



Pastor's Reflection by Paul Simpson Duke

December 12, 2018

Each year at our Christmas Eve service, a moment comes near the end when the congregation rises to sing, "Silent Night." I think that for many in the room, this is the highest or deepest or holiest moment in the service—all the more so because we sing the third verse without accompaniment, just our reverent, harmonizing voices. I suppose one reason this carol is so moving to so many people is its utter simplicity: a simple melody, simple harmonies, and simple words just describing the holy Child and expressing adoration. But maybe, too, something is stirred in us by the fact that each of the verses begins with the word, *Silent*. Softly, we keep repeating it: "Silent.... Silent.... Silent.... Silent...."

We are in a season that invites a balance between the raucous and the quiet, between the jolly and the hushed, the rollicking music of joy and the subdued, sighing music of longing, wonder, and peace.

In addition to "Silent Night," what are the quieter carols we love, the ones that bring us close to silence? "O Little, Town of Bethlehem" ("How still we see thee lie.... How silently, how silently"), "Lo, How a Rose E'er Blooming," "In the Bleak Midwinter," "Away in a Manger," and others. One of my favorites, and I almost never hear it, is "Still, Still, Still," which includes the words, "For all is hushed."

The reasons for such songs are obvious. We are gazing on a newborn baby, which invites us to soft tones or silence or lullabies. More importantly, we are in the presence of the deepest and tenderest Mystery, and in a state of wonder and love. What is more, the birth of this child calls us to simple receptiveness, contemplative self-giving, and the kneeling of the heart. All of this is an invitation to stillness. "Still, still, still," "Silent night [German: Stille Nacht], holy night."

All of which is to say that each of us would be wise to take up a regular practice of intentional silence during these remaining days of Advent. Isn't it absurd, how we speak of "the Christmas *rush*," and the way we get so swept away in the jingling and the buying and the ho-ho-ho? Let's take time for stillness. Sit in a darkened room with only candlelight or the lights on the tree. If you like, play the contemplative music of the season. The stillness will be for reflection, for listening to your heart, for prayer, for new choices, for wonder and love. Your soul needs it, and so does mine. It is the way to the deep heart of the season and to its richest gifts; and in what time remains, we can't afford to miss it.

Later on, we can knock ourselves out singing "Joy to the World" and "Have a Holly Jolly Christmas." But first, some open-hearted moments of silent morning and silent night. How can we not, when a sleeping baby is close by, and a star shines quietly in the night.

## **Children's Christian Education**

### **Our Sunday morning schedule:**

Children and Youth are an important part of our life together at First Baptist Church. All children are welcome in worship. 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)).

Children are encouraged to worship with their families. Optional nursery care (infant-3 year-olds) is available beginning at 9:45 am. Following Time as Children, 4 year-olds through 5th graders leave for Church School in the Children's Ministry wing.

### 4s-2nd Grade:

10:30-11:30	Church School (Room 202A)
11:30-11:45	Snack (202B)
11:45-12:05	Grace Notes Choir (202A)
12:05-12:30	Friendship Time (202B)

### *Resuming January 20:*

<u>Youth (6th - 12th grade):</u>	
11:30-12:30	Church School (Room 107)

### 3rd-5th grade:

10:30-11:30	Church School (Room 201B)
11:30-12:00	Snack and Friendship Time
12:00-12:30	Children's Choir (306)

### **Calendar for Kids at FBC:**

- **Saturday, December 15th:** Children's Choir (3rd-5th grade) has rehearsal for their Christmas Musical from 10-noon in the Sanctuary.
- **Sunday, December 16th:** Children's Choir presents their Christmas Musical during worship. Families are invited to participate in the congregation wide carol sing after Fellowship Time. Childcare will be provided during the carol sing. Kids (4s-2nd grade) will join us at the beginning of the carol sing and stay until they are ready to go play with our supervisors.
- **Sunday, December 23rd:** There will be no choir or Second Hour.
- **Monday, December 24th:** We have our Lessons and Carols Christmas Eve service modeled on the world-famous carol service from King's College in Cambridge, England, at 7:30 pm. Kids are welcome to attend. Optional care for young children is provided during this service.
- **Sunday, December 30th:** We will not have Church School or choir.

## **Adult Christian Education**

Our Sunday morning Christian Education series, *For All the Saints*, has come to an end for this year, and will resume on January 20

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

**Wednesday Bible Study** meets at 1:30pm in the Lounge. 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 every Wednesday evening during the school year, 5:00p-7:00pm, in the Campus Center, for a free, home-cooked meal, friendship, and spiritual growth. If you would like to receive our weekly e-newsletter, sign up here: <https://bit.ly/2N0FYGa>.

## FBC News & Happenings

The Mission Action Board is looking for one or more persons who will coordinate the 2019 Warming Shelter. The Warming Shelter ministry will be held at FBCCA on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the month of February. Last year we averaged 40 - 70 guests and 50+ meals. It is a much needed and important part of our homeless ministry in our Ann Arbor community. A Warming Shelter Coordinator Job Description is available. Contact the following for more information:

- Kent Jennings, email: [kentjen31@gmail.com](mailto:kentjen31@gmail.com), cell: 734-732-6802
- Ron Gregg, email: [rgregg@patientfocussystems.com](mailto:rgregg@patientfocussystems.com), w: 734-996-9232
- Kat Becker, email: [office@fbca2.org](mailto:office@fbca2.org) office: 734-663-9376

A festive poster for a Christmas Eve service. The background is light blue with white bokeh circles and snowflake patterns on the left. The text is in red and white. At the top, 'CHRISTMAS EVE' is in a bold, outlined red font. Below it, 'A Festival of Lessons &' is in a red cursive font. Underneath, 'CAROLS' is in a bold, outlined red font. The time '7:30pm' is in a red cursive font. A red ribbon banner at the bottom contains the text 'FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH' in white. At the bottom left, '517 E. Washington' is in red. At the bottom right, 'fbca2.org for free tickets' is in red.

**CHRISTMAS EVE**  
*A Festival of Lessons &*  
**CAROLS**  
*7:30pm*

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH**

**517 E. Washington** **fbca2.org for free tickets**

First Baptist Church of Ann Arbor presents ***A Festival of Lessons and Carols***, modeled on the world-famous carol service from King's College in Cambridge, England. Join us at 7:30p.m. Christmas Eve, Monday, December 24, to hear the Christmas story, join in singing beloved Christmas carols, and enjoy beautiful music from our choir. We want to make it as simple as possible for you to **invite** your family and friends to church for this service, and we also want to make sure we are **ready** to host everyone who wants to attend this service; we expect to have a full house! To assist with our hospitality, this year we are offering free tickets to our Christmas Eve service and asking everyone - whether members or visitors - to reserve their tickets online here: <https://bit.ly/2BV0fqg>. There are postcards available at the Information Counter to help you invite your friends. Free childcare will be provided for infants through first grade and may be reserved through the online ticketing system. We also have hard copy tickets available at the Information Counter for people who would prefer not to reserve them online.



**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.

**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.***

**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.

**Warm Clothing for Vespers Guests**

Please remember our Vespers guests during this cold weather. We are collecting new or gently used hats, gloves, mittens, scarves, long underwear, socks, coats, and sweatshirts. Donations of grooming & personal items, such as shampoo, soap (travel size and full size), toothpaste, tooth brushes, small Kleenex packs, and Band-Aids are also greatly appreciated. A basket will be near the Information Counter each Sunday for your donations.



**Join the Sunday Morning Welcoming Team!**

No meetings - just come and serve! Our Welcoming Team is one of our most important ministries. On Sunday mornings, volunteers stand in key places in the building to show hospitality to all who come for worship. Sign up online - Sign-up is online: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/20f0d44afa928ab9-sunday> - it's fast and easy! Sign up on your own, with a friend, with a spouse, or with your whole family. Sign up once or multiple times. Serving on our Welcoming Team is a great way to plug in to ministry at First Baptist and get to know others in our community. Questions? Contact Sam Laidlaw at [laidlawsam7@gmail.com](mailto:laidlawsam7@gmail.com).

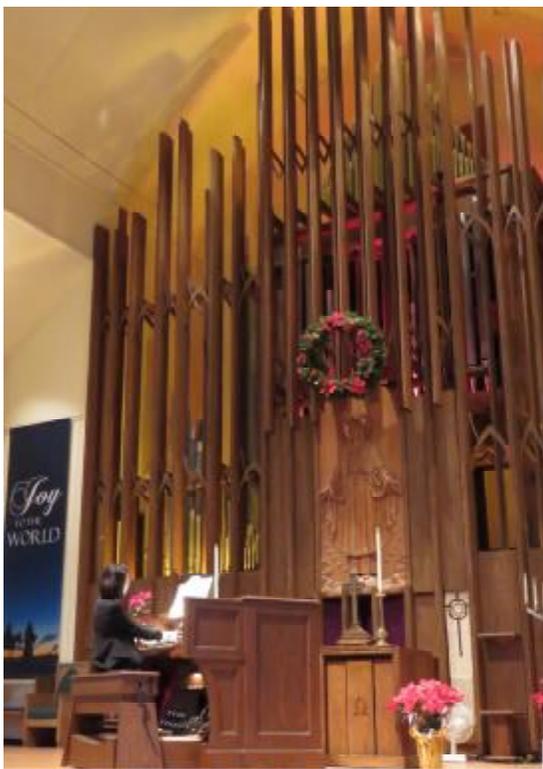


**2019 Calendars**

Only a few left! Each year the children sell *God's Creation* calendars for \$10. The profits are used to purchase books for the children of Hikone housing to be delivered with the food collection before Christmas. These heavy-weight calendars have beautiful nature photographs with scriptures. Only 25 calendars are available, so grab yours quickly! The calendars will be available for sale near the Information Counter before and after worship, or you may contact Sue Ellen.

### Coffee Break Concert Series

On a snowy and freezing rainy Thursday on December 6, about 40 people gathered in the beautiful sanctuary at Bethlehem United Church of Christ to hear the Organ Concert "Dancing at Christmas" performed by Shin-Ae Chun. Two contrasting organ pieces, one traditional and the other contemporary, were played on the warm sounding 3-manual Casavant Organ. Gregorian chants were often used in organ music. The chant that was used in Rheinberger's *Organ Sonata No. 3* was the 8th mode, which has still been used in Catholic churches to sing the Magnificat (Song of Mary, Gospel of Luke 1:46-55). Hakim's "*To Call My True Love to My Dance*" gave the audience a chance to hear different types of organ music such as a tango with different colors of the organ sound. The title of this piece is a quotation from a line of the English carol "*Tomorrow Shall Be My Dancing Day*." In addition to the organ pieces, two contrasting Christmas carols, one sacred and the other secular, were sung beautifully by the audience along with the organ accompaniment: *O Holy Night* and *Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas*. And as always, people shared good fellowship over nicely provided refreshments. No matter what reason you have to celebrate Christmas, it is, indeed, a wonderful time of the year; waiting for Jesus' coming, thinking of and shopping for loved ones, decorating our houses, and finally celebrating the birth of Jesus. Thanks to the wonderful cosponsorship of Bethlehem Church, our audience felt and tasted a little bit of Christmas. Next concert is Meditation I: "Music and Poetry" on March 14, Thursday at 12:15 pm. Mark it on your new calendar! - Shin-Ae Chun

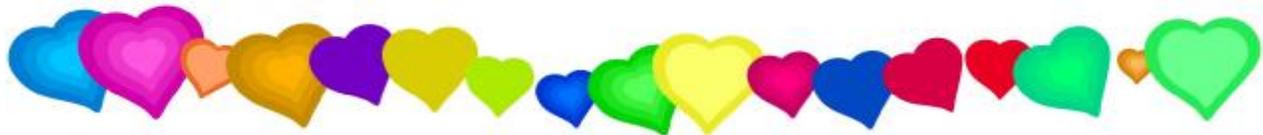


**Merry Christmas!**



# January 2019

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		1 New Year's Day  Church Office Closed  5:30 Vespers	2	3	4	5
6  10:00 Worship	7	8  1:00 Mission Action  5:30 Vespers 7:00 Executive Council	9  1:30 Bible Study  5:30 Gathering	10  7:30 Choir	11	12
13  10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	14	15  5:30 Vespers 6:00 Outreach	16  1:30 Bible Study  5:30 Gathering	17  7:30 Choir	18  7:00 Faith & Family Grp	19
20  10:00 Worship 11:30 2nd Hour	21	22  9:30 ABWM Board  5:30 Vespers	23  1:30 Bible Study  5:30 Gathering	24  7:30 Choir	25	26
27  10:00 Worship 11:30 Congregation Financial Meeting	28	29  5:30 Vespers	30  1:30 Bible Study  5:30 Gathering	31  7:30 Choir		



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The Reverends Paul & Stacey Simpson Duke, Co-Pastors

Next  
Newsletter  
Deadline:  
*Sunday, Jan 6*

## 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 14** .

Thank you!

