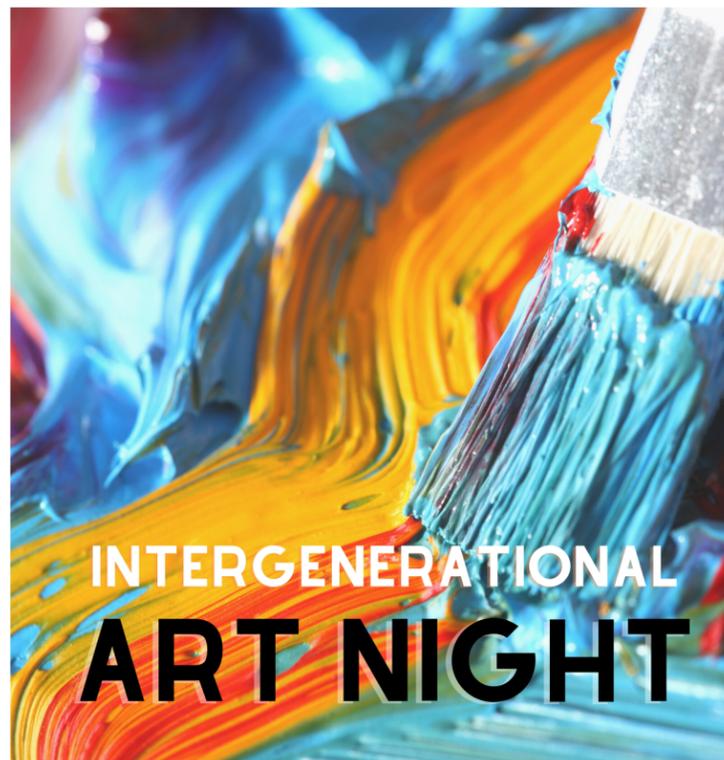


ART NIGHT

FRIDAY
02.25.22
6:00PM



Office Hours:
Monday - Thursday
8:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

Contact Information:
Church Phone:
405.321.8170
Day School Phone:
405.919.3989

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Return Service Requested



P.O. Box 722772
Norman, OK 73070



Letters to My Church



Jakob Topper
Senior Pastor

On December 16, 2004 a NorthHaven Church Task Force met at the Presbyterian Church to present the findings of their visioning study. Long before NorthHaven owned any property, designed a building, or moved into its own space, it took steps to discern who the church wanted to become.

It began by acknowledging a few things about who the church was before describing who it wanted to be. The church was made up of moderate and progressive Baptists who wanted something different in their church life and started NorthHaven for that particular purpose. Most of the members at that time came from a church split and were still going through the healing process. Most were lower and middle class, and a good many would be classified as intellectuals.

It also acknowledged that from very early on, NorthHaven was a regional church not confined to any one area. It drew members from Lexington, Midwest City, OKC, Moore, Ada, and even Ardmore. Today, we still draw members from many of those places as well as Blanchard and other, new locations.

Then, in Part II of the task force presentation, it sought to answer the question: "Who do we want to be?"

1. We want to be different, and we know if we are going to achieve this, then we are going to have to be very intentional.
2. We want to be a church that is more ministry minded, not a church based on programs.

3. We want to be a church that ministers outside the

walls of its building.

4. We want to be qualitative not quantitative.
5. We want to be challenged intellectually, seeking a good balance of head and heart.
6. We want to reach out to the community.

To support some of these goals, the church voted to give 15% of every dollar away to missions outside of the walls of the church and in the community. It also made a commitment to hire an educated, full-time pastor even before having a building.

NorthHaven was never a large church, and from our earliest days we made a conscious choice to prize quality over quantity. We've always been a quirky church, aware of and content with the strange place that we inhabit in the religious landscape of Oklahoma. Even taken steps to protect that uniqueness.

Today, 17 years after NorthHaven's task force gave its report, we have the opportunity to look back and see both how far we've come and where we've strayed off course.

We've remained a moderate and progressive Baptist church despite forces trying to pull us in other directions and at no small cost. Members who joined because we affirm women, left because they didn't like how we've talked about racism or Christian Nationalism. Yet through it all, we've maintained and reaffirmed our identity, even explicitly extending the hand of fellowship to our LGBTQ family members.

Today, imagining 15% of our budget going to missions seems like a dream. Since you brought me on staff in 2018, we've given only 4 and 5% to missions annually. Those of you on committees know how rarely our conversations are able to focus on anything outside the building and in the community.

(continued on page 3)



NorthHaven: An inclusive family of Christ followers, inspiring, challenging and equipping each other to participate in God's great story.

With continuing gratitude...

Dear NorthHaven Members,

This letter is a few weeks late. But, we have been busy changing addresses, finding new doctors, and adjusting to a new situation. Our move was sudden for you and us. Even though Norma and I are still able to care for each other, we knew this time would come when a higher level of care would be needed. We were advised that we should be near family before that time. All three of our sons now live in South Texas.

So we made the most difficult decision of our lives. We sold our home and moved to a Senior Adult facility west of Austin. I regret that all this happened without permitting us to come to NorthHaven and say our good-byes.

We have greatly enjoyed our years of worship and fellowship with you. We developed some deep friendships during the years I served as your Interim Pastor. We enjoyed worship with you during the Mitch and Jakob years. We think of you often and continue to pray for you during these difficult days of change and pandemic.

So, we say “good-bye” with deep regret. We are thankful for the gift of memory. We will never forget your loving care and graciousness that continues to nourish us.

With continuing gratitude,
Lavonn & Norma Brown



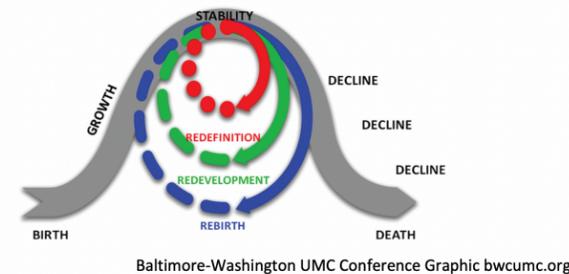
- February 6: Kim Schooler
- February 8: Leanne Fellows
- February 8: Dan Hobbs
- February 13: Caskey Stevens
- February 15: Kayleigh Latimer

- February 16: Karen Bowles
- February 16: Jay Liang
- February 17: Seth Jordan
- February 20: Eleanor Duncan
- February 20: Sandi Lasseter
- February 20: Kelly Miller
- February 25: Ronda LaShay
- February 25: Dawson Lasseter
- February 29: Lynn Autry

Church consultants say that a church needs to reassess and reaffirm its mission and vision every 5 years or so. Have we become who we aimed to be? Do those goals still apply to us? Where have we fallen short, where have we outgrown them, and where can we improve in the next 5 years?

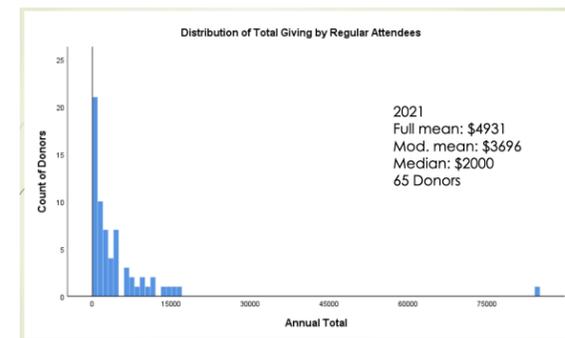
Consultants also observe that around the 20 year mark is where churches tend to either veer off course or come into adulthood, so to speak. That’s where we are today. Standing at a crossroads asking ourselves who do we want to be as a church? Do we still hold the values that we asserted 17 years ago?

On top of everything else, we are in a season of decline and depression as a church- just like nearly every other religious congregation in America. These last two years have been hard and harder on us than many others. But this is actually really good news in the grand scheme of things. It’s giving us the opportunity and the crisis necessary to reimagine who we are as a congregation and recommit to our core values. Here’s a graph I really like about the life cycle of congregations.



In the life of a church, the point of decline is also the very same point where rebirth is possible. (Is it an accident that we’re talking about Nicodemus being born again in worship this week?) It’s a profoundly spiritual and Christian truth. Death leads to resurrection and new life. It is in dying that the Christian lives. So it is with churches.

We are in a moment of death and rebirth. How we’ve been able to operate as a congregation is passing away.



We have a disturbing disparity in our giving data. Add to it the fact our largest contributor ever died in 2020 without anyone to take their place, and our current largest giver is 90+ years old. It would take 105 new families at NorthHaven to replace just those two givers.

NorthHaven has never and will never be that large. 17 years ago we chose quality over quantity. We chose to be our unique selves, knowing full well that would make us a niche church. And we choose to remain moderate and progressive in Oklahoma knowing it isn’t a popular option.

Today, we’re faced again with the opportunity to reaffirm these commitments (both their privileges and their liabilities) or to re-envision who we are and who we want to be.

I think we are still that same church who met at the Presbyterian Church 17 years ago and dreamed of a different kind of church in Norman. Who we are hasn’t died. Who we are as a congregation is, in many ways, stronger than ever before.

What’s passing away is the how. How we were able to be an “inclusive family of Christ followers” is dying away very quickly, but God is providing new ways for us to be faithful witnesses in our time and place even now. And we get to partner with God in the creation of this new thing that he is doing with NorthHaven Church.

Our rebirth is just on the horizon, and someday I can see it. I can see artists gathered showcasing their paintings at the art-walk. I can see homeless people at our door receiving bags of groceries and clean clothes. I can see politicians and religious leaders gathered around tables, sharing a meal, and dreaming about a more just society. I can see college students who hear for the first time an inclusive gospel articulated that is both biblical and Christ-like.

We’re right in the middle of rebirth. Right now. And anyone who has given birth or witnessed that miracle, knows it is a painful process. Sometimes slow. Sometimes twinged with grief or remorse. Always significant. Never something to be taken lightly.

Our rebirth won’t be without pain. It won’t happen quickly. We’ll have to push. It won’t be easy. But NorthHaven, there is no one else I want to share this moment with. No one else I want beside me in times as difficult and special as these. What’s coming is going to be magnificent.