

Save the dates for Re-Ignite Workshops

January and February bring 11 regional workshops for all of Oklahoma's United Methodist family — with classes for all ages and for both clergy and laity.

"Hearts Afire" is theme.

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. will be a key presenter at all but one workshop (Woodward).

Each church soon will receive brochures via U.S. mail. And online registration will open soon. Go to: www.okumc.org/Reignite.

JANUARY

Saturday, Jan. 11 —

Clinton District Re-Ignite
at Weatherford-First UMC

Woodward District Re-Ignite
at Woodward-First UMC

Saturday, Jan. 18 —

McAlester District Re-Ignite
at McAlester-First UMC

Sunday, Jan. 19 —

Muskogee District Re-Ignite
at St. Paul UMC, Muskogee

Saturday, Jan. 25 —

OKC North & South Districts Re-Ignite
at St. Luke's UMC, Oklahoma City

Sunday, Jan. 26 —

Enid District Re-Ignite
at Enid-First UMC

FEBRUARY

Saturday, Feb. 8 —

Lawton District Re-Ignite
at Duncan-First UMC

Sunday, Feb. 9 —

Bartlesville District Re-Ignite
at Claremore-First UMC

Saturday, Feb. 15 —

Ardmore District Re-Ignite
at Ardmore-First UMC

Sunday, Feb. 16 —

Tulsa District Re-Ignite
at Boston Avenue UMC, Tulsa

Sunday, Feb. 23 —

Stillwater District Re-Ignite
at Stillwater-First UMC



From left, Colt Healey, Sue Healey, and Casey Killblane help break ground Nov. 14 at Cross Point Camp.

Cross Point starts work on 2 cabins

By **HOLLY McCRAV**

Amid the woods beside Lake Texoma, a groundbreaking on Nov. 14 marked the start of construction at Cross Point Camp for two large cabins, a \$700,000 project.

Every person attending got a chance to turn the earth with golden shovels at both sites. "Well done," one participant uttered.

Ardmore District Superintendent Greg Tener prayed, "On this ground, may your holy presence be revealed so that this may become a sanctuary, where we may together be nurtured in the faith of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ."

"This day has been a long time coming," Conference Camps Director Randy McGuire told the group. He thanked the donors whose financial gifts large and small made possible the Healey and Lela Wilburn Cabins.

"As you stand here, please imagine the campers who will stay in these cabins and how their lives will be changed because of the work you have enabled," Rev. McGuire said.

No other major building project has occurred at Cross Point since the manager's home, started in 1998 and occupied in 2002, according to Ken Long, who is the camp manager.

"We've turned away many groups because we didn't have enough meeting or lodging space," he said.

Upon completion of the wood-frame cabins, each 3,400 square feet, Cross Point will accommodate up to 325 people and gain two large meeting rooms.

"It will allow more people to have the chance to see God in His setting here," Long said.



Todd Huckabay, at center in blue jeans, steps into his role for the Wilburn family on Nov. 14 at Cross Point Camp.

Photos by Andrew Himes

After the ceremony, Healey and Wilburn family members described those cabins' namesakes.

Son Colt Healey said, "You don't have enough time" to fully learn about his loving father's life.

"It was Daddy's wish" to support the capital campaign, said daughter Casey Killblane.

Casey said, "He loved things that were good for kids. His grandchildren came to camp here with the church and with FCA (Fellowship of Christian Athletes). When he was able to hear from his own grandchildren what the camp was providing, he was eager and excited to participate" in funding a new cabin.

Skip Healey had stayed at Cross Point, too. He died in October 2012.

His widow, Sue, and Casey are members at Davis-First UMC. Colt worships at Ardmore-First UMC.

Todd Huckabay traveled from Snyder to represent the Lela Wilburn family at the groundbreaking. He recalled his great-aunt,

who died at age 103 in October 2011.

"She loved children in church; she loved Christ," he said. She had no children of her own.

Wilburn's nephew, Paul Root of Washington, D.C., and niece, Ann Law of Hagerstown, Md., joined Todd and Deatra Huckabay in making the major estate gift to Cross Point.

In 1988, the Huckabays moved to Snyder — Wilburn's lifelong hometown. They connected to First UMC, attending alongside Wilburn, a longtime member.

The couple has volunteered as leaders in Cross Point's programming, and their children Kaylee and Cassidy have attended summer camps. Todd serves on the Conference Camps' Board of Trustees.

"You only have so many opportunities in life to answer Christ's call, and we acted on that when presented with this opportunity," Todd said. "It was presented at one of our crossroads in life as a way to serve the Lord, to help children know who God is and to follow Christ in their lives."

Oklahoma UM Disaster Response

4,000-plus volunteers deploy to help after tornadoes

A UMNS photo by Mike DuBose

Volunteering through Moore-First UMC, Sharon Johnson cleans tornado debris at a home in late May.

Numbers track just how extensive is the disaster recovery work since six tornadoes struck the state in late May.

On Nov. 19, updated numbers snagged attention in a meeting of the Oklahoma UM Disaster Response committee. Its members are from both annual conferences.

Richard Norman of the Oklahoma Conference reported to the committee. Among his statistics:

- 160 teams, from 28 states and Canada, deployed through the Volunteer Reception Center operating at Moore-First UMC (June 5-Nov. 18).

- More than 30 of those teams were from Oklahoma Conference churches.

- Total volunteers tracked by the center at Moore-First: 4,303 (May 24-Oct. 26).

- Total hours of service by those volunteers: 27,969 (May 24-Oct. 26).

- Over two years, UM churches will be asked to host thousands of volunteers as the work continues.

A total of 3,371 work projects were abandoned, Rev. Norman said, after a

plethora of groups and people eager to help left the disaster area in July.

But United Methodists commit for the long term. Oklahoma UMs have taken leadership in construction management and volunteer coordination, Norman explained, as well as disaster case management.

He reported 2,455 of those incomplete projects now have been confirmed as completed. Another 444 also are complete, awaiting final approval from homeowners.

Rev. Norman chairs the Oklahoma VOAD (Voluntary Organizations Active in Disasters), a collaboration of charity, civic, and government entities. In the Oklahoma Conference's Office of Mission, he is disaster response coordinator and Volunteers in Mission associate director.

Volunteer Reception Centers also are open at St. Paul's UMC in Shawnee and, in El Reno, at the American Red Cross Building and Wesley UMC.

The central phone number for all is 1-866-477-7276.

Births

Peyton Elizabeth was born Nov. 20, 2013. She is the daughter of Aly and Rev. Adam Shahan. Aly is Conference coordinator of the Re-Ignite Workshops, and Adam is associate pastor at Moore-First.

Brick Charles Dennison was born Nov. 15, 2013. He is the son of Mindy and Rev. Daniel Dennison, Wesley Foundation campus minister, University of Oklahoma, Norman.

Passages

Loren Basler, 88, of Bartlesville died Nov. 16, 2013. He was the father of Rev. Stan Basler, past director of the Conference's Criminal Justice & Mercy Ministries.

Albert Matthews, 82, of Muskogee died Nov. 30, 2013. He was the father of Rev. Brian Matthews, pastor at Okmulgee.

Opportunities

Director of Worship and Music Ministries: Full-time. Choctaw UMC, Andy James, pastor@choctawumc.com, 405-390-8151, 1200 N. Choctaw Rd., Choctaw, OK 73020.

Director of Student Ministries: Full-time. Sand Springs UMC. Don Tabberer. 918-245-5955. revdtabbs@sandsspringsumc.org.

Youth Ministry Summer Intern: Begins May 2014. Fairview-First United Methodist Church, Adam Brinson, umcprogramdirector@att.net.

Director of Youth Ministry: Part-time. Cushing UMC, Kathy Leithner, 918-225-5683, katleit2@aol.com.

Organist: Part-time. Johannus Ecclesia D-470 organ. Tulsa-Faith UMC, ctaberer@faithtulsa.org.

**School of Religion names Gragg outstanding graduate**

James P. Gragg was recently named a Distinguished Alumnus for the Wimberly School of Religion at Oklahoma City University.

This honor was presented at the annual Alumni Awards Dinner, held Nov. 1 in the OCU Student Center, as part of Homecoming weekend festivities.

Rev. Gragg followed his father, Owen Gragg, into ministry in The United Methodist Church. He received a Bachelor of Arts in religion from OCU in 1963, then completed his Master of Divinity work at Duke University Divinity School.

His appointments include Hinton, Marietta, Tulsa-Boston Avenue (associate), Drumright, Kingfisher, and Wickline in Midwest City. He served as senior pastor at Stillwater-First UMC for 12 years before completing his active ministry as South Oklahoma City District superintendent. He retired in 2006.

Jim and his wife, Elaine, are actively involved in OKC-Epworth UMC, a Recon-

ciling Congregation.

Jim served as a member of the board of directors for Neighborhood Services Organization for 12 years and chaired it for three years. He is co-chairing NSO's campaign to raise \$2.5 million for an expanded low-cost dental clinic and administrative offices.

He also is a leader in VOICE (Voices Organized in Civic Engagement), a coalition of nonprofits in Oklahoma City giving voice to the needs of citizens.

Jim and Elaine celebrate their 50th wedding anniversary this month. They have three married children, seven grandchildren, and eight great-grandchildren.

Dr. Sharon Betsworth, director of the Wimberly School of Religion, praised Gragg. "His service to the Conference, church, and our community is a model which we want to lift up for our students."

Gragg was one of seven honorees this year from various schools within the university system. Also honored: **Norah "Noni" Erb** (Class of '06), who manages the 35



From left: Sharon Betsworth, director, Wimberly School of Religion; Jeff Riles, president, OCU Alumni Association; Jim Gragg, distinguished alumnus; and Mark Davies, dean, Petree School of Arts and Sciences.

employees of the inpatient nursing care unit at St. Anthony's Hospital in Oklahoma City; **Gregory Potts** ('92), a therapist on a team serving older adults at Community Counseling Centers of Chicago; and **Vicki Zemp Behenna** ('84), who has served 25 years as a federal prosecutor with the U.S. Attorney's Office for the Western District of Oklahoma. **Scott Stone** ('87), manager of Spartan Resources, an oil and gas exploration company, is a life member of the National Association

of Eagle Scouts. **Jennifer "Jenny" Lang** ('93) has more than 20 years of production experience in the performing arts, spanning many venues. She is production manager and stage management adviser for the University of Arizona's School of Theatre, Film, and Television. Honored posthumously was **Joyce Eilers** ('63), recognized as one of the top choral composers in the country and as a mentor for young composers. She died in 2009.

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Strength for the journey: Ideas and thoughts from our bishop

It's a conspiracy!

"A green Shoot will sprout from Jesse's stump, from his roots a budding Branch. The life-giving Spirit of God will hover over him, the Spirit that brings wisdom and understanding, the Spirit that gives direction and builds strength, the Spirit that instills knowledge and Fear-of-God. Fear-of-God will be all his joy and delight. He won't judge by appearances, won't decide on the basis of hearsay. He'll judge the needy by what is right, render decisions on earth's poor with justice. His words will bring everyone to awed attention. A mere breath from his lips will topple the wicked." (Isaiah 11:1-4, *The Message*)

By BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.

Words can betray us. We think we know their meaning, but we don't.

One such word: *conspiracy*. Be honest with me — it's likely you will think of a devious scheme. Even Mr. Webster defines the word as *a plot, a secret agreement to do an unlawful or wrongful act*.

There you have it. It's the dictionary definition.

It's not our fault that we believe conspiracy means some wicked activity, that we naturally conclude somebody is up to something sinister

when the word *conspiracy* is used.

However, there also can be a conspiracy of good! Read the dictionary's second definition of this word. You'll discover Mr. Webster has more to say. You will find that conspiracy also means *to act in harmony toward a common end*.



Bishop Hayes

I bring this to your attention during this Advent/Christmas season because the Great God who created heaven and earth and everything in it is up to something!

There is a conspiracy going on. Don't miss it. It is nothing less than a conspiracy of goodness! God's plan gives us someone whose "words will bring everyone to awed attention, and whose mere breath will topple the wicked"! The prophets such as Isaiah knew this. They knew God was planning a spectacular, earth-shattering action for GOOD. They didn't know when, but they

were convinced that God had been scheming since Adam's fall.

Isaiah probably knew more than most, because he boldly proclaimed "a child will be born to us and a son will be given." He goes so far as to say that child will be called "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)

Isaiah even identifies the ancestry and place from which this gift of God was to come: "a shoot from the stump of Jesse" (the father of David), from a virgin's womb, in the city of Bethlehem.

Sure enough, nearing that tiny town one night, two weary travelers stumbled their way to a crowded inn, only to find there was no room. And the plot began to thicken. A child was born, and suddenly a host of angels gathered to form a heavenly chorus. Ordinary shepherds were summoned to be witnesses, and wise men trekked to see the child, following a star.

Some years later another prophet, whose name was John the Baptist, emerged from the wilderness and added to the conspiracy theories. He proclaimed someone would come "that is more powerful than I, the straps of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie." (Mark 1:7)

I could write much more on all the details of this scheme. But let's return to Webster's definition that conspiracy means *to act in harmony toward a common end*.

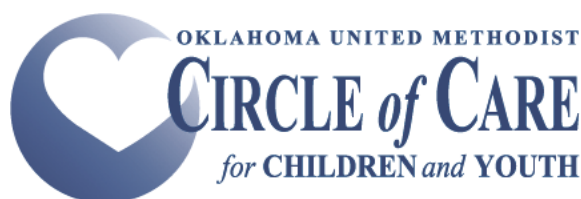
This so-called conspiracy didn't begin in Bethlehem. Not with a star in the East. Not with shepherds watching over their flocks one night. This scheme didn't start with an imperial decree about taxes. Not even with Mary and Joseph.

This conspiracy of goodness began with a redemptive purpose in the heart of God.

God plans nothing less than the restoration of the world. In holy harmony, the Most High works toward the common end of reconciling us unto God. Individuals and institutions can be redeemed and restored.

Author James Reid said, "Jesus did not just appear for a moment, like a flash from across the frontiers of the world, and then vanish into darkness. He dwells among us, living our lives, sharing our troubles, entering our sorrows and our joys, and bearing our burdens. He identifies himself with humanity at every point."

In this great demonstration of God's love, I realize that the light still shines from Bethlehem and that the darkness of our world has not been able to extinguish it.



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Kenton UMC



Lost Creek UMC



OKC-First UMC

Churches across the state submit stories to *Contact* about their innovative and effective ministries. On these pages, we gladly share that news, both to celebrate with them and to inspire others, when space is available.

Submit news by email to editor@okumc.org — digital photos need to be original sizes, JPG format — or by U.S. mail to *Contact*, United Methodist Ministry Center, 1501 N.W. 24th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73106. — *Holly McCray, editor*

Panhandle church helps bikers

The sounds of roaring motors in Kenton, in the Oklahoma Panhandle, signaled the arrival of about 500 bikers on May 11 during their annual one-day, five-state poker run.

Population is 17 in the unincorporated town, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. It no longer offers a gas station, fast food stop, or public restrooms.

But Kenton UMC welcomed the riders, extending radical hospitality. The church averages 17 people in worship, the 2013 *Journal* reports.

The church's outreach was spurred when about 100 bikers unexpectedly found themselves stranded at the stop during their 2012 run.

Tom Uecker led the effort this year. Volunteer fire chief and church member Steve Sechler made available the fire station's one restroom, and a portable toilet was rented. Containers were filled with 50 gallons of gasoline.

Rancher and feed store operator John Schumacher supplied and cooked burgers on his grill. Other church members brought more food and helped serve the hamburger lunch, including drinks and desserts.

"The disciples at Kenton United Methodist Church are intentional about looking for ways they can share the love of God with people outside their church walls," said Pastor Cindy Robertson.

Pray for America bus visits OKC

Bus riders on the Pray for America Rally Tour stopped at First UMC in downtown Oklahoma City for prayer and worship on Aug. 31.

From First Church, Jean Walker arranged for the visit and Hannah Davis led worship. Those gathered offered intercessory prayers for nation, state, and city.

Commissioned by the National Day of Prayer Task Force, the bus began a 23,000-mile, 300-city, 37-state tour on May 31 in Pittsburg, Pa.



Photo by Miriam Conrady

Wearing his backpack, Connor Hunt bows in prayer at Summit UMC's back-to-school service.

Shattuck cooks holiday feast

A new small group at Shattuck-First UMC hosted the church's first Christmas Day Dinner in 2012. Even with snow that day, lonely and hungry people were fed and church members experienced working and celebrating together in service to God's Kingdom.

The second Christmas Day Dinner will be served soon, according to Pastor Rick Trobaugh.

The small group had been studying "Committed to Christ: Six Steps to a Generous Life," by Bob Crossman. The last chapter, "Hands-on Service in Jesus' Name," inspired them to act.

One member recalled free Thanksgiving Day dinners at a family's restaurant.

A newer member talked of her experiences in another church that served Christmas Day dinners. She also had helped prepare meals for large groups in various ministries. When she expressed a desire to do something similar in Shattuck, others offered to help.

The project's mission is to not only feed the hungry or lonely on Christmas Day, but also to eat with them, to become acquainted and form relationships.



Photo by Andrew Himes

WINDOW JEWELRY—Workmen install one of five stained-glass windows, from the former OKC-Ridgecrest church, at OKC-Cornerstone UMC in mid-November.



St. Matthew UMC in Midwest City.

Plastic bags wrap people with love

At St. Matthew UMC in Midwest City, the United Methodist Women's circle recycles plastic shopping bags in an unusual way.

The women repurpose the bags as "plarn," plastic yarn, and use that to crochet sleeping mats for people who are homeless. Kay Ross is coordinator.

The UMW at OKC-Epworth church distribute the mats.

Barbara Perry learned of the project at a meeting of the North OKC District UMW early this year. She described it as "a unique idea that takes time, but no cost ... just hundreds of bags that some of us throw away." Perry is the district lay leader.

Music for labyrinth walkers

On Dec. 16, Quantum Calm will perform music during the Labyrinth Walk at Edmond-First UMC.

The public is invited to walk from 6 to 8 p.m. in the Christian Activities Center of the church at 305 E. Hurd. Two labyrinths are set up on the third Monday of each month.

UMMen keep on trucking

The United Methodist Men of Lost Creek UMC saw an opportunity and helped Camp Egan.

The camp was using an aging dump trailer to haul brush, soil, and rocks, according to Tom Kirby, former Conference Camps director.

Lost Creek's men evaluated the trailer and "knew we could make it great again with God's help," said Ken Morris of Stillwater, the UMMen coordinator.

"The men, working with the project leader of Stoney Burk, replaced the flooring, removed the rust, replaced the battery for the dump mechanism, reinforced the walls with a cross bar, rewired and replaced all the lights, re-engineered the cradle for the tarp and the gate stabilizers, and primed the new metal with a little paint."

"It was a team effort and all the guys helped, whether in person, through prayers, supplying materials, financial support," and more.

Egan Manager Josh Pulver said the men's work blessed the camping ministry. Lost Creek's men challenged other churches to become more involved in supporting Camps.

New church plant relocates

In Edmond, Summit UMC is benefitting by relocating to Cimarron Middle School, 3701 S. Bryant Ave. The move was made in late October.

The school site on busy Bryant Avenue boosts visibility for this new church family in the Conference. Almost 130 people participate in Summit's various programs, said Pastor Allen Buck Jr.

Another advantage is storage space available in the school's old gym, which is also where worship is held.

"We've been a mobile church," said Rev. Dr. Buck, "setting up every Sunday from a trailer."

The storage area accommodates all the trailer's contents, he said, simplifying staging for worship each week.

www.summitok.org

Oak Park hosts young readers

"Pageturners Reading Club" was the name chosen by the young people for their summer reading club at Oak Park UMC in Bartlesville.

A total of 13 youngsters attended the six-week program. Each meeting began with prayer and the Pledge of Allegiance. Then they read for 30 minutes. Women of the church volunteered to read with them.

Each week included a special activity. Pastor Linda Lusnia read a silly story. Law officers and firefighters talked about safety and demonstrated their equipment, including the police car siren. A guest sang "Amazing Grace"; the youth read and staged "Little Red Riding Hood."

The children received school supplies and "Pageturners" bookmarks.

Each meeting ended with ice cream.

(THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST FEDERAL CREDIT UNION MERGED WITH OKLAHOMA FEDERAL CREDIT UNION IN OCTOBER 1995.)

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100 years of Campus Ministry

This continues a series marking 100 years of campus ministry. One objective of the Oklahoma Conference's Strategic Plan is to reach more younger people.



As an OCU student in 2007, Lance McDaniel volunteers on a Wesley Center mission team serving in an area hit by Hurricane Katrina.

OCU alum credits Wesley Center

By LANCE McDANIEL

The college ministry at Oklahoma City University was a spiritual game changer for me.

I had grown up Methodist, but left the church for several years when I moved. I had become worn out by so-called Christians spending so much time judging, building walls, and excluding others from God's grace instead of inviting them to experience the radically inclusive nature of God's love.

The student Bible study at OCU helped change my mind. Through the staff and students, I opened my heart to the Word. I stopped listening to all of the negativity and started focusing on reading the Bible.

Each week, I joined 12-20 students and staff, working together toward a better understanding of God's plan by reading and discussing the Bible.

I am now a full-fledged member of St. Luke's United Methodist Church in Oklahoma City. I am involved in a great Sunday School class and several outreach activities. I am grateful for my loving, supportive family and my new church family.

And I will always be grateful to the students and ministers at the OCU Student Ministry for creating a light so bright it led me back home to God.

(This article was written for the 2013 Annual Conference. At OCU, McDaniel earned a master's in film. He directs the deadCENTER Film Festival.)

Young adults ponder calls to ministry

'God might just be calling your name'

Speaker after speaker told the 429 young adults — including 17 from Oklahoma's universities — that God is calling them to change the world and the church.

"This is not your momma and daddy's church. We have to be about making disciples, not members," Louisiana Bishop Cynthia Fierro Harvey told those attending Exploration 2013 in Denver, Colo.

Sponsored by the UM General Board of Higher Education and Ministry, the November event helped young adults discern God's call and explore their gifts for service. Total attendance was 676; two were Oklahoma campus ministers.

"Listen. God might just be calling your name," Harvey said. "All God wants or needs is for you to be the best YOU that you can be."

She is the first Latina bishop elected in the South Central Jurisdiction.

Among the young Oklahomans listening was Joe Mohr, a member of Ada-First UMC. Originally from Sayre, he graduated from East Central University in Ada.

"I was supposed to go into the workforce," Mohr said, but he loved the Ada church and community. He has been a church youth leader, served at summer camps, and performed music.

He began considering a call to ordained ministry.



Oklahomans load into a van before their trip to Denver, Colo.

"It wasn't a Saul-to-Paul conversion moment," Mohr said. "I don't know when the sun rose, but I can surely tell you it is shining."

He has entered the clergy candidacy process. He serves with Jana Hogg, a provisional elder, at ECU's United Campus Ministry. He also works as a bank teller.

The November event "gave me a great deal of insight," Mohr said. He learned about financing seminary study, steps to ordination, and defining his call. He befriended students at varied seminaries.

In Oklahoma, "I see this narrow sliver of Methodism," Mohr said. Exploration 2013 was "an amazing opportunity to see beyond ... We have this very diverse population of Methodists that spans the country."

He expressed appreciation to the Oklahoma Conference Board of Ordained Ministry, which subsidized the trip to Denver. "They made it so the cost was only \$50 per participant. Kudos for investing in people who want to get into ministry."

Attending from Oklahoma were: Shelby Greenhill, Nica

Onstott, Mohr, and Rev. Hogg, all from ECU; Christina Lee, University of Central Oklahoma, Edmond; Kevin Andrews, Drew Tarwater, Andrew Moore, Blake Whisenhunt, and Montana Borth, all from the University of Oklahoma, Norman; Brooke Willis, Katelyn Trobaugh, and Rev. Elizabeth Horton-Ware, all from Southwestern Oklahoma State University, Weatherford; and Grace Karber, Caitie Gassner, Olivia Coil, Michael Horn, Wesley Yang, and Hannah Lampi, all from Oklahoma City University.

—By Holly McCray and Vicki Brown

Doctoral program to start at Saint Paul @ OCU

In January, Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University welcomes its first doctoral-level students.

Dean Elaine Robinson said five people had enrolled by mid-November in the new Doctor of Ministry program.

They will begin with two core courses: "Theology and the Church's Ministry," taught by Amy Oden; and "Orienting Seminar," an introduction to doctoral-level studies and research, taught by Patricia Jung and Rev. Dr. Robinson.

The students are Becky Pierson, Semaj Vanzant, Sam Powers, Brian Bakeman, and Scott Sharp.

They will join about 40 masters students attending the United Methodist seminary at OCU in the spring term.

The new program "aligns very well with

the Conference's Strategic Plan," said Robinson. "The ongoing education and formation of pastors through the D.Min. is important for the leadership of the Church."

She explained, "The Doctor of Ministry degree is a doctorate for practitioners, unlike a Ph.D. designed for those intending to teach in higher education."

The goal is for D.Min. students to complete 30 hours in "Leading Congregations to Excellence and Innovation." This new doctoral track will be based in Oklahoma and combine the expertise of Saint Paul's faculty and OCU's nonprofit leadership program directed by Bob Spinks.

"Theologically, students will focus on the *missional church* literature, which suggests that leadership is about going into the communities where our churches are, finding

out where God is at work, and participating in that mission of God in order to transform lives," Robinson said.

She listed organizing, financial and legal aspects, intercultural competence, collaborations, and other aspects of skilled church leadership as curriculum.

Education at the highest level also is a natural progression for the seminary's Oklahoma City location, Robinson said.

In Fall 2014, two Master of Arts degree programs will launch there, in Christian ministry and in theological studies. Saint Paul's main campus is in Greater Kansas City, Mo.

"We continue to move forward, following the leading of Grace," Robinson concluded.

Find out more: <http://www.spst.edu/ok>.

— Holly McCray

Oklahoma Conference gets fewer GC delegates

Fourteen delegates — seven laity and seven clergy — will represent the Oklahoma Conference at the denomination's 2016 General Conference (GC), Joseph Harris has announced. He is annual conference secretary for Oklahoma.

In 2012, Oklahoma's voting bloc totaled 18.

"We are still the second-largest delegation in the jurisdiction," said Rev. Dr. Harris. "The Texas Conference has 18."

In the eight-state South Central Jurisdiction, the smallest delegations are the New Mexico and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences, each with two GC delegates.

The 2016 General Conference will have 864 delegates from around the world, Harris reported.

Thirty percent of them will be from Africa, 58.3 percent from the U.S.A., 4.6 percent from Europe, and 5.8 percent from the Philippines, according to United Methodist Communications (UMCOM).

In the U.S., churches are grouped as annual conferences. In other nations, such groups are called central conferences.

The number of GC delegates per annual/central conference is based on a formula that considers the total clergy and

lay membership of that conference. At minimum, one lay and one clergy delegate are required.

In the Democratic Republic of Congo, Africa, United Methodists of North Katanga Conference will be represented by 48 people, Harris noted, forming the largest delegation. Churches in the Congo are grouped in 14 conferences, with a total of 138 GC delegates from that nation.

Most conferences, including Oklahoma, will choose delegates in 2015, although a new *Book of Discipline* rule permits elections next year. Harris said the change was made to help international delegates secure passports.

Oklahoma's 14 GC delegates will be elected at the 2015 Annual Conference in Oklahoma City. An additional 14 delegates, equally divided between laity and clergy, will be chosen, plus several alternates, for the 2016 South Central Jurisdictional Conference. That meeting will be in Wichita, Kan., in July 2016.

In 2012, that voting was completed in one day, as recommended by the annual conference secretary.

"Last time we elected a number of younger delegates, an

increase over previous voting," Harris said. "I think our conference has a commitment to diversity and will continue that."

He added, "Our people also give their leadership to other areas of the General Conference, such as chairing legislative committees and subcommittees, not just voting."

The Church's *Constitution* allows a range of 600 to 1,000 GC delegates. Since 1968 that number has been close to 1,000.

At its October meeting, the Commission on the General Conference voted to reduce that total. The overriding factor was a desire to move toward a structure more suitable for potential locations beyond the U.S.A., UMCOM reported.

Meeting every four years, the General Conference is the top policy-making body of The United Methodist Church. Delegates can revise Church law as well as adopt resolutions on moral, social, public policy, and economic issues. They also approve plans and budgets for church-wide programs.

The 2016 General Conference will meet in Portland, Ore. Theme is "Therefore, Go."

—Holly McCray

The global church

Dec. 3 breaks records for Advance giving

Giving Tuesday generated a record \$6.5 million online on Dec. 3 for United Methodist missionaries and missions, according to the General Board of Global Ministries.

Nearly 11,000 donors in 34 countries gave more than 16,300 gifts through The Advance. GBGM matched the first \$500,000 received.

The initiative built on the shopping traditions of Black Friday, Local Business Saturday, and Cyber Monday.

"We were overwhelmed by this giving that went far beyond our dreams," said Thomas Kemper, who leads GBGM.

The Advance is the Church's second-mile giving channel, supporting more than 850 projects and more than 300 missionaries. Among them are ministries in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference and missionaries who serve in Oklahoma and deploy from Oklahoma. — *United Methodist Communications (UMCOM)*

Church-led team rebuilding communications in Philippines

A United Methodist-led team has been providing communications relief in the Philippines, assessing needs and identifying ways to reconnect churches and communities after the recent typhoon.

After Typhoon Haiyan hit Nov. 8, "the Philippine government issued a call to international organizations for assistance to urgently restore communications in the affected area," said Larry Hollon of UMCOM.

The loss of communications capacity "meant that people were not only unable to report on the extent of damage in the affected area, it meant that people in remote places were literally isolated and did not know of rescue and relief efforts."

Bishop Ciriaco Francisco told United Methodist News Service (UMNS) it will take a year to fully restore power to the area.



Finance agency responds to clergy housing decision

The General Council on Finance and Administration, which is the denomination's finance agency, responded Nov. 26 to a U.S. district court ruling in Madison, Wis., that found tax-free housing benefits for clergy to be unconstitutional.

In a statement, GCFEA noted an appeal by the government is likely. Implementation of the ruling has been delayed to permit filing of any appeals.

GCFEA stated it is too early to fully understand the impact of this case, or to predict the chances of a reversal of the court's decision. The agency continues to actively monitor the case. — *UMNS*

Christmas shopping can benefit local churches

In partnership with some of the largest online retailers, GCFEA has built a shopping tool that provides a cash benefit for your church when you purchase through the UMCmarket — items you might be buying anyway. How does it work? Create an account at www.UMCMarket.org. — *UMNS*

MUSCLE ON THE MOUNTAINTOP —

A team from OKC-St. Luke's UMC donated time and energy in service at United Methodist-related Mount Sequoyah, a retreat and conference center on property overlooking Fayetteville, Ark. They repaired and painted interior areas of buildings and removed carpeting. Julie Robinson, Jamie Anderson, Marsha Manners, Leslie Bross, Rip Bross, Lisa Ross, John Humphrey, and Charlie Ludden were among the volunteers in late June. Mount Sequoyah is an agency of the denomination's South Central Jurisdiction, which includes Oklahoma.

Council of Bishops requests complaint against Talbert

After hours of closed-door sessions, the denomination's Council of Bishops has requested a formal complaint be filed against retired Bishop Melvin G. Talbert, who officiated at a same-sex union on Oct. 26 despite Church law.

The council specifically urged the complaint be submitted by Germany Area Bishop Rosemarie Wenner, the council's president, and Birmingham Area Bishop Debra Wallace-Padgett, who oversees the North Alabama Conference where the wedding took place.

The complaint would go before the Western Jurisdiction, from which Bishop Talbert retired.

The statement said, "Pain exists throughout the connection, including persons who support Bishop Talbert's actions and persons who object to them. We express our pastoral concern and care for all people."

Oklahoma Area Bishop Robert Hayes Jr., who is the Council of Bishops secretary, read the full statement at the start of the council's session Nov. 15. — *UMNS*

Solar phone chargers: Relief for Malawi pastors

Telephone communication with the Malawi United Methodist Church will no longer be a problem as partners at United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan., provided a set of solar chargers to every pastor, evangelist, and conference staff member in Malawi earlier this year.

Pastors and evangelists whose homes lack electricity are using the 2.5-watt solar phone charger kits. — *UMNS*

Letter signers call for immigration solutions

In less than one week in November, more than 1,300 UM clergy signed a letter to Congress that calls for "genuine solutions" for the U.S.'s broken immigration system. Among endorsers of the letter are 40 bishops. Endorsers came from 49 states.

The letter was sent to members of the House of Representatives. "We witness firsthand every day the fear and uncertainty that so many immigrant families are forced to live under," the letter stated. — *General Board of Church & Society*

Pastor suspended 30 days for same-sex wedding

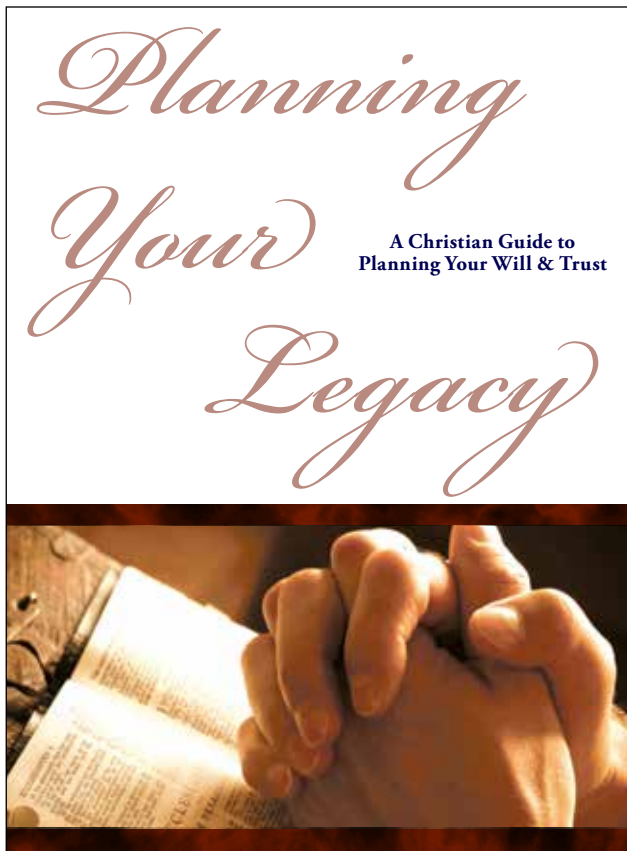
Frank Schaefer has been given a 30-day suspension by the jury in his church trial and told that if he can't uphold the *Book of Discipline* in its entirety he must surrender his credentials.

Rev. Schaefer was found guilty Nov. 18 of violating Church law that bans pastors from performing same-sex unions and of disobedience to the order and discipline of the Church. He acknowledged presiding at the same-sex wedding of his son, Tim, in 2007.

Schaefer is being monitored by his district superintendent in the Eastern Pennsylvania Conference and must meet with that conference's Board of Ordained Ministry during his suspension. — *UMNS*

Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation insights

Why do I need a plan?



Failure to plan may result in accidental disinheritance. Accidental disinheritance occurs when a person dies without having made a will or when a will does not function properly. Are you among the more than 50 percent of Americans without a will?

Because failure to plan risks harming those you love and subjecting your estate to needless tax, you need to make a plan for the future.

There are several options for planning effectively. A will is a written document that permits you to state how you want your property or estate distributed, name an executor (also called a personal representative) to distribute your property, pay debts and taxes, and handle other business affairs. If you own property, you may wish to set up a living trust. It may be set up during life and directs where your assets go. Unlike a will, a trust will not subject your estate to probate.

Sometimes other considerations need to be made regarding your estate planning. In advance of death, it is important to appoint a guardian to care for your mi-

nor-age children or those with special needs. If you become unable to personally manage your finances or property or wish to have someone else manage your property later in your life, a durable power of attorney will give the person you select the legal authority to buy, sell, and manage your assets. Also, a durable power of attorney for healthcare allows you to select a person who can assist your doctors in making healthcare decisions if you become unable to act on your own behalf.

The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation's **Christian Guide to Planning Your Will & Trust** can help you with all of these options and more. Contact the Foundation for your copy to begin the process of creating a will. The guide is complimentary and will walk you through the necessary steps of completing a will prior to seeing an attorney.

Call the Foundation at 800-259-6863 to request your free copy today.



Is it time to update your will?

Many significant things can happen in a year. The Foundation suggests you consider reviewing your will or estate plan every four years. Here are several life changes and other noteworthy reasons to update your will, as well as your estate plans.

- You give birth to or adopt a child
- Your children reach adulthood
- You inherit or are given "new" assets
- The needs of your beneficiaries change
- You give away or sell assets mentioned in your current will
- Significant change in your assets' value
- Marriage
- Purchase or sale of real estate
- Relocation
- A named beneficiary dies
- Death, relocation, or disability of executor or trustee
- Death of a spouse
- Divorce
- You wish to make a gift to your church or other United Methodist cause

The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation Inc., 4201 Classen Blvd., Oklahoma City 73118; www.okumf.org; 800-259-6863

Briefly

■ Tulsan honored for Interfaith work

Nancy Day, a member of Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC, recently was honored for her 32 years of excellent work as executive director of the Oklahoma Center for Community and Justice. She will retire at the end of the year.



Day

The recognition is well deserved, said Twila Gibbens, who is ecumenical officer for the Oklahoma Conference Mission & Service Ministry Team.

Under Day's leadership, the center has become a national leader in human relations and interfaith work.

"I can think of no more urgent mission than that of helping people learn to live together with their deepest differences," Day said.

■ Deadlines for annual awards

Several Conference groups announced their award deadlines in early 2014.

■ Nominations for the **Frances Willard Award** are being accepted through Jan. 1. Sponsored by the Commission on the Status & Role of Women, this honors a person who makes a distinguished contribution to the advancement of women in ministry in

the Oklahoma Conference. To nominate someone, send a letter of commendation, 100 words or less, to: Cheryl Newton, pastor@fumcnwata.net, First United Methodist Church, P.O. Box 129, Nowata OK 74048.

■ Jan. 15 is deadline to submit completed applications that nominate a clergy member or layperson for the **Harry Denman Evangelism Award**.

The form and instructions are at: <http://www.okumc.org/denmanaward>.

Submit the form to Janelle Brammer, First United Methodist Church, 1615 N. Highway 88, Claremore OK 74017; 918-341-4580 (fax); or jbrammer@claremorefumc.org.

■ 4 groups get grants

Grants awarded in the month of Thanksgiving counted among the blessings for four UM-related organizations.

The Inasmuch Foundation granted:

■ \$1 million to Oklahoma City University, to help its law school move downtown;

■ \$250,000 to a capital campaign for Neighborhood Services Organization in Oklahoma City;

■ \$150,000 to TEEM, The Education and Employment Ministry, in Oklahoma City; and

■ \$12,000 to Family Promise of Lawton, a shelter program, for case management. United Methodists in that city founded the nonprofit and continue to give key support.

You Can Save a Child

Become a Foster Parent

Call
1-866-978-2956
Today



Circle of Care is partnering with OKDHS and other nonprofit agencies to find homes for 10,000 Oklahoma children in need of a safe, nurturing home. You, or someone you know, can save a child's life. Join us!