

Calendar

“I Am Laity”

Summit '15:

(church leader training)

Feb. 7, OKC-St. Luke's

Sponsor: Board of Laity

<https://okumc-reg.brtaapp.com/IAmLaitySummit2015>

Cokesbury Vacation Bible School Showcases:

- Feb. 12
Tulsa-Faith UMC
11:30 a.m.-1:30 p.m.
- Feb. 21
Tulsa-Boston Avenue
9 a.m.-noon
- Feb. 28
OKC-Lakeside,
10 a.m.-noon

Saint Paul at OCU's Seminary Lite:

- “Introduction to Worship”
by Rod Newman
Feb. 7, OCU Chapel Building
- “Church History”
by Amy Oden
Feb. 5 and 12, evenings
OKC-Church of the Servant
- “Intro to Old Testament”
by Lisa Wolfe
Feb. 11 and 18, evenings
OKC-St. Luke's
- “Christology”
by John Starkey
Feb. 26 & March 5, evenings
OKC-St. Luke's
<http://www.spst.edu/Seminary-Lite>

UM Bedlam Bash

March 2
Wesley Foundation at OSU
Stillwater
www.wesleyosu.com/GameDayRegistration

St. Yootz Day

(benefits Youth Service Fund)
Aug. 15, Frontier City, OKC
Performing: Toby Mac
www.okumcministries.org/Youth

YOUTH 2015

(national event)
June 24-28, Orlando, Fla.
www.YOUTH2015.com
Yukon-First is chartering a bus. Contact 405-354-8858 to learn more.

Endings differ for 3 churches



Photo by Holly McCray

From left: Eliab Alba, Isabel Crookes, and Josue Alba, aided by Rex Bross, at OKC-St. John's.

After decades rich in service and witness to their communities and the world, three small Oklahoma City churches are making big changes. Strategic planning for any church calls for honest assessment and spiritual discernment. In the final month of 2014, congregations made final decisions. The outcomes vary for St. John's, South Lee, and Epworth UMCs.

St. John's plans restart

By HOLLY McCRAY

The final page ends with a comma, not a period, in the story of OKC-St. John's United Methodist Church.

On Dec. 14, the members voted to discontinue. But this faith community officially will restart as The Salt UMC, after a time of transition.

As Greg Tener, South OKC District superintendent, pointed out, “Discontinue does not mean close.”

It does mean change.

The Salt's strategy is to become a truly

multicultural church in its diverse neighborhood.

Co-pastors Obed Alba and Murray Crookes are modeling that during the transition. They alternate preaching. The language in worship is bilingual.

Before the vote Dec. 14, Rev. Alba prayed in Spanish and English. Among the 72 worshippers that day were people of Hispanic/Latino, Filipino, African-American, American Indian, and European-American heritages.

“We didn't want to just open another Spanish-speaking church,” Alba said.

Support for The Salt includes the Oklahoma

St John's, page 6



A blooming mustard plant against a historic mountain backdrop recalls Jesus' teaching about faith (Matthew 17:20). The Oklahomans learned that King Herod ordered earth moved from one mountain to fortify his mountain stronghold.

Walking the talk



For this issue, Pastor Crystal Hughes of OKC-Douglas Boulevard and laywoman Piper Freese of Cookson provide perspectives on a recent Holy Land pilgrimage with the bishop. Turn to page 8 for more.

A view of Bethlehem's Manger Square includes the Church of the Nativity, left; a Christian Christmas tree; and Mosque of Omar, at right. The city also holds significance for Jews, as the birthplace of King David and where Rachel is buried.



Top: Oklahomans join worshippers in Bethlehem's Church of the Nativity. Bottom: Bishop Hayes teaches in the dungeon of Caiaphas' house, Jerusalem, where it is believed Jesus was held after his arrest.

Photos by Crystal Hughes

Briefly

Thunder tickets benefit youth

You support the Youth Service Fund (YSF) when you make a special ticket purchase to an OKC Thunder basketball game on Feb. 8 or 22.

The fundraiser is a project of the Conference's Youth Ministry. A portion of ticket sales goes to YSF.

These tickets must be purchased through Megan DeCastro, assistant to the youth coordinator, 405-530-2199, mdecastro@okumc.org. Find out more at www.okumc.org/youth.

New district offices in OKC

North and South Oklahoma City Districts' offices have relocated.

New mailing address for both districts is: 5601 N.W. 72nd St., Suite 230, Warr Acres, OK 73132-5932.

That also is the North District office location. Phone is 405-603-8488. Rockford Johnson is superintendent.

The South District office is in Moore-First UMC, 201 W. Main. That phone number is 405-603-8622. Superintendent is Greg Tener.

Mouzon Biggs to preach at Ada

At Ada-First UMC on Feb. 15, guest speaker Mouzon Biggs will preach and lead an afternoon retreat.

Rev. Dr. Biggs was senior pastor at Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC for many years.

His 8:30 and 10:45 a.m. sermon is titled "Take Away Our Bent to Sinning." The Pre-Lenten Retreat will be 1-3 p.m.

Marriage program in Tulsa

Pat Calhoun, a member of Tulsa-Asbury UMC's Marriage Council, has announced a Weekend to Remember marriage getaway on Feb. 13-15 in Tulsa.

Asbury Church supports this community-wide program. Presented by FamilyLife, the event will be at Tulsa's Renaissance Hotel. Some scholarships are available, noted Calhoun, who also serves on the event's leadership team.

More info: pat.calhoun007@gmail.com or the Facebook page *Familylife's Weekend to Remember Tulsa*.

Passages

Rev. Jane Ellen Dibden, 56, of Forgan died Jan. 5, 2015. She was Supply Pastor for the Gate and Forgan churches.

Survivors include son Arthur Schwab; daughters Amy Turner, and Lisa, Jasmine, and Jessica Schwab; and her mother, Jean Dibden.

Service was Jan. 9 at Forgan UMC, with burial in Maine.

Rev. Homer Ray Williams Jr., 95, of Cordell died Dec. 27, 2014. He was a retired Associate Member.

His ministry in the Oklahoma Conference began in 1977 and included Hydro, Cheyenne/Reydon, Tyrone, Laverne/Fairview and Cloud Chief UMC.

Survivors include daughter Ellen Scott and sons Steven, Lawrence, Jerry, and Dean.

Service was Dec. 31 at Cordell-First UMC, with burial at Lawnview Cemetery.

Rev. Archie J. Taylor, 90, of Norman died Dec. 30, 2014. He was a retired Local Pastor.

He pastored at Chouteau and Afton between 1986 and 1990.

Survivors include his daughter Nancy

and his first wife, Dora.

Service was Jan. 6 at First Christian Church of Norman, with burial at Sunset Memorial Park.

Rev. Argus James Hamilton Jr., 91, of Oklahoma City died Jan. 6, 2015. He was a former South OKC District superintendent.

Between 1948 and retirement in 1990, he pastored at Boswell, Spiro/Panama, Stroud, OKC-Village, Lawton-Centenary, Ponca City-First, Muskogee-St. Paul, Bartlesville-First, Ardmore-First, and OKC-Chapel Hill.

Survivors include his wife, Claudia Hamilton; daughter Mari Jean; and sons Billy and Argus III.

Service was Jan. 10 at Moore-First.

Marian Miller, 82, of Edmond died Jan. 11, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. George Dean Miller, retired. Service is pending.

- Curtis Glassco died Jan. 6, 2015. He was the father of Rev. Kurt Glassco, pastor at Catoosa-Disciple.

- Mary Sam died Jan. 10, 2015. She was the mother of Rev. Cyvil Burks, pastor of Ardmore-Warren Memorial.

Archaeologist to present Neustadt Lectures



Oklahoma City University welcomes Aaron Gale to present the Neustadt Lectures, open to the public, on Feb. 4-5.

The Lectures include a new opportunity this year, in addition to two presentations on the OCU campus. On Feb. 4 at 7 p.m., Dr. Gale will engage in conversation with OCU professor Lisa Wolfe for an event at Temple B'nai Israel in Oklahoma City.

Gale's research centers upon the Jewish roots of early Christianity, specifically as it relates to the community associated with Matthew's Gospel. He is a respected archaeologist and biblical scholar.

The Feb. 4 event should be interesting as this Jewish New Testament scholar visits with Dr. Wolfe, a Christian Hebrew Bible scholar.

They will discuss "The Jewish Context of the New Testament." Everyone is invited.

Keenly interested in world cultures and traditions, Gale has conducted research in countries including Vietnam, Thailand, Hungary, Italy, Egypt, Japan, India, and Greece. The work resulted in an original textbook for the world religions course he teaches at West Virginia University.

He has won two major teaching awards, including the prestigious WVU Foundation Award for Outstanding Teaching. He joined that university's faculty in 2000 and is an associate professor of religious studies as well as director of WVU's Program for Religious Studies.

Gale is featured as an expert on the Fox News Channel documentary "The Nativity: Facts, Fictions, and Myths."



Dr. Aaron Gale

He is a fellow at the University of Nebraska at Omaha's Center for Biblical Archaeology, and he co-directs the Bethsaida Excavations Project in Israel, where he mentors student volunteers.

He earned his doctorate from Northwestern University, Evanston, Ill., in 2001.

Among his publications are the book "Redefining Ancient Borders: The Jewish Scribal Framework of Matthew's Gospel" (T&T Clark Publishing) and the annotated notes for Matthew's Gospel in the *Jewish Annotated New Testament* (Oxford University Press).

In 1983, Walter and Dolores Neustadt of Ardmore established this lecture series to strengthen understanding of the great contributions by the Judaic religious tradition to Western civilization and thought.

2015 Neustadt Lectures

February 4

The Jewish Context of the New Testament
"A Conversation with
Dr. Aaron Gale and Dr. Lisa Wolfe"
7 p.m., Temple B'nai Israel
4901 N. Pennsylvania Ave., Oklahoma City

February 5

"Matthew's Gospel and Judaism"
1 p.m., Sanctuary,
Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel, OCU Campus

"Archaeology: A Window to the Biblical World"
2:30 p.m., Watson Lounge,
Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel, OCU Campus

Martha Jean Lemon Special Lectures

March 5

"Dancing with THE WORD"
Presenter: Marilyn Oden
1, 2:30, and 7 p.m.

Oklahoma City University is located at Northwest 23rd Street and Blackwelder. All events are free to the public.
More information: 405-208-5284 or
www.okcu.edu/religion/centers/continuing-education/

Oklahoma Conference

"Youth Service Day"

March 7
10 a.m.-5 p.m.

All church youth groups are invited.
Spend the day helping others in service projects, and joining in worship and fellowship on the OCU campus.

Contact Rev. Rod Newman for more details —
Rnewman@okcu.edu or 405-208-5484.





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

Without hesitation

“As (Jesus) walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea — for they were fishermen. And he said to them, ‘Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.’ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.” (Matthew 4:18-20, New International Study Bible)

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

Sometimes one word is all you need. One word, carefully placed, often can convey as much as an entire sentence of words strung together with some attempt at correct grammar.

When I was a little boy, my grandmother and mother possessed the ability to say a lot with just one word. Most often that word was NO.

And on many occasions, they didn't have to say anything! I remember the look that stopped me cold if I was about to do something wrong. You know, *that look!* Something in their eyes made it clear that if I continued down that path, things would not end on a pleasant note.

I even recall hearing a grunt that preceded NO at times.

If those two actions didn't work, some serious consequence likely followed for me.

A lot of one- to three-word phrases stand out as important. Here are two of the most crucial words you will ever utter: *I'm sorry*. Oh, how I wish more people would say those words. If you are able to speak *I'm sorry*, you will find that can go a long way in mending fences and building bridges.

The same is true with *I love you* or *You are forgiven*. Yes, little words can mean a lot.

We find ourselves in the Church's season of Epiphany — marking the period in Jesus' life when he made himself known to the world. Matthew's Gospel describes this wonderful scene where Jesus calls his first disciples.

Most of us are familiar with the his statement “Follow me, and I will make you fish for people.” But one word brings together



Bishop Hayes

that entire scene: *immediately*. It's very clear: “Immediately they left their nets.”

And just after Jesus called Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, he also called James and John, the sons of Zebedee. They, too, left everything *immediately* and followed Jesus. They acted so suddenly that they actually left their father alone in the boat!

Other translations of this biblical passage use words such as “straight away,” “at once,” and “without hesitation.” These phrases emphasize the urgency of that moment.

Put simply, those disciples didn't even think about their decision. They left all and went with Jesus — abandoning their nets, fish, boats, even their father!

What in our Lord's appeal made them promptly leave everything? Was it his look, his voice, his eyes?

I think all those aspects affected them, but I also believe that Jesus appealed to their discontent. Fishing nets and predicting the tides did not satisfy them — they were looking for more.

The same is true in our time. Americans have every convenience available that we can imagine, and we have achieved more than ever before in technology, but something is missing.

There is a longing inside that just won't go away — until we put aside all the things and go with Jesus!

People like to say they are Christians and they love the Lord, but they still hold on to things that get between them and the Christ they claim to serve. They measure their discipleship not so much by duty but by asking, “What is it going to cost me?”

To answer, those who are comfortable think they must give up that lifestyle, and those with material possessions think they must relinquish what they own. For youth, it's popularity; for the busiest folks, it's about giving up their time.

If only you realized what you get in return for making all else secondary in your life. Like those disciples, you would put everything behind you and immediately go with Jesus.

Augustine, described as a notorious sinner before his conversion, wrote: “What I feared to be parted from was now a joy to part with. For once I was convinced to cast away all earthly things; in their place came Jesus, sweeter than all pleasure.”

During World War II, two soldiers were

Appointments

Alton Potts, to Sallisaw UMC from Lawton-First, effective Jan. 15.

Randy Scraper, to Lawton-First from OKC-Nichols Hills, effective Jan. 1.

Trevor Smith, to OKC-Nichols Hills from Sallisaw UMC, effective Jan. 15.

Michael Morgan, to Keota from Mc-Curtain/Keota, effective Jan. 1.

David Rose, retired, from Shawnee-Trinity (closed), effective Jan. 1.

Bennie Warner, retired, from OKC-South Lee (closed), effective Jan. 1.

Preaching schedule

Here are opportunities to hear Bishop Hayes preach this year. To invite him to visit your church, contact Joseph Harris, jharris@okumc.org, 405-530-2077. The bishop has more flexibility in his schedule on Monday-Thursday.

Jan. 25: Norman-McFarlin UMC and district worship service at Enid-First

(May 1-10: Council of Bishops Meeting, Germany)

May 17: Tulsa-First

May 24-28: Oklahoma Annual Conference

Feb. 1: (OIMC) Dallas Indian UMC

Feb. 7: “I Am Laity” Summit at OKC-St. Luke's

Feb. 8-10: Ardmore-First revival

Feb. 15: Durant-First

Feb. 22: Yukon-Good Shepherd

June 4-7: OIMC Annual Conference, Anadarko

June 21: Riverside UMC, Houston, Texas

(July and August: Sabbatical. Every bishop is required by the Council to take a sabbatical each quadrennium.)

Sept. 20: Ponca City-First UMC

Sept. 27-29: Ada-First revival

Oct. 4: Ponca City-Albright UMC

Oct. 11: Dewey UMC

Oct. 25-27: Trinity UMC, Arlington, Texas, revival

Nov. 15: Locust Grove UMC

forced to seek shelter in a ditch beside a road that was being bombed by the enemy. They hugged the ground, in fear for their lives. Whistling, a young corporal came down that road, never flinching as shells and bombs exploded.

As he passed the two men, they looked

at him and then at each other.

Without hesitation, they jumped from the ditch and walked with him to safety. The character of the corporal lifted them to action.

Jesus Christ can do the same for you. The price you must pay is to act *immediately*. Will you follow him?

Circle of Care

Special Sunday
is Feb. 8

Your gifts help
Oklahoma's
children

Donate through
your church or
<http://circleofcare.org>



Circle of Care's mission is to assist at-risk children and youth in our state. Foster care families are recruited and supported. Residential sites such as United Methodist Boys Ranch and transitional living programs provide safe, nurturing environments. You can save a child's life. Join us!

Employment

Youth Director: Mustang UMC. Full-time. Send resume to church, P.O. Box 180, Mustang, OK 73064; or to larry@mustangumc.org.

Nursery Attendant: Locust Grove-First. Matthew Franks, 918-479-6356 or justfranks@gmail.com.

(Submit job openings to Chris Schutz, Conference Communications Department, CSchutz@okumc.org, 405-530-2075. There is no charge.)

Summary of survey

Dear Readers,

We earnestly thank those of you who answered our recent *Contact* survey. You both encouraged and challenged us.

In this letter, we report on what we learned.

The survey was conducted in October.

- The highlight for us came in your affirmations of the statement: "I definitely want to keep receiving *Contact*."

A total of 97 percent agreed. Among four choices, 85 percent selected *agree strongly*, and 12 percent, *agree somewhat*. Not one chose *disagree strongly*.

- Answers to "What is missing that you would like to see?" will continue to test us most. One word sums up those responses: *more*.

Requests ranged from more articles about individual churches (small and large) to personal faith stories, from promoting programs and resources to interviews on topical social issues. And more.

This letter provides us a chance to answer one request. "We need a page on where to look for grants," said one reader. We suggest: www.okumc.org/awards.

People want global denomination news, too.

When the *Contact* was partnered with *The United Methodist Reporter*, each issue had 16 pages — half of them produced by the *Reporter* and focused beyond Oklahoma. But that publication ceased in May 2013.

The eight-page *Contact* prints every three weeks.

Perhaps responses to another question point out *Contact's* ongoing efforts to provide more.

"What is least valuable to you?" the survey asked. Again, most answers were affirming.

- "Each issue is so varied; it's all good and there's not any one specific thing least valuable."

- "All are of value to different persons."

- "I read it all. Maybe the help-wanted section, but I read them, too."

Job listings were less important, several said. But 57 percent of survey responders were age 65 or older.

In 2006, *Contact* previously conducted a survey. Only 6 percent of those responding said they read it online, yet 72 percent said they used the Internet. The latest survey showed online readership at 19 percent.

Also in 2006, most people (85 percent) said they read every issue. The 2014 survey asked people how much of an issue they read; 63 percent said cover-to-cover, and 34 percent answered "selected stories."

Contact's readers extend its value by: giving their copy to someone else, sharing specific content with someone else, and saving all or part of it for further use. They value it especially as an educational resource (70 percent) and as personal reference material (68 percent).

The 2006 evaluation drew 1,235 responses to 28 questions. That survey was mailed to each subscriber, along with a prepaid envelope.

Responses to the 2014 survey totaled 84. Seventeen questions were printed in the nonprofit newspaper and online at www.okumc.org.

The Apportionment for the Communications Department is the nonprofit *Contact's* major funding source.

With more than 500 churches in the Oklahoma Conference and limited *Contact* staff, you are invited to submit articles, photos, and ideas that succeed for your church. We welcome those. Reach editor Holly McCray at editor@okumc.org or 405-530-2076.

— Joseph Harris,
Communications director



Retired law officer relishes new year

Retired police officer David Holmes eagerly begins this new year. He remembers when doctors thought he wouldn't live another day.

"I wake up every morning and say, 'Thank you for another day.' I feel very fortunate," said the Oklahoma City resident.

Holmes served in The Village Police Department for 24 years before retiring as a lieutenant. He had prevailed against danger during his law enforcement career, then a sudden medical crisis became his biggest challenge.

Among those who rallied to help him were therapists at United Methodist-affiliated Epworth Villa. This nonprofit retirement community also offers short- and long-term rehabilitative care.

As a police officer, Holmes was trained to be aware of his surroundings. But one August afternoon, he realized he was sitting in his front yard and didn't know how he got there.

That morning he had taken his cocker spaniel Winnie on their daily 3-mile walk. Exactly what happened on that walk — or how he made it home — remains a mystery.

"It's all a blur," said Holmes.

What he did know was that after 62 years of complaint-free health, his body seemed to be betraying him. Just weeks before, Holmes had been diagnosed with small lymphocytic lymphoma. Doctors had assured him it was an easily treatable form of cancer.

But something more was going on.

Holmes was hospitalized, and doctors discovered why he was experiencing disorientation. He had contracted West Nile Virus, possibly from a mosquito-infested pond near his walking route.

Holmes was in a fight for his life. Suffering from inflammation of the brain, he was in a coma for weeks.

"The nurses and doctors told my family to say their goodbyes," said Holmes. "They didn't think I would ever



Photo courtesy of Epworth Villa
While hospitalized and at Epworth Villa, David Holmes got regular visits from his dog Winnie.

come out of the coma."

Holmes awoke from the coma, but his physical strength was almost entirely gone.

"I thought I wasn't going to be able to do anything again, not even walk," he said.

After two hospitals and another rehab facility had done all they could, Holmes' family arranged to move him to Epworth Villa in north Oklahoma City.

"They took me in on a stretcher," said Holmes. "I had no strength."

Occupational therapist Amber Bell remembered, "He couldn't stand on his own. He required complete assistance just to dress himself."

"One of his goals was to get home to his dog, who was getting older," said physical therapist assistant Jeannie Camp. "He felt the need to be there to

take care of him."

And until Holmes could get home to his dog, the dog came to the center to visit her owner.

"We would bring Winnie down to see him about once a week, and he would smile every time he saw him," said Kathy Terry, Holmes' sister.

Other Epworth Villa staff members were part of his support system, too.

The chef knew Holmes needed to regain weight and strength and catered to his returning appetite.

"Just about anything I asked for, they would give me," said Holmes, "even popcorn or ice cream after hours."

They even made Christmas Day 2012 special. "My family cooked a meal, and Epworth gave us a private room where my family could bring in the meal," said Holmes.

Thanks to the therapy and support, he was able to return home less than three months later.

Holmes is back on his feet, using a cane to walk, running errands, cooking, and driving his car. It is a happy new year for this former public servant.

(*Epworth Villa is among entities that collaborate with the Coalition of Advocates for Responsible Eldercare Oklahoma, which provided this story.*)

The global connection

EARTHQUAKE — Five years later, quake-stricken Haiti continues to be a magnet for United Methodist volunteers who speak of the enormous needs there and also of the spiritual return they themselves receive.

Dale Stickel, a retired engineer and member of Faith UMC, Goshen, Indiana, has made 14 trips.

"I go back just to get re-grounded in what really is important in our materialistic world, and to enjoy fellowshiping and worshipping," Stickel said.

At least one Oklahoma Volunteers In Mission team is scheduled to serve in Haiti this year.

HEALTHY CLERGY — A handful of Holston Conference pastors got a head start on the frequent New Year's resolution to exercise. They started CrossFit workouts several months ago.

All said that participating in a community outside of their clergy responsibilities filled a deep need.

For Andrew Amodei, the development of personal discipline is as much a spiritual exercise as physical. "The fad may be the means, but the transformation taking place is making a significant impact on people's lives."

He believes that being trained to push beyond his personal limits has fortified him to navigate the future of a local church formerly in debt and of a flood-damaged camp.

RACE RELATIONS — This month, human (race) relations focuses the General Commission on Race and Relations' *Vital Conversations Project*.

On Facebook, Twitter, and its website, GCORR is connecting people to examine what's behind civil unrest (in communities such as Ferguson, Mo.); how to move past stereotypes; global racism; and positive contributions being made across the Church. Join the conversation. <http://gcorr.org/>

YOUTUBE — "Chuck Knows Church," an online video series by the denomination's Discipleship Ministries, expanded this month. Chuck joined "The Committee," a group working to save a fictitious congregation that has lost its way, lost its pastor, and is closing its doors ... unless it finds a new way, with the help of Chuck, of course. The original Chuck Knows Church series also continues.

COLLEGE LOANS — The General Board of Higher Education and Ministry is accepting loan applications until May 5 for its next round of higher education assistance. Dreamers, young adults who were unauthorized immigrants brought into the United States as children, are newly eligible for such loans.

(Sources: United Methodist News Service and Interpreter magazine)

Campus ministry updating its prime location

OSU Wesley designs for future

By **KIRBY LEE DAVIS**
The Journal Record

Electronic lanterns blaze atop 25-foot-tall columns, casting a rippling glow on their fiery United Methodist logos.

Those torches anchor the new Wesley Foundation headquarters that Michael Bartley hopes to build at what's arguably the most prized development spot in Stillwater, ideally situated beside the Oklahoma State University student union and library mall, fraternity row, Theta Pond, the coming OSU performing arts center, and Campus Corner.

"Most churches don't want to be landlocked, but for a campus ministry, being landlocked by your mission field is absolutely perfect," said Rev. Bartley, who directs the six-employee nonprofit. "On all four sides of us is the mission field we're called for."

The United Methodist Church already holds that 1-acre corner at 823 W. University Ave., but with an 8,000-square-foot structure built in 1957 that's long lost its effectiveness.

"Through the years I've watched that building deteriorate to the point where it's in really bad shape," said Tulsa architect Gary



A concept drawing of the new building's west corridor

Sparks, who actually lived a year in that basement while attending the university in the 1960s. "It needs to be replaced."

Two years ago, the Sparks Reed architectural firm was asked to develop an alternative for the Wesley Foundation. Sparks and Project Architect John Alig came up with a two-story, 23,676-square-foot steel and concrete structure, boasting twin 13-foot-tall glass walls on two sides.

The exterior of this estimated \$6 million project will mix well with OSU campus buildings, Bartley said. The interior delivers flexible floor plates easily adaptable to generational changes.

Bartley pointed out how the existing

building not only lacks space for effective worship, but also fails to accommodate today's student activity needs.

"It has basically one large multipurpose room and a bunch of tiny rooms that are kind of unusable by anything but small groups," he said, noting the design's post-World War II origins. "It has more to do with dating than it had anything to do with a religious community."

The proposed new building also supports student mingling through a coffee shop, fireplace-warmed gathering places, dining area, and other elements. Alig said the second floor's space will unite up to 400 people in worship or some other event. That

floor also promises a 1,484-square-foot balcony overlooking the OSU campus.

"The basic concept is to draw the students into the building, because it's got such a great location," Sparks said. "You want to come into the building and see all the activities that are going on and participate in it."

To keep this Wesley Foundation home from suffering the same problems of its predecessor, Alig crafted all the interior amenities with no permanent structural elements.

"Technology's going to change, student lifestyles are going to change, and they're going to change faster in the future than they ever had before," Sparks said. "So we need to accommodate that."

"We've got about \$2 million pledged for the building," Bartley said.

With public meetings set or planned for Oklahoma City, Tulsa, and Enid, he hopes to meet the \$6.5 million target and launch construction before the end of 2015.

In this proposed building, Bartley foresees giving the Wesley Foundation a solid Stillwater home that will last 75 to 100 years.

"It's going to be a major upgrade to that part of the campus and city," Sparks said. "It's going to add a lot to that area."

(Jan. 2, 2015. Reprinted with permission of The Journal Record)

you're invited
the WESLEY FOUNDATION at OSU

what ● An update from the Wesley Foundation at Oklahoma State University on planning for a new campus facility

where ● St. Luke's United Methodist Church, OKC

when ● Thursday February 5, 2015
11:30 am - 1:00 pm

who ● Bishop Robert Hayes,
Episcopal Leader of Oklahoma

Rev. Michael Bartley,
Executive Director,
OSU Wesley Foundation

Mr. Gary Sparks,
Architect,
Wesley Planning Committee



RSVP to ImagineOSUWesley@gmail.com

If you'd like to host an Imagine event in your city or church, contact Michael Bartley, 405-880-7194.

Endings and beginnings in OKC —

Epworth UMC sells historic campus

By CARLA HINTON

Historic church property that housed the pre-statehood incarnation of Oklahoma City University has been purchased by a nonprofit school.

Epworth United Methodist Church, 1901 N. Douglas, has been sold to Positive Tomorrows, a private, tuition-free elementary school serving Oklahoma City's homeless children.

Susan Agel, the school's principal and CEO, said the December sale marked the first step toward expansion for Positive Tomorrows, which has been forced to turn children away because of a lack of space.

According to records in the Oklahoma County assessor's office, the sprawling church property sold for \$500,000. Agel said the school's board of directors does not have any long-term plans for the Epworth property, and a building committee actively is looking at other properties as possible sites for a new school.

"We turn away children all the time, and it's just good to make another step in what's going to be a very long process," Agel said.

Todd Lechtenberger, Positive Tomorrows board president, said the school will kick off a capital campaign to fund much-needed expansion efforts.

OCU's predecessor

Deborah Ingraham, pastor of OKC-Epworth, said it seems fitting the property



Photo by David McDaniel, *The Oklahoman*

Pastor Deborah Ingraham speaks in front of OKC-Epworth Church. The property was sold in December.

could become home to a school since it first served as the site of Epworth University, which opened in 1904 and is considered a forerunner to United Methodist-affiliated OCU.

"I think that the work of teaching is sacred, and the raising of children is sacred,

so it will continue to be a sacred space," Rev. Ingraham said of the church property.

The pastor said her congregation, with an average Sunday attendance of 80, has contracted to lease the church building from Positive Tomorrows through July.

Future plans for the congregation

include a merger with OKC-Leland Clegg United Methodist Church, 102 E. Hefner Road.

She said the two congregations have held two joint worship services and recently worked on a community project to benefit Britton Elementary School.



St. John's:

Continued from page 1

Conference's Department of Congregational Development and Hispanic/Latino Ministry, a component of the Office of Mission.

Chuck Nordean, director of Congregational Development, beautifully defined the term *restart*: "The other church gives itself away to become a new thing."

Longtime member Bob Fuller has remained faithful as St. John's attendance dwindled from 200. According to the Oklahoma Conference *Journal*, weekly worship averaged 24 people in 2013.

Now in his 80s, Fuller said, "Out with the old and in with the new, and that's good so we can serve (our community) in a better way."

For years, he has organized the church's weekly outreach

Key clergy leading The Salt UMC restart in Oklahoma City are, from left, Obed Alba, Carlos Ramirez, and Murray Crookes.

Photos by Holly McCray

meal. His tally of those fed totals tens of thousands. Known as New Journey Fellowship, this mission to the hungry will continue, with time in worship added.

"Food not only for the body, but for the soul, too," Alba commented.

The church also serves the hungry through its considerable Food Pantry, noted church administrator Elaine Parrent, a UM deaconess.

The Gallery, an after-school arts program for second-through fifth-graders, continues as well. This 1-year-old program is led by Kristina Thorson, a UM young-adult missionary. Three elementary schools are nearby.

Rev. Crookes said some parents are engaging in church life as a result.

St. John's launched in 1953 in Oklahoma City. Dec. 14 also was a day to celebrate its 61-year ministry.

Lay Leader Steve Clark remembered the church hosting a quilters guild and neighborhood watch group, and he spoke of a past leadership retreat that greatly encouraged him. Former

The minister said the new start may help take some of the sting from church members' eventual farewell to the historic Epworth Church building.

"It's a very bittersweet time for us because the people, their heart is here, and this has been an incredible building that has supported incredible ministry," Ingraham said.

"Now the property is coming full circle, and we're moving on."

United Methodist Historic Site No. 415

Ingraham said she has been told the property would be a worthy inclusion to the National Register of Historic Places.

It has been designated as United Methodist Historic Site No. 415 by the denomination.

Ingraham said Epworth University was founded by two Methodist denominations that came together for the sake of education, though they had split over slavery in 1844.

The main campus building was built in 1903, along with a wood-frame dormitory and a smaller building.

Classes began in 1904. According to OCU's website, this first incarnation of the university served nearly 100 students that year.

According to OCU and Epworth history, the school struggled, and classes were stopped in 1911 — although the school later was reopened under another name in Guthrie.

36,000 square feet for ministries

Ingraham said Epworth Church was founded in a house on Northwest 16th in 1911, and the sanctuary was added to the property in 1926.

She said the buildings on the church complex include more than 36,000 square feet of space.

They house and support several ministries, including the Epworth Manos Juntas Free Medical Clinic; Ice Angels, a ministry to the homeless; and a community garden. Ingraham said a community group has ballroom dancing events at the multi-level church.

Epworth UMC also is part of the Reconciling Network, a network of United Methodist churches across the nation working toward full inclusion for people of all sexual orientations and gender identities.

Ingraham said the congregation had been considering its options for the past 18 months because the church building needs extensive and expensive improvements.

Property needs improving

She said the knob-and-tube wiring is unsafe and needs to be replaced throughout the building, among other things.

"As sad as it is, we are excited about going on to another part of our ministry," she said. "We won't be bogged down with a building so God's resources can go towards ministry."

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. said the Epworth congregation moved forward with the sale of the building with the Conference's consent. He said the sale to Positive Tomorrows is a way to continue Epworth's tradition of reaching out to the community at large.

"It has been a beacon of light in a lot of people's lives over the years — a helpful witness in that community," Hayes said.

"This is a way to continue to do the work of reconciliation, of healing and wholeness and meeting people where they are."

(By Carla Hinton, The Oklahoman, Copyright 2015. Reprinted with permission.)

Watch a related video at:
<http://newsok.com/multimedia/video/3975972816001>



Photo by Paul B. Southerland, The Oklahoman

Church members Marshall Hanna, Dot Schilling, Wahnella Harris, and Claude McNabb stand in front of OKC-South Lee, which on Dec. 28 held its closing worship service, led by Bennie Warner, retired bishop, who pastored the congregation more than five years.

After 85 years, South Lee closes

By CARLA HINTON

A south Oklahoma City church known for its fellowship and a popular Ground Hog Day event closed its doors Dec. 28.

South Lee United Methodist Church at 601 S.W. 36th held a final worship service that day.

Wahnella "Wally" Harris, 83, said most of the church members were saddened by the decision to discontinue, but the congregation also celebrated the 85 years the church had flourished in the Capitol Hill High School neighborhood.

Her friend and fellow church member Dot Schilling, who had attended the church since 1961, shared similar views.

"It's a hard situation for us to give it up, but we're trying to go out in a joyful manner," Schilling said.

According to church history provided by Harris, the church was started in a home in June 1929. A Methodist leader felt led to establish a church in the area; it was incorporated as First Methodist Episcopal Church of Capitol Hill.

Harris, who was the finance chairperson, said the church closed because the membership had dwindled to about 15 people. She said most of the congregation consisted of octogenarians like herself and they had been attending for many years.

"My mother and daddy went there. My children went there. There's a lot of history there for me," Harris said.

Walter Melton, who led the board

of trustees, said the church members' advancing age had prevented them from being able to maintain the building as needed.

He said he started going to the church in the mid-1950s, left for several years while he was busy providing for his family, and returned in the early 1990s.

"They had a lot of people going then in the '90s and it was a large crowd, but now the building is too big for us to manage," Melton said.

Harris said South Lee UMC was known as one of the friendliest churches in the metro area and people especially liked to attend its Ground Hog Day Dinner, held for many

years until two years ago. The annual event featured a meal of whole-hog sausage, mashed potatoes and gravy, tossed salad, green beans, sauerkraut, rolls, and dessert.

According to the church's history, the dinner was started between 1949 and 1952 to raise funds to build a sanctuary.

Melton said everyone in the area knew that the dinner event always drew large crowds.

"All the south-side politicians would go to the dinner. They were politicking and eating ground hog," he said.

Harris said the South OKC District United Methodist leaders encouraged South Lee members to attend one of several nearby UM churches, such as Lambuth United Methodist at 3823 Shields Blvd.

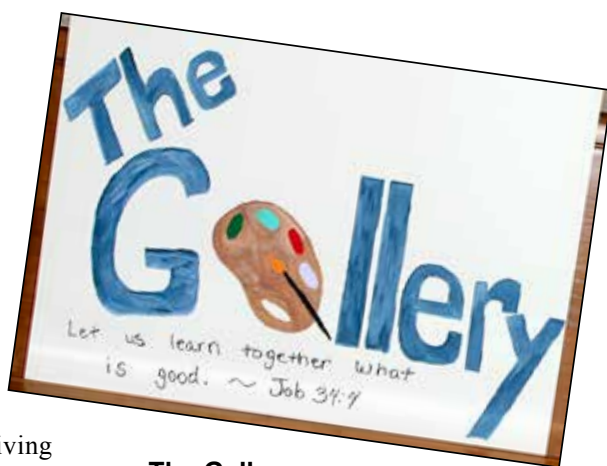
(By Carla Hinton, The Oklahoman, Copyright 2014. Reprinted with permission.)

member Robert Lintner reprised "My Tribute," which he had last sung more than 25 years ago, also at St. John's.

In 1955, Bob and Eileen McMullen responded to a neighbor's invitation to attend the church, and they joined in 1957. Bob reminisced about driving youths to summer church camp and driving a bus for a Young at Heart group.

Their daughter, Glenda Compton, was organist for the December celebration. She was 3 months old when the family began going to St. John's. At age 16, she became church pianist and filled that need for 14 years.

In the benediction Dec. 14, Superintendent Tener prayed, "Thank you be-



The Gallery after-school arts program is designed for 20 children. They made Christmas/New Year cards, and an art sale raised funds.

cause you are not done with (St. John's). Bless the plans we have for this place. May everything we do be what you want us to do."

Remember your church through a charitable gift annuity



Katherine's church is a very important part of her life. Her parents were members of the church. She was baptized in the church. She grew up in the church. She was married in the church. Her children were baptized in the church. Her daughter was married in the church. Her grandchildren were baptized in the church.

Recently, she saw the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation's theme for 2015 – *Remember Your Church When Planning Your Estate*. Katherine knew that she wanted to leave a legacy gift to her church. She decided to explore the various options available.

One option is a charitable gift annuity. The donor makes a gift and receives fixed payments for one or two lives. The payments are based on the age(s) of the person(s) receiving the annuity. *See charitable gift annuity rates, at left.* There are also very attractive tax benefits.

Katherine has been exploring ways to increase her income. She has several large certificates of deposits that are yielding less than 1%. Katherine is 87 years old and, based on her age, her annuity rate would be 8.20%. Since a charitable gift annuity is a combination of a gift to charity and an annuity, Katherine's church will benefit from the charitable gift portion upon her death. Katherine is very pleased with the fixed payments, tax benefits, and the satisfaction of *remembering her church through a charitable gift annuity.*

If you would like more information about charitable gift annuities and a personalized illustration of the benefits, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org.

Charitable Gift Annuity Rates

SINGLE LIFE		TWO LIVES	
AGE	RATE	AGES	RATE
70	5.1%	70	4.6%
75	5.8%	75	5.0%
80	6.8%	80	5.7%
85	7.8%	85	6.7%
90	9.0%	90	8.2%
95	9.0%	95	8.8%



THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION
4201 N Classen Blvd • Oklahoma City, OK 73118
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Sacred sites inspire laywoman

Bishop Hayes hosts

In December, Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. led a second Holy Land educational tour.

Among those traveling with him were clergy and laity of the Oklahoma and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences.

Surely each grew in discipleship on the 10-day journey. One laywoman shares her perceptions here.

By PIPER FREESE

The Holy Land trip has changed my life forever; the biblical stories for me have come to life. I look through all the pictures we took and think: trying to summarize it is very difficult. However, some things stood out to me.

First, seeing the wall that divides the Palestinians and the Israelis as well as the teaching by leaders at the Tent of Nations, an educational farm near Bethlehem, gave me some clarity on the divisions about Israel.

I have a better understanding of the struggles of living in the Palestinian areas. I purchased an olive-wood nativity while there. For me, its design reminds me every day of that struggle.

Another highlight was visiting the Princess Basma Center for Disabled Children, in Jerusalem. The hospital is United Methodist Advance Project No. 14238A. The children were beautiful, and the songs they sang for us were amazing! The work with special-needs children that the staff does is extraordinary



Left: An olive tree towers above the travelers in the Garden of Gethsemane. Due to its age, experts said, it could be one Jesus touched. Below: In a museum, the fragile hull of a fishing boat recovered from the Sea of Galilee draws attention. Archaeologists date it to Jesus' lifetime also.



and humbling to observe.

One of the most powerful experiences for me was our boat ride on the Sea of Galilee. Our guide, Jimmy, showed us the areas around the sea where Jesus lived, taught, and performed miracles. The boat's motors were shut off and, as we floated on the water, Scripture was read, songs were sung, and His Spirit was with us!

Then there was the Garden of Gethsemane. I just sat quietly and soaked in Him!

That's where we learned that olive trees can live for thousands of years. It was indescribable to know the large olive trees that I saw firsthand were there when Jesus came to pray before His crucifixion.

We experienced The Garden Tomb, believed to be Jesus' final resting place on this



Photos by Crystal Hughes

Oklahomans pause as Rudy Freese reads aloud Scripture during their time in Bethlehem. He is pastor at Cookson UMC.

earth, yet we know HE LIVES! It was a place that left me breathless, because it was main-

tained just as it likely appeared in biblical times. This site doesn't have a church atop it, as many of the sacred places do. It is simply a garden location with the tomb.

These are some high points for me, but there is much more that I could write. This was a holy and blessed trip. And it was wonderful to experience it all with family.

Bishop Hayes was a great host, despite his joke about contemplating to stay and become "the bishop of Tiberius." The tour company, Education Opportunities, organized our schedule well and we saw amazing sites in such a short time.

Thank you to my church family at Cookson for making this trip possible. I have returned a new disciple of Christ!

(Piper is married to Rudy Freese, pastor at Cookson UMC.)

Joining Bishop Hayes on the trip were: Kyle Anderson, Derrek Belase, Brandon and Courtney Blacksten, Steve Brant, Jacob Buckles, Joe Buckles II, Joseph Buckles III, Sherry Buckles, Kent and Tari Carbaugh, Lynette and Warren Danskin, Brenda and Robert Duran, Cali Eck, Piper and Rudy Freese, Joya Hayes, Ryan Hayes, Felecia and Pat Hensley, Crystal Hughes and Chris Ruddell, Cozetta Johnson, Margaret Johnson, Winslow Johnson, Stephen Lashley, Mary Lou and Pat Lorett, Artis Patterway, Paul Staat, Bryan Tener, Semaj Vanzant, and David Wilson.