



# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

May 16, 2007

## Pastors' Reflections

*by Stacey Simpson Duke*

Last June, the city sent a team out to our house to cut down our ash tree, which had succumbed to emerald ash borers. All that remains now is a big stump and several ruts in our yard where limbs fell. What I notice most, though, is the gaping absence of that great tree. It makes me sad.

Now that the tree is gone, I can see on the stump, where the bark has been peeled away, the little serpentine larval feeding galleries the beetles once made. But when we first saw the tree, in February of 2003, we had no idea that it had been invaded. Our first clue was when May came that year, and the ash gave forth only a very few leaves. The following spring, the tree stayed bare. We never saw other evidence of the beetles (though perhaps with trained eyes we would've noticed some exit holes or bark fissures). The tree looked fine, and then it was dead.

This is how the emerald ash borer makes its kill - the larvae feed on the inner bark of the tree. The inner bark is responsible for transporting water and nutrients throughout the tree's system, and to its leaves. By eating this bark, the beetle ultimately strangles the tree. Silently and invisibly, mighty trees are destroyed, from the inside.

It strikes me that this would be an apt and interesting metaphor for the spiritual life. On the outside, we may appear to be doing just fine. But what of the inside? So often, what kills us spiritually are the small, unseen things that burrow into our souls, strangle our faith, and then slowly take us down. Those hidden things that take up residence in our inner lives seem to vary from person to person. For one person, it may be petty resentments that build up and begin to destroy any sense of joy or generosity. For another person, it could be anxiety that coils around the heart, clutching at every circumstance as a sign that things are going badly, killing off any sense of peace and trust. For still others it could be a pervasive sense of grief, or an insatiable sense of need, or a gnawing sense of doubt. Bit by bit by bit, our souls get chewed up. How do we guard against such a death?

I think a certain vigilance is in order. Vigilance about keeping ourselves open to those things that we know bring us spiritual nourishment and strength - prayer, silence, worship, music, art, nature, friendship, service, reading, or anything that opens us more completely to the presence of God. But vigilance, too, about guarding ourselves against those attitudes, habits of thought, or habits of action that silently, stealthily destroy our souls. Certain habits and attitudes get entrenched in us and over time we discover we have turned into miserable, mean, or anxious people, who by no means enjoy or spread a sense of abundant life. Contrast this to the psalmist's vision of the spiritually vibrant life in Psalm 1, which counsels us to be like a tree planted by water, yielding fruit, sprouting leaves that do not wither.

As much as I love the big green trees in our yard, I am learning the most from the great silent absence of the mighty ash tree felled by tiny beetles. I am learning not to trust outward appearances - my own or anyone else's. I am learning to take seriously small challenges and threats I think cannot harm me. I am learning to be vigilant. I am learning to keep myself open to the source of my life, and all life.

# 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 - 2<sup>ND</sup> 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)  
3<sup>rd</sup> graders leave at 12:00 for Grace Notes (305)  
4<sup>th</sup> & 5<sup>th</sup> graders leave at 11:50 for Jr. Choir (102)

## Youth

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

## 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 <sup>rd</sup> grade)	12:00 - 12:30	room 305, upper level
Jr. Choir (4 <sup>th</sup> grade and older)	11:50 - 12:30	room 102, lower level

# Christian Education for Adults

(Sundays, 11:30 a.m.—12:30 p.m.)

**Addressing Contemporary Issues in the Study of Women in the Bible** (Lounge) Astrid Beck, leader  
Women are some of the most distinctive, unforgettable, and diverse characters in the Bible. Women, led by their faith in God, used their wits to defeat their circumstances. They were spunky, smart, and assertive. It is important for our understanding of the Bible, and for our faith, to study the women who speak so eloquently, to note their implications for the masculine and feminine paradigms, to hear their voices.

May 20 ... Mary and Martha, Sisters of Bethany: Luke 10:38-42, John 11:1-45, Mark 14:1-9

May 27 ... Women in Acts

June 3 ... Daughters of Zelophehad: Num 26:33, 27:1-11, Joshua 17:1-6, Witch of Endor—1 Sam 28

## **Share and Prayer Group** (Room 108)

Stacey Simpson Duke, facilitator

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).

## Other Adult Learning Opportunities

**Second Sunday Series ~ Living the Questions:** Our next session will be June 10 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.

**Wednesday Bible Study (Memorial Lounge, 1:30 - 2:30):** Rev. Paul Simpson Duke leads a study of First Corinthians 13. *The traditional wrap-up luncheon will be at Weber's Restaurant on Wednesday, May 23 at 12:00 p.m.*

**Small Groups (ChristCare):** Centered on Bible study, fellowship, mission, prayer and worship, we currently have two groups: one meets monthly and the other meets every other week. Please see Stacey, Paul or Sue Ellen for more information about joining a group.



# FBC News & Happenings



## **New Prayer Group**

Beginning Sunday, May 20, a prayer group will meet each Sunday morning in room 108 (Bride's room) from 9:30–9:50 a.m. We will pray for the morning worship and the week's church activities as well as any other concerns brought forth. The door will be open—please come for any of that time you can. We will pray together in silence or as any wish to speak.

## **MacGregor-Stitt Circle**

The next meeting of the MacGregor-Stitt Circle will take place this Thursday, May 17 at 12:00 p.m. (note time change) at the home of Phylis White for a potluck salad lunch and treasure sale.

## **Rummage Sale Clean-up**

The American Baptist Women's Ministries thank all who helped with the rummage sale or brought things for sale. As usual, we have a lot of unsold items and plan to have a stage clean-up day Saturday, May 19th at 1:00 p.m. We'll need volunteers to take a few bags or boxes to the Salvation Army Store or the Reuse Center. Thank you!

## **Vespers Bible Study**

There have been requests from some in the Vespers group for a Bible study. It would most likely need to be fairly short and informal. If you are led to help establish this, please contact Sarah Heidt.

## **Parking Permits**

If you get a new car or perhaps if you've never had a permit, please remember to purchase a parking permit (for just \$2) from the church office during the week. Everyone who attends FBC on a regular basis is eligible to purchase a permit, however it is to be used for church business only.

## **No More Campbell Soup Labels**

Starting in the fall, American Baptist Women's Ministries will be saving the UPC or bar code (the rectangular section with lines on the bottom or side of product) instead of the Campbell soup labels. You can obtain these from Campbell or Swanson and other eligible products and place them in the proper receptacle at the Information Counter. Thank you for your continued support.

~ Roberta Hause, Mission Chairperson



... to Bob Kidd who received his MBA from  
the University of Michigan on April 28!

## ~ Care & Concern Corner ~

Per letter to Ruth Kerr: *June Ludwig, who recently had stents put in to open up partially blocked arteries, has returned home from the hospital. She wants to thank everyone for their prayers and cards. They were greatly appreciated.*



Sue Ellen passes along this news from Jim Middleton:

*"I finished up my radiation treatments last week [for prostate cancer]. The doctor said I tolerated them very well with no adverse side effects. Now we wait until May 30th when I go in for a follow up exam. I feel quite confident that some progress has been made. I'm glad the treatments are over and whether they worked or not that is all the radiation I can receive.*

*So we're hoping for a good report. I feel fine and am very optimistic that the radiation will do the trick.*

*There is no change in our daughter-in-law. She has been in the nursing home for just over two years now. She knows no one, cannot speak, is on a feeding tube and so far as we can tell is on a plateau so that as she is now so she will always be. It's a tough situation.*

*Dot and I will be coming to Ann Arbor in June. The family of Thelma Graves has asked me to come and do a memorial service for Thelma. It will just be for the family at Island Park in Ann Arbor, on June 16. Then we will stay over and will come to church on June 17. It will be good to see all our friends at that time."*



*Since last October our grandson's name, Tim Tipton, has been on the prayer list in the Sunday bulletin. It's not there now because he returned from Iraq and is at his home Navy base in Gulfport, Mississippi. We are relieved and thankful for his safe return. Thank you to all who shared our concern and remembered Tim in prayer.*

~ Ron and Donna Tipton



### These Biennial/Centennial Speakers Will Inspire, Uplift & Energize You!

What great speakers await you at this summer's ABCUSA Biennial/Centennial! Here's a small sampling of the gifted and talented people you will meet and hear at the Pre-Biennial and Biennial/Centennial sessions (June 29-July 2).

**Tony Campolo:** Famous ABCUSA pastor, author, and public speaker known for challenging Christians by illustrating how their faith can offer solutions in a world of complexity. (Saturday, 8:30 - 9:30 am)

**Emerging Voices:** Four dynamic young people who are helping to shape our future: Kim Kushner of International Ministries Volunteers in Global Mission Team; Lauren Ng, assistant pastor, First Chinese Baptist Church, San Francisco, California; Hector Ramirez, associate pastor, Second Baptist Church of Cidra, Puerto Rico; and Adam Taylor, senior director of campaigns and organizing, Sojourners/Call to Renewal. (Saturday, 10:30 am - 12:00 noon)

**Elizabeth Conde-Frazier:** A religious educator who integrates the discipline of religious education with theology, spirituality and the social sciences. (Sunday, 10:30 am - 12:00 noon)

**Arlee Griffin, Jr.:** President ABCUSA, winner of the Edward H. Rhoades Urban Ministry Award at the 2005 Biennial, and senior pastor of Berean Baptist Church, Brooklyn, New York. (Saturday, 7:00 - 9:00 pm)

**Lauran Bethell:** Recognized as an outstanding voice in international circles addressing the exploitation of women and children. The Baptist World Alliance recognized her work by awarding her its 2005 Human Rights Award. (Monday, 7:00 - 9:00 pm)

## **Be More Connected, Inviting, Spiritually Vital, Involved in Local Mission**

Names have been taken, and commitments have been made. The time for action is here. This year's initiatives are:

### **Spiritual vitality**

1. Planning and having a church retreat.
2. Prayer for one another by using a page from the directory each week.
3. Renewal of the Sunday morning prayer group.
4. Consideration of an additional worship service.

### **Connection**

1. Establishment of circles of care so that everyone is in a contact group.
2. Better use of the attendance pad both to notice visitors and to notice who might be absent. Here's something we all can do.
3. Welcoming visitors who are seated nearby. This one too!

### **Inviting**

1. Morikawa/Waterman lecture. Planning for this is underway. Many of us will be needed to help with various details after the plan is set.
2. Support has been pledged by some for a radio broadcast of the service. More will be needed if this is to be done.

### **Local Mission**

1. Expansion of the Vespers program to a weekly event with the collaboration of other congregations.
2. Increased involvement with youth.

If your commitment is to a group activity, you will be hearing from someone soon. If you have not made a commitment to one of these initiatives, it's not too late! For planning/group actions, let me know.

Mary Davis  
Moderator

Dear First Baptist Church,

Thank you so much for your participation in the University of Michigan Unite for Sight Eyeglass Drive. With your help, we have collected over 300 pairs of glasses. Next year our organization is traveling abroad and will hand deliver your donated glasses to those that are in great need of better vision. Our mission is to decrease the vision need locally and world-wide and we could not do this without your participation. Thanks again for your participation and God Bless You!

Kristen O'Beirne  
President of Unite for Sight  
University of Michigan Chapter



A big THANK YOU to all of you for the beautiful card and gifts for Administrative Assistant's Day!! It was a wonderful surprise and as you know it feels great to have your hard work recognized and appreciated. I am grateful for the opportunity to serve here at FBC!

~ Carey Viviano

## Tornado Levels First Baptist Church In Greensburg, Kansas

VALLEY FORGE, PA (ABNS 05/08/07) -- First Baptist Church, Greensburg, Kan. has been destroyed by a massive tornado that news sources say leveled some 95 percent of the town of Greensburg on Friday night, May 4. The church's parsonage, although left standing, also sustained serious damage.

The category F-5 tornado was part of a particularly strong and dangerous weather pattern that has plagued the region over the past weekend.

"It is difficult to comprehend how great a loss has been suffered by the people of that community and by our brothers and sisters at First Baptist Church," said the Rev. John Williams, western area minister for American Baptist Churches of the Central Region. Williams said the church's pastor, the Rev. Marvin George, "is praising God for bringing him, his family and his congregation safely through this terrible storm." Williams said Rev. George has been able to locate almost all of his church family, and that all were safe and unharmed and had places to stay with family and friends. He urged American Baptists to be in prayer for all those affected by this disaster.

Dr. Steve Van Ostran, the Central Region's acting executive minister, will join ABMen of the Central Region disaster team members in assessing the damage to the church and surrounding area today.

"We will respond to this calamity with One Great Hour of Sharing undesignated disaster funds," said Kenneth George, National Ministries' coordinator, Intercultural Ministries/Direct Human Services. George noted that additional gifts to help the Greensburg congregation members and community should be designated "One Great Hour of Sharing-Central tornadoes" and sent through normal mission-giving channels. Gifts may also be made through the "Give Now" feature at [www.abc-usa.org](http://www.abc-usa.org).

Updates will be provided when more information becomes available.

## Scholarship Money Available

Money from the Chester & Vi Loucks Memorial Scholarship Fund is available for those pursuing post-secondary education or continuing education:



"Scholarships may be granted to supplement the cost of achieving these goals:

1. To obtain a post-secondary education, i.e., at the college or post-graduate level.
2. To develop or improve skills, obtain training or enrichment through camps, conferences, or continuing education experiences that relate to and enhance the work and ministry of First Baptist Church Ann Arbor."

Money from the Robert L. Johnson Memorial Scholarship Fund is available to provide support for those wishing to attend conferences at Green Lake Conference Center.

Applications for both scholarships will be available at the Information Counter or by email from Mary Davis ([madrad@umich.edu](mailto:madrad@umich.edu)) and are due by June 3. Please give or send applications to Mary Davis, 1414 Iroquois PI, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 or put in the Moderator's box in the church office.

~ The Scholarship Committee

**CINCO DE MAYO  
EVE  
FUN NIGHT!!**



A special thank you to David Robbins for his superb engineering on the piñata apparatus!!

First Baptist Church  
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*The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors*

**Next Deadline:**  
*Sunday, May 27, 2007*

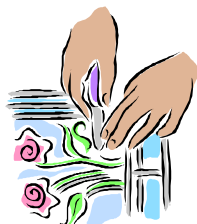
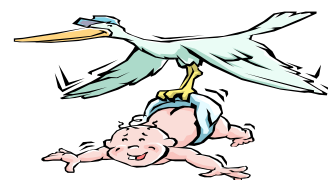


### ***Children and Youth Worship***

Join us this Sunday, May 20 for Children and Youth Worship; a special service planned, written and conducted by the youth and featuring the Jr. Handbells, Jr. Choir, Grace Notes and Tiny Grace Notes.

### **FBC Women's Book Club/Redinger Baby Shower Tuesday, May 29th at 7:00 pm At the home of Mary Gregg**

Please join this month's FBC Women's Book Club to help celebrate the arrival of Andrew Redinger (parents, Cynthia & Craig), for the first part of the evening and to discuss this month's book selection - "Reading Lolita in Tehran." All women are welcome and it is not necessary to stay for the book discussion. Please RSVP your attendance to Mary Gregg at 769-3127.



A huge **THANK YOU** to Linda Dicks for the beautiful stained glass piece she has created and donated to the church. It is hanging in the window next to the glass door on the Huron St. side of the building.