New nonprofit turns coffee into employment

BY MEAGAN EWTON

In a small basement office in Oklahoma City, a new non-profit is hoping coffee can address a societal problem: employment after incarceration.

Red River Roasters is dreaming big and starting small: three flavors, three blends, one grinder and one heat sealer. The endeavor was founded by Redemption Church, a ministry of Oklahoma’s Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries that meets at OKC-Penn Ave.

Crystal King, the first, and so far only, employee, grinds and seals each pound of coffee by hand. She likened the work to starting a small business one relationship at a time.

“I am not a salesman, but when it comes to the mission of helping people come out of prison, I can be excited about that,” King said. “I am one of those people.”

King, who was previously incarcerated for 42 months, is a graduate of Exodus House, a temporary residential program through CIAMM that helps people newly released from prison re-enter society. She believes Red River Roasters has the potential to change lives.

“It’s truly scary to be a success (after incarceration). The statistics are stacked against you,” King said. “What people need are jobs. That can be the difference between succeeding and going back to prison.”

This sentiment was the motivating factor behind starting the business, according to Rev. Brad Rogers, pastor of OKC-Penn Ave. and Redemption Church. He said a conversation with the coffee supplier for Redemption Church led to the choice to create Red River Roasters.

The nonprofit has received some support as they get started, such as a donated coffee grinder, donated tables, and a CPA who donated time to set up the 501(c)3 designation.

The church also received a New People New Places grant that in part supports the work of reducing recidivism through employment.

Rogers said that while they hope to grow enough to roast their own beans and provide full coffee service to their customers, the coffee is just the means used to provide hope to the incarcerated community.

“We have become passionate about coffee and still have a lot to learn, coffee comes second to the mission of changing lives and providing opportunities for the incarcerated community,” Rogers said. “As we gain success in this area, we will have a positive social impact on not only the lives of individuals such as Crystal, but also on the greater community.”

For her part, King is excited about the possibilities. She plans to continue marketing to United Methodist churches in the district as well as other nonprofits.

“Being a part of something like this is a game changer,” King said. “It can change somebody’s life. It changed my life.”

The Red River Roasters store can be found online at reddriverroasters.org.
The gentle draw of worship

It was one of the most unique worship spaces I have experienced. The back porch extended about twenty feet from the back of the modest home. There was a roof overhead and a deck served as the floor. The back of the house served as one wall. Two other walls were mostly unfinished. There was no back wall.

Words to the songs were projected on the wall of the house. The lyrics were mostly unfinished.

Two other walls served as one wall. The back of the house served as the floor. There was a modest cross on a table, a key deck and about that many more in the yard. About thirty folding chairs were on the washing machine, and the hot water heater framed by a small bathroom window, a on the wall of the house. The lyrics were on his life. He had little formal education and lived in one of the poorest sections of the country, along the border of Texas and Mexico.

Now he was telling a group of people that included several United Methodist Bishops his story. God had called him to use his home as a place for people to come and worship. He was building a place for his neighbors to worship, one plank of wood at a time. His wife and son also shared how thankful they were to God that their husband and father was still alive and had given himself to God. The son said that he had heard a call to ministry in the very place we had gathered to worship.

Testimony time continued when the neighbor from across the street stood to speak. She began her conversation saying that she did not like all the noise that was coming from this house. She had called police when the music got too loud. She had determined to do everything possible to shut down the gathering. She did not believe in God and described herself as a closed-minded atheist.

But her neighbors began to invite her to come to eat. She and her family lacked enough food, so she would come. She would not stay for worship; instead, she had begun to tolerate the noise. And then one night, she did stay for worship and her life was changed. Now she is one of the leaders.

After worship, the little church fed everyone who was there. The poor were feeding their neighbors, including the rich!

God is still at work in the world and in the United Methodist Church. It does not take a lot of money, but it does take an open heart. How might God impact your community today?

Musical and Bible study join the national conversation

The OCU Musical Theatre Department is bringing the American opera “Susannah” to the main stage Nov. 16-18. Based on the biblical story of “Susanna and the Elders” from the Apocrypha, this modern retelling is set in rural Tennessee and follows a series of escalating events that begin at a church dance and end with a community torn apart. Like the biblical story on which it is based, the opera delves into the themes of lust, false accusations, sexual assault, and the aftermath.

As a companion to the show, the OCU Wesley Center has prepared a Bible study for use by youth and adults. It is available for free download on their website: www.okcu.edu/campus/religious-life.

Tickets for the three performances range from $14-$28 each and are available through the OCU Ticket Office.

UCR dinner recognizes outstanding service

Each year OCU’s University-Church Relations department teams up with the Wimberly School of Religion to recognize individuals who have made outstanding contributions to the vitality of their community through their connection to OCU and the church.

This year, former Oklahoma City mayor and OCU trustees chairman Ron Norick of OKC-St. Luke’s and the Lemon Family of OKC-Church of the Servant will be awarded the prestigious Bishop Milhouse Award.

Additionally, the Wimberly School of Religion will be honoring Mark Crenshaw (’97) as their Distinguished Alumnus for 2018 and Brandon Katzir (’10) as their Rising Star.

The honorees will be recognized at the annual UCR Appreciation Dinner on Friday, Dec. 7 at 6 pm. The dinner will also serve as a mini-reunion for those active in OCU religious life from the graduating classes of 1988, 1998, and 2008.

The evening also includes the opportunity to attend the Vespers choir concert, the “Miss Bennet: Christmas at Pemberly” stage production, or the dance show “Home for the Holidays.”

Tickets for the event are available at www.okcu.edu/ucrdinner.
Contact to go digital in 2019

Communications Ministry to introduce new digital publication and quarterly magazine

BY REV. DR. JOE HARRIS, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNICATIONS MINISTRY

The Contact newspaper has been a mainstay of the Oklahoma United Methodist Conference since 1970, informing United Methodists across the state what God is doing in and through this conference.

Following the December 2018 issue of the Contact, the printed edition will be discontinued. The Contact will continue in an all-digital expanded format that will allow it to be printed by any printer for those who would like to have a paper copy of the conference news.

Digital Contact

The digital Contact will have all its current features with conference news featured prominently among its offerings. This expanded format will be available on all digital platforms (computers, tablets and mobile phones).

In the future, many articles will feature interactive elements and embedded video. This will allow us to share stories in a more in-depth way than we have been able to in print.

We also will be inviting writers from the Conference to submit book reviews, special features, and links to specific ministry information and sites. More information on the submission process will be shared as we get closer to the new year.

Why digital?

When considering the future realities of our Conference budget in light of unsustainable and ever-increasing costs of postage, paper and printing, it became clear that we could no longer continue offering the printed Contact.

We had to reinvent how we offer news and information to the annual conference. With many readers moving from printed materials and toward digital reading, creating a digital publication was a natural decision.

However, we did not want to leave out any person who needs or prefers a paper copy of the news. That is why our digital newspaper will be printable by anyone with an office printer. The new Contact will fit on letter-sized paper without resizing, making it accessible to everyone who wants to read it in print.

A new magazine

In addition to the digital Contact, a quarterly print magazine will be sent to a mailing list of specific leaders in the Oklahoma Conference.

This magazine will be a new ministry tool to inform, equip and inspire United Methodists across Oklahoma by sharing what Christ is doing in local churches, on the mission field, and through our connectional opportunities.

The magazine will feature innovative and inspirational stories that capture the movement of the Holy Spirit as we answer the call to make disciples who make a difference. These stories will be practical, relevant and thought-provoking.

While stories in the Contact will continue to focus on the news and work of the local church, the magazine will share how that work has affected the communities and individual lives reached by these ministries.

Looking ahead

Your Communications Ministry Board and staff have prayed, discussed and reminded themselves that their mission is to seek to make disciples of Jesus Christ by informing, communicating, and resourcing with conference entities, local churches and individual United Methodists for the transformation of the world.

We believe that God’s preferred future for us is to produce tools that will help Oklahoman United Methodists proclaim the risen Christ through digital, video, social media, and yes, print. We pray that you will find these new directions helpful in your ministry.

More information on the transition to digital, including how to submit ideas and content, will be shared in the December 2018 issue of the Contact.

Disaster response transitions to “blue sky time”

BY JEREMY BASSETT
DIRECTOR OF OFFICE OF MISSION

Some five years ago, together with multiple partners, our Annual Conference’s Disaster Response ministry geared up for the work needed following another devastating storm centered on Moore, Oklahoma. Two years later, another series of storms left even more work to be done, this time spread over 49 counties.

During this time, some 2,160 homeowners accessed disaster services; we were able to complete over 670 projects, utilizing around 6,500 volunteers for over 125,000 volunteer hours, valued at approximately $2.7m in labor value alone!

In these five or so years, we saw our United Methodist support staff grow to 30 temporary workers, itself just one part of the total staff deployed through our other partner agencies. Now, however, we alone remain on the field, completing the last of the assigned tasks.

But, it is time for us to declare this extended task “completed!”

So, we are transitioning out of our active work in this disaster response effort to what we are aptly calling “blue sky time.” The Oklahoma Annual Conference will continue to respond to future disaster events as it has in the past, but there is simply no workable way to keep staff in place when the grant money that funded our effort the past five years has run out.

The last few staff are working on establishing an independent effort, to be called “Recovering Oklahomans After Disaster, Inc.,” to continue the work, focusing on disaster response, recovery, preparation and mitigation. We applaud this effort, and wish them well, but are not able to be a part of it in any formal way.

Those on our Disaster Response mailing list will receive a separate communication about this effort, to which you are free to respond as you feel led.

Rev. Richard Norman, for so many years the key person heading up our various responses, will be taking retirement at the end of the year, but will be kept on retainer, to be available to us when needed. The Office of Mission will remain actively engaged in monitoring every future event for possible response — and will ramp up our team and our work as is needed and as funds allow.

We are deeply grateful to Richard, to his dedicated team of workers over the past five years, to the vast army of volunteers, donors and partners in the field in this vital work (especially to UMCOR and the churches and people of the United Methodist Church of Oklahoma!).

Sadly, there is always the likelihood of another event that will need our response. And, we will seek to be available then as we have been in the past, assuring that everyone gets a chance to go home again, safe and secure in their dwellings.

Please be assured we will be there to respond, if and when that occurs.
Young clergy still in short supply

BY SAM HODGES, UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE
REPRINTED WITH PERMISSION

The Rev. Nicole Anderson lives 20 miles from any other female pastor and even farther from one who’s young.
The 28-year-old has felt some loneliness and isolation in her work, and she’d like to see The United Methodist Church pair her and other young women clergy with women colleagues who could offer support and advice. It could happen online.

“Google Hangouts are a blessing from God,” Anderson said.

As pastor of First United Methodist Church in the small town of Vermillion, South Dakota, Anderson may be more isolated than most. But strength in numbers is not something any young woman elder can count on.

Elders are the seminary-trained ministers who lead most United Methodist churches in the U.S. and are the ones eligible to serve as district superintendents and bishops.

But young elders — under age 35 — continue to be rare in the denomination. And women elders are dropping in number and in their percentage of the young clergy group.

Those are two findings of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership’s 2018 clergy age trends study. The study counts as young elders those ordained and those in transitional living program

Of the 15 new elders ordained at the 2018 Oklahoma Annual Conference, five were 35 or younger. There are 16 ordained elders younger than 35 in the Oklahoma Conference, three of whom are women. That number rises to 32, six of whom are women, when including provisional elders, full and provisional deacons, and all local licensed pastors. There are 461 United Methodist clergy in Oklahoma.

BY SAM HODGES, UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

H. Weems Jr. and Ann A. Michel offer five reasons why The United Methodist Church, which has steadily declined in membership and worship attendance in the U.S., needs young leadership.

Reaching young people is one.

“They are more likely to speak the language of an emerging generation whose worldview and modes of communication differ from those of their parents’ generation,” Weems and Michel wrote.

The Lewis Center, part of Wesley Theological Seminary, annually reports on U.S. clergy age trends in The United Methodist Church, drawing on statistics from Wespath, the denomination’s pensions agency.

This year’s report confirms some longstanding patterns, including the overall decline in the number of active elders. In 1985, the denomination had 21,378, and earlier this year had just 13,669.

The number of licensed local pastors, who tend to lead smaller churches, often on a bi-vocational basis, grew steadily from 1985 to 2010, and has stayed about even as the elder numbers continue a steady drop.

The denomination had five elders for every local pastor in 1990. Now the ratio is under two-to-one.

The Lewis Center study shows the number of deacons dipped in 2018. Deacons can lead worship but often focus in church settings.

But the number of young deacons stayed the same — a record high 124 — and young deacons make up just over 12 percent of the total.

C

ircle of Care is raising $25,000 to match a $25,000 challenge grant from the Paul Milburn Gift Fund at the Oklahoma City Community Foundation. This grant will benefit the Preparation for Adult Living (PAL) Program, an independent living program for disadvantaged youth age 16-25.

“If DHS can’t find a foster home, they have to take you to a shelter,” said PAL participant Jonathan. “You feel like no one wants you because people don’t want broken.”

After leaving his last foster home, Jonathan applied for the PAL program to prevent him from shelter hopping. Doing so also helped him move past his heartache and focus on personal and professional goals.

“They have helped me so much,” he said. “There are people here you can talk to.”

Jonathan graduated in May 2017 as an honor student in high school, and now is in his second year at the University of Oklahoma working toward a Bachelors in Mechanical Engineering.

To help Circle of Care meet this challenge, contact Sarah Steffes at 405-215-1400 or visit circleofcare.org/ministries/pal.

Challenge grant matches up to $25,000 for transitional living program

Challenge Grant from the Paul Milburn Fund for the Preparation for Adult Living Program. $25,000 MATCH

1 + 1 = Twice The IMPACT

To see “Young Clergy” on page 8

PHOTO BY DOUG MCBARR

PHOTO BY DOUG MCBARR
GBGM offers resources for #GivingTuesday

The General Board of Global Ministries is providing resources to help churches raise awareness about #GivingTuesday. GBGM describes #GivingTuesday as “an international movement to extend the spirit of giving thanks into the Advent season.” People observe the unofficial holiday by donating money to their favorite charity or nonprofit.

Resources for local churches include free graphics and a toolkit that includes facts and figures, ideas for social media, fundraising projects, and steps for finding and supporting a GBGM project or missionary.

In 2017, more than $300 million was raised in 150 countries. More than $677,000 was given to projects through The Advance, an accountable giving arm of the United Methodist Church that sends 100 percent of each gift to its intended mission or ministry.

#GivingTuesday will be held on Nov. 27. Resources are available to download at www.umcmission.org/Giving-Tuesday.

Connection, cont.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

One such ministry is Ice Angels, an outreach to homeless people started in 2009 by Lenny and Mary Kaplan at OKC-Epworth (now a part of OKC-Mosaic). The Ice Angels food truck was the starting point for the Wednesday afternoon outreach. Mary Kaplan said having church partnerships helps their ministry offer more resources to more people than they could do on their own.

“It makes such a difference having volunteers because not only do they volunteer their time, but they bring a lot of supplies,” she said. “We couldn’t do it without the volunteers from churches.”

Larry Kaplan agreed, noting that organizational partnerships have allowed them to offer legal services, medical services and housing connections.

“Skyline has been the biggest help because when we’re doing this, they supply the food so we can cook and get a meal going, and it’s just been wonderful,” he said. “We’ve been able to serve people a meal that you’d go to a restaurant to get. It’s improving every year.”

William, a homeless man who comes to the Wednesday outreach on a regular basis, said he appreciates the spiritual aspect of the outreach ministry and the volunteers who help make it happen.

“They care about me,” he said. “They call me by my first name, so I know they care about me, and I care about them, too.”

Rev. Debbie Ingraham, the executive director of Skyline, said they have doubled the number of meals they serve each month since Andre started, going from an average of 300 to more than 600 since July.

Ingraham said their food resources for the homeless are available to any church or organization in the state that wants to take food to people on the streets, and Contino is available to provide training.

“We have food, and I can get materials; it’s finding people who are willing to risk getting out of the pews to ‘see all the people’ that we need,” Ingraham said. “This is what we’re called to do, and this is what grows us as disciples. It’s going out and meeting Christ in his nakedness and hunger and taking care of that.”

Contino said the outreach ministry is not about building up Skyline, but rather empowering local churches to engage in ministry they may not feel equipped to do.

“It’s almost like connecting the dots,” Contino said. “There’s a lot of people in our churches that are looking for purpose, asking, ‘How can we be the church other than just be in this building on Sunday morning?’ And that’s a great thing.”

At every opportunity, Contino invites others to join him for the Wednesday outreach. He believes helping others is a blessing not only for the recipient, but for the volunteer as well.

“It’s not just because we are giving out of our abundance; we need to feel this, we need to be part of each other, and we need to be part of this community,” Contino said. “For me, this is the core of discipleship. It’s not just to learn a principle… It’s when you live faith so deeply that it really changes who you are.”

For his part, Lenny Kaplan is looking for a new partnership to provide an ongoing need: showers.

“If anybody has a shower trailer or knows where we can get one, holler.”

Skyline Urban Ministries is a connectional ministry through the Oklahoma Conference of the United Methodist Church.
OCU student named “Champion of Character”

Oklahoma City University student named “Champion of Character”

Devaunjue “Jay” Williams has been named as the recipient of the 2018 Sooner Athletic Conference’s Champions of Character Award. The award recognizes a junior or senior student-athlete who demonstrates outstanding academic achievement, campus and community leadership, athletic achievement and has a strong future ambition.

Williams, a junior from Wewoka, is a member of OCU’s competitive cheerleading squad. He is a religious studies major and also serves on the pastoral staff at Village UMC in Oklahoma City. But what elevated Williams above his peers is the fact that at 21 years old he is raising his two 9-year-old nephews, Andre and Anthony, who came to live with him on campus full-time in the spring. His story was featured in The Oklahoman in June.

“Jay is a role model for the type of student-athletes who we strive to attract to Oklahoma City University,” said OCU athletic director Jim Abbott. Those sentiments were echoed by coach Alicia Bailey, who added, “There are not many college student-athletes who would have the courage, strength and responsibility to do what he has done.”

Williams was announced as the winner at the NAIA National Awards Day on Sept. 15.

OKC-St. Luke’s Asbury hosts fiesta during Hispanic Heritage Month

In honor of Hispanic Heritage month, OKC-St. Luke’s Asbury threw a fiesta for their community with crafts, games, food and music. The children painted maracas and Mexican flags, made crepe flowers, and everyone enjoyed eating elote (Mexican grilled corn), nachos and duros. They also had a bouncy house and piñatas.

The celebration ended with the Yúmare Mexican Folkloric Dancers putting on a special show as a thank you to the church. Each year, Americans observe National Hispanic Heritage Month from Sept. 15 to Oct. 15 by celebrating the histories, cultures and contributions of American citizens whose ancestors came from Spain, Mexico, the Caribbean, and Central and South America.

The celebration starts in the middle of the month because Sept. 15 marks the independence days of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua. Mexico, Chile and Belize follow shortly after on Sept. 16, 18 and 21 respectively.

OKC-St. Luke’s Asbury is located in a community with a large Hispanic/Latino population, so they offer English as Second Language classes and host Spanish bible studies as a way to reach out to their community. They also open their church to the Yúmare Mexican Folkloric Dance group for free, providing them a safe space to practice.

The children and teens who attend the dance group learn about Hispanic/Latino culture through exploring the stories behind dances found throughout Mexico’s diverse regions.

The group’s director, Shana Madrid-Smith, is grateful to OKC-St Luke’s Asbury for allowing them to practice at the church during the week.

“We really wanted to give back because without this space, we wouldn’t really have anywhere else to go,” Madrid-Smith said. “I’m so thankful they let us use this space every week.”

Act Now. Save Big.

There’s never been a better time to move to Epworth Villa. With our special incentive on spacious one-bedroom apartments, you can save up to 30% off your entrance fee—if you act now. And start enjoying more time doing the things you love in a beautiful place you call home. Call (405) 529-6679 for details and best selection.
Appointments

David Hanigar, from OKC-Wickline to discontinued, effective Sept. 15.

Marvin Hudson, from Cordell to retired, effective Dec. 30.

David Jones, from Tipton to retired, effective Sept. 30.

Adam Leathers, from Perry UMC to medical leave, effective Sept. 1.

Alan McIntyre, from Inola to not appointed, effective Sept. 2.

Charles Ryser, from Tulsa-Asbury to retired, effective Jan. 1, 2019.

Gerald Steele, from Inola to not appointed, effective Sept. 1.

Sarah Thornhill, from Owasso-First to maternity leave, effective Sept. 15.

Rev. Charles Hubbard Stewart passed away on Oct. 11. Stewart, a retired elder, served in the Oklahoma Conference for more than 20 years. Services were held on Oct. 16 at OKC-Sunny Lane.

Submit your event or job post by Nov. 21 to editor@okumc.org.

Save the Date

Youth Workers Training Day
Nov. 3, $25
OCU Student Union.
www.okumc.org/youthworkersacademy

Annual Missions Dinner at The OU Wesley Foundation
Nov. 16, 7 p.m.
428 W. Lindsey St., Norman
Cost: $20, Student: $10

Ministry Center Closed
Nov. 22-23
Thanksgiving Holiday

Passages

Rev. Charles Hubbard Stewart passed away on Oct. 11. Stewart, a retired elder, served in the Oklahoma Conference for more than 20 years. Services were held on Oct. 16 at OKC-Sunny Lane.

Every dollar makes a difference!
To make a donation through scholarship, visit www.spst.edu/giving
**Young clergy, cont.**

**CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4**

“We don’t feel like we have to, for lack of a better word, pay our dues to get the bishop’s ear,” said Rivera, who is on track for elder ordination. “We feel we belong at the table.”

The Dakotas Conference ranks second (after Arkansas) among U.S. conferences in percentage of young clergy. Deb Kjerstad, Dakotas’ leadership development director, can tick off a long list of targeted efforts that are part of a “culture of call” strategy.

But Kjerstad warns there’s no easy fix, and probably no fix at all without a lot more flexibility. She believes many young people who feel called to church ministry are more concerned with relevance and impact than with credentials or serving in an established church setting.

“We must encourage our boards of ordained ministry to be open and creative to new ways for people to enter ministry,” Kjerstad said. The desire for flexibility may be a factor in the decline of young women elders.

The Rev. Allison Sauls Sikes recalls that women made up more than half her seminary class, but many ultimately chose to be deacons or to do “deacon-type work” without pursuing ordination.

“Sometimes the structures of the church felt a little bit restrictive,” said Sikes, a 28-year-old associate pastor and elder at Asbury United Methodist Church in Lafayette, Louisiana.

Sikes also said it’s possible that the denomination’s struggle to remain united despite division over homosexuality could be a challenge to recruiting young clergy, male and female.

“There’s a lot of anxiety in the system and in people’s hearts,” she said.

**CONSIDER THESE POINTS:**

- Measure your annual growth in terms of:
  - new gifts received
  - growth of investment income
  - new donors identified
- Have you asked donors within the congregation to self identify? Do you know who is planning to remember the church in their will or living trust? Are you regularly reminding members of the congregation to include the church in their estate planning?
- How well have you communicated with the congregation on the benefits of legacy giving?
- What events or educational seminars have been most successful this year?
- Do you have permanent endowments? How has income from the permanent endowments been used to support or enhance the mission and ministry of the church? How well have you reported the disbursements to the congregation?
- How have you thanked and recognized your donors? Do you have a meaningful recognition program in place? Do you have a legacy society?
- Has your core leadership helped promote the program through their example of legacy giving?
- How successfully have you linked the church endowment to the church’s mission and/or long-range vision for ministry?
- Have you recently had someone from the Foundation meet with your church regarding legacy giving?

If you would like advice or guidance in evaluating your legacy giving program, the Foundation is here to help. Contact David Battles at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org today to Invest in Lasting Good.

**The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation**

WWW.OKUMF.ORG • 800-259-6863 • 405-525-6863

**Helping People Invest in Lasting Good**