



# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

January 9, 2008

## Pastors' Reflections

by Paul Simpson Duke

I sometimes wonder what some people might be thinking when we observe certain liturgical days in worship. In the past, most Baptists celebrated only Easter and Christmas. In more recent times, many have added Advent, and perhaps Lent, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, and Pentecost. But around here we also observe, to varying extents, Epiphany, Baptism of the Lord, Transfiguration, Ash Wednesday, Ascension, All Saints, and Christ the King. Our longer-term members are by now familiar with this parade of days and seasons. And most of our congregants who come from non-Baptist backgrounds (there are *many* of these) are long-time friends of these traditions.

Still, as I said, I worry that some among us might not much care for it all. Are these observances false to who we are? Are we disdainful of where we came from and just trying to act like Episcopalians? Is it all presumptuous, elitist - uppity? As you would expect, I don't think so. To me, these observances and celebrations are a powerful way of presenting the whole gospel over time. They teach. They preach.

Which leads me to share some thoughts about Epiphany. First, some facts. Just as Christmas is always December 25, Epiphany is always January 6, which this year fell smack-dab on Sunday. (And if you want to know where "the twelve days of Christmas" came from, just count from December 25 through January 5.) In the early centuries of the church, Epiphany was one of three great feast days of the church, along with Easter and Pentecost; Christmas was a later development and a less important day. What Epiphany is meant to celebrate is the manifestation of Christ to the world. The day invites us to recall those great early occasions of his life among us, when remarkable new disclosures of his identity were made, and other people began to grasp who he might really be. There are at least three gospel stories related to this day: the story of the Magi, Gentiles who saw and followed a star that bore witness to him (Matthew 2:1-12); the story of his baptism, in which people heard God say with delight: This is my Son! (Mark 1:9-11 and parallels); and the story of his first deed of power, when he turned water into great quantities of wine at a wedding party, at which point "his disciples believed in him" (John 2:1-11).

The birth of Jesus is a relatively hidden affair - a few shepherds see him, and that is all. But later come these open and rather public events that begin to reveal the great light of God in him: at a wedding, at a river, and among the stars (whereupon even a king learns who he is and is terrified, knowing what he is up against). In other words, Epiphany declares two realities. First, that Christ has not only entered the world, God is actively reaching toward us through him; great shining initiatives are now being made through Christ to us all. Second, we have been put in the position, one way or another, of taking new responsibility. If God in love has given us an epiphany - new perceptions of the ultimate gifts and commands of Christ - we must now choose what to do with it.

I think there's a nice convergence between Epiphany and the arrival of the new year. In both is a new invitation to wake up and pay attention to God's claim on us and to get busy acting on it. As with Jesus, we get past being babies. We decide to do some growing up. And as Christ's real identity was made more visible, more open, and more public for others, we find the nerve to do the same. We live in the freedom and the joy through Christ of being our truest selves - visibly, openly, and publicly transparent. Or, in the words of Isaiah 60:1, which is read every year at Epiphany, addressed to each of us and to our life together in the church - *"Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you."*

That's what January 6 was singing and preaching. So happy Epiphany - and happy new year too.

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 - 3<sup>rd</sup> 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)

## **Children's Music and Arts Ministry**

Jr. Handbells will resume in February

Tiny Grace Notes (preschool) will resume in February

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

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

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

### **The Jesus Class (Memorial Lounge)**

Ron Gregg & Sue Ellen Glover, leaders

In recent decades there have been new conversations, speculations, questions, and convictions -- among scholars and in churches -- about Jesus. There has been new dialogue about his identity and his mission, a re-visioning of traditional understandings of what we mean when we say "God is in Christ." This class is examining the issues and questions that are currently being raised. It is a safe place to think, ask questions, and exchange views about important theological and spiritual issues. We don't expect everyone to agree on one theological position, but we will thoughtfully engage each other on the issues. (This class will conclude February 20.)

### **Young Adult Bible Study (Campus Center Living Room)**

Marlene & Arthur Francis, leaders

We are undertaking a study of the books of the Hebrew Bible known as "The Minor Prophets." The name speaks to the relative length of the books and not to their importance. In these often-overlooked writings are to be found some of the earliest articulations of the principles of justice and compassion which today are essential elements of the Christian Gospel. We will begin by considering how the moral and ethical decay which began soon after Solomon's kingdom was divided led not only to the prophetic calls for repentance, but also to the eventual conquest and exile of the peoples of both Israel and Judah. A brief manual, giving dates, some historical and biographical background and a summary of the basic message of each book will be available. (This class will conclude February 27.)

## **Other Adult Learning Opportunities**

### **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.



# FBACA2 News & Happenings

## **Welcome New Members, David, Peggy and Jonathan!**



David, Peggy and Jonathan Cave moved to Ann Arbor the beginning of 2007 when David accepted a position with the University of Michigan's College of LSA's Development Office. Since then, Peggy has also joined the University, working as a Nurse Practitioner in its Cancer Clinic, and Jonathan has started his freshman year at Michigan State University, in its Residential College for Arts and Humanities. David, Peggy and Jonathan have been living in Northern Kentucky for the past fifteen years.

## **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.

## **2008 Annual Financial Meeting**

The congregation's annual financial meeting will be held 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.

Also, if you owe Carey a report, please have it to her (preferably via e-mail) by Friday, January 18. Thank you!

## **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.

## **January MacGregor-Stitt Circle Meeting**

The next meeting of the MacGregor-Stitt Circle will take place next Thursday, January 17, 1:00 p.m. at the home of Eva Kelly. The program will be "The Faith to be Still."

## **Elizabeth Lee's New Phone #**

Elizabeth's new phone # is 997-6736.

## **Meetings/Building Use**

It is important that various church groups/boards inform (via email or phone) the office in advance of all scheduled meetings so that the sextons know when to unlock (and heat up) the appropriate rooms. The meetings will then be included in the bulletin, newsletter and foyer calendars so that attendees may be informed of meeting locations and times. Thank you!

Congratulations to grandparents Ron and Mary Gregg and Aunt Kathryn Gregg who have been blessed with a little bundle of joy! Colin Carleton Barnes was born December 28, 2007, 9lbs 3ozs, 21 inches long. He is the son of Sara Gregg-Barnes and Jim Barnes.



Colin and Aunt Kathryn

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On Sunday, January 27, during the Adult education hour (11:30 - 12:30) there will be a presentation by:



#### About RAAH

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. RAAH directs financial contributions to efforts that increase housing opportunities for low income households and supports the Homeplace Community Land Trust and the Michigan Prisoner Reentry Initiative (MPRI).

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# 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.)

## ***Devotionals for the New Year***

Perhaps one of your New Year's resolutions was to spend quiet time each day with prayer and scripture. I'd like to recommend some resources:

- Currently we have the *Secret Place* available at the Information Counter. This is published quarterly and is offered in regular and large print editions. (It is also free as a gift from one of our members.)
- The Upper Room publishes a book of one-page daily devotionals, *Disciplines*, which follow the lectionary so that each week you can read and meditate on the scriptures that will be included in the upcoming Sunday's worship service. Each week has a different author, drawn from ecumenical ministries throughout the world. Please see me if you would like a copy.
- The Upper Room also has a daily devotional that will be emailed to you. Sign up at <http://www.upperroom.org>. Another excellent devotional site is <http://www.d365.org/todaysdevotion/>. This is directed toward youth but is usually quite applicable to us older folks, and uses the past Sunday's lectionary reading. *Sojourners* magazine (Jim Wallis' group on faith, politics and culture) has a daily *Verse and Voice* reading which is thought-provoking. This link: [http://www.henrinouwen.org/home/free\\_eletters/?m=1011221485028&p=oi](http://www.henrinouwen.org/home/free_eletters/?m=1011221485028&p=oi) will allow you to sign up for daily and/or weekly quotes from the writings of Henri Nouwen.

~ Sue Ellen

## ***Sacred Texts and the Heart of Peace***

What do the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim scriptures have to teach about peace?

Join the Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice for an event which speaks to the core of our interfaith work, featuring readings of sacred texts on peace from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Speakers will present reflections on what these texts teach us about the deepest calling in each of our traditions - the desire for justice and for peace for all people.



Join us as we seek a deeper engagement from within the Abrahamic tradition with:

- Dr. Soraya Orady, founder and president of the [Islamic Education and Resources Network](http://www.icpj.net/) (ILearn),
- Dr. Sarah Heidt, lecturer in philosophy and theology at Eastern Michigan University and Ecumenical Theological Seminary, and
- Alan Haber, a founder of the Megiddo Peace Project.

January 10th, 7:00 p.m. at St. Clare's/Temple Beth Emeth Social Hall, 2309 Packard, Ann Arbor.

This event is organized by the Common Ground for Peace in Israel and Palestine working group of Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice. It is co-sponsored by Temple Beth Emeth, St. Clare's Episcopal Church, and the Islamic Education and Resources Network (ILearn), Episcopal Church of the Incarnation, the Reconstructionist Havurah, and First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor.

~ Please visit <http://www.icpj.net/> for more information. ~



## 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. Starting Sunday, January 20 (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 a charity.)

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)

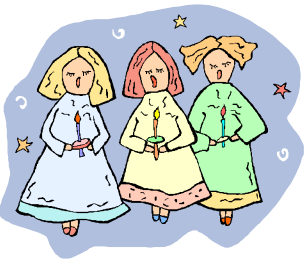
\_\_\_\_\_  
(message)

3. \_\_\_\_\_  
(recipient's name)

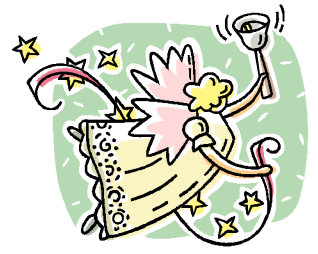
\_\_\_\_\_  
(message)

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](mailto:sueellen@fbca2.org)).





# *Carol Sing*



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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



Next Newsletter Deadline:

Sunday, January 20, 2008

## Vivaldi Concert - Sunday, January 13

Please plan on joining us for an exciting Second Sunday event this Sunday, January 13th. Our Sanctuary Choir will present a concert of works by Antonio Vivaldi featuring the *Gloria* with solo appearances by Bonnie Kidd and Lucy Thompson. A lecture discussing these works will be given by Carole Ott, Director of Music, at 2:00 p.m. in the Memorial Lounge. The performance will begin at 3:00 p.m. in the Sanctuary. (Free admission. Childcare provided.)

We hope to see you there!