

THREE GREAT ANNIVERSARIES



Group photo for the 70th anniversary of First Baptist Church of Walnut Creek

One member of First Baptist Church of Walnut Creek, California, exclaimed, “This was the best celebration I have ever attended!” It was truly a memorable occasion, a three-day celebration of anniversaries -- First Baptist Church’s 70th, Walnut Creek Christian Academy’s 60th, and Berean Christian High School’s 40th. Many enjoyed the festivities, including current and former church members and school families, friends from far and wide, and neighbors.

Even the mayor of Walnut Creek, on behalf of the city council, commended and recognized the vital spiritual and educational contributions that First Baptist Church, Walnut Creek Christian Academy, and Berean Christian High School have contributed to the Walnut Creek community through multiple decades. A tribute was sent from John Greening, the National Representative of the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches, and Ron Schrock of the California Association of Regular Baptist Churches, along with many letters from friends and missionaries who were unable to attend.

First Baptist Church of Walnut Creek first extended a call to worship on February 5, 1939, and was organized April 26, 1939. Over the years, the church has been comprised of dedicated people committed to sending out more than 150 members to full time ministry/missions, providing a strong missionary focus by actively supporting numerous missionaries, reaching out to other cultures within the community and abroad, and seeking pastors with a strong commitment to Christian education and a sound theological foundation.

First Baptist Church of Walnut Creek established the ministry of Walnut Creek Christian Academy in July 1949 in order to support the families and invest in the children of the community by providing a quality Christ-centered education designed to equip and challenge students to reach their unique potential spiritually, academically, socially, and physically.

Today, Walnut Creek Christian Academy serves as the oldest Christian school in continuous service to the families of the Bay Area, maintaining accreditation with the Association of Christian Schools International since 1971 and with the Western Association of Schools and Colleges since 1990. WCCA fosters a nurturing, mutually supportive school community of dedicated faculty and staff, Bible-believing churches, likeminded parents, and quality students who have gone on to distinguish themselves through service and leadership in the community and the church.

Seeking to expand their educational ministry, First Baptist Church and Walnut Creek Christian Academy established a high school which became independently incorporated as Berean Christian High School in February 1969.

Berean Christian High School now operates as the largest Christian high school serving the families of the East Bay, providing a quality Bible-based educational program, earning recognition for upholding high academic standards, and maintaining accreditation with the Association of Christian Schools International and regional accreditation with the Western Association of School and Colleges. School alumni have significantly contributed to their community both in the public and private sectors.

Coordinating their efforts, the church and both schools planned an unforgettable celebratory weekend, with one day to feature each ministry. The program began with WCCA's celebration on Friday, September 18, 2009, including a rock climbing wall, bounce houses, a maze, children's games, a walk down memory lane, memorabilia displays, and featured historians. Attendance exceeded expectations, with the gymnasium and outside areas overflowing with people of all ages. The kitchen served the school's original hot lunch (Hot Dog Day) at 1949 prices (50¢ for the whole meal), and ran out of hot dogs twice!

On Saturday, the high school activities began with a volleyball tournament, followed by junior varsity and varsity football games, carnival activities, and a burger bash.

The Sunday morning worship service commemorated First Baptist's rich heritage, featuring piano players and songs from three eras of church music and a PowerPoint presentation highlighting the history of Walnut Creek and the church. Members of our Tongan church sang, and current and former FBC members shared testimonials of the church's impact in their lives. Of course, the event included a delicious potluck, complete with beef brisket and two roasted piglets barbecued by the Tongan people. The children's program incorporated a bus tour of historic Walnut Creek and a stop at the local train museum. Adults and children alike crowded close for an outdoor picture which will memorialize the celebration for years to come.

Special guests shared in the day's joy. Former chaplain and current pastor Roger Welch, one of only seven first graduates, returned to tell of the school's life-altering influence on his spiritual growth. Alice Smith, a missionary to Brazil, and her daughter Judy attended, having furloughed in Walnut Creek, where Judy attended WCCA for several years. Wife of former FBC Pastor Tom Younger, Davina Younger and her daughter were present, and relived memories of the church during the 1980s. Home missionary Pastor Don Phipps and his wife Chris, former FBC members, traveled from Petaluma to report on their work.

Pastor Miller closed the celebration with a short message, challenging each one to focus on "Building to Last." Supporting his points with Scripture, he quoted a telling statement from a book: "All individual leaders, no matter how charismatic or visionary, eventually pass from the scene... Yet companies, organizations and institutions prosper over long periods of time through multiple generations of active leaders." Pastor Miller explained that this principle is also true of the institution of the church, "In the last 70 years, we have seen in Walnut Creek the building of a church, an academy, and a high school. Most often leaders were involved as pastors, principals, board members, administration, faculty, and staff who came here to build something bigger than themselves. They poured their lives into our church and schools that have continued to change lives for Jesus Christ long after they had left the scene. This is what we have seen here in Walnut Creek over the years, and this is what we are anticipating to see more of in the days ahead." Whether applied to individuals or the church as a whole, "Building to Last" is truly a fitting theme for yesterday, today, and tomorrow.