



# RELIGION

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## Clash of the Choirs contest is coming

The Clash of the Choirs, a competition between 20 local choral groups, will held Feb. 24 before and after the Tulsa 66ers basketball game.

Freddie Owens, 66ers director of marketing, said he modeled the event after NBC's "Clash of the Choirs" show.

"I was absolutely blown away by the number of churches in the Tulsa area," said Owens, who moved here from New York three months ago.

He said he sees the event as a way for the churches to display their talent, and to establish a connection to the sports community.

Ten choirs will perform one number each beginning at 2 p.m. before the 66ers play the Bakersfield Jam, and 10 more will perform after the game, from 6:30 to 9 p.m.

Participating choirs must pay a registration fee of \$50 and sell 25 \$10 tickets to the game and choir event. The game and choir contest will be held at the Expo Square Pavilion.

Prizes will be \$1,000 for first place, \$750 for second and \$250 for third.

Choirs will be accepted on a first-come, first-served basis. If more than 20 choirs apply, a second event will be scheduled, Owens said.

For more information, contact Owens at 749-5701, or the Metropolitan Tulsa Urban League, 584-0001, ext. 301 or 303, which will receive a percentage of the proceeds.

## 5 speakers set for annual lecture series

The annual Wiseman Lenten lecture series will begin at noon Wednesday at First Presbyterian Church, 709 S. Boston Ave.

The Rev. Catherine Purves, pastor of Bellevue United Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, will speak.

She also is a police chaplain and president of the Fellowship of Ministries, an ecumenical clergy group that includes representatives from social service agencies.

Lunch will be served for a small fee in Wiseman Hall after each of the five services. No reservation is necessary.

In addition, clergy and others are invited to a luncheon dialogue in Miller Library with the speaker after the service. Call 584-4701 for a reservation.

Other speakers scheduled are: Feb. 20, the Rev. Mateen Ellass, pastor, First Presbyterian Church, Edmond; Feb. 27, the Rev. William E.W. Robinson, student at Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, Va.; March 5, Douglas Fletcher, pastor (on sabbatical), Westlake Presbyterian Church, Austin, Texas; March 12, the Rev. William M. Christ, pastor, Holy Trinity Greek Orthodox Church, Tulsa.

## this week

### MUSIC

Concert by Frederick Swann, president of the American Guild of Organists, in the Fred Elder Recital Series. 5 p.m. Sunday, **Boston Avenue United Methodist Church**, 1301 S. Boston Ave.

Organ concert by H. Scott Raab of St. Paul's Cathedral, Oklahoma City. 12:05 p.m. Tuesday, **Trinity Episcopal Church**, 501 S. Cincinnati Ave.

### FELLOWSHIP

Fellowship of Christian Cosmetologists first meeting. For more information/RSVP, call 607-4318. 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Monday, **Stinchcomb Mansion &**

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## URBAN RENEWAL



SHERRY BROWN/Tulsa World

John Urban (left) holds his new daughter, Ava, 4, as they relax with Jude, 6, (second from left), Simeon, 10, Liesel, 7, Charissa and Hope, 3. The Urbans recently adopted Ava, who was born with Down syndrome in Ukraine.

# One more to love

► A Broken Arrow family overcomes obstacles to adopt a 4-year-old girl with Down syndrome from Ukraine.

By **BILL SHERMAN**  
World Religion Writer

A tiny 4-year-old girl who cannot sit up is bringing new life to a Broken Arrow family.

John and Charissa Urban say their adoption of a Ukrainian girl with Down syndrome is teaching their family deep lessons about God's love.

The Urbans returned Tuesday night from a whirlwind trip to Kiev, Ukraine, and the orphanage 12 hours by train to the east of Kiev.

There, they saw Ava Alina Grace Urban for the first time, and bundled up their 19-pound daughter for the long trip to Tulsa.

Wednesday afternoon, the Urbans' four biological children crowded onto a couch with their jet-lagged parents and heard once again the story of how they got a new baby sister.

"This is something I've always wanted to do," said Charissa, an Oral Roberts University nursing graduate.

She first learned of Ava last summer through the Web site for Reece's Rainbow, an international adoption agency that specializes in children with Down syndrome.

When children with mental disabilities in Ukraine turn 4 years old, they are taken off the adoption list and moved from orphanages into

mental institutions, Charissa said. "Nurses told us that most of them die in the first year," she said.

Ava will be 4 on Feb. 20. After much discussion, the Urbans decided to pursue the adoption.

"We prayed. I had peace about this little girl," said John, who works in software development at Williams Cos.

They went through extensive paperwork to get approval from the U.S. government, and then the Ukrainian government, which is careful about approving adoptions for children with disabilities out of a fear that they will be used for organ transplants.

In Ukraine, the attitude toward disabled children is different, Charissa said. They cannot imagine why anyone would want to adopt them.

On Christmas day, the Urbans were notified they had been approved for an adoption appointment Jan. 22 in Ukraine.

After long hours on airplanes and trains, they arrived for their appointment, which lasted only a couple of minutes.

Both of them cried as they explained to the official why they wanted to adopt Ava. After more paperwork, and a court appearance, the adoption was approved, and they returned to Tulsa and their four children, ages 3 to 10, each of them excited about their new sister.

The Urbans realize they will face physical and emotional challenges with Ava, who spent her first four years lying in a crib on her back looking at a white ceiling.

Charissa said workers at the orphanage did

the best they could to care for Ava, but with 50 disabled children, their resources were limited.

"We've got an adventure before us," she said. Tulsa has the resources for Ava that are not available in Ukraine, she said.

The Urbans said they see the hand of God in all the details of the adoption: an anonymous gift of \$7,000 and a \$2,000 garage sale toward the \$20,000 expense; getting bumped from their airline flight, and receiving free tickets in exchange; waiving of a mandatory 10-day waiting period in Ukraine; unusual timing and favor with Ukraine officials.

John said he believes his children will benefit from having Ava in the family, by becoming more patient and understanding.

"She's a joy. She's changing lives already," he said.

"This is something that's going to help Charissa and I, and our kids, just to take life at a slower pace, and to realize that life is more important than making car payments and house payments, and going to your job and getting ahead.

"I was thinking this morning," John said, his voice cracking, "I couldn't have done this if it wasn't for God's love in our hearts for this girl.

"It's a perfect picture of his love, and how he desires for every child to have a family, and to feel loved and accepted," he said.

"It's been a great experience, and it's just beginning."

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JOHN URBAN

## Minister to speak on state and religion

► The religious right and left have been at odds since the nation's founding, he says.

By **BILL SHERMAN**  
World Religion Writer

Tension between the religious right and the left has existed from the birth of the American government, said the Rev. Forrest Church, who will speak here Sunday.

That tension is locked into the very wording of the First Amendment, said Church, minister of public theology at New York City's All Souls Unitarian Church, possibly the largest Unitarian church in the world.

"The same issues that divide the nation today, on religion and politics and church and state, divided us at the founding," said Church, son of former U.S. Sen. Frank Church of Idaho.

"The religious right says we were founded as a Christian nation, with Christian leaders, and the religious left says we were founded as a secular nation, with secular documents, and both sides are 100 percent half-

### Forrest Church at 21st Knippa lecture



**What:** The Rev. Forrest Church gives 21st annual Knippa Lecture

**When:** 7 p.m. Sunday, reception following

**Where:** Grace Lutheran Church, 2331 E. Fifth Pl.

**For more:** Call 592-2999.

right," he said.

"The Puritan tradition of a religious commonwealth clashed with the Enlightenment tradition of a secular, libertarian state," he said.

"There's a natural tension in the First Amendment between the establishment clause (Congress shall pass no law establishing religion) and the free exercise clause (nor prevent the free exercise thereof).

"The left is obsessing on the establishment clause, and the right is obsessing on the free exercise clause.

"Both of them have reasonable arguments.

"I think it's a healthy tension. I think it's always been a healthy tension, between the libertarian and the

moral authoritarian.

"Both sides check the excesses of the other," he said.

Church said he was worried after the last presidential election, when exit polls suggested 75 percent of church-goers voted Republican, and 75 percent of nonchurch-goers voted Democratic.

"I was afraid that we were going to end up with a religious party and a secular party in this country.

"And if that happened, I think, whichever side was victorious, the American people would lose," he said.

But since then, he said, he senses both parties have moved to the middle.

**'When religion hitches its star to a political wagon, eventually that star will be pulled from the heavens and dragged to the dust.'**

### Forrest Church

Minister, All Souls Unitarian Church in New York City

"The Democratic Party is moving to a deeper appreciation of the importance of free exercise, and I think that's very clearly embodied in the two leading candidates, each of whom is a strong person of faith, and I think the Republican Party has widened its tent to become a bit more diverse, and is more sensitive to the dangers of religious establishment."

In part, he said, that is happening because the religious right was burned by too close an association with the Republican Party.

Early in the history of the Ameri-

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