

Elk City youths school all in service

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

The youth are the future of our church. The young people of Elk City United Methodist Church quash that stale phrase. They absolutely are the church now.

The youths raise the funds — a \$10,000 commitment by them for each school year — and serve their peers in a tutoring program at Elk City's schools. It's called Elk Up for the seventh and eighth grades.

The church youth group established it, partnering with the school.

Elk Up offers after-school help by paid tutors to students who are failing one or more classes. This fall, the seventh- and eighth-grade tutors include

two high school students, who are National Honor Society members, and three teachers.

Senior Jessi Casebeer attends Elk City UMC. She also tutored during her junior year.

"It's really cool because I can help them understand stuff," Casebeer said in a video. "I feel like these kids can go in and test better, knowing they understand a problem, not having to freak out, (but) 'Oh, I know how to do this.' They're not bad students. They just have trouble understanding."

"The best part about it is seeing other students understand."

Their grades prove they do.

Teacher Tim DeWitt said up to one-third of the middle-school students were failing one or more classes before Elk Up launched. "We've knocked that down" to



Jessi Casebeer tutors a middle-schooler last spring.

about 7 percent, he said.

"At three grade levels last year, we saw a 74 percent reduction in the number of classes

failed." The tutoring initiative began at the middle school and was expanded to the

SEE TUTOR, PAGE 3

Deaconess loves role in Tulsa

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

Retired school teacher Melanie Dewey wanted to serve the church, but she knew ordained ministry was not for her.

Instead, she became a deaconess at her home church, Tulsa-Centenary.

She learned about the United Methodist lay program from a pamphlet she received at Mission U four years ago.

It offered her "the way I wanted to minister without the restriction of being ordained," she said. She preferred to choose her own form of ministry and location, rather than itinerate.

"I knew exactly where I wanted to be and what I wanted to do."

Deaconess training is a two- to three-year process, she said. It involved seminary classwork.

She was consecrated at the General Conference in Oregon in mid-May, and Bishop Robert Hayes confirmed her later that month at Oklahoma's Annual Conference.

She is one of five active deaconesses in the Oklahoma Conference.

Dewey's career experience has been as a special education

SEE DEACONESS, PAGE 3

In Broken Arrow, fall festivities were promoted on Facebook by Heritage UMC.



Social media connects Heritage to lots of neighbors

To increase visibility in the Broken Arrow community, Heritage UMC turned its Pumpkin Patch from a simple fall fundraiser into an intentional ministry outreach and, using social media for promotion, realized "incredible" results.

Each weekend the Patch was open, Heritage held events designed specifically to invite the community to join in the fun on its property. Among the events were a Smoked Meat Competition and Pony Ride Saturday, and a Fall Festival, which included Trunk or Treat.

On their own, these were great events, but Heritage

created online Facebook Events for each of them as well.

Church staff and members reposted these events for weeks on Facebook. They began to notice other people in Broken Arrow were sharing the news in posts, too.

And suddenly even more people began sharing on Facebook. By the date of the Smoked Meat Competition and Pony Ride, 2,000 people had indicated they were "Interested" in the event. Over 400 had indicated they were "Going" to be there.

And come they did! More than 1,500 people came that Saturday to Heritage.

The United Methodist Circle of Care Boys Ranch, which provided the ponies, reported giving 319 pony rides that day — over 200 more rides than ever before on a single day. In the evening, more than 500 people ate smoked meat and side dishes.

Matt Morgan, who is the church's Foundry worship leader/youth minister, said, "We simply shared our post about the Smoked Meat Competition and Pony Rides and kept sharing. We invited our congregation to do the same. And they did."

"It only takes a few seconds to do, but it led to one of the greatest events ever at Heritage!"

That event was followed

by the Fall Festival, which typically draws about 300 people. Heritage's folks again went to Facebook to advertise the event.

The result: attendance increased by 200 percent.

Well over 900 people came to the festival.

Scott Rodgers, senior pastor at Heritage, said, "We have had incredible response to our Facebook posting. It is a tool we intend to use many more times in the future. I hope other churches will think about using social media to reach out into their communities as well."

FOR MORE, SEE PAGE 8



Deaconess Melanie Dewey arranges the clothing closet at Tulsa-Centenary UMC.



BY BISHOP JIMMY NUNN

A massive wave swept over much of Oklahoma recently.

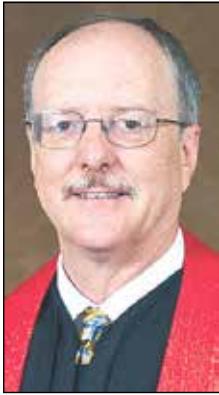
It is called “The Bedlam Series” and refers to the pandemonium that occurs when the two Big 12 universities in the state square off annually against one another in football.

I spent some time thinking further about bedlam. It is an interesting word.

It has been the name of a film and a few television shows.

The word has been used as the title of at least two novels, a

work of science fiction, and in comic books. It has been the name of rock bands and a rap group, as well as serving as the title of several songs and an album.



Bishop Nunn

Bedlam is a word that emerged during the 14th century, as the name for an English institution became abbreviated in common speech. The full name included the word Bethlehem. The name went through several contractions and became Bedlam, then over time lost its capitalization

as it became a synonym for madness.

Yet the concept behind Bedlam was anything but madness. In fact, it sought to restore sanity.

Bedlam was a specialized hospital in London that sought to help the mentally challenged people of its time.

In 1247, the bishop-elect of Bethlehem founded an institution to generate income for the crusades. That evolved into a place that housed the poor. In the 1370s, King Edward III took control of the facility and, by the early 1400s, it had become an institution for the insane, as the clients were called.

So, the word “bedlam” finds its origin in the word “Bethlehem.”

As Christmas approaches, we

are faced with a choice. Do we wish to celebrate the origins of the season or be subject to the madness of it?

The name Bethlehem has a radically different origin. It means “the house of bread.”

When I reflect on “the house of bread” and Jesus, I find yet another reason for joy in the season.

As I consider the birth of Jesus, I realize that he is the Bread of Life, born in the town called the house of bread. I realize that the Bread of Life was laid in a manger — a trough where food for the animals was placed.

I realize that the Bread of Life was given for all the world.

The prophet Micah offered these words about the city of

Christ’s birth: “As for you, Bethlehem of Ephrathah, though you are the least significant of Judah’s forces, one who is to be a ruler in Israel on my behalf will come out from you. His origin is from remote times, from ancient days.” (Micah 5:2, CEB)

Today, many in the world have changed the ideal of Bethlehem and substituted bedlam for it. Christmas has been reduced to a series of shopping, parties, and travel. The pace of life increases. All of this works against the development of our spiritual lives.

It can be bedlam ... but it does not have to be. Feed on the Bread of Life.



OCU/Saint Paul agreement means less debt for seminarians

A historic agreement that creates a new pathway to fulfill the academic requirements for ordained ministry was signed in November by Presidents Robert Henry of Oklahoma City University and Neil Blair of Saint Paul School of Theology.

The new path, called “3+3,” permits students to enroll at OCU for their undergraduate studies and then transition to seminary studies at Saint Paul School of Theology in their fourth year.

Academic credit earned in the transition year counts for both the bachelor’s degree and the first year of master’s study in the M.Div. program — thus reducing to six the total years of post-high school education needed for students pursuing careers in ordained ministry. The traditional study path requires seven to eight years.

This reduction in total years of study also will lower the debt load for seminarians entering full-time ministry.

The 3+3 Program is the result of several years of work by Saint Paul and OCU, both United Methodist-affiliated entities. Careful attention was given to how course loads are structured and scheduled so that students successfully complete the dual set of requirements as well as meet



OCU President Robert Henry, left, and Saint Paul President Neil Blair meet to seal the new academic agreement between the schools.

the standards set by the Higher Learning Commission, the University Senate, and other accrediting bodies.

Both schools already have experience with similar programs. For several years OCU has maintained an Oxford Plan for

students transitioning from undergraduate studies to law school, and last year SPST pioneered the 3+3 agreement with Kansas Wesleyan College.

The 3+3 Program will take effect with the incoming freshman class in Fall 2017.

Apply now for 2017 Bishop Scholar Award

Applications and nominations are now being accepted for the 2017-18 OCU Bishop Scholar Award. The scholarship is awarded to incoming college freshmen who plan to study in OCU’s Wimberly School of Religion and pursue a vocation in United Methodist ministry.

The scholarship is not solely for those called to pulpit ministry. It also has been awarded to students called to youth or children’s ministry, social justice ministry, ecumenical and interfaith ministry, and missions. The funds cover full tuition for four years of undergraduate study at OCU.

Pastors may nominate high school seniors whom they know have expressed a calling to ministry. Students also may apply directly for the award. The entire process is online, and the forms can be found at: www.okcu.edu/bishopscholar. **The deadline for submission of all materials is Feb. 1.**

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H.O.P.E. for a Changing Church



Feb. 22, Pawhuska UMC
Feb. 23, Fairview UMC at Slapout
Feb. 25, Coalgate UMC
Feb. 26, Anadarko-First UMC

- Keynote: Jodi Cataldo, director of Laity in Leadership, of Discipleship Ministries (GBOD) of The UMC
- Workshops especially for churches with up to 80 members, but attendance is open to everyone!
- Sponsors include the Oklahoma Conference's Discipleship Ministry Team and Commission on Rural/Small Membership Church

Register by church at www.okumc.org/hope

Clergy orders meeting Jan. 17 with bishop

The first Orders Meeting with Bishop Jimmy Nunn will be Jan. 17 at OKC-St. Luke's.

On that Tuesday in the new year, Oklahoma's clergy will hear from our new bishop as well as from new-church developer Jim Ozier of the North Texas Conference. In addition to directing new church development and congregational transformation there, he consults in more than 20 annual conferences.



Jim Ozier

Rev. Dr. Ozier's topic will be "Creating a Culture of Growth."

"Too often we are on a wishing trip," Ozier wrote. "We wish we had more people; we wish we made more of an impact; we wish we were more fruitful."

"Jesus said, 'Follow me and I'll make you fishers...' He calls us to go on a fishing trip."

Ozier uses humor and shares simple techniques and tools that clergy can take home to help move a church from wishing to fishing for new

people by "creating a culture that is outwardly focused in your community mission field."

According to professionals in change management, the results you get are because of the culture you have. Thus to change the results, you must change the culture, he said.

Ozier began his ministry working for noted missionary E. Stanley Jones, and he first served a church as a high school student.

Prior to his current assignment, he led a church in Flower Mound, Texas, to grow from 800 to over 4,000 members and birth three more churches.

He has presented at Church of the Resurrection's Leadership Institute and co-authored two books published by Abingdon Press. His doctorate is from Perkins School of Theology.

The Orders Meeting begins at 10 a.m. and concludes by 3 p.m.

Bishop Nunn will preach in the morning during the covenant renewal service, lunch will be served courtesy of the Board of Ordained Ministry, and Ozier's presentation will be in the afternoon.

All clergy under appointment are expected to attend, and retired clergy also are welcome.

Tutor:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
 intermediate (ninth grade) and high schools.

Elk Up has changed the culture, DeWitt said. Teachers support it, and students are motivated.

For example, he said, students who are English Language Learners "just weren't keeping up in class because they couldn't understand the language." Now a bilingual National Honor Society student helps them after school four days a week.

The after-school work definitely is not detention.

"It's an opportunity," DeWitt said, "not just one hour and done, not just about doing the homework. We really care about them."

Whitney Kleinpeter tutored last year, her senior year. "I think I can break it down, make it fun, act silly if they're tired — like stand up and do a silly stretch — and it kind of refreshes them. They have a way better attitude," she said on video.

"These are the kids who are afraid to ask questions, have trouble paying attention, feel kind of intimidated overall. I think they've made more friends; they're more open. They actually want to listen, want to try, break it down, and take it step by step."

A school band director, DeWitt admitted he was "so

Deaconess

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

teacher. After retiring, she worked at a nonprofit that offered counseling and medication therapy for children and adults, including victims of abuse, street people, and people going through divorces.

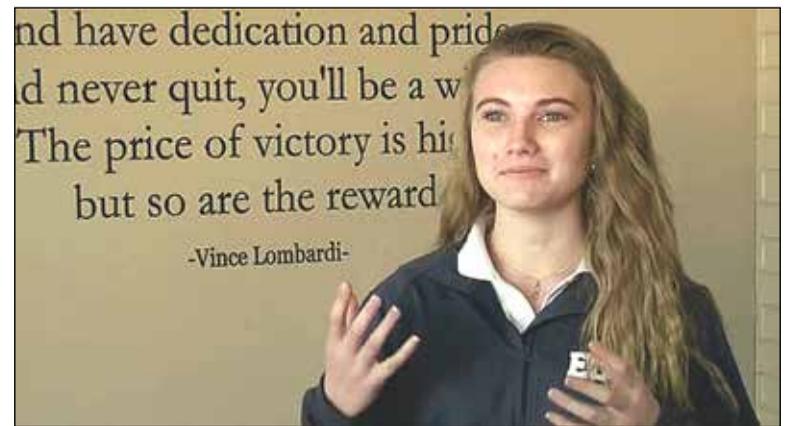
Now at Centenary UMC, her role is as a "community involvement coordinator." She helps with RISE, a program for developmentally delayed adults. Clients work in the church's food pantry and clothing closet and do other jobs at the church.

For example, they package bread donated from Panera, and then hungry families pick up what they need.

Dewey also is involved with outreach into two neighborhoods, Brady Heights and Owen Park.

Centenary is in a "unique area" of Tulsa, she said. The church is close to the John 3:16 Mission, a correctional facility, the Salvation Army, and a day center for the homeless.

Dewey described John, her husband of 40 years, as her "number-one" supporter. They have three grown children and four grandchildren.



'The best part about it is seeing other students understand'
— Jessi Casebeer of Elk City

frustrated" in the past when he saw the long list of students ineligible to perform because of low grades.

He also is the junior-high youth ministry coordinator for Elk City UMC. Senior Pastor Terry Koehn credits him and the youth members with the vision for Elk Up.

"God has really blessed our youth group with funding, and our church has been very generous. We're not here to collect money and sit on it," said Rev. Koehn.

This is Kingdom work, defined by Elk City UMC as "what makes Jesus smile," he said.

It's also "internal discipleship," he noted. The youth members raise money but don't spend it on themselves. It goes to the Elk Up program.

About six times a year, they pack and load unsold clothing from the church thrift store when

a "rags truck" arrives to collect the soft goods for other purposes. The company pays by the pound.

The youth group holds a dessert auction each February that raises thousands of dollars, too.

The church wanted to connect with the school to help students in a meaningful way, and "the tutoring program was where we needed to be," DeWitt said.

Elk Up won't solve every issue, he admitted, and other schools in the state operate similar programs. But its initial success in Elk City Public Schools was highlighted at a statewide teachers event called Gear Up.

On the video, Randy Brooks, also part of the school's music staff, said, "The one word that comes to mind is hope. There were kids falling through the cracks before ... Now this is an extra lifeline to help those kids get up to level and get on the task."



PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. confirms Melanie Dewey, kneeling, at Annual Conference. Jerrie Lindsey and Shelly Owen also are shown.

These deaconesses and a home missionary are affiliated with the Oklahoma Conference:

NAME — CHURCH — TITLE

Melanie Dewey, Tulsa-Centenary, Deaconess

William Dudleson, Leave of Absence, Home Missioner

Patricia Hoerth, OKC-Mosaic, Deaconess

Jerrie Lindsey, Holdenville-Barnard Memorial, Deaconess

Shelly Owen, Tulsa-Boston Avenue, Deaconess

Elaine Parrent, Leave of Absence, Deaconess

Sandra Wilson Wickberg, Tulsa-St. Paul's, Deaconess



Ted Campbell told North Texas church historians they never know what they may find when they poke around. He serves on the General Commission on Archives & History.

Church historians' sleuthing can turn up painful pasts

BY LINDA S. JOHNSON
NORTH TEXAS CONFERENCE

Being a church historian means telling the truth, even if it's painful, Ted Campbell of Perkins School of Theology told local church historians at an October event hosted by 105-year-old Oak Lawn UMC in Dallas.

And he has a story about that.

New in town in 1993, Dr.

Campbell's family joined the Rockville (Md.) UMC just as it began a yearlong celebration of its 150th anniversary, he told the group in Dallas.

"There was a historically black United Methodist congregation just three blocks away, and members of the Rockville church said, yes, we gave them that building when we moved out of it," he recalled.

How nice, but ...

When Campbell began poking around for details, he discovered that

the African-American Jerusalem-Mount Pleasant congregation was actually the original Methodist Episcopal church in town.

Founded in 1844, it was integrated in its early days. In 1860, a white secessionist group broke away from the church to form Rockville Methodist Episcopal South, part of a new denomination that arose with the Civil War.

"Our congregation had stolen not only the name but also the history of the earlier Rockville congregation, and that was painful to say. But you have to tell the truth as a historian," Campbell said.

He also pointed to how the United Methodist denomination bemoans that it is losing people after membership soared in the 1950s and '60s.

The decline may not be so steep, Campbell said, because the Methodist Church in those days was pretty

liberal in how it counted membership. Everyone who graced the doors but then never showed up again might have been "a member."

Also from Perkins seminary, presenter Tamara Lewis emphasized the importance of context — and pure detective work.

"As historians we all have a story, have a context, have a background. We can't write the history that we'd like to write; we write the story that the documents tell us," she said.

She urged local church historians to follow their hunches in research. She had been told there were absolutely no blacks in the Anglican Church in the 1720s, about the time John Wesley was attending Oxford University.

But she doubted that. "Something told me to keep looking, and I did. I found hundreds and hundreds of records of Africans who were members. I use that to encourage you."

Oklahomans join group in 'ministry of memory'

Celebrating Ted Campbell for distinguished service, organizing for 2017-2020, welcoming new board members, and blessing Bishop Jeremiah Park as he set off on a special mission to Mongolia highlighted the first meeting of the new four-year cycle for the General Commission on Archives & History (GCAH).

Two Oklahomans serve on this denomination board: Christina Wolf and Brian Bakeman. Wolf also is the archivist for the Oklahoma Area, and Rev. Bakeman is new executive director for the South Central Jurisdiction. Bishop Park is president of the 24-member commission.

The group met recently at the United Methodist Archives & History Center on the Drew University campus, Madison, N.J.

Dr. Campbell said, "People become disciples of Jesus Christ because of story, whether from the Bible, the

early church, Christian history, congregational histories, or personal accounts. People become involved in a particular church and develop loyalty because of that church's story — its DNA and unique personality."

"I like the way an attendee to our Archivists Training Event put it," said General Secretary Alfred Day. "GCAH is more about STORies than STORage."

Day also spoke about the board's mandate as the Church's "ministry of memory."

"Memory in the Commission's



Wolf



Bakeman

work is not meant in the passive but the active tense. Our promoting and caring for the historical interests of the UMC and its antecedents is vital, difference-making memory. Transformational."

A visioning time stressed initiatives.

- Increase digitization and online accessibility of resources.

- Expand efforts to train archivists, especially in Africa and the Philippines.

- Seek creative ways to translate the UMC's history at every level of church life.

The commission also approved a new award for children and youth curriculum about United Methodist history and set themes for the annual observance of Heritage Sunday. The 2017 theme is "Milestones – Encouraging Local Church History Celebrations."

You can reach Oklahoma's archivist at cwolf@okcu.edu or 405-208-5919.

The global church

ATTENDANCE — The United Methodist Church in the United States continued to see membership and attendance slide in 2015.

The denomination reported 7,067,162 professing members in the U.S., according to data from the General Council on Finance & Administration Nov. 17.

That marks a decrease of about 1.6 percent from 2014. The number does not include clergy, nor children who are baptized but not yet confirmed.

Average weekly worship attendance stands at about 2.7 million, a drop of about 2.9 percent from 2014. "It's a decline, but it's not as much as projected," said Lauren Arieux, GCFA statistician.

HISPANICS RALLY — Hispanic/Latino groups within the Church have issued a flurry of statements since Election Day, calling on the denomination to strengthen support for immigrants and refugees, and insisting denomination leaders speak out forcefully against discriminatory rhetoric and actions.

MARCHA (Methodists Associated Representing the Cause of Hispanic/Latino Americans) noted reports of hundreds of such incidents after the election and highlighted news of Hispanic youths harassed while attending the North Carolina Conference's Pilgrimage event.

The MARCHA statement calls on bishops to offer support and care to immigrants under duress.

FILIPINO REVIVAL — Ten-thousand United Methodists came together on Nov. 26 to participate in "Revive 2" at the Ultra-Philippines Sports Complex in the Pasig City section of Manila.

This year's event showcased the legacies and contributions of the Church to the Filipino nation.

"It aimed to instill to young people that there is so much in The United Methodist Church tradition, so much to be thankful for, so much to be praising our Lord for the UMC in the past, the present, and the future," said former Chief Justice Reynato Puno.

INFLUENCE GROWS — Africa University's influence is spreading across the continent and around the globe through about 50 partnerships with government agencies, non-profits, and corporations — nearly 25 years after the Church founded the university in Zimbabwe.

The university will celebrate the quarter-century mark in 2017. It has always received strong financial support through the Apportionment fund, special campaigns by annual conferences, individual donors, and more.

In Oklahoma, special gifts given by Dec. 31 will be matched to endow an AU scholarship in honor of Bishop Robert Hayes and Mrs. Dee Hayes.

Mail checks to the Conference Treasurer; write in the memo line "AU-Hayes Scholarship Fund."

#GIVING TUESDAY — More than 2,550 people in 19 countries contributed a total of \$853,909.78 to United Methodist mission projects and missionary support through the Church's #GivingTuesday campaign on Nov. 29.

"This is an outcome to celebrate, especially since this year we did not offer any matching grants as we have done on the past three annual Giving Tuesdays," said Thomas Kemper, chief executive of the General Board of Global Ministries.

Of the total amount, \$751,281.57 was given for 446 mission projects, and 156 donations totaling \$102,628.21 were for missionary support through The Advance, the United Methodist designated mission giving channel.



WELCOME TO THE NEIGHBORHOOD — A Nov. 17 reception honoring Bishop Jimmy Nunn also provided a chance for him to learn more about Neighborhood Services Organization, a national United Methodist mission agency in Oklahoma City that began almost 100 years ago. “Serving people with compassion and dignity, NSO is making a significant impact,” the bishop said. He described the mission as “acting on a vision that empowers people to live more fulfilling lives. Empowering people goes beyond providing for immediate needs.” Housing solutions, life skills programs, and a variety of health care services are among the ways NSO assists disadvantaged people. Your church’s Apportionment helps NSO financially. Reception photo: from left are internationally acclaimed acoustic musician Kyle Dillingham, who is an OCU graduate; NSO President Stacey Ninness; and Bishop Nunn. The event was sponsored by the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation.

Appointments

- Norma Quinn, from Lawton-Centenary to Oklahoma Conference treasurer, effective Dec. 1.
- Robert Gorrell, from OKC-Church of the Servant to Lawton-Centenary, effective Dec. 1.
- Connie Barnett, new, to OKC-St. Luke’s associate pastor (Asbury campus), effective Nov. 15.

- Brad Humphrey (retired), no longer supplying OKC-Cornerstone, effective Nov. 15.
- Richard Bland (retired), no longer supplying Tulsa-Epworth, effective Oct. 17.
- Lisa Crone, from transitional leave to First Christian Church-Disciples of Christ, Morgantown, W.Va., effective Oct. 15.

Passages

- Joseph Fellows Dickie died Nov. 13 in Tomball, Texas. He was the father of Rev. Steven Dickie, who is CEO of Oklahoma Methodist Manor in Tulsa.
- Francis Bartley Sr. died Nov. 6. He was the father of Revs. Francis Bartley, pastor at Hugo-Heritage, and Michael Bartley, campus minister at the Wesley Foundation for Oklahoma State University;

- and father-in-law of Rev. Lois Bartley, pastor at Valliant and Wright City.
- Artie Ware died Nov. 8, 2016. He was the father of Revs. Scott Ware, pastor at Freedom and Quinlan, and Phil Ware, retired; and grandfather of Rev. Elizabeth Horton-Ware, OCU director of Religious Life, and Debbie Ware of the benefits staff at the United Methodist Ministry Center.

Employment

- District Administrators: Council Oak District Office**, located in Tulsa.
- Heartland District Office**, located in Moore. Both full-time. Send cover letter and resume, or other inquiry, to Norma Quinn at nquinn@okumc.org.
- Administrative Assistant and Youth Director**: Broken Arrow-St. Stephen’s. Both positions are part-time. Resumes to Kirt Moelling at kmoelling@ssumcoba.org, 918-455-4202.
- Associate Director of Children’s Ministry**: Tulsa-Faith. Part-time. Contact Laura Eldridge at l Eldridge@faithtulsa.org
- Contemporary Music Assistant**

- Leader**: Tulsa-Faith. Part-time. Contact James Lambert at jlambert@faithtulsa.org. More information at faithtulsa.org/jobs
- Accompanist/Organist**: OKC-Sunny Lane. Part-time. Resume to cmoore@sunnylaneumc.com
- Director of Student Ministries and Administrative Assistant**: OKC-St. Matthew, located in Midwest City. Both positions are part-time. Assistant needed M-TH, 9-3. Resumes to smumcsprc@gmail.com
- Administrative Assistant**: OKC-Lakeside. Part-time. Resume to Randy McGuire, lakesideumc.pastor@coxinet.net



CIRCLE OF CARE SUNDAY December 18

Your church can help increase awareness and support for children and families in crisis. Get the Circle of Care video, slides, script, and bulletin inserts for your Dec. 18th service at circleofcare.org/howtohelp/church-resources.

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Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference

New church at Durant reports progress

Four years after the land was donated, construction of Chihowa Okla UMC at Durant has started. This is a new church in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

In late September, two teams of volunteers organized by First Broadstreet UMC in Kingsport, Tenn., arrived in Oklahoma. During two weeks of work, they completed the building's walls along with the roof.

The teams were made up of about 40 people from several states, including Tennessee, Louisiana, Colorado, Arkansas, Maryland, and Texas.

Danny Howe, the Volunteers In Mission project director from First Broadstreet, said the teams worked hard. The church at Durant is one of about 10 projects the Tennessee congregation has completed in the OIMC, mostly in the Southeast Region.

OIMC Superintendent David Wilson said he was amazed to see the team's organization in its work and the joy the volunteers exhibited while building.

"They were an amazing group, made up of people of all ages and professions," he said. "They are truly a group that lived out the gospel of Jesus Christ by the work and service they provided for Chihowa Okla."

Rev. Dr. Wilson commended the laity at the local level who were the VIM project leaders. "It is a reminder of the importance and service of laity in the local church."

Chihowa Okla UMC members are excited about the 6,500-square-foot building that is taking shape on North



In Durant, the building that will house Chihowa Okla UMC is taking shape. A VIM team sponsored by a Tennessee church assembled the walls and installed roof trusses at the site earlier this fall. More volunteer help is welcomed.

First Street in Durant, less than a mile from Southeastern Oklahoma State University. Durant is the headquarters of the Choctaw Nation.

The Choctaw Nation donated the land four years ago, under former Chief Greg Pyle. After consultation work with the City of Durant, permits were cleared. The work will progress over the coming months.

In the Choctaw language, the church name means "God's people." It was chartered in 2010 and was the first church in the OIMC Southeast Region to

charter in 30 years, according to OIMC Superintendent David Wilson.

Chihowa Okla UMC currently meets at the Choctaw Nation Community Center in Durant, with Sunday worship at 11 a.m., plus Sunday School and Wednesday evening ministries, according to the website.

Volunteers still are needed, especially professionals in the building trades. For more information, contact Josephine Deere at the OIMC office, 405-632-2006.

(Reprinted with permission, OIMC, The Advocate, Nov.-Dec. 2016)

UMW prepares for milestone anniversary

"The Power of Bold" will be the theme of the next Assembly of United Methodist Women, set for Columbus, Ohio, in May 2018.

This Assembly is particularly momentous. The largest faith-based women's organization in the world is marking 150 years and returning to the location of the first Assembly, in 1942.

When women unite, bold and courageous actions occur. In 1869, eight women came together to send a woman doctor and woman teacher to India and formed the Woman's Foreign Missionary Society. Today that society bears a new name but continues to change lives for women, children, youths, and families down the street and around the globe.

"Our movement was launched by the bold action of women who saw a need and claimed their power as disciples of Jesus Christ to address it," said Harriett Olson of New York City, chief executive officer of UMW. "They sent women leaders—Isabella Thoburn, an educator, and Dr. Clara Swain, a doctor—to India to serve women and children in 1869.

"This daring continued when leaders took a bold stand for racial justice and moved their first Assembly in 1942 to Columbus, where African-American women were welcomed at hotels and other public accommodations."

She concluded, "The Power of Bold will be evident again at Assembly 2018, when 8,000 women come together in faith to address priority challenges of their day: mass incarceration, economic inequality, maternal and child health and climate justice."

The Assembly website, www.UMWAssembly.org, will officially launch in March.

Couple brings praise to open-air chapel in downtown OKC

BY CARLA HINTON

Songs of praise could be heard wafting on the wind at NW Fifth and Robinson in downtown Oklahoma City.

Melissa Smith, of Haskell, was visiting the area with her children recently, and the youths were drawn to the pleasant sounds of someone strumming on a guitar and preparing to sing on a nearby corner.

Smith said they followed the music and were thrilled to find a weekly praise and worship service about to start at Heartland Chapel.

The small open-air sacred space was built on the grounds of First United Methodist Church in the aftermath of the 1995 Oklahoma City bombing.

"We were right here and we saw them setting up. The kids said they're going to do music, so we stayed. It's really neat," Smith said.

Mark McAdow, First Church's senior pastor, said the informal service was the

idea of Morgan Kennedy, the church's worship leader.

"It was really her desire to offer praise and bless our neighbors," Rev. McAdow said.

The minister said Ridge Kennedy, Morgan's husband, has recently been hired as the church's new youth minister, and he has been accompanying her on guitar.

McAdow said the 30-minute service has been offered each

Thursday ... It is a different way to share the love of Jesus to people who visit the Oklahoma City National Memorial adjacent to the Heartland Chapel, along with other visitors and people who work in the downtown area.

"John Wesley (the founder of Methodism) was known for his outdoor

ministry. In his day, they didn't do that, but it seems that Jesus was out a lot," McAdow said. "We are trying to get back to what He was doing."

On a recent Thursday, a church member distributed sheets with lyrics to the songs led by the Kennedys. People stood or sat

on the wooden benches and sang songs that included a traditional hymn and contemporary tunes, a variety of slow and up-tempo.

Morgan Kennedy said she thought of the service after a conversation with

fellow church member Jan Chapman, who was telling her about the history of the Heartland Chapel.

"We were walking around this place, and I thought it would be good for us to do something here. One of my favorite things is being outside and singing of God's creation," Morgan Kennedy said.

'John Wesley was known for his outdoor ministry'

She said church members have shown up to help with the singing, and passers-by like the Smiths have been attracted to the open-air praise as well.

"If they don't come in this place, that's OK. At least it's being heard," she said.

McAdow, who joined in the singing, said he loved the idea and immediately gave it his support.

"All I did was bless it," he said.

Church members Frank and Donna Sisson served as caretakers of the Heartland Chapel for many years. The couple, who recently celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary, have described the chapel as being a testament to faith after the bombing. They said the altar is made of native stone and granite from the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building, and the cedar benches and prayer altars were hand-carved by Oklahoma City woodcarvers.

(Reprinted with permission, The Oklahoman, Oct. 8, 2016)

Right: M&M's kids deliver food to New Emergency Resource Agency, Ponca City.

Ponca City-First finds ways to bless others near and very far

In Ponca City, First UMC has been engaged all season in thanks-giving.

The church partners with New Emergency Resource Agency to collect food each Thanksgiving. This project begins with the children in late October. During their missions time at M&M's, which is the church's weekly after-school program, kids ages 4-12 decorate sacks with pictures of turkeys, pumpkins, and more.

On Sack-Out Sunday, Nov. 6, the children passed out their sacks to church members during worship. A week later, on Sack-In Sunday, 89 sacks filled with groceries lined the steps in front of the altar, thanks to the members' generosity.

The next Wednesday during M&M's, the children took a field trip to the resource agency to learn about the mission — and deliver nearly 1,000 pounds of food to bless others.

Alongside the filled sacks Nov. 13 in First Church's sanctuary were 48 boxes of gifts to be mailed to Marines serving aboard the USS Somerset, deployed as part of the 11th Marine Expeditionary Unit.

The Ponca City church's enthusiasm for this project is because of a specific Marine on board that ship: Cpl. David Gilliland. The Ponca City native grew up attending First UMC.

In September, the congregation learned about the 11th MEU and took up a challenge to send a gift box to each of the Marines in Gilliland's berthing. After the donations were collected, the children packed those boxes, also during M&M's, adding their own thank-you letters and pictures.

On Sack-In Sunday, both the sacks of food and boxes of goodies were blessed in worship. The people of First UMC hope all who receive the items are blessed by their contents and the prayers that accompany them.



Volunteers pack 20,000+ pounds of holiday foods

In Tulsa on the two days before Thanksgiving, hundreds of community volunteers packed and handed out more than 20,000 pounds of food at United Methodist-related Restore Hope Ministries to neighbors in need.

The holiday baskets included more than 6,000 pounds of turkey.

Volunteers of all ages and from diverse backgrounds served shoulder-to-shoulder.

Among the sponsors and volunteers were church groups, Boy Scouts, and families. Tulsa-Memorial Drive UMC had collected 3,400 dimes to help purchase turkeys. Broken Arrow-Heritage UMC members worked on-site.

The Haws family has adopted and supported Restore Hope's basket project as a Thanksgiving family tradition through several generations.

"Our dad supported Restore Hope in so many ways when he was alive," Diane Powell said. "Every year he made sure there were fresh celery, carrots, and onions in the Thanksgiving baskets for families to use for cooking. We all worked together to distribute the baskets, too."

"Even though he is no longer with us, this brings our family together, and we serve to remember and to help our neighbors in their time of need."

Each basket's 21 ingredients included a turkey and all the trimmings, from fresh produce to dessert. Families registered at Restore Hope during the first two weeks of November.

The agency's executive director, Jeff Jaynes, said that far too many Tulsans worry about how they will feed their children, let alone prepare a holiday meal. Over 90 percent of Tulsa Public School students qualify for free or reduced-price school lunches, he noted.

Order 2017 Oklahoma Conference Calendars

Order your Conference Calendars online now at www.okumc.org

- The calendar is a helpful tool in local church planning. (It includes important Oklahoma United Methodist dates, the lectionary, and liturgical colors for the year)

Cost is \$10 each.

Nativity to allow kids to get close to real animals



These critters performed at the outdoor nativity event last Christmas.

Edmond-First's outdoor nativity scene this year will have an added attraction — a petting zoo with several larger animals for children to see and pet.

The animals will include a cow, sheep, donkey, and an alpaca in a pen near the nativity scene, said Megan Borum, the church's director of children's ministries.

The live nativity is set for 6 p.m. Dec. 23 followed by contemporary worship at 7.

A family with a baby will portray Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Children from the church will dress up as angels, animals, and shepherds. Visitors will be offered hot chocolate and cookies, and choir members will sing.

The replica of a stable was built by church members, said Erica Lawrence, director of youth ministries.

The outdoor nativity, which was first presented last Christmas, is "a great way to reach out to new people in our community," Lawrence said. The event had a "phenomenal" reception its first year.



TAX-WISE GIVING STRATEGIES

As the end of the year approaches, you may be looking for ways to save on taxes and benefit the ministries you care about. These strategies are an excellent way to complete your goals.

OUTRIGHT GIFTS OF APPRECIATED ASSETS

Gifts of appreciated assets such as securities or real estate are an excellent way to help your church or favorite ministry. These gifts can provide you with numerous benefits:

- Receive an income tax deduction, based typically on the asset's fair market value
- Avoid federal and state capital gains taxes

- Avoid the Affordable Care Act Medicare-tax

LIFE INSURANCE GIFTS

Making a gift to us of your old, unneeded, or obsolete life insurance policy can provide you with the following benefits:

- Receive a charitable income tax deduction
- Reduce your taxable estate
- Preserve your cash and savings

CHARITABLE LIFE INCOME PLANS

If you own low-yielding assets and are seeking a higher income, a charitable life income gift such as a charitable gift annuity or charitable remainder trust may be worth exploring. In exchange for your

charitable gift of cash or appreciated securities, you reap multiple benefits:

- Receive payments for your lifetime(s)
- Generate a current income tax deduction
- Bypass all or a portion of the capital gains on appreciated assets
- Enjoy increased financial security

CHARITABLE LIFE ESTATES

If your estate plans include leaving your residence (home, farm, vacation home) to charity, you may wish to create a charitable life estate arrangement. You can make a gift to

us of your property today and receive the following benefits:

- Current income tax deduction
- Life use and enjoyment of the property
- A lasting legacy to further your philanthropic goals

If you would like to learn more about end of year charitable gift planning, please contact David Battles, CPA, at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org.

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SHARE THE JOY through social media

In the Christmas season, and especially Christmas Eve, the world around us is in a mood most responsive to Christ and the church.

This Christmas, will you SHARE THE JOY?

The Conference's evangelism task force has designed Facebook resources for you to SHARE, to invite people to your holiday events.

- 1) Log into your own Facebook page. In the search field at the top of the window, type SHARE THE JOY UMC. From the pop-up list, select "Share the JOY UMC community."
- 2) The Facebook page "SHARE THE JOY UMC community" will open; then click on the "video" link. Preview any videos you wish.
- 3) Select a video and click "share," then "share on your own timeline."
- 4) Add your personal invitation in the comment box, with details (when and where) about the service you have in mind.
- 5) Click the "post" button.
- 6) Watch for comments and be responsive.
- 7) Consider posting invitations repeatedly in the days leading up to your event, especially right before Christmas Eve, because a lot of people make last-minute decisions.
- 8) After the event, SHARE THE JOY of it on your Facebook page. Share a conversation about the Christ of Christmas. Share connections that may interest your friends and bring them back to church.

Also find the step-by-step promotional video at:

- The OkumcCommunications channel on YouTube
- On Vimeo at <https://vimeo.com/192042406>

Questions? Contact Chris Buskirk, of the evangelism task force, at Chris@abidingharvest.org or 918-519-5874.

10 Facebook tips from Heritage UMC

Heritage UMC in Broken Arrow lists 10 ways your church can use Facebook for outreach.

1. Create a church Facebook page and encourage congregants to "Like" the page.

2. Encourage congregants to "Share" posts made on the church Facebook page. (Remember, they have Facebook friends who aren't connected to your church.)

3. Encourage congregants to "Check-In" on Facebook when they arrive at worship or any other church event. Remind them to tell others via Facebook about the church they love AND INVITE OTHERS.

4. Know your target audience, and create and post events that will interest the people you want to reach.

5. Choose your search terms carefully. When you create a Facebook Event, you are given an opportunity to add search keywords. Choose keywords that are specifically designated to reach your target audience.

6. Regularly post positive messages about what is happening at your church as well



as create Event pages for specific activities.

7. Remember to share your Facebook posts with all relevant groups (i.e., Community pages, Neighborhood Association pages, Local Buy/Sell pages).

8. Post often! Heritage began posting its Pumpkin Patch events three weeks prior to each one and reposted variations of that invitation at least every other day.

9. Post at different times of the day. (You can schedule that

through Facebook.) Not everyone checks Facebook at the same time each day.

10. Creating Facebook Events doesn't cost anything, although you may choose to buy additional advertising on Facebook. (For purposes of transparency, Heritage UMC did all its event posting/reposting for no cost. The church did not purchase additional advertising for events.)

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