



# FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

Pastor's Reflections by Stacey Simpson Duke December 14, 2016

As Paul and the boys and I decorated our Christmas tree earlier this month, Rob remarked on how it felt like it hadn't been very long since the last time we did this. We talked about all the events that were still ahead of us the last time we decorated - things we had no idea were going to happen. Mostly we talked about the unexpected losses: my dad's sister on Christmas Day; my mom's sister a month later; our dear friend, Joel. We talked about the pet deaths, too (my dad's little dog, killed by a coyote; my cat Sophie, who waited until I hit 'send' on my dissertation draft before she lay down to die). We noted how the last time we hung ornaments, we didn't know the course or the outcome of the presidential election. There was so much more that we didn't yet know and could not have predicted that was to happen between decorating the Christmas tree last time and this time.

It was jarring to think of our blissful ignorance this time last year, and it was sobering to consider what surprises might lie between decorating this year's Christmas tree and next. What are the losses that we aren't braced for because we don't yet see them coming? Who will we be missing next Christmas? What difficult things will we be facing nationally and globally? (My musings are a bit dark for 12 year-olds who just want to decorate the Christmas tree, so I kept these thoughts to myself!)

Our culture wants to make Christmastime only about happy nostalgia and excited consumerism, but we know that isn't all. For those of us who have faced real loss (which is most of us), or who right now are dealing with particular pain or sadness (which is many of us), we know the truth of Advent: darkness is real. And all the shopping, decorating, eating, singing, and celebrating do not change that reality, but may merely mask it. Part of what our faith is about is *unmasking*. It's about setting aside false ideals and letting go what isn't real, so that we can more fully embrace what is. So at church, during Advent, we acknowledge the dark, even while our own nostalgic and consumerist impulses try to force the light.

Even as we acknowledge the dark, we light candles. We sing of hope and longing. We speak of peace. We have the audacity to claim joy without pretending away the darkness. We commit ourselves to love - the real kind, that involves commitment, action, solidarity, empathy, humility, listening, and even self-sacrifice. We do all this without knowing the future. We claim hope, peace, and joy, committing ourselves to love, without even knowing what tomorrow brings, let alone what 2017 will bring. We are able to do this because we do know this one thing: the coming of the light.

We don't always believe in this as confidently as we'd like, and we don't always live like we believe it even when we say we do. But the longing we give voice to during Advent has not gone unanswered. The light does shine in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it (John 1:5). It is not a light we click on through our purchases or our forced cheer. It is a light that comes from beyond us, burned brightest in the life of Jesus, and still shows us the way. Without any idea of what hard - or happy! - surprises lie ahead, we *can* expect this: God is faithful. In this tender season of longing and expectation, may we be so bold as to trust that the hopes and fears of all the years are met in Christ, who will be born again - and again! - in us.

## Children and Youth Christian Education

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

No classes on December 25 and January 1 - Children may worship with their families and/or go to the nursery for childcare.

### CHILDREN AND YOUTH CHRISTIAN EDUCATION

December 18:

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

10:00 - 10:30 Worship with families  
10:30 - 11:30 Church School (Rm. 202A & B)  
11:30 - 12:30 Carol Sing with families (Sanctuary)

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

10:00 - 11:00 Worship  
11:30 - 12:30 Carol Sing  
(Sanctuary)

#### 2nd - 5th grade:

10:00 - 10:30 Worship with families  
10:30 - 11:00 Children's Worship (Rm. 201B)  
11:30 - 12:30 Carol Sing with families (Sanctuary)

CHILDREN'S MUSIC MINISTRY will resume on January 8

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 18 - please join the Carol Sing in the sanctuary!

No second hour classes on December 25 or January 1.

Adult classes will resume on January 8.

### 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! No classes on December 21 & 28 and January 4. Class will resume on January 11.

**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

## **Thank you from the Vespers Guests**

The Vespers guests on December 13 offered their appreciation to the congregation for your gifts of socks (almost 50 pairs), sweatshirts, fleeces, and coats, as well as lots of dental and other hygiene products. We were low on hats, gloves, scarves, and mitten donations this year, but you will get another chance to donate during our February hosting of the warming shelter. Watch for after Christmas sales of these items!

## **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."

**Many thanks from Ozone House and the Educational Project for Homeless Youth** for the gift bags and gift cards provided by John and Shannon Floyd, Betsy Foote, Mary Gregg, and Sue Ellen Glover.

## **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. The Board of Christian Education invites you to use *The Secret Place* or *Disciplines*. *The Secret Place* is available at the Information Counter (free). It is published quarterly and is offered in regular and large print editions. The Upper Room publishes *Disciplines* which has one-page daily devotions for the entire year and the scriptures are based on the lectionary. Each week you can read and meditate on the scriptures that will be usually be included in the upcoming Sunday's worship service. *Disciplines* books are available from Sue Ellen for \$5. If you would like information on other resources (including online resources), please contact Sue Ellen.

## **Volunteers Needed! No Experience Needed!**

- **Sunday Morning Greeters:** This is a great time to see friends and meet new people.
- **Communion Servers:** Six volunteers are needed on the first Sunday of each month. This is a special way to become a part of the Sunday communion service. 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.***
- **Information Counter:** Volunteers are needed for the second, third, and fifth (when it appears) Sundays, before and after the church service. Check with Bev Inbody at the Information Counter or call her at the church office during the week.
- **Sound System:** Help with recording the Sunday worship service and other services. See Clay Scott for more information.

All of the above positions are a great opportunity to meet people, help your church and become more involved. Sign up sheets can be found at the Information Counter.

## **Congregational Meeting on Sunday, January 29**

Our annual financial meeting will be held after fellowship time (11:30) on January 29. After the business meeting we will enjoy a potluck lunch. Please plan to attend.

### **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

#### **Update from the Board of Christian Education**

The BCE has not yet identified a suitable candidate for the Director of Children's Ministry position. Therefore, Sue Ellen has agreed to continue to work on a month-to-month basis in 2017, reducing her responsibilities and hours to 20 hrs/week. In January, the pastors will take over planning for adult education programming.

**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.



**The Interfaith Round Table of Washtenaw County** present the sixth annual "FACES OF FAITH" program as part of national *Religious Freedom Day* observances. The focus this year will be on the stories of religious leaders from the following traditions: **Baha'i, Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism and Unitarian Universalism**. Each presenter will talk about "the personal joys" and the "public frustrations" in being part of their faith tradition. Small group conversation will also be part of the afternoon.

Date: Sunday, January 15, 2017 (\$5 suggested donation)

Time: 4-6 pm

Location: Zion Lutheran Church, 1501 W. Liberty, AA

For more information, go to [www.irtwc.org](http://www.irtwc.org) or email [gbrides@umich.edu](mailto:gbrides@umich.edu)



**Longitudinal Early Practice Experience (LEPE)**

We are looking for a few new community partners for our Longitudinal Early Practice Experience (LEPE) program. Community partners are 60 years or older, take at least 3 prescription medications, manage their own medications, live within 65 miles to the college, and are interested in talking with a small group (2-3) of first or second year pharmacy students preferably in their home or a public place of their choosing if desired. The community partner will meet with their assigned students six times over the course of the 2 year program.

Unfortunately, we are having a difficult time recruiting enough community partners this year. If you, a family member, or friend meets these criteria and are interested in participating, please reach out to me!

Thank you for your help, Caitlin Ferguson

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED



**Volunteer with the College of Pharmacy's  
Longitudinal Early Practice Experience Program.**

Pharmacy students will meet in their volunteer's home to discuss medication, compliance, healthcare experiences, & build on their empathy & communication skills.

Students will NOT be providing healthcare services.

**VOLUNTEERS MUST:**

- \*Be 60 years or older
- \*Take 3 or more prescriptions
- \*Manage own medications
- \* Ideally, willing to commit to 6 visits over a 2 year period.

**FOR MORE INFORMATION  
CONTACT:**

Caitlin Ferguson, MA  
Program Manager  
University of Michigan  
College of Pharmacy  
734-615-6717  
cmferg@umich.edu

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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next  
Newsletter  
Deadline:  
*Sunday, December 25*



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