

Council of Bishops meets in OKC next month

On Nov. 2-7, the United Methodist Council of Bishops will meet in downtown Oklahoma City.

This international Council consists of 66 resident bishops plus all retired bishops.

Their semi-annual meeting opens at 4

p.m. that Sunday with a memorial service at St. Luke's UMC. Participation is by invitation only.

The Skirvin Hilton hotel will be the central location for the Council's work.

On Wednesday afternoon in Oklahoma

City, the Council will begin a joint meeting with The Connectional Table.

On Nov. 1, the Connectional Table will host a panel discussion on human sexuality, the Church's mission, and United Methodist church law. The discussion will be streamed

online 8-10 a.m. Several bishops will be among the panelists.

The full Council of Bishops has not gathered in Oklahoma since March 1978, according to Christina Wolf, the Oklahoma **See Bishops, page 6**

SKY-HIGH SUNDAY — On Sept. 7, Church of the Servant welcomed more than 1,000 people to an outdoor back-to-school event with helicopter rides, food trucks, pony rides and a petting zoo, inflatables, and more. The OKC church's Fam Fest drew a large number of first-time guests. "Our church family understood the power of inviting people to experience our church in a new and family-friendly manner," said coordinator Scott Bartlow. Boy Scout Troop 177 assembled a lookout tower; Oklahoma City firetrucks were on display, and Interstate Helicopters of Bethany reached new heights of fun.



Photos by Chelsea Riley

Ed Parker leads Camps for Conference

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

Ed Parker, new executive director of Camp & Retreat Ministries, met lots of Oklahoma pastors in his first day on the job.

Newly arrived from New Hampshire, he was introduced Sept. 23 at the annual Bishop's Retreat for all clergy. Then trips to the Conference's three camping centers added to the cross-country miles he'd just driven.

But one week on the road quickly loses ground to the total distance hiked, backpacked, kayaked, etc., by this outdoorsman. And he values highly the mile markers

God's placed along the trail of his life.

Rev. Parker "brings a unique blend of ministry, business, and camp experience," according to Craig Stinson, director of Connectional Ministries. That expertise includes strategic planning, fundraising, and financial management.

"God uses all of our experiences to equip us for further ministry," Parker said.

For him, Elijah's wilderness encounter with God is a biblical metaphor for camping as ministry.

On the run from an angry queen, that ancient prophet hid in a cave. A cacophony of wind, earthquake, and fire was followed by silence. In that quiet, Elijah heard from God. And he was revived. (1 Kings 19)

Storms, wildfires, and shaking earth are familiar to Oklahomans. But there also is chaos of heart.

Opportunities to get away into nature and its stillness can be a catalyst for growth. **See Camps, page 5**



Parker

We want your opinion

Turn to page 5 to take the **Contact** survey and mail it to us, or go online to: www.okumc.org.



Learn more, grow more

Missions conference
Nov. 14-15 — Page 3

Evangelism workshops:
Home for Christmas, etc.
Oct. 18 — Page 7



Hispanic congregation feeding souls in Tulsa

When Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. visited Nueva Esperanza UMC in Tulsa on Aug. 17, more than 150 people attended the late-afternoon service.

The great turnout was a big blessing, said Pastor Daniel Llanos Jimenez.

The bishop preached on “Detours, Obstacles, or Opportunities.” That title speaks to the determination by this primarily Hispanic congregation to reach and disciple new people, said Rev. Llanos.

Nueva Esperanza began in 2002, meeting in shared space. The congregation gained new life in March 2012, when the people moved into a permanent location: the former Harvard Avenue UMC building.

“We have experienced struggles and also moments of brokenness,” said Llanos, “but thank God we continue forward, preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ, handing out food through our food pantry and,

lately, going out to the streets one day a week.”

Nueva Esperanza searches out those who are homeless, “to whom simply we are giving a hug, a box with food, prayer when they ask for it, and a farewell with the simple phrase ‘Remember, Jesus loves you,’” explained the pastor.

The church’s food pantry has expanded to serve about 1,000 people per month. In 2012, about 700 hungry people were assisted monthly.

Five church members are enrolled in the Conference’s Academy for Part-Time Local Pastors at Okmulgee. They are: Arturo and Rocio Amaro, Josephine Jimenez, Rosangela and Frank Slager.

“In our pilgrimage we have had to take detours,” Llanos wrote after Bishop Hayes’ visit. But those led to opportunities to glorify God’s name as Tulsa residents see God’s hand in the ministry by the people of Nueva Esperanza.



Nueva Esperanza UMC has started a street ministry in Tulsa. Pastor Daniel Llanos Jimenez is at right.

Your giving supports Oklahoma’s Hispanic/Latino Ministries, helping make Christ known through Tulsa-Nueva Esperanza and other efforts across the state. The 2014 Conference Apportionment for these ministries is \$140,000. To learn more: www.okumc.org/HispanicLatinoMinistries.

Employment

Nursery Attendant: Bartlesville-Oak Park UMC. Part-time. More information: Karen Distanfano, 918-440-9213. To request application, email oakparkumc@cableone.net.

Organist/Pianist/Music Director: Nowata-First UMC. Part-time. Contact Cheryl Newton, 918-273-1562.

Youth Director: Jenks UMC. Part-time. Call the church, 918-299-5462, or Dave Karges, 918-706-8406.

Organ/Piano Accompanist: Midwest City-St. Matthew UMC. Send resume to smumcsprc@gmail.com or call Barbara at 405-550-0852.

Pianist: Blanchard-First UMC. Call: 405-485-3579. Email: mychurch@blanchardfumc.org.

Music Director: Moore-First United Methodist. Part-time. Contact Rob Harris, 405-794-6671, pastor.rob@moorechurch.com.

Youth Director: OKC-Putnam City UMC. Part-time. bobkanary@sbcglobal.net.

Youth Director: Shattuck-First UMC. Full-time. Housing provided. Contact Rick Trobaugh, revtrobaugh@gmail.com.

Assistant Youth Leader: OKC-Chapel Hill UMC. Contact Jon Cunningham, 405-751-0755.

Youth Minister: OKC-Sunny Lane UMC. Part-time. Call 405-677-3347.



Renita Weems to present Willson Lectures

Oklahoma City University welcomes Renita Weems to present the Willson Lectures on Nov. 13.

Rev. Dr. Weems is a biblical scholar, an academic administrator, a writer, blogger, and ordained minister. Her scholarly insights into modern faith, biblical texts, and the role of spirituality in everyday lives make her a sought-after writer and speaker.

She became the first African-American woman to earn a Ph.D. in Old Testament. *Ebony Magazine* named her one of America’s top 15 preachers.

Weems received her bachelor’s at Wellesley College and holds a master’s and Ph.D. from Princeton Theological Seminary.

She has been a faculty member of Vanderbilt University and visiting professor at Spelman College. Her current post is vice-president and academic dean at American Baptist College in Nashville.

She is the author of several acclaimed books on women’s spirituality and wholeness, including the influential “Just a Sister Away.” Many have read her commentary on the Song of Songs in The New Interpreter’s Bible series by Abingdon Press.

In 2008, Yale University invited Weems



Weems

to give the prestigious Lyman Beecher Lecture, making her the first African-American woman to do so.

In addition to illustrious academic accomplishments, Weems has had great

success communicating with secular and lay audiences.

Her book “Listening for God: A Minister’s Journey Through Silence and Doubt” won the prestigious Wilbur Award by the Religious Communicators Council for “excellence in communicating spiritual values to the secular media.”

She has provided commentary and analysis for the Discovery Channel, BBC, and *Washington Post* and was a panelist on Bill Moyer’s “Genesis Project.”

She has appeared on the PBS program “Washington Week” and was a columnist for *Beliefnet*.

She is married and has a daughter.

• On the OCU campus, Weems will lecture on “Gender and the Bible” at 1 p.m. in the Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel. At 2:30, she will engage in a discussion on the same topic with Professor Sharon Betsworth of the OCU’s Wimberly School of Religion.

• Everyone also is invited to hear Weems speak on “Gender and the Church” on Nov. 12 at 6:30 p.m. at Fifth Street Missionary Baptist Church, 801 N.E. Fifth St. in Oklahoma City. This event is sponsored by the Oklahoma Institute for Biblical Literacy.

2014

Willson Lectures

Thursday, Nov. 13
Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel
Oklahoma City University

1 p.m.—Sanctuary—Rev. Dr. Renita Weems, “Gender and the Bible”

2:30 p.m.—Watson Lounge—Conversation with Dr. Sharon Betsworth

All events free and open to the public.

More information: 405-208-5484 or www.okcu.edu/religion/continuinged.aspx

Bonus event

Dr. Weems will speak on the topic “Gender and the Church”

Nov. 12—6:30 p.m.

Fifth Street Missionary Baptist Church
801 N.E. Fifth St.
Oklahoma City 73104

Sponsored by the Oklahoma Institute for Biblical Literacy



Strength for the journey:
A collection of ideas and thoughts from our bishop

Desire a radiant faith

“Rejoice in the Lord always and, again, I say: Rejoice.” (Philippians 4:4)

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

How inspiring to see a devoted follower of Christ meet life’s challenges with a cheerful outlook and determination to overcome any circumstance! When you encounter people like that, your own burdens seem lighter and you gain incentive to go another round.

But how discouraging to see an equally dedicated disciple engulfed in hopelessness! I have seen both during my ministry.

The difference between them is the possession of a radiant faith.

Radiant faith results when you discover the meaning of the word “rejoice.” This word was not coined by followers of the risen Savior, but it seems distinctly Christian. It sums up the spirit of the New Testament writings, particularly those by the Apostle Paul.

Certainly Paul knew the triumph of hope in Christ over staggering difficulties in his life. He endured stoning, shipwreck, imprisonment, and outright rejection. Yet his letter to the church at Philippi reminds the people to express joy in all situations.

If you look deeper into Paul’s ability to rejoice in all things, you will discover profound meaning for today.

Rejoicing in prison

First of all, Paul knew he was asking those early believers to offer up their lives in service as they surrendered themselves to Christ. His radiant faith became a powerful witness to people. His spirit and zeal enabled Paul to persuade many to follow Christ.

When Paul was in prison at Philippi (Acts 16), he sang praises to God so the other prisoners would hear. When an earthquake caused the prison doors to open, even Paul’s jailer asked, “What must I do to be saved?”

While imprisoned in Rome, scholars tell us, Paul wrote the encouraging books of Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians as well as Philippians. Everyone who came in contact with him witnessed his unconquerable disposition.

A glad faith is contagious. Seeing the Christ-like joy in Paul stirred an irresistible urge to join him.

James Gregory is the name of a jailer in our era. He was the prison guard assigned

to Nelson Mandela during his long captivity. Mandela’s personality and essence were so tremendous that guard and prisoner became friends. When Mandela was sworn in as president of South Africa, James Gregory was there.



Bishop Hayes

Beyond happy

Also giving Paul a radiant faith was his unshakable relationship with the risen Savior who met him on the road to Damascus and changed his life. His jubilation was the result of a new vision of God and his newfound relationship with Jesus, who sought him out and used him in spite of Paul’s contentious past.

In the Scripture for my article today, please note that Paul didn’t say, “Be happy.”

No. He said, “Be glad in the Lord always. Rejoice.”

The one way you will find the radiant faith that Paul experienced is when you truly surrender yourself to follow Jesus Christ. Your relationship with him will keep your heart cheerful and your soul at peace. If your loyalty is divided, as it is for many people, your life and disposition will reflect that.

Judson W. Van DeVenter was raised in a Christian home; he was the son of Methodist parents. At age 17 he accepted Jesus as his Savior. After college, he traveled extensively in Europe, teaching music. He mastered 13 instruments, sang and composed hymns for the Church, and was very successful.

But deep within, Van DeVenter knew his life was incomplete. He struggled many years to fill the void inside his soul.

He was conducting music for a church event in 1896 when he yielded his desires completely to God and wrote the words that became the timeless hymn “I Surrender All.”

Rejoicing every day

When your life belongs entirely to Christ, you embrace the powerful urge to use your life in service to God and others. Christian joy is maintained by Christian service. A radiant faith emerges as you give yourself to those whose only response can be to give their lives to Christ, just as people did when they saw Paul.

Eugene Peterson’s *Message* translation of Philippians 4 uses this wording: “Celebrate God all day, every day. I mean revel in Him. Help them see that the Master is about to arrive. He could show up any minute!”

I will rejoice until that day comes. Again, I say: I will rejoice!



Mission and service: two crucial components in the DNA of United Methodism.

Sign up for a major learning event, packed with workshops and speakers, to further your church’s engagement in these areas.

The Conference’s Office of Mission will host the program on Nov. 14 and 15, Friday evening and Saturday, at UM Church of the Servant in Oklahoma City.

A variety of workshops will provide you many ideas to reach out beyond your church.

- *Understanding Poverty Through a Lens of Faith.* How can we be sure that our missional responses to need are appropriate and effective?
- *Generation Transformation.* What inspires young adults inside and outside of the church?
- *Intercultural Development.* Who lives in your community but is not represented in your congregation?
- The Kingswood Institute for the Study and Practice of Christian Mission
- “Fun With Duct Tape and Other Meaningful Strategies To Keep Young People from Doing Drugs”
- “Before the Next Disaster”
- “Global Health: The Church’s Response”
- “Making Global Missionaries a Part of the Local Church”
- A recertification class for Volunteers In Mission leaders will be held during the afternoon Nov. 14, at the church.

The presenters’ knowledge also is extensive.

Keynote speaker will be Denise Honeycutt, new deputy general secretary of UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief). Cherian Thomas is an international consultant on community health care. Missionary Willie Berman coordinates the Methodist Border Mission Network, based in Reynosa, Mexico. Audrey Phelps is VIM director for the eight-state UM South Central Jurisdiction. Richard Norman is president of Oklahoma VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters).

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. will be guest preacher.

“This is a perfect complement to the *New People, New Places* initiative,” said Jeremy Basset, who directs the Office of Mission. “Participants will leave equipped to help their congregations minister in new ways. Bring several people from your church if you want to cover all the workshops.”

Rev. Basset said the education provided at this event also will help fill a training gap in Oklahoma. The annual *Re-Ignite Workshops* will not be held in early 2015, because the work of transitioning to new districts by June 1 is engaging the time of many leaders.

Sign up at: <https://okumc-reg.brtapp.com/Equipping>. Registration is \$40 per person, and there is a discounted group rate.

Order your 2015 calendars online

Online ordering now is open for the 2015 Conference Calendars. Cost is \$10 each. **All calendar orders must be placed online.**

Oklahoma camps, special meetings, and event dates, the lectionary and colors for the Christian year are included on this calendar—a helpful tool in local church planning.

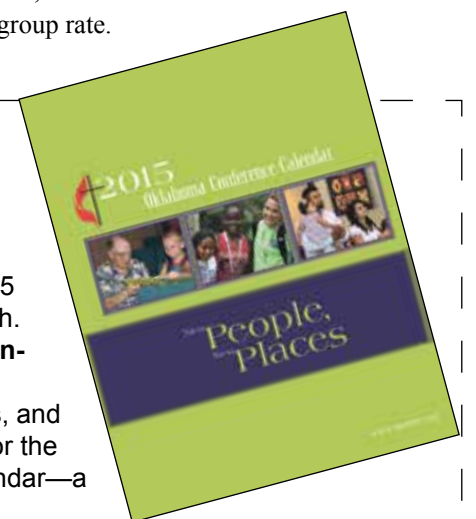
Each currently appointed clergyperson receives a free calendar. So clergy do not need to place an order, unless more than one calendar is wanted.

When ordering, you have the option to pay by credit card or by check. Mail checks to: United Methodist Ministry Center, 1501 N.W. 24th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73106, attn: Rebekah Hasty. On the memo line write: Conference Calendars.

The 2015 calendars will be available mid-November.

Important: Calendars will not be mailed until payment is received. For questions, contact 405-530-2019, rhasty@okumc.org.

To order: www.okumc.org



Saying yes to God

Stories of call inspire 93 at rally

By ERICA THOMAS

I was United Methodist even before I was born. My great-great grandmother joined OKC-Quayle UMC in the 1920s. My mother and father met at Quayle and were always active in the church.

In the summer of 1975, I attended district youth camp at Canyon Camp. I had an amazing experience where Jesus became very real to me. I continued to be active in church and heard a call to ministry. But I was a performer — still am — and wanted to try my hand at making a living on the stage. I felt that I would not pursue ordained ministry until later in life.

Going to college, having many experiences across the world, God has been with me every step. I always have sought out opportunities to be in Christian fellowship, as well as talk to my theater friends about their faith and mine.

During many years, God has used the talents he gave me to sing praises as well as opera and music theater. For example, I traveled to Cuba for a music ministry presentation.

In 2000, I attended a church workshop in Wichita, Kan. A preacher named Sherri Townsend gave the sermon “Walk Worthy” (Ephesians 4:1-2).

That Word convicted me, and I stopped running from this call. I began the clergy candidacy



Erica Thomas tells her call story Sept. 6.

Photo by Connie Barnett

process by reading “The Christian as Minister.”

Being a Deacon seemed just right for me.

I get to connect the world with the church. It is an awesome thing to see someone come into a relationship with Jesus Christ and be healed of past hurts caused by the church.

I also teach voice at a community college and meet many young adults with no church or faith experience.

I love being a Deacon, assisting in Communion and baptism, teaching Bible study, helping new Christians find their place in the Kingdom.

This is a fabulous journey.

(Rev. Thomas is an ordained Deacon.)

The five storytellers Sept. 6 included a seminary student, a Local Pastor, an ordained Deacon, even a bishop; and their stories were personal. They spoke of God calling them to ministry. Three of their talks are condensed on this page.

The audience was attentive that day at Moore-First UMC, because many were contemplating God’s call on their lives, too. A total of 93 people attended the Call to Ministry Retreat & Rally.

Among them were a dozen youths and 30 people described as “inquiring candidates” by Chuck Nordean, Conference director of Clergy and Congregational Development. Another 17 were enrolled in the Academy for Part-Time Local Pastors.

The Oklahoma Conference Board of Ordained Ministry designed the rally as Oklahoma embarks on group mentoring for all clergy candidates. Five such groups organized during the break-out sessions. Ten district superintendents and 24 mentors also attended.

By STEPHANIE STEPHENS

My call to ministry started at about kindergarten age. I gave my life to Christ, and shortly after that began hearing God speaking to me. As a young child, God literally called me by name.

I had the same kind of experience that Samuel had as a child when God called him.

At first, I went to my mother repeatedly, asking if she had called me, and she replied, “No!”

She finally told me to say, “Yes, Lord,” and then listen for God and do what he told me.

As long as I can remember, God has been using me to provide messages for others. At first I was scared because I was so young. How would people respond? Would they believe me, take me seriously? What would I say?

God reminded me of Jeremiah’s prophetic ministry. I truly believe that the Almighty called me in this way because my Savior wanted me to know there was need of me at an early age.

In college I was active in the Wesley Foundation. I joined a United

Methodist church’s mission trip to Mexico, and my heart was “strangely warmed.” I didn’t make any decisions about ministry then. But I did visit that church in the Oklahoma City area.

Because I wasn’t United Methodist, I did some research about the denomination and the church I was visiting. It was important to this preacher’s kid to join a church where I agreed with the beliefs, felt the presence of God, and could serve and grow. I prayed and, after hearing from God, joined that church.

Then I told my parents. Later, I told them of my decision to become a preacher, with hopes of pastoring and becoming an elder in The United Methodist Church. They were supportive and happy.

In 2010, I started seminary, Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City, and in 2013 I was appointed pastor of St. Mark’s UMC in Shawnee.

I wake up every day living out my calling. You should do what you love and love what you do, and I’m happy that I’m able to do that. When you fully allow God control of your life — “Here am I; use me” — God uses you beyond what you could ever think to do.

I first heard my call as a child, but I get the privilege to respond to that call each and every day.

(Rev. Stephens is a part-time Local Pastor.)



Stephens

By MIKE MAHAFFEY

My call to ministry can be described best as a “creeping call.” It sneaked up on me.

I was baptized in another denomination at age 14, left church at age 16, and wandered in the wilderness for more than 20 years.

Then my two adult children became very active in a denomination unfamiliar to me. I spent three years reading everything I could get my hands on concerning theology, world religions, denominational history, and more.

All that reading led me to “how” my children joined this denomination, but did little to answer “why” they were so involved.

One night, I awoke suddenly with these words ringing in my head: It’s not about them, stupid; it’s about you. I soon began



Mahaffey

looking for a church to call home.

In my reading, John Wesley’s theology of grace spoke to me in a way that I found missing in other faith communities. My wife had grown up United Methodist; her grandfather John Dennis was a retired Elder in the Oklahoma Conference.

She and I found our way to First UMC in Muskogee, and I vowed to give God an hour a week.

But we were invited to join a Sunday School class, and my one-hour vow began to change.

Members of the class rotated as volunteer teachers. After my first turn, the sign-up list mysteriously disappeared. I taught the class for five years.

I became a certified Lay Servant and taught a weekly adult Bible Study for three years. Then encouraging words from class and church members led me to “fill the pulpit” for vacationing pastors in smaller, nearby churches.

I was blessed to serve in these ways as

an active lay member and concluded, “This is enough.”

But others thought there might be more awaiting me, even a call to ministry.

I said, “No way.”

One Sunday found us worshipping at Kingston UMC, celebrating Rev. Dennis’ 100th birthday. Listening to the sermon, I thought it rude when someone behind me said loudly, “You will preach.”

Yet no one was there when I turned around, and none of the other worshippers seemed to notice. After the service, I told John about my church involvement and the proclamation that only I heard that day.

He prayed with me, offering a double blessing for what I was doing and what he knew would be unfolding.

That day my “no way” became “maybe” and, later, with encouraging words from trusted others, “maybe” became “Yes, Lord, here I am.” So I contacted my district superintendent and started the journey into clergy ministry.

However, I thought it unlikely that I would advance much. I was 50 years old at the time, with more wilderness than church experience, and confident all this was just a misunderstanding.

The Ministry Inquiry Process helped me so much as I wrestled with my call.

I found the ministry path for me was as a Licensed Local Pastor. I seemed best suited to serve small and/or rural churches — if there was a need and if I was found worthy.

This is my 15th year as a full-time Licensed Local Pastor. I chose licensed ministry for several reasons, and No. 1 is the accountability factor. Annually I submit my ministry to examination by the superintendent and District Committee on Ministry. In addition, not having security of appointment adds an intensity to my calling.

I depend on my call daily while living it out, currently serving Fairview at Slapout and Catesby. I have been blessed beyond measure after finally saying yes.



A waterfall cools Austin Parker and his dad, Ed, during a family camping vacation.

Camps

Continued from page 1

ing in faith, said Parker. “To me, that’s what camping ministry is.”

He has been involved with church camps since childhood. The Parkers – Ed, wife Lynnda, children Emily and Austin — enjoy family camping vacations. And Rev. Parker previously has led church camp and retreat facilities.

He served as president and CEO of The New England Fellowship of Evangelicals, which includes Rumney Bible Conference center and the White Mountain Camps. He led at Camp Loughridge, in Tulsa, and directed camps for New York City’s Bowery Mission.

Nationally, he has conducted youth and leadership training for the Southern Baptist Convention. His innovative consultant work includes *Angel Tree Camping* for Prison Fellowship, *Passage* for Promise Keepers, and the National Guard’s *Youth ChalleNGe* mentoring program.

Parker has 12 years of ministry experience as a pastor. He earned a B.A. in business administration, holds a Master of Divinity degree, and has done doctoral study.

The past four years, he directed the State of New Hampshire’s *Access to Recovery*, a \$12 million initiative.

Parker said he has been a change agent for organizations, and he always has felt a calling to transform lives.

He grew up immersed in small-church life in New Hampshire and was baptized at age 14. The youth group totaled about a dozen teens. Including Parker, eight of them have become pastors and missionaries.

“Who gets the credit for that? God does,” Parker said.

The new Camps leader is exploring this ministry as it relates to local-church life. He wants the mountaintop moments such as Elijah experienced to continue when campers return home.

“Real transformation comes through the heavy lifting at local churches,” Parker said. “We are also about resourcing the local church.”

He concluded, “I am here to serve you through genuine, authentic ministry that really connects.”

Contact survey

Thank you for completing this survey. Your feedback helps the Conference Department of Communications measure the usefulness of this resource. Your Apportionment giving makes *Contact* possible (Contribution Form, Item 560). Your information is confidential. Complete the survey online at www.okumc.org or mail this form to: Department of Communications, 1501 N.W. 24th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73106-3635. Surveys will be accepted until Nov. 1.

1. How do you receive *Contact*? Select all that apply.

- Printed newspaper
- Contact Digest* in my email
- I read it online
(www.okumc.org/OKUMCContactnewspaper)

2. *Contact* is produced every three weeks. How much of an issue do you read?

- Cover-to-cover
- Selected stories
- I skim the headlines and look at the pictures.
- I rarely read any of it.
- I do not read it.
(If this is your response, SKIP TO QUESTION 13.)

3. How do you use *Contact*? Select all that apply.

- As an educational resource
- As a devotional resource
- As personal reference material
- I post content on social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.).
- I place content in the church newsletter or bulletin.
- I pass my copy to another member or place it out at church.

4. How much has *Contact* increased your knowledge of the following areas?

	A great deal	Quite a bit	Some-what	Very little	Not at all
Oklahoma missions and ministries					
Where Apportionment money goes					
United Methodist beliefs					
Upcoming activities					
Available resources					
Oklahoma leadership					
Ideas for local churches					

5. Has *Contact* improved your understanding of the United Methodist global connection?

- Yes No

6. How strongly do you agree or disagree with the following statements about *Contact*?

	Agree strongly	Agree somewhat	Disagree strongly	Disagree somewhat
Has articles that interest me				
Helps me as a church leader				
Provides resources and ideas for ministry				
Is dull and poorly written				
Is not relevant to me				
Helps me feel connected to other United Methodists				
I definitely want to keep receiving <i>Contact</i> .				

7. Which of the following have you done after reading *Contact*? Select all that apply.

- I have given my copy to someone else.
- I have shared articles with someone else.
- I have saved all or part of *Contact* for further use.
- I have forwarded *Contact Digest* as email to church members and friends.
- I have requested additional print copies.
- I read it and discard it.

8. If you need extra *Contact* newspapers, how would you get them? Select all that apply.

- Talk to my pastor
- Ask someone at the United Methodist Ministry Center
- Go to the Conference website, www.okumc.org
- Call the Department of Communications

9. How likely are you to recommend *Contact* to a friend or colleague? 10 = Certainly; 1 = Not at all. (Circle one)

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. What in *Contact* is least valuable to you?

11. What is missing in *Contact* that you would like to see?

12. I read *Contact the Magazine*.

- Yes No Unfamiliar with the publication

13. I am:

- Local-church leader
- Local-church member
- Local-church paid staff
- Pastor
- Retiree
- Conference/District/Agency staff
- Other

14. My church is:

- Rural
- Small-town
- County seat
- Suburban
- Urban

15. My gender is:

- Male Female

16. My ethnicity is:

- African-American
- Asian
- Hispanic
- Native American
- Caucasian
- Other

17. My age group is:

- Younger than 25
- 25-44 years old
- 45-64 years old
- Age 65 or older



Photos by Holly McCray

Volunteers from New York move a gate Sept. 5 into the new barn for 1 Day Ranch at Bethel Acres, near Shawnee. The man at center is a team leader for New York Says Thank You.

Barn-raising complete at Bethel Acres

United Methodists remain engaged in disaster recovery work in Oklahoma after the May 2013 tornadoes. In Bethel Acres on Sept. 4-7, volunteers from the community and across the nation built a new barn for 1 Day Ranch, a nonprofit animal rescue and therapeutic riding facility founded in 2010.

The Oklahoma UM Disaster Response Committee awarded a major grant of \$50,000 for the purchase of building materials. Members from both the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) and the Oklahoma Conference make up the committee.

The New York Says Thank You Foundation annually commemorates 9/11 by doing recovery work at other disaster sites, in partnership with other groups. The Foundation declares, "What we do is about 9/12."

The hundreds of volunteers included New York firefighters and police officers who were first responders in the World Trade Center attacks, Ground Zero construction workers, and disaster survivors from other states.

Additional major funding for the



From right, Jeff Parness of New York Says Thank You updates Oklahoma United Methodist officials Jeremy Basset and David Wilson at the ranch on Sept. 5.

\$200,000 project came from the Jewish Federations of North America and Oklahoma City, the Chickasaw Nation, and Foundation supporters in North Dakota and Texas.

David Wilson, OIMC superintendent, said, "It is amazing to see how Creator God brings so many great people together from around the country for such a great ministry."

on the work that has taken place across the connection concerning the Acts of Repentance and what annual conferences are doing today to maintain healthy relationships with the Native communities of their respective areas," said Rev. Kernell.

"In addition, there will be a time of witnessing various tribal cultural expressions as persons from throughout the community will be invited to come and educate the episcopacy on the great diversity of the Native American community."

This OIMC clergy member is the General Board of Global Ministries' executive secretary of Native American & Indigenous Ministries, Justice & Relationships.

On Nov. 6, according to Kernell, time has been allotted to continue the conversations between members of the Native community and those in the Church about the role Christianity has played in their lives.

He said, "The time will end with a spiritual moment, recognizing the responsibility the bishops will carry as they depart."

The global church

United Methodists are responding on multiple fronts as the Ebola epidemic continues to spread in western Africa.

- UMCOR (the United Methodist Committee on Relief) has channeled more than \$400,000 in emergency grants, chiefly to Sierra Leone and Liberia. The funds support construction of holding units, purchase of tents and personal protective equipment, training for health staff, public messaging about Ebola, and psychosocial counseling for affected people. When possible, the funds go to UM health boards to purchase healthcare and supplies locally. UMCOR also is cooperating with trusted partner agencies.

- United Methodist Women in Liberia are handing out love and food, and training people in preventive health measures, even in quarantined areas. In late September, the UMW president for the Liberia Annual Conference said 18 church members, including two pastors and a UMMen president, had died in one district.

Camping ministries will not be conducted next summer at the four sites owned by the Missouri Conference. The proposal of that Camps board to sell the sites was the result of a two-year discernment process. The future of those sites will be determined by that Annual Conference in June.

"What we're good at is programming and discipling, and that can happen anywhere," said the board chairperson.

United Methodists were confronting family violence long before the NFL's response to players' assault charges was making headlines. Still, church leaders say we can do more to address the problem. A survey by LifeWay Research found 29 percent of Protestant senior pastors said they believe domestic violence is not a problem in their churches.

UMM and UMW groups in the Baltimore-Washington Conference plan to offer Domestic Violence Church Team Training.

"Coming to church and not singing is like going to the gym and not working out," wrote Michael White and Tom Corcoran, Catholic priests, in an online newsletter by the UM Lewis Center for Church Leadership.

They listed principles for worship music in the Sept. 17 issue of *Leading Ideas*.

"The music must be all about attracting the lost and growing disciples through worship. It's about discovering what music works in your community — not the personal preferences of the pastor and the music director, not the demands from the pews, not even the stated preferences of the majority."

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www.umcom.org/news/interpreter-magazine

A pilot project to provide e-readers loaded with theological texts to remote, low-power areas has proven so successful that this collaborative effort has been extended until December 2016 by the General Board of Higher Education & Ministry and General Board of Discipleship.

The "E-Reader Project" assists 16 UM schools of theology in Africa and four in the Philippines.

Gbarnga School of Theology in Liberia reported faculty previously wrote chalkboard notes for students to copy or depended on lectures before the pilot project began.

Leaders of the Rocky Mountain and Yellowstone Conferences received a task force recommendation in September to begin intentional conversation about merging. The two conferences include about 400 churches. The Futures Task Force of the Yellowstone Annual Conference made the proposal, and a Transformation Team will be formed. Final decision on any changes is up to the Western Jurisdictional Conference.

The General Board of Church & Society is seeking people to participate in consultations about the UM *Social Principles*. The goal is to make the *Principles* more succinct, theologically founded, and globally relevant.

Two consultations will be in Washington, D.C., on Jan. 16-17 and 23-24. Others will be in Mozambique, the Philippines, Czech Republic, and Nigeria.

For information about applying: Katie Montfortte, kmontfortte@umc-gbcs.org, 202-488-5679; or Neal Christie, nchristie@umc-gbcs.org, 202-488-5611.

Have you ever lost a job or known someone who has? Well-intended friends or family may say things such as "It must be nice not having to go to work" or "God has a better plan for you" to a person whose career just took a detour. A pastor in Colorado offers a few sensitivity tips to truly provide comfort and hope:

www.umc.org/resources/what-not-to-say-when-someone-has-lost-a-job

In a meeting lasting more than an hour, staff of President Barack Obama's administration and the heads of UM general agencies shared views and discussed how resources of the Church support U.S. initiatives to improve the lives of children at risk, prevent sexual violence on campuses, and address global humanitarian concerns.

The president's initiative "My Brother's Keeper" and the "It's on Us" campaign against sexual violence were among topics. UM leaders at the recent meeting were Gil Hanke of UMMen, Harriett Olson of UMW, Kim Cape of GBHEM, and Stephen Sidorak, ecumenical and inter-religious affairs.

Brad Jenkins, associate director of the White House Office of Public Engagement, hosted the group and arranged the briefing, working with Susan Henry-Crowe of the UM General Board of Church & Society.

— Compiled from *United Methodist News Service*, www.umc.org

Bishops

Continued from page 1

United Methodist archivist.

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. of the Oklahoma Area invited the Council to meet here, especially to continue the bishops' education and participation in healing the Church's relationships with Native Americans.

The Council's commitment to action on this issue began with an Act of Repentance at the 2012 General Conference.

Bishop Hayes leads about 90 churches in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) and 512 Oklahoma Conference churches.

The 2010 U.S. Census reported Oklahoma ranks second highest among all states for its Native American/Alaska Native population.

An Act of Repentance will be on the Council's agenda in Oklahoma City. Glen Chebon Kernell Jr. has a major responsibility in designing the bishops' engagement in that.

"The week will include a time of reporting



Christmas campaign will expand

The *Home for Christmas* media campaign for all churches will be highlighted by Chris Buskirk during a full day of evangelism workshops Oct. 18, hosted at OKC-Chapel Hill Church.

A total of 16 leaders will present in the “Reaching New People in New Places” event. Keynote speaker will be Bishop Robert Hayes Jr.

Among other topics are “Speaking With Skeptics,” “Prayer and Evangelism,” and “Navigating the Tightrope of Adolescence.”

Rev. Buskirk said, “Across our Conference, 180 churches participated in the 2013 *Home For Christmas* campaign, with remarkable results. Four out of every five of those reported Christmas Eve attendance increased by 33 percent.” He is pastor at Abiding Harvest UMC, Broken Arrow, and serves on the evangelism committee of the Conference’s Discipleship Ministry Team.

Pastor Ben Williams told how Shawnee-Wesley UMC used the campaign and saw the worshippers at that service increase from 90 to more than 300 in 2012.

“We just did some of the things described in the HFC workbook,” said Rev. Williams.

“Key for us was a request we made of our members for names of friends and family to which we could send an invitation from the church. We simply mailed about 300 invitations, and that personal connection really worked.”

Buskirk said studies confirm that Christmas Eve is the most likely time a non-

churchgoer will consider going.

Home for Christmas aims to not only get new people into a local church, but also inform guests of compelling opportunities that will get them to return.

This effort combines a media awareness campaign that individual churches seldom can afford and the customized approach of each local church, Buskirk explained. It is sponsored by the evangelism committee.

For the 2014 holidays, more TV spots and a greater investment in social media are planned. In Oklahoma, social media’s potential reach is 1.1 million people, primarily through Facebook, but also Twitter and Pinterest.

“The Crouch Group will do much of this for us, linking interested guests, as in the past, to www.ChristmasEveWorship.com to find a local church near them,” Buskirk said.

The Crouch Group will also be a resource for customized Facebook campaigns originating from local churches, to be “liked” and “shared” with the friend-to-friend connections that the Shawnee church discovered to be so influential.

To learn from Buskirk how *Home For Christmas* could “go viral” in your community this holiday season, attend his morning presentation Oct. 18.

To register, contact Connie Barnett, cbarnett@okumc.org, 405-530-2006. Fee, \$25, includes lunch.

7 classes on ‘Living the Lord’s Prayer’

Seven regional workshops on spirituality and discipleship are set for evenings in mid-October.

“Living the Lord’s Prayer” will be led by clergyman Trevor Hudson of Benoni, South Africa.

Dates and places:

- Oct. 14, Mangum UMC
- Oct. 15, Fairview UMC at Slapout

- Oct. 16, Lamont UMC
- Oct. 26, Adair UMC
- Oct. 27, McAlester-First
- Oct. 28, Prague UMC
- Oct. 29, Pauls Valley UMC

All events include a meal. Programs are 5-9 p.m. except at the Adair church; that workshop will be 3-7 p.m.

www.okumc.org/SmallMembershipChurch

Passages

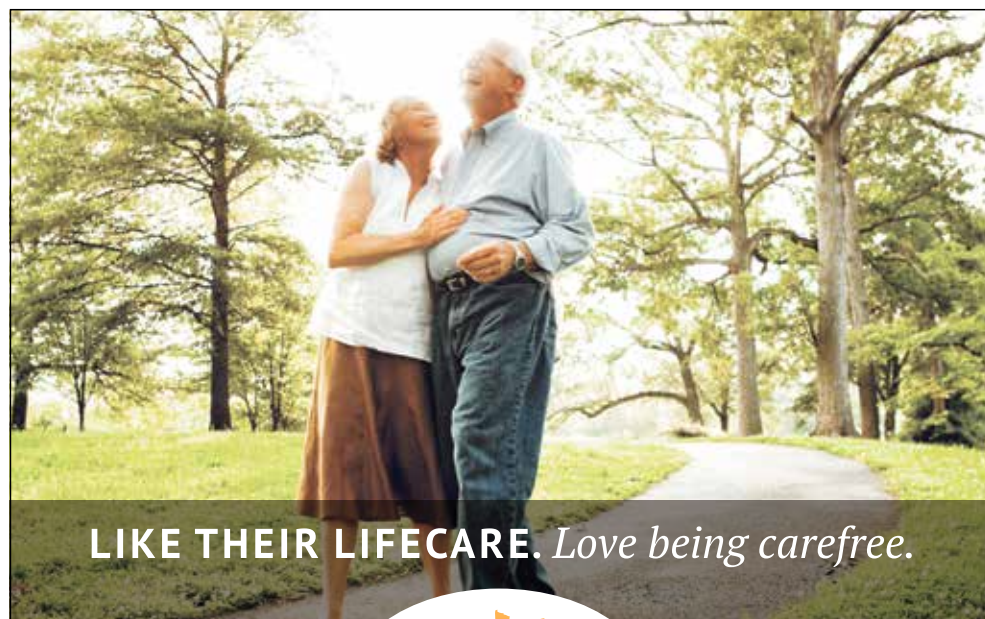
Dr. Carol Carruth Johnson, 69, of Broken Arrow died Sept. 13, 2014. She was the wife of Rev. Larry Johnson, retired pastor and longtime executive director of Restore Hope Ministries.

Carol was born Feb. 26, 1945, in Meridian, Miss. She earned the Doctor of Ministry degree. She was a retired professor of Pastoral Care and Spiritual Formation at Oral Roberts University.

Survivors include Rev. Johnson; sons Christopher Eisele and Richard Johnson; and four grandchildren.

Service was Sept. 18 at Church of Saint Benedict in Broken Arrow. Memorial gifts to: Restore Hope Ministries in Tulsa.

Geraldine King, 77, of Lawton died Sept. 23. She was the mother of Rev. Keith King, associate pastor at OKC-St. Luke’s.



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Legacy Planning Using Real Estate – Part 4

Real estate is an excellent asset to give to your favorite United Methodist cause or causes. The best method of making a gift of real estate depends on your individual situation and goals, both personal and financial. During this four-part series, we have explored options for making gifts using real estate. The various options outlined below offer flexibility in financial, estate, and legacy planning:

OUTRIGHT GIFT The outright gift of real estate held for over a year is the most advantageous method for income tax purposes, and its benefits are immediately available to the charitable organization.

BARGAIN SALE If the property's fair market value exceeds the value that you want to give, the property can be sold to the charitable organization for a price that is significantly below the value but above your cost basis. The difference between the fair market value and the selling price is considered a tax-deductible gift for income tax purposes.

PART GIFT - PART SALE If you have property that you are planning on selling and you would like to make a gift to a charitable organization, it is advantageous from a tax standpoint to deed a portion of the property to the organization prior to the sale. See *Legacy Planning Using Real Estate – Part 1, August 8 issue of Contact, for more details.*

CHARITABLE REMAINDER TRUST If you need income for retirement, you can fund a trust for the benefit of a charitable organization which makes payments to one or more beneficiaries. At the death of the last beneficiary, the assets remaining in the trust are used for the charitable purposes chosen by you. See *Legacy Planning Using Real Estate – Part 2, August 29 issue of Contact, for more details.*

LIFE ESTATE RETAINED If you are not sure that you want to give up the use of the property, consider gifting the property to the charitable organization while retaining the right to use the property for your lifetime or lifetimes. See *Legacy Planning Using Real Estate – Part 3, September 19 issue of Contact, for more details.*

BEQUEST FROM YOUR WILL OR TRUST This allows you to make a large gift at no immediate cost to you. This could be your greatest act of stewardship. There is an estate tax deduction with no limit on the amount. Many tithe their estates.

If you are interested in exploring the various real estate gift options, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org. There is no obligation, and all inquiries are confidential.

Your gift of real estate to your favorite Methodist cause or causes could change lives!



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Space to serve

New Hope completes major expansion

Scissors in many hands cut the ceremonial ribbon Sept. 14 to officially open the major expansion of New Hope United Methodist Church in far northwest Oklahoma City.

Then hands eagerly tore away brown paper covering a surprise in a large floor section of the new central Gathering Area.

For the first time, the people saw the UM cross-and-flame symbol embedded in the floor. It was created and then installed just before Dedication Sunday by church member Tim Gosdin, a construction manager. "You come to the cross" to begin your walk with Christ, he commented.



Gosdin said New Hope's \$2 million expansion project enlarged the building from 22,000 to 33,000 square feet.

"We've got it! What are we going to do with it?" Senior Pastor J.D. Ward asked the people in worship.

He answered his own question when he noted, "We had people at church every night this past week. We had 31 youth last Sunday night." A new adult member was welcomed Sept. 14.

The new space is dedicated to serve others in the name of Christ.

The many small groups at New Hope Church include Stitchers, *Christian Believer* classes, the *Stepping Up* series for men, even Zumba. Among recent events were "Paint for a Cure" and the seminar "Coping With Vision Loss."

The expansion project added 11 classrooms, a youth center, children's playground, kitchen, the large Gathering Area,

and more.

"New Hope has experienced major growth in the last five years, and we were out of space for Sunday School classes and our youth program," said Rev. Dr. Ward.

On the day the new space was conse-



Photos by Holly McCray

From left, new member Linda Timmons, charter member Agnes Goodman (seated), and Pastor J.D. Ward cut the ribbon at OKC-New Hope on Sept. 14. Inset: the United Methodist symbol anchors the new Gathering Area.

crated, he urged the people to recommit themselves, too. In both worship services, he preached "Devote Yourselves Completely."

During the Children's Moment, Les Basset reminded all ages, "If we weren't here, it would just be a building."

Scripture from 1 Kings described the celebration when the Temple was completed in King Solomon's reign.

In 1961, Shook Memorial Methodist Church opened on Northwest Expressway with 15 charter members. The congrega-

tion moved in 1998 to the current location, 11600 N. Council Rd., and took a new name. Two pews and a stained glass window from the original location are among New Hope's sanctuary furnishings.

In 2011, a committee began studying the church's space needs, and construction started in June 2013 on the expansion project.

Ward was appointed to New Hope UMC in 2009. Cali Depue Eck is in her second year as associate pastor.

— Holly McCray