

The Vessel launches

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

Sails swelling with the wind of the Spirit and 188 people aboard, The Vessel launched Jan. 15, navigating the waters of life in Claremore.

This new faith community, a satellite campus of First UMC in Claremore, uses the vernacular about ships several ways.

The leadership team is called the crew. The logo displays two blue sails. Wooden serving vessels sit on the altar table, made of glass.

Describing strategy for The Vessel FUMC South Campus, Jaimie Willis identified a fleet of “ships”: discipleship, worship, stewardship, and friendship.

On Launch Sunday, as the song “Broken Vessels” filled the worship space, the campus pastor “knew we were right where we needed to be.”

He admitted that he “drank way too much coffee before 8 a.m.” that day. He and the 30-member crew prepared for 150 worshippers, then hurried to set out more chairs as the crowd grew. Childcare staff embraced 13 children, infants through third-graders.



Worshippers express their praise to God during congregational singing on Launch Sunday, Jan. 15, at The Vessel, a satellite campus of Claremore-First UMC. Volunteers in a group named glorifi lead in music and media, and Jaimie Willis is campus pastor.

“We were praying for that,” said Rev. Willis about it all.

The Vessel reported 120 and 152 people worshipping on Jan. 22 and 29, respectively, according to Senior Pastor Ray Crawford of First Church. The goal for attendance after three months is to average 140.

Launching worship at The Vessel raises to six the number of weekly services under the umbrella of Claremore-First.

The main campus offers three services. Two restaurants also host services, Rev. Dr. Crawford explained. About 20 people

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One Church marks 1st day

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

It was one great day when One Church in Edmond welcomed people in worship Jan. 22.

Lots of praying and planning preceded that Sunday service at Frontier Elementary School. Turnout was crucial that day.

Leaders wanted weekly worship to launch with that service. But attendance by more than 100 adults was necessary, to carry forward momentum for this new faith community.

Andy Nelms couldn't subdue his excitement when he announced the total count of 138 adults. One Church, an extension campus of Edmond-Acts 2 UMC, was official.

The people followed worship with immediate service. They packed bags with classroom supplies that were donated to teachers at Frontier Elementary and Heartland Middle Schools.

One young mother balanced her toddler on her hip as the child carefully selected a glue stick and coloring pen and placed them in a bag. A father and two elementary-age sons made repeated trips among the tables of supplies, filling multiple bags.

Rev. Nelms, campus pastor of One Church @ Acts 2, said service is a priority for this new congregation. He gave worshippers action steps for the coming week.

“When you don't know what to do with the world, serve the world,” he preached, “because Jesus called us to serve. One Church is not sitting on the side. (One Church) is doing.”

The church's name was also his sermon title. “Unity is not a spectator sport. It's a contact sport.”

SEE **ONE CHURCH**, PAGE 7

Andy Nelms, campus pastor for One Church @ Acts 2, blesses bread for Holy Communion on Jan. 22 as the new congregation begins weekly worship in Edmond.

Circle of Care adds Woodward office

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

One of Raquel Razien's favorite childhood memories is of her time with Kami, a foster-care teenager who lived with Raquel's family.

“It was like having an older sister. Getting to experience having an older sister was a lot of fun for me,” said Razien, the family specialist who operates the United Methodist Circle of Care's new foster care center in Woodward.

Razien grew up to get a bachelor's in social work from Northwestern Oklahoma State University and a master's in that field from the University of Oklahoma. She is following in the footsteps of her mother, who is a social worker.

Foster care is “something that I really care about,” Razien said. Her mother is “over the moon” that her daughter joined her in the field.



PHOTO BY KACEY HULIN

FOSTERING HOPE — In Woodward, the Circle of Care opens its newest regional foster care service center. Almost 60 people attended ceremonies Jan. 10, including the school superintendent and members of the Chamber of Commerce and Woodward-First UMC. From left at front are: Tiffany Johnson, Raquel Razien, Sarah Steffes, and President Don Batson, all with Circle of Care; at far right is Senior Pastor Shannon Davis of First UMC.

The Woodward center is one of six that Circle of Care operates in Oklahoma. The others are in Lawton, Ardmore, Ponca City, Oklahoma City, and Tulsa.

Circle of Care's mission is providing Christian help, healing, and hope to children and families in crisis to ensure

SEE **CIRCLE**, PAGE 3



Three-part harmony

BY BISHOP JIMMY NUNN

Late one afternoon, I took a walk. Geese and ducks were settling into their resting areas when I disturbed their nightly ritual. Most of the ducks waddled away, and a few smaller birds took flight toward the water.

But the Canadian Geese did not want to yield. Two stubbornly stood their ground.

The walking path took me between them and the water. But they were all honking at me, encouraging me to turn around. This was their territory.

Then a third goose, the largest in the gaggle, came charging toward me. The other two, seeing their leader come, quickly moved toward him.

Together, the three of them stood body to body, their necks extended as high as they could reach. In unison, they honked as loudly as I have ever heard geese honk.



Bishop Nunn

Their warning reached a fever pitch.

A potential adversary was too close, so they stood tall and bravely honked together.

I never broke stride, but I walked quickly past them. I was perhaps four steps beyond them when their honking ceased. I glanced back to see that they were making their way toward the water. And then I realized what they had done.

The geese had found strength in numbers.

My mind jumped to Ecclesiastes 4:12: "A three-ply cord doesn't easily snap" (CEB).

In the immediate context of that verse, the writer cynically observes that lonely people work hard all their lives and are never satisfied with their wealth. The text continues with the reflection that two are better than one, because they can share the fruits of the work and can support each other should the other fall.

We sometimes take community for granted. The two geese who felt threatened had allowed themselves to stand passively outside the community until it was almost too late. The man walking by became a threat.

Their honking was both a warning and a cry for help from the community.

Perhaps there is a series of questions we should ask about the communities to which we belong.

- What holds the community together?
- What is its relevance for today?
- How does the community help equip its members for the future?

There is growing awareness today that Christians belong to the community founded by Jesus Christ. It makes sense to apply those questions to our local churches as well.

What concepts of Jesus hold us together? How does faith in Jesus shape our future?

Moreover, our conversations about Jesus should not be limited to the community that is the local church. We must also ask: What concepts about Jesus do people outside the church have? Are these ideas winsome or repelling to them?

Community is formed by creating trust, not by applying technique. In the Christian community, our trust is in Jesus Christ.

What is Jesus seeking to teach us about community?

Appointments

- Crystal Hughes, from OKC-Douglas Boulevard (closed) to OKC-Mayfair Heights, effective Feb. 1.
- Jim Adams, retired, to Wanette, effective Feb. 1.
- Lisa Miller, from Wanette to Heavener-Faithbridge/Hodgen, effective Feb. 1.
- Tim Boyer, from Heavener-Faithbridge/Hodgen to Not Appointed, effective Jan. 1.
- Steve Posey, from Foyil/Claremore-St. Andrew's to the South Georgia Conference, effective Jan. 23.
- Bob Brooke, from Franklin (closed) to Not Appointed, effective Jan. 1.
- Rick Cato, from Crescent-First to Harrah, effective Jan. 1.
- Creighton Alexander, from Harrah to Edmond-Acts 2 associate, effective Jan. 1.
- Shyloe O'Neal, from Norman-McFarlin associate to Jones, effective Jan. 1.
- Robert Foos, from Jones to Holdenville, effective Jan. 1.
- Marvin Hudson, from Holdenville to Cordell, effective Jan. 1.
- Amanda Lockwood, from Cordell to Leedey/Hammon, effective Jan. 1.
- Chuck Gilbert, from Leedey/Hammon to retirement, effective Jan. 1.
- Scott Ware, from Freedom/Quinlan to Woodward-Faith, effective Jan. 1.
- Charles Baumann, from Woodward-Faith to retirement, effective Jan. 1.
- Yvonne Buchanan, from Wagoner associate to retirement, effective Dec. 31, 2016.



PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY

PULLING TOGETHER — When Oklahoma's clergy met Jan. 17 at OKC-St. Luke's, they elected three colleagues to lead their peer groups this quadrennium (2017-2020). From left, sharing the workload will be Gloria McGee-Denton, chosen to chair the Order of Elders; Bishop Jimmy Nunn; Mike Mahaffey, chairing the Fellowship of Associate Members & Local Pastors; and Nancy Johnson, chairing the Order of Deacons. McGee-Denton is an associate at Tulsa-Asbury. Mahaffey pastors Fairview (at Slapout) and Catesby. Johnson is an associate at OKC-Wickline.

Council Oak, Heartland get new district administrators

Two of Oklahoma's districts — Council Oak and Heartland — have new district administrators.

In the Heartland District, Karen Mangano is greeting visitors in the office located at 631 N Broadway in Moore. Within the Heartland's boundaries are the churches mostly south of Interstate 40 and in the central part of the state.

Mangano is a familiar face to many, as she had been serving as volunteer management coordinator for the Oklahoma United Methodist Church Disaster Response ministry, also based in Moore. A native of Pennsylvania, she began attending Moore-First UMC after she moved to Oklahoma. The 2013 Moore tornado led to a life-changing decision for her.



Mangano

"I made a decision immediately after the storm had passed that we should volunteer to help," she said. "Little did I know that God had a hand even in the chaos of that day."

She met Sarah Nichols, who was the first manager hired by the Conference's disaster response officials to coordinate the teams of volunteers helping with recovery after those tornadoes. Soon she joined Nichols on the disaster response staff.

She initially served as director of case management, then coordinator of volunteers as recovery needs evolved.

"Now that I'm moving to a District Administrator's job, I can see how God has been leading me all this time and teaching me the skills that I needed to do the work that is now before me," Mangano said.

In the Council Oak District — serving



Turner

Contact your district office

- Cimarron:** Kacey Hulin. 580-254-3913. khulin@okumc.org
- Council Oak:** Stacie Turner. 918-742-7496. sturner@okumc.org
- Crossroads:** Jill Perrin. 918- 603-8488. jperrin@okumc.org
- Green Country:** Brenda Scrivner. 918-923-6199. bscrivner@okumc.org
- Heartland:** Karen Mangano. 405-237-3880. kmangano@okumc.org
- Lake Country:** Jacklin Drake. 918-423-0080. jdrake@okumc.org
- Northern Prairie:** Diane Bull. 580-382-4030. dbull@okumc.org
- Wichitas:** Andrea Dollarhite. 580-248-3343. adollarhite@okumc.org

the churches in Tulsa and surrounding that city — new District Administrator Stacie Turner returns to a familiar role. She formerly worked in the post for the Wichitas District, with an office in Lawton.

Then her husband's work was transferred from Lawton to Broken Arrow, and the family moved. She has been hired to fill the District Administrator spot held by Tee Higgins, who retired Feb. 1.

"It just worked out," Turner said.

It's a job that suits her. "I love being able to help keep things straight in the district, help churches try to grow."

She sees definite contrasts between the districts. Compared with the Wichitas, Council Oak has "a lot less area to cover. There are a lot more pastors and a lot more extension ministries."

Turner, who grew up in Broken Arrow, also said she is happy to be living close to her mother now.

Circle of Care:

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

safe, healthy, and spiritual futures. Local-church Apportionments help make the work possible.

The Woodward office, which held its open house Jan. 10, started "completely from scratch," Razien said.

She speaks at churches in the region about the need for foster care homes. In the northwest quarter of the state, she notes, there are about 2,000 children in "out-of-home" care, which includes shelters, group homes, and foster care.

Circle of Care strives to find

placements near a familiar area for the child.

The agency's efforts already are starting to pay off, Razien said. Four families in the region are going through the process of becoming certified foster families. To do that, they have to complete 27 hours of training, she said.

Sometimes families are "on the fence" about fostering, Razien said. Potential families may hear about fostering seven times before committing to open their homes, according to information she has.

Recruiting is a major part of her job. She also is responsible for maintaining and

supporting the families she recruits.

Since starting work, Razien has been "in awe" of the community support from the Woodward and Weatherford areas.

In addition to funds, churches have boosted Circle of Care's mission by gathering supplies to donate to foster parents. Razien senses a spiritual connection in the churches' willingness to get that started.

Her own youthful experiences with Kami and other foster children who stayed with her family "really influenced me to try to find a way to have an impact," Razien said.

At first, her parents were "pretty watchful" because Kami had once been active in a gang, she recalled. But Kami turned out to be "very protective" of Raquel and her sister.

Razien regrets that her family was unable to find out what became of Kami after she became an adult and left the foster care system.

For more information on Circle of Care's foster care services in northwest Oklahoma, contact Razien by email at raquel.razien@circleofcare.org or by phone at 405-312-6640.

Back to Belize

The third mission trip to Belize was the largest yet for Oklahoma City University students and faculty traveling there during OCU's Winter Break with Charles Neff, vice-president for University-Church Relations.

For the inaugural trip, in 2015, there were seven people on the OCU Mission Team. Fifteen participated in 2016. This January, a total of 27 made the 2,000-mile journey to the Central American country.

"This year we brought two teams — a construction team and a community health team," said Rev. Dr. Neff.

The construction team prepared and primed classrooms on the second floor of the Belmopan Methodist High School and mixed and hauled concrete by hand to pour a new sidewalk and floor at a nearby primary school.

The community health team, students and faculty members from the OCU Kramer School of Nursing, worked closely with the Ministry of Health to provide health fairs in two rural villages.

"My time in Belize has forever changed my view and sparked an interest in public health for me," said Keith Blair, a member of the nursing team. "I will forever think back on my times there and hope to visit again once I become an RN to better help the community in whatever way I possibly can."

During their weeklong mission, the OCU teams also visited Marla's House of Hope, a residential home for girls. The Oklahomans helped the girls with homework, played volleyball, and exchanged stories about life in their respective countries.

They also purchased and distributed rice, beans, and



OCU students Madison Snow, Stephen Lashley, Xiaoxiao Hu, Aurora Cao, and Casey Kurry make new friends while distributing beans, rice, and flour in the village of Mayapan.

flour in some of the poorest neighborhoods in the capital.

Due to a pair of generous grants from the United Methodist Woodworth Estate, trip cost was minimal for the students.

OCU is looking ahead to a domestic mission trip to Denver during Spring Break in March, a construction trip to the Bahamas in May, and a fourth trip to Belize next January.



Spring events welcome youths

In coming weeks, hundreds of high school students from across the state will converge on OCU for a series of special events.

STARS JUNIOR DAY, FRIDAY, FEB. 24

High school juniors and their families are invited to a college preview day, where they will meet faculty, staff, and current students as well as learn about the university, student life, honors, study abroad, and valuable scholarship opportunities and take a campus tour.

Register at: www.okcu.edu/juniorday

YOUTH SERVICE DAY, SATURDAY, FEB. 25

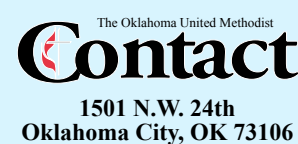
Registration is open now for youth groups and sponsors interested in a day of community service, worship, and fellowship with other United Methodist youths from across the Oklahoma Conference.

Registration details at: www.okcu.edu/campus/religious-life/

WORLD RELIGION EXPO, SUNDAY, MARCH 26

Students in OCU's Wimberly School of Religion host this information fair that highlights the varied faiths of people around the world. The expo is free, open to the public, and can be a great tool for church confirmation classes. The event is come-and-go, 2-5 p.m., on the first floor of the Gold Star Building.

No registration necessary.



Moving to a new address? Call 405-530-2075 or send an email to communications@okumc.org.

Sign up for Contact Digest, a free e-newsletter, at www.okumc.org. Send news to editor@okumc.org. Next publication date: **March 3, 2017.**

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Criminal Justice and Mercy Ministries

Camp changes adults too

New Day Camps blessed not only the 121 children who attended in 2016, whose parents were incarcerated, but also the adult volunteers, Kristen Harlin learned firsthand.

So she's calling more volunteers to join her in "all of the amazing things" that will occur during New Day One and New Day TOO this summer. Both are held at Cross Point Camp beside Lake Texoma, south of Madill.

• New Day One, June 11-16, for ages 8-11

• New Day TOO, July 16-21, for ages 12-14

Harlin is executive director of Criminal Justice & Mercy Ministries (CJAMM), which include the New Day Camps.

She wrote about her time as a dean at the camps last summer, paraphrased here.

Lex*, age 11, did not want to be at New Day One. She acted too cool to participate in anything, including her small group.

On Monday, she sat back and watched as others talked about life and played games. On Tuesday, she

participated — only by saying that she was making an effort. On Wednesday, her goal at first was to distract others, then to voice her opinion that she was too old to participate.

Thursday, the final day for small-group time, Lex sat far from everyone else. She tucked herself inside her hooded sweater; only black locks of hair and her sneakers were visible. As the session neared its close, members talked of returning next year and made a pact to think of and pray often for each other.

Unexpectedly, Lex poked her head out of her hoodie, tears streaming down her face. "I wanted to talk."

And every child stopped to listen to her.

Lex told them a few things about herself and led a group hug.

People had begun moving toward the dining hall for lunch when Lex grabbed my arm. Words exploded from her — about her mother's incarceration, about feeling lonely and angry, that she hated school, that her grandma was boring. She had been separated from her mother — her closest friend — for two years.

Then she also gave me a hug and thanked me for being part of her "family," using the words of the small groups that week at camp.

Harlin continued, "New Day Camp has a way of changing moments that change lives. The week that I thought meant plans of helping children change actually ended with a change in me as well. We have to reach people where they are, and at camp we meet each child on that child's level. I am humbled to have spent the week with Lex and all the campers. I can truly say I saw God."

New Day Camps link two children with each volunteer. In addition to small groups led by trained professional counselors, activities include swimming, service to the community, ropes courses, biking, and more.

Sign up now to volunteer; contact Lesa Rhoads at 405-530-2014 or lrhoads@okumc.org. To give scholarships for campers, go to www.cjamm.org or contact Harlin at 405-530-2015 or kharlin@okumc.org. (*Lex is not the real name.)



Will you volunteer a week of your time for a child whose parent is in jail? Search for "New Day Camp" at www.okumc.org.

A cautionary tale about church Wi-Fi

Counsel about copyright compliance for churches that offer Wi-Fi access to guests comes from the Conference's Communications Ministry.

Those churches are strongly urged to require that each guest endorse a user agreement form when signing in to the Wi-Fi network. This step is in addition to entering a password.

At the United Methodist Ministry Center in Oklahoma City, a user agreement is part of the guest Wi-Fi log-in process.

Recently, a UM church in Oklahoma acted promptly upon receiving a company's warning letter about the illegal download of a popular movie through that church's Wi-Fi network.

In the letter, the company stated it would take legal action if another violation occurred.

The church's leaders responded in several ways to ensure copyright compliance going forward. They identified the digital device used and educated people. They further secured the Wi-Fi network, with help from the church's Internet service provider, and blocked unapproved websites.

Network guests must now endorse a user agreement form, too.

Companies that protect copyrights are vigilant, and they easily trace media downloads using your IP address within three hours of the download, explained Nyla Wallin of the Communications Ministry.

"Rest assured, the Oklahoma Conference adheres to copyright compliance, especially for music, movies, and television," she said.

Through Christian Video Licensing International (CVLI), she explained, all churches in the Conference have copyright permission to view movies from the extensive CVLI catalog. This contract is paid from Apportionments.

But CVLI coverage does not include content that has been downloaded from unapproved websites or obtained by another method such as digital streaming or illegal DVD copying, Wallin said.

To add a user agreement form to a Wi-Fi network, a church should contact its Internet service provider.

In the Communications office, Wallin can be reached at nwallin@okumc.org or 405-530-2073.

Upcoming events

Cookson Hills fishing derby

"Fishers of Men"
Cookson Hills Center
March 31-April 2

- Fishing derby on Lake Tenkiller
 - Wild game dinner, spring work projects, more at the mission center
- More information: Bill Nygard, president of Green Country District United Methodist Men, 918-752-8080
Debbie Humphrey, interim director of Cookson Hills, 918-457-5181

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

Attend a regional workshop on hospitality and discipleship.

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

Sign up at www.okumc.org/hope



VBS showcase in Tulsa

In Tulsa, a free workshop Feb. 25 will help Vacation Bible School leaders develop their plans and preview VBS materials.

EvaMarie Campbell will lead the event, at Boston Avenue United Methodist Church, from 9 a.m. to noon in Jubilee Center. She is that church's minister to elementary school children.

Showcased will be "Hero Central," Cokesbury's VBS curriculum for 2017. Children will go on adventures with Bible heroes such as David and Abigail. Psalm 34:14 is the key verse: Do good! Seek peace and go after it!

Reservations are requested. Contact Rev. Campbell at 918-699-0120 or EvaMarieCampbell@BostonAvenue.org.



PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY

AWARD DEADLINES NEAR —

Outstanding ministries by churches and individuals earn recognition on the Conference level — and inspire others serving Christ. Find details and deadlines to apply for these at www.okumc.org/awards. In 2016, Duncan-St. Paul's UMC was named a "Ray of Light" in the Wichitas District by the Small-Membership Church Commission and the UM Rural Fellowship & Advocates. David Griffin, left, and Pastor Andrew Haire accepted on behalf of St. Paul's.

Summit scheduled for educators

Christian educators throughout the Oklahoma Conference are invited to a time of visioning on Feb. 27 at Oklahoma City University.

Leslie Long will lead the summit as the group discusses future training, fellowship, nurture, and faith formation in the Conference. Rev. Dr. Long is associate professor of religious education at OCU.

"Christians Engaged in Faith Formation Summit" will be from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

RSVP to EvaMarie Campbell, 918-699-0120 or EvaMarieCampbell@BostonAvenue.org.

Employment

Children's Day Out Worker: OKC-St. Mark's, in Bethany. Part-time. Contact Sharon Hunt, 405-789-9033 or sharon@stmarksbethany.com

Church Secretary: OKC-Wesley. Part-time. Contact Marla Lobo at marla.lobo@yahoo.com

Director of Student Ministries: Ada-First. Full-time. Contact Donna Jamar at fumcada@gmail.com. Deadline is April 1.

Camp Counselors, Camp Program staff: College-age young adults sought for United Methodist summer camps (Cross Point, Canyon Camp, and Camp Egan) and new mobile day camps around the state. Full-time, seasonal. Contact Neil Tate, ntate@okumc.org or 405-530-2018.

Music Director: Watonga-First. Part-time. Contact Tracey Ivy, wfumcpastor@pldi.net, 580-623-5122.

Youth Minister/Worship Leader (one position): Yukon-First. Full-time. Send resume to Greg Tolle at greg.tolle@fumcyukon.org

Director of Children and Family Ministry: Nichols Hills United Methodist Church. Part-time. 405-842-1486 or revtrevor@gmail.com

Youth Minister: Duncan-Sharp. Part-time. Send resume to Janice Sharp at janice.sharp@duncanfumc.org

Administrative Assistant: Norman-Goodrich UMC. Part-time. Contact Jim Shepherd at pastor@goodrichmemorial.org

Let's talk about race

"Get on the Bus to Tulsa — Let's Talk About Race," a weekend seminar, is planned in late March and sponsored by two Conference commissions: Strengthening the Black Church for the 21st Century and Religion & Race.

Dates are March 24-26 in Tulsa. Sessions will be at Tulsa-Centenary UMC and Postoak Lodge, a retreat venue. The program begins at 6 p.m. that Friday and concludes at 3 p.m. Sunday.

Participants will hear from Hannibal B. Johnson about the Tulsa race riot of 1921. He is author of "Black Wall Street, From Riot to Renaissance in Tulsa's Historic Greenwood District." They will join in educational discussions about race issues, from "Classroom bias studies" to "Why strengthen black churches?"

Child care and elementary-age activities also will be offered.

Planners of the March event described what compels them to take action.

"I am the white mother of a black son, and our family needs your help so he can grow up safe," said Shelly Daigle.

"I realized in high school, in the '70s, that I had the advantage to be anything, but a black friend at work would be limited by his race," said Steve Lewis. "I developed an opposition to any oppression. It offends me. And then I started seeing sometimes

I'm the oppressor." Judy Rowley recalled her childhood. "We weren't allowed to talk in terms that were prejudiced. My mom said it was tacky. When I encountered prejudice, I didn't understand it. I still don't."

Carole Minter said she wants to learn more and make things better. "When I was young, I remember seeing a sit-in outside a cafeteria in OKC. My dad said, 'Don't look at them.' But my mom went over and touched one of the women kindly on the shoulder."

Barbara Sears and her husband adopted three African-American and Native American children 40 years ago. "Even though I went to a lot of conferences about integration, I didn't know to train them on how to respond to law enforcement to protect themselves. I'm worried about them and my grandchildren."

The director of the Tulsa Historical Society, Michelle Place, said, "In 1921, one of the wealthiest African-American commercial centers in the U.S. was destroyed. For too long neither blacks nor whites talked about this event, its root causes, and its lasting legacy. But the past causes the present and therefore shapes the future."

Registration information will be online. Go to www.okumc.org and search for "Get on the Bus Retreat." There will be options for those who cannot attend all three days.



Multiethnic Ministries Training

(national event for pastors and church planters, seminarians, and annual conferences' leaders)

March 29-31

Crowne Plaza Hotel in Oklahoma City

"Celebrating Ethnic Diversity: God's Image in Many Faces"

Opening worship with Elaine Robinson of Saint Paul School of Theology at OCU

Hosted by Path 1, Discipleship Ministries, The United Methodist Church
www.ow.ly/LGyN302qUHB



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OKC-First's bells chiming again

The 11 bells in the tower of OKC-First United Methodist Church are back on the job after being silent for several years. On Christmas Eve, they lent their festive notes to the church's holiday celebration, ringing for the first time after a major repair effort. Now 94 years old, the bells had been damaged by the 2001 bombing of the Murrah Federal Building as well as deterioration due to exposure to weather. Church officials also feared flooring had weakened too much to support the bells' weight, so they were placed in storage in 2015, according to a story in The Oklahoman. The bells originally were installed in 1922. Four of them were inscribed with the names of the children of contractor Frederick Gross, who built the church in 1904. Last year's repair project also included installation of an electronic chimes system as well as steel-reinforced housing for it. Cost of the project was estimated at \$85,000, according to The Oklahoman. "In a sense, the bells are a verbal witness," Pastor Mark McAdow told The Oklahoman. Rev. McAdow especially credited church trustees including Chris Janka, Don Kuntze, and John Barrett with investing many hours in the bell project.



A crane lowers one of 11 bells into place at OKC-First in early December after a lengthy repair project.

Project Transformation

Working with kids gives joy to Ricks

Kelsey Ricks has joined Oklahoma's Project Transformation staff as program director. She brings great relevant experience to this United Methodist-supported ministry. PT operates literacy day camps for elementary kids in summer at several sites across the state. Before accepting the position, Ricks had spent two months in Belmopan, Belize, working with A Better Belize. "I helped them to develop their children's programs in the village by leading an academic- and faith-based day camp at the local school," she said. An Oklahoma City University graduate, she also served in Belize in early 2016, as part of an OCU student mission team. In 2015, Ricks worked as a teacher's aide at Positive Tomorrows Elementary School, for homeless children in Oklahoma City, through AmeriCorps. She also has an earlier, direct connection to Project Transformation. She was house chaplain for PT in Oklahoma City in Summer 2014. "Project Transformation is all about building relationships: with children, with parents, with churches, and with college students," she said. "Through my spiritual journey in The United Methodist Church, I have learned that the most effective way to share the love of God and make lasting, impactful change is to build strong relationships and foster deep connections with our communities." Ricks earned a B.S. degree in political science and master's in liberal arts with emphasis on nonprofit leadership, both from OCU. A lifelong United Methodist, she said both her parents serve in the Texas Conference.



From left, Oklahoma's Project Transformation leaders are Sarah Nichols, executive director; Kelsey Ricks, program director; and Charlie Ludden, associate director.

College students interested in PT internships may contact Ricks at 405-530-2010 or kricks@okumc.org.



DISASTER WORKER HONORED — Richard Norman, who is the Conference's disaster response coordinator in the Office of Mission, recently received the Servant Leader award from the partnership group called Oklahoma Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (Oklahoma VOAD). The members of this nonprofit collective share knowledge and resources throughout the cycle of disasters — preparation, response, recovery, and mitigation. Rev. Norman was honored for recruiting volunteers as case managers and project managers, to assist disaster survivors in Oklahoma. He also has spoken at churches to bring awareness of disaster recovery needs and has taught leaders in a number of communities to set up and operate long-term recovery committees. His award was presented during an Oklahoma VOAD meeting at Camp Egan.

Andy Nelms, center, questions children Jan. 22 in the first weekly worship service for One Church @ Acts 2, meeting in Frontier Elementary School at Edmond. They are joined by Mark Foster, left, Acts 2 senior pastor, and Angel Pollard, who leads One Church children's ministry.

PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY



One Church:

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A distinction for One Church is where the people worship. The school abuts the Acts 2 property, both fronting Pennsylvania Avenue. A paved drive links them. Other recent church plants in the Oklahoma Conference have not opened so close to an existing United Methodist church. But continually reaching out for Christ has been part of the DNA of Acts 2 since it was founded, Senior Pastor Mark Foster has said. Acts 2 previously planted what has become Connect UMC in Edmond. "Mark Foster is very knowledgeable," said Chris Tiger, the Conference's director of New Faith Communities. He described a church's life cycle as a curving line, rising, level, or falling.

When a growing church nears a plateau, "you start something new," Rev. Dr. Tiger said. That spurs continuing growth, research has shown. Nelms said that Tiger "has been an incredible blessing in helping me with the church plant." They meet regularly to talk about strategies. "Chris offers his advice and counsel. He also lets me know that he and his wife, Priscilla, are constantly praying for me and my family — as they are praying for all of our church plants." Jim Ozier of the Northwest Texas Conference is assigned to coach Nelms as a church planter. One Church receives funds from the Crossroads District and the Conference, which provided a New Faith Communities grant that will total \$372,000 over 3 1/2 years. Apportionment giving fulfills that grant.

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Passages

PLOWMAN — Rev. Howard Plowman, 92, of Tulsa, a former superintendent of the Stillwater and Tulsa Districts, died Jan. 23, 2017. He also directed the Conference's Council on Ministries. He pastored at Kellyville, Colbert/Calera, Tishomingo, OKC-Eighth Street, Ponca City-Asbury, Bartlesville-East Cross, Elk City, Tulsa-New Haven, Ardmore-First, and OKC-Chapel Hill; and he was a district secretary of Social Concerns. Survivors include daughters Donde Plowman and Sandy Kraus and son Tom Plowman. Service was Feb. 4 at Tulsa-Boston Avenue. Memorial gifts to: Oklahoma Methodist Manor or Boston Avenue UMC.

CONRAD — Rev. Dr. Foy Conrad, 84, of Oklahoma City, died Jan. 11, 2017. His career included missionary service in Kenya and as an evangelist nationally for The United Methodist Church. In Oklahoma he pastored at Bethel, Wesley Chapel, New Church, and St. Paul's, all in Lawton; Hunter; Lucien;

HESTWOOD — Bernice Hestwood, 95, of Amarillo, Texas, died Jan. 11, 2017. She was the widow of Rev. Dr. Bill Hestwood, who died in 2004. Among survivors are sons Art, John, and Jim Hestwood. Service was Jan. 17 at Memorial Park Cemetery, Oklahoma City. Memorial gifts to: St. Luke's United Methodist Church Foundation.

MASONER — Joella Masoner died Jan. 24. She was the mother of Rev. Larry Masoner, pastor at Mooreland.

CHAFFIN — Orah Chaffin died Jan. 29. She was the mother of Stillwater-First Senior Pastor Mike Chaffin.

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To the point: why people don't listen to announcements

In churches this weekend, leaders are going to get up and announce upcoming events. They want to move people to action, but some people will simply tune out that part of the service. We need to understand why people stop listening to announcements, then shift our behavior to better connect them with ways to serve. Here are seven reasons people don't listen and how to be more effective.

• There's nothing in it for them. We want attendance; we need volunteers. Reframe the message for *them*. People pay attention when things will positively impact *them*.

• Too much insider language. Cute names for programs and acronyms quickly alienate your audience because they need a dictionary to grasp all the "special names." Work hard to use plain language that everyone can understand.

• No heart. Do you feel like yawning while you make announcements? Imagine the audience response! People want to know why you are passionate about a subject. Use more than dates, times, and locations to touch their hearts.

• Too much noise. Two announcements are 30 percent less effective than one. Three are 90 percent less effective

than one. Do a minimal number of announcements to ensure maximum impact.

• Bad News Bill. Does the same person from the finance team tell each month how much the church is behind on offerings? If you are always the bearer of bad news, people will stop listening. Avoid using the public stage to disseminate bad news.



• Wrong audience. If you are announcing an upcoming hiking trip that 2 percent of the congregation could possibly attend, you are telling 98 percent of the people to ignore you. If your announcement does not impact 50 percent or more of the people in the room, why are you talking about it?

• Too much treadmill. When did you last celebrate something? If you only take time to promote what's coming next, you miss an opportunity to engage (and reward) people already involved in something at the church. Celebrate people and what they are doing. They will listen more.


(Used with permission. From *Leading Ideas*, January 2017, Lewis Center for Church Leadership. Excerpt of article by Rich Birch.)

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While the world may not be quite ready for a self-driving car, it is nice to imagine a car that could give you peace of mind by avoiding traffic jams, save you time by getting you to your destination sooner, and save you money by reducing fuel consumption.

While we can't give you a car, we



can help give you peace of mind and help you save time and money.

Most of your wealth is probably invested in your home, a bank, or other investment accounts. These assets can all be transferred to your loved ones or benefit your church or a ministry without you ever writing a will.

By making a simple change, these assets can go automatically to the beneficiaries you select.

LIFE INSURANCE

Complete a beneficiary designation form, designating a person, your church, or chosen ministry as a beneficiary for your life insurance policy.

IRA

Complete a beneficiary designation form to benefit the people and causes most important to you. Many administrators now make these forms available online.



INVESTMENT, CHECKING, AND RETIREMENT ACCOUNTS

List your loved ones, church, and/or favorite ministry as payable on death beneficiaries on a form provided by your account administrator.



REAL ESTATE

Give your property to loved ones, church, or favorite ministry by deed while reserving a life estate. Contact us for a free illustration of the benefits of this plan.

When a beneficiary designation is completed properly, assets simply pass automatically at your death. Call or email David Battles for all the ways you can make modest changes to your plans and benefit the people, church, or ministries most important to you. 800-259-6863 or dbattles@okumf.org

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Vessel:

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worship at 6:30 a.m. Wednesdays in a McDonald's, and 30-35 worshippers meet at Carl's Coney Island on Tuesday evenings.

Crawford, Willis, and Stephen Cagle share pastoral duties.

In 2016, First Church averaged 857 people in all worship services, and 44 people made Professions of Faith, according to the *2016 Oklahoma Conference Journal*.

On Jan. 29, total worship attendance reached 1,000, Crawford said.

To establish The Vessel, First Church members renovated 4,500 square feet of retail space in a strip mall beside Claremore's movie theater.

The crew, pastors, and others prayed often at the site throughout the refurbishment. They wrote prayers and Bible verses on the drywall and studs.

"It was bathed in prayer," Crawford said.

People familiar with the site's former businesses — a tanning salon and gym — reacted enthusiastically after the space was repurposed for The Vessel, Willis said.

Among those touring during the renovation was Chris Tiger, the Conference's director of New Faith Communities. Some First Church

members remember when he pastored at nearby Owasso United Methodist Church and those two churches served together on mission projects.

"I've been excited the whole time," said Rev. Dr. Tiger.

He helps all the church planters across the Conference network with one another, Crawford said.

"The Conference believes in us and wants to help us," Crawford said.

A \$375,000 grant from New Faith Communities, distributed over 3 ½ years, provides major financing for The Vessel, which also has received funds from the Green Country District. Apportionments assigned to every local church support New Faith Communities.

A successful church planter and author from the East Coast, Paul Nixon, is assigned as Willis' coach, according to Tiger.

The Vessel also is ministering to its community through a partnership with She Brews Coffee House, set to open this month in part of the converted retail space that includes a drive-through. The company employs women who formerly were incarcerated. The coffee shop is planning to operate six days a week, closing on Sundays.



Jaimie Willis, left, and Ray Crawford add their words of blessing to space under renovation for The Vessel FUMC South Campus, Claremore. The Vessel is one of three satellites of Claremore-First UMC, where Rev. Dr. Crawford is senior pastor. Willis is leading at The Vessel.