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**Living Hope:  
Annual  
Conference  
2019**

THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST  
**Contact**

Volume 1, Number 7 • June 14, 2019

[www.okumc.org](http://www.okumc.org)



# 2019 Episcopal Address

The following excerpt has been edited for length. The full address can be seen on our [YouTube channel](#).

The theme of this conference is “Living Hope.” It comes from the first letter of Peter to the general church. In chapter 1, verse 3, Peter writes, “You have been born anew into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead” (1 Peter 1:3 CEB).

Living hope requires preparation on our part. In chapter 1, verse 13, Peter writes, “Therefore, once you have your minds ready for action and you are thinking clearly, place your hope completely on the grace that will be brought to you when Jesus Christ is revealed” (1 Peter 1:13 CEB). There are two prerequisites for living hope. First, our minds have to be ready for action. People or churches that fail to take action are usually stuck or dying.

Second, we must be thinking clearly. Clear thinking should never be equated with the words, “I want.” We make the same mistakes over and over and pay an increasing price for our mistakes when our hearts are set on getting what we want for ourselves. Clear thinking is not writing a plan that will produce what we want; frankly, that is selfish thinking.

Living hope requires a bias for action. It centers on holy obedience to God’s truth and grace. When these preparations are in place, we are ready to act.

## Resources and statistics

I encourage local churches to use the video and guide entitled, “What is a Disciple?” I encourage local churches to use the video and guide, which describes a disciple as one who “listens to God and faithfully responds in obedience” at [okumc.org/whatisadisciple](http://okumc.org/whatisadisciple). It is a tool to clarify our mission.

In previous years, I have shared four priorities for the conference. Those priorities are developing leaders, planting new churches, invigorating existing churches, and strengthening stewardship and financial alignment.

An update of five related statistical areas is reported on page 75 of your [preconference workbook](#). In summary, worship attendance is down about 300 people. We continue to decline in the number of persons in the pew and increase in the number of people engaging online. The number of professions of faith are down about 10% compared to 2017 and down about 20%



**Bishop Nunn**

compared to 2014. We are experiencing a steady decline in the number of children professing their faith, but increasing the number of adults professing their faith. Spiritual formation groups declined about 5%. Mission engagement continued its pattern of steady growth, expanding by about 7% over the prior year and growing by about 56% since 2014. Stewardship as measured by giving to ministries beyond ourselves grew again last year.

As I was reading the [preconference workbook](#), I could not help but be inspired by the ministries of the churches in the Oklahoma Conference. Please be sure to read and celebrate the good work described on pages 13-14 of your [preconference workbook](#). Detailed reports can be found in the pages following the summary.

These and other ministries are blessing our communities and serving people in need.

There are more things we do as a conference than are summarized on these pages. I invite you to give thanks to God as you read through the reports. More than that, however, as a lay or clergy delegate, part of your job is to take this information to your local churches so that they too can be blessed. Be an advocate for the ministry that we do together.

This year, your [preconference workbook](#) includes the budget of each of our eight districts on pages 65-72. I encourage you to check out the work of your district and support its initiatives.

These ministries happen in large part because your church pays its Conference and District apportionments and the encouraged mission and ministry items.

## Financial headwinds

We have much to be proud of and thankful for in the Oklahoma Conference. However, we are facing significant headwinds.

Thus far in 2019, we are facing severe financial headwinds. First, we discovered that our self-funded health insurance plan had been underfunded for the past five years. That forced an immediate increase in premium, which I assure you, no one wanted.

Likewise, the health care supplement for retired clergy has hit a tipping point. Unlike the pension benefits, it has never been guaranteed. The cost in 2019 for the benefit is equal to 10% of the conference budget.

In the last appointment season, we learned that 14 churches can no longer support the salary and benefits of a full time elder. We are seeing a migration of people from many rural communities. In many of our churches, our membership is aging.

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Submission deadline: **June 20**  
Next publication date: **July 5**

Subscribe online at  
[www.okumc.org](http://www.okumc.org).



People are moving to be closer to their children, moving to care centers, or crossing over to eternity. As buildings age, fixed costs rise. We must adapt to changing realities.

### Division after General Conference

One of the headwinds is the turmoil in which the denomination finds itself. Differences of opinion on how to include LGBTQ+ people in our midst divide us. The decisions made at the 2019 General Conference were welcome by some and not welcome by others. These differences of perspective will likely have an impact on the finances of the local church and the annual conference.

At the recent Council of Bishops meeting, one of the leading questions was, "How do we lead with hope?" Friends, I have been praying for hope. I have been praying for the church. I have been praying for us and praying for the world. We need Jesus.

As I have been praying, two things have come to mind. First, Paul's words to the Corinthians. I have paraphrased this text to communicate what I hear in it. Here it is:

"Now I encourage you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ: Agree with each other and don't be divided into rival groups. Instead, be restored with the same mind and the same purpose. My brothers and sisters, Chloe's people gave me some information about you, that you're fighting with each other. What I mean is this: that each one of you says, "I belong to the traditional plan," "I belong to the one church plan," "I belong to the simple plan," "I belong to the connecting conference plan." Has Christ been divided?"

Has Christ been divided? Are we at the point where we simply say, pick your plan and go?

Paul went on to make this proclamation in the second chapter of 1 Corinthians: "When I came to preach to you, I didn't come preaching God's secrets to you like I was an expert in speech or wisdom. I had made up my mind not to think about anything while I was with you except Jesus Christ, and to preach him as crucified."

Perhaps some think we know more than we actually know and we have lost the essence of the gospel while holding too tightly to our own plan. To face the challenges of the day, we need both clergy and laity, to live our faith with a deep humility and respect for the other. We must empty ourselves in order to be humble, grateful servants of Jesus Christ.

### Chile and Bolivia

The second thing that has come to me as I consider the question, "How do we lead with hope?" are the experiences we had while worshipping and working alongside Methodist friends in Bolivia and Chile. On this trip, which came soon after the close of the General Conference, I experienced a different kind

## 2018 VITAL CONGREGATION STATISTICS

Below are the statistics for Oklahoma Conference churches, mission congregations, fellowships and new church starts for the period 2014 through 2018.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Worship	50,679	49,013	48,493	50,176	49,879
Evangelism	2,073	1,820	1,715	1,706	1,550
Spiritual Formation	6,385	6,286	6,069	5,877	5,672
Missions	25,495	29,783	35,533	37,993	39,940
Stewardship	25,398,104	24,478,763	23,007,246	23,731,998	24,117,399

Statistics from the Pre-Conference Workbook. The full workbook is available online at [www.okumc.org/preconferenceworkbook](http://www.okumc.org/preconferenceworkbook).

of Christianity. And the experience is much like that which I have experienced in other parts of the world. I saw a people of hope. An extraordinary hope that we do not see every day.

*(Editor's note: A video summarizing the trip was played at this time. It can be viewed on our [YouTube channel](#).)*

The first thing we might learn from our friends in other lands is that the "joy of the Lord" is more than a cliché. Joy runs deep and motivates people to do things that truly amaze me, when we put their achievements in their context.

The second, prayer has power. Prayer knocks on the doors of heaven and begs for God to intercede. Prayer can change lives. It builds churches. It opens doors to effective witness.

The third thing is that education is a gift from God. In every school we visited, we were greeted with students whose eyes were bright and shining. Several students had learned to introduce themselves to us in English. Their faces lit up as we responded to them. These students were filled with hope and they have dreams for their lives and for their families.

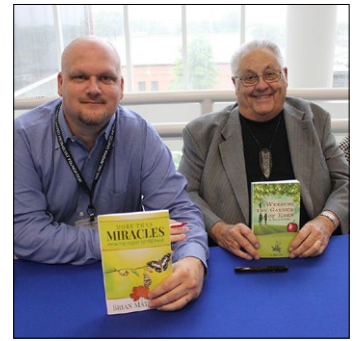
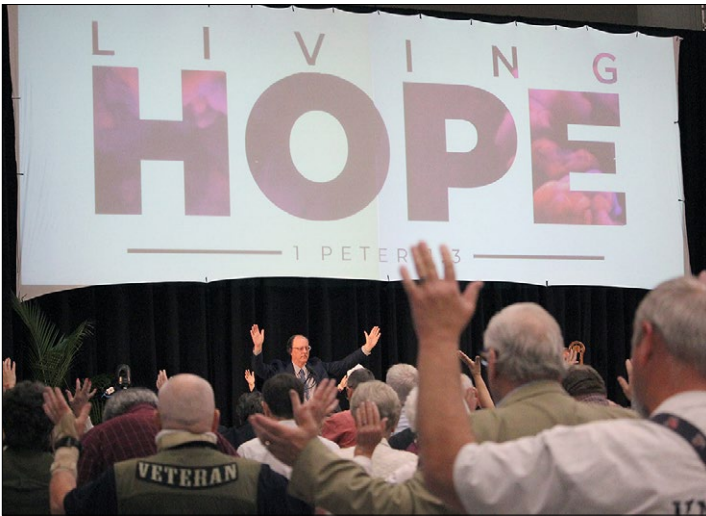
The fourth thing I want to share is the power of sacrificial giving. The laity and clergy gave in spite of their lack of abundance. Some of the people we met live on a wage of about \$2 a day. It is not uncommon for some pastors to walk up to four hours, carrying their small children with them, to serve their second or third church of a two-point charge or an extended circuit. Their attitude is "what do you need?" "We can share with you."

The last thing I leave you with is the power of engaging in mission. Years ago, I believed that we engaged in mission to help someone else. Now I believe that as we engage in mission, we open our own hearts to God to do a new work within us. Engaging in mission helps us to see the poverty of our own lives and to have true gratitude for the blessings we often take for granted. Find Reverend Jeremy Basset, our Director of the Office of Mission, and let him help you find a place to serve in mission.

So, what does it mean to celebrate a living hope? For me, it means to preach Jesus Christ, crucified and risen. And if that doesn't bring us Easter joy; I don't know what will!

Indeed, we face headwinds. But we have a heritage. Our heritage is rooted and grounded in Jesus Christ, our living hope. May we be living hope to the people right beside and in front of us... to the people in our home places and to all the people of the world; in the name and through the power of our living hope, Jesus Christ!

*The full address can be seen on our [YouTube channel](#).*



# LIVING HOPE

Annual Conference 2019

# Annual Conference elects delegates, approves changes to health benefits

BY MEAGAN EWTON

**W**ith minimal discussion and a show of hands, the Oklahoma Annual Conference voted to pass two major changes to clergy and staff benefits: recalculating a retiree subsidy according to years served and adopting a group health insurance plan.

Annual Conference was held on May 27-30 at Oklahoma City University with Bishop Jimmy Nunn presiding.

More than 1,300 local church delegates, clergy and guests attended in person or watched live online to learn about the state of OKUMC's many ministries with special focus given to work performed by Mission and Ministry (formerly Connectional Opportunity) ministries. The Conference also recognized 22 retiring clergy and 15 new ordained, commissioned and associate members.

Voting members elected lay and clergy delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conferences. Special services were held off-site at nearby churches, with OKC-Wesley hosting the memorial service and OKC-St. Luke's hosting the ordination service.

This year's Special Offering benefits the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. The offering totaled \$29,792.

Part of the offering will be used to help pay for OIMC youth attending Youth 2019, a

four-day discipleship event for middle and high school students and their leaders. Some students also will participate as speakers in a workshop examining the use of Native American imagery and culture as sports mascots. Youth 2019 will be held July 10-14 in Kansas City, Missouri and is sponsored by Discipleship Ministries.

## Valdez Barker shares heart for missions

Guest speaker Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker, executive director for the Global Mission Connections Unit of Global Ministries, shared about the history and importance of missions on three of the four days of Annual Conference.

Valdez Barker spoke first with Youth at Conference, a gathering of youth delegates from around the state, to discuss Global Mission's fellowship program for young people who desire to pursue a call in mission work. The next day she presented "Two Hundred Years of Methodists in Mission" during the opening session, followed by "Yesterday – Today – Tomorrow: God's Movement through Methodist Missions" during learning times for laity and clergy. She ended her time at Annual Conference the following morning by discussing how churches can engage in local missions during a Missions breakfast.

"We're a people of stories... With each passing century,

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

## Snapshots of Annual Conference



**Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker speaks with clergy about the interconnected relationship between missionaries, churches and communities. Photo by Tabitha Beckman.**



**Boy Scout Troop 88 received the Bishop's Award of Excellence for a second year in a row. The troop is sponsored by Claremore-First.**



**The Francis Willard Award was given to District Superintendent Tish Malloy. The award is presented by the OKUMC Commission on the Status and Role of Women.**

## Annual Conference, cont.

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we have the power of the Holy Spirit to see how God is still at work in each of our lives,” Valdez Barker said. “There is no mission without the church, and the church doesn’t exist without the mission.”

### Delegates elected

Though voting sessions ran slightly over time for both lay and clergy voters, the Oklahoma Conference elected all 34 clergy, lay and alternate delegates to General and Jurisdictional Conference on the first day of business.

The next regular session of General Conference will be held May 5-15, 2020 in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The South Central Jurisdictional Conference will be held July 15-18 in The Woodlands, Texas.

### Benefits and budget

One of the biggest changes is the Conference’s decision to move from a self-funded insurance plan to Health Flex, a group health plan offered through Wespath.

Information released by the Board of Pension and Health Benefits prior to Annual Conference stated that the self-funded plan had lost money every year since 2015 and would risk insolvency in 2019 if the Conference did not raise the amount being direct-billed to churches to pay for health insurance. The increase took place prior to Annual Conference, and the move in 2020 to Health Flex was in line with keeping financial solvency.

“Even as we made the hard decision to raise the amount churches had to pay, we were already looking at other options for providing group health insurance,” said Rev. Charla Gwartney, chair of the BPHB, in her report to the Annual Conference.

The Board voted unanimously to recommend moving the Conference health insurance to Health Flex. Gwartney said the decision to move to Health Flex was separate from the issue of insolvency.

“We were not adequately funding our health insurance plan over a period of four years,” Gwartney said. “By adopting the new group health insurance plan, the costs for our health insurance will not increase in 2020.”

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**Women clergy pose for a photo together at the end of Annual Conference 2019, with several wearing custom t-shirts with the phrase “Nevertheless, she preached” printed over the state of Oklahoma. Photo by Mike Tobey.**



### General Conference Delegates

- **Lay delegates:** Tom Junk, Don Kim, Cara Nicklas, Barbara Jean Perry, Herschel Beard, Kent Fulton, Janey Wilson
- **Clergy delegates:** Joseph Harris, Derrek Belase, Sam Powers, Jessica Moffatt, Charla Gwartney, Valerie Steele, Tom Harrison

### Jurisdictional Conference Delegates

- **Lay delegates:** Chuck Stewart, Kira Dawn Calhoun, Andrea Beth Dollarhite, Gloria Aijnomisangham, Holly Joy, Piper Nigel Freese, Aly Elizabeth Shahan
- **Clergy delegates:** Carol Cook Moore, Fuxia Wang, D.A. Bennett, Matt Judkins, James Lambert, Carlos Ramirez, Tish Malloy

### Alternate Delegates

- **Lay Alternates:** Evan Hal Nicklas, Kyla Powers, Courtney Blacksten
- **Clergy Alternates:** Lesly Broadbent, Jennifer Long, Adam Shahan
- **Delegate Executive Leadership Team**  
(In order of election): Tom Junk, Cara Nicklas, Joseph Harris, Derrek Belase, Jessica Moffatt

## Annual Conference, cont.

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A second significant change was how Conference funded Health Reimbursement Account (HRA) subsidy for retirees would be calculated. Pension benefits through Wespeth were not affected by the recalculation of the HRA subsidy. The Retiree Medical Apportionment, which determines the subsidy payout, was set at \$1.3 million.

BPHB offered a substitute proposal that was presented to the Board after the preconference workbook was printed. In essence, the proposal states 100 percent subsidy for clergy with 25 years of service, 60 percent for clergy with 20-24 years of service, and 40 percent for clergy with 15-19 years of service. Clergy with fewer than 15 years of service at their time of retirement would not be eligible for the HRA subsidy.

An additional \$400 equalization grant would be given to retired clergy with 25 or more years of service and 20 years or more of pre-1982 service.

The proposal passed by majority vote, and the distribution schedule will become effective on Jan. 1, 2020.

In addition to approving changes to active and retiree health benefits, the Conference voted to pass the proposed 2020 budget without amendment. The 2020 budget includes \$10,160,639 for Total Conference Apportionments, which includes \$2,733,993 for General and Jurisdictional apportionments. The overall budget passed for apportionments and Mission and Ministries is \$13,328,599, or a 0.46 percent decrease from 2019.

### Division after GC 2019 acknowledged

Both lay and clergy speakers acknowledged the deep pain and division resulting from the Special Called Session of General Conference held in February 2019. Rev. Linda Harker and Don Kim, respective heads of the clergy and lay delegates to GC 2019, both spoke about the division that characterized the special session in their reports to the Oklahoma Conference. Each received a standing ovation for their remarks.

Laity and clergy in favor of full inclusion of the LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer) community wore rainbow-colored stoles in various patterns throughout Annual Conference.

A request to suspend the rules to hear a petition titled "A Resolution of Confession, both of and from harm, caused by the Special Called General Conference of 2019" failed by a vote of 332 yes to 333 against. A revote called for by the bishop to address concerns surrounding the first vote also failed, 309 yes to 395 no. A two-thirds vote was required to hear the petition.

Bishop Nunn addressed the felt divisions in his episcopal address, paraphrasing 1 Corinthians 1:10-13 to liken the divisions among the early Corinthian believers to divisions among United Methodists today and asking if Christ has been divided among the Traditional, One Church, Connecting Conference and Simple Plans presented at GC 2019. He addressed divisions in the Conference again during his

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**Youth at Conference invited youth delegates and guests to participate in Annual Conference in meaningful ways.**



**In a moment of levity, Bishop Nunn calls the Conference to order using a light-up maraca given to him by the youth.**

### Videos Shown at Annual Conference

- [What is a Disciple?](#) (7:02)
- [Mission & Ministry](#) (3:37)
- [OK Camps](#) (4:17)
- [New People New Places: Grant Awards 2019](#) (4:46)
- [One Matters 2019](#) (11:45)
- [Special Offering](#) (0:26)
- [OIMC Video](#) (5:02)
- [Seven Habits of Successful Aging](#) (2:35)
- [Methodist Connection in Bolivia and Chile](#) (3:31)

SEE ALL OKUMC VIDEOS ON OUR [YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#)

## Annual Conference, cont.

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sermon at the ordination service, encouraging people to love one another.

“One of the hard lessons of ministry is that when we engage in the ministry of peacemaking, we don’t feel peace. We embody, many times, that very conflict. Have we not felt that since February?” Bishop Nunn asked. “We’re embodying the conflict, the tearing of each other. And the more we seek to make peace, the less peace we have. ‘Blessed are the peace makers because they’re gonna feel peace?’ No. What does it say? ‘Blessed are

the peacemakers, for they will see God.”

Bishop Nunn ended the final day of Annual Conference with a Spirit-filled prayer, encouraging all believers in the Conference to extend their hands on behalf of all those in need.

“Lord Jesus, just fill us with a sense of the gospel to share hope because every life, Lord Jesus, matters to you. You died for us all; may we give ourselves for all,” he prayed. “Come and heal your church and fit us for your mission. We give ourselves to you now in the holy name of Jesus, and all the people said, Amen.”

## Special Services at Annual Conference

- [Memorial Sermon](#) (22:00)
- [Opening Worship](#) (58:52)
- [Episcopal Address](#) (33:55)
- [Retiree Recognition](#) (18:48)
- [Ordination Sermon](#) (27:28)
- [Closing Worship](#) (38:10)
- [Highlight Video](#) (8:10)

SEE ALL OKUMC VIDEOS ON OUR [YOUTUBE CHANNEL](#)

**[Click here](#) or visit the OKUMC website to see appointments as of June 11.**

# RADICAL DISCIPLESHIP

**Mission u 2019 | July 19 - 21 | One Day Session July 22**

Take a deep dive into the Gospel of Mark, the topic of money, and the inspiring story of women organized for mission.

**Dates: July 19 - 21 | One Day Session July 22**

**Location: Oklahoma City University**

**Register Online:**

<http://okumc-reg.brtapp.com/Missionu2019>

### 2019 SPEAKERS:



● Dana Parker



● Don Skinner-Noble



● Faye Perry



● Kathy Caldron



● Sandy Wilder



● Derrek Belase

### READING LIST:

- *Practicing Resurrection: The Gospel of Mark and Radical Discipleship* by Janet Wolf
- *Women United for Change: 150 Years in Mission* by Ellen Blue
- *What About Our Money? A Faith Response* by Susan K. Taylor



# Oklahoma Conference Clergy Class of 2019



**NEWLY ORDAINED ELDERS** — Front row, from left: C. Craig Clark, Jay A. Henderson, Susan E. Rice, Kristen A. Melton, Kaela E. P. Burdge. Back row, from left: Board of Ordained Ministry Vice Chairperson Greg Tener, Dylan P. Ward, Emily L. Robnett, Jeffrey M. Hinton, Trey Witzel, Jinx M. Barber, Bishop Jimmy Nunn.



**ASSOCIATE MEMBER** — From left, BOM Vice Chairperson Greg Tener, Andre Contino, Bishop Nunn.



**COMMISSIONED ELDERS** — From left, BOM Vice Chairperson Greg Tener, Lisa Hines, Taylor Anderson, Wendie Jencks-Wilson, Bishop Nunn. Not pictured: Travis Ewton.



**CABINET** — From left: Rockford Johnson, Crossroads DS; Tish Malloy, Northern Prairie DS; Victor McCullough, Heartland DS; Cynthia L. Havlik, Council Oak DS; Bishop Nunn; Connie Gibson, Wichitas DS; Terry Koehn, Green Country DS; Charles Graves, Cimmaron DS; Larry Bauman, Lake Country DS.

# Missions, data, and listening to youth

*A casual conversation with Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker*

BY MEAGAN EWTON

**R**ev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker is the executive director for the Global Mission Connections Unit at Global Ministries. She sat down for a brief interview on May 28 after her first presentation to the Oklahoma Annual Conference. Questions and responses have been edited here for length and clarity.

**You’ve been described as a “reasonable enthusiast.” Tell me about some of that enthusiasm for missions that keeps you so involved, excited and passionate.**

I just love God’s creation and God’s people, and I think that’s what has kept me so enthused about mission. It’s an opportunity to learn about God in every person that I meet. When I get to go to different places around the world, around the country, or my own neighborhood, I get to say, “Okay, God, what are you going to teach me about you today through these people?” And that’s what burns me, is to say, “goodness, God is at work in everyone I meet!” Some of them know it, and some of them don’t. That, I think, is the great gift of being in mission: you get to meet God in all kinds of places.

**In the opening session of Annual Conference, you shared that all who have professed faith in Christ are, in fact, missionaries. Would you expand on that?**

To be called a true disciple is to love our neighbors. If we are truly loving our neighbors, and we mean all neighbors, then that is the mission, is it not? If the greatest commandment is to love God with all our heart, soul and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves – which includes everyone – then that means that everybody who professes discipleship and professes to follow Jesus are missionaries. It’s because they’re sent. They’re sent to be responsive to God’s love and grace, and that means loving everyone. I think we limit our minds to what missionaries are, but we don’t realize that we’re all called to be missionaries – just some of us in different kinds of ways.



**Rev. Dr. Amy Valdez Barker speaks during the opening session of the Oklahoma Annual Conference on May 28. She shared about 200 years of Methodist mission work throughout history and emphasized that all believers are missionaries. Photo by Meagan Ewton.**

**In your phrasing, what would you say the purpose of going out and serving beyond your community is in relation to mission within your community?**

I really think it’s about missional attitude. When I said (during the presentation) we’ve learned a lot in the last 200 years of mission, it’s really about the sense that when you go out, sometimes you think that you’re going to “save” the other. When you go to other countries, it’s easier to say, “I’ve got something to offer you, and what I have to offer is better, so let me offer this to you.” But that in itself is problematic because it’s more about you than it is about the relationship. I think that what we need to awaken in

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## Q&A, cont.

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people is that discipleship is really about relationships, and whether they're relationships in your community or beyond your community, all of it is the invitation to love our neighbor. The problem is when we think it's about "saving" our neighbor or doing the "God thing" for others. Then we've lost the thinking. I'm not against those, but I am for long-term mission relationships.

**You co-authored a book about using data to help churches engage their communities. How can churches see the stories being told by their data to better connect with their communities?**

I'm a total data nerd, I love it. I think the fear of data was that it would be used as a weapon, but what I tried to do when I was working with leaders was to use data to open up their minds, to ask more questions, to become curious about what the data was trying to tell us. If we were curious about what the data was trying to tell us, from there we could experiment and say, "I wonder, if we do this a little bit differently, will it help change the data?" The data gives you an opportunity to ask questions, to try something new, and see where the Holy Spirit might be leading. That's why I think data is so fascinating and so wonderful. It's just another tool for us to keep on learning how to be faithful.

**You said something interesting, that some people might be afraid that data would be used as a weapon. What would you say to people who might try to place a good/bad value on data instead of use it to see a larger story?**

It's human nature to place value on things. I think it's important to say, "What is this data telling us, how does it help us make these different decisions, and how, through those decisions, will we continue to better the mission and ministry?" Data is good to open up some hard conversations, but data alone should never be the part that makes a decision. I think that's where people are afraid: they're afraid a decision will be made on data alone verses the qualitative information (stories) surrounding the quantitative information (data). If you don't find out the stories surrounding the data, then you're never going to be able to make good decisions based just upon the data. I'll go to town with a scientist who wants to argue

with me about that, but as Christians, we believe it's in relationship where we make the better decisions.

**You were a youth minister, but you were also a youth delegate also. How would you encourage young people to get involved? Why should they go through the red tape and a system that's not designed with them in mind to work to invest in and impact their church?**

Their voice offers us new creation – hope. I told my team it was wonderful to be with the Youth (at Conference) because they give me hope. They're thinking and they're challenging and they're wondering and they're closest to their cultural context. If we're going to want to reach that cultural context and have a church for the next 10 to 20 generations, then we better be listening to what they're saying and inviting them and encouraging them to feel welcome in this space. There were many times I felt completely alienated and patronized and frustrated because they (older adults) weren't taking me seriously. But it was the three or four adults who cared who kept me in,

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**BACK TO SCHOOL**

— supply drive —

Circle of Care and Citizens Caring for Children are partnering to provide school supplies for children in foster care across the state.

**Helpful Ideas**

- Do a drive as a mission for VBS
- United Methodist Women's Drive
- Sunday School Class Drive
- Church Wide Donation Drive

 OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST  
**CIRCLE of CARE**  
for CHILDREN and YOUTH

For more information or to arrange a drive contact Sarah Steffes at 405-215-1400 or email [sarah.steffes@circleofcare.org](mailto:sarah.steffes@circleofcare.org)

## Q&A, cont.

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who said, “Say what you think,” “Don’t let them look down on you,” “Give your voice,” “Don’t be afraid.”

The church really does need to take seriously these voices and not only accompany them, but invite them to share – share their hopes, their dreams, and what the church is going to look like. Young people are so close to Christ. That’s why Jesus said, “Let the children come to me for theirs is the kingdom.”

If we’re not listening seriously to these young leaders, if we’re not taking what they say and what they think and what they dream and what they hope seriously, then we’re missing the voice of the Holy Spirit. So, I want to say to young people, let that voice come through you, and don’t be afraid.

### **As we close this conversation, is there anything on your heart that you would like to share?**

That book that I contributed to, “Where Do We Go from Here?”, honestly is weighing heavily on my heart. Maybe that’s why the tears came when we

sang “What a Beautiful Name It Is,” because I kept thinking, what a beautiful name it is, Jesus’ name. And what a beautiful church we have been when we’re connected around Jesus’ name. What a beautiful church we can be when we’re connected around Jesus’ name and God’s love.

I think what really breaks my heart is that we’re letting our differences – the polity, the governance, the desire for “my” opinion, or the desire for firm boundaries – I think because of that, we’re losing the opportunity to really be who Christ is calling us to be as a church, as a denomination, and as a people of God. I think that’s where my heart is broken.

I hope and pray that mission is something that can continue to unite us. As one contributor said in the book, making it more about the division of labor and not the control of behavior. If God is calling us to go further into the mission field, into the harvest, then let’s bless one another and divide the labor so that the harvest is plentiful.



## STAR Alumni

Charlie Ludden, BSB ‘09, enjoys leading a faith-driven life. In high school and college, he merged his passion for the ministry with his calling to work with children, a combination that led him to a full-time career.

Ludden went on to serve as the associate director of young adult mission and service for the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church and as associate director of Project Transformation Oklahoma.

Ludden is now the development manager for Court Appointed Special Advocates of Oklahoma County, which serves hundreds of foster youth in the metro area. He strives to serve and encourage others, a trait that reminds him of his time at OKCU.



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## Africa University graduates urged to create a better Africa

**M**UTARE, ZIMBABWE — Africa University President and Vice Chancellor Professor Munashe Furusa has challenged the graduates of the United Methodist-related institution to continue to be shining examples of their exemplary education and build a better Africa for the future.

“Remember you are Africa’s future that we invested in today, the hope that your families have been holding tight to, the sacred seeds we have planted and expect to burst into divine and wondrous flowers,” Professor Furusa told the graduates. “Therefore, go forth and build an Africa that we all want and deserve to live in. In doing so, do not neglect your dreams, but keep your faith, affirm your dignity, be kind, caring and generous.”

Professor Furusa was speaking at the 25th Graduation Ceremony where nearly 600 students from 22 African countries received their master’s and

bachelor’s degrees. The commencement ceremony was held on June 8 at the campus in Old Mutare, Zimbabwe.

He reminded the graduates that they were part of a special class, the Silver graduating class marking the 25th graduation ceremony. “Our alumni, whose ranks you are joining today, have gone on to take their place among the leaders, movers and shakers of this continent and the world and are reimagining our space in ways that we never thought possible.”

Professor Furusa told them about Lillian Achom, a Ugandan Computer Information Systems graduate of 2011 who is revolutionizing the field of IT in her country and realigning the role that women play in the development of the IT sector in Africa through her start up Grade Score.

Another shining Africa University graduate was

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE



### JOIN US FOR AN NSO GOOD SAMARITAN LUNCH AND LEARN!

On the last Thursday of every month, NSO hosts a Good Samaritan Lunch and Learn where individuals can come and learn more about NSO and our wonderful programs! Following the lunch, guests will take a quick tour of the NSO Dental Clinic and main offices. Lunch is also provided.

**Come see how NSO is impacting over 100,000 Oklahomans every year!**

Upcoming Lunch and Learn Dates:

June 27th	September 26th
July 25th	October 31st
August 29th	November 21st

**RSVP for a lunch and learn at [nsookc.org/good-samaritan](http://nsookc.org/good-samaritan), or by email at [gssociety@nsookc.org](mailto:gssociety@nsookc.org).**



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## AU graduation, cont.

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Bishop Mande Muyombo who recently assumed the chair of the Africa University Board of Directors and is creating a legacy of peace, service and stewardship in his home country, the Democratic Republic of Congo.

“Therefore, go in the knowledge that you are of Africa, and within you lies the hopes and dreams of a continent,” Furusa said.

The graduating class had 526 graduates, 54.6 percent of whom are women, 27.6 percent international representing 22 African countries.

The class of 2019 also included Dr. Kenjiro Yamada who was awarded an honorary doctorate in recognition of his contributions to Africa University’s development. He was instrumental in securing funding for the library on campus which is partly named in his honor.

Dr. Yamada’s career spans almost five decades in Methodist education, including more than 30 years of leadership at the General Board of Higher Education

and Ministry (GBHEM). He told the graduates not to worry about financial gains.

“Don’t chase the money. Let money chase you,” he said to a thunderous applause.

The keynote address speaker, Rev. Greg Bergquist, interim general secretary of GBHEM, called on the graduates to be grateful for the education they are receiving and to be loving and kind to all they meet in their endeavors. .

The university has initiated a process to transform itself into a research-intensive institution; become a prominent center for Childhood and Child Rights Studies, Intellectual Property Studies, Malaria Research, Public Health, Theological Studies, Leadership and Governance, and Environmental Advocacy. The University is also expecting several innovations, technological solutions and engineering products from the I5Hub and Clinical Research Center.

*Africa University is a United Methodist-related institution and aspires to become a world class university for leadership development in Africa. Learn more at [www.africau.edu](http://www.africau.edu).*

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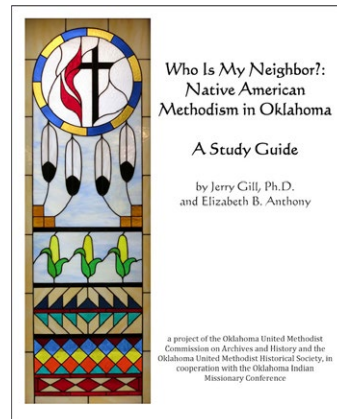
*A Life Plan Community*

# Native Methodist Study Guide Now Available

The first edition of “Who Is My Neighbor?: Native American Methodism in Oklahoma – a Study Guide” is now available from the OKUMC Commission on Archives and History.

Free to download at [okumc.org/nativedoc](http://okumc.org/nativedoc), the 60-page study guide is a companion piece to the Commission’s 26-minute documentary “Who Is My Neighbor?: Native American Methodism in Oklahoma” that was played during the Act of Repentance conducted at Annual Conference 2016.

More than 500 DVDs of the documentary have been distributed to Methodist congregations of the Oklahoma Conference and Oklahoma Indian



Missionary Conference, and it has been included in studies by Methodist groups nationally, including the United Methodist Men, United Methodist Women, and “Mission u” curriculum.

The documentary tells the history of the complex relationship between Native Americans and the Methodist Church, why the General Conference performed the 2012 Act of Repentance, and how United Methodists can work toward reconciliation with their Native American neighbors. Copies of the documentary are still available through the Conference Archives and through Interlibrary Loan.

The new study guide is divided into four parts, coinciding with the four narrative sections in the documentary, and provides more in-depth information about topics raised in the video. It also features discussion questions designed to provoke meaningful conversations among Natives and non-Natives alike.

“We are really excited to be able to share this

CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

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## Study guide, cont.

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new resource with Oklahoma Methodists,” said documentary co-director and study guide co-author Jerry Gill. “Film is a great medium, but it’s hard to cover 300 years of history in 26 minutes. The study guide allows us to provide more detail about some of the events and issues we could only touch on in the documentary, and the better people understand the history behind the 2012 Act of Repentance, the better they will understand how to respond to it.”

In 2017, Jerry Gill received the Distinguished Service Award from the General Commission on Archives and History, in large part due to his work on the “Who Is My Neighbor?” initiative.

“The next step after repentance is supposed to be reconciliation, and one of the keys to reconciliation is bringing people together for meaningful conversations,” said OKUMC Commission on Archives and History Chair Rev. Brian Bakeman. “The principal goal of the documentary was to inform and offer a historical context for the 2012 Act of

Repentance. This study guide is really designed to encourage small group study and discussion. I think the more we can get people talking, the more clear and easily recognizable the path to reconciliation will become.”

“This is the first of what we hope will be a few editions of this study guide,” said co-author Elizabeth B. Anthony. “We’re hoping to gather feedback from the small groups who use it and develop some guidance for discussion leaders as we identify fruitful approaches. In short, like the reconciliation it encourages, this study guide is a work in progress.”

“I am excited about the study guide,” commented David Wilson, superintendent of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. “Persons who want to explore the history of Native Americans in general and OIMC will find it very useful. It is very well done and provides an opportunity for folks to probe deeper into the rich and challenging history of Native American missions in Oklahoma. I think it will be well received.”

The new study guide and additional resources, are available online at [okumc.org/nativedoc](http://okumc.org/nativedoc).

## Oklahoma City University Expands Nursing Program to Lawton

Oklahoma City University will expand its satellite nursing program at Duncan Regional Hospital to include the Comanche County Memorial Hospital in Lawton, starting with the fall semester in August.

The program in Comanche County will work jointly with the one at Duncan Regional Hospital and will include similar incentives for students, where they may take nursing classes free of tuition if they agree to work at Comanche County Memorial Hospital for at least three years after graduation.

Students will enter the program with junior-level nursing courses. Classes will be held three days per week in the Learning Center at Duncan Regional Hospital, and

clinical rotations will take place two days per week at CCMH.

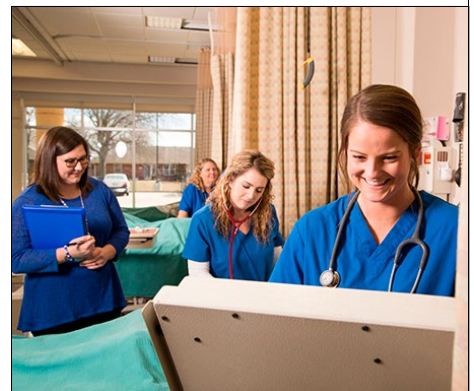
Lois Salmeron, dean of OCU’s Kramer School of Nursing, said the expanded program is a significant step for improving nursing education in southwest Oklahoma.

“This is a win-win for those who desire to become a nurse and are not able to leave the community to do so. It is a win-win for rural health,” Salmeron said.

Up to 20 scholarships for each cohort in the Bachelor of Science

in Nursing program are available.

For more information, visit the program’s page on the school’s website at [okcu.edu/nursing](http://okcu.edu/nursing).



**Students complete lab studies at Oklahoma City University’s Bachelor of Science in Nursing program at Duncan Regional Hospital. This fall, the program will expand to Lawton and includes up to 20 tuition free scholarships.**





# The Giving of Ourselves

## An Overview of the OIMC Annual Conference



Photos of OIMC's opening worship. Clockwise from bottom left: Women sing as the communion elements are brought in; Margaret Johnson, district superintendent over the Northern District, holds up a poster featuring Ida Beard, an indigenous woman missing from El Reno; Marcus Briggs-Cloud leads music during worship; Rev. Anita Phillips compares the Kingdom of God to intricate beadwork or embroidery, made more beautiful for the variety of colors it includes; a young boy receives communion as the opening worship comes to a close.



BY DAVID WILSON

“The Giving of Ourselves” was the theme for the 175th session of The Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, held June 6-8 at the Northeast Region Center at Preston, Oklahoma. The conference on the importance of hospitality among Indigenous peoples around the world and how OIMC has worked to provide that hospitality to many.

As a part of the recognition of 175 years as an Indian Methodist Conference, delegates recognized the 200th anniversary of the Missionary Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

Notable moments include:

- Wyandotte Chief Billy Friend was present to bring greetings and share that history and connection with the United Methodist Church.
- The conference brought attention to two areas where Native Americans have been impacted including the recognition of the hundreds of missing

and murdered Indigenous women in this country. The conference heard of young women connected to OIMC who are still missing.

- The conference was asked to form a task force to look into the recent news that Ft. Sill Military Base may be housing immigrant children who are unaccompanied.
- Bethel Hill, one of the oldest churches in OIMC, received the One Matters Award from Discipleship Ministries. The award recognizes churches that are making movement in professions of faith or in growth.
- Delegates elected two clergy delegates to represent OIMC at General and Jurisdiction Conferences in 2020. David Wilson and Eli McHenry were elected as clergy delegates, and Anne Marshall and Josephine Deere were elected as laity representatives.
- One Elder was ordained at the conference and two were received as licensed local pastors.



[Click here to watch the video on YouTube.](#)

*The Contact will feature one of 14 Mission and Ministry ministries every month. A full list of OKUMC ministries is available at [okumc.org/MissionAndMinistry](http://okumc.org/MissionAndMinistry).*

**T**he Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference is one of three missionary conferences in the United States and has been established for 175 years.

According to the General Commission on Archives and History, the Methodist quarterly conference licensed John Stewart a “missionary pioneer” in 1818 on lands “allotted to” the Wyandotte by the US government.

The following year, the Ohio Conference established an official mission to the Wyandotte. Stewart’s work and example inspired the formation of The Methodist Missionary Society in 1820. The foundations of the OIMC began shortly after with the evangelism work by the Methodist Church among the Cherokees, Choctaws and Creeks in the Southeast.

Today, the OIMC remains active both in local church and fellowship communities as well as across the country. In the last

year, OIMC leaders have prayed at a border detention center for immigrant children, delivered donations to Pine Ridge Indian Reservation after devastating snowstorms, marched in the inaugural Indigenous Peoples March in Washington, D.C., hosted a third annual immersion experience, and advocated for the well-being of Native peoples at national and global levels of United Methodist agencies.

OIMC has also produced some of the denomination’s top leaders, including Rev. Anita Phillips (executive director of the denomination’s Native American Comprehensive Plan), Rev. Chebon Kernell (executive secretary of Native American and Indigenous Ministries of the General Board of Global Ministries), and Bryan Tener (director of Contextual Evangelism and Church Planting Path 1 with Discipleship Ministries).

Learn more about the OIMC on their website at [www.umc-oimc.org](http://www.umc-oimc.org).

**Share about OIMC with your church or discipleship group. Download the featured video and other free resources at [www.okumc.org/MissionAndMinistry](http://www.okumc.org/MissionAndMinistry).**



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## OKUMC Briefs and Events

### Save the Date

#### Worship Design Studio Worship Planning Retreat | Aug. 18-21

OKC-St. Luke's, 222 NW 15th St., Oklahoma City

Single Ticket: \$350 | Team of 2-4: \$550

Team of 5-8: \$750

Register online at

[wds.events/planningretreat/register](https://wds.events/planningretreat/register).

#### Certification in Spiritual Direction New cohort starts Aug. 23

Perkins School of Theology – SMU

5915 Bishop Blvd, Dallas, TX 75275

Applications due by Aug. 1.

Details at [www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/CSD/SpiritualDirection](http://www.smu.edu/Perkins/PublicPrograms/CSD/SpiritualDirection)

### Employment

■ Site Director – Egan Camp and Retreat Center. Tahlequah, full-time and year-round beginning September 2019. Includes salary, benefits and pension; director's residence available. Bachelor's degree and five years' supervisory experience required. Full job description available online at [okcamps.org/jobs](https://okcamps.org/jobs). For consideration, send a cover letter and resume to [campjobs@okumc.org](mailto:campjobs@okumc.org).

■ Director of Children's Ministry. Lawton-Centenary, part-time. Contact Robert Gorrell at [rgorrell@lawtoncentenary.org](mailto:rgorrell@lawtoncentenary.org).

■ Family Specialist. Circle of Care, Oklahoma City, full-time. Send resume and cover letter to [careers@circleofcare.org](mailto:careers@circleofcare.org).

■ Youth minister. Chandler, part-time. For more information or to apply, contact Larry Holder by

phone at 405-258-1440 between 9 a.m. and noon, Monday through Thursday.

■ Director of AsburyKids. Tulsa-Asbury, full-time with benefits. Relevant bachelor's degree and five years' experience preferred. Details online at [asburytulsa.org/employment](https://asburytulsa.org/employment). To apply, email resume to [hr@asburytulsa.org](mailto:hr@asburytulsa.org).

■ Organist-Accompanist. Moore-First, part-time (Sundays and Wednesdays, other services as requested). Contact Music Director Ginny Pass at 405-794-6671.

■ Youth Minister. Kingfisher, part-time. Prior experience and some college preferred. Email resumes to pastor Rev. Patrick McPherson at [pmcpherson65@gmail.com](mailto:pmcpherson65@gmail.com).

### Passages

David Jones, who retired in September 2018 after 20 years of service, died on June 1. David served as a licensed local pastor at Tipton, Manitou, Lawton-New Light and Hulen. Service was held on June 6 at Lawton-New Light UMC.

*Share your event or job opportunity in the Contact.*

*For consideration, email your listing to [editor@okumc.org](mailto:editor@okumc.org).*

*Deadline for the July 5 issue is June 20.*