

Change is Here and It's Challenging

In June 2014, ODF Executive Director Eric Gray wrote an article for the Oklahoma Christian entitled, "The Death of a Church." In it he stated, "The churches are just a manifestation of Christ's work in the world. For that reason, the churches must be constantly changing form in order to bring the unchanging story of God's love and grace to an ever-changing world."

In the article he questioned, "What will the church of the future look like? Will buildings even be necessary? Will congregations gather like flash mobs to worship and serve?"

"Change is happening," he wrote. "What is our role as Christians today?"

"You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit – fruit that will last." – John 15:16

Fast Forward to 2020...Change is here. It's not exactly the flash mob scenario; however, who would have ever predicted that church doors would close for months worldwide to their members? Or, that the Oklahoma Region would be hosting their first virtual Regional Assembly in 2020?

Since March, churches have been scrambling to change. Many are still bringing the unchanging story of God's love and grace to an ever-changing world through socially distanced food programs for their neighbors, virtual Sunday school classes, Facebook streaming worship and serving Christ.

In an April 3, 2020, article in Cross-Walk.com, contributing writer J. Scott McElroy, wrote, "This is the church's moment to shine, and use every means possible to share the Good News and meet needs innovatively." (See next page article, "Need Technology Assistance?")

Whatever the cause, over the years, some churches have not survived. The community of believers in these churches wanted and tried to keep their church going; however, in each case, the

remaining church community opted to permanently close the church doors while keeping their gifts and memory alive.

The focus of Eric's 2014 article was on memorial endowments (congregational legacy gifts). He noted that when a congregation dissolves, its history and mission can live on through creation of an endowment and in giving gifts to existing churches. Moreover, that endowment allows the church to bear lasting fruit in the service of Christ.

In 2014, the Foundation held endowment funds from the passing of seven Oklahoma Disciples congregations. Today, the Foundation holds 14 church legacy funds. Three of those endowments help fund ODF's annual Grants Program.

Closed Oklahoma Disciples' Church Legacy Endowments

Burlington Christian Church Memorial Endowment

Community Christian Church, Tulsa, Memorial Endowment

Del City Christian Church Memorial Endowment

First Christian Church, Ada, Oklahoma Endowments (2)

Memorial Christian Church, Tulsa, Memorial Endowments (2)

Northwest Christian Church, OKC, Memorial Endowments (2)

Red Rock Christian Church Memorial Endowment

Rogers Heights Christian Church, Tulsa, Memorial Endowment

Sheridan Avenue Christian Church, Tulsa, Memorial Endowment

South Side Christian Church, Tulsa, Endowment

First Christian Church, Tecumseh, Memorial Endowment

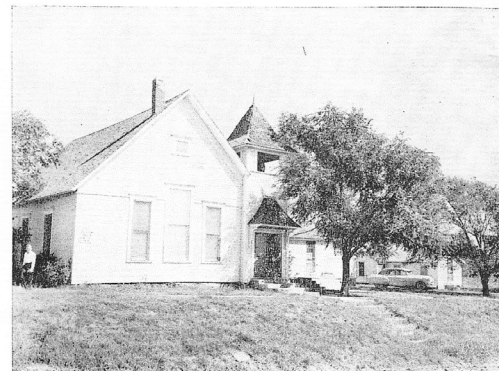
University Place Christian Church, OKC, Memorial Endowment

First Christian Church, Wetumka, Memorial Endowment

First Christian Church, Wewoka, Memorial Endowment

Bearing Lasting Fruit

Red Rock Christian Church's Legacy



Christian Church

Red Rock, Oklahoma

Red Rock Christian Church was the first church to establish a legacy endowment with the Foundation following its closure in 2005. Proceeds from the church building auction and remaining savings generated more than \$40,000 to initially fund the endowment. Distributions from this endowment provide annual funds for Central Oklahoma Camp (formerly Central Christian Camp) in Guthrie and New Church Establishment within the Region. The Red Rock congregation donated their church steeple bell to the camp as a memorial legacy and they gifted "The Good Shepherd" stained glass window to First Christian Church, Perry as a memorial to Martin and Erma Diehm.

An excerpt from the Red Rock Christian Church History booklet from May 1958, entitled, "The Challenge for the Rural Church," noted concerns for the continued life of rural churches and it suggested a challenge.

"People are moving away from the country into the city. Rural churches all over the country are having to struggle for existence. On the surface this is depressing. In reality, however, this is a great challenge.

"It is a challenge because: 1) There are still many people living in the country. Can the rural church let them down?

"2) The cities are being populated by people who have moved away from the country. What kind of individuals will these people be if the church does not make its contribution to their lives?

"3) The city churches are being composed to a significant degree of people with rural backgrounds. The rural church can help strengthen the urban church by doing its job well.

"4) Smaller churches produce more ministers in comparison to the size of their congregations."

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What Will Be Your Legacy?

STEWARDSHIP IN A TIME OF CRISIS RECAP

On August 17 and August 18, the Foundation hosted its first virtual “live” stewardship seminar with more than sixty participants. Rev. Bruce Barkhauer (co-host), Minister for Faith and Giving for Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), was guest presenter for “Stewardship in Time of Crisis.” The seminar was offered during two times (one evening and one morning) to accommodate participants’ various schedules.

Rev. Barkhauer presented information and suggestions on how to examine, think and talk about stewardship during this global pandemic. He also referenced the Center for Faith and Giving’s [“Faithful, Hopeful and Loving”](#) year-round stewardship resource materials purchased by the Oklahoma Region and available to all Oklahoma Disciples churches. Oklahoma’s Rev. Dr. Lisa Davison, Johnnie Eargle Cadieux Professor of Hebrew Bible at Phillips Theological Seminary in Tulsa, was a contributing author to these materials. These materials are available on the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) in Oklahoma website.

At the beginning of the presentation, Rev. Barkhauer briefly documented giving trends. “Historically,” he said, “Americans have given away only about 2% of their annual disposable income.”

With 2020 and the pandemic, Rev. Barkhauer noted pastors have had to become televangelists and learn technology without much assistance. He added that church is changing and may not go back to the way it was. He said most churches will continue some type of online presence and electronic giving option. Additionally, they need to provide multiple ways for people to give. He suggested that churches might want to move toward a giving app offering more security and reporting functions.

Referencing a study for the Lake Institute Center Philanthropy

from Indiana University, he said most people attending online worship are spending an average of 20 minutes. Creative thinking is a necessity to engage congregations. He noted that worship services might have to be streamlined and even segmented into smaller clips to meet individual preferences.

It’s important to note that churches are still doing ministry although not within the church building. Those stories should be told to engage congregations and the community.

He pointed out several essentials for a successful church: Vision (one that people know and get); Leadership (Pastor’s role is huge – be a model for the congregation); Education (teaching stewardship); Communication (tell moving stories); Access and Expectation; Gratitude (grateful for gifts from God always say Thank You!); Best Practices (do what we say we will do, be transparent).

Referencing the global pandemic, Rev. Barkhauer said, “There’s incredible opportunity as a restart for churches.”

Need Technology Assistance? Stay Tuned, As Help is on the Way!

Whether or not we embrace it, increased technology and technological knowledge has become a necessity to everyone including churches.

Several Oklahoma Disciples churches have created short videos of their technical equipment systems and methods. These videos will soon be posted on our homepage at <https://okdfd.org>.

ODF and a few technically savvy pastors and lay people are currently working on a live Zoom session to assist churches with digital worship production training, staging and suggestions for appropriate equipment/software.

If you are interested in such training, please call the Foundation at 405.525.6530 to be added to an email list for updates.



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Mail this form and check to the Foundation at the address listed above. Gifts may also be made via PayPal or credit card on our website listed above. Or, use the Givelify mobile app to donate to ODF.

THANK YOU!

I am interested in establishing a permanent endowment to benefit a heartfelt cause or church mission.

I am interested in receiving information on making a bequest to the Foundation.

I/We Wish to Make a Tax-deductible Gift to: Oklahoma Disciples Foundation, Inc.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Yes! Please sign me up for email news updates.

My gift is given in (honor/memory) of:
 circle one

Name: _____

YES! I would like to make a gift to ODF in the amount of:

\$25 _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ Other _____

Please invest my gift in:

Disciple Club supporting ODF Operations.

Named Endowment Fund as listed below:

 (Please list fund name)

Yes, I have included ODF in my estate planning. Please call me to discuss my wishes.