



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

June 9, 2010

Pastor's Reflections

by Stacey Simpson Duke

It's that time of year for milestone occasions - weddings, graduations, and moves - and this year more than most, it is all hitting me hard. A couple of weeks ago, I officiated at the wedding of a woman who grew up in my previous congregation. She was only eleven when I first became her pastor; now she is the age I was then. How did that happen so fast?

In May, Paul and I said good-bye to five university students who graduated and two more transferring to other schools. This past weekend, the church celebrated our three high school graduates, one of whom was born into this church and the others of whom first came here as preschoolers. All of these good-byes are good - it's exciting to see young adults celebrated for their achievements and ready to take the next step forward - but the good-byes are hard, too.

In a few days, our congregation will say farewell to Henry and Barb Griffin, who have been members of this congregation for over 40 years. Barb was on the search committee that brought Paul and me to First Baptist, and she and Henry were our church sponsors when we officially became members in January 2001. Their move to North Carolina has been a long time coming, yet now that it's here, I find it hard to accept!

All of these events have been bittersweet for me - I'm happy for the people involved, and sad at how quickly time goes - but nothing has hit me harder than what is about to happen next week: Rob and Charlie will graduate from kindergarten! How this has happened so quickly is mystifying. Just yesterday, I was trying to juggle holding a baby in each arm; now I struggle to fit one leggy child on my lap. Just yesterday, I was wondering when the 0-3 months size baby outfits would fit; now I wonder why the size 6 jeans already look too short! Even more shocking: just yesterday, I was standing at my own kindergarten graduation, in a frilly red dress with a red construction paper necklace. It can't possibly be the case that I am the adult now, about to watch my own children graduate from kindergarten.

Every milestone always marks a beginning and an end. We celebrate the beginnings - the new marriage, the new home, the new chapter in education or career. But sometimes we fail to adequately grieve the ending involved. Theoretically, we know that it makes sense for there to be sadness mingled with celebration, especially if a child is about to move out of the house. Still, it's easy in the midst of all the hoopla to forget to attend to our natural grief at what has changed and what has ended, and to move through the transitions in the most appropriate way.

To be honest, I'm not sure how best to do it. If it were up to me, I'm afraid I'd be doing my best to keep all of us stuck in time - where children never grow up, students never graduate, and nobody ever moves away. But life inexorably moves toward the future - toward growth and new possibilities - and however much we might want to stop time, that impulse ultimately is not a life-giving one. The opposite impulse is toward denial - living as if none of the changes or endings really matter; that impulse is emotionally and relationally stunted. The best I know to do for now, then, is to be honest about my feelings but not mired in them, and to do what I can to be present and attentive to what is happening *now*, rather than clutching at the past or worrying over the future. We don't have a choice about the fact that life moves forward; we have a choice about whether we move forward with it.

Whatever the transition, may we use these days to more fully attend to the people we've been given to love. May we more completely seize the day and more mindfully exist with God in it. May we be gentle with all that isn't easy. And may we let go of what needs to be let go.

Congratulations, graduates, and best wishes to all who are moving, saying good-bye, or making fresh starts.

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.

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next
newsletter
deadline:
Sunday, June 20th



CHURCH PICNIC

JULY 11 NOON – 2:00 Allmendinger Park

Sign up at the Information Counter.

Bring a dish to share, your table setting, lawn chairs – and friends!

Chicken and drinks provided by the Board of CE