



# FIRST BAPTIST

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## CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

November 23 2011

### Pastor's Reflections by Stacey Simpson Duke

When I was a child, my mother always bought my brother and me chocolate-filled Advent calendars. You probably know what I'm talking about - you open a door of the calendar each day, and behind each door is a small piece of chocolate. It was always such a fun (and delicious!) way to count down to Christmas.

The last couple of years, I have made an activity-based Advent calendar for Rob and Charlie. Instead of candy, there is a little slip of paper for each day with some sort of activity that they will do that day. Some of the activities are crafts (make a gingerbread house, make a pinecone bird feeder), some are food-based (drink hot chocolate, make Christmas candy), some are decoration-focused (pick out a Christmas tree, hang a wreath), some are family-oriented (have a family movie night, play board games), some are focused on being kind to others (tell someone something you like about him or her, buy food for the church food drive). The boys always really enjoy it, and they've already been looking forward to it this year (referring to it as our "Event" Calendar).

Marking time during Advent this way has given me a new perspective. Advent has become for my sons not just a time to look forward to Christmas, but a valuable time in and of itself. Each day, they awake with fresh anticipation of what the calendar will hold, what the day will bring. Whereas I tend to approach each day as many adults do, thinking about what I *must* get done, my boys approach the days of Advent with childlike eagerness, pondering what they will *get* to do. Their anticipation is instructive; their joy is my teacher.

It is hard, as an adult, to move through the coming season with lightness and wonder. Most of us feel the burdens of work, schedules, social obligations, finances, and the many stresses that preparing for Christmas can entail. It is difficult to give ourselves to what Advent means to offer - time for prayer and reflection, a chance to nurture expectation and a sense of joy and hope, the opportunity to get in touch with our deep longing for God.

How can we find ways to give ourselves to this sacred time in a way that doesn't feel like one more burden on our over-full schedules? It's difficult but surely not impossible. Sometimes carving out five or ten minutes a day for prayer, Scripture reading, and reflection can end up giving us more energy and focus to get through the rest of our day, so that prayer feels like a gift instead of one more obligation. What if we looked at such quiet time as a present to be opened the way a child opens the Advent calendar each day? We could approach it with excitement and anticipation.

It might also help to get creative. If you feel like your prayers are growing stale, find some new resource to support you. Sue Ellen will have the resource table loaded with Advent devotionals (for adults, children, and families) during Advent - check them out! Or consider using something other than a typical devotional book. What about reading through a book of spiritually-oriented poetry, one poem a day? Or pick a book of sacred art (perhaps images of Mary and child?) and contemplate an image each day. Pray through some of the Psalms, using a different translation than you ordinarily use. Use this season to shake up your usual practices, especially if those practices are not giving you life.

Advent is a gift, not a burden, and it is meant to help us focus our longing on the One who came as the greatest gift. As the days grow grey and short, we lean towards the coming light. May we do so with joy, with hope, with wonder, as we say with the church everywhere, "Come, Lord Jesus!"

## Children and Youth Christian Education

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

All children are welcome to worship with their families. After the Time as Children portion of the worship service, preschoolers - 1st grade leave for church school. Children in 2nd and 3rd grade are invited to Children's Worship in 201B.

### Preschool - 1st Grade:

10:30 - 11:30 Church School (Rm. 202A&B)  
11:30 - 12:30 Second Hour Church School  
And Childcare (Rm. 202A&B)

### Youth (6<sup>th</sup> - High School)

10:00 - 11:00 Worship  
11:15 - 11:45 Youth Choir (Rm. 306)  
11:45 - 12:30 Church School (Room 107)

### 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade:

10:00 - 11:00 Worship (2nd and 3rd graders are invited to Children's Worship)  
11:15 - 12:00 Church School (Rm. 202B)  
12:00 - 12:30 Children's Choir (Rm. 306)

## Children and Youth Music & Arts Ministry

11:15 - 11:45 Youth Choir (rm. 306)                      12:00 - 12:30 Children's Choir (Rm. 306)

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

Changing the Conversation - a third way for congregations  
(Marlene Francis, Ron Gregg, Sue Ellen Glover)

Lounge

A discussion inviting our congregation into ten crucial conversations to help us respond with greater vitality, effectiveness, and faithfulness to our culture and its challenges.

November 27 - A DVD lesson with Steven Furtick, lead pastor of Elevation Church in Charlotte, NC. *Audacious Faith* - A story about Elisha and ditch digging.

December 4 - **The Church and the Public Square** It used to be that churches like ours were the conscience of the community, the main instrument of aid to the less fortunate in the community, and the center of family and community life. Is that true today? What does it mean if we are no longer the standard; how should we react?

Young Adult Class (Rev . Paul Simpson Duke, leader)

Room 108

This class consists of conversational Bible study, discussing texts from the Prophets. "Young Adult" is defined as mid-twenties to 40(ish!).

### Other Adult Education Opportunities:

**Wednesday Bible Study** Bible Study meets at 1:30 p.m. in the Lounge, with Paul Simpson Duke leading a study of the Stories of David. Please join us for study, fellowship and snacks!

**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.

**College/University Students:** **The Gathering** is for undergraduates and graduate students. We gather every Wednesday night at 5:30pm in the Campus Center for a free home-cooked meal, friendship, and study. This year our topic is "Images for the Struggles and the Joy: Help from the Psalms," led by Paul Simpson Duke. In addition to Wednesday night gatherings, we also get together for films, service projects, and social events. If you would like to be added to our email list for announcements, please see Stacey Simpson Duke.



# FBC News & Happenings

## **Love, Share, Give, 2012!**

*"Everybody needs beauty as well as bread, places to play in and pray in where nature may heal and cheer and give strength to the body and soul." -John Muir (1838-1914)*

Number of pledges received: 58

**Mae-Ellen Middleton** We are sorry to report the death of Mae Ellen Middleton, the daughter-in-law of Jim and Dorothy Middleton (married to their son, Don), on November 3rd. Please keep her family and friends in your prayers.

## **Thanksgiving Prayer by the Children's Worship group**

Thank you, God

For love

For parents and step-parents, for grandparents, and for our church family

For warm homes and pets

For food (especially cranberry sauce and pie)

For our noses so we can smell snacks and turkey

For schools so we can learn and so we can teach our kids when we grow up

For our brains that we can use to do art and music, and that we can use to help people

For our hearts so we can be kind and can love

For Bibles so we can learn to be happy and peaceful

For Jesus so we can be happy

**The 1<sup>st</sup> Tuesday Vespers Crew** needs a few more regular members. We need at least one more person for the prep crew (3:30-5:30) and two more for the Serving/Cleanup crew (5:30-7:00). You can work both shifts or just one. If you like to try it out on December 6 before making a commitment, that's ok. Let Mary Davis ([madrad@umich.edu](mailto:madrad@umich.edu) or 747-8131) know that you'll be coming.

## **Decorating the Sanctuary for Advent**

All ages are invited to join in a "decorating party" this Saturday morning, November 26, 9:00 am, to prepare the sanctuary for Advent and Christmas. Please let Sue Ellen know if you are planning to come ([gloverse@hotmail.com](mailto:gloverse@hotmail.com) or call the church office).

## **Children's Choir (2nd-5th) and Youth Choir (6th-12th)**

Come and join us on Sunday in room 306 to praise God with music! The Youth Choir sings anthems in various styles and rings chimes from time to time, and the Children's Choir sings fun Bible songs and plays instruments. Youth Choir: 11:15-11:45AM Children's Choir : Noon -12:30PM

### **A Collection for Vespers Guests**

The weather has gotten colder and the 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5th graders are collecting warm clothing for the Vespers guests and others who are in need. A basket will be near the Information Counter each Sunday to gather your donations of new (or gently used) hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, long underwear, jackets, sweatshirts and other warm clothes. The FBC Youth are collecting items for Christmas gift bags and would appreciate donations of grooming & personal items, such as shampoo, toothpaste, tooth brushes, small Kleenex packs, Band-Aids, etc.



### **Food Collection for Hikone**

The Boards of Christian Education and Mission Action are again sponsoring a food drive for our friends at Hikone housing. The Christmas holiday break is very tough on low income children - they are not in school so they do not receive their free lunches and breakfasts, the Community Center is not open, Food Gatherers does not deliver, and the food stamps are running out because it's the end of the month. **Please help us gather a truck-load of food by bringing a few things each Sunday through December 19.** We are looking especially for kid-friendly non-perishable food such as macaroni and cheese, peanut butter, cereal, soup, oatmeal packets, juice/milk boxes, liter plastic containers of juice, tuna, canned pasta, breakfast granola bars, fruit cups and cans, etc. We also love monetary donations which will be used to purchase milk, bread and fresh produce.

### **First Baptist Church Concert Series "Ad Libitum" and Coffee Break Concert Series**

by Shin-Ae Chun (Concert Series Director)

Dear friends in Christ, I am excited to announce that two concert series will be running at our beautiful church, starting in January, 2012, thanks to generous sponsors and support from our church members. The **Concert Series "Ad Libitum"** is a formal concert series, held in our sanctuary with guest musicians playing various styles of music that will touch our hearts. Three wonderful concerts have been scheduled for the 2nd half of the 2011-2012 season. Please look for the brochures in mail in December. The **Coffee Break Concert Series** (Thursdays at 1:30PM) is more casual and informal, inviting student- and local musicians to perform. Each concert will give us a great chance to enjoy musical talents that these musicians bring in. The goal of both series is to reach out to people in our community, sharing beautiful music in our excellent facility. Our church members are welcome to any concert on these series and are also encouraged to invite and welcome people from outside the church. If you wish to volunteer for publicity, refreshments and greeting, please contact Shin-Ae Chun at [music@fbca2.org](mailto:music@fbca2.org). More information will be available on the next newsletter. Thank you!!!

### **Calendar Sale**

Once again, the children and Youth are selling calendars. This year the profits will go towards purchasing books for the children of Hikone. We know you get many free calendars in the mail but these are heavy-weight, beautifully photographed calendars which have a great surface for writing down your appointments and activities. Plus there are scriptures for inspiration each time you glance at the calendar during your busy schedule! At \$8 they are a real deal compared to other heavy-weight calendars found in stores and these calendars make great gifts! The children will sell them before and after worship, or you may contact Sue Ellen and she will mail you one (or two or three).

### **Date Reminders**

**December 4** is the Alternative Holiday Fair and our church will have three tables of interest. The Church World Service Blanket table is manned by the ABW Ministries. The Heifer International table is manned by Mission Action and the Nandasmo Table is manned by Toni Burton. Your support is always needed.

**December 18** is the AB Women's Ministries Christmas Celebration. It is held in the Fellowship Hall with lots of things to see and buy. There will be boutique-type bazaar items to entice you, baked goods and food items to tempt you and an interesting collection of gently-used holiday and Christmas items to make your holiday complete. Donations to all three areas will be gratefully accepted. Any questions call Bev Inbody at 904-5750 or the church office at 663-9376.

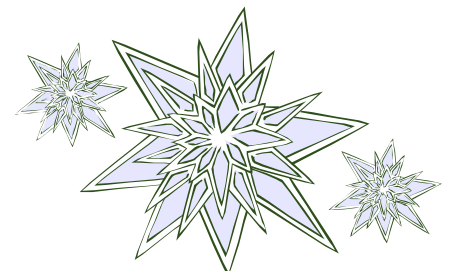
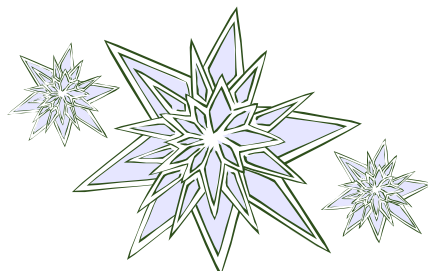
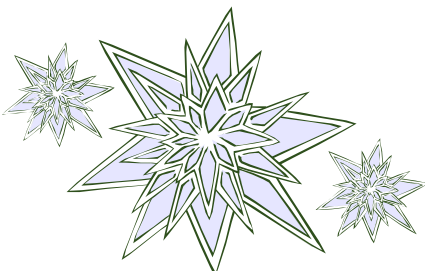
### **Family and Personal Profiles**

It's been many years since we updated the church family and individual data base, and collected interest surveys, so for the next few Sundays, members of the Recruitment Committee and others will be stationed at a table near the Fellowship Hall to gather this data.

**Youth Food Concession at the Alternative Holiday Fair** The Youth are once more running the food concession at the Alternative Fair. Your donations are greatly appreciated and increase the amount of money which the youth can donate. There is a sign up at the Information Counter. Thank you!

### **Advent Devotionals and Resources**

The time before Christmas can be stressful! To make this season more meaningful and more focused on the coming of Christ, the Board of Christian Education is offering Advent resources for all ages - fun activities and calendars for children and families to use in counting down the days to Jesus' birthday as well as daily devotionals for Youth and adults, available on a table near the Information Counter. We also encourage you to check out the website <http://www.adventconspiracy.org/> which shows ways to worship fully, spend less, give more and love all as we honor this holy season of Advent.



### What is stewardship?

A steward is a person who has been entrusted with another person's property, finances or resources. As Christians, we believe that everything we have is a gift from God. We are not owners. Instead, we are stewards of God's many blessings. Stewardship is about prayerfully offering back to God some measure of our time, our talents, our labor, our prayers, our presence, and our finances.

Financial stewardship, then, begins as a response to God: we offer back some percentage of our resources as a sign of gratitude, faithfulness and love. It is, first and foremost, about our spiritual vitality and growth. This offering is then used to support the mission and ministries of First Baptist Church as we seek to fulfill our mission to actively share the love of Jesus Christ with each other, our city, and the world.

### I give. Why should I make an annual commitment?

A commitment of record is important because it is a statement of belonging. A commitment is a way of saying, "*this* is my spiritual home," and "I consider myself a member of First Baptist Church." Furthermore, by making a commitment, we allow the church to plan a budget that accurately anticipates the revenue that will be received from parishioner giving.

### Why do we talk so much about *money*?

Like it or not, money plays a central role in our day to day lives. Just imagine how difficult it would be to make it through a single day without a thought of money, some small transaction. Because that is true, money can become either a valuable tool in our spiritual development or a stumbling block on our path to a Christ-filled life. When used with intention, with conviction - perhaps even as a spiritual practice - money can further our work as God's hands in this world, bringing glory to God and enabling more and more people to know the love of Jesus Christ. But, as with any tool with which one hopes to create great works, a dedicated practice is essential. How might our financial habits open our lives up to God and to our neighbors? Where might God be calling us to go today?

### So, this is like paying dues?

Absolutely not! Stewardship is not an entrance fee, nor is it a legalistic, one-size-fits-all model of giving. Stewardship is about taking stock of everything we have been given by God and then prayerfully considering how we can offer back our time, our talents, and our treasure.

In the end, stewardship is not about total dollars and cents. It is about recognizing God's generous love toward us, and being transformed into generous-hearted people ourselves. And, because that is true, stewardship is actually incredibly egalitarian. We are all called to give generously. We are all able to give generously. Generosity is not about how much we have; it is about what we do with what we have.

### How much should I give?

Throughout the Old Testament, the people of Israel are reminded to bring the "first fruits" of all their labor to God, offering a tithe (10%) as a sign of their gratitude for all that God had done for

them. In the Gospels, Jesus goes so far as to invite us to sell everything we have - to let go, to stop worrying - so that we might share all we have with our neighbors, near and far. We are invited to turn away from the things of this world in order to turn and follow the path of Christ. If the thought of tithing seems overwhelming, start by adding two percent to your current giving and then move toward the tithe.

We ask that everyone consider making a commitment that is both responsible and significant based on his or her financial situation.

### **Where does the money I give to First Baptist go?**

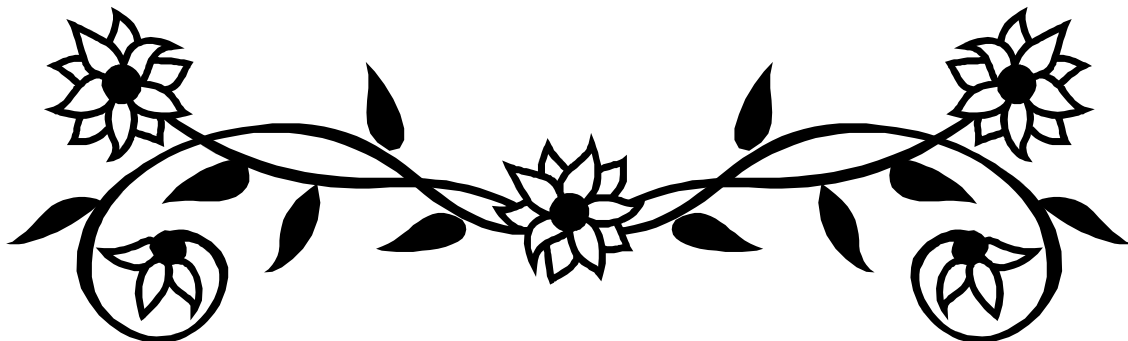
Annual stewardship funds everything involved in our church's ministry: our mission and outreach ministries; worship and music; education and programs for children, youth, and adults; fellowship events; pastoral care; salaries; and building costs. Every fall we prayerfully and carefully budget for these ministries; your financial gifts support and bless the work of God through our church.

**We can never be sure what to pledge so we just put money in the offering plate each Sunday. Isn't that good enough?**

It's good, but it could be better. To be as effective as possible in its work, the church needs to budget and to plan. We encourage you simply to give your best possible estimate based on what you have given in the past plus your projection of how you might give more. We know that people cannot always give what they pledge — some have to give less, other find that they can give more. No one will hold you to what you pledge. In any case, pledging and using the envelope system is beneficial both to you and to the church.

### **Why should we pledge?**

Stewardship concerns our relationship with God. It allows us the chance to let go of some of our earthly possessions and experience the joy and sense of freedom that come from trusting God. It is an opportunity to express our love for God, our gratitude to God, and our dependence on God. Giving is a spiritual discipline that helps us grow spiritually. Secondary to all of that, your pledge helps pay for the expenses of ministering together as Christ's church.



28th Annual

# Alternative Holiday Fair

Sunday, December 4  
12:30 - 3:00 PM

First Baptist Church  
517 E. Washington  
Ann Arbor  
734-663-9376

*Free parking  
across the street*

**CO-SPONSORED BY:**

First Baptist Church • Interfaith Council for Peace and Justice

**PARTICIPANTS INCLUDE:**

SERRV • Church World Service • Helper Project International • And Many More!

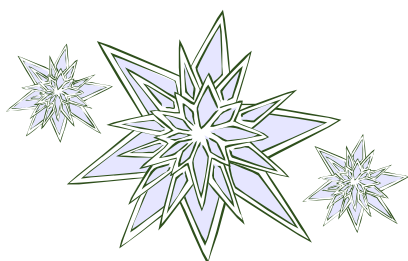
*Unique hand-made items from third-world countries:  
toys, jewelry, ornaments, leather crafts, pottery, and more.*

*Plus farm animals, trees, and fish  
to be sent to poor farmers around the world.*

*This is an alternative way of celebrating the holiday season  
by purchasing goods to help others!*

First Baptist Church  
517 E Washington Street  
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734-663-9376  
[www.fbca2.org](http://www.fbca2.org)  
[office@fbca2.org](mailto:office@fbca2.org)

The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors



Next  
newsletter  
deadline:  
*Sunday,  
December 11*

## Poinsettia Order Form

Please order \_\_\_\_\_ poinsettia(s) for the Christmas services at \$15 each,  
and list as such in the bulletin:

In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_ as payment for the poinsettia(s).

Please have paid orders to the office by Friday, December 9.

Thank you!

