

# Tidings

VOL. 68, NO. 4 - WINTER 2023

 **First 1885  
Church**

First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa



“Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!”

- JOHN 1:29

*In this issue:*



Get to know the interim pastor Rev. Hutchinson, p. 3



Mission teams travel to Ireland and Kenya, p. 8



Walking the Camino de Santiago, p. 10



# Advent Season at First Church Tulsa

Advent means “coming” or “arrival,” and is the season we celebrate Christ’s coming into the world and watch with expectant hope for his coming again. The four weeks of Advent present an opportunity for communal discernment and personal examination, as the church prepares to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord and looks with hope for Christ’s return. For a detailed worship and event schedule, read E-news or access our website at [FirstChurchTulsa.org/Events](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org/Events).



SUNDAY  
DECEMBER  
3

## First Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m., Traditional worship  
8:30 a.m., Contemporary worship  
11:00 a.m., Traditional, Contemporary and TIF worship

SUNDAY  
DECEMBER  
25

## Christmas Day worship

11:00 a.m. in Kerr Chapel  
A special Christmas worship service with Rev. James Estes

SUNDAY  
DECEMBER  
10

## Second Sunday of Advent

8:00 a.m., Traditional worship  
8:30 a.m., Contemporary worship  
11:00 a.m., Traditional, contemporary and TIF worship

SUNDAY  
DECEMBER  
31

## New Year’s Eve

9:30 a.m. Pancake Breakfast in Stephenson Hall & Atrium  
11:00 a.m. combined service in the Sanctuary  
9:00 p.m. New Year’s Eve Watch Service in Great Hall

WEDNESDAY  
DECEMBER  
13

## Christmas Awana and Carols, Cookies & Cocoa

6 p.m., Christmas Awana  
7 p.m., Carols, Cookies & Cocoa  
Enjoy this event for all ages celebrating the birth of Christ singing songs, eating cookies, drinking cocoa and decorating the Chrismon tree in the Courtyard.

SUNDAY  
JANUARY  
7

## Epiphany, Burning of the Greens and Polar Plunge

5:00 p.m. at Camp Loughridge  
Celebrate Epiphany with a bonfire and polar plunge. Includes a homily, cookies, hot cider & cocoa.

SUNDAY  
DECEMBER  
17

## Third Sunday of Advent & Christmas Music Sunday

8 a.m., Traditional worship  
8:30 a.m., Contemporary worship  
11 a.m., TIF & contemporary combined  
11 a.m., Traditional worship in the Sanctuary with Christmas music from the Chancel Choir, orchestra and bell ringers.

SUNDAY  
DECEMBER  
24

## Fourth Sunday of Advent Christmas Eve worship

11:00 a.m., Traditional and TIF worship  
5:00 p.m., Children’s Live Nativity  
7:30 p.m., Lessons & Carols  
11:00 p.m., Christmas Watch Night

The 5 p.m. Children’s Live Nativity service will be streamed to [Facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa](https://www.facebook.com/FirstChurchTulsa) and [FirstChurchTulsa.org/YouTube](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org/YouTube). Cox Cable Ch. 3 will run our Lessons & Carols worship service at 11 p.m.

# Get to know Interim Pastor Rev. Dan Hutchinson

By Kim Jones and Debbie Favell, Personnel Chair



Working closely with the Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery and Personnel Committee, the First Church Transition Team conducted a national search for pastor candidates and ultimately recommended Rev. Dan Hutchinson to serve as the Interim Pastor. Session approved and Rev. Hutchinson assumed his new responsibilities on November 1, 2023.

Rev. Dan Hutchinson has served at First Church for 11 years, so he is a familiar face. Read his answers to the questions below to get to know him better.

### Q: Tell us a little bit about your childhood.

I grew up in Edmonds, Washington, just outside of Seattle with my parents and my two older sisters. For the first twelve years of my life, my dad pastored a small church in Brier, WA, which meant that we were at the church all the time. We did not miss worship unless we were throwing up, and with it being a small church, we also helped with set-up and take-down, moving around chairs, cleaning bathrooms, painting parties, etc.

I really enjoyed baseball growing up, and all of us were also involved in music. I played trumpet in a youth symphony and ended up minoring in music in college. We also spent a lot of time outdoors, and my love of hiking and boating were definitely forged in those early years.

One of my favorite things from childhood was road tripping. This was how we vacationed. We went to the Grand Tetons, Glacier National Park, Yellowstone, the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, and a host of other sites, usually camping along the way to save money. The most epic trip was when I was twelve. We drove 13,000 miles over six weeks and made it all the way from Washington to Maine, down to Florida, and back, hitting up every major city and every major Civil War battlefield along the way. We all agreed it was

a little longer than it should have been, but I am grateful for a family that loved to be together! I still love to travel, and I have had the joy of many cross-country road trips in my adult life.

### Q: You are a Wheaton College graduate. What made you decide to attend Wheaton?

Yes, I graduated with a BA in History (minor in music) back in 2007. I ended up staying on another year and did an MA in Historical and Systematic Theology. I initially heard about Wheaton from my parents who both attended. When I was looking into colleges, I knew that I wanted to attend a Christian college that had rigorous academics, and Wheaton was at the top of the list. I was also very interested in archeology at the time and Wheaton had a very strong program. As so often happens, my plans changed, but it was a draw.

### Q: So, how did you end up in Tulsa, Oklahoma?

The short story is by the grace and sovereignty of God! The slightly longer story is that during graduate school at Wheaton, my theological journey had brought me to the reformed tradition, and I ended up working at a Presbyterian Church in Seattle for two years doing youth ministry. I had never attended a PCUSA church before, but during those two years, God confirmed my call into ministry, and I decided to pursue ordination within the PCUSA. After much consideration, I decided to go to Princeton Seminary.

Continued on next page...

The last semester that I was there, I took a class on the book of Galatians with Dr. Shane Berg. We connected, and a week before graduation, we were talking after an event and he asked me the infamous question, “Do you know what you are doing after seminary?” I did not. He mentioned that a friend of his was a pastor in Tulsa and that the church was looking to bring on a pastoral intern for a year. He asked if he could pass my name along, and I said, “Why not?” I could not have pointed out Tulsa on a map, but I trusted Shane and knew that if he was recommending it, it was worth looking into.

A couple weeks later, as I was road tripping back to Seattle from Princeton, I stopped by Tulsa and had a brief conversation with Dr. Miller and Rev. Michael Holman. The rest, as they say, is history. I immediately had the sense that I would enjoy working with Dr. Miller and that we were aligned in terms of theology and the mission of the church. I also have to say that on that first visit, Michael Holman pointed me to Double Shot for some coffee before I headed out of town. I won’t say that settled it, but it was a comfort to know there was good coffee to be had in Oklahoma!

The job changed a bit – from a pastoral intern to a designated pastor – but eventually I was offered the position, packed up my car, and headed out.

**Q: You met your wife, Hanna, at First Church. Most of us know her as your wife and Edmund, Rosie, and Elanor’s mother, but she is also a gifted artist and author. Tell us about her latest book.**

Hanna is incredibly talented. She had her own Etsy shop for a long time, selling hand-painted mugs, but her true passion and calling is writing. Her latest book is called *Our Divine Mischief*. I won’t give any spoilers, but it is set in an alternate version of Scotland, and one of the main characters is a dog. If you have ever had a dog that you loved (or really any pet for that matter), this book is definitely for you. If you don’t like dogs, just read this book, and then you will want one. When Hanna and I met, she had a very strange and beautiful dog name Ophelia. Ophelia wandered into Hanna’s life when Hanna was working at New Life Ranch during college, and the two truly became best friends. The dog in this book is very much the Ophelia that I came to know and love as Hanna and I dated and got married.

The book is a very fun read, but it also gets into some more serious themes around belonging, community, and love. It also tackles questions around religion and the silence of God in a manner that I would compare with C.S. Lewis’ work *Till We Have Faces*.

**Q: As you take on the Interim Pastor role, what do you see as your biggest challenge?**

Part of the role of Interim is to help the congregation grieve and process Dr. Miller’s retirement. Any time you have someone who has served as long as Jim did, who is well loved, who has poured themselves into a community as Jim did, and they leave, it is hard. His are some big shoes to fill. And I am not Jim! I have picked up a number of Jim-isms, but I have different gifts and skill sets. It is going to be different, which is part of what this season is about, but change is hard.

**Q: Give us a brief look into the heart of Dan’s Theology.**

I could talk a long time about my theology and things that I am passionate about, but for me, it all begins with Jesus. I mean this in a few ways. C.S. Lewis famously wrote that “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” I think Lewis is spot on. Christianity rises or falls based on whether or not what we read about Jesus in the gospels happened. Whether Jesus was truly God incarnate in time and space who lived, died, and bodily rose again from the dead. Everything else flows from this central claim. If this is true (and I believe it is), then I am confident of God’s love, a love I cannot comprehend and that is more wondrous and glorious than anything I could ever hope to fathom...that the great and good God who created all things would come and lay down his life for me?



General Presbyterian, Rev. Tim Blodgett and Dr. Jim Miller congratulate Rev. Hutchinson for being selected as Interim Pastor on October 29, 2023.

It is beyond imagining and yet, if Christ died for me, then I know it to be true. If the gospel is true, then I have hope. We live in a world that is an absolute mess. Things are broken. And yet, the cross and the resurrection give me concrete assurance that God is at work and that what we see is not the end of the story. If what we believe about Jesus is true, then I also have a Lord and King to whom I must submit. Which is, honestly, really good news. Have you ever tried to control everything around you? It is utterly exhausting, and it never goes well. There is a God, and I am not it! That is part of the good news! Jesus Christ is Lord, and if he is Lord, then he governs my ethics, he governs my view of the world, of myself – there is no arena of life that is outside of his authority.



The Hutchinson family, left to right: Rosewyn, Hanna, Edmund, Dan and Elanor Hutchinson.



**Dr. Jim Miller**

- **The Institutes of the Christian Religion** by John Calvin
- **The Tech-Wise Family: Everyday Steps for Putting Technology its Proper Place** by Andy Crouch
- **Confronting Christianity: 12 Hard Questions for the World’s Largest Religion** by Rebecca McLaughlin
- **10 Questions Every Teen Should Ask and Answer about Christianity** by Rebecca McLaughlin
- **Who is this Man? The Unpredictable Impact of the Inescapable Jesus** by John Ortberg
- **Praying like Monks; Living Like Fools** by Tyler Staton
- **Commentary on Matthew** (two volumes) by F. Dale Bruner
- **Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians** by Martin Luther
- **Lament for a Son** by Nicholas Wolterstorff
- **Wherever You Go, I Want You to Know ...** by Melissa Kruge



**Rev. Dan Hutchinson**

- **On the Incarnation** by St. Athanasius
- **Confessions** by St. Augustine
- **Crime and Punishment** by Fyodor Dostoevsky
- **The Abolition of Man** by C.S. Lewis
- **The Lord of the Rings** by J.R.R. Tolkien
- **The Cost of Discipleship** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- **Knowing God** by J.I. Packer
- **A Long Obedience in the Same Direction** by Eugene Peterson
- **The Return of the Prodigal Son: A Story of Homecoming** by Henri Nouwen
- **Delighting in the Trinity** by Michael Reeves
- **You Are What You Love: The Spiritual Power of Habit.** by James K. A. Smith



**Rev. James Estes**

- **Strange New World** by Carl R. Trueman
- **The First Society** by Scott Hahn
- **On the Holy Spirit** by St. Basil the Great
- **The Marvelous Pigness of Pigs** by Joel Salatin
- **Compassion, Justice and the Christian Life** by Robert D. Lupton
- **The Interior Castle** by St. Teresa of Avila
- **Redeeming Heartache** by Dr. Dan B. Allender and Cathy Loerzel
- **On Prayer** by Andrew Murray
- **Simply Christian, Surprised by Hope and After You Believe** by N.T. Wright
- **Jesus Through Middle Eastern Eyes** by Kenneth E. Bailey
- **God at War and Satan and the Problem of Evil** by Gregory Boyd



**Rev Wambugu Gachungi**

- **The Christian in Complete Amour** by William Gurnall
- **The Lost World of Adam and Eve** by John H. Walton (with contribution by N.T. Wright)
- **According to Promise** by Charles H. Spurgeon
- **The Weapon of Prayer** by E.M. Bounds
- **Claiming Theology in the Pulpit** by Burton Z. Cooper and John S. McClure
- **For the Body** by Timothy C. Tennent
- **In Praise of Slowness: Challenging the Cult of Speed** by Carl Honore
- **Life Together** by Dietrich Bonhoeffer
- **Moving Through Fear** by Jeff Gollither
- **The Peacemaker** by Ken Sande



**Rev. Julia Metcalf**

- **Ignatian Adventure: Experiencing the Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius in Daily Life** by Kevin O'Brien
- **Confessions** by St. Augustine
- **The Practice of the Presence of God** by Brother Lawrence
- **The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry** by John Mark Comer
- **Reaching Out** by Henri Nouwen
- **Reading Theologically** by Eric D. Barreto
- **Getting Involved with God** by Ellen Davis
- **Emotionally Healthy Spirituality** by Peter Scazzero
- **Redeeming Sex** by Debra Hirsch
- **The Blue Book** by Jim Branch



**Ron Pearson**

- **Unsinkable** by Daniel Allen Butler
- **Captain of the Carpathia** by Eric L. Clements
- **The Wright Brothers** by David McCullough
- **Failure Is Not an Option** by Gene Kranz
- **No Dream Is Too High** by Buzz Aldrin
- **Truman** by David McCullough
- **Roosevelt’s Centurions** by Joseph E. Persico
- **The Shroud** by Ian Wilson
- **Case Closed** by Gerald Posner
- **Beethoven – Anguish and Triumph** by Jan Swafford



**Miller Library has each of these collections of Top 10 books on display for you to enjoy.**

# The preparation for ministry process

By Nick McMillan

In the preparation for ministry process, inquirers and candidates discern their calling to ministry, walking alongside members of the church and the Presbytery.

Several candidates sponsored by First Church have been certified ready to receive a call by the Presbytery in past years. Process completers have gone on to serve as ministers in pastoral ministry at First Church, churches in other cities and denominations, and some are called to other institutions and roles. Two past completers, **Joel Wood** and **Michael Homan**, have gone on to serve congregations outside of First Church, and Michael currently works in non-profit fund development.



Joel Wood at his ordination service in 2016.

Joel was certified in 2015 and ordained in 2016 at First Church Tulsa, and he is now pastor at First Presbyterian Church—Sand Springs. Michael, certified in 2007, served as pastor at First Presbyterian Church in Tulsa and in Houston and is now Director of Development at Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation.

Looking back, each completer affirms how the preparation process provided an invaluable opportunity to train in discernment while at the same time noting that the process is just one small part of the preparation for all that ministry takes. Since completing the process, both Michael and Joel found they had to gain skills in areas the process did not cover and see ministry as a continual process of preparation and reformation.

For Joel, discernment meant learning to believe what his family, friends, and fellow youth ministry leaders already knew that he was called to pastoral ministry. Joel studied music at ORU and jokes that he was, “used to working with eight letters,” and he thought he would prove them wrong in the process. Instead, he excelled and thrived through the academic rigors of seminary and had no trouble meeting the requirements of the preparation process.

While seminary taught Joel new things about himself and his abilities to glorify God, he found the preparation process to be rather perfunctory. Despite his own experience of the process,

Joel maintains that it is an opportunity to push candidates to familiarize themselves with different varieties of Christian churches and approaches to worship. He completed the process while remaining in familiar church settings—which for Joel meant large, multi-pastor, reformed churches. Not satisfied with recognizing an opportunity for growth and walking away, Joel has until recently served as the chair of the EOP’s Committee on Preparation for Ministry. In this role, he sought to guide candidates to recognize their strengths and weaknesses and use this perspective to inform their growth.

Since completing the process himself, Joel has been positively challenged by accepting the call to the sole pastorship at First Presbyterian Church Sand Springs. He states, “as a solo pastor, you have to do it all. You have to get better and face things that you might not be good at.” The transition to a sole pastor at a smaller church has had a profound effect on how he ministers. When preaching to a small congregation, Joel observes, “you know every face and you can take a more conversational approach; you can make references on a personal level that everyone in the congregation can understand.”



Joel Wood

Currently working toward his Doctor of Ministry (DMin) degree through a joint program with Pittsburgh Seminary and the University of Edinburgh, Joel seeks to address challenges of the state of culture and the church by taking a storytelling approach in worship including sermons, liturgy, and experiential practice. Joel began a trial of this approach in October in Sand Springs.

For another completer of the preparation process from First Church, **Michael Homan**, the process was the epitome of tutelage and hospitality.

Hospitality, Michael states, means, “making room for someone when there is no obligation to do so,” and members of the Chancel Choir, Preparation Committee and church leadership made this room



Michael Homan

for him throughout. While Michael was interning, pastors Dr. Miller and Vince King practiced the “with me” principle, which meant he went along with his mentors on hospital visits and session meetings.

Because he was completing his seminary education at Oral Roberts University, an institution outside of the Reformed tradition, the preparation process required Michael to study one-on-one with Reformed ministers to ensure he was well-versed in Reformed theology. He later focused his DMin study on the intersection of Faith and Work, spurred by Dutch Reformed theologian Abraham Kuyper’s

concept of “sphere sovereignty,” which offers a framework for understanding how to integrate faith and work outside of the Church.

God is sovereign over all the varied spheres of life, Michael maintains, and a calling to serve in one sphere may not be permanent. After shepherding First Presbyterian Church—Houston through the pressures of a major denominational split, he left pastoral ministry to enter fund development for the Houston Methodist Hospital Foundation where his service lines include Spiritual Care, Behavioral Health, and Arts/Health Integration. As a pastor, he learned that the preparation for ministry process could better prepare candidates for ministry by providing training in fund-raising for the church. Philanthropy is not typically a required class in seminary, nor is it a topic covered by the process although it is a crucial aspect of what a pastor does for a church. Having noticed a lack of training in fundraising in the preparation for ministry process, it is now something that Michael does full time.

The preparation process and pastoral ministry, Michael says, taught him “how to work with diverse personalities and appreciate that everyone is unique and that some are more high maintenance than others, whether in a congregation or in a board room.” Pastoral ministry also taught Michael, “a counselor needs a counselor,” and how many pastors suffer in silence in what can be a “fishbowl” environment, without having developed emotionally healthy practices, boundaries, and coping strategies. He asks for prayers and encouragement for pastors and for their growth in supportive relationships—both within the church and other of God’s spheres.

## Other past completers of the process not mentioned in this article series include:

**Vince King** – EOP certified Ready to Receive a Call in 2007. Called to Camp Loughridge from 2007 to 2012, and Yale Avenue Presbyterian Church in Tulsa from 2009 to 2012. Currently serves as Vice President of Fusion Sales for McElroy Manufacturing.

**James Estes** – Certified Ready to Receive a Call in 2010. Called to First Presbyterian Church in Tulsa.

**Olivia Lane Berman** – Certified Ready to Receive a Call in 2013. Called to Tulsa’s Southminster Presbyterian Church.

**Michael Gewecke** – Certified Ready to Receive a Call in 2013. Called to First Presbyterian Church in Spirit Lake, Iowa.

**Joshua Miles** – Elected to be ordained in the Southern Baptist Convention in Louisville, Kentucky in 2014.

**Daniel Wambugu Gachungi** – Certified Ready to Receive a Call as a Commissioned Ruling Elder in 2013 and as a Teaching Elder in 2016. Called to First Presbyterian Church in Tulsa.

**Julia Metcalf** – Certified Ready to Receive a Call as a Teaching Elder in 2021. Called to First Presbyterian Church in Tulsa.



**About the author:** Nick McMillan is a class of 2025 deacon, Exodus high school Sunday School adult leader and co-chair of communion. He enjoys leading small group Bible studies with youth and is a frequent participant in the

Before the Rooster Crows Bible study. He joined First Church in June 2021 and is grateful for this opportunity to learn more about the preparation process and current candidates.



Michael Homan and his wife, Heather, at the Texas Medal of the Arts Awards representing Houston Methodist Hospital

# Visiting our global mission partners in *Ireland*

By Paul Marsh

Under the leadership of **Rev. James Estes** and **Rev. Wambugu Gachungi**, First Church Tulsa mission teams traveled overseas this summer to bring Christ's love, support and encouragement to mission partners in Ireland and Kenya.

Ireland is rich with Catholic and Protestant history. Beautiful cathedrals that adorn the countryside were once home to worshippers of strong faith. But today, these same churches are basically tourist attractions. Ireland's "post-Christian" culture suffers because most of the formerly strong churches now have little impact on their communities.

First Church has built relationships with **Discovery Church in Galway and Tuam, Ireland**, and also with the **Donemana Presbyterian Church in Donemana, N. Ireland**.

Discovery Church has a goal to plant one church every three years in areas that don't have a vital Christian presence. The church planting team researches specific villages and towns and choose the site for new locations. They strategically and prayerfully plant churches that will serve as a light to their communities.

Gretchen Bashforth recalls, "We went along to scope out a new site for a coffee shop ministry. It was a moving experience to pray with the church planting team and ask the Lord to prepare the ground for His work. We covered the site with prayer and asked the Holy Spirit to bless the location and give wisdom and direction."

A vital component of church planting is music ministry. The First Church mission team encouraged their Irish counterparts by coming alongside them and leading worship at churches in Tuam and Donemana. The First Church team also blessed Discovery Church with a gift of \$2,300 for the purchase of new instruments.

A priority of the Donemana Presbyterian Church is ministering to locals that are homebound. Our First Church mission team traveled to

various homes and spent quality time talking and ministering to the lonely. By caring and sharing the love of Christ to the homebound, our team's generosity was well received.

Highlights for the team included attending the Getty Music "Sing: Europe" worship conference in Belfast and hearing renowned Oxford professors John Lennox and Jeremy Begbie speak on the deep connection of music, mathematics and worship. Our First Church Tulsa mission team had the privilege of worshipping with thousands of Irish Christians in the massive arena at the Getty conference. The group also reconnected with Ross Wilson, artist of the Calling of Lazarus exhibit.



2023 Ireland mission team included Rev. James Estes, Jaclyn Metcalf, Eric Baird, Gretchen Bashforth, Michaela Estes, John and Sonia Donnelly, Gina and Dave Davis, Mariesa and Bill Worman and Roxie Sullivan.

# & *Kenya*



2023 Kenya mission team included Rev. James Estes, Rev. Wambugu Gachungi, Quentin Franklin, John Harper, Jr., Carter and Vicki Mathews, Paul Mungai, Ben Peterson, Beth and Michael Pielsticker and Katie Ragland.

**Rev. Wambugu Gachungi**, together with **Rev. James Estes**, led the Kenya mission team to vital ministries throughout Kenya. The team visited churches, NGOs, schools and homebound persons to support the work of mission partners in the country.

In contrast to Ireland, Kenya is full of vibrant churches. Rev. James Estes said, "Culturally speaking, Kenya's society can be compared to how the United States was 100 years ago. Kenya's religious leaders are highly respected both spiritually in their churches as well as socially in their communities. Having strong Christian faith in Kenya brings with it honor and deference."

Rev. Wambugu and Rev. Estes delivered sermons at local congregations in the capital, Nairobi, and in a village to the north called Bondeni. The team visited partners including **Presbyterian Church of East Africa (PCEA)** and **Kariobongi South Congregation**, Nairobi;

**PCEA, Bondeni Congregation** in Nyeri; and **International Justice Mission** in Nairobi. Each of these organizations are growing and actively furthering the Lord's work in Kenya.

**"The church of the global south has a passion, conviction and spiritual maturity that encourages and inspires. When I learn what they are doing with so little, I want to get involved and encourage however I can."**

– Rev. James Estes

First Church Tulsa gives tangible gifts to these mission partners. Monetary gifts have funded a new fence around the growing Bondeni church facility as well as the mission director's monthly salary. First Church mission ministry has given thousands of dollars to the local church schools for scholarships and mission gifts.

"It was very special for me to introduce First Church friends to my hometown, some

members of my family and even to my grade school teacher. We were encouraged after seeing first-hand the depth of faith in our Kenyan brothers and sisters," said Rev. Wambugu Gachungi.

When Kenyans in the mission partner churches receive a visit from a First Church Tulsa mission team, not all of them may know what money, supplies or logistics were brought to support them. But we can trust they feel the love of Christ, knowing someone from far away cares about them and is praying for them. We are mutually encouraged by each other's faith, even from the other side of the world.



**About the author:** When Paul Marsh is not designing communications materials for First Church, he and his wife, Wynne, love to travel in their RV, hike and explore beautiful campgrounds, near and far. They have two grown children and they cherish family time when they come to visit.

# Developing Bible literacy

By Nick McMillan



## Faces of the Foundation

by Katie Williams, Foundation Director

At a recent deacon meeting, **Rev. James Estes** quoted the findings of a study, published in the book MOVE by Greg Hawkins and Cally Parkinson, showing “the number one most impacting, significant factor in generating transformation of life in people is daily exposure to Scripture.” Despite the transformative impact scripture reading can have on our lives, the state of biblical literacy among the American public and even those professing Christianity is discouraging. George Barna, author of The State of the Bible, reports the following:

- Fewer than half of all adults can name the four gospel accounts
- Sixty percent of Americans cannot name five of the Ten Commandments
- Eighty-two percent of Americans believe that “God helps those who help themselves” is a Bible verse

For those unsure of their level of biblical literacy, you can test yours by using this online quiz at [FirstChurchTulsa.org/LiteracyQuiz](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org/LiteracyQuiz)

Biblical literacy, however, is not simply a matter of winning at bible trivia or accumulating “truthlets,” or verses taken as stand-alone quotes. **Phil Rounds**, leader of the Before the Rooster Crows Bible study, describes biblical literacy as understanding the Bible as a narrative, its progression and context.

First Church’s Executive Director of Adult Discipleship, **Duff Points**, affirms biblical literacy means understanding promises made and fulfilled by God. Duff emphasizes the importance of seeking to hear Him speak to us via the scriptures and thereby growing as His faithful disciples.

Phil adds that to appreciate scripture, it is important to read it as a Jew would, asking, “how does the Word guide us as a community?” as opposed a Greek asking only, “what kind of insight does the Word provide for me individually?”

Phil asserts that approaching the study of the Bible in this way will give you a sensibility by which you can know scripture, its meaning, and its appropriate application. He elaborates, “They train bank tellers to recognize counterfeit currency

many ways. The most useful, however, comes with handling genuine bills enough to develop a ‘feel’ for them.” As familiarity with genuine bills is the best way to recognize when you have a counterfeit in your hands, we develop an understanding for Scripture by observing, interpreting, and applying the Word regularly.

To promote developing biblical literacy, this is the first article in a series dedicated to the topic. The series will include interviews with members of First Church’s staff and congregation, and articles will cover:

- How congregants have fit the practice of biblical literacy into their lives and how it has transformed them;
- Presenting tools, methods, and approaches of biblical literacy and how to use them;
- How appropriate practices of biblical literacy vary for children, youth, and adults; and
- How to move from biblical literacy to biblical fluency, or as Duff puts it, “making the Bible part of the fabric of your life.”

Who is the First Presbyterian Foundation? Not what but who? There is not one answer but many. One is five years old and loves her little brother. Another is in high school. We have young couples, singles, generations from the same family and those who have experienced a lot of life. They all realize that their extra blessings today will help support the church for generations to come.

### There are also many ways to become a part of this living foundation.

#### Easy way to celebrate the blessing of life

The Foundation Trustees want everyone to be a part of the First Presbyterian Foundation and have started the Birthday Club. In 2023, our goal is every member or friend of the congregation becomes a part of the foundation by donating the amount in dollars equal to their age they turn on their birthday. Young and old and in between, we want everyone to celebrate the blessing of life. When you make your gift be sure to mark it Foundation Birthday Club.

#### Leaving a Legacy

Bringing like-minded people together was the spark to start the Legacy Society. With a \$1,000 gift or bequest you can be part of the people want to share their blessings to protect the church they experience today. It is an extended family with a strong foundation in First Presbyterian.

#### Making a mark through art

A once dark wall is now alive and vibrant with the newly installed Vine artwork. Just follow the atrium stairs up towards the sanctuary or walk off the elevator on 2 and experience a visual wonder. The vine feels alive to the eye with the winding metal branches and no two glass leaves alike. With a generous gift or bequest of 25,000 or more you can add your name to this marvel of glass and steel. We hope this inspires you to become part of the foundation and become part of this living legacy.

To learn more about how to share your blessings with the First Presbyterian Foundation, call Katie Williams at 918-292-9063.



**About the author:** Katie Williams is a child of the church and currently serving as the Foundation Director for First Presbyterian. She loves to tell your story.

# For those you leave behind

By Kathy Wilson

While many of us may have taken care of end-of-life legal documents, we may not have taken time to write out two additional documents that could be helpful and meaningful to the loved ones we leave behind.

The first of these two documents is called a Statement of Faith. Many people have shared that while they may know quite a bit about the biography of their deceased family member, they know very little about the details of his or her faith journey. Writing out the story of how

you came to the Christian faith and what your faith has meant to you during your life is such a gift to your loved ones. A Statement of Faith does not have to be a lengthy document; many are just one or two pages long. Writing these stories is a wonderful way to remind ourselves of how good God has been to us, in addition to serving as an encouraging witness to those we leave behind.

Another document that would be a blessing to your loved ones is a guide for planning

your funeral or memorial service. Unlike other major family events, there is often not a lot of time to plan a funeral. Having some guidance is a great help to loved ones who are already dealing with all the emotions inherent in a difficult loss. In addition to writing a basic biography or obituary, adding a list of favorite scriptures, hymns, and sacred songs is quite helpful. I would suggest that you avoid adding too much detail regarding the actual memorial service.

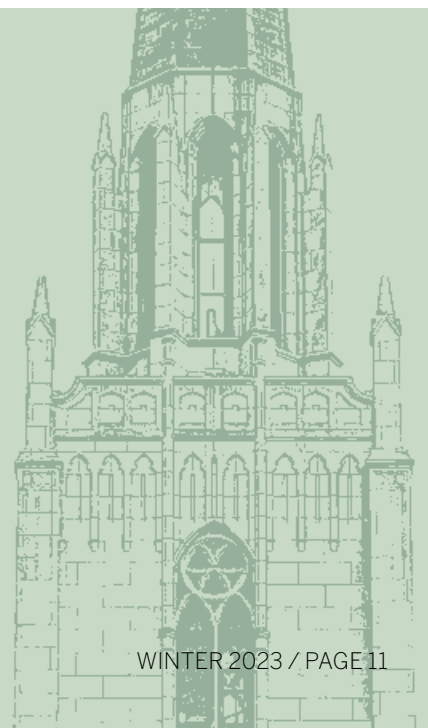
It would be a shame for your loved ones to decide against including something they would find very comforting and meaningful because it isn’t in your instructions. For example, my father, who was a humble man, told my mother that he didn’t want the Requiem Choir to sing at his memorial service because “that was just too much”. Even though the choir is a very important part of my mother’s life, she honored Dad’s wishes by refusing their offer to sing. However, Dr. Miller encouraged her to do what would be most comforting to her, and after some thought, she chose to accept the choir’s offer. It was such a good thing she did! Seeing all those beloved faces in the choir loft and hearing their beautiful music was one of the most meaningful parts of the service for Mom and all of us.

In addition to keeping these two documents in a safe place at home or in a safety deposit box, you may wish to have copies placed in your membership file here at the church where they are easily accessible to you and your family.

If you would like to learn more about memorial and funeral services at First Church, visit our website at [FirstChurchTulsa.org/memorials](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org/memorials). If you prefer to have information mailed to you, send a message to [kwilson@FirstChurchTulsa.org](mailto:kwilson@FirstChurchTulsa.org).



**About the author:** Kathy Wilson has been a member of First Church since joining as a confirmand in 1972 and has been on staff since 2018. One of her responsibilities is coordinating memorial services.





# Walking the Camino de Santiago

By Elizabeth DeVore

**Laura Stockbridge** is a First Church member and inquirer candidate pursuing the position of Commissioned Ruling Elder within the Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery. This past summer she walked about 76 miles along a route of the renowned pilgrimage, the Camino de Santiago, in northwest Spain.

Laura was inspired to walk the Camino de Santiago when she heard a pastor speak about it at a Presbyterian Women Synod Gathering in 2016 in Fort Worth. This pastor spoke about feeling as if she had been “literally walking alongside God as she walked in meditative prayer”. This put the desire in Laura’s heart to seek out this journey for herself.

The Camino de Santiago, or way of St. James, is a network of ancient pilgrim routes in Spain. They come together at the Cathedral of Santiago de Compostela in Galicia. Today’s pilgrims can start their journey at a variety of different points on the route, just as the original pilgrims would have done from their own homes.

Laura walked a small portion of the Camino Frances route. She began in Sarria and walked with eight other women whom she’d connected with on the internet beforehand. To prepare, she physically did lots of test walks and hikes with all of her gear. She also spent time in prayer and thought as she sought guidance for an open heart for the experience.

With a journey like the Camino that is both pushing you physically and spiritually there are bound to be some challenges. Laura said that the time preceding her trip may have been harder than any of the walking because of the fear and doubt that crept in. Once she began, Laura was surprised by how fast she got her “Camino legs.” The first day started out rough with a steep climb but each day got better. A few days in she even found herself wanting to go on strolls to take in the scenery after dinner even after walking six to ten miles that day. Laura said that she learned her “limitations aren’t weaknesses, they’re just limitations.”

She spent a lot of time in prayerful thought and God revealed himself in the simplest of ways, giving encouragement exactly when it was needed. “Just keep walking” was the answer God kept speaking to Laura about anything she was grappling with on the Camino.



Laura Stockbridge, second from right, with a few of the women she met while walking along the Camino de Santiago in 2023.




Walking the Camino de Santiago, Laura Stockbridge visited historic sites along the way.

Along the journey, Laura made many meaningful relationships with the eight women that she walked with. Their uniqueness of gifts and personalities were perfectly orchestrated in the way that only God can. Along the way at each lodging she had special exchanges with others on the journey.

She noted that “there was never any anger or bitterness...people took care of each other whether friend or stranger and regardless of language barriers”. Laura said some of the best parts of her trip were “to see and experience that with God’s help, the things you think are out of reach can be achieved ... the people I met along the way who were just wonderful, and ... unplugging for 11 days with no TV – that was glorious!”

Laura says she would absolutely go on the Camino de Santiago again and hopes to in another few years. Her advice to others who may want to go would be to take time to enjoy the journey and not rush. She recommends spending a couple days sightseeing beforehand to give your body time to adjust. Maybe learn some phrases in Spanish but she says “mostly, don’t overthink it—book a flight and go!” Laura would love to meet for coffee and speak more about the Camino with anyone that is interested.



**About the author:** Elizabeth DeVore is a lifelong member of First Church Tulsa. She loves being engaged in the body of Christ and growing with her church family. She currently serves as an elder, is involved in Pathfinder middle school ministries and a Young Adult K Group leader.



## MEMBER PROFILE - Vivien Wambugu

By Mark Brown

You can tell by the projects she’s worked on that **Vivien Wambugu** is a full-fledged academic. One, a research project titled “Closing the Gap on Health Disparities and Outcomes in Hypertension” became the basis of her master’s thesis, “Community-Based Interventions to Reduce Disparities in Management of Severe Uncontrolled Hypertension in the Southeastern United States: A Critical Appraisal.”

Read between those lines, though, and you’ll sense a mission of justice, one that began in Kenya, where Vivien was born and lived the first eight years of her life.

“At an early age, I was exposed to the inequities within health systems when I compared health services available in Nairobi and what was available in Tulsa, and the United States as a whole,” she said.

She saw members of her own family struggle to access treatment for even the most basic of health conditions. “I would always say, ‘If only they were here, they would be taken care of and live a full life.’”

In her newest post, as a post-graduate associate at the Yale School of Medicine’s Equity Research and Innovation Center (ERIC), she assists on a variety of projects focused on promoting health equity. Prior to Yale, Vivien received a Master of Science degree from the Duke Global Health Institute. (She did her bachelor’s in health science at the University of the Ozarks.)

Much of her team’s work lately has focused on food insecurity in the eastern Caribbean, and the attending factors such as hypertension, diet and nutrition, sleep, that combined with discrimination, create health crises.

**“The work I do is driven by the hope to provide quality healthcare for all individuals.”**

– Vivien Wambugu

It’s not the career in medicine she’s planned on, but it does fit the mission.

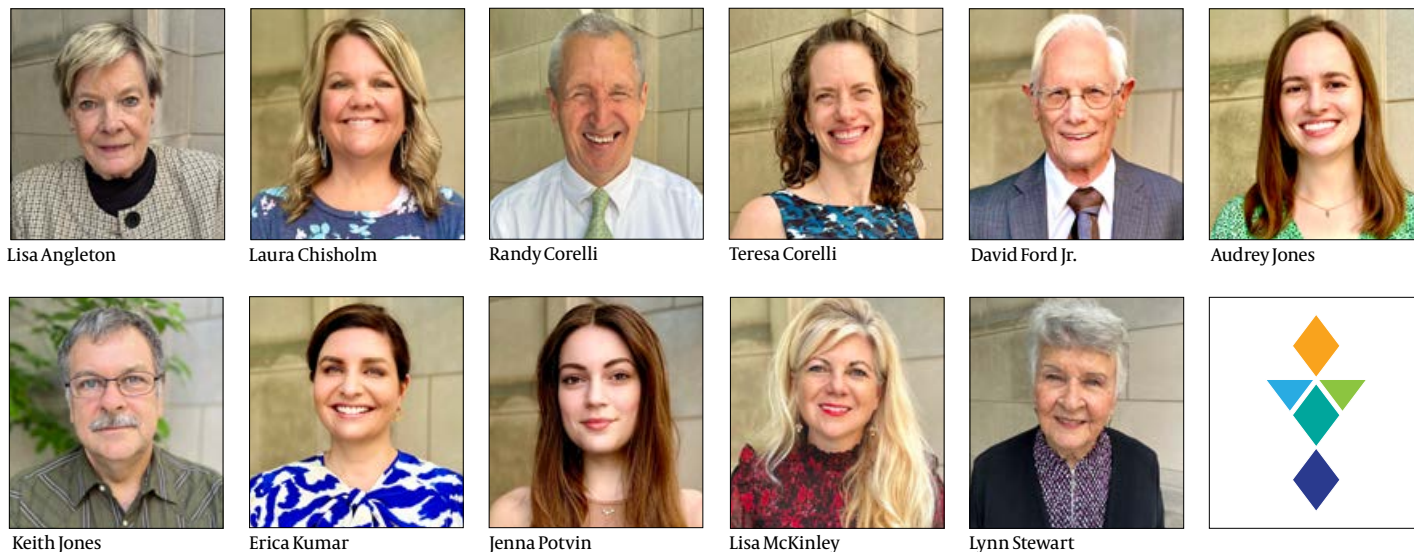
“The work I do is driven by the hope to provide quality healthcare for all individuals,” Vivien said, “especially for populations like those in my family who have limited access to basic services that we often take for granted in the global north.”



**About the author:** Mark Brown and his wife, Kelly, attended First Church a full decade before becoming members in 2008. They are now regulars at the 8:30 a.m. service with their sons, Lucas and Jonas, and are members of the Covenanters class. Mark enjoys fishing (versus catching fish) in Lake Parthenia and attending the Easter sunrise service in Kirkland Chapel. His last story for Tidings magazine profiled the many crosses of artist Tim Clement.

# Parish Register

## Welcome new members September 2023



Lisa Angleton

Laura Chisholm

Randy Corelli

Teresa Corelli

David Ford Jr.

Audrey Jones

Keith Jones

Erica Kumar

Jenna Potvin

Lisa McKinley

Lynn Stewart

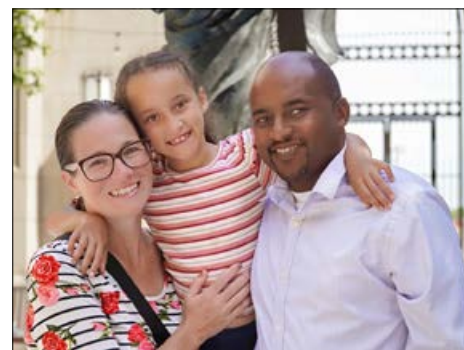
## Baptisms



Owen Elliott Hoppe & Hayden Ernest Hoppe



Colin Brian Curtis



Lea Ann Mungai (left)

## The sacrament of baptism

**Hayden Ernest Hoppe**, son of **Brian and Becky Hoppe**, was baptized on September 3  
**Owen Elliott Hoppe**, son of **Brian and Becky Hoppe**, was baptized on September 3  
**Lea Ann Mungai** was baptized as an adult on September 10  
**Colin Brian Curtis**, son of **Alexandra and Charles Curtis**, was baptized on September 18

## The joy of new life! We welcome:

**Alexander Doverspike**, son of **Jen and Adam Doverspike**, was born on June 22.  
**Hazel Renee Grogan**, daughter of **Clay and Courtney Grogan**, was born on August 7.

## With gratitude for the resurrection

**Larry Osterhout**, a member since 2001, died on July 29  
**Rosemary Priest**, a member since 1997, died on August 24  
**B.P. Loughridge**, a member since 2020, died on August 28  
**Beverly Dale**, a member since 1935, died on September 4

# Tidings First Church

**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 South Boston Avenue, Tulsa, Oklahoma 74119. Read past issues of Tidings on our website at [FirstChurchTulsa.org/Tidings](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org/Tidings). Please direct questions or comments to [communications@FirstChurchTulsa.org](mailto:communications@FirstChurchTulsa.org) or call 918-584-4701.

**Editorial Team:** Patricia Hall, Duff Points, Kathy Wilson and Paul Marsh

**Contributors:** Mark Brown, Elizabeth DeVore, Debbie Favell, Patricia Hall, Beth Hawkins, Rev. Dan Hutchinson, Kim Jones, John McCormack, Nick McMillan, Jeffrey Metcalf, Nelson Murage, Katie Williams and Kathy Wilson.

Thank you to the members of the Communications Committee for reviewing and selecting content for inclusion.

## Pastoral care

For pastoral needs, prayer requests, important family news or a change in contact information, please call 918-584-4701 or email



**Kathy Wilson** at [kwilson@firstchurchtulsa.org](mailto:kwilson@firstchurchtulsa.org). To directly request prayer by the **Guild of Intercessors**, call **Paula Peterson** at 918-296-5548 or text 918-688-2163.

## First Church Tulsa online resources

Find all First Church Tulsa links at: [Linktr.ee/FirstChurchTulsa](http://Linktr.ee/FirstChurchTulsa)



## First Church pastor transition

Find out the latest updates and information about the pastor transition on the church website:

[FirstChurchTulsa.org/PastorTransition](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org/PastorTransition)



## Pastor Transition Roadmap update

### November 2023 - Interim pastor appointed

The Transition Team recommends an interim pastor, and Session approves and appoints. The Transition Team assists with interim onboarding before the team dissolves, transitional duties concluded.



### November 5, 2023 - Dissolution of the pastoral relationship

Session calls a congregational meeting to take place for a formal dissolution of pastoral duties between Dr. Miller and First Church. This is a protocol by the Eastern Oklahoma Presbytery during transitions in pastoral leadership.



### November 2023 - Mission study commences

A Mission Study Team is appointed by Session (Elders) to lead this study; it is a process of discernment and listening to both the Holy Spirit and the congregation. The study is an assessment of where the church is presently and a conversation within the community of faith about the future of our ministry.



### Community study, congregational survey and conversations

The Mission Study Team works with staff and church committees to study the congregation, engagement with the Tulsa community and the mission around the church. Congregants are asked for input to understand the strengths of the congregation's culture, readiness for change and what may be missing.

### Mission study concludes - a report is finalized and approved

The Mission Study Team compiles all findings into a single mission study report. This report seeks to define and project the ministry priorities and goals for the next 3-5 years for First Church. It will aid in aligning new pastoral leadership with the church ministries.

### The Pastor Nominating Committee is elected

The pastoral search begins after the mission study is complete. Session calls a congregational meeting to elect the Pastor Nominating Committee, a group of candidates brought forth by the Nominating Committee.

### Mission report information session

The Session (Elders) and Mission Study Team presents the mission study report to the congregation. This report will guide the Pastor Nominating Committee as they develop the ministry discernment profile, the help wanted ad.

### Applications open for candidates for senior pastor

The Pastor Nominating Committee utilizes the ministry discernment profile to search for candidates. The committee begins receiving and reviewing applications from candidates.

### Candidate interviews begin

The Pastor Nominating Committee begins interviewing senior pastor candidates while continuing to receive applications.

### Applications close

The Pastor Nominating Committee closes applications for the position of senior pastor.

### Pastor Nominating Committee selects a candidate

The Pastor Nominating Committee selects a senior pastor candidate subject to the Presbytery's approval.

### Congregation votes to "call the candidate"

The Pastor Nominating Committee presents the candidate's name and the congregation votes to call the candidate to be the new senior pastor of First Church.

### Installation of the new senior pastor

When the congregation, Presbytery and candidate have all concurred in a call to the permanent position with First Church, a service of installation occurs in the context of worship.

Ready for the next steps to membership?

## Inquirers Class

Join us for our next Inquirers' Class. For more information, contact **Patricia Hall**, director of new member outreach, at 918-301-1028 or email [phall@firstchurchtulsa.org](mailto:phall@firstchurchtulsa.org).





## All are welcome to worship with us.

### Sunday services

- 8:00 a.m., Traditional worship in Kerr Chapel
- 8:30 a.m., Contemporary worship in Stephenson Hall
- 11:00 a.m., Traditional worship in the Sanctuary
- 11:00 a.m., Contemporary worship in Stephenson Hall
- 11:00 a.m., Tulsa International Fellowship (TIF) worship in the Great Hall



First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa  
[FirstChurchTulsa.org](http://FirstChurchTulsa.org)

 @FirstChurchTulsa

 @FirstChurchTulsa

 First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa

 @1stChurchTulsa