

CURRENT



Newsletter of the Trinity Brazos Area

July 25, 2013

CREATING A CULTURE OF GENEROSITY—REGISTER NOW

Most congregations have financial stress -- whether it is as simple as needing more money to meet your basic obligations or needing more money to expand your vision for ministry. On August 23rd, Rev. Bruce Barkhauer of the Center for Faith and Giving and Rev. Bobby Hawley of the Christian Church Foundation will present a day-long workshop on ways to confront the financial fears and challenges in your congregation.

This workshop is intended for clergy and lay people. Everyone is welcome! And, there is no cost. However, we need your RSVP by noon on August 14th. Bring a group from your congregation and enter into dialogue about ways to inspire generosity in your church.

To RSVP, call Rev. Hawley at 817-923-0422 or email your reservation to bhawley@ccf.disciple.org

LOVE LETTER FROM A TBA PARENT TO THE GROWN-UPS AT DISCIPLES CROSSING

My kids come home different from camp at Disciples Crossing. Yes, they're kinda' filthy and their sleeping bags smell like a weird mix of sweat and mildew. And oh, the laundry. But that's not the "different" I'm talking about.



They come home physically stronger. Their limbs are longer; their skin has been kissed by the sun. Their hair has grown an inch. They look well-fed and hearty - so different from the pale lifelessness of a summer spent in the air conditioning, playing video games with the shades drawn.

They come home emotionally connected. Their hearts have been populated with friends their own age from nearby churches. They have rekindled the dormant habit of conversation about things that matter. They have interesting things to report, relationships to describe, ideas to share.

They come home spiritually wiser. They've heard Bible stories and have joined in wonderment at the nature and character of God. They have remembered Jesus with joy and thanksgiving. They have experienced the presence of the Holy Spirit. They know how to worship, and pray, and eat, and sing, and play in the name of the Lord.

My kids come home different from camp, and my heart is filled with gratitude for the adults who helped them through those essential and beautiful changes. I don't really like camp for me - it's just not my thing - and so I am especially appreciative of the people who do like it, who seem to truly love loving my kids in that setting each summer (and fall and winter).

Thanks, camping grown-ups. What good gifts you have given our family this summer.

CENTRAL CC IN WACO FEATURED ON WEEK OF COMPASSION WEBSITE

The following column by TBA pastor Brian Coats offers a pastoral perspective on ministry following the explosion in West. We'll share this report in two installments. Here's part 1:

WHAT ONE CHURCH HAS LEARNED FROM DISASTER RELIEF

By Brian Coats

*Senior Minister, Central Christian Church
Waco, TX*

In 2005, I served a church 334 miles from New Orleans, Louisiana. We spent four months that year doing much Katrina relief ministry. So when the West Fertilizer Company plant exploded in West, Texas, 21 miles from the church I now serve, I knew things were about to get interesting, and we would need to be involved in the relief and recovery.



WHEN LIFE EXPLODES

I first heard about the explosion from a tweet, around 8:45 pm. As I was scrolling through my Twitter feed, my wife's cell phone rang. It was her grandmother, asking if we were close to West, Texas. For the next two hours, between social media and television news, I began to get an idea that something bad had happened. Our associate pastor, Kristin Jack, and I began texting back and forth.

Around 11 pm, I made a trip to a local grocery store because the news was reporting that emergency shelters were springing up all over the Waco area. The next day, some church members came up and we made sack lunches for about 70 and then delivered them to one of the shelters. That same day, we sent an e-mail to our Area office, letting other Disciples churches know we would be collecting donations for West. We also put a notice on our marquee that said "blankets and toiletries for West." Less than 24 hours later, we had half a classroom full of diapers, dry goods, toiletries, blankets and pillows. Two days after that - following at least three full-trailer deliveries from other Disciple churches - our storehouse was literally overflowing.

The weekend after the blast, our youth minister Trent Futral and I drove up to West to drop off a few of the supplies. I connected with a West resident who worked in their schools. Three of the four schools in the town of about 2500 were damaged, so almost all of the students were being displaced. I signed us up to prepare 14 "goodie bags" to greet the West ISD teachers at their new school, along with 94 bags for students. A few hours later, that number had ballooned to 500. As I knew I was delegating this project to Kristin, I said yes without hesitation!

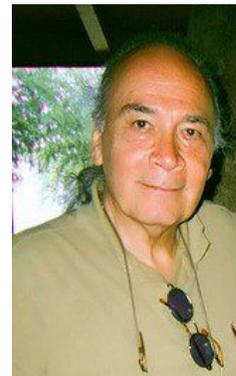
By Sunday morning, we were making 700 student goodie bags and 50 teachers goodie bags. Kristin did an incredible job mobilizing what seemed like the entire church to stuff these bags with donated school supplies, novelties, snacks and water, gift cards for the teachers and notes that said "You are loved." After worship, around 30 adults and children delivered the goodie bags to the campus that West students were moving to because the walls and windows of their former campuses were blown to pieces.

Six days later, we had a garage sale because in addition to the blankets and toiletries for West we had solicited, people also donated used clothing and toys. We priced everything at \$1, and made about \$1800. Along with monetary donations from church members and other Disciple churches, we have been charged with dispersing around \$19,000 to West relief and recovery...

[to be continued]

FCC WICHITA FALLS TO HOST BISHOP STEVEN CHARLESTON

The 2013 Stratten Series hosted by First Christian Church Wichita Falls features a unique voice in contemporary spirituality. Steven Charleston is a citizen of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma, the first of the Five Tribes from the southwestern part of the U.S. to be removed on the "Trail of Tears." He is a bishop in the Episcopal Church with 40 years of service in the ordained ministry. He has been the director of Native American ministries for his church, the first Native Bishop of Alaska, the President and Dean of a seminary in Cambridge, Massachusetts, and a seminar professor. Currently he teaches at the Saint Paul School of Theology.



Charleston's most recent collection of meditations is *Cloud Walking*, which follows his first book *Hope As Old As Fire* (Red Moon Publications). Here's a sample from the Bishop:

I have a friend who is going out on her third vision quest, out into the still space between heaven and Earth, out into the wild space where ancestors whisper on the passing wind and the trees bend to mark their passing. She will sit beneath a blanket of stars, resting her soul in the palm of Grandmother God's steady hand, a voice chanting in the center of the circle of life. She will pray for me, for you, for all of us, for every living thing, for peace and healing and renewal. One woman praying is more powerful than all the darkness that ever was or ever will be.

The Stratten Series with Bishop Steven Charleston begins Saturday, Sept. 14, when Charleston leads the discussion "So which Jesus did you get?" from 9 am – 12 noon. This is followed by a Ministers Lunch with the Bishop. Dinner at 6:30 pm that evening is followed by an address by Charleston and a desert reception and book signing. Charleston will preach for both Sunday services on Sept. 15—8:40 am and 10:45 am. The series is open to the public—reservations are requested for meals. Call the church office at 940-692-2282 to reserve your place

MAKING HISTORY

This is a year of territorial innovation for the Christian Church in the Southwest. The areas known as Tres Rios, High Plains and Central are working on a new ministry configuration under the banner "Mission West." Our neighbor congregations to the east are giving TBA a try. And TBA is sharing ministry expenses with the Bluebonnet Area.



All this innovation came to a head last month when leaders of the Whirlwind Cluster and leaders of the Outlier Cluster faced off in Mineral Wells. No, it wasn't a Wild West shoot-out. It was picnic hosted by Pam Holt and the good folks at First Christian Church Mineral Wells. Besides sharing a meal and conversation, the group visited the historic First Christian Church of Palo Pinto, Texas—the western-most church site in TBA.

What happens when the Outliers meet a Whirlwind? They all end up in church!

SAVE THE DATE

July 9	5 pm	TBA Executive Committee	
July 28-31		Relief Responders to Moore, OK	Park Place CC, WF
August 1-7		Study Trip to Rio Grande Valley	C3 Aledo
August 13	5 pm	TBA Executive Committee	
August 17	9 am, 10 am	TBA Admin Council, Board	RDMC
August 21	1 pm	TBA Committee on Ministry	RDMC
August 23	9 am – 4 pm	Creating a Culture of Generosity	University CC, FW
Sept. 14–15		Bishop Steven Charleston	FCC Wichita Falls

BBA AND TBA CHURCHES IN SEARCH & CALL

First Christian Church, Burkburnett	Completing congregational profile
First Christian Church, Burleson	Completing congregational profile
First Christian Church, Corpus Christi	Candidate interviews
First Christian Church, Kerrville	Seeking an interim minister
Northwest Christian Church, Arlington	Completing congregational profile
Richfield Christian Church, Waco	Candidate interviews
Richland Hills Christian Church, Fort Worth	Interim Hired
South Shore Christian Church, Corpus Christi	Completing congregational profile
Bethany Christian Church, Austin	Search Committee Orientation
Central Christian Church, Corpus Christi	Seeking an Interim Minister

Contact Renee Hoke at rhoke@ccsw.org for more information on these openings.



Central Christian Church (Waco) delegation to General Assembly.

A HOPEFUL SIGN

Young families and young adults arrived in significant numbers for this year's General Assembly in Orlando. Without question our proximity to Harry Potter World encouraged their participation. But it was a hopeful sign. We all noticed and gave thanks.

I spend more time these days attending conferences and reading books that help me understand the gifts and vision being shared by a new generation of church leaders. I want to be inspired and encouraged by these talented women and men. I want to help make a space for them in the life of the church. I believe they are the spiritual transfusion we have been waiting for.

Several months ago Carol Howard Merritt spoke at Brite Divinity School. What a treat to listen to this gifted young pastor! Her new book *Reframing Hope: Vital Ministry in a New Generation* has become an important resource for me. Carol is a mainline pastor in the postmodern world who describes herself as a “loyal radical.” If that term is new to you, pay attention. As Carol explains, “Unless we are kicked out of our denominations, most of us loyal radicals have no intention of leaving—yet we fully realize we are part of a shift in ecclesial thinking. We feel comfortable with the tension of working in a denomination, even with the reality that we live in a post-denominational culture.”

Carol says loyal radicals differ from leaders in the emergent movement in several ways: 1) loyal radicals have strong ties to the rich history of their denominations and share hope for a vibrant church that makes sense to a new generation; 2) these young pastors, writers and church planters are growing up alongside the emergent church but do not share the evangelical roots common with post-evangelical emergents; and 3) loyal radicals feel a responsibility to actively engage and empower those segments of our population who have been under-represented in traditional church leadership. As Carol explains, this active advocacy for leadership diversity is in marked contrast to the emergent movement’s more passive approach to inclusion.

So now you have a new term in your church vocabulary. It is possible that there are some loyal radicals in your congregation now or perhaps they are in your neighborhood, looking for a mainline church with a rich history that will welcome new vision. Here’s a great summary sentence from Carol: “Even as many denominational churches continue to mourn their membership decline, a new generation of Christians is longing for the very practices of inclusion, diversity, and questioning that many mainline churches have been cultivating for these last few decades.” I don’t know about you, but that gives me hope!

Praying for your ministry to and with loyal radicals,

Renee

Rev. Renee G. Hoke
Trinity Brazos Area Minister
Christian Church in the Southwest

Sharon Watkins eloquent pastoral letter on “Welcoming All to the Table” is included with this edition of the Current. My sense of the mood as we voted on Resolution 1327 was respect and recognition for our differences and a renewed passion for the Table and all it represents.