



# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH

Ann Arbor, Michigan

August 18, 2010

## Pastor's Reflections

by Paul Simpson Duke

In June I had an experience unlike any I have had before. I spent three and a half rather intense days interacting with a small group of people from religious traditions very different from my own. We meditated together, listened and talked with each other, laughed and ate with each other, then took our leave, enriched by each other.

The event was the Snowmass Inter-Spiritual Conference. Since 1984 a small group of spiritual leaders has been meeting annually, usually at a monastery in Snowmass, Colorado. The group was founded by Thomas Keating, a priest who has helped countless Christians into the practice of contemplative prayer, and who has a passion for spiritual dialog among people from different spiritual traditions. The membership of the group has changed through the years as some of its members died or became ill; but a continuing group remains with some of the founding members and some newer ones. They meet each year to meditate and to discuss what they hold in common and how they differ and how the world might change by such practice.

Eight of the members were present this year: two Christians (a Catholic and a Protestant), two Buddhists, a Hassidic Jew, a Vedanta Hindu, a Sufi Muslim, a Shaman, and the conference's current benefactor. They invited ten others of us to join them this year as their guests - to listen, to observe their interactions, and, in our own way, to participate. It was a phenomenal experience. The setting itself, at an altitude of 8000 feet in the Rocky Mountains, was awe-inspiring. The members were wonderful - wise men and women who clearly loved each other and obviously shared a great passion, not to mention a rich and easy sense of humor.

Three times daily we all sat in silence together, meditating. It is one thing to sit in silence alone for half an hour in contemplation and prayer; it is another thing to enter into a *shared* contemplative silence. I have done this at Quaker meetings, but never at such length and never in such a strong circle of diverse and united mindfulness. For me, the sense of Presence was almost palpable. Following meditation, exchanges would begin - sometimes just the members, sometimes all of us, and once just the guests. At times the discussions became rather theoretical, and at times they were full of stories of intensely personal experience. On one occasion we were privileged to hear readings from the sacred texts, or prayers or songs, from each other's traditions.

The differences among us were real and were clearly expressed. This was a positive strength of the experience. No one's tradition was compromised; the integrity of each perspective was held intact. But these essential commitments were gently held in a circle of deep listening to one another, and in the firm fabric of absolute trust, respect, and love. From such listening comes discovery of new accents, new insights, and perhaps new corrections of one's own spiritual perspective and practice. It is possible to become a better Christian for having spent time with a good Buddhist.

I left the gathering with a fresh conviction that the deepest human bonds are spiritual. Real unity-in-diversity does not begin with the intellect or with belief systems or with ethical commitments. It begins with silence - with deep spiritual desire and discipline - and from these, a commitment to attentive and fruitful relationship. And if this is true on a global scale, it is certainly true for a congregation. We, too, are diverse, with differing dreams, perspectives, and shapes of faith. So where will our deep unity come from? Not from discussions, programs, sermons, or mission projects - but only by the Spirit and by our prayerful surrender to it, together and alone. From this and this alone we emerge enlivened with new capacities to listen, to speak, to laugh, and to act in Christ as one.

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 - 3<sup>rd</sup> grade are invited to Children's Worship.

## **Children and Youth Christian Education**

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

### K - 6<sup>th</sup> grade

10:00 - 10:30 Worship

10:30 - 11:00 Children's Worship (Room 202A) for K-3rd

11:00 - 12:30 Church School (Rooms 202A&B)

### 7<sup>th</sup> Grade - High School

10:00 - 11:00 Worship

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

## **Children's Music and Arts Ministry**

will resume in September.

## **Adult Christian Education 11:30 - 12:30**

August Adult Class

Lounge

"The Four Witnesses: The Striking Differences in the Gospels' Presentations of Jesus."

As we explore specific events in the life of Jesus as seen through the four Gospels, we notice similarities and differences. Each Gospel author did not write in order to provide a thorough biography or historical account but wrote to bear witness to Jesus, the Christ. Often these differences are the result of each Gospel's very particular perspective and a specific message each author was trying to convey. Ultimately we are given a much fuller theological perspective on Jesus.

August 22 (Ron Gregg) -- Palm Sunday and Last Supper

August 29 (Paul Duke) -- Passion, crucifixion and resurrection

### **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.

Haiti Earthquake Crisis Report -- June 2010, American Baptist International Ministries  
The Churches have given 2.5 million!!

- These financial resources make possible a three-year comprehensive relief, recovery and rebuilding effort in Haiti. This holistic plan, guided by our missionaries and partners, is restoring life and livelihoods in Haiti.

Basic Needs: \$950,000 for food, water, shelter, and health care

- Rebuilding: \$750,000 for bricks and mortar and for rebuilding homes, schools, clinics, and churches
- Recovery of life and livelihoods: \$800,000 for training for new jobs, tuition assistance for students relocating in northern Haiti and spiritual, pastoral and psychological care for healing trauma

"American Baptist missionaries have been serving in Haiti for 87 years. International Ministries has a holistic approach to ministry that does not just arrive to &'fix' the situation, but seeks to partner with those already there to accomplish more than either of us could do independently."

-- Ruth Clark, current IM Board President.



Save the Date! **The Washtenaw/Ann Arbor CROP Walk 36** will be on Sunday, October 10, 2010, Zion Lutheran Church, Ann Arbor. More details coming soon!

**Sign up for Friendship House's 5th Annual Golf Outing**, Saturday, September 25, 2010, at Fox Creek Golf Club in Livonia. Cost is \$85/golfer. Hole Sponsors are needed for only \$100. Call 313-871-7443 for more information. Click [here](#) for brochure. [See this update](#) on our sponsorships so far for the 5th annual golf outing. The dinner and lunch are still available for sponsorship. And we'd love to have all 18 holes sponsored for only \$100 apiece. Can your family, church, employer, fraternity/sorority...sponsor a hole? The proceeds of this year's golf outing will be matched dollar for dollar by the First Baptist Church of Royal Oak Mission Fund. We want to capitalize on this fabulous opportunity to raise funds for Friendship House.

**Central Area Fall Senior Adult Event** will be held Tuesday, September 21, 11am -1pm, at Federated Church of Grass Lake, 519 E. Michigan Ave., Grass Lake, 517-522-4480, email: [glfederated@yahoo.com](mailto:glfederated@yahoo.com). The event will be hosted by the Young At Heart Senior Adult Group of the Federated Church where the Rev. Chuck McNeil is the pastor. The program will be presented by Dr. Andy Mead, Professor of Music at University of Michigan, who will describe the origins of the pipe organ, then play a short concert on the church's pipe organ. A luncheon will follow in the fellowship hall. Cost for the program and lunch will be \$5.

**A Screening of "With One Voice" at the Ann Arbor District Library** -- co-sponsored by the Interfaith Round table and the Life Sciences and Society Program, UM -- The award-winning spiritual documentary, "With One Voice," featuring mystics and scholars from different spiritual traditions, will be shown from 6:30 to 8:00 pm, Tuesday, September 14, at the Ann Arbor District Library, 343 S. Fifth Ave, Ann Arbor. This illuminating documentary explores the unity of humanity, reveals our essential oneness, explores the way to true peace in the world and spreads the single message that binds all faiths together. Included among the many mystics are Fr. Thomas Keating, Brother David Steindl-Rast, John Daido Looi Roshi, A.H. Almaas, Joseph Goldstein, Reb Zalman Schachter-Shalomi, Bhante Henepola Gunaratana, and Joan Halifax Roshi.

A film team member will be on hand to answer questions and lead a short discussion. For more information about this DVD, go to [www.withonevoicedocumentary.org](http://www.withonevoicedocumentary.org) or better yet, come see for yourself.

**Church World Service of Michigan** (the CROP Walk folks) invites you to participate in a "Learn & Serve" bus trip to the CWS Service Center in New Windsor, Maryland, October 25-29. You will have a hands-on experience at the International Gift Shop and the warehouse where CWS blankets and kits are collected, packed and shipped for use around the world. The trip includes a side trip to Gettysburg, PA. Why not consider participating in this short-term mission trip with a friend or two? For more detailed information go to the ABCMI website ([www.abc-mi.org](http://www.abc-mi.org)) or call Pam at 888-297-2767.

Next  
newsletter  
deadline:  
*Sunday, Sept 5*



**CALLING ONE, CALLING ALL!  
CELEBRATION SUNDAY**

**Sunday, September 12**, is special and important in the life of First Baptist Church. It is a “homecoming” Sunday. We seek to have every able-bodied resident member and friend present as we celebrate our faithful congregation, our church’s vitality, and the beginning of the program year. The worship service will be topped off by the **Ice Cream Social** and a time of warm fellowship as we greet friends and welcome those who have returned for the occasion.

You will hear more about the day, so stay tuned. Meanwhile, keep the day in the front of your mind, plan to be there yourself, and begin thinking now about church friends who have been missing for awhile and whom you will call (or bring). The day, again: **Sunday, September 12**.

**CELEBRATION SUNDAY+HOMECOMING+ICE CREAM SOCIAL**

The Board of Outreach