

Challenge to the Council



Photo by Holly McCray

Bishop Thomas Bickerton of Pittsburg receives Communion during the Council of Bishops Act of Repentance on Nov. 6 at OKC-St. Luke's. The elements used were a Native American dish, grape dumplings.

Native community urges bishops to counter injustices

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

On Nov. 6 in Oklahoma City, Native Americans called the bishops of The United Methodist Church to work purposefully to heal injustices caused by the Church and develop genuine relationships with the First People.

"I want you to go tell your people ... all is not well," liturgists declared during an Act of Repentance, held at OKC-St. Luke's UMC.

The program was part of the global Council of Bishops Meeting, Nov. 2-7 in the state capital.

Three Native women described how their families have suffered as a group marginalized by governments and the Church.

Religion split Tamara Wilson's great-grandparents, she said. Early Meth-

odist missionaries insisted they would "burn in hell" if they did not abandon their traditional spiritual ceremonies. As a child in a Methodist-affiliated boarding school, Wilson's grandmother was beaten if she spoke her Native language.

Wilson is a member of rural Concharty United Methodist Church, south of Bixby. The congregation is part of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC).

Missionaries threw water in the face of Denisha Wilson's grandfather when assigning him a Christian name – George. Also taken from his family to a boarding

school, he was called a savage and worse. The women talked of current efforts to reclaim their heritage. Deb Echo-

Hawk is the Pawnee Nation's Keeper of the Seed. She remembered Nora, more than 100 years old, praying over three kinds of Pawnee heirloom corn.

Tamara Wilson, 35, teaches Yuchi language classes for children.

"It's not just learning a different vocabulary. It's a whole different worldview," she said. "It's identity."

Through the storytelling, liturgy, and music, the Native representatives sought to educate the bishops, members of the UM Connectional Table, and others in attendance about trauma both past and ongoing for all indigenous people.

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. of the Oklahoma Area said, "My fervent prayer is that as we leave we will have learned how to do more to live together and honor one another."

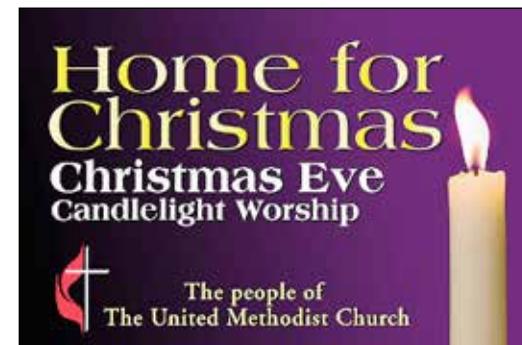
He also presented OIMC Superintendent David Wilson with a money gift on behalf of the Council and Connectional Table.

During the week, bishops' spouses



Photo by Ginny Underwood

Chebon Kernell scoops grape dumplings for the Communion ritual.



Meet me at the manger

The goal of the 2014 *Home for Christmas* campaign is to make sure that anyone who wants to be in church on Christmas Eve, anywhere in the state, can find a United Methodist church near them to meet this need.

That's because research shows Christmas Eve is the No. 1 time when people without a church home choose to visit a church.

This year's campaign, sponsored by the Conference's evangelism committee, combines TV commercials and social media networking to reach out in every Oklahoma zip code – to more than 1 million people.

Home for Christmas television ads will run on Tulsa, Oklahoma City, and Lawton stations beginning Dec. 21. The TV spots and paid Facebook posts will refer viewers to the website www.christmaseveworship.com, where they can locate church services near them.

Now is the time to be sure your holiday services are listed there.

By Dec. 1, submit your church's information, at no cost, at www.christmaseveworship.com/oklahoma/app/.

Next, through posts on your church's and members' Facebook pages, urge everyone to "share" and "like" the Facebook page "ChristmasEveWorship." Let's aim for "going viral" this season!

An engaging video can boost social media interest in a big way. Consider producing a brief one to promote Christmas Eve. Share the video on Facebook, on both your church's page and ChristmasEveWorship.

Your video could be recognized by the evangelism committee and win \$500 for the most "shares" and "likes"!

Contact the Crouch Group, 1-888-211-0273 or ron@thecrouchgroup.com, if you have questions or need help with promotion. You can view the TV ads on the website and use those in promoting your holiday events on your church's website or social media network. The Crouch Group also can help set up a church Facebook page if you don't have one.

People are waiting to be invited. The next step is up to you.

– *Chris Buskirk*

SAMPLE ROOM OPENS

— Now you can browse Cokesbury's United Methodist products at the United Methodist Ministry Center, 1501 N.W. 24th, Oklahoma City. View samples of the latest UM curriculum for children, Advent materials, and the new women's studies by United Methodist writers. Then contact Cokesbury resource consultants Julie Wise, right, or Diane Doughty to place your order. Only a portion of the sample room is shown. Also on display are robes, sanctuary products, and more book resources. And clergy can arrange to be measured on site for robes. Ministry Center hours are 8:30-4:30 weekdays.

**Employment**

Disaster Response Coordinator: Full-time, Great Plains Conference, Wichita, Kan. Contact Kalaba Chali, kchali@greatplainsumc.org.

Organ/piano accompanist: Midwest City-St. Matthew. Send resume to smumcsprc@gmail.com or call Barbara, 405-550-0852.

Youth Director: OKC-Crown Heights UMC. Part-time. Email: dianne@crowheightsumc.org.

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

Nursery Attendant: Bartlesville-Oak Park. Part-time. Contact Karen Distefano, 918-440-9213.

Pianist: Blanchard-First UMC. Email: mychurch@blanchardfumc.org.

Organist/Pianist: Tulsa-Centenary UMC. Part-time. Email: coch50@icloud.com.

Director of Music Ministries/Worship Leader: OKC-First UMC. Full-time. Email resume or questions to SPRC@FirstChurchOKC.com.

Youth Director, Nursery Attendant: Perkins-First UMC. Each job is part-time. Contact Laura Glover, 405-604-1301, pastorglover@SuddenLinkMail.com.

Choir robes. Free. Golden color. Contact Laura Glover, Perkins-First UMC, pastorglover@SuddenLinkMail.com.



School of Religion excels in preparing students for seminary and youth ministry

Since you became involved in Oklahoma's United Methodist family, you likely have been directly affected by a graduate of Oklahoma City University.

Alumni are serving local churches as pastors, musicians, business administrators, and youth/children ministry directors, as well as hospital chaplains and in nonprofit service agencies.

The OCU Wimberly School of Religion is a wonderful resource, right here in the state, to train young people and second-career folks for successful and faithful ministry in the churches and beyond.

The School offers five undergraduate majors: Religion, Religion/Philosophy, Youth Ministry, Religious Education, and World Religions.

Students on the path to ordained ministry often choose Religion or Religion/Philosophy. Both provide excellent preparation for seminary.

Recent graduates are attending Saint Paul, Boston, Garrett, and Drew seminaries. Several in the Class of 2014 were awarded full-tuition scholarships with stipends for their studies.

Sharon Betsworth, director of the

Wimberly School, appreciates the quality program and gifted colleagues who teach and mentor.

"We are excited to be able to prepare young people for ministry in Oklahoma, both the students who plan on attending seminary and becoming pastors and those who want to serve the church as a youth minister or Christian educator," said Rev. Dr. Betsworth.

OCU is one of a handful of United Methodist schools offering the degree in Youth Ministry.

This field is dear to the heart of Leslie Long, professor of Christian Education. She said the church community continues to ask how we can reach out to young people.

"One of the most important things we can do is have trained educators in the church," Rev. Dr. Long said. "Religious education for children and youth has lasting, positive effects in the lives of young people.

"National research studies indicate that youth who are part of a healthy learning community, where they are given the chance to develop in their faith, are more likely to turn away from harmful temptations and stay connected to the church in adulthood. Failing to emphasize the importance of this



Melaina Riley hands a program to Jackie Bolton, fellow Bishop's Scholar, at a recent chapel service.

ministry does a disservice to our families and especially our children and youth."

Youth Ministry and Religious Education prepare students to work in local churches in these fields. Many students even begin their ministry during their time at OCU.

For the past three years, 100 percent of OCU's graduates in these majors immediately have found employment in these areas. Many continued serving the churches where they worked during college.

- OCU continues to offer the Bishop's

Scholarship, which annually grants full-tuition awards for three students in the School of Religion. Applications are due Dec. 15.

- Other scholarships are available for UM students studying religion.
- The university also offers tuition remission for clergy dependents.

For more information or a scholarship application, contact Charles Neff, vice president for University-Church Relations, 405-208-5060, cneff@okcu.edu; or visit www.okcu.edu/religious-life/umc-scholarships/.



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

God welcomes your call of thanksgiving

When Jesus saw them (10 lepers), he said, "Go, show yourselves to the priests." As they left, they were cleansed. One of them, when he saw that he had been healed, returned and praised God with a loud voice. He fell on his face at Jesus' feet and thanked him. (Luke 17:14-16, The Common English Bible)

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

Some stories stay with you forever. One that I will remember always is the wonderful account of a man who attempted to call the editor of a large metropolitan newspaper. The editor worked in an exclusive, private office. All incoming phone calls were screened. To reach the editor, a caller first had to speak with a secretary in an outer office, then a subordinate in an inner office, and finally the personal administrative assistant to the editor.

When the man called, the secretary in the outer office told him, "I'm sorry, but the editor is extremely busy and cannot be disturbed."

The man persisted in pleading his case

and finally said, "Yes, I know the editor is busy, but I simply wanted to express my thanks for the column in yesterday's newspaper."

"Oh, that's different," said the secretary. "Hold on a minute."

Suddenly, the editor was on the phone — and kept the conversation going for more than 15 minutes!

Each year as Thanksgiving approaches, I remember that story for the insight it gave me. It reminds me that the easiest way to get through to anyone — especially God — is with a grateful heart.

Often when we pray, we approach God with a list of demands or with problems that we want solved quickly. At times we pour out our petitions in desperation, and when answers or solutions don't come immediately, we begin to think God is too far removed from us.

But God doesn't have secretaries to prevent you from getting through when you call. Nor is God isolated in some faraway place where your prayers cannot be heard.

When your prayers apparently bounce back like a rubber ball against a wall, try going to God in true thanksgiving, acknowledging God's goodness, mercy, and grace.

This is what the leper did in Luke 17.

Jesus encountered 10 desperate men who had the dreaded disease of leprosy. Forbidden to touch or even be near healthy

people, they discovered Jesus was nearby one day, and they shouted for help.

Jesus told them to go and show themselves to the priest, who had the authority to restore their place within the community. And while on their way, the lepers were healed!

But only one returned to give thanks. When he found the Master, he fell on his face at Jesus' feet in deep gratitude.

Jesus looked around and asked, "Weren't 10 cleansed? Where are the other nine?"

The nine were guilty of the sin of ingratitude, but the one who returned — a Samaritan — received even more blessings.

Seeing this one man who made time to express his thankfulness, Jesus pronounced yet another blessing upon him. One biblical translation records Jesus as saying, "Get up; go your way. Your faith has made you whole!"

Indeed, all 10 were healed of leprosy, but because the Samaritan returned with thanksgiving on his lips and true gratefulness in his heart, he was made whole in all ways.

The difference between being healed and being made whole will be your experience if you go to God in an attitude of gratitude.

One stormy night in Fall 1860, a side-wheel steamboat plying Lake Michigan collided with a lumber schooner and sank a mile

from shore. There were 393 people aboard the Lady Elgin, and 279 of them drowned. Among the heroes who saved some people that night was Edward Spencer, a Northwestern University student.

A young, strong swimmer, Spencer made 17 round trips to the sinking vessel to tow people to safety.

Then, exhausted, Spencer became delirious. Again and again he asked, "Did I do my best?" Tragically, he broke down under the strain and, for the rest of his life, was confined to a wheelchair.

Years later, interviewed on his birthday, Spencer was asked what was his most vivid recollection of that night. According to a Chicago newspaper, most memorable for him was that none of the 17 people he rescued returned to thank him.

Do you feel that you aren't connected to God when you pray? Do you feel that your calls to the Creator go unanswered?

Begin with a word of thanksgiving, and you will not only get through to God but also receive much in return.

Western Union has reported that more than \$1 million dollars is spent annually to add the words "thank you" to telegrams. Do you express your thanks to God? It won't cost you 1 cent!



Bishop Hayes

Passages

HANES — Rev. James Willard Hanes, 83, of Waynoka died Oct. 22, 2014. He was a retired Associate Member.

Jim was born July 10, 1931, at Hall Summit, La. On Nov. 19, 1951, he married Nancy Eubanks in Newport, R.I.

After he served 21 years in the Air Force, the couple moved to Oklahoma City.

After he answered the call to ministry, he pastored at Crescent/Marshall, Mountain View, and Waynoka between 1981 to 1995.

When he retired, he and son Jimmy owned and operated Jim's Sand Toys. They sold the company in 2007.

Survivors include his wife and son; a daughter, Rev. Pamela Hanes Zolczer; six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Service was Nov. 1 at Cheyenne Valley United Methodist Church. Memorial gifts to:

Waynoka or Cheyenne Valley churches.

ALBRECHT — Phyllis C. Albrecht, 69, of Camden, N.Y., died Nov. 4, 2014. She was the wife of Rev. Joseph B. Albrecht, who served churches in Oklahoma for 23 years.

Phyllis was born Dec. 24, 1944, in Oneida, N.Y. On March 17, 1962, Phyllis and Joe married in Florence UMC.

She was a church youth leader and Vacation Bible School teacher.

Survivors include Rev. Albrecht; daughter Lynette; sons Joseph, Jeffery, and James; and 11 grandchildren.

Service was Nov. 15 at LaRobardiere Funeral Home, Camden.

• Manilla Taylor, 95, of Oklahoma City died Nov. 4. She was the mother of Rev. Michael Fletcher-Taylor.

New in The DVD Library

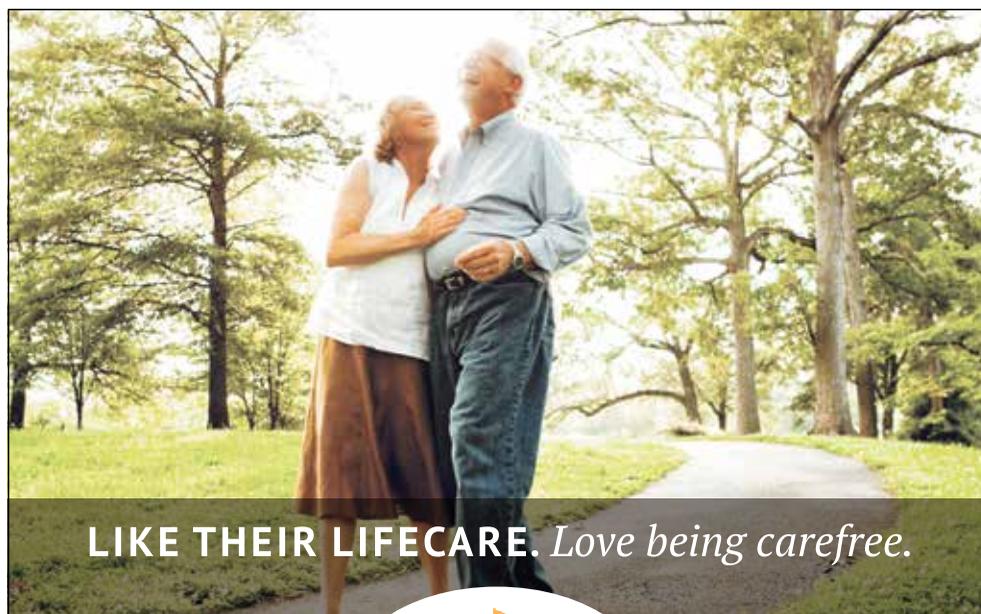
Two resources have been added to The DVD Library at the United Methodist Ministry Center, 1501 N.W. 24th, Oklahoma City. For information on checking out resources, contact Chris Schutz, cschutz@okumc.org, 405-530-2075.

The new items are:

■ "Revival, Faith as Wesley Lived It," by Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of UM Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan. The

DVD from Abingdon Press offers a six-part video journey in England, through Wesley's life, ministry, and teachings.

■ Covenant Bible Study kit from Abingdon Press, to help people read and discuss the Bible together and learn how to love God — and others — better. It includes 24 video episodes, guides for leaders and participants, and meditations.



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GBGM photo by Felipe Castillo

Above: In New York City, GBGM staff wash the feet of missionaries returning to Liberia. Helen Roberts-Evans is seated front. **Below:** Liberian bishops update Office of Mission Director Jeremy Basset, right, on projects in their nation. They were in Oklahoma City for the Council of Bishops meeting Nov. 2-7. From left: former Bishop Bennie Warner, now pastor at OKC-South Lee; former Bishop Arthur Kulah; and Resident Bishop John Innis.



'We can stop the spread'

Visiting missionary hopeful in fighting Ebola

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

Ebola-ravaged Liberia is undergoing major cultural changes because of the disease, said Helen Roberts-Evans, a United Methodist missionary in Liberia.

Due to the epidemic, Roberts-Evans was among the General Board of Global Ministries missionaries called back in August to the United States. She is a native of Liberia who spent years in the United States.

In late October, she visited with Bishop Robert Hayes in Oklahoma City to update him on Liberia missions. She also planned visits to Chicago, New York, and Atlanta.

She is director of the Department of General Education and Ministry for the UMC in Liberia and the Sunday school superintendent at her local church. She is the mother of four grown children and has one grandchild.

It has been hard to be away from the children at New Georgia UMC outside Monrovia, Liberia, she said.

"We're very, very close," she said of the 150 children in the Sunday school.

While she is thousands of miles away, she prays for the welfare of the Sunday school members, as well as for her godmother's family in Liberia. "I'm hoping they're all all right."

Roberts-Evans said one of the charms of Liberia is its sense of community. She told of sharing a taxi with a young mother, who handed over her baby for Roberts-Evans to hold.



Bishop Hayes meets missionary Helen Roberts-Evans on Oct. 21.

She has been able to communicate by Skype with some people in Liberia.

The children love to spend time playing soccer, she said, but they can't right now due to the sanitation guidelines and danger of being exposed to someone's body fluids, which can transmit the deadly virus.

In a country where people already have to use mosquito nets and take other steps to avoid malaria, typhoid, and tuberculosis, "we're having to be a lot more careful," Roberts-Evans said.

"You can't see germs, but that doesn't mean they don't exist."

Sanitation rules to help stop the spread of Ebola urge healthy people to keep their distance from those who are sick — a foreign concept to Liberians. When a family member is ill, it's customary for Liberians to remain nearby. When someone

dies, family members care for the body.

It is part of the culture to "greet everyone with a hug," Roberts-Evans said.

Taking steps to avoid disease involves some education, she said.

With schools closed since July due to the epidemic, Roberts-Evans said the country has a built-in army of educated people available to spread the word about how to avoid Ebola — its teachers.

They are equipped to share the message across Liberia's 15 counties — where 16 languages and dialects are spoken, Roberts-Evans said.

One of the goals is to impress on people the importance of hand-washing in a country with unreliable access to running water. A solution is to supply people with soap, disinfectant, and water buckets with spouts on the bottom, Roberts-Evans said.

She is convinced that education is the key to halting the epidemic. "We can stop the spread," she said with confidence.

Memories of her childhood in Liberia had made her long to go back as an adult to help the country recover from the devastation of civil war. She did, as a volunteer in 2008, and was commissioned as a missionary the next year.

Roberts-Evans and two other missionaries returned to Liberia in early November. Her GBGM Advance number is 3021129.

www.umcmmission.org/Explore-Our-Work/Missionaries-in-Service

Year-end deadlines to note:

Dec. 1

- Enrollment period ends for active clergy to sign up for health insurance.
- Start entering your church's 2015 officer names and contact information into the Oklahoma Conference online database.

For continuing officers, check and update their details, especially email addresses.

Accurate information is crucial to communicating successfully at all levels of the Church. One example: distributing the *Contact* newspaper. Whether delivered to a U.S. postal address or as the *Contact Digest* to an email address, help us be sure the news reaches you.

Dec. 15

- Deadline to enter your church's 2015 officer names and info in the database
- Final day to submit 2015 clergy compensation forms to District Offices.

Important: Use a computer that is Windows-based, not Apple.

Jan. 2

- Access opens to Conference Statistical Tables to report your church's end-of-year numbers.

Jan. 9

- All contributions to the 2014 Apportionments must be received by the Treasurer's Office.

Important: After Dec. 30, mail contributions directly to: Conference Treasurer, 1501 N.W. 24th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73106.

Jan. 30

- Deadline to submit 2016 budgets for all Conference ministries that receive Apportionment support.

Change in the pulpit

Senior and associate pastors deploy in new way to grow for God

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

One Oklahoma City church's approach to Kingdom work may be unique among models for ministry. The senior pastor is not the pulpit preacher at Chapel Hill UMC.

That is an anomaly for large churches.

Yet this radical strategy is growing both OKC-Chapel Hill and a young pastor's leadership skills.

On Jan. 1, associate Kris Tate began preaching each Sunday. Senior Pastor Robert Rose centered his work on overall executive administration.

And from January through July, the church welcomed more new members than during all of 2013. There have been more professions of faith and baptisms. More younger families come to church. A Sunday School class has launched for young adults.

Chapel Hill's people have been "amazingly engaging" with the change, Rev. Rose said. Longtime members have told him, "I can't believe what is taking place in our midst."

Numbers gauge impact for Chapel Hill, but the plan also benefits the wider United Methodist connection, church leaders believe.

"We recognized pastors as a whole in the Oklahoma Conference are getting older. Some real talented pastors are approaching retirement age," said Cary Dooley, who chairs Chapel Hill's Staff-Parish Relations Committee.

One-fourth of Oklahoma's active clergy are eligible to retire in five years, one-half within 10 years, according to data from the denomination's General Board of Pension Benefits. A former district superintendent, Rev. Rose identified a need for new clergy to gain experience quickly.

"One way to help is by training young, talented pastors in churches where there are

more experienced pastors to mentor them," Dooley explained. "We're going to need them sooner. Churches can make a difference for the Kingdom by training. Chapel Hill can do that."

Based on worship attendance, Chapel Hill is the 13th largest church in the Conference. The weekly average is 596 worshippers, and total membership is 2,526 people, according to the 2014 Conference *Journal*.

Among the staff are four appointed clergy; Nancy McCullough and Stephen Hale also are associate pastors.

Rev. Tate rises about 3 a.m. on Sundays to finish his sermon preparation. He preaches without notes. He previously pastored a three-point charge, but has eight years' experience as a church business administrator/associate pastor — at Edmond-Acts 2, Midwest City-Wickline, and Chapel Hill.

He had to regain the rhythm of weekly preaching.

That first Sunday in January, he thought, "This needs to go well," as he stepped into the pulpit.

Since then, he's baptized "a lot of kids and some adults, which is always exciting." He first baptized an infant and loved the interaction with the baby. Kris and Kinsie Tate have two children.

He baptized one adult by immersion; a water trough for large animals was used, set up in the church's memorial garden.

Ordained as a deacon in 2010, Tate is transitioning as a Local Pastor toward ordination as an elder.

He first sensed God calling him "to help facilitate positive change" but "I didn't know what that looked like." Political and law school pursuits fizzled.

As an adult volunteer at a summer



Photo by Michelle Pitt

Associate Pastor Kris Tate and his wife, Kinsie, greet people on a Sunday at OKC-Chapel Hill. At Kris' right is Associate Pastor Stephen Hale.

church camp, he chose seminary. He focused on what he had always excelled in: administration.

But the deacon's vision for church life persistently bubbled over into other areas.

"God really had called me to the ministry of an elder," Tate admitted. "It's my responsibility to proclaim the good news for the sake of the people."

Both Rose and District Superintendent Dan Pulver affirmed his decision. They had recognized elder's gifts in Tate.

"I believe when we're open, God can and does work through that," Tate said.

"One of the things I love about Chapel Hill is that we are a theologically diverse congregation. We focus on what unites us."

Tate emphasized his experience as churches' associate pastor. "I know what it is to be a role player. You're always learning something, if you're open, to make you better. We understand we are about the mission of making disciples for the transformation of the world."

The new format at Chapel Hill deploys all four appointed clergy according to gifts rather than titles.

Rose explained, "God and I have lots of dialogue. I said, 'OK, God, you put these people here. I believe it's for a reason, so

what do you want to do with us?"

"I believe that God wants to direct us. We have to get ourselves out of the way so God can."

And that's what Rose did, with approval of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee and the Cabinet.

Dooley said, "Robert's a real servant leader, willing to relinquish the pulpit for a time. I think it's been the right thing to do."

"The church is bigger than the pastor," Rose said. "I'm being realistic. I just want the church to grow, to be faithful, to reach more people."

"As long as the four people appointed by the Cabinet are here, this is the best utilization of their gifts."

Rev. Tate preaches and leads two traditional worship services. Rev. Dr. Hale preaches and leads contemporary worship. Rev. McCullough directs Chapel Hill's discipleship plan. Communicating with the laity is important, intentional, and ongoing.

North Oklahoma City District Superintendent Rockford Johnson said Chapel Hill's strategy "is realignment according to gifts, and it's contextual. We know that it's experimental, Wesley uses the term experimental."

"They are trying this to see what the Spirit does with it. We're watching it unfold. We are in this for the mission of the church."

Comedy reigns at Pawhuska's anniversary celebration

By **KATHRYN SWAN**

The Sisters Three topped the lineup of entertainment as Pawhuska-First United Methodist Church spent two days celebrating its 125th anniversary.

This comical male trio was charged with engaging the attendees in the 1928 song "Methodist Pie." Although the songwriter is unknown, "Methodist Pie" has been recorded by artists including Red Foley, Gene Autry, and Grandpa Jones.

A long-standing Pawhuska favorite, this lively song tells of a camp meeting, good grub, and a "great big Methodist pie."

Merriment continued throughout the two-day gala, Sept. 20-21.

CarMac the Magnificent and his dummy assistant, aptly portrayed by Terry Thorne and 11-year-old daughter Jentry, conjured laughter with secret questions and silly responses.

Photo ops abounded, with a Model T Ford Truck and horse-drawn surrey on display.

Clips of church activities spanning 30 years were shown.



Photo by Kathryn Swan

Richard Morris stands with Taylor and Laura Reed in front of a 1923 Model T Ford Truck. In background is historic Pawhuska-First UMC.

One comment overheard: "It doesn't pay to miss a Methodist

family night dinner, 'cause too much fun goes on without you!"

Commemorating the anniversary, Pawhuska-First purchased 125 Bibles for the Gideon Society, collected 1,250 diapers for the Department of Human Services, and donated 375 cans of vegetables to Christ's Cupboard. In addition, \$125 was donated for seminary scholarships in Chile.

History shows this was the first Protestant church in Pawhuska. According to reports, the first assigned pastor was gone before anyone met him. The second absconded when confronted with unpaid hotel bills.

When Mrs. F.T. Gaddis, through the Women's Home Mission Society, arrived in town and opened a school, she became the church's first appointed pastor.

In 1926 Pawhuska-First hosted the 35th Oklahoma Annual Conference.

Rev. Kathy Morris now leads First UMC. Worship attendance averaged 95 and 11 people were baptized in 2013. (Swan is First UMC historian.)

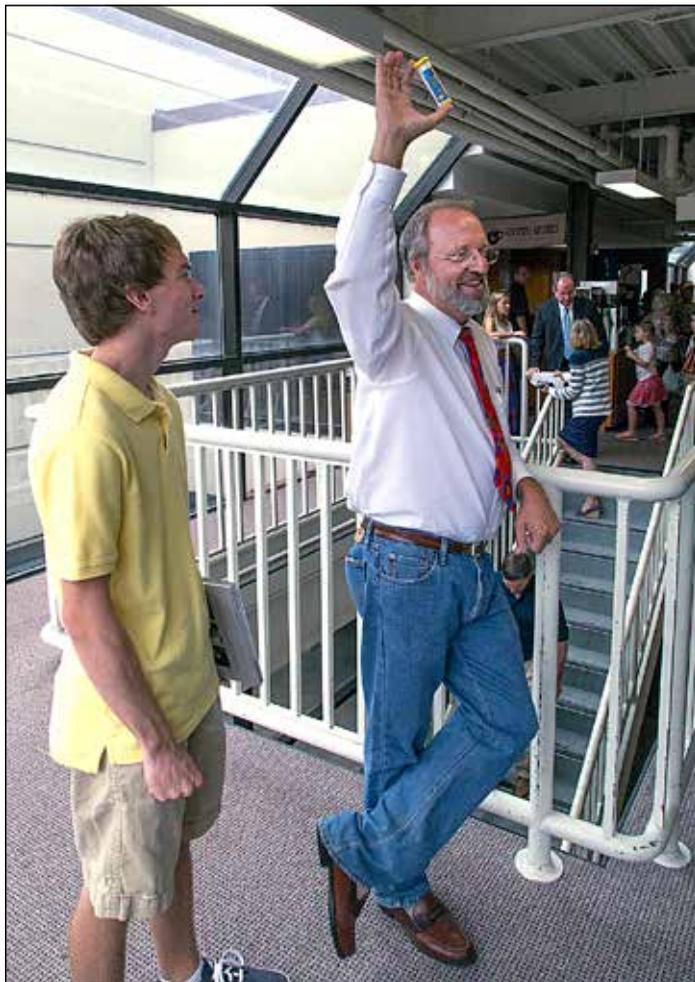


Photo by Dave Miller

Miles and Richard Bewley remind worshippers on Sept. 21 at Tulsa-First UMC to take home a tube of candy.

Success tastes sweet for Tulsa-First project

Little candy tubes filled with quarters sweetened the big Stop Hunger Now project at Tulsa-First United Methodist Church.

On Sept. 21, the containers with M&M'S© candy were distributed to everyone at the church. Once emptied, each can hold about \$14 in quarters.

Worshippers were asked to take the tubes home, enjoy the tasty contents, and return tubes filled with coins within two weeks.

The money donations then were used toward the goal of purchasing and packing 50,000 meals on Nov. 2 for Stop Hunger Now. Each meal costs 29 cents, according to the hunger-relief agency.

The aid agency began its hands-on program in 2005 to assemble nutritious dehydrated meals and distribute them globally. The food's shelf life is two years.

On Nov. 2, which was Thanks-Sharing Sunday at Tulsa-First, the congregation worked in two shifts to meet the goal.

More than 800 people, ages 7 to 87, volunteered on the meal assembly line inside Thomas Hall. First- through third-graders served alongside their parents.

"It is likely that some refugees in real need will receive this food," wrote Senior Pastor Wade Paschal in *FirstWord*, the church newsletter.

"These people will never know that First United Methodist in Tulsa prepared their food — but God will know. And we will know that we have been faithful to God's call to care for the 'poorest of these, my brethren.'"

Other Oklahoma churches also have volunteered with Stop Hunger Now, and the 2012 South Central Jurisdictional Conference delegates took on the project during that meeting in Oklahoma City.

Multiple choirs make joyful noise

Edging into the holiday season, Anadarko-First UMC despaired of finding a choir director/music minister in time to prepare the annual Christmas cantata at the church. So choir members and church leaders reached out in another way.

God multiplied their effort, with astonishing results.

Musicians from eight area churches will perform three times at three sites in early December.

Chester Taylor will direct the cantata, "O Holy Night!" Even a bell choir will participate. "I love it when the church sings and rings a

new way!" exclaimed David Gardner, pastor at Anadarko-First UMC.

Participating churches are: Apache First Baptist, Apache Pentecostal, Anadarko Bethel Baptist, Midway Baptist, Anadarko First Christian; and three United Methodist churches: Apache-First, Anadarko-St. Paul's, and Anadarko-First.

Performances, at 3 p.m., will be on Dec. 7 at Apache First Baptist, on Dec. 14 at Anadarko-First UMC, and on Dec. 21 at Apache-First UMC.

Scouts repair trails at historic site

Scouts from three groups volunteered recently at the Honey Springs Battlefield Historic Site, near Checotah, to learn and labor to help their community.

In addition to camping at the Civil War site, about 50 Scouts worked to improve the walking trails and earn a Scouting Historic Trails badge.

At a special Sunday service, the young volunteers heard from Wayne Loftin, senior pastor at Checotah-First UMC. He wore the period-correct clothing of a preacher.

Rev. Loftin encouraged the Scouts to make significant contributions in their lives, especially to their communities.

A historical presentation was by Omar Reed, an interpreter for the Oklahoma Historical Society. He told how "the Battle of Honey Springs had a lasting impact on the people involved."

The 1,200-acre site was scene of the largest Civil War battle in Oklahoma.

Boy Scout Euan Williams said, "As I was working today, I had an amazing experience thinking of how soldiers had also toiled in the very same field."

Stevana Marshall, an Explorer cadet sergeant, said, "This project was a great team-building effort."

Participating were Troops 642 and 995 and Explorer Post 601. Meals were provided by Warner Fire and Rescue Auxiliary, and Honey Springs site staff collected the materials needed.

— Contributed by Christopher Price, director, Honey Springs Battlefield Historic Site



Clergyman Wayne Loftin speaks to Boy Scouts near Checotah. Inset: a Boy Scouts of America Historic Trails award.

Thirsty to connect in Watonga



Youth members of Watonga UMC designed specialty bottles of water to give away at the city's Cheese Festival in October. Red-and-white labels declared "God Loves You, We Love You, And there's Nothing You Can Do About It" and listed church contact info. About 1,300 bottles were distributed over two days. These three visitors said they were excited to see the church reaching out at the annual festival. Steve Davis is pastor.

Blessed in Costa Rica

College student describes Claremore group's journey

By AUBRY NAGY

When someone says they've gotten more than they bargained for, it normally has a bad connotation. They mean there is too much work to be done. But what if we give this phrase a different implication?

What if it means we were blessed to receive more than we bargained for?

Claremore-First United Methodist recently went on a mission trip to Alajuela, Costa Rica, for the eighth year in a row.

When getting ready for a Volunteers In Mission trip, there are certain expectations of what will happen: the work, the people, the ultimate goal of worshipping God. All of these are naturally considered when planning for a mission trip.

God, though, always has bigger plans than any of us.

Claremore's team consisted of 28 people ready and willing to give a week of their summer to do God's work. Most of us were young adults, like me, and our previous mission experiences centered on Youth Force projects in Oklahoma. One of us had never flown.

But our leaders, Laurie and Jeff Ault, had directed the teams on the seven other missions in Costa Rica.

Because of their leadership, our group also welcomed 10 more people from a UM church in Plantation, Fla. This was their first time on an international mission trip, too.

One way our group gained more than we bargained for: We got 10 new friends.

We stayed at the Methodist volunteer reception center in Alajuela. Its campus houses teams from many denominations and organizations, who serve in mission throughout Costa Rica.

During the week our two groups worked mostly on different projects, but we also served side-by-side some afternoons.

The Florida team worked at the center, repainting some of the living quarters. Our Oklahoma team worked at Iglesia Evangélica Metodista Restauración, the Methodist church in Alajuela, painting, digging drain-



age ditches, wiring a new kitchen for electricity. Daily we were leaders for Vacation Bible School and a women's study group at the church.

These are the things that we did, but what we accomplished was so much greater — and could not have happened without the grace of God.

Claremore church members who had been on previous missions reconnected with Costa Ricans whom they had not seen in years and noted how many of them had grown.

In VBS, we saw timid children sing their hearts out to God in front of their congregation. We saw women gain confidence in themselves and in their faith through their study. We saw our relationships with each other grow whether we previously knew one another or began the trip as strangers.

Most of all we saw our personal relationships with God grow, strengthen, and become better as we answered The Great Commission from Matthew 28:19-20: "Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to



At a Methodist church in Costa Rica, Claremore-First Volunteers In Mission teach VBS songs, above, and build a perimeter fence, at left.

obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Throughout this trip our team continually got more than we bargained for because God's love for His people was so great that He did greater things through us than we ever could have imagined or done on our own.

Solely through Him, our team was blessed beyond measure.

Epilogue

Laurie Ault said the young missionaries continue to share what the VIM experience means to them. Pastor Victor Vargas, from the church in Alajuela, was scheduled to speak at Claremore-First on Nov. 16. He is traveling in the United States, reporting on ministries in Costa Rica.

(Nagy is a student at Rogers State University in Claremore.)

Constitutional amendments verified

The UM Council of Bishops has certified four constitutional amendments approved by the 2012 General Conference.

On Nov. 4 in Oklahoma City, the Council announced the items did receive the required two-thirds affirmative vote by all annual conferences.

There is variation worldwide in conferences' meeting schedules, so vote reporting takes some time. In May 2013, the Oklahoma Annual Conference gave overwhelming approval to the changes.

Here is a summary for each amendment.

1. Adds the word "pray" before "seek and work for unity," about ecumenical rela-

tions. Total vote: yes 42,816 – no 1,158. (Okla Conf vote: 523-5)

2. Removes the requirement that General Conference must be held in April or May. Total vote: yes 41,684 – no 1,991. (Okla: 512-14)

3. Changes "Lay Speaking Ministries" to "Lay Servant Ministries." Total vote: yes 41,223 – no 2,324. (Okla: 511-15)

4. Gives authority for boundary decisions to jurisdictional and central conferences, whose delegates include laypersons. Total vote: yes 41,176 – no 1,920. (Okla: 508-18)

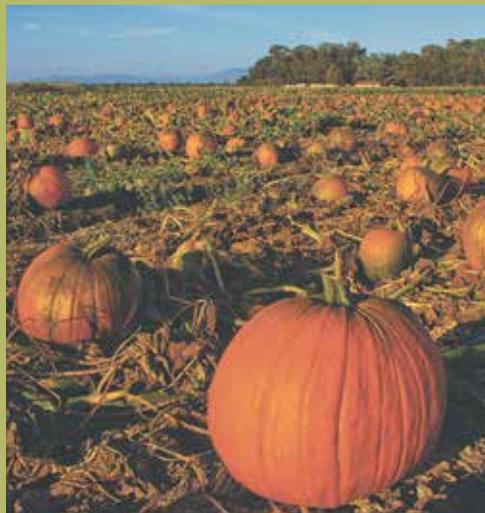
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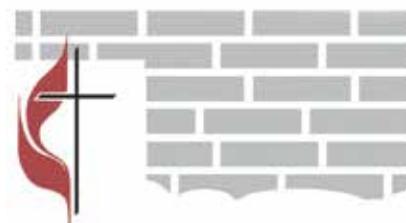


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Living history

Oklahoma Conference's United Methodist family reconnects as the denomination's Council of Bishops meets in Oklahoma City.

Active and retired episcopal leaders gathered Nov. 2-7 for their semi-annual meeting.

The Council met here once before, in 1978.

Clockwise from top right: The service of Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. (Oklahoma Area, 2004-), and Bishop John Wesley Hardt

(Oklahoma Area, 1980-88) bookends 34 years of episcopal leadership for the Oklahoma Conference and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference...

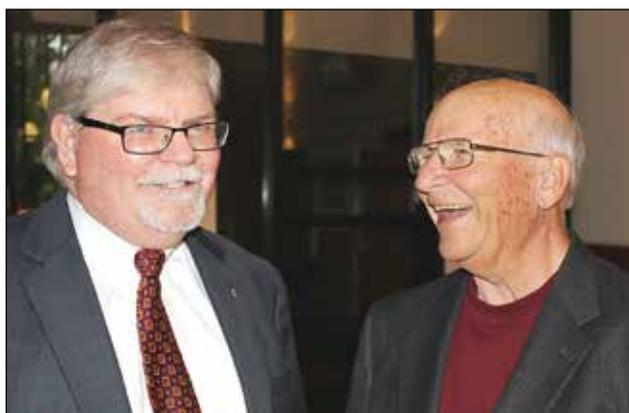
Bishop Dan Solomon (Oklahoma Area, 1988-1996) and his wife, Marcia, attended opening worship and a special dinner...



Photos by Holly McCray

Bishop Bruce Blake (Oklahoma Area, 1996-2004), right, laughs with Chuck Nordean, Conference director of Clergy and Congregational Development...

Retired Bishop Bill Oden was elected from Oklahoma in 1988, and his service included the Council's presidency.



Native community:

Continued from page 1

and guests explored the Native art collection at the Oklahoma Supreme Court building and related educational displays at the Oklahoma History Center.

The 2012 General Conference affirmed an initiative for healing and reconciling the Church with indigenous people. A resolution assigned the directive to the Council.

In Fall 2013, bishops traveled to Cherokee, N.C., one tribe's homeland before forcible removal by the U.S. government in the 1800s.

That location thus marks the beginning of one Trail of Tears for Native people. And so in Oklahoma, the Council met at the end of the trail.

Clergyman Chebon Kernell, a member of the Seminole Nation of Oklahoma, had a key leadership role in this month's program. He is executive secretary of Native American and Indigenous Ministries for the UM General Board of Global Ministries.

"The narrative you heard today reflects what is happening to indigenous people of the world," he said. "It's uncomfortable work, but necessary because our United Methodist Church is sick."

He challenged, "It's well past the time of making more resolutions. What will you do?"

On the following day Bishop Sally Dyck spoke in the Council's final plenary. "I was quite moved," she said. "They poured out their pain in a really honest way."

The Justice and Reconciliation leadership team of the Council reported working to encourage Acts of Repentance in all annual conferences and to update the foundational document "God's Renewed Creation: Call to Hope and Action."

More news from the Council of Bishops meeting: www.umc.org/news-and-media/united-methodist-news.