



Grants help 2 churches help kids

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

A clergy couple, pastoring different churches in southeast Oklahoma, looks forward to helping new people become disciples of Christ through the Conference's *New People New Places* grant program.

- \$10,000 in grant money went to Hugo's Heritage Church, led by Francis Bartley, to promote its "Toy Makers of Hugo" project.

- Wright City UMC, pastored by Lois Bartley, received \$1,970 to further its "Runner Girls" mentorship program for girls ages 9 to 18.

"Toy Makers," inspired by a toy-making program in Florida, has helped unite the recently combined congregations in Hugo, Francis Bartley said. (The merger of First and Wesley churches created Hugo-Heritage UMC.)

The church had 25 single men, so it was a "no-brainer" to form a woodworking project, he said.

The group creates wooden

See Grants, page 7



Photo by Lois Bartley

Alexis Tietz of Wright City Church's Runner Girls keeps pace at a recent 5K color run in Valliant. The Runner Girls ministry soon may add a second program, in Valliant.



Photo by Deborah George

Camp flotilla

Lawton District youth campers prepare to paddle to Cross Point Camp, on a peninsula south of Kingston, on June 22. Heavy rainfall has overwhelmed Lake Texoma, and the access road into Cross Point has been underwater since May. "Island camp" became reality, thanks to boat owners loaning their craft. Safety is top priority for the water crossing, about one-half mile. New Day II and CYME Camps expect to continue the island adventure later this month. Story, page 5.

District officials answer call

DAs staff new offices full-time

By HOLLY McCRAY

Pray for the eight District Administrators as they lean into their roles for the newly restructured Oklahoma Conference. Be assured they approach the work prayerfully.

The DAs serve full-time, making district offices more accessible and enabling District Superintendents to devote more time in the mission field. Summer office hours are 8 a.m.-5 p.m. Monday-Thursday. Beginning in September, the offices will be open 8:30-4:30 Monday-Friday.

Green Country

Brenda Scrivner describes herself as "an extreme pray-er." She told *Contact*, "I don't do much of anything without prayer."

She already was praying about a potential job change when she attended the 2014 Annual Conference as her church's lay delegate and heard about the new



The eight district administrators meet together for training at the United Methodist Ministry Center in June. From left are: front row, Brenda Scrivner of Green Country District, Diane Bull of Northern Prairie, Tee Higgins of Council Oak; center, Jacklin Drake of Lake Country, Stacey Sprayberry of Heartland; and back, Stacie Turner of Wichitas, Jill Perrin of Crossroads, and Kacey Hulin of Cimarron.

district posts. She doubled down on talking with God.

"I really wanted to get into some area I thought I could lend my expertise and still be in the area of (serving in) the church," Scrivner said. "I believe God led me here. I'm overwhelmed about how valued I feel."

A church member for 30 years, Scrivner has an administrative background. She was treasurer at a Tulsa church and for 24 years at Verdigris UMC.

The Scrivners live at Tiawah on 6 acres, about 8 miles from the district office at Claremore-First UMC.

They enjoy camping and especially fishing. Their travel trailer is often set up at Lake Oologah. They have two adult sons.

Lake Country

Jacklin Drake knew she would love working for the Church. When she interviewed, they began with prayer, she recalled excitedly.

She managed an office 17 years for the family business, a construction company. Much prayer was involved in deciding to take on a new post.

"The things we have faced in the last couple of years, we had to seek God's direction," she said.

Drake told God, "You're going to have to drop it in my lap."

The Drakes have three daughters and live in a new home on 2 acres north of McAlester.

She leads the women's ministry at a McAlester church.

Like her mother and grandmother, Drake enjoys many forms of arts and crafts. "I love Pinterest!"

See Districts, page 4

Events to help clergy achieve healthy balance in life

Clergy will fill their plates with healthy choices when they attend one of two free retreats hosted by the Wellness Committee.

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

The events begin with breakfast at 8 a.m. and conclude with "Feeding the Soul" at 3 p.m.

These inaugural OKUMC Healthy Clergy Retreats "would make John Wesley proud, for Wesley was concerned about physical, spiritual, and emotional health," said J.D. Ward, Wellness chairperson.

"When his brother Charles was struggling with his health, John wrote to one of the Methodist lay preachers and asked him to encourage Charles to consult a physician and stay active through physical exercise." The founder of Methodism also read extensively



Sign up for a Healthy Clergy Retreat at www.okumc.org/benefits

from the medical journals of his day and wrote "Primitive Physick."

Wellness program coordinator Debbie Ware echoed Wesley's long-ago concerns.

And Stephen Mitchell, director of Benefits/Personnel, said, "We must get healthier." He reports to the Board of Pension & Health Benefits and despairs over rising costs for Oklahoma's self-

funded clergy health benefits plan.

Some annual conferences have stopped providing clergy health insurance because of cost, Mitchell pointed out. But Oklahoma's leadership does not want to do that, he said.

"Your Insurance Plan" will be among the topics covered at the retreats.

Also: "Feeding the Body," about nutrition; "Walking Toward Health," explaining the Conference-sponsored Amazing Pace program; "Dining With Diabetes," the luncheon topic; and "Managing Stress."

Amazing Pace is part of a Conference wellness incentive that lowers health insurance premiums for participating clergy. Mitchell said participants overall are saving \$16,320 monthly, and \$195,840 for the year. Credits also are earned for achieving certain benchmarks

in blood pressure and cholesterol levels, body mass index, etc.

For more information about the upcoming retreats, call Debbie Ware, 405-530-2069. Each participant will earn one Continuing Education Unit.

Rev. Ward stated, "I decided that I had to lose weight, exercise more, and do a better job of managing my type-2 diabetes. These changes have blessed my life." He pastors OKC-New Hope Church.

In late June, the Center for Health of the General Board of Pension & Health Benefits released its 2015 Clergy Health Survey. Here are some key findings from the responses.

- 42 percent of UM clergy are obese, much higher than the 31 percent in a demographically-matched sample of U.S. adults.

- 49 percent have had high

cholesterol levels, also higher than the matched sample; 16 percent currently do.

- 20 percent have high blood pressure.

- 26 percent have at least some functional difficulty from depressive symptoms, compared to 14 percent in the matched sample.

The full report is available on the Center for Health website, www.gbophb.org/cfh

Save these dates

1. **Sept. 30**, Church Lay Employee Benefits Workshop (health and pension benefits), United Methodist Ministry Center, Oklahoma City
2. **Oct. 1-2**, Clergy Benefits Retreat (financial planning), Camp Egan
3. **Oct. 12-13**, Clergy Benefits Retreat (financial planning), Canyon Camp

Study abroad opens the world to students



By **RODNEY NEWMAN**

DUBLIN (Ireland) — Still slightly groggy from jet lag, 11 of us gathered around a glass case in the Royal Irish Academy.

Ten from Oklahoma City University and our Irish guide gazed in wonder at a Psalter from the late Sixth Century, every letter as clear as if written yesterday. History came alive as Deputy Librarian Bernadette Cunningham pointed out details and told us about the Psalter's significance.

This experience set the tone for our trip June 1-14 to Ireland to study about Celtic Christianity, one of the educational tours sponsored by OCU's Study Abroad program.

We visited monastic ruins at Glendalough in the Wicklow Mountains and at Clonmacnoise, arriving by boat on the Shannon River from Athlone.

Each of us received a blessing from the Sisters of Brigid, Solas Bhride, at their retreat center in Kildare, and we marveled at biblical scenes carved in the stone of the high-standing crosses.

We learned about the people of the island before the arrival of Christianity, at the 5,000-year-



Travelers from OCU pause at Glendalough, a monastic site in the Wicklow Mountains south of Dublin, Ireland. They are: Carus Newman, Taylor Barnett, John Hiller, Hannah Frye, Rodney Newman, Philip Younts, Samantha Erickson, Leslie Long, Hannah Lampi, and Sarah Kelly.

old Newgrange Tomb and at the ancient royal site on the Hill of Tara. We enjoyed the natural beauty of rugged coastlines on the Antrim Coast Road, barren landscapes in the west, and the sweeping valleys of the Donegal peninsula.

Many students said the most moving part of the trip was learning about the recent Troubles between Protestants and Catholics, especially in Northern Ireland. We visited neighborhoods in Belfast

separated by an imposing wall and viewed murals, some honoring perpetrators of violence, others calling for peace.

Members of the Corrymeela Community, an ecumenical ministry in Ballycastle, shared how their patient work of reconciliation continues today.

The Study Abroad program at OCU offers options for international study. One is faculty-led, short-term trips such as the one to Ireland. Some students



Muiredach's High Cross at Monasterboice, north of Dublin, Ireland, is among the finest examples of Celtic crosses in the Irish and Scottish landscape. The cross stands almost 19 feet tall.

choose to spend entire semesters at universities in other parts of the world. Religion majors Jordan Pittillo and Morgan Mitchell recently returned to the United States after the spring semester at Nazarene Theological College in Manchester, England.

History major Andrew Wasson spent a semester at Alpen-Adria Universitat in Klagenfurt, Austria.

As is common for many students abroad, Andrew pursued learning outside the classroom, taking short trips to the British Museum in London, the Coliseum in Rome, and the concentration camp at Dachau. To help exchange students adjust, his host university teams each U.S. student with a local student "buddy," a resource Andrew found extremely helpful to his "nervous American self."

Mary Benner, OCU director

of Academic Services and the Study Abroad program director of Academic Services, Office of Global Engagement, encourages students to take advantage of these opportunities and helps them make that a reality.

She believes such experiences "will challenge you, change you, and motivate you. The benefits of studying abroad exceed the time, money, and effort students put into it."

Taylor Barnett, one of those who traveled to Ireland, agreed. "The trip was more than I could've asked for. It was worth every bit of money as I learned about an ancient culture and about myself. The world around us has so much beauty and wisdom to share, and I'd go back to Ireland in a heartbeat!"

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Strength for the journey

Sign me up as a follower of Christ

NOTE: Bishop Hayes invited three laity to be guest writers of this column while he is on sabbatical.

By **KAREN DISTEFANO**

A motorcyclist was ahead of me as I drove to work on a recent day. Another motorcyclist approached from the opposite direction.



Distefano

The bikers waved at one another by extending their left hands out and down at their sides. I felt as if I had witnessed a secret signal, one known only to the motorcycle in-crowd. Seeking to confirm that

notion, I asked Stephen Hale about what I'd seen. (Rev. Hale, an associate pastor at OKC-Chapel Hill, is active with the United Methodist Motorcycle Association.) He compared it to a lodge sign* used by Masons. The gesture indicates "I've got your back" or "I'm here for you" to a fellow rider.

How great it would be to have a sign like that — one that says to a passerby, "I see you and recognize you as part of the family"!

We Christians already have such a sign. "They will know we are Christians by our love," declares a 1960s song.

Love. That's our sign!

A quick google search shows "love" is used 310 times in the King James Version of The Bible, with 179 of those in the New Testament. You probably know by heart many of the verses that use the word.

"Love God with all your heart and with

all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind."

"Love your neighbor as yourself."

"Love is patient and kind."

"Faith, hope, and love, and the greatest of these is love."

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only son."

"All you need is love." (Oh, wait; that's The Beatles. Sorry.)

This love of which the Bible speaks can be expressed in many ways. When we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit the infirm, and take care of the orphan and widow, we live out the commandment to love others. But these acts often are easy to do because we feel that the hungry, sick, or lonely deserve help. Showing love to those who make us uncomfortable or those we simply don't like is much more difficult.

Yet we are commanded to show them love, too. As faithful Christians, we are to pray for our enemies and those who would persecute us. We must forgive those we believe have wronged us. We are to see others as children of God, even when they don't look, think, talk, or act like us.

Manifested signs of Christian love are powerful. They transform not only the giver and receiver, but also the observer. I know this firsthand.

You see, I left the church for a while. When I left home for college and went out into the world, many other things caught my attention. Attending church stopped being any kind of priority for me. It seemed irrelevant, antiquated, and out of touch. Church got pushed away further and further, until it was nowhere in my life.

Then my father called one day, when I

was attending graduate school in Arizona. He said a group from my home church in Oklahoma was going to Guatemala to serve as Volunteers In Mission. He asked me to go with them as the team's interpreter.

I agreed to go, but wasn't expecting much except to have an interesting vacation.

People from all over Oklahoma made up that team. While in Central America, I saw them living out their faith in a quiet, yet very powerful way. I also saw the Guatemalan people who joyfully claimed their inheritance as God's children — in spite of marginalization, religious persecution, and even genocide — and who daily worked to fight heinous injustices that they suffered.

Together, the Guatemalans and Oklahomans labored as a unified body of Christ to do Kingdom-building.

There, in that place, I saw love. And I knew that I wanted to be a part of it.

Although I didn't immediately come back into the church, the proverbial seed had been planted in me. Later, after I moved back to Oklahoma, I returned to my home church. I intentionally learned more about our denomination, discovering Wesley's sermons, our *Social Principles*, and The United Methodist Church's worldwide missional agencies such as UMCOR,

UMVIM, and Global Ministries. I began to reclaim my inheritance as a Christian and a United Methodist.

Today, the Wesleyan tenet of faith in the Holy One, coupled with social justice for my neighbor, provides a firm foundation on which I continually strive to stand.

John 13 says: "Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet. I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you ... A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

There's that word! Love is our lodge sign!

Jesus showed it to his disciples. He did not even withholding his love from the ones he knew would deny and betray him. He told all of them to go and love.

Sisters and brothers, let's go and do likewise. Let's extend our hands to all those we meet. Let them know we are Christians by our love.

— **Distefano, of Bartlesville, is the Conference secretary of global ministries.**

(* Lodge signs are hand gestures used as a mode of identification among members of some Masonic organizations.)

Passages

OSBORN – Rev. Darrel Robert Osborn, 77, of Alanson, Mich., died July 1, 2015.

He served Oklahoma churches in Lucien, Jet, Lone Wolf, Tipton, Manitou, and Cookson before sabbatical leave in 1990. He went on Honorable Location in 1998 and officially retired in 2002. He also served three appointments in Iowa.

Among survivors are his wife, Darl Jean Osborn.

ATKINSON – Virginia Atkinson, 80, of Elk City died June 23, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. Jack Lee Atkinson, retired.

She was born Aug. 5, 1934, in Highmore, S.D. She and Jack married in 1955.

Survivors include her husband and four sons: Barry, Martin, David, and Jon.

Service was June 26 at Elk City UMC. Memorial gifts to: Friends of the Library and the Western Oklahoma Family Care Center.

Employment

Director of fifth- and sixth-grade ministries: Owasso-First. Part-time. Cover letter and resume to Jim Cinocca Jr., 13800 E. 106th St. N, Owasso, OK 74055 or jimcinocca@fumcowasso.org.

Coordinator of Children, Youth, and Family Ministries: Idabel-First. Part-time. Contact Cherie Townsend, 512-809-7497, or Pastor David, 580-286-6573. Send resume to church at 302 SE Jefferson St., Idabel, OK 74745.

Sound Engineer and Worship Singers: OKC-St. Andrew's. Part-time. Call Ginny Pass at 405-692-4242.

Church Secretary/Office Receptionist: Edmond-New Covenant. Full-time. Contact rgabelmann@ncovenant.org.

Administrative Assistant to Worship and Communications: Edmond-New Covenant. Full-time. Contact rgabelmann@ncovenant.org.

Nursery worker: Tulsa-St. Matthew's. Part-time. Must be bilingual in English/Spanish. Email Barbara Youngblood, youngbabs61@yahoo.com.

Child and Youth Advocate Assistant: Spot 31 Inc. in Tulsa (a United Methodist ministry). Part-time. Work with children in a multicultural setting. Email Debbie Gant at debbiegant@earthlink.net.

Accompanist/Organist: OKC-Sunny Lane. Part-time. Email church@sunnylanecumc.com or call 405-677-3347.

Piano/organ player: Noble UMC. Part-time. Email bills@gpcom.net or call 405-872-3913.

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

Church Business Administrator: OKC-Chapel Hill. Full-time. Send resume to John Brett at john@raydonex.com.

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Photo by Elizabeth Gwartney

New districts charter

Left: During the Communion ritual in the inaugural Council Oak District conference, people write hopeful messages on paper leaves and tie them to a young oak tree. Oak saplings were blessed, and each congregation was invited to take a sapling to plant.

“All over our new district, oak trees will dot the landscape as evidence of our prayers and blessings,” said Tee Higgins, District Administrator.

The significance of the historic Council Oak, from which the district gets its name, was described by Cherrah Giles, who is a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and of Cherokee descent. The tree grows in a Tulsa park. On May 3, Tulsa-First UMC hosted the conference; about 170 people attended. Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC, which provided the tree, planted it on BA property.

Right: Go out from your churches and into the crossroads and intersections of your communities to share Christ, urged Crossroads District Superintendent Rockford Johnson, in that inaugural district conference April 18 at OKC-Church of the Servant. Representatives of churches in that new district pinned photos of their churches and their mission fields (i.e., crossroads) to a large display during a dedication time, according to District Administrator Jill Perrin. About 125 people attended.



Photo by Michelle Pitt

Districts:

Continued from page 1

The district office is located in First National Center, downtown McAlester.

Wichitas District

Stacie Turner commutes from Duncan to the district office in Lawton.

She became Lawton District administrative assistant in 2011 and has noticed “the patience and love the people of the Church have.”

Their example gives this woman of faith “something to strive for: to be more like them,” she said.

Her work experience includes as being a construction project secretary for Duncan-First UMC, and she has an accounting background.

Turner played competitive golf as a child. “I try new things all the time.” She and her husband cook together, and she likes flower gardening.

She grew up in Tulsa, then lived in Arkansas, before moving to Duncan. The Turners have an adult daughter and son.

Cimarron District

Kacey Hulin has come full circle with her new job. The district office is in Woodward, and that’s her hometown.

The new post brought the Hulins back mere weeks ago, from Oklahoma City. Being closer to family is one of the blessings in that.

Hulin grew up attending Woodward-First UMC, and the couple married there three years ago. District Superintendent Charlie Graves conducted that ceremony because he was the church’s pastor at the time!

During the wedding, Hulin recalled, she had a giggle fit as her groom struggled to get the ring on her finger.

Staying fit is important to her. The couple work out together at a gym. They have a Weimaraner dog.

Hulin graduated from Oklahoma State University in hospitality management. She previously worked as a landman, which includes running titles on mineral rights ownership, and managed the front of the house at an Oklahoma City restaurant.

Northern Prairie

Diane Bull relishes growing things for God. She volunteered 12 years for the Appalachian Service Project, leading youth teams that helped make homes warmer, drier, and safer in that region.

She watched the youths grow, “and I grew, too.”

Bull said, “I enjoy working with kids. Outside of their element, they relax and get to know people, form relationships.”

Her son and daughter served on teams, too. In October, that daughter will marry.

Bull retired after 37 years as a teacher. Last year, she was a substitute teacher at a men’s prison.

The Bulls live on 15 acres, with room in the garden she tends

– 100 by 120 feet – to maneuver a tractor between the rows. She tagged herself “an avid gardener,” and admits randomly pulling weeds at other people’s homes.

The district post trumps teaching, which is stressful, Bull said. However, the myriad United Methodist acronyms – “especially clergy classifications” – can be challenging!

The office is located in Ponca City-Asbury UMC.

Heartland District

Stacey Sprayberry has traveled the world and then survived tornadoes after the family settled in Moore in 1995.

An OSU marketing graduate, she traveled as she worked 14 years for a gift wholesaler. She even went to Hong Kong and China. When the company relocated its headquarters to Oregon, she left that position.

With a kindergarten-age son, the Sprayberrys began looking for a church home. They chose Moore-First UMC, and Sprayberry has worked part-time there.

That’s a plus for her, because it’s where the district office also is located. “I know where the coffee is,” she said.

She’s busy with church closings as well as district changes following the realignment. She found valuable two days of training and meeting her counterparts, in June at the United Methodist Ministry Center in Oklahoma City.

The Sprayberrys were

building a home when the 1999 Moore tornado destroyed it. They opted to build on a different 1-acre lot. The 2013 Moore tornado caused \$13,000 in damage to that home, but the family stayed safe in their storm shelter.

Sprayberry still likes to travel. With their student-athlete son at college in Enid, the parents travel to baseball games.

The family has two rescue pugs.

Crossroads District

Jill Perrin “came to faith” at age 14 and has been active in churches since then.

“I’m a raging extrovert,” she stated, “so it’s really exciting to see all the different manifestations of church.” She sees God in all those expressions.

A year ago, she became North Oklahoma City District administrative assistant. The Crossroads office is at the same location, in northwest Oklahoma City.

Perrin expresses her faith through writing, too. She has created devotional material and curriculum. She wrote an Advent devotional resource for OKC-Church of the Servant. Her blog is “Sacramental Mothering.” She has a liberal arts degree.

She also is “a huge reader.”

The Perrins have lived in the northeastern U.S.; she led elementary-age children’s ministry at a Massachusetts church. The family moved to Oklahoma in 2011. Married

almost 22 years, the couple has two teen daughters.

Council Oak District

Tee Higgins holds the longest term among the eight DAs. In 2003, she became Tulsa District administrative assistant and has worked with three superintendents.

She’s a long-time church member, too: 35-plus years at St. Stephen’s UMC in Broken Arrow.

Music is among her passions. She plays piano and guitar, sings in the church choir, sang for years in a show choir with her husband, and was in Sweet Adelines for 10 years.

Higgins even admits to singing karaoke in nursing homes in the past.

Quilting is another interest. She teaches a community quilting group that meets at Tulsa-Southern Hills UMC.

The Higginses have two adult daughters and four grandchildren.

“I love to come to work here,” said the DA. The district office has remained at Tulsa-Asbury UMC, but Higgins’ duties did change.

Council Oak District consists of more churches (52) than the former Tulsa District, and Higgins is learning to use new online church management software and “to answer the phone differently.”

Her background is in finance and administration. In the 1980s, she managed a supermarket with 52 employees. She also has been secretary at two churches in Tulsa.



Creativity keeps camping afloat at Cross Point

By SAM HODGES
United Methodist News Service

The adventures of summer camp can include just getting there. Ask the teenagers who floated across floodwaters June 22 to Cross Point Camp south of Kingston, Okla.

Recent flooding cut off road access to the United Methodist camping facility on Lake Texoma. What had been a peninsula is temporarily an island – with no bridge.

Leaders scrambled to find other locations for the Lawton District program, scheduled for June 22-26, but then decided to create “island camp” at Cross Point, at least for older kids.

So on June 22, using 11 canoes and a pontoon boat – with a fishing boat in reserve – some 100 plucky campers and staff members floated nearly a half mile over to Cross Point.

“Camp is about the unexpected, it’s about flexibility, and it’s about dealing with challenges as they come along,” said Ed Parker, executive director of Camps for the Oklahoma Conference.

The canoes and other vessels

made more than 30 trips, all under a broiling sun. But the water was smooth, and the current helped move things along fairly quickly.

Within three hours, the campers were all across and ready for the next adventure.

“It went awesome, without a hitch,” Parker said.

Kyle Batt, 17, was making his third trip to Cross Point for the annual district camp. But this was the first time he arrived by canoe.

“We were all really excited,” Batt said by phone the next day. He is a high school senior from Carnegie.

“It was a good bonding experience for the campers who canoed together. And it was good for the experienced campers to come into camp in a new way.”

Safety concerns ruled out transporting younger children. Everyone on Monday’s flotilla wore a life jacket, and lifeguards were posted along the route.

On Tuesday, campers were maneuvering through the ropes course and learning archery, as well as gathering to worship.

The camp can handle a medical helicopter landing in case of emergency. For a less

serious injury or illness, a camper would be taken by boat back to the mainland to an ambulance or other vehicle.

Parker praised Ken Long, Cross Point’s director, and other staffers. He also credited the Ben E. Keith Co., the camp’s food supplier.

“They went the extra mile, backing their truck right up to the water,” he said.

Kingston United Methodist Church helped as well, providing parking and a place for registration, and shuttling kids by van to where the boats awaited them.

Parker, a military history buff, said the experience reminded him of the World War II evacuation of Dunkirk, when the British used all manner of vessels to move endangered troops out of France.

Parker said he even referred to the United Methodist flotilla as “Oklahoma’s Dunkirk” when asking people to lend a vessel.

The Lawton District camp concluded June 26, when the teens safely floated back across.

Oklahoma, like much of the Southwest, has had record-setting rains this year.

Parker said the Cross Point



Photo by John Hiller

Cross Point Camp staff members move food supplies, delivered to water’s edge by the Ben E. Keith Co., to the camp in mid-June.

access road was under at least 10 feet of water at the time, with only the tops of telephone poles showing.

He believes it could be late July or August before Lake Texoma’s waters recede and road access is restored.

About 10 United Methodist summer camps set for Cross Point have been cancelled or relocated.

Last summer, Cross Point struggled with drought. The lake’s water level was so low that the

camp’s dock was on dry land.

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. applauded the Cross Point team for coping with nature’s challenges.

“What it shows is creativity in the face of adversity,” he said. “The lesson I hope people will take away is that we can find a way to be the Church, to be the Gospel, to be disciples of Jesus Christ, in spite of all things.”

(Contact Hodges at 615-742-5470 or newsdesk@umcom.org)

Blessings wash over campers after relocating

Dean recognizes God had a plan

By SHARRI HILLER
Ardmore District Camp dean

Where to have the last Ardmore District Youth Camp? It was one of the hardest decisions I’ve had to make.

It was May, and the road into Cross Point Camp at Lake Texoma was flooded. Ken Long and Ed Parker were ready to boat us in, but I had too many questions and not enough time to get answers.

The Ardmore District camp was set for June 1-5.

The decision was made to move to Camp Egan, near Tahle-

quah, after the invite assured that Egan could accommodate us and the Journey Camp program at the same time.

The district camp volunteers were all in! The band and the nurse, Judy Parkey from Madill, would travel. All the small group leaders were in.

When all was said and done, we had about 25 more campers and staff this year than last year.

Zach, one of the band members, said he prayed at the week’s beginning worship that our being at Egan was no accident, and he was correct. Cross Point has long been our “home” camp, but I found that our “wandering around the creek” at Egan was a journey God had planned and had a plan to use.

The weather was great for using the open-air tabernacle. There was no rain the whole week! And our experience truly proved “the United Methodist connection.”

The distance between Camps Egan and Cross Point is more than 200 miles.

Churches partnered to make sure all the youths made it to camp. One church had campers and a van, but no way to get campers to camp. A neighboring church had campers and a leader, but no transportation. They joined efforts, and everyone made it to camp.

Ada-First UMC even loaned Lighthouse UMC use of its van all week.

The move to Egan did cause problems for clergy elders who

had signed up as adult volunteers. It appeared we would not have someone to consecrate the elements so that we could celebrate Communion during the week.

Then, the week prior to our camp, God led us to new connections during Annual Conference. Thanks to Michael Dye, D.A. Bennett, Katie Brown Hill, and Superintendent Larry Bauman, we were able to have Communion at every worship. Amid relocating from Ardmore to McAlester, Rev. Bauman came for Communion on the day we hiked up to the cross. The stars were coming out as we started; it was truly a special time.

During closing worship Friday, large rocks were carried to the altar by each small group as well as

the nurse, the band, Rev. Hill, and Egan staffer Monica Hiller. A pail of creek water held small rocks from Slate Bluff Creek. We talked about our time in “exile” at Egan, and each person took a small rock to remind us of our week “wandering around the creek.”

Back at home, I have already received one report from a grandmother that her grandson who attended camp was baptized and joined his church. Praise be to God!

We expect to have next year’s district camp back at Cross Point on the lake. For opening worship, we will build a permanent altar (See Joshua 4) to remind us about this year’s unusual experience and how God led us through change and adversity.

Witness of Denman winners inspires others

'Oh, how I want to be more like her'

Look to the Christian love shown daily by the 2015 Denman Award winners to inspire your response to the Lord's question "Who will go for us?" (Isaiah 6:8).

Sam Powers, Marcia Martin, and Shirley Adams surely reply, "Here am I. Send me."

Oklahoma needs more United Methodists to answer affirmatively, Bishop Hayes told delegates at the 2015 Annual Conference. During the Discipleship Ministry Team report, the laywoman and two pastors received the prestigious award for evangelism.

Reasons for their selection pack statements by people who nominated them.

Shirley Adams

"Simply put, Shirley radiates God's love. The fruits of the spirit are so evident in her life," said Donna Tonubbee of Shawnee-Wesley UMC.

"When Shirley Adams is aware of a place where God's church is not reaching out, not being salt and light, Shirley doesn't just talk about it or spend months in discussion. She says, 'Here I am, Lord!'"

"Oh, how I want to be more like her."

Adams, a member of Shawnee-Wesley for over 35 years, currently leads the Welcome Team, serves as Lay Leader, and facilitates a weekly Bible study. She founded and for 17 years led the church's fruitful after-school ministry with children.

"She taught me and other church members how important it is to be that adult, that teacher in the lives of children who need to know that God loves them and their church family loves them, too," Tonubbee said.

On applications for food and utility help from the church, some families mark "Yes" on the question "Would you like to know more about our church?" Adams saw follow-up falling behind and took the lead in making contacts.

"Prayer is priority in every area of her life," Tonubbee noted. "Every time she is in a leadership role in any group, opening devotional and prayer (are) essential. We all benefit by that model."

Pastor Ben Williams said, "A forward-thinker, Shirley got help in hanging a Dream Board in the fellowship hall. Her



From left, the 2015 Denman Award recipients are Shirley Adams of Shawnee, Rev. Marcia Martin of Vian, and Rev. Sam Powers of Edmond. At back are Revs. Stephen Hale and Janelle Brammer, of the Discipleship Ministry Team's evangelism committee.

vision is that the board will help Wesley members think about the forward momentum of the church's ministries. She gives a presentation to each succeeding class of new members."

About 200 people worship weekly at the church.

Rev. Marcia Martin

When Marcia Martin, Vian UMC's first female pastor, arrived in 2012, attendance was 35, with no youth ministry.

Worship draws 85 people now. Among 38 new members, all but two joined by Profession of Faith.

Church member Daniel Reid celebrated, "For the first time, the church has a second adult Sunday School class, a class for youth, and full-time nursery."

He noted that Rev. Martin endorsed five members to attend the basic Lay Servant course in April, bringing to eight the total Lay Servants at Vian UMC. Because of her encouragement, Reid also enrolled in the Part-Time Local Pastors Academy.

Now Vian UMC hosts Fifth Quarter after school football games and a Wednesday evening meal and worship. A chapter of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes was established in the community.

This pastor effectively uses Facebook and email — and

provides automated phone messages for members who don't utilize the Web.

District Superintendent Emery Mason said Martin "clearly believed that the church was intended to be more than 'dead and dying' and set out to give of herself to a vision that God had given her of a church that is 'resurrected and alive.'"

Martin previously served as youth director at Cookson UMC, pastored by Rudy Freese. He recalled that her efforts there grew "a few youth to a bustling youth group with more than 40 kids."

Rev. Freese said, "One only needs to follow her on Facebook to see that she is walking hand-in-hand with the people in the community and her church."

Rev. Sam Powers

"You ask that I describe the spirit of the man I have nominated. There is also a man in the Spirit. This is Sam Powers!" wrote Jim Swaim of Piedmont UMC.

"His was the first face I saw when the debris was cleared and our storm cellar door opened" after a tornado ravaged that city in May 2011.

Before his 2014 appointment as senior pastor for Edmond-First UMC, Rev. Powers had pastored at Piedmont since 2001. His community-wide service included the fire department's chaplaincy.

Swaim also applauded Powers' leadership in Piedmont's partner ministries with Cashion UMC, a smaller congregation. "Through the combined efforts of Sam, the church committees, volunteers, and support of the Oklahoma Conference, a rural Methodist church will not die," he wrote.

Superintendent Rockford Johnson remembered seeing the pastor at district youth camp in 2013.

"I found Sam there in his hiking clothes, with dirt and perspiration on him and a genuine smile on his face ... Sam not only leads the church in good programming, but also leads by example and by active, relational presence in the lives of people," Rev. Johnson said.

"The consistently high numbers of professions of faith at the Piedmont church, with 44 in 2013, is a telling witness to the priority of evangelism in Sam's ministry and leadership."

— Compiled by Holly McCray

TRAINING LOCAL PASTORS

— A total of 19 people attended the 2015 Local Pastors Licensing School, including two from out of state. The training concluded June 25 at Oklahoma City University. From left are: front row — Walter Sizemore, Mike Marcus of the Great Plains Conference, Matthew Patrick, Matthew Hewes; second row — Shana Dry, Michael Carpenter, Doreen Moore of the Alabama-West Florida Conference; and top row — leaders Ron Perciful, Victor McCullough, Nancy Johnson, and James Graham. Other participants, not shown: Ben Pasco, Sarah Thornhill, Shiuan Hie Lee, Tracey Ivy, Jeffrey Rickman, Bryan Hester, Adam Brinson, Stephen Cagle, John Miller, Travis Ewton, Tom Carruthers, and Jeff Hinton. Those 12 have been commissioned or have completed one-third of their seminary studies.



Historians choose Smith's book

The Historical Society of The United Methodist Church will present its 2014 Saddlebag Selection Award to Professor Tash Smith of Shawnee for his book "Capture These Indians for the Lord."

Dr. Smith teaches at St. Gregory's University. His book "sheds light on the work of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, among the Oklahoma tribes from the separation of American Methodism in 1844 to its reunion in 1939," a press release stated.

In his research for the book, Smith found sources in the Oklahoma United Methodist Archives, located at the Oklahoma City University Library.

The society will present the award at its meeting July 20-23 at Garrett-Evangelical Seminary. Oklahoma Conference archivist Christina Wolf will be among those attending.

Smith also provided vital material for the Act of Repentance and Reconciliation at the 2014 Oklahoma Annual Conference.

Grants:

Continued from page 1

cars, tractors, and push-toys, as well as wooden “Runner Girl” shoes that are given as awards in Wright City UMC’s running program.

Members of Heritage as well as people in the community have lent their hands to the work, performed mostly with donated materials and equipment supplied by church members. Children join in, too, by helping to paint the new toys.

Pastor Francis called the program an example of “intentional ministry. Anything that we enjoy doing together as a Christian community can be used as mission if we do it intentionally.”

Since September, the church has made “close to” 700 toys. Some are given to children who have been displaced by fire or crime. Others go to children in the foster care system, Francis said.

The grant money will be used to create a “safer environment” for the volunteers. Francis said the toymakers need better ventilation in their work area and woodworking equipment.

Twenty-five miles away in Wright City, Pastor Lois leads the Runner Girls. With a motto drawn from Hebrews 12:1, “Running the Good Race Together,” girls are paired with mentors. The group’s goal is to run 300 miles together in a season.

For every milestone they reach, each girl receives a handmade mile-marker bracelet, which can also be worn as a headband, Lois said.

Purpose of the program is to encourage the girls to make friends and grow in discipleship, she said. A devotional time is part of the Runner Girls’ activities.

The program seeks to show



Above: Wearing a protective mask, young Kase Lindly of Wright City learns about woodworking from toymaker Jack Goodrich of Hugo-Heritage United Methodist Church. Left: At a birthday event for Alex Roath, who is shown at front, the Toy Makers of Hugo and children from Wright City crafted and painted wooden gifts for other kids.

Photos by Francis Bartley

the girls “how Christ relates to all areas of our lives,” Lois said.

The grant money is to be used to grow the program. It will help pay for milestone celebrations, T-shirts, and running socks and shoes for girls who need them.

Lois is also implementing Runner Girls at her second church charge, Valliant UMC.

Francis said he and his wife are pleased at “how much the Conference really cares about the smaller outlying churches.”

In the case of the Hugo church, “The energy for that merger came from doing mission together,” he said, “and the energy for the mission was increased because of

the *New People New Places* grant.” The money gave the church “a shot of adrenaline.”

Francis said *New People New Places* grants bring “creativity back into the ministry.”

The 2015 NPNP grants were awarded to 24 churches and ministries. In addition to helping promote discipleship, applicants are asked to explain how their programs will attract new, younger and/or more diverse people to church.

NPNP deadline:

Applications for the 2016 grants must be submitted online by Aug. 31, by 11:59 p.m.

www.okumc.org/npn

The global church

Bishop Sally Dyck said, “Many laity haven’t moved in years, if ever, and really don’t (understand) the trauma that even a desired or accepted move brings in terms of relocating.”

(July 8, UMNS)

FAST UMC FACTS:

Looking for a snapshot of The United Methodist Church’s numbers around the globe? The data services department of the General Council on Finance & Administration has put together a chart of church membership, attendance, total active churches, and total active clergy: www.umc.org/gcfa/data-services

CLERGY FAMILIES: After a care summit in November, the Commission on the Status & Role of Women has launched a website to address the needs and concerns of clergy families.

“Clergy self-care continues to be of critical importance for the health of the clergy and his or her family,” said Dawn Wiggins Hare, the top COSROW staff executive. “The itineracy system is stressful, especially for couples with two careers and school-aged children. Being able to read, to share, to connect with others on the journey is a way that we can offer resources to support our clergy.”

FREE DOOR HANGERS:

The Rethink Church project is offering each UM congregation 100 free door hangers to help you reach out into your neighborhood. There are four design options, to use any time of the year, with a “Church Can Happen Anywhere” message.

Order yours for the back-to-school season. Offer ends Dec. 1. Choose “Store” at www.UMCOM.org/tools

A WEEKEND OF

ABAPTISMS: Worshippers at Crossroads UMC, a multi-campus congregation based in Pittsburgh, Pa., saw 40 people

Bishops offer advice after marriage ruling

By HEATHER HAHN

United Methodist News Service

How can a United Methodist pastor minister to same-gender couples and not run afoul of Church law?

A number of U.S. bishops have issued statements and offered advice in seeking to answer that question in the wake of the recent U.S. Supreme Court decision legalizing same-gender civil marriage in all 50 states.

Like the members of their flocks, the bishops have varied personal reactions to the ruling. But many noted in public messages that they want to respond pastorally to all United Methodists in their respective areas.

“This is not a time to draw lines in the sand but, rather, a time to come together in prayer for one another and for all those with whom God calls us to be in ministry,” said Nashville Area Bishop William McAlilly in a statement. Three of the couples involved in the Supreme Court case were in Tennessee.

The Supreme Court ruling does not change Church law, which prohibits pastors from conducting and churches from hosting ceremonies that celebrate same-gender unions.

The Book of Discipline, the denomination’s book of policies and social teachings, defines marriage as between a man and a woman.

At the same time, the *Discipline* calls for civil rights for all people regardless of their sexual orientation, and states that the Church is called to be in ministry to all people.

Only the General Conference, the denomination’s top lawmaking

Read Bishop Robert Hayes’ statement at www.okumc.org/bishops_corner

body, can change Church policy. That group meets in May 2016 at Portland, Ore.

United Methodists have been debating the denomination’s teachings on homosexuality for more than 40 years. Data from a recent United Methodist Communications survey of U.S. members found about 46 percent agreed with the Church’s ban, while 38 percent disagreed with it.

San Francisco Area Bishop Warner Brown Jr., who is president of the Council of Bishops, said the Supreme Court ruling calls attention to the difference between Church law and the law of the land. “May we continue to be a people of prayer, and hope, as we work towards a day of equality and inclusion for all people created in the image of God,” he said in a statement.

Another bishop offered a different take. Louisville (Kentucky) Area Bishop Lindsey Davis announced his disappointment in the high court’s ruling.

“The court’s reasoning runs counter to the teachings of almost all world religions including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam,” said Davis. “I will remain faithful to the biblical understanding that marriage is a lifetime covenant between a man and a woman.”

Bishops do not get a vote at General Conference. But they are all empowered to pray for the Church. Many bishops included prayers in their statements.

baptized and 105 others reaffirm their baptism during a special Baptism Celebration Weekend June 27-28.

“Many people shared why they were taking that step as they were in the water, creating a flow of testimonies to God’s grace and goodness,” said Steve Cordle, the lead pastor.

The baptisms were by immersion, something new for Crossroads. Initially 35 people requested first-time baptism, and 60-65 asked to reaffirm their baptisms. But during services, more people came forward.

(July 6, UMNS)

UMCOR IS 75: On behalf of the United Methodist Committee on Relief, staff executive Denise Honeycutt recorded a “thank you” video for annual conferences and churches that have celebrated the agency’s 75th anniversary this year by assembling emergency kits, choosing projects to support, and more.

Oklahoma UMs donated layette and personal hygiene kits, as well as cleaning buckets, during the 2015 Annual Conference.

Go to www.umcor.org for more ideas, including “75 things to do.”



Legacy Planning Using a Farm or Ranch – Part 2

In our article published on June 5, 2015, we noted there are significant financial, tax, and estate planning advantages for families who make legacy gifts using farmland or ranchland. A great planning solution is a Charitable Remainder Unitrust, which is a tax-exempt trust. The farm or ranch family transfers appreciated property to the trust and receives an income tax deduction for the present value of the remainder interest. The property is then sold inside the trust tax free, bypassing capital gains on the sale. The Unitrust pays a fixed percentage of the assets each year to the trust beneficiaries. Upon the death of the final beneficiary, the remainder benefits the ministries designated by the family.

While the family can transfer all of the property to the Unitrust, many will find

it advantageous to transfer only a portion of the property into the trust. Known as the “Sale and Unitrust,” this concept allows the donor to receive an income tax deduction and lifetime income from the trust along with a lump sum distribution of cash from the portion of the property sold outside the trust.

Generally, the “sale portion” will produce capital gains tax liability. Fortunately, the deduction from the Unitrust can be used to offset all or a portion of the capital gains tax. The “Sale and Unitrust” is a popular option because it generates immediate liquidity and retirement income.

John and Susannah are ages 75 and 70. John has farmed 500 acres of wheat for the past 40 years. When they were first married, John promised Susannah that

someday they would retire, sell the farm, and move to the lake. Since farming is becoming more difficult for John, Susannah convinced John that now is a good time to make good on his promise.

The farmland is valued at \$1 million and their cost basis in the property is \$100,000. They recognize that they have a potentially large capital gains tax liability if the property is sold. John and Susannah need both retirement income and \$400,000 cash to buy their lake property. By transferring \$600,000 into the Unitrust, John and Susannah will receive 5 percent of the trust’s value for both their lifetimes. In addition they will receive \$400,000 cash. The income tax deduction from the Unitrust will

offset the capital gains tax from the sale. John and Susannah have achieved both their financial goals and charitable goals since the remainder will be used to fund an endowment for the benefit of their church.

Are you interested in learning more about the “Sale and Unitrust”? If so, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org. There is no obligation and all inquiries are confidential.

SUMMER IS HERE! VISIT OKUMF.ORG AND FIND THE PETREE GRANT APPLICATION. DEADLINE IS SEPTEMBER 15.

THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION
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Parsonage houses volunteers far from home

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

An unused parsonage in Newcastle provided housing for two weeks for disaster response workers from Michigan after a May 6 tornado damaged property in the area, especially in Bridge Creek.

Newcastle United Methodist Church volunteered the use of the parsonage for an eight-member team affiliated with World Renew (Christian Reformed Church) from Byron Center, Mich.

The Oklahoma United Methodist Disaster Response Center has a good working relationship with World Renew and referred the crew to Newcastle UMC, Pastor David Cressman said.

Although the parsonage is mostly unfurnished, it gave the team a place to sleep on air mattresses and to shower. They were able to cook in the kitchen, said Barbara James, a Newcastle member.

The group went to services at the church, and World Renew member Lois Hecksel contributed to the music.

“My husband loaned her a guitar, and she played with our little band during service,” James said.

The church had short notice that the team would be arriving, so James gathered dishes from her house for the visitors to use, hung shower curtains, and set up a table and chairs to give them a place to eat.



A disaster cleanup team from Michigan prepares to clear debris from property in Bridge Creek.

The team asked for a list of restaurants in the area where they could eat dinner, James said. “They were very self-sufficient,” she said.

Before leaving June 30, the team cleared debris, removed damaged trees, and planted new trees, Hecksel said. The volunteers also installed new drywall and sanitized a damaged home. The group’s goal is to help make areas safe after a storm, she said.

How to help:

Volunteers In Mission teams and individual volunteers are needed urgently to help Oklahomans affected by flooding and tornadoes. Contact Richard Norman, Rnorman@okumc.org, or go to www.okumc-dr.org

Save the date

1. **Aug. 15**
St. Yootz Day, at Frontier City, www.okumc.org/youth
2. **Aug. 24-28**
Mediation Skills Institute for Church Leaders, at OKC-Church of the Servant, sponsored by Discipleship Ministry Team (DMT)
3. **Sept. 22**
Bishop’s Retreat for clergy, featuring church futurist Reggie McNeal, at OKC-St. Luke’s
4. **Sept. 26**
“Human Trafficking” seminar, at Oklahoma City University, sponsored by Conference Council on Youth Ministry (CCYM), www.okumc.org/youth
5. **Oct. 28-29**
Meeting of General/Jurisdictional Conference delegates from the 12 annual conferences within the South Central Jurisdiction, at OKC-St. Luke’s, with hosts Linda Harker and Don Kim