



RELIGION

TULSA WORLD • A16 • Saturday, December 15, 2007 • tulsaworld.com

IN BRIEF

Big band music: Dove Ministry, 2833 W. Main St., Jenks, will have Big Band gospel singer Dave Boyer and Jeff Brocculeri, trumpet soloist, in concert at 6 p.m. Saturday. They will be at Life Park Christian Fellowship, 9222 S. Harvard Ave., at 10:30 a.m. Sunday. Boyer and the Tulsa Praise Orchestra will be at the First Church of the Nazarene, 302 S. Elm, Sapulpa, at 6 p.m. Sunday.

Health fair: International Gospel Center, 7143 E. 10th St., will have an All Natural Holiday Health Fair from noon to 6 p.m. Saturday.

Live Nativity: King of Kings Lutheran Church will have a live Nativity from 7 to 8 p.m. Saturday and Sunday at 151st Street and U.S. 75, Glenpool.

Christmas concert: Fellowship Lutheran Church, 6727 S. Sheridan Road, will present "A Concert about One Small Child" at 11 a.m. and 5 p.m. Sunday.

Holiday Music: Faith United Methodist Church is presenting a Christmas Cantata, "A Night of Alleluias" on Sunday at 9:40 and 11 a.m. A Holiday Handbell Concert featuring the Faith Handbell Choir and Childrens Chimes will begin at 6 p.m.

Concerts set: Asbury United Methodist Church, 6767 S. Mingo Road, will have Chancel Choir and New Covenant Orchestra in concert at 9 and 11 a.m. Sunday and Rick Fraley, concert pianist, at 6 p.m.

Christmas play: Crossroads Free Will Baptist Church, 2525 W. Main St., Jenks, will present "Bing, Bling or Jesus?" a humorous Christmas play and program, at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. Sunday.

Holiday music: Faith United Methodist Church, 7431 E. 91st St., will have a Christmas Cantata at 9:40 and 11 a.m. Sunday, and a holiday handbell concert with Faith Handbell Choir and Childrens Chimes at 6:30 p.m.

Christmas Cantata: Forest Park Christian Church, 9102 S. Mingo Road, will have a Christmas Cantata at 11 a.m. Sunday.

Revival set: Christian Faith Unity Foundation will have a revival at 9:30 a.m. Sunday at University Club community room, 1722 S. Carson Ave., with Cindy Huntley, singer and speaker.

Music and poetry: Harvard Avenue Christian Church, 5502 S. Harvard Ave., will have a program of traditional Christmas music and poetry at 7 p.m. Sunday with a 25-piece orchestra, the Chancel Choir, children's choirs, the Hand Bell Ensemble and soloists Todd and Christina Maxwell.

Christmas Cantata: Plainview Baptist Church, 14531 E. 21st St., will have a Christmas Cantata at 10:45 a.m. Sunday.

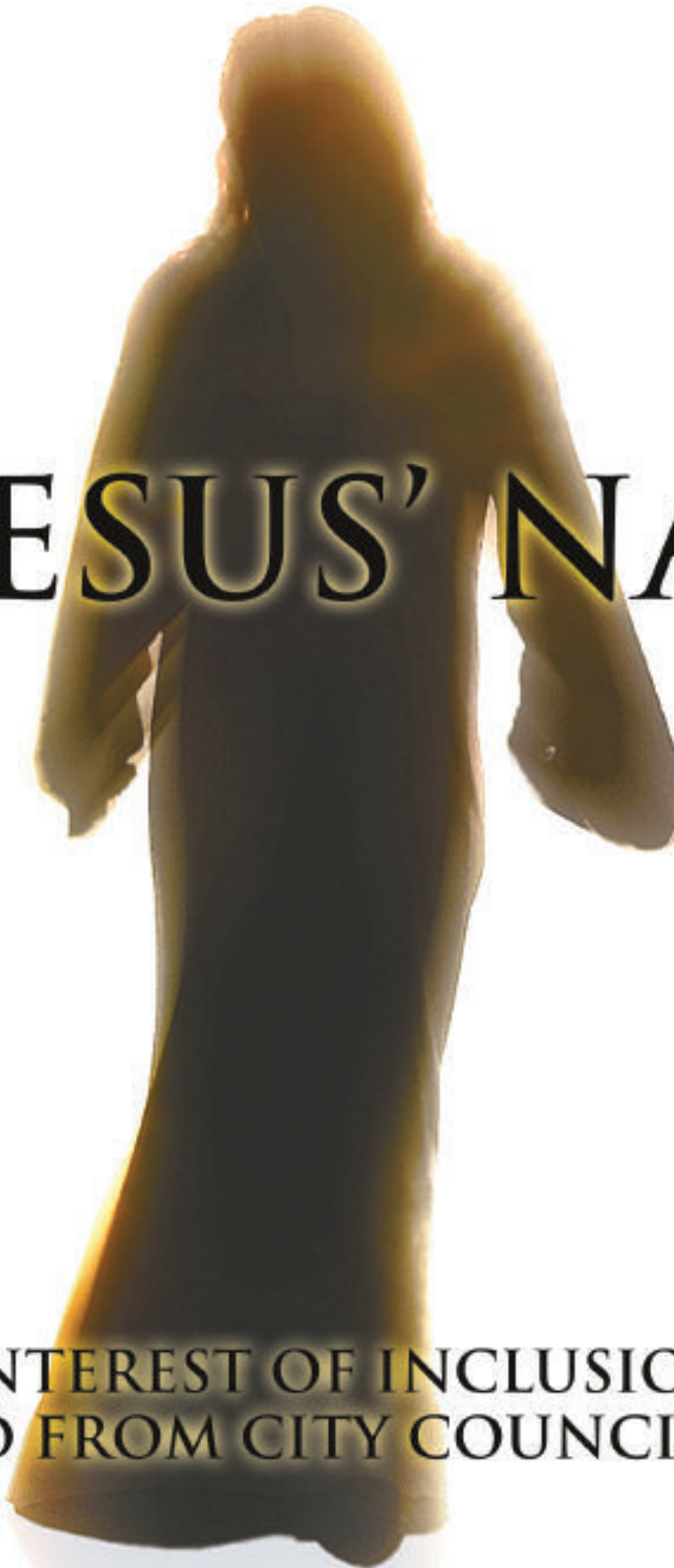
Special speaker: First Church of Christ, Scientist, 924 S. Boulder Ave., will present Elise Moore at 7 p.m. Tuesday, speaking on "God Is Speaking to You."

Holiday concert: Yale Avenue Christian Church, 3616 S. Yale Ave., will have a "Christmastime Is Here" concert featuring Greg Buntan at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday.

Lunchtime music: University United Methodist Church, 2915 E. Fifth St., will have organist Bruce Wilkin in recital 12:15 p.m. at Thursday.

The In Brief column offers churches and other groups an opportunity to publicize news items and upcoming events that may be of interest to people outside their organization. Continuing events may be published once when they begin. 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.

IN JESUS' NAME



IN THE INTEREST OF INCLUSION, JESUS EXCLUDED FROM CITY COUNCIL PRAYERS

By **BILL SHERMAN**
World Religion Writer

In an effort to be inclusive, the name of Jesus has been excluded from prayers opening Tulsa City Council meetings.

"We started working on this about a year and half ago," said Karl Sniderman, a board member of the Tulsa Interfaith Alliance (TIA) and a member of the Humanist Association of Tulsa.

Sniderman said he and another TIA board member went to a council meeting that was opened with a prayer in Jesus' name.

"I'm Jewish and she's Muslim, and it kind of irked us," he said.

"The City Council represents many people of many faiths, and shouldn't be limiting itself to Christian prayer."

Sniderman said numerous courts have held that sectarian prayer in public meetings is unconstitutional.

He talked about the issue to the TIA board, the attorney for the City Council, the police and fire chaplain, and others.

Things moved slowly, he said, but the Rev. Danny Lynchard, the police and fire chaplain who assigns people to pray before the meetings, agreed with him.

"He wasn't concerned about the constitutionality of the issue, but he was concerned that it was divisive, rather than inclusive, and said he would work on it," Sniderman said.

Lynchard said the goal always has been to offer inclusive prayers, but along the way, some ministers have prayed in Jesus' name.

"The phrase 'in Jesus' name' made it a non-inclusive prayer," he said.

"The issue is not the name, but inclusion.

"Tulsa has been traditionally, and is to this day, a majority Christian community, but the idea is to not let the majority overrun the minority," he said.

Over time, religious leaders who did not comply have been removed from the rotation, he said.

Lynchard said that for years Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry scheduled City Council prayer, but five or six years ago, he was asked to fill in and has been doing it ever since.

The only requirement, he said, is that the person be a religious leader in the community.

Drew Rees, attorney for the City Council, said the constitutionality of prayer before council meetings has been upheld nationwide.

"It's a sensitive issue. We try to be sensitive to all people while meeting the needs of the City Council and upholding our traditions," he said.

After Sniderman's successful campaign to eliminate sectarian prayer, he turned his attention to getting non-Christian leaders to pray before the council meeting.

On Oct. 4, Rabbi Charles Sherman, Temple Israel, prayed for the safety, security and well-being of the city and its leaders.

"This is a public place," Sherman said.

"The City Council is for all of us. Jews feel ex-



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THE REV. DANNY LYNCHARD
TULSA POLICE AND FIRE CHAPLAIN

'This is a controversial area that people of good faith don't agree on.'

RABBI CHARLES SHERMAN
TEMPLE ISRAEL



cluded by prayers in the name of Jesus.

"This is a controversial area that people of good faith don't agree on," he said.

"The Tulsa Interfaith Alliance wanted to say, 'There's a diversity of faith in this community; let's enrich the pool.' I agreed to be part of that."

On Nov. 15, Allison Moore, an American who converted to Islam, prayed at the council meeting.

She said her prayer was "Christian-like," and no one raised an eyebrow.

In part, she prayed: "Lord, grant our city peace and prosperity. Lower our crime rates and send your blessings to our police force, our firemen and women, our city workers and all Oklahomans."

One Tulsa organization has been on the forefront of the effort to eliminate sectarian prayer in public settings.

The Oklahoma Conference for Community and Justice and its predecessor, the local chapter of the National Conference for Community and Justice, have been involved in the issue for many years, according to executive director Nancy Day.

"When asked to give a prayer in a public setting, you cannot assume everyone is of your faith," she said.

"By praying to or through Jesus, that excludes folks in the room who are not Christian."

Other terms for deity, such as Almighty God, Maker, or Creator God, are acceptable to everyone, she said.

"We see prayer in a public forum as a privilege, and not a time to promote one's own faith, but a time for all present to be able to acknowledge and invoke the aid of deity," she said.

"The key word is public," she said. "We're not asking this of anyone in their own house of worship."

One of OCCJ's most popular brochures is its guideline on how to pray inclusively.

"It's not difficult to do that," Day said. "You don't have to compromise your own faith."

Day said anyone who cannot in good conscience offer an inclusive prayer should respectfully decline to offer public prayer.

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Activist vows to fight for right to invoke Jesus

By **BILL SHERMAN**
World Religion Writer

A former military chaplain who was court-martialed for violating Navy policy about public prayer in Jesus' name said he will defend the right of chaplains in Tulsa to pray in Jesus' name at City Council meetings.

"They want to include all the faiths except for my faith," said Chaplain Gordon James Klingenschmitt, an evangelical Christian.

"They're proselytizing us, forcing us to conform to a government-sanitized religion, and punishing us by exclusion," he said.

Klingenschmitt, who was removed from the Navy after his court-martial conviction, has been traveling and speaking widely in defense of the right of people to pray according to their own conscience and tradition.

"I'll write to Tulsa councilmen, demanding that they protect chaplains who pray in Jesus' name," Klingenschmitt said.

"And the people of Oklahoma will stand with me because they stand with Jesus," he said.

Klingenschmitt said he is scheduled to speak in Moore on Jan. 27, and if the problem is not resolved by then, he will come to Tulsa to address it.

"America is the land of freedom of religion, and free speech," he said.

"The First Amendment protects the speaker and the worshipper, not the bystander who's easily offended."

"It's the same problem the Pharisees had in Acts chapter four," he said.

"They ordered Peter and John to stop preaching in Jesus' name."

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