks forward one hour on Saturday, March 7, and plan to be at FAPC for Sunday School, Worship, and Fellowship on the second Sunday of March.



The Business Journal of Fresno recognized *National Raisin Company* as the Number One Women-Owned Business in the Central San Joaquin Valley. Congratulations to *President LindaKay Abdulian and her team!*



The 24 Hours of Prayer started on February 17th First Armenian Presbyterian Church joined other churches to cover Fresno and Clovis in prayer. How exciting to think there will come a time when

every hour, of every day, each month, will be covered by a different church praying for the welfare of our community! Our day each month will be the 17th.

Our first month of 24/7 Prayer had 39 of the 48 half hour slots filled! There is still room for you. See Paul Haroutunian in the foyer after church, and contact the office to sign up @ 237-6638. We will pray for:

1. Spiritual awakening
2. Unbelievers to be saved
3. Unity between pastors and churches
4. Families
5. Life to be valued and protected through all stages of life, beginning at conception
6. Local and national government leaders

For more information email Paul Haroutunian @ hyepaul@gmail.com.

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St. Patrick's Breastplate

*Christ be with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me
 Christ in me, Christ beneath me, Christ above me
 Christ on my right, Christ on my left
 Christ where I lie, Christ where I sit, Christ where I arise
 Christ in the heart of every man who thinks of me
 Christ in the mouth of every man who speaks of me
 Christ in every eye that sees me
 Christ in every ear that hears me*

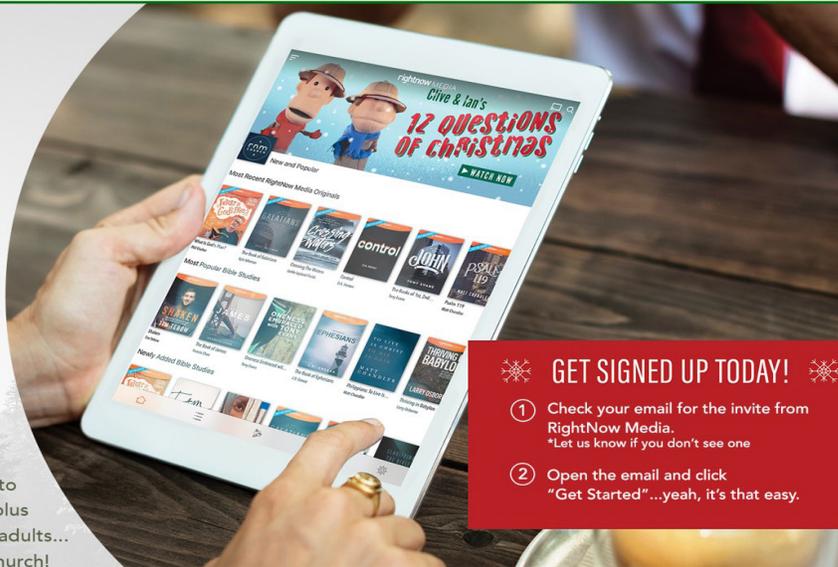


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FAPC CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

Serving together we can make a difference!
 Small ways. Big ways. All are important.

Where would you like to connect in ministry?

Help in a classroom.

Make events happen.

Work behind the scenes.

Count me in! Please contact me so I can learn how to make a difference!

Name _____

Best way to contact me _____

Best time/day to contact me _____

