

## 8 new districts get names and superintendents

# Realignment update

By HOLLY McCRAY

District names and superintendents have been announced for the eight new regions that will reshape the Oklahoma Conference map.

Among next steps are organizational meetings in April and early May, for each of those eight districts, as Oklahoma United Methodists count down to June 1. That's when the new structure becomes official.

This list identifies those districts and the superintendents appointed by Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. to lead them.

- Cimarron District – Charlie Graves
- Council Oak District – Dan Peil
- Crossroads District – Rockford Johnson
- Green Country District – Emery Mason
- Heartland District – Greg Tener
- Lake Country District – Larry Bauman
- Northern Prairie District – Tish Malloy
- Wichitas District – Chris Tiger

The district names evoke our state's geography and Native American influences.

The term "Green Country" long has been used to promote

tourism in the state's northeast. And prairie grasses and numerous lakes surely shape the landscape in two districts.

Stretching in the state's southwest, the Wichita Mountains bear the name of the Native people who reigned in that region long ago.

The Wichita and Affiliated Tribes government complex is near Anadarko.

The shape of Heartland District does resemble its moniker somewhat, and major roadways meet in the appropriately named Crossroads District.

The geography of the Cimarron District includes a similarly named river and the state's highest point, Black Mesa, in the county by that name. In the far western

Oklahoma Panhandle, that county is populated by 1.3 people per square mile, according to the 2010 U.S. Census.

The Council Oak District includes a location of great

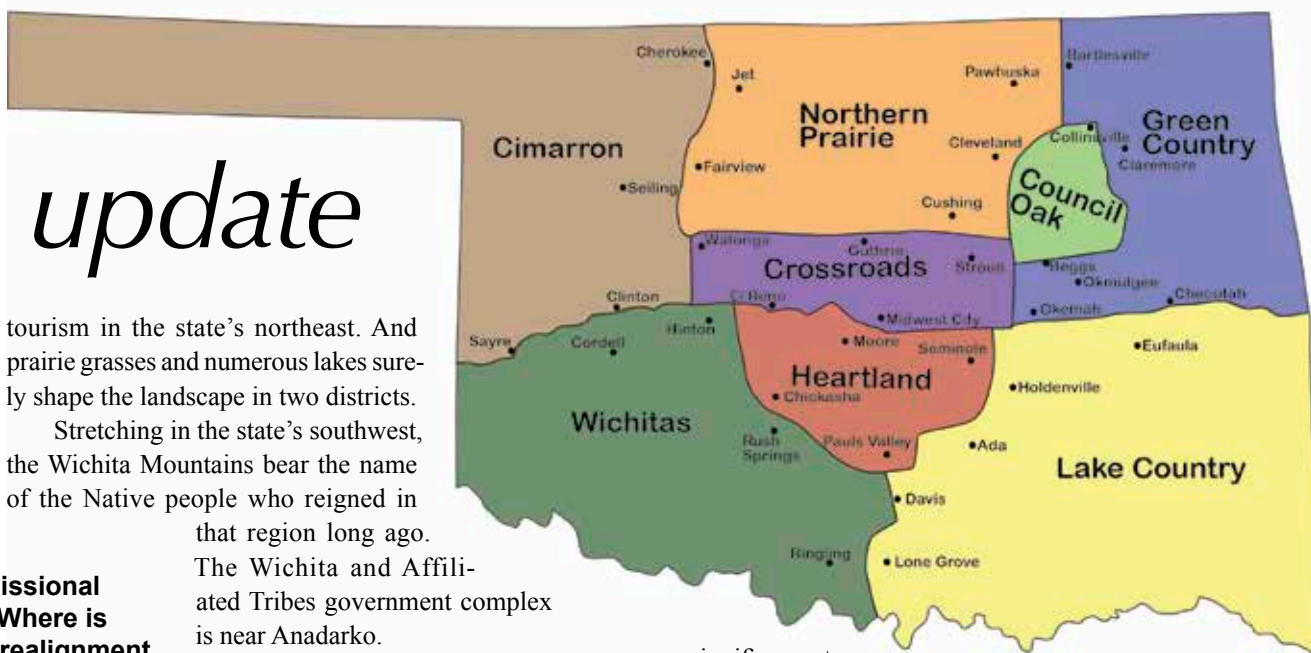
significance to

Native Americans. In Tulsa, the Creek Council Tree Site is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

These new district names will represent all churches well, the Cabinet agreed. Inclusivity was valued over districts defined by specific city names.

A full-time District Administrator will be hired for each new district. Job descriptions were being finalized as this issue of *Contact* went to press. The Conference Treasurer's Office will soon begin accepting applications for those positions, Treasurer Brian Bakeman said.

See *Districts*, page 8



**What is a missional strategist? Where is God in this realignment work? Bishop Hayes and Superintendent Greg Tener offer answers in a new YouTube video, at [www.okumc.org](http://www.okumc.org).**



**Bauman,**  
Lake Country

**Graves,**  
Cimarron

**Johnson,**  
Crossroads

**Malloy,**  
Northern Prairie

**Mason,**  
Green Country

**Peil,**  
Council Oak

**Tener,**  
Heartland

**Tiger,**  
Wichitas

# Pastor Education Fund reaches \$3 million goal

In amounts from \$10 to \$100,000, gifts have added up to \$3 million to provide seminary scholarships for Oklahoma United Methodist clergy.

The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation announced in January that the *Oklahoma United Methodist Pastor Education Fund* achieved its financial goal.

Through the generosity of individuals, families, and churches across this Conference, scholarship recipients can focus on their education and begin ministry careers unburdened by seminary debt.

Jay Smith is the first Foundation Scholar. He attends Asbury Theological Seminary in Wilmore, Ky., through its Extended Learning Program. He is an associate pastor at Edmond-New Covenant UMC.

"I am humbled by the generosity of so many that has made seminary a reality for me today. It is an honor to be the first recipient," said Rev. Smith.

Three Bible passages illustrate his call to ministry, he said. "I want to model" the love for God's people and the Church that Paul expressed in Philippians 1:3-11. "It's a deep love that comes from God only, that I can't make on my own," Smith said.

Acts 2:42-47 reminds him of the unique fellowship of believers, which drew people to them and, ultimately, to God.

And Smith signs email messages with his third selection: "Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead..." (Philippians 3).

What he calls his "Aldersgate moment" came when he was a high school junior. "In all of my 17-year-old certainty," he said, he planned a youth ministry career. And for more than a decade, that was his field of work, at various churches.

When he began working at New Covenant Church, his duties expanded.

Conversation and opportunities "exploded my call and

diversified it," Smith said. In 2013 he was assigned to pastor a new worship service at the church, and "I realized this is what God is leading me to be."

Smith said the Foundation scholarship is a blessing for him and his family. "I take this honor with a deep sense of responsibility and will continue to work diligently to represent the vision of the Foundation and the gifts of so many."

To obtain a Master of Divinity degree accredited by The United Methodist Church, a candidate must complete 80-90 hours of theological education in addition to the undergraduate degree. The financial cost can discourage potential seminary candidates or cause them to graduate with substantial debt.

"This is a great day," Robert Long said about the success of the endowment campaign. He chairs the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation's Board of Trustees and is senior pastor

See *\$3 million*, page 8

# Nominate young adults for new award

A brand-new award will honor a “Young Adult of the Year” in the Conference.

You are encouraged to nominate any Oklahoma United Methodist, between ages 18 and 35, who is doing outstanding work in the Church and helping grow God’s Kingdom.

Find the application form at: <https://okumc-reg.brtaapp.com/YoungAdultAward>. Deadline is May 1 to submit a nomination.

This Young Adult award, given by the Board of Laity, will be announced during Annual Conference in late May.

“Most people in this age range are very missional-minded,” said Aly Shahan, one of the Board’s associate lay leaders. In her role, she particularly relates to young families and young adults.

Besides recognition for one specific young-adult disciple, Shahan hopes this award will encourage members of every church to identify, lift up, and give appreciation to the young adults among them.

Applications may be submitted online or mailed to: First United Methodist Church, 201 W. Main, Moore, OK 73061, marked for attention by Aly Shahan.

## Briefly

### Christmas Eve promotion grows

More churches participated in *Home for Christmas 2014*, a project by the Discipleship Ministry Team’s evangelism committee.

The promotion connected 217 churches with potential new worshippers, the committee learned at its Jan. 15 meeting.

In 2013, a total of 180 churches participated, and 165 churches took part in 2012.

Among social media, Facebook posts generated the highest interest by far this season, according to The Crouch Group’s report to the committee.

### Speaker, theme announced for 2015 Annual Conference

“On Fire To Serve,” based on Romans 12:11-13, is theme for Oklahoma’s 2015 Annual Conference on May 25-28.

Guest preacher will be Jorge Acevedo, lead pastor of Grace UMC in southwest Florida. Weekly attendance tops 2,700 for the multi-site church.

Among other highlights will be hands-on mission opportunities alongside members of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, and election of delegates for the 2016 General/Jurisdictional Conferences.

### Save the date for Jurisdictional Conference

The Great Plains Annual Conference will host the 2016 South Central Jurisdictional Conference on July 13-16, 2016, in Wichita, Kan. Theme will be “Rejoice in the Harvest.”

### Journaling workshop in Norman

In Norman on Feb. 27 and 28, St. Stephen’s UMC will host a journaling workshop using the Proffoff Intensive Journal® program for self-development.

“Life Context: Gaining Perspective on Life” will be led by Meredith Bell, a Texas hospital chaplain and pastor for women’s ministry at White’s Chapel UMC, Southlake, Texas.

For more information: 405-321-4988 or [www.ststephensnorman.org](http://www.ststephensnorman.org).

## Check out DVDs about Lent

Several DVDs on the topic of Lent are available for church groups to borrow at no cost in The DVD Library at the United Methodist Ministry Center, 1501 N.W. 24th, Oklahoma City. Contact Chris Schutz, [cshutz@okumc.org](mailto:cshutz@okumc.org) or 405-530-2075.

- **“The Passion Narratives,”** by Professor Emeritus James Eford of Duke University Divinity School. The study compares the four Gospel accounts of Jesus’ betrayal, death, and resurrection. The kit consists of three DVDs, featuring 18 sessions. Total playing time is about 5.5 hours.
- **“The Trial of Jesus,”** a 50-minute documentary from the History Channel.
- **“24 Hours That Changed the World,”** based on the book by Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of UM Church of the Resurrection in greater Kansas City. Playing time for the 10-part DVD: 76 minutes.
- **“Final Words From the Cross,”** also from Rev. Hamilton. He examines Christ’s dying hours and final words as seen and heard through the eyes and ears of those who stood near the cross. Playing time is about an hour.



# Lecture series to feature Marilyn Brown Oden

Award-winning author and friend to many in Oklahoma, Marilyn Brown Oden on March 5 will present the 2015 Martha Jean Lemon Special Lectures at Oklahoma City University.

She will make two presentations on the topic “Dancing with THE WORD.”

• Her first address will be at 1 p.m. in the sanctuary of the Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel. A presentation at 2:30 will follow in the Watson Lounge of the Chapel.

• At 7 p.m., a panel will feature Oden and two other speakers in the Great Hall of the Student Center. They will discuss “Creative Writing on Spiritual Themes.” Joining Oden will be OCU English professor and poet Abigail Keegan; and Adam Shahan, an OCU alumnus, author, and associate pastor at Moore-First UMC.

Oden is the author of 11 books, which include “The Dead Saint” and “Crested Butte,” works of historical fiction; and devotional reflections in “Through the East Window: Prayers and Promises for Living with Loss” and “Hospitality of the Heart.”

Her life is enriched through experiences on six continents with diverse people — refugees, those who have physical challenges, women in prison, prime ministers, royalty, and presidents. She grew up in Oklahoma.

She has said two encounters profoundly



Oden

shaped her perspective on the world: visiting refugee centers in the war zones of Bosnia-Herzegovina during the NATO bombing, and participating in an ecumenical delegation’s fact-finding trip to the Middle East.

She taught spiritual formation at Perkins School of Theology; served as a teacher, counselor, and director of volunteers for the Oklahoma City Public School District; and taught creative writing at two universities.

She lives in Santa Fe, N.M., with her husband, retired Bishop William B. Oden.

About the lecture series, Oden wrote, “Dancing with THE WORD is not a dance of dogma but a dance of discovery. It is a dance of awareness of the sacredness of the present moment. Instead of spending the first part of life focusing on the future and the last part focusing on the past (and perhaps missing life instead of living it) — we are invited to dance daily to the music and mystery of God’s Presence in the present.”

All events are free of charge and open to the public.

## Youth Service Day is March 7

All youth groups in the Oklahoma Conference are invited March 7 to a day of fellowship, games, service in the community, and worship on the OCU campus. Registration begins at 10 a.m., and the day concludes at 5 p.m.

Reservations are required for planning purposes. By Feb. 16, contact Michael Horn, 817-219-7432 or [mahorn@my.okcu.edu](mailto:mahorn@my.okcu.edu), to register.

## World Religions Expo set April 12

Learn about different religions as well as faith distinctions among Christians by attending the World Religions Expo on campus April 12.

The Wimberly School of Religion invites you to move among exhibits and booths that afternoon in the lower level of the Chapel. OCU students will be your guides to explore branches of Judaism and Christianity, as well as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, and Native American religions.

Individuals, youth groups, and local churches are invited to this open house of learning.

No reservations are required. For more information, contact Leslie Long at [llong@okcu.edu](mailto:llong@okcu.edu), Lisa Wolfe at [lwolfe@okcu.edu](mailto:lwolfe@okcu.edu), or call 405-208-5176.

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

# Risking all to pursue Christ

“There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews. This man came to Jesus by night and said to him, ‘Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him.’ Nicodemus said to him, ‘How can a man be born when he is old?’” (John 3:1-2, 4, NKJV)

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

My grandmother Marie Hayes was a brilliant woman. Born in the early 1880s in Georgia and reared in Mineola, Texas, she was the wife of a Methodist minister and the mother of four girls and seven boys. Like many women of that era, what she didn't achieve in the way of formal education was more than made up for in the classroom of life.



**Bishop Hayes**

What my grandmother and other women of her generation possessed is defined as *mother wit*. It took the place of book-learning for them.

Mother wit describes a common-sense approach to living. My grandmother had a natural intelligence. She understood life as it revealed itself through everyday experiences;

she saw clearly the pattern of God's actions and felt that Holy Presence in everything around her. Grandma and other matriarchs of her time owned an unshakable faith.

“Big Mama,” as we called her, had the ability to laugh at life and herself. I was fortunate enough to be in her presence for 25 years, until her death, and her insightful teachings inspire me even today.

I remember most her personal proverbs, filled with wisdom that only can be learned with time.

One such saying was: *Need knows no shame!*

As a young boy, I didn't really know what that meant when she shared it with me, but I figured it out later. Grandma was saying that, when a great need presses upon your life, you reach a point when that claim causes you to drop all pretense and pride so you can deal with the necessity.

It's the definitive place where you say, “I'm sick and tired of being sick and tired.”

Long, long after I learned my grandmother's proverb, a startling find in my Bible reading made her words even more profound. Throughout the Gospels, I realized, the people who came to Jesus almost always came out of needs so great that they were willing to do whatever it took to find cures or remedy dire situations.

• In the third chapter of John's Gospel we find Nicodemus, a Pharisee and a leader of the Jews, going out under cover of darkness and in jeopardy of his position, to ask Jesus a question that he could not answer.

• The 10 lepers in Luke 17:11 threw caution to the wind as they begged Jesus for help.

• In Mark 5:27, a woman who had suffered from a flow of blood for 12 years broke a Jewish law that carried punishment of death, so she could touch the hem of Jesus' robe.

• And the Samaritan woman at the well at Sychar (John 4:5) went far beyond the accepted norms of her day by engaging in conversation with a Jewish stranger who promised her living water.

All these and many more came to Jesus because of such a pressing need, a spiritual emptiness, a hunger they *had* to fill. No matter the cost, they were willing to risk it all!

Someone else wrote: In order to get something you've never had, you have to do something you've never done!

As Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18, ushers in another Lenten season, I apply my grandmother's words and the New Testament stories in drawing up this article. They can teach us much about ourselves.

Each of us, like all those people who sought out Jesus, reaches a tipping point — where the need to find meaning in life has become the claim that will not let go of us!

On the surface, you think that you have everything for success and happiness. Yet, something is missing. A spiritual void causes

you to persist in asking: Is this all there is to life, or is there something more?

Yes, there is something more! The only place to find life in all its fullness is in Jesus!

Maybe pride has gotten in the way of your deep need for Christ. Not until you confess the shame of conceding you've missed the mark will you be truly whole.

In all those Bible stories, the people could not find life in all its fullness until they were willing to do what they had never done.

What about you?

Someone reading these words has a need to re-establish that personal relationship with Christ that somehow has become lost in time. Someone else is thinking they've been down this Lenten road so many times and nothing has happened, so why believe something will happen now.

Nothing will happen until you step outside of that comfort zone. Until you move away from the pride that has held you back. Until you stop fearing what others might think.

You can entrust yourself to the Lord of life, the one who knows your needs and the desires of your heart. If you are sick and tired of being sick and tired, do something you've never done — let go of shame so you can fulfill your greatest need.

## Passages

**UHLIG – Michele Johnson Uhlig**, 48, of Lexington died Feb. 2, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. Ted Allen Uhlig, who is the pastor at Lexington UMC.

They married in Tulsa on April 12, 1997.

An Oklahoma City University graduate, she was an ordained minister with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Survivors include her husband, Ted; children Blake and Rachel; and her mother, Virginia Johnson.

Service was Feb. 7 at OKC-Mayfair Heights UMC, with burial in Memorial Park Cemetery, Bartlesville. Memorial gifts to: Lexington UMC.

**PLOWMAN – Gertrude Eunice “Trudy” Williams Plowman**, 85, of Tulsa died Jan. 26, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. Howard Lee Plowman, who retired in 1994.

She loved serving alongside her clergy husband during his long ministry career.

Survivors also include daughters Donde Plowman Ashmos and Sandra Plowman Kraus and son Thomas Plowman.

Service was Jan. 28 at Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC. Memorial gifts to: Oklahoma Methodist Manor or Tulsa Metropolitan Ministry.

**MARSH – Rev. Dr. James Ross Marsh**, 86, died Dec. 24, 2014, in Geronimo.

During 1980-1993, he pastored at Lawton-Wesley and Temple Churches. He retired from another annual conference.

Survivors include daughter Cindy Martin and son Mike Marsh.

Service was Dec. 26 at Sunset Memorial Gardens, directed by Becker-Rabon Funeral Home.

**COCKE – Rev. Robert Winston Cocke Jr.**, 82, of Wilburton died Jan. 16, 2015.

His ministry, from 1953 until retirement in 1991, included Earlsboro, McLoud, El Reno-Ellison Avenue, Perkins, Wetumka, Texhoma, and Seminole/Bowlegs. He later pastored at Hodgen, Howe, and Rocky Point.

Survivors include his wife, Ann Cocke, and sons Robert, John, William, and Charles.

Service was Jan. 21 at Jones Harkins Funeral Home Chapel, Wilburton, with burial at the city cemetery.

## Appointment

Matthew Hester, as Supply pastor, to Sterling/Rush Springs, effective Feb. 1.

## Birth

Kaden Mark Anderson was born Dec. 29, 2014. He is the son of Heather and Rev. Kyle Anderson, associate pastor at Stillwater-First UMC.

YOU ARE INVITED!

## Friends of Children Banquet

Friday, April 17, 2015

6:30 p.m.

Please join us as we celebrate the mission, work, and impact of Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care.

Two Locations:

Oklahoma City  
Quail Creek Country Club

Tulsa  
Southern Hills Marriott

The presentation will be the same in both cities.

Using telecommunications technology, Circle of Care's supporters across the state will be united on this evening of celebration and hope. The program will include testimonies from clients and 2014 ministry highlights!

Sponsorship opportunities: call 405-530-2081

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\$10,000 – Two tables (8 seats each)

Name printed in both programs, program mention, and invitation to pre-event reception

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Name printed in local program, and program mention

• **Individual Dinner Reservation**

\$50 per person



RSVP at:  
[FOC.circleofcare.org](http://FOC.circleofcare.org)  
or 405-530-2081

# Tulsa church shows COMPassion

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

Tulsa-Boston Avenue is nearing the first anniversary of the church's COMPassion meal program, which provides meals for people who are homeless and differently abled — as well as chances to worship and to become acquainted with the downtown church's members and staff.

The "COMP" part of the name stands for Community Outreach Ministry Partnership, said Associate Pastor Paul Staat.

The church had noticed a "big influx of people coming off the streets needing food and shelter help, but also spiritual help," Rev. Staat said.

Some people have mental health issues, so the church partnered with A Way Home for Tulsa, which works to find jobs, housing, transportation, and medication for them, Staat said. Boston Avenue UMC decided it might be able to offer spiritual direction to them.

The church sought "how we might best help the situation downtown without being redundant in what we do," Staat said.

On March 24, 2014, the church held the first COMPassion dinner.



**Jonna Lawrence, left, and Courtney Carruth, new members of Tulsa-Boston Avenue, wrap surplus bread donated by a bakery to be given to COMPassion guests.**

Volunteers and guests dine together and visit during this family-style evening meal. A short worship service and Communion also are part of the event.

As they visit, "we learn from our guests what it's like living in the situation that they do. Faith

is all that has kept them going," Staat said.

Gradually, some guests have become volunteers, and some have joined the church, he said.

Boston Avenue's membership is about 7,800. Among COMPassion guests, the church has counted

12 baptisms, 10 professions of faith, and two members transferred from another denomination.

The meal is cooked and served by volunteers, who also provide transportation for the guests.

Staat said Boston Avenue wants the guests to "feel like

there's some love being put into that food."

A typical dinner is "not something industrial," Staat said. Meals might include beef stew and biscuits, ambrosia, fried chicken, egg rolls and fried rice.

Small gifts called "table agape" are set out for each guest. Prepared by church youth, these have included a small bag of treats with a Bible verse and a whistle with which to "make a joyful noise." Loaves of surplus bread donated by Panera are wrapped by volunteers for guests to take with them.

The church wants to make the dinners a welcoming experience for people who may dress, look, or act differently. The combination of meal and worship has been "an entry point to the whole life of the church," Staat said.

The COMPassion dinner is held every other week. Getting funding for the food has remained a challenge, Staat said.

"We're learning as we go along," he said. "The guests and our congregation are really getting something spiritual out of this."

## Ice Angels serve marginalized people in any weather

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

"All right, sir, what can we do for you?"

The man was hoping for a pair of jeans. In January, he stood in a line of about 10 people in a grassy parking lot, near an SUV with its distinctive sign: "The Ice Angels."

Lenny and Mary Kaplan's outreach to people who live on the streets of Oklahoma City was inspired one hot summer day several years ago.

As the couple drove to a church service, "I noticed a group of rather disheveled people gathering around a local fast-food drive-in. The temperature was 98 degrees at 10:30 a.m. By the time we left from church, the temperature had climbed to 112 degrees," Mary wrote in an account of how their project began.

"As we were driving home in our air-conditioned car, to our air-conditioned house, Lenny and I reflected how difficult life on the street must be, especially in temperature extremes."

They hit on the idea of putting ice and bottles of water into their cooler and distributing the cold water to people on the streets.

**Pray for those who receive and those who give as you watch a new YouTube video about the Kaplans' mission.**  
[www.okumc.org](http://www.okumc.org)

And one of the people they served dubbed them The Ice Angels.

"That was a life-altering happening," Mary said.

Their project began to expand when one person said, "Thank you very much for the water, but what I really need is some food. I am hungry."

With help from their church, OKC-Epworth United Methodist, and others, the Kaplans began to distribute lunches, along with clothing, shoes, toiletries, and other donated items.

"Without the help of local churches, none of this could be possible," Mary said. The two credited New Life UMC in Moore, St. Matthew UMC in Midwest City, and OKC-Leland Clegg UMC as among others that support the Kaplans' ministry.

Lenny, a former health advocate for AIDS patients, once lived

on the street himself. Mary is a retired nurse. They said they spend time every day on Ice Angels work. Sometimes, they help transport those who are homeless to doctors' appointments.

The Kaplans also encourage those they meet on the streets to connect with Oklahoma City's Homeless Alliance, which focuses on getting housing, counseling, and medical care for people without a permanent home.

Every Wednesday, the couple goes out to distribute food and other supplies to the people, who have learned to watch for that red SUV.

There is a constant demand for the items they provide — new and used clothing, shampoo, disposable razors, socks, and underwear, Mary said.

Among the items packed into the back of the Kaplans' SUV are unusual sleeping mats, hand-crocheted by volunteers using plastic shopping bags. Each mat requires about 700 plastic bags and a hefty Size Q crochet hook to make. Other volunteers take on the task of cutting the bags into strips and getting them ready for the crocheters.



**Mary and Lenny Kaplan show off a sleeping mat that was hand-crocheted from plastic grocery bags. The mats, which offer some cushioning and protection from the hard ground, are much-requested by people who live outside.**

The bags "are a much-requested and appreciated item," Mary said.

The parking lot deliveries create what Mary calls a "Walmart of the street" for those who are homeless. In addition to The Ice Angels' provisions, a person can pick up a box of food from a Regional Food

Bank representative. Someone else gives out pet food for the four-legged best friends that accompany some people.

Lenny estimated The Ice Angels help 200 to 250 people a month. "It's grown from just water to this," he said.

# Meal, mobility ministries keep small church nimble

An old habit upstages any fresh resolutions each New Year's Day at Glencoe United Methodist Church.

Since 1902, the church has served a community dinner every Jan. 1, with one exception. (In 1919, a flu epidemic disrupted the plan.) The town, population 601, is north-east of Stillwater.

More than 400 people attended the 112th New Year's Dinner. Members of the church, which averages 44 in weekly worship, and other volunteers served a lunch of turkey, chicken pot pie, chicken noodle casserole, black-eyed peas, and more. Musical entertainment was provided. Donations for the meal are used by the United Methodist Women.

The dinner is among an exceptional number of ministries by this small-membership church that lives large. The Glencoe United Methodist Mobility Ministry is another example.

"The Glencoe United Methodist Church does not let size dictate what can be done to help others. They see a need; they fill it to the best of their ability," wrote member Fara Williams.

The Mobility Ministry began in 2010. Retired clergyman Harold Wheeler realized that some people who needed motorized wheelchairs did not have adequate funds or resources to acquire the assistive equipment. He researched the issue and presented his



**Harold Wheeler, left, and Kenneth Brake discuss repairing motorized wheelchairs for Glencoe Church's Mobility Ministry.**

idea about a mobility ministry to the Glencoe Church Council. The Council agreed with Rev. Wheeler.

Thus began the mission: "in the Name

of Christ, to provide mobility devices to non-ambulatory persons with few resources in order to encourage a more active lifestyle."

The ministry obtains donations of used

motorized wheelchairs and scooters. Volunteers repair and clean the devices, which are then provided for free to people who need mobility assistance.

Some chairs are destined for long-term use. Sometimes a chair is needed for only a brief time, while a client awaits a special order or because a person has a short-term medical need.

Kenneth Brake, also a founding member of the Mobility Ministry, has used a power chair for years. He serves as resident expert for the project. Brake also provides use of his workshop as the central storage and repair location.

A \$10,000 Petree Grant in 2010 gave an early boost to the Glencoe United Methodist Mobility Ministry. (Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation has information about grant applications.) In 2013, the ministry received a \$1,000 grant from Central Rural Electric Cooperative.

Recently, the ministry expanded to include donated hospital beds and other assistive equipment such as walkers and manual wheelchairs. Team members have traveled across the state to pick up and deliver equipment.

"All this is done for the glory of God," Williams stated. "It is amazing what 'just a small church' can do with hard work, determination, and a passion for helping others."

## Saint Paul to award 4 full scholarships

Saint Paul School of Theology will award four full-ride scholarships to United Methodist men and woman of any age who will begin study at the seminary in Fall 2015.

The awards will be granted to two students at each of the seminary's two locations: on the campus of Oklahoma City University and at UM Church of the Resurrection, greater Kansas City, Mo.

Funds will cover a student's tuition, books, and fees for three years.

The Saint Paul Fellows Program is a collaboration with Church of the Resurrection and the Oklahoma Conference. The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation provided the lead gift to "kick start" the program.

The pastoral program is designed to eliminate debt and immerse students in varied church settings. Nationally, average seminary student loan debt is \$45,000, according to a Saint Paul report.

The Oklahoma Conference Fellows also will receive a student appointment to pastor a small church, with a parsonage and salary to cover living expenses.

The Church of the Resurrection Fellows will receive a stipend to cover living expenses while serving at the 21,000-member congregation's suburban campus in Leawood, Kan., within the Great Plains Annual Conference.

Seminary President H. Sharon Howell said, "We are seeking students who will lead and serve an ever-changing church in a broken and hungry world. Selected Fellows will show exemplary leadership and promise for creative and faithful ministry."

Application deadline is March 15. Eight finalists will be invited for on-site interviews in March, and the seminary will announce scholarship recipients on April 15.

Learn more at [www.spst.edu/fellows](http://www.spst.edu/fellows).

## Employment

**Secretary of Discipleship:** Edmond-First. 25 hours per week. Contact Sam Powers at [sam@fumcedmond.org](mailto:sam@fumcedmond.org)

**Technology Coordinator:** Edmond-First. 25 hours per week. Contact Sam Powers at [sam@fumcedmond.org](mailto:sam@fumcedmond.org)

**Director of Children's Ministry:** Owasso-First. Full-time. Send resume to Jim Cinocca at 13800 E 106 St. N, Owasso, OK 74055; email [jimcinocca@fumcowasso.org](mailto:jimcinocca@fumcowasso.org); or call 918-272-5731.

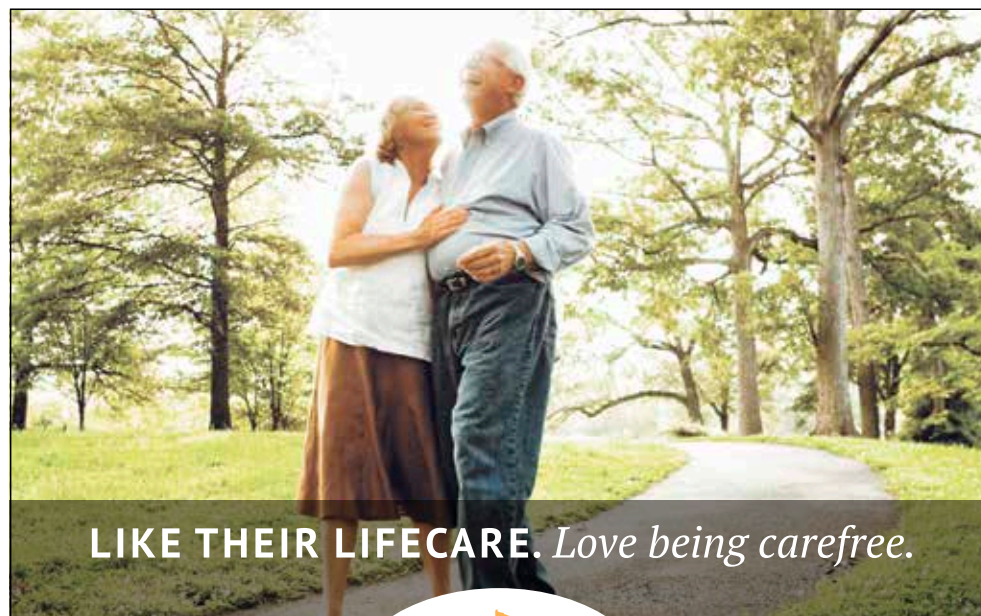
**Director of Discipleship:** Marlow-First. Full-time. Send resume and cover letter to

P.O. Box 247, Marlow, OK 73055; email to [mbscraper@clergy.okumc.org](mailto:mbscraper@clergy.okumc.org); or call 580-658-2765.

**Administrative Assistant:** Douglas Boulevard UMC in Midwest City. 20 hours per week. Send cover letter and resume to [pastor@dbumc.com](mailto:pastor@dbumc.com).

**Youth Director:** Sapulpa-First. Part-time. Email resume to [jeanne@sapulpafumc.org](mailto:jeanne@sapulpafumc.org) or by fax at 918-227-0646.

**Janitor:** OKC-Southern Hills. Part-time. Send resume to [conniejgibson@att.net](mailto:conniejgibson@att.net).



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**GETTING Schooled in Construction** — Seven people volunteered during Winter Break for Oklahoma City University to help at a Methodist school in Burrell Boom, Belize. Principal Evangelina Waight wrote, “We have been striving to complete three classrooms to be able to properly house our students. Therefore your contribution was a big help. May God continue to richly bless your endeavours.” Charles Neff, dean of the chapel at OCU, described the mission. “We worked five and one-half days constructing a cinder-block railing for the second story, as well as playing with kids at the school. We all returned to the States enriched by our experience.” He plans mission opportunities with other UM campus ministries during Spring Break. OCU students who served in Belize were Olivia Coil, Madeline Boehlke, Sylvia Hayes, Beatriz Martinez, and Emily Kersten, along with parent Steve Hayes and Rev. Dr. Neff. Missionary Lisa Williams shared, “Burrell Boom holds a very special place in our hearts, and I am sure yours, too, now. Thanks for heeding the call to come to Belize and be the hands and feet of Christ.”

## The global church

**Mapping program** — United Methodist Communications (UMCom) is using digital technology to help conferences map their churches. The Philippines Central Conference was the first to complete this process in three episcopal areas.

This work proved important during Typhoon Ruby preparations in December; crisis mappers depended on UM data to provide shelter locations. Partners in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Côte d’Ivoire also are engaged in the program.

**Conversations on race** — For Black History Month in February, Rethink Church is offering episodes of “Night Call,” one of the first national radio call-in shows. Airing in the 1960s, the show was aimed at getting whites and blacks to talk to each other over the airwaves during a time of great racial tension in the United States. The General Commission on Archives and History helped digitize the episodes. Listen at <http://rethinkchurch.org/articles/conversations-on-race/night-call>.

**Holy Communion** — The Week of Christian Unity became real in tangible and spiritual ways Jan. 25, at the National Cathedral in Washington, D.C. Canon Gina Campbell served Communion to both United Methodists and Episcopalians.

Her actions in the sanctuary were hailed by leaders of both denominations as historic for the denominations’ Interim Eucharistic Sharing Agreement.

Kim Cape of the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry said, “Those things that bind us together are stronger than those things that pull us apart. Sharing at the table is at the heart of who we are. We celebrate our family tree and common roots in Christ.”

**Winter shelter** — Cold temperatures in Northern Iraq forced thousands of families fleeing Mideast violence to seek shelter. Some found refuge in communal settlements or abandoned and unfinished buildings inadequate for health and safety needs.

In response, the United Methodist Committee on Relief (UMCOR) is supporting partner GlobalMedic in providing winterization kits to 1,620 displaced families in the Iraqi Kurdistan region. The kits include blankets, mattresses, coverlets, household heaters, and hygiene items.

(Sign up for the United Methodist News Service’s Daily Digest at [www.umc.org/news-and-media/daily-digest](http://www.umc.org/news-and-media/daily-digest), or the weekly UMCOR Hotline at [www.umcor.org](http://www.umcor.org).)

## Mission teams making plans

Through April, these are the Oklahoma Volunteers In Mission teams currently registered with the Office of Mission.

- Cartagena, Colombia; Feb. 19-27; leader Bill Fish
- Rio Bravo, Mexico; Feb. 21-27; leader Bill Wentroth
- Vietnam; March 9-20; leader Randy Shrauner
- Roatan, Honduras; March 14-21; OKC-St. Luke’s Church
- Belize City, Belize; March 14-22; Broken Arrow-First UMC
- Delta Grace Ministries, Sunflower, Miss.; March 14-20, Cookson UMC
- Port Isabel, Texas; March 14-22; leader Mike Terwilliger
- Dallas, Texas; March 14-20, leader Elizabeth Horton-Ware
- Denver, Colo.; March 14-19; leader Chris Hopper
- Belmopan, Belize; March 15-22; OKC-Chapel Hill Church
- Big Creek Mission, Bear Branch, Ky.; March 15-21; Tulsa-New Haven Church
- Tulsa, Okla.; March 15-18; leader Hal Hamilton
- Waslala, Nicaragua; April 17-25; leader Paula Watkins

(To learn more about VIM, contact Lori Foster, [Lfoster@okumc.org](mailto:Lfoster@okumc.org).)

## Christian ink

Study group feels welcome in tattoo parlor

United Methodists often see the Church’s logo, a cross and flame, on signs or church materials. But some in Wildwood, Fla., have decided to wear their link to the denomination on their sleeves, or at least really near their sleeves.

They were inspired by their unconventional pastor to share an outward sign of their internal convictions: tattoos.

It is immediately obvious that Michael Beck isn’t the conventional image of a minister. There are his tattoos, including the UM cross and flame.

There is his preaching shoeless, because he considers any pulpit — no matter how informal — hallowed ground.

And there is his previous life, which — like his Bible — is an open book.

“I guess most pastors don’t have criminal records,” Rev. Beck said. “I was born addicted; my mother abandoned me at birth. I had some United Methodist pastors early in my life start stepping in and mentoring me, but I made some wrong decisions and I ended up an alcoholic, a drug addict.

“But I knew when there was nothing left to do that I could go back to the church. God took a mess and made a message.”

So the congregation at Wildwood UMC is not surprised when Beck says things such as:

“We’re waiting expectantly for Jesus to return, maybe today, amen? I don’t know, but I want to be in a tattoo parlor studying the Bible when he comes back.”

That’s not just a joke. A Wildwood Bible study group convenes in a tattoo parlor in nearby Ocala. Most of the study participants already have religious symbol-

ism inked on their bodies. Some are adding more.

For me,” said Nicole Pennington, “having a tattoo that’s visible is a conversation starter.”

Krista Olson added, “In the past I never felt like I fit in, I never felt like I belonged.” She echoes the feelings of other new members at the church.

“There are so many young people out there right now, that you mention the word ‘church’ and they’re just, like, ‘Wow, no way.’ So when someone sees my tattoos I want to let them know that they’re welcome.”

Kjersti Hunterman requested a tattoo of a cross over scars on her wrist, from a very dark time in her life.

“God never wastes a hurt,” she said, “and this is a hurt that’s not wasted if I can share with other people what I’ve been through and how He brought me through.”

Beck said his own brokenness is what attracts people to his ministry. “They say, ‘Hey, if this guy can turn his life around, then I can.’”

When he came to Wildwood only 30 to 40 people were attending the church, and almost no children. Three years later, membership has more than tripled and includes many young families.

“Most denominations would not even take a chance on a person like me,” Beck said. “I’ve had a divorce, I have a criminal record. But The United Methodist Church, in our grace-centered understanding that God can use broken people and transform them, embraced me.”

— from “Taking Church to a Tattoo Parlor,” by UMTV

# CFA buys Conference-wide copyright licenses

By **HOLLY McCRAY**  
and **NYLA WALLIN**

The Council on Finance and Administration (CFA) recently voted to purchase group licenses for use of copyrighted music and videos by every local church and by a number of Oklahoma Conference agencies.

As of Feb. 1, the Conference has entered into agreements with Christian Video Licensing International (CVLI) and Christian Copyright Licensing International (CCLI). These two companies administrate such licensing for numerous intellectual properties.

The Council decision also saves money because the group licenses cost less than individual church coverage.

The contracts for CVLI/CCLI group licensing for a year cost approximately \$111,000. Typical costs for individual church and agency licenses for a year would add up to approximately \$175,000.

Money from the Conference's Contingency Fund will pay this year for previously unlicensed churches and agencies and for unexpired licenses. At the CFA meeting in March, the Council will recommend future budgeting, and that will be presented to the Annual Conference.

The East Ohio Annual Conference provides similar group licensing. East Ohio's discounted costs for the two licenses are calculated in each church's Apportionment amount.

## Popular funeral poem copyrighted

The relevance of the Council's action Jan. 29 was underscored the very next day. An Associated Press story reported that misuse of the NFL-copyrighted term "Super Bowl" in advertising has led to lawsuits.

Another example of copyright compliance of special note for clergy and churches was described to the CFA

by Oklahoma Conference Chancellor John Ray Green of Duncan.

A copyrighted poem titled "The Dash" is popular for funerals, Green said. This poem may be recited, but not reprinted in a funeral bulletin, reposted, or distributed, according to the law. Legal representatives for the author closely monitor use, and "they will come and get you" for noncompliance, Green stressed.

## Not all churches previously covered

Prior to acquiring the group licensing, 79 percent of churches in the Conference had CCLI coverage, according to Department of Communications records. Only 36 percent of churches had coverage through CVLI.

Joseph Harris, Conference director of Communications, told the CFA about other advantages of the group licensing.

Previously a separate license was needed for each church in a charge, whether a three-point rural charge or a multi-site congregation such as OKC-St. Luke's. These are now combined as one license under the name of the main church in both CCLI and CVLI.

A daycare or other weekday children's educational program at a church, such as Mothers Day Out, also previously required separate CVLI licensing, said Rev. Dr. Harris.

He explained that for 2015, such childcare comes under the umbrella of the new group licenses.

The childcare licensing is based on the completion of a Children's Education Survey, necessary to qualify. The surveys are being received by the Department of Communications.

The group licensing does not cover live streaming or podcasting, Harris said. Few churches use those media at this time.

## Intellectual property is not free

The law does seem complicated, but it is clear about copyrighted music and videos.

Without official permission from the holder of the rights, such intellectual property cannot be copied.

The law applies to an extensive range of uses, from projecting song lyrics on a screen to photocopying hymnal pages, from posting videos on church websites to showing a movie in a weekday preschool class.

Be wise about the resources your church or agency uses. You cannot assume material is free to use simply because you found it on the Web. You cannot make a video of your mission project and add a popular song as the soundtrack without the copyright permission for that music. You cannot claim a composer is "anonymous" just because a choir member said so.

The General Board of Discipleship of The UMC prepared "Copyright 101: Penalties for Copyright Infringement." Copyright holders can sue for statutory and punitive damages. Set by the U.S. government, statutory damages range from \$750 to \$30,000, and can go up to \$150,000 per infringement, according to the Board document.

## Extensive libraries in CVLI/CCLI

CVLI is the licensing administrator for 650 film producers and distributors, and each of them holds the rights to thousands of movies. Watch a video on the CVLI website that explains how to determine if a movie you want to show at your church or event is covered under that licensing. The video link is: [cvli.com/about](http://cvli.com/about).

CCLI enables legal copying activities that assist with congregational singing, including computer projections, songsheets, and bulletin inserts. This company represents over 3,000 publishers/song owners and over 300,000 worship songs. Find out more at <http://www.ccli.com/welcome/>. For additional help, go to <http://support.ccli.com>.

Please note that copyright permissions for all movies or music are NOT covered by these two companies. The Department of Communications encourages you to search for titles on the CCLI/CVLI websites to ensure compliance with the law.

Churches and agencies are receiving emails or letters from the Department and from CCLI with license numbers. For more information, go to [www.okumc.org](http://www.okumc.org).

# Out-of-the-box Easter ideas to adapt for your church

As cultures all over the world celebrate Christ's Resurrection, churches have an incredible opportunity to connect with their communities.

## 1 Carry the cross on Good Friday.

The people of Winstead UMC, Wilson, N.C., decided they wanted to "do something tangible and memorable to witness to Jesus on Easter weekend," said Pastor Paul Dunham. They place a cross display on property nearby. Carrying the crosses to the property has grown into a meaningful tradition.

Last year, they made it a community event by collaborating with 10 other churches in town. They began at the AME Zion building downtown and carried the crosses 10 miles through town. After placing them at the site, they had a joint worship service.

Not only did people involved in the procession participate in the service, but also people who saw the crosses being carried then joined the moving service. Rev. Dunham said the event had a huge impact

on the community.

## 2 Have an Easter basket/food pantry giveaway.

Another UM church collected traditional items for Easter baskets. Members shopped at thrift stores for baskets and collected new stuffed animals from friends and neighbors. Sunday school classes donated candy, and the church bought Easter grass and coloring books that pictured the Easter story.

Instead of members assembling the baskets and handing them out, the congregation enabled recipient parents to be part of the process.

The church collaborated with a local food pantry and set up at a predetermined location on Saturday. Day and place were well advertised.

After families received what they needed from the food pantry, parents shopped for their children's Easter basket contents. Instead of what someone else packed at random, parents got to select a stuffed ani-

mal, candy, and grass. They all received the coloring books, to help share the story of Easter with their children.

## 3 Offer a mountaintop Good Friday service.

Youth at University UMC in San Antonio begin their Good Friday service on Maundy Thursday. After school, they meet at a state park and pitch their tents to stay up with Jesus in prayer. Then Good Friday is filled with fasting, prayer, and reflection.

When the sun begins to set, they start a short hike up a mountain so that they arrive around sunset. At the top, gathered at a cross they help carry there, the youth and anyone who chooses to join them sing, read the story of the Crucifixion, pray, and sit in silence, reflecting on the sacrifice Jesus made.

## 4 Try a missional egg hunt.

Egg hunts annually draw crowds to churches everywhere. What if you turned it around this year? The people at Christ UMC,

Mobile, Ala., made it a missional moment last year.

The egg-hunt participants also served in an outreach ministry, assembling hundreds of supply bags to help meet needs of homeless people in their city.

## 5 Host micro events at various locations in your community.

Travel may be an obstacle for some people, so go to them. Consider seeking permission at bigger apartment complexes to use their courtyards or picnic areas to host egg hunts. Include inflatables, games, food, door prizes, and music to grab attention. It will be hard for residents to resist the fun. Make sure to invite participants to your church's Easter service.

Between the games and popcorn stand, families could grab bottled water, travel soaps, and other items and place them in bags as a moment of service amid the festival.

—By *Jeremy Steele of United Methodist Communications (UMCom), Nashville, Tenn.*

# Districts

Continued from page 1

Transitional procedures began wholeheartedly after lay and clergy delegates at the 2014 Annual Conference voted to realign from 12 to eight districts.

Most recently, the 12 districts held Final Conferences. Business included resolutions to officially disband as incorporated entities, elections of temporary trustees, and updates on District Apportionment budgeting.

Celebrations were held in conjunction with some Final Conferences. On Jan. 25, Bishop Hayes preached at the Enid District event.

Both Hayes and Superintendent Donna Dodson shared historical stories. Rev. Dodson said Enid-First Church held its first worship service on the courthouse lawn. Another church in the district built a sod house with canvas roof for its first sanctuary. And in the early 1900s, an offering total of 15 cents "was a great day," she noted.

Both leaders also turned attention firmly to the future.

District borders will change, but "the work is continuing," Dodson said, including Lay Servant training April 18 and CLEW District Youth Camps in summer.

"Be bold, brave, and adventuresome in this 21st century, like the pioneers," Dodson said.

The bishop declared, "We've set the course, but we understand where we end up belongs to God."

Hayes and OKC-South Dis-

trict Superintendent Greg Tener in late January discussed the vision that steers this missional realignment of districts. Here are excerpts.

**Q. What does missional strategist mean?** This is part of the job description for superintendents of the new districts.

**Bishop Hayes:** The missional strategist paints the picture of how ministry can look in this setting or this place. We need to paint this picture of a different kind of future. We need people who will be able to provide the paint and brush and canvass to do that.

**Q. Are mission and ministry interchangeable?**

**Rev. Dr. Tener:** Like the chicken and the egg, which comes first? They're simultaneous.

A missional strategist is discerning those places where we need to do slight tweaking and those places where we need to say, "This has got to be a deeper change if we're going to reach new people."

**Bishop:** In a lot of places in Oklahoma, churches know how to do ministry; they do it very well. We're going to find out what makes this so successful so we can duplicate that.

But there are some places, and too many, where people are fearful about their future. They have built this moat mentality where they pull the bridge up. We've got to leave the building and go out and do ministry.

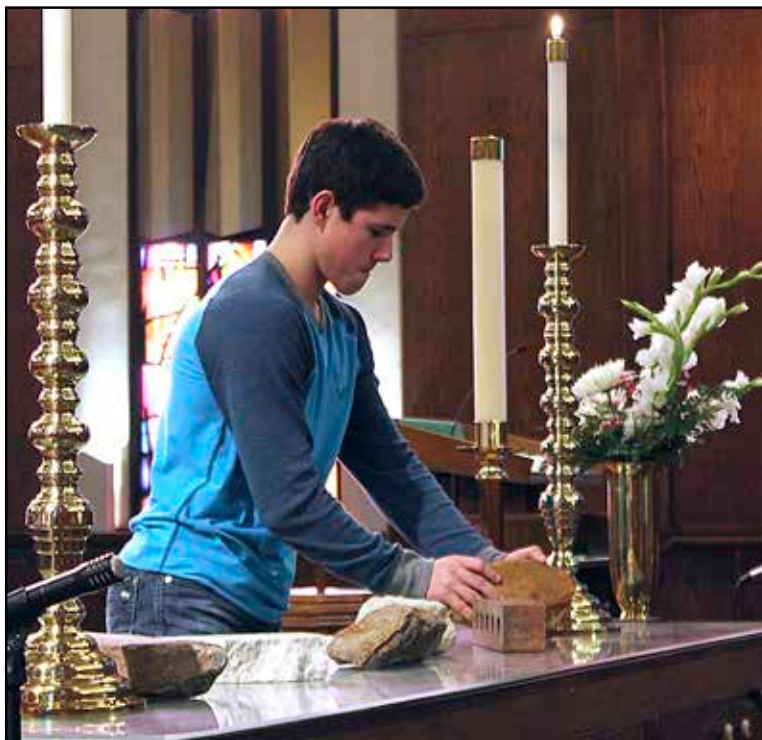


Photo by Holly McCray

**Emulating the Old Testament people who stacked stones to mark where God blessed them in their journeys, Jeremy Wilcox on Jan. 25 places a rock representing Kingfisher UMC on the altar during the final Enid District Conference.**

**Q: What is the role for laity in this vision?** The work at this point seems mainly to involve clergy, such as facilitators for Missional Areas.

**Bishop:** If you look at history, early on most churches only had pastors every 30-60 days. (But) the work of the church had to go on.

We have pastors convening these groups, but the laity will carry the ministry in these places. This realignment, this missional strategy is going to involve them in ways they never imagined.

We'll have people talking to

one another, getting to dream, to think about what this picture ought to look like for "my church." I'm hoping that people who have sat on the back row will move up and take their place in leadership.

**Tener:** It may look clergy-driven right now because the Cabinet is writing the documents about the roles of convening elder, of laity, of what a Missional Area looks like. Transitional Teams are roughly half (laity) and half (clergy). We know laity are very excited about the possibility of being involved in missional work.

## Upcoming organizational meetings:

Cimarron District: April 11, at 10:30 a.m., Woodward-First UMC

Council Oak District: May 3, at 2 p.m., Tulsa-First UMC

Crossroads District: April 18, at 10:30 a.m., OKC-Church of the Servant

Green Country District: May 3, at 3 p.m., Claremore-First UMC

Heartland District: April 26, at 3 p.m., Norman-McFarlin UMC

Lake Country District: April 25, at 10:30 a.m., McAlester-First UMC

Northern Prairie District: April 12, at 3 p.m., Pery UMC

Wichitas District: April 19, at 3 p.m., Lawton-Centenary UMC

## Q. Where do you see God with us in this change?

**Tener:** The image that comes to my mind is the Christian Life Center at St. Luke's, full, last year at Annual Conference. A lot of difficult questions. Even with those, there was excitement that "we are going to do something new." I sensed the presence of God in the room that day. As conversations have continued, that sense of excitement that God is at work continues.

And we're changing for the purpose of reaching new people with the Gospel of Jesus Christ, not just because we want to change things. What is it that we can do together for the good of God's Kingdom and the Church that we couldn't do on our own?

**Bishop:** This project has got to be Spirit-led. You can reorganize and plan, but if it doesn't have the Spirit of the Living God in it, it's not going to survive. Our allegiance is to Christ.

# \$3 million

Continued from page 1

of OKC-St. Luke's.

At the 2014 Annual Conference, he had encouraged lay and clergy delegates to announce the Pastor Education Fund in every church.

"The gifts that have been made today will strengthen the church of tomorrow," said Rev. Dr. Long in January. "All of those who have given and the United Methodist Foundation have made an investment for developing leadership that will inspire our church in its mission to share Christ."

Trustee Paul Milburn of Shawnee approached the Foundation about the need for a fund to provide scholarships for ministerial students who exhibit exceptional aptitude for pastoral work. His desire was to establish a \$2 million endowment by providing matching funds up to \$1 million.

Trustee Richard Small of Tulsa caught the vision and offered an additional match of up to \$1 million.

In meeting their challenge, the campaign



**The Midweek Meal at Edmond-New Covenant creates fellowship time for, from left: William Pruitt, Jay Smith, and Johnny Floyd. Foundation Scholar Smith is among those who cook and serve meals, and he teaches a Disciple class.**

Photo by Jamie Davis

received donations from churches of \$50 to \$50,000, and from individuals and families of \$10 to \$100,000.

"Because of the two-for-one match offered by the Milburn and Small families, we now have a \$3 million endowment that will help in the seminary education of clergy for generations to come. This is a significant success and we celebrate that success," declared Bill Junk, president of the Foundation.

"Many of you made significant contributions to this drive, and I am deeply grateful for your faithfulness and generosity."

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. of Oklahoma referred to Jesus' teaching about sowing seeds.

"These seeds have fallen on good soil because these people have been so generous to step forward and offer some of their resources that challenged us. Now we are reaping the fruit," Hayes said.

"I'm delighted that we reached this point where we can claim success."

He expects the Pastor Education Fund to strategically change how the Conference finds exceptional pastors.

Each Foundation Scholar will enter into

a covenant agreement with the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation to work in a church while attending seminary and to serve as an Oklahoma Conference pastor under appointment for a minimum of six years after graduation.

"It's not out of the ordinary that someone be given a waiver on their debt in exchange for serving," Hayes noted. Similar agreements secure physicians for some rural communities, for example.

The bishop clarified, "This is an investment. If they decide to leave before the six years under appointment, they take the balance of the debt with them." However, "if we can have that person in ministry, engaged in work that really challenges and inspires, we won't have to beg them to stay."

If you are being called by God to serve in a church and want to seek a scholarship from the Pastor Education Fund, the first step is to complete the online application at [www.okumf.org/pefapp](http://www.okumf.org/pefapp).

—Holly McCray