



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

February 24, 2010

Pastor's Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

I am writing this from Georgia, where my sons and I are visiting my family while the boys are on Mid-Winter Break from school. Only now that I'm here, I no longer feel like it's actually the middle of winter. The sun is shining through loblolly pines and many days the thermometer has read 70 degrees. Most mornings I have been wakened by birdsong. One morning I was wakened by thunder and lightning. It was startling and surreal to experience a thunderstorm in February, especially when I knew that Ann Arbor was experiencing an altogether different type of storm.

Forgive me for writing of the kind of weather Ann Arbor will not have until May, if then. I can't seem to help but enjoy every minute of what I've got here because I know that in not many days I, too, will be back under grey skies and heavy sweaters. In the meantime, I feel like I am experiencing two different realities at once - winter, yes, but also sunshine and blue skies. It is causing some dissonance.

I experience a similar dissonance during Lent. I appreciate Lent's somber focus on repentance, discipline, and discipleship. I think it is so important to spend a season pondering Jesus' Passion. Yet Sundays during Lent create a bit of a clash. Every Sunday, regardless of season, is meant to be a celebration - of resurrection, of new life, of Christ's triumph over evil, sin, and death. That is why, as Paul reminded us in our last newsletter, we speak of the Sundays *in* Lent rather than the Sundays *of* Lent. On the Sundays in Lent we live in a double awareness - penitently aware of our sin and of all the many ways we cling to our death-dealing ways, we focus on the cross and refrain from singing our *alleluias*; joyfully aware of the reality of resurrection, we do not pretend that our sin and his death are the last words. Even in this wilderness season, we gather each week to celebrate the new life we have been given. It is like sunning ourselves in the midst of winter.

In a way, the whole of Christian life is lived in this tension. As citizens of this world, we grapple with many forms of sin and death, including the darkness in our own hearts. But as followers of Christ, we affirm another reality is already among us and will ultimately prevail. Though we say this is what we believe, much of the time it is difficult to actually feel its truth.

This Lent, I am spending a lot of time reading the writings of Julian of Norwich, who wrote of her own challenges with living in these two realities. She shared her personal struggles of alternating between feeling wholly at peace in her faith, and feeling terribly afflicted, oppressed, and weary. She wrote: *And then presently God gave me again comfort and rest for my soul.... And then again I felt the pain, and then afterwards the delight and joy, now the one and now the other, again and again.... And in the time of joy I could have said with St. Paul: Nothing shall separate me from the love of Christ; and in the pain I could have said with St. Peter: Lord, save me, I am perishing.* Even the saints knew the difficulty of persisting in a sense of assurance, peace, and joy; they understood that faith can never be simply about what we *feel*. So Julian went on to say this: "And so we remain in this mixture all the days of our life; but [what breaks the impasse is that Christ] wants us to trust that he is constantly with us." In other words, we hang on. We just cling to Jesus as best we can, and the rest is grace - his own desire for us.

As we make our way through Lent, we always carry a little bit of Easter in our hearts. And even after Easter, we will be living in a Good Friday world. Through all of it we do what we can to hang on - to hope, to faith, most especially to Christ. And we help each other to hang on too. And some days, when we least expect it, the sun will rise in our hearts and something like birdsong will burst forth in our souls.

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

NURSERY care is available on the 3rd floor from 9:30am - 12:30pm.

K - 2nd grade:

10:30-11:30 Children's Worship and snack (Rm. 202A)
11:30-12:30 Church School (Rm. 202B)

Youth (7th - High School)

10:00-11:00 Worship
11:30-12:30 Church School (Room 107)

3rd - 6th grades

10:00 - 11:00 Worship
11:00 - 11:30 Jr. Choir (Room 102)
11:30 - 12:30 Church School (Room 201B)

Adult Christian Education 11:30 - 12:30

The Gospel of Luke: Good News for All
Sue Ellen Glover, Leader

Lounge

During Lent, we are following Jesus on his journey to Jerusalem as it is portrayed in this Gospel. The Good News is now proclaimed with an urgency in which Jesus attempts to describe what discipleship means for his followers, for the early Church, and for us today.

Young Adult Class
Paul Simpson Duke, Leader

Room 108

This class consists of conversational Bible study, discussing the letter to the Philippians and its application to our living. "Young adult" is defined as mid-twenties to 40(ish!).

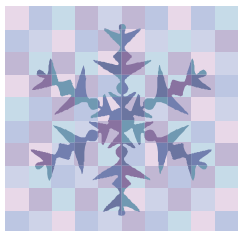
Other Adult Education Opportunities:

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

Pastor Stacey Simpson Duke leads a study of the Gospel of Mark. Join us for fellowship and study.

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.



FBCA2

News & Happenings

Devotions for Lent

The Board of Christian Education has made available a number of devotionals for adult and family use during Lent. These are located on the table near the Information Counter. We hope that these resources will deepen the meanings of this journey through Lent for you and your family.

The Ragbirds Homeless Benefit Concert

Ann Arbor Vineyard Homeless Ministries (our Tuesday evening and Rotating Shelter partner) are having another Homeless Benefit Concert this year. This year, The Ragbirds will take time out of their busy touring schedule to do a concert with proceeds going to the Ann Arbor Vineyard Homeless Ministry. It will take place on stage at Ann Arbor Vineyard, 2275 Platt Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104 at 8 pm on Monday, March 8, 2010. Tickets are \$10.

"BreakFest 2010"

A Celebration of American, Scottish and Irish Music to benefit the Breakfast at St. Andrew's program, which serves breakfast seven days a week to anyone in need. 7:00 p.m. on Friday, February 26, at The Ark. Admission \$30. Go to <http://www.breakfest2010.org> for more information.

The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County

On Sunday, March 21st, the Interfaith Round Table continue their five part winter/spring series on "*The Divine Language of Music*," with its third theme, INSTRUMENTAL MUSIC, from 7 to 8:30 pm, at the First Congregational Church, 608 E. William Street, Ann Arbor. Three local musicians/groups will perform and explore the meaning of their music: Organist Daniel Forger AAGO, Dr. Stephen Eddins and his percussionists, and Matt Endahl and the jazz ensemble, Quartex. For more information, call 734-424-1535 or email gbrides@umich.edu. Suggested donations --\$10).

America for Christ Offering 2010

Our surveys reveal countless people in need of Jesus' love and healing touch. It's a difficult challenge, but we believe that as American Baptists working together, we can make a difference by supporting the 2010 America for Christ Offering (AFC).

This special annual offering will be received on Sunday, March 7, and will be accepted throughout the month of March.



This year's theme - "With Willing Hands: Connect. Care. Celebrate" - is a powerful reminder that Jesus' public ministry was all about connecting and caring for people in need. Through the work of National Ministries, which is supported by the AFC offering, we can participate with our Lord in connecting, caring and celebrating the power of the Gospel:

- As people come to know the saving grace of Jesus Christ;
- As children in poverty are reached through the Penny Project;
- As youth, children and adults grow in discipleship;
- As communities are changed through Christian centers;
- As we increase church vitality through the Church in Mission trainings; and
- As we help to support and relocate refugees into churches and communities.

Read more about AFC at <http://abc-mi.org/elink/afc2010.pdf>

MARCH 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2 5:30 Vespers -- First Baptist	3 1:30 Bible Study	4 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	5	6
7 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour	8 5:45 Board of Christian Ed. 7:30 Board of Mission Action	9 5:30 Vespers	10 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis/Diels ChristCare	11 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	12	13
14 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour	15	16 2:00 Beecher- Brewer Cir. 5:30 Vespers 7:00 Board of Trustees	17 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering	18 1:00 MacGregor- Stitt Cir. 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	19	20
21 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour	22	23 9:30 ABWM Planning Meeting 5:30 Vespers	24 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis/Diels ChristCare	25 7:30 Choir Rehearsal	26	27
28 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Easter Event	29	30 5:30 Vespers	31 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering	April 1 7:30 pm Maundy Thursday Service (at Northside Comm. Church)	April 2 8:00 pm Tenebrae Service	April 3
← ROTATING SHELTER →						
April 4 Easter 10:00 Worship Service	April 5	April 6 5:30 Vespers -- First Baptist	April 7 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering	April 8	April 8	April 10

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



Next
newsletter
deadline:
Sunday, March 7

