



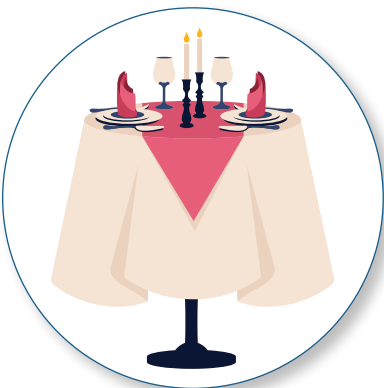
THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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DIGITAL EDITION • MAY 24, 2023

PAYING IT FORWARD

Vietnamese church now hosting new Hispanic congregation



**Rite of passage:
It be bad**

>> WALKER MOORE



**On mission: Jemison
reports on mission
work in Malawi**

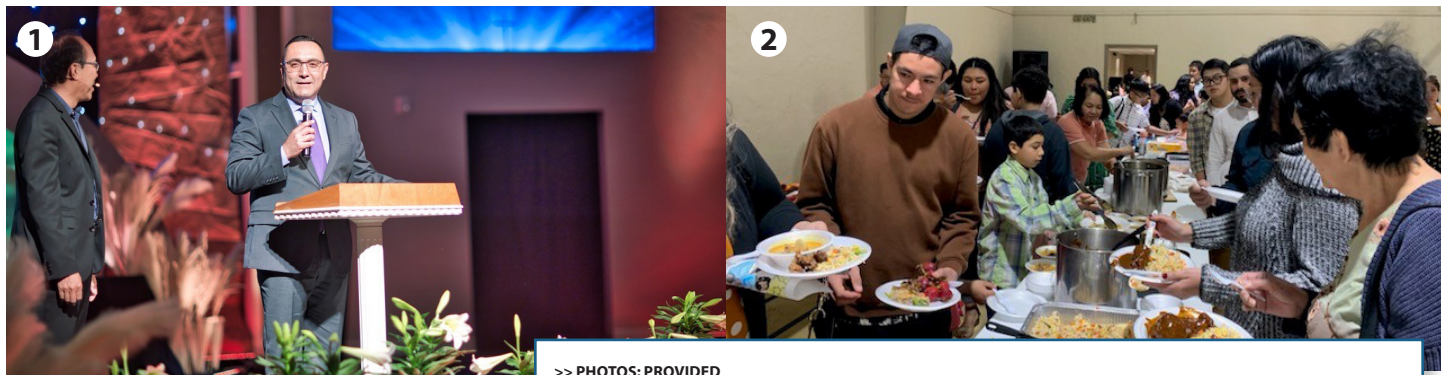
>> M.L. JEMISON



**GOSTUDENTS:
Celebrating the past
and looking to the
future**

>> BRIAN BALDWIN

OKC, New Vision 'paying it forward': Vietnamese-founded church now hosting Hispanic congregation



>> PHOTOS: PROVIDED

1) Vietnamese pastor An Nguyen listens as Hispanic pastor Luis Ruiz makes comments; 2) Food and fellowship followed the Easter service. It was the first service for the Vietnamese and Hispanic congregations to share space at New Vision Community

>> by Bob Nigh
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

In 1994, a group of eight Vietnamese people, led by David and Judy Vu, approached Anthony Jordan, then pastor of Oklahoma City, Northwest, about Jordan's church providing leadership support and a place to worship.

This provision led to the establishment of Oklahoma City, Vietnamese, which began meeting in Northwest's chapel. A year later, An Nguyen became the new congregation's pastor and the church, now called New Vision Community, has thrived since.

When the Vietnamese church called him to serve as pastor in 1995, Nguyen was leading a strong Vietnamese interdenominational youth fellowship in the Northwest Region-Vancouver, B.C., and had no desire to move to Oklahoma.

However, the events surrounding the April 19, 1995 bombing of the Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City, played a key role in Nguyen sensing God's call to the Sooner State.

"I turned on the TV and saw the whole story in front of my eyes," he said, recalling first learning of the event. "In my heart, I had a strong calling that God needed me there. I called my wife, Quan, and she agreed, 'I think God needs us there.'"

Almost three decades later, Nguyen's church is "paying forward" Northwest's faith by uniting with a new Hispanic congregation, Iglesia Bautista Gracia de Dios, led by pastor Luis Ruiz.

Nguyen's journey as a Vietnamese refugee to the United States was fraught with doubt and uncertainty. To escape the communists, he boarded a boat headed for Malaysia with 50 other people. What usually took only a brief time took 19 days because the boat's engine broke and the vessel floated on the ocean for days. Those on board eventually ran out of food and water.

But it was on that boat that God spoke to Nguyen, telling him He wanted Nguyen to serve Him full time.

"I knew I had been living in denial, but God made it very clear to me He wanted me to surrender to Him," Nguyen said. "This happened on the 18th day, and without food or water, I was confused, but what God said to me was clear in my mind. He told me He wanted me to say it out loud to the two buddies I had made friends with on the trip. I told them that God told me we would be rescued the next day."

At 9 a.m. the next day, the group was rescued by a Malaysian fishing boat.

In following God's call to begin his church, Ruiz also took sojourns along the way—beginning first as associate pastor at Oklahoma City, Shields Boulevard for two years, then as pastor of Roca Fuente church at Bethany, Council Road for one year, and then a short stint at Oklahoma City, Putnam City, a move arranged by his mentor, Bob Shelton, who, ironically, had served with Jordan at Northwest when the Vietnamese church was organized in 1994.

Shelton and Jordan had meetings with Nguyen and Ruiz, which eventually led to the Vietnamese and Hispanic congregations agreeing to share space—albeit in two separate worship centers—at New Vision Community's campus at 2121 N. MacArthur Blvd. Ruiz's church first met there on Easter Sunday.

"We had 60-75 people in attendance, including about 20 children," Ruiz said, pointing out that his group is, "Very young. I'm 48, and I'm probably the oldest member of the congregation."

"Everything is going well. I'm positive about the start," Nguyen said. "Pastor Luis is very energetic, has a good vision for his ministry, and is sound doctrinally. The church is a positive ministry which will reach out to the large and growing Hispanic population in our area." [m](#)

Rite of passage: It be bad



Walker Moore

Author & Messenger Columnist

Email | walker@back40.org

Twitter | @WalkerDeanMoore

If you want to get on my good side, take me out for either barbecue or Mexican food. I have strong opinions about both. I believe some of the best Mexican food comes from those tiny Mom and Pop restaurants. When you realize the waiter and the cook are the same person, your tongue knows a fiesta's on the way.

I have to laugh at these places because they usually have a plethora of luncheon specials numbered between one and 112. I usually order "Two enchiladas with rice and beans, no onions" (I got into a fight with onions in March of 1969 and lost, so I've stayed away from them ever since).

Next, the waiter/cook tells me, "Oh, you want the lunch special, Number 86." At my favorite Mexican restaurant, Señor Fajitas in Tulsa, they put my order on the grill when they see my car pull into the parking lot.

I'm the same way about barbecue. Some of the best barbecue joints don't even have plates. They pull out a piece of white butcher paper, slap some smoked meat on it, and you soon think you've died and gone to heaven. These places usually have the name "Bad" somewhere on the marquee. One of the best barbecue restaurants in Tulsa use to describe its food this way: "It be bad." I guess most of these places don't have a proofreader.

A while back, my wife and I ate at one of these "bad" barbecue restaurants. Most people who dine here come in their everyday clothes. But that day, as the hostess seated us, I noticed an elderly couple by the fireplace in the center of the room.

The man sported a dapper suit and tie; his companion wore a fancy dress. I'm sorry, ladies, but I'm not up to speed on the exact term for a gown that's one step below formal attire. Anyway, she looked gorgeous.

From watching their interaction, I guessed that the man had set up this dinner. A linen cloth covered the table, adorned with a silver candleholder and lighted candles. Real silverware, wineglasses and fancy china place settings added to the ambiance. As the two gazed into each other's eyes, they smiled and played footsie, oblivious to everyone else in the room.

A few moments later, our meal arrived on plastic plates. You could have taken the older couple and their table out of the barbecue setting, put them in the finest restaurant in New York City, and they would have fit right in. I leaned over to my wife and asked what she thought the occasion might be. "It's none of your business," she told me.

As I was eating my meal, I could see these two laughing and engaging with each other. Every once in a while, he reached out and touched the top of her hand in a tender way that brought a smile to her face. Was this an old love rekindled? An anniversary? A first date? Were they celebrating a long life together or beginning a new one? The longer I watched, the more questions mounted in my mind.

I leaned over to my wife and I told her I was going over to the two lovebirds to inquire about the occasion. "No, you're not," she told me. "This is their time together, and the last thing they need is someone horning in on it."

I knew she was right. She's always right. As my wife and I finished eating and headed toward the door, the waiter




was bringing the mystery couple's third course. As we walked to our car, I shot one last glance their way. There in the middle of an ordinary restaurant, something wonderful was taking place.

As we drove home that night, I again asked my wife what she thought the occasion might be. Again, she told me it was none of my business and again, she was right. Here was a man so moved by his lady that he created a five-star table in the middle of a rustic restaurant. I was amazed, impressed and humbled all at once.

But isn't that what love does? In the midst of everyday, ordinary life, it does the extraordinary. Love reaches out to say, "You're special. You matter to me."

Amid everyday, ordinary life, the God of the universe went out of His way to do the extraordinary: "But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us" (Rom. 5:8).

Even on the days when you think you don't matter or no one loves you, remember that God is always reaching out to say, "You're special. You matter to me."

What does that say about God's love? Three words: "It be bad." 

On mission: Jemison reports on mission work in Malawi



M.L. Jemison
Senior Pastor
OKC, St. John Missionary

Our mission journey to Malawi, Africa was a huge blessing. Our experience in Malawi, Africa was a mission experience I will never forget.

A mission organization helped us engage a hurting and hopeless people with the hope Jesus Christ. Not only did it ignite a fire in me as a pastor who is "missional-minded," but it sparked a fire within our church. We had approximately 90 children whom we committed to sponsoring.

Our members were committed to making a difference. This has impacted our church in a great way. God is good!

I begin the preparation of this great trip with prayer and in the Word of God. I knew God would bless our efforts to bring light into a dark situation. To God be all the glory!

In my preparation, I believed God was developing a plan to educate and train our people to go on mission with us. This was an opportunity as a pastor to model before our church members and the community what it means obey God and go to the mission field. We created a journal online and encouraged our people to join us every day while we were on the trip. People from all over the world joined us on mission in Malawi, Africa.



The Word of God instructs us to GO. As believers, we are called to actively spread God's Word and to make a positive difference in the world, whether it be our loved ones, or strangers from another country.

We should not only take the Gospel of Jesus Christ across the street. We need to be as passionate to take the Gospel to the world.

Mark 16:15 says: "He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.'"


We obeyed God and watched Him work. Here are the results:

- Sponsored children in need of God's love
- Mentored young pastors
- Educated our churches and members daily

- Supported families
- Developed sustainable relationships
- Trusted God to lead
- Revitalized global missions

I want to encourage every pastor and Christian to seek and obey God, looking for divine appointments to share the Gospel at home and around the world. Opportunities abound—from sharing the Gospel in our local communities to utilizing technology and connecting with the World.

God can and will use you, as you decide to use whatever you have, wherever you are, to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are committed to being "Great Commission" Christians.

If I can encourage you in any way, I can be reached at StJohnOKC.org or 405/478-3344. 

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Church news



COBRA MEETING. The Central Oklahoma Baptist Retirees Association (COBRA) resumed meetings on May 18 after a three-year hiatus because of COVID concerns. The group met at Baptist Village of Oklahoma City with more than 40 retirees coming together. The program featured the BVC Singing Saints choir and their bell choir. [m](#)



TAHLEQUAH, PARK HILL VISITS BVC AND OBHC IN OWASSO. A senior adult group from Tahlequah, Park Hill, led by Senior Adult Pastor Ron Watkins, toured the Baptist Village of Owasso campus and the Owasso campus of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC). Pictured above is the group in front of OBHC's new cottage. [m](#)

SOUTHERN SEMINARY ANNOUNCES GRADUATES FROM OKLAHOMA. Southern Seminary in Louisville, Ky. announced its graduates for the 2023 spring semester. A total of 11 Southern Seminary graduates hail from Oklahoma. They include Dylan Bone, master of divinity degree; Elijah Branham, certificate in worldview studies; Chelsea Davies, master of divinity degree; Parker Goforth, doctor of educational ministry; Caylie Holman, master in theological studies degree; Hoang Nguyen, master of theology degree; Tyler Price, master in leadership degree; Austin Puckett, master of divinity degree; Michael Roark, master in theological studies degree; Benjamin Schill master of theological studies degree; and Larson Woods, master of theology degree. [m](#)

May 24, 2023 | The Baptist Messenger | www.baptistmessenger.com

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:

June 15-16—Assisting Individuals in Crisis—9 a.m.-4 p.m.—\$50
Baptist Building, 3800 N. May Ave.

To register, email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org
(Continuing education for those who have completed Chaplain Manual and OSFA)

Sept. 16—Disaster Relief Orientation & Credentialing – 8:30 a.m. – 12 noon; Weatherford, First, 1510 E. Davis Ave.

Register at okdisasterhelp.org

Sept. 21-23—Chaplain Manual and Operational Stress First Aid—\$60.00 Baptist Building, 3800 N. May Ave., To register, email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

Coming event

MAY 27. Bethany, Tulakes, 6715 N.W. 50th Street, is hosting an Oklahoma United Gospel Music Association concert featuring The Lone Star Jubilee. The concert begins at 4 p.m. A love offering will be received for the talent. For more information, call 405/324-2144. [m](#)

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GOSTUDENTS: Celebrating the past and looking to the future

>> by Brian Baldwin

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

GoStudents has mobilized thousands of students on to the mission field over the past 20 years. People here, near and far have been impacted with the Gospel by Oklahoma Baptist students.

GoStudents participants have been inspired to take part in the Great Commission. Those who have gone have been molded to be more like Christ, and many have followed Jesus' call to serve in missions for a lifetime. Missionaries, church planters and ministry leaders have received from us commitment, encouragement and communion.

This summer, GoStudents will mobilize more students than ever before! More than 550 participants will be advancing the Gospel in places like Broken Bow, Lawton, Tulsa, Oklahoma City, Utah, Portland, Seattle, New York City, Miami, Edmonton, Calgary, Belize, Peru, London, Portugal, Spain and Cambodia.

We are thankful to God for the exponential growth of GoStudents in recent years, but now we look to the future with excitement and expectation in seeing even more churches and students mobilized for our King and His cause. For that to happen GoStudents must take on a new structure. After this summer, Go-

Students will become a network of "Certified Sending Partners" with unlimited potential, because we can do more in advancing the Gospel together!

Certified Sending Partners (CSP) are "capital K" Kingdom leaders from Oklahoma Baptist churches within the **GOSTUDENTS NETWORK**. They are trained, resourced and unleashed on to the mission field with not only their own group, but other individuals or small groups that need a pathway to go! The New Testament Church has always worked together in the Great Commission. CSPs help other churches get on the mission field and potentially multiply themselves for their missionary or church planter.


CSPs are certified by meeting a high standard of excellence in safety, organization, partnerships and training. CSPs will receive the **resources** to help with overhead costs (coordinator costs, vision trips, child safety training, travel insurance, background checks, registration/payment systems, travel agents) and **connections** with Southern Baptist field personnel and **training** for leaders, sponsors and students.

One of the greatest benefits churches receive from partnering with the **GOSTUDENTS NETWORK**



will be participant scholarships for their whole group that range from \$100-\$500 per participant. The primary funding will continue to be provided through the generous givers to the Falls Creek Missions Offering taken up every summer.

Jesus said in Matt. 9:37-38, "*The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.*" GoStudents has been an answer to the prayers of missionaries, church planters and ministry leaders for workers to be sent to them on the mission field. Now the **GOSTUDENTS NETWORK** has the potential to send more workers, on to more mission fields, that involves more churches, and more individuals working together for the Great Commission.

The only question is, will you join us? Find out how to send a team or join a team at oklahomabaptists.org/gostudents. 

The Tom Elliff Center for Missions is pleased to invite ALL Pastors to a "Smokin' Joe's Dinner" Tuesday evenings in June and July at Falls Creek.

Meet TECM representatives!

Hear from Elliff Center students who are preparing to serve on the mission field!

Learn how students who make career missions decisions both at Falls Creek or in the future can be equipped, trained and on the mission field in four years.

Tuesday Evenings in June and July | 5:30-6:15 p.m.

First Floor Event Center



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