New faith community seeks to fulfill prophecy

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

OKLAHOMA CITY — In the home of Victoria Lee, you’ll find the genesis of a United Methodist church. This newest faith community in the Oklahoma Conference especially seeks to engage with American-born Asians in Oklahoma City.

About two dozen people meet there monthly for worship, dinner, and sharing, and a moms’ group gathers weekly.

A native of Malaysia, Rev. Lee’s story begins in that country with her UM clergy parents. An elderly pastor visited the couple after their third child’s birth. He foretold another birth: a girl, to be given the Chinese name that translates in English as “proclaiming God’s grace.”

In 2011, Lee said, “I realized how fragile a human being is and how much I need God,” she said.

In 2012, “I re-surrendered my life at that point and experienced healing, restoration by the grace of God. It completely changed me and my family.”

One day in her piano studio, Victoria heard a new note. It was God’s call to career ministry.

“As I was sitting beside my piano student during lesson, I felt an overwhelming passion to not just coach youngsters to advance in their piano skills, but a calling to be an influencer, a spiritual mentor for the next generation,” she recalled. “Ever since ... Holy Spirit has placed in my heart a new desire.”

Victoria said her parents, now retired, always have hoped at least one of their children would be a pastor.

Along with her sister, Victoria enrolled at Saint Paul School of Theology at OCU. (The English translation for her sister’s name is “proclaiming God’s kindness.”)

NAME BAPTISMS

Special bathrobes commemorate the baptisms of some Confirmation students at Tulsa-First (2017).

Immersion punctuates Confirmation rituals

BY KYLE WESTFALL

TULSA — For several years, the modern service at Tulsa-First United Methodist Church has celebrated immersion baptisms with a soundtrack anchored by Phil Wickham’s song “This is Amazing Grace.”

As new believers are raised out of the water, the chorus is sung and the congregation erupts in joy.

Senior Pastor Jessica Moffatt, in an effort to emphasize this milestone of faith for children and youth, introduced the baptism tank and song to the Gothic cathedral services as part of the Confirmation ritual.

On April 8, Confirmation students who had never been baptized had the opportunity to do so by immersion, rising out of the water and into celebration. Each student was then wrapped in a bathrobe imprinted on back with the words “This is Amazing Grace.”

After the baptisms and Confirmation ritual were completed one year, Rev. Moffatt invited those in the congregation to remember their baptisms by touching the water in the tank.

As the audience moved through the sanctuary, a man stepped forward. He wanted to profess his faith for the first time and be baptized.

Encouraged by the sight of so many young people making personal commitments that day to faith and to the church, that man also proclaimed Jesus and was baptized — wearing his three-piece suit!

The First Church party extended to embrace him, too. Many gathered around him as he, too, was raised out of the water, into new life. God’s grace truly is amazing.

Annual Conference Special Offering

Book inspires first responders

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

OKLAHOMA CITY — Fire Chief Terry Ford keeps a dog-eared devotional book in his briefcase. For this man who heads up the 85-member civilian firefighting service at Tinker Air Force Base, the book’s title “says it all.”

That title: “Strength for Service to God and Community.”

The cover bears silhouettes of a medic, firefighter, and police officer. Daily devotions inside were written specifically for them, the professionals and volunteers who serve as first responders in crises.

“We’re your first call on your worst day,” said Ford, a firefighter for 36 years.

“We don’t pray for wealth or for safekeeping necessarily. The main thing that we pray for is what this book is all about: strength for service. Give me courage, give me strength to serve God in our community.”

Tinker Chaplain Sam Tucker spoke up in the April interview, quoting a star of the silent-movie era: “Courage is fear that has said its prayers.”

The United Methodist clergyman gave Chief Ford the book as a Christmas present.

Both men were pleased to learn more copies of the “Strength for Service” pocket books soon will find their way to more first responders throughout Oklahoma.
**Bishops get ‘Way Forward’ report**

The Council of Bishops of The United Methodist Church received a report from the Commission on a Way Forward during the Council’s meeting April 30-May 4 in Chicago.

The Commission had been assigned to examine all paragraphs about human sexuality in the denomination’s Book of Discipline and to explore options to maintain and strengthen the Church’s unity amid conflicting theological views. The work of the Council and Commission was guided by the mission, vision, and scope of that task.

Emerging from this guidance, the Council’s recommendation seeks to maximize the global presence of a United Methodist witness, allow for as much contextualization as possible, and create as much unity as possible.

The Council’s discernment process was guided by its overarching desire to strategically help the General Conference do its work and to honor the request of the 2016 General Conference to help the Church find a way forward.

The Council of Bishops will submit a report that includes the following three points to the 2019 Special Session of the General Conference.

1. All three plans — the Traditionalist Plan, the One Church Plan, and the Connectional Conference Plan — will be submitted to that General Conference.
2. The Council of Bishops will recommend the One Church Plan.
3. The report will include an extensive historical narrative of the Council’s discernment process regarding all three plans.

The Council “will make all the information considered by the Commission and the Council of Bishops available to the delegates of the General Conference and acknowledges there is support for each of the three plans within the Council. The values of our global church are reflected in all three plans,” explains a May 4 public statement issued by the Council.

The One Church Plan, which the Council will recommend, provides for differing practices and approaches to human sexuality. The plan allows for contextualization of language about human sexuality in support of the denomination’s mission. It allows central conferences — the churches in Africa, Asia, and Europe — to retain traditional language and values. It achieves as much unity as possible to maximize the mission within a global, multicultural Church.

The Traditionalist Plan retains the current language of the 2016 Book of Discipline and adds various points of detail.

The Connectional Conference Plan opens a way for the emergence of autonomous churches that are affiliated with one another yet have different approaches and policies related to human sexuality.

The three plans reflect the diverse hopes and passions across the Church.

The full report will be released by July 8. This deadline allows time to translate the report into the major languages spoken at the General Conference.

The members of the Council of Bishops have agreed to avoid discussing details or legislative proposals until documents are available to everyone. Information can be found on the Council of Bishops News & Statements webpage, which is the Council’s official news site.

www.umc.org/who-we-are/council-of-bishops-news-statements

Please seek to balance what you read from other sources.

The Council of Bishops has made its recommendation. Bishops preside but do not vote at General Conference. It will be up to the 2019 General Conference delegates to act on the recommendation.

That meeting will be Feb. 23-26, 2019, in St. Louis, Missouri.

In the meantime, the 2016 Book of Discipline continues to guide the Church in matters of polity.

Let us continue to pray for The United Methodist Church.

---

**Celebrations to mark Smith Chapel’s 50th anniversary**

Plans are underway for a year of events celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel on the Oklahoma City University campus.

Consecrated on May 9, 1968, Smith Chapel has been the center of religious life at OCU ever since that time.

Designed by renowned architect Pietro Belluschi, with stained glass by Gyorgy Kepes, the 20,000-square-foot structure has been host to the Wimberley School of Religion, Saint Paul School of Theology, and the OCU Wesley Center as well as hundreds of weddings, worship services, lectures, concerts, performances, exhibitions, and church events.

Monthly events are being planned for the 2018-19 academic year and will include a re-dedication service in late August, organ concerts, guest speakers, and other community gatherings. A full list of events and dates will be available online at www.okcu.edu/chapel50.

---

**Three OCU Presidents**

— From left are Tom McDaniel, Martha Burger, and Robert Henry. The former, incoming, and outgoing presidents posed at Henry’s retirement celebration April 7 at the OCU School of Law.

Board Chairman Ron Norick announced during the evening that the Robert H. Henry Endowed Chair in Humanities and Law will be established. Henry retires on June 30.

---

**First fast-food restaurant opens on campus**

Students at Oklahoma City University have a new food option on campus.

After months of construction in the lower level of the Tom and Brenda McDaniel Student Center, Chick-fil-A opened for business in mid-February. The first fast-food restaurant on campus, it was expected to open last fall, but permitting issues pushed back the grand opening.

Students took a survey in 2017 about their fast-food preferences. Chick-fil-A edged out Subway to top the list. So Chartwells, which is OCU’s new food service provider, quickly went to work to contract with the family-owned restaurant chain. The campus’s fast-food site offers the full menu of food and drink items and also eaters. Students can use their meal cards.

And, like the company’s other locations, the OCU location is closed on Sundays.

In addition, renovations were made to Alvin’s, OCU’s coffee shop/convenience market also on the lower level in the student center. The market now offers a larger grocery selection.

---

**A nationally recognized mascot greets diners at OCU’s Chick-fil-A.**
Annual Conference thanks retirees

Books:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

All donations to the Annual Conference Special Offering will make that possible. Through the Conference’s Strength for Service effort, the money gifts will purchase books, which local churches then can use to engage with first responders in each community. Your church’s delegates will receive more information.

The story of the “Strength for Service” books begins during World War II, when the Methodist Publishing House produced them for U.S. troops. In 1998, a Boy Scout working on his Eagle project secured support to update and reprint the volume through the General Commission on United Methodist Men.

“I’m a retired Scouter; my son’s an Eagle Scout,” Ford said. “That makes my love of the book even greater.”

On the UMMen’s website, a summary states: “We often forget that after families and friends of victims have been rescued, comforted, or consoled, it is often our first responders who need emotional and spiritual support.”

Ford said he often speaks to young firefighters at academy graduations. His talks include matters of the spirit.

“I can’t quote scripture like a lot of folks, but I am a man of faith,” he said. “I tell them, ‘Responding to a 1-year-old in cardiac arrest or pulling somebody out of a wrecked vehicle or a burning house or an aircraft — that’s not the time to get your religion. You need to come up with your faith early on.’”

He recalled one such God-moment. In 2013, firefighters at Tinker watched a tornado crossing Moore, tracking toward the military base.

Two of the men, new to firefighting and new to Oklahoma, had “eyes as big as dinner plates,” Ford said.

“We circled up, put our arms around each other’s necks, and the chaplain started praying.”

The team watched the storm dissipate over Lake Thunderbird. The rookies responded, “Ya’ll prayed that tornado away.”

Ford told them, “I guess the Lord works in mysterious ways.”

The chief recalled the prayer was “for strength for us because we knew what we were getting ready to do. We were going to Moore to do God’s work, and we were going to see some things that we didn’t want to see.”

Firefighters from Tinker spent three days serving as first responders in Moore after that killer storm. Ford said the crew at Tinker partners with local communities in prevention, response, training, and more.

Tucker, who will become senior pastor at OKC-Wickline United Methodist Church in June, said he wants that church and the Tinker crew to work together.

Ford described his choice of career, which he made as a first-grader on a field trip in Bowling Green, Kentucky.

“I got to sit on a fire truck, and I knew from that moment what I was going to do.”

Ford said firefighters “don’t save lives. We’re instruments of God’s power. What we do is extend God’s grace, whether it’s cutting the door off of a car, or putting out a trashcan fire, or responding to a medical emergency. This is all in God’s hands.”

(www.gcumm.org/strength-for-service)

“First-Class Ministry to First Responders”

This is title for one of the afternoon workshops planned for Wednesday, May 30, during Annual Conference. Building upon the book featured in this story, Chaplain Tucker and others in first-response work will give you insights about their work and their spiritual journeys.

Churches help out during walkout

United Methodists across Oklahoma stepped up to help when public schools closed, some for 10 days, in early April during a teacher walkout and protests at the Capitol about education. Churches’ responses in their communities ranged from operating day camps to feeding students during their unexpected vacations.

The Conference’s Young Peoples Ministry made available children’s curriculum from past summer camps, and 14 groups accessed that for their temporary programming, according to Charlie Ludden, associate director.

At the Capitol, some clergy and laity prayed and advocated for changes in Oklahoma’s education system.

Elk City hosts day camp

As it became apparent that Elk City teachers would walk out, church members knew some parents would need someone to watch their children, said Pastor Terry Koehn. Elk City UMC hosted a day camp during the three days schools were closed in that district in far western Oklahoma.

In opening to the children of the community, that church was following Bishop Jimmy Nunn’s advice for churches around the Conference to connect with schools, Rev. Koehn said. “We did what we could.”

On the first day, there were eight children at the camp; the total hit 27 on the third day.

Koehn praised some public school teachers who helped at the church with the event styled like a Vacation Bible School. “It’s not like they were home with their feet up,” he said of the teachers.

The church set up a check-in table, with a checkout code word for each child, he said, for safety.

Church staff and volunteers shopped for breakfast and snack foods. Sunday school classes provided some food. For lunches, pizzas and burgers were popular.

Elk City UMC was among the churches that utilized the materials furnished by the Young Peoples Ministry.

Program leaders also discussed character and faith formation and shared Bible stories.

The children also made crafts, watched movies, and enjoyed supervised playtime in the church gym and at a nearby park.

When it came to counting the kids busily running around the gym, leaders knew to tell everyone to “freeze” for the count, Koehn said.

He praised the teachers for recruiting others to help. “They made it go,” he said.

It took a lot of helping hands and caring hearts to make it happen.”

‘Camp Wesley’ in Tahlequah

A month before the teacher walkout, members of Tahlequah-First UMC began planning ways the church could help families that would be affected, said Pastor Matt Franks. The church determined it could accommodate 50 children from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. during weekdays.

What was called “Camp Wesley” ran for nine days while schools were closed. On average, 32 children attended, from kindergartners through fifth-graders, he said.

People from the church, community, and Northeastern State University helped operate the program, which included science sessions, art, games, and yoga.

Students active in the Wesley Foundation at NSU came to help. Players on the NSU women’s basketball team even led a basketball clinic.

As the days stretched on and schools remained closed, NSU students helped provide “fresh legs” and respite for some volunteers in the First UMC project, Rev. Franks said.

Breakfast and lunch at the church were furnished by the school system, he said. Any child or teen could eat.

Another positive result he reported from Camp Wesley was that a new family as well as some neighborhood children without their parents attended Sunday morning.

In all, hosting Camp Wesley was “a big and uplifting thing for the church.” It proved the church was “willing to take on a large mountain,” Franks said.

Guest appearances in Jenks

Rudy Freese, pastor at Jenks-First UMC, estimated 30 children per day, in grades K through 4, came to the day camp operated by the church.

First Church arranged with some guest groups to present activities for the children, including a visit by firefighters who showed off a fire truck, a presentation by the Tulsa Opera, and a skit by Newspring Family Church.

The camp offered a rotating schedule similar to many Vacation Bible Schools, with centers for science, reading, crafts, Bible study, and recreation time, Rev. Freese said. Local pizza and chicken restaurants donated food for lunch on some of the days, he said.

The church gave a Bible to each participant. Freese also said at least one family whose child was at the camp later attended Sunday worship.

Other churches make connections

A sampling of other church’s actions:

- Members from four Edmond churches — First, Acts 2, Connect, and New Covenant — volunteered at YMCA locations and at Mitch and Rankin Parks.
- Oologah UMC welcomed pre-kindergartners through fifth-graders, providing fun activities and food in a safe place during the weekdays.
- Ponca City-Albright UMC served lunches to children.
- Enid-First members operated mobile lunch stations for children.

Be an advocate for education

Clergyman Scott Spencer posted an action list on Facebook and links to relevant sections in the United Methodist Book of Resolutions. The list included:

- Pray
- Get educated about the issues
- Register and vote
- Call/write/visit the governor and state legislators
- Volunteer at a school
- Run for school board or another public office
- Support candidates whose values align with yours
- Learn how local and state government works.

Conference offers internship program

The Conference invites college students to apply by Aug. 1 for its new Collegiate Internship Program, set to launch as the fall academic semester begins.

The young adults will work alongside staff of the United Methodist Ministry Center in Oklahoma City. The interns can spend up to four years working in ministry settings on a variety of projects.

To be eligible, students must be entering their freshman, sophomore, junior, or senior year of college.

The program will be “a multiyear journey for college students that will equip them with knowledge and practical experience through working in our Conference Ministry Center,” organizers said.

For information on applying, contact Charlie Ludden, associate director for Young People’s Ministry, cludden@okumc.org or 405-530-2009; or Neil Tate, program director for Camp and Retreat Ministries, ntate@okumc.org or 405-530-2018.

New congregation:

Charis Character Camps: June 11-14 and 18-22 at OKC-Church of the Servant

Chinese cultural learning,” she said.

The program will teach martial arts, video-making, traditional dance and drama, computer coding, Asian cooking, the Mandarin language, and more, according to a flier.

Students in kindergarten through eighth grade may attend either or both weeks.

“Through talent enrichment programs and team-building activities, students have the opportunity to learn and put into practice the following character traits: respect, gratefulness, integrity, courage, kindness, perseverance, compassion, equity, honesty, and self-discipline,” the flier states.

Victoria has identified a growing interest in Chinese culture and, through Charis Character Camp, wants to provide a relevant experience for children.

For more information: www.charisalive.org.
EDITOR’S NOTE: Victor McCullough becomes the Heartland District superintendent in June, as announced by Bishop Jimmy Nunn. Ordained in 1990, Rev. Dr. McCullough has been senior pastor at OKC-Quayle since 2006. He writes here about his faith story.

BY VICTOR T. MCCULLOUGH

As far back as I can remember in life, I have known and experienced the love and acceptance of family and the faith and strength of the Church.

As a boy of 5, I watched my daddy sing in the choir, count the money as the church treasurer, and encourage the saints at Lambuth Methodist Church in Dallas, Texas, and he took me with him to visit the sick and homebound. My mother led uplifting solos, prayed riveting prayers, and led the Women’s Society of Christian Service. At home after worship, she prepared the best Sunday dinners ever; usually family members and friends from all over the city showed up.

I was a drug baby — my parents constantly “drug” me with them to church and family engagements. I learned and valued early in life the importance of honoring God through caring about and serving others. I grew up in a positive and affirming African-American faith community.

For me, the Bible was one of my first textbooks. Reading the stories, enacting the characters, and winning Bible drills in Sunday School were part of my introduction to both essential faith principles and my own cultural heritage. The church’s role in affirming my humanity, intelligence, spirituality, and destiny as having significance in the world convinced me that the church was not merely my rock but also could be a catalyst for changing the world.

Daddy died when I was 8. It took a strong mother, devoted aunts and uncles, a close community, a faithful and relevant church, and the hand of God to keep me on the straight and narrow. I can recall feeling wounded, angry and strong-willed, and often defiant during my teen years; I am not proud of that. Yet the Word of God and the faith and love of church and family still held me, still shaped my identity and worldview through the storms of those adolescent years.

Then as a student at the University of Texas at Arlington, I got involved in campus ministry. God used the young people in that ministry to pour God’s joy and peace into my soul. I gave my faith fully to Jesus Christ and he took me with him to visit the sick and homebound. I went to San Antonio to a gathering, called “Journey Inward/ Journey Outward,” to talk about missions and reflect theologically.

Those events began giving shape to a framework to act on my passion for personal and social holiness/justice. That passion is unchanged by time. My desire is to share the love of God as revealed most redemptive in Jesus Christ and to help love, lead, and disciple the Church in a manner that resembles the cross of Christ: that lifts God’s people upward in worship and outward in love and service to humankind.

I am blessed to have served churches in Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma for 30 years. Now it is a privilege to be given the opportunity to serve as superintendent of the Heartland District. I am humble yet confident in the grace of God to accomplish the mission of Christ’s Church.

Hirsch headlines free program

EDMOND — Where is Christianity and where is it headed?

Those issues will be part of a free talk June 22 on missional movements and leadership, hosted at Edmond-Acts 2, about ways churches can increase their reach.

Speaker Alan Hirsch is “one of the more thought-provoking authors” about Christianity and where it is going, said Chris Tiger, director of New Faith Communities for the Oklahoma Conference. Hirsch will discuss “how to reach those who are not attracted to church,” Rev. Tiger said.

A promotional flyer says Hirsch will discuss “The 60-40 Proposition” and explains that title by asking: “Why do most churches aim at reaching only 40 percent of the population, but have no idea of how to approach the 60 percent of Americans (and increasing!) who aren’t coming to church?”

Tiger said the event will be of interest to both clergy and laity.

Hirsch is the author of numerous books, including “The Forgotten Ways,” “The Shaping of Things to Come,” “ReJesus,” and “The Faith of Leap.”

His experience includes leading a local-church movement among the marginalized, developing training for innovative missional leadership, and heading up the mission and revitalization work of the denomination.

Deadline for registering is June 18. Lunch will be provided. Please sign up in advance with Megan, 405-530-2199, or go to https://tinyurl.com/AlanHirschOK.

Sponsor for the program, from 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., is the New Faith Communities Ministry Team.
Grant helps OCU law students help tenants at risk

Oklahoma City — Tenants facing possible eviction in Oklahoma County can get help from Oklahoma City University’s Law School to remain in their homes.

The law school recently received a “generous grant” from the Oklahoma Bar Foundation to create the OCU School of Law Pro-Bono Eviction Assistance Program, according to Richard Klinge, director of the program.

“Research has shown that two-thirds of people who faced eviction with legal representation were able to stay in their homes,” according to a statement from the school. “For those lacking legal representation, that number was one-third.”

“To my knowledge,” Klinge said in a letter to Bishop Jimmy Nunn, the law school’s effort “is the first program ever to solely focus on serving tenants facing eviction.”

Klinge encouraged pastors and churches’ lay leaders to contact him with questions about the new legal service. He can be reached at 405-208-5207 or rklinge@okcu.edu.

He said some 200 families face eviction every week in Oklahoma County, and almost all are unable to afford legal help to assist them in navigating the process.

While serving 10 years as senior director for legal services with Catholic Charities in Oklahoma, Klinge said, he observed that “intervention by an attorney on behalf of our tenant clients greatly improved the probability of a positive outcome for our client.”

The law students in the program will be able to inform those facing eviction about their rights under the Oklahoma Residential Landlord and Tenant Act (ORLTA). The program has no income or citizenship requirements for eligibility.

Wesley Foundation at OSU nearly complete

Stillwater — Applications are being accepted for residential space in the soon-to-be completed three-story Wesley Foundation building that sits just south of Oklahoma State University’s campus.

The $9.5 million campus ministry building at the corner of University and Washington is expected to be finished by July, with move-in by mid-August, according to Anne Walker, the Wesley Foundation’s interim director.

The Wesley’s top floor is reserved for suites of rooms that will accommodate a total of 12 students. Two students of the same gender will occupy each suite, and each suite consists of two bedrooms, one bathroom, a kitchenette, and shared living space.

The new residential space is reserved for students who are single and from sophomores to graduate-student level. It will take mere minutes for students to walk from the new building to classes or the library. The bathrooms are “nicer than I ever had in college,” Walker said.

The building’s ground floor and second story will be open to the public for Wesley Foundation functions. Their features will include a coffee shop and communal gathering spaces.

The students who reside atop the United Methodist center will be “living directly on top of worship space,” Walker said.

She expects the new residents to find “a community of people invested in wholesome living.” They will be able to offer spiritual support to one another.

The top floor also will include a full-size kitchen, private study space, large television, and a laundry area.

Plans are to hold a weekly community meal.

And throughout the new Wesley center, “there will be tons of opportunity to engage like-minded students and mentors. It will be a really welcoming space for students,” Walker said.

In June, James Hunt will become the Wesley’s full-time campus minister. Peter White will be on the Wesley staff as a mentor and spiritual director.

Fundraising continues for the project, with $1.5 million needed to complete the Wesley’s capital campaign. Separately $3 million is being raised for upkeep of the building, Walker said.

Students value ministry at TU

Tulsa — Two young adults active in United Methodist campus ministry at the University of Tulsa wrote about its value in their lives for the Wesley Foundation’s newsletter.

Gloria Hrncir is a junior at TU, majoring in sociology. Sophomore Aaron Goree studies computer science.

“In all the time I have been at Wesley, I have thought it to be a place for a diverse group of students who welcome others as they are,” Gloria said. “TU Wesley is a place where people, who might not necessarily have been friends before, become friends here because of Christ.”

She listed some of the Wesley activities she enjoys — karaoke nights, worship, jungle pong, Bible studies, trivia nights, and more — at the place she’s found “Christian community.”

Aaron said, “I was drawn in by the weekly activities my first semester, like Friday Noon Lunch and C.S. Lewis Reading Group.”

He noted, “Reaching out to the whole campus is important so that we can share what God has given us. Worship connects us with God through Bible study, music, and prayer. Games Night brings people together to enjoy some hilarious moments while building trust and friendship. I am thankful to have these experiences at the Wesley!”

Gloria’s family is active at Tulsa-First UMC, and Aaron is from Edmond, said the Wesley’s director, Ron Gentry.

Honorary doctorates for two UM leaders

Bill Junk, above, and Craig Stinson, right, received honorary doctorates from United Methodist-related Oklahoma City University on May 6. Junk is president of Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation, and Rev. Stinson is Oklahoma Conference director of Connectional Ministries. OCU President Robert Henry made the presentations at commencement.

PHOTOS BY JOSH ROBINSON

PHOTO BY ANNE WALKER

PHOTO BY JOSH ROBINSON

PHOTO BY ANNE WALKER

PHOTO BY JOSH ROBINSON
ADULT STUDIES AND LEADERS:

GREG TENER – Health and Wholeness
In June, Rev. Dr. Tener became senior pastor at Bartlesville-First UMC. He entered ministry in 1993 after working for SW Bell for 16 years. He directed the Wesley Foundation at Weatherford and pastored Putnam City, Poteau, and Wilson/Loco churches. Greg became a superintendent in 2012, leading the Ardmore District and then SOKC/Heartland. He earned a Bachelor of Arts from OCU, a Master of Divinity from Perkins, and a Doctor of Ministry from Saint Paul School of Theology. His area of specialization for his doctorate was Wesleyan Spiritual Formation.

MERRI WHITAKER – Missionary Confns
Rev. Whitaker is a retired missionary of the General Board of Global Ministries. Ordained in 1984, she is a member of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference. In 1987, she became director of Cookson Hills Center, a mission serving the Cherokee people in the Cookson area, and served there until 2016. Meri also is a pastor for Canterbury Chapel UMC, Vian, ministering to people in recovery. She is author of “My Sister, The Father,” available in the UMW library. She has received the Denman Evangelism Award and Sequoyah County Citizen of the Year Award.

KATHY CALDRON — Money
Kathy Caldron retired from ConocoPhillips after more than 24 years of service. Her UMW leadership began in 1972 when she was a member of the younger members in her local unit, she was asked to interpret the organization’s new structure. She has served UMW in multiple roles, including as local treasurer and president, district treasurer and secretary of financial interpretation, Conference treasurer and president; and on the Regional School of Mission Planning Team. She is the Conference UMW liaison for the 150th Legacy Endowment Fund and Northern Prairie District UMWtreasurer. She earned a B.A. at Oklahoma State University, where she met her husband, Royce, in the OSU marching band. Ponca City has been their home for 38 years.

CHILDREN’S LEADER:

FAYE PERRY
Faye Perry, great-great-granddaughter of a slave and granddaughter of a Seminole Indian, was introduced to UMW when she was invited to lead the Mother-Child Retreat. She also has served the UMW at the jurisdiction level. Faye is a member of OKC-Cornerstone UMC. She studied vocal music at OCU, then earned a B.A. from Mid-America Christian University and M.B.A. at Oklahoma Christian University. She has worked in the field of health care; she retired after 30 years at Presbyterian Hospital.

YOUTH LEADERS:

MICHAEL SMITH
(for senior-high youth)
Michael Smith has been youth director at Pryor-First United Methodist Church since 2016, and he led youth ministries at other Oklahoma Conference churches between 1998 and 2008. He also worked in retail management for over 10 years. With that history in management and leadership, Michael focuses on teaching students to use their faith and spiritual knowledge to become leaders in church and in their communities. In leisure time, he and his family like to go fishing, hunting, hiking, and camping.

GLENDA SKINNER-NOBLE
(for junior-high youth)
Rev. Glenda Skinner-Noble is the visual arts teacher at Prairie Queen Elementary in Oklahoma City. She holds two bachelor’s degrees in art from Oklahoma City University and a Master of Divinity from The Methodist Theological School in Ohio. Glenda enjoys drawing, sculpting primarily with wood and textiles, and printmaking using wood block and copper plate. Glenda and her husband, Don, have two children.

LOCATION:
Oklahoma City University
2501 N. Blackwelder, Oklahoma City

DATES:
Weekend:
Friday, July 20 — Sunday, July 22
Registration............3 p.m. (begins)
Supper.............5 p.m. (school begins)

One Day Plus:
Sunday, July 22 — Monday, July 23
Registration............3 p.m. (begins)
School .................6:30 p.m. (begins)

LEADERSHIP:
Betty Prentice, Dean of Mission u, bettyjeanprentice@gmail.com
918-695-7745

Norma Gravley-Quinn,
Conference treasurer,
will be guest preacher
Sunday morning and evening.

SPONSORS:
Oklahoma Conference’s Mission and Service Ministry Team
and United Methodist Women

CONTINUING EDUCATION:

Lay Servants
Counts as advanced course
Clergy
1 CEU for weekend school
0.8 hours for One Day Plus school

SCHOLARSHIPS:
1 full scholarship is offered for a youth participant. Some additional scholarships are available for others.

For information, contact Sue Helms, sahelms@sbcglobal.net.

STUDY RESOURCES:
Order your books in advance at
www.UMWMissionResources.org
or call 800-305-9857.
In 2019, the Foundation will be 75 years old! The Foundation’s legacy is more than dates and events. It’s a legacy of the heart. It’s a story about people who were compelled by grace, gratitude, and the dreams God placed in them to invest in lasting good. It is also the story of those who have been positively impacted by that investment. The story of the Foundation could be told in some way with each of our almost 2,200 accounts.

Annual Conference proposals

Budget reduction of 6.3%

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

The eight district meetings previewing Oklahoma’s Annual Conference (May 29-31, Tuesday-Thursday, in OKC) took Treasurer Norma Quinn on a quest across the state. Associate Conference Lay Leader and physician Don Kim referenced the “Quest” theme when he joined Rev. Dr. Quinn at the Heartland and Crossroads Districts’ preview. He defined quest as an opportunity for congregations to reach people outside their church families.

Dr. Kim said, “I hope this conference is an opportunity to go beyond our walls.”

Delegates are urged to read in advance the 2018 Pre-Conference Workbook, available online to view and download.

Quinn pointed out the budget proposal would reduce by 6.36 percent the 2019 apportionment for each church based on that church’s 2018 apportioned amount. It would replace the current Conference Decennial Plan.

And she fielded questions about other financial proposals to: 1) reduce by half the Health Reimbursement Account subsidy for clergy who retire after June 1, 2019; and 2) retain the 2018 pension annuity rate of $684 for clergy with qualifying pre-1982 service.

“This budget represents hundreds of people and hundreds of hours” of collaboration, Quinn said. “None of this was done in a vacuum.”

“Vitality” statistics are trending up:

- Worship attendance, up from 48,493 people in 2016, to 50,176 people in 2017 (counts online attendance for first time).
- Stewardship, up from $22 million to $23.7 million (includes all giving).
- Mission involvement, up from 35,533 to 37,993 people engaged at all levels.
- A Consent Calendar is new for business matters. That makes it possible to shorten Annual Conference to three days and to dedicate most of Wednesday to teaching time and 20-plus workshops. Resources from all the workshops will be placed online after Annual Conference concludes.

Bishop Jimmy Nunn explains the Consent Calendar in a video at www.okumc.org/consentcalendar.

More news to note:

- Bring your digital device Tuesday evening. Lay Leader Chuck Stewart will lead an interactive response session using Mentimeter, after the bishop’s Episcopal Priorities speech.
- Download the app “OKUMC” to access details about all aspects of the meeting.
- Find live stream link and more at www.okumc.org/annual_conference

One individual who invested in lasting good is Jim Egan—who was one of the original incorporators of the Foundation. In 1945, he and his father bought a large parcel of land outside Tahlequah on the Barron Fork River and gave it to the Methodist Church to be developed into a church camp.

Recently, Jimmy Doyle, who is on the Foundation staff, said, “I didn’t know who Jim Egan was, but he changed my life. I gave both my life to Christ and was called into ministry at Camp Egan.” In our Conference there are many pastors who made the decision to go into the ministry at Camp Egan. It would be difficult to know how many other lives have been changed while at Camp Egan.

Mr. Egan continued to support Camp Egan financially throughout his lifetime and continued his support of Camp Egan through his estate plan.

WE CAN HELP YOU

We want to share with you how deeply the Foundation reaches into the lives of people all over the world. Our mission is to help people invest in lasting good through endowments.

We work to help individuals, pastors, churches, and agencies to invest in people because we believe relationships are where change can happen and where incredible good can last beyond a single lifetime.

Do you have a vision for creating a legacy for lasting good? It can be as broad or specific as you like. We can help you create a plan that makes your vision a reality. Give us a call. That’s all there is to it.

Thank you Methodist Community for making the difference!

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