Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries

Volunteer of Year extends honor to all who help

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

Two men made clear God’s good work through Criminal Justice & Mercy Ministries (CJAMM) when they spoke at a recent Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon.

About 60 people saw Steve Bear of Tulsa honored as volunteer of the year and heard keynote speaker Tony Altizer of Oklahoma City. Both support CJAMM’s two Exodus House programs for newly released offenders and their families.

The March 13 luncheon was hosted by OKC-First United Methodist Church.

Bear is someone who exemplifies to me servant spirit,” said Greg Boyd, pastor of Tulsa-St. Luke’s Redemption United Methodist Church. “He’s done things I’m grateful for, that I wouldn’t know how to do. God bless you, my brother; you are something else.”

Bear was humble. “Every volunteer deserves this recognition.”

He gestured to the audience, “You come every week seeking to change the lives and hearts of somebody, to restore their families, to give them hope. It’s an encounter that God has created.”

He began volunteering about 10 years ago after meeting a Tulsa Exodus House resident. “She’s now my wife and my best friend. I’ve been very blessed.”

Altizer is an Exodus House graduate. “God showed up

Leaders prep for last conference with Bishop Hayes

The preacher for every worship service will be Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr. on May 30-June 2 during Annual Conference in Oklahoma City. He’ll bring the Word both mornings and evenings, beginning with the Memorial/Communion program at 7 p.m. Monday at OKC-St. Luke’s.

Bishop Hayes will retire at the end of August, after 12 years leading the Oklahoma Area, which encompasses both the Oklahoma and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences.

Six advance district meetings will inform delegates about proposals for the 2017 Apportionments; changes in active clergy health benefits, including a choice among five insurance plans; and nominations to general boards.

April 10 — Northern Prairie District — Perry UMC, 3 p.m.
April 17 — Cimarron District — Woodward-First UMC, 4 p.m.
April 21 — Crossroads and Heartland Districts — OKC-St Luke’s, 7 p.m.
April 23 — Lake Country District — Coalgate UMC, 3 p.m.
April 24 — Wichitas District — Anadarko-First UMC, 3 p.m.
May 1 — Council Oak and Green Country Districts — Tulsa-Asbury UMC, 3 p.m.

Registration hub: www.okumc.org/annual_conference

Storm story

Snapshot of a bigger picture

To better understand The United Methodist Church’s promise to help disaster victims, look at how money from one grant was spent after the devastating May 2013 tornadoes in Oklahoma.

These numbers track a grant awarded by the United Way of Central Oklahoma: $1.42 million to Oklahoma United Methodist Church Disaster Response (OKUMC-DR), to repair and rebuild survivors’ homes.

Richard Norman recently summarized what that specific gift accomplished between December 2013 and June 2015.

He noted this is a snapshot of that grant only; other major donations are not part of this report. He coordinates disaster response for the Oklahoma Conference.

OKUMC-DR leveraged the funds in ways that almost doubled the donor’s dollars, to more than $2.6 million, according to Rev. Norman’s summary.

That was achieved by establishing and managing a working capital fund that allowed, on most occasions, for payment of contractors and materials suppliers within five days. This financial process ensured good working relationships with contractors and encouraged priority response to disaster survivors, according to the report.

In total, 994 people received help from the Church through this grant. United Methodists completed 453 projects during the reporting period.

One chart identifies those jobs by county, including:
- 211 in Cleveland County;
- 101 in Oklahoma County;
- 68 in Canadian County; and
- 62 in Pottawatomie County.

United Methodists partnered with others on additional

‘God bless you, my brother; you are something else’

—Pastor Greg Boyd, left, thanks Steve Bear of Tulsa
right off the bat” in his assignment to a drug rehab program at a correctional center, he said. Then he learned about Exodus House from another offender. He also began going to church while incarcerated.

“I believed in God but didn’t know what his plans were for me. I had burned all my bridges,” he said.

But he did know he would need support, so he applied and “I was one of the few who get to come to Exodus House.”

The prison recidivism rate is astonishingly low — 3.7 percent — for Exodus House graduates, according to April Sellers White of Sapulpa, vice chairperson of the CJAMM Board of Directors and a retired judge.

For other offenders, that rate is 30 percent, she said.

Alitzer said the program “was so much more than I expected.”

He described the nicely furnished apartment and supportive housing sponsor; life skills classes, spiritual development, counseling, and 12-step sessions. He even received a gift card to purchase underwear and socks, “which was amazing,” he said.

He has been “blown away by the passion and caring” of people in this ministry. After graduating he worked in construction. He recently became facility manager at

Tony Alitzer and his daughter Kaitlyn attend the CJAMM Volunteer Appreciation Luncheon in Oklahoma City.

Exodus House in Oklahoma City.

CJAMM reported that volunteers annually serve more than 57,000 hours in various facets of its nonprofit ministry. Interim director is Lesa Rhoads; contact her at 405-530-2014

OCU enables youthful service to community

UNited Methodist church youth groups from across the state long have gathered at Oklahoma City University on the first Saturday in March. This year, what has become known as Youth Service Day fell on March 5.

Youths and sponsors enjoy learning about OCU, a meal in the cafeteria, and an afternoon in hands-on service for public schools, churches, and nonprofit programs. The day concludes with worship in the Watson Lounge of the Chapel.

For the 2016 event, OCU graduate Allison Jean returned to preach on following Christ’s example of serving others. She now is enrolled at Perkins School of Theology

As an intern for the Wesley Center — the United Methodist campus ministry at OCU — senior Michael Horn led planning. “Youth Service Day gives the Wesley Center a chance to really make a difference in the community around us,” he said.

Service sites included Project Transformation, The Well outreach ministry, and an elementary school.

The day is among countless ways that OCU students, staff, and faculty reach beyond campus throughout the year, embracing the university’s servant leadership model. They sponsor a Relay for Life fundraising race for cancer research, volunteer with Habitat for Humanity, and host a grilled-cheese benefit dinner for USO.

Here are a few more examples.

• The Wesley Center sponsored two Christmas projects. The Alternative Gift Marketplace raised $600 for UMCOR. Wesley students also raised over $1,300 to purchase Christmas gifts for 12 foster children through Circle of Care.

• The student group Ris4Thursday organized a meal initiative for the Homeless Alliance of OKC.

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• The students collected 20,181 items during their annual canned food drive for Skyline Urban Ministry, to help feed the hungry in Oklahoma City. That totaled 8,185 more items than last year’s record amount. Coaches and student-athletes also volunteer about 3,000 combined service hours each year.

• A group of more than 100 students — Clara Luper Scholars, American Indian Scholars, and OCU Leads Scholars — collaborated on service projects for numerous nonprofits. Toys were collected and donated to families identified through Catholic Charities and to the YWCA. Some students volunteered with Boys and Girls Club of Oklahoma City. A bake sale raised $170 to buy school supplies for Positive Tomorrows, a school for homeless children.
Contest between churches scores tons of food

A good-natured competition between two United Methodist churches in Edmond ended with Skyline Urban Ministries the winner — gaining 17.3 tons of food to help nourish those who are hungry in the Oklahoma City area.

During Lent, Edmond-First and Edmond-New Covenant challenged each other to see how much food their members could collect for donation to Skyline.

In all, the churches donated 34,626 pounds of food, which adds up to 17.3 tons of food.


40 is the number of testing and trial and, in the first chapter of Acts, that’s how many days Jesus appeared to his disciples and others after his resurrection and before his ascension.

But why 40? Why not seven, or 12, or 30? Was there some unfinished work or incomplete training that required 40 days for Jesus to accomplish before he went to heaven?

There are captivating reasons for that length of time that I want to know about in these weeks right after Easter.

I think Jesus lingered with his disciples so there could be no doubt about his resurrection!

If Jesus had appeared to them for only a day or two, some would have quickly doubted and rejected God’s triumph over death. They easily could have claimed, “We were stressed and not in our right senses” or “it was a figment of our imagination.”

But Jesus lingered, proving beyond doubt that indeed he was alive! He was seen by Mary, Peter, James, two disciples headed to Emmaus, 10 disciples together, and 11 disciples at another time.

On one occasion 500 people were gathered, and they all saw him, that same Jesus they had seen die on a cross.

It couldn’t be — but yet it was!

Another reason Jesus lingered was to encourage the disciples as they learned to think and act for themselves in light of that life-transforming event.

During those 40 days they saw Jesus from a very different perspective, as wonder and awe replaced fear. Their minds were being prepared to receive the new Holy Spirit power soon to come to them. Jesus knew they must have the ability to embrace it.

In most of his post-resurrection encounters with his disciples, Jesus was pushing them to remember, understand, and apply all he had taught them while with them in the flesh.

In those 40 days, he tested their faith by commissioning them to go and make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:19). He quizzed Peter, who was to become the Rock of the church, with his threefold question “Do you love me?” (John 21:15).

40 crucial days

Those disciples probably grew more in confidence and independence in those 40 days than the entire three years they had traveled with Jesus.

Ultimately Jesus lingered so he could teach his followers that they could change the world without him being present, that God’s love would flourish through their fellowship free of his physical manifestation.

This is a lesson the world needs today. Jesus’ resurrection still seems to some “an idle tale,” and some demand physical proof that he is alive.

British Protestant preacher John H. Jowett (1863-1923) spoke about a friend who was asked to sit at the head of a table and preside over a meeting. His friend begged the group to leave the chair apparently empty.

“I want the Lord to preside over us,” he said. “I will sit at his side and say such things as need saying, but let him take the chair.”

Rev. Jowett wrote, “The effect of the moment was almost overwhelming, and if, at the meeting, any person were tempted to say a word that was unworthy or out of order, the sight of the empty chair froze the word upon his lips, so that it could not be said.”

A special time for you

Let these 40 days on the Church’s calendar — between official observances of the resurrection and then the ascension of Jesus — be a time when you linger with Jesus, accepting beyond any doubt that Easter isn’t the one-day event that society makes it out to be.

Let these days test you.

Think deeply. Go out and witness for him. Understand that, although not physically present, Jesus is with you each and every day.

For me, the thought of encounters with him makes each day exciting.
Liberia trip creates memories

Warner attends dedication at school

A February trip to his native Liberia held triple meaning for Bishop Bennie Warner, who lives in Oklahoma City.

Main purpose was to witness the Feb. 18 dedication of the cornerstone for a new school: the Kaymah H. Warner New Hope Academy in Margibi County. Kaymah, daughter of Bennie and Anna Warner, died in 2014.

Another purpose was to attend the Liberia Annual Conference of The United Methodist Church. Also while Bishop Warner was there, Bishop Arthur F. Kulah asked him to be the best man at Kulah’s wedding. The two friends are both age 80.

The visit created yet more memories of Liberia for Warner, who learned to read at 15 in a Methodist mission school, went to college, pastored churches, was elected bishop there in 1973, and in 1977 became vice president of the Republic of Liberia.

His life changed dramatically when Liberia’s president was executed during a coup, in 1980, while the Warners were visiting the United States.

With conditions too difficult to continue in ministry in Liberia, they relocated to the United States. Warner returned to the pastorate, leading churches in New York, Arkansas, and Oklahoma.

He has taught at Oklahoma City University and has pastored Quayle, Wesley, Mustang, Leland Clegg, Blanchard, and South Lee Churches in greater Oklahoma City.

Now retired, Warner dedicates himself to raising money for completion of the school, which will have 10 classrooms for grades pre-K through nine, each with room for 35 students. Warner said construction likely will take another year to complete and calculates that an additional $21,700 is needed to install ceilings and classroom doors.

He expects the school to draw students from 14 villages nearby.

Warner noted that the school is necessary because the available government schools aren’t large enough to meet the need to educate all Liberia’s children.

New Hope Academy is being built on 50 acres of land donated by the Warner family. A dormitory for students and housing for staff will be built later. Nephews and their families live on the property.

The facility also will help the area in other ways, because the school will include a library and clinic for the community, Warner said.

The school has a large solar-power generator and expects to produce enough power eventually to sell some of it to surrounding villages, creating income for the school, said Jeremy Basset, director of the Oklahoma Conference’s Office of Mission. He also attended the February dedication.

Rev. Basset said he has been “deeply moved by Bishop Warner’s commitment to his home community … knowing how important education was for him.”

This school also has been a labor of love for several Oklahoma United Methodist churches, including Blanchard, Mustang, and OKC-Mosaic. Victory Memorial UMC in Guymon has sent volunteers to Liberia to help with the construction, Warner said. Fundraisers in Oklahoma have included an international fashion show and tea at OCU in 2011.

Building the school was something that Kaymah Warner wanted to see come to fruition, her father said.

“She’d be excited to know that all the plans are being materialized. She would be happy her name would be remembered,” he said.

District joins missionary in helping tribes’ kids

The Green Country District has entered into a Covenant Relationship with missionary Donna Pewo, announced recently by the district’s Board of Missions and Disaster Preparedness Team.

Rev. Pewo serves the Clinton Indian Church and Community Ministry of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC). From Lawton, she is a Church and Community Worker for the General Board of Global Ministries and an OIMC Local Pastor.

The ministry at Clinton, which is a priority of the OIMC, primarily serves children of the Cheyenne-Arapaho Tribes. Pewo’s assignment includes worship, tutoring, and recreation.

The ministry was launched when a former lay missioner heard the call for a church to respond to the needs of disadvantaged children in the Clinton area. Many struggle in school, and they are surrounded by substance abuse.

The work began with a very small group, but had increased to 35 children by 2011.

The ministry strives to win the trust of the Cheyenne and Arapaho, who have had a skeptical view of Methodists. In 1864, almost 200 people of their tribes, including children, were massacred at Sand Creek, Colo., by a territorial militia led by a Methodist preacher. The contemporary church has apologized for the action and also contributed to a Sand Creek memorial.

“God has led me through many storms in my life,” Pewo said. “I have learned to trust him and to be obedient to him for all he has done for me. I have faith in knowing that God is leading me in this new chapter of my life. As I go on this journey, I hope to bring our Indian people the hope that they can have new life in Christ.”

District Administrator Brenda Scrivener shared these ideas to support Pewo and the children.

• Watch a video about the mission. https://youtu.be/U1zldyP0fsQ
• Read the newsletter. http://goo.gl/EwxxPI

• Ask church members to pray for the missionary and the kids.
• Start a covenant relationship with Pewo, for 10 cents per week per church member.
• Visit the Clinton ministry as part of a Volunteers in Mission team.

For more information or to invite Pewo to speak at your church, contact Karen Distefano, Conference secretary of Global Ministries, okcsrm@gmail.com or 918-440-9213.
Leaders urge budget cuts

**By United Methodist News Service**

The top executives of The United Methodist Church’s 13 general agencies have unanimously recommended that the denomination’s budget be cut — to its lowest level in 16 years.

If the 2016 General Conference delegates approve, U.S. annual conferences would pay the lowest percentage of general church Apportionments since 2001.

The executives proposed a $599 million budget for general church funds in 2017–20.

That’s down from the current $603 million budget, for 2013–16, which was approved at the 2012 General Conference. It’s also down by $12 million from another proposal that just advanced, in February, from the General Council on Finance and Administration and the Connectional Table.

The general church Apportionments support bishops, ministerial education, and wide efforts ranging from ecumenical work to Africa University in Zimbabwe. However, the largest portion of those Apportionments support 10 of the 13 general agencies.

Those are all listed at www.umc.org/who-we-are/agencies.

“As local churches and annual conferences continue to cut budgets or hold them flat, we believe that all of the general funds must adjust as we stand in solidarity with United Methodists across the connection,” Gil Hanke said in a statement. He is the top executive of the Commission on United Methodist Men and convener of the General Secretaries Table, which brings the agencies’ top executives together.

The executives’ proposal came after the Economic Advisory Committee — a group of eight United Methodist economists and other financial professionals — raised alarms about plummeting U.S. worship attendance.

On average, that attendance dropped nearly 76,000 worshippers between 2013 and ‘14 — the largest decline in denomination records since 1977.

Currently U.S. churches support the bulk of general church finances for the global denomination.

Guaranteed appointment fight will resume at General Conference

**By United Methodist News Service**

Ending guaranteed appointment for ordained elders was a high-profile effort that passed at the denomination’s 2012 General Conference — only to be overturned by the Judicial Council.

The issue will again be on the agenda when the 2016 General Conference meets May 10-20 in Portland, Ore.

This time the push to end guaranteed appointment is coming from the Association of Annual Conference Lay Leaders.

“It’s a matter of accountability and a matter of empowering our bishops to do what they think they need to do with each and every appointment,” said Lonnie Brooks, lay leader for the Alaska Conference and an Association officer.

But the strategy for passage this time will require first changing the denomination’s constitution — a high hurdle. And opposition has hardly gone away.

“There’s value in having security of appointment for all clergy, in particular for those who have been marginalized,” said Frederick Brewington, a lay delegate from the New York Conference.

Lead-up to the 2012 General Conference featured much discussion about need for change in the denomination, given declining membership in the United States.

The Study of Ministry Commission pointed to guaranteed appointment as a problem.

The 2012 General Conference delegates voted to end the guarantee, but the legislation also was referred to the Judicial Council.

The Judicial Council rendered all debate moot in October 2012 by declaring that the petition to end guaranteed appointment was in fact unconstitutional.

The only option for those fighting the ruling is to seek to change the Church’s constitution, found in the Book of Discipline.

The 2016 petition by the Association of Lay Leaders is nothing if not direct, seeking to have the constitution state that a presiding bishop “has the authority, but not the obligation” to appoint a clergy member, among other points.

Steve Lyles, lay leader for the North Alabama Conference, said, “There has to be some accountability.”

But others, like Brewington, see guaranteed appointment as a justice issue, providing protection for all elders — particularly women and minorities — from capricious or otherwise unfair actions by bishops. (Brewington is married to an elder.)

Clergy delegate Ken Nelson of the South Carolina Conference said congregations are harmed when ineffective clergy are simply “passed around.” But he believes the Church has an obligation to work with clergy, to increase their effectiveness, and often fails to do so.

The Study of Ministry Commission did not propose legislation on the issue to the 2016 General Conference.
Attention, Annual Conference delegates:
Take notice of these items as you prepare for the 2016 meeting in Oklahoma City on May 30-June 2. Registration and information online: www.okumc.org/annual_conference

1 MINISTRY BOOTHS, DISPLAYS — and Cokesbury book sales — will move to a new location: the first floor of OCU’s Kramer School of Nursing (West). That building is directly east of the Freede Wellness Center.

2 SESSIONS — Major programming starts Monday afternoon at OKC-St. Luke’s — well before the evening worship.
   • 1 p.m., Laity Session
   • 1:15 p.m., Clergy Executive Session
   • 3 p.m., Service of Reconciliation, with Native American storyteller and author Ray Buckley, and affirming Oklahoma United Methodists’ commitment to authentic connection with Native brothers and sisters.

3 CELEBRATION — Ticket required for the program and worship on Tuesday evening, celebrating Bishop Robert and Dee Hayes, at the National Cowboy and Western Heritage Museum, 1700 NE 63rd St.
   • Tickets are free but limited in number. They must be reserved when you register online for Annual Conference.

4 FOOD TRUCKS — For your Tuesday supper, patronize the food trucks that will be parked near the Freede Center. This dining option will allow time for you to travel from OCU to the museum for the evening events.

5 HEALTH SCREENING — The retired clergy book sale and the health screening will also take place in Kramer School of Nursing (East).

6 MEALS — Price is $7 for any meal in the OCU cafeteria at the Tom and Brenda McDaniel Student Center. Order tickets when you register online or purchase at the cafeteria entry; tickets are not packaged with the dormitory housing signup.

7 UMCOR KITS — For 11 years, emergency supply kits for UMCOR (United Methodist Committee on Relief) have been collected during Annual Conference. Priority needs this year are Health and School Kits. UMCOR also is asking for packages of cloth diapers, prefolded or plain. Trucks will be parked at OCU in the lot north of the Freede Center and, on Monday, in St. Luke’s south parking lot during registration hours. Questions? Contact Kristin, Office of Mission, kterrill-wilkes@okumc.org, 405-530-2029.

8 CLERGY PHOTOS — Portrait photos of all clergy — active and retired — will be taken upstairs in the Freede Center, in the space previously used for displays and book sales.

SPECIAL MEALS/RECEPTIONS:
Monday, May 30 —
   • Deacons 20th Anniversary Luncheon
   • Candler School of Theology Alumni Reception

Tuesday, May 31 —
   • UMMen Breakfast
   • UMWomen Breakfast
   • Laity Luncheon
   • Clergywomen Luncheon
   • Perkins School of Theology Luncheon
   • Asbury Seminary Luncheon
   • Phillips Theological Seminary Alumni Luncheon
   • Saint Paul School of Theology Luncheon
   • Duke Divinity School Luncheon

Wednesday, June 1 —
   • Missions Breakfast
   • Oklahoma UM Historical Society Luncheon
   • UM Rural Fellowship and Small Membership Churches award luncheon
   • UM Rural Fellowship and Small Membership Churches award luncheon

Bible verse for the conference: “Under God’s control all the parts of the body fit together ... So when each separate part works as it should, the whole body grows and builds itself up through love” (Ephesians 4:16).
Young-adult team aids Tishomingo flood victim

W hen torrential storms in southern Oklahoma last June sent Pennington Creek over its banks, Tishomingo resident Dean Robinson feared he had become a man without a home. Rising floodwaters drove the war veteran from his house. Robinson says he was prepared to live in his car for the duration of the calamity.

Victory Tabernacle Church invited him to stay in its parsonage. “If it had not been for the church, I don’t know what I would have done,” he said.

Several homes in Tishomingo that suffered damage were condemned. But some homeowners, like Robinson, were determined to return to their homes.

His son Jim helped with some of the cleanup work, but realized it was more than he could do on his own.

That’s when Jim called Oklahoma’s United Methodist Disaster Response, hoping for more help.

The Conference ministry was already partnering with AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps (NCCC) to help with rebuilding after the flooding, as well as ongoing recovery help in the state after tornadoes in 2013.

A group of eight young adults with NCCC arrived in Oklahoma City on Jan. 9 to launch a 12-week relief project in Oklahoma. On March 5 that team — led by Project Manager Kevin Walker, from Moore-First UMC, and by NCCC representative Grace Adams — relocated to Tishomingo to fix the Robinson home.

Contemporary from Page 1 projects that used some of the grant funds, ultimately serving 688 households.

Among the cities where survivors received help: Newalla, Oklahoma City, Moore, El Reno, Shawnee, Carney, McLoud, and Norman.

The United Way funds also secured storage facilities, tool purchases, and project management software.

Norman reported 3,345 Church volunteers completed 61,521 hours of labor on homes. Those efforts were valued at $1.3 million.

The team stayed at Cross Point Camp beside Lake Texoma, driving to Tishomingo each morning to work on the home.

“This is a pretty heavy job we’ve been doing,” Adams said. “Before we came to Oklahoma we had been working on an urban educational farm for children in Tucson, Ariz. Talk about two very different extremes!”

“We’re in real good hands,” she added. “Working with United Methodist Disaster Response has been a great experience.”

Walker praised the team members for their willingness to put in so much hard work.

“Floods are not exactly a sexy disaster,” he said. “There’s not a lot of publicity and not a lot of death with floods the way there often is with tornadoes. ... We’ve been so fortunate to have this group come and give so willingly of themselves.”

A total of 2,800 young adults annually help people nationwide through NCCC.

Adams said getting to know local residents has been one of the most rewarding parts of the assignment here. “The people here have been so wonderful to us. It’s great to see that our work is being appreciated by folks here.”

Robinson said, “I just can’t thank them enough for everything they’ve done. There won’t be anybody any happier than me when I finally get to come home.”

(Reprinted with permission from the Johnston County Capital-Democrat, where Small is news editor.)

OK grateful to volunteers still coming from outside state

Three groups of volunteer disaster workers from outside Oklahoma were treated to grilled hot dog and burger lunches March 15 and 16 by the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation, as one way to thank them for their efforts.

The volunteers have been helping remedy damage to homes in several Oklahoma counties after tornadoes and flooding in 2015. For some, their service in the state has continued for weeks.

Honored at the luncheon were: 10 people from West Heights United Methodist Church in Wichita, Kan.; 35 construction engineering students from Iowa State University, along with five teachers; and the AmeriCorps National Civilian Community Corps Alpine 3 Team, including eight young adults from eight states.

Moore-First UMC opened its facilities to give the volunteers a place to eat together and relax. “It was inspiring to see so many volunteers from other states as they became Okies for a time and helped our people in powerful ways. Our team was honored to serve them,” said Mike Wiley, Foundation senior adviser.

Much of the 2015 storm damage was in Cleveland, Canadian, Oklahoma, and Pottawatomie counties, according to statistics compiled by Oklahoma United Methodist Church Disaster Response (OKUMC-DR). Amid ongoing aid work by several organizations to help the people affected, that United Methodist entity is overseeing deployments of volunteers.

The recovery work has “ultimately helped to bring a ‘new normal’ to the lives of hundreds of our Oklahoma neighbors in need,” said Richard Norman, disaster response coordinator for the Oklahoma Conference.

“We could not help families recover from disasters without you. Without volunteers serving, many families are not able to recover to their ‘new normal.’”

Jeremy Basset, director of the Conference’s Office of Mission, which includes disaster response ministry, praised the volunteers for their work. “Your presence here is really, really important. We are so grateful that you are here.”

Rev. Basset said Oklahoma used to get some breathing room between natural disasters. “Now, we just run one into the other.”

Are you interested in volunteering? Learn more at: www.okume-dr.org — Chris Schutz

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Legacy planning using endowments

Pearl Opel Thorpe had a vision of providing transitional housing and other support services to homeless women and their children in the Tulsa area. When she died, her estate created an endowment fund at the Foundation which achieved her dream. Pearl’s Hope receives monthly donations from Bishop W. Angie Smith’s Foundation which achieved her estate created an endowment fund at the Tulsa area. When she died, her endowment fund will provide insight into what was important to you.

ENDOWMENT FUNDS ARE EASY TO ESTABLISH
They can be established now with current gifts of cash, securities, or real estate. They can be created later through a legacy or planned gift. Another possibility is to start an endowment fund now and add to it later through a legacy or planned gift. The advantage of starting an endowment fund now is that you can enjoy the experience of changing lives through your endowment.

ENDOWMENT FUNDS ARE FLEXIBLE
They can be established to support your favorite ministry or ministries such as continuing your current giving level after your death; funding scholarships for church camps, mission trips, college, or seminary; supporting local and/or global missions; supporting children and youth enrichment programs; and building and property maintenance endowments to provide funds needed without using monies from the current budget.

ENDOWMENT FUNDS ARE ENDURING
We all want to be remembered when we pass from this life. It is very natural to want to extend our values and influence into the future. Endowment funds provide that opportunity! Long after you are gone, your endowment fund will provide insight into what was important to you.

Establishing an endowment fund expresses confidence in the future of our church. It is an act of encouragement to the present and future leadership. Finally and most important, it allows you to make a difference. For more information about establishing an endowment fund, please contact David Battles, CPA at 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org.

IN APPRECIATION — From right: On behalf of The United Methodist Men Foundation, David Battles recognizes Nancy Harris of Oklahoma City as an honored member of the national Society of John Wesley “in appreciation of your continuous support and devotion to prayer, youth, and mission efforts” of UMMen. Her husband, Joseph, joins them for the award presentation.

Missionary Alexander to make home visit
Missionary Marsha Alexander returns from the Philippines this month to visit churches and friends in Oklahoma. She directs Ashbury College on the island of Anda. With students ranging from elementary level through college, it educates young people for service in the Church and equips them for productive roles in society.

Originally from the church at Chickasha, Rev. Alexander will be in the state April 25-June 6. To arrange a visit, contact Karen Distefano, okcsqm@gmail.com, 918-440-9213.

Passages

VINCENT — Rev. Garry Russell Vincent, 67, who was pastoring the Waukomis and Drummond-Salem churches, died March 15, 2016. His ministry began in 1999, and he also pastored Custer City, Independence, and Chapel Hill churches. Among survivors are his wife, Barbara Lynn Parkins Vincent, and daughter, Crystal Lynn Godfrey. Service was March 18 at Waukomis UMC.

KNIGHT — Sue Alberta Knight, 83, of Edmond died March 13, 2016. She was the widow of Rev. Fred Knight Jr. She had a teaching career. Among survivors are daughter Debbie Knight and sons Andy and David Knight. Service was March 26 at OKC-

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Appointments


Johnny Morrow, from Altus-First associate pastor to no appointment, effective April 1.

Nikki Carter, from Pocola to discontinued, effective March 15.

Rebecca Morton, from assistant director at Skyline Ministries to no appointment, effective April 1.