

THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST

Contact *Weekly*

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Worshipping Together 2



Music and sports brackets join up to create a new take on fundraising 4



One Camping Family Out of Many 6



Revitalization of Faith: The Journey of First UMC of Tishomingo 8



Ten tips to equip churches and families as they prepare for Earth Day 10



CLICK HERE
for events, jobs,
and more!

- [Save the Date](#)
- [Employment](#)
- [Passages](#)
- [Appointments](#)

Oklahoma Annual Conference 2024

The World FOREVER Our Parish

Thursday May 30 - Saturday June 1

Preparing for Annual Conference 2024

Part 3
of our 8 part series

Worshipping Together

BY REV. DERREK
BELASE

One of the most beloved parts of annual conference is when we worship together. There is nothing like a group of United Methodists singing together and praising God by lifting our voices in unison. This year, we will offer four different worship services and each will be very special and unique. Please make plans to attend all of them.

All of the worship services with the exception of the Celebration of Ministry will take place at Chapel Hill UMC. The church is located



Worshippers gathered at last year's Annual Conference for morning worship.

at 2717 West Hefner Road in Oklahoma City.

Our opening worship will be the Eucharistic Memorial Service. It will take place at 7 p.m. on Thursday, May 30 with the pre-

worship concert beginning at 6:30 p.m. Groups of musicians from New Light Korean UMC in Lawton, including a famed harmonica player, will offer the pre-worship concert. Rev. Connie Gibson will serve as our preacher for the evening and Bishop Nunn will preside over Holy Communion.

The names of those clergy and spouses who have died between April 1, 2023 and March 31, 2024 will be memorialized. A reception follows the service.

The Celebration of Ministry Service will take place at 11 a.m. on Friday, May 31 in the Freede Center as a part of our business session that day. Rev. Dr. Joe Harris will be the preacher. This service

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includes the introduction of those who will be commissioned or ordained, recognition of 16 elders, deacons and local pastors who are retiring from active ministry and the consecration of deaconess Bonnie Reckinger of Owasso. The choir from First UMC in Edmond will provide special music.

A Celebration of the Districts will take place on Friday evening at 6:30 p.m. with Rev. Dr. Carol Cook Moore preaching. There will be lots of special music and a celebration of the eight districts that we have been organized in since 2015. Following the worship service, there will be a social hour for the

five new districts to gather and meet each other over punch and cookies. Rooms have been reserved for each district to meet in.

The Commissioning and Ordination Service will take place on Saturday, June 1 at 2 p.m. Bishop Nunn will preach his final sermon to the Oklahoma Annual Conference during this service. We will ordain four people and commission another four. Chapel Hill UMC's choir will offer a pre-worship concert beginning at 1:30 p.m. A reception for those commissioned and ordained as well as a time honoring Bishop Nunn and his wife, Mary, will be held

following the service.

As we have been doing for the last few years, Judy Horne and Tyler Stone will be with us each day on the piano and organ leading us in the great hymns of our faith as we begin each session as well as a 15-minute hymn sing on Friday afternoon at the end of the lunch break.



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Music and sports brackets join up to create a new take on fundraising

BY REV. ADAM YOUNG

Over the last two months, Sunny Lane United Methodist Church has been raising “fun” to hire a part-time Director of Children’s Ministry. The goal was to raise \$20,000 to pay for the first year’s salary. We started by asking our folks to sponsor an hour of salary time for \$20, a work day for \$160, a work week for \$400, and a work month for \$1600. We had one donor give a seed donation of \$2500 to get the ball rolling. We did pretty well those first few weeks as excitement grew at the prospect of having a children’s director again.



Lilia Fermin shows off some handmade items from the Phillipines.

Round 2	Sweet Sixteen	Elite Eight	Final Four
Amazing Grace	73		
Leaning on the Everlasting Arms	25		
Lift High the Cross	28		
Blessed Assurance	70		
Grace Greater than Our Sin	5		
It is Well	92		
The Old Rugged Cross	65		
Great is Thy Faithfulness	32		

One of multiple brackets used in the hymn challenge. Submitted photos.

Then, to increase the fun, we developed a “Hymn Madness Bracket Challenge.” We selected 64 hymns to face off against each other and divided them up into four categories or regions: Grace, God, Jesus, and Church. We created a ballot for folks to vote on each matchup, posted it online, and provided printed versions in person for a few Sundays in March and early April. Individuals could submit as many ballots as they wanted at a rate of \$5 per ballot.

One parishioner in particular, Mike Warfel, really got into the spirit of Hymn Madness and began stuffing the ballot box. He and his wife Renee, a flight attendant who frequently travels, would talk each night and listen to various versions of every song to make their decisions. “It was very difficult to decide at times!” Mike said. Their bulk voting certainly swayed the outcomes of a few matchups, but more than that, they inspired others with a competitive spirit to increase their donations.

I personally tried to rescue “Be

Thou My Vision” from getting knocked out in the first round with extra votes of my own. But alas, it was too little too late and 15-seed “What a Friend We Have in Jesus” prevailed and went on a bit of a Cinderella run.

There were a couple of other Cinderella runs, too. “Standing on the Promises” got to the Elite Eight and “Morning Has Broken” broke through to the Final Four. On Wednesday, April 10, we held a Hymn Sing and sang the Elite Eight hymns with the help of Jerry Connell, a fabulous blues guitarist. That night, we voted on the Final Four and Championship. In a matchup against the powerhouse resurrection hymn, “He Lives,” “It Is Well” won it all! “It Is Well” won the title by beating out the likes of “Amazing Grace” and “How Great Thou Art.” Congratulations, “It Is Well” fans!

On top of the Hymn Madness, some of our Filipino families stepped up and hosted a fundraiser



TOP: Vote counters (FROM LEFT) Gail Montgomery and Jo Ellen Reed listen as Mike Warfel and Rev. Adam Young tease each other about Be Thou My Vision. BOTTOM: Singers at the Hymn Madness Hymn Sing (FROM LEFT), Barbara Zapf, Roland Joy, Ken Peterson, and Ken Peterson. Photo by Taylor Roland.

luncheon to support the Children’s Ministry Fun-Raiser. We advertised our Filipino Family Meal on social media. With a menu of egg rolls, noodles, vegetables, sweet and sour

sauce, and sticky rice dessert, this meal turned into a real community event. We had a massive turnout with the line snaking down the main hall of the church.

There were many neighbors and friends who do not attend our church that came to enjoy this meal. The day was a huge success and we managed to raise \$2,272 toward our goal!

So far, among the three fundraising efforts, we are now over 85 percent of the way to our goal, having raised \$17,070 in seven weeks. We expect to meet the goal soon and will post the open children’s director position immediately. We are so excited about all that God is doing in our midst as we seek to live like Jesus, cultivate transformation in our community and embrace all with God’s grace.



Rev. Felix Jones and Rev. Adam Young pose with the church’s Filipino families after the Filipino Family Lunch.

One Camping Family Out of Many

BY REV. EVAMARIE CAMPBELL

Oklahoma United Methodist Camping Ministry has a place near and dear to my heart. As an elementary aged person, I remember being so excited to get to go to Camp to be a “gopher” (now termed Youth Leader in Training) to help my father, Rev. Charles Herndon, as he led what was then called Sixth Grade Camp. I got to see and be involved in the “behind the scenes” making of an excellent and faith-enriching week-long experience of Church Camp.

As I grew up, I continued to go to Church Camp and to help with all aspects of Camp. Being a United Methodist Minister’s daughter with the itinerant system I had the blessing of attending Summer Camp at all 3 of our Campsites over the course of my teenage years. My father instilled in me the love of being in God’s creation and the appreciation for how the Spirit moves in those “mountaintop experiences.”

Once I began in full time ministry, I too assumed leadership in our Oklahoma United Methodist Camping Ministry. I’ve been the Dean of 6th Grade Camp and Joy Camp many times. I recruited my father and my husband, Myers Campbell, to be in leadership with me through leading worship and serving in the Discovery Center.

Once I had children of my own, my mother even came to camp as our Camp Nanny!

Both my brothers, Mark and Alan Herndon, along with their spouses and children have been active in leading camps at Canyon Camp and Camp Egan. My niece Reese Herndon was instrumental in raising funds for new mattresses at Canyon Camp and my daughter Hannah Campbell Bryant and my son Dallas Campbell have grown from Youth Leaders in Training to small group and Silly Songs leaders. The joy of camping goes on.

The amazing thing about Camping ministry in Oklahoma is that my family is just one example out of many families who share the love and joy of leading camps together. As I’ve attended Camp Dean meetings, I’ve been pleased to meet other mother/daughter or father/son or aunt

and nephew teams of Camp leaders.

What a blessing for campers and leaders when families can share their love of God’s creation and create “mountaintop experiences” for the Spirit to move and change lives!



Friends made photos of Rev. Charles Herndon, father of Rev. EvaMarie Campbell, into a collage for Campbell when he passed away. Submitted photo.

Camp Dates

Conference Camps

Sonshine Camp (Grades 1-2)

Sonshine 1 at Canyon	June 15-16
Sonshine 2 at Canyon	July 13-14
Sonshine at Egan	June 22-23

Growin' in Grace (Grades 3-5)

Growin' in Grace 1 at Canyon	June 10-12
Growin' in Grace 2 at Canyon	July 8-10
Growin' in Grace 1 at Egan	June 17-19
Growin' in Grace 2 at Egan	July 15-17

Joy Camp (Grades 3-6)

Joy Camp at Canyon	June 14-16
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5th and 6th Grade Camp (Grades 5-6)

5th and 6th Grade Camp at Egan	June 17-21
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LEAD Camp (Grades 6 - Grad)

LEAD Camp at Cross Point	July 15-19
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Egan Youth Camp (Grades 6 - Grad)

Egan Youth Camp at Egan	June 10-14
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Camp Spark (Grades 6 - Grad)

Camp Spark at Canyon	June 24-28
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Ecumenical Camps

Clue Camp (Grades 6 - Grad)

Clue Camp at Canyon	June 3-7
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CYC (Grades 6 - Grad)

CYC at Cross Point	June 17-21
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The banner features a background of a tree-lined path. On the left, a circular inset shows a group of smiling children. On the right, another circular inset shows a group of people playing with a large, colorful beach ball. The text is centered and includes the OK CAMPS logo, a sign-up call to action, and the website URL.

OK CAMPS
United Methodist Camping Ministry
CANYON | EGAN | CROSS POINT

SUMMER CAMP

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THE 2024 SUMMER CAMPING SEASON!**

 [OKCAMPS.ORG/CAMPBOOK](https://okcamps.org/campbook)

Revitalization of Faith: The Journey of First UMC of Tishomingo

BY REV. SHARON COCHRAN

In the small town of Tishomingo, Oklahoma, a beacon of hope and inclusivity shines through the First United Methodist Church (UMC). Following a period of disaffiliation that has impacted many congregations across the United States, First UMC of Tishomingo stands as a testament to resilience and unwavering faith.

The disaffiliation season, a time marked by the departure of numerous churches from the UMC due to theological differences,

particularly regarding LGBTQ+ rights, has led to significant changes within the denomination. Despite these challenges, First UMC of Tishomingo has embraced a mission to revitalize its congregation, focusing on creating a welcoming environment for all, regardless of their background or previous church experiences.

At the heart of this revitalization is a deep hunger for spiritual growth and discipleship. The church's doors are open to everyone, especially those who have felt marginalized or unwelcome in other places of worship. This inclusive approach is rooted in the belief

that God's grace is boundless and available to all humanity.

The church's commitment to sharing God's grace is evident in its various outreach programs and community services. From food drives to support local families in need to hosting open discussions on faith and life, First UMC of Tishomingo is dedicated to being a living example of Christ's love in action.

As the congregation moves forward, it does so with a clear vision: to be a church that not only welcomes everyone but also actively seeks out those in search of spiritual home. The revitalization of First UMC of Tishomingo is not just about increasing numbers; it's about nurturing a community where every individual can find belonging, purpose, and a deeper connection with God.

In a world that often seems divided, the story of First UMC of Tishomingo offers a hopeful narrative of unity and grace. It's a reminder that even in times of change and uncertainty, faith can bring us together and guide us toward a brighter, more inclusive future.



Tabitha Beckman

Are you heading to Charlotte for General Conference?

Whether you're going to volunteer, to support a cause, to watch the proceedings, or for some other purpose, we'd like to connect with you!

If you have ties to Oklahoma and will be present for any portion of General Conference, please reach out to us before you go!

Email us at editor@okumc.org.



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A Life Plan Community

Ten tips to equip churches and families as they prepare for Earth Day

BY THE MICHIGAN ANNUAL CONFERENCE

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed individuals can change the world; indeed, it’s the only thing that ever has.” Margaret Mead, the famous anthropologist, said this, and it plays out in the story of [Earth Day](#). One man, distressed over the environmental degradation he saw, initiated the first Earth Day 53 years ago.

He claimed his “me power.”

Another man, employing his organizing skills, joined him and made the expansion of Earth Day possible so that it now reaches billions of people in 192 countries.

Together, they turned the effort into “we power.”

We, too, can change the world — with our individual and corporate actions. Let’s celebrate the possibilities, claim our power, and get to work!

Share these tips with your family, friends, and congregation.

the single-use plastic items you encounter. Become hyper-aware of plastic bags, excess packaging, water bottles, disposable cutlery, straws, and cups that litter your life before they stay in landfills or oceans for eons. Share your count with at least one other person.

Awareness is the first step to positive change.

Treat your family to alternatives to the usual single-use plastic items in your home.

For example, consider bamboo toothbrushes, shampoo bars, aluminum water bottles, and reusable silicone baggies. You can also visit a refill store. Move away from “throw-away.”



Choose any or all. Forward them to someone you care about. Add them to your email signature, correspondences, worship bulletins, newsletters, social media streams, or website.

For a few days, keep a tally of all

Tell your friends what you are doing to reduce the plastic waste in your life. Talk about why that change is important to you. Recount your changes as steps on a journey and invite them to join you in tackling the problem. Encourage

them and avoid creating any embarrassment.

At work, check out the coffee station. Styrofoam cups and plastic stirrers get thrown away but never go away. Look for non-plastic alternatives for coffee cups. Buy a package of linguine pasta, break the strands in half, and use them to stir the coffee or tea. The pasta-stirrers can be composted or thrown away without the same harm that plastic generates.

Plan an Earth Day (April 22) opportunity to educate and encourage your church family about choosing the planet over plastic.

Consider a display, “This — Not That,” showing alternatives to single-use plastics. Plan a special Sunday school program. Arrange to clean up a nearby stream or roadway as a service project. Weigh and report the results. In worship, include prayers for the planet. Hand out reusable bags imprinted with a reminder to care for God’s creation.

Donate to organizations that are addressing the plastic problem on a larger scale. Your financial support enables them to reach far and wide.

Check out these examples: [EarthDay](#).

[org](#), [Plastic-Free July](#), The Story of Stuff Project, specifically, [The Story of Bottled Water](#).

Push your state or city to ban specific single-use plastics. Already, more than 500 cities have ordinances against plastic bags. Twelve states have bans in place, and two more are working in that direction. The number is growing, and [the bans are working](#). Get your local policymakers on the “ban-wagon.”

Money talks. Boycott companies that use excessive plastic packaging. Purchase from businesses that are committed to environmentally friendly practices and plastic-free products. Look for [B Corp certification](#). Read the “About” tab on websites. Complain if you receive something with plastic packaging. Buy food not wrapped in plastic.

Currently wending its way through Congress is the bill [H.R. 6053](#): “To amend the Solid Waste Disposal Act to reduce the production and use of certain single-use plastic products and packaging, to improve the responsibility of producers in the design, collection, reuse, recycling,

and disposal of consumer products and packaging, to prevent pollution from consumer products and packaging from entering into animal and human food chains and waterways, and for other purposes.” Contact your representative to advocate for its passage.

Approach this Earth Day — and every day — with gratitude. Our Creator God has gifted us with an amazing planet — not wrapped in plastic. Our faithful response is to cherish and care for this treasure.

Watering the Earth: START WITH VISION AND A PURPOSE

CONTACT US TODAY TO PROVIDE FOR THE MINISTRIES OF YOUR CHURCH AND LASTING GOOD IN YOUR COMMUNITY



Call to Action



Sign up for legacy planning preparation.

Three UM congregations in the Heartland District will offer a half-day event to help people prepare for end-of-life matters in a faithful way. Representatives from The Oklahoma Methodist Foundation will be at each event to present information about estate planning; pastors will be present to discuss the funeral as a worship service and how to begin preparations now; and each registered participant will receive a NOKBox (Next of Kin Box - information at thenokbox.com) to give the gift of preparation to those we leave behind. Host churches are asking for a \$60 registration fee to cover the cost of the NOKBox and lunch.

Charla Gwartney, senior pastor at Good Shepherd UMC in Yukon will host the first event on April 20. Shyloe O'Neal, senior pastor at Moore First United Methodist Church will host the second on April 27. Desi Sharp Brumit, senior pastor at Shawnee St. Paul's United Methodist Church will host the third on May 4.

For more information please contact the church hosting the event that you would like to attend.

THE LAST FINISH LINE

Passing the Torch: Legacy Planning

April 20th @ Good Shepherd United Methodist Church
9:00 AM - 1:00 PM
REGISTER HERE: <https://umcgs.org/>

April 27th @ Moore First United Methodist Church
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
REGISTER HERE: <https://moorechurch.com/>

May 4th @ Shawnee St. Paul's United Methodist Church
9:00 AM - 12:00 PM
REGISTER HERE: <https://shawneestpauls.com/>

Share your event or job opportunity in the Contact.

For consideration, email your listing to editor@okumc.org.