

First Church News

April 2024

AHA trip set April 11

By Ruth Dobbs

The next AHA day trip will be on Thursday, April 11. We will be traveling to Edmond to the Armstrong Center to view an exhibit of the Kingdom of David and Solomon. This exhibit is through the Armstrong International Cultural Foundation in accordance with the Armstrong Institute of Biblical Archaeology, Israel Antiquities Authority, Israel Museum and the Hebrew University of Jerusalem as they present a world premiere showcasing the antiquities of the Kingdom of King David and Solomon of Israel.

We will leave the church at 12:15 p.m. from the north parking lot. We will arrive about 2 p.m. for our docent led tour which will be about one hour and then have some time on your own.

We will then leave and have an early dinner at the Bethlehem Mediterranean Grill to enjoy ethnic food that is commonly served in Israel.

AHA continued on back

Easter Appreciation



Easter appreciation gifts were delivered to members of the congregation living in retirement villages and nursing facilities on March 25 and 26.

Science & Scripture Study starts April 14

Science & Scripture Study (4 weeks) starts Sunday, April 14 at 5 p.m. in 301.

How was the world created? In the Christian worldview alone, there are incredibly diverse views on this, and other issues related to science and scripture, including whether or not there should be a “vs” in place of the “&” symbol. Join us as we dive into different views on

STUDY continued on back



DEVOS W/DEVON

Soul Hygienist

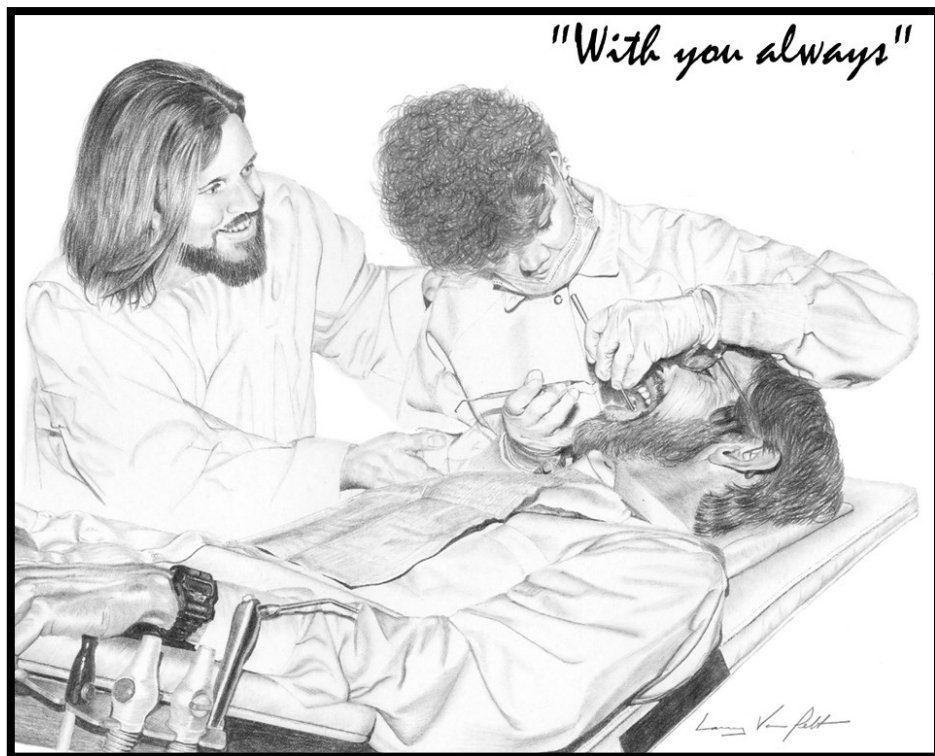


Pastor
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Confession: I don't like going to the dentist. It's nothing against dentists as people. In fact, the dentists I know are great people and feel called into the dental profession much like I feel called to be a pastor. Some people might even say the same about not wanting to see their pastor. I've heard the silly comparison that pastors are the dentists of the spiritual world... at least how we tend to approach the dentist anyway: from a place of guilt and shame as if we will never measure up when it comes to our soul hygiene.

If we're honest, we often tend to approach God this way too. As if God is our spiritual dentist and we will never measure up to the standards he has for us. This kind of relationship is based in guilt and shame and misses the point of Jesus' ministry and the new identity we've been given through him. When Jesus was baptized, he heard God speak to him from

“What we believe about God says a lot about how we will approach God.”



heaven saying, “*You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased,*” (Matt 3:17). This is an important moment for several reasons, including the reality that this happened before scripture records Jesus doing anything spectacular. The voice of God spoke in this moment before Jesus would heal, or preach, or do any of his work.

What does it mean to have our identity in Christ? When we consider who we are in Christ, it is important to remember that our identity is not defined by what we do. If we treat God like a spiritual dentist and it's our job to impress him with our soul hygiene we won't actually base our identity in him at all. Instead, we'll base our identity in our accomplishments, even while arguing everything we do is for God. Jesus, on the other hand, was claimed by God before he did the work. What if we have our identity backwards?

The very next thing Jesus does is spend 40 days in the wilderness being tempted by the devil. At one point the devil says “*If you are the Son of God, command these stones to*

become loaves of bread. If you are the Son of God, throw yourself down. If you are the son of God,” (Matt 4:2, 6, 9).

The argument of the devil is that if you are who you say you are then prove it. To which Jesus responds with something like, “I've got nothing to prove to you,” (paraphrased). Because of who God says we are, we have nothing to prove.

For far too long, we've been listening to voices telling us to prove who we are based on what we can do. What voices have you been listening to? Shame? Guilt? Disgust? Voices that agree with what you already believe? The first voice that spoke over Jesus has spoken over us and invites us into relationship long before we have anything to offer. What we believe about God says a lot about how we will approach God. May we reclaim our identity in Christ who invites us into relationship, not because of what we can do for him, but because of what he did for us. That's grace.

Grace and Peace,
Pastor Devon

NEWS FROM LEARNING TREE

Students learning about spring weather, animals



Ginger Diel

Director of
Learning Tree

Spring is here and Learning Tree is busy learning about springtime weather and baby animals. Warmer weather allows us all to get outside and celebrate the beauty God brings

to us in spring. We are taking spring walks to observe the signs of spring, as well as enjoying our amazing playground.

Our newest project is updating the big block room upstairs as well as the smaller block room in the basement. Thank you for your support during our cookie fundraiser. We are using these funds to update our equipment in the block areas. None of

these awesome things could happen without your support!

We will once again be offering a summer program this year. We currently have a few spots available so give us call if you are interested. Learning Tree is enrolling for the fall semester and is filling up quickly! Church members receive a 10 percent discount. So, come enroll and enjoy the fun. Learning Tree is the place to be!

Improvements made recently on church property

By **Kevin Klamm**
Trustee

The Trustees of FUMC spent much of 2023 reacting to water damage. The Fellowship Hall and classrooms in that area were repaired after flooding in May. The fix got complicated due to mold and asbestos discoveries. All is good, thanks to James' persistent oversight of contractors, and leadership with the sheetrock and trim volunteers. Though we thought the roof was done, the company returned to fix the last of the leaks and consequently had to replace the ceiling tiles in the Bell Choir room on the third floor.

Did you know the church has a Bride's Room? It is in the northeast corner of the Parlor in the basement. This was fully redone. Thanks to all the volunteers for their design input

and labor. Hopefully 2024 will allow us to be back to a proactive approach to the building's needs. More on this later as bids come in for hallway painting and parking lot maintenance.

Many upgrades will be happening at our Jefferson property that is leased by Shamrock Counseling Services. It is the white house on the northwest corner of Randolph and Jefferson. The improvements are being done by a local remodeling contractor and will happen throughout the year.

The first two projects completed are the main bathroom and the east interior entryway.

Money for these projects comes from donations, the budget, and earnings from the Property Maintenance Trust.

TRUSTEES continued on next page

April UWF Meetings

Wednesday, April 3:
Mother, Daughter,
Friend "Bingo for
Babies" Event, 5:30
p.m., Fellowship Hall.
All women and girls
invited to attend—
Rahab Circle hosting.

Wednesday, April 10:
Esther Circle, 9:30 a.m.
Meeting at the home of
Jenny Gwinnup, 3209
Willow Lake.

Wednesday, April 10:
Lydia Circle, 7 p.m.,
meeting at the home of
Janet Bennett, 512 Jack
Choate Ave.,
Hennessey.

Tuesday, April 16: Anna
Circle, 1:30 p.m. Dianne
Juhnke, hostess.

New Members

Daylon Caruthers, right, and Priscilla Baudoin, below, joined Feb. 25. The Jeff Bergman family, far right, joined in March.



Rahab Circle



The women of Rahab Circle recently met to assemble 44 hygiene bags to go to Enid High and the middle schools for their March Mission project.

TRUSTEES:

About 13 years ago the now disbanded garden committee was formed to come up with a plan to maintain the flower beds at the church. Bill Quigley, who had passed away, had taken care of the flower beds for many years.

The committee's plan was for Sunday School classes to be assigned to different flower

beds. This worked for a long time. As classes changed and aged only the Montgomery Class remained in this role. They deserve credit for hanging on to the responsibility the longest.

For various reasons they are no longer able to care for the west side flowerbed of the church. There were many

members from this class that had their hands in the dirt, but I want to especially thank Mike and Jenny Gwinnup for leading the efforts over the last several years. Whoever takes on the responsibility has a tough act to follow. The Trustees are looking for volunteers for this task. Contact Kevin Klamm if you can help at: 580-402-3774.

CARE NOTES:

Growing Through Grief meeting monthly



Deborah Reeves

Director of Care
Ministries

In January of this year I started the Growing Through Grief (GTG) group that meets every third Tuesday of the month. It is a place where we can share our stories and our tears and know we are not alone. To

support each other and find a way to grow more resilient. I want to share, grief is NOT an event, it is a journey and it is vital to know you do not have to do this journey alone. Death steals a person, every facet of them BUT it also steals living from those left behind. Our routine, safety, comfort, love and hope. It steals our future!

I know personally grief changes our world, it changes our body, mind and our spirit.

It makes us doubt. It's okay to hate this season and to doubt and even question God, but I realized I had to STOP asking why and trying to understand, and replace questioning with TRUST and in doing so I learned faith does not erase my grief.

We ALL have stories to share that will benefit others. We need to know there is a network of others that want to

CARE continued on back

MISSION MOMENT

April Open Your Heart for YWCA

By Heather Reames

We have just finished celebrating Easter and contemplating the hope of the empty tomb. In April, we have the opportunity to support two wonderful organizations that give hope to people in difficult circumstances.

Our Communion Rail offering in April will go to Enid Street Outreach Services. This organization meets people where they are. They not only help with immediate needs, but they also work on helping people regain their independence and join the workforce. You can find out more about this group at enidsos.org or on Facebook at Enid Street Outreach Services.

Our Open Your Heart this month is collecting items for the YWCA. The YWCA provides crisis intervention services and gives

hope to the people it serves. There is a website ywcaenid.com and a Facebook page YWCA Enid. They are in need of full-size toiletries for sensitive or dry skin, hair ties, brushes, deodorant, chapstick, hair spray and feminine products. Check out the complete list at the Information Table and by the collection bin by the north entryway.

Thank you for helping people in our community in so many ways. Check the Information Table for recent information on the Blessing Box and Welcome Table. I watched a man pull up to the Blessing Box on his bike. He dropped a can of something into his bag and then opened a granola bar and ate it as he drove away. He was smiling from ear to ear. You were a blessing to him First Church and to so many others through your generosity.

New sermon series begins April 14

DNA—Identity & Mental Health starts April 14.

When Jesus asks the question “who do you say I am” our answer reveals more than what we think about Jesus. It also reveals what we believe about ourselves: Who am I really? Jesus has redefined who we can become but we have to do the hard work to believe it’s possible. Join us as we uncover who Jesus says we are as we work to reframe and rewire our hearts and minds to see what Jesus sees in us.



SUNDAY SCHOOL

(recommendation during sermon series):

Don't Give the Enemy a Seat at Your Table by Louie Giglio

If you would like help ordering this study, please let Pastor Devon know.

STUDY:

creation, evolution, and intelligent design.

When it comes to science and scripture, we may never have the answers on this side of heaven but we can learn a lot in working to understand one another better.



Sign up using the QR code or go to

<https://forms.gle/6xx4DzT35TAbG4nb8>

CARE:

support us as we support them. I am learning that leaning into the pain and sharing it with others is allowing me to grow and heal.

No right or wrong response, no step by step way to process the experience. Grief is a very individual and crippling journey! But we can and will grow through it with a little help from our friends and even strangers bonded by shared experiences.

I believe God sees every one of our tears and tears do help in the loss and healing during grief.

Psalms 56:8 says, “You keep track of all my sorrow. You have collected all my tears in your bottle. You have recorded every one in your book.”

We need a goal, we need to grow through this. Hope changes grief but it does not remove it.

Let’s try to mix hope in with our grief. Hard to do, I know! To work at this grief is to try to move forward not to move on. To not let it impede my life but find a place for it in my life.

AHA:

The tour is free but I will find out if we should give a gratuity to the guide. Gas will be \$5 per person.

I believe this will be a very educational adventure and I know that I am looking forward to the day.

There will be a signup sheet on the Information Table. For further information please feel free to give me a call 580-603-3872.



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