Keith and Kristyn Getty to kick off 130th anniversary

ERIC BAIRD, CONTEMPORARY WORSHIP LEADER

In case you have been wondering, over these past few weeks there has indeed been an added gleam in the eye of “maestro” Ron Pearson, director of music ministries at First Church. It is due to a name that has been whispered in the halls of the Pearson Music Suite for some time: “Getty.”

Modern hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty have found a very special place in Ron’s heart and in the musical life of our congregation over the past several years, with songs such as “In Christ Alone” and “Power of the Cross” becoming major anthems of the church.

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Three little boys sat hunched over a table in the Bernsen Community Life Center one morning in July, intently painting self-portraits. One added a swirl of bright colors to the sneakers he had drawn, another painted himself in blue, a third added broad scribbles of hair.

Their portraits, as unique as the boys themselves, shared something in common. They all wore big smiles.

This was the first time for First Presbyterian Church to host a summer arts week in conjunction with Crossover Community Impact, a Christian organization that strives to meet needs in the community through an after-school program at Tulsa’s Hawthorne Elementary School, summer day camps and other services.

About 50 children attended the camp, which along with visual and 3D art classes, also included time for Vacation Bible School, games and music in the Bernsen Community Life Center.

“Many of the schools have cut their arts programs. This gives [the children] an opportunity to learn and experience something new,” said Brittany Easterly, who worked with the Rev. James Estes and Executive Director of Ministries Duff Points to plan the week at First Church.

“We also hope everything we do shows the

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Pastor’s Letter

What should the next issue’s pastor’s letter address? Email your own theological, biblical or moral questions to communications@firstchurchtulsa.org (subject: Ask a Pastor).

Celebrating a new chapter at FPC

If you’re serious about the mission of the Church, if you believe the Body of Christ should demonstrate His love by serving the common good of our community, if you care about at-risk children and families, you’re going to love FPC’s weeklong 130th birthday celebration!

On October 5, 1885 First Church was chartered by the Presbyterian Board of Foreign Missions and became the first organized Christian community in Tulsa. We have much to celebrate as we look in the rearview mirror.

From the very beginning, this congregation has been passionately evangelical and missional, or to put it another way: believing that the love of Christ is great good news — and driven by our love for Christ — we have launched many initiatives that have sought to serve the common good in Jesus’ name.

The Tulsa Boys Home, Tulsa’s Meals-on-Wheels, Helping Hand, Camp Loughridge, the Lindsey House … all of these began through the Holy Spirit’s prompting in and through this congregation.

But the most far-reaching missional effort that First Church has ever undertaken is about to be launched, and it seems providential that our 130th birthday celebration should include both the dedication and the ribbon cutting of the new 8:10 Building on 8th Street and Cincinnati.

What makes this strategic effort so important?

• The 8:10 project has a laser-like focus: to bring about life-changing Christ-centered ministry in and around metro Tulsa.
• When fully leased, the 8:10 Building is expected to generate approximately $1 million per year (a dedicated, traditional mission endowment would require a $20 million investment to see the same results).
• First Church will link the funding to member-engaged ministries — that is, the funding of projects will seek to involve FPC members and friends in hands-on projects and programs building relationships with Tulsans in need.
• Three primary areas of focus include: at-risk children and families, special community needs and housing concerns.

The building is called the “8:10” in reference to Nehemiah 8:10: “The joy of the Lord is my strength.” The entire book of Nehemiah is about the strategic decision to go to work rebuilding the city of Jerusalem, and that’s exactly what the 8:10 project seeks to do here in Tulsa. It is hard to exaggerate the impact that this initiative will have on those in need who live within our city.

The weeklong celebration of God’s faithfulness begins on Monday night, September 28, with a world-class musical concert in the Sanctuary of First Church. Keith and Kristyn Getty, Irish composers of some of our most-beloved modern hymns, will bring up Hymns for the Christian Life.

Wednesday Night, September 30, we join together for dinner in the Stephenson Hall and a brief worship service in which the 8:10 Building will be dedicated to the service of Jesus Christ throughout Tulsa.

Thursday, October 1, we celebrate the opening of the 8:10 with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on 8th Street and a tour of the facilities.

Sunday, October 4, we share the joy of a Festival Sunday in which the five regular worship services will all join together at 11 a.m. to celebrate the Lord’s goodness in years past and His call to serve afresh in this season of our life together.

It’s a great time to be engaged in the mission and ministry of the Lord’s work in and through First Church!

—Dr. Jim Miller, co-pastor

First Church shares personal stories of grace

George Savage (left) shares “Blessed from the Start” a personal story of God’s grace with the help of his son Bill Savage (right). During the 9:30 a.m. hour Sundays in June, different church members shared their own “Autobiographies of Grace,” now available online at firstchurchtulsa.org.

ELISA MANGESHO
Ron began a conversation with Getty management a couple of years ago as to what it would take to bring the artists to First Church for a concert.

The Gettys were very interested in coming to Tulsa, but it simply was not a practical possibility at the time. Mr. Pearson stayed in touch with their management and now, First Church is thrilled to share the blessing of this musical worship experience with the city of Tulsa. The concert begins a week of activities commemorating the 130th anniversary of First Church, bringing the glory to God for the historical witness of this faith community and for the exciting chapters ahead.

Originally from Northern Ireland, the Gettys now also have a home in Nashville, Tennessee. With this rich heritage, the Getty band has a truly unique sound, blending elements of Irish folk and bluegrass with contemporary instincts and classical hymn writing and arranging techniques.

What makes a “modern hymn?” Mr. Pearson says “it’s a fine line of distinction,” but the Getty’s website describes that the artists are “re-inventing the traditional hymn form ... connecting the world of traditional and classical composition with contemporary and globally-accessible melodies.”

Learn more about the Gettys and see recordings of them in concert online at gettymusic.com or on their YouTube channel, “KeithhandKristyn Getty.”

Their current album and tour goes by the title, “Hymns for the Christian Life.” With this music and ministry, they are determined to make the statement that “the Gospel story touches every part of life.”

With this great heart for ministry, and their top-tier talent, the Gettys bring a brilliant day of ministry that has the potential to have a great and lasting impact on our church and community.

Not only will they be performing that evening, but they will also be working with the choir, and there will be an opportunity for ministry leaders from the community to spend some time in a workshop with Keith.

“Keith and Kristyn have expressed their desire as Christian musicians to create music that appeals to audiences of all ages and musical preferences,” Pearson says. “Their songs are notable for both solid theological grounding and their musical appeal, and they are effective in a variety of worship styles from contemporary to classical and traditional. The Getty Tour plays to large and enthusiastic audiences worldwide, and they will appear at FPC with a Celtic-style band which will fill the Sanctuary with joyous and celebratory music.”

I personally had the privilege of attending a Getty concert at John Brown University some years ago. At the time, having previously had minimal exposure to their music and never having heard them perform, I went in with very low expectations. I came away with the impression that it was truly one of the best concerts and times of corporate worship I had ever experienced.

Keith and Kristyn are truly world class talents as composers and musicians. They tour with a band whose ability is second to none, and their ministry is from the heart and led by the Spirit.
Laurel Baird, born and raised in Tulsa, is our new Next Generation ministry assistant for children and youth ministries.

After graduating from Oral Roberts University with a business administration degree and a missions minor in 2010, Laurel spent several years in Ireland where she gained tremendous experience with Foundation in Christ ministries, providing graphic design and other administrative services.

After three years in Ireland — which is also where Laurel met her husband Eric — the Lord called the Bairds back to Tulsa where they have both since been led to serve at First Presbyterian Church. Having been profoundly impacted by the children’s, youth, and college ministries of her own church growing up, Laurel feels that it is important to engage the next generation in church — not just as another activity to attend but as a family to actively be a part of.

Laurel is most excited that through her support to the children and youth ministry leaders, they will in turn be able to focus more on individuals and less on details.

In her spare time, Laurel likes to make birthday banners, play with her nephews, cook, paint, drink coffee and engage in deep conversations.

"If you approach it as a fun arts camp, you’re chatting with parents as they pick up their kids. You’re showing them their art. You’re celebrating their child and their accomplishments artistically," she says, "and whether you know it or not, you’re creating a bond, so when a crisis situation happens, they feel comfortable going, ‘Hey, I have this issue. Can you help me with it?’"

The other benefit, Pickard says, is that it’s fun for the kids and volunteers.

“I think something we can forget is how rewarding it is to have a child’s love and have a child come up and say, ‘I love you, Miss Leah.’ It’s a beautiful picture of the body of Christ working with kids.”

First Church volunteer Kelly Brandenburg says Pickard’s knowledge of the individual children and the commitment of the Crossover staff seem key to the camp’s success.

“They are a great model for anyone whose purpose is to make an impactful difference in the lives of others,” says Brandenburg, whose sons Ian, 15, and Noah, 12, also helped with camp.

She says the teachers brought their own special artistic talents to the camp, and as she worked with the kids, she saw plenty of budding artists.

"I said more than once, ‘Wow, you just drew that? Amazing.’"

An after-school arts program is something that FPC is seriously considering as it explores potential mission projects to be funded by the future leasing of the 8:10 Building, which is scheduled to welcome its first tenants this September.

Look for more information coming soon on opportunities like this one where each member of First Church will be called to engage in lives of the local community.
Our church sanctuary is filled with treasures. You just need to know where to look and understand what they all mean.

For instance, have you ever wondered why there is a bird above the lectern or know where the secret passageway is located?

On July 15, First Church held a Sanctuary Treasure Hunt for children and adults to explore details of the sanctuary and learn why we worship the way we do.

During the Sanctuary Treasure Hunt, participants received maps with questions. When seekers found the answers, they received more details about specific items within the sanctuary, including why they’re used in worship.

“It’s a chance for them to be able to get up close and personal to all of the things that look a little foreboding and learn what they are used for, so that worship becomes more meaningful every week,” says Julianne Hand, FPC’s children’s worship arts leader.

“I would like them to be able to understand what the sanctuary means as a worship gathering. Why do we have a pulpit? Why is it positioned the way it is? I want them to have a more intimate place to gather ... and to enhance their worship experience,” Hand says.

“I had never been to the secret passageway. It was fun!” said Alexandra Harper, age 10. “It was really loud when Mr. Pearson played the organ.”

Cesar Hernandez, age 11, shared that the Christ Window was his favorite part of the Treasure Hunt. He said he learned about the “12 I am’s” that he had never noticed before.

Prizes were given for different answers, and Josh’s Sno Shack also was on hand to provide summer treats after the hunt.

The gathering also gave children and their families the chance to meet the team that oversees the Worship 101 program.

Worship 101, which occurs during the children’s discipleship hour every Sunday, guides children in the ways of our worship services, prepares them to lead in those services and fosters understanding in doctrines of faith.

The program provides a time for singing as well as lessons on the liturgical calendar, baptism, communion and why the church worships.

This fall, through Worship 101, children will have service opportunities to help with greeting, ushering, sharpening pencils and participating in the actual service.
Seemingly worlds away and yet so close to many of our hearts, Romania is a unique mission field where missionaries closely connected to First Church continue to grow the Romanian Evangelical Medical Mission. Their mission: sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ by building bridges of hope and love to meet the needs of the Romanian people.

Led by Peter and Ana Lucaciu, this ministry based in the picturesque Transylvanian village of Beius is now in its 25th year. Ask anyone at First Church who has been on a short-term mission trip there, and they’ll tell you how they carry part of that beautiful country with them in their hearts today. It’s through the Lucaciu’s courage and perseverance — since before the fall of Communism in Romania — that doors have opened for our church to expand ministries in that corner of the world today.

I’ve been on two trips to Romania and the growth of ministry between those two trips in 2006 and 2013 was phenomenal.

More teachers have allowed us in classrooms to share the Gospel, more communities have welcomed our groups to teach their children about Christ and more Gypsy communities have established churches thanks to the boldness of preachers whom REMM and our mission groups directly support.

The love of Christ thrives in this region despite many economic, political and cultural challenges that we, as Americans, rarely have to face.

The newest endeavor is the Walnut Tree Project. After researching the country’s massive walnut production prior to the Communist era, Peter realized REMM’s 22 acres of farmland could be turned into a walnut grove, generating enough income to supply REMM with 90% of its operating budget.

Over 200 trees have been planted so far, many purchased with thousands of dollars in donations from our congregation. It takes about 6 years for the saplings to reach maturity. More land has been cleared to continue planting the trees this year.

Casa Josef orphanage remains the home to eight sweet girls, most of whom are crossing into adolescence.

Several church groups from around the United States are spending time with the girls this summer, involving them in a big music camp, Vacation Bible School and leading worship in a number of local churches. REMM is also using these visiting groups to continue their Agape Runs, bringing prayer, food and other staples to families with big needs. Over the past year, the organization has cared for over two dozen families with help from many of the Casa Josef girls.

Efforts continue to be made by the Lucacius to work with Romanian politicians to allow open adoptions internationally, and not just to those of Romanian citizenship. Steps in the right direction have been made, but it is a slow and complicated process.

Many of our church members are devoted to spreading the love of Christ in Romania, thanks to the pioneers who first made this a fertile ground for the Gospel. This summer, Paul and Jenette McEntire are spending two months supporting various REMM ministries, and the Seibert family will visit Romania to see the girls at Casa Josef, as well.

Inspired by her experience on two previous mission trips to Beius, Elizabeth DeVore also chose to spend her summer in Romania serving a similar organization called Livada Orphan Care, in the gypsy village of Ogra where she is teaching English and organizing other summer Bible programs for the kids. You can follow her journey in Romania on her blog: goroadventure2015.wordpress.com/author/goroadventure/.

As the walnut trees take root in the Transylvanian countryside, so too does our shared love as global neighbors in Christ, transforming lives of the orphaned, the ostracized and our very own.
Deacons to host Emerson Mentor Sunday

On August 30, the Deacons will host an Emerson Mentor Sunday, promoting opportunities to serve and engage with young members of Emerson Elementary, First Church’s partner school located just north of downtown Tulsa.

Sign up tables will be located in the atrium where church members can register to be a mentor and complete a background check. Current mentors will be in attendance to share their own experience of what it’s like to work with children an Emerson.

Every week, First Church volunteers meet with a young “lunch buddy” over their break to provide consistent, positive adult interaction. After lunch, there’s time to read, play games or just talk.

There are dozens of students still waiting to be paired with mentors, and even some of the most undisciplined children have been known to clean up their acts in the hope of getting their own mentor and the adult attention they so desperately crave.

“When we come into their lives and develop a friendship with them, we get to see the world from a whole new perspective,” said Hannah Keith, First Church’s ministry assistant for mission, who enjoyed her first time as a mentor over the past year.

“I was very excited ... the biggest surprise I had was the actual friendship I developed with Vasti, [my lunch buddy.] ... and the depth that it grew to.”

By the end, Keith shared that her lunch buddy even said “I don’t want you to leave, I don’t want it to be summer time.”

The Emerson Mentor Sunday will also include a hot dog roast in the First Church courtyard following the 11 a.m. services, as well as other fun back-to-school/tailgating themed activities like cornhole.

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

Calendar of Events

AUGUST 2: FAITH PARTNERS ADDICTION WORKSHOP A five-week workshop with Reed Bryant, C.A.D.C., licensed alcohol and drug counselor meets Sundays in August from 4-5:30 p.m. in room E104. Equip yourself to better deal with this disease and support those who are struggling.

AUGUST 5: FOSTER PARENTS’ NIGHT OUT Please help us say ‘THANK YOU’ to Tulsa area foster parents by helping to provide childcare from 6-8:30 p.m. Sign up and fill out a background check by contacting Hannah Keith at 918-301-1039.

AUGUST 6-7: GLOBAL LEADERSHIP SUMMIT 2015 World-class leadership development at FPC. Learn more and register at firstchurchtulsa.org/summit.

AUGUST 8: CAMP SUNSHINE The Deacons host this annual day camp experience for children battling cancer. Sign up to help out at the camp online at firstchurchtulsa.org/campsunshine

AUGUST 30: EMERSON MENTOR SUNDAY Learn about mentoring a “lunch buddy” at Emerson Elementary. Hot dogs and games in the courtyard after worship.

SEPTEMBER 23: DISCOVER YOUR PLACE WORKSHOP Learn about the ministries of this local Body of Christ and where you fit in, 6:30 p.m. Stephenson Hall.

SEPTEMBER 11: HELPING HAND GOLF TOURNAMENT Every weekday, Helping Hand helps Tulsans through temporary crises. Support this great ministry through a fun day of golf at LaFortune golf course. Sign up to sponsor or participate online. All proceeds go directly to Tulsans in need through Helping Hand Ministries.

SEPTEMBER 11: 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. Cost is $2 per child.

SEPTEMBER 13: BREAKFAST ON BOSTON The whole congregation will come together at 9:30 a.m. outside the church on Boston for food and fun! There will be no regular 9:30 a.m. Sunday school.

SEPTEMBER 18: EVENINGS AT THE BERNSEN - AMY COTTINGHAM & FRIENDS Noted pianist will delight as she tickles the ivories and so much more! Surprises in store with friends galore! Concert at 7:30 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.

SEPTEMBER 28: 130TH ANNIVERSARY: GETTY MUSIC CONCERT Modern hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty kick off our anniversary week by bringing praise to the Lord. Concert at 7 p.m., doors at 6 p.m. Tickets available at firstchurchtulsa.org/gettymusic or by calling 918-584-4701.

SEPTEMBER 30: 130TH ANNIVERSARY: 8:10 BUILDING DEDICATION

OCTOBER 1: 130TH ANNIVERSARY: 8:10 BUILDING RIBBON CUTTING

OCTOBER 4: 130TH ANNIVERSARY: FESTIVAL SUNDAY All-church worship service in the sanctuary at 11 a.m.

Learn more about these events and more happening in the life of FPC, online at firstchurchtulsa.org.
Everyone wins when a leader gets better.
—Bill Hybels

IT’S NOT TOO LATE TO REGISTER!
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FIRSTCHURCHTULSA.ORG/SUMMIT

This week, Tulsans from all walks of life are coming together at First Church to improve their leadership skills and maximize their Kingdom impact through vision, inspiration and practical skills.

First Friends are on the move!

On June 24 First Friends on the Move, a fellowship and travel program for FPC members of all ages, visited the newly-renovated Myriad Botanical Gardens and the Oklahoma City Museum of Art where they saw art by Fabergé and glass sculptures by Chihuly (shown here).

SAVE THE DATE!

Monday, September 28 - Getty Concert
Renowned modern hymn writers Keith and Kristyn Getty present “Hymns of the Christian Life” along with their band and the First Church choir. 7 p.m. in the Sanctuary. Doors at 6 p.m. Tickets on sale from the church offices and online at firstchurchtulsa.org/gettymusic.

Wednesday, September 30 - 8:10 Building Dedication
Commemorate a new chapter of mission in Tulsa in the name of Christ.

Thursday, October 1 - 8:10 Building Ribbon Cutting
Celebrate the opening of the 8:10 Building.

Sunday, October 4 - Festival Sunday
One all-church worship service at 11 a.m. in the Sanctuary followed by birthday refreshments and festivities.

A week of celebration and rededication at First Presbyterian Church