Pathfinders serve at Voice of Hope

ELIZABETH DEVORE

On June 15, 39 energized and enthusiastic Pathfinder middle school students and 10 brave adult leaders set out to serve for a week in Dallas, Texas. They spent five days at Voice of Hope Ministries’ summer day camp interacting with elementary school students through various games, bible lessons, songs, chants and crafts. Some of the group also did work sorting, cleaning, planting and doing other projects that the staff needed help completing.

“The kids at Voice of Hope knew how to brighten up someone’s day!” said middle school student Lydia Elias. “The kids would always be so grateful and were ready to listen at any given moment ... Voice of Hope was a joyous experience for me and made me thankful for those kids!”

The mission of Voice of Hope Ministries is to share the love of Jesus through the ministry of education and recreation.

You had better Belize it!

DAN RUSSEL

Why Belize? Was it the beaches? Was it the Mayan ruins? Or maybe it was the howler monkeys? The truth is, 12 months ago, I didn’t know anything about Belize. I mean, I knew it existed. I knew it was a country. But I didn’t know where it was or what it was like. So when Patti Richards, one of our Exodus Adult Leaders mentioned it, I don’t know why, but it intrigued me.

A couple of months later I set aside a day to focus entirely on mission trip research, and first thing in the morning there was an e-mail from thirstmissions.org with the subject line “2014 Mission Trip Option.” Interesting. I had never heard of Thirst Missions. How did they know I was going to research mission trip options that day? “Dear Dan, I’m writing to ask you to prayerfully consider a winter, spring, or summer mission trip to Belize in 2014.”
Seeking the wisdom of our spiritual grandparents

ADRIENNE KALLWEIT

“Gray hair is a glorious crown; it is found in the way of righteousness.” (Proverbs 16:31)

My fondest church memories were in the Sunday school classes I attended as a child. Not because of the sugar cookies and juice we all quickly gobbled up after each lesson or the joyful morning play with my church friends, but for the learning time we spent with Mickey.

Mickey was an older woman with wrinkles on her hands and hair the color of a newly polished silver spoon. I considered Mickey my Spiritual-Grandparent; a grandparent of no blood relation but one that I felt related to through a spiritual family.

Each Sunday the little curious minds of class would surround Mickey’s chair placed in the middle of the room, listening with attentive ears while story after story was read from the children’s Bible. “The animals went in two by two,” Mickey would say as she held up puppet animals and gestured walking, crawling or running into the Noah’s Ark wooden toy. Mickey’s wisdom, as well as her obvious passion and love for God, made us crave more. She led my childhood Sunday school class from the time I was six through my elementary days, providing a comforting hand that drew me to know more about God, teaching me to pray and providing a strong platform from which to grow my faith.

There are great blessings for everyone when the young in our church have Spiritual-Grandparents leading their Christian learning. We make a promise as each child is baptized in our congregation that we will bring the child into our family of faith and lead the young to know God.

With a growing church, now more than ever, we greatly need more Spiritual-Grandparents to step forward, honor our vows and lead our young. The great thing is that there are many varying capacities to get involved. Whether you are able to lead a semester class, foster relationships and help children grow in their faith or simply have a few weekends over the year to volunteer as a substitute, your help is greatly welcomed.

Thank you to those in our congregation who have already stepped forward in leading our children. Peggy Welch is one of our congregation’s much loved Spiritual-Grandparents. She has helped with various children’s ministries for years and has given of herself in the nursery by rocking small children seeking comfort while parents attend church. She has provided a helping hand during many summer VBS sessions and contributes leadership during the school year with Awana. When asked why she gives herself to a myriad of children’s ministries, she responded without hesitation, “because that’s what we promise. When we watch those cute little kids be baptized, we pledge to do everything we can to lead them to Jesus.”

Helping with the children’s ministries comes naturally to Peggy and she plans to stay involved. She encourages the community to break typical routines, and branch out to discover ways to help. “Meet the new young families, help lead a children’s Bible study, even volunteer for just one week. Whatever you can offer,” she says. The reward has been quite apparent for Peggy. “To watch those precious children grow up in the church and know them, that is my greatest reward.”

Want to get involved?
Check out the “Next Gen. Map” spread on pages 4-5 to learn more about how First Church lives out its baptismal promises to young disciples!

Ask a Pastor

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

How can I help my kids have a meaningful experience in worship?

“Sanctify yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do wonders among you.”—Joshua 3:5

I can’t find the above question anywhere in the Bible. Instead, concern regarding worship in the Old Testament is far more basic; in arranging a meeting with the Lord, how do I keep my kids alive? This is not because the God of the Old Testament is somehow full of vengeance and wrath. No, the same God who brought Israel out of Egypt is the same loving God who raised Jesus from the dead. Rather, people in the Old Testament realized that worship is a daring encounter with a force infinitely bigger than nature.

Asking the above question is a sure sign that we’ve domesticated God. One way we parents do this is to reduce worship from an encounter with the Almighty God to an ethics class. In other words, worship becomes the place Johnny and Suzy learn to be good little boys and girls rather than a brush with the creator of the cosmos. Its no wonder worship can be painfully boring for kids. We’ve moralized a never-ending story.

I know its hard to hear, but worship isn’t about forming good little boys and girls or not even about making it “meaningful” in the sense that culture is teaching our kids to be good consumers whose wants and desires drive their decisions. The aim of worship is far more audacious: its to sanctify kids, or make them holy. Its to set them apart for the Lord’s Spirit. It’s to get them eager to experience tomorrow’s wonders that the Lord has promised to do among us.

As you prepare for worship, stop telling your kids how to act and instead tell them whom they’re going to meet.

—Rev. Ryan Moore
A peek into the past of Dwight Mission

JOAN HOAR

The Dwight Mission Exhibit, now on view in Heritage Hall, Bernsen Center, includes authentic maps, early photographs and other original documents.

When History and Archives Committee member and Elder Bill Hellen began work on an exhibit about Dwight Mission, he learned that the mission, founded in 1820, was originally located in Arkansas Territory. It was the first mission established west of the Mississippi to serve the Cherokee people and was important enough to be shown on early Scottish and British maps of the 19th century. Fort Gibson, founded in 1826—and at that time the furthest military outpost to the west—does not appear on these same maps because it did not yet exist.

At one time or another, the Presbyterian Church supported over thirty schools for American Indians in the area encompassing present day Oklahoma. Presbyterians, together with our New England Congregational cousins, were the first to translate the languages of the Five Civilized Tribes into English. Mission school printing presses produced vast amounts of bilingual religious and educational materials which were distributed throughout the region. Many of the missionaries, in turn, learned the Indian languages, some reaching a level of fluency where they could preach and teach in the native tongues. Robert McGill Loughridge, who preached the first sermon in Tulsa and later pastored our congregation, was among them, earning him the everlasting respect of the people he loved and served.

Many people from First Presbyterian Church, Tulsa and from the larger community throughout Oklahoma and Arkansas have supported Dwight through the years. Dr. Kerr had a personal interest in the Indian schools. Bryant Kirkland had a special love for Dwight and often made mention of it in his sermons. O.B. Campbell, a newspaperman, author, historian and elder in the Pilgrim Presbyterian Church of Vinita authored a book on Dwight, as did our own Betty and Oscar Payne. Among the many giving generously of their time and talent, several are especially remembered for their dedicated service: Leslie Barto of Second Presbyterian, Tulsa; Jim Eagleton, Sr. of First Church, Tulsa; Will Arnold of John Knox, Tulsa; and Tracey Kelly of First Presbyterian, Bristow. Through their effective leadership Dwight was preserved and kept within the Presbyterian fold.

If you have not already done so, plan to visit Dwight at least once. Stroll through its historic cemetery, taking note of the early markers, some over 180 years old. Here you will find record of the early missionaries and their families, Cherokees just arrived from the Trail of Tears who ended their days at Dwight, Civil War soldiers and others known and unknown.

Dwight Mission has a wonderful history. But it is a living institution. Hundreds of young people and adults from all over Oklahoma and Northwest Arkansas gather every year for camp and conference. For while mindful of its heritage, Dwight Mission exists to serve the needs of today while preparing for the future. It is a place to come to for nourishment of the soul, a place to “Be still and know that I am God.”

This pre-1830’s engraving shows the extent of settled territory. Dwight Mission appears as one of the western-most markers in the Arkansas Territory.

Today, Dwight Mission still hosts a variety of conferences and Presbyterian camps and retreats.
Next Gen. Map
See how faith grows at First Church!

The baptism of children witnesses to the truth that God’s love claims people before they are able to respond in faith, though a person may be baptized at any age. When an infant or child is baptized, the church commits itself to nurture the child in faith!

Kingdom Kids
Kingdom Kids is the area for young children (infants through kindergarten) located on the 1st floor. Parents receive emails each week guiding them through the curriculum.

Crew 2:52
Crew 2:52 is the area for young disciples (grades 1-5) in the basement. The curriculum follows the message from the pulpit, and a helpful corresponding email, “Read It, Teach It, Live It,” is delivered each week.

Awana
Awana is the children’s component for First Church’s Wednesday Night Downtown from 6:30-8 p.m. for children three years old through 5th grade.

Ultimately, programs don’t change lives. God’s Word does. God’s timeless truth has transformed the hearts and minds of children, youth and parents through Awana for over 60 years. A national survey found that among adults who participated in Awana for at least six years, 93 percent still attend church weekly, and most regularly pray, study Scripture, witness, serve and give to their church!
Next Gen. Map

See how faith grows as First Church students live out the truth claims of Scripture. It’s a place where students can challenge, question, assess and analyze the claims of Christianity as a life-changing, life-shaping truth revealed by God through Jesus Christ!

Some highlights:
- Weekly Gateway Worship starts August 28
- Weekly small group meetings
- Ministry Team retreat August 29-30
- Fall Retreat at New Life Ranch October 10-12

Contact:
Rev. Dan Hutchinson, 918-301-1040
dhutchinson@firstchurchtulsa.org

UKirk is a community of college-age students seeking to grow as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ as they live out the truth claims of Scripture. It’s a place where students can challenge, question, assess and analyze the claims of Christianity as a life-changing, life-shaping truth revealed by God through Jesus Christ!

Some highlights:
- Weekly Gateway Worship starts August 28
- Weekly small group meetings
- Ministry Team retreat August 29-30
- Fall Retreat at New Life Ranch October 10-12

Contact:
Rev. Dan Hutchinson, 918-301-1040
dhutchinson@firstchurchtulsa.org

Confirmation is for 8th graders who wish to deepen their relationship with God and publicly affirm their faith in Jesus Christ. The course continues over one school year, and at the end of the program, the students are ready to stand before the church congregation and profess their faith and their desire to grow as a member of the global church!

Confirmation:
- Pathfinders Discipleship Quest August 8-9
- Back to School Bash August 24 at Loughridge
- Fall Retreat October 3-5
- Believe Conference January 30-31

Contact:
Rev. Dan Hutchinson, 918-301-1040
dhutchinson@firstchurchtulsa.org

Need directions? Contact Lauren Allen, 918-301-1009, lallen@firstchurchtulsa.org

"And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men." Luke 2:52
Local Mission

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

tries is “to provide children living in the neighborhoods of West Dallas with strong character models, education support, life skills, and family support services needed to become productive Christian citizens.” This is exactly what the team saw during the week as they got to know the loving staff and take part in sharing the Biblical principles and character traits that are enforced in the kids’ daily activities.

As with many mission opportunities, flexibility is key and the team quickly learned this also meant they needed to be flexible with their stomachs. The local food bank provided lunch each day for the kids, staff and volunteers at Voice of Hope, but couldn’t always deliver the food on time or at a good temperature. Despite all this, the Pathfinders noticed that the kids didn’t seem to be complaining much, even if lunch was delayed until 2 p.m. One of the staff members pointed out that many of these kids are used to being hungry for long periods of time and do not always know when they will get their next meal.

This was difficult to hear, and the Pathfinders spent time in small groups debriefing and realizing how blessed they truly are. Middle school student Jack Turner said, “the thing I took away from the trip is that even though kids might not have too many tangible things, they still shine with their love of God.”

The theme for the week was based on Luke 9:24, “For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.” When we choose to follow Jesus we are “losers,” as the shirts for the trip say, because our lives are given up and lost for the purposes of His glory.

It was an incredible week connecting with and serving the kids at Voice of Hope, and the goodbye and the end of the week was filled with many tears. Pathfinder Julia Elias said, “I got to know many of the kids at Voice of Hope so well that they were able to tell my twin sister, Lydia, and I apart. The kids were so up to learning anything and just got so excited when we started talking about God and how He loves them so much.”

For some of the students it was their first time working with kids, and they were pleasantly surprised at how rewarding and meaningful the experience can be when they live out their faith.

Global Mission

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

They explained that “Belize is a poor country with a great many needs, and our groups so far this summer are seeing much fruit while partnering with churches across Belize.” Wow, Belize again. Next, I read e-mails from no less than two other people forwarding me the exact same information from Thirst Missions! Coincidence? God was definitely up to something!

In prudent Presbyterian fashion, Scott Rodheaver and I continued researching many different countries and mission organizations. After several follow-up meetings with students and adult leaders, it became clear that God was leading us to Belize this summer, and I am so glad He did!

Without question, this was one of the most amazing experiences of my youth ministry career. Our students and adult leaders were unBELIZEable!

“The love and joy I just experienced in Belize was tremendous,” shared high schooler Will Jezek. “I like to refer to my experience as truly teaching me the definition of going slow and being content.”

The team mixed and poured concrete for two church buildings, slept on the floor without air conditioning (and didn’t complain), led VBS for over 150 children, delivered food, prayed with those in need and, of course, ate lots of rice and beans!

Student Nicole Vanderburgh said, “I really see God shining through these kids and their smiles, because even though they have so little of everything, they have been happy all the time.”

“I can really see God in the way these kids act,” team member Molly Inhofe said. “Even though I came here to serve them, I feel like they’re serving me even more.”

We led worship and shared stories of God’s goodness. We met so many amazing people. We ministered to them, and they ministered to us.

Student Preslea Borin shared that “it was amazing to see our progress throughout the entire trip. When we started [construction] there was nothing, and now we are finished. It was amazing to see what God strengthened us to do, because without Him we wouldn’t have the strength and the power to do this!”
New Members - May 2014

LAURA “LAURA BETH” BEVILL
ROBERT & ASHLEY BOOZER
PHILLIP BOWMAN & JESSICA JOHN-BOWMAN
LAURIE FULBRIGHT
LARRY DON JOHNSON
JO ANN KOKINOS

New Members - June 2014

JOHN & ANNE RUPE
BERYL BOLO
GUSTAVO CASADO
AMOS CHAINA
JEANIE DANCER
CHARITY EHIREMEN

CHRISTOPHER GREEN
DOROTHY “DORA” KAIJUKA
NELSEN KIRAGU & ANN MURAGE
DEBORAH NSEREKO
ROSELYNE OKOMA
CISSY SSETTIMBA

ALSO JOINED: GAY WINTERRINGER

Questions? Check out the Inquirers’ Class!

Interested in learning more about membership and the life and history of our church and the Presbyterian tradition? Contact Patricia Hall, 918-301-1028, phall@firstchurchtulsa.org

The next Inquirers’ Class will be held Saturday, August 16 from 9 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in room E100 and Sunday, August 17 from 9:15-10:30 a.m. in room 206.
Have you invited anyone to church lately?

BETH PIELSTICKER

When was the last time you invited someone to attend FPC? If you pose this question to a student in one of our youth programs, chances are, they could tell you exactly when they brought a friend and why.

Just ask Caroline Neal. Caroline is in the Exodus program and her family hosts a life group at their house every week. Her group is comprised of 10-12 high school girls. Two of Caroline’s friends, Preslea and Kate, joined the life group after Caroline invited them. This summer they all went on the Belize mission trip and often attend Sunday worship and Exodus youth group. Kate enjoys coming to FPC even though she and her family are also active in their own church.

Casey Savage, who is a recent confirmand and is beginning Exodus in the fall, also invites friends to church. Casey said, “I feel like my friends would like it as much as I do.” He doesn’t want them to miss out.

When guests stay for the weekend, he enjoys bringing them to church too.

Middle school student Callie Hall also invited her friend Natalie Cota to check out confirmation classes, and Natalie enjoyed it so much she finished confirmation with Callie and recently joined the church. They both had a blast at the fall retreat, and they went on the Pathfinder mission trip together. Callie’s family attends the traditional 11 a.m. service on Sundays while Natalie enjoys the contemporary service. In her confirmation statement of faith, Natalie wrote, “one of the most important influences in me coming to know Jesus is Callie.”

It’s not just older kids that are making a difference either. Just ask Will Scheiper why he likes bringing friends to Awana. He and many other elementary kiddos would be happy to tell you why they love to have their friends come to Awana, Sunday School and Vacation Bible School!

Exodus student Jessie Barber said that her strategy for getting her friend Libby to start attending her life group was to simply march the rest of the group across the street to grab her. Libby grew up at FPC but she hadn’t gotten involved in any small groups. Once these high school girls enveloped her, she joined the Life Group and recently went on the Belize mission trip.

Jessie observed that, “It’s hard to make it a priority to join small groups and go to church regularly. People get busy, so it’s difficult to get plugged in unless you have people with strong faith around you who are great encouragers ... It’s easier to go into a situation when somebody invites you instead of just showing up on your own.”

Do you know anyone who is missing out on a church family? Take a lesson from our students and just ask (or swoop in and grab them). You never know what kind of impact your invitation will have on another’s life. God is calling them, and it just might be through you!

Calendar of Events

JUNE 31: THE ROMANIA MISSION TEAM DEPARTS
AUGUST 8-9: PATHFINDERS DISCIPLESHIP QUEST
AUGUST 8-10: EXODUS 44 HOURS OF FUN!
AUGUST 10 & 17: FAITH AND TECHNOLOGY BEGINS Summer intern Michael Raubach, who holds a Masters degree in Religion, Theology and Culture from the University of Glasgow, explores connections between faith and technology. 9:30 a.m. Miller Library.
AUGUST 14-15: GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT FPC live streams leadership speakers from around the world. Everyone wins when a leader gets better!
AUGUST 16-17: INQUIRER’S CLASS Saturday, August 16 from 9 a.m.-1:00 p.m. in room E100 and Sunday, August 17 from 9:15-10:30 a.m. room 206.
AUGUST 20: TULSA PUBLIC SCHOOLS RESUME
AUGUST 24: PATHFINDERS/EXODUS BACK TO SCHOOL BASH Camp Loughridge 5-8 p.m.
SEPTEMBER 3: AWANA KICK-OFF
SEPTEMBER 7: FESTIVAL SUNDAY Boston on Sunday, at 9:30 a.m. Egg caserole, sausage links, biscuits and gravy, fresh fruit, assorted cereals, juice and coffee ($5 per adult, $2 for children, 3 and under are free). The Jambalaya Jass Band is returning due to popular demand, so get ready for some toe-tapping tunes on Boston Avenue. There will also be face painting and for the first time this year, pony rides for the kids! Reserve your meal online or at the welcome center starting Sunday, August 17. We hope to see you there!
SEPTEMBER 10: WNDT RESUMES from 6:30-8 p.m. An optional dinner by reservation only is available at 5:45 p.m. Reserve online or by calling 918-301-1019.
SEPTEMBER 11: UKIRK GATEWAY WORSHIP RESUMES Thursdays at 9 p.m. at the University of Tulsa’s Sharp Chapel.
SEPTEMBER 12: HELPING HAND GOLF TOURNAMENT This fun event supports Helping Hand Ministries, a charitable organization that regularly provides a variety of different kinds of financial assistance to Tulsans in need.
SEPTEMBER 19-21: CONFIRMATION KICK-OFF RETREAT
SEPTEMBER 19: EAB Evenings at the Bernsen hosts Concert Pianist Sun Min Kim. 7:30 p.m. Great Hall, Bernsen Center. Call 918-388-4720 for tickets and information.
SEPTEMBER 26-28: EXODUS BACKPACKING TRIP