

'I'm here because you sold me on the idea of a new way to be or do church' — Pastor Heather Scherer quotes a member



Photo by Holly McCray

Fabric fish dangle in the children's space at Living Water UMC, Glenpool. Heather Scherer purchased them on her Wesley pilgrimage in England.

Drink in God at Living Water

By HOLLY McCRAY

The Living Water new church plant in Glenpool is aptly named. Its search for a location remains fluid. Its people go with that flow, and the "Overflowing Project" is one example.

Participants purposefully share joy through their daily

interactions, then report outcomes via social media, and the congregation celebrates.

"There is lots of intentional outreach by this church," said Pastor Heather Scherer.

"They're outward focused. My job's really to enable and resource and support what

they're passionate about."

Living Water launched two years ago, making and taking sandwiches to transient people at a park.

Already this new United Methodist church family has mucked out flooded homes,
See New church, page 2

UMCOR grants \$1 million to help victims of flooding

By HOLLY McCRAY

Now well into their senior years, the couple always has lived in the modest frame house in southern Oklahoma. They had been so proud to pay off the mortgage. Yet in retirement, their fixed income falls short against ever-rising living expenses. They face health challenges.

Every day brings decisions about money. They know they still should carry home insurance, but it costs so much to live. Do they pay for medicine or insurance?

Then weeks of rain in May brought flooding, water rising from below and pouring in when wind ripped away aged shingles. A Good Samaritan helped patch the roof temporarily.

There is neither insurance nor savings or strength for the elderly couple to make repairs on their own. Embarrassed, they rationalize that someone else surely needs help more than they do.

Summer heat triggers mold growth due to the waterlogged flooring. The roof begins leaking when the patch gives way.

The calendar rolls into autumn.

Hope has arrived in this season.

Grant funds totaling \$1 million have been awarded to Oklahoma United Methodist Disaster Response Ministry from UMCOR*, the denomination's agency for emergency aid and humanitarian relief. Oklahoma will add \$250,000 from its disaster response fund, said Richard Norman, who is coordinator of the Conference's Disaster Response Ministry.

The goal is to repair 500 homes that were damaged in May.

Luke Pratt sees firsthand the poor living conditions for many disaster victims. "To begin with, they're living hand-to-mouth. A disaster seems like just one more tragedy in a life full of tragedy," he said.

Pratt is the ministry's construction and volunteer management supervisor. He's eager to sign up volunteer teams to work on homes, because that will make the \$1.25 million go further.

"We can leverage so much

See Disaster, page 5

Church enters new ministry era with blaze of glory



Photo by Kim McKinley

From left: D.A. Bennett baptizes Abigail Rose Kitchel, joined by Susan Robinson and David Johnson, at OKC-St. Andrew's.

St. Andrew's is mapping new routes for ministry after exiting the tollway of mortgage debt.

The church in south Oklahoma City recently burned the note in a worship celebration that included showers of confetti. Instead of the usual three services on a Sunday morning, all met together in the gym. Rain cancelled outdoor plans, but the crowd still swelled to 550 people.

"There was nothing that was going to dampen our spirits that day. Nothing could take away from the joy," said Senior Pastor D.A. Bennett.

His sermon was titled "Free

To Decide."

A bank official presented the mortgage papers to Lay Leader Rich Snyder. Then Colby Sandburg, who chaired the trustees when the mortgage was incurred, and Ike Dodrill, a charter member who currently leads the trustees, set fire to the paperwork at the altar.

Rev. Bennett baptized baby Abigail Rose Kitchel, daughter of Perry and Marlee Kitchel.

The day's favorite moment for Kim McKinley came when everyone sang "Praise God from Whom All Blessings Flow," composed in the 1600s.

"The doxology is where we're rooted, and I grew up singing that. I like how the whole thing came together, the old and the new," said McKinley, the church's communications director.

St. Andrew's UMC was planted 22 years ago. In 1996, one building project was completed; construction of the Christian Life Center followed that. A recent capital campaign, "Prepare the Way," has culminated in retiring the debts.

The church's monthly payment had been \$11,680.

See Free, page 8

New church:

Continued from page 1

mowed lawns, and walked neighborhoods to collect food items. They served java and Jesus as a Christian coffeehouse business.

They pack “blessing bags” — basic necessities, gum, and granola bars — to carry in their cars and pass out as needed. They offer the use of a shower and washer/dryer for displaced persons.

The church received a 2015 New People, New Places grant of \$6,400 to offer parenting and financial classes.

Inspired by Checotah UMC’s thrift store, they opened one in Glenpool as an outreach and a way to fund ministry.

“My people are so used to doing that they don’t understand why it’s such a big deal,” Rev. Scherer said.

“Jesus doesn’t care about whether you sit in church on Sunday morning. What he cares about is what you’re doing to make the world a better place.”

She said 135 people call Living Water their church home. Most previously never attended any church or had severed their church connections.

One man began coming after he watched Scherer’s “Faith and Science” sermon series on YouTube.

The pastor has performed six weddings. The youth group has doubled in size this school year.

Scherer identified one constant among the

worshippers. “Everyone who visits has gone online and read our website. It’s a big deal.”

This church plant is underwritten by the Conference’s New Faith Communities Ministry Team (formerly Congregational Development). Glenpool’s population has swelled; the 1A school district is now 5A.

For about a year, Living Water has met in its second rented space. Suite C encompasses 5,000 square feet at 519 E. 141st St., Glenpool. Also, the Council Oak District recently began allowing them to use an existing building on 5 acres — the former Glenpool United Methodist Church.

With potential at both sites, life for Living Water seems comparable to Noah’s family aboard the ark. A leadership team is studying pros and cons.

The existing church building is mortgage-free, yet aging. It does have a new roof and glows with promise inside. Volunteers from Tulsa-Asbury UMC have been repainting the interior and refinishing cabinetry.

But the property isn’t a prime location.

Both the Oklahoma and the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences previously have attempted and failed to establish churches there.

In a shopping plaza, Suite C features lots of glass walls, casual furniture, and airy spaces.

“What they love is the nontraditional setting,” Scherer



Living Water UMC rents 5,000 square feet of space in a Glenpool shopping plaza.

said. Also, “parents couldn’t put kids in a separate space” in the previous location, a coffee house that doubled as worship space.

Youths now have decorated their room with a 232-piece paper chain on which they wrote blessings.

John Wesley’s church plants “looked like this,” Scherer mused. “No pews. Nothing was nailed down. It was all used for teaching people, feeding people ...”

Monthly rent exceeds \$2,000 for Suite C.

“We do want to have a space that we can continue to grow in,” the pastor said. “We are working very hard to be sustainable by the time our funding ends from the Conference.”



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OCU campus prays for Stillwater peers

The Oklahoma City University community joined its peers in grieving the tragedy that occurred during the Oklahoma State University Homecoming Parade in Stillwater on Oct. 24, when a car struck a crowd of people, resulting in deaths and injuries.

Universities share a sense of special kinship. OCU visibly expressed solidarity with OSU through expressions of grief and symbols of caring.

But the people of OCU not only are joined with those in Stillwater because of the two centers for higher education.

Some individuals in our community have friends and loved ones associated with OSU. Among those at the parade who died was the grandson of a doctoral student in OCU’s Kramer School of Nursing.

Two public responses on Oct. 26 at OCU were made possible by Charles Neff, vice president for University-Church Relations and a United Methodist clergyman, who organized them.

A prayer service was held in the Chapel sanctuary from 1 to 2 p.m. Each worshipper was encouraged to light one of many candles filling the altar rail in honor or in memory of those injured or killed.

Time was allowed for personal prayer and reflection, with prayers offered by the community every 15 minutes.

While words fail to grasp the depth of great loss, they can enable people to reach out in hope in time of



Philip Younts, left, and Michael Horn offer orange memorial ribbons outside the OCU cafeteria.

need, such as this petition offered that afternoon: “God of healing, God of wholeness, in your presence and power grant us faith and confidence that within your love, broken lives are made whole.”

Everyone on campus also was encouraged to wear orange or black clothing that day. Orange ribbons were available in the Student Center and in the Chapel for people to wear.

Wesley Center encourages faith conversations

On the first Wednesday of each month at OCU, the Wesley Center offers a free lunch in Watson Lounge of

the Chapel, in partnership with Sodexo Food Services.

This is one of the most diverse gatherings of students on campus, with people of differing views and from many states and countries. Conversations are encouraged on how faith impacts their lives and all of society.

Each month, a printed question about a specific issue awaits on the tables. Questions for this discussion series, known as “Speaking of Faith,” have included:

- How do your religious beliefs (or attitudes toward religion) influence your position and actions on political issues?
- What religious themes do you see in movies such as “Star Wars,” “Harry Potter,” “Lord of the Rings,” etc.?

One table is reserved for informal discussion with a professor or staff member, who shares how faith influences and informs his or her work. This semester, sociology professor Joe Meinhart and Colbi Beam, coordinator of First Year Experience, have challenged and informed students with their insights.

Bishop Scholar award deadline is Dec. 15

If you are a high school senior interested in a career in Christian service within The United Methodist Church, or if you know such a person, you are encouraged to apply for the full-tuition Bishop Scholar award, which is for UM students who plan to study in OCU’s Wimberly School of Religion. For details and an application, go to www.okcu.edu/BishopScholar. Deadline to apply is Dec. 15, with all supporting paperwork due Feb. 1.

The Oklahoma United Methodist
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Strength for the journey: A collection of ideas and thoughts from our bishop

What should a pastor do?

NOTE: Bishop Hayes is calling each of us to action in the Oklahoma Conference. This is the third in a five-part series, following “Closed on Sunday?” and “Is church high on your list?”

“I can’t impress this on you too strongly. God is looking over your shoulder. He is about to break into the open with His rule, so proclaim the Message with intensity; keep your watch. Challenge, warn, and urge your people. Don’t ever quit. Just keep it simple. Keep your eye on what you’re doing; accept the hard times along with the good; keep the Message alive; do a thorough job as God’s servant.” (2 Timothy 4:1-2; 5. The Message Bible)

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

Every time I enter one of Oklahoma’s churches, one of the first things I do is take a long look at the worship bulletin. I can tell a lot about what’s going on in the life of a congregation by what’s in that.

In addition to the order of worship, I usually find a listing of events, meetings, and ministry opportunities for the upcoming week. Often, those sick or homebound are named, and there may be a space to write notes from the sermon.

Church contact details are included, and beneath the pastor’s title and name I sometimes see the designation *Ministers*. Beside that I often read the word *Everyone*.

This is a noble attempt to remind the people of that church that all are engaged in this sacred work, along with the pastor. That is true. I keep this in mind when I write each newspaper column; I pray that what I share is meaningful in some way for everyone.

As I prepare this particular article, however, those who stand behind pulpits or

who hold the title of pastor fill my thoughts. Perhaps that is because I have entered the final year of my 45-year Spirit walk.

I feel that I must direct this column toward those whom God has called and set apart as clergy of the Church.

I have been thinking about what, for me, makes my clergy career meaningful and significant. I ask myself:

What can I pass on that might inspire or be helpful to others called into this work?

What experiences that I identify as transformational moments have occurred to me along the way?

What key can I offer that could open doors to fuller, more satisfying ministry for other clergy?

And:

Can I share these despite the risk of sounding like someone who has all the answers?

There is no doubt that the saving grace for me during more than four decades of ministry has been the passion and enthusiasm God gave me when I began this journey. Without a deep thirst and an excitement for this occupation, a time comes when a clergy person feels it is impossible to continue. If you don’t love what you do, at some point you will begin to dislike why you do it.

I find clergy who have stopped looking for God, the One who called us and set us apart to this special undertaking.

Passion keeps holy fire burning within you. Enthusiasm carries you forward to the full joy of knowing that you are living out what God wants you to be!



Bishop Hayes

Long ago I discovered that God who called me into this enterprise always has been present with me in the midst of it. God has been present in every worship service; each baptism, wedding, hospital visit, and funeral; in every challenge and success I’ve experienced.

Not every transformational moment has a burning bush or a mountaintop encounter. Remember that God is found in the simple, often-overlooked everyday experiences of ministry.

Mrs. Daniels, the widow of a preacher, told me to “keep it simple and preach Jesus” after I gave my first sermon in my first appointment. That moment forever changed my life!

And when I was sent to what I expected to be my most difficult assignment, little did I realize what was to come. It was one of the greatest blessings I have received.

Our lives are governed and guided by a loving God, who not only knows us better than we know ourselves, but also has placed us where He wants us to be. This is important advice from me for your ministry: Stay in love with God!

•Develop and maintain an intimacy with God that will weather the storms of bad times and bring peace to your soul and spirit at other times.

•Pray and study with others also called to this task, and develop friendships that will give support and encouragement.

•Be authentic and open to what God has in store for you. There are no pedestals or special places in ministry as clergy, and the seat you are called to occupy is most often the least important.

•Be truthful with yourself, acknowledging pain when it invades your life and your humanity when you stumble.

•When you trip or collapse, get back up! Dust yourself off and press on, as Paul urges, to win the prize in the race to which God has called you.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul reminded him that ministry has urgency and intensity. Look at the words Paul used to describe this calling: proclaim, challenge, warn, urge!

He concluded by saying, “Keep the Message alive! Do a thorough job as God’s servant!”

Therein lies the most important word that I can place before you: servant! That is who you are and what you are called to be. Don’t ever forget that.

Tulsa agency thanks volunteers

At Restore Hope Ministries in Tulsa on the day before Thanksgiving, dozens of volunteers will prepare and distribute more than 600 food baskets to families in crisis. Almost 7,900 pounds of food will be given.

Each 21-ingredient basket includes a turkey and all the trimmings – from fresh produce to dessert. So that the United Methodist-affiliated agency can properly serve them, families register during the first two weeks of November to receive the food.

Volunteers for the 2014 Thanksgiving project included groups from UM churches: New Haven and First, in Tulsa, and Heritage and First, in Broken Arrow.

“Thanks to the generosity of our sponsors, Restore Hope Ministries has been providing Thanksgiving baskets to families in crisis for almost 30 years,” said Executive Director Jeff Jaynes.

“Far too many Tulsans worry about how they will feed their children today, let alone prepare a special holiday meal. In fact, over 90 percent of Tulsa school students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches.”

Rev. Jaynes said many families assisted by Restore Hope “just need a little extra help when unexpected events or expenses arise. We are here to give them a hand up when they’ve stumbled, to *restore hope* that a better day is possible.”

Employment

Church Secretary: OKC-Chapel Hill. Full-time. shari@mychapelhill.org


Two openings: Sand Springs UMC.

Contemporary Worship Leader, part-time. **Traditional Music Coordinator**, part-time. Email resume to office@sandsspringsumc.org

Worship Arts Director: Shawnee-Wesley UMC. Full- or part-time. David Larson, wesleychurchoffice@sbcglobal.net

Children’s Ministry Staff Person: Moore-New Life UMC. Part-time. Kathy Brown, rev.kathybrown@gmail.com, 405-794-8393

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OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST

CIRCLE of CARE

for CHILDREN and YOUTH

Briefly

Orders meet Jan. 19

Tom Albin will present at the Jan. 19 meeting of the Orders of Elders and Deacons and the Fellowship of Local Pastors.

Clergy will meet 10 a.m.-3 p.m. that Tuesday at OKC-St. Luke's.

Rev. Albin is dean of The Upper Room chapel in Nashville, Tenn., and a clergy member of the Oklahoma Conference.

Update officers now

Now is the time to enter your church's 2016 leadership information in the Conference database. Dec. 15 is the deadline.

If you are designated to do this for your church and need help logging in, contact mmyers@okumc.org.

Send a kid to camp

A Christmas gift idea comes from Camps, for a child or teen to enjoy now and next summer.

Young church campers' remarks about their 2015 summer adventures include ...

Something new I learned was ... "to be brave."

I will never forget ... "the hike to the cross that we put up."

I can't wait to tell ... "that I had the best time ever. I want to come back. I made new friends and came closer to God. I saw an armadillo."

The best part for me was ... "Everything!"

Consider giving a young person a life-changing adventure at church camp next summer. The ministry is wrapping and shipping holiday packages — each contains sunglasses, water bottle, flashlight, and a \$75 Camps gift certificate. Cost is \$100. Go to www.okcamps.org or call 405-530-2017.



Correction

Tags printed with the church name are attached to Warm Fuzzies gifts from OKC-New Hope. ("Fuzzy friends," Oct. 30)

2016 Conference Calendars



Order your calendars online now at www.okumc.org

The calendar is a helpful tool in local-church planning. Cost is \$10 each.

Youths in new district determined to connect

Youths in the Green Country District began networking quickly after Oklahoma's new eight-district structure became official in May.

They want to grow genuine peer friendships within this larger configuration — 63 churches — in northeastern Oklahoma.

Their success shows.

Approximately 500 youths descended on Claremore-First UMC for an inaugural gathering on Sept. 13. They agreed to brand themselves GCDY (Green Country District Youth).

Steve Bumgarner, a member of Bartlesville-First, challenged the youths to embrace the change in districts. He serves on the Oklahoma Conference Council on Youth Ministry.

He spoke about how difficult change can be and urged: Meet some new friends; let go of the past. Each person present was invited to take a seashell home and, over a few days, think about what he/she was hanging onto over God. They were directed to then smash their shells to symbolize "letting go."

Bumgarner hoped the youths would tweet what they give up.

Claremore youth member Sydney Pharris helped coordinate and also spoke. Theme was reCONNECT.

There were legendary four-square, football, kickball, and volleyball games. The Claremore-First ELEVATE youth band led a time of worship and praise. Jaimie and Jennifer Willis coordinated on site.

On Oct. 10 at Locust Grove UMC, district youth officers were elected during an organizational meeting.



Photo by Brenda Scrivner

Green Country District youth members select shells during worship to smash later as a spiritual gesture.

Then, on Nov. 8 at Egan Camp near Tahlequah, a crowd of 228 youths cooked hotdogs and s'mores, played games, and worshipped around a campfire. Jaimie Willis reported 12 churches were represented during this first-ever GCDY hayride and bonfire.

— Contributed by Brenda Scrivner

Lilly grants go to 2 campus ministries

The United Methodist campus ministries at Oklahoma State University and the University of Oklahoma have each been awarded \$100,000 grants by the Lilly Endowment Inc.

In Norman, The Wesley at OCU will receive \$20,000 per year during five years. The ministry will use the funds to help undergraduate students

develop leadership talents, said Jennifer Nath, especially The Wesley's student interns. She was on the team that wrote the grant application.

At Stillwater, The Wesley Foundation will use the grant over three years. It especially will support vocational discernment and Christian discipleship groups in concert

with a regional women's conference, said Janina Graves, student ministry coordinator.

According to Religion News Service on Nov. 4, the Lilly Endowment awarded almost \$4 million total to 53 private faith organizations that work with students at 49 public universities.

Faced with many choices, college students long to reflect

on their deepest concerns and to clarify their values. Campus ministries respond, developing innovative programs that help students draw on their faith as they make life-defining decisions about their futures.

The Endowment's initiative is designed to encourage campus ministries with such programming.

Dental clinic's relocation elicits big smiles in OKC

After a four-year capital campaign, Neighborhood Services Organization (NSO) has opened the doors on its new, state-of-the-art dental clinic at 431 SW 11th St. in Oklahoma City.

The agency was closed for two weeks in September while moving both the clinic and the agency's central offices from its temporary location to the new building in the historic Riverside Neighborhood. NSO has roots in The United Methodist Church and receives Apportionment funds and other UM support.

"We are so excited to be back to work," said Alan McDonald, NSO's director of dentistry. "The calls for our services didn't stop while we were moving, so I'm ready to get back to serving Oklahoma's underinsured, uninsured, and in-need."

The dental clinic provides more than 6,500 procedures each



A dental patient tests the chair in an exam room during a recent tour of NSO's new dental clinic in Oklahoma City. Standing are Laura Gutierrez, left, clinic manager, and John Gladden, president of Delta Dental.

year. There are approximately 1 million Oklahomans without dental insurance, and Oklahoma ranks last among states in which adults have seen a dentist in the

previous year. These startling facts are why NSO has a commitment to providing low-cost dental care to anyone who needs services.

The clinic saw its first patients at the new site on Oct. 1. It is open for weekday and Saturday appointments.

"NSO dental clinic is a vital part of the oral health safety net in Oklahoma County, and our foundation is proud to have partnered with it for the past seven years," said John Gladden, president and CEO of Delta Dental of Oklahoma and chairman of its Oral Health Foundation.

"This nonprofit clinic makes care accessible to many low-income patients who would have no other way to afford the treatment they need."

NSO has a 95-year tradition of offering help to those who need it most. Other programs include transitional and permanent housing, rental assistance, and WIC (women, infants, and children) clinics.

Missionaries rerouting after 30+ years

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

Longtime United Methodist missionaries Alex and Brenda Awad, who have been serving in Israel and Palestine, are anticipating the end of their mission in May (2016) and are wondering what's next.

"We don't know what God will open up," said Rev. Alex, who is affiliated with Bethlehem Bible College as a professor, dean of students, and board member.

Brenda works about 30 hours a week at the college, assisting with administrative needs and developing proposals for the college's worldwide support base. She also substitutes as an English teacher and performs several functions at the small international church in East Jerusalem where her husband is pastor.

The couple recently visited the United Methodist Ministry Center in Oklahoma City to discuss their mission work.

The Awads have been affiliated with the General Board of Global Ministries for 26 years, Alex said.

They are thankful for the support received from Oklahomans, Brenda said. "We have been embraced by many of the



Brenda and Alex Awad

churches here in the Oklahoma Conference," she said.

Over the years, their ministry has included time in the state, serving as mission interpreters for the Schools of Christian Mission (now Mission U), presenting to local churches, and speaking at

United Methodist-affiliated Oklahoma City University on Mideast conflict and peacemaking.

Brenda and Alex are the parents of three grown children: Christy and Basem, who live with their families in Thailand, and Randy, who lives in Thailand and India.

'The church in the Holy Land is very resilient'

Since opening 36 years ago, Bethlehem Bible College has been producing pastors to serve in the Holy Land, Alex said. It also offers a medical clinic and language classes.

Palestinians "have a great desire to learn English," he said.

He encourages Oklahomans to visit the college and see the work being performed there. People can tour the college, stay in the guest house, join the international study program, and volunteer.

In March 2016, people can participate in the college's fourth "Christ at the Checkpoint" program. Among Oklahomans who

have taken part is Darrell Cates of the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation. Theme is "The Gospel in the Face of Religious Extremism," according to the program's Web page.

Mission work can be challenging, Alex said. He has learned that "regardless of how difficult the mission field, God is in every situation, and in his own time he will bring groups to the ministry."

He said he is grateful for the opportunity to be with people who are suffering

and hurting. "Being able to understand them. Be a blessing to them."

It is important to remember "God is calling us to be faithful rather than be successful," he said.

Alex said he experienced a "special God moment" during graduation at the college this year.

"When we saw 50 people graduating, released to go out for ministry, I realized that the vision God gave us 36 years ago when we started the Bible college was being fulfilled," he said.

"I saw the vision alive."

The graduation reinforced his feeling that "the

church in the Holy Land is very resilient and very powerful."

The Awads have written a Dec. 24 Advent devotion for a blog produced by Kristen Brown, an Oklahoman who has been serving as GBGM Methodist Liaison in Palestine and Israel since 2011. The blog link is: <https://methodistliaisonjerusalem.wordpress.com/2015/11/05/advent-devotions-for-year-c-2015/>

Missionary support codes are: Alex, 10825Z; and Brenda, 10826Z.

'We have been embraced here in Oklahoma'

Disaster:

Continued from page 1

more with a volunteer team," he said. Hiring contractors can triple expenses, he has observed.

Volunteers deployed in the state by Oklahoma UM Disaster Response have served 6,632 hours since March, reported Chad Detwiler, when heavy rains flooded homes in the Tulsa area. Their service equates to \$142,256.40 in labor value.

In early November Pratt was excited to report that 150-200 people already have signed up to volunteer in spring. They include students from Oklahoma's campus ministries and groups from out of state.

Pratt also needs workers in January and February. People are needed now, too.

"Volunteers for this are the most crucial, even with all this money," said Rev. Norman.

"We try to get to the most vulnerable people first. The elderly are the ones I really worry about."

In addition to UMCOR, Norman expressed gratitude for other Oklahoma partners in the ongoing recovery work. Catholic Charities, Habitat for Humanity, and Rebuilding Together are among them.

Three long-term community recovery committees are active at this time. Pastor Paul McDowell of Kingston UMC leads the committee in south-central Oklahoma. Two other committees oversee needs in Grady County and in central Oklahoma.

Moore-First UMC continues to provide

space for a UM volunteer deployment center. Karen Mangano coordinates that segment of the response.

"Sometimes it's the invisible disasters that really require the greatest funding," said Greg Forrester, head of UMCOR U.S. Disaster Response. "For the families affected, the impact lasts a lot longer than the news cycle."

Oklahoma's disaster response ministry was just concluding long-term recovery work after the 2013 tornadoes when this year's flooding occurred.

"The tornadoes in Moore attracted a lot of funding because the damage was so visible," Forrester said. "That's more difficult with flooding. The water comes up, does its worst, and then goes away."

"A lot of the destruction is inside the home; you don't see it from the street."

Norman said the federal government designated 45 of Oklahoma's 77 counties as disaster areas after the flooding.

He's "very pleased" for UMCOR's help. "Because of this Conference's commitment (to disaster response ministry) and our ability to have construction/volunteer/case management pieces" in place, UMCOR knows the most vulnerable people will get help, he said. — Linda Unger, a senior writer for GBGM, contributed to this story.

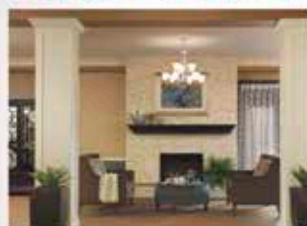
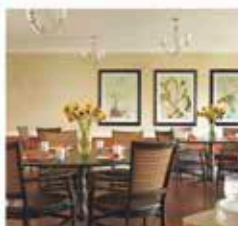
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A unique mix of innovation and tradition.





SEMINARY SAYS THANKS — Oklahoma's Tom and Brenda McDaniel, above, and Bishop Robert and Dee Hayes, lower left, received the 2015 Saint Paul School of Theology President's Award on Oct. 12 during the United Methodist seminary's dinner in Overland Park, Kan. They were honored because "together they made the dream of our Saint Paul at Oklahoma City University location a successful reality," stated H. Sharon Howell, lower right. The program was centered on the parable of the sower from Matthew 13, emphasizing verses 8 and 9: "Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundredfold, some 60, some 30. Let anyone with ears listen!"



BARR — Rev. Robert Lester Barr, 85, of Elk City died Nov. 4, 2015. His ministry extended beyond a half-century.

Robert was born June 23, 1930, in Blackwell. He married Betty Harden in 1955.

He pastored at Nash, Ames, Cloud Chief/Sappington, Gotebo, Butler, El Reno-Ellison Avenue, Hartshorne, Stratford, Guthrie-West, Wetumka, Mountain View, Tipton/Manitou, Minco, Calumet, Arapaho, and Canton. He officially retired in 1995. His last pastoral appointment was to Loyal UMC, where he served for 19 years.

Among survivors are daughter Darla Barr, son Paul Lester Barr, and ex-wife Betty Moore.

Service was Nov. 7 at Elk City UMC. Memorial gifts to: Elk City United Methodist Church Youth Group.

PARKER — Rev. Wayne B. Parker, 81, of Okmulgee died Nov. 4, 2015.

He was born Aug. 27, 1934, in Sasakwa. Wayne and Katherine Magby Parker were married for 31 years.

He served at OKC-McKee, Piedmont, OKC-Wesley, OKC-Lakeside, Enid/Garber, Mustang, Blanchard, Rush Springs/Woodlawn, Waurika, Tishomingo, Henryetta, and

OF SPECIAL NOTE — At right: descendants of Methodist circuit-rider William Wood recently donated an 1860s pump organ to Choctaw United Methodist Church. Rev. Wood was minister there when the church was newly formed, circa 1892. He pulled the organ in a mule-drawn wagon as he navigated his preaching circuit. Now the organ is displayed in the church's foyer. From left are Jeff Flick, Pastor Andy James, and Dan Flick. Dan's wife and Jeff's mother is Charlene Martin Flick, who is Rev. Wood's great-great-granddaughter.



Retreat is music to United Methodist souls

Laura Jaquith Bartlett is a self-professed worship geek. Seated at a piano in Eagle Creek, Ore., she lightly played a hymn ending in "Alleluia."

"That's the one that was going through my head when I woke up this morning, out of all the ones I was working on last night," the clergywoman told Fran Walsh of UMTV.

Rev. Bartlett loves the spoken and unspoken details of worship, from tying prayers and music together, to setting the mood, with visual and interactive elements.

She will lead worship at the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Ore.

"What really gets me going is when I get to work on worship design and when I get to take all these pieces and weave them into the liturgy together and create something that does, in fact, help people claim their relationship with the Divine," she said.

Since 2009, she has hosted "Great Hymns of the Faith" at the United Methodist Alton L. Collins Retreat Center in Oregon.

At a recent "Great Hymns" retreat, she prayed, "The humblest thing You created sings your praise."

The events are a chance for music enthusiasts to learn more about the origin of favorite hymns.

"The hymnody is a great treasure which the church has accumulated over the centuries. And most of us don't know nearly enough about it," said retreat participant David Poindexter.

"Charles Wesley said that he could sing religion into people a lot faster than John could preach it in," Poindexter declared. He is a fan of the most famous Methodist hymn writer.

And while teaching the group about Isaac Watts, Bartlett concurred with Poindexter: "Next to Charles Wesley — who was of course the greatest ever, I just need to make that clear — next to him, Watts is certainly one of the greatest hymn writers ever."

Watts composed hundreds of hymns. Among the best known are "Joy to the World" and "When I Survey the Wondrous Cross."

Retreat participant Betty Pritchard said, "A lot of people in a congregation find that they have some of their most inspirational moments during the music of the church. It adds to their spiritual experience during the worship service."

Bartlett's perspective on music in worship is more direct. "I think that in many ways music isn't just an add-on; music is an integral part of how we relate to God, how we understand at a deeper level that goes beyond words, what our relationship is with the Divine, and how we are shaped together as a community of faith."

Some at the retreats are choir directors who like to learn new hymns and ideas to share with their congregations.

But Bartlett pointed out that a church doesn't have to have well-trained musicians to add excitement to worship.

She explained, "When we sing 'For the Beauty of the Earth,' I ask the women to sing one of the stanzas and then the men to sing one stanza, and then everybody comes back in. ... Many, many congregations would never think of doing that. Just that little bit not only gives some variety, but it also gives us a chance to listen to each other."

Participant Carol Seckel said, "We can memorize Scripture, but I find that we don't do that a lot. But we do remember music."

Passages

Wewoka, and in Ruidoso, N.M., retiring in 1999. He also filled the pulpit at Tulsa-Harvard Avenue.

He was a representative in 1984 to the World Council of Churches.

Among survivors: his wife, Katherine, and son Brian. Service was Nov. 13 at Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC.

Memorial gifts to: Sistema Tulsa or the Television Ministry at Boston Avenue Church.

PULVER — Rev. Dr. Merle Burdette Pulver, 94, of Oklahoma City died Nov. 4, 2015. He was the father of Rev. Dan Pulver, senior pastor at Bixby, and grandfather of Egan Camp manager, Josh Pulver.

Merle was born Nov. 17, 1920, on an Iowa farm. He married Oleta Lucille Williamson on July 8, 1945.

He served in three denominations — the United Brethren in Christ Church, Evangelical United Brethren Church, and The United Methodist Church — as mergers took place during his career. He began pastoring in 1942 in Nebraska.

He was Bartlesville District superintendent in the 1970s.

He pastored at Hardesty, Pleasant Hill, Bartlesville-First EUB, Tulsa First-EUB, Enid-First EUB, Enid-Central (now

Willow View UMC), Yukon-First UMC, Tulsa-St. Paul's UMC, OKC-First UMC, McAlester-Grand Avenue UMC, and OKC-Ridgecrest UMC prior to retirement in 1987.

In retirement he served OKC-Nichols Hills, Edmond-First, and Yukon-First. He also was a chaplain at Deaconess Hospital in Oklahoma City.

Among survivors are his wife, Oleta, and sons Merle Clovis Pulver, Bennie Burdette Pulver, and Rev. Daniel Wayne Pulver.

Service was Nov. 9 at Yukon-First. Memorial gifts to: OCU Scholarship Fund or Yukon-First.

JOHNS — Cherry T. Johns, 74, of Broken Arrow died Oct. 31, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. Robert Edward "Bob" Johns, pastor at Tulsa-Will Rogers UMC.

Cherry was born Dec. 16, 1941. She was a telecommunications executive.

Among survivors are her husband, Rev. Johns, and children Gena Hamilton, Melissa McDaniels, Stephanie Kingfisher, and Rex Nichols.

Service was Nov. 5 at Will Rogers UMC. Memorial gifts to Will Rogers UMC food pantry.



Photos by Sarah Baumann

FIRED UP — Judges for the chili cookoff on Oct. 25 at OKC-First United Methodist Church downtown were city firefighters from Station One. They also brought a ladder truck for all ages to tour. Top: Toby Nelson sets up her entry, labeled “Toby’s Terrific Chili.” Center: Pastor Mark McAdow, standing, counts samples with Meredith and Clay Diers, right, who was a contestant. First-place winner Cary McClellin received a gift card from — you guessed it — Chili’s restaurant.



The global church

MISSION AGENCY MOVING — Buenos Aires, Argentina, will be home to the first of three new regional offices for the General Board of Global Ministries, directors affirmed at a recent meeting. They also were updated on the GBGM’s plan to relocate its headquarters to Atlanta next year. The plan to establish regional offices is part of a decision to vacate the board’s longtime central offices in New York by Fall 2016. (*United Methodist News Service, Oct. 6*)

GIFTED DIFFERENTLY — With the support of the Baltimore-Washington Conference, Don Geller has planted a new church especially welcoming people who are differently abled. “Caregivers worry their special-needs child or adult will cry out during the worship service,” he said in Lexington Park, Md. “Embarrassing moments are the main reason we see very few caregivers of people with disabilities in our worship services.” A unique worship experience is designed and messages are tailored to the challenges parents and caregivers of children and adults with disabilities face in everyday life. Community With A Cause began holding worship on Sept. 12, and 66 people attended. Rev. Geller told them, “God has not forgotten you or those whom God has gifted differently!” (*Wesley Theological Seminary, Sept. 24*)

HAPPY BIRTHDAY, GHANA — The Methodist Church of Ghana has been celebrating 180 years of ministry this year. A commemorative concert with the theme “Methodism Was Born in Song,” was held in Accra. METHOFEST took place in Sunyani. In August, a huge Thanksgiving Service was held, also in Accra. (*World Methodist Council, First Friday Newsletter, November*)

LOADS OF LOVE — Members of McKendree UMC in Georgia go to laundromats monthly to offer free detergent, fabric softener, and quarters for the machines. It’s one example of their “church can happen anywhere” philosophy. They usually cover 20 people’s laundry costs each trip, and they try to bring at least one member who speaks Spanish. (*North Georgia Conference, Oct. 6*)



Photo by Holly McCray

PAST AND PRESENT CONNECT — Chuck Stewart, left, of Stilwell and Carl Young of Edmond — current and former Oklahoma Conference lay leaders, respectively — meet at an educational event for delegates to the 2016 General and South Central Jurisdictional Conferences. OKC-St. Luke’s hosted the event on Oct. 29-30. During his term, Young started a leadership program for district lay leaders, and Stewart was in the first class. The St. Luke’s event drew 78 percent of the delegates from eight states. Bishop Robert Schnase of Missouri told them there are 4,774 “shalls” in the *Book of Discipline*. Bishop Patrick Streiff of Switzerland reported that the *Discipline* must be translated into 10 languages for use by United Methodists in central and southern Europe. Eight SCJ episcopal candidates were introduced.

PEACEMAKERS — United Methodist Women had a specific testimony to offer when celebrating a longtime United Nations resolution dedicated to women’s roles as peacemakers. Recently, UMW brought together Russian and Ukrainian women at the UM-owned Church Center for the United Nations, to talk about how to end the conflict between their two countries. (*UMNS, Nov. 3*)

Go ahead! Text in church!

By **TRICIA BROWN**
United Methodist News Service

Carrying a cellphone has become as common as toting a purse. Last year, 81 percent of U.S. adults with smartphones used them for texting. Those short messages seem to be the preferred form of communications for many, so it’s logical to explore ways churches can utilize this technology.

Mass texting can:

- Alert congregants to time changes and cancellations
- Send event invitations and reminders
- Announce births, deaths, and funerals
- Communicate special needs or prayer concerns
- Request feedback on various ministry issues

Using a mass-text service, a church leader can enter all participant names and numbers once and, when needed, type and send one text to all. Some of these short messaging services (SMS) allow you to schedule texts in advance.

During the Ebola crisis, SMS became an effective tool to deliver

credible information to United Methodist clergy in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

“Modern, sexy stuff rarely works in many of the places where SMS still works,” said Ken Banks, who developed the Church’s SMS for that emergency. It’s the “dumbest” technology that often has the most profound effect.

United Methodist Communications’ *ICT4D Church Initiatives* is working with staff of episcopal areas in Africa and the Philippines to utilize SMS as an alternative to email, which requires expensive Internet service. Keeping phones charged is more cost-effective; they can be paired with a low-cost solar cellphone charger.

Many people don’t carry cash, and some (especially younger generations) don’t write checks. Text-giving, also known as mobile giving, has become one of the newest ways to support Church ministries. This can promote consistent giving but also comes in handy for special requests (such as a one-time mission campaign). Some providers, such as Give By Cell,

even offer a “text pledge” service for fundraising campaigns.

In addition, some churches use texting in more innovative ways.

One Missouri pastor encouraged worshippers to text him during the service. He answered some texts during the sermon and replied to others later.

Numerous pastors, youth leaders, and Sunday School teachers use texts to send encouragement and Bible verses to congregants and class members.

To set up text-giving or mass texting for your congregation, your church will have to subscribe to a texting service. Various mobile giving services are available, including E-Zekiel, Simple Give, Easy Tithe, and mgive. Texting services and costs vary. Consider affordability, security policies, and simplicity.

For any texting service, also learn what kinds of customer support are available.

Next time you see someone use a phone in church, don’t think of it as a faux pas. Think creatively.



Legacy Planning Using Donor Advised Funds

John and Jeri first visited beautiful Asheville, N.C., 10 years ago. They were traveling the eastern U.S. and stopped for the night. They ended up staying for three nights and have been back every year. Last year John and Jeri sold the family business and made the decision to retire in Asheville.

They are interested in continuing to support Oklahoma United Methodist causes including their home church. They recently attended an estate and legacy planning seminar presented by the Foundation and learned that they could donate real estate to the Foundation.

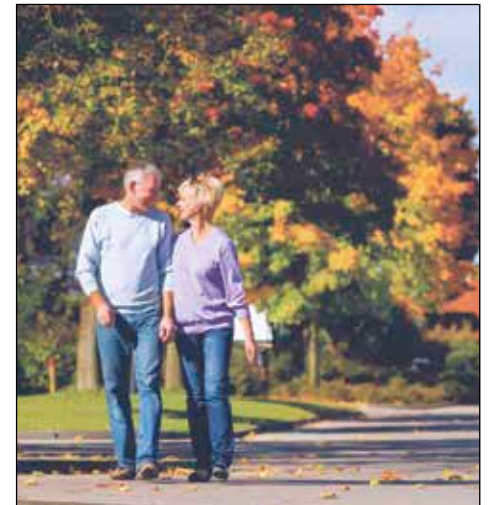
John and Jeri still own their home in Oklahoma and would like to donate it to the Foundation to accomplish their philanthropic goals. After exploring various charitable giving options, they

determined that a Donor Advised Fund (DAF) was the best vehicle for them.

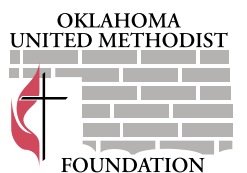
A DAF is like having a private foundation without the unfavorable restrictions and excise tax. It offers a flexible and easy-to-establish vehicle for charitable giving. The fund is invested for growth, which permits the donors to make gifts while they are alive and allows their children to make recommendations for distributions after they have passed on. Gifts made to the DAF qualify for a full fair market value charitable deduction. The fair market value of John and Jeri's home is \$3 million. When they contribute their home to their Donor Advised Fund, they will receive a current income tax deduction for that amount, which will offset the capital gains tax from the sale of their business.

As soon as their home is sold, John and Jeri will be ready to make gifts to both their church and other Oklahoma Methodist causes. They can also make additional gifts of cash and securities to their DAF. Additionally, John and Jeri plan to make arrangements to add a bequest to their DAF. Their Donor Advised Fund will enable them to pass on their legacy of giving to their children and grandchildren.

If you would like more information about Donor Advised Funds, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org. There is no obligation and all inquiries are confidential.



THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION
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Colby Sandburg, left, and Ike Dodrill burn mortgage papers in worship Sept. 20 at OKC-St. Andrew's.

Free:

Continued from page 1

“We are free to decide what God would have us do next,” said Rev. Bennett. “God called us to do this, and we did it, but God's not through.”

Scripture for the Sept. 20 sermon was “Without a vision, the people perish” (Proverbs 29:18).

Nine action groups already are exploring.

There's key interest in expanding family ministries. Leaders met with a church growth expert and identified

the church's target audience is “nominally churched families with children and youth living in the Moore school district,” the pastor said. He noted the preschool has grown and lots of youths are involved in church life.

Commitment to mission service remains foundational for St. Andrew's.

“We've never sacrificed mission for paying off our debt,” Bennett said.

On Sept. 27 the people packed more than 50,000 meals



Photos by Kim McKinley

Youths fire confetti cannons in the Debt Retirement Service at OKC-St. Andrew's on Sept. 20. From left: Decklin Nagel, Cole Apel, Charis Bennett, Cameron Benson, Garrett Bennett, Jake Nelson, Blake McKinley, Kevin Glover, and Zach Nelson.

as they took part for the third year in Stop Hunger Now. The nonprofit hunger-relief project delivers dehydrated meals worldwide.

“We do it on Sunday morning to get rid of any excuses; you are already here (for worship),”

Bennett said.

An October fall festival, retooled in recent years, also was hugely successful. The evening event included live music, trunk-and-treat fun, and food trucks. The Boy Scout troop provided s'mores.

“Perfect” weather for the outdoor event drew so many people that the food trucks were depleted, Bennett said.

St. Andrew's UMC is located on Southwest 119th Street, just east of May Avenue.

— Holly McCray