

RIVERS OF LIVING WATER AND LEAVING A LEGACY OF BEAUTY FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

"Whoever believes in me, as Scripture has said, rivers of living water will flow from within them." – John 7:38

First Christian Church, Bartlesville, (FCC Bartlesville) held its final church service on Sunday, April 24, 2022. Just a week after Easter, congregants celebrated a day of remembrance, love, legacy and loss. The church dates back 125 years to the banks of the Caney River in Bartlesville. It was the same year Bartlesville became a city.

After more than two years of decision-making, prayers, questions and more prayers, remaining church members made the faithful decision to close the doors to the church. Dwindling membership demographics and cost to maintain the church building were a few factors contributing to the decision to close.

Guided and supported by Reverend Susan Payne who served as the transitional minister at the church for the past two years, longtime church members took to heart their options for the future of the church

The once thriving church (see October 1, 1916, Sunday School class photo below right) leaves a legacy of memories for current and previous church members and ministers. Over the years, the church established legacy funds with the Christian Church Foundation in Indianapolis and with the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation. Those legacy funds will continue to support the important ministries of the church.

Additionally, the church consulted with the Bartlesville City Council to propose leaving the church building to the City of Bartlesville to serve as an extension of the nearby community center. The City is currently conducting a feasibility study to determine the need for a conference center or alternate use for the city. Architectural renderings have been drafted for a new building that leave a portion of the church building intact so that church legacy will remain visible to future generations.

The closing worship service brought current and former members, guests and members from Disciples Christian Church, previously formed by FCC Bartlesville families, together to fill the church sanctuary one final time. Several former FCC Bartlesville ministers sent words of appreciation and blessings to the church.

The church service ebbed and flowed like the Caney River where the first Disciples were baptized. Music filled the sanctuary while sunlit, multicolored purple and blue stained glass windows (top right photo) held memories of rivers of life within the church...baby dedications, baptisms, weddings and funerals.

Rev. Payne noted the color of the minister stoles and church paraments were red (signifying Pentecost) rather than the usual white of the season. She said red is rare and special recognizing the presence of the Holy Spirit. She added that the Holy Spirit has run through this congregation for years; therefore, red was chosen for the final Sunday service.

In recalling her days at Phillips Theological Seminary, Rev. Payne shared a story of a geology course she found intriguing. She explained that water, drop by drop, could recreate and sculpt hard rock and the earth. Riverbanks widen, rivers transform and they change course.

"The Holy empowers us to find new ways to love God and our neighbors," she said. "Holy has moved through this church nurturing seven ministers and forming three new Christian churches and several community service organizations."

During the decision process members continually asked, "How can we be good and faithful stewards to what we have been entrusted?" They did a remarkable job of answering their own question. The closing service was a legacy of love, hope, community, ministry and commitment. Living water, living love, changing course and steadily flowing.



ODF Board and Staff Gather for Vision Planning at Bank of Oklahoma Park Plaza Tower in Downtown Oklahoma City

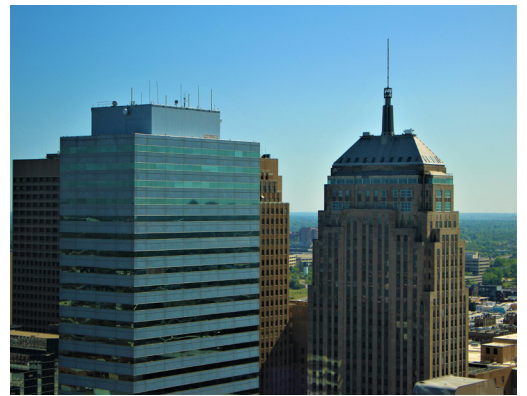
"If you don't know where you are going, it doesn't matter which way you go." — Lewis Carroll, Alice in Wonderland

Last month, the Foundation engaged in the process of strategic planning to discuss ODF's mission, vision, priorities and to outline details of a 3-5 year strategic plan. ODF board of directors met together with staff and a professional facilitator to consider these issues. At the end of the day long session, the consensus among those present was that this

exercise provided a valuable opportunity to reconnect with the Foundation's vision and mission.

Janetta Cravens, Vice President of Programs with the Oklahoma Center for Non-Profits, served as the facilitator for the day. Janetta is an ordained Disciples minister and a native of Oklahoma. Janetta is processing all the data and input from the planning retreat and will present a written document and action plan to staff and board in the near future.

The venue for the strategic planning meeting was provided by Bank of Oklahoma, ODF's money manager. This state-of-the-art setting on the 24th floor of the bank's downtown



location provided inspiring panoramic views of Oklahoma City (pictured, above). The new, modern space with floor to ceiling windows allowed the opportunity for ODF board members from across the state to connect with each other and share their vision for the future of the Foundation.

Read upcoming newsletters or subscribe to our [weekly eNewsletters](#) to learn the outcome of our strategic planning, including possible revision of our mission statement as well as implementation of the plan and its progress.



Janetta Cravens, right, charts board members thoughts. (Board members, left to right) Connie English, John Peach, Frank Gresh and Sei Touthang.

Help Us Connect With You and Go Green

The Foundation emails a weekly Saturday morning eNewsletter to those who subscribe. The newsletter provides a brief snippet about the work of the Foundation, features on grant programs or words of positivity. It also has links to current articles on Savvy Living, Washington News, Personal Planner Information and Finances. Many people have found this quick read useful and informative. Please send your email to jabowers@okdfdn.org to be added to the Foundation's [weekly eNewsletter](#) mailing. We can also email you a link to these quarterly newsletters rather than mailing them.

2022 ODF Grants Program Awards Nearly \$130,000

This year, the Oklahoma Disciple Foundation's Grant Committee and staff reviewed 74 grant applications requesting support for community feeding programs, refugee tutoring and foster care programs, children and youth mission trips and VBS programs, senior adult care programs, educational assistance for pastors, technology assistance for churches and a wide variety of other worthy ministries and missions.

After a long and fulfilling day discussing grant allocations, the Grant Committee awarded over 82% of the organizations at least their minimum grant request and over 20% received their full funding. A list of [final 2022 grant awards](#) totaling nearly \$130,000 is on our website at <https://okdfdn.org>.

Help Grow the 2023 Grants Program

Whether you give \$20 or \$5,000 directly to the Grants Program, you can be assured every single tax-deductible dollar goes to a church program or ministry in need of funding.

You can make a difference and touch lives. DONATE at <https://okdfdn.org>.

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The Foundation newsletter is published quarterly. Email Julie Bowers (jabowers@okdfdn.org) to opt out or advise of any errors, changes, or to update your email and contact information. Every effort was made to ensure the accuracy and completeness of this publication.

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