



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

January 23, 2008

Pastors' Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

Perhaps you gathered from Paul's sermon on Sunday that there are some big fans of Dr. Seuss living at our house. It's true - we are all crazy about him. And even hearing and reading *Green Eggs and Ham* several times each day has not deterred our enthusiasm. As far as I'm concerned, the man was a genius, and I'm enjoying the chance to get reacquainted with his work these days.

Theodore Geisel (aka Dr. Seuss) began writing children's books during World War II, but his work took on a particular focus on beginning readers after a 1954 *Life* magazine article about illiteracy among school-children. The report concluded that part of the problem was that children were bored by children's books, and therefore not learning to read very well. Seuss's publisher drew up a list of 400 words that he felt were important for children to learn and asked Seuss to cut it to 250 and write a book using those words. Seuss then used 220 of those words to write *The Cat in the Hat* (the number nine best-selling children's book of all time). Not long after that, he wrote another book using just 50 words, and that book is the fourth best-selling children's book of all time - *Green Eggs and Ham*.

Aside from Seuss's fanciful drawings, made-up words, and enchanting rhymes and rhythms, I think a large part of his appeal lies in his use of repetition. Through the repetition of simple but essential words, Dr. Seuss helps create a climate of accessibility for children in their first efforts towards reading. A child who hears the same words over and over again begins to absorb those words, and then repeat those words, and then connect those words with the written letters on the page. It's a pretty fascinating process, though over time we begin to take our abilities to read and write for granted.

I have been thinking lately that the church could learn a lot from Dr. Seuss. If faith is a language - which it is - then part of our responsibility is to learn its grammar, and then to pass it on. This happens in many ways, not the least of which is simply in the daily living of Christian commitments. But what we are about on Sunday mornings in particular could very well be thought of as a reading lesson. There is a kind of simple wisdom in the repetition of what we do in worship and in Christian education - we hear the same old stories over and over again, for years. We sing the same songs again, over and over again for years. We pray some of the same prayers. There is one prayer in particular that we always pray, and it, too, has been prayed over and over again for years, for centuries, for millennia even.

All this repetition, and the rhythm of it all, is fundamental, and it is formative. Those stories, those songs, those prayers, are doing deep work in our souls. As we let ourselves absorb the words and the truths, we begin to make connections between those truths and our own lives. This repetition doesn't have to be boring or feel rote - like the best children's books, the ones kids (and adults) love to read over and over again, it should have an element of playfulness and joy. I think that creative, lively spirit was at the heart of who Jesus showed himself to be, and it certainly should be at the heart of all our worship as well.

What would the church as a whole look like if Christians approached their faith with the same curiosity and engagement and zeal that young children bring to learning to read? What if we continually came to our faith as beginners, as those who are ready to be taught, and who are open to correction, and who realize there is always more to learn? How would Sunday mornings feel, if we found our way to the sanctuary like little children scrambling to hear a favorite story read, one where we knew most of the words but still noticed and learned something new with each fresh telling of the tale?

We follow One who was known as a great story-teller. His stories were always an invitation - an invitation to reflection, to engagement, to action, and, ultimately, to transformation. He tells his story still, and the invitation remains.

Nursery care is available on the 3rd floor from 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

All children are welcome to worship with their families. After the Time as Children portion of the worship service preschoolers may go to the nursery for childcare and their church school class starting at 11:00 a.m. Children in kindergarten - 3rd grade are invited to Children's Worship.

Children and Youth Christian Education

Families: please note that there have been changes to the schedule of some classes and the Jr. Choir.

3 and 4 year olds

10:00 - 11:10 Worship w/ family or childcare in nursery
11:00 - 12:30 Church School (room 306)

K - 2nd grade

10:00 - 10:30 Worship
10:30 - 11:00 Children's Worship (room 202A)
11:00 - 12:00 Church School (room 202B)
12:00 - 12:30 Grace Notes Choir (room 202B)

3rd - 6th grades

10:00 - 11:00 Worship
11:10 - 11:50 Jr. Choir (room 102)
11:50 - 12:30 Church School (room 304)

7th grade - high school

10:00 - 11:00 Worship
11:00 - 12:30 Church School (room 107)

** Please note: on Sunday, January 27, the 4th grade - high school youth will meet from 11:50 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. for Youth Worship in the Youth Room 107.

Children's Music and Arts Ministry

Jr. Handbells will resume in February

Tiny Grace Notes (preschool) will resume in February

Grace Notes (K - 3rd grade) 12:00 - 12:30 Room 202A, middle level

Jr. Choir (4th grade and older) 11:10 - 11:50 Room 102, lower level

Adult Christian Education (11:30—12:30)

February 10 is the first Sunday in Lent. During Lent there will be two opportunities for learning:

Foundations of Faith (Lounge)

Leader: Rev. Ron Tipton

Christian life and mission are built on a foundation of personal faith. This class will focus on the spiritual foundation for belief and mission. We will explore such topics as the meaning of personal faith; our relationship with God in Christ; the use of the Bible in guiding and sustaining our faith; the place of imagination, symbols, music, and art in personal faith; the role of the Church as the Body of Christ; and such concerns as may arise from our discussions.

Lenten Small Group (Room 108)

Facilitator: Sue Ellen Glover

A small group is being formed to meet on Sunday mornings during Lent. Participants will commit to consistent attendance, shared leadership, and preparation each week by reading essays, meditations and sermons (up to 50 pages per week) by writers such as Barbara Brown Taylor, Frederick Buechner, Henri Nouwen, and others. We will use our group time to share the personal meanings these writings had and to share other resources which have impact on our spiritual lives.

Other Adult Learning Opportunities

Second Sunday Series, February 17 (3rd Sunday) at 12:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall/Lounge

Linnea Berg and others from Friendship House will cater a spaghetti lunch (donations accepted) and then present a report on the ministries of this American Baptist mission serving the Hamtramck area of Detroit.

Wednesday Bible Study (Memorial Lounge, 1:30—2:30 p.m.)

Rev. Paul Simpson Duke leads an in-depth study of the Gospel of John, chapters 12-21. Join us each week for fellowship, learning and great snacks!

Small Groups (ChristCare) - Centered on Bible study, fellowship, mission, prayer and worship, we currently have two groups: one which meets monthly and the other which meets every other week. See Stacey, Paul or Sue Ellen for more information about joining a group.



FBCA2 News & Happenings

2008 Annual Financial Meeting

The congregation's annual financial meeting will be held this Sunday, January 27 at 12:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. We will gather together for a potluck lunch followed by the meeting at which we will consider and approve a budget for 2008. Please plan to attend. Childcare will be provided for the meeting.

FBC Ladies Book Club

The FBC Ladies Book Club will be meeting on Tuesday, February 19th, at 7:00 p.m. to discuss selected stories from "The Complete Stories" by Flannery O'Connor. We will be meeting at Tammy Canell's house. All ladies are welcome! Any questions, please contact Tammy at 572-9063 or Janice Stumpf jlstumpf@umich.edu.

Ash Wednesday Service

There will be an Ash Wednesday service February 6, 2008 at 7:00 p.m. in the sanctuary. Childcare will be provided.

Lenten Devotionals

The Board of Christian Education provides many different resources for Lenten devotionals. Materials are available for all ages—children, families, youth and adults and can be found starting Jan. 27 at the table near the ramp.

Cooks Needed for The Gathering

Volunteers are needed to cook meals for our campus ministry program, The Gathering. This is a much-appreciated ministry of hospitality for students who are away from home and don't often get a home-cooked meal. Please sign up at the Information Counter where instruction sheets are provided for you to take with you.

2008 Flower Calendar is up!

The 2008 Flower Calendar is now posted on the downstairs bulletin board. Please sign up if you are interested in hosting the chancel flowers, especially if you'd like a specific Sunday in 2008. The arrangements are from Tom Thompson's Florist and costs \$30. The dedication appears in the bulletin the week you host them. You are welcome to do whatever you wish with the arrangement following the service.

'07 Year-end Financial Statements & '08 Pledge Envelopes

Please pick up your 2007 year-end financial statements and your 2008 pledge envelopes at the little table near the Information Counter. They will be available every Sunday throughout the month of January.

Leftover Place Settings

Sue Ellen has a couple of place settings of silverware that were left at the picnic last summer. They were left in a plastic pitcher-type of container. Do these belong to you?

THE INTERFAITH ROUND TABLE is pleased to make available tickets for the UMS's *Urban Bush Women*, Friday, March 28th, at 8:00 p.m., at the Power Center. This unique project is setting the performance world abuzz for bringing together two African and African-American dance companies—one all-male and one all-female. Together they weave the cultural and spiritual traditions into life-affirming works that explore untold and under-told histories and stories of people committed to transformation. Tickets: \$22, \$34 and \$38. For information and purchase please call 734-424-1535, email George Lambrides at gbrides@umich.edu or visit www.irtwc.org and click on UMS.



Friendship House

A thank you letter was received from Linnea Berg, Executive Director of Friendship House, acknowledging our congregation's generous Thanksgiving donations. Five bags of groceries and \$375 was collected and graciously accepted:

"Our food pantry manager was delighted with the items your congregants collected on our behalf. We distributed about 200 turkeys and the fixins ... We had to order more turkeys at the last minute because the number of people needing help is up from last year. People really depend on Friendship House for help all year, but especially so around the holidays. We would not be able to provide the makings of a holiday meal without the faithful support of churches like yours."



ACTS 2008

(Area Church Training Seminars for the Central Area Churches of ABC-MI)

Saturday, February 2

Olivet Baptist Church, Lansing

9 am – 12:45 pm

(registration begins at 8:30 a.m.)

ACTS 2008, the Central Area American Baptist Churches training event, will take place at Olivet Baptist Church in Lansing on Saturday, February 2, from 9:00 a.m. - 12:45 p.m. There are six workshops offered including one on Nicaragua mission opportunities led by Arthur Francis and Pat Hernandez. Dr. John Piippo returns to lead a workshop on Spiritual development and there is new information and training on how to become a "missional church."

Brochures with workshop descriptions and registration forms are available at the Information Counter or from Sue Ellen. A price reduction is available if you register by Wednesday, January 23, though walk-in registration is also available. Plan on attending this event - join with others for a day of learning and sharing. (See Sue Ellen for more information.)

**First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, Michigan
Board of Christian Education
Vision Statement for Youth Ministry
January 2008**

Congregational Identity and Vision

First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, a congregation of the American Baptist Churches, USA, is known for providing a spectrum of ministries to persons of all ages. Anchored in Ann Arbor's thriving downtown and located on the edge of the University of Michigan, we seek to serve our educationally oriented community with ministries that promote the seeking, nurture, and development of Christian faith.

Our leadership has recently articulated our vision as "...becoming more caring, more involved in local mission, more spiritually vital, and more inviting." **An enhanced youth ministry reflects this vision.**

Youth Ministry at FBC

The Scope: For many years FBC has relied on volunteer or minimally paid members of the church to provide our youth leadership. Due to our relatively limited investment in youth programming and leadership, our youth ministry has typically focused around Sunday school, youth worship and assorted activities, and some opportunities for youth to offer service to others. The youth ministry has been aimed almost exclusively at our own youth and their guests. Due to our relatively small numbers, youth programming includes grades 7 - 12, and even grades 4 - 12.

The Problem: By the time our youth become 11th and 12th graders, their active participation in the youth program diminishes. Yet the developmental issues they face with spiritual implications - e.g., sexual activity, drug and alcohol use, choices about college/career, etc. - bear down upon them. Ironically, while our older youth ministry effectiveness languishes, we are located in the midst of a burgeoning youth culture.

The Need: The need to better engage all of our youth and positively impact the youth in our community requires **our long-term investment in a youth minister** called to, trained for, and motivated to care for "kids." Meeting this need through careful planning, oversight, and support that is both financial and relational fits our identity and vision of FBC. To not do so is to turn away from who we are called to be.

A New Vision: The FBC youth minister will be responsible for the development and oversight of all ministries to youth grades 7 - 12 with the goal of nurturing Christian faith. He/she will lead a youth ministry of pastoral relationships with youth, their parents, and volunteer youth leaders. This vision includes an active ministry with FBC youth and a creative outreach to the youth of our community. Some elements of this ministry will include ministries of fellowship, worship, biblical teaching, discipleship, and mission.

Next Steps in the Process for Developing an Enhanced Youth Ministry at FBC

A church-wide meeting will be held during second hour on **Sunday, February 3** for dialogue regarding the position and its funding. Pending subsequent approval, the search would begin for a **half-time youth minister**, with hiring for August 1, 2008.

William Foster, January 17, 2008



YOUTH VALENTINE SALE

It's time for the Youth Valentine Sale - a chance for you to show your love, friendship and appreciation to those in your church family. Through February 3, the youth (and parents) will be selling the blank valentine cards (\$1 each) at tables near the Information Counter and the Fellowship Hall, before and after worship. After you fill out your cards, return them to the youth, who will compile the cards and deliver each one to your chosen Valentines on February 10, along with a special treat. Remember - everyone will receive a treat from the youth. What you are purchasing are the cards to express your sentiments, which will be joyfully delivered by the youth. If you would like assistance in filling out your cards, the youth will be glad to help. (All profits from this sale will be donated by the youth to the Sister Church in Nandasmoo.)

If you are unable to be in church the next few weeks, please call, email or send the following information to Sue Ellen or Brandy:

Person ordering: _____ Phone #: _____

Who would you like to send cards to (full name please) and what would you like the card to say?

1. _____
(recipient's name)

(message)

2. _____
(recipient's name)

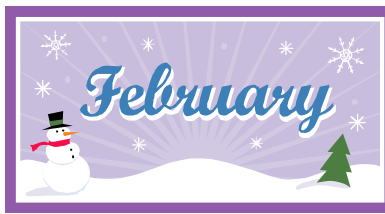
(message)

3. _____
(recipient's name)

(message)

Please mail this list along with \$1 per card to Brandy at First Baptist Church, 512 East Huron, Ann Arbor, MI 48104, or you may call or email Sue Ellen (663-9376; sueellen@fbca2.org).





Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 Communion 11:30 Congregational Discussion re: Youth Minister (Newsletter Deadline)	4 7:00 Board of Evangelism	5 5:30 Vespers	6 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:00 Ash Wednesday Service	7 6:15 Handbell Practice 7:30 Choir Practice	8	9
10 Valentine Delivery	11 7:00 Board of Worship	12 5:30 Vespers	13 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering	14 7:30 Choir Practice	15	16
17 12:30 Second Sunday (Newsletter & March Calendar Deadline)	18 9:30 ABWM Board	19 1:00 Beecher- Brewer Circle 5:30 Board of Christian Education 5:30 Vespers 7:00 Ladies Book Club	20 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering	21 11:45 MacGregor- Stitt Circle 7:30 Choir Practice	22	23
24	25	26 5:30 Vespers	27 1:30 Bible Study	28 7:30 Choir Practice	29	



Craig Redinger	1	Carolyn Blue	6	Ahnon Kerschbaum	19
Vicky Rushton	2	Conrad Juchartz	7	Ed Voss	22
Mary Lou Hallock	4	Grace Aaron	10	Beth Foster	22
Doris Fraker	4	Henry Griffin	14	Linda Halsey-Ames	24
Lauren Fisher	5	Greg Cartee	14	Ginny McKeachie	27
Renee Alton	5			Katharine Drake	27

First Baptist Church
512 East Huron Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-663-9376
www.fbca2.org
office@fbca2.org

The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next Newsletter Deadline:

Sunday, February 6, 2008



On Sunday, January 27, during the Adult Education Hour (11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.) there will be a presentation (sponsored by the Board of Mission Action) by the Religious Action for Affordable Housing group. RAAH seeks to achieve a significant increase in the supply of permanently affordable housing in Washtenaw County, in collaboration with religious congregations and non-profit housing groups.

This group seeks to serve families and persons who are most vulnerable and who have the greatest need by supporting affordable housing projects that create a substantial number of affordable units. It promotes housing that remains affordable in perpetuity through the stewardship of the Homeplace Community Land Trust, is committed to ecologically sound and efficient use of land, has completed a \$200,000 capital campaign for Avalon Housing for their Carrot Way housing project, and supports the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI).