



## Pastor's Reflections by Stacey Simpson Duke

July 19, 2017

Every two years, our denomination, American Baptist Churches USA (ABCUSA) holds a national gathering called the Biennial Mission Summit. The Mission Summit has three purposes: 1) to worship God together and to celebrate what God is doing in and through our churches and our denomination; 2) to share ideas and learn from one another in order to become more effective, more vital churches; and 3) to do the necessary business of our denomination. This year, the Biennial Mission Summit was held in Portland, Oregon, June 30 through July 2, and nine members of our congregation attended: Heather Entrekin and Pete Stover; Arthur and Marlene Francis; Frank Willis; and four Dukes (Paul, Rob, Charlie, and me). I want to share a few highlights from my perspective, but you may want to ask the other attendees about their experience as well.

**Diversity.** Our denomination is smaller than the other mainline denominations - 1.2 million members in 5100 congregations throughout the United States and Puerto Rico - but we are the most ethnically diverse and racially inclusive body within Protestantism. Within the next few years our denomination will be comprised of no racial/ethnic majority group. Our diversity was well-represented in the worship and workshop leadership throughout the weekend, and there were multiple structured conversations and learning events around issues of race. With respect to diversity, a highlight of this year's Biennial is that we elected our first denominational president from Puerto Rico! At the pre-biennial Theologians Conference I attended, one of the presenters gave a paper challenging us to focus less on congratulating ourselves on the diversity of our denomination and more on the hard work of true multiculturalism within our congregations, which is not about mere tolerance but calls for actually listening to, respecting, and being changed by the perspectives and experiences of others.

**Creation Care.** At the 2015 Biennial, I participated in an energizing conversation around environmental concerns. Out of that conversation, a vision emerged for the formation of a Creation Justice Network within our denomination. Last summer, I was invited to be a part of the steering committee of this network, and, since September, we have been working to develop this new network. As we work to more deeply engage with the problem of the ecological crisis and related issues such as poverty and racism, our vision is a just and sustainable future for all God's creation. At this Biennial, though environmental issues were (regrettably) not part of the formal agenda, our new Creation Justice Network did have a small pre-biennial gathering as well as a booth in the exhibit hall. Part of the mission of the network is to help encourage and equip congregations for the work of creation care; I am eager for our church to more fully engage in this work.

**Missional Partners.** One of the best parts of the Biennial Mission Summit gatherings, from my perspective, is the chance to connect with some of our missional partners - organizations our congregation supports through our missions budget as well as with our prayers and, when possible, our volunteer service. Here are three we spent time with:

*Bacone College* - Arthur and Marlene spent significant time with Frank Willis on issues related to the health and vitality of Bacone College, an American Baptist college with a commitment to offering a quality education to Native Americans and others with limited college opportunities. This college does so much with so little for some of the most underserved young adults, including those from foster care, from the inner city, and from low-performing high schools, as well as Burmese refugees, first generation college students, and others who might not otherwise have access to higher education.

*AMOS Health and Hope* - The Francises and the Dukes spent time with Dr. Laura Parajon, American Baptist missionary and Medical Director of AMOS Health and Hope, and Christy Lafferty-Garache, Development Director of AMOS. We are working on plans to bring Dr. Laura here this fall to speak at our church - stay tuned for details! I am also working on plans to lead another team on a mission trip to Nicaragua next winter (tentatively scheduled for February 24 through March 4).

*BPFNA-Bautistas por la Paz (Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America)* - Paul and I attended the BPFNA breakfast and enjoyed an inspiring program. First Baptist Church is a Partner Congregation of BPFNA, a network that seeks to gather, equip, and mobilize Baptist peacemakers in the United States, Canada, Puerto Rico, and Mexico, in order to work together towards a more just and peaceful world. The BPFNA does profoundly important work on the pressing issues of peace, including not only conflict, violence, and war, but issues such as poverty, racism, immigration, refugee resettlement, fair trade, environmental issues, and human trafficking. Check out their website at [bpfna.org](http://bpfna.org).

These few highlights represent just a snapshot of some of our experiences at the Biennial. I also had a thought-provoking day at the ABC Theologians Conference, a delightful time taking Rob and Charlie around the exhibit hall to learn about the various ministries our denomination supports, and an energizing series of conversations at the booth for the Association of Welcoming and Affirming Baptists (AWAB, the National Voice for LGBTQ Baptists, is a network of churches and individuals supporting and advocating for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people [and allies!] across all Baptist faiths and traditions). All-in-all, it was a good meeting, and a great reminder that, at a time when the word "Baptist" has mostly negative connotations, the American Baptist tent is actually wide, inclusive, and filled with passionate people committed to doing creative gospel work. May we here at First Baptist continue to do our part in that work around the world - and right where we are.



**Paul and Stacey Simpson Duke, Arthur and Marlene Francis, with Christy Lafferty-Garache and Dr. Laura Parajon, at the AMOS Health and Hope booth at the ABCUSA Biennial Mission Summit in Portland, Oregon.**

## **Children and Youth Christian Education and Music**

NURSERY care for infants and toddlers is available on the 3rd floor from 9:30 - 11:30

### **CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

Children and Youth are an important part of our life together at First Baptist Church. All children are welcome in worship. Optional nursery care is provided during worship for infants through preschoolers. If you are visiting and would like more information about our ministry with kids and youth, please connect with our Director of Children's Ministry, Xan Morgan ([xan@fbca2.org](mailto:xan@fbca2.org)) or our Youth Minister, Stacey Simpson Duke ([staceyduke@gmail.com](mailto:staceyduke@gmail.com)).

Regular Second Hour Church School programming for all ages will resume in September.

### **Adult Christian Education**

**(11:30-12:30)**

Regular Second Hour Adult classes will resume in September.

### **Other Adult Education Opportunities:**

Wednesday Bible Study will resume in September.

**Adult Small Groups:** We have continuing small groups centered on study, sharing, prayer, worship and mission meeting at various times. See Stacey or Paul 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 during the school year for a free home-cooked meal, friendship, and study. Our program will resume in September. If you would like to be added to our email list for announcements, please email Stacey Simpson Duke at [staceyduke@gmail.com](mailto:staceyduke@gmail.com).

### **Nursery Volunteers for the Fall:**

Children are at the center of the Kingdom of God! One of the important ministries we offer to our families with young children is a welcoming, safe and fun experience in the nursery. Each Sunday we have one paid caregiver, Kathryn Gregg and one volunteer. We are looking for teens and adults who would like to serve as a volunteer in the nursery, once every four to five weeks. If this is a ministry you are interested in learning more about, please let me know! ~Xan

### **FBC e-Connection and Newsletter Email Distribution**

Over the past couple of months, the office has heard from quite a few people that they didn't get word of various events. Here is a quick summary of how to get your email added to one or both of the distribution lists...

The church office sends out two communications electronically. FBC e-Connections are sent out with important news about happenings at the church and the concerns of church members, such as prayer concerns, birth and death announcements. We have a separate distribution for the FBC Newsletter, and can send it by email to anyone who wishes to receive it that way.

If you aren't currently subscribed to either list and wish to be, please email the church office at [office@fbca2.org](mailto:office@fbca2.org) and we will send out an invitation to subscribe to either or both lists. When you get the email invitation, click on the link to finish the subscription process. ***In order to prevent complaints about spam, the distribution program doesn't allow us to simply add an email address to the list.***

# FBC News & Happenings

**Radical Hospitality Event**  
Being a friendly church is good. Being a church of radical hospitality - intentional invitation, welcome, and inclusion as a witness to God's limitless love - is even better. Join Marissa Alaniz, Stacey Simpson Duke, and the Board of Outreach on Sunday, August 27, 11:30-12:30 in the Memorial Lounge, to get ready for guests. As we work together to nurture a congregational culture of hospitality, we will focus on the nuts-and-bolts, practical (and easy!) things each one of can do to make sure our worship visitors experience the warmth and welcome of Christ through us. Please plan to join us for this fun training event!

## **Art Fair Parking Vouchers**

This year's Art Fair is scheduled for Thursday, July 20, through Sunday, July 23. Our own parking lot is used during Art Fair for artist parking; free parking for everyone attending worship will be available across Washington Street in the Liberty Square parking garage. If you did not pick up a parking voucher at church ahead of time, church volunteer Pete Stover will be stationed outside the entrance of the parking garage to make sure you receive one. You will then hand it to the attendant at you enter. We do have a few parking spots reserved in our lot for those with mobility issues, and if you need to drop someone off at the door of the church, we will make that work as well. After worship, you are welcome to leave your car in the parking garage as you visit the Art Fair.

## **Backpack and School Supplies for Hikone Children**

Once again, we have committed to providing twenty backpacks for Hikone children s part of the back-to-school collection for Community Action Network coordinated by First Congregational Church. Tags will be available in late July or early August with the backpacks due in mid-August. This notice is going our early so you can start stocking up on back-to-school supplies as they go on sale in July.

If you would like to donate money and let others do the shopping, please make a check out to Sue Ellen Glover. We can buy and fill a middle school or high school backpack for \$65 and an elementary for \$40, but any sized donations are appreciated. Left-over supplies are donated to the Education Project for Homeless Youth through the Washtenaw Intermediate School District. Thank you for your participation in this ministry!



**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](https://www.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.



**Lemonade on the Lawn:**

God loves it when we have fun together! Fun times were had with hoola hoops, bubbles, and sidewalk chalk at Lemonade on the Lawn this past Sunday. Our next Lemonade on the Lawn is scheduled for August 27.



**Volunteers needed!**

Please check the Information Counter for assorted volunteer sign-up sheets. We can always use your help and no experience is required. It's a great way to meet people at church and get plugged in! If you have any questions, please contact Beverly Inbody in the church office.

**Wish Isabelle Louis a Happy Birthday!**

Isabelle Louis will be turning 102 years old on July 28! Let's make sure she receives greetings from her church family. You can send cards to her at 2302 Manchester Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48104.

**Help Needed for August 6 Communion**

There is a need for Communion servers on Sunday, August 6. We need someone to fill the #2 position to prepare and serve the bread and positions #4, 5, and 6 to serve communion and clean up. You can sign up at the Information Counter or call the church office at 663-9376. Thank you.





**Gerald Rees** died on June 21, 2017 in Ann Arbor. He was born in Luckey, Ohio on June 7, 1924, the son of Chester B. and Frances Eckert Rees. His family settled in Toledo, Ohio in 1932 where he graduated from Scott High School in 1942. He spent one year studying music at Bowling Green State University, but before the end of the school year he joined the US Army, serving in England, France, and Germany as a member of the 292nd Field Artillery Observation Battalion during the final months of World War II.

Jerry, as he was known to friends, was discharged from the Army in February, 1946. He went directly to Ann Arbor, where he enrolled at the University of Michigan with the help of the G.I. Bill. He graduated in 1950 with a master's degree in education. As a student he was active in the Inter-Cooperative Council, a student owned and operated housing cooperative, and served as its president in 1947-48. On April 2, 1949, he married fellow student Carol McCrady. They were married 64 years, until Carol's death in 2013.

From 1950 to 1958 Jerry taught physics at Denby High School in Detroit. During this time he also worked summers for the U.S. Lake Survey. In 1958 he moved his family to Ann Arbor, where he taught at Ann Arbor High School. In 1967, he became one of the early instructors at Washtenaw Community College, teaching physics at the original Willow Village campus in a quonset hut left over from World War II. He retired from the community college in 1979.

Throughout his teaching career he strived to make scientific ideas accessible and compelling for his students, and was constantly inventing new mechanical aids to illustrate the concepts of physics and astronomy. He spent several sabbatical years helping to develop educational materials, including the federally funded Harvard Project Physics.

Jerry was a longtime member of the First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor, where he served as a trustee and a deacon and sang in the choir.

Jerry was a founder, in 1970, of the Ann Arbor Bicycle League, which successfully lobbied for construction of the city's first system of bike paths.

In the 1990s, with his wartime commanding officer, he organized several reunions of his army battalion.

All his life, and especially in retirement, he enjoyed traveling the US and the world with his wife and children to see points of natural, cultural, and engineering interest, often by bicycle.

Jerry is survived by three sons: David, of Ypsilanti, Jim (Sarah Casello) of Ann Arbor, and Jonathan (Oakley Hoerth) of Arlington, Massachusetts; and two grandchildren. He was preceded in death by his parents, his wife, his sister Eleanor, and his brothers Reynold, Vernon, and Leland.

Gifts in Jerry's honor may be sent to the First Baptist Church or to NAMI of Washtenaw County, 1100 North Main Street, Ann Arbor, MI 48104. A memorial service will be held at First Baptist Church on Sunday, August 13, at 1:00pm.

### **Visitation and Memorial Service for Betsy Willis**

A reminder that the memorial visitation for Betsy Willis is this Saturday, July 20, at the Karpus-Hunter Funeral Home in Alpena, 10:00am until 12:00 noon, with memorial service immediately following. Following the service, there will be a luncheon in celebration of Betsy's life at the Jesse Besser Museum in Alpena, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. In lieu of flowers, the family requests donations be made to the Jesse Besser Museum, First Baptist Church Alpena, or charity of choice. Online condolences can be made at [karpushuntercares.com](http://karpushuntercares.com)

# August 2017

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1  5:30 Vespers	2	3  6:00 BCE Picnic Prep Mtg.	4	5
6  10:00 Worship 12:00 Church Picnic	7  6:00 Outreach	8  1:30 ChristCare  5:30 Vespers	9  7:30 ChristCare	10	11	12
13  10:00 Worship  1:00 Rees Memorial	14	15  5:30 Vespers	16	17	18	19
20  10:00 Worship	21	22  5:30 Vespers	23 *newsletter*	24  6:00 Christian Education	25	26
27  10:00 Worship 11:30 Radical Hospitality Event	28	29  5:30 Vespers	30	31		

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next  
Newsletter  
Deadline:  
*Sunday, August 20*

**See you at the Church Potluck Picnic!**  
**Sunday, August 6th**  
**from 12:00-2:00 pm in Almendinger Park**

Join us for lunch, games and prizes at our annual church picnic. We will have some tables and chairs; please bring blankets and lawn chairs too. Church will be providing chicken and drinks. RSVP online [here](#) or at the Information Counter on Sundays so that we can plan accordingly.

We're looking forward to our time together!

~Board of Christian Education

