



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

January 11, 2006

Pastors' Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

This past weekend marked the fifth anniversary of Paul's and my arrival at First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, which we celebrate with gratitude. These five years have been rich and full – and have gone by exceptionally fast. We remain grateful for this church and this community, and we continue to look forward to our shared future together. What an honor to be your pastors and friends. What a privilege to raise our children in this church family.

As I count the blessings of these past five years, one of the things I remain most impressed by regarding this congregation's faith commitments is our relationship with our sister church in Nandasmo, Nicaragua. The relationship our two churches have cultivated is unlike any I have witnessed in any other church. It is no token endeavor. In addition to "good will" trips that church members and pastors from both Ann Arbor and Nandasmo have taken, and in addition to work trips made by our youth and other members, we have made a substantial commitment of resources to attempt to help our sister church in specific, critical ways. The primary focus of this commitment in recent years has been our assistance with the Nandasmo Farm Project, a project with the goal of providing economic benefits to members both of the Nandasmo church and of the wider community. In 2003, our church raised and then donated \$40,000 to purchase the land and to go towards other start-up needs. Since then, we have given continued financial support.

Our support goes well beyond merely sending money, however. Part of our commitment to the project has been the crucial work of our Nandasmo Task Group, the members of which (Ron Gregg, Scott Diels, Arthur Francis, Toni Stearns, Paul Simpson Duke, Graham Miles, Anna Moyer, and David Moehring) have given countless hours and untold amounts of energy to sorting through the complex issues surrounding the farm, including its management and oversight, its potential for profitability, its relationship with the church and the school, and the church's relationship with us. Nearly everyone on this team has visited Nandasmo and worked on the farm, and more than half the committee has made multiple visits. They are to be commended for doing the difficult detailed work of this ministry, and for their leadership of our church in this commitment.

Now, they are asking the rest of us to join in a renewed commitment to our brothers and sisters in Nandasmo. A newly constituted farm committee in Nandasmo has produced a new operating plan, projecting significant profitability within a shorter-than-expected timeframe. Our Nandasmo Task Group has enthusiastically received and supported this new plan, with the understanding that in order to achieve its goals, the Nandasmo farm will need more short-term financial assistance from our church. A new fundraising campaign is slated to begin later this month - a chance once again to make concrete our covenant to love our neighbors.

You are invited to learn more at a special meeting this Thursday, January 12th, at 6:00 at the church. There will be pizza, childcare, and time for questions and answers. If you are unable to attend Thursday's meeting, you may pick up an extensive report at the Information Counter or the main office, and you may also ask questions of the Task Group members. The beginning of a new year is a great time to make new and renewed faith commitments, and this is certainly an important one.

Thank you, First Baptist Church, for five amazing years of growing together in faith and discipleship. Thank you for your commitment to living the gospel in solid, specific ways, in this particular local community and within the global context. Here's to a new year of living our faith together!

THANK YOU from the Children @ FBC

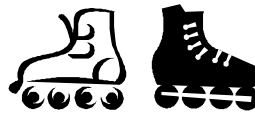
We thank you for your generous support of the children's calendar sale and your generous donations during the Christmas Musical (\$130!). We will be able to provide TWO scholarships for children in Nandasmo to go to school!



Welcome new FBC member, Gaius Lim!



Happy (belated) Birthday to Katie Beene!
She celebrated her 18th birthday January 6!



Sunday, January 15, all Youth (grades 4th - 12th) are invited to lunch in the Youth Room at 12:30 p.m. and roller skating from 2:00 - 4:00 p.m. at the Skatin' Station in Canton. Drivers are needed. Please contact Brandy Kirchner (734-276-6187) if you plan to attend and if parents are willing to drive.

VESPERS

The next Vespers meal is Tuesday, January 17th. If you are interested in giving Devotionals anytime during 2006, please speak with Sarah Heidt.



Meditative Knitting A Prayer of Heart and Hands Led by Stacey Simpson Duke

Calling all Knitters! (and Crocheters!)

People who work with their hands often experience the calming, centering benefits of such repetitive, quiet work. Approached with an attitude of spiritual attentiveness, such work can become an avenue towards deep meditation and prayer. If you are interested in exploring the possibilities, join us on Saturday, January 21st, in the Memorial Lounge from 10:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.. Though this is not an instructional class, knitters and crocheters of all levels of skill are welcome. Please bring your own needles and yarn. You may bring a simple project you are already working on; Stacey will also have free knitted dishcloth patterns available (the focus of this gathering is not the project but the process). Coffee, tea, baked goods and childcare will be provided. Please RSVP to stacey@fbca2.org no later than Friday, January 20th.



CONGRATULATIONS



to Wayne and Dorothy Lamerson who recently celebrated their 60th Wedding Anniversary!

ACTS 2006

ACTS 2006, the Central Area American Baptist Churches training event, will take place at the First Baptist Church of Jackson on Saturday, January 28 from 9:00 a.m. - 12:15 p.m. (Registration begins at 8:30). There are 8 different workshops offered, some designed for church leaders, and others designed for all of us as we try to live out our faith in everyday life. Free childcare is offered. Brochures with workshop descriptions and registration forms are available at the Information Counter. Here are a couple of the one-hour workshops that will be presented:

- ***WEEP WITH THOSE WHO WEEP***

A practical understanding of the Grief and Loss process from a Biblical perspective; how to help others and ourselves deal with the death of a loved one or friend. The session will touch on the importance of the recognition of loss, the symptoms and cycles of grief, communicating concern to those who have experienced a loss or grief, supporting the recipients of loss, and developing a legacy for remembering those who have died. Specific topics such as children and grief, siblings, and sudden or unexpected death situations, as well as terminal illness will also be discussed.

Leader: Rev. Richard H. Wilford, Pastor, Clark Lake Baptist Church and former Victim Assistance Coordinator for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police

- ***LEAVING LASTING LEGACIES***

Everyone wants to be remembered when they are gone. This workshop will explore your three legacies: Personal, Social and Financial. You will get practical suggestions that you can take home to begin the process of planning, preparing and perpetuating each legacy.

Leaders: Arlon Elser, PhD, retired Program Director in the Education Grants Division of the W.K. Kellogg Foundation in Battle Creek, past chair of the ABC-MI Region Division of Finance and Property and member of the Region Endowment Fund Board.

Ed Ritzler, Certified Financial Planner, president of Professional Management in Battle Creek with 40 years experience assisting healthcare professionals with taxes and financial planning. Ed is currently ABC-MI Region Treasurer and a member of the Region Endowment Fund Board.

The deadline for registering is January 21st. Plan on attending this event - join with others for a day of learning and sharing! Please see Sue Ellen for further information.

Waterman-Chapman Circle

Come join the Waterman-Chapman circle at Lois Crabtree's home Tuesday, January 17th at 1:00 p.m. Jill Ratajczak from Neighborhood Senior Services will speak. Numerous topics will be covered with the main emphasis on an explanation of all the various services available to older adults who want to continue living in their own home. Please call Betty Doman at 734-971-7373 if you are able to attend. Thank you!

Macgregor-Stitt Circle

MacGregor-Stitt circle meets at 1:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 19 at Eva Kelly's home. The program will be "Inspirational Books."

Annual Financial Meeting

The church's annual financial meeting, at which the congregation receives and discusses reports of the financial affairs of the church and adopts the year's operating budget, will be held at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday, January 29 in the Fellowship Hall. It will begin with a potluck lunch and will be enlivened with singing -- yours! Please bring a dish to share: meat, vegetable, salad, or dessert. Eating utensils and beverages will be provided. Y'all come now!

Dear FBC family,

I am thrilled to report that I recently received a long-awaited phone call from Social Security -- my claim for disability benefits has been approved! We are relieved to have this over with. I will be receiving enough monthly income to nearly cover our mortgage payments, and my SSDI benefits will be there as long as I need them -- unless I experience a miraculous recovery or find myself able to return to work, either of which I would gladly trade for! Otherwise, I'll continue learning to live with my disability as it progresses.

So now, fifty-one weeks after the loss of my job and career in graphic design, things are looking up! I will remove my name from the weekly prayer request list, but do continue to remember our family in your prayers. We would also gladly accept any assistance that is offered to us (meals, cleaning, housework, etc.), as many physical tasks continue to be very difficult for me. Dave works very hard, at the office and at home, but there is only so much one person can accomplish!

Dave and I feel like we are finally out of limbo and can move on with our lives! It is a wonderful thing. I am very excited about the possibility of pursuing a career in genetic counseling. Genetic counselors work in health care, providing support to patients and families. They investigate and interpret information about genetic disorders and inheritance, provide counseling, serve as patient advocates, and make referrals. They also educate other health care professionals, and many engage in research activities. I'd have to be accepted into (and then survive) UM's master program in Human Genetics and Counseling. But we'll just take one thing at a time, perhaps beginning with some volunteer counseling, and then an undergraduate science course or two.

We are also happy to report that Ahnon's tonsillectomy/adenoidectomy at UM on December 7 was a success! After a bit of a rough start, he is now recovering very well. His teachers have already reported to us that he is a different kid -- he seems more calm and focused in school since the surgery. Hopefully the better quality sleep (uninterrupted by apnea) will continue to make a difference in all areas of his life!

With much love and gratitude,

Katie, Dave, & Ahnon

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Katie Kerschbaum
kerschmom@gmail.com
734 741-5288 home

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 15 (through February 5) 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 12, 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).

ABCUSA Urges Continued Prayers Following Mining Disaster

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS) - As fear for the miners trapped in Sago Mine, Tallmansville, W.Va., has turned to grief at the death of 12 miners, American Baptists across the country are encouraged to continue praying for the victims' families and American Baptist churches helping the communities deal with the tragedy.

Sago Baptist Church, near the mine, ministered to families as a gathering place while they awaited word of loved ones' fate. Pastors of local churches ministered by their presence and church members served food and showed their solidarity with miners' family members.

The American Baptist area minister for Sutton, W.Va., Dr. Maxwell Hill, described the situation as one where the entire community feels the grief. He mentioned that Martin (Junior) Toler, a deacon at Stump Chapel in Sutton, W.Va., who died in the mine, was especially active in West Virginia Baptist Convention life. The Convention's executive minister, Dr. David Carrico, said, "Good, supportive churches are close to the situation and the region is ready to support them as much as possible."

By way of denominational support, American Baptist Churches USA General Secretary, Rev. Dr. A. Roy Medley, said, "We appreciate the ministry of Sago Baptist Church and Pastor Wease Day at a time of great difficulty, and we hold up in prayer the church and this servant of God as they shepherd a community deeply stricken with grief. We grieve, as well, for the families who lost relatives in this disaster, and we pray for the recovery of the young man who survived. Christ would have us include in our prayers, too, the rescue team and the company that owns Sago Mine, for no one touched by this disaster is without pain and struggle. May God's hand bring comfort to all."

With regard to material support, National Ministries' executive director, Rev. Dr. Aidsand F. Wright-Riggins III, said National Ministries' Office of Disaster Relief stands ready to provide assistance, when needs are identified, with funds contributed by American Baptists through One Great Hour of Sharing. "At times such as these, our actions are the embodiment of God's love reaching out to those in despair. We pray and care for our brothers and sisters in Christ to prove that God, indeed, does not forsake us, even in the darkest night."

Condolences to the families and communities affected by the recent tragedy may be sent to Rev. John Simmons, associate executive minister of Missions and Administration, West Virginia Baptist Convention: P.O. Box 1019, Parkersburg, WV 26102-1019, or via e-mail to jsimmons@wvbc.org. He will forward these through the appropriate channels.

Hosting Chancel Flowers

If you're interested in hosting chancel flowers in 2006, the new flower calendar is up on the board outside the Fellowship Hall. Please sign up now, especially if you have a specific date in mind.

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www.fbca2.org

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Dated material:

Wednesday, January 11, 2006

Next Deadline:

Sunday, January 22, 2006

VBS PLANNING MEETING

Vacation Bible School returned to FBCA2 last summer after a LONG break. So much fun and learning! And now it's time to start planning for this summer's VBS!! Lots of people are needed and wanted to help with the behind-the-scenes planning and preparation, as well with helping the week of the event. If you are interested in supporting this wonderful experience by helping with the planning in a big or small way, please join us for a brief lunch and meeting on January 22, 12:30 in the Fellowship Hall. Childcare will be provided. Please let Sue Ellen know if you plan to attend. If you are unable to attend but are interested in helping in some way, please let her know and she will keep you updated on the preparations (phone - 663-9376; sueellen@fbca2.org).

