



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

March 28, 2007

Pastors' Reflections

by Paul Simpson Duke

Atheism isn't new (though you wouldn't know it by the fuss made last week when a congressman - the highest-level American politician ever to do this - said he doesn't believe in a supreme being). Reasoned disbelief has long had its adherents. Many who don't believe there is a God have held that conviction quietly. Some have formed societies of kindred minds on the subject. A few have been vigorously outspoken. This has been noticeably true from at least the nineteenth century.

But something has struck me in the last couple of years that feels new, at least to me. In several magazine articles I've run into sentences that seem to assume God's non-existence to be a broadly accepted fact. These are not sentences stating arguments; they are passing remarks which apparently take it for granted that it's understood by all of us who read, say, *The New Yorker*, that God has vanished from the contemporary mind. Though my sense of God differs, I take seriously the sensibilities behind those passing remarks. Whole communities of astute, intelligent people judge that God, at very best, is absent from our world.

And Christian faith, rightly understood, is no stranger to the experience of a world without God.

I have been thinking about the day after Good Friday, commonly called "Holy Saturday." We have no special observances on that day, though Christians from some other traditions do. If that day can be called "holy," I think it can be so only in the most dreadful sense.

What used to be Jesus is a corpse. It is impossibly still and cold as stone. It is the wrong color. Lips are parted. Eyes that had flashed great light are lifeless, fixed, staring at nothing through half-shut lids. The body was washed, but still is covered with black wounds. According to one report, his last words were a scream: My God, why have you forsaken me?

If you believe that this man was more than another martyr - much more - the world is godless now. There is no Presence. It might as well be the corpse of God. The abandonment is complete. By Politics and by Religion, God is murdered - is dead.

And think of this: it was the Sabbath day, the day of worship. Did any of the friends of Jesus straggle to the synagogue that day? How could they? Worship is now absurd. Or maybe some did go, some of the women perhaps? Hearing the readings, the prayers, the speaker's comments - how wretched they must be! They should not have come. It is madness, saying prayers to a vanished God.

The sense of a world-without-God held by many today is, in some ways, the "Holy Saturday" crisis. The day invites us to identify with them, as does the crucifixion itself. Our own experiences of abandonment, emptiness, and absurdity can be claimed and grieved. They are sanctified by that ultimate and finally saving abandonment. There are mercies of the divine Presence that cannot come to us until we have known the divine Absence. Is this why Jesus says, "It is to your advantage that I go away"? (John 16:7)

All of this, bleak as it may be, constitutes the dark night into which the Resurrection suddenly shines like the sun. The tomb is broken. After dreadful silence, Christ rises powerfully alive - and then what music is ours to make! And what news is ours to offer in a world that has seen too little reason, as of yet, to have hope of a living God.

Christian Education for Children and Youth

(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 service, preschool - 3rd grade are invited to Children's Worship in room 202A until 11:00 a.m.

Preschool - 2ND grade

10:00 - 10:30 Worship (Sanctuary)
10:30 - 11:00 Children's Worship (202A)
11:00 - 12:00 Church School (202B)
12:00 - 12:30 Grace Notes (305)

3rd - 5th grades

(3rd graders may attend Children's Worship)
11:00 Church School (304)
3rd graders leave at 12:00 for Grace Notes
4th & 5th graders leave at 11:50 for Jr. Choir

Youth

10:00 - 11:00 Worship
11:15 - 11:50 Church School (107)
11:50 - 12:30 Jr. Choir (102)

Easter, April 8: Children 1st grade and older will worship with their families. Childcare will be provided for children younger than 1st grade. There will be no church school classes or Children's Choir rehearsals after worship.

Children's Music and Arts Ministry

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

Christian Education for Adults

Sunday, April 1: Continuation of "Church Visioning & Renewal Process"

Sunday, April 8, Easter: No adult classes

Sunday, April 15: American Baptist missionaries, David and Laura Parajon, will be our guests and will present an overview of their work in the rural villages of Nicaragua. Since 2001, David and Laura have been serving remote rural communities in Nicaragua through the training and support of village health leaders. These health care providers staff clinics in their communities to diagnose and treat the most common illnesses, teach nutrition and hygiene, and coordinate diverse community-oriented projects to improve health and prevent disease; they have significantly reduced deaths among children and women in their communities. David and Laura have also been receiving short-term mission teams that work in construction projects alongside village members.

David is an internist and Laura is a family physician. Their ministry to serve the poor focuses on health, hope and healing. Based in Nicaragua, they serve through AMOS Health and Hope and the Council of Protestant Churches in Nicaragua (CEPAD), working in Latin America to improve the health of rural communities. They also work with hospital and clinical services, hospice care, and programs focused on prevention and treatment for people living with HIV/AIDS.

Second Sunday Series: Living the Questions: Join us Sunday, April 15 (note: third Sunday due to Easter) from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m. Following a simple potluck and time of fellowship, we gather in the Memorial Lounge for a time of engagement with some of the most challenging issues of the Christian faith. After viewing a 30-minute DVD of clips of leading theologians, biblical scholars, sociologists, and church leaders, we will have time for in-depth discussions of the issues they raise. Please sign up at the Information Counter and pick-up your copy of the participant's guide for Lesson 6, *A Kingdom Without Walls: Ruth & Jonah*.



FBC NEWS & EVENTS



Welcome New Members Becky, Craig & Cynthia!

Becky Miller is a fourth-year student in linguistics at UM. Originally from Howell, she has been attending FBC since she came to Ann Arbor in the fall of 2003. She is also an active member of The Gathering and the handbell and sanctuary choirs and has served as a sexton since last May. Becky's future plans include working on Bible translation for one of more than 1500 world languages that have no translation of scripture. She hopes that wherever the Lord leads her, there will be enough yarn to satisfy her knitting habit.

Craig and Cynthia Redinger have been residents of Ann Arbor for nearly five years, having moved here shortly after they were married. Craig and Cynthia were formerly from Pittsburgh Pennsylvania, where they both settled after earning degrees in Civil Engineering from the Pennsylvania State University. Since arriving in Ann Arbor, Craig earned his Juris Doctor from Ave Maria School of Law, and is now an Attorney with Young Basile, an intellectual property law firm. Cynthia, a licensed Professional Engineer, works for the Washtenaw County Road Commission in the Traffic and Safety Section. Both Craig and Cynthia are eagerly anticipating the birth of their first child in late March.

2007 Annual Program Meeting

The congregation's Annual Program Meeting will be held Sunday, April 22 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 constitutional changes. Proposed changes are available at the Information Counter. Childcare will be provided for the meeting. The Board of Care and Community needs help with set-up and clean-up. Please let Donna Tipton know if you can help out with either or both. Carey would greatly appreciate receiving (electronic) reports by Monday, April 9th.

MacGregor-Stitt Circle

The April meeting of the MacGregor-Stitt Circle will take place on Thursday, April 19 at 1:00 p.m. at the home of Mary Munson. The program will be "Mary's Trip to Turkey."

Directory Proofing

The new edition of the church directory will be available April 22. If you are unable to attend church in the next couple of weeks, but would like to update or have your contact information added to the directory, please e-mail (office@fbca2.org) or call the office at 663-9376. If you will be at church, please review your information and make corrections at the table near the Information Counter the next couple of Sundays. Thank you!



Congratulations to Brandin and Angie Tarnaski on the birth of Talon Michael on February 26th!! He is the grandson of Robb Rushton.



EASTER LILY ORDER FORM

I / We would like to order an Easter Lily (\$15 each) to be given:

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____

Given by: _____

Enclosed is my check made out to "First Baptist Church" for \$_____, for a total of _____ plant(s), which will be displayed on the chancel Easter Sunday, and may be picked up following the service that day. Paid orders must be received by Sunday, April 1st to be included in the Easter bulletin. If you choose to mail your order to the office please write "Attn: Carey" on the envelope and be sure to write "Easter Lily" on the memo line of your check. Thank you!



Youth Ice Skating Event





Observing Holy Week in the Home

Adapted by Sue Ellen from an article by Lynn Gilliam in *Pockets* magazine, <http://www.upperroom.org/pockets>,
The Upper Room, Nashville, TN.

We spend much time during Advent preparing for Christmas, but it seems more difficult to observe Holy Week at home. Baby Jesus, stable animals, stars and angels are much easier to discuss than crosses, denial, darkness and death. But just as the observance of Advent helps us to prepare for the celebration of Christmas, observing Holy Week helps prepare us for the joyous celebration of Easter.

"Jesus lives." We pass on this statement of joy and assurance to our children as we deal openly with their questions, talk about our own faith, and include them in family and church celebrations of Easter. Here are some ideas to help families journey toward Easter together:

Consider having simpler meals than usual. Fasting, one of the most ancient of spiritual disciplines, is not appropriate for everyone, certainly not for young children. But all of us can simplify our meals in order to remind ourselves of the solemnity of the week leading up to Good Friday. Simply eliminating desserts is an easy way to do this.

Read together about the events leading up to Easter in your child's Bible or in Easter storybooks (available near the Christian Education classrooms on the middle level.)

Don't forget the Easter Event on April 1 from 12:30 - 2:30 p.m. We'll have lunch together, then work on fun Easter crafts which emphasize the true meanings of Easter and Holy Week. While the youth are hiding Easter eggs for the hunt, the children gather with Sue Ellen to hear the Easter story.

Attend the special services during Holy Week. While it may be tempting to exclude our children from these solemn and sad observances, these are an important part of understanding and experiencing the joy of Easter morning. Give your children opportunities after the service to talk about what happened and their feelings. Talk about your own feelings as well.

Add the events of Holy Week to your family devotions (i.e. "God, we remember today how Jesus served his friends by washing their feet. Help us to serve others, too.").

And when Easter arrives, celebrate at home (as well as at church) in a big way. Make "Christ is risen!" banners to hang around the house. Have a special food. If fresh flowers are available, bring some in to decorate the spaces where your family gathers. Teach your children the traditional Easter greeting: "Alleluia! Christ is risen!" and the response: "Christ is risen indeed. Alleluia!"

Church Visioning and Renewal Process

This Sunday, April 1st, during Second Hour, we will continue discussing the next phase of our church visioning and renewal process. We will be working on some specific ideas to recommend to the congregation. In the March 14 edition of the newsletter (which can be found in the brochure racks), a summary sheet can be found including four categories related to what we want to be. Under those are themes, in italics, into which many of the ideas brought forth in the small group meetings fit. Then there are a couple more specific ideas from the big list, just to serve as examples. Copies of the whole list will be available at the discussion. Some of the ideas represent extensions of what we already are and do, some are bold new ventures, and some are small projects that can make a big difference. I urge you attend this second meeting (the first one took place March 18) and to come with the outlook of helping to discern God's leading for our congregation and for your involvement.

Mary Davis, Moderator

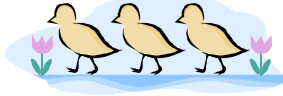


On March 17, 2007, playing in the K-5 Championship Bracket of the Michigan Children's Chess Championship at U of M Dearborn, Sam Kidd won first place among all 5th graders in Michigan. Sam earned 4 points with 3 wins and 2 draws.

Congratulations, Sam!!

Many thanks to those who helped host the 2007 Rotating Shelter: Elli Barron, Roberta Hause, Barb and Henry Griffin, Mary Davis, Ron Gregg, Ginny and Bill McKeachie, Deb Snyder, Jackie Snyder, Jose Barrantes, Clay Scott, Greg Cartee, Jerry Rees, Maryann Bowen, Annabel Erskine and Beverly Inbody. Thank you for donating your time and energy to make the shelter a success!!

~ Mission Action Board ~



April 2007

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1 Communion	2	3 5:30 Vespers	4 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering	5 6:30 Handbell Practice 7:30 Maundy Thursday Service	6 8:00 Good Friday Service	7
8 <i>Happy Easter!</i> (Newsletter Deadline)	9	10 1:30 Munson ChristCare 7:00 Bd. of Worship	11 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	12 6:30 Handbell Practice 7:30 Choir Practice	13	14
15 5:30 Second Sunday	16	17 1:00 Beecher-Brewer 5:30 Vespers 7:00 Bd. of Trustees	18 1:30 Bible Study	19 1:00 MacGregor-Stitt (Munson's) 6:30 Handbell Practice 7:30 Choir Practice	20	21
22 12:30 Annual Program Meeting (Newsletter Deadline)	23	24 9:30 ABWM Board	25 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 Bd. of Christian Education 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	26 9:00 Rummage Sale set-up 6:30 Handbell Practice 7:30 Choir Practice	27 9:00 Rummage Sale	28 9:00 Rummage Sale
29	30					

Happy Birthday!

Bonnie Jensen	4	Ethan Wright	9	Kate Edwards	16
Ivy Marzano	4	Andrew Lee	9	Eva Kelly	17
Jim Hause	5	Ola Jeanne McCullough	12	Brandy Kirchner	17
Jack Stearns	6	Lev Kelly	14	Tom Barron	17
Joan Blunt	9	Carol Rees	15	Jim Stearns	18
Dee Drake	9	Jim Suits	15	John Syler	25

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next Deadline:
Sunday, April 8, 2007

Holy Week

Easter Event: April 1, 12:30 - 2:30 p.m.
Lunch followed by crafts, the Easter story, and an egg hunt

Maundy Thursday Service: April 5, 7:30 p.m.
at Northside Community Church

Community Good Friday Service: April 6, 12:00, 12:30 & 1:00 p.m.
at First United Methodist Church
(The FBC Choir and Organist, Joel Hastings will perform at the 1:00 service)

Tenebrae Service: April 6, 8:00 p.m.
in the First Baptist Sanctuary
(childcare provided)

Easter Sunday: April 8, 10:00 a.m.
in the First Baptist Sanctuary