



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

May 26, 2010

Pastor's Reflections

by Paul Simpson Duke

I thought that our worship service on Sunday, Pentecost, was exceptional. Apparently so did many of you. It was spirited (capital S?) and joyous. Celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit to the church in freedom and power, we worshiped in different shapes of freedom and power than usual. In an opening "responsive reading," the congregation divided in half and practically shouted rapid-fire back and forth (oh my!). The choir rang out, "Every Time I Feel the Spirit." Sue Ellen had the children and youth wrap the entire congregation in a single very long red crepe paper streamer. We sang a Pentecost hymn at a great rollicking pace. Randy Faber played Debussy with exuberant virtuoso flare, and jazzed our singing too. And we all left the room with geraniums in our hands, to watch, tend, and grow these red, red reminders of the Spirit and the church in the places where we live. All in all, a wonderful morning of worship, most fitting to the day.

Sermon preparation, at least as Stacey and I approach it, involves much time in reading and reflection, as well as the final choosing of the words we mean to speak (though improvisations adlibs and derailments do occur). In the process, there are often many thoughts that might have been included in the sermon but, because of the constraints of time, go unused. They end up, as the moviemakers say, "on the cutting room floor."

Here is one of this week's unused thoughts. The title of the sermon was "The Expressive Spirit," and I focused on how the church's expressiveness of Christ to the world is built in to our faith from the very start, how the Spirit is the source of that expressiveness, and how our part, among other things, is to ask for the Holy Spirit's power within and among us. The connection I did not make is with the church's worship. On the first Pentecost, before those 120 women and men became expressive to their world, they were expressive in their worship. They had been "continually in the temple blessing God" (Luke 24:53), and were now together in one place, where they prayed. It was here, where they were *enclosed together in worship*, that the Spirit came and spoke through them till they were *unleashed together in witness*. The expressiveness they found in worship was precisely the expressiveness they took into the city and beyond.

These two "venues" for expressive faith - worship and witness - cannot exist in isolation from each other. For either to remain vibrant, both must remain vibrant. A church committed to strong worship without strong witness is irrelevant (and hasn't truly worshiped). A church committed to strong witness without strong worship is severed from its source (and hasn't truly borne witness).

My accent on Sunday was on the church's witness; my accent here is on the church's worship. Like our witness, our worship is empty apart from the Spirit. So we seek the Spirit to help us worship and to enliven it. Accordingly, we get ourselves here, we *lean into* the engagement with God that worship is, we bring deep desire to it, honest confession, intentional minds, and absolute openness to what the living Presence might grant to us or ask of us. We worship *with heart*.

Inevitably, this will mean, among other things, joy. Not every Sunday morning will infuse us with joy; but, on the whole, joy will find us in it. The expressive Spirit has much joy to express through us. Frederick Buechner says about worship: "A Quaker Meeting, a Pontifical High Mass, the Family Service at First Presbyterian, a Holy Roller Happening - unless there is an element of joy and foolishness in the proceedings, the time would be better spent doing something useful." It happened once more among us on Sunday. It was the Spirit of Pentecost in worship, indivisible from the church's free and joyous witness to the world.

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 - 12:30 Church School (Room 201B)

Adult Christian Education 11:30 - 12:30

Acts of the Apostles/Acts of the Holy Spirit

Sue Ellen Glover, Leader

Lounge

We are exploring how the Holy Spirit is empowering believers to carry the good news of Jesus Christ beyond Jerusalem and empowering them to live so that their lives are witnesses to this good news.

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

Bible Study will resume in the Fall.

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.


JUNE 2010

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	31 Memorial Day Church Buildings & Office Closed	1 1:00 ABWM Garden Party 5:30 Vespers -- FBC Host	2	3 7:30 Choir	4	5
6 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour 12:30 Board of Music & Arts 4:00 Board of Care & Community	7 7:00 Board of Outreach	8 5:30 Vespers	9 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	10 1:00 MacGregor- Stitt Circle 7:30 Choir	11	12
13 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour	14 7:30 Board of Mission Action	15 12:00 Beecher- Brewer Circle 5:30 Vespers 7:00 Board of Trustees	16	17 7:30 Choir	18	19
20 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour	21	22 5:30 Vespers	23	24 7:30 Choir	25	26
27 10:00 Worship Service 11:30 Second Hour	28	29 5:30 Vespers	30			



First Baptist Church
517 E Washington Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2015
734-663-9376
www.fbca2.org
office@fbca2.org

The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



**Next
newsletter
deadline:**
Sunday, June 6th