

THE NEW CITY JOURNAL

A Publication of First Presbyterian Church Aurora



MEET YOUR NEW INTERIM PASTOR

BY PASTOR TONY HINCHLIFF

Call me Tony. I am your new transitional Senior Pastor. I will answer to Pastor Tony in a pinch.

I live on a sailboat down behind the banks of North Carolina. I miss my dog Ben, of 15 years, who died in 2023. I have never been married. I was ordained by Rev. Tim Keller, at Redeemer Presbyterian Church of Manhattan and planted a church in Hoboken, New Jersey in 2003. I was born as a Subject of the Queen England, but I am now a free American citizen. I have a father and sister still in England and a sister in California.

In 2023, Rev. Jeff Moore, your beloved pastor of 17 years, told you he had received a call to a new church. Your Session could have then immediately sought a replacement for Pastor Jeff. Instead, your Session decided that this was a God given chance to pause and reflect on the nature of First Presbyterian's ministry to its changing membership and neighborhood.



To facilitate this process your Session contacted Interim Pastor Ministries (IPM). IPM is a coalition of experienced former pastors who seek to share their experience and expertise with churches seeking to start a successful new chapter in their ministry. I am a member of IPM, and will not be your future long term Pastor.

I will be following a well-tested 5 step program and process. The whole process takes approximately 12-18 months. The successful result will be a self-confident and self-aware church that has:

- 1) An objective, data driven, sense of itself (strengths, weaknesses, ministry potential and possibilities).
- 2) A deeper understanding of its changing neighborhood and the kind of ministries and leaders that might best lead and advance God's kingdom in Aurora.



I will be sharing much more about the 5 steps in the future. The first step is for us to get to know each other. Please consider meet with me at the church office or perhaps over coffee, lunch or dinner. I suggest you schedule a time with Melissa Beneke, (630) 844-0050 or mbeneke@firstpresaurora.org.

Faithfully yours,

Rev. Tony Hinchliff.

STORIES FROM THE MISSION FIELD: DAVID & MAJKA PHILLIPS, GEM



David and Majka Phillips serve with GEM (Greater Europe Mission) in Vienna, Austria. Here is an excerpt from their February 2024 Newsletter Article.

Dear Family and Friends,

For the last twelve years, the two of us have had the privilege of hearing many life-transforming stories from our international student friends. Their stories testify to God's miraculous ways and the twists and turns lives take sometimes. In this letter, we would like to share [a] short testimonies from a friend in Vienna (names changed and stories shared with permission).

Abdullah:

After deciding to leave behind the Islamic faith, Abdullah spent the next several years empty and unsure of what to do with his life. After receiving a Bible from a friend, Abdullah decided to read it and compare the life of Mohammed to the life of Jesus. After months of studying and talking to people, Abdullah placed his faith in Jesus. Soon afterward, his mother did as well. Currently, Abdullah is studying in Vienna and is the main translator for an English/German/Farsi Bible study that several people from his country attend.

As you can see, God is at work all over the world. If we had time, we would share other testimonies from a Chinese professor, a Taiwanese graduate student, a Russian PhD student, musicians from South Korea, and many others. All of them are committed to trusting Jesus with their lives. They all encourage us greatly and we are thankful to know them. [This Story] reminds us of the words the Apostle John wrote in Revelation 7:9-10,



“After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

A VIEW ON SHARING THE LIVING HOPE OF CHRIST THROUGH WORD AND DEED

The good news of the Gospel and the gift of mobility is transforming lives of hundreds of people impacted by disability in Kenya. Please pray for Pastor Karen, Dale Roberts, and Paula Jarot and the 26-member Living with Hope U.S. team as we come alongside the Hope Mobility Kenya team to share the Living Hope of Christ March 9-20.

Pray for

- Safe travels as the team gathers from across the U.S. and Croatia.
- God to unite the hearts of the team.
- The logistics of the Wheelchair distributions—that the container shipment arrives on time (the container is delayed in the Red Sea)
- The gift of mobility to help people respond to the good news of the Gospel.
- Children with disabilities at a school in Machakos to be encouraged and celebrated at a Luke 14 party given in their honor.
- The wheelchair mechanics and the support team to engage with individuals and their families at the wheelchair distribution. (Paula is on the support team)
- The work of the Holy Spirit as pastors attend a 2-day training in 2 separate locations to become congregations of belonging where people of all abilities are welcomed and serve together. (Pastor Karen leads this initiative)
- The creation of videos to tell the vision and mission of Hope Mobility Kenya through images and stories of people with disabilities. (Dale engages in this initiative)
- Michael Panther, founder of Living with Hope, as he speaks at worship services on March 17.
- The Pastors' Breakfast on March 18. 70+ pastors in Nairobi will attend. Michael Panther and Pastor Karen are speaking.
- Pastor Karen as she meets with faculty from St. Paul's University and Moffat Bible College about equipping future Kenya pastors through the Joni and Friends Beyond Suffering Course.

~ Pastor Karen Roberts

HEADING FOR HOLY WEEK

We are half way through the season of Lent. Our Lenten journey intensifies when we arrive at Holy Week on Sunday, March 24. My invitation to you is to lean into all that the week has to offer.

Palm Sunday / Passion Sunday: We remember both the triumphal entry of Jesus into Jerusalem AND His passion that was to come in the following week. Communion will particularly focus on the sacrificial death of Jesus. How will these events speak into your life this year?

Maundy Thursday: Maundy comes from the Latin word *mandatum*, meaning commandment. When Jesus and the disciples were gathered around the table in the upper room, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another." (John 13:34 ESV) When we come to the table, our focus will be on the community and love aspect of communion. What will the call of Maundy Thursday look like in your life?

Good Friday: A night of sorrow. A night of infinite goodness. Our communion remembrance will be somber as we reflect on the sacrifice that Jesus made for us and our salvation. How will you wish to respond to the gospel, the good news of Good Friday?

Easter: Alleluia! Christ is risen! The Lord is risen indeed! Alleluia! This is the day of days! Death is overcome! The powers of evil are defeated! Our God, our Lord, our Savior, our Friend, our Jesus has won the ultimate victory! Communion will be a celebration of the risen Lord who is with us now and meets us at the table now and feeds our souls with His very self. Will I, will you, will we be ready to unleash our minds, hearts, and voices to worship in every way possible to the glory of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit?

Praise be to our God!

~ Keith Scherer

BOOK OF THE MONTH

All Who Are Weary: Finding True Rest by Letting Go of the Burdens You Were Never Meant to Carry

By Sarah J Hauser

This book tackles a number of different topics that burden us. Hauser looks at how we can find rest from things like: worry, comparison, insignificance, and despair. If you are feeling stuck in your life, discouraged or weary, this book will help you to be “equipped with Scripture and encouraged by personal stories that help us identify the burdens we need to release” (moodpublishers.com/all-who-are-weary/).

I enjoyed each chapter and felt like I could connect personally to a lot of the book. We all get weary sometimes, but Jesus doesn't want that for us. I hope this book my help and encourage you that you are not alone and there is hope.

~ Melissa Beneke



MEDIA OF THE MONTH

Shall Not Want

By Elevation Worship and Maverick City

This song has been a blessing to me and I pray it is a blessing to you. These verses address situations that we all go through: feelings of loss, weakness or being surrounded by enemies. But God has the power to bless us and protect us even in the midst of adversity. We will not lack because we have a shepherd who provides abundantly.

The goodness and mercy of God is expressed in Psalm 23:6 “Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life.” This shows us God’s provision and grace. “Shall not want” means to not be lacking or wanting anything. Not wanting speaks to the sufficiency of God. Even in difficult times and challenges, we can experience God’s hope and security. His presence always helps us overcome fear and find hope.

Listen to the song here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=duLKCOMxbJs>

~ Brenda Bustamante

STEWARDSHIP REPORT

Average Weekly Need: \$ 14,239.00

Received January 7, 2024 \$ 9,207.00

Total Attendance 219

Received January 14, 2024 \$ 14,540.00

Total Attendance 202

Received January 21, 2024 \$ 5,213.00

Total Attendance 213

Received January 28, 2024 \$ 10,256.00

Total Attendance 200

**Total includes online. Average online worship: 69*

Financial Report - January 2024

Actual income/expenses for year to date, including surplus funds of \$28,276, and “Faith Giving above Pledges” of \$152,280.

Income \$ 423,830.86

Expenses \$ 448,161.68

Net Deficit \$ 24,330.82

DATES TO REMEMBER

Soup Supper and Scripture March 6-20

Prolife Prayer March 6

Pray at Planned Parenthood March 8

Family Get Together March 9

Friendship Bible Club March 10

Session Meeting March 12

Deacon Meeting March 12

Family Get Together March 23

Palm Sunday 10 AM Worship March 24

Holy Week Breakfasts March 25-27

Maundy Thursday Service March 28

Good Friday Service March 29

Easter 10 AM Worship March 31

SESSION MINUTES—ORDINATION AND INSTALLATION OF OFFICERS

Sunday January 21, 2024

Ordination and Installation of Officers at First Presbyterian Church Sanctuary was held at the end of worship at 10:00 AM.

PRAYER:

The ordination service was convened and opened with prayer by Pastor David Goetz.

ORDINATION OF OFFICERS:

The following were called to the front of the congregation and presented for Ordination and Installation.

- Anne Miller – for Elder Ordination
- John Young – for Elder Installation
- Janet Taylor – for Deacon Ordination
- Berniece Wheeler – for Deacon Installation
- David Burmania – for Deacon Installation
- Lourie Burmania – for Deacon Installation

The ordination and installation vow questions were given by Pastor David Goetz and all answered in the affirmative by each with an answer of “I will by God’s grace”.

Elders of the congregation were then called for the laying on of hands of those being ordained. During the laying on of hands Pastor David Goetz prayed over the ordinands.

CLOSING OF THE ORDINATION SERVICE

Pastor David Goetz made congregational announcement and closed the service in prayer at around 10:15AM.

SPECIAL NEWS

Baptisms:

- **Kaylee Abigail Salmeron**, baptized on February 11, 2024 and born on 11/13/2023. Daughter of Felipe and Ana Salmeron.

ADMINISTRATIVE NOTES

2024 Stewardship

Several people have asked recently when we would be holding our stewardship campaign now that we've implemented a fiscal year change with a July 1 beginning.

Our "pledge drive" will likely occur during a several week period between Easter and Pentecost, in April or early May.

During that time, we will be discussing stewardship and gathering financial commitments for the period of July through June, in order that the Finance Commission can begin the budgeting process for the new 2024/2025 fiscal year beginning in July.

While the FC plans for this upcoming drive, and we celebrate Easter together, we hope you will consider your participation in the continuing life of our congregation. Please pray about whether or not you can increase your giving in 2024/2025, a year of continuing transition.

~ Dan Wegehaupt

LAST WORD FROM PASTOR DAVID

In his first sermon here at First Pres, our Transitional Pastor, Rev. Tony Hinchliff, talked about the need for this congregation to discern what our God is calling us to be and to do. "Come and see, come and follow, come and be"—these are the commands of Jesus to us. What will that mean for us?

Well, I've been meditating on the Old Testament's historical books for the last several months and think the story of King Josiah might speak to us in our own circumstances. Josiah was a remarkable king, not least because he assumed the throne at eight years old! He reigned in Judah for thirty-one years and was found faithful: "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him" (2 Kings 23:25). And this good king was a reformer: he secured the repair of the temple, and while the repairs were being done the high priest Hilkiah (the father of the prophet Jeremiah) found the Book of the Law. When Josiah heard this long-lost book read to him, "he tore his clothes" (2 Kings 22:11) because he realized that his fathers had been walking in disobedience for generations—that they had

neglected the right worship of the LORD God and had instead followed the devices and desires of their own hearts.

What would you have done had you been in Josiah's shoes?

In short, Josiah took two radical and thoroughgoing steps. First, he stopped all idolatrous worship and destroyed all the servants and temples and trappings of idolatry (23:1-20). Second, he re-instituted the proper worship of the living God according to the word of God (23:21-24).

We will wrestle with all sorts of questions in the year to come: What is the history of our church? What are our strengths? What are our weaknesses? What needs to change? How can we prepare ourselves to receive the new shepherd our Lord will call to First Presbyterian Church? As we wrestle with all of these necessary questions, we need to remember the one thing that can't and won't change: we will continue to worship the LORD our God according to his word.

Let us "worship the LORD in the splendor of holiness" (Ps. 96:9)!

MEET AND GREET WITH PASTOR TONY

Pastor Tony's first Sunday with us was February 18. To introduce him at length to the congregation, the Session organized a time after worship—in place of our normal adult education classes—for Tony to share a little bit of his story and to answer some questions prepared by the Session and a few others from the congregation.

I was encouraged that, of the many people in worship that morning, nearly all came downstairs to Graham Hall afterward to get acquainted with our Transitional Pastor. After I opened our time in prayer, Britta Wallbaum (Director of Children's and Family Ministries) led the children in asking a few questions, the most basic one being, "Do you like kids?" Some of our kids also asked challenging questions about the similarities and differences between Christianity and Buddhism.

After the children went to their classes, Dale Roberts (one of our Ruling Elders) asked a series of questions to help us get to know Tony.

Tell us your story: What's your background and how did you come to know the Lord? Tony got to tell us a little about his unchurched childhood in England and coming to the United States as an adult and being converted under the ministry of Tim Keller in New York City.

What has your life in ministry been like? Where and how have you served the body of Christ? Tony got to share some of his pastoral experience with us: leading small groups at Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan; leading a church plant for twenty years in Hoboken, New Jersey; and now sensing a call from the Lord to the work of transitional ministry.

What drew you to transitional ministry? After finishing his work at the church in Hoboken, Tony bought a sailboat; but he realized pretty quickly that "sailing into the sunset" is a euphemism for dying and that he wanted, instead, to remain useful to and for the Lord. Hence transitional ministry! He wants to help churches figure out their next steps in the path



of obedience to the Lord, and he wants to help churches prepare for the coming of their next pastor. We hope and pray he'll do that work effectively among us here at First Pres of Aurora!

What are you looking forward to here in Aurora? Tony is eager to get to know us, to get to know our city, and to take (at long last) the chance to see and explore the city of Chicago. He has lived in many places—New York City, San Francisco, England, Thailand, Brazil, et al.—but has somehow never made it to the Windy City.

Are there any particular passages of Scripture, or doctrines of our faith, that the Lord has specifically used to shape you? Tony highlighted John 1:1-18 as of singular importance to him: "And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth." These verses were formative in Tony's conversion and remain deeply encouraging to Tony's heart; he described them as something like "the most beautiful words ever written."

What are some of your hobbies or passions? This came up above, but Tony loves to sail and loves to travel!

Do you prefer coffee or tea? Tony loves coffee in the morning and tea all afternoon. He has even instituted weekly tea time in the office with the staff!

~ Pastor David Goetz