Three Days in Wonder Valley

By Whit Woodard

The beautiful Wonder Valley Ranch Resort was a fitting venue for our annual Christian Workers’ Retreat with the theme “Looking to Christ as We Look for Christ.” Pastor Randy Pullard set the tone with a plea for meaningful and powerful prayer that produces spiritual enabling, divine guidance, and personal fulfillment, based on the topic “Looking to Christ When Worried: Contentment in Christ.”

Pastor Shawn Hull shared his insight on “Looking to Christ When Weary: Confidence in Christ” by encouraging us to gain strength as we look back on God’s faithfulness in former days and ahead to Christ’s promises that produce endurance.

CARBC Representative Bruce McLain brought enlightening insight on “Looking to Christ When Wobbling: Courage in Christ.” He reminded us of the declaration, defense, description, difficulties, and deliberation of Paul’s ministry in 2 Corinthians 4, pointing to examples of looking to Christ when wobbling in our servanthood, in our commitment, or because of suffering.

Finally, Paul Pierce from The Friends of Israel culminated the fellowship with stirring remarks on “Looking for Christ When . . . .: The Believer’s Consolation (Hope) in Christ,” helping us to understand, anticipate, and apply our hope in Christ and His imminent coming.

The preaching was enhanced with ample time for making new friends, renewing old friendships, experiencing godly fellowship, and sharing in excellent food and recreation.

The words “What a fellowship, what a joy divine” from the familiar gospel song are a fitting exclamation for the combination of spiritual refreshment, physical rest, and recuperation enjoyed by all who participated. Our hearts were warmed and filled as we sang together under the musical direction of Pastors Gregory Oliver and Randy Pullard and as together we witnessed the beauty of God’s creation in the splendor of Wonder Valley.

90th Anniversary Bible Conference

“Still Faithful after All These Years” is the theme for the CARBC Annual Bible Conference, April 9–11, as we celebrate the 90th anniversary of the CARBC. First Baptist Church, El Monte, led by Pastor Jay Gauthier, will host this historic meeting. Speaking to our theme will be former CARBC Representatives David Wilcox and Ron Schrock, Southern California Representative Herb Rogers, and CARBC Representative Bruce McLain. Information for the conference will be posted at www.carbc.org as plans are finalized.

The CARBC began in 1929 with 19 churches. Two of those churches are still part of our association and will be recognized at the conference. They are First Baptist Church of El Monte and First Baptist Church of Wilmington.

CARBC Representative Bruce McLain states, “I am praying that this conference gives us a renewed appreciation for our heritage and a clear vision for our future.”
With the Lord: Gerald Harder

Gerald Harder was born Sept. 15, 1951, in Madison, Wis., to Alfred and Myrtle Harder. He grew up in Louisiana with his brother, Richard. He joined the US Navy at 18. While stationed in Key West, Fla., he met and married Connie, "his sweet angel," as he called her. In 2018, they celebrated their 45th wedding anniversary. He was born again Dec. 12, 1973. He was baptized and called to preach while attending Key West Baptist Temple. Pastor Harder graduated from Tennessee Temple in 1978 in the school’s heyday, as he used to say.

He started Canyon County Baptist Church in Caldwell, Idaho, immediately after graduating from Bible college. He moved to Vacaville, Calif., with his wife and four boys—Jesse, Joel, Nathan, and Andrew—in 1986. He served at Elmira Baptist Church for 32 years, loving people and lifting up Christ. Pastor Harder preached the word faithfully for 40 years and spoiled his 9 grandchildren with ice cream for 17 years.

As a preacher, I am rarely without words. But for the last three months, I have been speechless more times than at any other period in my ministry. The first speechless moment happened when I was driving through Paradise at sunrise on Nov 9. During the drive evacuating our home in Magalia, Kristy and I saw homes and buildings burning in lower Magalia and realized how close the fire was moving toward our home. We sat silently as we drove through Paradise and the destruction that surrounded us.

The second speechless moment came only minutes later as we sat in our car in front of what had been our congregation’s meeting place for the last 75 years. The auditorium, the educational building, and the original building were nothing but piles of rubble. Wisps of smoke rose here and there from the ruin.

Other times of speechlessness followed. Many of you know we held our breaths waiting word about one of our widows. At first we thought she had gotten away, escaping the fire but becoming disconnected from us. Four weeks later the county’s sheriff’s department found her body; she had perished in the fire. We rejoiced during a Sunday service because she has continued in the Lord’s care.

I join my church in speechlessness again. Our hearts are filled with gratitude for your generosity to us. Your gifts and offerings have supported us while each member has had to find temporary housing and buy basic items during the months since the fire. Still the effect of the fire wrenches at our hearts, and we become speechless.

I have never known a time of such outpouring of love to a congregation. So many churches and individuals have reached out to care for us. We want to thank you. We are overwhelmed with thanksgiving to God, Who has shown His love to us through you and by your generosity. Thank you for producing in us a sense that we are loved and supported, and for arousing thanksgiving, worship, and, again, speechlessness. Thank you.