

Asbury satellite launches in midtown Tulsa



PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY

From left: Jon Odom blesses the Holy Communion elements, assisted by Spencer and Libby VanDolah and Kristen and Chris King at Cornerstone.

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

TULSA, Okla. — On Jan. 21, Cornerstone greeted its first-day crowd all prayed up. Pastor Jon Odom said the launch team spent 800 hours in prayer before the opening of this satellite of Tulsa-Asbury United Methodist Church.

“We’ve prayed that you come eager. In the name of Jesus, you are welcome,” said Rev. Odom.

More prayers wove themselves throughout the worship hour. And Odom spoke of “a neat sense of teamwork” among the Tulsa churches. He received text messages that Sunday from Tulsa pastors of varied denominations, assuring him that they, too, were praying for Cornerstone’s debut. “It’s all for God’s kingdom,” he said.

Cornerstone launched in midtown Tulsa in a sanctuary and classrooms at 4803 S. Lewis Ave. Perhaps another sign of greater

‘We need a hard reset on our spiritual operating systems’ – Jon Odom

kingdom purpose is the location itself. The rented space, including an office, is in the ministry center for the Lutheran Arkansas-Oklahoma Synod.

Chris Tiger, who is the Oklahoma Conference’s director of New Faith Communities, noted that the satellite’s leadership wanted to take root in “sacred space.” Some church plants start in schools or retail storefronts.

Cornerstone’s use of technology in worship matched up with the young families swelling the audience of 276 that first Sunday.

“Take out your cellphone and text here or new to (phone number),” Odom instructed them. Attendance was recorded

SEE SATELLITE, PAGE 5

What’s in a word?

COSROW event explores gender influences

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

Traditionally male “God-talk” and other word usage that may discourage women from considering a ministry career will be the topic of a Feb. 17 workshop planned by the Oklahoma Commission on the Status and Role of Women (COSROW).

The workshop in Oklahoma City will be led by Leigh Goodrich of Chicago, representing the United Methodist General Commission on the Status and Role of Women. The event will be that Wednesday from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. in the Small Gardner Room of the Meinders School of Business at Oklahoma City University.

Under the title “WIDE WORDS,” Rev. Goodrich will discuss the use of male pronouns and images in church life.

“There are other words we can use to widen our understanding of God and

SEE COSROW, PAGE 3



A riderless horse, led by a grandson on horseback, follows the casket of Bernard Landon Nine in his funeral procession Jan. 6 near Slapout.

PHOTO BY BECCA BRADLEY

Panhandle cowboy honored with ride into sunset

SLAPOUT, Okla. — At 94 years old, Bernard Landon Nine was still feeding cattle most every day and often buying a few more cattle at the sales. The cowboy was an outstanding, longtime member of Fairview United Methodist Church near Slapout, in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

He was born at home north of Gage, Okla., on Dec 19, 1923. He died Jan. 2, 2018.

Family and friends gathered Jan. 6 to turn back the clock, honoring his last wishes.

Wearing white shirts and blue jeans,

many of them rode horseback, following a wagon bearing his casket from the Fairview church to the cemetery adjacent to Bernard’s boyhood home and a field he had plowed with horses in his younger years.

Namesake grandson Landon Nine led a riderless horse behind the horse-drawn hearse.

Funeral officiant was Fairview UMC Pastor Mike Mahaffey. The procession was led by Oklahoma Highway Patrol Captain Stan Walker in his patrol car.

Born to B.J. and Edna Nine, Bernard graduated in 1940 from Laverne and

attended Panhandle College for five days. His adviser told him: If you will stick around, I will make a farmer or rancher out of you. Bernard decided he might as well go home to learn that.

As a 14- and 15-year-old kid, he worked two summers for Arch McGuire, for \$1 a day. He worked cattle with his dad and later on his own.

As a boy, he and his older brothers, Raymond and Kenneth, hunted coyotes with a horse and dog for 10 years.

The three boys once bought a box of cherry chocolates for their mother.

SEE COWBOY, PAGE 8



Content or discontent?

BY BISHOP JIMMY NUNN

The 2018 Winter Olympics are here. I am convinced that television ratings are higher for these games because of the personal stories the reporters tell about the commitment, struggles, and dedication of the athletes.

Most stories include an awakening, where an athlete realizes a love for a sport and resolves to excel in that sport.

Their zeal drives them to train and practice long hours each day. They forsake everything else for the cause.

Malcom Gladwell called such dedication the “10,000-Hour Rule,” which states that it takes about 10,000 hours



Bishop Nunn

of practice for an individual to achieve mastery in a chosen field.

Few people make the Olympic team; even fewer win a medal. Only the greatest win gold.

Have you ever wondered what motivates such dedication?

In an article titled “The Cubicle Epiphany,” Chip and Dan Heath tell the story of a young marketing communications executive. The office cubicle next to hers was reserved for visiting out-of-town executives. One day, a woman who occupied the cubicle especially impressed the young worker with her professionalism and enthusiasm.

At the end of the day, the young executive determined she was in the wrong profession. She admired the coworker but hated the job she did.

So she set out to find another way.

She went to a career counselor. There she had another epiphany. She wanted to do what the counselor was doing. That day she changed the direction of her

professional life.

The Heaths’ article quotes psychologist Roy Baumeister, who has studied people with these awakening experiences. He says a lightning-bolt experience occurs during moments of what he calls “the crystallization of discontent.”

That is when all the negatives in a specific circumstance line up, and a person recognizes what really is going on.

The Heath brothers hypothesize there is also a “crystallization of content,” where everything falls together.

In Matthew 13:45-46, Jesus told a simple story: “Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant in search of fine pearls. When he found one very precious pearl, he went and sold all that he owned and bought it.”

This brief parable describes a moment when everything fell together for the merchant. It was his “crystallization of content” moment. He had found something more valuable than everything

else he already owned.

Yet in that same realization, the merchant also experienced a “crystallization of discontent” moment. Everything he owned fell short of the value of that newly discovered pearl. So he sold everything that expressed his discontentment — and bought the thing that offered him contentment.

Like athletes who dedicate themselves to a goal, the woman with the cubicle epiphany, and the merchant who bought the pearl, we experience epiphanies of insight where we discover contentment. This kind of contentment is so intense that we begin the process of systematically eliminating the things in our lives that we now see offer us only discontentment.

We press on toward a goal.

In what ways might you be experiencing contentment and discontentment? What might you exchange to move toward the goals you seek?



Jewish poet headlines Neustadt lectures

On Feb. 15, poet, playwright, activist, and educator Merle Feld will be guest presenter at the 35th Annual Neustadt Lectures for Oklahoma City University.

Feld is the founding director of the Albin Rabbinic Writing Institute, where she guides rabbis and students from all denominations in developing their spiritual lives and serving as effective spiritual leaders.

She is the author of two books — “Finding Words” (2011) and “Spiritual Life: Exploring the



Merle Feld

Heart of Jewish Tradition” (2007) — and several plays, including the award-winning “The Gates are Closing.”

As a peace activist and scholar-in-residence, Feld has facilitated Israeli-Palestinian dialogue in the West Bank, supported Jewish women activists in the former Soviet Union, and taken her work into hundreds of synagogues and universities from Brooklyn to Beijing.

Her three lectures are scheduled for Thursday (Feb. 15) — at 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. in Bishop Smith Chapel at OCU and at 7 p.m. at Temple B’nai Israel, 4901 NW Pennsylvania Ave., Oklahoma City.

All lectures are free and open to the public.



Mission is part of OCU's annual Youth Service Day.

Wesley Center will host Youth Service Day

OCU's annual Oklahoma Conference Youth Service Day is set for Saturday, March 3, from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., beginning and ending at the Smith Chapel on campus.

United Methodist youth and their leaders will be in mission at service sites across Oklahoma City, share in worship with the OCU Wesley Center worship team, and interact with campus life. The event is free, and lunch is provided.

Youth groups must pre-register by Feb. 22 with Elizabeth Horton-Ware at 405-208-5484, erhortonware@okcu.edu, or www.okcu.edu/campus/religious-life.

Welcome, high school juniors!

This month, OCU will open its doors to high school juniors with an opportunity to experience life as an Oklahoma City University Star. At “Stars Junior Day” on Feb. 23, juniors will meet faculty, staff, and current OCU students; tour campus; dine in the cafeteria; and learn about scholarship opportunities and application deadlines. The Tuesday event is from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. More information and the registration link: www.okcu.edu/admissions/events.

The Oklahoma United Methodist
Contact
1501 N.W. 24th
Oklahoma City, OK 73106

Moving to a new address?
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COSROW:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

ourselves,” according to promotional information about the event. “Come learn how a wider vocabulary transforms people’s lives, and listen for how gender influences shape our own experiences of God.”

Goodrich has served churches in the New England Conference for 14 years. She serves on the Northeastern Jurisdiction’s Appeals Committee and is a delegate to the special 2019 General Conference.

“We are interested in how women are represented in the church,” said Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, who chairs Oklahoma’s COSROW.

Sometimes, she noted, “churches are not prepared to be led by females. You find it in churches everywhere. There is much more familiarity with male leadership.”

COSROW studies statistics within the conference on female leadership, she said. Those show about 30 percent of active clergy in Oklahoma is female.

“I’m not sure that we do a good job of helping our young women imagine themselves in leadership positions in the church,” Rev. Ahrens-Sims said.

COSROW would like to see an increase in role models for women, to help them imagine “that could be me,” she said.



**Feb. 17 workshop
9 a.m.-4 p.m.
at OCU’s
School of Business**

Ahrens-Sims is an associate pastor at OKC-Chapel Hill. She has been a pastor for three years.

Only a small percentage of offices within Oklahoma churches are held by women, she said, according to COSROW’s research. No women chair any District Committees on Ordained Ministry, she said.

“There is room for improvement toward equal participation.”

COSROW “works with all people,” Ahrens-Sims said. “We are interested in how women are represented in the Church.”

To register, go to <https://tinyurl.com/widewords>. Fee, \$12, includes lunch.

For more information call Ahrens-Sims at 405-507-7318 or email Jennifer@mychapelhill.org.

Join immersion event on Native experience

The Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) extends an invitation to you to participate in an OIMC Immersion Event on March 7-11.

You will visit some of the historical sites in Oklahoma that connect their existence to United Methodism. You will visit OIMC churches, and members will serve Native cuisine.

Among the places you will tour are Standing Bear Park in Ponca City and the Oklahoma History Museum, which has an extensive Native American exhibit.

This experience is open to all, and it should be particularly valuable for church groups that study the Mission U geographic topic “Missionary Conferences of The United Methodist Church in the United States.”

Home base for the Immersion Event is

Best Western Saddleback Inn, at Interstate 40 and Meridian, in Oklahoma City.

Deadline to make reservations is March 1.

Cost per person, \$200, will include meals, transportation while involved in the immersion event, and admission to some venues.

Lodging and transportation to the base are not included. The hotel offers a special rate; note that you are with the OIMC immersion group when you reserve a room; phone is 405-947-7000.

“We look forward to having you in our Conference and the opportunity of sharing our Conference with you,” stated a letter from OIMC Superintendent David Wilson and Josephine Deere, director of Interpretation and Programs/Connectional Ministries.

Appointments

- Paul McDowell, from Freedom/Quinlan to medical leave, effective Feb. 1.
- Creighton Alexander, from Edmond-Acts 2 associate to not appointed, Jan. 28.
- Tom Combs-Francis, from not appointed to Kaw City, Jan. 15.
- Castulo Garcia, from Heavener-Faithbridge to not appointed, Jan. 15.
- Erma Pregler, from Tulsa-Faith associate to retired, Jan. 1.
- Dan Peil, retired, to Norman-Pathways Micro Community, Dec. 31, 2017.

Ruby Payne will lead free seminar on poverty

Spend “A Day with Ruby Payne” March 15 to gain insight and develop practical steps for your church’s ministry with the poor.

Moore-First United Methodist Church will host the free seminar led by Dr. Payne herself, widely known for her work on the culture of poverty and its relationship in education.

She co-authored “What Every Church Member Should Know About Poverty,” and the book was featured in a fall United Methodist workshop that drew 130 participants to Oklahoma City.

Those who attended were asked what they learned. Among their responses:

- “Understanding our churches’ hidden rules and creating an environment for those who come in to be comfortable”
- “Help create empathy and understand that we do have resources to share”
- “Realizing how the church appears to the unchurched”
- “I was expecting only information on the poor, but thought it helpful to compare characteristics of poor with middle class and wealthy.”

The March seminar is open to all, explained Derrek Belase, director of Discipleship for the Oklahoma Conference. Attendance at the earlier event is not a pre-requisite. Walk-ins are welcome. Continuing education credit is offered.

“A Day with Ruby Payne” will cover these topics: the hidden rules of middle class, language patterns and cognition, violence and conflict resolution, family and relationship building, and church action plans.

Participants will discuss how to invite poverty groups as members and will explore the issues surrounding the transition and integration of these groups into the church family.

The seminar begins with registration at 9:30 a.m. and program is 10 a.m.-3:30 p.m., with a 1½-hour break for lunch off-site.

To sign up, go to bit.ly/2CVIacZ.

Sponsors are the Conference’s Discipleship and Mission & Service Ministry Teams and the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation.

JOSH SHIPP

FRIDAY | APR 20

National Cowboy & Western Heritage Museum
1700 NE 63rd St
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

TICKETS AVAILABLE AT
CIRCLEOFCARE.ORG

Tickets \$85 | Tables \$1200
Corporate Sponsorships Available

REGISTRATION 5:15PM
PROGRAM 6:00 - 8:00PM

*Attire semi-formal



Friends of Children Banquet

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Josh Shipp is an author, acclaimed speaker, & former foster kid turned youth advocate.



OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST
CIRCLE of CARE
for CHILDREN and YOUTH

Combat pilot gives up wings for chaplaincy

'I'm sold out to following God wherever the adventure's at'

— Jay Henderson

BY BILL SHERMAN
TULSA WORLD

TULSA, Okla. — Broken Arrow native Jay Henderson, a Blackhawk helicopter pilot with 450 combat flight hours in Iraq, was commissioned a chaplain and promoted to captain in the Oklahoma Army National Guard in a Jan. 14 ceremony at Asbury United Methodist Church.

The event cemented a decision he made years ago to give up his love of flying to pursue the ministry.

Rev. Henderson wanted to be a helicopter pilot since he was a boy, he said recently, surrounded by helicopter photos and models in his office at Asbury, where he is an associate pastor.

That desire turned into a passion when his cousin Lawrence Shane Colton was killed while piloting an Apache helicopter on a rescue mission in Iraq on Easter Sunday 2004.

"He was like a brother to me," Henderson said of Colton, who successfully completed the mission before a rocket destroyed his Apache. He was posthumously awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross.

"Following in his footsteps became my passion. It wasn't just a matter of something I wanted to do. It was something I needed to do," said Henderson, who was serving as an intelligence sergeant in Iraq with the 120th Engineer Battalion of the Oklahoma Army National Guard when he heard the news.

And something else was growing in him as he watched his friends fight and die on foreign soil.

He began to ask himself the big questions, he said, questions that over the next few years would lead to a decision that meant he would never pilot another Army helicopter.



PHOTO BY MARK MOORE

From left: Lt. Col. Brad Hanna commissions Capt. Jay Henderson for the chaplaincy as Jay's children and wife, Jayme, watch Jan. 14 at Tulsa-Asbury UMC. Hanna is state command chaplain for the Oklahoma Army National Guard. Taking part in the pinning ceremony was Joseph Lynch, who directs religious education at West Point, the U.S. military academy in New York. Rev. Dr. Lynch, a retired Oklahoma elder, was Jay's mentor through the candidacy process before seminary.

After Henderson's first tour of duty in Iraq, he married Jamye, his high school sweetheart, and enrolled in flight school to be a helicopter pilot with the National Guard.

While he was in flight school, he said, he wrestled with a growing sense that he was called to the ministry.

The decision did not come easily.

He worried that he was not good enough to be an example to others.

But he got the boost he needed at a chapel service. An older woman, a close friend of the family, told him before the service, "I was praying to the Lord, and he told me you are going to be a preacher."

He dismissed it politely, but later, during the service, the minister stopped in the middle of his message and said, "I have to stop, because the Holy Spirit is telling me one of you is called to the ministry, and you're trying to run from it. You need to

submit to the Lord."

Henderson said he was "freaking out."

But he still had his second tour of duty before him. By then, he and Jamye had two young children. The day he left Tulsa, he learned that Jamye was pregnant with identical twin girls.

For the next year, he shuttled soldiers in and out of hot spots in Iraq.

As he landed from one mission, his commander rushed him from the helicopter. "The rotor was still turning," he said. By Skype, he joined Jamye as she gave birth to the twins.

"I'd like to give a shout-out to my family," he said. "They've just been amazing. My wife's Superwoman. She's the only woman I've ever loved."

Back in Oklahoma, Henderson completed his bachelor's degree at Oklahoma Wesleyan University, graduating summa cum laude, and then

moved his family to Dallas to attend Perkins Theological Seminary at Southern Methodist University.

He began work on his master of divinity degree and was assigned to be the pastor of three rural churches near Dallas.

On his second Sunday at a church in Celeste, Texas, 50 members of his National Guard unit surprised him by showing up. They had arranged a training mission to fly to Texas on six Blackhawk helicopters.

He pastored those three churches for all four of his years in seminary.

"I loved it," he said.

After graduating from seminary, he returned to Oklahoma and was assigned a full-time position at Asbury United Methodist Church.

He is once again a member of the 120th Engineer Battalion of the Oklahoma Army National Guard.

And he will still go to war with the unit if they are called up. But he will go holding a Bible, not the flight controls of a Blackhawk helicopter.

And he thinks he is uniquely qualified to connect with soldiers.

"I know what it is to struggle with the loss of comrades and the stress of deployments," he said.

The chaplaincy, he said, "is my mission work. This is me getting outside of the four walls of the church."

"For me, serving as a chaplain is a matter of integrity, because I'm doing nothing less than I ask my congregation to do, which is, in addition to your day job, go out and serve the world in the name of Jesus Christ."

Will he ever fly again?

"I had to give that up to pursue the chaplaincy."

Will he miss flying?

"Of course," Henderson said. "I wrestled with this calling. But I'm sold out to following God wherever the adventure's at. This is the only thing worth investing in, sharing the good news."

(Reprinted with permission from Tulsa World Media Co. Jan. 14, 2018.)

Gastrochurch serves deep teaching in four-course meals

BY SHERRI GRAGG

HOUSTON, Texas —Meredith Mills had a problem. It was incredibly difficult to get her friends to attend church, and when they did, she felt they left without digging into the deepest struggles of their faith.

So this pastor in the Texas Conference began to explore: What type of worship would her friends want to attend? How could she incorporate deep teaching that met their needs? And then it came to her.

What if church looked more like the dinner table?

Rev. Mills just wrapped up Gastrochurch's first year of ministry.

Q: This is such a unique concept. Help us wrap our heads around how an evening at Gastrochurch unfolds.

A: The Gastrochurch model is very structured. I always

begin with something along these lines: "The whole premise of Gastrochurch is that much of your days are pretty meaningless. We don't talk about the things that matter most. Tonight, we are going to talk about those things." Then I present a sermon in four parts, with a discussion question for each food course. At the end of the evening, I offer an invitation to participate in communion.

Q: Give us an example of a topic for discussion.

A: In October, we discussed Martin Luther. Before we presented the appetizer, I said, "Martin Luther's story is the spiritual journey of someone who was plagued by guilt who came to grace. How big a role did guilt play in your childhood spiritual formation?"

Q: I bet that generated some interesting discussion!

A: Gastrochurch came about for a lot of reasons, but part of the theological underpinning was incarnating some of the themes of the Bible that we never talk about. It is the

hospitality of inviting everyone to the table no matter what they believe, no matter what they have done. The dinner table feels different to people.

Q: Where does Gastrochurch meet?

A: It depends. One of the things we have learned is that it is important to find a place that feels like neutral territory. It is really uncomfortable for someone who is non-church to walk into someone's private home.

Q: What will enable Gastrochurch's next steps?

A: In order to really develop community, Gastrochurch needs to meet every week, but it is so much work to host a pop-up restaurant. We just can't do that every week.

We are praying that God will lead us to a Christian restaurant owner who will partner with us by hosting Gastrochurch.

Learn more at <http://gastrochurch.org/>

(Story posted Jan. 11 on the Texas Conference website)



Above: Cornerstone Church in Tulsa meets at 10:30 a.m. Sundays at 4803 S. Lewis Ave. Right: a young family joins in the praise singing on Launch Sunday, Jan. 21, at this satellite campus of Asbury United Methodist Church.

PHOTOS BY HOLLY MCCRAY



Satellite:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

and contacts secured in one swift moment. During the offering time, screenshots displayed how to donate online or by text while small buckets were passed along the rows of people.

This brand-new faith community in Tulsa also receives support from the Oklahoma Conference and the Council Oak District.

"I can tell you that the entire Oklahoma Annual Conference is paying attention to our willingness to step out in faith for the kingdom!" Odom declared in a Jan. 16 email to the satellite launch team, about 50 people. He reports regularly to Rev. Dr. Tiger and the Oklahoma Conference New Faith Communities Committee, chaired by Mark Foster.

First steps involved memorizing scripture

Odom's email continued: "In some ways, we've deviated from the standard script for how to launch a new church ... A group of us has been memorizing scripture, slowly and steadily sowing hours of prayer and making personal invitations of people who don't know Jesus or aren't in a church ... And already some of the people we've been reaching out to and praying for have started meeting with the launch team, not wanting to wait until the official launch."

Odom also stated, "THANK YOU (yes, in all capital letters) to Pastor Tom

(Harrison) for having a missionary spirit, for encouraging us to take steps of faith in this mission of helping others follow Jesus." Rev. Dr. Harrison is Asbury's longtime senior pastor.

Cornerstone seeks people new to any church

In the email, Odom described types of people to whom Cornerstone is reaching out. This is paraphrased:

■ A month ago, Anne* sent a suicidal text message to her family. They spent all night driving around, trying to find her before she took her life. They found her. She's been at Cornerstone in recent weeks. I ran into her at a concert; she came straight up to me and said, in a slurred voice: I'm going to see YOU on SUNDAY! And then she gave me a fist bump. Praise God for drawing in Anne. We started Cornerstone for Anne.

■ Chris* grew up in church, but hadn't been back since graduating from high school over a decade ago. He's married and has children. His parents, on our launch team, have been earnestly praying for him for years. Recently Chris and his family have been meeting with the team. He and his wife are now in discipleship groups. When the launch team met together to worship, Chris read scripture and prayed for my message. We started Cornerstone for Chris.

■ Derek* moved to Tulsa a few years

ago for work. He's curious about God, but thinks it would be embarrassing if someone he's dating finds out he's associated with church. He's not sure what or if he believes. He has been loosely around Cornerstone for a few months, perhaps out of deference to his good friend who is on the launch team. God is clearly working in him. We're praying for Derek to throw himself headlong into following Jesus. We started Cornerstone for Derek.

Cornerstone chose its name from 1 Peter 2:6.

"We know that everyone is building a life around something," Harrison wrote to the Asbury community in an August e-newsletter. "Will you pray that God would use the ministry of Cornerstone to help others in midtown Tulsa follow and build their lives around the precious cornerstone of Jesus Christ?"

Looking ahead to Easter

The satellite's staff includes Danae Castle, children's director, and worship leaders Ben and Noelle Kilgore.

Odom told worshippers Jan. 21 that he will preach from the Gospel of John through Easter. "Everything we want to know about God comes back to Jesus," he said.

"We need a hard reset on our spiritual operating systems. I hope people walk away with curiosity about Jesus."

Website is www.CornerstoneTulsa.org. (*not actual people)

OCU names police chief

Oklahoma City University has named Jennifer Rodgers as chief of police.

Rodgers assumed the role Jan. 3, following a lengthy career with the Oklahoma City Police Department. She is an OCU graduate and a former adjunct professor in OCU's criminal justice program.

"It is my absolute pleasure to return to the OCU family," she said. "I am leaving behind a 28-year career with the Oklahoma City Police Department. Those years of training and experience will serve me well in my new position as OCU chief of police. I look forward to serving the campus community."

"I am delighted to welcome Chief Rodgers back to the OCU campus," said President Robert Henry. "Her accomplishments have been very impressive and her experience, leadership, and dedication to our mission will serve the campus community well."

Rodgers most recently served as a lieutenant in the operations bureau of the Oklahoma City Police Department's Springlake Division. She also has worked in communications, investigations, and administration for the department.

She holds a Bachelor of Science in criminal justice and law enforcement from Texas State University and a master's degree in Criminal Justice Administration from OCU.

Passages

■ **HAY** — Rev. Ronald Hay, 69, of Tulsa, died Jan. 21, 2018.

Ron served congregations in Sayre, Prattville, Sand Springs, Inola, Muldrow, Roland, and Trinity. He retired in 2015.

Survivors include his wife, Sue, and their children, Michael Winnen Hay and Trena Hay.

Services were Jan. 25 at Tulsa-Faith United Methodist Church and at Floral Haven Memorial Gardens. Memorial gifts to: Faith UMC.

■ **OWEN** — Rev. Russell Edwin Owen, 90, died Nov. 17, 2017, in Bartlesville.

He was appointed as the Conference Pension and Benefits officer for 15 years, and he chaired the Conference Board of Pensions, on which he served 31 years. He is credited with initiating the Pension Fund Crusade in 1982.

He pastored churches at Wright City, Vinson, Prairie Hill, Court, Wapanuka/Clarita, Hennessey, Lamont, Shidler, Cleveland, Blackburn, Prague, Bristow, Holdenville, Walters, and OKC-Penn Avenue.

Survivors include his wife, Roberta Jean, and one son, Joseph Robert.

■ Larry Edward Bergman of Coalgate died Jan. 23. He was the father of Rev. Todd Bergman, pastor at Turpin and Baker.



Get ready for grand outdoor adventures! Registration is now open for this summer's Oklahoma Conference Camps programming. Go to www.okcamps.org.

Lake Country District Spring Lay Servant Training

Feb. 16-17, McAlester-First UMC
<https://tinyurl.com/LayServant>

2018 Day at the Legislature

Feb. 26, 8:30-4:45 p.m.
Theme: "Equal Justice"
<https://tinyurl.com/DayAtLegislature>

Morning program at
Oklahoma's State Capitol
Lunch and afternoon workshops at
St. Paul's Episcopal Cathedral
Presented by Oklahoma
Conference of Churches (OCC)
(Sign in at Capitol's 4th-floor rotunda)

UMC membership now tops 12.5 million

*U.S. slide continues,
ethnic diversity rises*

BY HEATHER HAHN
UNITED METHODIST NEWS SERVICE

The United Methodist Church's global membership now exceeds 12.5 million.

That total comes from the most recent annual conference journals sent to the General Council on Finance and Administration. The vast majority of the journals are from 2016, with some from 2017 or earlier years, including one from 2013.

The total professing membership is 12,557,214, reflecting the newest information collected by Gary Graves, secretary of the General Conference.

That's up from the denomination's estimated 12.4 million members in 2013, which is the previous time that the secretary of the General Conference calculated delegations.

The numbers in the journals show the denomination's overall growth continues even as the church has seen its U.S. membership slide.

A more recent picture of that decline comes from U.S. figures that the General Council on Finance and Administration published on its Data Services website.

The website's information comes not from journals but from statistics local churches submit each year, which generally show more recent data than collected in journals.

According to this data, U.S. membership dropped below 7 million in 2016 — to about 6.95 million people. That marked a decrease of about 1.6 percent

from 2015, roughly the same percentage decrease seen in the previous two years.

U.S. average weekly attendance fell to just under 2.66 million — representing a 3.3 percent decline. All five U.S. jurisdictions reported decreases in both membership and worship attendance.

However, there are bright spots.

The Dakotas, Northwest Texas, and Red Bird Missionary Conferences all reported slight increases in worship attendance.

Overall, U.S. churches saw 108,071 new members join last year by profession of faith or faith restored. That figure includes people who completed Confirmation or were previously unchurched for some time.

Another 38,443 new members joined by transferring from another denomination.

However, that didn't offset a net loss of 115,884 U.S. members.

The church, which still is 90 percent white in the United States, also saw a slight increase in its ethnic diversity. In 2016, the denomination added 282 more Hispanic/Latino and 32 more Pacific Islander members. It also saw an increase of 1,148 more multiracial members.

Much of the 2016 membership losses resulted from U.S. churches removing long inactive members from their rolls or correcting previous data.

Another 90,613 were removed from the rolls because of death, or as United Methodists would say, they joined "the church triumphant."

Churches reported just 22,930 members withdrew because of joining another denomination. The percentage of such transfers actually dropped nearly 10 percent in 2016. (UMNS, Jan. 29)

NSU Wesley feeds 200

TAHLEQUAH, Okla. — It's not out of the ordinary to see the windows of the Wesley Foundation building fogged with steam from its kitchen, and Jan. 15 was no exception.

Each year on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, the Northeastern State University community honors Dr. King with a day of service. Students sign up to serve in teams on tasks all over Tahlequah.

This year, the university contacted the Wesley with the opportunity to serve a meal to the volunteers. Director Shana Dry and her own team of Wesley volunteers prepared dozens of grilled-cheese sandwiches and more than 6 gallons of soup.

Students were invited in from the 30-degree chill that day to enjoy lunch. In total, 200 student volunteers left with full stomachs and full hearts.

The Wesley at NSU has emblazoned upon its wall a statement of commitment to demonstrate the love of God to campus and community. For this ministry, that means preparing food, and lots of it.

(Contributed by Abigail Shaw-Bolen)

Series on health to begin

A "Health Talk Series," open to the public, begins this month at Epworth Villa in Oklahoma City.

Presenters will include a physician, rehabilitation therapist, and wellness coordinator. Each 1-hour program begins at 10:30 a.m.

- Feb. 21, "Show your heart a little love"
- April 18, focus on bones and joints
- June 20, focus on nutrition and supplements
- Aug. 15, focus on Alzheimer's and dementia awareness
- Oct. 17, "Diabetes: not sugar-coated"
- Dec. 19, focus on Parkinson's

To enroll in the series or select dates, call 405-753-9295. Epworth Villa retirement community is related to The United Methodist Church.

Conference updates video and song copyright licenses

This month, the Oklahoma Conference will renew the umbrella copyright licenses that permit every local church to use the extensive collection of songs and movies specifically licensed through two companies: CCLI (Christian Copyright Licensing International) and CVLI (Christian Video Licensing International).

Local churches have related responsibilities during the year to show they are complying with U.S. copyright law. This requires someone at the church to carry out specific tasks, according to type of license, as described in this article.

Your church's Apportionments make possible this annual basic coverage.

CVLI — video licensing

Every local church must report its

children's ministry attendance totals, to ensure the correct amount of CVLI coverage. This annual digital report is made during the season for Charge Conferences.

It includes noting the proper names for any daycare, after-school, Kids Day Out, or similar programs.

The children's ministry information must be submitted on the "CVLI Children's Ministry Online Survey" form that is part of each church's digital Charge Conference packet. Assign this reporting task to only one person at your church.

Submitting the form is mandatory. If a church fails to complete the survey, coverage cannot be included. If a church has no such ministry, *zero* or *not applicable* must be entered.

If you have questions about the form,

contact your district office, which oversees the digital Charge Conference packets.

To check if a movie is covered by the CVLI license, go to <https://us.cvli.com> and follow the instructions.

CCLI — song licensing

Local churches must keep records of songs covered by the CCLI license that they have copied, perhaps for choir use, or projected during worship.

The most accurate way to track these is on a weekly basis. Assign someone to spend a few minutes each week on this task.

A critical part of this licensing is the "Copy Report." More about this:

Every 2 ½ years, the local church will be required to digitally submit a six-month Copy Report.

The CCLI company will notify a church by mail and email before it's time to do the report.

Several people may create profiles and log in to work on the report online. The report enables CCLI to accurately pay royalties to songwriters and producers.

For questions about CCLI licensing, email Nyla Wallin in the Conference Communications Ministry, nwallin@okumc.org.

Internet sharing is not covered

A local church must separately purchase a license for live streaming, podcasting, and posting recorded worship services that include music on social media such as Facebook. The Conference's umbrella licensing does not cover this. Go to <https://us.ccli.com>.

Campus ministry

Officials, board members, and students take part in a groundbreaking Jan. 8 at the Wesley Foundation for the University of Oklahoma. Expansion and renovation work got under way the next day. Campus minister Daniel Dennison, center, in purple and hardhat, dumps the dirt from his shovel, as missionary Fuxia Wang, beside him at left, digs into the earth. She leads the OU Chinese Fellowship that meets at the center.

PHOTO BY CHRIS SCHUTZ



Work begins for OU Wesley project

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

NORMAN, Okla. — Shovels hit the ground Jan. 8 for a symbolic start to a multiphase improvement project for the Wesley Foundation at the University of Oklahoma.

The capital campaign exceeded its goal of \$500,000 by the end of 2017 — instead, the total was \$702,000, said campus minister Daniel Dennison.

“We feel very encouraged,” Rev. Dennison said. “It’s only once in a generation that we would ask for that kind of giving.”

The foundation is grateful that gifts have exceeded the original goal, in case of possible cost overruns, he said.

Dennison, missionaries assigned to The Wesley, board members, donors, and students participated in the groundbreaking on the north side of the facility at West Lindsey Street and Elm Avenue.

The fundraising success means the Wesley will get “substantial updates,”

Dennison said.

The first phase of the project will give an attractive new look to the front of the building, with patio seating and a pergola over the walkway. The new entry is meant to be inviting, beckoning to students walking or cycling past the building.

That phase has begun, with the work occurring during the day. There is noise, but “it’s manageable,” Dennison said. Most of The Wesley’s programming is in the evenings.

The next phase, set to begin in April, will feature a new international office suite, roof, and updates to the east side of the building. Also during that phase is remodeling of “The Pit,” the central commons area in the building. The work will include removing a dropped ceiling and replacing lighting, Dennison said.

A third phase, expected to begin in May 2019, will bring construction of a new office suite on the north side of the building to help accommodate The Wesley’s growing intern program,

Dennison said.

It is important for the building to remain usable during the work, he said.

At the end, “it will look a lot nicer and not like it’s 60 years old.”

Present for the groundbreaking was James Parker, a donor and board member who was active at The Wesley when he was an OU student. He graduated in 1993. “It will be a wonderful addition for the students,” Parker said. The aesthetic improvements will “match the worship experience.”

Skyler Rodriguez, a senior majoring in communications, said he believes the changes will help recruit new students to The Wesley. Jake Pannell, a junior mechanical engineering major, agreed.

Jack Bode, a senior linguistics major, said he is pleased the international ministry will get a bigger office. “I like them a lot,” he said.

To contribute to the United Methodist campus ministry at OU, go to: www.okwesley.org/building-the-future.

NEO tournament honors late board member

MIAAMI, Okla. — Campus ministry leaders already have scheduled a fundraiser for the next academic year after the success of an inaugural golf tournament for the Wesley Foundation at Northeastern Oklahoma A&M College.

The Wesley Foundation’s fall tournament raised \$7,000.

This event will be planned yearly in memory of Ron Gilbert, an outstanding United Methodist layman and dentist in Miami, according to Donni Long, Wesley Foundation director. Dr. Gilbert, who died last year, was the last surviving member of that foundation’s original Board of Directors.

The ministry at NEO began 55 years ago.

More than once Gilbert talked of his devotion to United Methodist campus ministry. He and his wife, Ann, met in 1965 at the Methodist Student Union for the University of Tennessee in Memphis, where Ron was in dental school and Ann in nursing school.

The current board hopes this will be a fitting tribute to his legacy, said Long. The next tournament will be Oct. 15 at Peoria Ridge Golf Course.

“We are so very appreciative of the support shown to us for the continuation of the ministry to the NEO campus,” Long said. “Our first golf tournament brought in 36 golfers from Miami, Grove, Webb City, and as far away as Tahlequah.”

The tournament was an initial venture into large-scale fundraising, she said.

The money will “support the Wesley mission of providing generous hospitality to all NEO students who enter our building, which is focused on bearing witness of God’s amazing grace through the unconditional love of Jesus Christ.”

Known as the Wesley Student Ministry, the center offers free lunches twice weekly and programs of worship and fellowship.

Long recalled what a student told her last year. “I wasn’t sure I even believed in God but, after hanging out at Paint and Praise a couple of times, I was convinced that there really is something different about this place. I started attending the lunches and worship. By the end of the school year I began building back my relationship with Jesus. Without the Wesley, I don’t know where I would be today.”

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Cowboy:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Temptation was too great; by the time they got home to give the candy to her, they had eaten the bottom layer.

The family had one pickup truck for two adults and three boys to share. The highlight for a kid was going to Laverne on a Saturday night to the drugstore and theater.

With the family having only one pickup, Bernard didn't play high school sports. However, he played softball, and he went on to coach women's softball. He played tennis in his cowboy boots, winning one year with partner Delvin Jett. He also played horseshoes at Slapout on Sundays.

Bernard first met his wife, Phyllis, roller-skating. He skated up beside her when she was a young girl and told her: When you grow up, I want to go with you.

They later married at Fairview United Methodist Church. They were married more than 69 years.

Bernard rode a horse most all his life. He'd ride his horse 4 miles to church and, if he had enough money, he'd stop in Slapout to get something to eat.

He rodeoed four or five years with Oden Shepard, Earl Alley, and Pauli Bentley. Once he entered a rodeo at Dodge City, Kansas, and his part of the winnings



PHOTO BY MARY MORRISON

Mourners pray at the graveside of Bernard Nine on Jan. 6. He was a longtime active member of Fairview UMC near Slapout.

was \$11.25. He said he felt rich, as that was 2 weeks' worth of work at the time.

The rancher said he wanted to buy more land when it was \$10 per acre, but he couldn't borrow the money at the time. When he was asked late in life if he had accomplished all his dreams, he said: Not quite; I still like to run cattle. He recalled good times gathering cattle with Kenneth Pinkard.

The biggest part of Bernard's life was

spent feeding cattle, but he and Phyllis always made time for their grandkids' sports and events.

When asked what was his legacy, Bernard answered: the United Methodist church. He also said he hoped all of his family was interested in church.

In addition to his wife, among survivors are four children, 11 grandchildren, and 14 great-grandchildren. (Source: Schilling Funeral Home Group website)

Employment

■ Morning Worship Leader: McAlester-First United Methodist Church. Part-time. Contact Matt Judkins at mbjudkins@gmail.com.

■ Youth Director: Clinton-First United Methodist Church. Part-time. Resume to Rick Robart, rick.robart@yahoo.com, or call 918-803-1138.

■ Children's/Youth Minister: Duncan-St. Paul's United Methodist Church. Half-time. Send resume by Feb. 4 to stpaulsduncan@gmail.com or contact Denise Tinney-Clark at 580-255-2538.

■ Director of Children's Ministries: Norman-St. Stephen's United Methodist Church. Half-time. Call 405-321-4988 or email revjeankc@aol.com.

■ Youth Minister: Tuttle-First. Part-time. Email pastor@tuttlefirstumc.org or call 405-381-2458.

■ Director of Children's Ministries: Cushing-First. Contact Kathy Leithner at katleit2@aol.com or 918-255-5683.

■ Coordinator of Food Services and Housekeeping: Camp Egan, Tahlequah. Full-time. Resume to campegan@okumc.org.

(Send job listings to Chris Schutz of the Communications Ministry, cschutz@okumc.org, 405-530-2075.)