

First steps

Lawton church moving out on digital pathways

By **HOLLY McCRAY**

Worship services on every Sunday began Oct. 11 with 72 people at the new United Methodist church planted in Lawton.

Participants smelled fresh popcorn as they entered Community UMC and received bags of the warm treat. Wall screens displayed welcome messages and more.

Parents paused at digital stations to sign in youngsters eager to explore a virtual indoor playground called an EyePlay. Certified childcare staff met them all.

In the experiential worship space, an environmental projection system painted three walls. A digital tablet held Pastor Phil Hodson's sermon notes; he uses three versions of the Bible when preaching. (He reads from seven as he prepares his messages.)

"It's still the greatest story ever told. But how do we tell it? Embracing technology in worship is critical if you want to connect with generations that have that everywhere in their life," he said in a September interview at Community's location, 1001 SW "F" Ave.

A drill buzzed in the background as safety installations went up in the kids' zone.

Community aims to connect with young families in this city where the median age is 30. Fort Sill drives that



As Xane dances in a virtual playground, each step adds color to the scene projected onto the floor at Community UMC in Lawton.

Photo by Holly McCray

youthful demographic; Lawton's population is about 100,000.

The United Methodist churches in Lawton "are worshipping less than 700 people a week," said Rev. Hodson. "This is Kingdom work; a lot of people are praying."

Money from the Wichitas District—especially its

Kingdom Builders fund—the Oklahoma Conference, and the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation is seeding the new ministry.

Programming for mothers with very young children proves Community's desire to serve God's littlest ones. This ministry began informally in the Hodsons' home. Phil

See *First steps*, page 7

Pilgrims pause after 100 Walks to Emmaus

By **JOSEPH HARRIS**
Director of Communications

Small beginnings can lead to huge success for God's Kingdom. This happened with a dream to create a Walk to Emmaus community in southern Oklahoma about 25 years ago.

On Oct. 10, a gathering celebrated the 100th Walk at Cross Point Camp.

Emmaus is a three-day experience of Christian spiritual renewal and formation as well as a short course in Christianity.

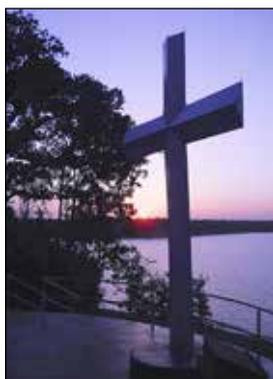
While serving as superintendent of the Ardmore District in the 1990s, I was challenged to either make economically viable or close down the Oklahoma Conference campground at Lake Texoma.

The camp's board members and I saw the commitment and enthusiasm for the camp in the district's church members and its beautiful location right beside the lake.

We wanted to do everything possible to save it.

Clearly we needed to increase use of the camp, not only by Oklahoma United Methodists but also by the general public. Other groups could utilize the camp for company retreats, family reunions, etc. We began dreaming to draw more diverse people to this wonderful camp with which God had blessed Oklahoma.

The Walk to Emmaus had been transforming for my wife and me during our time serving in Tulsa. We saw



possibilities in it to promote the camp and to nurture Christians in the region.

But previous Walks in Oklahoma had been held only at churches, never at a campground.

There was concern that Emmaus would be significantly different at a camp. Would changes necessary for that setting have a negative effect on the experience? Could we recruit enough pilgrims to what seemed a remote location?

It took two years of planning, starts and stops, and prayerful consideration, but we held the first Walks at Cross Point in 1991. Attendance met the minimum for a Walk.

Yes, we began small, but God had larger plans.

More Walks were held there. More people were lifted spiritually, and camp awareness and use increased. More clergy became involved, and more denominations.

Participation in a Walk to Emmaus begins with an invitation from a sponsor who has walked. People who accept then complete an application. Leaders prayerfully consider each applicant and, in God's time, extend invitations to specific Walks.

From the moment of arrival, participants encounter New Testament Christianity as lifestyle. The objective of Emmaus is to inspire, challenge, and equip people for Christian action in their homes, churches, communities, and places of work.

Emmaus lifts up ways for our grace-filled lives to be lived and shared meaningfully with others.

It is offered through The Upper Room, a branch of the United Methodist Board of Discipleship.

Since 1991, more than 3,000 people have been on Cross Point's Walks to Emmaus, according to leaders' estimates. Also during that time, with the camp board's leadership, the facilities have been upgraded and expanded, including two large cabins that opened this year.

PJ Stewart leads the Cross Point Emmaus community and pastors Sulphur UMC. She led the Oct. 10 celebration.

The gathering was deeply personal for me. One guest especially wanted me to hear his story.

When the man first took part in the Walk, he was not attending a church and had not been involved in church life for some time. Because of the Cross Point Emmaus experience, he returned to God, trained and became a clergyman, and has planted five cowboy churches.

He simply wanted me to know that what began small has impacted thousands of lives.

The Cross Point Emmaus community now is known widely as one of the most ecumenical ones within the movement. Baptists, United Methodists, Catholics, independents, and other denominations send pilgrims to the Walks hosted at Cross Point throughout each year.

"Who dares despise the day of small things..." (Zechariah 4:10)

Through 100 Walks, God has revitalized lives, created and energized churches, and increased camp participation in ways only the Holy Spirit knew as we began. Visions, no matter how small, can move forward in tremendous ways when God blesses them.

Give a child the gift of Camp for Christmas

Your gift will be unwrapped 3 ways!

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OK Camps will pack a gift-wrapped box, with a gift tag, and send it to the address of your choice. The gift package contains: sunglasses, a water bottle, flashlight, and \$75 gift certificate to the camp of your child's choice. (Total cost = \$100)

It's a great idea for mentors, grandparents, and parents and also a joy-filled way to support this ministry that transforms lives in profound ways.

Order your gifts now so they arrive in time to be placed under the Christmas tree!

Go online to www.okcamps.org or call 405-530-2017.



Reach your community on Christmas Eve

By CHRIS BUSKIRK
Chair of Evangelism

It's not too early for dream sessions about this year's Christmas Eve celebration in your church.

There is not a better time than Christmas Eve to extend an invitation to folks who are not in the habit of going to church anywhere. That's right; Christmas Eve claims the highest probability for a "yes" from them, compared to any other day of the year.

Capitalize on that rare window of opportunity by borrowing momentum from the Conference-wide HOME FOR CHRISTMAS 2015 campaign.

Last holiday season, the campaign's leaders saw that social media achieved the greatest success among its marketing efforts. We expect "viral" ratings this season through sharing a winsome invitation via Facebook, especially if each church's members exercise their networks of influence.

What if your church doesn't have a Facebook Page? That's not a problem. Let us help you set up one now, free of charge, and it will be there for you to continue using long after Christmas.

The Crouch Group is calling all churches in the Oklahoma Conference, starting in late October, to assist in:

1. Confirming the church's participation in *Home for Christmas* (your option);
2. Asking for Christmas Eve service information to post on the website Find-A-Service-Near-You (www.ChristmasEveWorship.com); and
3. Coaching someone of your church through set-up for a successful Facebook campaign.

All of this is free of charge to your church, including new videos and images to post on your Page as the campaign unfolds.

Your Facebook invitations will get a big boost from over 1 million paid posts. The Conference Evangelism Task Force is honored to support our churches in this endeavor.

So choose your service times. Identify a "draw" that will capture interest in your community. (Ideas: a live nativity, a petting zoo, testimony by a local celebrity, etc.)

You can contact the Crouch Group for assistance connecting with new people (1-888-211-0273).

On Christmas Eve, your church will not only share a festive celebration, but also next steps for newcomers to make connections in ongoing, life-giving ministries. (Ideas: a New Year's sermon series, a new parenting class.)

On Christmas Eve, many will be searching for an open door. Help them find their way Home for Christmas!



Called to serve?

OCU offers wide range of religion degrees

Oklahoma City University offers a number of undergraduate and graduate degree programs for those considering a life dedicated to Christian service.

The Wimberly School of Religion offers four undergraduate degrees—religion, religion/philosophy, religious education, and religion/youth ministry—and three minors—religion, religious education, and interfaith studies—that can be combined with almost any other major on campus.

The Petree College of Arts & Sciences offers undergraduate programs in art, math and science, education, history, modern languages, criminal justice, political science, and mass communication; and graduate programs in nonprofit leadership, education, and creative writing.

The Kramer School of Nursing offers a number of degrees for those considering parish nursing or other medical mission fields. The Petree College of Performing Arts offers programs in music, theater, and dance for those discerning a call to music and worship ministry. And the Meinders School of Business offers degrees in a number of business-related tracks for those who feel called to administrative roles.



Students Madelyn Parker and Ethan Zambrano serve during Habitat for Humanity Day, sponsored Oct. 3 by the Wesley Center campus ministry.

With its location in the heart of Oklahoma City, many OCU students take advantage of the opportunity to serve in local congregations in various ministry-related roles. OCU also has an excellent record for preparing students for seminary, with many graduates receiving generous scholarships to those schools.

The small class sizes and personalized attention from professors combined with the numerous community faith-based partnerships and opportunities for service make the OCU experience unique.

For more information about OCU and its offerings, go to www.okcu.edu.

Attention youth groups!
OCU Youth Service Day
March 5, 2016

A day to worship, serve at agencies and churches in the OKC area, and fellowship with United Methodist youths from around Oklahoma. For more information, contact Michael Horn at 817-219-7432 or e-mail mahorn@my.okcu.edu.

OCU Bishop Scholar award: now taking applications

Each year OCU awards up to three full-tuition Bishop Scholar awards to incoming United Methodist students who plan to enroll in the Wimberly School of Religion in preparation for a career in Christian service to the Church.

To be considered, applicants must meet these eligibility requirements:

- Must be a high school senior who is entering OCU as a first-year student.
- Meet the admissions standards of the university
- Have at least a 3.0 GPA
- Hold membership in a United Methodist church
- Be recommended by the senior pastor of the student's church
- Be a full-time student at OCU who intends to pursue a career in Christian service in the United Methodist Church
- Major in one of the degree programs of the Wimberly School of Religion
- Plan to live all four years on campus in university housing facilities

There are two ways to apply for the Bishop Scholar award: students can be nominated by their senior pastor, or a student can apply directly.

To begin the process, students or pastors should go to: www.okcu.edu/BishopScholar and follow the online instructions. **Application must be made by Dec. 15, with all supporting paperwork due Feb. 1.**

Applicants are interviewed in February and notified shortly thereafter. Students who are interviewed but not selected as Bishop Scholars are often awarded other scholarships, ranging from 60 to 80 percent tuition.

The Oklahoma United Methodist
Contact
1501 N.W. 24th
Oklahoma City, OK 73106

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Strength for the journey: A collection of ideas and thoughts from our bishop

Is church high on your list?

NOTE: Bishop Hayes is calling each of us to action in the Oklahoma Conference. This is the second in a five-part series, which began with "Closed on Sunday?"

"When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him." (Luke 5:11)

By BISHOP ROBERT HAYES JR.

In a recent meeting of Conference leaders, I was troubled to learn that still only one-third of our churches are growing in members. That means two-thirds are either stagnant or declining. These are statistics that keep your bishop pacing the floor at night, asking myself: What are we doing wrong?



Bishop Hayes

Much conversation these days grieves the falling membership of major denominations, including our United Methodist Church. Since the mid-1960s the number of people who worship in our churches has been steadily decreasing, with a sharp drop in the number of people who actually join. I'll be first to admit there is no one solution for this dilemma.

But I do believe there are a few answers within our reach that we can employ if we are going to change the trajectory of our course.

Today I offer these ideas, in combination with my last article, as conversation-starters for your church.

I begin with this basic premise:

To make a disciple, you must be a disciple!

All too often we want to place the weight of disciple-making on the pastor or someone who has the unenviable title of "chair of evangelism." Truthfully, all of us are in the disciple-making business.

The question becomes: Are we really disciples ourselves?

The vast majority of worshippers feel that attending church on Sunday morning meets the requirements for a devoted follower of Christ. Furthermore, many believe that being present at church once or maybe twice a month fulfills all obligations of being "a member in good standing."

It requires more than that!

I want to call attention to this. Within every congregation there are a faithful few disciples who on every Sunday open the church, turn on the lights and adjust

the temperature control, make the coffee and juice, and teach Sunday School. They also are present at Bible studies, choir rehearsals, workdays, and in a host of other ways throughout the week. And if there is a special need, you can always call on them.

What separates them from so many others? The answer is straightforward:

They have consciously made the church a priority in their lives, and everything else is secondary.

Now, you may argue that you just don't have that kind of time to devote to the church, and that may be true. But you should be fully aware that you become a disciple of whatever demands the most of your time and energy! Devotion to your family—I encourage that. But remember that you are part of Christ's family, too; the church is his Bride.

Shouldn't your devotion to Christ and his church rank somewhere near the top of your list?

When members (disciples) are received into the church, they are asked this question: *"Will you be loyal to The United Methodist Church, and uphold it by your prayers, your presence, your gifts, your service, and your witness?"*

Those words represent a vow—a covenant, a promise, a commitment. If we don't honor that pledge we make, if we don't live out those words, are we truly disciples?

In the pledge, there are no loopholes that give us permission to place the church last in our priorities.

Disciples are eager to grow in faith, willing to give themselves unashamedly to the cause of Christ and the work of the church. Discipleship is a way of life, not a practice we pick up and put down on Sunday mornings. It involves the whole person, focused and devoted to transforming self, family, community and, yes, a hurting and needy world!

In this touching verse found in Luke's Gospel, it is clear what was important to those first disciples. "When they had brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him."

We live in a time when very few are willing to leave the comfort of their boats—the boats of convenience, ease, and misguided loyalties. They make mountains of excuses.

I appeal to you today to look very closely at how you live out your discipleship. How much are you willing to leave behind to follow Christ? Everything—or just a little?

Go and ask those faithful few who keep the church alive what reward they get for their loyalty. It's likely they won't be able to put that into words, so look to the evidence of their lives. The reward is priceless! You see, they left their boats a long time ago!



Photos by Karen Graves

Bishop Hayes prays during the officer installation Oct. 3 in Woodward.

UMW shifting to new districts

Women's leadership will change Jan 1

Installation of the 2016 officers for United Methodist Women placed another keystone in the new eight-district structure of the Oklahoma Conference.

On Oct. 3, Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. presided as UMW officers for every district and the Conference level were inducted, in the 2015 UMW Annual Meeting hosted at Woodward-First Church. Their terms begin Jan. 1.

UMW operations at all levels follow a calendar year. The Conference's realignment from 12 to eight districts became official June 1. However, the UMW ceremony underscores that such change is not accomplished in one midnight pen stroke.

At Woodward, small flags identified each district's representatives. Total attendance was 267.

Speaker was Anita Phillips, a member of the Keetoowah Cherokee Nation and an elder in the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference.

Cindy Hull of Waynoka continues as Conference UMW president. The 2016 Pledge to Mission is \$290,000.

Also featured were: UM missionaries Meri Whitaker of Cookson Hills Center and Fuxia Wang of the OU Chinese Fellowship; Stacey Ninness of Neighborhood Services Organization; and UM deaconess Kathy Kraiza of the Sager Brown Depot, an UMCOR

distribution center in Louisiana. (UMCOR = United Methodist Committee on Relief)

For Kraiza, the event also meant a family visit. Her mother is a member at Woodward.

Pastor Shannon Davis performed on violin, and Jan Davis played hand bells. Jo Millard, also of First Church, chaired Local Arrangements.

"Loved the entire weekend. The churches at Woodward certainly have hospitality. I should have been tired; instead I was energized by all the wonderfulness that took place!" declared a social media post by Conference UMW Music Leader Judy Horne.

"God's Spirit was evident among us. Much laughter and radiant faces!"

Jurisdiction will meet here

On April 15-17, the South Central Jurisdiction's UMW Quadrennial Meeting will be held in downtown Oklahoma City. Every four years, this event draws attendees from eight states.

2016 leadership team

President Hull is joined in 2016 by these Conference officers: Ramona Paine, Enid, secretary; Sue Helms, Chandler, treasurer; and chairpersons Marilyn Quinn, Sulphur, nominations; Jacci Freno, Oklahoma City, programming; Glenda Gilpin, Hooker, membership; and Joyce Alfred, Oklahoma City, mission.



Jan Davis, above, plays hand bells during the UMW Annual Meeting. Keynote Anita Phillips, right, uses a Native American symbol.





Family sees the power of Youth Force

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

Vacations for the Lee Shouse family have consisted of going to sometimes remote locations in Oklahoma to help with Youth Force projects during the past eight or nine summers.

Along the way, the Shouses' two children have grown up and learned how good it feels to do things that help other people.

"They love seeing the effect they can have on someone's life," said Cathy Shouse, mother of Catee, 24, and Trey, 19. They are members of Vinita United Methodist Church.

Youth Force provides one-week, hands-on mission service opportunities for teens at multiple locations across Oklahoma.

A typical project for the Shouse family is building a ramp to help a person with

physical challenges get in or out of a house.

Lee, who is a chemical engineer, knows a lot about building things, Cathy said. His family "always built their own homes," she said.

Cathy has been amazed at the dedication of all the teens in Youth Force. They "pay \$200 to go and spend a week in the sun and do all this work. They want to go!"

While serving at a site, participants stay at nearby colleges or in churches. That can mean sleeping on the floor, Cathy said.

The work has taken the Shouse family to sites in northeastern Oklahoma as well as Guymon, Henryetta, Muldrow, and Poteau.

The missions have allowed the Shouses' children to see places they

might not otherwise go. "I think that's so important," Cathy said.

A surprise bonus is that Catee and Trey, now college students, sometimes run into acquaintances from Youth Force during other travel in the state, Cathy said.

Catee, who is working on a master's degree in library science at Rogers State University in Claremore, now serves with Cathy and Lee as a Youth Force leader. Trey, majoring in business management at Rogers State, continues to work in mission alongside other teens.

The short-term missions are sponsored by the Oklahoma Conference as a facet of Volunteers In Mission. The \$200 fee pays for meals, lodging for Sunday evening through Friday morning, project supplies and expenses, recreation, worship, training materials, and a Youth Force T-shirt.

Above: Cathy Shouse, left, paints a sign for a building in Guymon, and Trey Shouse surveys work on a Norman project in 2014. At right: Lee Shouse rests beside a new entry ramp built in Henryetta this summer, and Catee Shouse plans gardening work on a 2014 project in Norman. Vinita UMC is this family's home church.



Passages

BROAM—Rev. Charles V. Broam, 68, of Alvin, Texas, died Oct. 17, 2015.

A Local Pastor, he served at Hunter/Kremlin and at Ellison Avenue UMC in El Reno. He had retired in 2013.

Survivors include his wife, Marcia Broam, and daughters Laura Windsor and Heart Broam.

Service was Oct. 22 at First UMC in Alvin.

TAYLOR—Chris Lorraine Taylor, 64, of Oklahoma City died Oct. 16, 2015. She was the wife of Rev. Dean Taylor, who is pastor at OKC-Linwood.

Survivors include her husband of 25 years and stepsons Kyle and Kreston Taylor.

Service was held Oct. 24 at Linwood UMC, where she was a member. Memorial gifts to: Linwood UMC or Pets and People.

KILLION—Helen Berniece Killion, 94, of Patterson, Mo., died Sept. 29, 2015. She was the widow of Rev. Kenneth Killion.

Survivors include daughter Mildred Montemayor of Piedmont.

Service was Oct. 3 at Morrison-Worley Funeral Chapel, Greenville, Mo.

Employment

Children's Ministry Staff Person: Moore-New Life. Part-time. Kathy Brown, 405-794-8393, rev.kathybrown@gmail.com

Worship Arts Director: Shawnee-Wesley. Send resume to David J. Larson, wesleychurchoffice@sbcglobal.net

Accompanist: El Reno-Wesley. Part-time. Contact Sam Ritter, 931-542-7073 or samueljosephritter@gmail.com

Pianist: Locust Grove-First UMC. Part-time. Contact Matthew Franks, 918-479-6356 or fumclgok@gmail.com

Three part-time jobs: Tulsa-Faith UMC. Youth Ministry Associate, Youth Music Leader, and Contemporary Music Assistant Leader. For more information, go to www.faithtulsa.org/jobs

Church Business Manager: Tulsa-New Haven UMC. Part-time. Requires associate or bachelor's degree in business or related work experience. Email resume to cindy.havlik@newhavenumc.org

Business Office Assistant: OKC-Chapel Hill UMC. Part-time. Experience required in personnel and payroll tasks. Send resume and salary requirements to 118psalms24@cox.net

Project Transformation works to turn the page for kids

It's time to turn the page for Project Transformation, a United Methodist literacy program for elementary students.

This moment straddles summer's happy ending for 461 low-income kids and the opening chapter for PT's 15th year.

"We are proud to announce that 98 percent of campers maintained or improved in their reading," said PT Director Sarah Nichols. "They and their teachers did not have to experience the decline that typically takes place during summer break."

Proficiency was assessed as the school year began in Oklahoma.



With students back in the classroom, PT staff and supporters have turned to planning, recruiting, and funding for 2016.

With your help, PT will continue working to change statistics such as these:

- Low-income students lose more than two months in reading achievement during summer. (National Summer Learning Association)
 - "Two-thirds of students who cannot read proficiently by the end of fourth grade will end up in jail or on welfare. Over 70 percent of America's inmates cannot read above a fourth-grade level." (Write Express Corp. *Literacy Statistics*)
- PT's goal is to raise \$35,000 in

donations by Dec. 31 "to begin our 15th year of ministry," Nichols said.

The program is benefitting from increased public awareness about the faith-based program, she said.

During eight weeks in June and July 2015, children in first- through fifth-grades were welcomed by church hosts in seven cities for the Monday-Thursday day camps.

"Our staff and alumni love to share the successes of Project Transformation with Oklahoma United Methodist congregations, and give special thanks to our supporters," Nichols said.

Two ideas for fall fundraisers are tailored for youth and children's groups.

- Set up a Giving Bookcase. Fill it with

children's books and, inside each one, tuck a colorful bookmark bearing a dollar amount. Invite people to take bookmarks that show what they wish to contribute.

• Create a Giving Tree, with varying dollar amounts printed on its leaves. This theme comes from the children's book "The Giving Tree." Invite individuals, families, and small groups to select leaves and donate the amounts to PT.

Churches could select PT to receive a special holiday offering, too. Leaders are happy to provide informational materials and speak to your congregation.

For information, email ProjectTransformationOK@okumc.org.

Opening acts

The money you give to the Church assures connections that make God known in many places, opening hearts, minds, and doors to love and life-changing opportunities. “Apportionments” is the name United Methodists use to identify the portion of money that is sent forward from each church.

Within the Apportionments, funds go to 1) worldwide work by the denomination, 2) regional (“jurisdictional”) causes, 3) district missions, and 4) Oklahoma Conference ministries.

This article offers basic information about Oklahoma’s Apportionment budget for 2015, using as perspective The United Methodist Church motto: “Open Hearts, Open Minds, Open Doors.”

Four of the the budget items provide infrastructure that supports the Oklahoma Conference’s ministry teams.

Communications Department	\$431,000
Annual Conference Council	\$495,000
Conference Administration Ministries.....	\$1,029,700
Ministerial Support.....	\$4,905,841

Annually, each church is called upon to provide a specific amount in Apportionments. That amount is based on the church’s programming and operating expenses and staff costs.

Eighty percent of the overall Apportionment contribution supports Kingdom work within Oklahoma. “As you read about ministries you support through your ‘portion meant for others,’ be inspired knowing your church’s reach is well beyond where you worship,” Bishop Robert Hayes Jr. said.



Mission & Service Ministry Team — \$1,958,011

People of faith open their hearts to others through acts of mercy and justice work — Circle of Care, Cookson Hills Center, Criminal Justice & Mercy Ministries, Hispanic Ministries, Neighborhood Services Organization, Office of Mission, Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference, Prevent/Recover Ministry, Project Transformation, Restore Hope, and Skyline Urban Ministry

“They said to each other, ‘Weren’t our hearts on fire when he spoke to us along the road, and when he explained the Scripture to us?’” (Luke 24:32, CE)



Leadership Development Ministry Team —\$353,000

Board of Ordained Ministry/Ministerial Recruitment, Saint Paul School of Theology at Oklahoma City University, Academy for Part-Time Local Pastors

“Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures.” (Luke 24:45, CE)

Discipleship Ministry Team — \$1,966,000

Camps and Conferences, Campus Ministry, Oklahoma City University

Since Methodism began, education has been a core value for our community of faith.



New People, New Places — \$700,000

New Faith Communities* — \$822,200

(Name changed from Congregational Development, approved by 2015 Annual Conference)
New Faith Communities,
Racial Ethnic New Church Starts

“Everyone who asks, receives; whoever seeks, finds; to everyone who knocks, the door is opened.” (Luke 11:10, CE)

We practice radical hospitality, welcoming all to open their hearts and minds to know Christ and grow alongside us.

Churchgoers push to rename Columbus Day

By **HEATHER HAHN**
United Methodist News Service

Should the second Monday in October celebrate Christopher Columbus? A number of United Methodists say no.

Church members have joined efforts in Oklahoma and other parts of the U.S. to change the day into one that honors the people already in the Americas when Columbus landed.

"We are the original inhabitants of this land," said David Wilson, superintendent of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference (OIMC) and a Choctaw. "But there is so little to affirm the contributions that Native American people have made to this country by giving up the land, which wasn't voluntarily, and all the sacrifices people have made."

Wilson and others believe Native Americans should receive the official recognition a civic holiday provides.

Columbus, they add, is a particularly apt candidate to bump from the calendar, given his brutal treatment of indigenous people.

Rev. Dr. Wilson said the OIMC campus ministries pushed successfully to observe Indigenous Peoples' Day at United Methodist-related Oklahoma City University and at Southeastern Oklahoma State University. The University of Oklahoma also has made the change.

Sydney Wahkinney, a United Methodist and a senior at OCU, was excited her campus marked its first Indigenous Peoples' Day on Oct. 12.

Wahkinney joined with other students in a "cedaring." During the rite, people burn cedar or sweetgrass and pray. Wahkinney said the belief is that the smoke, much like incense in a Catholic



Photo by Josh Robinson/OCU

Mass, is cleansing.

"It's empowering to know we wanted to change something, and we changed it," said Wahkinney, who is Comanche. "It shows that we are still here, and our culture and heritage means a lot to us. Instead of celebrating this man, why not celebrate the melting pot of the United States?"

Wilson and OCU students also advocated for the Oklahoma City Council to re-designate the day.

"While we understand that Columbus Day is a federal holiday, it is important that the capital city of a state well-known for its indigenous populations show appreciation for the people that help make our city and state beautiful, diverse, and unique," said a letter from the university's Native American Society.

On Oct. 13, the Council voted 5-4 against the proposal.

Advocates have found a receptive audience in some cities, including Anadarko. This year that city declared Oct. 12 as Indigenous Peoples' Day. So did Portland, Ore.; Lawrence, Kan.; and Albuquerque, N.M. They followed similar actions in St. Paul, Minn.; Alpena, Mich.; Olympia, Wash.; Bexar County, Texas; Seattle; and Minneapolis.

The Choctaw and Muscogee Creek Nations also renamed the holiday.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt made Columbus Day a federal holiday in 1937.

Berkeley, Calif., arguably started the effort to rename the day in 1992, the 500th anniversary year of Columbus' voyage.

United Methodists at the Upper New

INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY AT OKLAHOMA CITY UNIVERSITY— OCU President Robert Henry speaks in a proclamation ceremony at the Chickasaw Warrior Garden on campus Oct. 12, which was declared Indigenous Peoples' Day at OCU. He acted in support of Native American culture and campus diversity on a day that is traditionally observed as Columbus Day. Henry told how the Lakota Sioux tribe encourages its people to organize their lives, learn new things, and listen to the opinions of others. Sharon Yeahquo of Clark Memorial UMC, Del City, sang a Choctaw hymn; Cortney Yarholer of the Sac & Fox and Creek nations performed a drum song, and Superintendent David Wilson of the Oklahoma Indian Missionary Conference gave opening remarks.

York Annual Conference approved a resolution in spring to end the celebration of Columbus Day, as part of the denomination-wide Act of Repentance Toward Healing Relationships with Indigenous People.

OIMC clergyman Glen Chebon Kernell Jr., executive secretary for Native American and Indigenous Ministries at the General Board of Global Ministries, said he has heard from United Methodists in Philadelphia, who are starting discussions about encouraging their city to rename Columbus Day.

Rev. Kernell, who is Muscogee Creek, said he hopes more church members will join such efforts. "I am in support of speaking the truth," he said. "It's not the end-all, but I think it will help."

Copyright licensing requires you to keep records

Churches have several tasks to perform in the coming months to show they are complying with copyright law.

The Oklahoma Conference purchases umbrella copyright coverage for all its church organizations to use the songs and movies that are licensed through two companies: CCLI (Christian Copyright License International) and CVLI (Christian Video License International).

In February, the Conference will renew this annual CCLI/CVLI licensing for churches, agencies, camps, and campus ministries.

Video licensing

Each year, all those Conference entities must update specific information to ensure the correct amount of CVLI coverage. Membership and children's ministry attendance must be reported.

They must fill out the required CVLI Children's Ministry part of the Charge Conference forms.

This includes noting total attendance in children's ministries and the proper names for any Mother's Day Out and after-school

or daycare programs.

Another benefit of the CVLI license is that your group now has free access to the standard ScreenVue package, which allows you to download and use scenes from select major movies and other films.

Not every movie is covered by the CVLI license. To check if a movie can be shown, go to www.cvli.com and follow the instructions.

Song licensing

Conference organizations must keep records of the songs they have copied or have projected on screens.

A critical part of the CCLI license is to create a "Copy Report." More facts on this:

- Every 2 ½ years, each entity will be assigned to complete a six-month Copy Report. You will be notified by mail and email before it's your organization's time to report.
- Copy reporting does not affect your group's license fee.
- Multiple people from a church or other group may create profiles and sign in to work on the report. They may

review others' work.

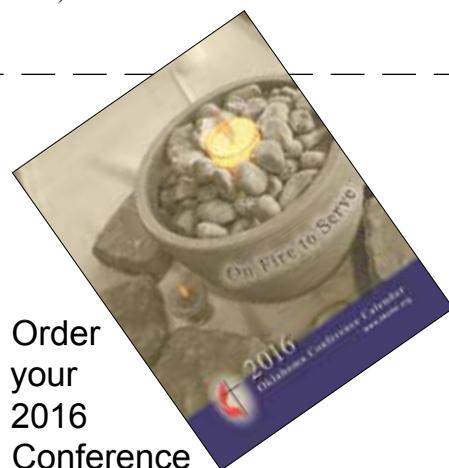
- The most accurate and easiest way to track copies and projections is on a weekly basis. Set aside a few minutes each week for this task.

- If there is no copy activity to report, sign in at the end of the reporting period and click on the button "Nothing To Report."

- Copy usage must be reported online. Go to <http://support.ccli.com/category/ccl-reporting-online/how-to-report/>

The purpose of these reports is so that CCLI accurately pays royalties to songwriters and producers. There are four types of reports explained on the company website. They are: print, digital, recording, and translation.

Church organizations also may invest in three more categories of CCLI licensing: SongSelect, Rehearse, and Stream. If you choose to buy any of these additional licenses, you will receive a separate bill for that. These categories are not part of the Conference coverage. For more information, go to www.ccli.com



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Appointments

Debbie Biehler, new, to Loyal UMC, effective Oct. 1.

George Lupton, from Pond Creek UMC to retirement, effective Oct. 1.

Paul Staat, from associate pastor at Tulsa-Boston Avenue UMC to Discontinued, effective Oct. 1.

Brandon Parker, from Alderson UMC (closed) to Not Appointed, effective Aug. 23.



When Phil Hodson was 16, his grandfather gave him this sailboat with a note, "Follow your bliss." The verse imprinted on the craft is Jeremiah 29:11. "It's sat on every desk in every office I've been in, from college to CEO to the pulpit," said Rev. Hodson. His grandfather pastored United Methodist churches for 41 years in Indiana.

Photo by Holly McCray

First steps:

Continued from page 1

and Joelle are the parents of Xander, 4, and Xane, 2.

Now the church hosts Mothers of Preschoolers (MOPS) multiple times each month, and Joelle leads them. Some 52 moms and 49 kids participate. The church's technology enables moms in their meetings to see kids in the play area.

"MOPS has curriculum based on fun-think-talk-do, with video and questions to facilitate discussion," Joelle said.

She showed the creative setting for the next MOPS meeting and numerous kid-friendly aspects deployed throughout Community's rented space. A whiteboard "to-do" list includes cereal.

"We fire through Cheerios like nobody's business at MOPS," said Phil.

The church employs 13 part-time staff, most in child care, and a full-time assistant, Rebecca Braun-Harrison.

Also, Community and the Oklahoma UM Circle of Care for Children & Youth partnered to hire Ayrika Watson as children's ministry leader/COC foster care family recruiter.

"Our hope is that will dovetail as that church grows and attracts young families," said COC official Mike Slack.

Volunteers—Phil prefers the term "servants"—handle all the church's technology tasks. Those helpers are as young as 12.

Community will use digital tools to engage small groups. Sunday School and weekly studies don't work for its demographic, Phil explained.

"My people—this generation—are way too busy. So how do we foster community with hyper-scheduled people?"

Small-group members will interact through their personal digital devices, then meet in person eight times a year. And the church plans to begin live streaming its worship in November.

"This is the age when people want a fully functioning church," said Phil, "or they think you're just a crazy preacher passing out tracts."

The phone call to plant a new congregation in Lawton came when the Hodsons were traveling. With lots of time to talk, "we couldn't talk ourselves out of it," Joelle said.

"What an amazing opportunity! Phil and I always get along well with 'Dream big.' My family comes from a long line of entrepreneurs."

In childhood, Joelle said, she always got the Girl Scout pin for selling 400 or more boxes of those famous cookies.

The first MOPS event hosted at the church attracted far more moms and children than expected. Then the exhausted pastor went into his office, put up his feet, and spent two hours talking with God.

"Peace came back," Phil said. "I clearly heard: 'Get it together.' I realized this is the tip of the iceberg, baby. We're here to grow the Kingdom of God; that's it. We do that by whatever resources He's giving us. A ministry is as strong as the team that supports it, and we have a great support network."

(Facebook.com/CommunityLawton)

New in The DVD Library

Two Christmas-themed DVDs for small-group study have been added to The DVD Library at the United Methodist Ministry Center. The videos are available for loan by contacting Chris Schutz at 405-530-2075 or at cschutz@okumc.org

1 "Not a Silent Night: Mary Looks Back to Bethlehem." By Adam Hamilton. The five-part study interprets Mary's point of view about her son. Chapters range from 11 to 14 minutes. With leader guide and youth study books.

2 "Sent: Delivering the Gift of Hope at Christmas." By Jorge Acevedo of Florida, who was guest preacher in May at Oklahoma's Annual Conference. He is lead pastor of Grace Church, a multi-site UM congregation. "Sent" offers a five-week Advent journey to discover how, where, and why we are sent. Joining Acevedo on video are young clergy who challenge viewers through story, art, and Bible study. Chapter length 8-10 minutes. With leader guides for all ages.

Resources

UPDATE OFFICERS NOW — Churches elect new officers in the fall. Email addresses and cellphone numbers change frequently.

Now is the time to update your church's leadership information for 2016 in the Conference database.

Deadline to complete any changes is Dec. 15.

Having correct information helps assure effective communications at all levels—Conference, district, and locally. Make certain your group receives up-to-date news and event information.

If you are designated to do this for your church and need help logging in, contact mmyers@okumc.org.

LAY SERVANT TRAINING — Two districts are preparing for Lay Servant Training.

- Wchitas District will hold the training Nov. 13-14 in Duncan at St. Paul's United Methodist Church. Contact Christy Clark, marketmechristy@yahoo.com
- Lake Country District leaders will offer courses Nov. 20-21 at Cross Point Camp. RSVP by Oct. 26 to receive materials before the training. Contact Toni Hignight, mmwoodwalker@sbcglobal.net

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED — Sign up online now to help during Disaster Volunteer Day on Nov. 14 in Oklahoma City, Moore, and Bridge Creek, where flooding and tornadoes damaged homes earlier this year.

Work projects will range from interior demolition to painting and carpentry. Skilled labor is especially needed.

Contact Oklahoma Disaster Response Ministry at www.okumc-dr.org or 405-802-0904.

SERIES ON RACISM — The General Commission on Religion & Race has created "Vital Conversations: An Interactive Video Series on Today's Realities of Race and Racism." The series was scheduled to premiere Oct. 28. Go to <http://gcorr.org/topics/racism>

GUN VIOLENCE — The General Board of Church & Society has developed a three-session Bible study about the use of guns in committing violence.

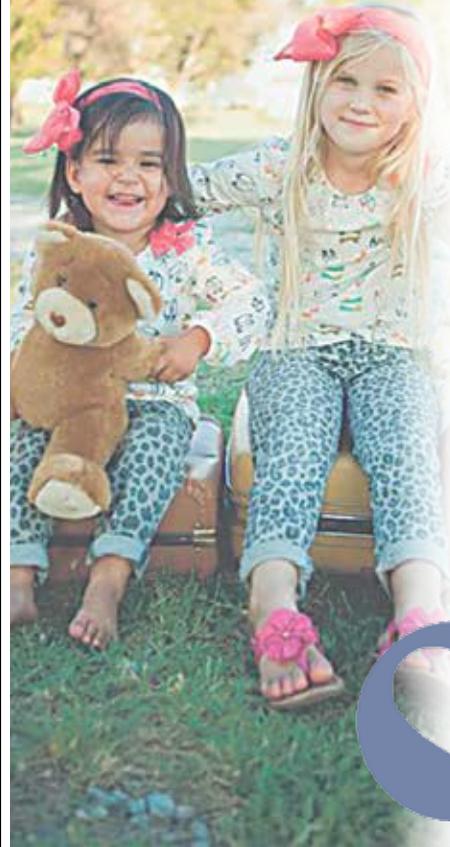
The free study, "Kingdom Dreams, Violent Realities," uses Micah 4:1-4 as its scriptural foundation.

Download it at <http://umc-gbcs.org/faith-in-action/kingdom-dreams-violent-realities>

Child SHARE Family Specialists

Our mission is to provide Christian help, healing, and hope to children and youths through recruiting and supporting Oklahoma foster care families.

There is a child waiting for you, will you help?



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Ponca City 2	405-802-9687
Shawnee	405-693-7795
Stillwater	405-312-6640
Tulsa Metro	918-794-3876
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Grants reach high notes

Ms. Margaret E. Petree of El Reno left an \$11 million farm estate to the Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation in the mid-1990s. The vast majority of the income from this endowment is dedicated to scholarships at OCU and several significant annual grants for churches and agencies in the El Reno area.

Ms. Petree had the forethought to reserve 10% of the annual income for discretionary spending. The use of this 10% is decided by a committee of Oklahoma United Methodist Foundation trustees "for institutions, agencies, and nonprofit corporations administered, managed, or supervised by the Oklahoma Annual Conference ... for the care of children, youths, the aging, or needy and disadvantaged."

FIRST UMC IN CUSHING received a grant for replacement sewing machines, tools, and supplies to continue and expand a program making quilts and baby clothes that are given to local authorities, Child SHARE, Skyline, the Children's Home, Cookson Hills Mission, and local charities.

The grant for **CONNECT UMC IN EDMOND** provides curriculum and equipment to start "Hands on Bible" for children.

NEW COVENANT UMC IN EDMOND, with the help of Quail Springs Baptist, received a grant to start the *Upward Sports* program to minister to their surrounding community.

FIRST UMC IN HEAVENER received a one-time grant for its food pantry.

HENNESSEY UMC received a one-time matching grant to start up "Keepers Coffee House." The church will use a neutral environment to attract youths for after-school tutoring, open-mic nights, game nights, and worship experiences outside of the church.

COMMUNITY UMC, the newest church in Lawton, received a grant for technology equipment to help safely monitor children and youth on Sundays and during events. Many are from military families, who are accustomed to heightened security.

FIRST UMC IN MARIETTA received a one-time grant to expand the Coats and Clothes for the Needy program.

NEIGHBORHOOD SERVICES ORGANIZATION in Oklahoma City received a grant for ongoing support of programs that provide housing and life skills education to prevent homelessness.

CIRCLE OF CARE received a grant for continuing support of the statewide Child SHARE foster care/adoption programming.

FIRST UMC IN OKMULGEE received a grant to offer *Financial Peace*

University to the community.

FIRST UMC IN PERRY received a grant to support foster care families in Noble County.

OPERATION HOPE MINISTRY IN TULSA received a grant for *Project Impact* to help children of incarcerated parents improve reading skills and to provide mentoring.

The two most significant grants were awarded to **ST. LUKE'S UMC IN OKLAHOMA CITY** and **BOSTON AVENUE UMC IN TULSA** for their *El Sistema* programs. Boston Avenue is just getting started. St. Luke's is in its third year, serving over 220 disadvantaged children with 40 volunteer program instructors. Every child receives a brand-new instrument and about 300 hours of music training. These programs are a staggering success.

Thanks to the wisdom and dedication of the Foundation's trustees, the Foundation has awarded more than \$2,065,000 through more than 300 grants from this endowment since 1996.

THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST FOUNDATION
4201 N CLASSEN BOULEVARD, OKLAHOMA CITY, OK 73118-2400
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Photo by Chris Schutz

Nellyne Hanlin cuddles toys and kids at OKC-New Hope. Clockwise from her are Rosie Miller, age 2; Rylee Goff, 2; Lydia Langert, 1; and Grace Keimig, 1.

Fuzzy friends

Collections calm kids in crises

By CHRIS SCHUTZ

A project that helps provide comfort to hurting or troubled children has proven to be a hit among the members of OKC-New Hope UMC.

The Warm Fuzzies project involves collecting stuffed animal toys twice a year, to be donated to ambulance crews and the Oklahoma Highway Patrol.

After they arrive at the church the furry bears, puppies, and other critters get places of honor on the seats of the sanctuary. During services, they get cuddled by worshippers.

When a person gives an animal, the donor's name is written on an attached tag, said Nellyne Hanlin, one of the project coordinators. That way, the child who receives the toy will know who it's from.

The collection drives are each May and October, Hanlin said. At the end of the month, the church holds a service to dedicate the toys. Then they are bagged individually and readied for distributing.

Ambulance crews prefer animals with "obvious arms and legs," Hanlin said. That way a child "can point on the bear to where they hurt."

Other types of stuffed toys, such as a tomato or a fish, are donated to the OHP. They are used by the OHP chaplain and patrol officers across the state, Hanlin said.

She knows a former Child Protective Services staffer. The man had seen a child in a difficult situation receive a stuffed animal. "It was amazing how it calmed the child down," he told Hanlin.

The New Hope Church project, started about seven years ago by member Alison Anderson, was dubbed Warm Fuzzies by a church member. The name "just stuck," Hanlin said.

The church has since branched out, also collecting children's blankets for emergency responders. The Warm Fuzzies team learned sometimes crews go into homes that are too chilly for the children who live there.

"If they need a blanket, they get one," Hanlin said.

At the end of a collection month, an ambulance crew arrives at the church and accepts the Warm Fuzzies from the youngsters in New Hope's Children's Day Out program. That gives those children a chance to explore the ambulance, too.

"It's helpful for them to see the inside even when they don't need it," Hanlin said.

The 560-member church has been gathering 600 to 700 stuffed animals a year, Hanlin said.

It's the type of project that could be adopted by almost any church, she said. "It's a need that never goes away. It's something anyone in church can do regardless of age."