For parents with young children, getting away for a night out can seem as tricky as getting a tired toddler through a grocery store without a meltdown. There's the quest for a babysitter who's not only trustworthy but also available, the rush to get the kids fed, the improbability that friends in the same boat will be able to meet up for the evening.

But for eight Fridays during the school year, First Church makes it easy for parents to reclaim some valuable adult time. The church provides the babysitting, feeds the kids and creates an opportunity for parents to get to know one another through an evening out.

Jan Miller, director of children's ministries, started the program, called 8 Dates, to help couples with young children come together and deepen friendships in a way that is hard to do on busy Sunday mornings at church.

"You can come to worship and not necessarily make any authentic friendships," she explains. "8 Dates gives parents time to get to know each other, to build friendships and support one another as a community."

"Authentic is the word I would hope this group would most embody," Miller says. "I want people to put away the faces we put on for each other and be who they are."

Parents also learn some valuable parenting skills. Before they head out for dinner, each 8 Dates night includes a thought-provoking presentation on challenges parents face. Miller draws on her background in parent education to put the topics together.

The way it works is this: Parents make res-
ervations for childcare, which costs only $2 per child and is provided at the church. After dropping off the kiddos at 6 p.m., the adults gather for the 45-minute presentation. Afterward, they leave for dinner, either on their own or in small groups. They return to pick up their children at 9:15 p.m.

“It’s a Friday night once a month that we, and our children, look forward to,” says Johanna Harper, who with her husband Josh and their two children have been 8 Dates regulars since the series started five years ago. “We all enjoy the fellowship, and we as parents always come away with something we can use from the lessons.”

When other activities conflict with 8 Dates, the Harpers still make an effort for at least one of them to attend the class each month. She values the parenting education on everything from reinforcing good behaviors to learning how technology and social media affects children.

“It gives you a break to listen to what others have been through or are going through and [learn] how the advice offered might help you too,” she shares, “or to hear about what might be ahead and how to prepare.”

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“8 Dates” is named after the eight date nights it offers to parents from September-May (excluding December).

Adam and Jennifer Doverspike look forward to the couple time, something that’s harder to come by these days with a four- and three-year-old, but Jennifer also points to the skills they’ve learned.

“We loved a recent session about child behavioral techniques,” she says. “The session encouraged us to begin a sticker chart for bedtime and a bedtime routine. Things have been much, much calmer around here!”

And while they enjoy the chance to slip away to dinner together, they’ve also gotten to know other great couples. “The more people we meet, the more we feel a part of the First Church community,” Jennifer adds.

Jan Miller explained that many of the topics planned for 8 Dates in the coming months will focus on faith questions such as: How do I surround my child with people who will help me nurture faith? Should I worry about the influence of my kids’ unbelieving friends? How do I explain death to my child? How soon should I start talking to my child about God?

Dr. Jim Miller led the first 8 Dates kickoff in September on the question, “What scares you the most about being a Christian parent?”

Johanna says no matter the topic, one of the most important things 8 Dates provides is the reassurance that “you aren’t in the parenting trenches alone.”

“It offers an opportunity to connect socially with other parents and seek the support of our Christian family,” she says. “And you will always learn something new!”

The next 8 Dates night is scheduled for October 9 with the topic “What’s more important: grace or discipline?” The following session will be on November 13.

UKirk welcomes new intern, Courtaney Miller

LAUREL BAIRD, NEXT GEN. MINISTRY ASSISTANT

First Church’s UKirk College Ministry is excited to welcome the new intern for the year, Courtaney Miller. After graduating from Jenks High School in 2010, Courtaney moved to Dallas to attend SMU on a rowing scholarship. There she embraced the chance to experience a new environment and worked to be a beacon for Christ on a secular campus.

Though difficult at times, Courtaney came to welcome the opportunities this created to openly share her faith. “This, along with the other struggles that come with growing up, helped me understand what I truly believe and grow deeper in my relationship with Christ,” Courtney explained.

At SMU, she found a great source of strength and encouragement from her church community called Shoreline, and now that she has graduated, she hopes to share a similarly supportive faith community with college students in Tulsa.

As a UKirk intern, she will organize events and be available on the TU campus to mentor and build relationships to help bridge the gap between the typical college experience and the local church.

Courtaney enjoys being active and outside and has recently taken up the ukulele. When she is not on one of the college campuses around town, you might just find her journaling in a coffee shop or searching for great finds in a thrift store.

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First Church members discover their place in the body of Christ

HANNAH KEITH,
MISSION MINISTRY ASSISTANT

Just a short 130 years ago on October 5, First Church was formally founded as a church soon after Rev. Haworth presented himself and fifteen other charter members, who were all Creek Indians, to the Indian Territory Presbytery. Reflection upon the inception of such a missional church during this time of celebration provides a season of self-examination and rededication to the call of God upon our lives and upon this church. While God’s plans for our lives and the church may seem entirely distinct, in truth they are one and the same.

We are all as individuals members of the Body of Christ and we are designed to function uniquely based on God’s particular gifts to us. Once we realize that God has a specific place for us to serve in His church, we can discover where that is! Fortunately, here at First Church, we have implemented Discover Your Place, which, according to Jackson Seibert, “has great potential to create a space for everyone in First Church to discern where their gifts would be best utilized in the church, and thus be an outward, evangelistic expression of the Body.”

The first Discover Your Place event occurred on Wednesday August 26 and highlighted various departments and volunteer jobs of the church — even those that operate faithfully, unseen or unheard, behind the scenes.

On the night of Discover Your Place, Jackson mentioned that you could feel “a little bit of tension, an excited tension, a buzz about people who wanted to get plugged in… because everyone there actually did want to get plugged in, because they were anxious to serve somewhere and find their place to serve.”

As First Church begins a new chapter of mission, it is our prayer that you will Discover Your Place and recognize, as Rev. Moore expressed, that if we aren’t serving each other as a community of believers, then we are not fully expressing ourselves as who we really are in Christ.

If you missed the inaugural Discover Your Place event, visit the Discover Your Place table that will be scheduled on a regular basis in the atrium and join us for the next Discover Your Place in early 2016.

Have a heart for college students?

ATTENTION! UKirk is looking for families who would be interested in investing in the lives of college students. We as the church have a great opportunity to be the family of Christ to these students, many of whom come from outside the Tulsa area. Here are a few ideas of what we are looking for: folks willing to take college students to lunch after worship, host college students for meals in their homes, provide rides to church for college students who do not have cars (especially those who attend ORU), or be a “second family” for a student during the course of their time in Tulsa. Being a second family can include, but is not limited to, inviting the student over for meals, sending a care package from time to time, providing a place to do laundry or taking them out to coffee. If you would like to get involved with this ministry or have further questions, please contact Dan Hutchinson (dhutchinson@firstchurchtulsa.org) or Laurel Baird (lbaird@firstchurchtulsa.org).
A new chapter of mission in Tulsa

In 1885, First Presbyterian Church was organized as a “Foreign Mission” outpost under the Indian Territory Presbytery with 15 charter members, all Creek Indians from Wealaka Mission.

Since then, First Presbyterian Church has been hard at work serving the common good in Tulsa, Oklahoma, a city where 14.1% of families live below the poverty line.

On Sunday, August 19, 1883, seventy-four-year-old Robert M. Loughridge, a Presbyterian missionary, rode his horse twenty miles from the Wealaka Mission to J. M. Hall’s general store. He stood on the steps and preached the first sermon in Tulsa.

Ruins from Race Riot, June 1, 1921

Upon learning of the invasion and devastation of Greenwood in the Tulsa Race Riot on June 1, 1921, Dr. Charles W. Kerr immediately phoned his Sexton and told him to open the church as a sanctuary for all refugees. Dr. Kerr authorized church funds to be used to feed, clothe and care for those in need. Dr. Kerr then rang various Greenwood Pastors and leaders telling them to spread the word in Greenwood that his church was a sanctuary, which would welcome all who needed refuge from racial oppression.

On September 17, 1889, ten women of First Presbyterian Church met in the home of Mrs. C.W. Dorman at the corner of 4th and Main to organize a Home and Foreign Missionary Society.

Helping Hand was established in 1981 as part of the Christian Service Board. In 1983, they dispersed $27,556 to Tulsans in need. Last year in 2014, they disbursed $365,911.
With more people entering into town, there came the desire to build a school for the children. J. M. Hall and others appealed to the Presbyterian Board of Home Missions to establish a school in Tulsa. The board authorized the erection of a school building that was also to be used as a church on Fourth and Boston.

In 1907 Henry Kendall College, now the University of Tulsa, was moved from Muskogee where it had been founded in 1894. Tulsa, through the influence of Dr. Kerr and other community leaders, offered to furnish twenty acres of land and $100,000 to build on a site then two miles east of the city. While the buildings were under construction, classes met in the First Presbyterian Church building.

In 2010 Transitional Living Centers of Oklahoma opened the Lindsey House as its first project. First Presbyterian Church celebrated the dedication and began its five-year commitment of $45,000 per year in funding.

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This week the completed 8:10 Building was dedicated for Christ’s glory and serving the common good of Tulsa. As tenants continue to move in, every dime of net profit will go directly towards serving those in need in downtown Tulsa.

Boy Scouts Troop 1, the oldest troop in Oklahoma, has been hosted by First Presbyterian Church since 1911.
New Members - August 2015

ANITA ANTHONY  GREG & LAURA BLOXOM  LEE HERRING  DIANE HOGAN  JACQUES LAFRANCE  NANCY MACKEY-BLOCKER

ADAM & JOAN PEARSON  AL TALLEY  CR TALLEY  GINNY TALLEY  JACQUES LAFRANCE  JEFF & SUSAN ROBIN, JOSH & CALEB WALDIE

Questions?

To learn more about membership at FPC, contact Patricia Hall at 918-301-1028, or phall@firstchurchtulsa.org. The next Inquirer’s Classes are offered as part of Wednesday Night Downtown or in a two-part weekend session:

Wednesday Night Downtown: October 7, 14, 21 (and Sunday October 11) - optional dinner at 5:45 p.m. before class from 6:30-8 p.m. This session also meets on Sunday, October 11 from 9:15-10:30 a.m. in Room #206. Sign up for dinner online.

Weekend session: October 10-11 - Saturday, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. in room E100 (with a light breakfast and lunch) and Sunday, 9:15-10:30 a.m. in room #206. Childcare reservations for the Saturday class are required by Tuesday, October 6.

In her time off, Julia loves movies, coffee shops and ice cream and is getting involved in the Niche young adult fellowship. She’s also hopeful that Ron Pearson might give her organ lessons!
New contemporary choir begins this fall

ERIC BAIRD, CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER

I love fall! It’s the best! Cool weather, football, pumpkin pie … bring it on! And with the fall season comes a new season of ministry at the church. Along with the many other exciting events of the next couple of months, we will be starting a new musical venture in the contemporary music ministry: a contemporary choir!

In part due to the current conversations occurring in worship ministry circles on “engagement” and in part simply looking to expand what we do and provide more opportunities for involvement, the contemporary choir will help lead worship, along with the worship band, once a month in Stephenson Hall.

The Contemporary Choir will practice twice monthly; once as a group and once with the band. If you are looking for a way to be active in contemporary worship ministry, have a passion for singing and for serving the body of Christ, this may be the opportunity for you!

For more information and to sign up please contact Gretchen Bashforth: gbashforth@firstchurchtulsa.org, (918-301-1019).

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

“You see, we cannot possibly hear this story and not look away from ourselves, from our own life with its cares and burdens. There He is, our great God and Savior, and here we are, human beings, and now it is truth that He is for me, is for us…”

My prayer, as we dive into this beautiful Story of God’s rescue and love, is that we would let Jesus take center stage of our lives and our life together so that we can be caught up in God’s everlasting and cosmic drama.

Sharing Our Own Stories

Last spring, members of the First Church session of elders began writing their spiritual autobiographies in order to chronicle God’s impact on their lives and how they sought to follow Jesus Christ.

Elder Robbie Burke shares,

“What I enjoyed the most was when I purchased two new journals from the bookstore to begin writing my Spiritual Autobiography. Two new journals with a blank page waiting for me to begin my story. I sat down with Bible and journal in hand and began to reflect on how God had brought me to this point in my life. My journal was filled with a sense of wonder, thanksgiving, and appreciation for all that God had done for me. I realized that my story is not my story but the autobiography of Jesus Christ who has walked with a sinner like me through all of life’s ups and downs. His story shows how He has redeemed my life through the church community, by His call to His service and by His personal witness in my life. I recommend this experience to all.”

Another elder writes,

“Preparing my spiritual autobiography caused me to reflect upon how God’s hand has guided and strengthened me. I was fortunate to grow up in a family who worshiped every week and who were active members in our local church. However, in my adult years I drifted away from my relationship with Christ. From the casual onlooker’s perspective, I appeared pulled together — I had a great job, traveled extensively, lived in a lovely neighborhood, and had a string of exciting, romantic relationships. Appearances are deceiving. The storybook looked shiny and polished, but I was actually living a life titled, “The World Revolves Around Me” and finding my self-centered, sin-laced existence more and more unfulfilling. Dust, it tasted like dust. But living water was on offer — I had strayed from Christ; however, I discovered that he had never strayed from me. The saving grace of Jesus called me back into his arms, and over the next several years, he helped me reorder my days and my priorities. I like to think this chapter of my spiritual autobiography is titled “Disciple in Training.”

Looking for more personal testimonies of First Church members? Check out the “Autobiographies of Grace” presented every summer and recorded at firstchurchtulsa.org.

As Christians, we are called to give of our lives, our love, our time, and our resources. In doing so, we discover the act of giving has the power to transform not only the lives of the receivers, but of the givers as well.

We give out of gratitude for a God who gives Himself… for the live of the world.

Learn more at firstchurchtulsa.org/give
Gather at table with Dinner 2:42

STEPHANIE FARRIS

Join First Presbyterian members at an upcoming Dinner 2:42, a fellowship program developed by the Outreach Committee and inspired by Acts 2:42. The program encourages congregation members to break bread together in Christian fellowship.

Dinners for up to eight people are held in members’ homes. After reservations are made, the coordinators, Katie Williams, Anita Ewing and Patricia Hall, match members with diverse interests and backgrounds together for a night of fellowship, food and fun.

“It’s great to get together in someone’s home,” said Williams. “There is a warmth. It takes away the formality of meeting in church. In someone’s home, you build a connection quickly.”

Hosts coordinate a meal and contact guests to suggest side items that might complement the meal.

Don’t miss the opportunity to take part in the fall series either as a guest or a host on Friday, October 30, Sunday, November 7 or Saturday, November 14.

Make your reservations before October 18 on the First Church website or contact Hannah Keith at 918-301-1039 or hkeith@firstchurchtulsa.org.

Calendar of Events

OCTOBER 9: 8 DATES A presentation on parenting and a date night! Drop off your children in the Children’s Area at 6 p.m. and head to Miller Library for a presentation on parenting. At 7:30, parents may leave the church for a dinner out and return by 9:15 to pick up their children. Childcare reservations are mandatory at firstchurchtulsa.org/8dates or by calling 918-301-1009 by Oct. 2. Cost is $2 per child. In October we will be looking at the question: What’s more important-grace or discipline?

OCTOBER 11: RON PEARSON’S 42ND ANNUAL ORGAN CONCERT Join us at 4 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Experience a moving performance with Ron Pearson at the keys of the newly-renovated organ in the Sanctuary of First Presbyterian Church. Reception to follow in the Miller Atrium.

OCTOBER 15-18: CURSILLO RETREAT Retreat held at Dwight Mission, Vian, Oklahoma. Contact Steve McCormack at stephenmccormack@windstream.net for more information or download application at https://firstchurchtulsa.org/calendar/cursillo-retreat

OCTOBER 25: FALL FESTIVAL Food, fun and fellowship for the whole family from 3:30-6:30 p.m. at Camp Loughridge!

NOVEMBER 6: EVENINGS AT THE BERNSEN - STILLWATER CHAMBER SINGERS Hear their high standard of performance with expressive storytelling through choral music from different historical periods and regions. EAB concerts begin at 7:30 p.m. in Great Hall with doors opening at 7 p.m. Tickets are $10 for adults, $5 for students and children 12 and under are free. Contact Tom Marsh for ticket information at 918-388-4720.

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