



RELIGION

TULSA WORLD • A10 • Saturday, June 2, 2007 • www.tulsaworld.com

WORSHIP: COMING HOME TO GOD

IN BRIEF

Children's event: Calvary's Connection, 10838 E. Marshall St., will have children's extravaganza night from 4 to 7 p.m. Saturday, with Jupiter jump, carnival games, prizes, dunk tank and food for children ages 1-12.

Fundraiser: Circle of Nations Christian Women's Conference, Holly Hall, 300 N. Ash Ave., Broken Arrow, will have a fundraiser garage sale from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. and Indian taco sale from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday.

Garage sale: Crossroads Church, 2525 W. Main St., Jenks, will have a garage sale with furniture, toys, collectibles and more, a bake sale with pies, cakes and other treats, and a car wash from 6 a.m. to 2 p.m. Saturday, to benefit youth ministry.

Singing: Emmanuel Baptist Church, 1246 E. McKinley, Sapulpa, will have Southern gospel singing at 7 p.m. Saturday.

Gospel: The Green Country Event Center, 12000 E. 31st St., will host a Southern gospel worship gathering hosted by Peter and Dorothy Enns and Ted and Joanne Robertson at 5:30 p.m. Saturday.

Concert: Trinity Episcopal Church, 501 S. Cincinnati Ave., will have the Tulsa Boy Singers spring concert at 7:30 p.m. Saturday.

Garage sale: Women of the Madalene, Church of the Madalene, 3188 E. 22nd St., will have an indoor garage sale with furniture, appliances, jewelry and household and yard items from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. Saturday.

Speaker: Bishop Richard Hogue, pastor of Citychurch, Oklahoma City, will speak at 6 p.m. Sunday at Pam Vinnett's monthly meeting at Tulsa Hilton Southern Hills, 7900 S. Lewis Ave. Meetings also will be held at 10 a.m. and 7 p.m. Saturday.

Women day: Calvary Baptist Church, 412 N. Seventh St., Sapulpa, will celebrate annual women day with the theme "Reformation brings Restoration" with the Love Outreach Ministry at 3 p.m. Sunday.

Open House: Hope Unitarian Church, 8432 S. Sheridan Road, will have an open house from 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. Sunday with a hot dog lunch.

Recital: Christ United Methodist Church, 3515 S. Harvard Ave., will host Maureen O'Boyle in recital at 5 p.m. Sunday, and will have a free concert featuring the Africa university choir from Zimbabwe at 6 p.m. Wednesday.

Speaker: Gary Cooperburg, founder of Project Shofar, will speak on Israel at CityPlex Towers, 2488 E. 81st St., 46th Floor, at 2:30 p.m. Sunday.

Anniversary: Eastland Assembly of God, 12310 E. 21st St., will celebrate its 40th anniversary with founding pastor J.W. Ellsworth speaking at 10:30 a.m. Sunday.

Vacation bible school: First Christian Church, 913 S. Boulder Ave., will have vacation Bible school for families and children, starting with a 9 a.m. breakfast and VBS activities from 9:30 a.m. to noon every Sunday in June, with child care for infants and toddlers. Call 582-8237, ext. 129, for more information or to register.

Car show: First United Methodist Church of Bixby, 15502 S. Memorial Drive, will have gospel singing and a car show Sunday, with cars arriving at 9 a.m. and music beginning at 12:30 p.m. Food will be available.

Revival: Glad Tidings Assembly of God, 38 S. Vandalia Ave., will have a revival with evangelists Luis and Gail Torres at 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday.

Vacation bible school: Jenks First United Methodist Church, 415 E. Main St., will have vacation Bible school from 6:30 to 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday, with registration beginning Sunday. For more information, call 299-5462.

Safe escape: University United Methodist Church, 2915 E. Fifth St., will have a "Safe Escape Program" to teach families practical ways to escape a dangerous person or situation at 6:30 p.m. Sunday.

Classes: Islamic Society of Tulsa, 4630 S. Irvington Ave., will have a four-part series for non-Muslims. Introduction to Islam will be from 7 to 8:30 p.m. each Wednesday of June. The first session will be on basic beliefs.

The In Brief column offers churches and other groups an opportunity to publicize news items and upcoming events. All articles are subject to editing and will be printed on a space-available basis. Items must be received in writing by 5 p.m. Wednesday for Saturday publication. Mail to Bill Sherman, religion writer, P.O. Box 1770, Tulsa, OK 74102; e-mail to bill.sherman@tulsaworld.com; or fax to (918) 581-8353.



Photos by JOY LEWIS / Tulsa World

Ellie Fenn crawls to her mother, Amy Fenn, as members of a Tulsa house church worship in Dora Iordanova's home. House churches account for much of the growth of Christianity worldwide.

Homegrown religion

Christians find fulfillment, support in house churches

By BILL SHERMAN
World Religion Writer

A dozen people sat in the living room of an apartment on Riverside Drive on Sunday morning.

Eyes closed, they sang worship songs to a guitar while a baby crawled around on the carpet, occasionally finding a seat on someone's lap.

They are members of a house church, Christians who have left the traditional church to worship in the intimacy of private homes, among friends and family.

Dora Iordanova, Bulgarian native who played host to Sunday's meeting, said she likes going to a house church because people know her and truly care for her.

"If you have a problem, or have had a bad day, you can share it. When I was in a big church, people didn't even know my name,"

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At left, members of a house church worship in Dora Iordanova's Tulsa home on a recent Sunday. At right, John Fenn holds a Bible and his granddaughter, Ellie, during a worship service at a house church in Tulsa.

Organization helps worship thrive in the home

By BILL SHERMAN
World Religion Writer

John Fenn's involvement in the house church movement is a return to his spiritual roots.

When he and his wife became Christians in the 1970s, their formative spiritual years were spent in the intimate fellowship of a small group that met in a church basement and another group that met in the great room of an Indiana farmhouse.

"That's where we were disciplined," he said.

He attended Rhema Bible Training Center in Broken Arrow, graduating in 1980, and then pastored and did campus ministry for 12 years in Colorado.

In 1995, he became associate director and then executive director of Victory Bible Institute in Tulsa.

In the spring of 2000, he resigned to consult and advise churches and Bible schools all over the United States.

"The more I traveled, the more I saw all churches were basically the same, and had the same issues and

questions," he said.

Pastors everywhere reported a core group of members, 20 percent to 30 percent, who stayed in the church, and another 70 percent to 80 percent who rotated in and out.

"Most of their congregations would change completely every couple of years," Fenn said.

Pastors wanted to know how to keep people in their churches.

"People are finding that traditional church just doesn't do it for them. They don't realize there is another way of doing church," he said.

"They want more of God, but can't quite figure out what it is."

Fenn said he began to see church as self-insulated, a subculture with its own language, dress and style — a small clique irrelevant to the rest of society.

Troubled by those thoughts and by the unexpected suicide of an active church member, Fenn said he began to earnestly search the Scriptures to determine what church is supposed to be.



JOY LEWIS / Tulsa World

Brian Fenn (left), John Fenn and David Henry worship in Dora Iordanova's home. John Fenn formed The Church Without Walls International of Tulsa, which provides help to churches that meet in homes.

SEE FENN A-11