Putting our lives online:

Conference eliminates printed calendar for 2018

It’s a date. Rather, a year full of dates. Oklahoma Conference dates.

In 2018, leaders will exclusively use a digital calendar, rather than a printed one, to track the meetings and events planned by various Conference groups.

Among those is Annual Conference, scheduled for May 29-31 (Tuesday-Thursday).

View the Conference calendar at www.okumc.org.

- This change will improve the calendar’s accuracy. New events might emerge mid-year. Meetings may be rescheduled. Dates are simple to alter online.
- This change will save money. Moving to an online-only calendar will save about $6,000 annually on printing and mailing, according to Annual Conference Council (ACC) staff.
- This change especially will help leaders communicate better. Hyperlinks in the calendar will connect viewers to more details and action instructions.

An ACC survey showed fewer officers use the printed Conference calendar, relying instead on email for meeting announcements, and low interest in buying a printed one.

An option for people who prefer a printed calendar is the United Methodist Program Calendar, produced by United Methodist Communications (UMCom), the denomination’s media agency. Wall calendars, desk blotters, pocket calendars, and other versions are offered. Go to shop.umc.org and search for “calendars.”

Ventriloquist prepares for next big stage

Ventriloquist Darci Lynne Farmer credits God for blessing her with the talent that won her $1 million on the television show “America’s Got Talent.”

The 13-year-old and her family are still adjusting to the changes that have resulted from her first-place finish on the show. They are members of OKC-Church of the Servant.

Darci’s parents are Clarke and Misty Farmer, and she has three brothers, Nick, Dalton, and Nate.

Mom Misty said she has advised her daughter to “trust that God’s going to take care of you.”

Darci said she plans to give some of her prize money to the church for mission work. OKC-Servant is “a big family, so supportive. I got everybody here to vote for me.”

The Sept. 20 win came with the chance to perform in four shows at Planet Hollywood in Las Vegas on Nov. 2-5.

Darci said she is “super excited” about the shows.

The original plan was for her to perform twice, but demand for tickets was so great that the producers added two shows, Misty said. There had been no word from producers of any schedule change after the mass shooting Oct. 1 in that city, she said.

Darci, her mother, and the producers

See VENTRILIOQUIST, PAGE 8

Historic bells ringing again at St. Luke’s

As crews reinstalled 42 bells in the Carillon Tower of OKC-St. Luke’s Church this month, they were rewarded with heavenly views from their skyboxes of a sort. The tower rises 185 feet, and the largest bell weighs more than 3,000 pounds. Inscribed with dates, scripture, and dedications, the bells were removed last year for refurbishing in Cincinnati. They “have called us to worship for 60 years,” said Senior Pastor Bob Long.
Paying it forward

BY BISHOP JIMMY NUNN

Forgiveness is tricky business. While it is a basic concept in the faith, it is one often misunderstood. One time Peter asked Jesus how many times someone should forgive. Is seven times enough? No.

Jesus told a story of a king who wished to settle accounts. He summoned a servant who owed a sum so large that it could never be repaid. Yet the servant asked the king to be patient with him and promised to repay the debt.

Jesus said, “The master had compassion on that servant, released him, and forgave the loan” (Matthew 18:27).

The newly forgiven servant did not “pay forward” that compassion and forgiveness. Instead, he confronted a second servant, one who owed him a small amount of money. When that servant asked him for more time, the request was denied. Moreover, he had that servant arrested and placed in debtors’ prison until he could get the small amount owed to him by that servant.

When the king learned that the servant whom he had forgiven had caused the imprisonment of the second servant, he was furious. The king ordered him also delivered to debtors’ prison.

Jesus concluded this story with the warning that we, too, will be treated in the same way if we fail to forgive.

Have you ever wondered why the first servant failed to extend forgiveness to his fellow servant?

- He was not honest with himself. He failed to acknowledge his own impossible situation. He had deceived himself into thinking that he could repay that massive debt if given more time. Time does not always heal all wounds.
- That unforgiving servant also mistreated his peer because he did not acknowledge his own role in building the mountain of debt he was called to repay. Asking for more time was a way to avoid admitting that he had been wrong. He had convinced himself that he was right and, given more time, he would prove it. Self-justification has limitless power to hide us from reality.
- Finally, his belief system did not have the capacity to grasp the magnitude of grace. He disregarded the actions of his master because he did not understand compassion and forgiveness. He heard only what his belief system allowed him to hear — he believed he had more time. Defective beliefs lead to destructive actions.

When you are not honest with yourself, when you fail to acknowledge the wrong you have done, when your belief system fails to account for kindness and benevolence, you may act in hateful, destructive ways toward others.

People who do not believe they can be forgiven will not be able to experience forgiveness. And those who cannot experience forgiveness do not have the capacity to extend forgiveness. The prison of unforgiveness torments those held in its chains.

Do you believe that you can be forgiven?

Who do you need to forgive?

What next steps should you take today?

Rising Stars — OCU welcomes Class of 2021

At Oklahoma City University, the fall semester officially began Aug. 21 with the start of classes. But for the Class of 2021, their first year of college began the previous week, Stars Week, with a full slate of events designed to introduce freshmen to campus and college life.

Members of The Interfraternity Council assisted students moving into Walker Hall, the freshman dormitory, on Monday and Tuesday. New students were then welcomed by student volunteers and OCU staff at the OCU outdoor pavilion, with goody bags full of gifts and helpful information. Stars Week included the Religious Life Block Party and campus-wide Welcome Picnic, book discussions and a presentation by acclaimed author Josh Neufeld, concerts and pep rallies, and the Matriculation worship service with guest speaker Art LaFrancois.

On par with enrollment in previous years, OCU welcomed 296 new freshmen and 220 new graduate students. The United Methodist university’s diverse student body includes people from every U.S. state and 51 other countries.

Nov. 30 is United Methodist Visit Day

Registration is now open for United Methodist Visit Day

United Methodist high school students who are interested in exploring study at Oklahoma City University will arrive at campus Nov. 30 for the annual United Methodist Visit Day.

Starting with breakfast, prospective students can tour campus, collect information about scholarships and financial aid, visit with a faculty member in a student’s area of interest, eat lunch in the cafeteria, participate in chapel worship, and learn about OCU’s Wesley Center and religious life offerings.

Registration for this and other admissions events can be found online at www.okcu.edu/admissions/events.
CAMPUS MINISTRY AT NSU

Center offers comfort after wreck

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

TAHLEQUAH — Grieving college students found a place of solace Sept. 18 at the Wesley Foundation for Northeastern State University after five peers died in a local wreck.

A pickup truck crash late Sept. 17 killed Donovan Caldwell of Muskogee; Jessica Swartwout, McAlester; Drake Wells, Thackerville; Lily Murphy, Gentry, Ark.; and Rhianna Seely, Salina, Okla.

All five were NSU freshmen, ages 18 and 19.

United Methodist campus minister Shana Dry learned of the tragedy from the Wesley’s intern, Abigail Shaw-Bolen. Together they prepared and opened the Wesley building beside campus, filling the space with candlelight and soft Christian music, offering snacks.

“If somebody wanted to pray or scream or be in the Presence, we were available,” said Rev. Dry.

Students retreated into the safe space before and after a student-led candlelight vigil on the Tahlequah campus that Monday evening. Another ceremony was Wednesday.

Dry said NSU students who asked her to pray with them asked God especially to give peace and comfort to the families and friends, including the roommates, of those who died.

The young adults “were very emotional that week,” Dry said, “having discussion groups and lighting candles. School had only been in session four weeks.” The Wesley’s Wednesday lunch drew “a very, very big crowd.”

Among those who died, no two came from the same hometown, she made note. “Those five probably built that friendship within the last week or two. It was so new.”

Families soon quietly removed personal belongings from dorm rooms, Dry said. Now students’ prayer requests have expanded to more subjects.

“I felt empathy for those families and for the NSU student body, what they were going through. I know the anguish,” she said. Her brother died at age 32, and she adopted her daughter.

“They had to pick up the pieces and move forward.”

At the end of “that very long day” Sept. 18, Dry went home and hugged all her children.

“I thought, my goodness, those families are having to plan funerals when they had just packed up their children to go to school.”

Families soon quietly removed personal belongings from dorm rooms, Dry said. Now students’ prayer requests have expanded to more subjects.

“Interest has swelled in the Wesley’s Wednesday lunches. ‘We served over 248 today,’ she said on Oct. 4. ‘We have almost tripled what we served last year.’”

She spoke appreciatively of the United Methodist church groups that supply meals and send checks to purchase food.

“It’s amazing what God is doing,” she summed up. NSU students “can be who they are at the Wesley. They really feel loved and accepted.”

In Oklahoma, churches’ Apportionment giving supports more than a dozen United Methodist college ministries.

Learn more at www.okumc.org/campus_ministry.

Tour will focus on racism in America

Plan to “Get on the Bus to D.C.” in June 2018 and travel with other Oklahoma United Methodists to learn more about racism in America.

The chartered bus trip is jointly planned by three Conference groups: the Board of Church and Society, Commission on Religion and Race (CORR), and Strengthening the Black Church in the 21st Century (SBC-21).

Dates are June 9-16.

The journey to the nation’s capital builds on the educational program “Get on the Bus to Tulsa,” which took place early this year.

The travelers will visit the National Civil Rights Museum at the Lorraine Motel in Memphis, Tenn., and the Museum of African American History and Culture in Washington, including the permanent display about the Tulsa Race Riot of 1921.

“The goal is for persons of color to be strongly represented and for the travel experience itself to inform and inspire the participants,” said Jeni Markham Clewell, who is an officer of the Board of Church and Society. “In these days of spirited talk around racism, unity, and faith, may we all add our walk to our talk when living out the good news of Jesus Christ.”

Save the date:
‘Get on the Bus to D.C.’
June 9-16

Although she grew up in Tulsa, she was in college when she first learned about the deadly Tulsa riot.

“I was born into the Methodist church in Tulsa. I spent my first 18 years being educated in the Tulsa Public Schools. I participated in the first round of integration of Booker T. Washington High School in 1973.”

As a freshman at Oklahoma City University, “I had the first occasion to be in conversation with someone who mentioned that the worst race riot in the history of the U.S. was in Tulsa in 1921. I flatly rebuked this as fabrication because, well, I grew up there. I would certainly know if something that significant happened in my hometown, wouldn’t I?”

The associate pastor of OKC-Mosaic UMC now knows about the 300 people killed, most of them African-American, and the destruction of dozens of city blocks, an area once heralded as the Black Wall Street of America.

“How could I not know?” she asked. She urges United Methodists to gain more education about racism in all forms.

For trip information, contact a committee member.

The chairpersons are: Mark Davies, Church and Society; Valerie Steele and Nicholas Lee, SBC-21; Shelly Daigle and Scott Spencer, CORR.
national, and international missions/Methodists have taken part in local, international missions.

About 20,000 more Oklahoma United Methodists have taken part in local, vital congregations, mission involvement during the survey, which focused on mission interests within local churches. The survey asks: Where is your Samaria? The survey poses: Where is Judea for you? That's worthwhile because interest is high in serving others, according to the Conference’s secretary of global relations, Karen Distefano.

She’ll then provide a custom list of connections that can help your church attract and educate more people through missions.

That’s worthwhile because interest is high in serving others, according to her church. She’s eager to receive more completed surveys, to assist both churches and her own outreach ministries since 2012, according to the 2017 Pre-Conference Workbook.

Let’s build intentionally on that success, said Distefano. “This is all part of discipleship. Just as Jesus washed the feet of the disciples and said, ‘I’ve done it to you, now go and do it to others,’ that’s how we make disciples.”

She reminds United Methodists of Jesus’ call to go “to the ends of the earth.” The survey poses: Where is your Samaria? Where is your Judea? Where is your Samaritan? Questions ask you to choose specific geographic interests, name your church’s current outreach efforts, and consider various ways you might engage with missionaries and missions that have more relevance for your congregation.

The survey link, https://s.surveyplanet.com/Hkx5meyP4-, was initially emailed to local chairpersons of missions. Distefano said those who responded identified hunger and the No. 1 concern, and 75 percent were willing to personally visit missionaries.

She is eager to receive more completed surveys, to assist both churches and her own leadership efforts in “the bigger picture of mission.”

Distefano’s home church is Oak Park UMC in Bartlesville. For a number of years, Volunteers in Mission (VIM) teams from Bartlesville have served at a cancer care center in Albuquerque, N.M. Then they learned service opportunities there, “as a way to continue expanding their experience on VIM missions,” Distefano said.

With the survey, she also can help your church incorporate the suggestions into your overall mission program.

To contact her by email: kdistefano@okumc.org. Distefano is a member of the Conference’s Mission & Service Ministry Team and directs Chile/Oklahoma Encounter, a new mission partnership between The Methodist Church of Chile and the Oklahoma Conference. Learn more about the partnership on Facebook.

— Holly McCray

Church for kids takes first steps

Pastor Corey Nelson and his small team saw so many children come through Grace UMC, Louisville, Kentucky, that they finally took what seemed the next logical step since they started ministering to the troubled neighborhood in 2013.

They turned Grace over to the kids. The result, which launched in early September, is Grace Kids: A Church for Children. Corey is the lead pastor.

The idea of a church ministry focused almost exclusively on ages 3-18 is unusual, to put it mildly. But it seemed natural when the adult leaders looked at who was always around the church, merely blocks from the legendary Churchill Downs.

For the first couple of Sunday afternoons, services, around 30 kids showed up, Corey said. He expects 60-80 by Christmas.

Church is informal and clearly geared toward a young audience with limited attention spans. There’s contemporary music and lessons in UMC rituals such as the Apostles’ Creed. After a short sermon, the kids break into small groups. Then it’s play time – and things can get a little rowdy.

Wednesday evenings start with a family-style meal. They transition into small discussion groups, then play time. Corey said, “We also want to give them space to be children and to be kids, something they don’t always get.”

Friday, Family Fun Night, has no agenda other than safe space, meal, and fun.

About 20 “legacy members” attend a Sunday morning service.

Most kids walk or ride bikes to church. A lot of them have behavioral issues; the adults firmly but lovingly work with them.

Having enough money is a challenge. The Conference provides about half the funding, including pastoral salaries. The kids themselves sometimes place a little money in the offering plate.

The neighborhood is about 60 percent white and 40 percent black, and race relations can be tense at times. But inside the church, no one seems to notice or care about color.

— Oct. 1, United Methodist News Service
Volunteers in Mission from Oklahoma will be serving alongside missionary Kristen Brown in Bethlehem. Rev. Brown’s hometown is Tahlequah.

The mission will be April 9-20, 2018. If you are interested in being part of this team, contact Marsha Purcell of Mangum, 918-520-8187 or marsha.purtell@gmail.com. The project includes working with Palestinian women and children in medical missions, Vacation Bible School, and potential light construction.

Donations of specific supplies also are welcome. They include hearing aids and UMCOR-style fabric kits, to make clothing for children. Again, Rev. Purcell has details.

This mission trip number is 18-105. For general VIM information, contact coordinator Lori Foster, 405-530-2070 or lfoster@okumc.org. Also: http://www.okumc.org/VIM.

While Irma, Harvey, and Maria dominate current news, the United Methodist Committee on Relief hasn’t forgotten about Matthew. That storm killed hundreds across the Caribbean and the southeast United States nearly a year ago.

“We’ll be at it for five more years,” said the North Carolina Conference’s Bishop Hope Morgan Ward of recovery efforts. “We have moved into the long-term recovery phase and are rebuilding homes.”

UMCOR has been aiding families affected by natural and manmade disasters around the world since 1940. Its response is a three-stage process: an emergency stage; a relief stage to help homeowners assess damage and stabilize their homes if possible, while also caring for their emotional and spiritual needs; and the long-term recovery stage.

Being the last to leave after a disaster is a calling card for UMCOR and a sign of hope for those starting the recovery process in the wake of Harvey, Irma, and Maria.

UMCOR’s disaster response process starts with a request from the resident bishop or church partner in an area. The request may be for financial or material resources, volunteers or technical assistance. Emergency grants are issued.

Catherine Earl, UMCOR’s director of U.S. disaster response and partner relations, said, “We all have to recognize that the community owns the disaster. The conference lets us know when they are ready for volunteers and the kinds of skills they need to help, keeping the survivors always central to our work.”

Susan Luttrell, of First UMC, Mansfield, Texas, has seen that solidarity in recent weeks in visits to the Coastal Bend area of the state, devastated when Hurricane Harvey made landfall on Aug. 25.

As a district disaster coordinator, Luttrell led an Early Response Team from the Central Texas Conference to that hard-hit area in the Rio Texas Conference.

“It’s not only discussing the ins and outs of tarping or mucking out a house, but it’s also covering the most important thing that we do: being a caring Christian presence. If we do nothing else at a survivor’s home but sit and listen to their story, then we’ve done what we needed to do,” Luttrell said.

Another hallmark of UMCOR is providing aid in areas that don’t get much media attention.

While media focused on the flooding in Houston after Hurricane Harvey, tiny communities in the Coastal Bend area had fallen off the news radar, she said. Luttrell traveled from town to town to assess needs.

Mudslides in Sierra Leone and earthquakes in Mexico also have been overshadowed by the recent hurricanes, but UMCOR is working with partner agencies in those areas to offer relief. In August, UMCOR disbursed a $10,000 emergency grant to The United Methodist Church in Sierra Leone. The agency is working with partners to provide tents, water filters, and water containers to those living in temporary settlements there and will airlift hygiene kits and bedding supplies.

One hundred percent of gifts through UMCOR Advance funds goes directly to disaster relief. Administrative costs are covered by donations on UMCOR Sunday (formerly One Great Hour of Sharing). The agency reports $8.7 million donated to those Advance funds since Harvey hit.

— Sept. 25, United Methodist News Service

VIM team to assist missionary in Bethlehem

On an upcoming trip, Volunteers in Mission from Oklahoma will serve alongside missionary Kristen Brown in Bethlehem. Rev. Brown’s hometown is Tahlequah.

The mission will be April 9-20, 2018. If you are interested in being part of this team, contact Marsha Purcell of Mangum, 918-520-8187 or marsha.purtell@gmail.com.

The project includes working with Palestinian women and children in medical

natural disasters: “Fresh Connect members saw how Hurricane Harvey affected those in the Southeast Texas and Northwest Louisiana regions, and wanted to help.”
UMW LEADERSHIP — From left, the 2018 Oklahoma Conference officers of United Methodist Women are: Secretary Ramona Paine of Hennessey; Treasurer Tanya Case of Duncan; Harri Williams of Harrah, programming; President Glenda Adair of Oklahoma City; and President-elect Desert Willsey of Edmond, training. Photos by Marla Cabezudo.

PHOTO BY MARLA CAPEZIO

Plans emerging about special General Conference

G ALLANT, Alabama — The denomination heads into “uncharted waters” as it prepares for a special General Conference in 2019, said Gary Graves, a key planner of the lawmaking body.

Since The United Methodist Church formed in 1968, its top legislative body has met only once outside the normal four-year schedule. That was in 1970, to complete merger of the Methodist and Evangelical United Brethren denominations.

Rev. Graves, secretary of the General Conference, said, “We are in a different situation for this one. It’s the first time a session has been called in the interim by the Council of Bishops for a particular matter.”

Nevertheless, Graves and other organizers are making quick work of planning the special session the bishops have called. The Commission on General Conference approved those plans during its Oct. 6-8 meeting in Gallant, Alabama.

The bishops have set the special General Conference for Feb. 23-26, 2019, at the America’s Center Convention Complex in downtown St. Louis, Missouri.

Delegates will be limited to acting on a report by the Council of Bishops, based on recommendations from the Commission on the Way Forward. The 2016 General Conference authorized the bishops to form the commission to seek a way through the denomination’s potentially church-splitting impasse around how the church ministers with LGBTQ individuals.

The Book of Discipline requires petitions to be submitted 230 days before the opening day of General Conference. So bishops must submit their report by July 8, 2018.

The estimated cost of the four-day meeting will be a little under $3.7 million, lower than estimated last year, said Moses Kumar, the General Conference treasurer and top executive of the General Council on Finance and Administration (GCFA).

“The joy of February in St. Louis is that it’s not a popular time in the city, so we have some great hotel rates,” Sara Hotchkiss, the General Conference business manager, told the planning group this month. Her office also will develop plans related to the possibility of inclement weather.

General Conference also will see cost savings by sharing the convention center with a volleyball tournament. And, GCFA negotiated a break from city hotel taxes.

Most of the 864 delegates to the special General Conference will be the same people who attended the 2016 legislative gathering. The Book of Discipline does allow an annual conference to elect a new slate of delegates, as long as the same number of assigned for 2016 is retained.

At this point, Graves said, he knows of two annual conferences — California-Nevada and New York — that have made plans for a new election of delegates.

He also said the Red Bird Missionary Conference has made plans to elect new reserve delegates.

About 58 percent of the delegates will come from the United States and 30 percent from Africa. The other delegates are from the Philippines, Europe, and Eurasia as well as 10 from “concordat” churches with which The United Methodist Church has formal relationships.

The special General Conference also will be using the same rules for legislative action approved by the 2016 body, Stephanie Henry told United Methodist News Service. She chairs the commission’s Rules Committee.

One question the Commission on General Conference cannot answer at this point is just how much what happens in 2019 will affect what comes before the 2020 General Conference in Minneapolis.

— Oct. 9, United Methodist News Service

Miami dentist remembered as leader

Ronald Wilson Gilbert, 82, of Miami, Oklahoma, who held several influential positions as a lay member of The United Methodist Church, died Sept. 17, 2017.

He was elected and served many times as an Oklahoma Conference lay delegate to the denomination’s General Conference and the South Central Jurisdictional Conference (regional).

He had chaired the Oklahoma Conference Council on Finance and Administration. He had been a member of the General Council on Finance and Administration and chaired its Investment Committee.

Gilbert also served on the board of directors of the jurisdiction’s Mount Sequoyah Retreat Center, Fayetteville, Ark. He had been deeply engaged in church life at Miami-First UMC, over time serving in most of the church officer roles, singing in the choir, and as a substitute organist.

His civic involvement also was extensive at Miami. He co-chaired the city’s 100th anniversary celebration. He was school board president and a leader in tourism efforts.

His career as a dentist extended 52 years, with the Oklahoma Department of Health and in private practice in Miami. Among survivors are Ron’s wife of 59 years, Annie Gilbert.

Service was Sept. 23 at Miami-First.
Top-level commission salutes historian Jerry Gill

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

STILLWATER — A longtime historian who has given years of outstanding service on the Oklahoma Conference Commission on Archives & History now holds the Distinguished Service Award from The United Methodist Church’s counterpart.

Conference archivist Christina Wolf said she nominated Jerry Gill of Stillwater for the denomination-level award “since he had done so much as Chair of the Commission on Archives & History to champion United Methodist history in Oklahoma.”

Dr. Gill, who chaired the Oklahoma commission from 2012 to 2016, received the award Sept. 16 at Drew University in Madison, N.J. Also in attendance were his wife, Susan; Elizabeth Anthony, a commission member; and Wolf.

Gill is retired after a long career as a history professor at Oklahoma State University and as the university’s alumni director. He is a member of Stillwater-First UMC.

He called the award “great recognition for our Conference and what we’re doing.”

Being chosen for the honor is “certainly humbling,” he said, and he accepted it on behalf of all who have been involved in tracking the Church’s history in Oklahoma.

“It’s like a team sport,” he said.

Susan and Jerry Gill display the Distinguished Service Award that Jerry received from the General Commission on Archives & History.

Gill has worked to secure official recognition of Oklahoma United Methodist Historic Sites in Oklahoma. In 2014, Stillwater-First UMC was designated Historic Site No. 489.

UMMen take on domestic violence with new curriculum for groups

NASHVILLE, Tennessee — The leadership of the Commission on United Methodist Men recognizes that ending violence against women begins with men.

The United Methodist general agency has partnered with AMEND Together, an initiative of the YWCA of Nashville and Middle Tennessee, dedicated to ending violence against women and girls.

The partnership features an eight-week group series for United Methodist men.

Gil Hanke, top executive of the Nashville-based agency, said the partnership aligns perfectly with UMMen’s mission to support spiritual growth among men.

Two years ago, Hanke was invited to a local school to learn more about the AMEND program. It includes clubs that teach boys in middle and high school to value and respect women and girls and to challenge a culture that supports violence against women.

One in four U.S. women will experience domestic violence in her lifetime, and more than 15 million children witness that abuse in their homes every year.

Those numbers resonated with Hanke. Hearing how the program would work in schools, he realized it also would be a powerful opportunity to engage men across the denomination on the issue.

“I said: This is it. This is how we get involved (on this issue). … I think this is where God is leading us.”

The partnership mushroomed from there, Hanke said. AMEND Together wrote the group curriculum, which focuses on helping men learn to recognize, respond to, and prevent violence against women.

Hanke first presented the initiative in a room with about 100 men’s ministry leaders. After showing a clip about the program and domestic violence statistics, he asked the group their thoughts.

“For about 15 seconds, there was that uncomfortable silence. Then, one by one, guys stood up and said, ‘My sister,’ ‘My mom,’ ‘My grandmother,’ ‘My daughter,’ ‘My granddaughter.’”

The program was unveiled at United Methodist Men’s 12th National Gathering in Indianapolis in July.

Hanke said the response has been overwhelmingly positive.

The series focuses on healthy manhood, healthy relationships, and what the Bible says about those things, said Shan Foster, a former NBA player and senior director of AMEND Together.

“The partnership with the United Methodist Men is so critical to our effort to reach a more national audience,” he said.

“How are we starting conversations with our adult men about how to be better role models? Once men get this kind of a message, they’re immediately inspired.”

The curriculum, which was funded through a World Service Fund contingency grant of $20,000, is expected to be available through the UMMen website.

— Oct.5, United Methodist News Service

TRAINING AS SPECIALISTS — A clergy group has begun learning about the work of “intentional interim ministry specialists.” Certified trainer Bonnie Osteen of the Texas Conference led the series of September classes that met at the United Methodist Ministry Center in Oklahoma City. From Houston, she will return in March for the second class series. Clergy who specialize in this ministry can assist churches in times of special need, such as with conflict management or a pastor’s disability or death. From left are: (seated) Dan Peil, Greg Tener, and Michelle McCarty; (standing) Bonnie Osteen, Sonja Tobey, Larry Bauman, Gilbert White, Stephen Hale, and Darrell Cates. To learn more, contact the Oklahoma Conference’s Clergy Development office, whose director is Chuck Nordean, at the Ministry Center; 405-530-2007, cnordean@okumc.org.

PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY
The Shortest Day

Every day has 24 hours—1,440 minutes—86,400 seconds. Or does it? A short day is coming for all of us—a day when we will not reach the 86,400th second, and will pass on to our final reward.

We may have lived a long and useful life, filled with great memories. First, the “learning” years—youthful and vibrant time spent in school with classmates. Second, the “earning” years—that first job, building a career and meeting many friends and business associates. Third, the “retirement” years—when you finally have time to enjoy visits with all of your family and friends.

In many ways you have made a difference for family, friends and countless others during your lifetime. Yet there is one more part of life—the chance through your estate to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those in need. And so I invite you to consider this story.

John D. Rockefeller founded Standard Oil in 1870 and became the richest man on the planet. When he passed away, his accountant’s answer was: “All of it.”

During his lifetime John D. Rockefeller accumulated many assets. He also gave generously both during his lifetime and through his estate. But he also understood Psalm 49:16-17, “Do not be overawed when a man grows rich, when the splendor of his house increases; for he will take nothing with him when he dies, his splendor will not descend with him (NIV).”

You also have accumulated and given. Yet in your estate the accumulation period is over. As was true with John D. Rockefeller, everything will be given to someone or for some purpose.

Thank you for your gifts to the Lord’s work during life. We know you have carefully thought and prayed about how much to give, to whom to give and how to give. Now we invite you to think about a “living legacy.”

This is called a “living legacy” from your estate because through this gift you live on—at least in the sense that your lifelong efforts for accumulation continue to bear fruit in helping others.

Many of our friends find great joy and satisfaction during life, knowing that their estate will someday make a great difference in the lives of others. By completing the Planning Your Legacy guide and an estate plan with benefits for family and charity, you too can join in that happiness.

Only the Lord knows if your “Shortest Day” is coming soon or is many years into the future. But your chance for the satisfaction of a legacy that touches many others can be here today. Thank you again for your generous support of those in need!

Contact David Battles at 800-259-6863 or send an email to dbattles@okumf.org to get a FREE COPY of the Planning Your Legacy guide.

Ventriloquist:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

have not yet decided which of Darci’s six puppets will appear in the shows and what songs to use.

The most well-known of the puppets are Petunia, a pink bunny; Oscar, a mouse; and Edna, a senior citizen who sang passionately to judge Simon Cowell in an episode of “America’s Got Talent.”

Darci also has Katie, a cowgirl she designed; and Okie (a duck) and Nigel (a bird), both gifts.

It was Darci’s idea to try out for “AGT.” The process involved making an audition video and submitting it. Then show producers said they wanted to see her audition in person in Austin, Texas, last year.

Misty estimated there were thousands of performers who took their acts to Austin in hopes of getting on the TV competition.

After that audition, producers called in December. They wanted Darci to perform on the first taped show, in Pasadena, Calif.

The young ventriloquist picked the song “Summertime,” from the opera “Porgy and Bess,” because she had heard her mother sing it at home. She and Petunia partnered on stage to present it.

Church member Darci Lynn Farmer was featured in the Oct. 4 newsletter for OKC-Church of the Servant after she took first place on Season 12 of NBC’s “America’s Got Talent.”

As Darci advanced in the “AGT” voting rounds this summer, she had help from music directors in picking other songs she and her puppets performed, such as “Natural Woman” and “With a Little Help From My Friends,” her mother said.

Even though some of the songs were not familiar to her daughter, “she learned them all very quickly,” Misty said. As part of OKC-Servant’s worship leadership team, Misty assists when the congregation sings hymns.

Darci said the process of performing was fun and she enjoyed getting compliments from the judges, but waiting on stage for the voting results was difficult.

Darci and her parents have been getting a lot of requests for her to perform — “so many that she can’t do them all,” Misty said. They are seeking to work with an agent and manager for her.

Chuck Weatherford, who is director of music ministries at OKC-Servant, quipped that Darci is “the most famous Methodist I know.”

The good publicity from her win “is good for the Methodist church,” he said.

Mother and daughter sing together at the church on Mother’s Day. Weatherford said, “They always bring the house down.”

Appointments

- Jinx Barber, from Muskogee-St. Paul (associate) to Dewey UMC, Oct. 15.
- Kevin Tankerson, new, to director of the Wesley Foundation for Langston University and OKC-Quayle (associate), Oct. 1.
- Matthew Borum, new, to director of the Wesley Foundation for the University of Central Oklahoma in Edmond, Oct. 1.
- Samuel Donica, new, to Ardmore-First (associate), Oct. 1.
- Linda Truitt, from transitional leave to Yukon-Good Shepherd (associate), Oct. 1.
- Gnaeme Collett, new, to Broken Arrow-First UMC (associate), Sept. 15.

Birth

Gideon Wright Odom was born Sept. 19, 2017. He is the son of Emily and Rev. John Odom, an associate pastor at Tulsa-Asbury UMC.

Employment

- Director of Senior Adult Ministries: Norman-McFarlin UMC. Part-time. Resume and cover letter to wneal@mcfarlinumc.org.
- Administrative Assistant: Guthrie-First. Part-time. Resume to pastor@guthriefirstumc.org.
- Youth Director: Clinton-First. Part-time. Send resume to Rick Robart, rick.robart@yahoo.com.
- Director of Children’s Ministries: Norman-St. Stephen’s UMC. Part-time. Email revjeankc@aol.com or call 405-321-4988.