

Bearing witness

Carrying a cross in Enid, Catholic parishioner Richard Patocka leads a procession into St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church on April 3. The ecumenical Good Friday walk, which begins at First United Methodist Church, has continued for decades. Patocka is accompanied by Carson Krittenbrink, associate pastor at St. Francis Xavier and St. Gregory's, in Enid, and St. Michael's in Goltry. Find more Easter-people news on page 6.

Photo by Bonnie Vculek



Annual Conference: 'On Fire to Serve'

The big meeting of church members and clergy from 505 United Methodist congregations in Oklahoma begins May 25 in Oklahoma City.

May their hearts be "strangely warmed" — as John Wesley experienced — by the worship, missions, and celebrations of Annual Conference. And when they depart May 28, may they burn with desire to light the world for God.

That will prove the week's theme, "On Fire To Serve."

It's based on Romans 12:11-13: "Don't burn out; keep yourselves fueled and aflame. Be alert servants of the Master, cheerfully expectant. Don't quit in hard times; pray all the harder. Help needy Christians; be inventive in hospitality." (MSG)

An abundance of information about Annual Conference is online, including registration, agenda, the Pre-Conference Workbook and UMCOR kit collection. Go to:

www.okumc.org/annual_conference

Deadline to register is May 10. The meeting is hosted by OKC-St. Luke's and Oklahoma City University.

• **WATCH LIVE** — Internet streaming can spark Christian discipleship for viewers. Opening worship is Monday evening, business begins at 8:30 a.m. Tuesday, and commissioning/ordination will be Wednesday evening.

Election of 14 laypeople and 14 clergy as delegates to the 2016 General/Jurisdictional Conferences will be held Tuesday.

• **DAY OF MISSION** — On Wednesday, afternoon activities will mark the second year of intentional

See *Annual Conference*, page 8

Your rooms are ready



Trees shade the new Lela Wilburn Cabin at Cross Point Camp beside Lake Texoma.

Cross Point to dedicate cabins June 1

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

Two new cabins will be dedicated debt-free on June 1 at Cross Point Camp in southern Oklahoma.

Together they add 80 beds and two large meeting spaces to the United Methodist camping and retreat center on a wooded peninsula jutting into Lake Texoma. Now Cross Point can lodge up to 320 people.

"We are already hosting

more groups on weekends," said Manager Ken Long in late April.

The Lela Wilburn Cabin opened its doors to campers on Feb. 20, and the Healey Cabin on April 10.

Their brown exteriors blend well with the natural setting. Nantucket Dune is the interior paint color.

The cabins are design twins. Their energy-saving

aspects are worth noting.

Spray-foam insulation was applied throughout, even in the attic. Long said, "We are already seeing the difference." In late winter, cabin interiors remained in the 50s when outdoor temperatures fell to the teens. Cross Point's older cabins are not insulated.

Windows are double-pane, with blackout curtains. The

See *Cross Point*, page 4

Cabins consecrated at Canyon Camp

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

Joyfully, Charlie Graves led the consecration of the Paul & Ann Milburn Cabin and the Foundation Cabin on April 18 at Canyon Camp, near Hinton in western Oklahoma.

The Clinton District superintendent prayed "for the people who will use these cabins: children, youth, adults — that their time spent here at Canyon Camp will be for them an encounter with the living Christ!"

Two young women validated his prayer when they told personal stories to the crowd that had trekked to the camp for the ceremony, followed by a meal.

Billie Wilson said she found God on her first stay at CLEW Camp (Clinton, Enid, and Woodward Districts' joint summer program at Canyon).

"I discovered who I wanted to be in a tabernacle full of sweaty, stinky teenagers," she said.

And she recalled how her spirit soared when a hawk flew close as she stood by the cross atop the canyon's red

See *Canyon*, page 4



16 clergy will officially retire at Annual Conference



Ruth Atterberry
2000-2015



Buddy Bolin
1972-2015



James Bradford
2004-2015



Ron Hay
1994-2015



Jerrell Heath
1988-2015



Sherry Heath
1995-2015



Brad Humphrey
1975-2015



David Karges
1981-2015

The ministry careers of some retiring clergy in Oklahoma total more than 40 years. They and their spouses will be honored on stage at the Retirement Recognition Service during Annual Conference. The service will begin at 2 p.m. Tuesday, May 26, in OCU's Frede Center.



Claudia Lovelace
2002-2015



Maurice Major
1972-2015



Curtis Nigh
1995-2015



Irene Potts
1993-1996



Earleen Reedy
1998-2015



Susan Ross
1975-2015



David Stephenson
1972-2015



George Warren
1975-2015



Wesley Center celebrates love over hate

On a cool evening in April, laughter and the sounds of tuning instruments filtered through the student center. Rows of tables began to fill with food and T-shirts. The atmosphere was festive as preparations were completed for the eighth annual Love Not Hate Day on the campus of Oklahoma City University.

This tradition began in 2008. That spring, the theater department scheduled "The Laramie Project," a play about the death of Matthew Shepherd, the victim of a hate crime in Wyoming. Then members of Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas announced they would stage a public protest near the Oklahoma City campus.

The university community discussed how best to respond to this protest.

Jennifer Long, director of the OCU Wesley Center at that time, led an effort to print 1,000 T-shirts with the words "Love Not Hate" prominent on the front. All the shirts were distributed, free of charge, in less than an hour.

When the protesters arrived, they were

met by hundreds of students, staff, and faculty making a silent but powerful witness to the power of love to unite a community.

Since that day, the United Methodist campus ministry at OCU continues to sponsor Love Not Hate events, celebrating the diversity on campus and in the world.



The program has been embraced by the university community. Sodexo Food Service donates food for a casual dinner, served by its friendly staff. Student musical groups perform.

This year the Steel Drum Band played the first hour, followed by the high-energy OCU pella chorus' rendition of popular songs.

The Wesley Center continues to provide free T-shirts, which have become very popular among students.

Other traditions have developed, too. Tie-dyeing stations are available to personalize shirts. An art project encourages people to express their feelings or desires on the theme.

"Loving All Our Neighbors" was the focus this year. Participants were invited to write on colorful paper the names of groups



Music by students with steel drums filled the OCU student center on Love Not Hate Day. Inset: A heart-shaped world was featured on free T-shirts that day.

that represent neighbors in need of our attentive love.

Named were "the homeless," "fellow humans with different opinions," "foster kids," and "the ones who hate us," among other groups. The slips of paper were arranged on a board in the shape of a heart. This mirrored the T-shirt design, which featured a heart-shaped map of the world.

Wesley Center intern Rachel Honaker helped organize the day. "Honestly, it is a lot

of fun to be involved in Love Not Hate Day," said the OCU senior. "It's really all in the name. We want to encourage an atmosphere of love, not hate, where we are seeking to understand those who are different from us and accept them for who they are! That is the big draw for me in being involved in the day.

"Society is full of fear and hatred of the other. We want to stand against that and support those who are viewed as different as an important part of our community."

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

A tribute to mothers

“I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”

(II Timothy 1:5, NIV)

By **BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.**

One Sunday morning, 7-year-old Marcia was scheduled to recite a short speech for her class at church. She had rehearsed it so many times; she knew it by heart. But when she stepped to the stage and looked out at all the people, her mouth went dry, her mind went blank, and she trembled, on the edge of panic.

In the first row of pews, Marcia's mother shared in her daughter's agony. She tried to calm the child by silently mouthing the opening words of the speech. That didn't work. Finally the mother whispered, “I am the light of the world.”

Immediately the girl's stage fright faded, and in a loud voice she began confidently with “My mother is the light of the world!”

To be sure, what Marcia said was not scriptural. It also wasn't blasphemy. Have not many of us seen in our own mothers that radiant Christian spirit of which Jesus speaks?

This Sunday, May 10, will be Mother's Day, and you'd be hard-pressed to find anyone who appreciates that special day more than I do. A Jewish proverb declares: “God could not be everywhere and, therefore, He made mothers.”

I'm a bit uncertain on the theology of that statement, but when I reflect on the woman who nurtured me, I see her as a god-like presence embedded in my memories.

If there was not a Mother's Day, I would find it necessary to establish one. There is no person who deserves more tribute and praise than Mother.

To all the great-grandmothers, grandmothers, and mothers in this world — to all women who lovingly care for the generations that follow them — I say thank you for the genuine faith you instill within us. We praise you for your steadfastness and the strength you give us for the journey of life.

Most importantly, we will forever remember the love you impart to us. For in that love, we see God!

I know this special day can be bittersweet, too. For those who have lost precious mothers, it can be a difficult time. In a unique way, that makes Mother's Day all the more important. My mother passed away nine years ago, but with each day, month, and year that goes by, my gratitude for the time God gave her to me

and my family remains undiminished.

Recently my mind flashed back to a scene that brought tears to my eyes. The memory reminded me that my mother is the main reason I am a minister today.

My father and several others surely influenced me in that decision, but my mother had more to do with my choice than anyone.

At about age 13, I had to recite prayers and short speeches for several groups, such as the student council in school, church youth group, and other organizations. Like little Marcia who stumbled saying her speech, I never quite seemed able to pull together my rambling thoughts and put them on paper — not until my mother helped me.

I remember sitting next to her, telling her what I wanted to say. Patiently she took up a pencil, and together we brought out the words locked inside of me. She focused in on the thought I wanted to share, and she worked with me like a potter toiling over clay until that thought became words. After she wrote down the words, she read them back to me, and then she directed me in writing them myself.

For two or three years we did this, and eventually I learned how to carve out my own prayers and speeches, thanks to Dorothy Hayes!

As I think about the tremendous amount of patience and understanding it took for her to listen, write, and respond to my incoherent thoughts, the more I am grateful for my mother. In many ways she was my liturgist, my celebrant, my congregation, my best critic, and my main supporter!

Today every sermon that I preach, every prayer that I utter, every article that I write has a part of my mother in it.

What a great compliment it is when a grown child looks upon his or her life and says, “I was able to accept Jesus Christ because of the Christian home in which I was reared” or “I was able to know the love of God through Christ because of the way my mother loved God and me.”

In the New Testament, Paul gave Timothy's mother and grandmother the highest of tributes when he wrote, “I am reminded of your sincere faith, which first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and, I am persuaded, now lives in you also.”

Paul further emphasized how he valued those women by reminding Timothy to “fan into flame” and “stir up the gift” within him.

Are we to do less?

In the local church where I served my last appointment as a pastor, my mother became a member of the congregation. We had come full circle. Each Sunday she sat with my father on the second row, observing the final product (me) that decades earlier she had helped to shape. I look back on those memories, and I realize that, in every sermon by me that she heard, hidden between the lines was my declaration: “My mother is the light of the world!”

Thank you, God; and thank you, mother!



Bishop Hayes

The global church

Korean milestone — On a rainy Easter Sunday exactly 130 years ago, Henry Appenzeller, the first Methodist missionary to Korea, set foot in Seoul. This April 5, Bishop Marcus Matthews and leaders from the Baltimore-Washington Conference walked in those footsteps.

General Conference — A “Bring Your Own Device” system to stream audio, using a smart-phone app connected to a dedicated wireless network, may be the way to ensure that language differences are dealt with as fairly as possible at the denomination's 2016 General Conference in Portland, Ore. The Commission on General Conference also said it will provide computer tablets, at a cost of about \$170,000, to delegates from Africa, Europe, and the Philippines who do not already have such devices.

Being neighborly — Nearly 545 students in 48 classes at 42 churches of the Northern Illinois Conference learned some Spanish and explored *¿Quién es mi vecino?* (Who is my neighbor?). The classes grew out of Bishop Sally Dyck's vision of offering 100 Spanish-as-a-second-language classes so churches could be more welcoming to Hispanic/Latino neighbors.

Fighting disease — The United Methodist Church recently donated \$9.6 million to The Global Fund to fight malaria. The gift is the single largest contribution

made by a faith-based organization to the Geneva-based institution.

Divorce — Efforts to overturn a long-standing provision that barred divorced UM clergy from nomination for bishop in Liberia were rejected by conference delegates on April 18. United Methodists who wanted the ban lifted picketed and sang, halting one afternoon session of the conference.

Money trouble — Leaders of the General Council on Finance & Administration will comply with a UM Judicial Council order to provide financial restitution to Bishop Daniel Wandabula. GCFA had withheld some of his pay because of financial irregularities in the East Africa Conference, which he oversees. Agency leaders say they remain concerned about enforcing accountability of church funds.

Resource for teens — A new resource to help youth struggling with their sexual identity is now available as part of the series “SEX: A Christian Perspective on Our Bodies, Decisions and Relationships,” from the Young People's Ministries Division of UM Discipleship Ministries. “We know that teens dealing with issues of sexual identity are two to six times more likely to attempt suicide because of issues of isolation and hopelessness,” said Michael Ratliff, head of the Division.

—from *United Methodist News Service*, April 2015

A BAD DAY AT
the **GOLF**
COURSE
always beats
A GOOD DAY AT
the **OFFICE.**

the wesley
Golf Tournament

Monday, June 8 | 9 a.m.
Moore Golf & Athletic Club

For more info, visit OKWesley.org or contact Jennifer
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Proceeds support the Wesley at OU, a United Methodist Campus Ministry.

Your rooms are ready



At the Canyon cabins dedication are, from left: David Battles, executive vice president, and Bill Junk, president, of the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation; and Tom Kirby, who directed Conference Camps from 1982 to 1996.



Canyon manager David Combs, left, is thanked by Randy McGuire, who directed Conference Camps from 1996 to 2014.



Ann and Paul Milburn of Shawnee attend the Canyon celebration April 18, joined by Ed Parker, right, current Conference Camps director.

Photos by Holly McCray

Canyon:

Continued from page 1

rock walls during her church confirmation class retreat.

"Each year I've been able to grow in my faith," she said.

Dossanna Miller was a seventh-grader when she first went to Canyon, also to CLEW Camp. Previously not a churchgoer, she became a summer camp regular. Now a student at Southwestern Oklahoma State University, she helps lead worship at the Wesley Foundation. Her faith also helped her family relationships.

"Thank you for continuing to make (Canyon) such a wonderful place to be," Miller said.

An emotional Ed Parker, new Conference Camps director, said, "We don't know all the challenges young people face, but they come here to experience God and a loving, safe, secure environment, and leave transformed by God's word."

Parker met many retired United Methodist clergy at their 2014 fall retreat, which was his first official Canyon Camp event. Many told him, "I received my call at camp," he said.

Rick Trobaugh, who chairs the Board of Trustees for all three Oklahoma camps, celebrated "the possibilities of new saints being made within the walls of the canyon."

Paul and Ann Milburn, members of Shawnee-Wesley UMC, and the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation were recognized April 18 as major donors to the cabins' capital campaign.

The Milburns "know a lot of people who make a commitment to go into ministry at summer camp, and it's a deep religious experience, so we think it's a great thing to be part of," Paul said.

David Battles of the Foundation said he grew up going to the camp; his father pastored in the area. "I've seen it change quite a bit, but it's always beautiful down here," he said.

Cross Point:

Continued from page 1

climate-controlled meeting and sleeping rooms also have ceiling fans. Aerobic treatment units dispose of wastewater. The cabins have fire sprinkler systems.

More than 50 years ago, Methodists camped in southern Oklahoma at a site west of Turner Falls. In 1958, that ministry moved to the current lakeside location, and construction of a dining hall and 12 cabins began in 1960, according to Long. They continue in service.

Long said records show Cross Point's first summer camp was held in 1962.

Decades later, an enclosed tabernacle was built. It currently is being enlarged to 40 feet by 90 feet.

Total cost to build the Healey and Wilburn Cabins was about \$700,000. They were completed under budget, Long noted.

"A lot of donors stepped up," he said. "The Healey family gave the first major gift. The Wilburns saw the need." Among other supporters, Emmaus groups long have held walks and reunions at Cross Point, and their members contributed financially.

Long is thankful for all the support.

Each new cabin is about 3,400 square feet, not including covered porches. The meeting room can accommodate at least 80, Long said, and has a kitchenette and two bathrooms.

Each of two sleeping areas has bunk beds and dorm-style restrooms. The sturdy bunks are anchored to the building's frame, their ladders outfitted with stout handrails. Built-in shelves provide personal storage at the head of each camper's bed. Each restroom has six sinks, three showers, and three toilet stalls.



The new cabins at Cross Point include sturdy bunks with climbing rails and stylish lights above six sinks. Above: all the camp's study pavilions now are enclosed and climate-controlled.

Black clergy explore common themes at retreat

By JOSEPH HARRIS
Director of Communications

A group of African-American and native African clergy who serve in the Oklahoma Conference gathered April 16-18 for a time of teaching, inspiration, information, and fellowship in downtown Oklahoma City.

This annual retreat for clergy of African descent was developed from the vision of Victor McCullough, Semaj Vanzant, and Bishop Robert Hayes Jr.

Bishop Hayes said the African-related context allows those who participate to relate to common experiences, develop common dreams, and encourage one another with a sense of common hope. It's an important event because it helps give participants

clarity of calling and direction as ministry needs change, he said.

About two dozen participants were inspired by devotions given by Frankye Johnson, retired, and new clergy member Nicolaus Lee of Ada-First UMC.

Principal speaker was Joseph Daniels Jr. of the Baltimore-Washington Conference. Rev. Dr. Daniels holds the unique position of being superintendent of more than 67 churches in the Greater Washington District and, at the same time, serving as lead pastor of Emory United Methodist Church. He was appointed to that church in 1992, and its average Sunday attendance has risen from 55 people to more than 400.

Daniels also is the author of three books.

Two of them were given to every participant: "Walking with Nehemiah – Your Community Is Your Congregation" and "Begging for Real Church" (with Christine Latona).

Daniels led discussion and teaching in four areas. He told those attending that their ministries must always be relevant, enthusiastic, authentic, and loving. That's the African-American tradition of church at its best, he noted.

For Daniels, *relevant* means that clergy speak to the human condition of the people they seek to transform. Clergy are *enthusiastic* when they become "possessed by God," and that inspires people to a holistic life change. Clergy are *authentic* by being transparent, honest, and down-to-earth.

And they must lead with unconditional *love* that desires the well-being of others regardless of race, class, gender, age, nationality, or orientation.

Daniels connected all four topics to calling, worship, and leadership. He urged participants to give their all, take risks, understand their ministry context, and pray as if life depends on it.

Three of his sessions were "Real Leadership in the African-American Church," "Leading With Pastoral Authority," and "Blacks in the Methodist Church — Where do we go from here?" The training concluded with a focus on "Leadership With Conviction: Casting Vision, Navigating Change."

Circle of Care Friends of Children

Heart of Ministry Award thanks two couples

On April 17, Oklahoma United Methodist Circle of Care clients, supporters, and staff gathered for the 2015 Friends of Children Banquet.

But instead of having a dinner in Oklahoma City on one night and another in Tulsa on a different night, as in years past, the agency held both dinners on the same night — and joined the audiences through a live video feed.

Tom Harrison served as the regional host in Tulsa, and Robert Gorrell hosted in Oklahoma City.

At the annual banquets, Circle of Care names recipients of the McNaught Heart of Ministry Award.

In Oklahoma City, Paul and Ann Milburn were honored for their transformational impact on the Child SHARE program, through their challenge grants.

In Tulsa, Jenny and Jono Helmerich were honored for their service in the 2013 Pearl's Hope capital drive and with the completion of the Child SHARE expansion challenge. Jenny also serves as a Circle of Care board member.

The award, named for Burrel and JoAnn McNaught, was created to recognize individuals who have demonstrated, time and again, their support for the agency and other



TJ escorts Martha Smith at the Friends of Children Banquet.

ministries of the Church. Burrel has been a longtime pastor and district superintendent in Oklahoma Conference. JoAnn served a variety of UM ministries through the years, including as Conference treasurer and as a Circle of Care board member.

Also during the banquet, clients from the agency's Preparation for Adult Living program, Child SHARE, and Pearl's Hope shared their testimonies. Alton Carter, director of youth ministries for Stillwater-First UMC and author of "The Boy Who Carried Bricks," described

his experiences growing up in foster care and reminded the audiences why it is critically important to recruit and support loving homes for children in crisis situations. In his closing comments, Bishop Hayes encouraged attendees to do what they can to support those in need.

The telecommunications efforts were successful in uniting the audiences, totaling about 350 people, on the one night to celebrate help, healing, and hope. Future dinners will capitalize on lessons learned and improve upon this success. Special thanks go to the event's statewide sponsors: The Helmerich Trust and the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation.

Save the date

Mission U

- July 17-19, OCU
 - July 19-20, OCU
- Studies: "Created for Happiness," "Latin America," "The Church and People with Disabilities"
Look for details in June 5 issue of *Contact*

St. Yootz Day

Aug. 15, Frontier City, OKC
Performing: Toby Mac
Supports youth ministries

Healthy Clergy Retreats

- Aug. 31, OKC-New Hope
- Sept. 1, Tulsa-Faith UMC

Clergy moves

Darrel Cox, from Chelsea Epworth/Delaware (Bartlesville District) to Chelsea Epworth, effective Feb. 1.

Linda Grounds (Leave of Absence), to Delaware, effective Feb. 1.

Donald Scott, from Big Cabin (Bartlesville District) to retired, effective Dec. 31, 2014.

Earl Scott Worley, to Big Cabin, effective Jan. 1.

Passages

Shirley Nordean of Oklahoma City died April 28, 2015. She was the mother of Rev. Chuck Nordean, Conference director of Clergy and Congregational Excellence.

What is the dream of the Wesley Foundation at Oklahoma State University?

Expansion of current ministries

Our mission, "To Make Disciples, Create Leaders, and Transform Lives for the Transformation of the World," is at the foundation of our dreams. The Wesley Foundation at Oklahoma State is not a building or a facility, but a ministry called to engage all students, faculty, staff, and community members with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ. Our dream for a new facility is rooted in our hope to be more effective, efficient, and engaged with a wider and more diverse audience. We dream to embody God's Kingdom, as best we can, in the midst of our lives at OSU.

Through the success of the Imagine Capital Campaign, we will be empowered to reach out and engage a vast audience of students. Fraternities and sororities, traditional and non-traditional groups, international and minority faculty and students, Methodists and non-Methodists, Christians and non-Christians will find a place of growth, reflection, hope, and welcome. The dream of the OSU Wesley is to deepen our engagement in the message of Jesus Christ's gracious invitation to life.

Five pillars of our ministry

Oklahoma State University is a diverse and growing major university. With a population of more than 25,000 students, representing more than 100 countries, we believe that we have an incredible opportunity to share God's love in ways that have not only global, but also eternal impact. It is important that we as Christians engage and embrace all our students, faculty, staff, and community members with a sense



OSU student Kelsey Murphy, left, of Inola, Okla., is blessed by having her hands washed by student Hasina Rakotomanana of Antananarivo, Madagascar. Both are active in the Wesley Foundation at the university. The UM campus ministry students and staff organized hand- and foot-washing on April 1 outside the Student Union. This Holy Week activity was just one of many ways the OSU Wesley Foundation is extending hospitality and practicing Christian leadership.

of grace-filled **HOSPITALITY**.

As Christians we understand that our first act of relationship with God is rooted in our practice of **WORSHIP**. This worship calls us into the lives of people wherein we meet the various hopes and dreams of our brothers and sisters. In this relationship, we believe that Christ has called us to be a ministry of Healing and Wholeness.

As a ministry of healing and wholeness, we see and engage the gifts, talents, and grace given to all individuals and

create processes to offer **EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT** and opportunities for shared leadership.

At the foundation of our ministry is an understanding that we are called to **SHARE COMMUNITY**. Shared community will take many shapes. Covenantal living, intentional discipleship, and family groups engage students, faculty, and staff in the various areas of development.

Our leadership's commitment

Our Board of Directors, representing

churches and communities across the state of Oklahoma, has partnered with the students and staff of the OSU Wesley to expand our networking and resources through the Imagine Capital Campaign. Their covenant to our ministry includes commitments of Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service, and Witness. And we are so grateful for them. With their support, we have had regional "Imagine Our Future" events in Enid, Ponca City, Oklahoma City, Frederick, and Tulsa, with plans to do more.

Our invitation

We invite you to dream with the Board of Directors, staff, and students of the OSU Wesley by supporting our ministry through your Prayers, Presence, Gifts, Service, and Witness. We plan to keep you updated on a monthly basis through ads here in the Oklahoma United Methodist *Contact*, and we encourage you to stay connected by registering through our website for further updates and event invitations: www.wesleyosu.com/imagine

We invite you to host a local or regional Imagine Our Future event. From conversations at UMW circle gatherings to city-wide dinnertime evening events, we would like you to consider what it will look like to be part of our dream. Please email imagineosuwesley@gmail.com for more information.



Journeying to Easter



Photo by Becky Balsler

In Tulsa, University UMC members staffed an unusual car wash. It was not a fundraiser but a holy act of service on Maundy Thursday, recalling when Jesus told his disciples to wash each other's feet. After a car was washed, its driver washed another car in turn, explained Pastor Nathan Mattox. "Come serve and be served" became the rally call.



Photo by Becky Balsler

Tulsa-University UMC Pastor Nathan Mattox and his young son take a turn carrying a cross on Good Friday, as about 25 people walked the University of Tulsa perimeter, observing the Stations of the Cross, before the Service of Darkness in the church. The service closed as Rev. Mattox sang "Were You There" a capella. The next day, the church van operated as a Communion Food Truck at a local festival.



Photo by Bonnie Vculek

At noontime April 3, people walk from Enid-First United Methodist (in background) to the Episcopal church, the second stop in a long-running ecumenical Good Friday observance.

At OKC-Southern Hills Church, Sharon "Grandma Bunny" Saulmon reads a story to children during the AU-Some Easter Event, with sensory-sensitive activities, on March 28.

Photo by Holly McCray



Diverse groups connect at cross

By ROBERT BARRON

The cross waits at the front of the altar in Enid-First United Methodist Church on Good Friday. People quietly enter the sanctuary and take their seats. At noon, a service begins that brings together the people of four downtown Enid churches — as has been done for more than 30 years.

The Good Friday Walk involves First UMC, First Presbyterian, St. Matthew's Episcopal, and St. Francis Xavier Catholic churches. All the churches provide leadership for the ceremony, and the public is welcome.

A large cross is carried at the front of the procession as the walkers move between the churches. The people enter each church and share in a portion of the liturgy.

The walk begins at First United Methodist, proceeds to the Episcopal church, which is a block away, and then to the Catholic church across the street. Walking to First Presbyterian, several blocks away, is deemed too far for the hour-long observance, but its clergy give leadership in the program.

"It's a coming together of people of all faiths," said Susan Southall, associate pastor at First UMC. "There's something wonderful about that. We are all sitting at the foot of the cross, different denominations but all redeemed by the blood of Jesus Christ."

At the Catholic church, the liturgy is in both Spanish and English. For Rev. Southall, that's a powerful moment, signifying that people are not separated by language, she said. At each church, a verse of "O Sacred Head, Now Wounded" is sung.

No one now associated with the event knows just when it started. Randy Mitchell, senior pastor at First UMC, recalled that it was held in the 1980s, when he was attending Phillips seminary at Enid.

At some point, leaders of the United Methodist, Episcopal, and Catholic churches gathered and planned a common Good Friday service, called Stations of the Cross. Five years ago, the Presbyterian church was invited to participate.

Every year the same liturgy is used, although each church presents it according to that faith community's understanding.

"The power of good liturgy doesn't change over time," Southall said. "The important thing is that we can all come together; we have found a way."

She added, "The pastor who gives the homily is always the newest or one that's about to leave."

St. Francis Xavier volunteers built the cross, which is on rollers. Catholic deacon Tony Crispo believes the original cross is still being used. After the

walk ends, the cross is stored until the next year. "It's always between these churches," Deacon Crispo said.

On this Good Friday, Presbyterian Pastor Andrew Long read Scripture at First United Methodist. Then some in the crowd sang hymns as they walked to the second stop. Episcopal rector John Toles led the liturgy there, and then the walkers proceeded across the street to the Catholic church, where Rev. Dr. Toles delivered the homily.

"This is my sermon on the love of God," he said. It is easier for people to acknowledge the Gospel when you talk about the birth of Jesus and the miracles he performed, the clergyman said, rather than "the humiliation of the cross."

Yet the cross "points to the pure love of God. He loved you enough to die for you," Toles said. "God's love has been poured out on all flesh, and all you have to do is accept it. That's what makes this Good Friday."

Each year on Good Friday, the people of Enid's downtown churches reaffirm that, despite various religions, they can come together to observe the love of God.

(Robert Barron is a member of Enid-Willow View UMC.)

Employment

Summer Spectrum Coordinator: Norman-McFarlin Memorial UMC. Oversee summer elementary child care program. Send resume to Taylor Concialdi at tconcialdi@mcfarlinumc.org

Youth Director: Guymon-Victory Memorial UMC. Part-time. Call 580-338-6501; ask for Pastor Gary or Connie.

Youth Director: Fairview-First UMC. Full-time. Send resume to church, P.O. Box 457, Fairview, OK 73737; fairviewumc@sbcglobal.net; or melissa.mainord@att.net

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

Contemporary worship singers: OKC-St. Andrew's UMC. Part-time. Call Ginny Pass at 405-692-4242 ext. 102, or email gpass@saokc.org

Summer Student Ministry Intern: OKC-Chapel Hill UMC. Part-time. Contact Jon Cunningham at Jon@mychapelhill.org, 405-751-0755.

Development Officer: Saint Paul School of Theology, with two campuses: at Church of the Resurrection, Leawood, Kan., and at Oklahoma City University. Full-time. Apply by May 29. More information: www.spst.edu/jobs/

Minister of Pastoral Care: Sunny Lane UMC, Del City. 15 hours per week. Call 405-677-3347 or send resume to church@sunnylaneumc.com

Choral accompanist: Tulsa-First UMC. Call Joseph A. Bias, Dick Taylor, or Lory Ferrin at 918-587-9481.

Director of Children's and Family Ministries: Verdigris UMC. Full-time director for children's ministry, DHS-licensed after-school and summer day care program, and new family ministry program. Send resume to Mark Whitley at pastor@verdigrisumc.org or call 918-266-4161.

Administrative Assistant: Part-time. Broken Arrow-St. Stephen's. Send resume to SSUMC, 400 W. New Orleans St., Broken Arrow, OK 74011 or ssumcaa@ssumcoba.org.

Dentist: Neighborhood Services Organization, Oklahoma City. Part-time. On-call to assist dental team. Must be licensed in Oklahoma. Contact hr@nsookc.org or call 405-236-0452.

Oklahoma City University provided housing in its dormitories for the college students who served internships with Project Transformation at OKC-Chapel Hill and Moore-First United Methodist Churches during the summer of 2014.



Project Transformation

Young adults grow alongside kids

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

Organizers of Project Transformation (PT) are preparing for another summer of addressing the academic, physical, and spiritual needs of disadvantaged elementary-age children in Oklahoma. Through internships, the program also gives college students a way to explore ministry possibilities and develop as young adult leaders.

It can be a life-changing experience for the young adults as well as the children, said Janina Graves of Stillwater, a former intern who is now a member of the organization's board of directors.

Graves was a PT intern while she attended Oklahoma State University. She called her summer of PT service a formative experience. She was majoring in elementary education and Spanish.

By tutoring a girl from a Hispanic home, she learned "how vitally important language was." Graves reapplied herself to her Spanish studies and has become fluent in the language.

"It's a skill set I use all the time," Graves said. She has been able to converse in Spanish during trips to Mexico and Bolivia, and she hosts a weekly Spanish conversation group at OSU's Wesley Foundation, where she is the student ministry coordinator.

Graves said the PT internship also gave her a "more realistic perspective of the challenges of poverty."

Intern is now board member

Through her service on the board, Graves has learned that PT is "one of the most practical ways that The United Methodist Church in Oklahoma is loving God and loving people."

Eight churches are Project Transformation sites this summer: Tulsa-Southern Hills UMC; Metropolitan Baptist Church, Tulsa; OKC-Chapel Hill UMC; Moore-First UMC; Mangum-First UMC; Bartlesville-First UMC; El Reno-Wesley UMC; and Muskogee-St. Paul's UMC. Each site conducts its own enrollment for the

eight-week literacy-based program.

More than 500 children total are expected to participate.

Some 50 college students who will be housed near the churches will help coordinate PT this summer. Some will live in Oklahoma City University dorm rooms. Those in Mangum will live in a parsonage. Others will stay in houses at Tulsa and the Muskogee School for the Blind.

A primary focus is helping children maintain or improve their reading levels by the time they return to school in the fall, according to PT Director Sarah Nichols and Associate Director Charlie Ludden. Statistics show that 80 percent of low-income students in Oklahoma do not read on grade level.

Thousands of volunteer hours

The project involves major commitment for the organizers. A literacy program coordinator develops a reading plan for each child, Nichols said. In all, 11,500 volunteer hours are spent serving over 37,000 meals to children and young adults and reading with the kids.

This summer's overall theme is Disney stories. Nichols said the children will explore times when characters are brave or kind and respect differences in each other.

PT has seen encouraging results. All the PT students across the state in 2014 maintained or improved their reading levels, measured when they went back to school, Nichols said.

She and Ludden hope "to work ourselves out of a job by helping close the literacy gap," Nichols said.

Volunteers at Tulsa-Southern Hills UMC were pleased to learn all the third-graders in its 2013 program passed the mandatory state reading test. In El Reno, 40 percent of Wesley's PT students improved their reading levels and 60 percent maintained them in 2014.

If you would like to support PT in any way, call Nichols or Ludden at 405-530-2009 or email snichols@okumc.org.

<http://ProjectTransformation.org/oklahoma>

3 churches team up for kids

Oklahoma City's Britton Elementary School boasts new soccer fields and equipment thanks to the combined mission efforts of three United Methodist churches.

Leland Clegg, Epworth, and Summit churches concluded "we could do more missionally together than we could apart," said Marla Lobo, pastor of Leland Clegg.

Church representatives met with the school staff about their needs. "We sat down and listened to them," Rev. Lobo said.

Allen Buck, pastor of Summit UMC, said the churches sought ways to have an impact in a poor area of Oklahoma City. "The needs there are just so great," he said.

The churches raised \$7,800 through special offerings to help the school.

After the meetings, the churches decided that soccer equipment could be enjoyed by the largest number of students.

"Soccer is something that you can play regardless of how old you are," Lobo said.

Two fields, one sized for older children and a smaller one appropriate for younger kids, were set up during a March 28 workday by about 40 volunteers from the three churches. Benches, goals, and nets were set up, and the school received a supply of soccer balls.

While the work was going on, people in the community came to see what was happening and offered to help, Rev. Dr. Buck said.

The churches also donated a new copier,



Photo by Allen Buck

Canyon and Ponder C. will have a ball at their school in Oklahoma City.

served teachers a soup lunch, and brought them gift sacks and gift cards.

The teachers seemed pleased to receive the surprises, Lobo said. "You did this for me?" she quoted one as saying.

Buck said the project illustrated "churches working together to do something that shares God's love." He called this project an example of a "unity act."

Lobo said representatives plan to meet again with school staff to discuss other ways the churches might help. One project may be a soccer clinic at the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Buck said.

— By Chris Schutz

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A bequest is perhaps the easiest and most tangible way to have a lasting impact on the people and organizations that mean the most to you. A bequest may also be an effective way to remember your church and other charitable organizations and provide a permanent legacy of support through an endowment.

AN ENDOWMENT GIFT MAY BE DESIGNATED FOR A SPECIFIC PURPOSE.

You may want to establish a scholarship endowment to provide for students in your church wanting to go into full-time Christian service; you might want an endowment to support the children and youth pro-

grams at your church; you might want an endowment to support the music ministry at your church. The list goes on.

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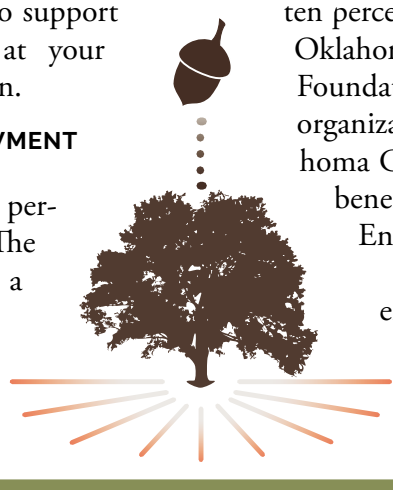
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hereby give, devise and bequeath ten percent of my estate to The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization located in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma for the benefit of the Your Name Endowment Fund.”

Schedule A of the endowment agreement describes how the distributions will be used. Depending on the size of the endowment, the distributions could support several organizations. If for

some reason in the future you would like to change the distributions, you only need to change Schedule A. You would not need to amend your will or trust.



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Annual Conference:

Continued from page 1

reconciliation ministries with Native Americans. (An Act of Repentance was a 2014 Annual Conference highlight.)

For the Day of Mission, six churches of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) will host events, with two more options on the OCU campus for those not able to travel.

At the churches, a meal will be served and songs performed in tribal languages. OIMC members will tell their stories in conversational style.

At the OCU venues, subjects will be (1) the boarding schools where Native Americans were sent in early Oklahoma and (2) the 1864 Sand Creek massacre.

• **GUEST PREACHER** — Jorge Acevedo is lead pastor at Grace UMC, a Florida congregation with four campuses and 13 weekly services. Worship attendance totals 2,800 people.

Rev. Acevedo was born in Puerto Rico and raised in the United States. Touched by the grace of God at age 17, his life was transformed radically.

Rescued from a life of addictions, he delights in connecting people to Jesus and the Church. And Grace UMC is recognized for having one of the largest and most effective recovery ministries in America, with over 700 people involved weekly.

“We serve the God who can do anything.”



‘We serve the God who can do anything’
— Jorge Acevedo

Acevedo told Southwest Texas Annual Conference delegates.

“If a pudgy Puerto Rican in Southwest Florida, a redneck city, can lead a prevailing church that was ready to close and now is vital and vibrant and ... folks are coming to know Jesus, it can happen anywhere,” he said, according to a 2012 story online.

He also challenged, “Do you love your music and liturgy, your precious parlor and carpet more than you love people? Do you love church nice and comfortable for you? It ain’t about you. It’s about Him and lost people.”

Acevedo has been very involved in the Walk to Emmaus. He is a recipient of the Denman Evangelism Award and is the 2009 Distinguished Evangelist of The United Methodist Church. Asbury seminary honored him as its Distinguished Alumni of the Year in 2007.

His written work includes the book “Vital: Churches Changing Communities and the World” (2013).