



FIRST BAPTIST

CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

November 9, 2011

Pastor's Reflections by Paul Simpson Duke

Three Sundays ago, on October 23, the Executive Secretary of American Baptist Churches USA, Roy Medley, was with us. Since Baptists are strongly committed to the autonomy of each congregation, we don't have a denominational hierarchy per se. Dr. Medley leadership is to be "pastoral and administrative." We were very grateful to him for preaching among us and for leading a Second Hour discussion about a new initiative to invigorate congregations for their mission and life together.

But in truth, his visit was not the real news that day. The real news was that Northside Community Church was with us. Our two churches are "sisters" - both of us American Baptist congregations in Ann Arbor. We have a long history together. Northside was a mission church planted by First Baptist fifty-five years ago, and our two congregations through the years have partnered in many ways. Currently we worship together each year on Maundy Thursday, and on the third Tuesday of every month a team from Northside conducts the Vespers ministry in our building, preparing and serving the meal and leading the worship service. Some good friendships are shared among many members of our two churches.

Northside was very generous to give up their own service in their own space in order to share in this joint service with us - and it really was a shared service. The Northside choir and the First Baptist choir became one. Chris Grapentine, pastor of Northside, led worship alongside Stacey and me. The prelude was offered by our organist, Shin-Ae Chun; the postlude was offered by their Musician in Residence, Kathryn Goodson. But best of all were the people's faces and voices joined in worship and fellowship and, in the discussion time after worship, considering together how to be more effectively the church where we live. (Coincidentally, Dr. Medley stressed that the pairing of churches is a component of current trends in church renewal.) Because of what they brought to us, and because our minds and hearts were joined with theirs, the whole experience had an energy and warmth about it that I found to be fresh and rejuvenating.

I have put in some good time in recent years with interfaith endeavors: Jews, Muslims, Buddhists, Hindus, and others, seeking understanding and cooperation with each other. I believe deeply in such efforts. I am persuaded that everyone's spiritual growth can be deepened by them, and that peace in the world becomes more possible through them. But joining groups outside your tradition is by no means the same as joining people of your own faith who just happen to be from another congregation. To renew old friendships in Christ, to forge new friendships in Christ, to experience united worship and ministry in Christ - there is tremendous value in it that is far too rare among us.

Congregations like our own are easily too insular and isolated from other churches. We think too narrowly of our own programs, our own ministries, and our own ways of doing things - and in the process accomplish far less than we might, and *are* much less than we might otherwise be. Our separateness can impoverish us; our partnerships can not only enrich us, but multiply our ministry in the community and beyond.

In the opening paragraph above I spoke of the Baptist love of autonomy. I'd say we overdo it! I'm for more collaboration, more partnership, and more of the great witness of creative unity. Thank you, Northside, for helping to make it evident; and may we see much more of the same for us all.

Children and Youth Christian Education

NURSERY care is available on the 3rd 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 (6th - High School)

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

2nd - 5th 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 13 - Write the Vision Once we agree on our core purpose, what is our vision of how to accomplish that purpose? What key first steps do we need to take to begin to make the vision real? This conversation will include opportunities for your active participation.

November 20 - Let's Get (Less) Organized Too many congregations are organized more for maintaining the status quo than for mission and responding to new challenges. We will talk about how our church is currently organized and look at Anthony Robinson's suggestions for how 21st century churches could more effectively organize themselves. We will ask ourselves: Could First Baptist Church do more ministry with less organization?

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!

“Joy is the flag that flies from the citadel of the heart when the King is in residence.”
- Unknown Scottish poet

This Sunday, November 13th, please plan to join us as we place our pledge cards in the offering plates. Together, we will ask God's blessing on these promises and celebrate God's great goodness toward us.

If you have any questions or concerns please don't hesitate to contact Stacey or Paul at the church, or the Stewardship Chair, Renee Keogh at 734-660-4105 or by email: rkeogh19@yahoo.com.

Date Reminders We have some very busy days ahead of us and hope you will mark them down on your calendar.

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 Nandasmio 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.

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

UNICEF

Thank you for your very generous donations to the children's UNICEF collection during Fellowship time on October 30! You gave \$218.72 - the children were amazed and thrilled! Thank you on behalf of children all over the world.

Decorating the Sanctuary for Advent

All ages are invited to join in a "decorating party" on 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 or call the church office).

A Collection for Vespers Guests

The weather has gotten colder and the 2nd - 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.

The Education Project Holiday Gift Drive

Recently I dropped off the three boxes of school supplies you had donated (in addition to the 18 backpacks) at Washtenaw Intermediate School District and received information about this gift drive:

Our gift drive allows Washtenaw County students in homeless and temporary living situations to have a special holiday gift. Individuals, businesses and organizations commit to buying gifts (valued at about \$35) and putting those gifts in a gift bag marked with the ID we provide you. Gifts are delivered to Washtenaw Intermediate School District on Dec. 5 and we coordinate with the schools for distribution. Last school year, we worked with more than 950 children and youth living in shelters, motels, cars, temporary foster care placements and other temporary situations. Many are living doubled up with friends or family temporarily because they lost housing or were fleeing an abusive situation. We work with many teens who are "couch surfing" or living with a non-parent or guardian, often because of an abusive or unsafe situation at home.

If you are interested in helping, please contact Sue Ellen.

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.

New changes to Fellowship Time

The Care and Community Board believes one central part of our mission as a church is to provide opportunities for our people to connect with each other and with visitors in meaningful ways. Fellowship Time is such an opportunity. We would like to make this core mission as effective as possible and therefore are asking for your help.

We are excited to report that we have made some changes to our Coffee Time Set Up and Clean Up that will make it faster and easier for all of us to participate.

First, the coffee and hot water will be started on Sundays mornings by Mary Davis, or her backup. The Board of Care and Community will provide the snacks and all that is needed to prepare for coffee time.

Next is where you come in, we are asking for people to pair up and provide for either **Set Up and Service** or **Clean Up**. We will pair you up with someone who has provided for coffee time and knows their way around the kitchen and where things are kept. We estimate that with two people for each task, it should not take more than 20 to 30 minutes of your time either before church, during church, after church, or after second hour to provide for one of these tasks.

Here is what these tasks involve:

Set Up and Service - Set up involves making hot/cold tea (or lemonade in summer), removing pitchers of cold water from the refrigerator, setting out baskets of cookies and cheese/crackers, preparing the creamer/sugar bowls, and setting out a basket for donations. During the fellowship time, keep an eye on the snacks and drinks to see if refills are needed. Continue to serve until 11:30 am.

Clean Up - Clean Up involves emptying the coffee pots, washing the few dishes used, including the coffee pot, putting away any unused items from service, storing all supplies, and wiping down the tables and counters.

A sign up sheet will be at the information counter for you to pick a convenient date for you to sign up. If you have any questions, please direct them to Mary Gregg, Bev Inbody or Cynthia Redinger, Care & Community Board



The Interfaith Roundtable of Washtenaw County will hold its seventeenth Annual Interfaith Thanksgiving Celebration on Sunday evening, November 20th, at 7 p.m., at Trinity Lutheran Church, 1400 West Stadium, Ann Arbor. Join us as we give thanks with readings, music, meditations and other unique presentations from a wide variety of faith traditions. Donations accepted for non-perishable food or turkey money to help those in need in our community. 2012 Interfaith Calendars also available. For more information, call Rev. George Lambrides at 734-424-1535 or Laurie Gailunas at 734-662-3654.

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?

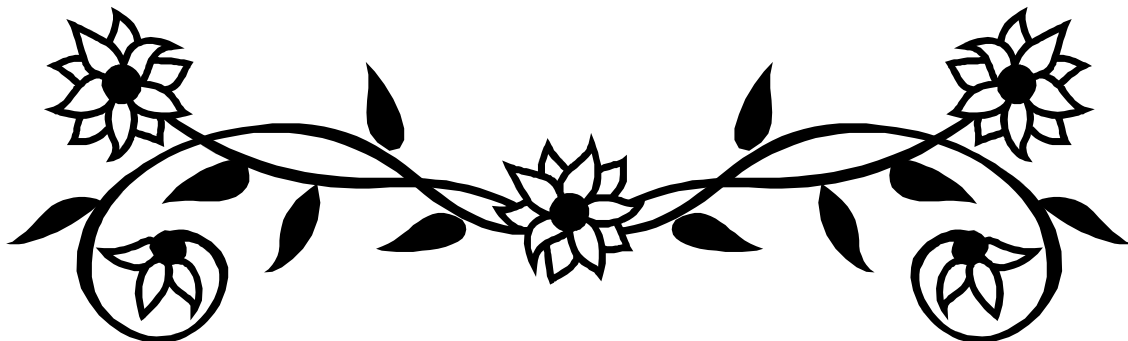
Annual stewardship funds everything involved in our church's ministry: our mission and outreach ministries; worship and music; education and programs for children, youth, and adults; fellowship events; pastoral care; salaries; and building costs. Every fall we prayerfully and carefully budget for these 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!*

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next
newsletter
deadline:
*Sunday,
November 20*

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).

