



FIRST BAPTIST

CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

December 14, 2011

Pastor's Reflections by Paul Simpson Duke

On almost every evening lately, I've been spending time with Ebenezer Scrooge (and no, *not* by looking in the mirror). I still have the privilege every night of reading to the boys at bedtime. For months we've been working our way through *Harry Potter and the Goblet of Fire*, but at Charlie's request, we are for now reading from two books each night: half our time goes to Harry Potter, and half goes to Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Some of it is rough going. The stage productions and movie versions leave out many of Dickens' words for good reason. He veers into long, winding descriptions and (apparently) witty comments that cause the eyes of seven-year-olds, and of their father, to glaze over. Some of the idioms are so tied to 19th-century England as to be indecipherable to us. Still, there's the marvelous plot, and Marley's ghost, the three spirits, Scrooge, Bob Cratchit, Tiny Tim, and all the rest. It's a ripping good read!

Part of the fun is in the language we never use. "Bah!" and "Humbug!" - and a holiday reveler "should be boiled with his own pudding!" (I *loved* reading that!) But my favorite by far is about "keeping" Christmas. "Nephew," says Scrooge to Fred, "keep Christmas in your way, and let me keep it in mine." "Keep it!" says Fred. "But you don't keep it." The expression turns up elsewhere in the book, but most famously in the final paragraph: "and it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well."

We use other verbs. We "celebrate" Christmas, or "observe" it, or "have" it, or "spend" it. The verb *keep* for Christmas has passed out of use - and I nominate it for immediate reinstatement!

To think of *keeping* is to think of, among other things, a grateful *preserving* of memory. No time of the year evokes memories so powerfully as Christmas. The colors, the music, the texts, the fragrances, - they all tap the deep reservoirs of remembrance for most of us, memories of Christmases past with loved ones, memories of ourselves in other places and times. This is why tradition matters so much to us at this time of year: repeating the old rituals, singing the old songs, even preferring to hear the old King James Version of the familiar texts. I once heard Garrison Keillor say that children do not want innovation at Christmas, they want the same family rituals each year. The same is true for us all, and the embrace of memory is at the heart of it; we carefully keep the traditions so as to keep alive our deep recollection of the one story that changes everything.

Knowing that the word *keep* has lost much of its original meaning, I looked it up. To my surprise, at root, the word refers to careful *looking*. It derives from an Old English word that meant, "to behold," and is akin to an Old Norse word that meant "to stare at!" Deep down, "to keep" means "to see well." "Keeping" Christmas, then, is truly to behold it, to see its meaning steadily, to keep a good eye on what it wants to give us, to watch lovingly over one another and over all for whom the Child was born. Luke's Gospel tells us that after the shepherds departed, "Mary *kept* these things, and *pondered* them in her heart." She was pioneering the practice, the art, of keeping Christmas.

Wouldn't it be a shame to have so much else in our eyes, so much else on our minds, that we failed to follow her lead? And, for that matter, the lead of old Scrooge. When Dickens concludes the book by saying, "and it was always said of him that he knew how to keep Christmas well," he adds, "May it truly be said of us, and all of us!" Hear, hear! And, oh yes, "God bless us, every one!"

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.

There will be no second hour classes for children or youth on December 18, 25 or January 1. Classes will resume on January 8.

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

There will be no second hour classes for adults on December 18, 25 or January 1. Classes will resume on January 8.

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! Bible Study will resume on January 11.

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. The Gathering will resume on Wednesday, January 4.



FBC News & Happenings

Love, Share, Give, 2012!

Proposed budget for 2012 \$470,736
2012 Pledges and other income \$454,966
Percent complete 97%

The 2012 Stewardship Campaign at First Baptist Church is very successful so far. Once again, this congregation has exhibited both commitment and generosity with the result that, although we are going through a period of economic uncertainty, the final results will show an increase in the number of members pledging and an all-time high in the total of these pledges. We are on our way to achieving our budgeted goal.

The challenge we now face is that our widening ministries require ever increasing resources, and our indicated revenues from traditional sources will fall short of our basic needs. Maintenance costs on our building were high in 2011 and will be again in 2012. Health care cost for our staff will increase by 20% and the cost of the youth minister program, which for the past three years has been funded by a special appeal, will now become a budget line item. The result is that when the Budget Committee met to consider 2012 funding requests from boards and committees there was an apparent shortfall of \$15,000.

How do we deal with that? First of all, if you are in the habit of pledging and have not yet done so please turn in your pledge as soon as possible and be as generous as you can. Secondly, if it has been your normal course to give without pledging, please reconsider and, if you feel so led, add your support to that of your fellow members and friends. That will be of immeasurable value to the church administration in planning expenditures for the coming year. Thirdly, if you have already pledged but might be prepared to help meet the challenge of our expanded ministries you could turn in a further commitment card marked "supplemental." Two families who attended the Budget Committee meeting have already done so and invite you to join them.

Lastly, 2011 is not yet over. If you still have a balance outstanding on your pledge for this year there are only two more Sundays to play catch up. Please do so.

We are all aware that First Baptist church is one of the most vibrant Baptist congregations in Michigan. Frank Willis reminded us a few weeks ago that living entities need to be fed. Feeding this living and ministering church is both our challenge and our opportunity.

Renee Keogh, Chair Stewardship Committee
Craig Redinger, Chair Budget Committee

Year-to-Date Personal Contribution Statements have been just been distributed. Please take a look at the statement and make sure all is correct. It is much easier to make corrections during the current financial year than in January when the books have been closed. If donations were made by transfer of stock, please make sure to let the treasurers know the details. Thank you.

Food Collection for Hikone

This Sunday, December 18 will be the final day for your food or monetary donations. Now we need your time and muscles!! We will be sorting the food on Wednesday, December 21 starting at 9:00 am. On Thursday, December 22, the food needs to be delivered at Hikone by 10:00 am so we will load the food into vans and trucks at 9:15 on Thursday. This is a lot of food to be loaded and unloaded - and 100's of pounds! We need your help! Please contact Sue Ellen if you are able to come on either day.

Resources for Personal Devotions

We hope that one of your New Year's resolutions is to spend a quiet time each day with prayer and scripture. There are many resources available, including *The Secret Place and Disciplines*. *The Secret Place* is available at the Information Counter (free as a gift from one of our members). It is published quarterly and is offered in regular and large print editions. The Upper Room publishes a book, *Disciplines*, that has one-page daily devotions which follow the lectionary so that each week you can read and meditate on the scriptures that will be included in the upcoming Sunday's worship service. Each week has a different author, drawn from ecumenical ministries throughout the world. These are available from Sue Ellen for \$10. If you would like information on other resources (including online), please contact Sue Ellen

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. More information will be available on the next newsletter. Thank you!!!

Calendar Sale

The children have about 12 calendars left! Buy yours this Sunday or let Sue Ellen know and she will mail you one (or two or three). This year the profits will go towards purchasing books for the children of Hikone.

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.

The FBC Ladies' Book Club will next meet on Tuesday, January 10th, at 7 pm. Mary Davis has agreed to host us that evening for discussion of "Sarah's Key" by Tatiana de Rosnay. This book details the experiences of an American journalist who 60 years after the arrest of Jewish families in France seeks to find out what happened to Sarah, a 10-year-old who lived in the apartment she (the American) now occupies. The plan is to borrow a Book-Club-to-Go set from the A2 library. If you are interested in receiving a book or have other questions, please feel free to contact Janice Stumpf, jlstumpf@umich.edu or 663-4871.

Faces of Faith

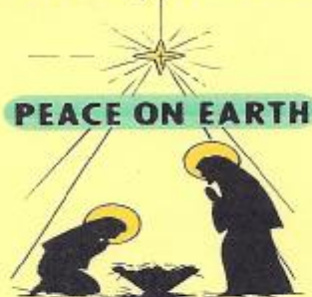
You and your family are invited to participate in the second *FACES OF FAITH EVENT* sponsored by The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County. Formerly "The Living Library", FOF allows you to meet people from your community who pose as "books" telling you the story of their personal spiritual journey. Each time you "borrow" a "book", you'll learn (one on one) about a different spiritual practice, religious belief, or turning point of faith. Between the three "reading periods" (20 minutes each), you'll be able to purchase snacks at the coffee/tea/cocoa bar and help support the non-profit work of the Round Table - to build bridges of understanding between different faith traditions in our community and beyond. **WHEN:** Sunday, January 15, 2-4 pm

WHERE: The Social Hall of Temple Beth Emeth/St. Clare's on Packard Rd, Ann Arbor

WHY: In honor of Religious Freedom Day

For more information, call 734-424-1535 or email gbrides@umich.edu

Begin Your week of
Christmas
with a Journey to Bethlehem



Experience the true meaning of Christmas
as we welcome you to view the live
presentation of the birth of Jesus Christ.
We present this "moment of history" using
live animals (inc. camel), music, and
authentic-style costumes
portraying this blessed event.

December 18th & 19th at 6:30pm, 7:00pm, 7:30pm

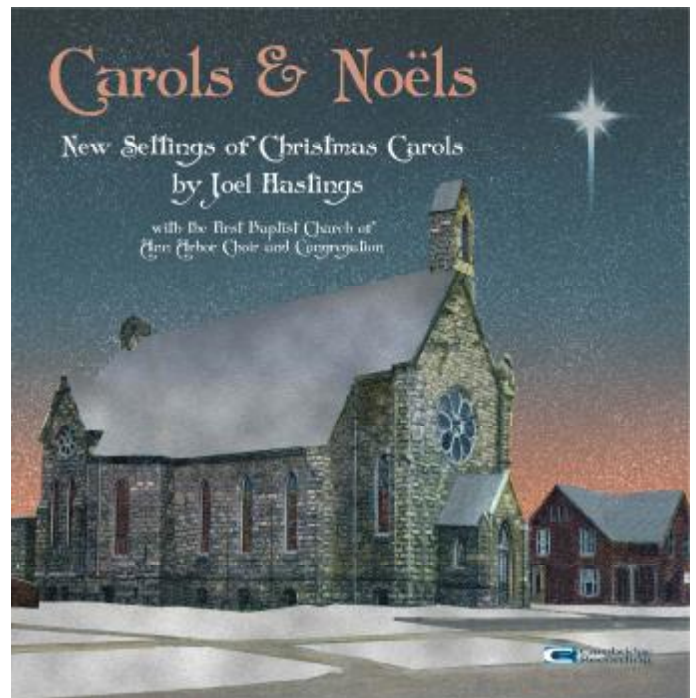
First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti
1110 W. Cross
After each performance
feel free to pet the animals
and enjoy refreshments in
our social hall.

DECEMBER 2011

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
			14 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 The Gathering 7:30 Davis-Diels ChristCare	15 7:30 Choir	16	17
18 10:00 Worship 11:15 ABWM Christmas Bazaar 12:30 FBC Youth Event	19	20 5:30 Vespers 7:00 Trustees	21	22 7:30 Choir	23	24 7:30 Lessons & Carols
25 Christmas 10:00 Worship	26 Church Buildings & Office Closed	27 5:30 Vespers	28	29	30	31

Carols & Noëls now available!

This Christmas CD features the FBC choir and members of the congregation singing original carol arrangements by former organist Joel Hastings. It was recorded this year in the sanctuary with the FBC organ. Contact Kat Becker at the church office to order your copies. CDs are \$12 each.



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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next
newsletter
deadline:
*Sunday,
December 26*



Please join us for worship on Christmas Day, Sunday, December 25, at 10:00am, for a warm, intimate service celebrating the birth of Jesus. Come as you are, dress as casually as you would like - wear your favorite Christmas sweater or even stay in your pajamas! However you are dressed, we'd love to see you. We invite all children to bring one toy to the worship service, as we will have a "Blessing of the Toys." Following the service, we will have a brief time of coffee and fellowship.

