First Church choirs “make a joyful noise unto the Lord”

STAFF REPORT

Throughout the academic year, the Chancel Choir is busy leading in worship every Sunday as well as performing beautiful choral music for special events.

Recently on Sunday, April 19, the Chancel Choir presented their final special program of the spring through an outstanding concert featuring “inspiring music from the world’s greatest oratorio,” highlights from Handel’s “Messiah.”

Even when they are not practicing for big events like their seasonal concerts, members of the Chancel Choir are working hard to provide the leadership and musical accompaniment that is so integral to worship services at First Church.

“As a pastor once put it, choir members are ‘midwives of beauty,’ and in an age of distraction, they help us behold the life-giving beauty of our God Sunday after Sunday,” says Co-Pastor Rev. Ryan Moore. “Choir, thanks for prompting us to praise and exalt Jesus, our Lord and Savior!”

On April 19, members of the First Church Chancel Choir presented highlights from Handel’s “Messiah” for their spring concert.

In worship, the Chancel Choir also leads the congregation in singing hymns from the hymnal. These are typically familiar pieces which are pitched to a comfortable

Worship Behind the Scenes: The Mighty Men and Women of Maintenance

JOAN HOAR

When Steve Caldwell and Steven Mitchell set out to make a few notes as to all the myriad tasks undertaken by our maintenance and housekeeping, the list had to end at some point.

The ten employees of these two support services at First Presbyterian Church are responsible for ensuring that members, guests and the physical campus are cared for. No matter the day of week nor the time of day, chances are that someone is hard at work keeping our facilities in top shape and ready for use.

Steven Mitchell (see Tidings volume 60, number 1), divides the support staff into two categories: housekeeping, supervised by Chaaz Bailey; and maintenance, supervised by James Flynn.

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Ask a Pastor

Each issue, a First Church Pastor answers one of your theological, biblical or moral questions. Email your questions to communications@firstchurchtulsa.org (Subject: Ask a Pastor).

Seeking God in the summer

How can I grow my spiritual life over the summer? I know I’ll be doing different things and probably hanging out with different people outside of school...I’m trying to figure out how God wants me to use my time.

... 

For many of us, summer is a long awaited break. It is a break from school, a break from routine, a break from the hectic nature of life. It is a time to relax, go on vacation, travel, work some odd jobs and recharge. It’s a time to take a step back from the chaos and reorient ourselves, but I’ve also found that this ‘break’ mentality can easily drift over into those things that help us grow in our spiritual lives.

We’re traveling or at the lake so we miss church. People are out of town, so a Sunday school or small group stops meeting. Without ever intending it, we can put our faith on hold during the summer months. My encouragement is that the summer is actually the perfect time to reinvigorate and deepen your spiritual life.

A great spiritual activity is to attend a Christian camp or go on a mission trip. It’s amazing to see what God can do as you spend an extended period of time alongside other believers, building relationships and seeing how God is at work.

I would also encourage an intentional commitment to some basic spiritual disciplines. Take the extra time that you have without homework as an opportunity to dive into reading your Bible and praying. You might consider challenging yourself to read through a book of the Bible or maybe a few books. You could look at the upcoming sermon texts and read the story a few times before church. Find a friend or group of friends and hold each other accountable! Meet up at Chipotle and share what you’ve been reading.

Summer is also a great time to try something new. If you’ve never journaled, now can be a great time to start. You might think about spending time praying through the psalms. Find ways to serve in the community, like volunteering for VBS. There are tons of opportunities to plug in!

Finally, set aside time each week to be with a community of believers. Join a group that is already meeting or get a group of friends together, share a meal, and spend some time praying for each other. Commit yourself to going to church, even if you are on vacation. This can actually be very fun and very illuminating. When you visit a church, you might want to consider some of these questions: How did the church welcome you as a visitor? What were the major points emphasized in the service? How was scripture and faith tied to life? What would you say was most important to that community?

One of the great things about visiting other churches is that it gives us new eyes with which to see our own church and think about our own spiritual lives. Sometimes we get so used to what we do each Sunday that we can lose sight of what God is really calling us to.

Whatever you decide, my prayer for us all is that we would see this summer as an opportunity for growth and a chance to see our faith in a new light as we open our eyes anew to the things that God is doing in our midst.

—Rev. Dan Hutchinson, associate pastor for Next Generation Ministries

Support Goodland Academy through the Presbyterian Women Clip Joint!

The Presbyterian Women Clip Joint collects labels from different items to send to Goodland Academy, First Presbyterian Church’s mission partner in Hugo, OK (goodland.org). The school is currently trying to purchase a van and have already collected 1,159,838 out of the 1,600,000 points they need. Please help support this ministry by dropping off your labels at the church office. They do not need to be trimmed (Member Kay Langenkamp does all the trimming of labels). For a list of all eligible labels, go to labelsforeducation.com. For more information, please contact Dionna Schooley at 918-301-1029 or dschooley@firstchurchtulsa.org.
Several First Church members recently carved out time from their busy schedules to give Tulsa area foster parents a much-needed break from theirs.

On Friday, April 30, First Church once again hosted a Foster Parents’ Night Out, giving foster parents a chance to relax, run errands or do whatever they need.

Not only does the event provide a respite for foster parents and fun activities for the children, it also gives First Church members a chance to share and experience Christ’s love in a special way.

This past event was the first time that Laurel Baird (the new assistant to the church’s Next Gen Ministries and wife of Worship Leader Eric Baird) volunteered to help out. Her brother and sister-in-law are foster parents, and she knows how much hard work they put into it. Laurel wanted to give other foster parents like them the night off.

“It’s a really fun and accessible way to reach out to our community and show God’s love in a tangible way,” Laurel says.

She explained that the kids are hungry for attention, and this was a way for other adults besides their foster parents to spend a couple of hours with them and show them how valuable they are.

Children were served dinner, interacted with a magician and played inside and outside the church under the supervision of volunteers.

Volunteering for the event also was a first-time experience for First Church member Sarah Smith, who encourages other adults to volunteer in the future.

“As Christians we are supposed to help out with the community, and it’s a good way to help out and a good way to live by example,” she says.

Although an official date has not yet been set, look for further information coming soon about our next Foster Parents’ Night Out planned for July.

To learn more, contact Hannah Keith at hkeith@firstchurchtulsa.org or call 918-301-1039.

Several of First Church’s youngest members served alongside their parents in welcoming and entertaining the children who attended Foster Parents’ Night Out.

On April 10, Mike Miller and Tom Hillis lead a game of bingo as part of a silent auction and bingo night fundraiser for Emerson Elementary School. Many other First Church members also helped in this event which raised a total of $4,825. Susan Foust, auction coordinator and school library media specialist, shared that the funds will support much needed playground equipment as well as the Science, Tech, Engineering and Math Initiative (STEM).

In a thank you note, Foust wished to share with the congregation that “your donations of time, money and hours of helping are a great sign of the stewardship that you have taken on. Emerson benefits greatly from all of your effort.”
Many thanks to the individuals listed below who invested their time over the past year to fulfill their baptismal promises. Programming for Children's and Youth Ministries requires an army of dedicated adults who are willing to share in the formation of our church’s youngest disciples. This list represents academic year commitments that can add up to five to six hours per week for those who lead a wide variety of programs, including Sunday school, Awana, Pathfinders on Wednesday (POW!) and Exodus Core Groups. We also want to thank a host of adults who have signed up for “sharing the caring,” our initiative to engage the congregation in the care-giving of our babies and toddlers on a rotating basis. A big THANK YOU to each of you!!

ALAN ROWLAND
AMY SCHEIPER
ARA JACOBSON
BETHANY FENNEL
BETH PIELSTICKER
BETH WOODARD
BILL SAVAGE
BOB BASTEMEYER
BRADLEY SEIBERT
BRAD MORROW
CAM CAMPBELL
CAROL ROWLAND
CASPER DEN HARDER
CHRISTY LAMERTON
CINDY DEVORE
CLAY GROGAN
CURT WILSON
DAN THOMAS
DAVE DAVIS
DAVID GRIGG
DAVID RUSSELL
DAYNA BOYNTON
DEIDRE SAVAGE
DYLAN BRUMLEY
ELIZABETH DEVORE
EMILY RAMSEY
GINA DAVIS
HANNA HOWARD
HAYLEY HIGGS
HENRY FENNEL
HUTTON PERSON
JACLYN METCALF
JAKE DODSON
JAMIE BAKER
JANE CRAIN
JANET DRIKO
JANINE BURLIN
JARED STARKWEATHER
JENNIFER PHILP
JIMMY INHOFE
JIM SCHEIPER
JOE JACOBSON
JOHANNA HARPER
JOSH BUTTS
JOSH HARPER
JUDY BASTEMEYER
JULIANNE HAND
JULIE BALL
KATIE SWAN
KATY MCQUEEN
KAY WARD
KELLY BRANDENBURG
KELLY BROWN
LAURENCE MANSUR
LIZZY BRADFORD
LYNNE MANSUR
LYNN MILLER
MAGGIE DEN HARDER
MARTI STONE
MARY DIACON
MATTHEW CRADDOCK
MIKE MILLER
MONICA CRADDOCK
MONNIE RONEY
PAIGE MILLER
PATTI RICHARDS
PATTY LAWSON
PEGGY WELCH
PHIL RICHARDS
RACHEL FIRESTONE
RYAN BARRY
SARA BARRY
SCOTT STONE
SHANNON BAIR
SHANNON THOMAS
STEPHANI BARTHOLOMEW
STEPHEN MCCRACKEN
STEVEN BUCHELE
SUZY MCCRACKEN
TIM SCHAAFSMA
URBANAS MASAKU
WAYNE WARD
ZACH ROLAND

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range for easy congregational singing.

Beginning in the fall of 2014, the Chancel Choir rearranged its long-standing routine to align its rehearsals with the programs during Wednesday Night Downtown. Now the choir members enjoy dinner and fellowship with the rest of the congregation at 5:45 p.m. before adjourning for rehearsal from 6:30-8 p.m.

Beginning in June, however, the schedule will now shift to the church’s regular Summer Choir routine, in which anyone from the congregation is invited to join.

If you are a wanna-be Choir member or have ever wondered what it would be like to sit in the choir loft surrounded by a magnificent organ and friends who love to sing, this is your chance!

On Sunday, June 7, the First Presbyterian Church Summer Choir begins, and you are invited! There are no Wednesday evening rehearsals in June, July or August; instead the choir gathers Sundays at 10:15 a.m. in the Choir Room for a brief warm-up and a review of the anthem for the 11:00 a.m. service. Musical selections for the summer are simpler to sing, and you will find that the choir is a warm and welcoming group that is eager to help newcomers learn the anthems and find their robes!

Whether you are considering joining the larger Chancel Choir or would just like to partake in the famous patriotic Sunday following the Fourth of July, the Summer Choir is an easy way to get a taste of choral singing with a minimum time requirement. New members are always welcome to continue on with the Chancel Choir in the fall. Why not give it a try?
One Saturday a month, high school students at First Presbyterian Church come together for worship and to ask some really tough questions. The gathering, called Amass Exodus (that’s catchy word play based on the overall high school ministry, Exodus), is typically led by the students themselves. Food and fun are part of it, but the real aim is helping teens find in God the answers to their questions about faith and life. "They’re kind of in the trenches,” says Steve Wilson, director of youth ministries, noting the culture clash these high schoolers often face between their daily lives and faith lives.

Seventeen-year-old junior Anna Schale says Amass Exodus brings four grades—from ninth to 12th—closer. It’s a relaxed, comfortable meeting but structured enough to deliver real impact. "It is a time for high school students to evaluate their own values and talk about the problems and the difficulties that we students face every day and how they do or don’t line up with our faith or beliefs,” she says.

The questions they raise run the gamut—about relationships, homosexuality, why pain and suffering exist. “These aren’t your typical Sunday morning sermon answers,” Anna says. “It is a time to ask the questions we all don’t want to ask, but we want to know the answers.” The best part of Amass Exodus, she says, is being able to discuss in small groups what the Bible says about specific scenarios or “how we would respond to situations when the Bible doesn’t give us a play-by-play of what to do in this moment.” “It’s beyond valuable,” Anna says, “to have a situation where the Bible shapes your opinions about something before society does.” Anna explains that this “unplugged” version of the Exodus ministry also is the perfect place to bring friends who might be new to the youth group.

Fellow student Kirstyn Taylor says the larger gathering of Amass Exodus is enhanced by smaller weekly meetings of Life Groups at host homes, as well as by weekly Sunday School in the Powerhouse. "In Life Groups, approximately eight to 10 students gather in homes and serve as a support group,” Taylor says. “We eat dinner and discuss the week, as well as how God has worked in our lives during the week. In my Life Group, we have grown so close that we are planning a trip this summer!”

Adult leadership through Wilson, Rev. Daniel Hutchinson, Jackson Seibert, Maggie and Casper den Harder, Jaclyn Metcalf, Jake Dodson, Patti and Phil Richards and others, also resonates with Taylor because they have shared “a personal story of faith and they are all in different parts of life, so one can see how faith grows from a young adult to a parent.”

Summer mission trips are another way that senior high students learn how to live out their faith in their daily lives. On June 13, Exodus students will be traveling to Detroit to serve both with their hands and their hearts. The students will be staying at a Presbyterian church outside of the city and then traveling every day to different Detroit missions to help serve lunch. They might also visit neighborhoods to help with continued cleanup after flooding last year.

Mission trips often prove transformative to students at the precipice of adulthood, Wilson says. “The very questions they’re struggling with of what does it mean to be a Christian are answered in very tangible and heartfelt ways for them when they’re on a mission trip. They are loving their neighbor. They are seeing to the needs of others,” he says. “I think that resonates with them.”
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Each housekeeping staff member, as Steve states, puts in 40 hours per week. They are responsible for the day to day cleaning of all three properties. Duties include everything from spot cleaning carpets to waxing floors, cleaning classrooms, restrooms, walls, blinds and on and on...

Our maintenance crew, also full time, takes care of room setups, opening and closing the buildings and any other “Honey Do’s”—that is, anything that members, staff, or Bernsen Center tenants, need.

Steve Caldwell, director of operations, adds to the lists of tasks: “the maintenance staff is also here to help on Sunday mornings when members need help with their laptops and the Promethean Boards. They are here, especially after dark, to walk members and other employees to their cars if they feel “uneasy” for any reason. They may also assist with the sound system during memorial services and show prospective users around the buildings for weddings, receptions, banquets and other large events. They also take care of cleaning after Friday or Saturday events to be certain we are ready for [Sunday worship]. They may, after a late night event on Saturday, work until 1 or 2 a.m. to be sure we are set up and ready for Sunday morning.”

When I asked the staff for a few comments as to why they served so faithfully and what each would like members to know about their work, almost to a one, the responses involved the fact that they love their work because it gives them so much satisfaction to make things nice for others: “I love so much meeting and helping the people at the church.” “I enjoy the people...doing different things every day and working for the Lord!”

As we depend so heavily on our church’s great support staff, there are a few things we might keep in mind. Please remember to be patient and understanding of the many challenges involved in setting up for church events and numerous meetings. During peak hours, many needs are addressed simultaneously in order to keep everything running smoothly.

Housekeeping and maintenance also cannot always change things at members’ immediate request. Work orders must go through the proper channels.

We often pray, “May we be mindful of others,” and, may we especially be mindful—and thankful—of our great staff who support us in so many ways!
As we continue to approach our First Church contemporary worship experience with prayer and intentionality, it has been one of my missions to seek out music appropriate for the life of our church. When choosing music for our services here, I try to pull from the catalogs of artists who combine depth of lyric with depth of personal ministry.

A couple of weeks ago I had the wonderful experience of joining a number of First Church folks in attending my second All Sons and Daughters concert.

All Sons and Daughters is a worship band out of Nashville, Tennessee. We play an ever-increasing number of their songs in our contemporary services, and several of our attendees are devoted followers of the band. The band is built around the duet of leaders David Leonard and Leslie Jordan who serve as worship leaders at Journey Church of Franklin, Tennessee. Their music flows out of their local church ministry and is inspired by the life of their congregation. Dave (formerly the leader of Jackson Waters and member of Need to Breathe) once told me, “We didn’t set out to be a touring band, we were just writing songs for the church…this is what God has done with it.”

I think this is what makes their songs so beautiful; they are not written with radio or performance in mind, they were written for and out of a very specific group of people’s encounters with God. It is this persona and perspective that makes an All Sons and Daughters concert (if such a term is appropriate) so unique.

Their concerts are built to be a time spent in community with Christians of all backgrounds seeking the Lord collectively and individually in a community bonded by their mutual love of God and music. The concert we attended was a church service, in a broad sense of the term, although it looked very different from our typical Sunday morning experience.

The concerts are done in low lighting with (by current standards) very minimal production values (no laser light shows, no performer tricks, etc.), in fact you won’t even find much in the way of a spotlight on the band, just a subtle glow for ambiance.

The evening also included communion as well as opportunities for people to express their prayers and worship through written reflection or drawing. Throughout the concert, Dave and Leslie give insightful reflections and prayers, and on this particular tour, the pastor of their church was present to give a brief, highly impactful, message.

I came away from this concert, as I had before, impressed by the band as ministers and musicians, but more than anything, touched, moved, and in awe of God and His heart for the church.

Music has always played a large role in how I relate to God. It is the language I speak best, so I find it the most natural way to express myself in prayer. As a worship leader, the content of music—and even the substantive nature of the source—play heavily into my choice of what music I listen to, worship with, and lead others in worship with.

All Sons and Daughters have a ministry and music that I recommend without reservation. The honesty, heart, and theological insight they put into their song writing and ministry as a whole is truly inspiring. The ability to present that ministry wholeheartedly in fullness of integrity in the Lord night after night deeply impacts lives. It has mine.

This is my ambition for the contemporary music ministry of First Church—yes, that people would enjoy the music, but most of all, that the music would convey the prayers of our hearts, and there we would encounter God, being moved and changed by His Spirit, for His glory.

If you would like to become more familiar with the music we use in our contemporary services here at First Church, you can find video playlists of each week’s music by the original artist on YouTube. Visit firstchurch-tulsa.org/contemporaryworshipmedia or search First Presbyterian Church of Tulsa playlists on YouTube.com.
JUNE 1-5: VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL
9 a.m.-noon at Camp Loughridge. $10 for VBS (elementary) and $25 for VBS (4th-5th grade). Register to attend or volunteer online at firstchurchtulsa.org/vbs.

JUNE 4: UKIRK COLLEGE MINISTRY SUMMER BIBLE STUDY
College-age students are invited to join in the UKirk Bible study hosted in various homes around town every Thursday at 6:30 p.m. Learn more on the UKirk Tulsa Facebook page or contact Dan Hutchinson at 918-301-1040.

JUNE 5: TIF DREAM NIGHT TALENT SHOW
Tulsa International Fellowship jump starts its 6th anniversary weekend with a celebration of God-given talents in the Great Hall, Bernsen Center at 5 p.m.

JUNE 6: FINE ARTS DAY
A Saturday program and luncheon ($8) celebrating music, architecture, and the visual arts will be hosted by the First Church docents together with Ron Pearson, director of music. Reserve your lunch online or call Gretchen Bashforth at 918-301-1019.

JUNE 7: TIF’S 6TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
TIF celebrates its 6th anniversary in worship on Sunday, June 7 with a luncheon following the service on the 4th floor of the Bernsen Center.

JUNE 7-28: AUTOBIOGRAPHIES OF GRACE
Join us every Sunday in June at 9:30 a.m. in the Kerr Chapel for Autobiographies of Grace. These personal stories of God’s grace are told by a different fellow member of the First Church family each week. They will inspire you, enrich your faith, and enable you to see God’s hand at work more clearly in your own life...

June 7 – George Savage
June 14 – Robbie Burke
June 21 – Patrick Cheptiony
June 28 – Cheryl Arthur

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JUNE 7: YOUTH CAR WASH
Bring your dirty cars to the Powerhouse parking lot after worship to support students going on the Exodus and Pathfinders’ Mission Trips this summer.

JUNE 22-26: KANAKUK KAMPOUT
FPC will host an outreach-oriented day “kamp.” Kampers and volunteers needed.

JUNE 24: FIRST FRIENDS ON THE MOVE VISIT OKC
First Friends on the Move travel to the Myriad Botanical Gardens and the OKC Museum of Art. Learn more online or contact Elaine Horkey at 918-301-1037.

AUGUST 6-7 GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT
The live-broadcast world-class leadership experience returns to FPC August 6-7. Learn more and register at firstchurchtulsa.org/summit.

Register online at firstchurchtulsa.org/summit
Enter the rate code “GLS15HOST” by July 7 for special $89 host site pricing

VISION, INSPIRATION AND PRACTICAL SKILLS YOU CAN IMMEDIATELY APPLY

Calendar of Events

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