



# The Family Times

Newsletter of Church of the Savior

Fall 2015

## Ode to Autumn: Oblation and the Art of Living by Luke Taylor Gilstrap

October has always been my favorite month of the year, when trees turn ablaze and brisk morning air does what a cup of coffee simply cannot. During my childhood, I remember fall as a time of learning and growing, new friends, cozy spaces. When school first started in August and the final bell rang at promptly 4:10 PM, I remember shuffling everything into my purple backpack and bolting out the door, down the front lawn, and into the car where my parents waited every afternoon, content and happy to see me. Once fall came around, the end of the day looked a little different. Instead of sprinting away from the shackles of public education, I remember carefully stepping, one foot in front of the other, down each square of pavement. I was looking for helicopters.

Helicopters, or "maple tree seeds" for the adults (at heart) reading, are magical seedlings that line a runway of possibilities along autumn sidewalks. Where once was only hot concrete now lie winged seedlings just begging to take flight. All they need is a little push from an eager palm, a gentle toss up in the air and WHOOSH! they spin and spin and spin until they land and ask to go again.

Though absolutely wonderful, helicopter seeds are but one of the many natural miracles that occur right around this time of year: things like pumpkin patches and apple cider, just to name a few.

When I was a child, I didn't realize my excited endeavors with helicopters (my parents still patiently, usually, waiting in the car) was in fact a priestly act, an act of piety and worship. I was practicing the art of oblation.

Though the term is most often used in a discussion of the Eucharist, "oblation" is the act of lifting up and offering something to God, for God. Liturgically speaking, this is the primary act of a priest, taking every aspect of the worship and lifting it up to God. But oblation doesn't just happen inside a church building. Robert Farrar Capon, a wonderful and oftentimes hilarious theologian, talks about oblation in his book, *The Offering of Uncles*.

While walking along the beach with his children, says Capon, "Every year we hunt for perfect stones...The very act of hunting them is an introduction to the oblation of things. Look at this one! Do you think it will split evenly enough for arrowheads? What color is it when it's wet? Lick it and see...We walk down the beach lifting things into history; we are collectors, ingatherers of being...As long as we can hunt stones, we will know that the fire of our priesthood has not gone out."

Tossing helicopters was an act of oblation, a priestly act. I see my dad, a carpenter, worship in the same way, when the aged aromas of fine woods fill his imagination with things he will form into existence: a dining table, a treasure chest, a cross.

A potter lifting water and soot into history. A painter gathering all the colors of our perception and shaping them into an altar of oil and canvas. A cellist laughing with dancing strings. All priests. And it's not just artists and musicians, either, who practice the art of oblation. Think of runners who form stretches of paved miles

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into a testament of God's living temple. Mothers who are strong enough to remain tender when a flustered child tempts otherwise. An amateur cook who chooses a real, live clove of garlic over the powder you can buy at the store. All these are priests, too.

So the question turns back on us, and the question is an apt one for this time of year. What will we lift into history in this autumnal season of oranges, yellows, reds? How will we worship?

I'll leave you with a quote from Marilynne Robinson, who can say it much better than I: "Wherever you turn your eyes the world can shine like transfiguration. You don't have to bring a thing to it except a little willingness to see. Only, who could have the courage to see it?"

Sources: *An Offering of Uncles* by Robert Farrar Capon; *Gilead* by Marilynne Robinson

## A Fresh Look at Psalm 19: Nature and Worship by Marv Hinten

***The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands.***

Many of us have real trouble sustaining worship. Day after day we pray, "God, I praise you so much. I praise you for all of your marvelous works. I just wish I knew what some of them are." We don't know what they are because we haven't tried to find out. When was the last time you went outside for your prayer time to look at the stars and thank God for the Big Dipper?

Ignorance of nature is an overlooked hole in contemporary worship. I'm not saying this, by the way, as a big nature buff. My idea of roughing it is to be more than a ten-minute drive from the nearest library. (On days of balmy weather, I've been known to say to my wife, "How can you stand to be out in the yard when it's such a nice day inside?") But facts are facts. In Scripture, particularly in the Psalms, God is praised for His creation.

So once a month or so, why not pray outdoors? Examine a dog or cat or tree or flower or snowflake to see how God has put it together. An occasional half-hour spent appreciating nature may feel like a waste of valuable time; it's not.

If you're an indoorsman like me, you might watch a nature show on television as an act of worship. Did you know (I learned this from watching *Nature*) that there's a butterfly in the Amazon jungle that gets its salt by drinking the tears of a certain species of turtle? That sort of thing makes me break out in awe.

Almost any branch of science can be fruitfully studied for Christian worship—astronomy, geology, anatomy, physics, chemistry. The unique properties of water alone are enough to pray about for days!

And never before have so many resources been available for learning about God's creative work. For instance, *Reader's Digest* for several years ran a series called "I Am Joe's Body." This was an excellent series for augmenting Christian worship. Until I read "I am Joe's Pancreas," I could never celebrate God's work in providing us with that organ. I didn't know what it was for!

The more I learn about nature, the more I join the heavens in declaring the glory of God.



*To celebrate our 40th anniversary as a church, COTS will be collecting stories of church life all year long and publishing them for you to enjoy. This newsletter 's edition is a fantastic interview with Cora Olson and Greg Parker on the history of COTS, family, worship, and what it means to “do church.”*

I think my earliest recollection is this event they had in the summer called “Five Days in June.” In the summer of 1970, Century II hosted five days of Bible teachers, speakers, etc., and it led to some things. I don’t know how I heard about it, but I remember going with my brother and some of our friends from high school. It was in the Convention Hall and it was like a concert, like a rock concert, with all these kids everywhere. Tom [Rozof] led the thing, playing his guitar with people singing and I remember thinking, “Well, this is pretty cool.” For a long time I thought Church of the Savior grew out of those meetings, the church being made up of the people who gave their heart to the Lord at those concerts. It wasn’t until much later that I discovered there was actually a group that started meeting long before that. They were who organized the whole event.

I remember going to the BASIC group at Faith Presbyterian a couple of times at their Saturday night meetings. There were some kids I knew from my high school that went there quite a bit. The kids were from all over. I know my brother and I, and probably others, were involved in other churches, but we came to these meetings as an alternative to our “adult” church. But then there were also a lot of kids who came to these meetings from no church background, and I think these were the kids who became the core group of COTS, the ones who weren’t really brought up in church at all.

#### *What was it like to have kids start a church?*

I thought it was pretty cool. The church I grew up in felt like two completely different churches: one for the youth group and the big church for the adults. I stayed there because I knew there was a lot going on there with the youth, but I knew this other thing was happening at BASIC, too. It was kind of a “hippie” time, with a lot of kids rebelling from their parents’ way of doing anything. This counter-culture was fairly strong in Wichita. So BASIC seemed natural in its coming about, because you had kids that were interested in God, but not in traditional church. There really wasn’t any place these kids could go until BASIC started.

It wasn’t until I was in college that I started attending there. At some point they split off from Faith Presbyterian. They started meeting downtown at the YWCA and when that happened I think we became a little more serious. We went from this loosely organized group of kids to this more intentional kind of community.

Personally, I wasn’t really a kid anymore, I couldn’t keep going to my home church’s youth group, so I had to decide: do I want to attend this more “adult” church, which didn’t have any appeal for me at all, or do I want to meet with like-minded kids who are really trying to do something. So I started going to BASIC, admittedly sporadically.

I moved to Boulder to go to graduate school, but also to get involved with a similar thing that was happening over there. When I came back, I was pretty eager to get involved with the church and felt like it was, at least for me, the only place in town to go. I’d sort of given up on the established church so I was looking for an alternative and I knew this was it.

The appeal of Church of the Savior was that it felt like something new in that they were trying to figure out how to “do church.” So it was exciting to be a part of a group of people in the beginning who were trying to figure out a different way and be fairly free to figure it out for yourselves. But therein also showed the weakness of the group, too, I think. Where most churches have a more defined

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character about them, our church was kind of nebulous. So I think the first split occurred between those two factors: there were those who wanted to define the character of the church and kind of keep a lid on things and then there were those who wanted to improvise more and mainly figure things out for themselves.

*they were trying to figure out how to “do church”...to figure out a different way*

### *This was the split when Tom left?*

Yeah, and I really wasn't even around when it happened. We went to KU for school in 1982 and the split happened while we were in Lawrence, I think the year after. That being said, even though we weren't around when the split officially happened, I could still see it coming before we left for KU. Tom wanted things to go a certain way and there were some that wanted to follow him and some that didn't. I was in the camp that didn't. [Laughs] I felt like Tom was kind of taking his authority a little too far and I didn't really like that. From what I know about the split, there were those two camps of people for a while before, and the split finally happened when Tom finally left the church to form his own thing and those that wanted to left with him. And I don't think he ever looked back when that happened. [Laughs]

But I think the split was a good thing, something that had to happen. There wasn't as much confusion after the split. The people left at Church of the Savior had to figure things out from there, and I think they did. Being in Lawrence, we could only know what was going on through our friends back home, but I would still go to men's retreats and Nancy would go to women's retreats. So we managed to stay involved as we could be despite not living in Wichita.

We had a lot of history at the church—Nancy and I met there, we got married there. The church always had a presence throughout my time in high school. So when years later, almost fifteen years later, with many different circumstances and the opportunity to move back to Wichita came, we felt like we had something we could really come back to. Because the church I grew up in wasn't even a possibility for me to think about going back there, you know. So Church of the Savior was a very natural fit when we came back and we've been here ever since.

### *What was it like to come back?*

The church here really made a big difference in welcoming us and having a place for our family. It just seemed like the right thing to do. And I think it really made a difference to our kids, too. Our kids really thrived, I think, in the church and in the youth group. At COTS there was not a lot of distinction between the youth and the rest of the church. You know, most other churches have a very defined “youth ministry” who kind of do their own thing off to the side of everyone else. At Church of the Savior I never really felt that way. Instead, I felt like the kids were so much a part of everything else—everything was very integrated. Whether you were Ron Orr or a family or little Jesse, there wasn't this sense of the youth going off doing their own separate thing, but everyone was integrated into the whole body of the church and that was really important to us. And I think it's somewhat unique, too. It may be that the size we were allowed us to do that. It may be that having been a church started as kids, our kids were now that age. Either way, the kids were allowed to just be themselves.

When we came back in 2002, things kind of seemed like something needed to happen. I think a lot of old members were getting burnt out, carrying the load of the church. Some people had been teaching Sunday School, or working the nursery, whatever for years and years. There was some fatigue. But when we came back, along with a few other couples that joined around the same time, we had some new leadership and that brought some new energy to the church. And then we also had some congregational meetings what were really good. We were trying to figure out who we were and where we came from but also who we were then and where we saw our church going in the next few years. Out of those meetings I think a lot of things happened. But I think during those meetings a lot of us were

concerned with the generational issue, you know, "What's going to happen when we get old?" Which we are now. And the church hasn't died yet! [Laughs]

But then again, there's the question of who's going to take over once our kids are out, too. Who's going to keep things going? I think that's probably the question most churches deal with. You know, there are a lot of big, established churches that are closed now because people got old and kids didn't come back. Fortunately, that hasn't happened to us yet. As long as we can keep younger people coming in and getting involved with young families, and their kids bring in other kids, and so on.

*Did the church ever collectively talk about the splits at congregational meetings?*

No, we didn't. But you know, I think the church still really benefitted from those meetings. Coming out of those meetings, there was a real sense of who we were. Instead of having this kind of complex—"we're not this, we're not that, we should be this, we should be that"—the meetings helped us to look at who we are, what our strengths are, and acknowledge that it's OK to be who we are. We don't have to be like this other church, that other church. We are this church. Part of the problem is because we're not linked to a strong denomination, there hasn't been that kind of anchor. So we've tried to find an anchor by comparing ourselves to other churches. "Let's catch up to this church, let's follow this program that other church is doing" etc. And then some people that came to church kind of thought "hey, anything goes." So they would try to force their view on how things should go. And not having a real good definition of ourselves, it could have been easy to get kind of lost. But all along there have been people in the church that have kept us grounded when things start going too far one way. I think that's why team leadership is so important; there's not one person leading the show. Instead there are a group of people that have to talk things out together.

The other thing I wanted to mention was the style of worship. When the church started, it started with a couple guys playing guitar and singing worship songs. They didn't sing hymns, they sang worship songs and a lot of the songs they made up, you know. And so BASIC was largely songs either written by Tom or Ralph [Teran] or songs they had picked up from Christian radio stations or different worship circles. It was sort of a grass roots kind of deal. There weren't a lot of places to hear contemporary Christian music. There were a few bookstores in town you could find this music, but it was a pretty new genre. If you weren't singing Gospel or hymns, the genre of contemporary Christian music was pretty rare and new. So that's how our worship started, just singing largely original songs with acoustic guitar.

That continued when they started meeting downtown. They kept a lot of those songs and they wrote a lot more. They just kept churning out these songs for the benefit of the group. And then later on we picked up songs here and there. So from the very beginning, Church of the Savior has had contemporary worship. We never really had any other kind. So it's interesting to me now, after years of the contemporary sound being out there, that it's made its way into other churches. Now, contemporary music seems like a regular part of many bigger churches. Today, most bigger churches have a traditional service and a contemporary service, but we never made any kind of transition. We were always contemporary in the beginning as we are now. We have different expressions now in our different music teams, but it's still the same idea.

*What was it like to be the president of the trustees?*

Well, I had no clue as to what I was getting into. I just knew Meme encouraged me to do it. I thought she didn't know what she was talking about, but what the heck, I'll do it. I had been on the board prior to that for at least a couple years. I was just a board member. I didn't know exactly what I did. [Laughs] But at some point things shifted around and I ended up president. I remember always being slightly uncomfortable in that position. It just wasn't the most natural thing for me to do. The church survived, I guess. [Laughs] We did do some things during my tenure that are worth noting, particularly the fact that that was when we started looking at funding

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who we are.  
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Legacy Ministries. Charissa had heard about it and came to one of our meetings and did this presentation. At that time we were looking for something the church could kind of get its teeth into in terms of ministry. I think we were kind of floundering and we didn't really have a real outreach program. We wanted to do something with kids but didn't know what that looked like. So this came up and it was geared toward kids and it was also geared toward utilizing art and music. So there were several things about it that seemed to be a pretty good fit with our church. Using art and music in ministering to kids was very similar to how our church was even started.

We took a while and considered the ministry and met with Tammy [Pruitt] and other people with the ministry. Eventually we presented the idea to the congregation and decided to take it on. It may have been that following summer that we did our first camp and we've been doing it ever since.

I think we also made some improvements on the building while I was president. I might have painted the sanctuary during that time. And we put the digital projector screen up in the sanctuary. Ron Orr for years and years was up at the front of the church projector films putting the worship songs on the screen. That all changed when we put up the digital screen. I don't know when exactly that happened, maybe 2002 or 2003. Willis figured out all the electrical stuff and I got up there with the ladder and put it in. That was an improvement, I think, for our worship time.

*Luke and I found some of those old projector slides when we cleaned out the office a few months ago and just laughed and laughed.*

Those should really be put in some kind of archive!

*We kept one of them: a slide from the 1992 congregational meeting. The first bulleted discussion item was, "PIZZA!"*

Things really haven't changed, have they? [Laughs]

*Any last thoughts before we wrap up?*

The only story I wanted to make sure I threw in is about Bible Quiz: when the infamous "Raul" made his first appearance. I was on Dan's team and there was some kind of Mexican theme. We ended up all dressing up like a Mariachi band. Everyone wore a costume... but I decided to go all out. I found this wig and cowboy hat-like thing, poncho, beard, and I became "Raul." I came into the Fellowship Hall and I don't think anybody even knew who I was! I think it was one of the first times that someone really wore a full costume to Bible Quiz. People wore hats or something, sure, but nothing like this.

Raul was this very angry sort of guy who...liked to spit on things. [Laughs] And he had this rough, Mexican voice. But don't ask me to do the voice now!

*Thank you, Greg, for this wonderful starting point in our yearlong Story Project. If Greg has sparked a story for you, dear reader, contact the church office for more information on how you can get your words out there. And don't be shy! The church needs your voice.*

A Newsletter Of Church of the Savior

# Upcoming Events

875 Spaulding  
Wichita, KS

Phone: 316-263-2391  
E-mail: office@cotsks.com  
Website: www.cotsks.com

October	November	November
SUNDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
25	21	22
<b>Pastor Appreciation</b>	<b>Fall Ball</b>	<b>Thanksgiving Potluck</b>

## Recap of the Congregational Meeting by Cora Olson

In mid-September we gathered as a congregation to consider the financial life of our community. Our fiscal year runs July-June, and we are well into this fiscal year. We want to communicate again some changes to this year’s budget. Our relationships with our missionaries are changing as some are retiring from their posts and other support is being reconsidered. The Sharp’s role has been expanded this year to include leading our young adults into deeper relationship with Christ, and another Nursery Teacher position has been created in order to care for our growing families. Overall for 2015-16 our planned budget is expected to be about 16% over the gifts and offerings received this past fiscal year. In order to meet our 2015-2016 budget, we need an additional \$250 a week from the congregation, or about \$1,000 a month, over last year’s giving. Please prayerfully consider how you are being invited to participate in meeting this goal. It also came to our attention that with new positions and recent staff turnover, not everyone knows who is working for COTS. Our staff includes: Church and Life Care Administrator: Cora Olson; Secretary: Luke Taylor Gilstrap; Nursery Teacher (pre-school): Kerry Broadley; Nursery Teacher (babies): Merrie Henderson; Youth Leaders: Alex and Briana Sharp; Facilities Managers: Kristoffer Broadley and Justin Meyer.\* Thank you for the many ways you contribute this the life of this congregation.

\*In the congregational meeting we said that Josh Zanhiser-Cranston was our newly hired facilities manager, however, his employment opportunities have since changed and Justin will now be serving our church in this capacity.

### COTS current financial status

from Michael Mitchell	July 31 2015	Aug 31 2015	Sept 30 2015
income to date for current fiscal year:	6,867.93	13,237.30	21,279.17
expenses to date for current fiscal year:	10,394.13	15,706.22	21,852.16
net income/(deficit):	(3,526.20)	(2,468.92)	(572.99)
avg donations per week this month:	1,716.50	1,273.50	2,010.02
avg weekly donations to meet budget:	1,786.81	1,786.81	1,786.81
available cash on hand:	18,186.65	20,463.93	22,729.86