



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

Informing and Inspiring Oklahoma Baptists Since 1912
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>> by Brian Baldwin

**OKLAHOMA BAPTISTS YOUTH
EVANGELISM AND MISSIONS
MINISTRY PARTNER**

DAVIS—On Jan. 15-16, Oklahoma Baptists held its largest training event of the year, the Youth Evangelism Conference (YEC), at Falls Creek Baptist Conference Center. There were about 2,300 participants from more than 140 churches. YEC is an easy and practical way for churches to prioritize evangelism in their student ministries. It isn't about rock concerts, entertainment and goofing off with friends, with an occasional Bible study. It is a focused two-day event filled with the Holy Spirit, worship, prayer, evangelism training and team building.

Here are five key takeaways:

1. Students love breakouts

Students enjoy picking and attending smaller and more specific breakout sessions about topics that interest them and allow them to ask questions. There were 23 to choose from, but students could only attend three for the sake of time. Breakouts are recorded and available on our YEC Virtual Center for further training when they get home.

2. Motivated students are the status quo

We tell youth leaders to bring all types of students, but the norm is



those who are eager to be inspired and equipped. Breakout leaders are continually impressed on how students lean into what they are teaching. YEC switched from an outreach event to an equipping event because the best way to reach teenagers is with teenagers.

3. Youth leaders are empowered

There is a high number of youth ministers and pastors leading the event. They don't just attend; they have a job to do! We involve them in breakouts, general sessions, strategic planning sessions, consultations and more. Instead of a few stage personalities leading the masses, there is an army of empowered leaders advancing the Gospel together. It's beautiful!

4. Core teaching elements are clear


General sessions are top-notch and highly strategic. Our main speaker, Shane Pruitt, is the top motivator in the U.S. for next-gen evangelism. He did a great job challenging the stu-

dents in our core teaching elements: Gospel Urgency, Fluency, Strategy and Mobilization. Inspiring and equipping are of paramount importance but never complete without activation. Each general session ended with a call to immediate obedience in a way that allows youth leaders to follow up.

5. Strategic action plans are made

Near the end of YEC, church groups met to develop plans to help them accomplish "Gospel-advancing goals" throughout the year. With the help of their youth leaders, students helped plan specific ways to reach their friends, classmates and communities with the Gospel. When you involve students in building the mission blueprint, you don't have to convince them to invest in it. The action plan provides tangible marching orders for when they get home.

We would love for you to join us next year, Jan. 14-15, 2024! Teenagers who share the Gospel consistently are much more likely to own their faith personally. Churches not focused on evangelism will lack passion. Youth ministries will never be able to draw in students by out-entertaining the world, but we can challenge them to be a part of the greatest mission the world has ever seen!

Visit oklahomabaptists.org/yec for information. 

Rite of passage: Time and treasures



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Time is a beast that will either chase you toward or away from the better things.

When I was young, television was just coming into its own. I spent the early part of my life listening to the radio. To this day, I would rather listen to the radio than watch television. With the radio you can do other things: build model cars, sand a tabletop or work on a puzzle. But television takes these options away from you.

As a young man, I worked as a photographer. This was back in the days before we had heard the word “digital.” I worked in a darkroom for hours on end, developing negatives and processing prints. My workplace consisted of a small dark room with one dim red light. But even there, I was never alone. My constant companion was the music pumped in by WHB of Kansas City. The DJs who cranked out the top-40 hits called themselves the **World’s Happiest Broadcasters**. The radio station followed me home, where I lay in bed at night, smiling as I waited for the graveling howls of Wolfman Jack and knowing that life was good.

Looking back, I’m caught off guard by what I used to deem important and by the things I treasured. I don’t know if we all go through this process, but God has used time to point me to the more valuable things of life. I don’t treasure possessions as much as I used to, unless you count my highly-prized 45 r.p.m. “Love Potion No. Nine” record. (Some of us will have to explain to this digital generation the difference between 33 1/3s and 45s.)

How have my values changed? These days, I treasure time. I treasure the time I have with my wife, my sons and es-



pecially our grandsons. I don’t understand how time has slipped through my fingers. Only yesterday, I was google-eyeing one of the most beautiful girls I had ever seen, and soon we will celebrate 40 years of marriage.

I have become a time-grabber. I grab every minute I can with any of my family members. I treasure our short rides to the grocery store. I treasure the conversation as they talk about whatever they want. The topic doesn’t matter to me because I cherish the time more than the conversation.

I treasure friendships, old and new. Time has taught me that friendships are the spice rack of life. Some of them you use every day and others only on occasion, but they are nice to have when needed. Time has not only taught me the value of having friends, but of being a friend. When someone needs me, I’m not in as much of a hurry as I was in the past. Over the years, I’ve learned that the things I thought were demanding and important will still be demanding and important ... next week.

Time has taught me to treasure the Word of God, and I’ve seen the importance of meditating on it. The Bible has truly become the lamp for my feet and the light for my path (Ps. 119:105). As I’ve seen God deliver on His promises, the Bible has become even more relevant. I’ve instructed my family that if our house catches on fire, they should first make sure everyone gets

out safely and second, they should retrieve my Bible. It is worn, marked up and has pages falling out, but it holds the sacred truths of life.

All in all, time has taught me to treasure two things. First, I have learned to treasure relationships above worldly things. But I still have lots of things I hold dear. Old, yellowed papers with pictures my sons drew in school, with the word “Dad” scrawled below them in crayon, or the first time they wrote the words, “I love you.” The Hopalong Cassidy cereal bowl and plate that my departed mother bought me as a young child. The pictures of my family and the many Christmases, vacations and school activities we enjoyed together. I value these items, but I treasure the relationships with my family and friends more.

Time has also taught me to treasure the things of God. God Himself, His Word, the church, brothers and sisters in Christ, the community of believers working life out together, the preaching of the Word and missions—all of these grow more and more valuable to me.


I guess what I want to say to all young people is to take it from those who are closer to the end of the road than you: Let time take you not to the good things of life but to the best: relationships and God.

“There is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens” (Eccl. 3:1). [m](#)

Coming events

FEB 8. The Rose Day Indoor Pro-Life Rally will meet at the Oklahoma State Capitol. Registration opens at 9 a.m., and rose distribution begins at 9:30 a.m., as attendees will distribute red roses to their representatives, senators, Lieutenant Governor and Governor. The indoor rally will begin at 11:30 a.m. and will feature award-winning actress Ashley Bratcher as keynote speaker, who played the leading role in the movie "Unplanned." Visit roseday.life for more. 



MARCH 9. Del City, First Southern is hosting Oklahoma Hymn Sing, 7-8:30 p.m. The event will include Singing Churchmen, Singing ChurchWomen, Oklahoma Baptist Symphony, Oklahoma Student Worship Choir, and Oklahoma Baptist Children's Chorus. 



VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

OKLAHOMA

On-going opportunities for volunteers:

Baptist Village Communities:

- Ada—Tracy Scheer, 580/332-6004
- Broken Arrow—Monty Baggett, 918/355-0099
- Cleveland—Danna Ellis, 918/358-2575
- Cordell—Alicia Holt, 580/832-5831
- Elk City—Cathy Henderson, 580/225-5555
- Grove (Honey Creek)—Gary Mishler, 918/786-2223
- Madill (Lake Texoma)—Alandra Needham, 580/564-3776
- Miami—Shane McGhee, 918/542-7124
- OKC—Chris Finley, 405/721-2466 ext 2115
- Okmulgee—Matthew Wood, 918/756-5377
- Owasso—Steven Walkingstick, 918/272-2281 ext 102
- Entrusted Hearts (Home Health Care)—Shannon Ryan, 405/942-3000 ext 4685

DISASTER RELIEF

Training:


- Feb. 11**—Disaster Relief Orientation & Credentialing—8:30 a.m.–Noon; McAlester, Frink, 1830 S. George Nigh Expressway
- March 16-18**—Chaplain Manual and Operational Stress First Aid—\$60, Baptist Building, 3800 N. May, OKC
To register, email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org
- March 25**—Disaster Relief Orientation & Credentialing—8:30a.m.-Noon—Pryor, First, 601 E. Graham Ave.
- April 1**—First Aid/CPR class—9 a.m.-3 p.m.—\$20, DR Team Center, 7189 NW Expressway, Okarche

For more information on upcoming training, visit okdisasterhelp.org

Campers on Mission serves ministries in Oklahoma

Campers on Mission wrapped up 2022 and began 2023 with groups assisting the Baptist Village of Oklahoma City with some apartment upgrades.

Other groups sewed and delivered positive pregnancy bags to Hope Pregnancy Center and cell phone holsters along with lap quilts to the Mid-Del Nursing Center in Del City.

Those interested in building, sewing, evangelizing and lively fellowship, call Paul Day at 405/509-0396 to begin your journey of Christian service through Oklahoma Campers on Mission. 



>> PHOTO: PROVIDED
Carolyn Vanderburg delivers cell phone holsters and lap quilts to Tadshai Smith at Mid-Del Nursing Center.



>> PHOTO: PROVIDED
Joe and Doris Drennan with Paul Day help make apartment upgrades at Baptist Village of Oklahoma City.

Marching for Life



Brian Hobbs

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EDITOR'S NOTE: Article information was included from Baptist Press news story on the March for Life.

An estimated 100,000 Americans gathered at the Washington Mall in our nation's capital on Friday, Jan. 20, for the 50th annual March for Life.

The March for Life in Washington, D.C. changed its route this year. Instead of marching straight to the Supreme Court building, participants passed the Capitol on the House side on the way in recognizing Congress' role.

Among the numerous speakers was former National Football League coach Tony Dungy and his wife Lauren, who encouraged the crowd to continue in the pro-life cause. The Dungys have 11 children, eight by adoption.

March for Life OKC

On Saturday, Jan. 21, the recently established March for Life OKC event

took place near the Oklahoma State Capitol, attracting hundreds of attendees.

The March for Life OKC consisted of a two-mile walking route and featured a rally with speakers, including Owen Nease, pastor of Oklahoma City, Emmaus.

Each of these pro-life events celebrated the overturn of *Roe v. Wade* by the United State Supreme Court last June, while recognizing much more work has to be done to end abortion in America and to care for mothers facing unexpected pregnancies. Speakers at the March for Life OKC event sounded the alarm about the rise of chemically-induced abortions in Oklahoma and other states.

Sanctity of Human Life Sunday & More

On Sunday, Jan. 22, churches across Oklahoma took part in the annual Sanctity of Human Life (SOHL) Sunday. This SOHL Sunday marks the 38th year for the observance on the Southern Baptist Convention calendar.

Oklahoma Baptists and Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children teamed up to provide resources for churches, in-

>> PHOTOS: BRIAN HOBBS

1) Former NFL coach Tony Dungy speaks at the March for Life in Washington, D.C.; 2) Pastor Owen Nease of OKC, Emmaus speaks during the March for Life rally on the steps of the State Capitol.

cluding bulletin inserts, prayer points, videos, sermon outlines and more.

In a letter to Oklahoma Baptist pastors, Todd Fisher, executive director-treasurer for Oklahoma Baptists, said, "We must stand together to speak for life, to oppose abortion and to care for abortion-vulnerable women through our pregnancy resource ministries like Hope Pregnancy Centers."

On Wednesday, Feb. 8 at the Oklahoma State Capitol, the annual Rose Day Pro-Life Indoor Rally will take place. Pro-life spokeswoman and actress Ashley Bratcher, best known for her role in the faith-based movie, "Unplanned," will speak. For more information, visit roseday.life.

Whether it is in the national or state capital, or in your own town and church context, Oklahoma Baptists have multiple opportunities to stand for life.

Fisher encouraged churches to "redouble our efforts to prayer, preaching and serving in this vital area."

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