



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

November 7, 2007

Pastors' Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

It seems to me that our congregation is standing on the threshold of a new realm of faithfulness. In the past year, we have grappled more and more with how we are called to follow Christ. We have had hard conversations, made tough decisions, and prayed together over how we are being led to minister to those in our midst, those right outside our door, and those in other countries. It has sometimes been confusing and difficult, especially when we don't always agree on the best course of action. But the truth is, this is a very exciting time in the life of First Baptist Church, as we seek to respond to Christ's call to bold and faithful witness, and I am looking forward to seeing how our life together continues to unfold.

On Sunday, Arthur made a compelling case for increasing our financial support of our church. He spoke of all the ways our church is reaching out, and of how this is made possible by our faithful action - which includes faithfulness in giving. Our budget needs for 2008 total 7% more than they did for this year. If we want to do all the things we feel called to do as a congregation, then we must pledge our support to such an increase. If we are committed to our church and its ministries, then we do what we can to enable those ministries. This is a good reason for giving.

But it is not the only - or even first - reason for giving. As Christians, our giving is always a response. It is a response to what has already been given to us. Many of those gifts have come to us through this very church. Other gifts have come entirely apart from any organized religious experience, and yet those, too, seem to come from God. What we have been given most of all is grace, and our giving must be a response to that.

So often, when we speak of financial things, something inside us tightens up. We get anxious. There is not enough, there is never enough. We wonder how on earth we can give more, or how we can give at all. We feel we have nothing left over to give. This sense of scarcity, of anxiety, makes it hard to see some things clearly - like how blessed we really are.

I would like to suggest that, as you consider what you might pledge to give next year, stop first to think of how much you've been given - and I don't mean financially. Take stock of what your life really is, what good gifts you've received, what you have to celebrate right now. When I look back over this year, I feel I have received more blessing than I can ever fully count. It makes me wonder what blessings I might be taking for granted. What about you? What is good in your life? What are you taking for granted? How has God's grace come into your life? What do you need to be thanking God for right now?

From a grateful and spacious place, we can reflect more clearly on what we really have to give. When we make our pledges to our church, one of the things we are doing is answering God's gifts with our own. And when we do that, we are also taking a step of faith - declaring that we will not be governed by anxiety, but by a sense of trust in God's goodness and faithful response to that goodness.

The great Christian philosopher mystic and writer Meister Eckhart once wrote, "If the only prayer you ever said in your life was 'Thank you,' that would be enough." Perhaps our whole lives should be praying that prayer over and over - and praying it with every action we take, including what we give.



FBCA2 News & Happenings

Youth Collecting For Christmas Gifts

The Youth will be conducting Vespers on Tuesday, December 4 and will give the guests gift bags. These gift bags will be filled during Youth Worship in November and will include many useful items that are purchased by the Youth, such as flashlights, combs, toothbrushes, and handwarmers. The Youth very much appreciate your donations as well - items such as AA batteries, travel size cosmetics, aspirin/Tylenol, band-aids, pocket tissue packs, etc. can be dropped off at the Information Counter. Warm clothing is especially needed now that the weather has changed. The Youth will also have a basket for socks, hats, gloves, mittens, long-underwear and any warm clothing you would like to donate. Thank you!!!



2007 Christmas Celebration

We're starting to gear up on plans for the Christmas Celebration, which will take place Sunday, December 9th. It's not too late to think about a special project or two to donate to the Bazaar and Bake Sale. Remember that there will also be a table for gently used Christmas and holiday items which you may no longer use but will become a treasure for someone else. Please contact Bev Inbody (904-5750) or Helen Johnson (662-1461) with any questions you may have. The Christmas Celebration is an AB Women's Ministries fundraiser.



Calendar Sale

Once more, the children and youth church school classes are selling *God's Creation calendars* to raise funds for school scholarships for the children in Nandasmo. These heavyweight and beautifully photographed calendars include a scripture verse for inspiration. At \$7 they are great gifts! The children will sell them before and after worship, or you may call Sue Ellen and we will mail you a calendar (or two or three)!

"Jean Amick: A Tribute" - Ann Arbor Art Center Exhibition

An exhibition of the recently deceased Jean Amick's artwork will be on display at the Ann Arbor Art Center from November 15 – December 31. There will be an opening reception Friday, November 16 from 6:00–8:00 p.m. Please contact the Art Center (734-994-8004) for further details.

AB Women's Ministries Fall Joint Meeting of Circles

The AB Women's Ministries will have their Fall Joint Meeting of Circles Thursday, November 15 at 1:00 p.m. in the Memorial Lounge. The MacGregor-Stitt Circle will present the program "Women of God Arise" with Nancy Nabors. Dessert and coffee will be furnished by the Beecher-Brewer Circle. We are inviting all church women to join us for this interesting afternoon.

Men's Book Club

The FBC Men's Book Club will be discussing "Crisis of Abundance: Rethinking How We Pay for Health Care" by Arnold Kling. The meeting will be hosted by Cesar Alaniz on Tuesday, November 13th, at 7:00 p.m. Please RSVP to calaniz@umich.edu or 663-4871 if you are able to come. All men are welcome!



Ladies Book Club

The FBC Ladies Book Club will be meeting on Tuesday, November 27th, at 7:00 p.m. to discuss, "Water for Elephants" by Sara Gruen. All are welcome! Toni Stearns has graciously invited us to her home. Please let her know if you plan to attend, 668-7965. Any questions, contact Janice Stumpf at 663-4871 or jlstumpf@umich.edu.

Message from Iris Martin

Iris would like to thank everyone for the prayers, cards and concerns during her son John's recent illness and hospital stay. He is having a great recovery and hopes to be home by November 20th. Iris would also like to thank everyone for their prayers, concerns and cards for her. It's nice to be remembered.

CROP Walk 2007 Report

The final report for CROP Walk 2007 is that First Baptist Church raised \$1,210.00. THANK YOU TO EVERYONE FOR YOUR SUPPORT!!

~ Board of Mission Action

Rob Snyder's fundraiser

Rob would like to thank everyone who ordered from him for his fundraiser and to let you know that he will bring your purchases to church on November 25th.



The Gathering Halloween Party



Children and Youth Christian Education

Nursery: 9:30 - 11:30 a.m., room 307

All children are welcome to worship with their families. After the Time as Children portion of the worship service, children in preschool - 3rd grade are invited to Children's Worship.

3 and 4 year olds

10:00 - 11:15 Childcare in nursery
11:15 - 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 202A)

3rd - 6th grades and Youth (7th - High School)

10:00 - 11:00 Worship
11:00 - 11:50 Church School (3rd-6th: room 304; Youth: room 107)
11:50 - 12:30 Jr. Choir (room 102)

Adult Christian Education

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.

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.

Other Adult Learning Opportunities

Second Sunday Speaker Series

Each month we feature scholars and visionary church leaders addressing theological and social concerns. On November 11, we welcome Dr. Larry Greenfield, currently Executive Minister for the Metro Chicago Region of the American Baptist Churches, and past President of Northern Theological Seminary and an interim pastor for this congregation in 1991-92. Please join us in welcoming Larry back to Ann Arbor. A potluck dinner will begin at 5:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. (Sign up at the Information Counter.) Dr. Greenfield's address, "*Mission Impossible? Being a Baptist with Integrity Today*," will begin at 7:00 p.m. followed by a discussion until 8:00 p.m.

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.



Celebration of Care Summary



Wow! What a party. It started off with some great music played by Charise & Joel, spontaneous dancing by Hannah & Christina, and a great Chili Cook Off with Jose, Dee, Bob and Ron. (I think the vote was pretty close to a tie). We also had some great Corn Chowder provided by the Whites.

After lunch, several people talked about what a Community of Care has meant to them. The Care and Community Board invited everyone to consider participating in one of three new initiatives that will be implemented this year. ***If you were not able to attend or have not had a chance to fill out your CARE AND COMMUNITY LAY MINISTRY ACTIVITIES form please pick up yours from the Information Counter on Sunday, fill it out and return to anyone on the Care and Community Board*** (Mary Gregg - chair, Barb Griffin - secretary, Bev Inbody, Bud and Phyl White, Carolyn Hillebrand and Doris George.)

The following is a summary of these new initiatives:

The first initiative is to serve communion to the homebound after church on communion Sundays. We are looking to put together teams of two from within our congregation. Paul and Stacey will provide training to those of you who would like to participate in this service to others.

Second we would like to expand the number of people who visit people who are hospitalized or homebound. We have heard most people find comfort in maintaining connection with people in the church. We would like to try and reach all of those people. The pastors will provide training. We are hoping to get enough people participating in the program that teams of two will be called on maybe 3 to 4 times a year.

Our third initiative is to re-institute the sponsorship program. This would involve a process to help new people get connected to people and programs in the church after they have been regular attendees. The sponsors will make introductions; invite them to church activities like the ice cream social, fun night, the picnic or maybe to attend a Sunday school class. A special invitation may make the difference. We think a formal relationship for about a year would be the right amount of time to get regular attendees connected.

Another way people get connected and cared for in our church community is to join one of the various groups we have in the church. A representative from each group gave a thumbnail sketch of their group. Many of us learned some new things about these groups. We also talked about starting some new groups.

Thanks should go to many people who helped plan and make this celebration happened. They are Barb Griffin, program planning, Bev Inbody and Joyce Arnn for decorations and set up, Carolyn Hillebrand for coordinating the lunch, Bud White, Greg Cartee and Clay Scott for clean up, Janice Stumpf and Maryann Bowen for kitchen help, Jose Barrantes, Dee Drake, Ron Gregg and Bob Kidd for making chili, Phyl White for corn chowder, Helen Johnson and Ellie Barron for desserts, Joel & Charise Hastings for music and speakers: Paul, Stacey, Beth Foster, Doris George, John Floyd III, Roberta Hause, Bonnie Kidd, Fred Munson, Toni Stearns, Dee Drake, Mary Davis, Thomas Scott, John Floyd III, Zoë McClaren, Brandy Kirchner and Jackie Snyder.

Mary Gregg
Chair, Care & Community Board

Are We Thankful Yet?

By The Rev. Cassandra Carkuff Williams, Ed.D., National Ministries' coordinator,
Discipleship Resource Development, American Baptist Churches USA



In a children's sermon one day, I gave each child a flower as a reminder of God's love for them. With delighted smiles, they proudly—and carefully—carried their flowers back to their pews. As I began the adult Sunday school session that followed worship, one of the adults arrived huffing, "I am so ashamed. Not one of those children said 'thank you,' so after the service, I stopped them and told them so." I took a calming breath and replied, "I never once doubted that they were thankful for the flowers." Others in the class concurred with my response. They too had seen the children's gratitude, which was expressed in wide eyed smiles, unmistakable joy, and the care they took with their little treasures. When Sunday school was over, children made their way to me one by one to say, "I'm sorry I didn't say 'thank you' for the flower." Instead of happy saunters and smiling eyes, I saw shuffling feet and bowed heads. An experience designed to remind children of God's love had been scolded into an experience of guilt.

We live in a culture that values pretense and saying the right words. While it is valuable for children to learn the conventional manners of our culture, we too often emphasize the right words and actions, valuing superficiality over honesty. This tendency is also apparent in church life. Our prayers are filled with nice words—what we think God wants to hear—rather than honest expressions of our thoughts and feelings, which nurture an authentic relationship with God. "Thanksgiving" stands among the six normative concepts of faithfulness identified by Karen Marie Yust in her book *Real Faith, Real Life*.¹ While manners are essential to a functional society, saying the words is not the same as being thankful. The question, then, is: how do we nurture thankfulness in our children?

★ **ENCOURAGE GRATITUDE RATHER THAN GUILT:** "I've done so much for you, you should appreciate it!" "Your aunt spent her money on that gift; you should show some gratitude!" "There are children who would be happy to have the stuff you have!" Have you ever heard—or spoken—these admonitions? Certainly children need to recognize what others do for them. They need to learn to be polite when receiving a gift, and to begin to learn about justice issues. However, these approaches promote guilt rather than gratitude. When adults allow children to process their feelings about things they don't have or can't do, without taking it personally, they've taken an important step in nurturing authentic gratitude. Another step is reframing our relationship with material things. For example, saying, "I know you didn't receive the gift you wanted, but it shows how much your aunt loves you, and being loved is a great gift," honors children's feelings and wants, while pointing toward the things that are of ultimate value.

★ **REDEFINE WEALTH:** When we think about giving thanks, it is easy to focus on material things—cars, homes, or the "right" dress, as if life's purpose is acquisition and God is a cosmic Santa. Young children, of course, are focused on the concrete here and now. We cannot expect them to recognize the "priceless" things of life. However, adults can model gratitude that transcends individualism and materialism. We can live life as though true wealth is defined not as having lots of things, but as needing little. We can value God's most precious gifts: life, creation, and salvation. We can practice celebration on a daily basis. Your child's brown eyes, a bird singing from a telephone wire, a glass of cold water—such things remind us of God's goodness—and every day, we stand forgiven and loved by a gracious God. Even on life's hardest days, these are things worthy of rejoicing and children need to see this thankfulness in the lives of the adults around them.

★ **EXPLORE OTHER WAYS WE SAY "THANKS:"** We express gratitude by taking care of what we have, by reaching out to others, and by doing things in return. We express gratitude to God for life's blessings by taking care of God's creation and sharing what we have with others. For example, if your child outgrows his bicycle, you could probably sell the old one at a garage sale or let it rot in the garage. You could also say "thanks" by working together to fix it so it works like new, and give it to a child whose family cannot afford a bike.

¹The other concepts are belonging, giftedness, hospitality, understanding, and hope. *Real Kids, Real Faith: Practices for Nurturing Children's Spiritual Lives*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2004), 13-14. Sue Ellen has copies of this book if you would like to borrow it.

AMERICAN BAPTIST CHURCHES USA

Rev. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary

Tuesday, October 9, 2007

Grace, mercy and peace through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Please help Jimmy Carter and me spread the word about the importance of the New Baptist Covenant Celebration set for Jan. 30-Feb. 1 in Atlanta, Georgia. As you know, plans for this celebration began Jan. 9, 2007 at the Carter Center in Atlanta after I and about 80 other leaders from Baptist organizations in the United States and Canada signed the North American Baptist Covenant.

You'll find more information on abc-usa.org, including a bulletin insert from Jimmy Carter, which I hope you'll disseminate to your church. Information on the gathering can be found at www.newbaptistcovenant.org. There is no registration fee. I hope that you will plan to be there so that American Baptists are well represented at this historic meeting. Organizers expect some 20,000 people to attend. It will be an unprecedented gathering.

If you come, you're invited to be my guest at breakfast with other members of your American Baptist family on Saturday, Feb. 2, 8 to 10 a.m. at the Atlanta Sheraton. Our speaker will be Baptist World Alliance General Secretary Neville Callam. Please be sure to pre-register (<http://www.abc-usa.org/documents/nbc.htm>) for breakfast so that we can accommodate everyone.

Please note that the New Baptist Covenant Celebration is NOT about trying to create another denomination or organizational structure. It is about how diverse Baptist groups can work more closely in addressing critical missional areas, such as those of poverty and social justice. These are areas in which American Baptists have already taken leadership stands, such as on the issue of slavery more than 150 years ago and on social justice during the civil rights period only a few decades ago. Today, we continue to make our voices heard. For example, National Ministries has focused its resources and energies on ending childhood poverty and International Ministries on human trafficking.

I hope to see you in Atlanta.

Yours in Christ,

A. Roy Medley

Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley
General Secretary

P.O. Box 851, Valley Forge, PA 19482-0851
800 ABC 3USA • 610 768 2274 • FAX 610 768 2275 • Roy.Medley@abc-usa.org

Children's Music and Arts Ministry (Sunday mornings)



Jr. Handbells	9:15 - 9:45	Room 305, upper level
Tiny Grace Notes (preschool)	10:45 - 11:00	Room 305, upper level
Grace Notes (K - 3 rd grade)	12:00 - 12:30	Room 202A, middle level
Jr. Choir (4 th grade and older)	11:50 - 12:30	Room 102, lower level

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, November 25, 2007



Holiday Food Drive for Friendship House

In order to feed many less fortunate families in the Hamtramck area this holiday season, we will be having a food/money drive for Friendship House. They are in need of stuffing, canned yams, jello, canned vegetables, canned pumpkin, evaporated milk, cranberry sauce, corn muffin mix, pie crust mix, instant mashed potatoes, etc. Monetary gifts will go towards turkeys, hams and side dishes which Friendship House will purchase. Checks can be made payable to "Friendship House" with "Harvest Food Pantry" on the memo line. (\$15 pays for a meal for a family of four.) Donations will be received at the Information Counter on Sunday, November 11 and Sunday, November 18 at both the morning worship service as well as the evening Thanksgiving service we will share with Northside and Solid Rock churches here at FBC.