



Oklahoma Conference

of The United Methodist Church

The official Oklahoma Conference logo represents both the outreaching community and all believers coming together. As shapes overlap and colors blend, new creation emerges. Green also signifies life and growth.

OCU names 1st female president

BY ZOE TRAVERS
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF, OCU STUDENT PUBLICATIONS

Oklahoma City University will have its first female president beginning this summer. OCU alumnus and trustee Martha Burger was named the university's 18th president on March 25.

Burger will take office July 1. She will replace President Robert Henry, who retires June 30.

"I am excited and, understandably, a bit nervous with anticipation and anxious to roll up my sleeves and get into it," Burger said March 26.

She's interested in getting feedback from students and learning what she can do to better the future of the university. She also said she's excited to interact with students.

"I'm going to be doing a lot of listening. You know, I have some thoughts, but it comes from the filter of a trustee, and I'm really anxious to continue to get input from everyone." She has served on the board of trustees for the United Methodist-related university since 2008.

Burger said she's excited to enter a university with student involvement.

"I grew up in the '60s during a time that's well-known for



Martha Burger will begin her new job on July 1.

student activism, and I see a rebirth of engagement in the big picture," she said. "I know it's been happening at universities, but I'm anxious to be a part of that perspective and that energy."

Ron Norick, chairman of the trustees, sent an email to the campus community on March 25, reading: "Martha Burger is

SEE NEW PRESIDENT, PAGE 7

In Enid, Circle of Care prepares way for another foster home

TOP: Young guests look at floor plans and elevation drawings in Enid on March 19 for the Legacy of Care foster home planned there by Circle of Care.

The home, for sibling groups, will be constructed on the 8-acre site that also is the location of the agency's Holsinger Home, built in 1999.

The 3,000-square-foot home is expected to cost \$285,000. A clubhouse that will provide space for group activities is also planned.

BOTTOM: At Alva, construction on another Legacy of Care foster home for siblings is running ahead of schedule and expected to be complete in July, said Sarah Steffes, the United Methodist-related agency's vice president of development. Groundbreaking was Jan. 31.



Meet the Monnets:

4 generations live out faith at one church

BY CAITLIN DRYKE

TULSA — As someone who studied sociology, I find that I best understand a place by understanding the people of that place. New to Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, I am coming to know the church through the memories, stories, and experiences that members share with me. Recently I was fortunate enough to speak with Irene Brown and Ed Monnet Jr. and see Boston Avenue through the eyes of a family that has been involved there through four generations.

The Monnet story is a testament to faith, family, and love.

Edward Orton Monnet Sr. and his twin sister, Gloria M. Nicholson, were born on April Fool's Day in 1927.

They were among the first babies baptized in the current church building, making them in March 2018 perhaps the longest-tenured living members of Boston Avenue.

Their father, Eugene Monnet, donated funds for the tower elevator in the church. Their uncle, Forrest Darrough, chaired the board of stewards from 1943 until 1951.

Ed Sr. followed in his uncle's footsteps and

SEE GENERATIONS, PAGE 7



Do we live in the shadows?

BY BISHOP JIMMY NUNN

As a church, are we in a penumbra? What is that? The word comes from the Latin and combines two words meaning almost and shadow.

Are we shadows of what God is calling us to be? Are we almost what God intends us to be?

A similar word, from the field of science, is eclipse. We enjoy seeing these astronomical events — the solar or lunar eclipses that occur when the earth, sun, and moon are in special celestial alignment.

In medical terms, a penumbra is an event that occurs when part of the brain loses its blood supply. The result is a stroke.

It might be said that when something experiences a penumbra, it still may show signs of life, but it has been disconnected from its source.

Could the church be experiencing a penumbra? Could a fresh experience with God be what the church needs to be full and complete?

In his New York Times article titled “The Christian Penumbra,” Ross Douhat opened with these words: “Here is a seeming paradox of American life.”



Bishop Nunn

He continued, “The social goods associated with faith flow almost exclusively from religious participation, not from affiliation or nominal belief. And where practice ceases or diminishes, in what you might call America’s

‘Christian penumbra,’ the remaining residue of religion can be socially damaging instead.”

His point: People who identify as Christians but do not participate in a church community have social behaviors as bad as or worse than the general

population. Church participation makes our society better!

But that is not why the church exists.

The church’s purpose is not to make society better.

In 1938, at the outset of World War II, author T.S. Eliott wrote, “It is essential that we not revert to a very dangerous inversion where we advocate Christianity, not because it is true, but because it might be beneficial” (from the book “Christianity and Culture,” by Eliott).

The Apostle Paul understood these dynamics. He wrote a letter to Titus to guide the new pastor in a church that was slightly off the mark. It was in a penumbra. Its people were busy doing good things, but they had neglected the first things.

Paul affirmed the truth of those first things that remove shadows and complete the journey of faith.

Titus 3:4-7 articulates the core of the gospel: “When God our savior’s kindness and love appeared, God saved us because of his mercy, not because of righteous

Appointments

■ Chuck Horton, from senior pastor at Owasso-First to associate at Tulsa-First, effective April 15.

■ Jim Cinocca, from associate to senior pastor at Owasso-First, effective April 15.

■ Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, from associate at OKC-Chapel Hill to associate at Norman-St. Stephens, effective April 1.

■ Steve Taylor, to associate at Chickasha-Epworth, effective March 15.

things we had done. God did it through the washing of new birth and the renewing by the Holy Spirit, which God poured out upon us generously through Jesus Christ our savior. So, since we have been made righteous by God’s grace, we can inherit the hope for eternal life” (CEV).

Without God’s kindness, love, and mercy, we are mired in a penumbra. Our faith is only a shadow of what God purposed.

Paul instructed Titus to “insist on these things, so that those who have come to believe in God might give careful attention to doing good” (Titus 3:8, CEV).



OCU religion major wins seminary scholarship



From left: OCU senior religion majors Ben Patterson, Tatum Nelson, Melaina Riley, and Joey Simpson.

While attending Exploration 2017 in Portland, Oregon, religion major Melaina Riley received some life-changing news.

With an hour to go before the start of the November conference, the Oklahoma City University senior decided to tour the seminary booths. She headed first to Garrett-Evangelical Theological Seminary’s display and to the recruiter she’d met a few weeks earlier when visiting that school, in the Chicago suburb of Evanston.

As Riley approached, the recruiter smiled and said, “I have something for you.” Reaching behind the table, she drew out an envelope with Riley’s name on it.

As her peers from OCU looked on, Riley opened the envelope and burst into tears. She had been awarded a full-tuition scholarship to the United Methodist-related graduate school.

A native of Oklahoma City and member of OKC-Quail Springs UMC, Riley first experienced her calling to ministry in seventh grade.

Next month this OCU Bishop Scholar will graduate with a B.A. degree in religion. In summer she will move to Chicago, then begin her seminary studies in the fall.

“I’ve never lived anywhere other than Oklahoma City,” said Riley. “I’ve never even moved houses. I’m excited and terrified, depending on the day.”

Riley credits her studies at OCU for thoroughly preparing her for the next stage of her education.

“Seminaries love our students,” said Sharon Betsworth, director of OCU’s Wimberly School of Religion. “We have heard time and time again that our graduates are better prepared for seminary studies than most students. As a result, our graduates usually receive pretty generous scholarships.”

Ordination in The United Methodist Church has been Riley’s end goal for years.

“That’s always the only thing I’ve ever wanted. It’s always been the next step,” Riley said.

“I want to work to reconcile the church with people who have had bad experiences with religion. It’s been such a good thing for me, but I’ve seen it be bad for other people. I want to be part of fixing that.”

After completing her master of divinity degree at Garrett, Riley plans to return to Oklahoma and serve as a clergy elder in the Oklahoma Conference.

The Oklahoma United Methodist
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Next publication date: **May 18, 2018.**

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'Get on the Bus' for civil rights tour

In September, join Bishop Jimmy Nunn and other Oklahoma United Methodists who will travel by chartered bus to tour the National Civil Rights Museum in Memphis, Tennessee, and Little Rock (Arkansas) Central High School.

"Get on the Bus" organizers said participants will have conversations about race relations, racism, white privilege, social bias, and intercultural competence as they travel.

Dates are Sept. 20-23.

The Memphis museum is located at the assassination site of Martin Luther King Jr. and pays tribute and homage to the legacy of this great leader, but it also is dedicated to the thousands of people who were part of the overall American Civil Rights Movement.

Little Rock Central High School is recognized for its role in the desegregation of public schools in the United States. The persistence of nine African-American students in attending



Rosa Parks statue in the National Civil Rights Museum at Memphis

the formerly all-white Central High School is viewed as the most prominent example of the implementation of the 1954 Supreme Court ruling in "Brown vs. Board of Education."

The September journey is sponsored by the Oklahoma Conference's Commission on Strengthening the Black Church in the 21st Century (SBC-21), Commission on Religion and Race

(CORR), Board of Church and Society, and the "Get on the Bus" design team.

This trip is a follow-up to a 2017 experience in Tulsa, "Get on the Bus: Let's Talk About Race," which was sponsored by SBC-21 and CORR.

To see the full trip schedule and to register, go to www.okumc.org and search for "Get on the Bus" by Aug. 1.

Registration is \$295 per person, which provides for double-occupancy hotel lodging, breakfasts and suppers, and administrative expenses.

Transportation costs for the charter bus have been underwritten. Souvenirs and lunches are not included in the price. Single-occupancy lodging, an additional cost, must be arranged immediately through Twila Gibbens or Trina Bose North.

For more information, contact Gibbens by email to twila.gibbens@gmail.com or call 918-508-9079, or call Bose North at 405-535-8288.

Passages

■ **NELSON** — Rev. Marvin Dean Nelson, 84, of Oklahoma City died March 28, 2018.

His 65 years in ministry included serving as Woodward District superintendent and pastoring at Berlin, Deer Creek, Loyal, Hunter, Lawton-St. Paul's, Cushing, OKC-Mayfair Heights, Guthrie-First, Edmond-New Covenant, OKC-St. John's, and Kremlin. He also was corporate chaplain for John Vance Auto Group.

Among survivors are his wife, Kaye; sons Doug Nelson and Matthew Irvin, and daughters Mary Beth Ziba and Kylie Goering.

Service was April 3 at New Covenant UMC. Memorial gifts to: Mayfair Heights UMC, Frontier Hospice, or the "Marvin and Kaye Nelson Ministry Scholarship Fund at OCU" at the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation.

■ **DUBIE** — Rev. Laura Ann Wolfe Dubie, 64, of Tulsa died March 25, 2018. She had been on medical leave.

She pastored at Tulsa-Rose Hill, Tuttle, and Bristow, as associate at Enid-First, and as minister of pastoral care at Tulsa-First.

Among survivors are her husband, Ed Dubie; her children, Ryan Wolfe, Sean Wolfe, and Sara Shaw; and Ed's daughter, Christina King.

Service was March 31 at Tulsa-First. Memorial gifts to: Tulsa-First, The Lydia Project, or St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

■ **WALKER** — Rev. Wiley Bruce Walker, 83, of Oklahoma City died March 16, 2018. He was a retired deacon.

In Oklahoma City, he was director of music at Wesley and Village churches and business administrator and choir director at Chapel Hill.

Among survivors are his wife, Jan Walker, and four sons: Chris, Marion, Scott, and Paul.

Service was March 23 at All Soul's Episcopal Church, Oklahoma City. Memorial gifts to: All Soul's music department or Vocal Sounds of Oklahoma.

Passing the Baton



Speaker: Church consultant Jim Ozier. This seminar is based on Jim's experience coaching pastors going through transitions.

Register: <https://tinyurl.com/PassingTheBaton>
Deadline is April 23. Fee includes lunch.

More information: Megan DeCastro, 405-530-2199, mdecastro@okumc.org

April 28, OKC-St. Luke's,
10 a.m.-3 p.m.

Topics for arriving pastors:

Getting a running start, strategic preaching to get started, and celebrating the past while building a future

For churches:

Healing hurts and creating buy-in, honoring other staff, and saying goodbye and hello

For exiting pastors:

Handing off the baton, setting your successor up for success, and saying goodbye in a healthy way

Consultant Payne advises churches on poverty ministries

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

MOORE, Okla. — Language itself can create a barrier to reaching people who seem trapped in poverty, Ruby Payne taught at a seminar that offered insights for church action.

Payne, whose books are "What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty" and "Bridges Out of Poverty," spoke to about 230 people on March 15 at Moore-First United Methodist Church. The workshop was offered through the Oklahoma Conference's Discipleship Ministry Team.

She divided language into four types: formal, consultative, casual, and intimate.

The type of language spoken at church is often formal, which may be difficult for poorer members of a community to understand, said Dr. Payne, of Baytown, Texas. Formal language also is expected at school or work.

People who don't speak in the formal manner "don't have the words to resolve an issue," she said. But churches can be

"God, my shepherd! I don't need a thing. You have bedded me down in lush meadows, you find me quiet pools to drink from. True to your word, you let me catch my breath and send me in the right direction. Even when the way goes through Death Valley, I'm not afraid when you walk at my side. Your trusty shepherd's crook makes me feel secure." (Psalm 23:1-4, The Message)

"key players" in helping them.

A growing population of adolescent males who are undereducated and under-resourced experience this difficulty, Payne said. When it comes to work, some of them have the view that "real men don't push paper."

She suggested ways to reach members of this group, including use of The Message Bible, which is written in a contemporary style.

She also made more suggestions churches can apply to form connections with impoverished people.

■ Offer male-only events that include an activity, such as building something. This may improve participation.

■ Sessions for women benefit when child care is offered. Women place a high priority on safety or belonging, she said.

■ Plan coffee klatches, where someone brings coffee and someone else brings pastries.

■ Keep in touch by text. This can include texting Bible verses.

One workshop participant was Jeannie Himes, senior pastor of Norman-St. Stephen's UMC. She said Payne "is very well-informed about the subject of poverty. A key component is still to place ourselves where we can have one-on-one conversation with people who are struggling in the chain of poverty."

April Coates, pastor of Ponca City-Asbury and Albright UMCs, said, "I value the Bridges Out of Poverty model because it forces the church to look honestly at its own biases and misconceptions about poverty. It gives us a healthier place from which to enter into conversations with,

rather than at or to, families struggling with poverty. I'm hoping to do some intentional education and study with my congregation around Bridges Out of Poverty and reassess how we share with our neighbors."

Payne also observed that some factors experienced by those in poverty, such as bankruptcy, make it difficult for people to plan ahead.

Those who want to help the poor should understand that the culture of poverty requires people to share, she said. A donor who gives a poor person a car to help them get to work should not be surprised if the recipient lends it to someone else.

Payne pointed out that people "desire relationships" from church, said Derrek Belase, director of Discipleship for the Conference. Church should not just be "a transaction," such as offering donations of food.

He said the workshop gave church members and leaders "a chance to think more deeply about issues surrounding poverty."

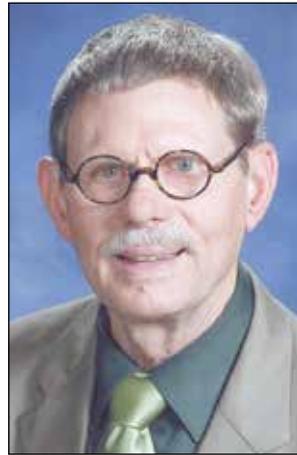
The Social Principles

2 Oklahomans give leadership to revising sections in *Book of Discipline*

OKLAHOMA CITY — Clergymen Mark Davies and Stan Basler serve on two of the global teams of theologians and experts assigned by the 2016 General Conference to revise the *Social Principles* sections in United Methodism's *Book of Discipline*.

This is the first comprehensive revision work since the Social Principles were adopted in 1970. The revision proposals will be presented to the 2020 General Conference.

Here, the two Oklahomans tell about the work. This article is compiled from a profile on Rev. Dr. Davies, by Neil Christie of the General Board of Church & Society, published in December, and Rev. Dr. Basler's email responses to the same questions for *Contact*.



S. Basler



M. Davies

Question: What team did you serve on for the Social Principles revision work?

Answer: Davies chaired the group working on The Natural World section. Basler served on the team studying The Political Community section.

QIn addition to this role, what are you engaged in now?

ADavies: I am the Wimberly Professor of Social and Ecological Ethics and director of the World House Institute for Social and Ecological Responsibility at Oklahoma City University. I consult with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry to help lead initiatives and projects related to social and ecological responsibility in United Methodist higher education. I am an ordained elder and appointed to teach at OCU, working in both teaching and administration there for 21 years. (He also chairs the Oklahoma Conference Board of Church & Society.)

Basler: I went from clergy retirement to a faculty position with Saint Paul School of Theology as professor-in-residence, Restorative Justice and Prison

Ministry. I preach at OKC-Penn Avenue Redemption UMC and chair the IMPACT Committee of the Oklahoma Conference of Churches. I teach restorative justice at Oklahoma City University's Law School as adjunct faculty. I am a Whiz Kids tutor at OKC-Wesley UMC.

QWhat do you hope your team contributed?

ABasler: I believe we clarified some areas and eliminated some overlap. We considered how global church dynamics should influence our statements. We focused on theological underpinnings and concrete calls to action...

As a retired person, I felt honored to be included in this task and to be able to specifically address issues of criminal/restorative justice and the death penalty

Davies: I hope our team will be able to contribute to a revision that will help the church address the global nature of our ecological challenges.

QWhere in the part of the Social Principles that your team reviewed do you see our greatest strength as a Church?

ABasler: The greatest strength is that our church is serious

about understanding the political realm as intertwined with Christian theology and biblical principles of justice, not as a subject separate from the Christian witness.

Davies: Our strength is in our connection. The church has an opportunity to model global and intercultural cooperation for the flourishing of the entire human and ecological community.

This will be important in addressing climate justice and the preservation of biodiversity.

QWhat difference do the Social Principles make in the life of a congregation or an annual conference?

ADavies: The Social Principles lift up what we aspire to be as a church in relation to each other and in relation to the community of God's creation.

We are part of a global church that is working together to discern ways to live more fully into God's beloved community here on earth.

Basler: I am proud that the Church and Society committee has actively distributed copies and held education events. I use them in Confirmation Classes.

QWhere do you see the greatest challenge to revising the section of the Social Principles that your team handled?

ABasler: Probably the greatest challenge is the propensity of persons to concede biblical interpretation to civil religion. Secondly, understandings of acceptable political systems are not uniform.

Davies: Unfortunately, there is significant polarization in some societies about our understanding of our ecological challenges... I think the greatest challenge will be to find ways to convey the urgency of our ecological challenges in a manner that will inspire cooperative action.

QTell me the three greatest systemic oppressions or injustices facing society where you live today.

ADavies: 1) An economic system that has not yet found a way to operate within the carrying capacity of our planet.

2) Racism and xenophobia that exacerbate inequality of economic opportunity and hinder full inclusion of all persons within society.

3) The influence of economic power on political processes in a way that suppresses a more just and participatory society.

Basler: 1) A willingness to subordinate measures to preserve creation over the long term for short-term goals and gratification.

2) A failure to prioritize the needs of the poor and alien among us.

3) A punitive spirit and retributive approach to criminal justice and corrections.

The Social Principles are on pages 105-146 in the *Book of Discipline*.

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2018 Annual Conference pursues new paths

Shorter schedule among the changes

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

Delegates and guests to the 2018 Annual Conference should prepare for a meeting transformed in purpose and schedule — and should register online now to attend.

The abbreviated meeting in Oklahoma City will open early May 29 (Tuesday) and conclude May 31 (Thursday). Activities will NOT be held on Memorial Day, as in past years.

With one exception, Oklahoma City University will host all events, with its Freede Center as hub. That exception: St. Luke's UMC is site for the Service of Commissioning and Ordination on the evening of May 30 (Wednesday).

You're invited to Annual Conference to journey alongside other Oklahoma laity and clergy on a "Quest" in pursuit of United Methodism's primary mission: "Go and make disciples of all nations."

Wednesday for workshops:

Teaching and workshops will fill most of May 30 (Wednesday), led by Junius Dotson, who launched the denomination's #See All the People initiative and is the denomination's general secretary of Discipleship Ministries.

In the afternoon, the first set of workshops will be organized by church size. The second set — about 20 classes — offers choice among topics, based on your personal preference.

At lunchtime that day, multiple food trucks will serve you right outside the Freede Center.

Most Annual Conference business will be conducted on Tuesday and Thursday.

You must sign up separately for special events such as seminary

www.okumc.org/annual_conference



luncheons and the Missions Breakfast. A Laity Luncheon is not planned this year.

Annual Conference Offering:

The Annual Conference Offering will benefit an outreach effort that can help each church build relationships with firefighters, police officers, and other first responders in a community. The donations will purchase copies of the devotional book "Strength for Service to God and Community" at a discount, for distribution by Oklahoma churches to those crucial community leaders.

Repair homes with bishop:

"Let's Finish This" will be a rally call led by Bishop Jimmy Nunn during the three-day meeting. Volunteers are being called to sign up for service this summer to complete repairs to about 40 storm-damaged Oklahoma homes. The Disaster Response Ministry of the Conference's Office of Mission is overseeing this effort. The bishop himself plans to work beside other volunteers on project sites.

Consent calendar is new:

For the first time, a consent calendar will expedite business plenaries.

Delegates can learn more about this by attending pre-conference district meetings, reading the Pre-Conference Workbook, and watching a video featuring Bishop Nunn.

Download the app:

The digital hub for all things Annual Conference is:

www.okumc.org/annual_conference

You also can download the free Annual Conference app on your smartphone. Search for OKUMC or Oklahoma UMC in the iTunes App Store or Google Play stores.

Watch for updated information online and on the app in days to come and during the three days of Annual Conference.

The plenaries will be streamed live online.

Additional notes:

Attention, clergy: In addition to registering to attend the meeting, you must sign up in advance for two key Annual Conference activities.

All clergy — active and retired — need to sign up online now to schedule your official **photo session** with Lifetouch. Use the link in the Annual Conference digital hub.

Health screenings are limited to active clergy and their spouses, and they must register between May 1 and 15 to participate. Watch for email from the Conference Benefits team with instructions.

Pre-Conference District Meetings:

- April 15, at 4 p.m., Woodward-First UMC, (Cimarron District)
- April 22, at 2 p.m., Orlando UMC (Northern Prairie District)
- April 22, at 5:30 p.m., McDaniel Student Center at Oklahoma City University (Heartland and Crossroads Districts)
- April 29, at 4 p.m., Tulsa-Faith UMC (Council Oak and Green Country Districts)
- May 6, at 3:30 p.m., Coalgate UMC (Lake Country District)

Employment

- Director of Youth Ministries: Kingfisher UMC. Part-time. Resume to Patrick McPherson, pmcpherson65@gmail.com.
- Director of Children's Ministries: OKC-Church of the Servant. Full-time. Resume and cover letter to Scott Smith, ssmith@churchoftheservant.com.
- Director of Music Ministries: Norman-Goodrich UMC. Part-time. Call 405-321-0975 or go to the church website, www.goodrichmemorial.org.
- Administrative Assistant: Collinsville-Meadowcreek UMC. Part-time. Resume to mumc74021@gmail.com.
- Director of Confirmation and Mid-High Ministries: Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC. Full-time. Resume and cover letter to Angelyn Dale, angelyndale@bostonavenue.org.
- Youth Minister: OKC-St. Mark's UMC. Full-time. Email Keith Cressman, PastorKeith@StMarksBethany.com.
- Community Outreach Specialists (two positions): Nowata-First UMC. Part-time. Contact Jeffrey Rickman, pastor.rickman@gmail.com.
- Director of Youth & Children's Ministries: Chickasha-Epworth UMC. Full-time. Contact Scott Keneda at pastor@epworth.info or 405-224-3320 ext. 101.
- Youth Ministry Assistant: Tulsa-Faith UMC. 15 hours per week. Resume or questions to jgarrett@faithtulsa.org.
- Executive Director & Campus Minister: The Wesley Foundation at OU, Norman. Resume and cover letter to david@thepromotionsolution.com.
- Children's Director: Cushing-First UMC. Part-time. Contact Kathy Leithner at 918-225-5683 or katleit2@aol.com.
- Accompanist (piano and organ): Duncan-First UMC. Part-time. 580-255-3353.

BACK TO SCHOOL

supply drive

Circle of Care has once again partnered with Citizens Caring for Children to provide school supplies for children in foster care.

Here are a few ideas for helping Circle of Care send foster children back to school with the supplies needed for success:

- Do a drive as a mission for Vacation Bible School
- United Methodist Women's Drive
- Sunday School class drive
- Church-wide donation

To arrange a drive or get more info, please contact:
Denise Ebersbach,
Development Specialist at Circle of Care,
405-613-2276 or denise.ebersbach@circleofcare.org.

ALL SUPPLIES DUE BY JULY 1 for the 2018-19 SCHOOL YEAR.

Amid tumult of 1968, a church came together

BY HEATHER HAHN
UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

The year 1968 convulsed with assassinations, riots, war in Vietnam, and student protests against that war. The Troubles revved up in Northern Ireland, and Soviet tanks rolled into Czechoslovakia.

Fifty years ago this month, when it seemed much of the world was violently splitting apart, a group of Wesleyan Christians peacefully and joyfully were coming together in Dallas, Texas.

On April 23, 1968, two bishops followed by two children, two youths, two adults, six ordained ministers, two church officers, and ultimately all the 10,000 people present joined hands and repeated in unison: “Lord of the church, we are united in thee, in thy church, and now in The United Methodist Church. Amen.”

With those words in an auditorium, the 750,000-member Evangelical United Brethren Church and the 10.3 million-member Methodist Church became one.

The merger also brought people together in another way: the official dissolution of the Methodist Church’s racially segregated Central Jurisdiction.

Amid a tumultuous year — and just weeks after the assassination of Martin Luther King Jr. — The United Methodist Church was born.

“It felt like the restoration of the Methodist movement,” said clergyman Joseph Evers, a Methodist delegate to the 1968 Uniting Conference. He is now 91 and lives in Quincy, Illinois.

Standing at a doorway into that Uniting Conference was Gilbert Caldwell, a district superintendent. He was among demonstrators promoting integration. They held signs silently reminding delegates the church still had work to do. Caldwell’s sign quoted the title of Rev. Dr. King’s final book, “Where Do We Go from Here... Chaos or Community?”

“We knew even though we eliminated the Central Jurisdiction, issues of race and



racism were still there,” he said.

As The United Methodist Church celebrates its 50th birthday, church historians see lessons for a denomination facing questions of unity anew.

U.S. Methodism in its first century saw a structural split about every decade, according to church historian Russell Richey.

Most dramatically, northern and southern Methodists ruptured over slavery in 1844.

By the early 20th century, John Wesley’s spiritual descendants had gone from breaking up to making up — but at great cost. In 1939, three Methodist denominations reunited to form what was then the largest Protestant denomination in the United States.

But to make that union possible, Methodist Protestant clergywomen had to surrender their clergy rights.

Most notoriously, the Methodist Episcopal Church South required the creation of the Central Jurisdiction, which enshrined the segregation of African-Americans in that new denomination’s constitution.

In 1946, the merger of the United Brethren and Evangelical Church featured its own setback. While the United Brethren approved full clergy rights for women in 1889, the Evangelicals wanted to halt their ordination. While never an official ban,

During Annual Conference in late May, the Oklahoma United Methodist Historical Society will mark this milestone at a luncheon. Register in advance and pay at the door; find details at www.okumc.org/acspecialevents. Also look for an Archives & History display and video. Archivist Christina Wolf oversees the Conference’s historical collections, located in Oklahoma City University’s library building.

women’s ordination slowed greatly in the resulting union.

“The mid-20th century marked a broad movement toward church unity,” said Thomas Frank, a church historian at Wake Forest University. Other denominations embarked on similar dialogues that led to formation of the United Church of Christ in 1957, the Presbyterian Church (USA) in 1983, and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America in 1988.

The path to The United Methodist Church wasn’t without roadblocks.

Bishops from both denominations in 1957 identified possible impediments to union, said Ted Campbell, church history professor at Perkins School of Theology.

One issue was that the Methodist Church gave bishops life tenure, while the Evangelical United Brethren had term limits. Other concerns included overlapping church agencies and finding a name that honored the heritage of both.

The denominations made compromises. United Methodists in the United States adopted the Methodist practice of life tenure for bishops. The EUB Council on Ministries structure was adopted. The word United became part of the new name.

The Central Jurisdiction was not on the bishops’ initial list of trouble spots in 1957, Campbell pointed out. But efforts to end it date from its 1939 inception.

The Evangelical United Brethren

ultimately made abolishing the segregated institution a condition for union, said Steven O’Malley. An ordained EUB pastor at the time of the 1968 merger, he is now a professor at Asbury Theological Seminary.

“This move reflects longstanding EUB opposition to segregation and, before that, slavery,” he said.

Four years before the merger, Methodist conferences within the Central Jurisdiction began transferring to geographical jurisdictions.

The 1968 union also assured women the right to be ordained and have full clergy rights.

However, the UMC sometimes has struggled to live up to its teachings.

EUB Bishop Susan Hassinger was ordained in 1968 in the new denomination. She waited two years for her first appointment, which was only part-time.

Hassinger and other church leaders say the lessons from 50 years ago seem especially relevant as the church prepares for a special General Conference in February 2019, as delegates face questions about homosexuality and decisions could be church-dividing.

“People had to listen to each other across differences and learn how to value the other” five decades ago, said Hassinger, now bishop-in-residence at Boston University School of Theology.

O’Malley thinks the church can benefit from its EUB heritage by taking a more “irenic” approach to conferencing, church order, and social principles — that is, aimed at reconciliation and peace.

Ian Straker, a former Howard University School of Divinity professor, has yet another lesson in mind.

While uniting a church is hard, he said, breaking up is even harder. The split in 1844 was not as simple as the amicable declaration made so long ago.

“Stuff was tied up in litigation for decades,” he said. “It made a bunch of lawyers happy, but it was not neat and easy.” (March 29, UMNS)

Way Forward prepares final report to Council of Bishops

BY HEATHER HAHN

Heading into its homestretch, the Commission on a Way Forward met in Los Angeles recently to prepare its final report for bishops.

The 32-member commission is helping the Council of Bishops try to find a way through The United Methodist Church’s decades-long divisions around how the church ministers with LGBTQ people.

That’s no easy task in a denomination whose 12.5 million-membership stretches from countries where same-gender marriage is legal to countries where same-gender activity is a crime.

The bishops will use the commission’s report when they meet April 29-May 4 to

determine what proposals to submit to the special 2019 General Conference.

“By listening and through reflections I have learned — in all humility — that unity, which seems so simple in the church, is fragile because each person has their own personality, their own cultural and religious context, their own education, their own life experiences, and their own truth,” said Hortense Aka, a commission member from Côte d’Ivoire.

As in its previous meetings, the commission met March 19-22 behind closed doors. Church news media has reported the commission is focusing on two plans, but bishops aren’t limited to those.

■ **The one-church model:** Under this

plan, each conference would be able to decide whether to ordain LGBTQ individuals as clergy. Each pastor would be able to decide whether to perform same-sex weddings or unions. Each local church would be able to decide whether to allow same-sex weddings in its sanctuary or receive an openly gay pastor. Those who could not in good conscience participate in same-sex weddings or ordination of LGBTQ clergy would not be required to do so. Central conferences — church regions in Africa, Europe, and the Philippines — could maintain their own standards on ordination and marriage.

■ **The multi-branch model:** Under this plan, United Methodists would share doctrine, services, and one Council of

Bishops, while also creating different branches. The five U.S. jurisdictions would be replaced by three connectional conferences, each covering the whole country and based on theology and perspective on LGBTQ ministry — in progressive, contextual, and traditional branches. Annual conferences would decide with which connectional conference to affiliate. Central conferences would remain as they are or could choose to affiliate with one of the three connectional conferences.

Bishops and commission members also have been meeting with various groups of leaders across the connection to get their thoughts and update them on the Way Forward work. (March 23, UMNS)

Generations:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

became chairman of the administrative board in 1983. But his service to the church ran deeper. He was a long-time member of the finance and budget committee, and he served as head offering bearer at the 11 a.m. service for over 50 years.

Ed Sr. and his wife, Marjorie, served as junior high sponsors, and they were founding sponsors of the Roundtable Sunday School class.

Marjorie has been a leader in Christian education at Boston Avenue and nationally.

Ed's diverse church activities included his portrayal of Thomas, at the 1967 Religious Arts Festival, in portraits of church members as the 12 disciples of Christ.

Over the years, the number of Sundays when Ed missed church could perhaps be counted on your fingers. Even in retirement, living at Oklahoma Methodist Manor, he was a dedicated viewer of the church's live-stream worship.

Ed Sr. died on April 1, 2018, his 91st birthday.

Yet perhaps the greatest indicators of the Monnets' dedication to Boston Avenue are children and grandchildren, active members of the church who give of their time and talents in their own ways.

Daughter Irene Monnet Brown, who



From left: John Brown, Irene Monnet Brown, Ed Monnet Jr., and Ed Monnet Sr. at Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC. (Historical photo from *The Word*, July 4, 2014)

started singing in the choir at age 4 and continued in the Chancel Choir, remarked, "I found my voice at Boston Avenue."

She married her husband, John Brown, at Boston Avenue; they were happy to join the church when they moved from Chicago to Tulsa 15 years later. Their children are involved as well: son John co-chairs the senior high youth group, and daughter Marjorie is mission co-chairperson. She went on the recent

mission trip to Nicaragua.

Ed Monnet Jr. — Irene's brother — has fond memories of growing up in the church. He made lifelong friendships in Sunday School and choir, and he recalled the childhood fun he experienced in Scouts. (Troop 20 had nearly 100 members, with regular hikes and campouts.)

Ed Jr. and his wife, Jimmie, raised their children — Parker, Tori, and Ed III — in

the church's life, and they now joyfully bring their grandchildren any time the kids are in town. They are deeply dedicated to all the children of Boston Avenue: "Mr. Ed" has taught elementary Sunday School for 38 years, and "Mrs. Ed" teaches as well.

Ed Jr. said Boston Avenue is his second home, and has always been "welcoming and comfortable, not an intimidating place to be, but warm and embracing." He said it was healthy for him to have church as part of his routine growing up, that attending every Sunday was meaningful in its constancy.

He said that he is grateful to be part of "a place that makes it easy to attend regularly, where there is something of interest for everyone ... big enough that there are people with whom you can build friendships and relationships, that there are enough activities to keep you busy. (Boston Avenue) is a large church that has always been home."

For four generations, Boston Avenue has been home to this family that has shown faithfulness and love for church. I am grateful to have gotten to know them a little bit, and to know Boston Avenue better through them.

(From *The Word*, March 30, 2018. Caitlin is the church's communications director. Reprinted with permission.)

New president:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the right person to guide OCU forward. I am delighted that she has accepted the position, and I am very excited about the university's future."

He said the trustees received applications from more than 40 candidates and narrowed those down to three. Burger originally was on the presidential search committee but stepped down after she was nominated as a candidate.

She received her M.B.A. from OCU in 1992 and an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters in 2012.

Burger also said she is excited to take on the role as the first female president of OCU. She said she feels humbled and proud to be a woman in power.

Business experience

She has served as senior vice president of human and corporate resources at Chesapeake Energy Corp. She also co-founded Amethyst Investments LLC and is a member of the board of directors of Tapstone Energy.

"I have sponsored, mentored, and developed women who are professionals in the business community for decades. So I think this is one more way that I can pave the way for others after me," she said.

Student Carly Youngberg said she's

"Nobody had any doubts as to her skills and strengths" — Robert Henry, retiring president

especially excited that Burger will be the university's first female president. "That's exciting for me as a woman, too. I'm excited to see what she can bring to the table, for sure," said the sophomore English major.

Burger meets students

Students met with Burger on March 19 during a student session. At that event, Burger said her top priorities as president are to grow and nurture programs at OCU.

"What I want to do is to work on growing the university, and I don't just mean in enrollment, but I mean by being able to invest and nurture programs that we have that are already excellent, but need continued maintenance or additions to make them even better," she said at the session.

She also plans to use her business background to benefit the university economically.

"I come from a finance background, so I talk about things in those kinds of terms, but they translate to the heart of things, not just the numbers around things," she said. "The university has worked really hard to

mind their expenses. We've gone through some tough processes and decisions, and we are to a great stable place where we live within our means."

Blake Lemmons, a junior majoring in political science, said he thinks Burger will do well despite an initial learning curve.

"I really think that Mrs. Burger's going to be great for the university because she'd be good at fundraising and everything, and she already has a really good working relationship with the trustees because she was a trustee, and she knows how to be an administrator because that was her role at Chesapeake," Lemmons said.

"I think that she'll have a bit of a learning curve, but I think all of the candidates were going to have a learning curve in some aspect or another."

Professor, president weigh in

Karen Youmans, who is OCU honors program director and an associate professor of English, said she's excited so many students were interested in the process.

"I'm encouraged by the number of students who showed up to ask questions,"

Dr. Youmans said. "I think that speaks well of our student body."

President Henry said, "Martha is a unique individual. She is brilliant. She was a female executive in a male-dominated world, and nobody had any doubts as to her skills and strengths."

Henry said Burger is familiar with the Oklahoma City area, which will be positive for fundraising, and he is confident in her management of finances.

"We've worked on all sorts of matters, from settling lawsuits to handling insurance claim files to working with investments to working with facilities. She just really knows those financial matters," he said. "I suspect that was something the trustees were interested in."

Henry said he admires Burger for her ability to constantly read, learn, and travel.

"She's been around to a lot of places and always studies those places and learns about them and brings new thoughts and ideas," he said. "She's a lot of fun to be with and very smart and very tough."

Henry said students will enjoy getting to know Burger. "I think she will blend right in," he said.

(March 28, 2018, *The Campus*. Reprinted with permission. Zoe Travers is an OCU mass communications/multimedia student.)



PLANNING YOUR LEGACY GUIDE

A plan is important, but an estimated 60% of Americans don't even have a will. The **Planning Your Legacy Guide** from the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation will help you by making the process easy and understandable.

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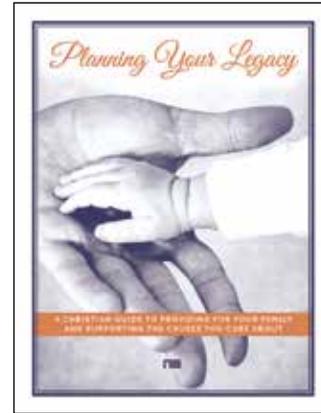
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Camp Ministries



Fish Camp

April 27-29, Cross Point Camp
Fishing tournaments, ropes course, archery, and more
<https://okcamps.org/fish-camp-2018>

Wilderness retreat set

A wilderness camping experience awaits adults who attend Spring Fling on April 27-29 at Canyon Camp.

Open to people age 19 and older, the retreat begins about 5 p.m. Friday and concludes at noon Sunday. Campers are reminded to bring their sleeping bags, flashlights, and hiking shoes.

RSVP to Randy McCurdy, randymccurdy@icloud.com, to be met at the entry gate for the wilderness site or for more information.

Stylist's gift to students is shear delight

BY GINNY UNDERWOOD
UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

CLINTON, Okla. — With a snip and smile, Native American children were able to start 2018 with a new look and a lot of confidence thanks to free haircuts offered by volunteers from Brock, Texas.

On Jan. 27, Nikki Humbles and her mother, Sue Quisenberry, packed up their scissors, hair dryer, capes, combs, and brushes to drive more than four hours to provide the service.

In one afternoon, they helped 18 customers.

"I wanted to do something that was in my capabilities as a licensed cosmetologist," said Humbles. She learned about the Clinton ministry when she accompanied her mother on a mission trip with Brock United Methodist Church.

"I believe this free haircut service gives the sense that people care," said United Methodist missionary Donna Pewo, pastor of Clinton Indian Church and Community Center. She said the small service means a lot to the parents as well as the children.

"One father told me it was hard to come up with \$12-\$14 to pay for haircuts for three children."

The ministry outreach also focuses on education. Many children in the community live with grandparents, aunts,

Native American Ministries Sunday is April 15. Find out more at www.umcsgiving.org.

uncles, and other relatives, according to Rev. Pewo. Church members offer after-school support, which includes tutoring for students ages 5 to 18.

"Our hope is to build confidence, teach responsibility, and work with children to make sure they know we care about them and their education," Pewo said.

The partnership between Brock UMC and the Clinton ministry began in July 2016. Volunteers in Mission from Texas helped to clear a building and clean up the ministry grounds.

The mom and daughter came back to the church in August of last year to offer haircuts to 13 children preparing for the new school year.

They hope to make their visit an annual event. "It was such a privilege and honor to be a part of something so beautiful," Humbles said.

Clinton Indian Church and Community Center is part of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) and is a UM Advance mission project.

"We are thankful for Nikki, who fell in love with the ministry at Clinton and was inspired to use her own gifts as a



PHOTO, CLINTON CHURCH AND COMMUNITY CENTER

Texas volunteer Nikki Humbles gives a haircut to a Native American youth in Clinton.

stylist to share with the beautiful kids at the center," said David Wilson, who is conference superintendent of the OIMC.

"Nikki is a reminder of how innovative we can be in sharing not just our gifts, but also our love with others."

Rev. Dr. Wilson invites United Methodist churches to explore the Clinton ministry and other ministries within the conference for Volunteers in Mission opportunities. (Feb. 8, UMNS)