Pastor’s Letter

From its humble beginnings in the Middle East, to its eventual spread across Rome into Europe, the Bible shows that the early church was a vibrant collection of believers, living in community and sharing their lives to serve each other and the cities around them.

Today, as members of the global church, we still act as the hands and feet of “the Body of Christ” — each of us equipped with unique gifts and opportunities to make an impact in the name of Christ.

As Rev. James Estes, associate pastor for mission and outreach says, “we are called to invest our time and lives into things that matter.”

In modern culture, a true Christian community is something entirely unique. Regardless of age, sex, class, ethnicity or profession, people from all walks of life come together to worship and serve. It’s this key aspect that makes a church so different from any of the clubs, organizations and activities we are bombarded with every day. We come together not simply to be served with entertainment, socialization and other services.

That’s how the last chapter of Luke’s gospel opens (ch. 24). “On the first day of the week, very early in the morning, the women took the spices they had prepared and went to the tomb.”

They find themselves weeping with the women, and then everything changes. Luke 24 takes us through a series of stunning reversals. One after another they come; one unexpected event followed by the next.

First the women are stunned to find the stone strangely out of place, the mouth of the cave open. While they’re trying to make some sense of this, two imposing figures pose the question: “Why are you looking for the living among the dead? Jesus is not here. He is risen!”

They run and tell the others, but who is going to believe such nonsense?

Then we read of two grieving men on the road to Emmaus who meet a stranger. What he says challenges their thinking, but only when they sit at table with him are their eyes opened. The stranger, they discover, is none other than the resurrected Jesus, and everything is transformed by His presence.

These reversals are what Christians celebrate every Sunday. We join together on Easter Sunday to celebrate with the global Church this dramatic Story of God’s Great Reversals. Absence becomes Presence! Despair becomes Joy! Death is swallowed by Life. The list goes on, and your story can add to it.

Holy Week is often called “Passion Week” — the week of Suffering. But the whole story ends in Surprise! There’s victory, O my God, there! victory — in Jesus!

This Victory has the power to reconcile human hearts, to cleanse the sinful, to give hope to the despairing. So do everything you can to bring people in to hear this story! Get your kids out of bed. Call your cranky neighbor. Build a bridge; offer an invitation. Come and worship.

As we gather together, we are so glad to be singing and sharing the joy of Easter with you!

—Dr. Jim Miller, Co-pastor

The joy of Easter!

Becoming "the Body of Christ"

Lucas Forsythe, Director of Communications

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A generous gift brings upgrades to church TV Ministry

ELAINE HORKEY

Not that many months ago, First Church member Ed Apple donated his picturesque acreage in Logan County, Arkansas to the Church for the express purpose of our selling the property and using the proceeds to upgrade our television cameras and related equipment.

Our Television Ministry not only reaches the greater Tulsa area on local stations, but also through live-streamed and on-demand viewing on the FPC website.

Currently utilizing dated equipment, the worship services are now broadcast and recorded in "SD" standard definition 4:3 format, meaning that the picture quality is quite limited and hindered by black bars on either side of the screen. With this new generous gift, the Television Ministry will be able to capture worship at First Church in full "HD" high definition and upgrade to industry standard widescreen format.

What started as a casual inquiry has turned into a lovely gift for our Television Ministry. The entire process only required a few signatures by Mr. Apple, and Planned Giving Ministries took care of all the details. Ed saw a need in the life of the church and recognized that he had a creative solution to meet it. With his help, a much-improved broadcast will be able to touch lives of those in hospitals, at home and around the world.

On the other side of the camera, this ministry is made possible by a dedicated team of volunteers, both seasoned veterans and a new generation of young recruits. These volunteers are hard at work in their control room and behind cameras to capture the true essence of our worship experience each week.

Ed Apple, who worked with the TV Ministry, is now retired from his volunteer duties after almost 25 years. Throughout this experience, he has been quick to emphasize that the TV Ministry should be highlighted—not him. He is not alone, many church Planned Gifts are given anonymously or with little fanfare. Such is the case with all of the television volunteers—a very humble group, to say the least.

With more than 80 combined years of service, Doug Crain, Richard Halliburton and John Scott remain at the helm of the ministry. Without their untold hours, our home-bound members would not benefit from our weekly worship services. Countless others within our local community and beyond receive the word of our Lord Jesus Christ, all due to the TV Ministry team.

Crain, who directs the weekly broadcast, shared that, "the team really, really appreciates this generous gift from Ed; without it we might have been three or four years off [from an upgrade]."

The whole system is in desperate need of refreshing, and with decades of old equipment piling up, the team has come to fondly refer to the TV control room as "Grandpa's Broadcast Museum."

"I'm hoping we flip the switch on HD by May 1," said Crain. "Hopefully everything lines up. There are a lot of moving parts. Everything we've been doing over the last five years has been done with this eventual upgrade in mind."

There are many ways others, too, can be like Ed and make an impact in the life of the church. Many choose to leave a Legacy Gift to the FPC Foundation, which involves a bequest in an estate plan. With a Legacy Gift, there is no outlay of dollars during a person's lifetime.

Another easy gift is leaving a savings plan or a life insurance policy to the Foundation, simply by designating the Foundation as a beneficiary. Once again, no dollars are given during one's lifetime.

With a little foresight, anyone can unlock their imagination and generosity to make a lasting impact in the life of First Church and the larger community of Tulsa.
The 2016 Confirmation class started their journey together in September 2015 with 27 students and 10 leaders. They have met faithfully on Sunday mornings throughout the year, exploring the fundamentals of being fully-devoted followers of Christ.

Typically in the Presbyterian Church, children are baptized as infants, celebrating the promise of Christ’s gift of mercy and unconditional love. As they begin to grow and discover what faith means as young adults, they are given the opportunity to respond to this gift by “confirming” their beliefs. Confirmand Ella Austin said, “When I came to confirmation, Jackson [the FPC associate director of middle school ministries] really opened up a new part of my life that I had never really experienced before — and a new way to think about my life. I learned from him the importance of faith in my life and how great God really is.”

Together they have delved into topics such as the Trinity, our need for salvation, an ongoing relationship with Christ, spiritual disciplines and prayer and community as the body of Christ. Throughout the weeks, Confirmand Xena Gehring has discovered, “my belief and trust in Jesus helps me stay humble and give my glory to God — because He has shaped me to be who I am.”

On March 4 the group headed to Goodland for the Confirmation Spring Retreat, giving them time away to process all they have learned and start writing their Statements of Faith.

Confirmation Leader Shannon Bair shared that, “over the weekend, I read several Statements of Faith and was so impressed with the depth and maturity with which the students answered the questions … They have a strong love for Jesus, understand what it means to have a relationship with Him and are looking for ways that they can serve Him. I can’t wait to welcome them as full members of our congregation!”

On May 12 First Church will do just that, inviting the Confirmands to affirm their Baptismal Promises and become official members of this congregation during the 11 a.m. service in the Sanctuary.

Confirmand Luke Fravel summed up his experience by sharing that, “being a part of the church is like being a part of the team. Everyone has a role to play. Although I might not know what mine is yet, I know the overall goal. A team wants a championship; the church wants to bring more people to the living body and presence of Christ.”

We are so excited to welcome these enthusiastic believers on to our team as we serve Christ together. Please be praying for each of the Confirmands. Although their Confirmation classes may be coming to a close, this is just the beginning of the exciting journey of faith God has planned for them.

In March, this year’s Confirmands gathered for a retreat at Goodland where they enjoyed time together and got a chance to reflect on their own Statements of Faith.

Get to know a Confirmand...

Xena Gehring
"My favorite Bible verse says that a person who believes is shaped like a potter shapes his clay. I love it because it means that in Christ you are able to be shaped and reshaped. That is just amazing to me. God can take your life and just change it to make it better which I think is incredible "

Get to know a Confirmand...

Ella Austin
“Being a faithful member of the Church as part of the body of Christ means that I am intertwined with people all over the world through faith. Our faith helps us stand out across the world and as Christians together we can keep each other accountable for our actions and intentions.”
Learning to choose the best

JANET BULL

When we talk about "Choosing the Best," we are trying to focus on what God truly desires for each of us, and Scripture is clear, God only desires the best for each of us. That is why the Word is full of God’s precepts, commands and guardrails. The Bible is our road map with very clear directions on which path to take.

Our society is also very clear on the variety of roads to choose from today. Our choices are endless, and often that is exactly where they lead … to the end, occasionally a dead end. This is especially true when we are discussing human sexuality.

Since January, leaders, parents and youth have been blessed by "Choosing the Best," a Biblical sex education curriculum taught every other year at First Presbyterian Church.

During these classes our youth are invited into scripture where God’s divine design for our sexuality is highlighted. Leaders offer perspectives on our current culture and ways to navigate decisions the youth will face.

Choosing the Best is a comprehensive course which engages the differences between male and female. Students discuss how the unique physical, emotional and relational qualities of each are purposefully designed to complement each other.

The class aims to engage our youth to think intentionally about their bodies, their feelings and their desires and how to honor God with the choices they make today and tomorrow!

Leaders try to create an environment where honesty is paramount and questions are encouraged. The outside influences our youth face are tremendous, and they need direct answers and attentive adults who will listen and confront tough issues.

At the heart of this program, the church comes alongside parents and assists them in the training of their children. Church leaders cannot replace or usurp the authority of the parent, but can only help to enhance the development of a child’s heart to glorify God.

As a leader, the heart aspect of this program has excited me from the beginning. Scientific data is shared, but the heart of God and His desire — as well as His glorious forgiveness — is always stressed. No matter where a young person finds themselves, they are welcomed into the classes without judgement or condemnation.

Prayer begins the time and sets the tone, God’s presence and purposes are our hope. Disciples following God’s design in our daily choices is our goal!

Have questions of your own about sex, faith and relationships? Feel free to contact Steve Wilson, director of youth ministries, at 918-301-1007 (swilson@firstchurchtulsa.org).

Like individual parts of the body, we receive life, knowledge and refreshment from the greater whole so that we may go out to do that which God has specifically and wonderfully made us to do.

When we begin to engage with one another in service, we not only nurture the body of Christ, but we begin to tell a powerful story as well. Jenette McEntire, who serves on the church outreach committee shares that "the best evangelism (my understanding of outreach) is the witness of how well we care for one another. I think of Galatians 6:10, 'So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.'"

If you’re interested in finding an easy place to engage in the vibrant life of the church, please consider serving the hospitality ministry as an usher or greeter! With as little as one Sunday a month, anyone can welcome members and guests in the name of Christ and help them feel comfortable in worship.

"Scripture is clear about the purpose of hospitality... of welcoming a stranger" says Estes. "It’s a real gift to welcome someone warmly with a smile and look them in the eyes."

Want to learn more about the FPC hospitality ministry or learn about other ways to serve? Visit the "Discover Your Place" table in the Atrium starting Sunday April 3.

Discover Your Place is a new ministry that will help church members find a place to serve in the body of Christ. Friendly volunteers will be more than happy to share more about how to get involved and how service has made an impact on their own Christian walk.

When we talk about the purpose of faith and works in Christian community, Jenette wonders if perhaps “faith and works are not two things; they are more like the head and tail of a single coin, the depth (edge) of which is love. And that coin is the currency of God’s grace. It is He who gives us the faith and the work and the talent (the coin) to spend in the service of His kingdom.”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
First Church sets sights on Romania

JENETTE MCENTIRE

"God can pour on the blessings in astonishing ways so that you’re ready for anything and everything, more than just ready to do what needs to be done. As one psalmist puts it, ‘He throws caution to the winds, giving to the needy in reckless abandon. His right-living, right-giving ways never run out, never wear out.’ This most generous God who gives seed to the farmer that becomes bread for your meals is more than extravagant with you. He gives you something you can then give away, which grows into full-formed lives, robust in God, wealthy in every way, so that you can be generous in every way, producing with us great praise to God.” (2 Corinthians 9:8-11, MSG)

Eugene Peterson’s paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 9:8-11 in The Message, beautifully expresses God’s mission — happening everywhere, at all times. It’s at once, a 50,000-foot view of God’s unbounded love for mankind and a personal, intimate reassurance of His love and provision for each of us.

This summer, the FPC "GoRO" team will travel to Romania July 28-August 8, where there are great opportunities for both service and evangelism. A typical day could include doing a VBS in a nearby village; visiting, providing for and praying with an impoverished family or widow; sharing in worship with a Gypsy community; hosting discipleship events at the Bridge coffeehouse or investing time in the girls at Casa Josef Orphanage. Whatever activity ends up filling the day, we go knowing that we “will be enriched in every way for your great generosity, which will produce thanksgiving to God through us” (2 Corinthians 9:11b).

Participating in short-term mission is a powerful way to tap into God’s work in the world and grow in discipleship. In short-term mission, we see how God provides the means, courage, word and gifts we need to go and see all of it multiply as we give it away. We become bridges of hope and love between the needs of people and the only One who can meet every need — Jesus Christ.

If you’re interested in joining us this year, please visit firstchurchtulsa.org or contact one of our team co-leaders, Elliot Forsyth or Jamie Baker.

Learn about REMM at remm-ministry.org, facebook.com/REMMRomania or vimeo.com/REMMRomania.

8:10 Building update

KELLY BROWN

From the outside, First Presbyterian Church’s transformation of the run-down tower across the street into a sleek and modern office space would seem complete.

The awnings of the 8:10 Building are crisp and new. The windows glow. There’s a shine on the 90-year-old building that is drawing tenants at a faster-than-expected pace.

The project was never just about bricks and mortar, says Co-pastor Jim Miller. Because of that, the most exciting work is yet to be done.

Income generated by the leasing of office space in the building is dedicated entirely to special urban mission endeavors in Tulsa. The first of those projects, a faith and fine arts academy for children, is expected to start in pilot form this fall.

“The 8:10 Building comes to us with this vision,” Miller says. “It’s entirely devoted to serving the needs of metro Tulsa.”

The 8:10 Building is expected to generate up to $1 million a year in revenue for mission projects.

Four of its six floors have already been leased years ahead of schedule, but the challenge is that the cost of building out those floors also has come more quickly than expected.

This summer, the church will begin a capital campaign within the congregation that aims to cover $2 million the building’s initial costs. Additional funding for the renovation will be sought from outside sources.

The church received loans to start the project and could wait for income from leasing to cover those costs, but Miller says that would mean years of delay for the mission projects.

“If we all make some kind of commitment to this project, it will make the end result come more quickly and that’s what we all want,” he says.

The idea for the 8:10 project came a few years ago, the day when First Church was dedicating its new second steeple. Miller says church member Charlie Stephenson leaned over, looked in the direction of the dilapidated Avanti Building and said, “Have you ever thought about what First Church could do with that building?”

As the capital campaign prepares for its summer kickoff, Miller envisions the day Stephenson’s idea comes to fruition, a day when church members see young children who would otherwise miss out on art and music lessons participating in the faith and fine arts academy.

“I think some people who are blessed with discretionary income would say, ‘I’d like to give my investment to that because I know it has an in perpetuity dividend,’” he says.
New Members - March 2016

Questions?

The Inquirers’ Classes is a great opportunity to learn more about the Christian faith, the Presbyterian tradition and membership at First Church.

To learn more about the Inquirers’ Class and membership at First Church, contact Patricia Hall at 918-301-1028, (phall@firstchurchtulsa.org).
Calendar of Events

APRIL 30 - NEW WEDNESDAY NIGHT DOWNTOWN SESSION BEGINS See class descriptions and register for classes and meals online or call 918-301-1019.

APRIL 1 - ART OF FORGIVENESS OPEN HOUSE A special open house coincides with “First Friday” art crawl with refreshments and entertainment from 6-9 p.m.

APRIL 1 - FAITH PARTNERS ADDICTION WORKSHOP BEGINS Reed Bryant, C.A.D.C. licensed drug and alcohol counselor leads a new seminar for friends and family members of those affected by addiction, Fridays in April from 7-8:30 p.m. in room E104. Cost for the workshop is $20 per person ($5 per session). Scholarships available. RSVP to Dionna at 918-301-1029 (dschooley@firstchurchtulsa.org)

APRIL 1 - EMERSON SPRING FUNDRAISER Support our partner elementary school by volunteering, donating auction items or attending the annual silent auction and Bingo night from 6-8 p.m. at Emerson.

APRIL 1 - SCHOLARSHIP DEADLINE Remember, the deadline for the various scholarships administered by First Presbyterian Church has been moved to April 1. An application is available on our web site, firstchurchtulsa.org.

APRIL 3 - QUESTIONS OF FAITH AND SCIENCE CLASS BEGINS Dr. Jacques LaFrance leads a new multigenerational class reconciling faith and science, Sundays in April from 12:15-1 p.m.

APRIL 8 - 8DATES Fellowship, a presentation on parenting and a chance to leave the church for a date night! Childcare ($2/child) must be reserved online or by calling 918-301-1009 by April 5.

APRIL 14 - OUTCRY TOUR CONCERT First Church youth visit the BOK center for a night of worship lead by incredible artists and worship leaders. Sign up online ($25).

APRIL 17 - CHANCEL CHOIR SPRING CONCERT The Chancel Choir presents “Music for Springtime” including “Feel the Spirit” by John Rutter and “Missa Festiva” by John Levitt, with orchestra at 5 p.m. in the Sanctuary.

APRIL 21 - CURSILLO RETREAT Grow in faith and commitment to the Master, April 21-24 at Dwight Mission. Pick up a brochure and registration form at the welcome center or download online.

APRIL 21 - FAITH PARTNERS: PARENTS HELPING PARENTS Education and support for families dealing with the impact of a child’s addiction. Third Thursday of each month from 6:30-8 p.m. in the 1st Floor Bernsen reception area.

APRIL 22 - EAB: NEW REALTIME TRAVELERS Evenings at the Bernsen presents an energetic evening of old-time American hits with banjo, mandolin, fiddle and guitar. 7:30 p.m. in the Great Hall, Bernsen Center. $10 for adults, $5 for students, free for children 12 and under.

APRIL 23 - YOUTH AT THE FOOD BANK FPC youth serve at the Community Food Bank (1304 N Kenosha Ave.) from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of each month.

APRIL 23 - PETRA KIDS MINISTRIES ANNUAL BANQUET Dinner, live music and auctions benefiting children of Uganda at 5 p.m. in Stephenson Hall. Cost is $10 if paid online and $15 at the door.

MAY 13 - 8DATES Fellowship, a presentation on parenting and a chance to leave the church for a date night! Childcare ($2/child) must be reserved online or by calling 918-301-1009 by May 10.

MAY 14 - AMASS EXODUS Our monthly gathering for high school students from 6-9 p.m. in the Powerhouse with food, fun, games, music and a relevant message.

MAY 19 - FAITH PARTNERS: PARENTS HELPING PARENTS Education and support for families dealing with the impact of a child’s addiction. Third Thursday of each month from 6:30-8 p.m. in the 1st Floor Bernsen reception area.

MAY 28 - YOUTH AT THE FOOD BANK FPC youth serve at the Community Food Bank (1304 N Kenosha Ave.) from 9 a.m.-12 p.m. on the fourth Saturday of each month.

JUNE 6-10 - VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL Get ready for a week of fun, fellowship and discipleship at Camp Loughridge. Registration is now open online or by calling 918-301-1009.

Learn more about these events and more happening in the life of FPC, online at firstchurchtulsa.org

Pastoral Care

Faith Partners Column: Helping or Hurting?

REV. JAMES ESTES
(SOME CONTENT PROVIDED BY PARENTS HELPING PARENTS, USED BY PERMISSION)

Jesus tells us to be “wise as serpents and gentle as doves” (Mt. 10:16). This need for wisdom and tenderness is felt perhaps nowhere more than in serving those suffering from addiction. Sometimes it is hard to know the difference between empowering and enabling, between helping and hurting. The desire to help others is one of the noblest human instincts, but sometimes our best efforts to help can backfire when addiction is involved.

The difference between empowering and enabling is about the power to change and grow. Empowerment should add progression and value to the life of another person. Enabling, while often motivated by a wish for a better tomorrow, creates a sense of powerlessness, often discouraging and de-motivating the person who needs help. Empowerment is about helping a person to increasingly carry their own weight, even if they progress only slowly and with difficulty.

By stepping in to “solve” another person’s problems, the enabler takes away any motivation for the addict to take responsibility for his/her actions.

If you are wondering whether you are empowering or enabling, read the following comparisons and ask which description seems truer to your own experience:

Enabling is about immediate relief; empowerment is about long term growth.

Enabling is about excusing or dismissing problems; empowerment is about sober assessments.

Enabling seeks control and claims power; empowerment seeks to give power away.

To truly empower someone requires great courage to witness someone’s pain and do nothing to stop it and great resolve to love a person enough to not save them from themselves. When we focus on giving the responsibility for change to the other person we will find that we give them dignity and the opportunity to grow.

To learn more about support for addiction at First Church, call 918-301-1028.
We need YOU to complete our new church photo directory

Now scheduling free photo directory portrait sessions for all First Church Members.

Professional photography will take place in and around the church with beautiful stained glass and architecture in the background.

Each family will receive a photo directory and a complimentary 8x10 portrait. You will also be given the opportunity to purchase additional prints and gifts but are not obligated to do so.

To schedule your portrait session visit firstchurchtulsa.org/lifetouch or call 918-301-1019.

Wednesday Night Downtown

Registration is now open for the next series of family classes and programs (Wednesday Nights, 6:30-7:50 p.m.).

The Reason for God: First Church pastors and guest panelists examine faith, truth, and doubt using Timothy Keller’s best-selling book.

Financial Peace University: Learn to beat debt, invest in the future, and give like never before with Dave Ramsey’s award-winning curriculum.

End of Life Issues: Local experts join FPC pastors and staff to discuss funerals, wills, and other planning issues relating to life’s biggest transition.

Learn more and register for classes/meals at firstchurchtulsa.org/wndt or call 918-301-1019

The ART OF FORGIVENESS

A special exhibition at First Presbyterian Church featuring over 50 original pieces inspired by the familiar parable of the Prodigal Son as interpreted by Rembrandt, Thomas Hart Benton, JJ Tissot, and dozens of other artists.

“First Friday” Open House Event:

Friday, April 1 from 6-9 p.m.

FREE AND OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
firstchurchtulsa.org/art

THE GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

August 11-12, 2016 | willowcreek.com/summit

A world-class faculty of speakers includes Bill Hybels, Melinda Gates, Horste Schulze, Patrick Lencioni, and more.

VISION, INSPIRATION, AND PRACTICAL SKILLS YOU CAN IMMEDIATELY APPLY

Register Today (use host church code PREMIER16)
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