



# FIRST BAPTIST

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## CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

Pastor's Reflections by Paul Simpson Duke

November 30, 2016

Next Tuesday, December 6, many Christians—Eastern Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Anglican, Episcopalian, some Lutherans, and others—will observe a special day. They will happily recall the life and the legacy of a great saint whose name was Nicholas. Saint Nicholas. His feast day is December 6. Since I don't see many TV commercials and hardly ever go to the mall, I haven't seen any images of Santa Claus yet this year. But I recently came across some interesting bits about the man who morphed into that "Jolly Old Elf." You may already know about him, but indulge me.

He was Greek (olive-skinned?), born to reportedly wealthy parents around the year 270 in what is now western Turkey, little more than two centuries after the Apostle Paul himself was there. Because popular legends often attach to the lives of saints, it's impossible to be certain of many details, but here are some core pieces of Nicholas' story. From his youth, he was devoutly Christian. He fasted every Wednesday and Friday. He spent three years with monks who lived in caves on a mountain that overlooked Bethlehem. In the city of Myra, he was made a bishop. Under the persecution of the emperor Diocletian he was tortured and imprisoned. Later he was among the bishops who assembled at Nicea to craft what became the Nicean Creed.

Nicholas was known most of all for his empathy and good works of charity, especially among the poor. The most famous story is of a poor man with three daughters and no money at all for the dowries needed for them to be married—meaning that they would almost certainly have to become prostitutes. When Nicholas heard of it, he filled three small bags with gold coins and secretly slipped them through the window (some versions say he dropped them down the chimney). He also advocated in behalf of three unjustly accused convicts awaiting execution, and got them exonerated. His generosity to poor children was also legendary.

Was he "jolly"? Likely not. At the Council of Nicea he got into a heated debate with a famous heretic, Arius, and is said to have grown so angry that he punched the man in the face! But, then again, how could anyone be so generous with the needy and so kind to children and not be given to smiling? Maybe on some occasions it could even have been said: "His eyes, how they twinkled."

To be honest, I don't have much of a problem with the modern Santa Claus. I'm glad of the extra merriment, magic, and wonder that he brings for children—and we could all use a little more "Ho! Ho! Ho!" and a little less "Bah-humbug!" But here is the unsettling difference: The mysterious, multiple, often expensive toys and games, etc., that show up so magically for our children are supposedly modeled on a man who gave all his gifts to the *poor* and was an advocate for the *vulnerable*. How strange and disturbing a holiday irony!

A suggestion: Whenever you see images or stand-ins for Santa Claus, who will soon be—already is?—all over the place, have the familiar, fond feelings if you like, but then try seeing *through* him. Try seeing, beneath the red suit and the blubbery belly, a man, lean from fasting, walking city streets with whatever money and other necessities he could put together, and giving it, sometimes anonymously, to the poor and other vulnerable people. Then consider what you, and perhaps others with you, might give or do in this season for the poor and other vulnerable people. Of such good choices, the Christ Child, born very poor, will approve; and the real Saint Nicholas—his eyes, how they twinkle!

## Children and Youth Christian Education

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

**December 4:**

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

#### Preschool - 1<sup>st</sup> grade

10:00 - 10:30 Worship with families  
10:30 - 11:30 Church School (Rm. 202A & B)  
11:30 - 11:45 Grace Notes  
11:45 - 12:30 Activities

#### Youth (6<sup>th</sup> - High School)

10:00 - 11:00 Worship  
11:30 - 12:30 Church School (107)

#### 2<sup>nd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> grade:

10:00 - 10:30 Worship with families  
10:30 - 11:00 Children's Worship (Rm. 201B)  
11:15 - 12:30 Church School (Rm. 202A & B)  
and Children's Choir (Rm. 306)

### CHILDREN'S MUSIC MINISTRY

Grace Notes (Preschool - 1st Grade) 11:30 - 11:45 Rm. 202  
Children's Choir (2nd - 5th Grade) 11:30 - 12:00 Rm. 306

## Adult Christian Education

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

**No Adult second hour classes on December 11 and 18 due to holiday special events.**

**December 4:**

### **Scripture Reflections**

Mary Davis, Paul Duke, Ron Gregg, Kent Jennings, and Joe Mortensen, Leaders

**Memorial Lounge**

Each Sunday we'll discuss the day's sermon then look at the lectionary scriptures for the *upcoming* Sunday, exploring the background and context for each of the 3 scriptures that will be used in the worship service. We will share what meanings these scriptures might have for each of us so that we may reflect on these scriptures throughout the week, preparing ourselves for a more meaningful worship

### **Young Adult Class**

**Room 108**

***Knowing God with Heart and Mind*** - Discussions based on selections from the writings of ancient and modern Christians.

### 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](mailto:staceyduke@gmail.com).

# FBC News & Happenings

## 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, 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 **December 18**. We are especially looking for kid-friendly non-perishable food such as macaroni and cheese, peanut butter, cereal, soup, oatmeal packets, juice/milk boxes, 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, fresh produce, laundry detergent and items that cannot be purchased with food stamps.

## A Collection for Vespers Guests

It's gotten cold and the children are once again collecting warm clothing like hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, long underwear, socks, jackets, and sweatshirts (gently used or new) for our Vespers guests. We would also appreciate donations of grooming & personal items, such as shampoo, toothpaste, tooth brushes, small Kleenex packs, Band-Aids, etc. A basket will be near the Information Counter each Sunday for your gifts. **We will deliver these gifts on December 13.**



## Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering 2016

The roots of RMMO go back to the mid-1930s, when American Baptist congregations received a Communion Fellowship Offering on the first Sunday of each month to support retired ministers, missionaries, their widowed spouses and elderly clergy within their churches. In 1977, American Baptist Churches USA launched the Retired Ministers and Missionaries Offering (RMMO) to continue this appreciation of God's service. The theme for RMMO 2016 is "Faith through Gratitude."

**Stacey's Doctor of Ministry Final Project Presentation.** In October, I submitted the first draft of my dissertation for my D.Min. degree. Earlier this month, I received approval of the draft with no major revisions required. I now have three remaining steps to complete my degree: a journal-length article based on my paper; a public presentation of my project; and the submission of the final draft of my paper, which will incorporate any feedback from my presentation. I will be making a presentation of my project on Sunday, December 11, 11:45am-12:30pm, in the Memorial Lounge, for anyone interested. Thank you so much for your ongoing support and encouragement of this work! - Stacey Simpson Duke

## AB Women's Ministries' Annual Christmas Celebration

Our annual Christmas Celebration will be Sunday, December 11, in the Fellowship Hall after the worship service. The AB Women's ministries will once again offer a bake sale, holiday craft/boutique sale, as well as tables of gently-used holiday decorations. As you are decorating for the holidays and find you have decorations you no longer need or want, please consider donating the gently-used items to the Celebration. If you would like to donate baked item - cookies, bread, etc. -- clearly label for allergies. The baked goods can be brought in Sunday morning before church to the kitchen. The holiday items can be brought to the church office during the week or the Information Counter on Sunday mornings. If there are questions, please call Bev Inbody at 734-904-5750 or in the church office at 734-663-9376. This is the last AB Women's Ministries fundraiser for the year and will help to support the women's various church projects.

## Volunteers needed!

Please check the Information Counter for assorted volunteer sign-up sheets. We can always use your help and no experience is required. If you have any questions, please contact Beverly Inbody. **We particularly need help with communion on the first Sunday of each month. If you can help, please sign up at the Information Counter. January communion will be served on January 8, and any help that day is also greatly appreciated.**

### Director of Children's Ministries

The First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor seeks an enthusiastic and creative individual for a part-time Director of Children's Ministries position. This 15- to 20-hour position will oversee many facets of Christian education and focus on children from infancy through 6<sup>th</sup> grade.

#### **Responsibilities:**

- leading and nurturing children toward Christian faith and discipleship by providing opportunities to study, worship, serve, build community, and grow spiritually;
- developing and implementing sound and innovative educational programs that foster spiritual development and promote Bible fluency;
- teaching children on Sunday mornings and at other times as scheduled;
- training and scheduling teachers and nursery caregivers;
- coordinating children's events and selected outreach programs;
- developing a strong relationship and communicating with families with children both within the congregation and in the wider community.
- working with the Board of Christian Education and Church staff.

#### **Qualifications:**

A Bachelor's degree in a related field and teaching experience are required. The successful candidate will possess strong oral and written communication skills and be a self-motivated leader able to work well with a variety of groups, including children and their families, volunteers, and church staff. A healthy personal spiritual life and a theology consistent with the pastoral ministries of First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor and supportive of American Baptist Churches USA tradition are essential.

Anticipated hours are 15-20 hours weekly, including Sunday mornings. Salary will be commensurate with experience. Candidates should submit a letter that describes their interest in this position in Children's Ministries as well as a resume of relevant experience to Janice Stumpf at [jlstumpf@umich.edu](mailto:jlstumpf@umich.edu). Questions may also be directed to Janice by email or to Rev. Stacey Simpson Duke at (734) 663-9376 or [staceyduke@gmail.com](mailto:staceyduke@gmail.com).

Approved by Board of Christian Education, August 2016  
Approved by Executive Council, August 2016

### Thank You from UNICEF

Dear First Baptist Church,

I am writing today to thank you for your recent gift to the U.S. Fund for UNICEF of \$160 and to let you know that it's already making a big impact.

Because of you, UNICEF can reach more children suffering at the hands of conflicts and disasters. We can give them the nutrition, water, and health support they need to survive. We can help them overcome poverty and build a better life.

Simply put, your support means we can do whatever it takes to save and protect children's lives, no matter how remote their location or how challenging the conditions.

Still, the sheer number of global crises we're facing today is depriving so many children of a chance to have a healthy and safe childhood.

As you read this, millions of children are hungry because they lack proper nutrition...are prone to illness because they do not have access to safe water and immunizations...and are scared because they have lost their families, homes and hope.

These children have so little, but fortunately, they have you. Thank you again for your generous support and for putting children first.

Fondly,  
Caryl M. Stern, President & CEO

### **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 also send the FBC Newsletter out 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.***

We have also heard some gmail users that their service is routing e-connection emails to the "promotions" folder, rather than the "primary" folder. If you are a gmail client and it appears that you have suddenly stopped receiving e-connections, give the church office a call and Kat will work with you to fix the situation.

**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://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.



## Poinsettia Order Form

Please order \_\_\_\_\_ poinsettia(s) for the Christmas services at \$20 each, and list as such in the bulletin:

In honor of: \_\_\_\_\_

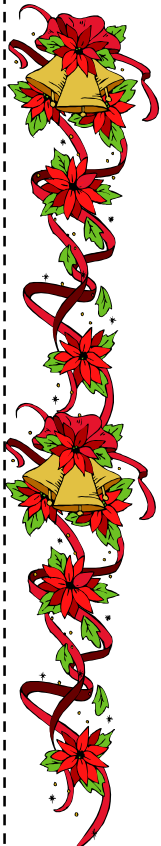
In memory of: \_\_\_\_\_

From: \_\_\_\_\_

I have enclosed \$\_\_\_\_\_ as payment for the poinsettia(s).

Please have paid orders to the office by **Friday, December 9** .

Thank you!



# December 2016

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1  7:00 Choir	2	3
4  10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	5  5:30 Mission Action	6  5:30 Vespers 7:00 Executive Council	7  1:30 Bible Study  5:30 Gathering	8  7:00 Choir	9	10
11  10:00 Worship 11:15 ABWN Christmas Celebration	12	13  1:30 ChristCare  5:30 Vespers	14 *newsletter*  1:30 Bible Study  5:30 Gathering	15  1:00 MacGregor- Stitt Circle  7:00 Choir	16	17
18  10:00 Worship 11:30 Carol Sing	19	20  5:30 Vespers	21	22  7:00 Choir	23	24  7:30 Lessons & Carols
25  <i>Christmas Day</i> 10:00 Worship	26  <i>Church Office &amp; Buildings Closed</i>	27  <i>Office Closes at 1:00pm</i>  5:30 Vespers	28 *newsletter*  <i>Office Closes at 1:00pm</i>	29  <i>Office Closes at 1:00pm</i>	30  <i>Office Closes at 1:00pm</i>	31



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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next  
Newsletter  
Deadline:  
*Sunday, December 11*



CHRISTMAS EVE

**A FESTIVAL OF  
LESSONS AND CAROLS**

December 24 - 7:30 pm

FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR  
517 E. WASHINGTON STREET  
FBCA2.ORG