

The background of the entire image is a close-up of a stained glass window. It features various colored panes in shades of orange, yellow, green, and red, separated by dark lead lines. In the bottom left corner, a small, lit candle is visible, casting a warm glow. The overall aesthetic is traditional and religious.

F B C  O K C  
EST. 1889

# First Connect

December 2025



# Letter from Sarah



Dear First Baptist Church Family,

A happy and holy Advent to you. I want to invite you to enter this season with an extra dose of grace. We are all more stressed this time of year, and I'm sure that is quite impossible to avoid. But what if we try to breathe deeply every day, offer ourselves and everyone around us grace, and trust that God is with us in the middle of it all? For those who have given their lives to following Jesus, you have the presence of the Living God dwelling within you wherever you go. That means, whatever room you find yourself in, God is there.

Fleming Rutledge wrote in her book *Advent: the Once and Future Coming of Jesus Christ* these words: "Even the tiniest sign of reconciliation, the smallest hint of forgiveness, the most minuscule shimmer of kindness is a sign that God is with us, our Lord Emmanuel. In even our most seemingly insignificant moments of fellowship and renewal, God is at work. He can use you to make a little piece of heaven come, if only for a moment, for someone, this very day." That is the work of the church. To bring a little piece of heaven here, if only for a moment, by how we love one another.

My challenge for us is to be the peaceful, hopeful, joyful, loving presence of Christ wherever you go. Be the reason someone else can breathe better. Be a safe space for people to come and feel seen and loved. Everyone around you is facing a harder battle than you know. As children of God, we should be the people who make others feel a little bit more hopeful.

We are the continuation of the work begun by Jesus. We have work to do, you and I. We are called to show the world what God is like by how we live and how we love. We are kingdom bearers. We carry the light of Christ in us wherever we go. Anywhere you are, Christ is there. You are his agents of grace in this world. You are the ones who get to walk in his goodness and live in the hope, peace, joy, and love that come through a relationship with Jesus Christ. This is holy work. This season of Advent, pray big, brave prayers. Ask God to open your eyes to see how he is working and moving in this world. There is a secret gift that comes when you say yes to what God puts in front of you. He allows you to see just how good he is and how beautifully he works all things together for the good of those who have been called according to his purposes.

This past few months, we have worshipped the Lord and welcomed four new members, we've baptized one in a worship service and another later that afternoon. We welcomed a new congregation to our building as partners, and we shared a meal as brothers and sisters in Christ. We celebrated with our Hope is Alive partners as they find new life in Christ, and we hosted a conference for Episcopal priests and Methodist ministers about learning how to use your church building for kingdom-building purposes. We welcomed back our mission team and sent youth on a retreat, and countless other small moments of study and growth and surrender and service. God is moving and working all the time. May we have eyes to see, ears to hear, and hearts to follow.

A happy and holy Advent season to you, church family. Christ has come, and he will come again. And he is with us now. Emmanuel.





# October Membership

Hello,

My name is Morgan Johnson. I grew up traveling the world with my family while my father served on active duty. My little sister and I were exposed to many different church denominations and raised to be non-denominational. I found that my personal faith grew as God placed people in my life spontaneously. I started coming to FBOKC with my boyfriend, who is now my husband. The first time I walked into the church, I was filled with a sense of peace and familiarity. My husband and I were blessed to have Pastor Sarah conduct our premarital counseling and wedding ceremony - she always does an amazing job with everything she does!



My name is Ryan Johnson, and I grew up in a Southern Baptist church in Auburn, Alabama. When I moved off to college, I struggled to find a church that felt like home. That struggle persisted once I graduated, joined the Air Force, and moved to Mississippi for pilot training. My move to Oklahoma came at the very beginning of COVID lockdowns. Right as the walls of my apartment began to feel like a prison, I saw a sign that FBOKC would be opening up in-person services. I jumped at the opportunity to get out of the house and have some human interaction. What I found was an accepting and loving community that felt like home.



# Kids and Youth



## The Footpath to Peace

To be glad of life, because it gives you the chance to love and to work and to play and to look up at the stars; to be satisfied with your possessions, but not content with yourself until you have made the best of them; to despise nothing in the world except falsehood and meanness, and to fear nothing except cowardice; to be governed by your admirations rather than by your disgusts; to covet nothing that is your neighbor's except his kindness of heart and gentleness of manners; to think seldom of your enemies, often of your friends and every day of Christ; and spend as much time as you can with body and with spirit, in God's out-of-doors – these are little guideposts on the footpath of peace.

From Leaves of Gold

By: Henry Van Dyke

## **Elementary Christmas Party, December 12**

Christmas Party for kids grades Kindergarten through 5th grade. Bring a \$10 funny gift for white elephant! We will meet from 6-9pm. Dinner provided. Drop off and pick up in the Youth Center. Treat this like a Christmas themed Kid's Night Out!

## **Little's Christmas Party, December 13**

Christmas Party for Pre-K and younger! The party will take place from 6-9pm. We will have fun crafts, watch a Christmas movie, and get into the Christmas spirit!

## **Youth Christmas Party Lock-In, December 19-20**

Yes, you read that right...A youth Christmas party LOCK-IN. Drop off in the gym at 7pm and pick up in the gym at 7am. Bring a \$10 funny/gag gift for White Elephant and your favorite snacks/beverages to share! No need for blankets or pillows because sleep is for the weak!



# Upcoming Events

## **Coat & Blanket Drive**

Please consider participating in our coat and blanket drive for those in need! Items can be placed in the Commons for distribution by our CareForOKC team.

## **Annual Business Meeting, December 3**

Join us in the Dining Hall at 5:30pm for a light meal and business meeting.

## **Sounds of the Season, December 14**

Join us for a special morning of worship on December 14<sup>th</sup> as our Sanctuary choir leads us in a Christmas worship service. They have been hard at work preparing for this incredible day. Invite your friends and family to join you for a meaningful Christmas service.

## **“Rooted” 60+ Game Day, December 16 at 11am in the dining hall**

Join us on December 16 for game day. Toni will order pizza, and you will bring your favorite holiday cookie. We will play Bingo, and yes, we will have prizes to give out. If you are an extrovert, wear your favorite Christmas sweater! And even if you're not an extrovert but love Christmas time, wear your favorite Christmas sweater. We look forward to seeing you on December 16 in the dining hall at 11:00 AM. Come ready to have fun!

## **Christmas Feast, December 21**

Save the date for this upcoming feast where we will eat and enjoy fellowship. Details coming soon.

## **Taste of Christmas & Christmas Eve Service, December 24**

Join us for Taste of Christmas, a time of fellowship in the Commons at 5 pm on Christmas Eve. Bring your favorite Christmas goodies to share. At 6 pm, we will have our family-friendly candlelight Christmas Eve service with a living nativity from our children.

## **Mission Trip Share Service - Sunday, January 4 at 10:30am**

Plan on coming to FBCOKC on January 4 to hear our mission team share about their experiences serving near the U.S. - Mexico border! You don't want to miss this opportunity to hear stories, see pictures, and learn how God has worked in and through our team.



## **Mission Trip Share Service**

Sunday, January 4 at 10:30am



# Missions



## Lose to Find: Embracing the Way of Jesus

Recently, I've been rediscovering the countercultural nature of Jesus. It's impossible to ignore it if you carefully read through the gospels. For those who've grown up reading Scripture and going to church, it's easy to let our familiarity with Jesus' words unknowingly blind us to their transformative power. You may have heard the kingdom of God described as an "upside-down kingdom" where our entire lives are reoriented to flourish as new creations in Jesus. Let me give you an example:

In Mark 8, Jesus predicts his death and tells his disciples and the crowd what it means to follow the way of the cross:

*"Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me and for the gospel will save it."* – Mark 8:34-35

While it is true that many of the apostles and disciples died of martyrdom, Jesus' words about losing your life here are not just about physical death. Jesus is calling his disciples, and us, to surrender our lives daily to His will and purposes SO THAT we can experience true life.

We are told by the kingdoms of this world that the good life is built upon self-preservation: focus on your own goals, needs, aspirations, and desires. In every facet of life, our society teaches us that the path to happiness and fulfillment is to focus on ourselves. But Jesus clearly says again and again in the Scriptures that the only way to truly SAVE our life is to LOSE it for his sake. When we turn our focus off of ourselves and onto Jesus and his purposes for this world, we become truly alive.

The antidote for our culture's self-preoccupation is to give our lives away in Jesus' name. Ask anyone who has spent time serving others about their experience and they will tell you this is true. Every day we have a chance to make small surrenders that, when put together over a lifetime, can slowly shape us into the image of God.

How will you choose to give your life away? Maybe it happens through serving food or clothes to a client at CareForOKC. Or by tutoring a child or encouraging an overwhelmed teacher at a local elementary school. Or maybe you go on a mission trip to love and serve strangers who become friends. We all want our lives to matter. To mean something. Jesus' call is for all of us. Lose your life for me and the gospel and in doing so FIND abundant life.

## LOSE TO FIND

### Embracing the Way of Jesus





# Serving Opportunities

## **What is CareForOKC?**

CareForOKC is our church's community ministry. It's located on the Ground Floor of FBCOKC and serves clients on Monday afternoons from 4-6pm. We have a food pantry which is like a tiny grocery store. Canned vegetables, meats, produce, milk, eggs, pastas, bread, desserts, and a lot more. Clients get to shop for groceries. We also have a clothes closet that has clothes for women, men, and children. If you've never been to CareForOKC, we'd love for you to come down and take a tour. We serve over 75 families every single week.

## **Who does CareForOKC serve?**

CareForOKC serves the working poor, those experiencing homelessness, immigrants and refugees new to Oklahoma City, folks who may have lost their jobs or are in another life transition, victims of domestic violence, the disabled, and many more.

## **How does CareForOKC provide this service to the community?**

We have an incredible lay team of volunteers that serve clients on Monday nights. Volunteers check in clients, assist them in the food pantry and clothes closet, and help people get their food/clothes loaded into their vehicles. In addition to Monday afternoons, we have drivers who pick up food donated from Wal-Mart and bring it to CareForOKC, we have other volunteers who come up during the week and restock the food pantry shelves or process clothes in the closet.

## **Where Does the Food Come From at CareForOKC?**

CareForOKC has partnerships with a local Wal-Mart where we pick up donated food twice a week and deliver it to the church. We also have a partnership with the Regional Foodbank of Oklahoma that enables us to buy bulk food items at a discounted cost. Occasionally, we will receive free items from the foodbank in addition to the goods we buy. In addition to Wal-Mart and the Regional Foodbank, we receive food and monetary donations from our FBCOKC church family and the community.

## **How can I pray for and support this ministry?**

You may noticed that your grocery bill is more expensive these days. Items that we purchase from the Regional Foodbank for our food pantry, which are often heavily discounted, are becoming more expensive or even not available. Due to the recent cuts to federal aid, our CareForOKC team is spending more money purchasing food to help keep our shelves stocked each week. Our reality is not unique. Community ministries in our area and across the nation are working to find creative ways to continue serving folks despite the effects of inflation and budget cuts. God has been so faithful in providing for our needs and we trust that God will continue to be faithful as we love our neighbors as ourselves. We can't express how thankful we are for your prayers, countless volunteer hours, food and clothes donations, financial gifts, and so much more. See the link below to learn more about giving to CareForOKC! You are testifying to the goodness of God in a world that sometimes feels hopeless. Jesus is our hope and we are His people.

<https://app.aplos.com/aws/give/FirstBaptistChurchOklahomaCity/GiveNow>



# Senior Adults & Discipleship



## Memories...

A life-giving memory of mine from the holiday season growing up is the open house my parents would host one night during Christmas. My dad served as a pastor for a small congregation for the last 26 years of his life, and they would invite the congregation, which consisted of around 80 members, over for an evening of food and fellowship. Although my parents didn't have a large house, my dad would bring in 8-foot tables from the church and set up as many seats as possible in the living space.

In preparation for the event, my mom would bake and cook for weeks to ensure there was enough food for everyone. She would hand-make tamales, rice, beans, chips, hot sauce, cheese queso, along with various breads, cookies, and candies. When I say "handmade," I mean she truly made everything from scratch. She was an amazing cook.

Let me tell you, it was quite a production! The atmosphere was often crowded, loud, and hectic. But why did they do it?

As I reflect on my childhood, I'm puzzled by my parents' deep-rooted love for acts of service. To my youthful mind, it often seemed like an overwhelming burden—endless tasks for fleeting recognition. I questioned whether anyone truly appreciated the sacrifices they made so willingly. Yet, it never seemed to affect my parents; no matter how limited their resources were, they always shared what they had.

Now, with the wisdom that comes with age, I look back on their selfless generosity and countless acts of kindness extended to others. I am reminded of the teachings of Jesus, who warmly welcomed children, reached out to the marginalized, and embodied a spirit of joy in giving. My parents understood the profound importance of embodying Christ's love in their lives, bringing light to the community they cherished and served.

Their unwavering commitment mattered deeply to them and to those they touched. During times of struggle, when hardship affected many, the connections formed through compassion and generosity brought great joy. It is a timeless truth that how we treat others should mirror the kindness of Jesus, regardless of our own abundance or scarcity. That core belief continues to resonate within me, reminding us of the positive impact we can have in the world.

Christmas time should bring great joy to all people. Like my parents, I have seen our church step up with money, time, talents, and energy to serve and love the community. My parents, along with you, have shown me that Christmas is a day to celebrate the Good News: that God loves you, God is with you, and God is for you! What a gift! **Toni**





# Connect

## **Small Groups at FBCOKC**

As the holiday season draws near, we want to take a moment to appreciate the amazing journey we've shared. We are taking a refreshing break, as we pause to celebrate and recharge, with our next gathering set for January 7. If you haven't yet found your place in one of our groups but feel the pull to connect and grow this January, I'm excited to help you find the perfect fit—just reach out!

Imagine small groups as vibrant circles of fellowship, where hearts come together for enriching teaching and authentic accountability. This isn't just a meeting, it's an invitation to form deep, meaningful connections that can transform your life. Picture yourself surrounded by supportive friends, sharing insights, laughter, and encouragement as you navigate life's ups and downs.

We would be thrilled for you to be part of this inspiring experience. Join a small group in January and step into a community where you truly belong! **Toni**

## **Bible Study at FBC/OKC**

I believe the single most important tool to spiritual growth is reading and studying God's word. It helps us discern between right and wrong, provides wisdom, strengthens our faith, gives us comfort, and encourages us to keep on keeping on.

Bible Study at FBCOKC is a small group coming together from all levels of Bible knowledge to discuss passages. A few classes use a Bible Study guide that provides material for students to study throughout the week. Some classes choose a passage or topic from the Bible that a teacher introduces, which is then studied and discussed. I am amazed when God's word is read and studied, it is relevant today as it was some 2000 years ago. God's word is alive, true, encouraging, challenging, and builds us up as believers in Christ. These Bible study groups require no prior Bible knowledge, so it doesn't matter how much Bible knowledge you have, because God can take a little and use it to nurture and grow us in our faith and walk with the Lord. Truly, this can happen.

Please take the step to join a Bible study class and see how God will use His Word to change your life. I would love to introduce you to a class. The classes are listed below. **Toni**

### **Kids@First**

Who: Babies – 5th Grade

Where: 1st Floor Children's Area

Contact: Ariel Koerner

### **Youth**

Who: Grades 6-12

Where: Youth Center (Ground Floor)

Contact: Ariel Koerner

### **Young Adult Group**

Who: 20's and early 30's (Singles and Couples)

Where: 1st Floor across from Office

Contact: Brad Stewart

### **Middle Ground**

Who: 30's and 40's

Where: Ground Floor

Contact: Victoria Malony and Rick Johnson

### **Higher Ground**

Who: 40's - 50's (Singles and Couples)

Where: Parlor (Ground Floor)

Contact: Brenda Cline

### **The Collective**

Who: All ages; singles and couples

Where: Coffee Shop (Ground Floor)

Contact: Marie Davis, Joey Clifton, David Pennington

### **Chapel Class**

Who: All ages; singles & couples

Where: Library (First Floor)

Contact: Toni Adams

### **Good Shepherd Class**

Who: All ages

Where: 1st Floor across from Office

Contact: Alan Hicks



# Members



Griffin Stewart - 12/2

Lauren Capraro - 12/5

Steve Sanabria - 12/8

Desiree Kinser - 12/10

Pam Dunbar - 12/12

Dusty Cook - 12/14

Carol Moorad - 12/17

Earlene Hall - 12/21

Courtney Wallace - 12/22

Jake Gregston - 12/22

Evelyn Millar - 12/25

Maritzel Nash - 12/28

Lisa Driskill - 12/28

William Prescott - 12/30

Billy Daniels - 12/30



# Year at a Glance

## December

**\*Please note:** *Activities are subject to change*

December 3 Annual Business Meeting  
December 12 Elementary Christmas Party  
December 13 Littles Christmas Party  
December 14 Sounds of the Season  
December 16 Rooted Holiday Cookies & Bingo  
December 19-20 Youth Christmas Party Lock-In  
December 21 Christmas Feast  
December 24 Christmas Eve Service

## January

January 4 Mission Focused Worship Service  
January 11 Deacon Nomination  
January 16-18 Youth Mission Trip  
January 18 Committee Kickoff  
January 23 Kid's Night Out

**THANK YOU ONCE AGAIN !!!**

Our ***OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD SHOEBOX PROJECT*** is finished for this year. We want to express a huge ***THANK YOU*** to all who participated. We have delivered 45 filled shoeboxes to our local collection location. From there, they are being loaded onto one of four huge trucks and taken to the regional warehouse in Grapevine, TX., where they will be secured onto big wooden flats and shipped to excited children all over the world.

- If you still have a box at home that you were unable to return, please just keep it in a safe place and begin thinking about filling it next year.
- Continue to pray for the child(ren) who will receive the box(es) that you filled. Pray that they will be excited to unpack their gifts, and that they will also be attentive to the story booklet about Jesus which is offered to each child.
- If you registered your shoebox online, you should receive information about where it goes. Also, if you enclosed a picture and/or contact information about yourself, you may even hear from the child. We would love to know about any feedback that you get from this project.

Thanks again from your Missions Committee.



Love God | Love Other | Make Disciples

## Service Times

### Sunday Mornings

Bible Study at 9:15am

Worship at 10:30am

### Wednesday Evenings

Small Groups and

Children's Activities at 5:30pm

Choir at 7:00pm

### FBCOKC Ministers and Staff

Sarah Stewart, Pastor

Brad Stewart, Missions Minister

Toni Adams, Minister for Senior Adults & Discipleship

Ariel Koerner, Minister for Young Families

Steven McConnell, Minister of Music

Don Clothier, Pianist

Justin Keiser, Facilities Manager

Miranda Fryer, Administrative Assistant

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