



FIRST BAPTIST

CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

Pastor's Reflections by Paul Simpson Duke

February 22, 2017

These are not the easiest times for preachers. Looking out at the congregation we see people whose families are fractured by the current political upheaval. We see people who are disheartened; we see many people who are disheartened, alarmed, and concerned, and others who believe the country is now on a better course, and feel that objections to it are excessive. The pastors have their own strong convictions, which they believe are faithful to the way of Christ, and which others may see as merely partisan. Some worshipers feel a deep need for words relevant to current happenings, offering clarity and courage. Others find this unfitting and tiresome. Over the course of such times, the preacher's challenge is to name what the church must resist and what it must pursue, to point to the crucial common ground we hold whatever our differences, to encourage truthfulness, compassion, and inclusion, to avoid overstatement or skewing of the gospel, to discern when it is time for pointed speech and when it is time for silence, and to try not to make things worse! — all of this while multiple, jarring developments erupt every single week. Feel free to pray for us.

What has struck me with new force is the relevance and power of Scripture. Stacey and I did not pick and choose the biblical texts that we have been preaching from. We had already decided that in 2017 we would follow the schedule of texts assigned by the lectionary. You might have thought otherwise, because most of the texts speak with surprising directness to the current situation: texts calling for hope and courage, texts demanding justice, texts admonishing against evil talk and accusations. Among these texts were Micah 6:8 (“What does the Lord require of you but to do justice, love kindness, and walk humbly with your God?”) and Leviticus 19 (“Love your neighbor as yourself,” with attached words about kindness to immigrants!).

Preachers need not strain for “relevance”—and people do not come to church to hear what the preacher thinks about some current topic. It turns out that the ancient biblical texts have been waiting for us and will *show* us what is most truly and deeply relevant. Their capacity, again and again, to speak precisely the word that is needed at a given time is wondrous.

I have felt it most powerfully when Scripture was read in worship. The most pointed example was on January 29. It was two days after the executive order banning travelers from seven predominantly Muslim countries was signed. Stories were pouring in about the people being turned away, and protests were happening at airports across the country. Feelings of outrage, horror, and concern ran high. Then came Sunday morning, and the appointed Gospel reading for the day—chosen centuries ago for this day. The reader, Astrid Beck, invited us to stand, and then began to read words of Jesus: *Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth.... Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God....* From the first words of it, an uncanny stillness fell on the room; people were listening from a place of fresh need and yearning. We were hearing the Beatitudes as *news* of encouragement and hope from the living Christ. It seemed to me the air was trembling. I almost wept, and I was not alone.

Afterwards, it occurred to me that for nearly 2000 years, many Christian communities have heard those words from a place of such longing and need—only more constant and urgent than mine. And it struck me all over again, that a holy word finds its power not only in *what* it says, but in *when* and *to whom* it is said. Let us not imagine that we already know what the Scriptures say. In a new moment in time, they speak their waiting words with startling newness; and, if we are listening, we can hear them as if for the first time.

Children and Youth Christian Education

NURSERY care for infants and toddlers is available on the 3rd floor from 9:30 - 12:30

CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

Preschool - 1st grade

10:00 - 10:30	Worship with families
10:30 - 11:15	Church School (Rm. 202A & B)
11:15 - 11:30	Grace Notes music
11:30 - 12:30	Activities

Youth (6th - High School)

10:00 - 11:00	Worship
11:00 - 11:30	Fellowship Time (Fellowship Hall)
11:30 - 12:30	Church School (Rm. 107)

2nd - 5th grade:

10:00 - 10:30	Worship with families
10:30 - 11:30	Church School (Rm. 201B)
11:30 - 12:00	Children's Choir (Rm. 306)
12:00 - 12:30	Children's Worship (Rm. 201B)

CHILDREN'S MUSIC MINISTRY

Grace Notes (Preschool - 1st Grade)	11:15 - 11:30	Rm. 202, directed by Marissa Alaniz
Children's Choir (2nd - 5th Grade)	11:30 - 12:00	Rm. 306, directed by Shin-Ae Chun

Adult Christian Education

(11:30-12:30)

Simply Jesus

Joe Mortensen, Leader

Memorial Lounge

An examination of Gospel texts and the historical setting of Judaism in Jesus time in order to gain better understanding of his proclamation, ministry, and identity. This study will draw from the insights of N. T. Wright's book, *Simply Jesus: A New Vision of Who He Was, What He Did, and Why He Matters*. This class meets through February 26.

Young Adult Class

Room 108

An in-depth, discussion-based Bible Study of the Gospel of Mark that will run through February 26.

How to Pray: A (Re-)Introduction to the Ongoing Practice of Prayer

Room 102

Paul Simpson Duke, leader

Pragmatic discussions of the basics of daily prayer, with guidance and rationale on the foundational elements of prayer and on different approaches and models for a practice of daily prayer. This is a course for beginners and for those who wish to renew and strengthen their practice of prayer. It meets through February 26.

Other Adult Education Opportunities:

Wednesday Bible Study: Pastor Paul is leading *Studies in the Prophets*. We will discuss the work of the prophets in their historical context and will examine selected texts for closer understanding. Please join us!

Adult Small Groups: We have continuing small groups centered on study, sharing, prayer, worship and mission meeting at various times. See Stacey, Paul, or Sue Ellen for information on how to join an existing group or form a new group.

College/University Students: **The Gathering** is for undergraduates and graduate students. We gather every Wednesday during the school year, 5:30-7:30p in the Campus Center, for a free, home-cooked meal and study. If you would like to be added to the email list for regular updates, please email Stacey at staceyduke@gmail.com.

An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture

Contemporary consumer culture teaches us that no amount of material goods is enough. Rather than leading us towards personal or societal well-being, the ideology of consumerism has produced a culture that makes poverty, violence, ill health, and an exhausted planet seem inevitable.

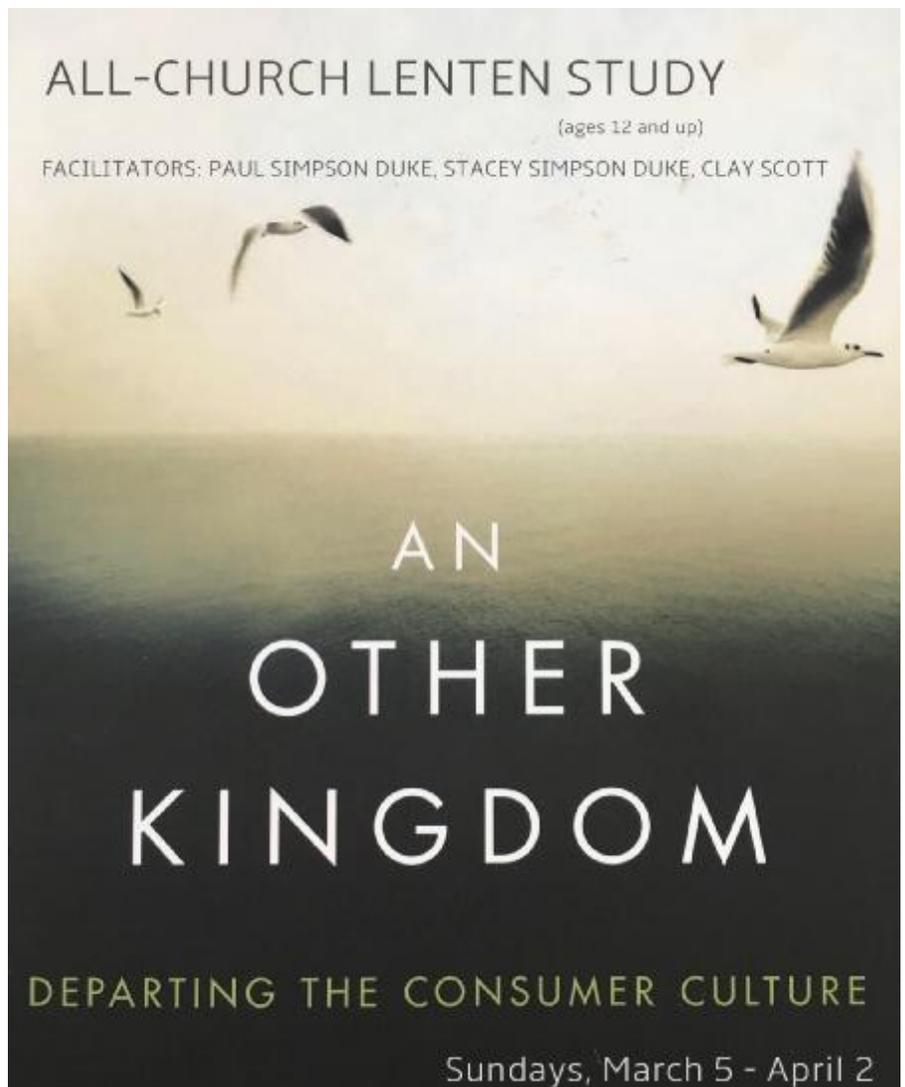
Can you imagine something different?

- What if we could discover a way of living that would bring us closer to our true nature?
- What if we could discover a way of being that would address our deepest longings?
- What if we could discover a way of speaking and acting that would lead towards greater well-being for all?

We invite you – actually, *we dare you* – to join us during Lent for an exploration of an alternative vision: a connected community, where the frenzy towards acquisition is replaced by the belief in abundance and a culture of addictive consumption is replaced by neighborliness.

Based on the book *An Other Kingdom: Departing the Consumer Culture* by Peter Block, Walter Brueggemann, and John McKnight, this series will require no reading or other preparation by participants. The focus will be on personal examination and reflection and a consideration of how we can collectively nurture and support shared commitments to connected community. We will grapple with the practical implications of the biblical vision of neighborliness, specifically around issues of time, food, silence, covenant, money, and worship. We will gather each Sunday for a half hour presentation by our leaders; then we will break out into smaller groups for half an hour of focused conversation.

We are inviting, encouraging, and challenging each of you (ages 12 and up) to be a part of this special study series on Sundays during Lent (March 5 – April 2, 11:30a-12:30p) in the Memorial Lounge.



FBC News & Happenings

Help Wanted for the Rotating Shelter 2017

We need overnight volunteers to staff the Ann Arbor Men's Rotating Shelter, Monday Evening, March 20 - Monday Morning, March 27, here at First Baptist Church, 8:00 pm - 7:00 am. This is Michigan and you never know what kind of weather the month of March might bring. I'm thinking, "cold" with the possibility of snow. The Rotating Shelter provides a warm place to sleep during these cold wintry nights. Your help with this important ministry is greatly needed and appreciated. We need a minimum of 2 people each evening to stay overnight from 8 pm - 7 am.

Sign up at the Church Information Desk on Sunday mornings, or contact the church office, 734-663-9376, if you can help. Also, contact Kent Jennings, 734-732-6802, kentjen31@gmail.com, if you want more information regarding this very important ministry. Your participation is greatly appreciated.

There will also be a sign-up sheet available at the Church Information Desk on Sunday mornings for those who would like to bring an evening soup that would serve approximately 25 men. Light snacks (fruit, cookies, granola bars, etc.) are also appreciated.

Can & Bottle Drive Youth Fundraiser

On June 18, our Youth Summer Mission Team will head to Spirit Lake Nation in North Dakota to work with the United Methodist mission there on the reservation. Every Sunday between now and the trip, the youth group will be collecting cans and bottles to take in to receive the deposit money on; this money will be used to help offset the costs of travel to North Dakota. You can help by bringing in your cans and bottles any Sunday (or every Sunday!). It's an easy way to make an important contribution to the service and learning of our youth group. We have bins next to the Information Counter. Thank you!

Coffee Break Concert Series

On February 9, a cold wintry day, about 50 people gathered in our sanctuary to hear a beautiful musical offering by Dr. Rajung Yang, Associate Professor of Piano at the University of Idaho. The program was filled with traditional, contemporary and Jazzy music. Dr. Yang delighted the audience with *Bach's Partita No.2*, and Gershwin-Earl Wild's *Embraceable* and fascinating Kapustin's *Variations*. People were more excited to hear George Crumb's *A Little Suite for Christmas* and to see the piano played in different, non-traditional ways. And the refreshment table prepared by our ABWM members was very popular as always.

The next concert on our Coffee Break Concert Series is Violin Concert on March 9, Thursday at 12:15 pm. Rita Wang, doctoral student at the U of M and prize-winner, will play solo violin pieces by J.S. Bach; Partita No.2 in D Minor, BWV 1004 and Sonata No.3 in C Major, BWV 1005. It will be a beautiful concert. Come, invite your friends and neighbors and enjoy the concert and the sound of a violin in our sanctuary. The concert is free and open to all.



Diana Butler Bass will speak at First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor on Saturday, March 25, from 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. in the downtown sanctuary.

“Relocating Faith” - Finding God in the horizons of Nature and Neighbor

- How do we live as a people of faith?
- What does it mean to take the Incarnation seriously? What if God isn't so far away?
- Our vibrant, progressive church does not talk much about “being saved.” What are other reasons to come to church?



This event is free. To help us plan, please pre-register at <http://tinyurl.com/Mar25-DBB>.

The event will include a 45-minute lunch break. Box lunches are available to purchase. Box lunch purchases may be made until March 12 or until sold out.

Information about our downtown location, parking, accessibility, and other events can be found elsewhere on our church website: <http://www.fumc-a2.org>.

Diana Butler Bass is an author, speaker, and independent scholar specializing in American religion and culture. She holds a Ph.D. in religious studies from Duke University. After a dozen years teaching undergraduates, she became a full-time writer, independent researcher, educator, and consultant. Her work has been cited in the national media, including TIME Magazine, USA TODAY, and the Washington Post, and she has appeared on CNN, FOX, PBS, and NPR. Diana is the author of nine books. Her most recent book is “Grounded: Finding God in the World — A Spiritual Revolution.” She comments on religion, politics, and culture in a variety of media.

First United Methodist Church of Ann Arbor
120 S. State St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
734-662-4536
www.fumc-a2.org

For more information about this event contact Director of Adult Education, Debbie Houghton, <mailto:debbie@fumc-a2.org>

March 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1 <i>Ash Wednesday</i> 1:30 Bible Study 7:00 Ash Wed. Service	2 7:30 Choir	3	4
5 10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	6	7 5:30 Vespers	8 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 Gathering 7:30 Executive Council	9 12:15 Coffee Break Concert 7:30 Choir	10	11
12 10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	13 6:00 Mission Action	14 5:30 Vespers	15 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 Gathering	16 7:30 Choir	17	18
19 10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	20	21 5:30 Vespers	22 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 Gathering	23 7:30 Choir	24	25
						
26 10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	27	28 5:30 Vespers	29 1:30 Bible Study 5:30 Gathering	30 7:30 Choir	31	
ROTATING SHELTER						

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next
Newsletter
Deadline:
Sunday, March 5

Ash Wednesday Service

Please join us at 7:00pm on Wednesday, March 1,
for a simple, somber service of prayer and ashes.
Childcare will be provided.