



# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

November 8, 2006

## Pastors' Reflections

*by Paul Simpson Duke*

This past Saturday I attended a Sabbath service at Congregation Beth Israel. I was there, along with our pastoral intern, David Bucholtz, to show support for that congregation, which has been the target of what I would call fanatical harassment for three years. Each Sabbath morning a group of people stands on the sidewalk by the synagogue with signs accusing that community of being anti-Palestinian, which they are not. A number of Christian clergy take turns worshiping there, to indicate our support of the congregation in these difficult, wearying times. It is not the first time I have attended.

I didn't know that this particular service would include a bat-mitzva. The girl's name was Mara. Having reached the age of religious responsibility in Jewish faith, thirteen, she gave substantial leadership in worship, reading extensively from the Torah and the Prophets, and reciting prayers, all in Hebrew. She also delivered what amounted to a brief and delightful sermon. The reading of Hebrew Scripture and prayers is chanted tonally, musically. Mara's reading was beautiful, in clear tones on a lovely, gifted voice. She had obviously done prodigious, disciplined study. Her spoken reflections also indicated serious thought. She spoke to us about honesty, distinguishing between the occasional permissible lie to encourage or save someone else, and the uttering of self-serving, inexcusable falsehood. Her talk was funny and true and, to me, moving.

Among the most memorable moments to me were the ones in which she showed her response to friends and family sitting near the front. When gifts and affirmations had been given to her by various groups in the congregation, and applause finally erupted for her, she smiled radiantly as she looked to those who loved her most; and she laughed. In pure, unabashed, infectious delight, she laughed and she laughed throughout the applause.

During a synagogue service, people sometimes feel freer to talk aloud to each other than we do here. An older gentleman was sitting beside me who knew I was a minister. Early in the service he turned to me and asked, "Are the rites of passage for young people in your church similar to ours, except for the language, of course?" I paused, then told him it was difficult to answer briefly. But the truth is, in that moment I felt awkward and uneasy.

It's not that we don't do a great deal for and with our children and youth, or that they don't do a lot for us. Like Mara, we have children and youth who read Scripture and pray in worship -- beautifully. When they reach a certain age, we give them Bibles, or lead them in special classes on discipleship. We speak to them about professing their faith and being baptized. They are free to choose this at any age they wish, or not to choose it at all. That's our approach. Education, nurture, opportunities for leadership and service - existing, as Baptist tradition does, in ample space for any kind of individual response.

As valuable as these commitments are, and however well we pursue them, one element is inevitably insufficiently present. I am no means thinking only of children and youth but of adults as well. Becoming a full member of this community of faith does not require long sustained study and a substantial public emergence that demonstrates understanding, maturity, and a potential for spiritual leadership. We are surely left with a weaker sense of unity and belonging; and, ironically, a less joyous celebration of individuals. This is less a complaint than a sigh. I can't stop seeing Mara's laugh. It beamed from a full celebration of her emergence into mature, disciplined understanding and expression of her faith. Our tradition offers no such rite of passage. At very least, we should - in our freedom - wish for and work toward a similar emerging in ourselves, and in us all.

# FBC NEWS & EVENTS



## **Welcome New Members, Helen and Gad!**

**Helen Foley**, a lifelong Lutheran, is joining today by transfer of letter from Christ the King Lutheran Church in Livonia. Born in St. Louis, Helen moved to the Detroit area in 1940. She taught children's Sunday School for 48 years, serving as Superintendent of the Primary Department for 12 of those years. In the 60's, she moved to Ann Arbor to work as Assistant General Manager at Green's Cleaners, where she retired in 1974. Helen first got involved with ABWM here at First Baptist Church 43 years ago, when she joined the Ann Arbor Business and Professional Women's Circle; she remains an active member of what is now called the Beecher-Brewer Circle.

**Gad Lim** is currently completing his PhD in education at the University of Michigan, focusing on issues of second language learning, teaching, and testing. He does test development and validation work for the Testing Division of the UM English Language Institute. Before coming to the United States, he taught writing and literature at Ateneo de Manila University, a Jesuit institution in the Philippines where he remains a tenured instructor. He is also a sometime writer, whose fiction has been published, translated, and anthologized. Gad has been attending First Baptist Church and been a member of the campus ministry since 2002.

## **State Champion**

Congratulations to Sarah Drake, member of the Pioneer Field Hockey team that won the State Championship last weekend.

## **Pancake Breakfast**

This Saturday, November 11 at 9:00 a.m., the Youth Group will be cooking a pancake breakfast in the Fellowship Hall. They are asking for a \$2 donation and kids eat free! There will also be a pie sale. All of the proceeds will be donated. If you are interested in attending, please call Brandy at 734-753-9880.

## **Alternative Fair Food**

Once again, the Youth are running the food concession at the Alternative Fair (Dec. 3) and will donate all profits to our Sister Church in Nandasmoo. Your donations of baked goods, pop, juice or chips are much appreciated and help raise the profits. Please sign up at the Information Counter.

## **AB Women's Ministries Joint Meeting**

The Joint meeting of the two ABWM Circles meets Thursday, November 16 at 1:00 p.m. in the Lounge.

## **Youth Collecting for Christmas Gifts**

The Youth will be conducting Vespers on December 5 and will give the guests gift bags. These gift bags will be filled during Youth Worship on November 26, and will include many useful items that are mostly purchased by the Youth, such as flashlights, combs, toothbrushes, and hand warmers. 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!!!

### **New Office Hours**

Our Administrative Assistant, Carey Viviano, recently requested a small change in her office hours, which we can gladly accommodate. On Mondays and Fridays, she will leave at 1:00. Monday afternoons will be covered by Annabel Erskine and Beverly Inbody, to whom we are very grateful. On Fridays the office will be closed after 1:00. Messages left on Carey's voicemail will be checked by a sexton every Friday at 5:00. In the event of an emergency, please call the pastors at home.

### **Christmas Celebration, Bazaar, and Bake Sale Reminder**

You're welcome to bring in finished craft items to either the Information Counter on Sunday morning or the office during the week. Please be sure your name is on the item as well as the suggested sale price. We will have the gently used Christmas decoration sales table again this year. This year's date for the celebration is Sunday, December 17th at 11:15 a.m. in the Fellowship Hall following our morning church service. Please contact Helen Johnson (662-1461) or Beverly Inbody (904-5750) if you have any questions. The Beecher-Brewer Circle and the MacGregor-Stitt Circle appreciate your support in helping to make the Christmas Celebration a success.

### **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)!

### **Who You Gonna Call? 211**

Beginning November 1, 2006, residents of Washtenaw, Livingston and Monroe counties have one phone number to call - [211](tel:211) -- for easy access to community services. Whether it's helping with basic needs like food, shelter or rent assistance, employment services, help with child care, respite care, disaster relief or hundreds of other services vital to your well-being, 211 will direct you to the right agency. Use a land line, cell phone or a pay phone to make this toll-free call.

### **Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration**

The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County will hold its twelfth Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration on Sunday, November 19th, at 7:00 p.m., at the new facility of the Interfaith Center for Spiritual Growth, 704 Airport Blvd. Join us as we give thanks with readings, music, meditations and other unique presentations from a wide variety of faith traditions. Donations accepted for non-perishable food or turkey money to help those in need in our community. For more information, call Rev. George Lambrides (424-1535) or Laurie Gailunas at 662-3654.



### ***"Becoming the Body of Christ"***

The pledge cards have been sent out and if you have not returned yours, please try to do so by this coming Sunday. We will be having the Litany of Dedication of our pledges on Sunday.

Thanks to all who were able to attend the Financial Campaign Luncheon. The food was great as Pastor Paul and Arthur Francis provided additional information regarding the campaign. Also, thanks to all those who brought food for the meal and to those who assisted in preparing the Fellowship Hall and for those who assisted in the clean up. Special thanks to Donna Tipton and the Board of Care and Community for their careful attention to detail to insure a successful luncheon.

For the Financial Campaign,  
Cesar Alaniz  
John Floyd, III

## Christian Education for Adults

Second Hour Sunday Groups (following worship and fellowship time from 11:30-12:30):

***Addressing Contemporary Issues in the Study of Women in the Bible (Lounge)*** led by Astrid Beck  
 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. This fall, we will study some of the early biblical women, and their men. They comprise the foundation of the early society in the Bible, the time of Abraham, Moses, and the prophets, a reference point for Jesus in His ministry in the New Testament as the foundation of faith. At the end of the series, we think you will agree that there are surprising discoveries in our study. **Schedule:**

- Nov. 12 - *Rebekah: Beloved of Isaac* (Gen 24-28)
- Nov. 19 - (Paul) *Rachel and Leah: Competitive Sisters, Unified in Purpose* (Genesis 28-35)
- Nov. 26 - *Tamar: How was she more justified than Judah?* (Genesis 38)
- Dec. 3 - *Miriam: First Prophetess* (Exodus 2, 15; Numbers 12, 20)

***Share and Prayer Group*** (room 108)

facilitated by Tricia Baldwin

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***

November 12, 5:30 - 7:30

Our next meeting will be this Sunday, November 12. 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. Topics will include such things as biblical authority, the divinity of Christ, and the relevance of Christianity in a contemporary world. Childcare will be provided. Plan to join us on November 12 for dinner, dialogue, and discovery! The participant's guide for Lesson 3, "*Creativity and Creation Stories*," is available at the Information Counter.

***Wednesday Bible Study*** (Memorial Lounge, 1:30 - 2:30 p.m.)

Rev. Paul Simpson Duke leads a study of Philippians. Join us each week (Sept–May) for fellowship, learning and great snacks! *(Please note: there will be no Bible Study Wednesday, November 22nd).*

***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. See Stacey, Paul, or Sue Ellen for more information about joining a group.

*My dear church family,*

*Thank you for the notes, cards and visits these past months while I was hospitalized. I am now at home, but walking is a permanent problem I have to cope with.*

*I intend to attend church as often as I can, as being with my church family is very important to my welfare.*

*Christ is my Savior,  
 Mildred MacGregor*

## *Faith Talk for Families*

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

In Deuteronomy 6:1-9, we hear of God's design for sharing our faith with our children and grandchildren. When Moses exhorted the people of Israel to pass onto their children the ways of the Lord, he did not specifically suggest they send their children to Hebrew school, Sunday school or Youth group. Rather, he stated that God's Word was to be shared with children "*when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.*" In other words, passing on the faith involves **the basic routines, patterns and practices of daily family life.**

The activities suggested in these newsletters are based on this scripture - families are encouraged to *TALK THE FAITH* in daily life (when sitting and walking), engage in *DEVOTIONAL PRACTICES* that frame the day (in the evening and the morning) and using *RITUALS AND TRADITIONS* that remind us of God's place in our lives. Mark 12:28-46 connects love for God with love of the neighbor. When as Christian families we *SERVE* others in God's name, we serve God. Our faith is formed and strengthened by seeing God at work in, and through us and others.

**Faith Talk:** Discuss in your household or small group:

- Who loves you? How do they show you their love? How do you show others that you love them?
- We are supposed to love God with all of our *heart, soul and strength*? What does this mean?
- How can we show our love for God each day in practical ways?

**Devotional Practices:** As a family, memorize the two greatest commandments as found in Mark 12: 29-31 (your children know these words, so it shouldn't be too difficult).

**Rituals and Traditions:** In Deuteronomy 6:8, the people of Israel were instructed to tie God's commands as symbols on their hands, bind them their foreheads, and to write them on their doorframes and gates. Find some large rubber bands and write upon them these words: "*With all my heart, soul and strength.*" Wear these on your wrists this week as a reminder of God's call for us to love him in all that we do.

**Service:** Jesus linked together closely the command to love God and to love our neighbors as ourselves: we show love for God by showing love to our neighbors. As you think forward to your family celebration of Christmas (only 7 weeks to go!), consider how you might share God's love with someone who is lonely or in need. Begin to make plans to do so.



### *Operation Christmas Child*

Our campus ministry group, The Gathering, would like to invite the congregation to participate with us in a simple, hands-on Christmas mission project. We will be participating in Operation Christmas Child, a mission to bring joy and hope to children in desperate situations around the world by sending them gift-filled shoeboxes. We invite you to take an ordinary shoebox, fill it with little toys, school supplies, hygiene items, and a personal note, along with a check for \$7 to Samaritan's Purse to cover shipping costs, and drop it off at the church by Sunday, November 19th. On Monday, November 20th, the students will take all the shoeboxes and deliver them to the Drop-Off Center in Saline. You get to decide whether your gift is for a boy or a girl, and what age child your gift will go to. If you include your home address in your personal note, you may even get a note back from the recipient. If you are interested in participating, there are a limited number of pamphlets at the Information Counter.

**Words of Witness**  
**by Ron Gregg on Sunday, October 22**

I have found that the full impact of this church on my life has sort of snuck up on me. It has been an extremely important influence, but so incremental that I only became fully aware of the significance as I was preparing this testimonial.

For a long time I have lived my life being concerned about looking good to others, and have been extremely careful in any discussion to be right on the issue (and, of course, making others wrong if they didn't agree). I also have struggled really hard in the effort to establish meaningful, sincere, or at least friendly, relationships with others. I lived mostly out of my past experiences which, in many current situations, told me that there was something wrong, that someone was at fault, someone was to blame. And I was clear that most of the time it wasn't me.

The impact of living this way on me was that I experienced a kind of distance, a separation from many other people. I often missed opportunities to enrich my life by sharing other peoples' experiences through their eyes and appreciating not only what they were saying but where they were coming from. I felt as if my life was somehow partially under the control of others, that I was not experiencing real freedom. And I was not clear just what role God played in all this.

However this church, the pastors and laypeople alike have caused a significant and fundamental difference in my life. For over 25 years this gathering of Christians has helped me to begin to live out of a more empowering context. And for that, I am grateful.

This church has helped me come to believe that God is encountered as an intuitive presence within ourselves, within every experience, and within the world, imparting to each moment an undeniable sense of meaning, value and worth. The church's role for me has been to help make this God experience conscious and explicit in a form that is intellectually engaging, emotionally stirring, morally challenging and existentially reassuring. It does this directly through carefully crafted and thoughtful sermons and challenging educational exchanges that go beyond mere intellectual inquiry, to touch the spirit at the center. It does this through the shared experience of community gatherings and celebrations, and through collaborative efforts, such as with our Sister Church relationship and Vespers, which engage many in common efforts to reach out to help change peoples' lives in fundamental ways; and in the process we find that we are changing our own lives as well. And it does this through many examples of extravagant care and love lavished on members and friends in times of their greatest hope and anticipation, as well as in times of their deepest sorrow and anguish.

This church has helped me to appreciate the passage in Rev 21:5 which has God saying **"I am making everything new."** So I have come to understand that my past experiences are influential, but not determinative for my future, which is always open to new possibilities. I need not be mired in guilt, blame and fault for past thoughts, words and deeds, but am freed up by God to strive toward full self-expression and openness to others.

This church has helped me to see that we don't need to struggle so much with relationships, that all of us are already related at a deep and profound level, that we live out of shared assumptions and values and states of being that are more powerful than any of our differences. This understanding has taught me to honor people who are not at all like me, and to strive to take responsibility for my relationships without requiring reciprocity from the other person.

I acknowledge that I often fall short of fully acting out of these understandings, but the church has also taught me to keep trying.

I am sure that many of you feel the same way about the importance of this church in your lives. Paul says to the church in Rome, **"Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. Then you will be able to (access) what God's will is - his good, pleasing and perfect will."**

This church, that is all of us collectively, when we are at our best, are about nothing less than the life transformation that Paul describes. In what more important endeavor could we be engaged?

### **AB Women's Ministries 2006-07 Mission Project**

In April, 2007 the American Baptist Women's Ministries of Michigan will be sending a leadership team to Nagaland (Northeast India) to lead a conference addressing the "felt needs" of women in Nagaland. Our project this year is "A Handful of Rice." We are asking that each of you select one item that you buy regularly at the store, and put that amount of money aside each week - like the ladies in Nagaland put a handful of rice aside. When their jar was full they sold the rice. The ladies there raised enough money for a building. We'd like to raise enough money to help the Naga women have a women's conference to help them learn about being leaders and better wives and mothers.

In addition to money, we are asking for Playtex household gloves that our Naga team will take with them and give to the 1,000 women attending. We would like a special prayer to accompany each pair of gloves asking for spiritual growth and for ways that God will use them as a result of their presence at the conference. Please sign your name and write "First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor" and tape it to the gloves.

There will be a basket at the Info Counter Sunday mornings throughout the rest of November and in December, where we will gladly accept your donations. On December 17th, the day of our Christmas Celebration, your donations will also be accepted.

If you have any questions about this project, feel free to ask any of the members of the AB Women's Ministries.

In Christ,  
Robert Hause  
Mission Chairperson

***Pastor Manuel and  
Wilmer's recent visit to FBC.***



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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Dated Material:

*Wednesday, November 8, 2006*

Next deadline is early due to  
the short Thanksgiving week:

*Sunday, November 12, 2006*

## ADVENT WORKSHOP

Preparing hearts and homes ...  
remembering the true meanings of Christmas



Sunday, November 19th  
12:30—2:30 p.m.

Designed for families with children ...

Bring the grandchildren and invite your neighbors