Annual Conference: Farewell party and funding push

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

Oklahoma City — Oklahomans showered appreciation (and even rain) on their episcopal family during the 2016 Annual Conference, May 30-June 2 in Oklahoma City. That gratitude clearly was reciprocated.

Bishop Robert E. Hayes Jr. will retire Aug. 31 after 12 years leading the Oklahoma Area. Distinctive in the Church is his ministry as the first African-American bishop assigned to both a Native American annual conference and a predominantly white one.

In the opening worship processional, the bishop’s pause at the altar in OKC-St. Luke’s hinted of his desire to savor final moments in his role. He preached five times; he spontaneously joined in “It Worked for Us” award photos; he autographed copies of a tribute booklet collected from the Contact and the Advocate, newspapers.

The Hayses accepted gifts and accolades from many, but they in turn gave gifts and thanks to others.

When the feet of Bob and Dee Hayes were washed in a poignant ritual, the husband grasped the wife’s hand as they supported one another during the Service of Repentance on the conference’s first day, May 30, at OKC-St. Luke’s.

The service was the third in a three-year series of Annual Conference actions, under the direction of Bishop Robert Hayes, in which Oklahoma United Methodists repented for former and current harm to Native Americans.

The robe, Buckley explained, was made from a black cavalry blanket used to wrap his grandmother as a child — in 1889. Later his grandmother adorned the robe with silver fox pelts, an elk skin patch, seashell buttons, and beadwork that depicts a baby killer whale.

“We wear our histories upon ourselves,” said Buckley, whose grandfather was Tlingit. His father also was Lakota Indian; his mother was Scottish. Buckley grew up on the Pine Ridge Reservation in South Dakota. The family moved to southeast Alaska in the 1970s.

Buckley wove family experiences into his talk about the pain caused to Native Americans. He said they still suffer physically and psychologically because of continuing mistreatment.

“The ability to see that people are disposable still exists,” he said.

• Causes of suffering have included the forced removal of millions of Native American children from their families to be adopted by non-native parents in Canada and the United States, Buckley said. Adoption records were destroyed.

• Many Native people were institutionalized because they were homosexual, blind, or had birth defects.

• A burial mound at the former Canton Indian Insane Asylum in South Dakota now is at the center of a golf course, he remarked.

• Continuing harm today includes abuse of Native women by non-Native men and the abuse of children.

• The suicide rate is high among Native boys.

• Until the early 1990s, tribes could not legally practice Native religious beliefs.

Over the years, Buckley realized that his grandmother possessed the unusual gift of being able to grant “instant forgiveness.”

During one winter in his childhood, he and his grandmother were walking home through snow. Three young men set upon them, beat them, and stole their moccasins.

When they got home, his grandmother washed the blood from her face and hair and had Ray do the same.

Later, she began to make three pairs of moccasins.

When Christmastime came, she and Ray went to the home where their attackers lived. Grandmother told the person who answered the door, “I have some gifts. May I give them? Merry Christmas.”

Annual Conference: Farewell party and funding push

From left, Chris Tiger and Chuck Stewart wash the feet of Bishop Robert and Dee Hayes at the Service of Celebration on May 31. The bishop first washed the feet of new clergy in the Service of Ordination at the 2012 Annual Conference. Rev. Tiger has been Cabinet dean; Stewart, Conference Lay Leader.

PHOTO BY HUGH SCOTT

Native speaker: Legacy of harm continues

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

Ray Buckley stood quietly at the front of the church as the Annual Conference audience took in the details of his elk skin-fringed robe.

Buckley, of Alaska, is a Native American layman and was keynote speaker for the Service of Repentance on the conference’s first day, May 30, at OKC-St. Luke’s.

The service was the third in a three-year series of Annual Conference actions, under the direction of Bishop Robert Hayes, in which Oklahoma United Methodists repented for former and current harm to Native Americans.

A baby’s blanket from 1889 became the robe worn May 30 at Annual Conference by Ray Buckley, Native storyteller, author, and artist.

PHOTO BY HOLLY MCCRAY
Boston Avenue Scouts achieve Bishop’s Award of Excellence

Tulsa’s Boy Scout Troop 20, based at Boston Avenue UMC, was honored May 30 at Annual Conference with the Bishop’s Award of Excellence.

More than 50 active Scouts currently are in the unit.

This troop and the church hold the longest continuous scouting charter in Tulsa; they have more than 90 years of service together. Scout families have become church members through this affiliation. And although not required, roughly half of the unit’s adult leaders are Boston Avenue members.

In 2015, the troop earned a Presidential Volunteer Service Award–Gold Level for over 1,000 hours of community service. Their efforts include the CROP Walk, Tulsa Food Bank, Restore Hope Ministries, and more.

Troop 20 also has received the Boy Scouts of America Journey to Excellence–Gold Award for providing an outstanding program in developing young leaders. More than 400 members have achieved the rank of Eagle Scout over the years, including five in the past year. Members also earned 92 ranks and 363 merit badges in the past year.

The Scouts plan and organize their events, including campouts across Oklahoma and Missouri; Civil War re-enactments; and skill, development, and patrol competitions. They annually attend summer camp at Hale Scout Reservation, where they grow together through hiking and aquatic activities.

At Boston Avenue, they participate in the PRAY God & Church Program, for elementary through high school Scouts, and serve as greeters, ushers, choristers, offering bearers, and Communion servers.

The Bishop’s Award of Excellence for scouting was presented to Tulsa’s Troop 20 during the Laity Session of Annual Conference on May 30. From Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC are (from left) Senior Pastor David Wiggs; Audra Fogle, director of Welcoming Ministries; and members Braden, Christian, and Rob Wright; with Bishop Robert Hayes. The Wright family joined the church through their affiliation with Troop 20.

Horton-Ware joins OCU as director of Religious Life

OU is pleased to welcome Elizabeth Horton-Ware as the new director of Religious Life.

Her appointment, which began on June 8, includes oversight of the OCU Wesley Center, coordination of the school’s ecumenical and interfaith student groups, assisting with the campus worship services, and participation in church-relations activities and conference events hosted by OCU.

For the last seven years Rev. Horton-Ware served as the Wesley Foundation director at Southwestern Oklahoma State University in Weatherford. Previously she served as the associate pastor at Grace UMC in Oklahoma City.

Her seminary degree is from Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, Ga.

She said she has a strong sense of calling to campus ministry and always hoped that she would have the opportunity to come back and serve at OCU, where she was active as a Wesley Center student from 2000 to 2004, while Brett Thomasson was its director.

In her short time on the job, Horton-Ware has already participated in several Stars 101 new-student orientations, preached at Oolagah, attended camp as an adult leader, and met with Wesley Center interns to begin planning for the coming school year.

Horton-Ware follows Rodney Newman, who served in the position of director of Religious Life from 2014 to 2016 and previously as university chaplain from 2008 to 2014. Rev. Newman also served as the director of the Owen Wimblerly Center for Continuing Education in Religion at OCU.

He has since been appointed as pastor of Bridgeview UMC in Norman and part-time as chapel coordinator for Saint Paul at OCU. Newman’s eight years of service to the university were recognized during a special tribute during the final University Chapel Service of the school year.

If you have a student who is at OCU, is coming in the fall, or who is considering studying at OCU, please encourage them to introduce themselves to Horton-Ware in person or by email. Her office is located in the lower level of the Bishop W. Angie Smith Chapel. Her email address is erhortonware@okcu.edu.
Oklahoma United Methodist Contact

July 1, 2016

Excerpted from the Episcopal Address, Annual Conference, May 31

On the short list

BY BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.

Over two years ago I promised this conference that I would step away from any non-essential duties as bishop to more fully invest in our work together here. I knew transition to new episcopal leadership was on the horizon.

Today, as we prepare to receive a new bishop on Sept. 1, we are in a better place to carry on our life-transforming work. Yet you and I know we must not linger here.

Jesus did not call us to be comfortable. We must always go on toward perfection; we press on in the race in the name of the Christ.

In the short term, I have three crucial matters that I believe we must take up.

• First: how can we best deploy our resources to assure the success of new-church starts?

Multiple, dynamic approaches are emerging for creating new faith communities. That landscape is changing rapidly, and we find ourselves moving into areas we have never been. Our new-church starts have not always achieved a level of success, and to address this challenge I am announcing a full-time appointment: Rev. Chris Tiger as director of New Faith Communities.

His major responsibility will be to oversee the work of starting new churches, while giving significant attention to the revitalization of existing ones. We need someone like Chris Tiger to apply his creative gifts and talents.

• Another challenge we face is the retirement of many of our pastors within the next few years.

The Pew Research Center recently reported that Millennials now outnumber Baby Boomers in America. That one statistic foreshadows dramatic shifts in leadership for the church at large; we must focus especially here in Oklahoma.

The Bi-Vocational Pastors Academy is doing an outstanding job preparing second-career and indigenous persons to fill some of Oklahoma’s pulpits. This training is particularly for people working full-time who also feel called to a part-time pastorate.

However, we must do more to prepare new, quality pastors to replace ones soon entering retirement.

Every church must do its part in recruiting and developing new clergy. In The United Methodist Church, a pastor must be sent out from a local congregation. If churches do not lift up, nurture, and send pastors to us, then we will not have enough pastors to send out into the fields, into your local churches.

In nearly every church there are people who possess the gifts and graces for ministry, but they won’t know that if no one encourages them to recognize their potential.

That’s where you come in. You must all be recruiters for new church leadership, inviting gifted individuals to explore ministry as a career.

• One more significant challenge for us right now is the state of Oklahoma’s economy.

Our state government finds itself engaged in a tremendous struggle with financial deficits. I want you to know this crisis does not escape the attention of the people charged with managing the finances of our conference. Our Council on Finance and Administration, chaired by Tom Junk of Tulsa, has been exemplary in helping us be proactive as we navigate the waters of church vitality and relevancy amid a depressed economy.

Like you at your home, the Conference and churches must live within the limits of what we receive, doing all we can to fit our budgets to today’s reality. I urge finance committees and other people responsible for stewardship in the local churches to sit down and develop strategies that will keep our churches economically sound.

The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation is an excellent resource to call upon to help with issues of finance and giving. A wonderful program called “Rise” is led by Mike Wiley at the Foundation.

To all of our churches in this challenging economy, I want you to know for certain that what you do for God’s Kingdom is deeply appreciated — not overlooked, not taken for granted.

Last year, 375 churches paid their Apportionments in full, and we are extremely grateful for that support.

You probably could name other challenges confronting us as the Church, but I want to focus your attention right now on the three I have just described: the struggles of new faith communities, a shortage of pastors, and financial instability in the state.

You see, I believe the Oklahoma Conference is poised to conquer them. Oklahoma has all the ingredients for continued growth, sustainability, and vibrancy. I want you to feel as strongly about the future of this conference as I do.

PAST AWARD RECIPIENTS

Jim Egan
Richard & Norma Small
Dale West
Robert & Gissy Parker
Elliott & Lu Fenton
Joe & Jean Holliman
Glenn & Veronica Cox
Paul & Ann Milburn
Mouzon & Gayle Biggs
Marvin & Kaye Nelson
Bishop Robert & Dee Hayes

The Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation presented Bishop Robert and Dee Hayes the Jim Egan Legacy Award at Annual Conference. This award is presented to persons who exemplify the generosity and dedication to United Methodist Church causes as shown by Mr. Egan. As an original incorporator of the Foundation, he continues to model United Methodist Church Philanthropy.

Jim Egan was a longtime member of the First United Methodist Church in Muskogee and was its board chairman for more than 20 years. He was a past president of the board of trustees of Oklahoma City University and received an honorary doctor of laws degree from OCU in 1964. He also served on the board of trustees of Southern Methodist University for over 20 years.

Mr. Egan was a delegate for many years to the United Methodist Church’s General and World Conferences and served on various boards and committees. In 1945, he and his father bought a large parcel of land outside Tahlequah on the Barron Fork River and gave it to the Methodist Church to be developed as a summer camp. He continued to support Camp Egan throughout his life.

“Jim was a very humble man who carried a lot of responsibility,” said Bill Junk, President of the Foundation.
Communicator fills toolbox with resources

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

Royya James of United Methodist Communications in Nashville, Tenn., made the journey to this year’s Annual Conference. When she spoke briefly to delegates, as part of Oklahoma’s Department of Communications report, she encouraged every local church to learn about the valuable and varied communications help — including grants and free materials — available from UMCom to enhance the work of making disciples in every place.

James said among the newest products offered by the general church media ministry are videos from the 2016 General Conference in Portland, Ore. UMCom also offers web ministry courses, advice on social media, and both online and face-to-face workshops. Go to www.umcom.org.

Among the items in her booth were T-shirts with the message “Church Can Happen Anywhere.”

James, who has been with UMCom for 11 years, can be reached by e-mail at rjames@umcom.org. Apportionment funds sustain this agency. James’ role is to build relations with annual conference communicators and to offer updated resources. Her title is conference relations coordinator.

Cross Point cabins blessed for service

BY HOLLY MCCRAY

As the two newest cabins at Cross Point Camp were consecrated June 6, Herschel Beard of Madill remembered the site in the 1960s.

He was among the first teen campers when the United Methodist facility opened beside Lake Texoma, a few miles south of Kingston, Okla. Today Beard chairs the Oklahoma Conference Camps Board of Trustees.

Leaders that first summer included college students, who were housed in chuckwagons on site, he recalled.

Another leader then was Mona Mae Waymire, the Madill church’s senior-high youth director at the time. She attended the recent ceremonies, too.

During the Monday events, Bishop Robert Hayes anointed the Healey and Wilburn Cabins inside and out with oil. Among special guests were Healey family members. Lake Country District Youth Camp also began that Monday.

The newly designated Long Tabernacle was toured after dinner and a program that recognized Ken and Jody Long, recently retired after more than 20 years in management at Cross Point. Donations to a fund honoring them will complete the building.

Beard produced a three-page list of improvements made to the camp under the Longs’ direction. “The two of them have given most of their adult lives to this,” he said. They created “a place where we really can make disciples.”

All three camps’ current managers attended the special day. They described Ken as a mentor. Egan manager Josh Pulver said, “Ken is the only camp director I remember as a kid.”

New Cross Point manager Jeff Hiller said, “He’s done so much you can’t see, to the infrastructure.” “Maybe I had a little part,” Ken said. “It’s not just what happens here. Multiply it out.”

Kingston UMC Pastor Paul McDowell presented a wooden cross gift that he crafted. One side is rugged, and one smooth, he said, symbolizing how Jesus changes people.

“Ken Long is not only a builder of buildings but a builder of people, of lives,” Beard said.

Save the date

• Mobile day camp
  July 18-22
  Edmond-First UMC
  (for ages 7-12)
  http://eaglelakecamps.com/
  FUMCEdmond

• St. Yootz Day
  Aug. 13
  Frontier City, OKC
  Fun in the park and concert
  by MercyMe (Christian music)
  Tickets: www.okumc.org/youth
  405-530-2199

• Social justice event:
  “It Happens in Church”
  Aug. 13
  OKC-Sunny Lane
  (A faith-based response to
  domestic violence)
  www.okumcministries.org/
  UMW/programs.html

• Stewardship Focus Day
  Aug. 23
  OKC-Church of the Servant
  Leader: Clif Christopher
  Register with Bill Junk at
  bjunk@okumf.org

• New People New Places
  Deadline to apply
  for 2017 grants: Aug. 31
  www.okumc.org/npnp

• UMW Annual Meeting
  Sept. 30-Oct. 1
  OKC-St. Luke’s
  Speaker: Derrek Belase
  Registrar: Coe Ann Patton,
  918-836-0071

• Retired Clergy Retreat
  Oct. 10-12
  Canyon Camp
  Speaker: Tex Sample

• Welcome our new bishop
  TENTATIVE date: Oct. 23
  Tulsa-Asbury UMC

• 5-Day Academy
  for Spiritual Formation
  Nov. 6-11
  Canyon Camp
  www.okumc.org/
  SpiritualFormationAcademy
NEWLY LICENSED — Nine people completed the 10-day Local Pastors Licensing School in mid-June, with leadership by James Graham and Nancy Johnson, meeting at Oklahoma City University. From left are: (front) Jennifer Reynolds, Philip Younts, David Hanigar, and Eddie Gill; (middle) Kaela Burdge, Matt Morgan, and Andy Henson; (back) Rev. Graham, Greg Ray, Jaimie Willis, and Rev. Johnson.

Medical missionary touring state

Missionary Pierre Manya will be itinerating July 22-31 in Oklahoma. Invite him to present for your church group!

He recently wrote about an impoverished pregnant woman helped because of the services funded by mission giving to the United Methodist health and medical services he coordinates in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

Just over 3 feet tall, the woman is a rape victim. She faced death because she could neither give birth normally nor afford a surgical birth.

The ministry provided the $300 needed. A gynecologist and surgeon, Manya has been in medical mission since 1984.

“Intervention was possible thanks to your support to my ministry,” Manya wrote. “Now she is witnessing of God’s love to anyone who would listen that, had not it been for the church, she could have died. Now, both her and the baby are doing well.”

He already is scheduled to speak at these locations:
- July 24, Nicoma Park UMC
- July 25, United Methodist Ministry Center, OKC, noon
- July 29, Stillwater-First, UMMen breakfast
- July 31, Cyril and Fletcher UMCs

To invite Manya and his wife (his interpreter), contact Karen Distefano at okcsgm@gmail.com or 918-440-9213. The Advance project is No. 15165Z.

Births

- Eli Edward Sims was born June 14, 2016. He is the son of Eddie and Rev. Jennifer Ahrens-Sims, who is an associate pastor at OKC-Chapel Hill.
- Susanna Grace Rickman was born June 16, 2016. She is the daughter of Sara Beth and Rev. Jeffrey Rickman, who is pastor at Nowata and Delaware.

Passages

- Homer Brown of Langley died June 8, 2016. He was the father of Rev. Lora Stiles, associate pastor at Owasso.
- Raymond Chapman of Lawton died June 7, 2016. He was the father of Rev. Janice Sharp, senior pastor at Duncan-First.
- William Morton of Fort Worth, Texas, died June 3, 2016. He was the father of Rev. Norma Quinn, senior pastor at Lawton-Centenary.

Employment

Campus Minister: Wesley Foundation at Southeastern Oklahoma State University in Durant. Approximately 20 hours weekly. Send resume or inquiry to Brett Thomason, revbrett@yahoo.com

Administrative assistant: Saint Paul School of Theology at OCU. Part-time with benefits. Send resume to rick.burns@spst.edu

Children’s Minister: OKC-The Christ Experience. Part-time. Send resume to pastor@thechristexperience.tv or call 405-424-2800.

Pre-school director: Tulsa-Will Rogers. Part-time. Responsible for a 3-days-a-week program. Email bjhnson@willrogersumc.org

Two jobs: Church Secretary (part-time) and Youth Director (part-time). Bristow-First. Resume to bristowfumc@sbcglobal.net.

Restore Hope in Tulsa earns 4 stars

Restore Hope Ministries, a Tulsa nonprofit dedicated to preventing homelessness, reducing hunger, and promoting hope, recently earned the highest rating from Charity Navigator.

“Restore Hope’s coveted 4-star rating puts it in a very select group,” according to President Michael Thatcher of the charity tracker. Seven Tulsa charities and a total of 23 Oklahoma charities have earned that status.

“This rating affirms the trust our donors have in us, that we are using our funding wisely to accomplish our mission to restore families in financial crisis to economic and spiritual vitality,” said Restore Hope’s executive director, Jeff Jaynes.

“We take our fiduciary and governance responsibilities very seriously.”

Appointments

Obed Alba, from OKC-The Well to Wesley Iglesia UMC, El Paso, Texas, effective July 1.
Diana Northcutt, from Oklahoma Conference director of Discipleship Ministries/Youth to pastor of Salem UMC, Council Bluffs, Iowa, effective July 1.
Seminary grads go out to churches

BY CHRIS SCHUTZ

Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. found parallels between his upcoming retirement and the next stage of life for the graduates of Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University.

He was their commencement speaker May 27 in OCU’s Smith Chapel.

Hayes, who titled his message “The Next Chapter,” told the five graduates that both he and they “are coming to the end of the chapter.” They must turn the page to see what’s next.

He encouraged graduates to “have a theme to your life. What will be the things that drive you? You must declare what your values are.”

He advised, “Success is not all that important.” Instead, work to be significant.

“In life, God is the dispatcher,” Hayes said. “The destination is not up to you.”

The bishop is excited that the seminary now has graduated six classes. Saint Paul at OCU is “a reality, a dream come true,” he said. After retirement, he plans to continue working with Saint Paul as its bishop-in-residence at OCU.

At commencement, Master of Divinity degrees were conferred on: Lance Ashmore of Wister; Seungrok Kim, Oklahoma City; Shiuan Hie (Victoria) Lee, Oklahoma City; Lora Lee Stiles, Vinita; and Zachary Zink, Yukon.

All five have been appointed to churches, said Elaine Robinson, seminary dean.

The class presented gifts that represented their diversity to the school. Among them was a Korean pencil case, representing tools of education. There was a Native American blessing bowl, a reminder of “our common connection to God, who is always present in hearing our prayers,” and a Chinese-English New Testament, signifying Christ “is the Savior of all people and all cultures,” according to a statement read by the students during the ceremony.

There was also a hand-woven Bolivian awayu. The rectangular cloth is used a community tablecloth and as a backpack of sorts for carrying food, children, rocks, or livestock. Stiles, who was class president, has a passionate interest in Bolivia and leads mission trips there.

Del City teen lunch program is a mission success for UMW

Mission U, formerly the School of Mission, is credited for inspiring a weekly high school lunch program in Del City that has continued beyond its 20th anniversary.

After six hours studying “Making the World Safe for Children” — the social action topic — the plan in 1995 was for United Methodist Women at Sunny Lane UMC to feed students at the high school next door to the church.

“God placed our church next to Del City High School, and it might be a wonderful idea to offer lunch once a week to the students,” member Fran Harbert recommended.

“Lunch Bunch” was launched in October 1995. Students in grades nine through 12 paid $2 each for pizza, cookies, and a drink. Youth Director Stuart Malloy greeted them and gave a prayer and devotion.

The program started with about 25 students and soon grew to 100.

The UMW circles continue to take turns preparing and serving lunch to the youths next door, but the program now focuses on ninth-graders.

Those students are not allowed to leave campus for lunch on their own but, accompanied by one or two teachers, they can take part in the meal at Sunny Lane.

What is now called “Fresh Lunch” offers chili-cheese nachos, corn dogs, pizza, hoagie sandwiches, and sloppy joes, as well as cookies and drinks. Today the meal is free to the students. Attendance varies from 75 to 100.

Youth minister Harold Smith gives a prayer, devotion, Bible trivia, or life lesson.

UMW member Jacci Freno said the goal is “to introduce youth to the church, make them feel welcomed, inform them of activities, and let them know our doors (lead to) a place of love and safety.”

In July each year, Mission U spotlights three topics for study and encourages follow-up action. The topics emphasize spiritual growth, a geographic region of the world, and social action. Enrollment is open to men and women, youths and children.
Cookson Hills Center has always been a big part of Larimie Fixin’s life. In fact, it often was the reason there was food to eat at home, said Fixin, who is now director of the Children and Youth Program at the United Methodist mission center that primarily reaches Native Americans in a rural part of eastern Oklahoma.

Fighting nerves, Fixin, 23, stood before the hundreds of people at Annual Conference to tell of the differences Cookson Hills has made in his life.

“When you’re a kid, all you know is food’s going to show up on the table,” he said. While the boy slept, his grandmother and aunts worked nights putting together Native American jewelry to sell to the mission, which then resold the creations.

“I didn’t know that was how we were getting food on the table,” he said.

Some Christmases in his boyhood, there weren’t any gifts for the family, he recalled. But one Christmas, “the living room was filled with presents.” His grandmother had been able to buy them through the Christmas store program at Cookson Hills.

Thanks to donations the last three years, the center has been able to double the number of children and teens served during the school terms and summer vacations, according to a recent newsletter. The staff wants to help more of them. The children who come range in age from 6 to 18. They live in remote, rural areas where opportunities and resources are few.

“I was raised like them,” Fixin stated in the letter. “They live with food scarcity, with no food in the house at least once a week. And, by the end of the month, they have run out completely.”

He continued, “I try to pour the love of Christ into these kids. I am watching them grow, and I see how coming here impacts their lives in a positive way.”

The kids play basketball, learn arts and crafts, enjoy cultural outings, and have devotional time. “I just want them to be kids, and give them an escape from what they face at home.”

Fixin, who was brought on staff by Interim Director Debbie Humphrey, also works in another one of the mission’s cottage industries, making rubber doormats from strips of used-tire sidewalls. The mats are accented with colored beads made from recycled water bottles. A tire shop in Sallisaw supplies the tires.

Fixin estimates he’s made thousands of the doormats, which come in several sizes. Demand for them varies. “Sometimes I can’t make enough,” he said.

At Annual Conference, Cookson Hills offered a range of products at its booth, from several cottage businesses it has launched, providing employment.

Fixin’s goal in leading the kids is to “impact them in a positive, loving way.” He also takes part in mission trips and visits inmates in county jails.

He lives in Stillwell and might attend seminary in the future. “I’m open to it if the Lord leads that way,” he said.

Other programs at Cookson Hills are substance abuse ministries, day care, assistance to seniors, and more.

This national mission of the UM General Board of Global Ministries is supported by the Oklahoma Conference Apportionments. The UM Advance number for special donations is 582161.

Saint Paul seminary names new president

The Board of Trustees has named Neil Blair as president of Saint Paul School of Theology. He will begin his service on July 1.

Rev. Blair is a 1980 Master of Divinity graduate of the United Methodist seminary. He returns with a combination of passion for Wesleyan evangelism, knowledge of The United Methodist Church, and a variety of development leadership experiences.

“We are fortunate that Neil Blair has agreed to provide leadership to Saint Paul during this time. He brings with him knowledge and love of the seminary as well as a strong understanding of the church and theological education’s special role in the life and vitality of the church,” said Twila Glenn, who chairs the board.

Blair most recently served as executive director for institutional advancement with the General Board of Higher Education and Ministry. Previously he was president of The Foundation for Evangelism of the UMC in Lake Junaluska, N.C., and vice president for institutional advancement at Dakota Wesleyan University, Mitchell, S.D. He also served 19 years as vice president for development at Saint Paul.

Blair is an ordained elder in the Dakotas Conference and pastored eight years at a Missouri church. He has two grown sons. Some new and expanded initiatives at Saint Paul were noted in a recent e-newsletter by Acting President Nancy Howell.

• Development of deaconess/home missionary training at Saint Paul at Oklahoma City University in partnership with United Methodist Women
• Establishment of a Center for Spiritual Formation
• Creation of a Doctor of Ministry degree in partnership with the Academy for Spiritual Formation
• Inspiration for a Certificate in Theological Formation, providing face-to-face, hybrid, and online learning experiences for laity
• Increased emphasis on prophetic witness and service across M.Div., D.Min., and M.A.C.M. ministry tracks

Established in 1958, Saint Paul has locations in Kansas and at OCU. Students are predominantly United Methodist, but the student body represents more than 20 denominations each year. Learn more at www.spst.edu

Benefit golf tournament for Cookson Hills Center

Nov. 7 at The Golf Club of Oklahoma, Broken Arrow

- Entry fees and sponsorships due July 31.
- Contact: Cookson Hills Center, P.O. Box 130, Cookson, OK 74427

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OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST
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HONORED FOR EVANGELISM

— Lesly Broadbent of Enid, left, received the prestigious Harry Denman Evangelism Award for his exceptional witness. Bo Ireland of Wayne, right, presented at the 2016 Annual Conference on behalf of the award committee. Rev. Broadbent pastors Willow View UMC, where professions of faith have increased each year since 2012 and, over a decade, worship attendance has grown from 159 to 234.

"Lesly’s witness is personal, local, and missional," said Rev. Ireland. "He relates in the local school system by announcing high school football games, connects through the church’s food pantry, and leads teams on missions abroad. His confidence that God still changes lives is contagious."

Jurisdictional Conference
July 13-16
Wichita, Kansas

Election and assignment of bishops gets top billing at this event, with 216 voting delegates from 12 annual conferences. The eight-state jurisdiction is served by 10 bishops.

At this meeting, the Oklahoma and Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conferences will learn who will be the Area’s new episcopal leader, following Bishop Hayes’ retirement on Aug. 31.

Oklahoma will send a 34-member delegation, including six reserve delegates. Bishop Hayes will preach during the Service of Consecration on July 16.

Other major business includes a proposal to sell Mount Sequoyah retreat center, Fayetteville, Ark., and potential boundary changes.

Both worship and plenary sessions can be viewed live online. Guests are welcome to register and attend in person, too.

Learn more at www.scjumc.org

Conference:
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Christ’s light has been shared in 65 countries through 81 missionaries, helping people after 149 disasters and supporting 364 ongoing ministry programs.

The Conference was recognized for the highest church participation in the denomination in donating to Advance and UMCOR Specials — 85 percent of all Oklahoma churches made contributions.

• ANNUAL CONFERENCE OFFERING had reached $60,814.59 as this newspaper issue went to press. Contributions continue to be welcomed.

• RENAMED — The Department of Communications is now Communications Ministry.

• MONEY GIFTS honoring the Hayeses were made by groups and individuals to special funds through the Foundation, totaling $16,272 as Contact went to press. The total included $8,000 to the Pastors Education Fund and $8,247 to the SPST@OCU Bishop Hayes Scholarship Fund.

Tell your church the stories from Annual Conference. Find 20 videos at www.okumc.org/okvideo. Also, watch for more stories/photos in the July 22 issue of the Contact.