

THE OKLAHOMAN

FEATURES

After 60 years, Oklahoma Disciples Center is moving from First Christian Church-OKC property

A building deconsecration ceremony is planned



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With a 60-year lease agreement coming to an end, a building on prominent church property will be deconsecrated in Oklahoma City.

The Oklahoma Disciples Center, 301 NW 36, will be deconsecrated during a ceremony set for 12:30 p.m. Saturday on the First Christian Church of Oklahoma City property at the corner of NW 36 and Walker Avenue.

The Disciples Center is located just east of the site where the iconic First Christian Church-OKC with its egg-shaped dome once stood. The center was built intentionally on First Christian Church grounds and has been the regional headquarters for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Oklahoma for decades, but the Rev. Pam Holt said First Christian Church decided not to renew the regional organization's longtime lease.

The church and the regional faith group have been connected over the years through the Disciples Center lease agreement and the close physical proximity, according to First Christian Church/Oklahoma Disciples of Christ historical documents shared by Holt, regional minister for the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Oklahoma.

First Christian was once home to one of Oklahoma City's largest congregations, with between 3,600 and 3,800 members, when its "Church of Tomorrow" opened at 3700 N Walker in 1956. According to the church and the Oklahoma Disciples of Christ intertwined history, a committee was formed to negotiate with First Christian Church to locate the Disciples Center on the church's property. A lease agreement was worked out and the state

Disciples of Christ board approved the agreement on Nov. 22, 1963. The building, constructed in 1964, was designed by Fred Pojezny, one of the architects for the First Christian Church building.

"This building (Disciples Center) being located here will help strengthen ties between First Christian, as the state's largest church, and the state association," stated an excerpt in First Christian/Oklahoma Disciples of Christ historical papers.

Meanwhile, Holt said Oklahoma Disciples of Christ staff members will work remotely for a time until another office is located. She said there are currently 122 Disciples of Christ churches in the state.

Three other organizations also leased space in the building and they have already relocated. Holt said they include the Oklahoma Faith Network, formerly known as the Oklahoma Conference of Churches; Interfaith Network; and the Oklahoma Disciples Foundation.

What will happen to Disciples of Christ building in OKC?

The Rev. John Malget, First Christian Church-OKC's senior minister, said the church doesn't know what it will do with the empty Disciples Center building.

"We have no concrete plans for right now," he said Tuesday.

For her part, Holt acknowledged that there may be community members who are curious about the church's decision not to renew the center's lease and what that could mean for the building and the future of the sprawling church property.

First Christian Church caught historic preservationists, former church members and others in the community by surprise when the historic mid-century landmark church building was demolished in September 2022. The church put the property up for sale in late 2016 and historic preservationists and some community members and Oklahoma City Council members had hoped to keep the iconic building from being torn down.

"This is kind of 'part two' of the dome building coming down," Holt said of the Disciples Center's lease ending. "Negotiations to extend the lease were unfruitful."

Malget has previously said much-needed repairs to First Christian's aging church building were too costly. This reality came into play when the much larger and arguably more

affluent congregation at Crossings Community Church, 14600 N Portland, also cited the enormous renovation/repair expense as the reason Crossings ultimately nixed a plan to purchase the iconic building and turn it into a satellite.

The First Christian congregation moved out of the church building in 2020 and Malget said Tuesday church members continue to meet in the youth building on the church property. He said Jewel Box Theatre performances also are held in that building and the theater company is preparing for its 66th season. The Jewel Box, a First Christian Church ministry, had performed for years in its own iconic building on the church's property but the structure was demolished in 2022.

More: Jewel Box Theatre demolition 'It's closing night.' Longtime director and supporters watch Jewel Box Theatre demolition

Deconsecration ceremony set for Disciples Center in OKC

Holt led a remembrance service for the First Christian Church building after it had been torn down. Though she is unsure of the fate of the Disciples Center building "we're going to celebrate the life that it had under the Christian Church Disciples of Christ in Oklahoma."

The deconsecration ceremony will be followed by a reception. Holt said attendees will be given opportunities to view items contained in a time capsule at the site and recently opened just in time for the closing of the building.

Meanwhile, Holt said she and the Disciples Center are connected in several ways. Not only did she spend several years of her ministry career in the building, but she said the late Rev. Orval Holt, the First Christian Church-Bartlesville pastor and state Disciples of Christ association president, was the leader who started the process to get the building constructed and also her husband Randy's uncle.

The minister said she plans to retire in March 2024, just a few months after the Disciples Center's longtime home closes its doors.

More: First Christian Church-OKC No place like dome: A look back at the egg-shaped 'Church of Tomorrow' building



The Rev. Pam Holt, regional director of the Oklahoma Christian Church Disciples of Christ, stands outside the Oklahoma Disciples Center, a mid-century modern building on the grounds of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) property at NW 36 and Walker. *DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN*

OKLAHOMA DISCIPLES CENTER

Christian Church
Disciples



CHRISTIAN CHURCH
IN OKLAHOMA

OKLAHOMA DISCIPLES
FOUNDATION



OKLAHOMA ASSOCIATION
OF
CHRISTIAN CHURCHES

ORGANIZED AS
OKLAHOMA CHRISTIAN MISSIONARY SOCIETY
1900
BUILDING ERECTED
1964

FOR NO OTHER FOUNDATION CAN ANY
ONE LAY THAN THAT WHICH IS LAID
WHICH IS JESUS CHRIST

A cornerstone time capsule is shown at the Oklahoma Disciples Center, 301 NW 36 in Oklahoma City. *DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN*



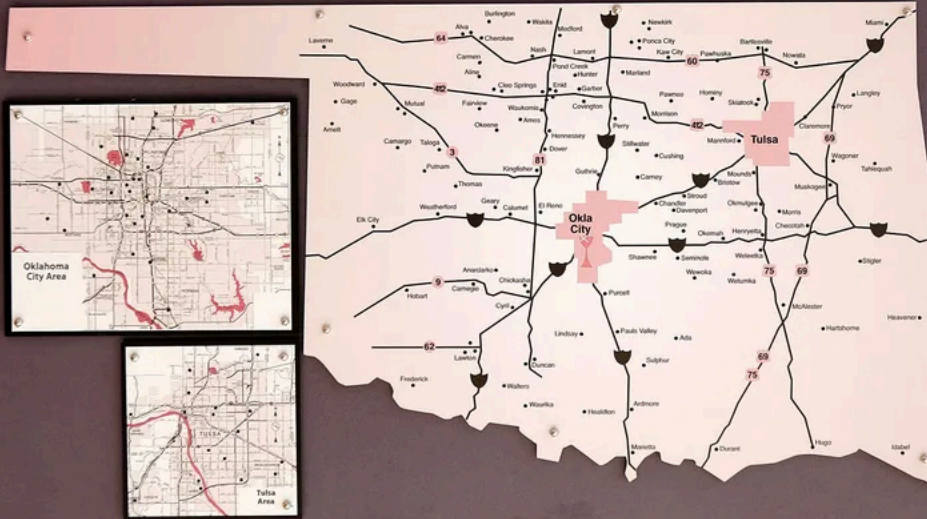
Randy Holt, husband of the Rev. Pam Holt, works to retrieve a cornerstone time capsule at the Oklahoma Disciples Center in Oklahoma City. *DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN*



The Oklahoma Disciples Center, 301 NW 36, is shown in this photo. *DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN*

Christian Church in Oklahoma

Disciples of Christ



A map reflecting the presence of Christian Church Disciples of Christ churches around the state is shown at the Oklahoma Disciples Center in Oklahoma City. *DOUG HOKE/THE OKLAHOMAN*