



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

June 7, 2006

Pastors' Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

This past Sunday was Pentecost, which means that now we are in the part of the Christian year known as "ordinary time." The bulk of the Christian year lies in ordinary time, which is as it should be, since life in general tends to be comprised more of ordinary time than of peak moments and special celebrations. The color for the ordinary season of the Christian year is green*, which is meant to symbolize growth. It makes sense that especially during the most ordinary times in our lives, our calling is to continue to be engaged in and open to spiritual growth.

It is good that this season of ordinariness begins with Pentecost, the celebration of the coming of the Holy Spirit into our lives. Any growth we look for will come because of this Spirit, and not by our own efforts (think of a child who wills himself to grow taller - it just doesn't happen that way). At issue is not how we can make ourselves grow into "better" Christians and a "better" church. At issue is whether or not our lives and our church are more and more open to God and God's work.

Earlier this year, some of us studied the book *Becoming a Blessed Church: Forming a Church of Spiritual Purpose, Presence, and Power*, by Graham Standish. It was a marvelous, thought-provoking book, and one I would enthusiastically recommend. Standish writes, "If I were to pinpoint the biggest problem in the mainline church today, it would be that the modern church has succumbed to treating God as a theological ideal, as an abstract concept, rather than as an experience, an encounter, an embrace of One with whom we can have a deep and transforming relationship." (p. 49) Do we expect to experience God, as individuals and as a congregation? Another way of putting that question is to ask, are we spiritually open? Standish argues that this is the foundational decision that church leaders and church members must make if they want to become blessed, blessing, vital congregations - to become spiritually open at our core.

Spiritual openness does not mean having a certainty about God, or about one's own beliefs. Openness starts with being curious. It means not being closed to the possibility that God could speak to you, could be present to you, could work in your life and through your life. It means praying, or trying to pray. It means gathering with others who are trying to do the same, with open minds and unguarded hearts. It means allowing our souls to open up to whatever experience of the sacred that God would give us.

As late spring turns into summer, and our schedules and rhythms take on a more relaxed feel, and the long days bring a real light into our lives, we often begin to feel a kind of expansiveness in our souls that we don't feel at other times of the year. Lean into that sense, for God is there. Allow that expansiveness to move you into gratitude, awe, wonder, and prayer. Seek God, and expect to find God. Go outside when you wake in the morning, and just sit in the sun, listening to the birds' chorus, feeling the summer breeze - this can be prayer. Take a walk on your lunch break, breathe the warm air, be grateful that you can move, look at all the other people in all their beautiful variety and quirkiness - this can be prayer. When the summer showers come, and the sky is dark and heavy, and the thunder pounds the atmosphere, stop and listen, maybe even step into the wet - this can be prayer. When the sun goes down late and slow, and you make your preparations for a night of sleep, stop and say a prayer - a prayer of gratitude for what you've been given, a prayer of hope for what you and others and the world still need - say your prayers, for God is there. This is the road to where we need to go, as individuals and as a congregation - the road of prayer, of curiosity, of openness, of attentiveness, of expectation, of hope. Let's keep on walking it, every ordinary, extraordinary day.

*the first and last Sunday of this season are considered transitional days with special themes - Trinity Sunday and Christ the King Sunday - and their color is white

CHILDREN & YOUTH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Nursery

Room 307

9:30 - 12:30

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

The following Church School classes begin at 11:00 or when worship concludes:

Preschool - 2nd grade	Room 202B	11:00 - 12:00
3rd - 6th grade	Room 304	11:00 - 12:00
Younger Youth (7 th - 9 th)	Room 107	11:00 - 12:00

Our summer church school schedule has begun — church school classes meet from 11 a.m.—12 p.m. and all ages are together for group activities until 12:30 in Room 202A & B.

ADULT CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Lessons from the Wisdom Literature of the Bible: "Proverbs"

Discussion Leaders: Mary Davis and Scott Diels

(Memorial Lounge)

Using the Judson Bible Journeys curriculum we will explore selections from the Wisdom literature of the Old Testament in relation to questions of the meaning of life, suffering, and divine presence in the world. The curriculum also highlights our unique American Baptist heritage and mission. Student booklets are available in class.

Share and Prayer Group

Facilitated by Stacey Simpson Duke

(Room 108)

A time for sharing, singing, silence, centering, and group prayer. Together we will engage in a ministry of prayer for our church, for other members, for specific concerns, and for local and world events, as well as having time to become more connected to one another and more personally grounded and rooted in God. This is not a class about prayer, but a time for actually engaging in prayer together (no one will be obligated to pray aloud, but anyone who wants to will be welcome to).



Summer Newsletter Deadlines

(subject to change)

June 18 · July 9 · July 23 · August 6 · August 20

E-Connection

Please e-mail Carey at carey@fbca2.org if you would like to receive e-mail messages concerning the church family and events.

FBC News & Happenings



Church Work Party

As we head into the summer season, it is a good time to give the building and grounds a poor man's makeover (no expensive creams, just elbow grease). The Board of Trustees is organizing 3 workdays over the course of the summer, the first of which will be on Saturday, June 24 from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon. On this workday we will focus our efforts outside, working to clean and beautify the church grounds. Please consider joining the effort for any amount of time you can.

-The Board of Trustees

Honorable Mention: Kathryn Gregg

Kathryn recently received a Certificate of Childhood Development from Washtenaw Community College at an honors convocation. Congratulations, Kathryn!

Vespers

The Vespers service on June 20th will be led by Terry Sight, who recently graduated from Ecumenical Theological Seminary in Detroit. We are seeking devotional speakers for the remainder of the summer. Contributions of clothing and shoes are always much appreciated. One of our regular female guests is looking for work doing housecleaning so if you would like to know more, call Sarah Heidt 424-2776 for a reference.

MacGregor-Stitt Circle

The next meeting of the MacGregor-Stitt Circle will be Thursday, June 15 at noon at the home of Phylis White. A potluck salad luncheon will be enjoyed as well as the Treasure Sale.

* Please note that the meeting will be at 12:00 noon this month.

2006 Church Picnic

Traditionally, the Board of Christian Education sponsors an all-church picnic the second Sunday in June. This year, we have decided to move the picnic to Sunday, July 30, from 12 - 3:00 p.m. - to avoid all the June recitals, open houses, etc. and to give us something fun to do in the middle of the summer. Please look for more announcements in late June.



ONE GREAT HOUR OF SHARING TO PROVIDE \$25,000 IN INITIAL RELIEF ASSISTANCE TO VICTIMS OF YOGYAKARTA EARTHQUAKE

(from the ABC-USA website)

The World Relief Office of the American Baptist Churches USA has released a grant of \$25,000 for immediate relief to victims of the recent Yogyakarta earthquake on the Indonesian island of Java. The death toll from the earthquake, which struck Indonesia on Saturday, May 27, 2006, now stands at more than 5,000. Church World Service Indonesia reports that more than 200,000 people are homeless according to government reports; many of them in and near the ancient city of Yogyakarta. You can support Indonesian earthquake relief efforts through this month's One Great Hour of Sharing Offering.

Baptist World Aid (BWAid), the Union of Indonesian Baptist Churches, and Church World Service responded immediately to the needs of the hundreds of thousands of victims of this most recent tragedy. One Great Hour of Sharing funds will assist the relief efforts of all three of these relief agencies. BWAid and Hungarian Baptist Aid (HBAid) immediately sent two "Rescue 24" teams in the affected area. Rescue 24 immediately offered search and rescue, medical, and mass feeding teams to local authorities who accepted the medical assistance.

Leaders within the Union of Baptist Churches of Indonesia have been coordinating the response and have already distributed emergency tents, meal packs, and food. In addition, Anugrah Baptist Church is being set up as an operation center, and Prambanan Baptist Church as a medical clinic.

With local staff throughout Indonesia, Church World Service responded almost immediately following the earthquake, sending an initial supply of nearly 3,000 bottles of water and blankets to Bethesda Hospital in Yogyakarta, which is receiving many of the injured. Church World Service has distributed water and food rations to 500 households as well as two tons of family tents, Health Kits, and CWS Blankets. Eleven more tons of emergency supplies will follow later this week.

Church World Service is projecting that their relief work will continue in this area for at least one year. "The people of Indonesia have suffered greatly from recent natural disasters," said World Relief Officer, Lisa Rothenberger. "Within the past 18 months, they have been victims of the tsunami, the eruption of the Mount Merapi volcano, and now this devastating earthquake. There is little doubt that relief will be needed for at least the next twelve months. Even as we pray for the victims of this earthquake, please also pray for the relief workers, as many have worked tirelessly on relief and rehabilitation activities since the tsunami of December 2004."

~ The One Great Hour of Sharing offering will be received throughout the month of June ~

For Families

(adapted by Sue Ellen from the *Taking Faith Home* newsletter by Pastor Greg Priebbenow)

John 17:6-19 Christ's prayer for his disciples

Faith Talk: (Discuss in your household or small group)

- What brings people together? What pulls them apart?
- Jesus prayed that his followers would be "one." What do you think he meant?
- Why is it important to stay connected to other Christians?



Rituals and Traditions: Write a family creed stating what you believe in and value. You may wish to use the following structure:

We are the _____ family.

As a family we believe _____

As a family we value _____

As a family we strive to _____

In all that we do, God help us and keep us. Amen.

Service:

Talk together as a family about the ways you serve the Christian brothers and sisters whom God has given you as your congregation. What gifts and resources has God given you for this purpose? How are you currently using these?



VBS Volunteers Needed

If you have not yet found time to join the fun of VBS, there is a sign-up sheet at the information counter with specific times and days when help is needed - or contact Sue Ellen (663-9376; sueellen@fbca2.org). We are including children from the community and children in the Hikone housing development so many more hands are needed.

There are varying degrees of time commitments from an hour to help with set-up or clean-up to a three hour shift to help us with the kids - help with transportation is especially needed. There are also very important jobs that you can do on your own schedule, including shopping for food and crafts.

Registration and Consent Forms are available at the Information Counter. Each child attending VBS needs to have this form completed by a parent. Please take some for your neighbors and friends. Completed forms may be returned to Sue Ellen by June 20 or left in the basket on the CE information desk near the coat racks and classrooms.

May Fun Night - TALENT SHOW

Jokes were told, food was enjoyed, magic tricks and piano tunes were played, and laughter was shared!



Children & Youth Worship



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

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Ann Arbor, MI
Permit 542

The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Dated material:

Wednesday, June 7, 2006

Next Deadline:

Sunday, June 18, 2006



2006 VBS

Bold, Brave and Blessed!

June 26-30

10:00 am – 1:00 pm,

K-5th grade

Friends and neighbors are welcome!

(Registration forms are available at the information counter or by contacting Sue Ellen.)