



Pastor's Perspective by Paul Simpson Duke

May 23, 2018

I love Pentecost, and I loved our Pentecost service on Sunday. So many people dressed in red, the call to worship going back and forth from three directions, the speaking of the gospel in twelve different languages, new members joining, the choir rocking the house in jazzy, spirited song, a 5-year-old girl running to dance in front of the tenor soloist while he was singing—because he is her preschool music teacher and she dearly loves him. It was a day of laughter, high purpose, commitment, and joy.

And, at its center, was the telling of a very, very strange story—the account of the birth of the church as told in the 2<sup>nd</sup> chapter of Acts. During the very popular Jewish festival of Pentecost (*Savuot*, meaning “Weeks,” i.e., seven weeks after Passover—a celebration of the spring harvest and the giving of Torah at Sinai), 120 men and women were praying together in a large house in Jerusalem, as the risen Jesus had instructed them. Suddenly, they heard something “like the rush of a violent wind,” and they saw something like flames of fire that “rested on each of them.” Filled with the Holy Spirit, they all began to speak in different foreign languages. The streets were crowded with visitors to the festival—a cosmopolitan, multilingual multitude from around the known world. Many of these “internationals” heard their own native dialects and languages coming from the Spirit-filled folk, and were amazed. Peter spoke to the whole crowd about Jesus, and about 3000 of them believed and were baptized.

Some of us may know this story so well that we don't notice how, well, *weird* it is. The Gospels are filled with strange stories of miracles and wonders performed by Jesus, but not one of them strikes me as bizarre as this story does: the sound of a roaring wind when there was no wind; the sight of something like “tongues” of fire over 120 human heads; the whole lot of them speaking fluently in languages they don't know. My goodness! True, there's plenty of symbolism in it, but still. Even as biblical miracle stories go, this one seems to be off the charts.

Maybe there's a kind of logic to this. Maybe the Pentecost miracle is so over-the-top because turning people into a true, brave, diverse, free, faithful, and effective church is just about the biggest miracle imaginable. If plain, flawed human beings like us are to be filled with the spirit of Jesus together, be truly united, yet convey good news to the world in all our distinctive, various voices—as somehow one shared voice—the Spirit would have to pull out all the stops. Being, and continuing to be, a diverse, united, honest, missional, vibrant, healthy, growing church seems, in many ways, contrary to what is natural. For most of us, it is more natural to be anxious, suspicious, prickly, short-sighted, self-involved, distracted, and unimaginative. So Jesus said that what we'd need in order to become truly his church is to be “clothed with power from on high” (Luke 24:49). When it happens, it's a Wonder.

It did not escape my notice that when, after the service, we had a broad conversation about our church and the LGBTQ community, it was a Pentecost occasion. We were all together, we prayed, then people spoke one by one, each in the language of his or her own experience and conviction—and the subject was how best to be a diverse and united church in extending the gospel to people outside, and to do it in a language that can be perfectly understood as the outreaching Good News for them, as for us all. How about that! Going forward, may we be continually “clothed with power from on high.” And may we witness a Wonder.

On Sunday, April 15, our church began a series of conversations about our congregation's stance and practice towards members of the LGBTQ community. We have now had four productive, well-attended sessions. Audio recordings of the first three sessions (April 15 - "The Bible and Sexual Orientation/Gender Identity," April 22 - "Welcome and Full Inclusion Panel Presentation," May 6 - "Stories and Perspectives") are available on our church website (fbca2.org - go to "Events" and then click "Previous Events" to find the list). This past Sunday, May 20, we hosted our fourth session, a town-hall style congregational conversation; an audio recording of that conversation is available from the church office upon request.

After the town hall conversation, we took an informal survey of those present, to assess current response to the proposed Statement of Welcome. The responses to the proposed statement were overwhelmingly positive, and more than met our proposed 75% approval threshold for moving forward with a vote next month. In order to make sure we were getting an accurate picture of the congregation's feelings about the statement, we also sent the survey out via email (using an online platform that allows for anonymous response) to those local church members who were not able to be present for the town hall and survey. The response to the online survey has demonstrated the same high level of support for moving this statement forward.

We are now writing to let you know that **the congregation will be convening in a special meeting on Sunday, June 10**, following the worship service, to vote on the Statement of Welcome. This meeting is open to all, but only church members are qualified to vote. We have heard from people who are unable to be at the meeting on June 10, asking about other options for voting. Our constitution currently makes no provision for proxy or absentee voting, and we have yet to find precedent for such in our congregational history. Because of this, the Welcome and Full Inclusion Working Group believes we are not at liberty to make an exception for this particular meeting. If there are any in our congregation with special knowledge on this aspect of our constitution or our church history that might help clarify this matter, please do let us know!

Later this week, we will be sending out a document that addresses some of the written questions that were submitted at the end of the town hall meeting on Sunday. On June 3, we will also have a Second Hour session devoted to facilitated small group conversations - a chance to talk, listen, think, learn, and prepare ourselves for a healthy congregational meeting and vote. Please plan to participate! Between now and June 10, there is also still plenty of time to talk with one of us about any questions or concerns you might have about the statement or the process. We have been so grateful to hear the range of input from this church family, as we all seek together to be the most faithful, most loving community of Christ that we can be. We recognize that the conversation we are having as a congregation has not been easy or comfortable for everyone; nevertheless, it has been filled with love, respect, vulnerability, humility, and courage. Thank you for being part of this. Please keep our church in your prayers as we continue this conversation together.

With love,  
Stacey and Paul

## **Children's Christian Education and Music**



Several times this summer we'll have Lemonade on the Lawn. Weather permitting, the next one is scheduled for June 17th. There will be lemonade, goodies and yard games on the Huron Street lawn. There will be coffee and goodies in the Fellowship Hall as well. We look forward to the time spent snacking, playing and connecting!

## *FBC News & Happenings*

### **Thank you from the ABWM!**

The ladies of the AB Women's Ministries at FBC would like to thank our church family for the strong support given this past Sunday with the Spring Donation Bake Sale. Because of your generous donations, we will be able to continue with our many church projects. A special thank you to our wonderful bakers and their contributions.

### **Habitat for Humanity - Good News Houses 2018**

Dates have been set for our weekend and weekday workdays with Habitat for Humanity. The congregational work dates are set for Saturday June 9 and July 14, starting at 8:30 AM and ending at 3:00PM. For those members with flexible weekday schedules, our work date is Friday Aug 3.

The Good News Houses for 2018 are to be the renovations of two 1950's ranch houses in Ypsilanti. The houses are at 679 and 830 Calder. We will also need lunches on those three dates.

Please contact Scott Diels at 734-649-2787(Cell) or [hscottdiels@att.net](mailto:hscottdiels@att.net) if you are able to participate.

Thanks, Scott Diels

### **Scholarships Available**

Scholarships are available from the Chester and Violet Loucks and Fullerton funds for post-secondary education. For an application, please contact Mary Davis ([madrad@umich.edu](mailto:madrad@umich.edu)). The deadline for receipt of applications for the Loucks/Fullerton scholarships is June 1.

### **AB Women's Ministries Collection**

We continue to collect items to fill the purses everyone so generously donated (tissues, lip moisturizer, hand lotion, nail clippers, note pads, pens, etc. ) The filled bags will go to a local women's shelter. Any questions, ask Roberta. Thank you, in advance, for helping us.

### **The Interfaith Roundtable of Washtenaw County**

*Tastes of Faith - II: Fundraising Dinner Celebrating Father's Day and Indian Cuisine*

Date: Sunday, June 17, 2018

Time: Doors open at 5 pm, dinner and program from 5:30 to 8 pm  
(meal prepared and provided by the Chinmaya Mission)

Place: The Hindu Chinmaya Mission, 4760 Packard, Ann Arbor

Tickets: \$25 (meal only) - children 5 and under free, \$60 (family ticket)  
\$50 (Friends), \$75 (Sponsors), \$100 (Patrons)

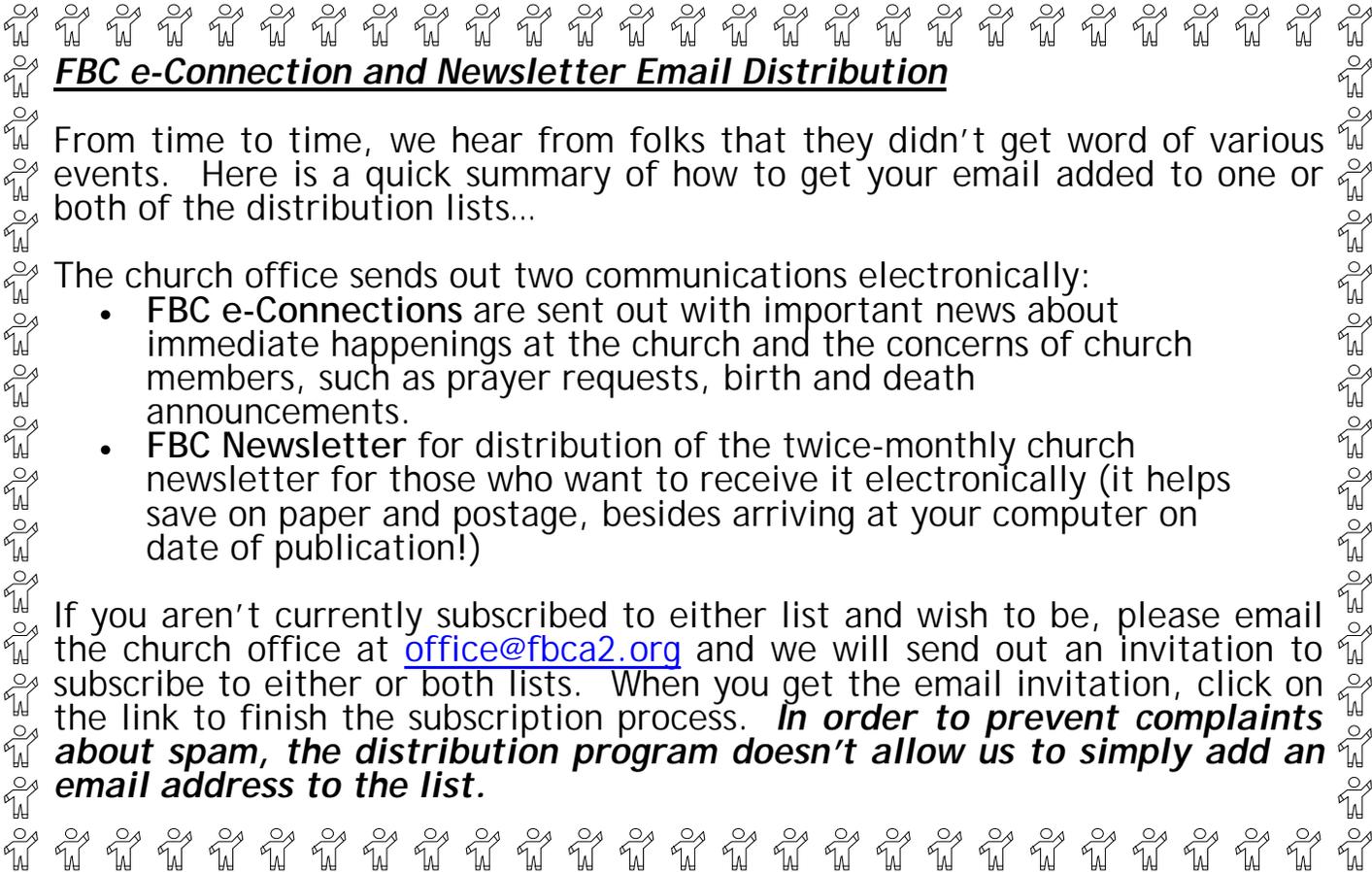
For more information, call 734-649-0107 or 734-678-5616 or email [gbrides@umich.edu](mailto:gbrides@umich.edu)

Come support the work of the IRT that focuses exclusively on creating a culture of understanding and inclusion.

# June 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3 <i>Graduation Sunday</i> 10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	4	5  5:30 Vespers	6	7  7:30 Choir	8	9  8:30 - 3:00 Habitat for Humanity Work Day
10 10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	11  6:00 Outreach	12 1:00 Mission Action  1:30 ChristCare  5:30 Vespers	13 *newsletter*	14	15	16
17 10:00 Worship 11:00 Lemonade on the Lawn	18  6:30 Facebook Book Group	19 9:30 VBS  1:00 Beecher- Brewer Cir.  5:30 Vespers	20 9:30 VBS	21 9:30 VBS  1:00 MacGregor- Stitt Circle	22	23  2:00 Mothering Justice
24 10:00 Worship	25	26 9:30 ABWM Brd.  5:30 Vespers	27 *newsletter*	28  1:00 ABWM Garden Party	29	30

Next  
Newsletter  
Deadline:  
Sunday, June 10



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

From time to time, we hear from folks 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 immediate happenings at the church and the concerns of church members, such as prayer requests, birth and death announcements.
- **FBC Newsletter** for distribution of the twice-monthly church newsletter for those who want to receive it electronically (it helps save on paper and postage, besides arriving at your computer on date of publication!)

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.***