



FIRST BAPTIST

CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

Pastor's Perspective by Paul Simpson Duke

February 7, 2018

On Wednesday of next week, February 14, the season of Lent begins. Like the majority of Christians through history, we will be observing the forty days prior to Easter (the number forty does not include the six Sundays) as a season of self-examination, repentance, and a recommitment to the way of Jesus. The first day of Lent is widely known as Ash Wednesday. Our church offers a worship service on that night at 7:00. and I hope that many of you will be present.

In this service we sing, we read Scripture, we pray, we observe silence, and we observe what is called "the imposition of ashes." Your pastors stand at the front of each aisle, and worshipers who wish to participate come forward in a line toward one of the pastors, who applies ashes in the shape of a cross on each forehead, and says to each individual: "Remember that you are dust, and to dust you shall return."

If you haven't been to such a service and it sounds morbid to you (all the more so because this year it falls on Valentine's Day!), I must tell you that it isn't. It is, in fact, a service that powerfully affirms the preciousness and the possibilities of life, and is therefore an invitation to joy. The candid, intimate reminder that one day we will die is a beckoning to live *now* and to live *better*, to live with keener awareness of what matters and what does not, to live in more grateful trust and obedience to the liberating way of Christ.

Ashes are a biblical symbol of death, grief, and repentance. But laid upon us now in the shape of a cross, they are also a symbol of powerful transformation. For this reason, Thomas Merton described Ash Wednesday as "a day of happiness." He added: "The cross of ashes, traced upon the forehead of each Christian, is not only a remembrance of death, but inevitably... a pledge of resurrection.... The cross, with which the ashes are traced upon us is the sign of Christ's victory over death." That is the double gift that Ash Wednesday can give us: the invitation to live more truly before we die and the news that in Christ all sinister powers of death have been defeated by infinite Love.

There is something especially powerful about experiencing such a gift in the company of others. Each of us individually is told of our death and redemption as the ashes are placed upon us, but we notice as well that the mark of death and redemption is on the face of everyone around us—people we love and people we barely know and perhaps people we do not know at all, each of them marked with the sign of death and of infinite suffering love for all our sakes. So the room is filled with what one writer has called a "communal poignancy." Some of us begin to think of others who are not present, and of humankind as large, and of the greater compassion we owe to the world in the shadow of our common dying. And if we are wise, we reflect more deeply on the one who died on a cross made not of ashes but of the worst that the world can do, and who calls us, mortal as we are, to the way that leads to resilient and joyous life.

The word *Lent* comes from an Old English word that means "lengthen," which refers to the lengthening of light that we celebrate in Spring. The word is fitting to a spiritual journey which seeks a lengthening of the reach of our love and our hope, and the lengthening of light that God shines on our days and our nights, and shines from our living if we will let it be so. Ash Wednesday is the first day of that renewed seasonal journey. If you are able, please join us on Wednesday evening, February 14, at 7:00. It will make a good beginning to a season of reflection and of making new choices for faithful living—a season that will conclude with great celebration of death defeated by the triumph of Resurrection.

Children and Youth Christian Education and Music

It's S³ - Switch it up for Second Sunday! On second Sundays of the month, we have some special things happening for the kids (6th grade and younger). During worship, we sing the Gloria in a three part round. The kids are invited to come up front with Pastor Stacey, Pastor Paul and Xan to lead the congregation in the round. The 3rd-6th graders stay for the whole worship service; they will be given sticky notes to jot down what STUCK with them during worship. And the kids join the rest of the congregation for fellowship time too on second Sundays. Parents, we will bring the kids downstairs to the Fellowship Hall to meet you. The 3rd-6th graders are hosting our special Valentine's Day fellowship time. Kids will head to their choir rehearsals at 11:30 when second hour classes begin for adults.

Sing Unto the Lord a New Song: This Sunday, our Children's Choir and our Grace Notes Choir will be singing in worship. We will warm-up and rehearse at 9:35 am. Children's Choir will meet Shin-Ae in the music room. Grace Notes will meet Marissa in the Sanctuary.

Valentines and Soup and Ashes...oh my! Children and their families are invited to begin the night of February 14th celebrating Valentine's Day with a soup supper together at 6:00 pm. We'll have cookies to decorate and eat too. Following dinner we'll talk about the season of Lent, introduce a Lenten discipline for the kids and talk about what they'll see, hear and experience during our Ash Wednesday service which begins at 7:00 pm. The service is 30 minutes. Optional childcare will be provided for infants and toddlers. Please let Xan (xan@fbca2.org) know if you're able to come and whether you're able to help make the soup supper happen.



Say CHEESE!

This week we will have 100 households coming to church to get their photo taken for our new church family photo album. Keep your eye out for your email reminder with your date and time. With photo shoots happening every 10 minutes it will be important to be on time for your appointment. A host from our church will be ready to sign you in downstairs, just outside the Fellowship Hall. [Here](#) are some tips from Universal Church Directories. If you were unable to make it to church for a photos, you will have the opportunity to get your photo taken at church on February 18th and 25th. If this doesn't work for you, please email a photo to Heidi Goodhart (dendles@gmail.com) or mail a photo to church (att. Xan Morgan 517 E. Washington St, 48104).

Music at St. Paul's Flint: Remembering Joel Hastings

Prof. Joel Schoenhals, piano.
Sunday, February 25, 2018 at 3:30 pm at
St. Paul's Episcopal Church,
711 S. Saginaw Street
More information can be found at
<http://musicatstpaulsflint.org>



Heroes of the Bible (Astrid Beck, leader)

Lounge

As we begin the new year, we will continue with our study on Heroes of the Bible, great men and women, outstanding leaders in the biblical account, who were foundational to our faith, who not only defined it, but who also taught the values inherent in our faith practices. In the weeks before Lent, we will take a look at Paul, the first New Testament writer, who formulated and established the basics of our Christian faith. No background readings required. Bring your favorite Bible or use one of ours.

A History of Baptists (Joe Mortensen, leader)

Library

This class examines key points in the history of Baptists, from their beginning until now. Participants will learn about the roots of the Baptist movement in the Reformation, the early Baptist advocacy and influence for religious tolerance in America, the pioneer work of Baptists in International missions, the North/South division of Baptists over slavery and the Civil War, and issues of current Baptist denominational life. The discussion will be enlightening and engaging not just for longtime Baptists, but for people who are new to our congregation's Baptist identity and tradition.

The Gospel of Mark

Room 108

This class offers an ongoing study and discussion of Mark's Gospel, attending to its original context and meaning and to its applications for today. 2018 is an especially good year for this study because it is Year-B of the church lectionary cycle, when most of the Gospel readings, and many of the sermons, will be from the Gospel of Mark.

The R&R (Relaxing and Reflecting) Group

This group will meet at the cafe Fred's, just three doors down at 403 E. Washington and will spend time connecting with each other and having informal discussions of the morning's sermon. Participants are welcome to grab a coffee or a bite to eat if they'd like. Parents of teens and/or kids will need to be back at church by 12:30 to pick them up from their morning programming. Connect with Paul or Xan if you have questions.

Other Adult Education Opportunities:

Wednesday Bible Study: Pastor Paul Simpson Duke is leading a study of the Gospel of John.

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. If you would like to be added to the email list for weekly updates about gatherings and service opportunities, please email Stacey Simpson Duke at staceyduke@gmail.com

Would you like to financially support the work of our mission team to Tierra Blanca, Nicaragua?

It was a wonderful worship experience to have our mission team lead worship this past Sunday. Thank you for supporting their work financially and with prayer. The team has raised 50% of their \$5,000 goal. These funds will cover the cost of the water filters, building supplies for the roof repair and the materials for the VBS we'll be hosting. The "Walk With Us" letter included in this newsletter provides more information. The team will leave for Nicaragua on Friday, February 23rd at 10:30 am. All are welcome to come for the send off!



When we walk together,
we can change lives.

FBC News & Happenings



WASH Kit Drive for Kids in Nicaragua: After participating in the VBS that will focus on WASH - Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Education the children will receive a WASH kit. The kits include travel shampoo, 2 personal soaps, 1 comb, 2 children's toothbrushes, 2 travel-size toothpastes, 1 loofah and 1 small towel (washcloth or hand towel) in a Ziploc bag. We'll have a giving tree with items needed hanging on the tree. Cash donations will also be accepted for the WASH kits. Please bring items to church by Sunday, February 18th. Our kids will be assembling the WASH kits during church school on the morning of the 18th. Questions? Connect with Xan Morgan (xan@fbca2.org).

The MacGregor-Stitt Circle next meets at 1:00pm on Thursday, February 15, in the Lounge. Sandra Deline and Eva Kelly are co-hostesses, and the program is "India" by Fred & Mary Munson.

The Tuesday ChristCare Group next meets on February 13 at 1:30pm in the Lounge. Heather Entrekin will be leading the program.

Warming Shelter Ministry at FBC Volunteer Sign up & Warming Center Collection

The Warming Shelter will be open at First Baptist Church on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the month of February, 9am-3pm. First Congregational will be the host on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Friday. The group MISSION oversees the Warming Shelter Ministry, and will be providing many of the volunteers to work this important ministry to the homeless.

Each church hosting the Warming Shelter is invited to participate in any number of ways, such as:

- Volunteer your time to mix and mingle with those using the Warming Shelter;
- Bring some snacks (nothing with peanuts), or food to share with the guests; etc.;
- Sign up at the information desk, or church office to prepare and bring a luncheon dish to serve 35 people (NO Peanuts in food). We will need at least 2 dishes (serving 35 each dish). The Warming Shelter has been averaging about 70 people.
- We are also collecting warm clothing including gloves, hats, mittens, and socks (look for sales!), plus personal products like toothbrushes and toothpaste, deodorant, shampoos, pocket tissue packs, combs, soap, etc. There will be a basket near the Information Counter each Sunday.

Contact Kent Jennings (kentjen31@gmail.com; 734-732-6802) or Ron Gregg (rgregg@patientfocussystems.com) for more information.

Prayer Friendship Bracelets: You are invited to wear a bracelet as a reminder to pray for Pastor Stacey. Please grab a bracelet before or after worship at the Information counter. If you would like us to mail you a bracelet, please contact Nancy Paul (nkpaul1505@gmail.com or 734.913.4611).



The 2018 Chancel Flower Calendar

The signup calendar is now posted on the downstairs bulletin board near the Lounge door. The cost is \$30 and your dedication goes in the bulletin. The flowers are yours to take after the Sunday morning service. Please sign up early to secure your date(s).

Baby Shower

Join us on March 4, 12:30 - 2:00, for a baby shower for Zahra Sher Mohammad (the family from Afghanistan whom we are assisting). We hope many of you will join us for lunch and the shower. There is an RSVP sheet at the Information Counter. Childcare will be provided upon request. Also at the Information Counter is a gift wish list. When you purchase a gift, please either check -off your gift on this list, or let Sue Ellen know. (Gently used/like-new items are welcomed.) Financial donations are very much appreciated so that large items (car seat, stroller, etc,) may be purchased. You may leave your financial gift in the offering plate (labeled as "shower gift"), or send to the church office. In order to shop, we are asking that financial gifts be turned in by Feb 18.

Items needed:

- Car seat
- Stroller
- Crib sheets and mattress pads
- Receiving blankets
- Baby clothes
- Baby towels
- Diapers and wipes
- Small bath tub
- Lotion/shampoo/powder/cream

The Board of Care and Community and your congregation want to be available to help in life's difficulties and transitions, but we can only do that if we know your are experiencing them. We can offer visits, help with food, transportation and possibly other needs. If you or your family lets the church office know, we will contact you by your preferred method to see how we can help.

Emergency Contact Forms - There may be times when the church office or staff needs to contact a family member of someone in our congregation. If the family member does not attend FBC, we will not have the information we need. We would appreciate each family in the congregation completing this emergency contact form (to be used only by the staff) and leaving it in the offering plate, at the Information Counter, or mailing it to the church office.

YOUR NAME: _____

Contact #1:
Name _____

Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Contact #2:
Name _____

Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Contact #3:
Name _____

Relationship: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Walk With Us ...to Tierra Blanca, Nicaragua!

This February, we will be traveling from the United States to the remote, rural village of Tierra Blanca, Nicaragua through the nonprofit organization, AMOS Health and Hope. AMOS improves the quality of health in rural communities by working alongside them in health, education, and development.

The need for community-based healthcare is high in rural Nicaragua. The majority of people who live there survive on less than \$2 per day. Women and children are especially vulnerable to preventable illnesses, and poverty and lack of access to healthcare contribute to high maternal and infant death rates.

We are excited to bear witness to God's love and help create positive change in our world by walking together with AMOS and the people of Tierra Blanca!

Our team will be working in collaboration with the community's health and water filter promoters towards these common goals:



Install 35 water filters in homes of extremely poor families who do not currently have safe drinking water



Repair the roof of the community health clinic, which will allow the Health Promoter to continue to see patients there

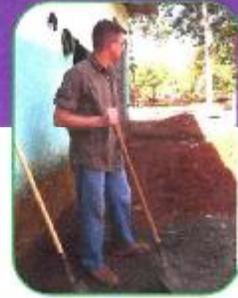


Plan and facilitate children's activities to teach the kids of Tierra Blanca about health and hygiene

To execute our projects, our team needs to raise \$5,000. Though our work is short-term, we walk together in service to the comprehensive, long-term goals identified by the community itself. We walk together to learn more about the world around us. We walk together to bring health and hope to the people of Nicaragua.

Will you walk with us today?

- The Tierra Blanca 2018 Mission Team: Christina Alaniz, Marissa Alaniz, Kathy Brady, Alex DaSilva, Xan Morgan, Anjali Nemorin, Eldi Paguada, Nancy Rhodes, Macauley Rybar, and Ethan Wright



When we walk together with the people of Nicaragua, we ensure better health and brighter futures.

AMOS
HEALTH AND HOPE

FIRST BAPTIST
CHURCH OF ANN ARBOR

I want to walk with you!

My gift brings health and hope to the children and families of Tierra Blanca, Nicaragua. I'm enclosing:

- \$35 to provide supplies for water filters and roof construction
- \$50 to provide in-home healthcare to ten vulnerable patients
- \$100 to provide training for Tierra Blanca's health and water filter promoters
- \$_____ to help as many people as possible

In honor of: _____

Please make checks payable to First Baptist Church with "Tierra Blanca" in the memo line. Your gifts are tax-deductible as allowed by law. If you prefer to donate online by credit card, please visit www.crowdrise.com/tierrablanca2018.



When we walk together, we can change lives.

First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor
Coffee Break Concert Series, 2017-2018 ⑤
Free Concert and Open to the Public

Violin ^{and} Piano • Organ

Andrew Jennings

Professor of Violin • Chamber Music
University of Michigan
Oberlin College Conservatory

Gail Jennings

Organist and pianist
Bethlehem United Church of Christ



Music by Handel, Szymanowski,
Harrison, Rochberg, Bernstein and Beethoven

February 15, 2018
Thursday at 12:15 pm

517 E. Washington St., Ann Arbor, MI 48104
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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next
Newsletter
Deadline:
Sunday, Feb 18

Ash Wednesday Service

As we enter the season of Lent, we reflect on our penitence and our mortality. Please join us this Wednesday, February 14, at 7:00pm, in the sanctuary, for a simple, somber service of prayer and ashes. Optional childcare will be provided for infants and toddlers.

Adult Lenten Church School Series: *A Clearing Season*

Drawing on an understanding of Lent as a season for "clearing space," this study will offer opportunities for participants to explore spiritual practices that can help them cultivate a deeper relationship with God. Starting on February 18, join us for Second Hour classes 11:30-12:30 in the Memorial Lounge.