



FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

Pastor's Reflections by Paul Simpson Duke

January 11, 2012

I've never been much for New Year's resolutions. I know people who have made very productive use of them, but I have also had personal acquaintance with many a heroic resolution that, having made grand promises, died young and embarrassed. To notice that this year's resolutions look suspiciously like last year's resolutions, which in turn resemble the ones we made two years ago is to wonder if resolutions per se are for us.

Which does *not* mean this isn't a good time for a new beginning. How can it not be? Our part of the world has declared that we've all just finished another full ride around the sun, and the next loop has begun. We could designate some other calendar date for the purpose - birthdays do nicely - but the Western world chose January 1 for dropping the big ball, and in so doing handed us a collective occasion for looking backward, then forward, to ask, "How have we/I been doing?" and "How might we/I hope to do better?" You don't have to be a big resolution maker to find such a moment fertile for new beginnings.

Has it occurred to you how absolutely central to Christian faith is the whole concept and practice of beginning again? We believe in *resurrection from the dead*. We believe in being reborn. We acknowledge the fact that we sin dismally and chronically, but that the free grace of God pours out forgiveness for every sin - and each moment of forgiveness is a moment of a brand new, fresh start. Desmond Tutu expressed it beautifully: "We don't have a God who says, 'Gotcha.' We have a God who picks us up and dusts us off and says, "Try it again." Or in the happy analogy from my old friend Grady Nutt, by God's grace we do not live in a spelling bee in which to make a mistake is to have to sit down; we are living in an art class in which we get to keep a wet rag on our clay. And it's not for without meaning that the Resurrection of Jesus happened on a Sunday and that we gather to worship on Sundays - the first day of a new week every time.

The German philosopher Franz Rosenzweig wrote: "The Christian is the eternal beginner." He did not mean it as a compliment, and you can see why such a statement points to something potentially dangerous in our faith and practice. We can be so casual and presumptuous about the prospect of repeatedly starting over that we abdicate responsibility for serious spiritual growth and moral growth and societal growth. "Eternal beginner" might describe a person who perpetuates the cycle of easy resolve and failure, a life that forfeits the solid strength of continuity and never progresses, never grows up.

But theologian Jürgen Moltmann welcomes the expression. Quoting Rosenzweig, he says, "'Christians are the eternal beginners'... is actually the best thing that can ever be said about believers, lovers, and the hopeful." In the end I think he's right. As prone as we are to mistakes, failures, and foolishness, hadn't he better be? There's nothing about being an eternal beginner that rules out making solid progress over time. Truth is, we don't have a prayer of making progress if we don't, along the way, keep starting again.

Personally, I don't make "New Year's resolutions." What I did do in the quieter, last days of 2011 was to ponder who I've been and what I've done in the year past. I was grateful for some of it, dissatisfied with some of it. And once again, Love leaned over me kindly dusted me off, and said, "Try it again," pointing to some attitudes and actions I might change in the process. I am beginning again, and that is a truly happy new year. You too?

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

Finding Personal Meaning in the Scriptures (Ron Tipton, leader)

Lounge

Why do Christians need the Scriptures in our heads and in our hearts? Can the scriptures make a difference in daily life? Can the Word of God speak to us through the words of the Bible? What does imagination have to do with reading the Bible? Does one have to be a monk to practice *lectio divina*? And what does prayer have to do with reading the scriptures?... Well, these are the questions we'll be dealing with on January 8, 15 and 22. Each week we will relate the discussion to some of our favorite Bible passages.

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

Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 22

Our annual financial meeting will be held at 12:30 on January 22. Before the business meeting we will gather for fellowship and a potluck lunch. Please plan to attend. There will be a sign-up sheet at the information desk on Sundays and in the church office during the week.

Year-End Personal Contribution Statements are available and can be picked up at the Information Counter on Sundays in January or in the office during the week.

Thank you from AB Women's Ministries! The AB Women's Ministries would like to thank everyone for making the 2011 Christmas Celebration a huge success. This means that the programs and work supported by the ABWM can continue for another year. A special thank you for the baked goods and bazaar items donated by church members -- they were a big help!

Central Area Annual Meeting

And how can they preach unless they are sent? As it is written, "How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!" Romans 10:15

The Annual Meeting of the Central Area Churches will be held on January 28, 2012, at the Federated Church of Grass Lake, 9:30 - noon. Our worship time will be led by Lynne Punnett and Dolly Tittle from the First Baptist Church of Ypsilanti, who will also share their experiences as part of the 2011 Michigan Servants for Christ mission team to Haiti. Later in the morning we will hear from several of our Central Area churches reporting on their participation in the Missional Church Learning Experience through ABC-USA. Each church was awarded a small grant as seed money for a specialized community project designed by the individual congregations as a way to reach out and to bring the Gospel into the community. There will also be a short business meeting with the election of officers and approval of the budget. The Annual Report with the proposed budget will be available by January 20 and we will be happy to email it to you to review before the meeting. There is no cost for this event but we do like to have registration ahead of time so we know how to plan. Please register by contacting Sue Ellen Glover (gloverse@hotmail.com or 734-663-9376). Of course, walk-ins are welcome on the day of the event!



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

Flower Calendar 2012

The flower calendar for 2012 is hanging in the hallway downstairs and is filling up nicely. There are still many open Sundays for you to choose from, but don't wait too long! Flowers are from Tom Thompson and cost \$30.



Traveling through the Baroque: Joint Organ Concert by Alice Van Wambeke and Shin-Ae Chun on the beautiful tracker organ by Beckerath. January 15 (Sunday) at 3PM at St. Peter's Episcopal Church in Tecumseh (313 N Evans St, Tecumseh). Music by Bach, Buxtehude, Bruhns and many other Baroque composers.

The Gifts of Time, Talent and Treasure

Gift of Time - The Great Commission is the normative mission statement for the church. "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." (Matthew 28:19-20a RSV). It is through our giving of time that we can make the Christ known to the world

Gift of Talent - Christian stewardship is using the gifts God has given us, to do the work God is calling us to do. Discerning and carrying out God's purpose is the primary purpose of our lives. The primary role of the church is to guide individuals in discernment of the ministry for their lives and the use of their resources in accomplishing it. Do you hear a call to be truer to your Christian beliefs?

Gift of Treasure - How we use money says more about our value system than anything we say or do. Some would think that the way we handle our money is a window into our souls. In funding ministry there are three faces of financial stewardship. *Annual giving* (ordinary stewardship) is the regular practice of returning to God a portion of all that God has given us. *Capital giving* (extraordinary stewardship) involves the special occasions that arise in the life of Christian communities that call us to give beyond our ordinary habit. *Legacy giving* (legacy stewardship) is the way in which we address the matter of disposing of the accumulations of our lifetime.

Follow us on Facebook!

If you aren't already a fan of FBCA2 on Facebook, come on over and "Like" our page: facebook.com/fbca2. We post regular updates there about what's going on around here, along with the occasional devotional thought. You can post on our wall as well. If you are already a fan, did you know that you can easily share certain FBCA2 posts with your own Facebook friends? Events and links that can be shared will have a "Share" button (in addition to the usual "Like" and "Comment" buttons). Click "share" and the event or link will show up on your own Facebook page for all your friends to see. It's a great way to get the word out about special happenings at our church.

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

Faces of Faith 2012 Collection

I Come with a Hyphen John Kotre (Anabaptist-Catholic)

"No Hell Below Us, Above Us Only Sky": How John Lennon Taught Me to Be an Atheist
Dan Thiel (Atheism/Humanism)

Baha'i Teachings on Race and The Spiritual Journey of an African American Baha'i
Richard Thomas (Baha'i, Race Relations)

Once a Southern Baptist: An Evolving Journey of Faith Peggy Cave (Baptist-Universalist)

The Cross, the Backpack, and the Lotus Jennifer Ratliff-Moss (Buddhism)

The F.R.O.G. Prince Doug Jackson (Christian Science)

Gaining a New Perspective On Creation's Reality Dave Sebolt (Christian Science)

Through Christ to Eclecticism: Personal Salvation to Freedom Alison Rene (Eclectic)

Journey to the Promised Land Barbara Scoville (Episcopal)

From Evangelical to Post-Evangelical: Rejecting Fundamentalist Roots
Emily Swan (Evangelical-Christian)

Searching for the One Among the Many Brent Coy (Hinduism)

From My First Communion Veil to My Hajjah Veil Zakiyyah Ali (Islam)

A Journey from New Age to Islam Loretta Poisson (Islam)

A Window into the World of One of the Abrahamic Faiths: One Woman's Journey into Self-Discovery through Hopes, Trials and Tribulations Lamia Sharmeen (Islam)

Waking Up in the Desert: A Westerner's Journey to Sufism Jason Osstifin (Islam-Sufi)

What's a Nice Jewish Boy Like You Doing in a Shul Like This? Allen Singer (Messianic Judaism)

Finding Homes in the Unexpected Places Susan Sprowls (Lutheran Christian)



My Life on the Train Janet Reedy (Mennonite-Christian)

My Journey from the Mountain Top, to Mexico, to United Methodist Missionary Sonya Luna (Methodist)

Breaking Free: How Forgiveness and A Course in Miracles Set Me Free
Lorri Coburn (Course in Miracles)

The Intergenerational Effects of a Grandmother's Faith Jeff Bednar (Mormonism)

Walking My Truth, Walking in Honor: Lessons of Coming Home to My Self
Yako Myers/Tahnahga, (Native American Indian)

Returning to One of My Ancestral Roots
Dwight Wilson (Quaker)

Growing Up with Quakers and What Drew Me Back
Anne Ogren (Quaker)

Seasons of Faith
Sister Catherine Morgan (Roman Catholic Christian)

A Way To Be Helpful and To Make a Difference
Monika Biddle (Scientology)

Spiritual Quest for Understanding and Clarity
Ernestine Griffin (Unity)

Kabbalah Miracles
Karen Greenberg (Universal Kabbalah)

Building My Own Theology: My Search for Truth in Love
Tim Richards (Unitarian Universalism, Existentialism, Zen)

Integrating Intricacy: The Paradox of Complex "Basics"
Diane Lehman Wilson (Judaism-Conservative)

The Center for Faith & Scholarship at Campus Chapel (1236 Washtenaw Ct., Ann Arbor) is serving as a remote broadcast site for the January Series, the acclaimed lecture series of Calvin College that runs weekdays from Jan. 4 - 24. Lectures are from 12:30-1:30pm Monday-Friday. Admission is free and doors open at 12:15pm. Feel free to bring a brownbag lunch and dine while enjoying the lecture. Lecturers this week include Eric Metaxus on Bonhoeffer (Monday), Gabe Lyons on young Christians (Wed.), and Michael Gerson on Religion and Politics (Thursday). For a complete list of speakers, visit the January Series website (www.calvin.edu/january) or contact CFS/Campus Chapel (734-668-7421).

Hope Medical Clinic Support Assistant: 24-hr/wk paid key administrative post for quick-learner who's passionate about helping the uninsured in a Christian free clinic in Ypsilanti. Monday and Wednesday evenings, Saturdays, and some flexible weekday hours. Become a knowledgeable resource to medical and office volunteers; screen, schedule and orient volunteers; screen new patients; and assist with other tasks. Excel and Word proficiency; previous medical clinic or office experience required. Send resume and cover letter to ksimpson@thehopeclinic.org.

First Baptist Church
517 E Washington Street
Ann Arbor, MI 48104-2015
734-663-9376
www.fbca2.org
office@fbca2.org

The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next
newsletter
deadline:

Sunday, January 22



Coffee Break Concert Series

Thursdays at 1:30PM



On chosen Thursdays each month, we invite student- and local musicians to perform in our beautiful facility. You all are welcome to join us to enjoy the wonderful talents that these musicians bring. Please look for the information about more concerts as the schedule is updated frequently at www.fbca2.org.

January 26 Amy I-Lin Cheng (Piano)
Music by Mozart, Liszt, Debussy, Gershwin

A native of Taiwan, pianist Amy I-Lin Cheng holds degrees in Piano Performance from the Curtis Institute (BM), Yale School of Music (MM and Artist Diploma), and the New England Conservatory (DMA). Amy is the pianist for Duo Clarion with clarinetist Chad E. Burrow, assistant professor of clarinet from the University of Michigan. The duo also forms Trio Solari with violinist Sean Y. Wang. Currently Amy is on faculty at the Ann Arbor School for the Performing Arts, and is a collaborative pianist for the University of Michigan School of Music.

First Baptist Concert Series Ad Libitum presents

O Dulcis Jesu

Divine Music Celebrating the Son of God
January 20 (Friday) at 7:30PM, 2012
Bring your family and friends!



Sfogati

Lorna Hildebrandt, Coloratura Soprano
Kiri T ollaksen, Cornetto
Shin-Ae Chun, Harpsichord and Organ

Music and Poetry/Scripture by
Monteverdi, Cozzolani, Praetorius, Schein,
Schütz and others

Everyone is welcome. Reception to follow