

# TOWER



OKLAHOMA WESLEYAN UNIVERSITY



**NOT  
ALONE.**

2021 ALUMNI & FRIENDS MAGAZINE

PRESIDENT'S LETTER

# ONE ANOTHER

**“God never intended us to be alone. We are not all alone. Thank the Lord that the presence of His Holy Spirit is with us always!”**

**JIM DUNN, PRESIDENT**

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# *Even in a season of isolation, we are not alone.*

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Nine months into my new role serving Oklahoma Wesleyan University as president, I found myself staring at a screen for hours on end, hundreds of thoughts demanding my attention. The world had literally shut down due to the threats of the global pandemic. I wondered when I would be able to laugh and pray with students and colleagues again. I was losing my ability to think big because of the decisions that had to be made in the midst of uncertainty.

It was a time when I felt all alone. With God as my helper in all things, I wasn't.

## **Not Alone**

Did you know that the most common two-word phrase in the New Testament English Bible is "*one another*?" It's used 100 times in 94 New Testament passages. These passages give instructions to followers of Jesus or deal with church members getting along. They instruct Christians to love, commanding an attitude of humility and deference among believers.

*One another.* It's two words in English, but only one in Greek. The transliteration of the word from Greek to English (*ah-LAY-loan*) almost sounds like "*All Alone.*"

Here, then, is that biblical truth I mentioned: God never intended us to be alone. We are not all alone. Thank the Lord that the presence of His Holy Spirit is with us always!

We were made to be in relationship with God and others. To be loved by Christ is constant in prevenient grace, as well as when we repent of sin and accept Him into our lives. We need that love.

We need others to humbly invoke the presence of the Holy Spirit in prayer. There are times, whether we admit it or not, when we simply need another's help, and when others need ours. Our lives are richer because of these relationships.

We need one another for instruction. We mature as we are able to process the events of life with others who are often older and wiser.

We need one another to be held accountable—biblically, personally, and corporately. In this current day of abundant opinions, words, and division, we need each other to point us to God's truth. Biblically, we need to see others first and foremost as image bearers of God Almighty. We need the Holy Spirit, as well as one another, to speak the truth in love to us when we err or sin. We need others to warn us when we are disobedient to God's truth. The world needs Christians to stop talking *about* people and start talking *to* them, offering the hope and holiness of Jesus Christ in every conversation.

## **Living it Out**

None of this is easy. Striving to live out the numerous "*one another*" commands in the New Testament prompts some reflective questions. Am I obeying the commands of biblical truth in every relationship—with God, family, neighbors, people who do not believe the same as me, or in my social media posts? In my interactions both inside and outside the church?

This year, that's what we at OKWU are striving for—to model love, unity, respect, truth, righteousness, and biblical accountability on campus and in our worldwide OKWU family.

May we again steward well the privilege of going through life with Jesus Christ and with one another. ☪



ISAIAH 41:10

Do Not Fear,  
for I am with you;  
do not be dismayed, for  
I am your  
God.



### When he was 19 years old, an anxious Ackrion Mangimela boarded a plane to China.

It was his first time inside an airplane, and he was on his way to begin a six-year medical school program. During the flight, Mangimela felt the Lord nudging him to a particular passage of Scripture, Isaiah 41:10: "So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."

That plane ride would certainly not be the last time Mangimela made the decision to jump into the unknown, nor the last time he felt anxious about the future. But each time since, he's remembered that moment, that nudge from the Lord, and that passage.

"I've held onto that verse," he said. "Every time I'm about to leap into something I don't really know... that verse comes to mind, that promise."

This year, as Mangimela begins a full-time role at Oklahoma Wesleyan University as an **Assistant Professor of Biology**, he's still drawing on that promise.

"In a setting like OKWU, there's more to what students should take home than knowledge. One of the things I hope they can take home is to actually meet Christ," he said.

Mangimela was born in Zambia, the fourth child in a family of ten. Growing up, he always imagined he'd take one of three career paths: law, medicine, or computer science. He eventually chose medicine, attending medical school in China and working in a diverse array of specialties within the profession, both in China and in Zambia.

As he prepares for this new role, Mangimela sees his role as a mentor and a spiritual helper. Working at a Christian campus was non-negotiable, especially after his freedom in Zambia to share his faith with patients and peers.



Ackrion Mangemela, Assistant Professor of Biology

"I think that it's crucial for me," he said. "Being here allows me to still continue pouring into the spiritual lives of students, helping them, pointing them to Christ."

In the future, Mangimela is interested in returning to hands-on healthcare, probably to become a specialist. For now, he's here in the classroom, and that's enough.

One thing is for sure: the next time Ackrion Mangimela steps out into the unknown, he'll be drawing on the same promise God gave him at 19, as he boarded his first airplane. ✈️



**OKLAHOMA  
WESLEYAN  
UNIVERSITY**

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**TRANSFORMED  
BY GRACE & TRUTH**

**Oklahoma Wesleyan University** is a biblically-centered Christian university of The Wesleyan Church, modeling a way of thought, a way of life, and a way of faith. It is a place of serious study, honest questions, and critical engagement, all in the context of a liberal arts community that honors the primacy of Jesus Christ, the priority of Scripture, the pursuit of Truth, and the practice of Wisdom.

"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." - John 1:14

# TOWER

2021

The TOWER is published yearly for alumni and friends by the office of Creative Impact at Oklahoma Wesleyan University. It is named for the historic La Quinta Mansion on campus, built in 1932. The opinions expressed are those of the individual authors. Send comments or letters to the editor at [creative.impact@okwu.edu](mailto:creative.impact@okwu.edu).

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NOT

ALONE.

## OKWU VOICES

### LIFE IS ALWAYS FULL OF CHALLENGES, BUT 2020 FELT DIFFERENT. THINGS FELT ALTERED.

In a season of virtual workplaces, endless Zoom calls, and social distancing, the COVID-19 pandemic has put the word “community” into sharp focus. It’s caused us here at OKWU to consider: what does it really mean to be part of authentic, life-giving Christian fellowship with those around us?

In this issue, we’ve invited voices from across the OKWU family to explore this theme. We reflect on the value of community in a year marked by isolation, and we tell the stories of those working to

show Christ’s love in the pandemic’s dark places. Through it all, we’re proclaiming this biblical message: We are not alone.

In Matthew 28, Jesus gives His followers this promise: “Surely I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” We held onto that promise through 2020, and we’re holding onto it for tomorrow, too. We hope that our OKWU family of alumni and friends will be strengthened and encouraged by this issue.

No matter what, you are not alone!

“For me, spiritual community means hope, and I appreciate the presence and support of others now more than ever.”

**Brianna Hudson**

CLASS OF 2022

“My community with OKWU, my church, and my family is here, around me now, and I need to take advantage of every opportunity to engage it. I hope that whatever value we take from this last year will continue on. I don’t want things to go back to normal; I want life to change for the better.”

**Natalie Church**  
CAMPUS CARE COORDINATOR

“Before the pandemic, I may have said that community was being around people with shared values, ideas, or goals. Now, I believe community can come in the simplest of forms.”

**Sunshine Hattingsh**  
DIRECTOR OF STUDENT ACADEMIC SERVICES

“For me, 2020 was a season of increasing my faith and trust in the Lord. I leaned on Psalm 56:3: ‘When I am afraid, I put my trust in you.’ The Bible reminds us the Lord will not leave us, a comfort when we feel alone. This pandemic season is memorable and offered opportunities for growth if one was brave enough to seize it.”

**Jana Russell**  
ACADEMIC ADVISING COORDINATOR

“When the love of Christ drives me, I have the strength of ‘I will.’ I will love my neighbor. I will be in community with others. I will care for those who are disenfranchised. I will prioritize ministry. I will... I will... I will...”

**Kyle White**  
VP FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT







# COMMUNITY

*Oklahoma Wesleyan University is deeply committed to developing the whole person – heart, soul, strength, and mind (Luke 10:27).*





SAVE THE DATE

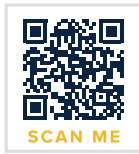
**MARCH 30, 2022**

***OKWU.EDU/GIVEDAY***



**NEW**  
**DOCTOR OF NURSING PRACTICE DEGREE**

*Impacting the Future of Healthcare*



Dr. Rosa Ketchum

OKWU is blazing new trails, launching the first-ever doctoral program in the university's 115-year history. With a 100% online curriculum, the brand-new Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree will equip nurses to serve at the highest level of nursing practice, becoming leaders who improve patient outcomes and health systems by translating research into practice.

"This program will create opportunities to expand our mission by preparing nurses to advocate for social justice, equality, and ethics within healthcare throughout the world," **Becky Le, OKWU's Director of Adult Nursing Programs**, said.

"Our students and faculty will not be constrained to physical boundaries in their calling and will make a Kingdom impact through nursing ministry well beyond our reach."

Like all of OKWU's curriculum, the DNP's coursework holds to the foundation of a Christian worldview, preparing nurses who can care for their patients' bodies and souls. The program offers two doctoral learning pathways: a **Post-Masters DNP** and the **BSN to DNP**. The Post Master's Pathway enables advanced practice nurses, nurse informaticists, nurse educators, nurse administrators, and other masters-prepared specialty nurses to obtain a DNP in Executive Leadership. The BSN to DNP Pathway allows bachelors-prepared nurses to earn their Doctor of Nursing Practice.

"The DNP in Executive Leadership is a program that will enable Kingdom nurses to serve at the highest level of nursing practice," **Dr. Rosa Ketchum**, director of the program, said. "This program acts to develop and empower nurses at the BSN or MSN level to use their leadership skills to improve patient outcomes and health systems by translating research into practice." ☪



During the Board of Trustees meeting on March 11, 2021, OKWU's nursing team celebrated approval of the brand-new Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) program.



*The DNP in Executive Leadership is a program that will enable Kingdom nurses to serve at the highest level of nursing practice. — Dr. Rosa Ketchum, DNP Director*



ATHLETICS

PUSHING THROUGH THE

# NOISE

**When you look back on the 2020-21 school year, one thing immediately comes to mind: *disruption*.**

Between quarantines, missed practices, and games being moved, coaches and players were forced to battle through the strangest collegiate season in recent memory.

For the fall sports, like volleyball and soccer, the disruption came when their season, usually wrapped up well before December, was put on hold and scheduled to resume during the spring semester. Yet, each of those teams were able to band together during the unexpected interlude and come back strong. Volleyball made their way to

the KCAC semi-finals, and women's soccer rolled through regular season play. The men's soccer program went further than any team before them: the Eagles' first ever trip to the **NAIA National Championship**.

"This was the most successful season in program history," said Jamie Peterson, men's soccer coach. "I am proud of how our players represented Christ, our program, and their families."

In basketball, the COVID pandemic came at the same time that the NAIA merged the two separate divisions into one larger division. Despite the increase in competition (and a shorter schedule due to COVID restrictions), the Eagles soared to the **NAIA Sweet 16** once again.



The '21-'22 OKWU Men's Soccer team earned the No. 2 spot in the NAIA Preseason Coaches Poll — the highest preseason ranking in program history.

On the diamond, both the Eagles baseball and softball squads put together seasons to remember. The Lady Eagles softball team, predicted to finish 9th place in the conference, won 31 games and earned a spot in the KCAC Tournament.

“I am very proud of my girls and the year they had,” said Shawn Woods, head softball coach. “They refused to listen to the noise and worked hard to surpass everyone’s expectations but their own.”

Finding a rhythm is hard enough during the long baseball season, but Coach Kirk Kelley and the Eagles also dealt with two separate 10-day breaks with no practices or team meetings after positive COVID tests. But the team rallied together and advanced to the **NAIA World Series**.

“With all the COVID restrictions, my team showed tremendous character in the midst of adversity,” said Tracie Gillette, head volleyball coach. “In a year like this, it was very tough to do. 🙏”





## OKWU Men's Soccer (21-3-1)

The Eagles started their season with 12 consecutive wins, rolling to KCAC regular season and tournament championships. Coach Jamie Peterson had five of his players honored as NAIA All-Americans. Julio Belo, Stefan Cvetanovic, and Stefan Lukic were named First Team All-Americans, while Matheus Ferreira was named to the Second Team and Alfeu Bertini received Honorable Mention.



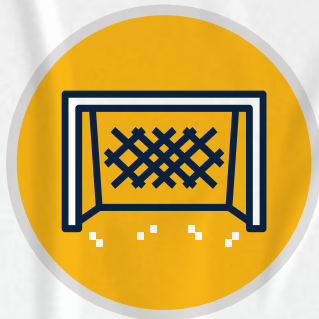
## OKWU Baseball (49-11)

The Eagles dominated KCAC play, romping to a 30-4 record in the conference. They won the KCAC regular season championship. Cody Muncy, a junior, was named KCAC Player of the Year, while Kelley was honored by the KCAC coaches as Coach of the Year. The Eagles had a total of eight players named to the All-KCAC Teams: Isaac Wersland (First Team), Cody Muncy (First Team), Crosby Bringham (First Team), Kellen Brothers (First Team), Danny Perez (Second Team), A'Darius Council (Second Team), Brendan Bell (Second Team), and Jesus Rojas (Honorable Mention).

# A BANNER YEAR



Kirk Kelley (Athletic Director & Men's Baseball Head Coach)  
and Jamie Peterson (Men's Soccer Head Coach)



### **OKWU Women's Soccer (18-3-0)**

The Lady Eagles, coached by Ivan Ristic, also dominated the pitch, finishing the year 18-3-0. They won the KCAC regular season and tournament championships.

Three Lady Eagles received NAIA All-American honors.



### **OKWU Men's Basketball (21-7)**

An eight-game winning streak in the middle of conference play propelled the Eagles Men's hoops squad, led by Coach Donnie Bostwick.

The team finished as runner-up in the KCAC Tournament before advancing to the NAIA National Tournament. They made a run to the Round of 16 before seeing their season end.



### **OKWU Women's Basketball (12-14)**

The team found its stride in the KCAC Tournament, winning two post-season games and advancing to the semi-finals. Coach Grace Hadley welcomes a talented and experienced group for the upcoming season.



### **OKWU Softball (31-17)**

On the diamond, the Lady Eagles Softball team finished fourth in the conference and earned a spot in the KCAC Conference Tournament.



### **OKWU Volleyball (20-17)**

A strong postseason push, including a win over #2-seeded McPherson, saw the Lady Eagles advance to the semi-finals of the KCAC Tournament.

**>> SUPPORT THE EAGLES  
FOLLOW @OKWUEAGLES**



## STUDENT PROFILE

### What does community mean to me?

Growing up, I was told that in order to impact the world, you needed to first start with your community. I never knew what that meant. Living through the global pandemic was a tough battle—I struggled with the sense of being trapped. Not having a community to go to “in person” was hard, and I struggled mentally because of that constant mindset of being alone.

Going back to school in the fall was a blessing, especially since other schools weren’t able to. OKWU was more than just a school for me, and the people there were more than just my friends, professors, or peers. For me, OKWU became a family. Everyone spent time with each other and made others around campus feel connected. I’ve learned that community is more than just the group of people you surround yourself with. It’s an intentional group of people who support, encourage, and help you in your time of need.

I went through a lot of trials this past spring semester, and if it wasn’t for the community I had on campus, I wouldn’t have made it through. The students, professors, staff, and faculty took time to check on me and made me feel wanted and loved. Having people in my life that truly cared made me realize something about OKWU: this place is a community built on Christ.

But the community aspect goes even further than that.

This summer, I traveled with a team to different church camps across the country. What I saw was beautiful. For eight weeks we traveled, but it was the community we built as a team and family that got us through the summer. We were able to be vulnerable and lean on each other through our battles. I saw a group of people leaning on each other, building and supporting each other. I saw this generation craving community—I saw the need to feel loved, wanted, and supported.

This past year reminded me that we, as children of God, are not alone. It bears repeating.

We, as one body, are not alone. 🌐



# JOE

# PENA

*I saw a group of people leaning on each other, building and supporting each other. I saw this generation craving community—I saw the need to feel loved, wanted, and supported.*

— Joe Pena (Class of 2022)





@OKWUNIV



>> WANT TO STAY SOCIAL?  
FOLLOW @OKWUNIV





# WAKE UP, DEAD MAN

IT'S BEEN MONTHS SINCE THAT SINGULAR  
MOMENT IN A LONELY HOSPITAL ROOM IN TULSA  
WHEN A DYING MAN AWOKE TO LIFE AGAIN.

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## '20 OKWU Graduate Serving COVID-19 Patients

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### In January of 2021, David Sieminskie was close to death.

Infected with COVID-19, he lay in the Intensive Care Unit of Hillcrest Medical Center, deeply sedated and struggling to breathe. His prognosis was grim, and **Micah Neuenschwander**, one of his nurses, knew it right away.

“The night that I first had him, he was already prone on his belly. He was sedated, he was paralyzed, he was on blood pressure support,” Micah recalls. “Most people I saw at that point didn’t make it out without permanent brain damage, to where they wouldn’t be able to function anyways. Or they just didn’t make it.”

On Micah’s second night with David, he worked to change the situation. The goal was simple: David had to wake up and start breathing on his own, getting off the ventilator and restoring his own functions. Through multiple nights, Micah tried to help him break through—with no success.

It took time, patience, and hope in the face of what seemed like insurmountable odds. “The night that he woke up, I honestly wasn’t expecting it,” Micah says. “I had gone the whole night, multiple times, trying to get him to wake up and open his eyes and do something for me. And I hadn’t had any success.”

But just as Micah’s shift was ending, something happened: David Sieminskie opened his eyes.



WATCH THE VIDEO AT  
[WWW.OKWU.EDU/TOWER](http://WWW.OKWU.EDU/TOWER)





On Friday evening, symptoms began to appear.

**“It hit,”** David says. **“And it hit hard.”**

“It was a complete game-changer,” Micah says. “As soon as he did that, I had to tell him: *you have to keep fighting.*”

He sat by David’s bedside, that phrase his rallying cry: keep fighting. Not just for David himself, but for his family, the people outside the hospital who needed him to recover. After that, Micah simply repeated his patient’s name, over and over, like a mantra:

*David, David, David, David.*

Realistically, David Sieminskie’s story should have ended differently. Both he and Micah know that. But it didn’t. And when asked to describe exactly what happened, to explain that pivotal moment, David’s answer sounds deceptively simple:

“I woke up to Micah screaming my name in my face,” he says, his tone matter of fact. Other than a few hazy blurs, it’s the first thing he can remember now of his two weeks in critical care.

The important thing is that he woke up at all. It wasn’t a given. Both David and Micah use the word *miracle* to describe it.

## Uncommon Circumstances

In a kinder world—a world where healthy fifty-year-old men don’t end up half-dead in the ICU—David and Micah might never have met. Their paths certainly wouldn’t have converged naturally.

When the pandemic began in 2020, Sieminskie was a healthy salesperson in Collinsville, working to sell the PPE that would be so valuable later in the year. Micah was working to finish his senior year at OKWU amid the chaos that accompanied the Spring 2020 semester: delays, virtual classes, and a widespread, undefined sense of unease. He was already working as a nurse extern when the general COVID outlook began to look scary, but he tried to take a measured response to it.

“I think everybody had the same thought at first: it’s just another one of those diseases that’s going to come by, it’s going to leave, and that will be that,” he says. “It wasn’t until I got to the ICU that I really started to see how bad things got.”

Once that reality dawned, the emotional and physical toll was costly. “It’s not common for new grads to see as much death as what we have—all these new grads that are going into the COVID units now after graduating.”

David’s reaction to the pandemic was measured, too—at least in the beginning.

“My initial thought process was like anyone else’s: okay, how does this affect me?” he says. “Months went on, you learn more about this, and you understand just how real it is.”

His initial diagnosis was pneumonia on a Monday evening in January. On Wednesday, after an antibiotic, he was feeling better. It was later in the week that he thought to receive a COVID test. It was positive. On Friday evening, symptoms began to appear.

“It hit,” David says. “And it hit hard.”

That night, his wife Belinda took him to the local emergency room. It’s the last substantive memory he has until the moment he woke up to Micah’s voice.

## “A Good Human Being”

Even after David woke up, Micah kept checking in, amazed at the progress his patient was making. “Even before he left the ICU, he was getting out of bed on his own, which is unheard of,” he says. “We couldn’t believe that he had been doing so well.”

When things progressed to the point that they could finally move David out of the COVID-specific ICU area and into a general section of the hospital, Micah checked in one last time. This time, he brought something with him.



David Sieminskie and Micah Neuenschwander '20

**“HE CAME UP THERE, AND HE’S CHECKING ON ME AND WONDERING HOW THINGS WERE GOING. HE BROUGHT ME A CARD AND SAID, ‘THANK YOU FOR ALLOWING ME TO TAKE CARE OF YOU,’” DAVID RECALLS NOW. “I MEAN... WHO DOES THAT? THAT’S JUST INCREDIBLE.”**

Micah says he’s given notes to a few patients during the COVID crisis. It’s a way to thank those people that he’s been able to help towards positive outcomes—because, as sad as it is, those positive outcomes were rare last year.

“David was one of my three success stories,” he says. “I wanted him to know that he has definitely changed my life... Patients like him and these other success stories that we have, that’s the reason why we go into nursing. And if I can have the chance to tell him that he’s the reason why I keep coming to work every night, then I definitely want him—and all my patients—to know that.”

When a local news station picked up the story, it provided an opportunity for the two to connect outside of the hospital. They friended each other on social media, began texting back and forth, and made plans to see each

other, even as David struggled through a grueling physical therapy process.

It’s been months since that singular moment in a lonely hospital room in Tulsa, when a dying man awoke to life again. It’s fair to say both David and Micah remember it differently. For Micah, it’s an example of light during a dark year, a flicker of hope during a long, cloudy night.

For David, of course, it’s different. He’s simply grateful to be alive, pointing to the daunting recovery statistics for those who become intubated with COVID. “In terms of people making it, I absolutely consider it a miracle,” he says. “I’m one of the fortunate ones... I give God the glory and I always will.”

But he also views this story as a testament to the sacrifices those in the medical industry made last year, a way to shine a light on their stories. In his eyes, that’s the value of this story. It’s not about him at all; it’s about those men and women standing in the gap for their patients each day, an expression of Christian love—and OKWU’s mission—if ever there was one.

“Understand that these people are out there taking risks that most people don’t want to take,” he says, his voice passionate. “They deserve every bit of the accolades or recognition [they get]. And the beauty of it? Micah wasn’t interested in accolades or a pat on the back. He was more interested in how I was doing, in making sure I came out of it alive. That’s not just helping or being a nurse, that’s being a good human being.” 🙏



## EVENTS

# AHEAD IN 2021-2022

SEP  
**24**

### Engage: College for a Day

*College preparation event for high school students.*

OCT  
**8**

### OKWU Visit Day

*Register online for a personalized visit.*

OCT  
**8/9**

### Homecoming Weekend

*Celebrate with our extended OKWU family.*

DEC  
**17/18**

### Graduation

*Help us celebrate our graduates during our Baccalaureate and Commencement ceremonies.*

FEB  
**25**

### OKWU Visit Day

*Register online to experience our beautiful campus.*

MAR  
**30**

### Give Day

*Support student scholarships on #OKWUGiveDay.*

APR  
**8**

### OKWU Visit Day

*Experience the people and spirit of OKWU.*

MAY  
**6/7**

### Graduation

*Help us celebrate our graduates during our Baccalaureate and Commencement ceremonies.*

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FIND NEWS, EVENTS, AND MORE AT [OKWU.EDU](https://okwu.edu)



## WHY WE GIVE

WILL YOU SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH THE LIFE-CHANGING POWER OF AN OKWU EDUCATION?

[WWW.OKWU/GIVE](http://WWW.OKWU/GIVE)

“As alumni, we give to OKWU because of our past. We know that our story would have been very different without the ministry and opportunities we were afforded during our undergrad years. Plus, now that we have two children who also want to attend OKWU, we give because of our future, too!”

JEREMY AND MELISSA LITTLE ('02), WITH CALEB AND OLIVIA



SCAN ME

Students at Oklahoma Wesleyan University receive a Christ-centered education that's only made possible by the generous support of people like the Littles.

# OKWU HEADLINES

## OCTOBER 2020

**Dean of Ministry Exploring Christology Through Publication**  
Dr. Jerome Van Kuiken served as the co-editor of **Methodist Christology: From the Wesleys to the Twenty-First Century**, which explores the doctrine of Christ within the Wesleyan and Methodist traditions. The work was edited alongside **Dr. Jason Vickers**, of Asbury Theological Seminary. In addition, this year marked ten years of service at OKWU for Van Kuiken.



DR. JEROME VAN KUIKEN

## NOVEMBER 2020

### Athletics Launches Beach Volleyball Program

OKWU is excited to officially announce the addition of a Women's Beach Volleyball program, with competition to begin **Spring 2022**. **Stephanie Lindsey**, a former 4-year OKWU volleyball player, will lead the program. Visit [www.okwueagles.com](http://www.okwueagles.com).



STEPHANIE LINDSEY

## JANUARY 2021

### Dean's Scholarships Announced

Dean's Scholarships are awarded to extraordinary students committed to excellence in their studies and poised for success in the future. Each dean chooses students who represent the best of their chosen discipline. Visit [www.okwu.edu/deans-scholarship](http://www.okwu.edu/deans-scholarship).



DAN REILAND

## MARCH 2021

### Dan Reiland Headlines Dunn Institute

Dan Reiland, Executive Pastor of 12Stone Church in Georgia, served as the keynote speaker for the 2021 conference, with additional seminars presented by **Kyle Hubbard**, President of Arvest Bank in Springfield, Missouri, and **Dr. Randy Thompson**, former Vice President of Development at OKWU. Over 40 pastors attended from all over the country.

## MARCH 2021

### Board of Trustees Reaffirms Statement of Faith

During this year's Board of Trustees meeting, university leadership reaffirmed OKWU's mission as a Christ-centered and Bible-living university holding tightly to our core pillars. OKWU is grateful to the men and women leading the university and advancing its Christian mission without compromise.

## APRIL 2021

### Kelley and Peterson Receive Coaching Honors

Coaches **Kirk Kelley** (baseball) and **Jamie Peterson** (soccer) were both named **KCAC** coaches of the year for their respective sports for the 2020-2021 season. The awards serve as a fitting end to a season of tremendous, historic success for the OKWU athletic program—even in the midst of pandemic chaos.



### APRIL 2021

#### Sells Earns Doctorate

Congratulations to Dr. Kelley Sells, who successfully defended her thesis this April to earn her doctoral degree. OKWU is grateful for the passionate faculty making an eternal impact in the lives of our students.

### MAY 2021

#### OKWU Announces DNP Program, First-Ever Doctoral Degree in University History

The university is proud to announce its brand-new Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP) degree, allowing nurses to serve at the highest level of healthcare practice. Designed for working adults, this program offers two doctoral learning pathways: a Post-Masters DNP and the BSN to DNP. For more information, please visit [www.okwu.edu/dnp](http://www.okwu.edu/dnp).



DR. KELLEY SELLS



JANA RUSSELL

### APRIL 2021

#### Russell Named OKWU Prep Coordinator

Jana Russell, part of OKWU's talented team of academic advisors, was recently named the director of OKWU Prep, the university's groundbreaking concurrent curriculum pathway for high school students. Visit [www.okwu.edu/prep](http://www.okwu.edu/prep).

### JULY 2021

#### Faculty Undergoes Online Training

Led by Keri Bostwick and Kevin Osborn, OKWU faculty members attended hands-on training workshops to better serve the student population through online learning. It's one of the ways the university is preparing to launch OKWU Online, a unique pathway for online undergraduate students.



### SUMMER 2021

#### Summer Camp Students Baptized

OKWU was proud to host a number of summer camps on its campus, allowing students from all over the country the chance to experience the life-changing gospel of Jesus Christ. During DETOUR, The Wesleyan Church's Tri-State District Youth Camp, 38 students gave their lives to Jesus and were baptized in OKWU's pond. 🌊

## ATHLETIC PROFILE

# CORI

# CAMPBELL

During her time at Oklahoma Wesleyan University, Cori Campbell has experienced quite a few “bonuses”—perhaps none bigger than being the 2021 recipient of the Kansas Collegiate Athletic Conference’s Character Award.

Spurred on by Coach Julia Mongin to enter her name, Campbell almost forgot about the competition until the night of the deadline. “I wrote it really fast. I really did *not* think I would get it,” she said. But, of course, she did receive the award. And the unexpected nature of how it happened is on par with the rest of her athletic career at OKWU—starting with the fact that she even has an athletic career. “I didn’t originally think I would play a sport in college,” she said. “I knew that if I went to school for tennis, it would be for tennis, and not for my education. I wanted to really focus on [that.] OKWU allowed me to do that and still play the sport I love.”

Playing the sport she loves is no easy commitment for Campbell. She’s double majoring in Graphic Design and Strategy and Digital Cinema, and she’s stayed active and involved with extracurricular activities on campus. While scheduling can be a challenge, she’s made it work—Campbell was named a Scholar-Athlete by the **Intercollegiate Tennis Association**, signifying that she’d achieved a GPA of 3.5 or higher.

A junior now, she’s not quite sure what comes after graduation, but that’s fine with her. She’s going to keep doing what she’s been doing—working hard in the classroom and on the tennis court, enjoying the journey to the fullest. 🎾



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Rendering by Ambler Architects

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ALUMNI PROFILE

# STEPPING INTO THE GRACE OF GOD

*Two years ago, a man began attending church meetings in Beirut, Lebanon, with Matt and Julie Hattabaugh—although "attending" might be putting it a bit strongly. Participation on this man's part was lacking.*

*GPS Students Serving in Lebanon*

“He would just sleep, then he’d wake up, and he’d question,” Matt remembers. “He was either sleeping or asking questions.”

But as time went on, the man’s attitude began to change. He listened to the gospel these missionaries were preaching, and he practiced God’s word practically in his life. Earlier this year, he came to Matt with a realization.

“He said to me, ‘Paul had an experience with Jesus, but he couldn’t see until he found Ananias,’” Matt recalls. “He pointed at me, and he said, ‘You’re Ananias.’”

It was a turning point for the man—and a validation of Matt and Julie’s entire ministry.

“I said, ‘Yes! And you’re Paul!’” Matt says, laughing. “That story really sums up our focus. We want to turn Lebanese people loose with the ‘go ye’ Gospel message for Lebanon.”

The Hattabaughs have worked hard during their time in Beirut to build a ministry that speaks to the needs of the local people, one that puts the glory of the Gospel above personal ambition.

“The good news answer is not American missionaries in these places,” Matt says. “We bring as many problems as we solve, because we’re always going to be communicating through a cultural barrier. But as we release leaders here to be equipped and to follow the same Jesus that we know, He can do great things in places we just can’t go.”

## Less than Convinced

No one can say that Matt and Julie have taken the easy path. Not only are they deeply involved with church ministry and numerous aspects of leadership and missionary training—they’re students, too. Julie completed her Bachelor of Ministry and Leadership in December through OKWU’s **Adult and Graduate Studies** program, and now she’s working towards her master’s in the same subject. Matt started in 2019 on the Organizational Leadership trajectory.

Their path to Lebanon wasn’t easy, either. Matt and Julie were married in 2012, coming from different backgrounds and experiences within the Christian faith. Matt’s family were strong believers.

“My family never asked the question, ‘Are we going to church this Sunday?’ It was always, ‘What time are we leaving?’” he says now. After attending ministry training, he spent four years in Russia teaching at a Bible school, then lived a short time in the Czech Republic. His path, as he saw it, was clear.

Julie had a mixed experience with her faith—definitional, perhaps, but not experiential. “When I was six, on Easter Sunday, I remember my mom telling me to go down front and pray... I had no idea what I was doing,” she says. “I knew that there was a God, I knew of Jesus, and I knew that Jesus had a very special place in my heart, but I had never actually confessed Jesus as my Lord and Savior.”



Matt and Julie Hattabaugh with their children, Trinten and Kaitlynn, in Beirut, Lebanon.

**“AS WE RELEASE  
LEADERS HERE TO BE  
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JUST CAN’T GO.”**

This didn't change until 2012, when both Matt and Julie were attending a missions conference at Rhema Church. "It never clicked to me that I hadn't confessed Jesus," she remembers. "They gave an altar call, and I just knew that I was supposed to confess in that moment."

The experience came with an immediate calling, too—Julie knew she was to attend Rhema Bible School to prepare for overseas mission work. When she graduated, Matt and Julie would move to the mission field.

Only, they weren't sure where to go. Julie had long felt a calling to Lusaka, Zambia, and was keen to pursue a pathway there. But before they made a decision, Matt got the opportunity to take a trip to Lebanon.

"All the time was spent in the streets of Beirut witnessing to people," he says. "Very little organized ministry."

He came home with a plan.

"I told Julie, 'We're moving to Beirut!'" Matt laughs now. "She was less than convinced that was a great idea."

But over the next year, the family spent time going back and forth from America to Lebanon, and they made the decision to move there in 2017. Julie, still pining for Lusaka, had given God something of an ultimatum: He had three months to convince her Lebanon was the right place for their family. That certainty came early.

"We'd been there about two weeks and Julie said to me, 'Isn't this supposed to be much harder?'" Matt says. "We really stepped into the grace of God."

## Seeing Growth

That's not to say that everything in Lebanon is easy, or that the country is some half-forgotten geo-political paradise. There are incredible challenges to overcome due to governmental unrest. In 2019, the sitting Lebanese government resigned after receiving a vote of no-confidence from the parliament, and the new sitting government has yet to receive that vote.

"Essentially, we don't really have a functioning government now," Matt says.

The Lebanese currency has lost value, the official unemployment rate is at 66%, and consumer goods have seen an almost 500% increase in price, leading to an unstable banking system. The Beirut port explosion, which rocked the country and dominated world headlines in August 2020, destroyed over 19,000 businesses and left 300,000 people homeless.

"This has been a really difficult time, and everyone we're ministering to is experiencing it," Matt says. "People that

are really committed to planting churches and seeing evangelism go and grow, they're faced with these practical life issues."

When you add a seismic demographic shift to this political unrest, the situation becomes precarious. In 2014, 70% of Lebanon's population was culturally Christian, with a minority Muslim population. After the Syrian Civil War, Lebanon took in 2.5 million refugees into a country with a population of 3 million. Most of them are Muslim.

"That's analogous to something like 215 million Muslims coming into the United States in ten months," Matt says. "Everything has changed."

So, yes. There are certainly challenges. But Matt and Julie remain optimistic, confident in the calling they received and confident in the growth they've been seeing. Since arriving, they've assisted in three different church plants, and their primary ministry, **Go Church Beirut**, has successfully launched—even after the challenges of COVID-19.

**THERE ARE CERTAINLY CHALLENGES. BUT MATT AND JULIE REMAIN OPTIMISTIC, CONFIDENT IN THE CALLING THEY RECEIVED AND CONFIDENT IN THE GROWTH THEY'VE BEEN SEEING.**

"We had 38,000 people watch a 53-minute message on Easter that was super evangelistic and had a really strong altar call," Matt says.

Even still, the couple isn't concerned with their own goals—they're working hard to equip others to lead.

"We're working to become as useless as possible, as fast as possible," Matt says.

When asked what the future holds, the Hattabaughs smile. The look they exchange speaks to a clear satisfaction in their work, a soul-deep conviction that Lebanon is *home* now.

"We are in Beirut, Lebanon, until [it] ends," Julie says confidently. "When the Lord tells us to leave Beirut, our heart's desire is to go to the next thing and do the same thing again."

Matt paints it even more starkly: "In World War II, when you signed up, you signed up for the duration of the war, plus six months," he says. "Our time in Lebanon is the duration plus six months." 🕊

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# HOMECOMING

# 2021

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SCAN ME

*Register & See Schedule*

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## CLASS REUNIONS:

- >> 1970 and 1971; Miltonvale Alumni
- >> 1995 and 1996
- >> 2010 and 2011
- >> 2015 and 2016

## MAIN EVENTS:

- >> Soaring Seniors Reception
- >> Campus Updates
- >> Homecoming Banquet
- >> Lawn Games & Scavenger Hunt
- >> Alumni Games: Baseball & Basketball

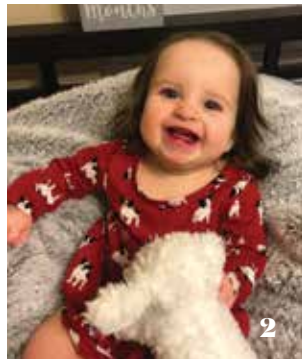
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**See our website for current scheduling and health advisories.**





## ALUMNI UPDATES

# OKWU ON THE MOVE

**1**  
**Richard ('71) and Inge Huston** have been ministering to international students for decades, and they are excited to continue to grow a city-wide ministry in Hamburg, Germany, which reaches over 10,000 international students from all over the world.

**2**  
**Erica Wiszneaukas-Reeves ('04) and her husband, Robert,** welcomed a baby girl, Makayla Claire Reeves, on December 9, 2019, in Oklahoma City, OK.

**Ed and Yvonne ('66) Felter** are thrilled to announce their retirement and relocation to Grain Valley, MO, east of Kansas City, after 35 years in ministry and 25 years in the financial securities services.

**3**  
**Billie ('19) and Spenser White ('20)** welcomed their firstborn daughter, Chloe, on September 10, 2019.

**Joyce Gray-Ritchie (Doolittle, '76)** is enjoying retirement at the age of 92, celebrating decades of dedicated service as an educator in and around the Bartlesville area. Her son, Eric, now teaches English and Literature at OKWU.

**4**  
**Taylor (Perkins, '19) and Rusty Corder** were married on January 2, 2021. Taylor is currently pursuing her master's in chemistry at Kansas State University and will defend her thesis this year.

**5**  
**Brittany (Downard, '05) and Brad Whaling** were married on October 7, 2017. They welcomed their oldest daughter, Bristol, on March 17, 2019, and their youngest, Brooke, on July 20, 2020. Brittany works as a teacher for the Bartlesville Public School system.

**6**  
**Elmer ('50) and Velma (Hotchkiss) Brannon** celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary on June 6, 2021. Their family held a reception for them and presented them with a park bench in their honor on OKWU's campus.

**Blythe Moseman ('20)** is celebrating her dream role at Bartlesville High School, where she teaches 9th grade English and Public Speaking.





5



10



12



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11

**7**  
**Bethany Tiffany ('20)** works as a corrections officer at a detention center, interacting each day with at-risk youth. She is grateful for the chance to serve each day and build relationships with the young men and women she spends time with.

**Ryan and Taylor Akers ('03)** are celebrating 20 years of marriage this year after meeting at OKWU. They have four children: Paige, Kobe, Brooklyn, and Reagan, and foster a three-year-old and a seven-year-old. Ryan graduated from Wesley Seminary in 2020, and currently serves as the campus pastor for Lamont Wesleyan Church, a thriving rural church which has seen more than 100 baptisms since its launch in 2018.

**8**  
**Abby (Powell, '20) and Josh Petermann** were married on March 27, 2021. Abby recently took a role at OKWU as an Academic Assistant.

**9**  
**Ally (Powell, '20) and Jabin Umfleet** are celebrating their second wedding anniversary. Jabin currently works as a youth pastor at Lamont Wesleyan Church, and Ally teaches 8th grade English. They live in Madison, KS, with their border collie, Dax.

**10**  
**Josh and Ashley Blain ('09)** have been living in Concordia, KS, since 2012. Their daughter, McAllister, is seven, and their son, Boaz, is five. Ashley is entering her 10th year teaching English at Concordia High School. Josh was employed as the youth pastor at Concordia Wesleyan Church but resigned in 2018 to work through his own addiction recovery. Josh and Ashley now lead Celebrate Recovery, where they can walk with others through hurts, habits, and hang-ups.

**Eleanor Hunsinger ('62)** has retired from a career in missionary nursing in Zambia. She now lives in Brooksville, FL, and has self-published her first novel: *Mark of the Covenant: The Story of Jonathan, Prince of Israel* (2021). The book is available for purchase on Amazon.

**11**  
**Jamie Baier ('21)** recently relocated with her family to Ozark, AR. She works for Heart of Hospice as an on-call nurse, enjoying her time in the nursing field and the blessings God has given her.

**12**  
**Addy (Johnson, '20) and Daniel ('19) Lopez** were married on June 26, 2021. Addy teaches 3rd grade at Dewey Elementary School and Daniel serves as the Youth Director at Grace Community Church in Bartlesville.





## BENEDICTION

A prayer for students from Dr. Brian Turner  
Convocation Chapel 2019

**"HOLD ON TO INSTRUCTION; DON'T LET GO.  
GUARD IT, FOR IT IS YOUR LIFE."**

PROVERBS 4:13

*Heavenly father, we celebrate this new day.  
We are so thankful for our teachers, coaches,  
and mentors, and view them as shining lights  
to guide the next generation.*

*Bless their upcoming year, strengthen them  
for their workload, and give them patience  
and wisdom for shaping lives.*

*And may we look to you, Jesus,  
as the greatest student who ever lived:*

*You studied hard, even when no one was watching.*

*You understood your calling was to be a servant  
of others, not focused on yourself.*

*You listened to the stories of others,  
and learned from them.*

*You found solitary places to be refreshed by God.*

*You looked to the Scriptures to find  
your strength and courage.*

*You embraced close friends to walk  
with you on the journey.*

*You did what was right,  
no matter what it might cost you.*

*In the name of the Father,  
of Jesus Christ His Son,  
and through the Holy Spirit.  
God in three persons, yet One.*

*Amen!*



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