



Third Base

Vol 88, Issue 8 · August 2024

From the Pastor

Giant Ants have mutated because of nuclear radiation—and chaos breaks out in Eisenhower’s America (*Them!*)—Marvin Simons and Ruby Feagin watch from movie theater in Fort Worth, Texas.

Marvin and Ruby were set up by Linnie Maude (Marvin’s mother) searching for “good Christian woman.” In spite of Dad’s poor movie selection—Marvin and Ruby fell in love—which led to Marvin Simons, Jr. (Tommy’s) entrance—July 6, 1959.

The pregnancy was unplanned and Ruby placed college on pause (1 of 10 children, growing up poor in East Texas, first to attend college)—Ruby (19) dropped out and placed focus on raising first born.

The first house was purchased down street from Marvin’s parents John and Linnie Maude. John would walk each day and watch Tommy in crib—too anxious to pick up—until Ruby placed Tommy in his arms.

Horses followed by crowds are my first memory—later understanding I was watching John F. Kennedy’s funeral.

I remember sharing room with baby (John)—new member of family—and Dad announcing move to Houston in 1966. Imagine 7 year old arriving in a place on leading edge of space program—leading to my first passion—“I want to be an astronaut.”

I vaguely remember Marvin and Ruby’s change of mood—anxious faces and talk of “complications”—something was *wrong*.



Melissa Simons entered our family and later discovered pregnancy was difficult and could have “lost mom.”

Marvin and Ruby were faithful Christians and joined Brentwood Baptist Church—each Sunday I looked west from church parking lot and reviewed dome shaped structure with white roof panel.

I first entered Astrodome in 1966—baseball in air conditioned comfort. Dad, Grandpa, and I enjoyed Houston Astros vs. Los Angeles Dodgers (Grandpa’s favorite team). “Why are so many people here?” – “the man on the mound is Sandy Koufax. NASA lost a perspective candidate—passion shifted from astronaut to baseball player.

Baseball assisted transition from childhood to angst of teenage years. The summer of 1973 winning championship—piling into managers pick-up truck—holding trophies high—speeding off into the night—*can life get any better than this?*

Mom and Dad insisted I join family for church every Sunday—*as long as you are under this roof, etc.*

Continued on page two

I hated going to church and specialized role of weekly martyrdom.

Youth group and green covered book changed direction of my life. The family discovered new church with engaging youth minister—developing welcoming culture.

The green covered *Living Bible* opened windows of understanding certain parts of Scripture.

I preached my first sermon 47 years ago today— as of this writing—July 10, 1977—and congregation responded with encouragement and grace—as I tortured text on Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego—accepting call to “full time ministry”.

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It’s at this point, looking back, I *feel like I boarded a bullet train*—sitting by window and watching scenes fly by:

- 1977-1981 attending Houston Baptist University and serving at Park Memorial Baptist.
- Southwestern Seminary 1981-1985—discovering lifelong friends, ministering in various churches each summer.

The train picks up speed and professional career is launched:

- Vestavia Hills Baptist in Birmingham—1985-1994. Willow Meadows Baptist in Houston—1994-2007.
- Divorced in 2003.
- Caren and Carson written into my story in 2005—experiencing fatherhood at 46 (I did not see that coming).
- I see my living room and Caren enters holding a stick—its positive.
- Colton Simons enters picture in 2007.

The train accelerates.

- I accept call to Trinity Baptist in Memphis, Tennessee.

The scenes fly by at an alarming rate—*please slow down*.

The bullet train enters unknown territory in 2015—Third Baptist Church in Saint Louis is written into my story.

The train found another gear and accelerates.

Colton holding hands with Carson—crossing street and entering school.

Covid enters and train slows down to reveal frustration— How can our church survive? How long does my congregation have to cover their face? How are my boys going to adjust from attending school two years through Zoom?

The train picks up speed:

I stand in driveway and wave goodbye to Carson—attending school in California. Colton receives driver’s license—summer of 2024 is first time Caren and I will not drive boys to school.

Colton is headed into Junior year and considering military service—Carson is attending firefighter school.

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The eye of the hurricane is Caren—counsel, wisdom and love are written into all scenes out the window.

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And now train stops for brief moment: Marvin Thomas Simons, Jr is 65.

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It’s at this point you’ll endure another “what have I learned” from reaching “milestone”—before train departs.

Here we go:

The train is never slowing down and accelerates with each passing year.

You live in two realities—past and present. The past witnessed out your window is unchanging—you cannot delete or edit.

Playing scenes of regret on loop is unhealthy. The only reality is presence, in present. The life you live at this moment—even as you read this sentence.

Take a moment and review your *present reality*.

A few snapshots of mine:

I receive grace and love from my family and Caren's.

Marvin and Ruby, John and Melissa are still gifted with life and involved in my story.

I am honored to pastor a diverse family of faith—committed to exhibiting *Fruits of the Spirit* and a stubborn resolve to “fight the good fight” in the City for Good.

The bullet train leaves station and soars on post year 65.

I hope to savor scenes left serving you beautiful people at Third—and watch images roll by with Caren— as Carson and Colton write their own story.

The congregation sang Happy Birthday after service July 7—and inheriting my grandfather's stoicism— emotion is hidden through humor— “thank you, I have turned 65 but not retiring, I have too much damage left to do.”

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My favorite sentences discovered in my green hard back book was Philippians 4:6-7—first read at 16.

And as I view memories from 65 year journey—the following is scrolled across each scene:

*Don't worry about anything; instead, pray about everything; tell God your needs, and don't forget to thank him for his answers. If you do this, you will experience God's peace, which is far more wonderful than the human mind can understand. His peace will keep your thoughts and your heart quiet and at rest as you trust in Jesus Christ.*

*(The Living Bible translation)*

Grace and Peace,  
Tommy

July 21st: Baptism of Wayne Brewer  
and dedication of Serenity



Welcome Jill Arbini  
to Third!

Jill's husband is  
Chris, along with  
two boys,  
Owen and Henry

# Family Ministries

Drew Phillips, Minister to Families

Third's youth have had a busy summer:

Elijah Kimler, Gregory Robinson, and Jaden Jacobs camped with Junior Highers at Lake Springfield Baptist Camp (LSBC). Colton Simons served as a Junior Counselor, Gabe Thiems as a Counselor in Training. Natalie Thiems Directed camp, Drew Phillips and Katrena Jordan staffed.

Dante Clay, Autumn Hildebrand, Gregory Robinson, Colton Simons and Gabe Thiems camped with Senior High Students at LSBC. Natalie Thiems Directed the camp, Drew Phillips and Evelyn Kurtz counseled, and Katrena Jordan staffed.

- Alex Brooks participated in the summer architecture program at Washington University.
- Avery Brooks participated in summer theater camp at MICDS.
- Kaelyn Smithers participated in a summer Writers Craft course at Truman State University.
- And we have two new drivers in the youth group - Colton and Alex! Congratulations, fellas!

We are blessed with families who prioritize the community and spiritual lives of students. Join me in celebrating the many accomplishments of our students!

Visiting the St. Louis Cathedral Basilica

Youth outing to a Cardinals game



Camp leadership!



Sr High Campers at Lake Springfield Baptist Camp





Happy campers



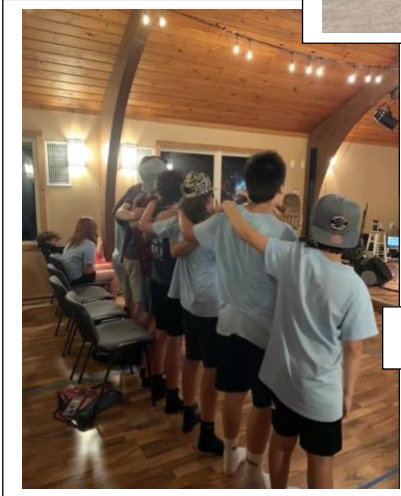
Cabin scavenger hunt!



Colton slays at entertaining campers on guitar.



And Colton volunteers for pothole-filling!



Camp worship time



Junior High campers



**Intergenerational Feast and Game Night  
Wednesday, August 28 at 5:45 p.m.  
In preparation for the new school year!**

# Missions Moment: Mary VanRheenen and Keith Holmes

Mary VanRheenen and her husband, Keith Holmes, have served in Europe since their commissioning in 1996. They are based in the Netherlands but work with Romany, who live all over Europe. Romany (Roma and Sinti) are the largest minority in Europe. Deeply rooted discrimination makes it difficult for Romany in many ways. When Keith and Mary were appointed as CBF field personnel, there was no authorized version of the Bible in any of the 20+ languages spoken by Romany in Europe.



Romany prefer to hear the Word, learning and sharing information in an oral way. Keith has partnered to create and distribute Christian media like dramatized recordings of the entire New Testament, dubbed versions of existing Scripture videos, and YouTube videos of children's Bible stories in Romani languages.

In recent years Keith has transitioned from full-time CBF field personnel to being the first CBF field associate. Mary has helped to create an educational program called Davar: Bridging to Literacy (<http://davar-education.eu/>), "games specially developed for children who are older but do not yet go to school.

Your support makes the following possible:





- Creation and distribution of Scripture Media in Romany languages
- Creation of educational materials for oral cultures (Davar: Bridging to Literacy)
- Assistance for our partners in Romany Outreach in Moldova
- Weekly online meeting with leader of Romany children's club, Romania
- Bimonthly online literacy discussion group
- Encouraging culturally-appropriate education through workshops, interviews, and the Romany Education Network.

Connect with Keith and Mary at [holmes@cbf.net](mailto:holmes@cbf.net). Learn more about oral cultures and non-print learning styles at [Romany Education Network](#) and [Davar: Bridging to Literacy](#). Read about current projects at [CBF-Romany Ministries blogspot](#).

How to Help – [visit here](#).

Learning with Mary

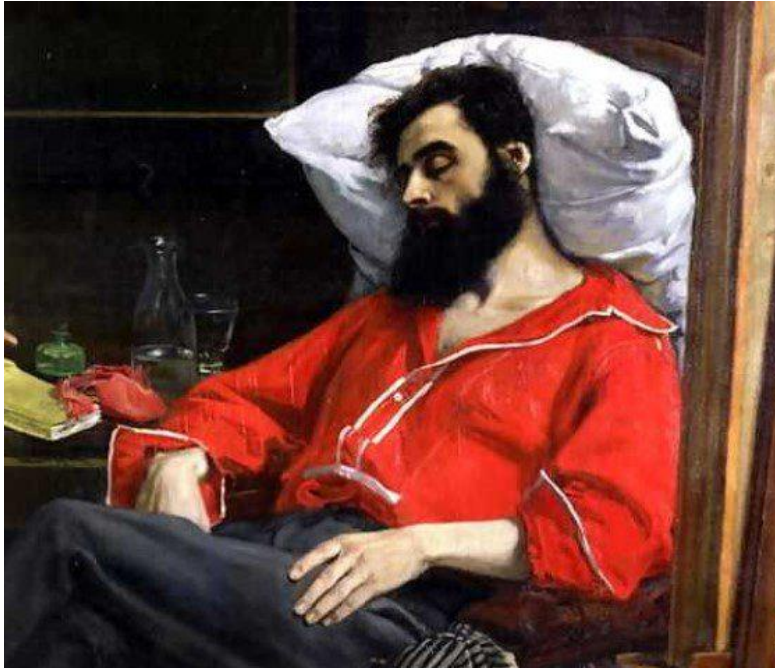
### How To Help

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|  <p>Children's Bible clubs \$20</p> <p>\$20 provides two weeks of children's Bible clubs in a Romany village.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p> |  <p>Einführung in das Curriculum von DAVAR</p> <p>\$50</p> <p>\$50 covers the costs of translating three Davar games into another language.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p> |  <p>Bible Media Resources \$100</p> <p>\$100 provides transportation to a Bible recording project.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p> |  <p>Davar trial runs \$300</p> <p>\$300 covers the costs of starting a trial of Davar materials in a new location.</p> <p><a href="#">DONATE</a></p> |
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Source: <https://www.classy.org/campaign/mary-vanrheenen-2/c574971>

# Adult Discipleship



## Wednesdays in August:

How Shall We Live Then?  
Lessons from Tolstoy's  
*The Death of Ivan Ilyich*

Led by Dr. Tommy Simons

Dinner: 5:15 p.m.

Discipleship: 5:45 p.m.

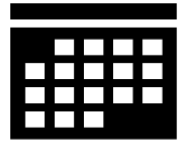
For dinner reservations contact:  
tsimons@third-baptist.org

## AUGUST BIRTHDAYS

### *Happy Birthday to...*

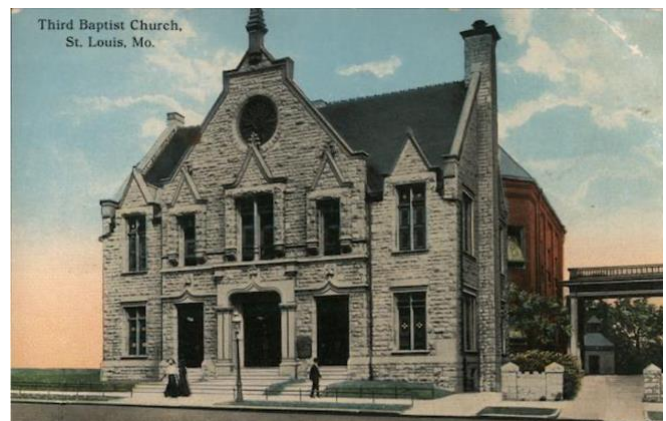
- 02 🎁 Natalie Thiems
- 04 🎁 Maggie Jackson &  
Gwendolyn Tyson &  
Kayia Mooney
- 05 🎁 Ken Blanton
- 10 🎁 Rachael Whitt-Barnes
- 13 🎁 Jerry Campbell &  
Julie McDaniel
- 20 🎁 Evelyn Kurtz &  
Edna Betts
- 25 🎁 Samuel Governor &  
Avery Brooks
- 27 🎁 Frank Stevens &  
Pat Blakes &  
Josiah Huddlen
- 28 🎁 David Stevenson

## Note Your Calendar...



### September 8th:

Third will celebrate Drew, Dani, and Julius Phillips' 5th Anniversary - with recognition and fellowship in Pillsbury Threshold.



### Stories of Third: Podcast Series

Third will celebrate 175th Anniversary in 2025. As part of our recognition, you will hear stories of people investing in and shaping our beloved community.

<https://www.buzzsprout.com/%201750498>



# Third Baptist Church

**620 North Grand Blvd**

**St. Louis, MO 63103**

**Office: 314-533-7340**

**third-baptist.org**

We'd love to connect with you!



[third-baptist.org/guest](http://third-baptist.org/guest)

## Third Baptist Church Staff

**Dr. Tommy Simons**  
PASTOR

**Rev. Drew Phillips**  
MINISTER TO FAMILIES

**Dr. Philip Barnes**  
DIRECTOR OF MUSIC

**Ella Banks**  
RECEPTIONIST/OFFICE  
ASSISTANT

**Brent Johnson**  
ORGANIST

**Lansin Lim Kimler**  
PIANIST

**Sally Stevenson**  
PARISH NURSE

**Tom Kurtz**  
BUSINESS MANAGER

**Christine McCarthy**  
FINANCE

**Ronnie Winthrop**  
FACILITIES MANAGER

**Timothy Harrison**  
CUSTODIAN