



### Optimistic Realism



Pastor Bob Zoba

I heard a joke about the virtue of pessimism: you're either right, or you're pleasantly surprised. That's kind of like Paul Samuelson's famous quip that modern economists have "predicted nine of the past five recessions". No wonder Economics is called the dismal science: if you predict gloom and doom long enough you will eventually be right. (I suppose that goes for preachers as well.)

But despite the relative virtues of pessimism, I do not believe it is always the proper mindset of the believer in Christ. Now note, I did not say that it is never the proper mindset of the believer in Christ, since there are times when unabashed pessimism is merited.

For instance, when it comes to hoping that we human beings can merit salvation based on our own good works, we should be unabashedly pessimistic about that. Why? The Bible tells us as much. Perhaps the clearest example of that is the despairing lament of the Apostle Paul at the end of Romans 7. After recognizing that there is a force within him that compels him to do those things he knows he should not do and to leave undone those things that he ought to do, he cries out, "O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? "

That's about as despairing as one can be.

Obviously, the answer is not to be found within ourselves. Instead, the answer is in Christ.

So, at times, pessimism is biblically warranted.

Likewise, I do not believe we serve Our Lord very effectively or maintain our Christian witness very convincingly, if we respond to the all the problems in our world with a mindless optimism or a vacuous, Pollyanna-ish buoyancy. For example, in Puerto Rico we are facing some serious challenges that threaten life as we know it on this enchanted island.

According to The NY Times, the is-land has just 90 obstetricians and 800 pediatricians, down from 1,400 pediatricians a decade ago. This exodus may accelerate as some pediatricians who earn as little as \$27 for a patient visit here in Puerto Rico can earn as much as \$200 on the mainland.

But, according to the Times, even for adults, surgeons are in short supply. In fact, there are now only 180, for a population of about 3.5 million. What's worse: the average age is 58.

To make matters worse, the Mi Salud health care program was a very progressive plan at its inception in terms of its provisions for low-income patients. At present, 45 percent of our population is covered. However, like most quasi-socialistic programs in the world today, it does not have a way to pay for itself in perpetuity.

Up to now, Uncle Sam has borne much of the cost, but much of that money is scheduled to run out in a year or two. Ironically, that may happen just about the time we will be plagued by the full costs of the growing Zika

**AUGUST  
2016**

**Sunday Services  
10:00 a.m.**

**Adult Sunday School  
9:00am**

**Sunday School  
PK-12  
10:30am**

**Choir Practice  
Thursday 7pm**

#### Weekly Activities

Ladies Bible Study  
Tuesdays 12-2

Small Group  
@ the Rivera's  
Tuesday 7pm

Men's Breakfast  
Wednesday 7am

Women's Study  
@ Anita's  
Wednesday 7pm

Women's Bible Study  
Thursday 8am

Prayer Service  
Thursday 7pm

#### Second Union Church

2109 Calle Mileto  
Guaynabo, PR 00969

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**secondunion.org**

Rev. Robert Zoba  
Pastor

Gustavo Gonzalez  
Youth Pastor

epidemic. For example, did you know Puerto Rico has 500,000 septic tanks, each of which can produce up to 1,500 mosquitoes a day, if left unsealed. Let's face it, the implications of those realities can make a person down-right pessimistic.

But, as Christians, we must not give in to pessimism. Instead, we must embrace what I like to call "optimistic realism". The latter half of that, realism, speaks to the fact that we must face the full reality of the challenges that we face. To pretend that the future is not rife with daunting challenges does not move us any closer to addressing our real problems nor does it win us any credibility with those whom we seek to influence.

However, as Christians, we are incurably optimistic that no matter what daunting challenges we face, our God does not change and His sovereignty is not diminished. Just as the Apostle Paul ends Romans 7 in utter despair over the inadequacy of human flesh to combat the evil within us and the enemies without, that same Apostle ends chapter 8 exuberantly proclaiming that nothing can separate us from the love of God, "neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers, nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans. 8:38f, NEV)

So, granted, if you are a pessimist about the future, you may find cold comfort in virtues of pessimism as you will be either right about the future or pleasantly surprised. However, how much better to be optimistically realistic about the future, for that is the gift of God to every believer. Indeed, let me leave you with a little secret that I know. I have read the end of the story of God's mysterious Word and guess who wins? Guess who ends up victorious? Guess who ends up joyously rejoicing at the greatest wedding reception ever imagined? We do: the Bride of Christ, the Church.

Blessings!

*Pastor Bob*

**Bible Study & Small Groups**

**Adult Sunday School**

The Bible: Verse by Verse  
9am Conference Room

**Tuesday Ladies' Bible Study**

Study: The Armor of God, Priscilla Shirer  
noon-2pm Fellowship Hall

**Tuesday Evening Bible Study at the Rivera's**

The Mysteries of Heaven / The Second Coming: A New Beginning  
7pm at the Rivera's home in San Francisco

**Wednesday Men's Breakfast**

30/30 Series (rightnowmedia)  
7am Fellowship Hall

**Wednesday Evening Women's Study**

Humble & Bold, Jennie Allen  
7pm at Anita Rodriguez' home in Rio Piedras Heights

**Thursday Ladies' Coffee Shop Study**

8am at the Coffee Shop on Parana

**Thursday Night Prayer Meeting**

6pm Conference Room.

**Choir News**

**Cantata Practice Begins!**

Though Christmas is still three and a half months away, we will begin working on this year's Christmas cantata!

**Thursday, September 1  
from 7:30pm-9pm.**

The cantata is a great way to meet new friends who enjoy making music together.

Whether you're an experienced vocalist or someone who just likes singing along with the radio, we invite you to join us in making our Christmas celebration joyful.

For more information contact our Choir/Worship Leader, Jeff Penn at jeffpenn1@gmail.com.

**HEALTH**

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FELLOWSHIP HALL                      SEPTEMBER 11                      AFTER SERVICE

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FEATURES      SECOND UNION CHURCH OF SAN JUAN                      MEN'S MINISTRY

**A Frank Talk on the Zika  
Pandemic**                      GUEST SPEAKER  
**Dr. Dana Thomas, CDC**

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You can't go anywhere in Puerto Rico without hearing the fateful word "ZIKA" mentioned these days. Some 'experts' have downplayed the significance of the effect Zika is having or will have on our island, yet each day the threat seems to grow worse.

There are a lot of questions circulating about this virus, and a lot of answers that may or may not be based on facts.

Join us to hear the Zika expert in PR, Dr. Dana Thomas, of the Center for Disease Control, speak about the truth is about this epidemic.

Knowledge is critical for you to make well-informed decisions.

All are welcome to attend.

For more information, call the church office or speak with Joe Calcolli.

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Christie Curie Zoba

**Madelyn Vega** writes: This was an unforgettable summer for Xavi, Mom Madelyn and Dad Raymond! First they decided to enjoy the beauty of Puerto Rico, particularly our beautiful beaches! Then they embarked on a 405 miles journey from Malibu to San Francisco with older brother Jamil! It was great



family fun!

We have been blessed with visits from **Dr. David Yost** for his CDC assignments. It sure has been great seeing Dr. Dave, however, hopefully Laurie can accompany him next time. In the meantime, they will be visiting their son and daughter-in-law in Madrid, Spain.

**Fabiola Velazquez** spent her summer visiting the various service academies including West Point and the Naval Academy in Annapolis.

**Rosa Trinidad** has been traveling a lot this summer as she just came back from Croatia and plans on visiting **Ivette** in England to help her with her new baby on the way. She also helped her younger daughter, **Carla** move to Baltimore at the end of August.

**Edda Sustache** has been going back and forth to Dallas to help with husband Manny's medical needs.

**Mike Strong** has been in Florida visiting his dear daughter before she relocates to Japan.

**Steven & Loida Spivak** have generously donated a lot of wonderful books in Spanish for our Backpack Program. (Thanks Spivaks!!!)

**Matt Rose** will be working for Dennis Gonzalez's company.

**Joe & Elilda Ramos** are cruising the coast of Mexico. When Joe returns, they will be relocating to Palmas as Joe will be the full-time pastor at Palmas Community Church.

**Chinye Mordi's** mom has been visiting from Nigeria and will remain here until December.



**George & Joan McMurray** are just about ready for their river cruise of the Danube from Nuremberg to Budapest.

France.

**Eduardo and Betsy McCormack** just returned from a visit to Italy and

**David & Val Banderman** are looking to adopt a child soon.



**Trey McCarley** has been painting the cityscapes of Old San Juan.

**Dell and Lynn McCarley** are resurrecting the Condado small group. (If you live in the area, let them know.)

**Pastor Bob & Christie** are talking waltzing lessons at the **Arthur Murray Dance studio** in Miramar which is owned and operated by our own **Denise Hill**.

**Eli and Serena Lozano** most recently lived in Hawaii. They are now here in PR as Lt. Col. Lozano is administering the medical clinic at Ft. Buchanan. (Welcome to PR and to 2UC!!!)



**Roy Gill** has two new twins. That makes a foursome for him. Congrats Roy!!!

**Brenda Ferrer** will finally be back on Sept. 10 after her many summer travels to Germany, Texas, and New Jersey. Welcome back Brenda!

**Tom & Patricia Engfer** recently returned from Patricia's hometown in Bolivia.

**Colleen Comer** has been working on a film this summer with Keanu Reeves.

**Mayra Chipi's** Philadelphia Eagles will play their home opener against **Pastor Bob's** Cleveland Browns. (Could be trouble;-)

**Lauren Candia** and husband **Andrew** just gave birth to a baby boy. **Eduardo "Eddie" Neal Gowdy!** Born on August 21 just after midnight. (Congrats to all!)



**David & Kailie Benson** are happily settled in the Norfolk area. (We sure miss David on Wednesdays.)

The recent 5k for the Food Bank featured a number of runners from 2UC including **Dennis & Amarilis Gonzalez, John Alberts, J.B. Wilcox, Matt Rose, and Christie Zoba**.

**Tim Adams** has been able to hitch free rides to visit **Kris** in North Carolina the last couple of weekends. There are privileges to being a pilot!

**Janette and Ed Kreuger** celebrated their first anniversary at the end of September! And Janette had foot surgery the next day!!



In 1878 in Truro, a town further southwest than just about anything else in England, the choir of Truro Cathedral gathered for rehearsal. Their bishop, George Walpole, had conspired with the choir director to create a novel approach to their Christmas Eve service. Rather than travelling throughout the town to sing carols at the doors of each of the parishioners, as was the custom, they wanted to create a program that would draw the churched and unchurched alike to the cathedral to celebrate and share the gospel of Christ. Through a series of readings, congregational carols, and choral pieces, the story of Christmas, from the fall of man through the prophecies of Messiah up to the birth of the Christ child, would unfold.



The idea was a hit with the choir and congregation, with many churches in nearby towns and villages copying the idea. Two years later the order of service was formalized by the new Bishop of Truro, Edward Benson, and with his appointment as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1883, the Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols became firmly established in the Anglican tradition.

Since that time Nine Lessons and Carols has been performed annually in Truro and throughout England. While many of the carols and musical selections within the program change, the readings remain consistent, and the first and last carols remain fixed. The best-known version is broadcast annually to millions around the world from King's College, Cambridge, on Christmas Eve, whose world-famous choir has performed the service continually since 1918. Even during the cold of winter in the midst of World War II, with no heat and the stained-glass windows bombed out, the choir gathered to declare the message of hope to the world through scripture and song.

On December 11, 2016 the choir of Second Union will perform its own version of A Festival of Nine Lessons and Carols. With compositions spanning 1,500 years of tradition, we are excited to have this opportunity to share the message of salvation with our community, and encourage you to make plans to invite your friends and neighbors who may have never heard the true Christmas story before.

We also invite you to join our choir. If you sing, or like to sing, please come on Thursdays from 7:30-9pm. If you have any questions, please feel free to email our choir director, Jeff Penn, at [jeff.penn1@gmail.com](mailto:jeff.penn1@gmail.com).

Second Union Church  
2109 Mileto/Guaynabo

9AM- 2 PM  
Sept 10, 2016

**PRAYER STRATEGY  
WORKSHOP**

WITH  
PASTOR BRENDA TAYLOR, LORAINÉ COLON  
& ANITA RODRIGUEZ

TO RESERVE YOUR SPOT PLEASE  
CALL 787-587-2371 OR 787-720-4423  
LUNCH PROVIDED  
BRING YOUR BIBLE AND NOTEBOOK

NOW TO HIM  
**WHO IS ABLE TO DO  
IMMEASURABLY  
MORE** THAN ALL WE  
ASK OR IMAGINE  
ACCORDING TO  
**HIS POWER**  
THAT IS AT WORK  
WITHIN US

EPHESIANS  
3:20



## Mochila Alegre 5K

In the beginning of August, a 5K was held to raise funds for the Backpack Program and the Banco de Alimentos.



A big thank you to the 2UC team including Jon Alberts, J.B. Wilcox, Dennis & Amarilis Gonzalez, Mabel Varela, and Matt. Several of our backpack students were there as well handing out medals to the finishers!



## Donation of Books

A big thanks to Steven Spivak and Loida Velilla for the generous contribution of some great Spanish-language books which they were able to source at the Book Depository in Washington, D.C. Getting the books was one thing, but getting them to Puerto Rico was another challenge altogether. The Spivaks brought one load down in their suitcases, and the next load they boxed up and sent to us. Christie Zoba presented the books to the Juanillo Fuentes Elementary School which is the same school that benefits from the Backpack Program. Hugo Robles, the school social worker and a language arts teachers received the books on behalf of the students and the administration. They were very grateful!



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## A Presentation About Values

On Friday, September 2, Loraine Colón, in representation of Second Union Church, presented a program on Values to the entire student body at the Juanillo Fuentes school. The students were so enthusiastic and almost all of them wanted to participate; many by answering specific questions about values. Loraine spoke about Responsibility, Honesty and Obedience and students provided examples of each. She specifically pointed out the need for obedience with regard to the traffic laws, and one second grader shouted out, "Mi papa come las luces!" (My dad runs red lights!) That got a big laugh from all of the teachers and adults in the room! Thanks Loraine for your creativity, your dedication and most of all for your love for these wonderful children.



## Tutoring Begins Wednesday, September 7

We need tutors! Please contact Christie or Loraine, if you would be willing to help out with tutoring on Wednesdays from 3-4:30 in the school library! We have 20 students signed up, so we need as many people as possible.



Q- I love watching movies in the theater! Don't you, A?

A- I do, Q! And so does PB!! He loved Ben Hur.

Q- True, true. He said so last Sunday. What movie do you want to talk, A?

A- Let's talk about Genius starring Colin Firth and Jude Law.

Q- What is it about?

A- It's about writer Thomas Wolfe [Law] and his editor Max Perkins [Firth].

Q- So, a bio-pic?

A- Yes! Max Perkins was an editor for Scribner Publishing. He discovered F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway!

Q- What did you think of this movie?

A- Well, Q, I liked it. It was really different. Colin Firth is something to watch. He can show quite a bit of emotion without really speaking. His character is a quiet, humble man of strong convictions. Firth's performance was captivating. Thomas Wolfe was a bombastic, wild man with words and writing driving his life. Jude Law really stepped out of his normal acting range with this character.

Q- So I should go see this one?

A- Definitely, Q! What about you, seen any good movies lately?

Q- Yes I have! I saw a bio-pic, too! Meryl Streep in Florence Foster Jenkins. This movie is set in 1944.

Q- Oh, about 20 years after Genius, set in New York in the 20's. I really like period films. The costuming, set design and everything.

A- The costumes were great in Florence Foster Jenkins. The story was set in New York as well. Hugh Grant plays Madam Florence's husband.

Q- Grant and Firth both look really comfortable in most any decade!

A- Agreed! I loved the combination of Meryl Streep and Hugh Grant! Did you know Hugh Grant was seriously thinking about quitting acting when this movie was offered to him?

Q- NO! Really? Well, I for one am glad he rethought that. This movie was so good! I laughed so hard I couldn't breathe. The audience I was with loved it too judging by their laughter.

A- What is the story about?

Q- Madam Florence is a wealthy woman, struggling with ill health. She has a deep love of music and performing opera. But she doesn't sing very well. She has boldness and compassion. Such a sweet combination. Meryl Streep did an excellent job.

A- I've heard that if you are singer, it is really hard to sing off key on purpose.

Q- I've heard that, too. And she is a good singer! Remember how surprised we were with Mama Mia?

A- That is for sure!

Genius and Florence Foster Jenkins are showing now at Fine Arts Miramar.



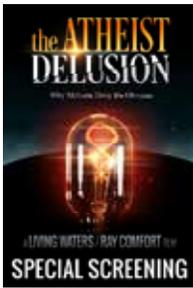
For the last twenty or so years, every third and fifth Monday of the month, the homeless in Old San Juan are served a delicious and nutritious meal thanks to the many helping hands of Second Union Church members and friends.

We are grateful for so many who contribute to making this happen every month - from those who prepare the food, to those who transport the food and serve the food and to those clean up afterwards, it truly is a labor of love.



Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40)

If you would like to be a part of this ministry, come at 2pm to cook or come at 6:30 to serve. We'd be honored to have you join our team!



### The Atheist Delusion

Friday September 9th at 7:30 pm.

From Living Waters, creators of the award-winning TV program "The Way of the Master" and the hit movies "180" and "Evolution vs. God," comes the powerful film "The Atheist Delusion." Executive produced by TV co-host and best-selling author Ray Comfort (Hell's Best Kept Secret, Scientific Facts in the Bible).

Having to prove the existence of God to an atheist is like having to prove the existence of the sun, at noon on a clear day. Yet millions are embracing the foolishness of atheism. "The Atheist Delusion" pulls back the curtain and reveals what is going on in the mind of those who deny the obvious. It introduces you to a number of atheists who you will follow as they go where the evidence leads, find a roadblock, and enter into a place of honesty that is rarely seen on film.

All are welcome to join us!



NO MAN KNOWS  
HOW BAD HE IS  
TILL HE HAS  
TRIED VERY HARD  
TO BE GOOD.  
-C. S. LEWIS