

## CRAVING CONNECTION

I've had coffee, dessert and meals with some of you, and chatted on the phone, talked in the driveway, and sat in lawn chairs in the parking lot. My pastor's heart has loved every minute of getting to know you, learning your stories, and hearing about your faith. You are a wonderfully warm and welcoming church, with a lot of diversity in how you think about God and the world. You are fun, and willing to try new things, and you love our church. It's why some of you have said the very first time you visited HACC you knew you had found your church home.

There is one thing that stands out however in all the conversations. One thing that I've heard in the parking lot and on back porches and on the phone. Everyone is craving the same thing, and it's not more classes or Bible studies or activities, though you love all those things, and they are important. **You are craving connection.** Six months of quarantine, physical distancing and masks has left you hungry for connection. Hugs. Handshakes. Smiles. Conversation.

While the church exists primarily to worship God and to make the Kingdom of God real in this world, the church also exists for another purpose that makes those other two things possible, and it's social. We are here to encourage and build one another up in our faith, to pray with and for each other, to learn from and be an example to one another, to express empathy for one another and be a presence in times of sorrow and grief.

Our online worship has been a gift during these past six months. It's been one of the big blessings during this strange time. We would never have moved so quickly and brought this ministry to life without this strange time. It's going to be a long-term strategy for our church to reach our community. Do you realize that our church community has expanded during this time period and even beyond our city? But it's never going to be an adequate replacement for in-person, hugs, smiles, hand holding, and fully present worship. And this is why **I'm not worried about people not returning to church.** We desperately need the in-person connection, and that overrides the comfort of worship in our pajamas with a bagel and cup of coffee.

I recently read a story of a teenage boy who told Pope Francis that he was trying hard to believe in God and be faithful, but that he often struggled with doubt. "What can you say to help me and others like me?" he asked the pope.

Pope Francis said the journey of life is an art that isn't easy because it requires juggling the need to move forward with the importance of taking time to reflect. "If we walk too quickly, we'll get tired and won't be able to reach our destination," yet if we stop or take our time "we won't get there either." Life's journey "is truly the art of looking at the horizon, reflecting on where I want to go, but also putting up with the fatigue from this journey," he said. "Don't be afraid of failure," he insisted. The problem with the journey of life and faith isn't falling; it's not getting back up. "Get right back up, immediately, and keep going," he said. Don't embark on this journey alone either, he said, because that would be "awful and boring." Go as a "community with friends and people who care about you very much because that will help us get to our destination." he said.

Please know that I am praying for you. I'm praying for you during this difficult time. Please use this newsletter to feed your need for connection.

With much love,  
David



## FIND A WAY

*I've known that guy since he was in my small group at camp.  
Oh my gosh, you should talk to Erika, she'd be great for that.  
Wait. How do Tom and Chris know each other*

Connecting isn't just what we do, it's who we are.

In a moment unlike any we've known, it would be easy to give in – to despair, to anger, to sadness, to isolation. When the calendar seems like a blur and the next thing to do is as yet unseen, it is easy for our hearts to give way. But **there is another way.**

The One who makes a way out of no way ... the Artist, who took dust in the beginning and gave it form and breathed Life into what was not yet alive ... the Divine, who calls us beloved, calls us disciple, calls us found ... the Sustainer, who holds together even that which seems to be falling part (even us!) ... this One

Even when we need to remain at more distance than we would like, what gifts we have been given! ... to call, to write, to pray, to invite, to gather on screen when we cannot be in person, to check in, to report back, to send offerings, to share communion ... to find a way, whatever unexpected shape that way may take, to **find a way back to each other, and to the One who calls us together.**

*Now you are the body of Christ, and each of you a member of it. The body is not made up of one part, but of many.*

As you're using your Harvard Ave magnet (let us know if the mail missed you!) as a touchstone for prayer in this season, pray about ways you can connect to the life of the church, even while we are still finding our way toward being in-person together as we'd like.

One of the best ways to do that is through **study, prayer, and community built into group life.** Here is a (short, incomplete) list of some of our ongoing study groups and how they're finding a way in this season. (All contact info is in our church directory. Call the church office if you need an update!)

- *Challengers* (contact: Cathy Leonard) – small groups (6-8) meeting on patios for planned program and discussion, rotating groups monthly; monthly forum zoom call for all to join in
- *Explorers* (contact: Kevin Howe) – creating family small groups for adult and children lessons and at-home family worship plans
- *Seekers* (contact: Abby Langenheim) – study the Wired Word, weekly conversation about current events and faith impacts, via Sunday morning Zoom call
- *Genesis* (contact: Bendy Gilpin) – currently studying Life Together, by Dietrich Bonhoeffer, via Sunday morning Zoom call
- *Believers* (contact: Susan Hollingsworth) – meeting Sunday Sept 13 in Manion Park, planning from there for Zoom or park gatherings (as weather allows)
- *Disciples* (contact: Alan Crider) & *Koinonia* (contact: Melanie Nicholas) classes are not currently meeting formally but are staying connected through frequent phone calls, emails, and other check-ins on each other!
- *Book Group* (contact: Charlie Bennett) – check out the back page of this issue for the 2020-2021 reading list and meeting info



If you need help finding your way to the group that's right for you, or would be interested in new groups that might be coming soon, Community Pastor Kevin Howe (kevin@hacctulsa.org) would be glad to help!

**Connecting isn't just what we do, it's who we are.**

Courtney Richards  
Connections Pastor

## CONNECTING WITH FAMILIES

It is common knowledge that parents are the first teachers of their children – and this season of pandemic living is pushing that role to its limits! While formal education is required by law, faith formation is not. Therefore, **we want to encourage and support our families in every way we can** to include time for worship, study and fellowship at home. Here are some of the ways we seek to meet that need:

- Weekly email with support materials from a variety of sources
- Weekly recording of Children Worship & Wonder to be used at their convenience
- Zoom and Messenger Kids connections with Pastor Darlene
- Mailings with educational materials and treats

**.....and the newest endeavor: Family Small Groups!**

All families are welcome to join in with a small group of 3-5 families twice a month in a host's back yard to share a meal (BYO), a short hands-on lesson for kids, and an adult discussion with guided questions. Surveys are currently ongoing to determine group logistics. This model allows for connection at a variety of levels and locations. We imagine offering this in a 6-8 week season this fall and spring of 2021, with the option to reformat groups each season. If you want to be part of this ministry and have not received a call, please contact me at [darlene@hacctulsa.org](mailto:darlene@hacctulsa.org).



*Darlene Martinez*  
Childrens Pastor

## LET'S DO THIS!

What a wild ride 2020 has been! It truly seems like the only thing that is certain is uncertainty. It marks the first year in my 15yrs on staff at HACC that we haven't had a summer mission trip, pool party or even an official meeting. As heartbreaking as this has been for me and our youth, we knew when we suspended youth activities in March that it was the right thing to do. And now, we are looking at fall and trying to wrap our heads around how to safely engage with our students in a meaningful way. We've done a virtual Senior Blessing as our four graduates spread out across the country to take the next steps in their journeys and have had a highly modified New Youth Adventure to welcome 6th graders into the group. But is it safe to meet yet? Can we have Wednesday Night Worship? Small groups? Can we be in the Youth Space? Can we be together at all?

I don't know all the answers but what I do know is that I miss our youth and our shared lives together. Connecting via text and Zoom is nice, but it's just not the same. **We were created to do life together, to live in community**, we need presence in our lives. So, we've wrestled with options, connected with experts and talked to parents and students. We've looked at what other groups are doing – what's working and what isn't – and have come up with a plan.

In new ways, we're coming together:

- **Outside:** Wednesday Night Youth is making the move from the Youth Space to the Stubblefield house. We have plenty of room to spread out in the backyard and space to meet in our driveway to maintain a safe social distance.
- **Masks:** Just do it, always! Youth will certainly not be an exception and I'll even have a few extras on hand in case you forget yours.
- **Distanced:** I will do my best to keep our youth distanced while we are together. If you've ever been around teenagers and their friends, you know it's a challenge but we're going to do our best.
- **Every other Week:** One of the easiest ways for us to physically distance is in smaller groups. We will split our middle and high school groups and have them meet every other week.
- **Timing:** Instead of the full 2 hours for each group, we'll meet for 1 hour, thankful we can be together.
- **Supplies:** Per the Tulsa County Health Department's recommendations we will have hand sanitizer, tissues, trash baskets, disposable facemasks, cleaners and disinfectants available.
- **Flow:** Our Wednesday nights will obviously be different, but we will come together and share our lives and have a short lesson or worship.

There is risk in everything we do and I'm not kidding myself that we have eliminated all of it, but we have certainly lowered it to the extent that we feel safe for our youth and excited about the chance to get together again. So, let's do this!



## CONNECTING WITH THOSE IN NEED

Our congregation is excited to host Family Promise once again, for the week of September 13-20. As a result of COVID-19, our host experience will be different this time around.

Family Promise Tulsa is excited to be partnering with The Lindsey House and Mental Health Association to rent three to six apartments, for a term of one year, to continue to assist families in need of housing. The Lindsey House is providing apartments with all bills paid for \$400/month. The Harvard Avenue Outreach Team has sent a requested \$1,200 to aid in the cost of this Apartment Shelter Program.

During our upcoming host week, **our congregation will continue to provide meals and grocery support for the families actively enrolled in the program.** If you are willing to help, click here to see a list of the current needs for our host week.

We are grateful that Family Promise continues to engage their critical mission during this time, and grateful for your generous support of our shared efforts to help families in need.

*Andrea Glen  
HACC Outreach Team Lead*

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## CONNECTIONS FOR AWAKENING

Have you ever noticed just how many times the New Testament talks about people being asleep? I have a hunch that it's because it is so easy for us to fall asleep to the reality of God's presence in the world and the divine spark within ourselves and others.

I know I can move through most of my days in what I call "sleep-mode" or "autopilot," simply going through patterns of action, thought and emotion that require little or no consciousness on my part (and provide equally little spiritual and personal growth in return). And yet, our faith asks us to become increasingly conscious of God's work inside ourselves and in the world so that we can live out our days with purpose and intention. **We need connections to people and practices that awaken our souls.**

During my recent sabbatical leave, I had the opportunity to spend a great deal of time in various outdoor settings. What I walked away from those wilderness experiences with was a greater appreciation for just how much nature can be a tool to awaken our minds and senses. Connecting with nature can pry us out of our sleepy patterns. Perhaps you too have been awakened by the majesty of an old growth forest, or the color palette of a sunset at sea, or the comprehensibility of a mountain view. We need such encounters to wake us up to the awareness of the present moment, awareness of ourselves, and awareness of God.

And connection with nature is just one of many practices and disciplines that can serve as a tool for awakening our souls. Some people find contemplative prayer or meditation to be practices that serve this purpose. I know a person who sets the alarm on her watch to sound at different times in the day, so she can step back from what she is doing and refocus her attention.

In the season ahead, I will be **searching for connection to practices and relationships that serve to wake me up** from "sleep-mode," and I would invite you to consider doing the same. What brings you into mindfulness of the present moment? Attentiveness to your being? Consciousness of God?

What awakens your soul?

*Kevin Howe  
Community Pastor*



## TOGETHER WE THRIVE

Coming soon to a smart phone, iPad, or computer near you (very near you)...a series of videos reminding us it's pledge time, it's appreciation time, it's gratitude time. The annual all Stewardship season at HACC is approaching. All ages of our church family will be represented in stewardship messages in worship, on our website, and in enews. You do NOT want to miss a single one!

To every member of our HACC family I wish to send a germ free, virtual and warm "thank you" hug. Because of the generosity of our remarkable church family, we approach this stewardship season with current bills paid. That doesn't mean, by any stretch of the imagination, we can rest on our paid laurels. But our balanced church

budget is exceptional for pandemic-riddled 2020. In spite of not being able to congregate in person, we've stayed in touch and contributed to supporting our cohesive family in Christ.

**"We are family. Together we thrive"** is this year's Stewardship theme. We are that in the truest sense of the word. We look after one another, our amazing ministers and staff, and our beautiful and functional building and grounds. In spite of the pandemic, we've managed to remain connected in a variety of creative ways, thanks to our gifted team online services, messages, lessons, and activities have keep us in frequent touch and grounded in all things Christ.

We could be the poster family for good stewardship. My favorite high school coach, Red Parker, often used a Truman quote. "It's amazing what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit."

Please accept my heartfelt appreciation for your past and future thoughtful giving. The way we care for and support each other is truly a beautiful thing. Blessings!

*Mary Magee  
Stewardship Team Lead*

## NOW SHOWING!

Worship from anywhere. Harvard in the Backyard. Stewardship videos. How does that all come about? Lots of planning, talking, prayer, and lots of time and effort – much of it from Harvard Avenue's newest staff member: Dillon Ford!

Dillon is a recent graduate of OSU, with a major in multi-media communication. He came home at spring break, realized he wasn't going back to campus, and made himself available as we were turning the corner into online-only worship experiences. He helped us realize the need for a whole new player on our dynamic staff team: Video Production Coordinator.

You've already seen Dillon's work each week in worship, piecing together recordings from multiple spaces and places, and creating a seamless and quality worship experience for all of us. His heart for creating good things that celebrate God's goodness is evident, and we're so glad he's here.

His gifts will only continue to expand and strengthen our ministry as we move forward together. We have a vision for creating more video study options for individuals and groups to use at home. We'll have someone to record and create videos of special worship and program events. And even with an eventual return to in-person worship, a majority of our community (and those beyond Harvard Ave) will continue to connect with us in online worship and through social media.

Here's a little about Dillon, and a glimpse of his work. And send him a note ([dillon@hacctulsa.org](mailto:dillon@hacctulsa.org)) to say hello and thanks!



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## Book Discussion Group

Fall is just around the corner and the HACC Book Discussion Group has compiled a list of books for the upcoming 2020-21 discussion season:

### September 17

*Elephant Company* by Vicki Croke

### October 15

*The River* by Peter Heller

### November 19

*The Giver of Stars* by Jojo Moyes

### January 21, 2021

*Simon the Fiddler* by Paulette Jiles

### February 18

*What Did You Do in the War, Sister?* by Dennis Turner

### March 18

*The Day the World Came to Town* by Jim DeFede

### April 15

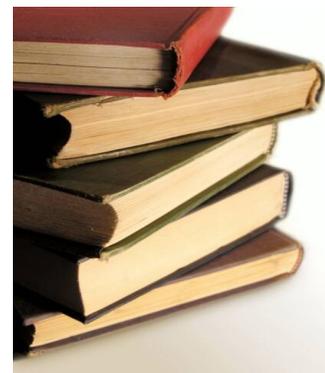
*Outrun the Bullets* by M. Carolyn Steele

### May 20

*The Library Book* by Susan Orlean

### June 17

*Last Bus to Wisdom* by Ivan Doig



The group meets the third Thursday of the month, 11:am to 12:30pm. **Current plans are to meet virtually via Zoom.** Please contact the church office for more information on how you can participate.

Next Newsletter - October 5  
Visit us at [www.hacctulsa.org](http://www.hacctulsa.org)

Office Hours: 8:30 am - 4:00 pm Monday - Thursday; closed Friday (918) 742-5509