



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

April 28, 2010

Pastor's Reflections

by Paul Simpson Duke

Who among us at one time or another hasn't felt sick and tired of doing the same things every day? Get up in the morning, get ready, then do all the other rituals and repetitions required for the maintenance of a life: cook the meals, wash the dishes, do the laundry, clean the house, buy the groceries, run the errands, write the emails, pay the bills, exercise. And if you've got a job, clock in on time; if you're a student, do the readings, projects, and papers on time; and if you happen to have kids at home, well, just add a lot more to the list. Life is largely comprised of seemingly endless repetitions. Many of us have chafed inside the dull constraints of routine.

But the truth is that repetition and routine offer the greatest opportunities of our lives. Even if drudgery enters in, doing the same things over and over again can lay the foundations for our truest freedoms and our most vibrant creativities. And it's not just because repeating a thing makes us better at it. "How do you get to Carnegie Hall?" asks the tourist in the old joke, and the answer is: "Practice, practice, practice." So yes: in all the arts, in all sports, and in most everything else, there is no path to real achievement that doesn't include countless repetitions of the same routines.

But there are broader and deeper possibilities within the constraints of routine. The same task at the same time and place can become a reliable frame *inside* of which freedom is found for fresh insights and choices. On the most mundane level, let us say that I wash the dishes twice each day. Let us say that I find it sometimes tiresome; but let us also say that eventually I figure out that I can use this routine, each time I take it up again, as opportunity to reflect, to ponder the day, to think of those with whom the meal was shared, to be as fully present as I can be, and maybe even do the job with an extra bit of flare. If the habit is established, the task becomes a vessel for renewal and discovery.

One of the first rules for writers is this: sit down every day in the same place at the same time, and for a set block of time, write. Why? Because the sameness of surroundings and circumstance over time builds a reservoir of associations, reflexes, and habits of mind. It's not unlike how good jazz and other improvisational music happens. It's not spun out of thin air. The melodic structure is already there, and the music is made by finding all kinds of freedom to play within and around the given structure. So it is with living inside all our routines. Structure, sameness, constraint? Yes. But inside these boundaries is tremendous freedom - to be fully present, to notice, to choose a perspective, to try new approaches, to be always creative with love. Because this is true, there is no such thing as an exact repetition. Every time we do "the same thing" is the occasion for a new thing.

The same is true in our worship. Worship has its repetitions. Every week we make music, offer prayers, read Scripture, hear a sermon, give an offering, greet each other, and once a month observe Communion. Call it *ritual*, a very good word. Should we "mix it up" more than we do? Probably. But there is good reason for the elements and structures to remain largely the same. Inside the given forms is where our best freedoms are found. Inside the structures come the heart's improvisations. It doesn't have to happen, of course. If we bring no intention or effort, the routines are "empty" after all. But if we are truly present - mindfully, receptively, communally, and regularly present - our Sunday repetitions open spacious room for hearts to dance.

So also in our solitude. Abraham Joshua Heschel said of daily prayer, "Routine breeds attention." Same times, same places, same habits of body and mind, every day - and the silences begin to speak to us differently, old words start to breathe with new significance, and a very ordinary day is now luminous. Who knows? Maybe we should be looking not for less routine, but more.

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)

Save the Date: Children & Youth Worship!
will be on May 9 (with rehearsal on May 8, 9:00 – 11:00).

Adult Christian Education 11:30 - 12:30

Acts of the Apostles/Acts of the Holy Spirit
Sue Ellen Glover, Leader

Lounge

We are beginning a study of the second volume by the author of Luke. In the Gospel of Luke, we heard how Jesus came to restore and fulfill the covenant between God and humans. In Acts, we will explore how the disciples of Christ struggled to live out his teachings and to carry his message of repentance and salvation for all.

Young Adult Class
Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Leaders

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!).

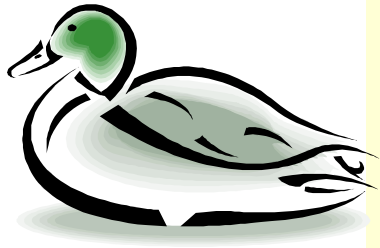
Other Adult Education Opportunities:

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. *The last class will be held on May 12th. The traditional end-of-the season lunch will be held on May 19th at 12 noon at Weber's Restaurant.*

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.



FBC News & Happenings

Children and Youth Worship will be on May 9. We hope you will join us for this special service which is written and conducted by the children and youth, with special music by soloists, the Grace Notes and the Jr. Choir.

Remembering Ruth Kerr

On Sunday, May 2, we will hold an event in honor of Ruth Kerr, longtime member and church treasure. Ruth died in September and had requested that no memorial service be held; but her service to the life of our church was so substantial and her impact among us was so strong that we want to have an occasion for paying tribute to her. We are calling it "Remembering Ruth." May 2 is the Sunday nearest to her birthday, so the time seems fitting. A light luncheon will be held after Second Hour on that day, then we will move to the memorial lounge, where memories will be shared and reflections offered. We hope that many of you will join us. If you plan to attend, please RSVP right away by calling or email the office (734-663-9376 or office@fbca2.org).

Scholarships Available

Scholarships are available for post-secondary education from the Chester and Violet Loucks Scholarship Fund. Applications are available at the information desk and from Mary Davis (madrad@umich.edu). Applications must be turned in by May 16. Scholarships are also available from the Johnson fund for attendance at Green Lake conferences (contact Mary Davis).

-- Scholarship Committee

Telephone Directory Update

We are in the process of updating the telephone directory of friends and members of FBC. You will find edit copies at the Information Counter and in the Fellowship Hall. Please take a moment to make sure that the information you want included is updated/correct, including the birthday list at the back. Don't see your name and want to be added, let us know. If there is information you don't want published (i.e. telephone number, email, etc.) that's fine, too. Thank you!

ABWM Spring Salad Luncheon

On Thursday, May 6th, at 12 noon, the American Baptist Women's Ministries will hold their annual Spring Salad Luncheon. The MacGregor-Stitt Circle are hostesses this year and the Beecher-Brewer Circle are leading the program, *History of Salad Vegetables*. Please RSVP if you plan to attend.

The MacGregor-Stitt Circle will meet on Thursday, May 20 at 12 noon at the home of Phyllis White for a Potluck Salad Luncheon and Treasure Sale.

Sowing the Seeds of Ministry Regional Offering

Our ministries at the American Baptist Churches of Michigan are like garden plots, carefully planned and planted in order to reap a bountiful harvest. As plants need light, water, and soil to grow, so our ministries need a variety of things to thrive: dedicated people, prayer, and funding. Because we all want to see a yield of changed lives, we need to be careful stewards of our resources.



One of the ways ABC-MI is doing just that is through our annual Region Offering: Sowing Seeds of Ministry. Through this special offering, our churches have the opportunity to contribute directly to our Region to support the worthy ministries that ABC-MI provides. Money given to this offering helps support efforts to grow healthy churches, cultivate health in our pastors, and sow seeds of the Gospel in Michigan.

ABC-MI is proud to stand in partnership with your church, providing the ministries you need when you need them. We hope you will take advantage of the chance you have to directly impact those ministries through your generous giving. You have the opportunity to sow seeds of ministry in our state where many people are hurting and in need of support.

Remember: as in bringing forth fruit from the earth, bringing in the harvest of the Kingdom takes time, dedication, prayer, and patience. It also takes financial support. Thank you in advance for yours.

AB Women's Ministries Spring Bake Sale

On May 16th, The ABWM will hold their Spring Bake Sale in the Fellowship Hall, beginning at 11:00 a.m. after the worship service. We are encouraging all our church women to show off their baking skills with a wide variety of baked goods to tempt our church members. Remember that all our church women are members of ABW Ministries and, even if some are not actively involved, we hope that all will take part in the bake sale. The baked goods can be brought to the church kitchen Sunday morning or to the church office on Friday during the day. Please list any ingredients that might be a problem with allergies and do not have any baked goods which need refrigeration. You will not need to price your baked goods, as this will be a donation sale. It has been decided to discontinue the fall and spring rummage sales and we are trying new and different ways to earn money so that we may continue our many service projects. Please call Bev Inbody (904-5750) if you have any questions.

The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County

The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County concludes its sacred concert series, "The Divine Language of Music," with "An Interfaith Musical Experience and an Indian Meal," held at the Hindu Chinmaya Mission, 4760 Packard Road, Ann Arbor -- Sunday, May 16, from 6 - 8:30 pm. This will be an evening of sacred music from a variety of religious traditions including vocal solos, chanting, dance and instruments, ending with a delicious Indian meal. Ticket prices: \$15 (basic), \$25, \$50 (charitable contributions categories). Call for family prices. For more information, call 734-424-1535 or email gbrides@umich.edu.



MAY 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
						1
2 10:00 Worship 11:30 Second Hour 12:30 "Remembering Ruth Kerr"	3 5:45 Board of Christian Ed 7:00 Board of Outreach 7:30 Board of Worship	4 5:30 Vespers-- FBC host	5 1:30 Bible Study	6 12:00 ABWM Spring Salad Lunch 7:30 Choir	7	8 9:00 am Children & Youth Rehearsal
9 Children & Youth Worship 11:30 Second Hour	10 7:30 Board of Mission Action	11 5:30 Vespers	12 *newsletter* 1:30 Bible Study (last class) 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	13 7:30 Choir	14	15
16 10:00 Worship 11:15 ABWM Spring Bake Sale 11:30 Second Hour	17	18 1:00 Beecher-Brewer Cir. 5:30 Vespers	19 12:00 Bible Study Lunch at Weber's 7:00 Executive Council	20 12:00 MacGregor-Stitt Circle 7:30 Choir	21	22
23 10:00 Worship 11:30 Second Hour	24	25 9:30 ABWM Board Mtg. 5:30 Vespers	26 *newsletter* 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	27 7:30 Choir	28	29
30 10:00 Worship 11:30 Second Hour	31 <u>Memorial Day</u> Church Buildings & Office Closed					

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



Next
newsletter
deadline:
Sunday, May 9th

