



THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST

Contact

Volume 4, Number 12 • December 6, 2022 www.okumc.org

IN THIS ISSUE

- Pastoral Letter Clarifying Calls 2
- United Women in Faith's Weekend of Action 3
- Restore Hope Ministries Blesses 400 Plus Families 5
- Finding belonging in new places 6
- What Comes Around 7
- Five-Day Academy and The Secret of Joy 8
- CU Wesley's New Approach to Old Stories 9
- Christmas on Sunday 10
- Ministry in a Minute 11
- OKUMC Briefs and Events 12

United Women in Faith's Weekend of Action

Toole Tyme at Cookson Hills Ministry Center

TABITHA BECKMAN

Every year women and men from around Oklahoma gather in Cookson, near Lake Tenkiller, to help Cookson Hills prepare for their Christmas store. The store provides low-income families in the area with a chance to come pick out gifts and have them wrapped for Christmas. Families also receive a bag of food to prepare a Christmas feast. This annual event is known as Toole Tyme.

This year's group also helped rake leaves, paint a fence, and pack bags of food that go to local schools for kids to take home over the weekends.

Rev. Jami Moss, who is newly elected to the Cookson Hills board, said, "They really do a lot in the community. And I think that's my

favorite piece of it. Because if Cookson Hills were to go away, the community, which is already underserved, would be that much more underserved. I'm excited about the revitalization of Cookson in the area because I do believe that Cookson is a cornerstone in this community."

Cookson Hills Center is a project of the United Methodist Church. It is the only rural mission program in Oklahoma and the only mission program that is a joint effort of the Oklahoma Conference, the Oklahoma Indian Mission Conference, the United Women in Faith, and the General Board of Global Ministries. Cookson Hills serves Adair, Cherokee and Sequoia counties.

Harri Williams, the conference President of United Women in

Faith, described the Toole Tyme event, "We come in on Friday and meet and greet and fellowship and sign up for the awesome opportunity to work at this mission center to help them prepare for Thanksgiving and for Christmas. It's an awesome opportunity to be able to do this and it takes a lot of hands to organize."

When asked what makes Cookson Hills Ministry special, Williams said, "If you haven't been in the eastern part of the state, you miss the fall colors, you miss the mountains, and of course, Lake Tenkiller is right here also. But when you come and see the beauty of this mission and the land that it sits on, it's like stepping onto holy ground, to be here and serve in whatever capacity we can serve in."



Above left: volunteers present homemade jam. Above right: helpers in the Christmas store choose just the right toys for little ones. Far right: as everyone has worked up an appetite, a team prepared delicious and healthy meals. Photos by Tabitha Beckman.



Top left: Fall is the perfect time to rake leaves at Cookson Hills; Middle left: the thrift store is an enticing shop with lots of merchandise; Bottom left: the group prepared bags and bags of food for making Christmas dinner. Above left: a fresh coat of paint makes the fence inviting and new. Above right: the Christmas shop made it possible for kids to have a ball playing with toys and gifts they receive for Christmas.

Cover photo: a volunteer sorts through food donations. Photos by Tabitha Beckman.

YOUR AD COULD BE HERE

Email editor@okumc.org for rates and publication dates.

Respect

is one

of the

greatest

expressions

of

love

IN THIS ISSUE

Over \$2 Million Available in
Scholarships for United Methodist
Students 2

Community-wide MLK Worship
Service 3

For I was hungry 4

OKUMC partnerships make merry
5

UMC Bishops ask church court for
clarification on 2024 Conference
7

Keeping the Faith 7

Two Countries, Two Cultures, One
Faith 8

Ministry in a Minute 11

A Baby Shower for Mary 13

OKUMC Briefs and Events 14

THE OKLAHOMA UNITED METHODIST
 **Contact**

Volume 5, Number 1 • January 11, 2023

www.okumc.org

Two Countries, Two Cultures, One Faith

How US and Mexican churches partner to help children flourish

BY TABITHA BECKMAN

Bishop Nunn, members of the Cabinet and other leaders from the Oklahoma Conference visited Manos Juntas (Hands Together Ministry) in Rio Bravo, Mexico, and Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso, in early December. Manos Juntas has been an important mission of the OKUMC for over 20 years, and Lydia Patterson Institute has been a Methodist-supported school for over 100 years.

Lydia Patterson Institute (LPI) is a private, faith-based school supported by the United Methodist Church South Central Jurisdiction. It provides an education to students in the El Paso borderplex areas to include El Paso, Texas, and Juarez, Chihuahua, Mexico. Lydia Patterson Institute currently serves students from grades seven to 12. LPI stands out as a unique place where students are immersed in an academic and spiritual environment.

For over 100 years, Lydia Patterson has been dedicated to building bridges between two countries, two cities, and two cultures.

What began in 1913 with Mrs. Lydia Patterson, a Methodist laywoman acting through the Women's Missionary Society of her church, began to set up schools in the homes of some Mexican Methodist families. Her spirit and vision are still alive today at LPI where young men and

women, a majority of whom are from Ciudad Juarez, continue to be educated in a challenging academic environment while being nurtured in Christian values.

LPI was one of the first schools in the United States to emphasize the teaching of English as a Second Language in 1921, and to then merge students into their appropriate grade level to put them on the path toward graduation from high school. United Methodists and LPI are committed to forming bilingual and bicultural leaders for society.

The team visited with the students, teachers and the new President Carla Cardoza of Lydia Patterson Institute in El Paso, and walked across the border to experience the students' daily journey to and from school.

Manos Juntas works to provide

better housing, healthcare and educational opportunities for those in need: people who lack proper housing, access to schools, and health services affordable to the poor; and churches with unfinished buildings, no resources to improve their teachings and social services. Problems in the area include insufficient schools or school classrooms; schools with no facilities and/or resources for better teaching techniques; and shortage of places to teach job skills. By partnering with different institutions like churches, schools, Red Cross, Rotary clubs, local, state and federal government, Manos Juntas implements programs and activities to educate, inform and empower people to make better decisions for their daily living.

Manos Juntas partners with



Team photo at the bridge of Juarez Mexico crossing from El Paso, TX. Left to right, LPI President Carla Cardoza, Joe Holt, Sam Powers, Carlos Ramirez, Tabitha Beckman, Rebekah Hasty, Diana Northcutt, Nancy Hamilton, Aly Shahan, Derrek Belase, Carol Cook Moore, Jim Jones, Bessie Hamilton, Bishop Nunn, Lori Foster, Roger Parker.

short-term mission teams, churches, schools and other communities to develop programs and activities to promote education, health, and cooperation among people to empower them to overcome different adversities in life, promoting Christian values along this process.

The Oklahoma mission group visited the Manos Juntas main health clinic in Rio Bravo, the after-school program at the Susana Wesley Institute, the site of a future daycare, Guarderia Infantil in northeast Rio Bravo, a children's home Casa Hogar/Casa de la Esperanza, a retreat center and camp Vamonos Ranch, and a new

health clinic in Nuevo Progreso.

Lori Foster, Associate Director of Connectional Ministry for Mission, Coordinator Volunteers In Mission OKVIM/DR shared, "Our time spent in Rio Bravo and in Lydia Patterson was a spiritual awakening and reminder of how God works in amazing ways! It was a reminder of God's presence among us, with us and through us. The ministries that are alive and vibrant focusing on God's

people with such grace and mercy. The purpose was to strengthen the ties that bind us together, to listen, learn and be transformed. To nurture the relationship and be open to all that God reveals to us." She concluded, "Manos Juntas and Lydia Patterson have a great deal to teach us if we pay attention and allow ourselves to be present with one another."

Manos Juntas is working on its newest project, Guarderia Infantil, a Child Care Center located in a populous sector northeast of Rio Bravo. The Center will serve working mothers and couples that need a safe and healthy place



Bishop Nunn with a group of children from Casa Hogar at lunch at Vamonos Ranch Photo by Tabitha Beckman.

where their kids will be treated with love and care. "Several of our partner churches have worked in its construction and we pray to open in the first half of 2023," said United Methodist missionary Willie Berman.

Another work in progress is the House of Hope Children's Home, also known as the Casa Hogar/Casa de la Esperanza.

In this region of Nuevo

Progreso and Rio Bravo, Tamaulipas, there are no children's homes available. Children in need of this service are being sent to Reynosa, the biggest city in the area. Relatives of these youngsters have a hard time visiting the children because of the great distance. Violence created by drug cartels and mafias affecting this area has put many fathers, and sometimes mothers, in the path of criminal activities. A lot of parents have been incarcerated or killed.



The OKUMC ministry team tours the dormitories at Casa Hogar. Photo by Tabitha Beckman.



Bishop Nunn (right), Sam Powers, and Bessie Hamilton check out the Casa Hogar cafeteria. The wall contains the words to a song the children are learning, along with sign language to go with it. Photo by Tabitha Beckman.

"Manos Juntas and Lydia Patterson have a great deal to teach us if we pay attention and allow ourselves to be present with one another."

-Lori Foster

This has created an increase of children with no parents or with parents who are unable to provide adequate care. All of these families are still living in poverty conditions.

The purpose of these homes is to alleviate the suffering of orphans, single parents and/or grandparents, by taking care 24/7 of children without parents or whose parents cannot take care of them. Manos Juntas partners with state government, local churches, and other agencies to collaborate on the wellness of these precious children.

Sam Powers said of his experience, "I've been to both Manos Juntas and Lydia Patterson prior to this trip and it was great to see how both ministries continue to thrive and impact people's lives. Manos Juntas has expanded its ministries beyond the casitas that we built so regularly and now extends into education, child care, child residency and health care. The range of ways that we help to feed the hungry and clothe the naked leaves the vivid impression that we are truly transforming the world as disciples of Jesus Christ."

Get Involved

JOIN A MISSION

Rio Bravo conference mission October 16 to 20, 2023 or Lydia Patterson mission. To learn more, contact Lori at lfoster@okumc.org

LEARN MORE ABOUT

Manos Juntas, visit [GBGM Advance #3020527](#) or Manos Juntas VIM Mexico on Facebook

House of Hope Children's Home, [Advance #3022419](#)

Global Ministries, contact Willie Berman at manosjuntasmexico@hotmail.com

Lydia Patterson Institute, visit <https://lpi-elpaso.org/> or Lydia Patterson Institute on Facebook

Of his personal transformation, Powers added, "Lydia Patterson continues to make my heart swell with each visit. The young people shaped by this school have the kind of work ethic, soft skills and positivity that parents everywhere are seeking for their children. This is a ministry not only worthy of our support but one that I wish we could multiply to other locations!"



A map of Texas with the locations of the two missions marked with red stars.



Team photo in Manos Juntas. Left to right Willie Berman, Bessie Hamilton, Jim Jones, Carol Cook Moore, Carlos Ramirez, Derrek Belase, Sam Powers, Roger Parker, Bishop Nunn, Diana Northcutt, Joe Holt, Aly Shahan, Lori Foster, Nancy Hamilton, Tabitha Beckman, Rebekah Hasty.



Team photo at LPI. Left to right, Sam Powers, Roger Parker, Derrek Belase, Rebekah Hasty, LPI President Carla Cardoza, Carol Cook Moore, Aly Shahan, Jim Jones, Joe Holt, Diana Northcutt, Lori Foster, Bessie Hamilton, Nancy Hamilton, Carlos Ramirez, Tabitha Beckman.

OKUMC partners with Chile Conference for collaborative devotional for Holy Week



BY TABITHA BECKMAN

The Oklahoma Annual Conference has been a Covenant Partner with the Methodist Church of Chile since 2018. Bishop Nunn traveled down to Chile to sign and celebrate the Covenant with Bishop Merino and the rest of the Methodist Church of Chile in the spring of 2019.

During Holy Week this year the Oklahoma Conference joined with the Methodist Church of Chile to host short daily videos with a mixture of Chileans and Oklahomans sharing welcome, liturgy, scripture, music and a reflection videos filmed in their homes or churches.

So how did this all get started? Karen Distefano, the Oklahoma Conference Secretary of Global Ministries and the Chile-Oklahoma Covenant Coordinator said that, “Rev. Miguel Ulloa, the Ecclesiastical Secretary of the Methodist Church of Chile, contacted me one day and said, “What would you think of doing a collaborative devotional series for Holy Week between Chile and Oklahoma?” I thought it was a fabulous idea and contacted Rev. Derrek Belase with the opportunity.” Ulloa said he thought about how in the Christian calendar, Holy Week and Christmas play an important role, to “not only connect us with

God through means of grace but also to connect us with others, and one expression of that is to seek to celebrate, in a joint form, those things that inspire us and remind us of our faith.”

Distefano said the project came together through Revs. Ulloa and Belase devising a schedule of daily videos that included a welcome, Scripture reading, devotional message, song, and prayer. Tabitha Beckman in the Oklahoma Conference Communications office helped collect, film, edit and subtitle five daily inspirational video compilations that were shared with Methodists throughout Chile and Oklahoma.

Beckman said that, “I felt it was really important to make sure everything was subtitled. If they were speaking in Spanish then there were English subtitles and if they were speaking in English then there were Spanish subtitles. I didn’t want language to be a barrier to worshipping with each other. I owe a lot of thanks to Karen and a few others who helped me translate everything properly.”

The goals of the project were to provide Methodists in each place a way to deepen their Holy Week observations through collaboration and cooperation.

Ulloa said what he hoped to achieve with the

collaborative videos was a celebration together aimed at uniting us through technology; he continued, “to connect two far-away places in the world through faith and the spirit of Holy Week, through personal experiences of a virtual Methodist connection that we have all been through, and to share the faces of our brothers and sisters on the other side of the world that unites us in faith in Jesus Christ and our Methodist identity.”

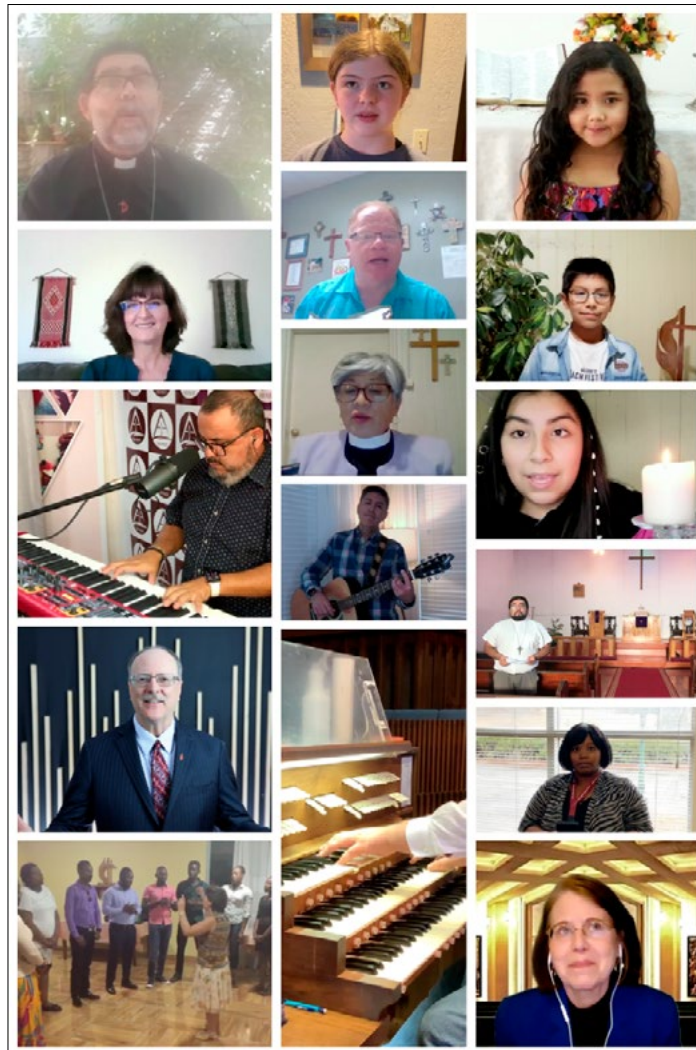
Belase praised the collaboration, “I love this practical, deeply spiritual and liturgically meaningful way for us to show our connection with our brothers and sisters in Chile.

The various reflections revealed to me that we are all affected with things like COVID 19 in similar ways. We are trying to make sense of that. At the same time, the honesty in the reflections and worship services made me think more deeply about how those in other countries have experienced the pandemic.”

Ulloa reflected that, “To celebrate Holy Week together represents that, being so far apart and having different views on life and of the church, we have the essential in common that, as the father of Methodism, John Wesley, would say, “If your heart is like mine, give me your hand”, and with that expression I want to represent the spirit of gathering what unites us instead of what separates us, something that had so much space and importance in early Methodism.”

Distefano also praised the project and hoped to have more in the future. “For me, it was inspirational to see the different ways people expressed themselves and their faith. We were so encouraged by this project that we are already discussing plans to have an Advent series later this year.”

Ulloa, “I think that this small project can be the



start of generating a long-distance celebrated communion that challenges us to open a door to mutually show our religious identity and the faces of children, youth, women, and men, but also to give evidence of the migrant reality, the consequences of this pandemic, the cries of the minorities, the gender violence, structural sin, and so many other things that can make our celebration a cry of protest in the middle of what we are living, both inside and outside of the Church.”

Distefano is excited about future plans with Chile. She said “An essential part of our covenant partnership with the Chilean Methodist Church is to have an exchange of volunteer

teams between the two countries. COVID-19 has put all plans on hold for now but once it is safe to travel again, we look forward to getting back to doing ministry with them, both in Chile and in Oklahoma.”

Belase also expressed hopes for the future, he said “I really loved the variety of expressions which were a part of the services and I look forward to another joint project in the future.

I am hoping to take a group of youth directors to Chile in late 2022. This was one reason I was so happy about this project and how many young people they were able to use. We will do better next time getting young people involved.”

If you or your church want to know more about our ties with the Chilean Methodists or explore ways to get involved, please contact Karen Distefano, the Chile-Oklahoma Covenant Coordinator at kdistefano@okumc.org.

To watch the Holy Week series visit the [OKUMC Facebook page](#) or [YouTube channel](#).



JAMES G. NUNN
BISHOP

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ!

One of the wonderful traditions of the Oklahoma Conference is to receive a special offering to further the missional outreach of our churches through the Annual Conference. This year's special offering at the May 22-25 Annual conference will benefit the new daycare center being constructed at Manos Juntas (Hands Together Ministry) in Rio Bravo, Mexico. Manos Juntas is a Global Ministries mission and has been supported by the Oklahoma Conference since its formation.

The new daycare center is designed to meet the highest standards of safety, quality, and accessibility, and will feature age-appropriate classrooms, play areas, and outdoor spaces. Maximum capacity will be 134 children, but they plan to start with less, and expect to be self-sufficient in a few months.

This childcare center will be a valuable asset to the surrounding community, especially for working couples, single mothers and all the children that come into their care. It will also provide outreach opportunities for the children's families.

Manos Juntas are committed to develop this and other long term, high impact, measurable projects to maintain the growth and evolution of this ministry, and to keep their mission refreshed and evolving as the needs of their communities require. This is the first project of its kind for the Eastern Conference of the Methodist Church of Mexico, and Manos Juntas believes in the positive impact this center will have on the lives of young children and their families.

You may submit offerings on the conference website through <https://www.okumc.org/specialoffering> or mail it to our conference office at 1501 NW 24th Street, Oklahoma City, OK 73106-5106. In person offerings can also be made during Annual Conference May 22-25, 2023 at Boston Ave, Tulsa, OK.

Just as a body, though one, has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit so as to form one body—whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free—and we were all given the one Spirit to drink. 1st Corinthians 12:12-13

Thank you for your support. May God bless you.