Church furnishes home for refugee family of three

BY MEAGAN EWTAN

The email came on a Friday. Catholic Charities was helping a refugee family from Honduras complete the immigration process, and they would arrive in 10 days. The mother and children needed food and furnishings for a new home. Catholic Charities had already provided the home; would the church be willing to provide the rest?

That Sunday, Jeremy Basset relayed the request to his congregation at OKC-Wesley. He knew the church was a diverse group who valued immigrants; 12 nationalities were represented among their weekly worshippers. But furnishing an entire apartment in a week was a sizable project for a church that worshipped 113 on average. So,

Basset asked: are we willing and able to help this family?

The church responded: Yes.

The next several days were a whirlwind of managing donated items and funds. A member of the church volunteered to be the point person for the project. Furnishings and decor were donated not only by the church’s members, but also by extended families and others in the community.

A list of needed items such as bedding, soap, trash cans and towels was emailed to church members that Wednesday with a request to drop off the items at the apartment on Saturday. Volunteers were requested to move items and help set up the home on Saturday afternoon.

The apartment was completely furnished by Saturday night. Beds, couches, tables and counters were decorated with care, and even the shower was stocked with toothbrushes, soaps, towels and other necessities.

Groceries were purchased the night before the family’s arrival. A Latin American family from the church offered to cook a homemade meal for the family’s first night in Oklahoma, hoping familiar food and conversing in Spanish would help the Honduran family feel more at home.

Basset couldn’t be prouder of his church. After recounting the story, he drummed his finger on the table as he shared a heartfelt statement:

“That’s how a community welcomes immigrants.”

Disaster Response announces completion of “Let’s Finish This”

Oklahoma’s Disaster Response ministry has announced the completion of the “Let’s Finish This” initiative.

The initiative called for United Methodists in Oklahoma to help complete work on many homes that were damaged by state-wide floods in 2015.

Efforts to help families move toward recovery were led by Rev. Richard Norman for three years. Norman, the coordinator for the Disaster Response ministry, said personal stories and statistical data are being gathered in order to fully share about the work that’s been completed.

“One of the most difficult aspects of my ministry in Disaster Response has been those past disaster events in which we were not able to ‘finish’ serving those in need,” Norman said. “This initiative and the surrounding support elements of the 2015 Recovery have shown us that we can ‘Stay Until Recovery is Complete’ and finish that which God has laid before us to do.”

One of the realities the ministry faces is that recovery work does not truly end; there’s always a need to address current needs and to prepare for the future.

Norman is thankful for the churches, volunteers and community organizations who worked together to complete recovery projects this summer.

“It is my sincere prayer that God will help us to find a way to continue to ‘finish’ serving the survivors of future disaster events.”

Donations to support recovery work through Disaster Response can be made online at www.okumcmision.org/dr.
The compass and the horizon

As my plane flew into the clouds and we lost sight of the ground below or the sky above, I thought about a World War II pilot. After fulfilling his service to the country, Bill became a pilot trainer. He loved to talk, especially about flying airplanes.

On more than one occasion, Bill would say that he could not relish the thought of being blindfolded, sitting in a chair, and spinning the chair around. He did not relish the thought of a blindfolded, spinning pilot.

But as my friend Bill said, “Without a horizon, you might be flying upside down and not even know it.”

I grew up in an area where I could see to the very edge of the horizon. The force of gravity is the only horizon most of us will ever need. But as my friend Bill said, “without a horizon, you might be flying upside down and not even know it.”

We face storms and challenges in life. Do we prefer the instruments we call our eyes and ears to navigate life? The compass and horizon are simply metaphors for the spiritual resources that mark our direction and define our life relative to the realities around us.

When the disciples were about to sink during a storm, they used their eyes and ears to survive. They saw Jesus sleeping during the crisis and woke him asking, “Do you not care if we die?” Jesus is the compass and horizon.

What instruments are you using to navigate life?

Rising stars - OCU welcomes Class of 2022

In August, Oklahoma City University welcomed the largest freshmen class in almost a decade.

The fall semester officially began with the Matriculation Convocation service on August 15, where Dr. Martha Burger became the newly elected president of the university.

The event is free to the public and will be held at Grace UMC on the Northwest Expressway. The Oklahoma United Methodist Contact September 7, 2018Page 2
Moving into the next 100 years of history

Kingfisher United Methodist Church has been a family church for more than 100 years. It’s the kind of church where parents have witnessed their children get married in the place where they once took their own vows, seen their grandchildren get baptized in the same sanctuary they did, and watched their great-grandchildren play where they used to play. It’s the kind of church where the building becomes part of the skyline, a landmark for locals and passers-by alike.

It’s also a church that needs a new building.

History

In 1889, the year of the Oklahoma Land Rush, Kingfisher UMC held its very first service in a tent that had been used as a prize-fighting venue the previous night. At least, that’s how the history was passed on to the current pastor, Patrick McPherson.

He said the congregation worshipped in multiple locations over the next 28 years before starting construction on the current building in 1917. The first service was held on Easter Sunday in 1918, making 2018 the building’s 100-year anniversary.

In part because of the church’s longevity, McPherson said the decision to build a new building has been a hard process, even for those in favor of the move.

“It’s very much a generational church in many ways,” he said. “We’re talking about people whose families were born, baptized, and even buried there. It’s been an emotional journey for everybody.”

Today

Steeped in history, the building is starting to show its age. The altar area was built for a small choir crowds the worship band on Sunday mornings. When the elevator breaks down, 20-30 people are unable to access the sanctuary for worship. Maintenance, upkeep and utilities cost tens of thousands of dollars every year. There is little multi-functional space. Physical accessibility is difficult, and to bring the building up to code would cost more than a million dollars.

“Due to the building’s age, accessibility is not expected by the city, but it’s expected by Christ,” McPherson said. “You can’t talk about being welcoming and then have certain parts that are not accessible to some people.”

In addition to accessibility, the new building will be filled with multi-functional space. Every classroom will be used for more than one purpose.

“They see ministry as more than just the building,” he said. “They realize the ministry needs to continue on into the next 100 years of history.”

Process

Kingfisher UMC voted 89-17 in favor of moving from its current location at the corner of HWY 33 and HWY 81 to a 12.5-acre plot just south of the high school. The capital campaign started in October 2015. The youngest donor is seven.

McPherson encouraged churches who are facing similar decisions to have patience with folks who have a hard time with the idea of moving to a new building. Though it’s a painful process, he said it’s important to always respond with love.

“Realize that your history is not in the building, but in your people and the relationships you’ve built,” McPherson said. “Have a vision and have hope. Letting go of your building doesn’t mean you’re letting go of Christ. Your ministry is not dying; it is continuing because of your faithfulness.”

Kingfisher UMC has been a family church for more than 100 years. With a new building and a strong bond, they hope to make it 100 years more.

Continuing education together

Oklahoma pastors and laity traveled to Dallas, Texas for course of study at Southern Methodist University’s Perkins School of Theology in Dallas.

From left to right: Daniel Ramey of Atoka and New Zion, Greg Smith, Sharon Cochran of Sharon, Tim Ford, an associate at Durant, and OIMC Superintendent David Wilson, who is an adjunct professor at SMU Perkins.
Devotion series focuses on spiritual preparation for GC2019

28ACTS

28 weeks, 28 chapters, 28 devotions leading up to General Conference 2019

BY MEAGAN EWTON

Delegates and conference leaders, both clergy and laity, have joined together to create 28 Acts Devotion. The digital devotion series is designed to prepare United Methodists in Oklahoma for the 2019 General Conference, which will address the denomination’s stance on human sexuality.

Derek Belase, director of discipleship, said the idea for a devotion series came after people asked him about spiritual preparation for General Conference.

He considered waiting to see if denominational resources would be made available, but ultimately decided to explore a biblical story where the faith community had to decide how to move forward in the midst of deep-seeded differences: the book of Acts.

He spoke with the delegation, and they confirmed the idea of creating the devotion series.

“This desire of people in our annual conference was, how do we prepare for this?,” Belase said. “Focusing on the book of Acts seemed to be one way to do that.”

Spiritual grounding

The devotion series aims to help clergy, laity, conference leaders and church members “reflect on what pulled the (early) church forward in a time of great upheaval and cultural change.”

Rev. Linda Harker, lead pastor at Norman-McFarlin and head of the Oklahoma delegation to General Conference, said examining the early church’s struggle for unity can remind people about the essentials of faith.

“I hope that (this preparation) keeps us grounded in what it means to be the church and what it means to be united, and that these devotions will simply lead us through the story of the early church and remind us of how we got where we are,” Harker said. “We’re not the first to go through challenges, and scripture shows us a way through.”

Harker, who authored the first week’s devotion, said everyone should be in prayer about General Conference whether or not they believe the outcome will affect them personally.

“Because we are a connectional church and what affects one person affects the entire body, it’s important for us to be as spiritually grounded as we can be when we enter into a time of discernment, like the early church who came together in the midst of all their differences,” Harker said. “They were able to keep their focus on what was really important: to take care of one another and to share the good news and to follow the way of Christ.”

Identity in Christ

Rev. Valerie Steele, lead pastor at Stillwater-Highland Park, said pastors can use the devotion series to discuss the Way Forward with their congregations.

“Something is going to happen in February 2019, and no matter what, it is going to affect us all,” Steele said. “I would hate for any church members who did not have the opportunity to discuss this or ask questions to be blindsided because we felt it was too uncomfortable to talk about.”

Steele hopes that devotion will help people focus on the church’s collective identity in Christ, emphasizing the need for the church to continue the work of making disciples.

“Acts is constantly reminding us we have a job to do, and we need to be about our father’s business,” she said. “This devotional helps us to remember intentionally that God is still speaking, and because God is still speaking, we need to be ready to hear.”

While she acknowledges the possibility of a schism, Steele believes the most important thing is to continue to fulfill the mission of Christ.

“If we’re going to get stuck on anything, let’s get stuck on who we are and what our purpose is on God’s earth on this side of glory,” Steele said. “The big question for us is can we still be faithful to what God has called us to be as disciple makers for Jesus Christ around the world, even if (General Conference) doesn’t turn out exactly the way we would want it to be.”

The series is sent via email every Monday and published on the conference’s website and Facebook page. Sign up for the devotion online at: okumc-reg.brtapp.com/28WeeksActsDevotions.

Mobile day camps see growth in second year

Voyage Mobile Day Camps saw a 56 percent increase in the number of campers this year, according to Neil Tate, program director for Camp and Retreat Ministries.

Eight week-long day camps were held in eight cities across the state, including Edmond, Stillwater, Checotah, Duncan, Carnegie, Stigler, Perkins and Shawnee. Thirteen college students served as staff.

Students attending Voyage participated in activities such as bubble soccer and archery while learning first steps to knowing and following Jesus. The camp aims to engage children from diverse racial-ethnic backgrounds and is paid for in part by a New People New Places grant.

The mobile day camp reached an attendance milestone on week two when more than 100 campers participated at Stillwater-First.

Another large camp was held at Oak Park Retreat Center in Perkins, also a NPNP grant recipient. The organizations maximized their impact by working together to reach the greater Perkins community.

With increased attendance came repeat campers. Tate shared that on two separate occasions a student attended Voyage, traveled to visit a relative, and attended the mobile camp again.

“We’ve been doing this for two years, and we already have people who want to keep coming back,” Tate said. “It’s a great feeling to know we’re having a positive impact on these kids’ lives.”

Conference camps overall were well attended, according to Ed Parker, director for Camp and Retreat Ministries.

Camps included two LEAD Camps, youth and children’s camps, and two backpacking treks to Montana.

Parker is thankful for the 59 people who served as camp deans this summer, saying, “we can’t do it without their leadership and we can’t do it without the adult leaders who help ensure fun, safety, and spiritual growth.”
Dear Oklahoma United Methodist Family,

As many of you know, we will soon be facing an important time in the life of our United Methodist Church. On February 22-24, 2019, a special called General Conference will be held in St. Louis, Mo. with the purpose of discerning the direction our church will go regarding the Human Sexuality questions we have debated over many years. We encourage every United Methodist in Oklahoma to be in prayer concerning this conference. We also have available a weekly devotion (written by Oklahoma leaders) that can supplement your prayer time. Links for these resources are printed below.

We would also like to invite you to attend a presentation about the plans that are scheduled to be presented at the called General Conference. This discussion and presentation will have members of the Oklahoma delegation present as well as Bishop Nunn. This important gathering will be held on Friday, Oct. 5 from 2 p.m. - 4 p.m. at St. Luke’s UMC Christian Life Center (CLC) in Oklahoma City. There will be no charge to attend, however if you plan on attending we need you to register so that we have adequate seating and handouts for all. Please use the resource link below to register your attendance for this meeting.

If you are not able to be present, we plan to live stream this important discussion in the life of our denomination. A link to the live stream will be provided on the conference website and sent by email to you as we get closer to the date.

We want to thank you for your prayers, concerns and continued commitment to our beloved church. As challenging as this discussion may be to some, it also offers us hope for a future that will best reflect our ongoing commitment to making disciples for the transformation of the world. We look forward to seeing many of you on the Oct. 5.

Rev. Linda Harker, Chair Oklahoma Delegation
Rev. Joseph Harris, Assistant to Bishop Nunn
Dr. Don Kim, Oklahoma Delegation

OKUMC invites all to witness delegation discussion for GC2019

GBGM, Hispanic/Latino Ministries expand focus
Community initiatives to be included in outreach efforts

Hispanic/Latino Ministries is expanding its focus to include community initiatives, said Carlos Ramirez, pastor of Putnam City UMC. The Hispanic/Latino Ministry of the Oklahoma United Methodist Conference met with a representative of the General Board of Global Ministries on Aug. 24-25 as part of a planned discussion about how best to reach Latino communities in Oklahoma.

The two-day summit was centered on visioning and strategic planning with a strong emphasis on how best to pursue multiethnic and multicultural ministries and address challenges leaders face in those ministries, as well as a renewed emphasis on leadership development and deployment.

Ramirez, a GBGM missionary, serves as a Hispanic/Latino ministry coach and a consultant for the Oklahoma Conference.

“This type of ministry is harder than you think,” Ramirez said. “You cannot only be the priest. You’re also a grant writer, a cheerleader, an organizer, and more, all while being sensitive to other cultures. You can only mess up so much before you start to lose connection with people.”

During the summit, the representative from GBGM led guided discussions and exercises to assess the status of Latino ministry and representation in the Oklahoma Conference. They learned that less than one percent of all leadership in the conference – either clergy or lay – have a Hispanic/Latino background.

For this reason, leadership development was placed as a high priority for Hispanic/Latino Ministries. In addition to leadership training that is already being offered, leadership development will include intercultural development, community advocacy and entrepreneurship.

One of the items considered during the summit was the OKUMC Strategic Plan presented at the 2008 Annual Conference. Its focus on allocating resources in a way that would welcome younger and more diverse disciples paralleled Hispanic Ministries’ goal of engaging in multiethnic and multicultural ministries.

To reach this goal, Hispanic/Latino Ministries will include community initiatives in its outreach efforts.

 Leaders who plant community initiatives will need to demonstrate that their efforts are both replicable and sustainable. The “fruitfulness” of these initiatives may be demonstrated by data or by demonstrated outcomes.

“We need more than encouragement... We can’t show up to meet a need too late and expect to see resurrection.”

Hispanic/Latino Ministries will meet with GBGM again on Sept. 14-15 to finalize strategy details. Ramirez believes conference support is vital for success.

“We need more than encouragement,” Ramirez said. “We need people to champion this ministry with their time and their resources. We can’t show up to meet a need too late and expect to see resurrection.”
Communications Ministry offers Advent resources

When planning for Advent, consider these resources

A Different kind of Christmas
Published Nov. 28, 2017
Mike Slaughter inspires viewers to approach Christmas differently and be transformed in the process. About 69 minutes, with guides for children, youth and adults.

Faithful: Christmas Through the Eyes of Joseph
Published Oct. 23, 2017
Four videos featuring Adam Hamilton teaching about Joseph and what we as Christians can learn from him. The videos when combined with the book and leader guide, provide an engaging 4-week group study. About 42 minutes.

Because of Bethlehem/He Chose the Nails
Published Sept. 1, 2016
Two-disc set for Advent and Lent by Max Lucado. Study guides are available for each title.

Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem
Published Oct. 13, 2015
Imagine Jesus from Mary’s point of view – proud of her son, in awe of his gifts and mission, guided by love for him as a person and so much more. This DVD is meant for group use along with Adam Hamilton’s book of the same name. DVD contains five videos of about 10 minutes each. 1 copy of DVD, Leaders Guide, Youth Leader Guide, Youth Study Guide

Sent: Delivering the Gift of Hope at Christmas
Published Oct. 13, 2015
Dynamic pastor Jorge Acevedo leads a five-week journey to discover how, where, and why we are sent. Joining him on the journey are four young clergy who challenge us through story, art, and Bible study. DVD contains five video sessions for small group use, less than 10 minutes each. Comes with leader guide, youth study book and children’s leader guide.

The Journey
Published Jan. 22, 2015
Take your group on a journey with Adam Hamilton as he travels on video from Nazareth to Bethlehem in this fascinating look at the birth of Jesus Christ. This 5-session DVD was filmed on location in the Holy Land and is an essential companion resource to the (included) book “The Journey: Walking the Road to Bethlehem.” Hamilton is senior pastor of the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection in Leawood, Kan.

The Nativity Story
Published Oct. 1, 2014
This 2006 feature film stars Keisha Castle-Hughes as Mary and Oscar Isaac as Joseph. Follow the drama that focuses on the period in their lives when they journeyed to Bethlehem for the birth of Jesus.

Submit your event or job posting to editor@okumc.org. Submission deadline for the Oct. 5 issue is Sept 20.
Cindy Havlik (center) holds the Frances E. Willard award presented by Jennifer Ahrens-Sims (left) and Katie Hill (right).

**GBHEM doubles dollar amount UM students can borrow to pursue higher ed**

NASHVILLE, Tenn. – The Office of Loans and Scholarships at the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry (GBHEM) announced an increase in the maximum amount United Methodist students can borrow to pursue their education.

Students can now borrow up to $10,000 per calendar year (January through December) with a lifetime maximum of $40,000 from the United Methodist Student Loan Fund. Previously students were allotted $5,000 per calendar year with a maximum lifetime total of $20,000 during a four-year college career. With one of the lowest education loan interest rates in the U.S., GBHEM is offering students an opportunity to avoid more costly loans and decrease the amount of education debt acquired.

“GBHEM’s Office of Loans and Scholarships has maintained our commitment to providing United Methodist students with affordable options while pursuing higher education.

We will continue this commitment and are proud to provide low-interest loan options to help students avoid excessive education debt,” explained Allyson Collinsworth, executive director of the Office of Loans and Scholarships at GBHEM.

For more information or to apply, visit www.gbhem.org/loans-and-scholarships.

**Passages**

Opal Mae (Hudson) Williams passed away at her home on Aug. 18. Services were held in Hobart on Aug. 25. Williams is survived by her husband Rev. Jim “Weegie” Williams, a retired United Methodist elder who pastored churches in Oklahoma for more than 40 years.

Margaret Montgomery died on Aug. 25 in Ponca City. Montgomery was the wife of Rev. Robert Montgomery, a retired elder and former district superintendent for Bartlesville. A Celebration of Life Service was held for Montgomery on Aug. 29 at Ponca City-St. Paul’s.

**COSROW Student Scholarship Open**

COSROW is accepting applications for the COSROW Scholarship for Women in Ministry Students. The scholarship is open to women who are 1) enrolled in seminary, pre-seminary courses, or Course of Study, and 2) are connected to the Oklahoma Conference.

The application deadline is September 30, 2018.

Download the application at www.okumc.org/forms.

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- Creating and supplying Welcome Baskets for new placements
- Hosting Parents’ Night Out or other events
- Praying for foster families
- Providing meals for foster families
- Hosting foster care information sessions

**THANK YOU METHODIST COMMUNITY FOR MAKING THE DIFFERENCE!**

Learn more about all Circle of Care programs at circleofcare.org or call (918) 402-3247 to find out how your church can get involved in this ministry.
Ministry in a minute

Top left: Callie Duncan, Sara Martin, Jay Williams and Katelynn Trobaugh represented the South-Central Jurisdiction at the 2018 Global Young People Convocation (GYPC). GYPC is a quadrennial gathering of United Methodist Young People from around the globe to engage in fellowship, community, and worship while learning about leadership and the church.

Bottom left: The Nicoma Park UMC and Thrift Store received an award from Circle of Care for being one of the top five churches per capita in giving in the state of Oklahoma. The thrift store donates all proceeds to missions and charities. This is the fourth such award that the thrift store has received from Circle of Care.

Top right: Students and volunteers at Vacation Bible School pray over supplies gathered for a local pregnancy center. Waynoka and Cheyenne Valley churches were one of 21 church recipients of free VBS curriculum supplied by the Rural and Smaller Membership Church Commission. The commission plans to supply curriculum to small churches again in 2019.

Thirty Years of Bill Junk

This August, we celebrated our president’s 30th anniversary of work with the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation. What an incredible legacy that Bill continues to develop each day! We are so grateful for his faithful leadership and direction.

Bill, thank you for dedicating your life to the work of God through OKUMF and for thirty years of lasting good!