



Photo by David Combs

A new cross rises above Canyon through the efforts of Choctaw's United Methodist Men. Among the volunteers were: (clockwise from blue shirt) Jerry Bower, Keipher Hotella, Kelly Davis, Charlie Parker, and Jessie Hotella. Top right: teens share sunrise Communion at Egan. Right: John Hiller watches a youth zip along at New Day Camp Too, Cross Point.

Water and Spirit

Camps' leaders wade through summer

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

On the last night of summer's final youth camp, Ed Parker saw undeniable proof of the Kingdom power in church camps. He watched 29 teens signify that they felt called to ministry.

They responded in worship at CYME camp, a leadership training opportunity for high school students. (CYME = Conference Youth Ministry Enterprise)

"I interviewed a lot of these kids. These are quality decisions rather than just someone raising their hands in the moment," said Parker, who directs Oklahoma's Camp & Retreat Ministries.

For him, summer's biggest challenges — floodwaters as well as no water — can't wash away that high point of the youth camp season.

The water woes slammed two of the Conference's three camping centers: Cross Point and Egan. Some groups relocated; some cancelled. Innovation resulted in "island camps" at Cross Point, inaccessible by road for about 10 weeks due to Lake Texoma flooding.



The three sites served 229 groups (United Methodist and others) in the first half of 2015. Canyon hosted 99 groups; Egan, 87; and Cross Point, 43.

Parker said implementation of a new food service system saved \$12,000 for Camps in that time. Also, new recipes and menus have gotten positive feedback from campers.

A diner told Egan's manager, Josh Pulver, "That's not just the best camp food I ever had. That's one of the best meals I ever had," Parker overheard.

Now it's time to evaluate summer's programming for children and youth, analyze costs, and plan next summer's schedule; to repair the dock at Cross Point, build the medical station at Egan, and add lights to Canyon's new cross.

Strong winds toppled that large cross early this year. Tweens Campers installed a temporary one.

"Each camper took a turn carrying the cross up the trail. (Manager David Combs) led us in a prayer. Dean Amanda Lockwood and her staff are doing great ministry this week!" declared a June 11 post on Facebook.



Photo by Michael Bartley

Then a dozen United Methodist Men of Choctaw UMC built a sturdy cross off-site and installed it in one day, using 15 bags of cement. They will treat the wood with protective sealant next spring.

See Camps, page 4



Photo by Josh Robinson/OCU

Students gather Aug. 23 for a celebration at OCU's Gold Star Building.

School of Religion gets Gold Star at OCU

By **CHRIS SCHUTZ**

The start of a new school year at Oklahoma City University brings new environments for students of law and religion.

It's the first full academic year for the law school's new location: a historic downtown building at 800 N. Harvey Ave.

Meanwhile, work is continuing on the OCU campus to convert former law school library space in the Gold Star Building into classrooms and office space for the Wimberly School of Religion.

Both buildings are considered Oklahoma City landmarks.

The tower of the 286-foot tall Gold Star Building on the OCU campus, topped with a 200-pound star, can be seen for miles. OCU gives 1953 as the completion date for the building, although the floors in its tower were never finished.

The Gold Star Building originally

was intended as a home for the School of Religion, but wasn't used as such until now, said Sharon Betsworth, the school's director. It also now houses OCU's theater and honors programs.

The building was constructed in honor of Oklahoma Methodist veterans who died in World War II and the Korean War. Their names appear on a plaque in the lobby.

Rooms to grow

Previously the School of Religion was housed in limited space at Smith Chapel. Now, "all of us have space to expand and grow," Dr. Betsworth said.

Betsworth believes the new environment will be appealing to prospective students, with its plentiful light and open spaces. The school will have four classrooms by the time the work is done next summer, she said.

The Gold Star Building is to be re-dedicated at next year's United Methodist Annual Conference, Betsworth said.

In turn, the School of Religion's move out of Smith Chapel has freed up space for OCU's Wesley Center, said Charles Neff, OCU's vice president of university-church relations and dean of the chapel.

Most of the chapel's main floor, which includes the sanctuary, is used by Saint Paul School of Theology. The lower floor will be used by the Wesley campus ministry, and space will be available for student groups and interns, Rev. Dr. Neff said. Part of the lower lobby may be converted into a prayer station, he said.

High school now law school

Downtown, the former Central High

See Buildings, page 2



Left: Second-year law students prepare in the Chickasaw Nation Law Library at OCU's Law School. From left: Kevin Brackett and Jake Brown, both of Yukon, and Nana Dankwa of Oklahoma City. Right: In OCU's Gold Star Building, Sharon Betsworth stands beside a plaque that memorializes young Oklahoma Methodists who gave their lives in World War II and the Korean War. Beginning with this fall semester, the Gold Star Building now houses OCU's Wimberly School of Religion.

Photos by Chris Schutz



Buildings:

Continued from page 1

School building dates back to 1910. It also has served as offices for Southwestern Bell Telephone Co. and American Farmers & Ranchers Insurance.

"Admissions are up," said Laurie Jones, associate dean for Law Admissions. She said that's due to "the great reputation of the

university and the wonderful facility."

Visitors to that building can view memorabilia from the old high school in a room that also contains a two-part mural drawn by artist Olinka B. Hrdy in 1929.

She didn't sign the mural (whose sections are called "Development of the Mind" and "Development of the Body") until 1982.

The insurance company left behind a system of rolling shelves that has proven ideal for OCU's collection of law books, said

Brook Arbeitman, the law school's director of marketing and communications.

The law school also features a Grand Hall, repurposed from what was the high school auditorium. It contains tables and chairs where students can study.

Furniture can be moved to accommodate rows of chairs for larger events, Arbeitman said.

Another feature is a classroom set up like a courtroom.

There also are spaces for the Murrah Center for Homeland Security Law and Policy, Oklahoma Lawyers for Children, and the Oklahoma Innocence Project.

This year, the law school has 453 students; 161 of those are first-year law students. The faculty numbers 29.

Officials for both the religion and law schools have noticed an increase in visits by prospective students since their moves.



Speaker's story engages Eastern spirituality

Oklahoma City University welcomes John Thatamanil to present the Willson Lecture series on Oct. 15.

"The Promise of Religious Diversity" is the theme of the Willson Lectures this year. It's a timely topic and one that draws on Dr. Thatamanil's academic research and personal experience.

He is associate professor of theology and world religions at Union Theological Seminary in New York.

Thatamanil is a frequent lecturer in churches and universities both in the U.S. and internationally. He blogs periodically for *The Huffington Post* and other online publications and has published editorials in *The Los Angeles Times* and *The Washington Post*.

A native of southern India, he was raised in the Mar Thoma Syrian Church there.

His first lecture at OCU will be at 1 p.m. that Thursday in the sanctuary of the Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel, following a brief prayer service. At 2:30, he will speak in Watson Lounge, in the building's lower level. The day concludes with a final presentation at 7.

Specifically, Thatamanil writes on Hindu-Christian Dialogue and Buddhist-Christian Dialogue. His first book on Hindu-Christian dialogue is "The Immanent Divine: God, Creation, and the Human Predicament."



Lecturer John Thatamanil

He is at work on a second book, titled "The Promise of Religious Diversity: Constructive Theology After Religion."

Thatamanil's courses have covered diverse topics such as the theology of Paul Tillich, process theology, and Eastern

Orthodox theology and spirituality.

His research specializes in comparative theology and theologies of religious pluralism. He chairs the American Academy of Religion's (AAR) Theological Education Steering Committee and is project director of

Willson Lectures

Oct. 15

Dr. John Thatamanil

"The Promise of Religious Diversity"

Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel
at Oklahoma City University,
NW 23rd Street and Blackwelder

- Presentation I
1 p.m., Sanctuary
- Presentation II
2:30 p.m., Watson Lounge, lower level
- Presentation III
7 p.m., Watson Lounge, lower level

All events free and open to the public
Call 405-208-5484 for more information

the AAR/Luce Summer Seminars on Theologies of Religious Pluralism and Comparative Theology.

Prior to his appointment at Union Theological Seminary, he taught at Boston University, Millsaps College, and Vanderbilt Divinity School.

There is no admission fee for any of the presentations. Everyone is welcome.

The Oklahoma United Methodist
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**Strength for the journey:
A collection of ideas and thoughts from our bishop**

The connection blesses

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

Stepping away from my daily job, I embarked upon my sabbatical leave in July to seek renewal and rest. I was excited and did some things that I've always wanted to do. Near the end of my time away, I began to dread the mountain of emails, calls, letters, and meetings that awaited my return.

But there, in the pile of paperwork on my desk, was a letter that inspired and moved me to tears. It is a letter of triumph and tragedy, joy and pain.

And within the lines, there is the work of the Church, strong and resilient. I share here parts of that letter, so you also can understand how God works through our United Methodist connection to accomplish the work of the Kingdom.

Dear Bishop Hayes:

Several weeks ago, members of my congregation here in Mogadore (Ohio) asked to speak to me and shared the tragic story of their adult son who had been in trouble with the law and incarcerated there in Oklahoma for most of 35 years — since the age of 19. It was a shocking and overwhelming story of love and loss.

Their son had been paroled about 14 months earlier and had throughout all the years stayed in regular contact with his parents. However, they had not heard from him for about six weeks and could not find any information from their contacts in Oklahoma. They knew from their son that he had on several occasions reached out to United Methodist churches and pastors for help and had been taken “under wing” by a couple of pastors. They even knew that, from time to time, their son had given his testimony of faith to other inmates. His spiritual life compelled him to reach out to God’s people for help, even in the midst of the worst times.

The parents asked if I might know how to be in touch with the Church in Oklahoma, to see whether anyone might have any helpful information about their son. Only 16 months earlier, I had taken a (Volunteers In Mission) team to Moore to help with tornado relief, and I immediately remembered several names I might contact.

That evening I sent email to Karen Mangano, volunteer coordinator for Disaster Relief; to District Superintendents Greg Tener and Rockford Johnson of the districts closest to Oklahoma City; and to the pastors of the two churches I had met — Wickline and Moore-First.

Within 24 hours, Karen Mangano responded with grim news that the son had been murdered six weeks earlier. And shortly thereafter, Superintendent Tener advised that he had forwarded my request to those working in prison ministries there and was able also to confirm the bad news of the man’s death, BUT that he had been ministered to by Stan Basler, retired pastor and someone who had known this man for some time, reaching out in mercy and faith to him.

You might imagine the awful pain of delivering such tragic news to the parents and their terrible pain in receiving it. But can you imagine the blessing of hearing that their son — whose body lay in the morgue “unclaimed” for six weeks — had received the blessing of a memorial service by Rev. Bassler, with many speaking on his behalf? Can you imagine their relief knowing that they could bring their son’s remains home? This would not have been possible without The United Methodist Church!

Bishop Hayes, I wanted to write to share this with you because I have been feeling so overwhelmed by the blessing of how “the connection” worked for this family in this awful situation, and to express my deep gratitude for the quick response of those whom I contacted and for the commitment to ministries of compassion and justice that allow such an ending to what could have been an even more devastating story.

Please express my deepest gratitude to all! I am grateful beyond words, and so is the family here in little Mogadore!

*In constant hope,
Rev. Pamela Gable*



Bishop Hayes

Employment

Multiple part-time positions: OKC-Mosaic, a new church.

Music Director	Soundboard Tech
Choir Leader	Office Assistant
Pianist	Child Care Director
Contemporary Music Leader	Child Care Assistant
Organist	Janitorial

Deadline is Sept. 22 to apply for any of these jobs. Positions start Oct. 1. Send resume to Mosaic UMC, Attention SPRC, 102 E. Hefner Road, Oklahoma City, OK 73114.

Choir Director: Moore-New Life. Part-time. Contact Kathy Brown at 405-794-8393 or rev.kathybrown@gmail.com

Tween Ministries Director: Tulsa-Faith. Half-time. Email resume to James Lambert, jlambert@faithtulsa.org.

Preschool Ministry Director: OKC-New Hope. Part-time. Contact Cali Depue Eck at 405-721-5015 or cali@newhopeokc.org

Church Office Manager: Norman-St. Stephen’s. Full-time. Email resume to revjeank@aol.com.

Director of Youth Ministries: Duncan-First. Full-time with some benefits. Musical ability a plus. Email resume to greg.tolle@duncanfumc.org.

Coordinator of Worship: Duncan-St. Paul’s. Part-time. Ability to play guitar a plus. Email resume to Andrew Haire, acdhaire@gmail.com.

Special Needs Ministry Director: OKC-St. Mark’s. Part-time. Development and oversight of special needs ministry. Email stmarks@stmarksbethany.com or call 405-789-9033.

Director of Children’s Ministry: OKC-Southern Hills. Part-time. Email resume to Connie Gibson, conniejgibson@att.net.

Pianist: Crescent-First. Part-time. Contact Richard Cato at rdcato_1@yahoo.com, 405-732-4915, or 405-210-4473.

Youth Director: Cushing-First. Part-time. Contact Kathy Leithner at 918-225-5683.

Custodian: OKC-Chapel Hill. Part-time; evenings and weekends. Email resume to Brock Peters, brock@mychapelhill.org.

Communications Coordinator: Great Plains Conference of The United Methodist Church. Location: Wichita, Kan. Contact Todd Seifert at tseifert@greatplainsumc.org.

A full day of fun!

Benefit Rodeo and Basket Auction

Saturday, October 17

High Noon ‘til 3 p.m.



**5K race starts at 8 a.m. and benefits
Volunteers in Mission. Sign up:
[https://runsignup.com/Race/OK/Gore/
SodaStevesRootBeerRun](https://runsignup.com/Race/OK/Gore/SodaStevesRootBeerRun)**



**United Methodist
Boys Ranch
Gore, Oklahoma**

Deadline for baskets: Thursday, October 8

**Questions? Want to volunteer?
918-487-5281**

Feeling the force

More than 130 children and volunteers in Mooreland took part in “G-Force,” putting God’s love into action for First UMC, at Vacation Bible School in late July. From top: Katelynn Purviance succeeds in an action challenge as her egg drops smoothly into a glass of water. Runners are (from left) Jackson Crofts, Kayden Ross, Chandler Persons, and Quinten Whisenand. Masked third- and fourth-graders mimic the VBS mascot, a cheetah named Chester. Pastor Larry Masoner got a pie in the face after the children raised about \$550 for the food pantry. VBS was held on five evenings.



Photos by Julie Focht



Camps:

Continued from page 1

“Just to get up to the cross area is a challenge,” said UMMen President Mike Funk. They used all-terrain vehicles to move equipment and tools over most of the route, but “we had to carry it the last several hundred yards.”

He added, “Guys get involved if you have projects to do.”

The Choctaw men also have cleared trees and made benches for seating at the cross, and built gazebos for Canyon’s pool area.

They host a golf tournament to raise camp funds for kids. This summer, those UMMen supported 30 children and youth campers.

Combs said Canyon guests asked “Where’s the cross?” before the replacement efforts. “Wouldn’t it be nice if we looked for

it every day?” he posed.

Parker said, “Our site directors do a good job of creating a culture and environment of Christian hospitality that leads people — even if they’re just there in a secular way — to experience God in some tangible way.”

Pastor Brett Thomasson of Madill UMC described one “island camp.” Dayspring South took the plunge to stay at Cross Point.

“We had a luau featuring island decorations and some Hawaiian shirts bright enough to make outdoor lighting unnecessary,” Rev. Thomasson said.

Camp staff and student volunteers used a dozen canoes and two power boats to shuttle the 400-plus youths and adult volunteers, as well as luggage and equipment. “Extra work

Blogger gets personal about summer camps

By MOLLEIGH McCANN

Growing up, I went from basketball camp to soccer camp to “High School Musical” camp to church camp. Almost every week of the summer, I lived out of my suitcase, was constantly sleep-deprived and hyped up on sugar, and loved every second of it.

My mother always asked when it came time for school again, “What was your favorite one this year?”

And my answer was always the same: Church camp at Egan.

My mom likes to tell the story of how nervous I was while sitting on the bus for Egan that first summer. A third-grader, I was next to our pastor’s granddaughter, and we were both very anxious about this whole sleep-away camp concept. I was just about to bolt when out came our minister to say goodbye to his granddaughter, thereby blocking the door.

Little did I know that I was off to start one of the greatest adventures I have had.

It sounds corny and stereotypical, I know. But for one week every summer, filled with silly songs, games, creek hikes, bug bites, crafts, farmer tans, friends, and Jesus, my spirit was rebooted.

There was never a summer when I left Egan not feeling rejuvenated and ready to conquer the world — even at age 8.

Camp Egan was my safe haven, my happy place. No matter what was going on in my life, I was able to put it all aside as soon as I set foot at camp. It gave me some of my favorite memories, greatest friends, and the strongest connection to my faith.

There was something about

being surrounded by a bunch of sweaty, sticky kids and leaders that made my heart feel so full and alive.

This summer, after finishing Tulsa District Camp as my first time on the leader side, I find myself reflecting. I was so excited to finally get to be at Egan on the flip side.

(Although) having no running water was not exactly ideal.

‘Being surrounded by a bunch of sweaty kids and leaders made my heart feel so full’ — M. McCann



When I first heard that news and thought we would all be headed home, I was crushed.

(A rural water district had supply problems, affecting Egan for several days, reported camp manager Josh Pulver.)

I was blown away by Egan’s response to the problem. Immediate plans were put in place to bring in port-a-potties, jugs of water for brushing teeth, and even a firetruck for our “shower.”

As 100 kids in bathing suits were getting hosed down by firetruck and dancing to music at 10 p.m., I found my happy place in a completely new light. I realized it wasn’t just the beauty of Egan that made it so special to me.

It was the people.

On the first night of camp, at worship, we were told to take a sticky note, write on it our “Why?” question to God, then pin it to the

cross. I thought about it for a while, then ended up writing, “Why did you choose for me to serve this summer?”

Just a few days later, I had my answer: I needed those kids and those experiences. I had been somewhat reluctant to even go home this summer, let alone work for the church. But through those kids I was able to, once again, find myself with an uplifted heart and spirit.

The high spirit these kids kept through the entire experience made me realize that I was exactly where I was supposed to be. I found myself focusing on one of my favorite Bible verses. Philippians 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength.”

This year summer camp was not easy, and it was certainly not simple. But it was worth it.

I hope that I touched at least one camper’s soul half as much as they all touched mine.

After 11 summers straight, I don’t know when I will next experience Camp Egan. However, I know all the fond memories and life-changing moments that place has given me will keep me going for a long time to come.

Egan was one of the biggest shapers of my faith and my person all through my childhood.

They talk every summer about their goal to change people’s lives, and I can say confidently that they have changed mine. The spirit is certainly alive there. I am forever indebted for the opportunity to have it as a huge step in my faith journey.

(McCann, a member of Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC, worked with children and youths this summer as one of that church’s college interns. She has begun her sophomore year at the University of Southern California.)

in getting to camp helped bond our entire community and set the stage and tone to be open to God’s work in us,” said Thomasson.

“I told the campers that I’ve been a part of 23 editions of Dayspring, and the way they stepped up and opened up meant that I had never been prouder to be associated with it.”

He added, “John’s vision of the New Jerusalem says that its streets are paved with gold. In case the River of the Water of Life gets a little high and covers them up, we’ll have a crew ready to help out.”

Dayspring’s campers returned to the mainland just as the youngsters of Growin’ in Grace and Tweens Discover were arriving at water’s edge south of Kingston.

At Egan on the last day of Bartlesville

District Camp, youth director Evan Holmes of East Cross UMC awoke at 5:30 a.m.

“My sleeping bag had fallen half-off my bed,” he wrote in the church’s newsletter. “I recalled the papers pinned to the cross, with all sorts of questions to God from the campers: ‘Why am I here?’ ‘Are you really there?’ ‘Why aren’t my parents together?’ It had been an emotional night.

“What gave me the energy that morning was remembering the faces of the kids that had asked Jesus as their Savior. We ended the night watching the fireflies hum over the creek water.”

Holmes concluded, “You never know what God has in store for you in one week that has the capability to change your life.”

Circle of Care

Agency launches effort to secure ethnic foster homes

To recruit Hispanic foster parents in Oklahoma, the United Methodist Circle of Care (COC) has begun a partnership with the Office of Mission's Hispanic/Latino Ministries.

They are responding to a critical need.

In the state, 1,900 Hispanic children need foster care. Child experts say stable, loving Hispanic foster homes for these children are essential to maintain cultural customs in the absence of biological parents.

But only 130 Hispanic foster homes have been approved by the state to receive children.

A COC Hispanic family specialist, Isabel Arango, is leading the new collaboration, along with Carlos Ramirez and Jeremy Bassett in the Conference Office of Mission.

A recent graduate of Oklahoma City University, Arango is originally from Colombia. Her bilingual language skills and cultural background facilitate her work. She is well versed in the processes and needs for all foster care here in Oklahoma.

The state's emergency shortage of foster homes has been well documented.

For too many neglected or abused children, there is no family member nearby who can comfort and care for them when they enter state custody. When such a kinship placement isn't available, a child

is placed in a foster home. But if there is no foster home with an opening, the child is housed at an emergency group shelter.

Circle of Care wants to prevent children from languishing in large group shelters.

Aligning with strategic groups such as UM Hispanic/Latino Ministries and opening new

recruiting offices across Oklahoma are helping COC address the urgent need for foster homes. Regional recruiters are at work in seven cities in addition to Tulsa and Oklahoma City.

Expanding in these ways will make possible more good outcomes like that experienced by the Murray Crookes family.

Rev. Crookes, pastor of North Oklahoma City UM Native American Fellowship, and his wife, Chivi, are kinship foster care parents through the state Department of Human Services. Murray is Native American, and Chivi is Hispanic.

They speak both English and Spanish. The family now is connected with COC because of the agency's new alliance with Hispanic/Latino Ministries.

Speaking in Spanish, Arango reached out to the Crookes. Now they know they can access the COC support programs offered to foster parents all over Oklahoma. That help ranges from clothes and school supplies through the



Arango



While caregivers select children's clothing and school supplies, girls play together at one of five co-ops operated by the Circle of Care (COC) for foster families across Oklahoma. Circle of Care representatives are reaching out in nine cities to recruit and resource foster parents, to meet the pressing need for more foster homes in the state.

agency's ChildShare co-ops to holiday group parties and even respite care.

The Crookes are providing a safe and loving home for relatives' children who are officially in their care until the kids are reunited with their biological parents, adopted, or exit the DHS system through other avenues.

For those children, the sorrow of being separated from their parents is blunted by the calm constancy of other family

members who care for them.

Another plus is that the children are with people who share their Native American heritage.

Arango already has aided other kinship foster families in accessing COC's support services.

If you or anyone you know, whether English- or Spanish-speaking, is able to provide a loving foster home in Oklahoma, COC is eager to answer your questions. Call Arango at 405-312-6640.

Passages

NORMAN — Rev. Billee Joe Norman, 79, of Mead died Aug. 18, 2015. He was predeceased by his wife, Rev. Randa Norman, in 2013.

Beginning in 1976, Bill pastored at Gracemont, Coger, Muskogee-First (associate), Tulsa-Grace, Roosevelt, Lone Wolf, Thomas, Fay, Woodville, and Kingston. He retired in 2001. Bill and Randa together served Colbert and Calera churches.

The couple married in 1955. Among survivors are sons Chuck and Kirk and daughter Kemily.

Bill's service was Aug. 22 at Sunny Lane UMC in Del City.

PHYFFER — Rev. Chester Leroy Phyffer, 71, of East Point, Ga., died Aug. 14, 2015.

His ministry began in 1994. He pastored OKC-Village, OKC-Selecman, OKC-Leland Clegg, and OKC-Christ churches. Chester retired in 2007.

Survivors include daughter Monique Augustine.

Service was Aug. 21 at OKC-The Christ Experience UMC.

TREMPER — Rev. Sherron Hughes-Tremper, 70, of San Antonio, Texas, died Aug. 24, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. Dr. Dale G. Tremper.

In 1978, Sherron was the first woman ordained in the Evangelical Covenant Church of America. Between 2002 and '09, Sherron was supply pastor for Spencer, Nicoma Park, and OKC-Epworth.

Among survivors are her husband, son Matthew Arrington, and daughter Stephanie Gameros.

A service was set for Sept. 19 at 11 a.m. in the Oklahoma City University chapel. Another service was held on Aug. 28 in San Antonio at Travis Park UMC, where Dale Tremper is an associate pastor.

Memorials to: Corazon Ministries c/o Travis Park UMC.

• Richard "Dick" Parker died Sept. 8, 2015. He was the father of Rev. Roger Parker, pastor of the Laverne and Rosston churches.

Births

KRAUSE — Audrey Claire Krause was born Aug. 28, 2015. She is the daughter of Luran and Rev. Devon Krause, associate pastor at Elk City.

BELASE — Elizabeth Grace Belase was born Sept. 3, 2015. She is the daughter of Rev. Rebekah Belase, a deacon who is assistant director for Church World Service, Greater Plains Region, and Rev. Derrek Belase, pastor at Prague and Arlington churches.

Briefly

Bishop of Peru reaches out to Oklahomans

On Sept. 19, meet the bishop of Peru.

You are invited to be part of a mission encounter that Saturday, joining Bishop Samuel Aguilar and other Methodist leaders for a Peruvian Mini-Consultation.

Plan to connect either online or in person in Oklahoma City.

"Together, we will learn about the history of the Peruvian Methodist Church, the challenges they face today, and how Oklahoma United Methodists can work with them to help the church advance," said Karen Distefano, who is Oklahoma's secretary of Global Ministries.

Any interested person may register by emailing Distefano at kririe@aol.com. For those not able to travel to Oklahoma City, online meeting information will be provided.

The event will be held at the United Methodist Ministry Center, 1501 NW 24th St., Oklahoma City. Registration begins at 9:30 a.m. At 10, the consultation will begin with missionary Dora Canales and Juan Gattinoni, Global Ministries' staff leader for Latin America and the Caribbean, in addition to Bishop Aguilar.

Bishop Hayes to preach at Albright UMC anniversary

Ponca City-Albright UMC will celebrate its 90th anniversary on Oct. 3-4, and Bishop Hayes will be guest preacher.

The church will host a come-and-go reception 4-6 p.m. that Saturday. In Sunday's 10:30 a.m. worship service, the bishop will preach and be the celebrant for World Communion Sunday. A potluck dinner will

follow, then an anniversary program at 1 p.m.

Albright was organized in 1925 as Lincoln Heights Chapel within The Evangelical Church denomination. The name soon changed to First Evangelical Church. In 1946, it became First Evangelical United Brethren Church when the Evangelical and United Brethren denominations merged. In 1968, when the EUB and Methodist denominations united, the church took the name Albright United Methodist Church.

New curriculum for kids' groups

This fall, new curriculum for children is available from Cokesbury.

"Deep Blue One Room Sunday School" is a kit recommended for ages 3 to 12.

Diane Doughty is Cokesbury's resource consultant in the state. Contact her at ddoughty@cokesbury.com or 918-240-4942.

Woodward to welcome state's United Methodist Women

Anita Phillips, a clergywoman in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, will be the keynote speaker for the annual meeting of Oklahoma Conference's United Methodist Women, set for Oct. 2 and 3 at Woodward-First UMC.

Rev. Phillips, a member of the Keetoowah Cherokee Nation, has served as executive director of the denomination's Native American Comprehensive Plan for eight years.

Prior to entering ministry, she was a social worker for over 20 years in Native

American communities.

She has pastored several Native American churches in Oklahoma, served as a district superintendent, and chaired the Board of Ordained Ministry for her conference.

Organizers encourage each local unit to send at least two women to the annual meeting, President Cindy Hull said in the UMW's fall newsletter.

Friday, the first night of the meeting, will be reserved for food, fun, and fellowship. Phillips will speak on Saturday morning, and

much of the day will be devoted to UMW business, including news about missionaries, Neighborhood Services Organization, and the UMW National Seminar.

In the afternoon, women from each of the eight new districts of the Oklahoma Conference will meet separately to elect 2016 district officers, set budgets and pledges to mission, and adopt standing rules.

All the new officers will be installed by Bishop Robert Hayes at the culmination of the annual meeting.

Jacci Freno, Conference UMW programming officer, noted there will not be afternoon focus groups at the meeting. That time has been allocated for the district sessions.

UMW officers begin their terms Jan. 1. To register for the meeting, go to the programs tab at www.okumc.org/UMW.

You must sign up by Sept. 25 to be included in the lunch count. Those who register after that date or attend as walk-ins will find restaurant choices in Woodward for lunch.



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Women drive increase in young clergy numbers

Growth in the number of young clergy has been due all to women over the past 10 years, according to the annual report "Clergy Age Trends in The United Methodist Church," released Sept. 9 by the Lewis Center for Church Leadership.

The report on elders, deacons, and Local Pastors is prepared with assistance from the General Board of Pension & Health Benefits.

The denomination's number of young clergy elders reached a low point in 2005, with 850 active elders under age 35. This year, there are 986 of them.

In the Oklahoma Conference this year, these clergy members are younger than 35:

- 24 out of 310 active elders;
- one of 30 deacons; and
- 15 among 135 Local Pastors.

Gender has been the major factor in the denomination's young clergy gains. The number of women in that age category increased greatly in the past 10 years.

• In 2005, there were 263 young female elders. In 2015, there are 404 of them — a gain of 141 women.

• In 2005, there were 587 young male elders. Now there are 582.

The report noted that deacons have tra-

ditionally been predominantly female. Yet, even among young deacons, the percentage of women has made quite a jump: from 68 percent in 2012, to 80 percent in 2015.

And women continue to make up about a quarter of all young Local Pastors.

The report also noted that 55 percent of all active elders are between ages 55 and 72 — the highest percentage in history for that age category.

Clergy elders who are in the middle category, ages 35 to 54, have declined from 65 percent in 2000 to 38 percent currently.

Here is the clergy age distribution in Oklahoma, according to the report.

- Ages 55-72: 169 elders; 17 deacons; 74 local pastors.
- Ages 35-54: 117 elders; 12 deacons; 46 local pastors.
- Ages 34 and younger: 24 elders; one deacon; 15 local pastors.

Five annual conferences showed strong increases in clergy numbers in the past three years. They are California-Nevada, Detroit, Florida, North Texas, and West Ohio.

The Virginia Conference has the most young elders, with 60.

You can help older adults bridge the digital divide

By TRICIA BROWN
UMCom, Nashville, Tenn.

Some older adults are still skeptical about the practical applications or benefits of digital technology. Some may need assistance to learn how to use devices and access Internet resources.

According to data by the Pew Research Center, approximately 40 percent of all adults age 65 and older do not access the Internet at all. More than half do not have broadband access at home.

How can churches help older adults take advantage of the world of cyberspace?

Make it personal

Engage older adults with specific applications that can make their lives easier or provide entertainment.

Show homebound church members how they can view and interact with live broadcasts of your worship services or classes.

Invite older adults to share their stories on your church's social media sites.

Collaborate with family or close friends of older adults to have a surprise Skype visit or Facetime call. Imagine having the grandkids pop into a Sunday school class to say "hello."

Teach older adults to use online Bible apps or Internet study resources such as BibleGateway.

Convince more older adults to try smartphones! Research the versions that are made especially for seniors. Show them the fun features on your smartphone. Show them how to download free music apps.

Encourage volunteer support

Everything is more fun when you do it with a friend. Recruit volunteers who are willing to take a hands-on approach to introduce technology-based ministries to older adults. Be very patient and gently troubleshoot problems that may arise.

Remember, when teaching novices of any age to access Internet ministries, use non-technical language and provide easy-to-follow printed instructions.

Have a volunteer visit older-adult Sunday School classes to demonstrate specific uses and answer questions. Include the same information in Sunday morning worship pamphlets or bulletins and monthly newsletters and during slideshows before worship.

Have an expert teach an introductory computer class at your church.

Create a buddy system! Pair up knowledgeable teen or adult volunteers with older church members who want to learn how to use computers, cellphones, tablets, and other digital devices.

Look for "Accessibility" settings on seniors' smartphones. You may be able to increase text size and adjust colors or increase screen color contrast for better viewing, and turn on captions for people with hearing concerns.

Provide equipment

Many older adults live on fixed incomes. Those who are not connected to the Internet may not have the equipment or funds to do so.

Sponsor a computer drive to purchase equipment.

Provide at least one computer, with Internet access, in the older adults' Sunday School room.

Provide a list of other places such as libraries and community centers that offer free computer and Internet services.

Some will remain "unplugged"

Make use of traditional methods to stay connected with "unplugged" church family members. And remember that even those "plugged in" welcome in-person visits and phone calls.

(Article from the free MyCOM newsletter. Subscribe at www.umcom.org/news/mycom-tips-enewsletter.)

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Save the dates

1. **Bishop's Day Apart for clergy**
featuring Reggie McNeal, missional leadership specialist
Sept. 22, OKC-St. Luke's, 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m.
www.okumc.org/bishopsdayapart
2. **Muntz/Myers Lectureship**
featuring Bishop Robert Hayes Jr.
Sept. 27-28, Ada-First UMC
580-332-1398
3. **OIMC Benefit Gala and Silent Auction**
"Legacy of the Past, Hope for the Future"
In support of Native American pastoral leadership
Oct. 8, The Reed Center, Midwest City
www.umc-oimc.org/benefit-gala-and-silent-auction
4. **#BRAVE** (based on 2 Samuel 10:12)
Clergy Spouse Fellowship Retreat, Oct. 8-10
Worship and sessions — Edmond-Acts 2 UMC
Hotel — SpringHill Suites by Marriot, Oklahoma City
Contact Heather Tiger, 918-571-3095, heathertiger15@gmail.com

Conflict in the church

Group gets intense training to resolve problems

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

The youths wanted different music on Sunday mornings. The worship committee met, drew up a short list of hymns, and told the teens to choose from that. The youths did not respond. People of opposing views complained to the pastor. Emotions escalated. Church members threatened to boycott worship.

This role-play and others recently helped 61 people learn about group conflict and how to respond effectively to it.

They attended a five-day Mediation Skills Training Institute presented by the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center. OKC-Church of the Servant hosted the training, sponsored by the Conference's Leadership Development Ministry Team (LDMT). Dianne Peters and Charles Rettig led the planning.

The main objective is to build Local Church Response Teams of trained clergy and laity who will volunteer to help Oklahoma churches in crises, said Rev. Peters, who chairs the LDMT. Those teams can troubleshoot and give programs about conflict in families as well as conflict in congregations.

The highly regarded Peace Center training was a first step, Peters said. The Oklahoma mediation volunteers will meet quarterly, and additional training will be scheduled.

Richard Blackburn of Lombard, Ill., presented the late August seminar. He drew from more than three decades of personal experience as a mediator. The executive director of the Peace Center has taught the ministry of reconciliation internationally.

On the opening day, Blackburn identified biblical roots for the training. And he spoke about "the Matthew 18 process" in conflict resolution. Matthew 18 includes the parables of the unforgiving servant and the lost sheep and Jesus' instructions "if your brother sins against you ..."

Blackburn noted that Christians have diverse opinions as well as gifts.

But when church people "get overfocused on differences, they forget our common ground — in Jesus," he said. "Listening is really hard when you feel attacked, because you tend to go into reactive mode."

The week-long training taught lots about good communication. Some of Blackburn's advice is shared here.

- Use "I" statements. Speak for yourself, not "many." How many is that?

- Be specific; don't generalize. "You never keep your promises" just makes a person defensive.

- Listen carefully and paraphrase to lower the intensity of emotions.

- Talk to each other without a table separating you, "so people don't go into committee mode," Blackburn said.

- "Too often we think we can calm our most ardent critics by putting them on a committee. That doesn't work."

- Invite people to pray with you about an issue.

- "The clergyperson can't take on desperadoes by themselves. Give laity leaders responsibility. If you empower other folks to be part of the new vision, the recalcitrant person gets isolated," Blackburn said.

Suggested resources included the book "Reconcile: Conflict Transformation for Ordinary Christians," by John Paul Lederach (2014).

Among the participants were 14 laypeople and some current and former district superintendents.

A comment by George Warren summed up lessons learned: "I need your point of view to see better. We need each other so we together can see what God sees."

"Blessed are the peacemakers," Jesus said (Matthew 5:9).

Youths sponsor Oct. 6 seminar on suicide issues

"My sweet baby girl loved God, she loved her family, and she loved her students. She was so kind and helpful to everyone. Please tell me she's not in hell now. Losing her is unbearable..."

A grieving father, after the suicide of his 33-year-old daughter, was talking with Kathy Brown, pastor of New Life UMC in Moore.

That and other United Methodist conversations about such loss have led to the development of the upcoming workshop "It's Time To Talk! A Conversation About Depression, Suicide, and the Church."

This Oct. 6 event is for all who would like to learn about the warning signs of suicide and how to Question, Persuade, and Refer (QPR) someone for help. Moore-First UMC will host the program, 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Cost, \$10, includes training materials and lunch.

Major sponsor is the Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM).

Youth leaders and clergy especially are encouraged to sign up, to gain tools and insight needed to address the issues.

"Church, it's time to talk about a subject that impacts our families, our churches, and our communities: depression and suicide," says Rev. Brown. "Oklahoma has one of the highest suicide rates in the nation, and too often church leaders feel unprepared to address this reality in our churches."

Cases of depression and suicide have risen steadily the past decade, she notes. In 2014 the state medical examiner identified suicide as the cause of 731 deaths, and a

number of other deaths ruled as accidental were deemed to be possible suicides.

The workshop will open with worship. Linda Harker, senior pastor at McFarlin UMC in Norman, will deliver a message of hope in her sermon "Suicide, the Elephant in the Living Room."

QPR training will follow, led by Julie Geddes, who is a suicide prevention senior field representative from the Oklahoma Department of Mental Health and Substance Abuse. She is a nationally known leader in the field of suicide prevention. QPR is not a counseling method, explains Brown, but rather a technique used to assess potential suicide victims and persuade them to get the help that is needed at that time in their lives.

The afternoon session will feature inter-

'It's Time To Talk'

Workshop on suicide and depression
Oct. 6, Moore-First UMC

active conversation about the Church's role in raising awareness and providing support for those impacted by depression and suicide.

Participants in "It's Time to Talk" will receive 0.5 Continuing Education Units for attending.

Register online at www.okumc.org/TimeToTalk or call Megan DeCastro, 405-530-2199. For questions other than registration, contact Kathy Brown, rev. kathybrown@gmail.com, 405-794-8393.



Legacy Planning Using the Flexible Deferred Gift Annuity

Lewis is a 54-year-old executive at a large healthcare organization. He purchased company stock when the stock price was low, and now the stock has grown substantially.

Lewis and his wife, Ann, sold a vacation home in the mountains earlier this year and are looking for a way to offset the capital gains tax owed on the sale. Lewis enjoys the challenge and responsibility of his job and is planning on continuing to work until he is 70 years old. Ann has spent years volunteering at their United Methodist church. They have supported the church generously and would like to find a way to make a lasting gift to the church.

They are both in good health and are very active. They are looking for ways to plan for retirement in the future. Even

though Lewis is planning on working until he is 70, he is not certain when he will retire. They want to find an income source that will permit them to be flexible with Lewis' retirement date.

Lewis and Ann learned that a **flexible deferred gift annuity** would help them meet their goals. Instead of selling appreciated company stock and paying high capital gains tax, they could give it to the Foundation and receive an immediate charitable income tax deduction that will offset the current tax on the sale of their vacation home and avoid capital gains tax. The flexible deferred gift annuity would permit them to elect to begin taking payments for life when Lewis is ready to retire.

They decided to set up a two-life flexible deferred gift annuity. They will

receive a charitable income tax deduction this year, which will give them an immediate tax savings. When Lewis is ready to retire, he will contact the Foundation to begin the payments on the deferred gift annuity. This gives him the flexibility to continue working as long as he would like. Also, the longer he waits to begin the annuity payments, the greater the fixed payments will be. Another attractive tax benefit is that a portion of the payments will be income tax free. Upon the deaths of Lewis and Ann, the remainder will be used to establish an endowment to benefit their church.

Please note: Since the flexible deferred gift annuity amount is based on the current ages of the annuitants and the ages when payments begin, your benefits may be different. If Lewis decides to defer payments until he is 70 years old, the deferred gift annuity payout percentage would be 7.5%. The charitable income tax deduction would be 26.7% of the property given.

If you would like a personalized illustration of the flexible deferred gift annuity, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org. There is no obligation and all inquiries are confidential.

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Missional Area makes a splash with first collaboration



Photo by Wendee Perceful

Three generations of the Ellis family find it's cool to be in the pool during Methodist Swim Night in Midwest City on Aug. 8. The women are Kathy Ellis, left, and Karren Brown, with grandchildren (from left) Corie Barnes, Megan Barnes, Maddie Ellis, and Mason Ellis.

A "united" swim party has whetted interest in collaboration between the churches of Midwest City's Missional Area.

On Aug. 8, all three UM congregations in that eastern suburb of greater Oklahoma City gathered to celebrate their unity in Jesus Christ.

People from Wickline, St. Matthew, and Douglas Boulevard churches gathered for a cookout and swim party at Midwest City Regional Park.

"Terrific turnout from all three congregations" was reported by Crystal Hughes, pastor of Douglas Boulevard UMC.

She said the five pastors of those three churches had met to see how the groups could collaborate with each other as the designated Missional Area for this part of the Crossroads District.

The clergy want to "take steps to break down barriers of separation and create opportunities to be united in our common mission of making disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world," said Rev. Hughes.

They agreed that a fellowship event would be ideal for the first Missional Area gathering.

Food was central to the plan, but also an opportunity for families to play together. The park's swimming pool met that goal.

Participants made "organic connections"

Know more:

New terminology has emerged with Oklahoma's realignment into eight districts. *Missional Area*, used in this Midwest City story, is one such term. *Key missional strategist* defines the primary role for a district superintendent. Watch new informative videos, featuring Chris Tiger of the Wichitas District, on the YouTube channel "OkumcCommunications."

with other United Methodists, according to Hughes.

"The event was such a positive example of how United Methodists can come together rather than compete for numbers in worship," she said.

"All three congregations believe the future of the Church is not rooted solely in individual congregational numbers but in the effective ministry we participate in together.

"We believe that we need to live into our denominational name and be united in our mission!"