

Tidings



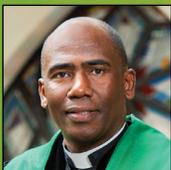
FIRST PRESBYTERIAN
CHURCH OF TULSA

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“Finally, brothers, whatever is **honorable**, whatever is **just**, whatever is **pure**, whatever is **lovely**, whatever is **commendable**, if there is any **excellence**, if there is anything **worthy of praise**, think about these things.”

-Philippians 4:8

In This Issue



**“Ordinary Time”
that is not
ordinary** p. 4



**Caring for
others amid
crisis** p. 6



**Peace in
the valley**
p. 11



Reopening and broadcast services

Reopening the Church for worship only beginning May 31 – Phase 1

A task force chaired by **Cynthia Stewart** brought a recommendation to the Session May 12 to reopen the Sanctuary, Stephenson Hall and the Great Hall for worship effective on **Pentecost Sunday, May 31st**. The Session overwhelmingly approved the Task Force's recommendations. Phase 1 includes opening three worship services only including 8:30 a.m. Stephenson Hall – contemporary worship, 11:00 a.m. Sanctuary – traditional worship, and 11:00 a.m. Great Hall – Tulsa International Fellowship worship. See more about our opening at <https://bit.ly/FPCOpen>.

Events as of this printing May 20. Online events subject to change. Check the website or Facebook calendar.



10:10 Pastor's Message, Monday through Saturday, 10:10 a.m. subject to change after June 1.
Watch online at www.Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa



Life on the Vine with Jackson and Hutch, New podcasts every Tuesday at 2 p.m.
Listen online at <http://LifeontheVine.podbean.com>



Armchair Theology with Hutch, Thursdays
Join Rev. Dan Hutchinson for discussion about a theological concept.
Watch online at www.Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa
and on the Facebook group: [Third Thursday Theology on Tap @ FPC](https://www.Facebook.com/ThirdThursdayTheologyonTap@FPC)



Fridays at Five: Worship Music with Eric, Fridays, 5 p.m.
Close your week with songs from Worship Leader Eric Baird.
Watch online at www.Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa



Children's programming, Throughout the week
Check website calendar for children's programming updates.
Watch online at [Facebook.com/FPCChildrens](https://www.Facebook.com/FPCChildrens)



Youth programming, Throughout the week
Programming for Pathfinders and Exodus can be found on their YouTube Channel and on their Facebook groups.
YouTube Channel: <https://bit.ly/YouthFPC>
Exodus Facebook group: [FPC Exodus Youth](https://www.Facebook.com/FPCExodusYouth)
Pathfinders Facebook group: [FPC Pathfinders](https://www.Facebook.com/FPCPathfinders)



Worship

Contemporary Sunday Worship
Sundays, 8:30 a.m., Stephenson Hall

Traditional Sunday Worship
Sundays, 11 a.m., Sanctuary
Watch online at: [Livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.Livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa)
and [Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa)
Cox Cable Ch. 3 at 11 a.m., 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Tulsa International Fellowship (TIF) Sunday Worship
Sundays, 11 a.m., Great Hall
Watch online at: [Livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.Livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa)
and [Facebook.com/wambugu.gachungi](https://www.Facebook.com/wambugu.gachungi)

A message to the First Church members



By Rev. Dr. James Miller

This issue of Tidings is unlike any other in the history of the 135-year history of the First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa. On that, I suspect, we can all agree. Never has First Church been closed, shuttered, locked down for eight Sundays in a row (and counting)! Never have we *not* been together during holy week, missing Palm Sunday and Easter. Never have we been instructed *not* to go outside, mingle with friends, or associate with colleagues at work. Isolate yourselves, we're told.

The word "isolate" comes from the Latin word, *insulatus* – which means to "make into an island." And we all know that "no man is an island." We're not hard-wired for that. We need each other. Our hearts beat for each other. We find encouragement and strength in being together. The presence of Christ comes to us in community.

I hope I never lose the hole-in-my-heart feeling I have on Sunday when I walk into an empty sanctuary. The vacant chapel. The silent atrium. And, I pray for a revival in each of our hearts that says, "Amen!" to that most vital of encouragements: *Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together* – Hebrews 10:25.

The Apostle Paul knew this. He anguished over it. He spoke freely about his "chains," – his literal imprisonment that kept him tied down (for at least five full years of his life). He speaks often of his needs, both physical and spiritual.

This morning we shared a "Zoom" staff meeting as we've done every Tuesday morning since our staff began working at home. I received this message from one of the staffers:

"Is there a way to start having staff chapel again? As we are caring for our ministry areas and devising new ways to minister, I personally am growing weary - mentally, emotionally and spiritually. I know I can't be alone in this among the staff. I would find it helpful to have a time where our staff spirits are collectively

bolstered and encouraged; a time where we are not discussing logistics, but just being fed."

For me, part of the silver-lining amid this deadly and destructive COVID-19 virus is found in that paragraph. The sense, the recognition, that we desperately need each other, that we rely upon the Body of Christ, gathered somehow, someway. We need to be together, "just to be fed" – nourished and strengthened by the presence of Christ among us.

Or, how about this e-mail (paraphrased) from a friend deeply engaged in the FPC community:

"I've spent a lot of time thinking about why the Church being closed is so upsetting to me. Here's what I landed on ... as a kid, I felt safe and normal and loved at Church. But when my family wasn't "at Church," wasn't participating in the community, all of that seemed to go away. I discovered that I need the gathering; I need to connect with people. I need the relationships. I need a place where we can talk about real stuff, our shared concerns and challenges, learn from each other and take courage from one another."

This is why Jesus gathers the disciples together into community. That's where He promises to meet us. Together, in Christ, we're fed, nourished, strengthened. But watch that same group of Christians, that community of the Beloved, once they're fed you will see them eager to be out and about, straining to serve in Jesus' name.

That's *the other* part of this silver-lining visible in this whole ordeal. Men and women, younger and older, looking for ways (amid all the necessary confinements) to extend the love of Jesus to a hurting and broken world. To me, this is the main story. This is what we need to keep our eyes on. This is headline good news. Watch, look and listen to what God is bringing about in these days.

My list is long (and I don't know the half of it!) of all the hard-working, under-the-radar, folks serving and caring for others because their

hearts beat with Christ's love. None of them are looking for recognition.

But ask **Jan Miller** sometime why she was prompted to band together a ministry of callers and a "buddy system" of "prayer and care" – bridging the gap between folks in special need and the Church community who loves them.

Ask the anonymous giver of the Easter lilies purchased for the (empty!) sanctuary on Easter Sunday why that was important for her? Or, ask the "**Sherry Halliburtons**" (working with her daughter, **Amy**) why they felt urged to arrange those lilies so beautifully.

Ask **Allison Biggs**, one of our newest members, what prompts her to charge the hill of community need, bringing an army with her, each of whom wants more than anything else, to simply give themselves away for Jesus' sake.

Ask **Sam DeVore** and **Eddie James** why they showed up to give out 150 box lunches to the folks at Hewgley Terrace Apartments.

Ask those who have given generously out of their own need to financially support their Church.

Ask the Session why they chose to give \$75,000 to those in special need. Ask why First Church would direct monies to pastoral discretionary accounts of pastors serving northside Churches.

The list goes on and on.

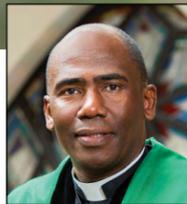
The Apostle Paul sat in prison, lamenting the inability he had to be out and about. He must have thought "I could be so much more useful to the Kingdom, proclaiming the good news of Jesus, if I were free."

But consider this: if it weren't for those prisons in which Paul languished, he might never have written the letters we call his "prison epistles." And, we would never have read them. Who wants to give up Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians or Philemon? Gifts that keep on giving, indeed!

God is continually at work to redeem. Always and in every circumstance. So let's keep our hearts open to His promptings. Let's keep our eyes open to His work. Let's listen for His voice to get into the fray. To collaborate with His work.

In this trying season of COVID-19, let's remember His word to us: "Be strong and courageous –for I the Lord, your God, am with you wherever you go." (Joshua 1:9). A dangerous, deadly season for all of us? Yes. But the Light of Christ is seen most clearly in the dark. Watch for it. Reflect it. Take joy in Him!

“Ordinary Time” that is not ordinary



By Rev. G. Wambugu

My Church liturgical calendar is before me as I write this note. I'm counting six liturgical seasons beginning from December but for counting purposes I will start in January with Ordinary Time after Epiphany, followed by Lent, Easter and Ordinary Time after Pentecost, Advent and Christmas. These seasons are symbolized by four colors. The year begins with white, then green, followed by purple, white, red and then green. Green is more prominent, and it represents the “Ordinary Time.”

So, why is green more prominent than other colors and why is it called Ordinary Time? Does it mean that this season of the Church is not important or nothing of significance happens in the Church calendar? Is it just ordinary? It is important to know the meaning of the season rather than just assuming the meaning of the name. This is important because some Christians have interpreted this season of the Church as unimportant. Some Christians become inactive until next season when the colors of the Church change to white or purple – Christmas and Easter.

Ordinary Time, for some of us in the western world is a low season of the Church. We become inactive in Church “stuff.” We take a break. I'm bothered by the idea that it seems there is season when a Christian is supposed to be inactive or just ordinary or takes a break in religious things. The pews are empty and attendance is low in many Churches. Why? The scripture calls the followers of Jesus Christ to be inwardly strong and outwardly focused *in season and out of season* (2 Tim 4:2). There is no ordinary time for a Christian! Green color does not give us the green light to do whatever we want. It's the liturgical season for growth.

When you see green robes, green vestments, green paraments around the Church this season, remember it not just Ordinary Time for Christians to be inactive, rather it is time for the Church to blossom. It is time for the Church to ‘reveal green’ in the world.



“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you.”

– Matt 28:19-20

“Go therefore and make disciples” is the green time for the Church. It is time for every believer to allow Christ to stir up their faith and to blossom in the dark world; it is time to bear fruit of the Kingdom.

After Pentecost, the early Church according to the book of Acts, was set loose into the world. Christians formed “small groups” gathering in homes for prayers and breaking bread. Men and women were empowered by the gift of the Holy Spirit and began to preach the gospel without fear or intimidation. It was not ordinary time for the early disciples and it is not ordinary for the Church today. The Holy Spirit is here with us. We are enlivened. Let us join the crowd of witnesses in this “Ordinary Time” to do extraordinary work for the Kingdom of God.

It is time to blossom. It is time to be stirred up by the Holy Spirit. It is time bear fruit. So, if it is not Advent, Christmas, Lent or Easter, it is Ordinary Time. Go therefore make disciples.

Reflection on trusting God amidst an uncertain time



By Dan Hutchinson

Hanna and I went into the hospital on March 16. The day before, we had been in worship. The Wednesday prior, I had led the Wednesday Night Downtown Lenten worship service. The previous weekend, we even went out for a date. Suddenly, our lives and everything else seemed to change. Little Edmund was born on March 17, and when we came home on March 19, the city was shut down. It was surreal. I felt like I was living out the script of a movie or stepping back into history.

The transition home was less disruptive than it might have been. However, there were questions we had to consider that didn't seem to have good answers including: how do we keep this little one safe? Are we OK with grandparents coming to hold their grandson? If not, how do we tell them and how long do we make them wait? Is curbside actually a safer way to shop than going into a store? These were minor questions in the grand scheme of a global shutdown with people losing their lives and their livelihoods, but what I began to feel in that first week home was fear.



Edmund Hutchinson

I analyzed every breath, trying to discern any signs of COVID-19 that I might inadvertently pass on to my son.

I was experiencing a loss of control. I don't think I am alone in this. In some ways, the whole world has been realizing how little control we have. Despite our technology, medical capabilities and all our progress, it did not take much to upend our routines.

I've been reading through the book of James with a group of college students, and in 4:13-15, James writes, “Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit’ – yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. Instead you ought to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.’”

I don't know if you find this verse immediately comforting, but it speaks an important truth. We do not control what tomorrow will bring – God does. This, in part, is the good news of Scripture. God is the Lord of tomorrow and He is able to work redemptively for our good, even in the midst of difficult and uncertain circumstances.

“He is able to work redemptively for our good, even in the midst of difficult and uncertain circumstances.”

– Rev. Dan Hutchinson

As I have wrestled with my own response to the events in our world, I have reflected on two questions: do I truly trust God with my life and how has God called me to be faithful right here and now? It's easy enough to say that I trust God when I don't have to trust God. But what about when I have no other option? Faith in God is never theoretical. It's always situational. How do I live faithfully with the time that God has given to me, knowing that God is sovereign? Faith and discipleship are not put on hiatus because there is a pandemic. Obedience does not get sidelined because we are in quarantine. I see this time as an invitation to think creatively and evaluate if the rhythms of our lives are pleasing to God.

I have loved seeing the ways in which the people of God are living out their faith during this time. My prayer for us is that we would learn to trust that God loves us instead of being governed by fear. I pray that we would relinquish our desire to control tomorrow and instead ask, “How can I be faithful with the time God has given to me?”



Caring for others amid crisis

by Braigen Hubbard

Continued from page 6

Once called upon, Church members and staff of all ages volunteered their time to call and check on people, their energy to run errands for those who were homebound, and their resources to help support the efforts of the Church and assist members in financial crisis. Some parishioners stepped up in their own ways, offering to give a special gift or to deliver homemade cookies to individuals who needed some cheering up. It may be cliché, but the saying “the worst of times brings out the best in people,” is true for our congregation. We will look back on this time in history and say with confidence that we opened our hands to our neighbors and provided for their needs, whatever they were.

The saying “the worst of times brings out the best in people,” is true for our congregation.



“If there is among you a poor man, one of your brethren, in any of your towns within your land which the Lord your God gives you, you shall not harden your heart or shut your hand against your poor brother, but you shall open your hand to him, and lend him sufficient for his need, whatever it may be...”

– Deuteronomy 15:7-11



Lizzy Bradford and other members of the Hillcrest ICU team fuel up on Old School Bagel Cafe sandwiches, provided by the Church, at the beginning of their shift.



Volunteers at Hunger Free Oklahoma's TPS food distribution sites bag and distribute anywhere between 200-900 meals per day, depending on their location.



Online training for Masterwork students.

Not only as the Church, but as brothers and sisters in Christ, we have a responsibility to meet the needs of those around us. There has yet to be such a pronounced collective need, not only in our own communities, but worldwide, as we have seen during the global pandemic of COVID-19. These needs come in many forms, including spiritual, physical and financial need. While we can all lift each other up in prayer and encouragement, it takes planning and careful execution to manage finite resources in a way that meets the physical and financial needs of those in our community.

Cindy DeVore and **Jenette McEntire** stepped into education support roles with our Emerson and Anderson students, helping coordinate supplies for distance learning and providing online classes through Masterwork Art Academy. Others volunteered their time staffing Helping Hand Ministries, led by **Emma** and **Brian Smith**, and **Tom Marberry**; and Hunger Free Oklahoma's TPS food distribution sites, initiated and lead by **Allison Biggs**. **Jan Creveling** coordinated with the City of Tulsa's Early Settlement Mediation Program to assist tenants facing eviction once the courts reopened. Teams of phone-buddies and pen-pals, led by **Jan Miller**, spent their time calling and writing the isolated senior members of the congregation to spread the love of Christ and keep spirits lifted.

An especially large effort to support healthcare workers, students, and individuals in food or financial crisis was made through the creation of the 8:10 COVID-19 Emergency Fund, approved by the 8:10 Council, chaired by **Dr. Patrick Grogan**. Because of these funds, the Church was able to keep food on the table, assist with living expenses, and give back to the healthcare heroes jeopardizing their own health to keep our community safe and take care of the sick. The connection to ICU workers at Hillcrest, through **Lizzy Bradford**, and to St. Francis Emergency Room workers through **Lindsey Schuster** allowed us to bless these hard working healthcare professionals with quality meals and coffee, while also supporting local food establishments. This just scratches the surface of the efforts put forward by volunteers and staff during the pandemic.



Jan and Dwight Creveling with Helping Hand Ministry.

From the heart

By Eric Baird

Several times a year I get the distinct pleasure of playing guitar with a group of passionate worshipers who, every week, pour out their hearts in song. When I get to experience those times with them, the worship they lead is so unique, beautiful and genuine. I'm always swept into the current of the moment and am able to fully rejoice with these in the presence of the Lord. With this article, I hope to shed a little light on this wonderful ministry team - the Tulsa International Fellowship (TIF) worship team.

To get a behind the scenes scoop, I called **Rachael Tsuma**, our associate director of Children's Ministry - Elementary, who has long been a member of the TIF worship team. Rachael tells me that the entire team, including Director **Allan Kanyeki**, are volunteers or are college students on scholarship. Allan is assisted in leadership by **Grace Masaku** and **Solomon Tsuma**. Allan assigns the team and he and Solomon work with **Pastor Wambugu** to select the music for the week, which is chosen to accompany the sermon topic. The team practices every Saturday and though the practices are meant to last two hours, they usually go for at least three hours because, “We love spending time with each other.”

I asked Rachael, “What makes this ministry tick?” She said, “These are people who love the Lord. They all have stories, many have come through great trials of life and this is their way of thanking the Lord. Watching them worship has shown me the heart of God.”

If you have not had the opportunity to experience TIF worship, I encourage you to take a Sunday and watch or visit the service at 11 a.m. and rejoice together with these, who come from all over the world, in worshipping our risen Lord Jesus.



“These are people who love the Lord ... Watching them worship has shown me the heart of God.”

– Rachael Tsuma

Children's programming reimagined

Online children's programs March through May 2020

By Katie Williams

Six days a week and then they rest.

The children's programming at the Church has an incredible responsibility to grow the faith base of the children in the Church with the word of God. That is an awesome and joyful experience in the best of times. There were hugs, smiles and interaction all week at the Church when we were meeting. When the Church closed, the children's programming hit another level of creativity.

Monday's



Every day, a new way to connect with their faith life was offered. Starting with the young, the Little Lambs still had a virtual meeting on Mondays to learn and sing together.

Tuesdays



Then on Tuesdays, families from the Church came forward to teach about different topics in Worship 101. And, that was supplemented with incredible family sing time links from **Gretchen Bashforth**.

Thursdays and Saturdays



Thursdays and Saturdays, **Courtaney Miller** led with fun ways to read a story and share some time with the children. We met her dog, and shared in singing as the children learned about the stories in the Bible.

Wednesdays



The extra energy of Awana did not miss a beat with **Grace Shelton** and others who lead the children in virtual Awanas on Wednesdays. They used stories and activities to stretch mind and body and grow in the love of God.

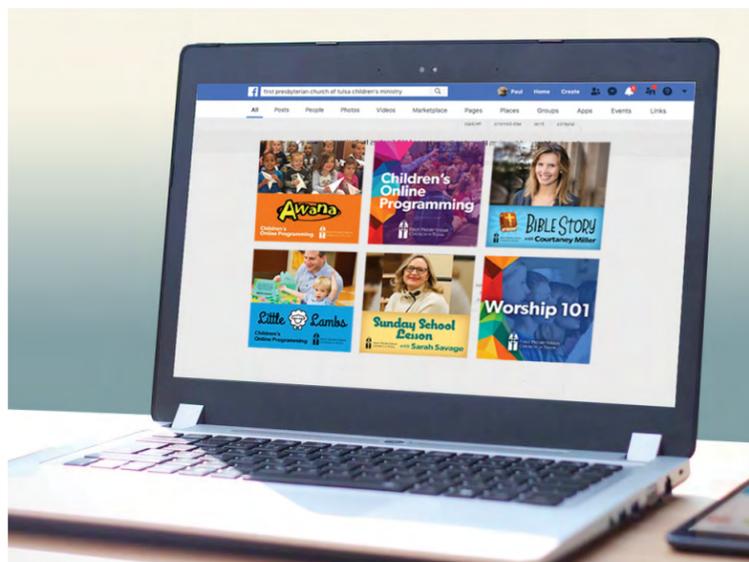
Friday's



And on Friday, **Sarah Savage** and **Rachael Tsuma** lead the Sunday school lesson of the week. They connected with extra videos, work sheets and things to do at home. All these connections during the week, just remind us that our Church family is always there and walking hand in hand with us. If you miss the time or the day, we now can just get online and catch up. It truly has become a 24 hour/ 7 day a week ministry. Also, families have participated in worship by video, shared their Easter day and continue to connect.

God took nothing and in six days created this great earth and six days a week our Children's Ministry team keeps our children connected to the Church, the Church family and most importantly, to their growing faith in this time of separation. And, as a parent I say Thank You!

Stay tuned for summer children's offerings as posted on E-News, the website calendar and Facebook.



Scouts update

by Ron Hart, Scoutmaster

Unlike the leaves of the forests they haunt, Boy Scouts don't retire when winter comes. In fact, some of the best camping in Oklahoma happens when the air is cool and the nights are long. Nothing compares to crisp, quiet nights when sounds travel for miles and clear skies offer a view to every star in the winter sky.



Jack Davenport takes a turn tending the fire to dry some wet clothes and socks for the team.

Scouts of Troop 1 were busy prior to the self-isolation we all experienced in late winter and early Spring.

Nineteen Scouts and adults attended our annual trek to **Dead Woman's Gulch**, in the deep woods of rural Cherokee County. Some of the boys built their own shelters using materials from nature and from the garage.

We started January by serving as the fire and safety crew for First Church's annual **Epiphany service** and follow-the-cross lake plunge. Scouts helped organize discarded trees and greens from various Church members and managed the bonfire as well as the warming fire.



Three wise men prepare for the Epiphany service at Camp Loughridge (Krishna Bhadrirajnu, Alex Byers and Jon Scheiper).

Our January campout was our annual trip to the **Trappers' Rendezvous**, an annual event hosted by the Wichita (KS) area Scout council where Scouts interact with living history mountain men. It always is chilly at Trappers', but this regional campout has evolved into a giant swap meet for nearly 6,000 Scouts and adult leaders.



One of the programs at Trappers' was a demo mining camp kitchen, offering hot cider and bits of smoked ham as a snack.

In February, we traveled to western Missouri to **Snow Creek Ski Area** for a day of fun. On the way, we stopped in Kansas City to see Union Station and tour the Science Museum there. Snow Creek is a family-friendly ski resort northwest of Kansas City.

And, we focused on our own local history in March, camping and rock climbing at **Robbers Cave State Park**, a famous hideout for outlaws in the old Indian Territory after the Civil War. Scouts and parents were treated to horseback riding along the same highland trails used by Belle Starr and her outlaw band.

"I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day."

From The Darkling Thrush
by Thomas Hardy



Amy Scheiper and son, Will, are preparing to race up the mountain.

Trust, compassion, stability and hope

By Cynthia Stewart



We find ourselves navigating white waters in a global experience akin to none other in history.

For most people, life in the COVID-19 era is like skating on ice for the first time with no ice skates. You hope there are plenty of people around to catch you from falling on the slippery surface - but wait, there's no touching and there's very few people nearby. We need proper skates because the ice stretches out before us and we don't know how far we have to go to safety.

We need to be able to find trust, compassion, stability and hope to steady our legs and to skate more confidently into the unknown.

These four needs - **trust, compassion, stability and hope** - are human needs that followers seek from their leaders. Gallup uncovered this in significant research where they sampled 10,000 "followers" in organizations, schools, Churches, social networks and families. Gallup refers to these as "The Four Needs of Followers."

When we think about the needs of followers of Jesus, these match up beautifully with how Jesus leads us. It's no wonder that all research uncovers truths so deeply rooted in the Incarnate Word.

Followers **trust** leaders who lead with honesty, integrity and respect. To engender trust, leaders need a high degree of candor and authenticity. Jesus said "truly I tell you" close to 200 times in the gospels. He perfectly modeled for us the value of being honest in all our dealings, acting with integrity and respecting others.

Followers seek **compassion** from leaders who demonstrate caring, friendship, happiness and love. Jesus' little flock stayed with Him. His followers thronged after him and formed crowds around Him. They felt His love and compassion, as we feel it today. As we all know, "What a friend we have in Jesus."

When we model Jesus as leaders, we fill the needs of our followers - in our families and work teams - with trust, compassion, stability and hope.

— Cynthia Stewart

Followers seek **stability** through security, strength, support and peace. The first thing that Jesus said to His disciples when He appeared to them after His resurrection is, "Peace be with you." He spoke directly to their fear, confusion and grief. Those words gave them everything they needed - security, strength, support and peace.

Followers find **hope** in leaders who lead them into a brighter future with faith, direction and guidance. Jesus grounds our faith in God. When we put on the armor of God, in faith we put on the "hopeful" helmet of salvation. He assures us of the brighter future which He prepares for us.

When we model Jesus as leaders, we fill the needs of our followers - in our families and work teams - with trust, compassion, stability and hope. Fundamentally this is what people need most to calm their fears, meet their distress and bring hope.

Peace in the valley

By Mark Brown

Dr. David Dyson, basking in the glow of retirement, sat less than comfortably in his easy chair. He'd not been feeling well for days. His daughter, Laurel Baird — named for the wreaths the ancients used to crown their athletes, because her parents, "wanted to speak God's victory into my life," — could tell the symptoms were lining up. David told his wife to call 911. He was driven to St. Francis and admitted to the COVID-19 ward, where the doctor told him he was going on life support. What most worried him now was his wife Linda. He went under sedation on March 22—a Sunday—and remained on a ventilator for a week. In June, he'd turn 69.



"The Lord has chastened me severely, but he has not given me over to death."

— Psalm 118

Faith

A large team gathered in the hall outside his room, about to prep him for treatment. A few things went through his mind, but not panic. "I had a conversation with God," he said. "It was not the first time we'd talked."

"Sure, I wanted to see my wife again," he said. "See my children and grandchildren, but the other side is not something I feared." God said to me, "I have a plan."

David Dyson, a member of First United Methodist, taught in the College of Business at Oral Roberts University. Laurel took his courses on ethics and nonprofit business.

That Sunday, Laurel and her husband Eric streamed the Tulsa International Fellowship service. "The sermon text came from John 11," Laurel said, "... and I held onto this quote from Pastor Wambugu all week: 'We are often too early to believe Jesus is late.' My Dad went on a ventilator that night and did not come off until the next Sunday.



Pictured left to right: Robert Pyle, Eric and Laurel Baird with daughter Joy, Linda and David Dyson.

Many times that week it felt like, "What are you waiting for, Jesus?" Mary and Martha thought that about Lazarus.

"I kept holding onto the fact that Jesus would be glorified best in the way He chose to act in this situation," Laurel thought, "even if it differed from my timeline."

Hope

The second thing David remembers upon waking up were the restraints, strapping him to the bed so he wouldn't thrash and tear his tubes loose. The first was the light. "I could see but everything was hazy. Like the blind man in Mark's Gospel. I see people, but they look like trees."

The doctor stressed to him that there was no guarantee. We're not out of the woods, he put it. Remembering the restraints, David offered prayers.

"Hebrews 13, 'Remember those who are in chains, as if imprisoned with them, and those who are ill treated, since you are also in the body.'"

He felt cold at times and offered prayers for those also cold. When he felt short of breath, he prayed for the breathless, like he's done with the Bartlesville organization, The Voice of the Martyrs, praying for Christians suffering worldwide. For those on the frontline.

Love

He's home now. Linda, who went home without him and into quarantine for two weeks, still occupied a separate area of the house. "We touched with our eyes," David said.

One thing he misses is worship and singing. Singing, like the army of Jehoshaphat, armed only with their voices. And Martin Luther's Mighty Fortress: "Our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing."

He learned, without God, are we ever out of the woods?

"Psalm 118," he said, quoting. "I will not die but live, and will proclaim what the Lord has done."



Dr. David Dyson, longtime ORU professor, in a teaching moment. Photo by Mary Ellis



The God of the small things

By Mark Brown

Let's begin where, for all of us, this life will end, that is, with the worms.

After a peaceful (if unproductive) fishing trip to Dripping Springs Lake, I emptied a box of unspent nightcrawlers onto the lawn. Fearful that birds might make short order of them, I grabbed a strangely handy wire waste basket from the garage and set it over the wriggling mound. Then I fell on my knees to watch.

Those segments of a worm are called annuli. They are marked by dozens of small bristles called setae, which allow the worm to not only move but nosedive into the packed earth. A worm seems, to the naked eye, incapable of nosing its way into soil, but seeing is believing. When I came back for my basket, they were gone.

Lately, I have been noticing things. Small things. I don't know if it's because I have the time or, borne of some intuition, the inclination. Whatever, in the bliss wrought by the treacherous unknown, I keep seeing God.

My neighborhood walks are more neighborly these days. I watch among the parked cars for the odd vanity plate, most of them so obscure only the owner knows the meaning. Where's the vanity in that?

I can't go a block without encountering somebody I take care to steer clear of. The block feels alive, strangely, and my noticing extends beyond the human.

The helicopter seeds that twirl from a maple, we now know, spin much like the vortex of a tornado. Bats, hummingbirds and insects employ the same physics when they flap their wings. Who'd a thunk?

I bent to pull a weed from a bloom of Star of Bethlehem flowering in Mudd Park 2, the name Google gives to the park near Carnegie elementary. It felt, to me, out of place. I tugged and the weed would not give, not unlike the way an unripe peach will resist rash plucking.



Whatever, in the bliss wrought by the treacherous unknown, I keep seeing God.

— Mark Brown

It's April, and the worms are out. I bent to pull a wandering nightcrawler off the asphalt, lifting it with a stick onto a fescue lawn. Peering tread level at the road, I saw asphalt as any another aggregate, like those composed of river rock. Asphalt, when it cracks, breaks and bends like a river.



Those are some small things.

Before we turned tail for Dripping Springs, we strolled a branch of the Deep Fork River, looking for a spot to wet a hook. The river ran milky brown as a bottle of Chocolate Soldier. Large driftwood angled in the current that tugged deftly at the red-clay banks.

Our sons had spotted a black snake of some sort and, while not taunting it, were certainly showing it attention. Snakes, ever since Eden, have drawn the short straw. How, though, do they differ from the other critters of creation?

I walked on ahead, mining the current for increasingly unlikely fishing holes. Too wild, this torrent. On the gravel road ahead of me were spread the shards of a fallen limb. At some point, I must have taken my eyes off the ball.

"MARK!" my wife screamed.

Instinctively, I turned toward her and lept unwittingly into harm's way.

"No, NO, come back!" she said, beckoning wildly.

I danced an awkward dance and felt a grip in my chest. Behind me, snaking its way across the road a social-distance six feet between us, lay a very long, very thick cottonmouth. It seemed not to mind. We're talking ball bat thick, tapering to the pitted head young Okies are trained to fear.

This instinctive dread ... is this the legacy of Eve, who surely must have recoiled from the serpent at first sight? Has the fear of getting stung been handed down so long as that? Genesis talks of the serpent being crafty, which is believable enough, though craft is not the attribute I would give to the loaded beast ambling its way into the muck of Deep Fork.

Nor, I must confess, did I venture close enough to find any marvel in its design.



"For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made."

—Romans 1:20

Life on the Vine podcast series

By Jackson Seibert



Life on the Vine with Jackson and Hutch – a new podcast series created by **Jackson Seibert** and **Dan Hutchinson**, has been a long time coming. The concept and desire for a podcast was merely a, "One day I would like to try that," in the back of Rev. Dan Hutchinson's mind. We had just finished a meeting and Dan was rattling off all the ideas and hopes he had for ministry including the things he would like to do but could never find the time for. "I would really like to do a podcast. I think that would be pretty cool." The words came out as if he already knew that it would never happen, but you could hear the spark of life that happens when you start to create something new. "What do you think? Would you ever want to do one?"

I was in! I had no idea what I was doing, and still don't, but I was ready! Then Dan left for sabbatical. Our momentum halted before we ever got going. That was when I realized I didn't need the same passion as Dan, I could just be the sound guy. So I did some research on the internet, purchased some equipment, watched some videos on YouTube and we were ready to record.

Upon Dan's return, we quickly realized we needed a direction. What was our goal? Who were we speaking to? We wanted to talk about anything and everything, but that wasn't going to work. Naturally, we narrowed it down to the incredibly slim topic of Christian living. We also needed a name. We tossed out some good ones and some bad ones. In the end we decided to go to Jesus for inspiration and finally settled on "Life on the Vine with Jackson and Hutch."

John 15 is the perfect image of what we are trying to speak to in this podcast. We aren't talking about life in general, but life tied into Jesus. We are excited to explore all the ins and outs of living a life that is intimately connected to Jesus. We are also not here to provide all the answers, but if you want to join us on our "can of worms" adventure, you can tune in to "Life on the Vine with Jackson and Hutch." We launch a new episode each Tuesday at 2:00 pm. You can find the podcast on popular apps like Apple Podcasts, Google Podcasts and Podbean. Or you can go to our podcast website <http://lifeonthevine.podbean.com> and follow all our content.

We hope that you listen, enjoy, and draw closer to Jesus!

Parish Register

January – April 10, 2020

Meet our newest members



Eric and Laurel Baird



Allison Biggs



Jeff Biggs



MaryAnn Blackburn



Cassia Carr



Joel Carr



Dr. Heather Cha



Carly Chalmers



Shonda Crites



Dr. Major Cunningham



Stephanie Fowkes



Marnie Grimes



Rob Grimes



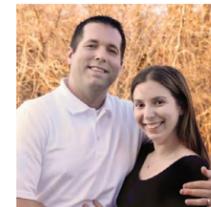
Heath Lofton



Jennifer Lofton



Dr. Billy "B.P." Loughridge



Brett and Abby Miller



Joshua Peters



Barrett Powers



Sofie Awungshi Roblyer



Jim Savage



Sarah Savage



Will Savage



Grace Shelton



John Shelton



Dylan Trotzuk



Jane Trotzuk



Frederick Tsuma Katana



Mary Tsuma

Ready for the next steps to membership?

Join us for our next Inquirer's Class. For more information, contact **Patricia Hall**, director of new member outreach at 918-301-1028 or phall@firstchurchtulsa.org.



The Sacrament of Baptism

Edwin Cawiezell, son of Pat and Gillian Cawiezell on January 26, 2020.

With gratitude for the resurrection

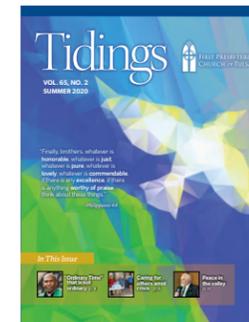
- Clay Roblyer**, a member since 1993, died Jan. 18, 2020.
- Diane Cherry**, a member since 2002, died Jan. 20, 2020.
- Lloyd Elliott**, a member since 1993, died Jan. 26, 2020.
- Jimmie Mathews**, a member since 1991, died Feb. 2, 2020.
- Jerry Nixon**, a member since 2002, died Feb. 7, 2020.
- Bill Ball**, a member since 1998, died March 3, 2020.
- Ralph Kitch**, a member since 2000, died March 15, 2020.
- Beverly Jacobs**, an affiliate member since 2007, died March 18, 2020.
- Lalah Adair**, a member since 1945, died March 31, 2020.
- Frank Efron**, a member since 2013, died April 4, 2020.

The celebration of Christian marriage

Kelli Fitzpatrick and **Blake Johnson** were married on Jan. 25, 2020.
Rachael Kamaru and **Solomon Tsuma** were married on March 21, 2020.

Pastoral Care

Do you need prayer? Would you like to report a birth, marriage, hospitalization, or death? Email Bev Carter at bcarter@firstchurchtulsa.org or call 918-301-1029. For afterhours emergencies, please call 918-584-4701.



Tidings: The Holy Spirit at work in and through the members of the First Presbyterian Church

Tidings is a quarterly publication of First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa, 709 S. Boston, Tulsa, OK 74119.

Read past issues of Tidings on our website at firstchurchtulsa.org/tidings. If you would like to write an article or take photos for Tidings, please contact Louann Buhlinger at 918-301-1032 or email lbuhlinger@firstchurchtulsa.org.

Editorial Team: Hannah Elliott, Duff Points, Patricia Hall
Contributing Writers: Eric Baird, Mark Brown, Michael Grogan, Patricia Hall, Ron Hart, Braigen Hubbard, Rev. Dan Hutchinson, Rev. Dr. James Miller, Cynthia Stewart, Rev. G. Wambugu, Katie Williams, Kathy Wilson
Designer: Paul Marsh
Editor: Louann Buhlinger

New First Church Website

We have a new website. It is streamlined featuring the most viewed information including event calendar, live and recorded services, and contact information. Members and newcomers will find the site easy to use.



www.FirstChurchTulsa.org

Website Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

- Q: Where do I find the calendar?**
A: Scroll down to the bottom of the first page and you will see several events. Click the button below these events to see the monthly calendar. Or, click the magnifying glass at the top of the page and enter the search word, "events."
- Q: Where do I find the title of the sermon and/or the bulletin for the upcoming worship service?**
A: Go to the calendar for the upcoming service and click on the worship event. It will take you to a page that lists the title of the sermons for all services, the ministers that are preaching and a link for the bulletin(s). This is usually updated on Friday afternoons prior to the Sunday worship service when the worship planning is completed. Note that during the Church closure, broadcast services will continue with no bulletin.
- Q: Where do I find the worship service videos?**
A: Click the "watch" button on the homepage just under the Church name.
- Q: How do I find a list of all the pages on the website so that I can pick my destination?**
A: Click the "menu" button on the upper right corner any page. On the mobile version, click the three horizontal lines in the same location.

Do you have questions about finding something on the new website? Feel free to reach out to us by emailing communications@firstchurchtulsa.org or by calling the Church office at 918-584-4701 and the receptionist will send the correct party your inquiry.

We'd like to thank **Michael Grogan** and members of our website task force, **Lucas Forsythe** and members of our communications team as well as contributing staff members for their help in developing this updated tool.

Stay in touch!

Get the bi-monthly e-newsletter delivered to your inbox.
Learn about all of the activities and events at First Presbyterian Church
of Tulsa. Sign up for the E-Newsletter at <https://bit.ly/FPC-News>

Social media



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@1stchurchtulsa



@firstchurchtulsa



First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa

Worship Broadcasts Online

Traditional Sunday Worship, Sundays, 11 a.m.

[Livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa)

[Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa)

Cox Cable Ch. 3 at 11 a.m., 5 p.m. and 10 p.m.

Tulsa International Fellowship (TIF) Sunday Worship, Sundays, 11 a.m.

[Livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.livestream.com/FirstChurchTulsa)

[Facebook.com/wambugu.gachungi](https://www.facebook.com/wambugu.gachungi)



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CHURCH OF TULSA

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