



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

December 9, 2009

Pastor's Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

This year, I'm doing our Advent calendar at home a bit different than in years past. Instead of a little chocolates, I've loaded each day with a little slip of paper printed with an activity that we'll be doing together that day. The calendar includes things like "bake cookies together," "have a family movie night," "drive around town looking at Christmas lights," and so forth. Each morning, the boys get up with a sense of excitement and anticipation, to see what the day is going to bring.

Their attitude seems so perfectly suited to Advent - that sense that something BIG is going to happen, and it's going to be good, and worth waking up for. "Wake up!" is certainly an important watchword for Advent, and my kids teach me a lot about what it means to become more awake, and what it means to nurture hope. Whereas joyful anticipation seems to come naturally to children, especially at this time of year, the rest of us don't always come by it so easily. But we must do what we can to cultivate it, because *hope* is one of the most important attitudes a Christian can have. It is more than a feeling - it's a commitment, a choice, a conviction.

I have found myself lately feeling a new sense of anticipation about something going on within our congregation. A few weeks ago, after reading about the hidden poor in Ann Arbor, Sue Ellen had the inspired idea that our church ought to undertake a food drive for the children and families at the Hikone Housing Project. These are children we've been developing a relationship with for the past few years, and they have come to feel like part of our church family. It is startling to realize that they, and many other children in our community, may go hungry when the schools (which provide hot lunches and free breakfasts) are closed for the holidays. The Board of Christian Education and the Board of Mission Action are sponsoring this food drive; the collection will be delivered on December 21.

I feel like something new and tender and wonderful is blossoming in our congregation as we continue to develop our friendship with the children and families at Hikone. Sue Ellen and the Board of Christian Education have done an amazing job in leading us in these efforts. I have heard many people express the desire to take things further, to have a more consistent presence and relationship with the families there. At Executive Council meetings we have been talking about possibilities. My own sense is that our relationship with the Hikone families is coming to be a vital part of who we are, and could become a central part of our purpose as a Christian community. Whereas the Board of Christian Education has led the way, it is important for our entire congregation to take on fuller responsibility for this growing relationship. I am looking forward to seeing what forms this relationship will take in the months to come.

My boys will wake up one morning next week, and the slip they pull out of their Advent calendar will say, "Buy food that kids like for the church food drive." I know they will be excited to get to help pick out things they think other children will enjoy. I am excited, too. At this time of year, we have so many opportunities to give good gifts; this opportunity strikes me as particularly meaningful. In a season when we look toward the One who comes to us as a child, what better way to celebrate than by giving what we can for the sake of children? What better way to participate in hope? Let's be extravagant in this giving, as God has been extravagant with us. Let's allow this offering to become a true outpouring of our own hope and faith. And then let's see where God's Spirit leads us in this relationship in the new year.

All children are welcome to worship with their families. After the Time as Children portion of the worship service, preschoolers may go to the nursery for childcare and children in Kindergarten - 3rd grade are invited to Children's Worship.

Children and Youth Christian Education

Due to all the special events during the month of December, there will be no church school classes. Children's Worship will continue for Kindergarten - 3rd grade until worship is complete.

December 13 Schedule:

Jr. Handbells - 9:15 - 9:50 in the handbell room
Nursery - 9:30 - 12:45

Children Kindergarten - 7th grade:

- After Time as Children and during Children's Worship, the Grace Notes will rehearse until about 11:10. Parents should pick up their children at that time.
- The Jr. Handbells will meet immediately after worship in the Fellowship Hall to prepare for the ABWM Christmas Celebration.

When the handbells are done, the Jr. Choir will rehearse (Rm. 102) until 12:15.

The Youth Class will not meet

December 20:

Jr. Handbells - 9:15 - 9:50 in the handbell room
Nursery - 9:30 - 12:45
Children's Worship after Time as Children, then the children will meet with their choirs.

Adult Christian Education 11:30 - 12:30

There will be no adult classes during the month of December. Classes resume on January 10 .

Other Adult Education Opportunities:

Wednesday Bible Study (1:30—2:30 pm; Memorial Lounge)

First Corinthians is the material for the Wednesday Bible Study class meeting this Fall with the leadership of Ron Tipton. Because Paul often discusses the same topic in different sections of the letter we are studying the letter by topics rather than a verse-by-verse study. The Bible Study meets on December 9 and 16 to discuss "Spiritual Maturity" and "Resurrection".

Adult Small Groups (ChristCare):

Centered on Bible study, fellowship, mission, prayer and worship, we currently have two groups: one which meets monthly and the other which meets every other week. See Stacey, Paul or Sue Ellen for more information about joining a group.



Please join us for
*A Special
Christmas Eve Service*
December 24 • 7:30 pm

A Festival of Lessons and Carols

*Based upon the annual presentation
at King's College, Cambridge.
Readings from the Christmas
story are alternated with choral and
congregational singing of carols.*

**First Baptist Church
of Ann Arbor
517 E. Washington • 663-9376**

*Parking at the
Washington St.
structure.*

*Childcare
provided for
infants through
Kindergarten.*





DECEMBER 2009



SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			9 *newsletter* 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis/Diels ChristCare	10	11	12 10:00 Choir Rehearsal 10:30 Christmas Celebration Set-Up
13 ABWM Christmas Celebration 11:30am	14 7pm Mission Action	15 5:30 Vespers 7:30 Bd. of Trustees	16 1:30 Bible Study	17 1:00 MacGregor-Stitt Circle	18	19
20 Children's Music & Arts Carol Sing 2nd Hour	21	22 5:30 Vespers	23	24 7:30 Festival of Lessons & Carols	25 Christmas Day Office & Church Buildings Closed.	26 Office & Church Buildings Closed
27	28	29 5:30 Vespers	30 *newsletter*	31	January 1, 2010 Office & Church Buildings Closed	January 2, 2010 Office & Church Buildings Closed

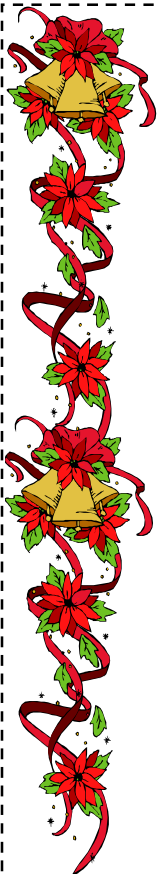


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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



Next
newsletter
deadline:
*Sunday,
Dec 27, 2009*



Poinsettia Order Form

Please order _____ poinsettia(s) for the Christmas services at \$15 each,
and list as such in the bulletin:

In honor of: _____

In memory of: _____

From: _____

I have enclosed \$_____ as payment for the poinsettia(s).

Please have paid orders to the office by this Sunday, December 13.

Thank you!