The 8:10 Building: new name, new heart

KELLY BROWN

Building an endowment doesn’t usually involve actual hammers and carry the kind of risks that require hard hats. But the endowment for local mission that First Presbyterian Church is establishing across the street certainly does.

On any weekday at 810 S. Cincinnati, construction workers in safety vests are hard at it—hammering and welding amid the grit and debris of a multimillion dollar renovation project, working to transform investment in an old building into investment in local lives.

“This is the mission endowment,” says Steve Caldwell, chief operations officer for the church, standing in the alley next to the former Avanti office building and raising an arm to take all six stories of it in. When renovations are complete, the church intends to lease out the new office space and use the revenue stream to fund its local missions.

“It’s called direct investment,” Caldwell says. “Instead of investing money in the stock market, you’re taking those funds and putting them directly into the investment that creates a higher return.”

The $8.8 million overhaul of the building, which has been renamed the 8:10 Building, also reflects a trend toward social entrepreneurship. This is entrepreneurism that is driven not only by profits but also its positive effect on society, says Bobby Pielsticker, a real estate professional and church elder who has helped lead the project.

“It’s a unique opportunity in the Tulsa market for a church to invest in a real estate asset where 100 percent of the net income...”

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2

Using conversation as outreach

STAFF REPORT

Members at First Presbyterian Church kicked off 2015 with the January Series, one of two programs designed to engage the larger Tulsa community in fellowship conversation.

“As a downtown church, one thing we ask ourselves is ‘how can we reach out to individuals who work and live in the surrounding area?’ shared Duff Points, executive director of ministries at First Church, “one way is to offer interesting educational opportunities; and, while doing so, extend the warm hand of Christian friendship.”

The January series, which began on January 7, presented free lunchtime lectures, live-streamed from Calvin College in Michigan. A variety of topics every weekday through January 27 covered everything from the human brain to national security, the Holocaust, health and jazz.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 7
from the property will support local Tulsa missions,” Pielsticker says. “Tenants will embrace the idea, and it will be successful.”

For now, scaffolding stretches across the facade of the 1920s-era building, which once housed a Studebaker auto dealership. On the top floor, sunlight once streamed through holes in the roof where it was recently replaced. The building is being stripped to its brick walls and concrete floors to prepare for the new open floor office space. Work is on track to be completed by mid-summer.

At 90 percent occupancy, Pielsticker says the building is expected to generate an estimated $850,000 annually. Tenants leasing additional parking from the church could bump the building’s total revenue-boosting potential to about $1 million annually.

A church discernment team is in the process of deciding how those funds can best be used to directly meet Tulsa’s needs, and professional firms will handle leasing and management of the building. One-third of it has been leased already.

Cyntergy AEC, the architectural firm overseeing the renovations, signed a 12-year lease for two floors. That leaves 56,000 square feet for as many as six more tenants, Pielsticker says.

The warehouse-tech style space, he says, “is attractive to firms that utilize an open plan for collaboration and positive interaction. Many Fortune 500 firms like Google, Microsoft and Apple have embraced this type of office design as they are focused on attracting and retaining younger employees.”

About $2 million of the $8.8 million project still needs to be raised, Pielsticker says. Caldwell says the 8:10 in the building’s name refers to its address, but church leaders also point to favorite “8:10” passages in scripture that seem to fit this project and its mission of revival:

Romans 8:10, “But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death because of sin, the Spirit gives life because of righteousness.”

And in Nehemiah, “This day is holy to our Lord. Do not grieve, for the joy of the Lord is your strength.”

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

For leasing information regarding the 8:10 Building:
Please contact Trinity Commercial Real Estate Advisors, Derek Bateman, at 918-493-8470.

To offer financial support for the 8:10 Building renovation:
Please contact Bobby Pielsticker at 918-289-6728.

Worship and Music

Worship Behind the Scenes: If I Had a Hammer

This month, Tidings kicks off a new series celebrating the men and women who work behind the scenes to facilitate worship and many other classes and programs. These staff members, “Church Mice,” ushers, musicians, and many other volunteers work faithfully each week to help spread the Good News at First Church.

JOAN HOAR

When Steven Mitchell began his employment with First Church, a hammer was one of the few tools that came with the job.

“A hammer, two hand saws, two pry bars and two screwdrivers—one held together with electrical tape—was my tool kit,” Steven recalls.

In 1988, the maintenance office and shop were located across the main elevator doors on the basement level. At that time, the maintenance staff of three, plus Steven, was responsible for the 1925 Sanctuary Building and the Kerr Building. Steven supervised the landscapers’ committee, employment and discharge of staff and served on the committee to purchase the Bernsen Building. He was responsible for cleaning and set-ups and supervised maintenance repairs.

From this essential and modest background, the maintenance staff has grown to a total of ten men and women required to meet the needs of our current properties, over 220,000 square feet.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 3

Old meets new in the First Church maintenance shop where Steven Mitchell poses with some of his original hand tools along with some more modern power tools.
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)

The “ministry of reconciliation”

The session has announced that all of the proceeds from the new 8:10 building project will go towards “local mission.” I’ve been on “mission trips” both outside of the country and to disaster areas like Moore, Oklahoma. But what does mission look like in Tulsa?

“I have found that there are three stages in every great work for God: first, it is impossible, then it is difficult, then it is done.”

- J. Hudson Taylor (1832-1905, Pioneering missionary to China)

The project we’re calling the 8:10 building is focused entirely on mission. So it might be helpful to unpack the word “mission” a bit. Consider this: it’s not about the work of the Church as much as it is about God’s purposes in human history.

Have you ever wondered what God’s mission statement might be? Paul offers a brilliant summary statement in II Corinthians; you can find it etched on the FPC campus at the base of the new south tower:

“In Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us this ministry of reconciliation.”

This is powerful stuff for it reminds us that we live in an isolated and alienated world. Sin enters God’s good creation and causes a deep divide: humanity is alienated from God, from one another, from creation and even alienated from themselves.

Into this alienation Jesus comes to seek and save the lost. But that’s not all; He also enlist “disciples” like us and gives marching orders, what Paul calls the “ministry of reconciliation.” God’s mission, then, is to save the world through the most offensive, foolish and unlikely group of people: the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church.

Jesus commissions His disciples to demonstrate the coming of God’s Kingdom—by doing good works and telling the good news.

This sense of call has been at the very center of what the FPC Discernment Team (led by Dan Elinoor and John Bair) has been working toward, seeking how we might advance the Lord’s reconciling work with neighbors right here in Tulsa. It’s exciting to see how this is unfolding. The FPC Leadership retreat set for Feb. 6-7, is entirely focused on the Discernment team’s work.

One thing is assured: because of this work and FPC’s investment in it, the visible demonstration of Christ’s love for Tulsa will be magnified. We believe that the best parts of God’s story and our part in it have yet to be written.

—Rev. James Estes, associate pastor for mission and outreach

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The maintenance department, now located on the lower level, north end of the education wing, includes the shop area, management office, an office shared by two staff members, a general all-purpose desk/work area for schedules, calendars and reports and a locker area for staff. The lockers, formerly in the Power House, are like all furnishings in the maintenance department, “repurposed,” and previously used in other areas of the church.

The tool inventory has also greatly increased to better allow staff to “do their jobs.” Trade tools that are dedicated to specific needs have been acquired, including “a leak detector, a drill press, disc and belt sander and an air compressor.”

Steven holds a Stationary Engineers License, which is required to supervise the ongoing operation and maintenance of heating and cooling equipment.

“The complexity of maintaining three different HVAC systems and other new technologies makes his job much more difficult,” says Steve Caldwell, Chief Operating Officer. “He does a super job.”

As supervisor, Steve also is responsible for the department budget and human resource needs. He admits that with this heavy responsibility of management duties, his greatest pleasure continues to be working with his hands—“doing some repair,” as he puts it.

You will see Steven out and about modeling the example he advises his staff: “Do what you can do today, don’t put it off. Every day is different, hectic and chaotic at times. Don’t put off anything until later.”

Thanks, Steven, for your decades of service at First Church. (And, by the way, some of those original tools may still be found in the Maintenance Department.)

Next issue, check back to learn more about the “Mighty Men and Women of Maintenance” who serve faithfully with Mr. Mitchell behind the scenes every week!
Modern culture doesn’t spend a lot of time listening to generations past. It tells us only that which is fast, young, shiny and new is worth our time and money, but the Every Friday Social group will take you back to a simpler—and perhaps more fulfilling—time. It’s easy to see exactly why the Bible calls people like these precious, honorable and worthy of high esteem.

One Friday in January, I, the youngster, took the opportunity to participate in a long-standing tradition held together by various members within the First Church community: Every Friday Social.

Every Friday at 1 p.m. on the second floor in the Bernsen building, a group of friends meets to play dominoes, drink lemonade and enjoy a few laughs. Mr. Fred Fulkerson, a long-time faithful member of the group, shared how throughout the years, various groups of people from the older generation would meet at First Church, whether for a Sunday School group or a casual get together. “Eventually these groups fell apart. All that was left was a small group, and that is when Every Friday Social started.”

While outsiders might see Every Friday Social as a quiet way to pass the afternoon, it can be anything but! The group has “already worn out one set of dominoes,” according to Mr. Fulkerson.

As a young woman whose age is a quarter of that of some of my competitors, I was unsure of what to expect from this older group. Would they understand me? Would I understand them? How can I possibly relate to these people who grew up in the Great Depression and served in World War II?

American culture seems to teach us that the generations are inexplicably separated by a line drawn in the sands of time, but this was quickly proven to be entirely untrue by the graciousness of my hosts.

Mr. Calvin Swindell, who just recently turned 92, was elated to see me as usual and continually put a hearty smile on my face whenever he exclaimed, “I think I’m gonna win!”

The running joke of the day was that the gentlemen have over 270 years of combined experience and yet cannot beat the ladies.

Mr. Fulkerson, who is 91, taught me how to play the domino game, “Chicken Foot.” The rules clearly state that cheating is illegal, but there is always speculation that some step beyond the rules and “help their friends,” as they help themselves.

As I enjoyed the game of dominoes and more enthusiastic exclamations from Calvin about his pending victory, I realized just how much their countless stories and priceless memories about the congregation of First Church were warming my heart and strengthening my soul.

After having so many laughs, at myself and with the group, it was hard for me to leave Every Friday Social. If you have never been to an Every Friday Social, I personally encourage you to go, regardless of your age. I promise that you will not regret it!

“Gray hair is a crown of glory; it is gained by living a Godly life.”

Proverbs 16:31 (NLT)
If you want to experience Christ’s love in a way that you will never forget, then sign up for Cursillo.

For years, friends had encouraged me to attend this special retreat, and I always wondered why. When I finally committed to going, it all became crystal clear.

Cursillo, which means “short course,” is a transforming experience and one that will open your eyes and heart to the many blessings that Christ has on offer.

It’s a three-day faith renewal event filled with a series of talks by both lay people and clergy, small-group discussions, singing, laughter, lots of food, fun activities and many memorable moments.

This year Cursillo will be held March 12-15 at Dwight Mission, located near Sallisaw.

Many who attend as participants go on to become staff members so they can share the Cursillo experience with others. Among them is First Church member Co Edwards who will serve as moderator this year.

“I was born and raised in our church and came from a loving, active Christian home from several generations back. I had always believed and known that God loved me and that Jesus died and rose for me,” Co says. “Over the years, I attended Bible studies, Sunday school, etc., but it wasn’t until I experienced my Cursillo weekend that I truly felt that God wanted a relationship with me!! Oh, I knew I wanted one with Him, but it wasn’t until then that I began to feel worthy of His love.”

Cursillo gave her a new and deeper understanding of the Lord and has propelled her into a much closer walk with Him. Today, she allows Him to be Lord of her life and knows without a doubt, He is a God of promises.

“Because of all that, I have more desire to praise Him and to serve Him wherever He leads me,” she says.

Steve McCormack, who first attended Cursillo in fall 2005, frequently helps staff other weekends. Like Co, he says the weekend awakened him to the kind of relationship God wants with him and others.

“It has greatly improved my prayer life. I like that Cursillo is ecumenical so that no matter what religious affiliation it is chartered under, it is patterned similarly to provide a fundamental basis of Christianity. So, it truly can rejuvenate and strengthen one’s faith, and I think many of us need that very thing,” he says.

“I have found a community within the greater church that is accepting, loving and sincere. I can truthfully say I have become more active in church as a result. Furthermore, I have seen the same growth in others, in them personally and within their churches. I believe in the Cursillo method, the positive attitude it fosters, the healing that has come from these weekends and the encouragement all receive in growing their faith,” Steve says.

For more information, please contact Co at 918-640-7409 or coedwards@swbell.net or pick up a brochure at church.
Talk about a leap of faith! I am leaving the staff of this church I love and moving out into a new chapter of life. But it’s time. As fulfilling as serving you has been, I am certain—which also means I am at peace—that our Creator God is calling me to something new.

It’s a jump I’ve been persuaded to make largely because of all the funerals I do—coming to know from families what it is about the deceased that has made their life have enduring value. It’s the way their lives have cumulatively witnessed to the love and goodness of God that has me asking myself how my quality of life measures up here in my seventh decade.

What that means is that for the next year I plan to paint every day in my little backyard studio. There are techniques and styles and subjects that I’m looking forward to exploring in oil paint. And equally important: I plan to make a Home for Andy and my grown kids, to cultivate some friendships that I’ve neglected, and to reconnect with extended family. Officiating at lots of funerals gets you thinking about things like that.

After a year, I’ll rethink ministry callings. My hope is to take a training course on Interim Ministry, so that one of my options will be to serve for a year or so at a church without a pastor. I am also interested in crisis chaplaincy. But all of that comes after the year of painting.

I’ve been a member of First Church since my family moved to Tulsa when I was 18. This will always be my church home. My parents, who were both elders here, are some of those saints in the balconies beyond sight every Sunday. They’re joined there by First Church saints like Betty Payne, Joe Huffstetler, Marian Carden, Dave Sheffer, Mary Stuart Wood, Armenta Davis, Garvin Berry and so many others I’ve known and loved over the years.

I’ve been involved in almost every area of First Church’s life, beginning with the Collegians when we were staffed by Rev. Dr. Dave McKechnie. As an elder and then a pastor, I’ve been afforded the opportunity to serve on two pastor nominating committees, to lead women’s ministries, evangelism, mission, spirituality and communications.

Ministry is my vocation, and I’ll always be a pastor. So, in a way, it’s farewell . . . but just for a season. Andy and I will be back in worship. And I’ll still see some of you weekly at Emerson Elementary School.

Stay the strong church you are. Go on loving the Lord. Go where God leads when he leads. And may you continue to be blessed by the grace of Christ Jesus, the love of God, and the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit.

Rev. Elaine Hedgecock Cervini, Associate Pastor

Elaine now plans to spend much of her time painting in her art studio, recently completed in her backyard.
Rev. James Estes, associate pastor for mission and outreach encouraged members to invite friends and family, explaining that, “if it’s a gift to you, it can be a gift to someone you know.”

Due to the efforts of January Series champions and some free local promotion, the series drew record attendance this year. Now in its third year in Tulsa, attendance saw more than a 60 percent increase over last year.

On Tuesday, January 13, a presentation by Holocaust survivor Tova Friedman captured the attention of 113 members, guests and visitors. Friends from all over Tulsa, including several Jewish synagogues and organizations came together over Friedman’s stirring story of horror and redemption. The lecture concluded with a solemn prayer by a First Presbyterian Church member Case Boshuizen, a Dutch immigrant who remembers well the terror of Nazi invasion and seizure of Jewish friends and neighbors.

“The January Series has been an excellent outreach opportunity!” said Patricia Hall, the director of new member outreach. “We have people coming on their lunch hour from downtown, driving in from surrounding communities, parents bringing their children and retirees. Over half of our guests are from outside the church which is thrilling!”

Many of these visitors didn’t just come for the lecture, but stayed for conversation as well. “It really makes a big difference in some people’s lives,” says Krista Schaafmsa, a Calvin alumna and volunteer chair for the series. She is also excited that many attendees, including non-FPC members, are volunteering to help out with the series. “What a wonderful way to engage people to take ownership as we discuss these big issues!”

“The lectures also provide an avenue to invite friends into conversations about their questions of faith,” shared Duff Points.

Now that the January Series has concluded, the First Church community looks forward to the Welch Lecture Series, co-hosted by the church and the University of Tulsa on February 8-9.

Once again, the content of the series is designed to help strengthen the church congregation and surrounding community. The overall theme of “Christian mission in the 21st Century” is all about helping guests to be “outwardly focused,” just like the First Church mission statement calls its disciples to be.

“The Welch Lecture Series 2015

Sunday, February 8, 2015 at First Presbyterian Church
8 a.m.-12 p.m. - Dr. Sunquist and Dr. Bolger, preaching at regular service times
9:30 a.m. - Dr. Sunquist and Doctor Bolger presenting in Stephenson Hall
7 p.m. - “The American Mission Field” Fireside Conversations
8:30 p.m. - Dessert Reception

Monday, February 9, 2015 at the University of Tulsa
9:30 a.m. - Refreshments
10 a.m. - Morning Lecture with Dr. Ryan Bolger, presenting
11:45 a.m. - Lunch
1 p.m. - Afternoon Lecture with Dr. Scott Sunquist, presenting

For more information on the Welch Lecture Series, please call Jeffrey Francis, Sharp Chaplain at the University of Tulsa at 918-631-2546 or go online to firstchurchtulsa.org/welch.
FEBRUARY 6-7: LEADERSHIP RETREAT FPC staff and officers retreat at the church for fellowship, inspirational direction and encouragement.

FEBRUARY 8: WELCH LECTURE SERIES DAY 1 Worship and Sunday School with guest preachers from Fuller Theological Seminary, Dr. Scott Sunquist, and Dr. Ryan Bolger. “Fireside conversations” regarding the American mission field will take place from 7-8:30 p.m. at FPC.

FEBRUARY 9: WELCH LECTURE SERIES DAY 2 Programming with the keynote speakers from Fuller Theological Seminary continues at the University of Tulsa’s Sharp Chapel from 9:30 a.m.-2 p.m.

FEBRUARY 13: 8 DATES A presentation on parenting at 6:15 p.m. in Miller Library followed by a time for dinner out. Childcare from 6-9:15 p.m. by reservation only ($2).

FEBRUARY 15: LOVE AND LAUGHTER FPC Men’s Ministry host a romantic night with dinner, music, and comedy. Tickets ($25) must be purchased online or by calling 918-301-1015 by February 9.

FEBRUARY 18: ASH WEDNESDAY (LENT BEGINS) No regularly scheduled Wednesday Night Downtown, Awana or POW programming. An optional simple dinner will be served at 5:45 p.m. (reserve online or call 918-301-1019) before worship at 6:30 p.m.

FEBRUARY 20-21: PLANET WISDOM An outstanding Tulsa youth conference for Exodus high school students.

FEBRUARY 28: PETRA KIDS MINISTRIES ANNUAL BANQUET 5 p.m. Stephenson Hall

MARCH 12-15: CURSILLO RETREAT A memorable weekend at Dwight Mission designed to strengthen faith and commitment to the Master (see page 5).


MARCH 14-22: TPS SPRING BREAK

MARCH 14-19: EXODUS SKI RETREAT Exodus high school students retreat to Sonlight Camp in Pagosa Springs, CO.

MARCH 22: CONGREGATIONAL MEETING After worship in Stephenson Hall

MARCH 27: BLUE JEANS AND BOOTS BBQ ROUND-UP Come support our friends at Camp Loughridge through an evening of food, fund-raising and fun!

MARCH 29-APRIL 2: HOLY WEEK March 29: Palm Sunday, April 2: Maundy Thursday, April 3: Good Friday, April 5: Easter Sunday

PETRA KIDS MINISTRIES
Annual Banquet
Dinner, Live Music, Auctions
Feb. 28, 5 pm - Stephenson Hall
All proceeds benefit children in Uganda
www.petrakidsministries.com