



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

October 24, 2007

Pastors' Reflections

by Paul Simpson Duke

In the New Testament book that we call "The Acts of the Apostles" (though its Greek title is simply *Praxis*), the very first report of a church conflict is about church members demonstrating - or not demonstrating - care for each other. You can read about it in Acts 6:1-6. The church had many widows who were poor. Some of them were being visited daily and given food, others of them weren't getting as much attention and help. The disparity was rooted in familiar group dynamics: not everybody knows everybody; there are old-timers and newcomers; we attend more to our friends than to others; we assume that what we aren't doing is taken care of by somebody else; "comfort zones" are hard to break through, especially with regard to people who seem different from us.

First Church of Jerusalem dealt with the problem. A meeting was called. Leaders reported that they could not give adequate care of this kind. They called for new structures of care-giving in the church, and announced that more people - new people - should take responsibility for addressing needs within the community. These people emerged, and the ministry got done.

The story is a reminder that in terms of human relationship, the church always has a double calling. We reach out to people beyond the church in friendship, service, and evangelism; and we reach inward to members of our own church in friendship, service, and care. Most churches, including our own, need growth in both the reaching out and the reaching in. I want to tell you about new efforts to strengthen our reaching inward by the ministry of caring for and with each other.

We have a Board of Care and Community. It has functioned beautifully and effectively for years to extend the care of the church to members whose needs we have known. That board has worked very hard and served us very well. Now a new emphasis is being added to that board's vision and work. They are seeking to stimulate the involvement of a great many more people in doing the ministry of care among us.

Toward this end, a happy event will take place this Sunday, October 28, at 12:30 p.m. It is called "Celebration of Care," and it is for absolutely everyone who is physically able to attend. Mary Gregg and Barb Griffin of the Board of Care and Community have led the way in conceiving of and planning this event. It will begin, naturally, with a great meal. Some men in the church will show off their impressive chili-cooking skills, and fabulous desserts will be served. Then, the *really* good stuff. We will learn of the many kinds of care being offered in our church, and hear some first-hand testimonies about what such ministry means to those who receive it and to those who give it. Some exciting new ministry possibilities will also be introduced. And each of us will be invited and encouraged to find our own way of helping in such ministries of friendship.

Would you like to get a glimpse of some of the great love and service going on in this church? Most of it gets done quietly and privately, but here's a chance to discover some happy and inspiring secrets. Would you like to have more friendships in this church, and to feel more connected here? Would you like to *do* something - and for all of us to do something - to make Christ's love more evident to each other?

Church is nobody's chance for just another version of consumerism. Church is for engagement - including engagement with one another's needs for Christ's sake. Join us this Sunday at 12:30 to find out how it's being done, and what more might be done, and what your new part in it might be.

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 will feature scholars and visionary church leaders addressing theological and social concerns through a lecture and discussion period. On November 11, we will welcome the Rev. Dr. Larry Greenfield, currently Executive Minister for the Metro Chicago Region of the American Baptist Churches, past President of Northern Theological Seminary and an interim pastor for this congregation in 1991-92. To welcome Larry back to Ann Arbor we will have a potluck dinner at 5:30 before his presentation and discussion. (Sign up at the Information Counter)

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.



FBCCA2 News & Happenings

Youth Collecting For Christmas Gifts

The Youth will be conducting Vespers on 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!!!

Sunday Morning Prayer Group

Do you have 3 minutes? If you have even a few minutes before worship, come down to Room 108 (Bride's room). The room is open from 9:30-10:00 a.m. for prayer and preparation. I've found that even a couple of minutes of silent meditation and prayer for our worship helps me participate more fully.

~ Mary Davis

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 Nandasmoo. 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)!

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.

Jean Amick's Artwork - 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.

Ashley (Harrison) & Justin Kerns' New Address:

8024 A Rainbow Canyon, 29 Palms, CA 92277



Dr. Richard Willis, who recently retired after 37 years as a Family Practice Physician, has been honored by the Alpena Medical Society with a Physician's Recognition Award, which is given annually to a physician in the area to recognize an outstanding contribution to the community. In a sense, Richard is following his daughter Tracy Arnold's example. Several years ago she was honored as Alpena's Outstanding Teacher of the Year.

~ Submitted by Zella and Edgar Willis

Proposal for a Pavilion

Preliminary note on procedure: A meeting will be held in the Memorial Lounge on Sunday, November 4 at 11:30 a.m., to discuss the proposal below. After the discussion, participants have up to a week to cast their vote to allow time for further consideration and prayer. Ballots can be handed in after the meeting, mailed in during the week or turned in to the moderator on Sunday morning, November 11 (there will not be a meeting on this topic on that day). Those who vote must be members of the church and must have attended the discussion meeting. This stipulation stems from the Executive Council's conviction that in church decision-making, we owe it to the Body to listen to one another before casting our vote. Since only members may vote, all ballots are to be signed. Only Mary Davis, church moderator, will see the ballots, and will keep the names in strictest confidence. Because we want everyone to feel complete freedom in expressing their views, and knowing that some among us are reluctant to speak in a meeting of the group, we welcome written questions or comments - pro and/or con - by those who prefer not to speak. Please submit these to the moderator before the November 4 discussion begins. She will read them aloud in the meeting.

Background

In September of 2006 a congregational meeting was held, not the first, to discuss ideas regarding our response to homeless persons who come our way. A Homelessness Task Force - Mary Davis (moderator), Joyce Arnn, Scott Diels, Paul and Stacey Simpson Duke, John Floyd III, Arthur Francis, Anna Moyer, and John Reed - presented a document for the church's reflection. Its report began by stating the following shared values:

- We believe that the entire congregation, with its varying perspectives and concerns, is to be respected, and that the church's process of discernment should take all voices into account.
- We believe that the homeless persons who come our way represent Christ's call to us and are part of our church's mission.
- We believe that the present arrangement is inadequate and undesirable, both for the church and for the homeless persons who come our way.
- We believe that the issues of local homelessness, especially of the mentally ill, are so enormous that we should participate in larger efforts to address them; but we also believe that our first responsibility is to those who are closest to us.

The document then listed several proposals, unanimously agreed upon by the Task Force, for the church's ministry with the homeless. The first of these proposals was the construction of a pavilion near the east side of the property on the Washington Street side to give shelter so that homeless persons need not sleep under the awning by the front door. Verbalized response in the meeting was largely positive. The task force was strongly urged, however, to establish clear information regarding insurance and liability. The process of doing so took a surprisingly long time, but was satisfactorily resolved. Meanwhile, discussions had begun about leasing space to the Ann Arbor Co-Op Nursery School, which would include the space originally discussed for the pavilion. The Homelessness Task Force reconvened and arrived at a new site proposal for the pavilion, which they believe to be preferable to the one originally proposed.

Proposal

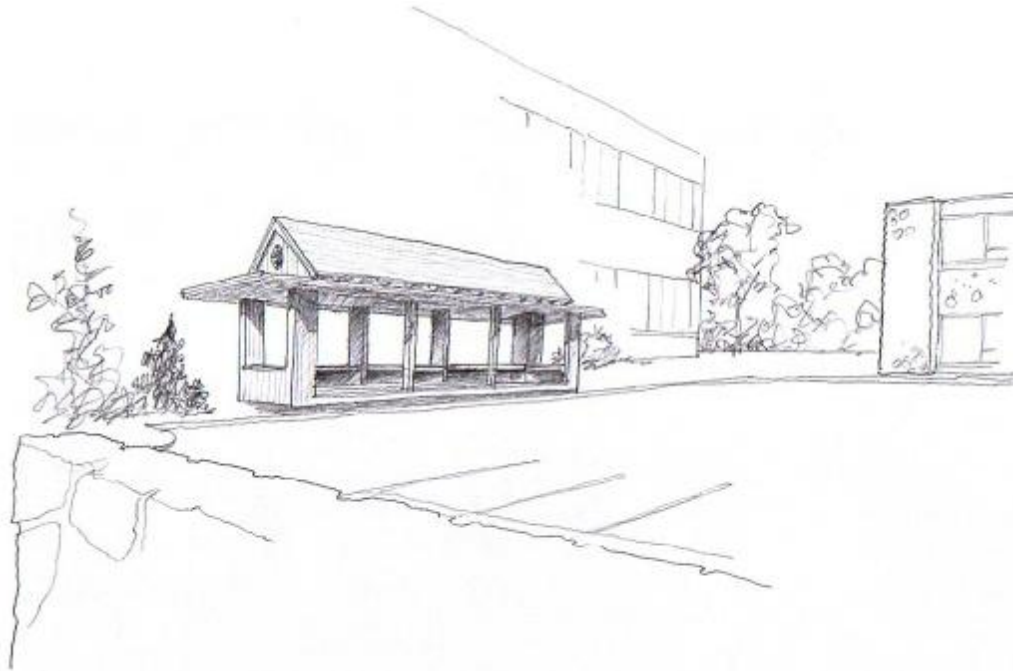
The Homelessness Task Force and the Executive Council propose the construction of a pavilion to be available for homeless individuals to sit or sleep, provided their compliance with certain rules of conduct. This structure, rectangular in shape (approximately 8 ft by 24 ft), would be located between our parking lot and the office building on the west side of the property. (See the sketch on the next page. A more detailed drawing will be available at the meeting.) The design includes some space in which personal belongings might be stored. Homeless persons will be asked no longer to occupy the space under the portico by the door but to make use of the pavilion instead. This proposal is contingent on approval from the Historical District Commission, which will discuss it on Nov. 15. Though it is not certain, we believe it is likely that the commission will approve the plan.

(Cont'd on next page)

(Proposal for a Pavilion, continued from previous page)

Construction would be done by a combination of a professional contractor and church volunteers. Estimated cost is \$15,000, including construction. Funding would be, to the extent possible, by personal donations. The means for funding the balance of the cost will be discussed at the meeting.

We wish to stress that the proposed structure is to be considered an experiment. We are asking the church to *try* it. If in a year or two it is discovered that the arrangement is not working, we are free to reassess and choose an alternative course. The task force does not see this as a real solution to the problem of homelessness and hopes that the congregation will work, over the next few years, on this aspect of our ministry.



Vespers News

As the weather grows colder, more folks are coming to the meal who need coats, sweatshirts, and blankets or sleeping bags. It is a difficult thing to tell someone who has no shelter that we have no jacket or blanket to offer them. If you have any unused items at home, please consider bringing them to share with our Vespers guests. Toiletry and personal care items like toothbrushes, toothpaste and deodorant are also always needed.

An interesting fact: \$40,000 is spent on someone with mental illness for one year of homelessness. \$25,000 a year is spent on the same person, for affordable housing with supportive services. There is not enough housing of this type available in Washtenaw county. Avalon Housing has a closed waitlist. Even the waiting period to get into ordinary local public housing is currently 3 years. People who fall through the cracks of "the system" end up at churches like ours. As William Sloane Coffin said: "The churches have to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and shelter the homeless. But they have also to remember that the answer to homelessness is homes, not shelters. What the poor and downtrodden need is not piecemeal charity but wholesale justice."

As we pursue our charitable works at First Baptist with the hungry and homeless who know to come to us for help, let us also support organizations like Habitat for Humanity, [Religious Action for Affordable Housing](#) and pursue social justice in other areas of our lives as citizens as well.

~ Sarah Heidt

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TRAVEL TO AFRICA WITH AMERICAN BAPTIST LEADERS

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 10/17/07) – Today, American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) unveils a new blog that will follow American Baptist leaders through a two-week visit to Africa.

The blog will provide on-the-spot reflections, experiences and images as the group visits with International Ministries (IM) missionaries serving as Christ's hands and feet to some of the poorest parts of the world. The group will meet as well with their national counterparts, congregations and government leaders to see first-hand the faces of our neighbors, of our brothers and sisters in Christ, who live in economic jeopardy. You can find the blog at <http://abc-usa.blogspot.com/>.

This visit was organized by IM's area director for Africa, Rev. Eleazar O. Zihherabere to connect with fellow Baptists in Africa, including the Baptist Community of Congo, the Baptist Convention of Zambia and the Baptist Convention of South Africa. On the trip are: Rev. Dr. Reid Trulson, IM executive director; Rev. Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, National Ministries executive director; Rev. Sumner M. Grant, the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board (MMBB) executive director; Virginia Holmstrom, American Baptist Women's Ministries (ABWM) executive director; and Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, ABCUSA general secretary. All will make contributions to the blog.

ABCUSA has a long history of service to the world through IM - dating back to the Judsons' mission to Burma in 1814. Today, however, ABCUSA recognizes that it needs to work in concert with various organizations and governments to bring desperately needed help and hope to all corners of the world. The denomination continues to press governments around the world to recognize and grant basic rights to the poor. ABCUSA has also been a pioneer and a developer of programs and resources tackling the ravages of poverty among the poorest of the poor - whether in the United States through National Ministries or overseas with IM.

The above message is an example of where your money goes when you give to the World Mission Offering 2007, which will be received throughout the month of October. Please give generously.



World Community Day

Friday, November 2, 2007

Sponsored by Church Women United, this year's theme is "Embracing Justice Under God's Tent," which is a worship service lifting concerns of homelessness, immigration, and responses to disaster based on familiar scriptures and Psalms 23, 82, and 85. The event will be held on Friday, November 2 at 9:30 a.m. at the New Hope Baptist Church, 218 Chapin St., Ann Arbor. They will begin with Fellowship followed by the worship service at 10:00 a.m. Church Women United (CWU) was founded in 1941 and works for peace and social justice from a Christian base. It is a recognized United Nations Non-governmental Organization.



November 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1 7:30 Choir Practice	2	3
4 (Daylight Saving Time Ends) Communion Newsletter Deadline	5	6 5:30 Vespers	7 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Executive Council	8 6:15 Handbell Practice 7:30 Choir Practice	9	10
11 5:30 Second Sunday	12 7:00 Board of Mission-Action	13 5:30 Vespers 7:30 Board of Worship	14 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	15 1:00 ABWM Joint Circles 7:30 Choir Practice	16	17
18 12:30 Fall Financial Campaign Lunch	19	20 1:00 Beecher-Brewer 5:30 Vespers 5:30 Bd. of Christian Ed. 7:00 Board of Trustees	21 1:30 Bible Study	22 <i>Happy Thanksgiving!</i>	23 Church and offices closed	24 Church and offices closed
25 Newsletter & December Calendar Deadline	26	27 5:30 Vespers	28 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	29 6:15 Handbell Practice 7:30 Choir Practice	30	

Happy Birthday!



Mary Davis	1	David Lee	9	George Lambrides	19
Betty Gerstler	2	David Robbins	12	Marcia Blunt	20
Mildred MacGregor	2	Sid Zell	13	Betty Doman	24
Dave Kerschbaum	3	Gad Lim	14	Suzanne Knight	27
Joyce Laakso	4	Sarah Heidt	15	Betty Ehrlinger	30
Frances Hinderer	7	Nancy Paul	17	Geoff Halliday	30
		Malcolm Fleming	19		

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



Next Newsletter Deadline:
Sunday, November 4, 2007

Celebration of Care

The challenge is on!! Dee Drake has entered the chili cook-off with a secret family recipe. So in addition to Dee, we have Jose Barrantes, studying to be a chef, Ron Gregg, who is know for his cooking ability and Bob Kidd, who is good at most things. Let's let them know how excited we are about the challenge. Our program this Sunday, October 28 will share some stories of all the good things we do to serve and care for each other in our church family and learn of opportunities to form bonds of friendship and caring by being part of a group within the church. We want everyone in the church family to know of oppourtunities to get to know each other by working, learning and having fun together and supporting each other. **Children and youth** are encouraged to participate and **childcare** is provided. We will celebrate all the great things we have always done to care about and for each other and we want to have everyone help build FBC into an even more Caring Community. Please plan to join us this Sunday at 12:30 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall.