



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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Oklahoma fellowship draws 440

>> *THE BAPTIST PAPER*



OBU honors Dew with Hobbs Award

>> *BRYAN PAINTER*



Rite of passage: 'Where are Elisha's bears?'

>> *WALKER MOORE*

2023 SBC Annual Meeting Highlights

>> by Baptist Press staff & Messenger reports

NEW ORLEANS, La. (BP)—More than 12,000 Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) messengers, including 435 registered messengers from Oklahoma, gathered in New Orleans June 13-14 for the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting.

The SBC messengers and attending guests shared in times of worship, prayer, missionary sending and more; the following are important happenings during the SBC meeting.

IMB missionaries share their stories during Sending Celebration

A total of 79 missionaries were recognized at the International Mission Board's (IMB) Sending Celebration June 13.

IMB President Paul Chitwood celebrated the 44 churches in 19 different states—including Oklahoma—that the new missionaries represent. Those missionaries will soon spread across 33 countries, "taking the Good News with them, willing to leave behind comforts, friends and family, to answer God's call upon their lives," Chitwood said.

"The major reason why the SBC was formed and exists is to take the Gospel to the nations," said Oklahoma Baptists' Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher. "Today 79 new IMB missionaries, including one couple from Oklahoma, were just commissioned. They join 3,521 missionaries and their 2,700-plus children currently serving in 122 nations. The only way our churches can send this number of missionaries and fully support them on the field is through our SBC Cooperative Program giving. We do more for the kingdom of God together than apart."

Rummage elected as 2024 SBC Pastors' Conference president

During the 2023 Pastors' Conference on June 12, Oklahoma pastor Stephen Rummage, an author and preaching professor, was elected president of the 2024 Southern Baptist

Convention Pastors' Conference by acclamation.

Rummage, pastor of Oklahoma City, Quail Springs, will lead planning of next year's SBC Pastors' Conference June 9-10 in Indianapolis. Following his election, Rummage expressed his desire to pray for pastors over the coming year.

Messengers agree Saddleback, two other churches not in friendly cooperation

Messengers agreed with a February 2023 decision by the SBC Executive Committee (EC) to deem Louisville, Ky., Fern Creek; Vero Beach, Fla., Freedom; and Lake Forest, Calif., Saddleback, not to be in friendly cooperation with the SBC.

Fern Creek was ruled not in friendly cooperation with the SBC based on the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000's* statement that Scripture reserves the office of pastor for men. Linda Popham has pastored Fern Creek full-time since April 4, 1993, after a near three-year term as interim pastor.

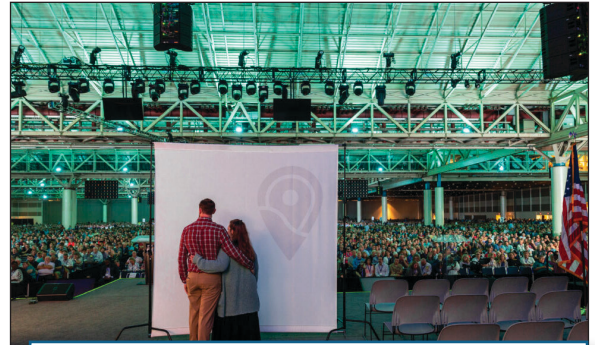
Freedom Church was deemed not to be in friendly cooperation because the church failed to cooperate to resolve concerns regarding a sexual abuse allegation.

Saddleback Church was deemed not to be in friendly cooperation with the Southern Baptist Convention's statement of faith, the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, due to "the church continuing to have a female teaching pastor functioning in the office of a pastor."

Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force work to continue

The Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF) received another vote of confidence June 14 from Southern Baptists to continue its work in the Convention.

During the ARITF's report, Chairman Marshall Blalock unveiled the Minis-



>> PHOTOS: BAPTIST PRESS

A missionary couple participate in the IMB Sending Celebration during the SBC Annual Meeting. For security reasons, they addressed the gathering behind a screen.

tryCheck website, which will include a searchable database and ministry toolkit for churches. The one-year extension will help lead to the completion of a working database, hopefully by the 2024 annual meeting, with "credibly accused folks' names on there, so that churches are safer next year than they are today," Blalock said. Oklahoma pastor Mike Keahbone of Lawton, First has served as a member of the Task Force.

Crossover reaches New Orleans with Gospel hope

Southern Baptist seminary students walked the streets, presenting the hope of the Gospel. Churches hosted block parties for their neighbors. New Orleans Seminary held an appreciation event for local law enforcement. These events were part of all that took place during the Serve Tour + Crossover outreach events for New Orleans and the surrounding areas.

Barber elected for second term

Bart Barber was elected by messengers for a second term as SBC president in a contested election with Georgia pastor Mike Stone.

Out of 11,014 votes, Barber, pastor of Farmersville, Texas, First, received 7,531 (68.38 percent) of the ballots. Stone, pastor of Blackshear, Ga., Emmanuel, received 3,458 (31.4 percent) of the vote. Twenty-five votes were disallowed.

~continued on next page~



>> PHOTOS: 1) ALAN QUIGLEY; 2) BRIAN HOBBS
 1) Thomas Jordan, Oklahoma Baptists director of church benefit services, right center, speaks on a panel at the 2023 SBC meeting; 2) Pastor Heath Tucker of Edmond, Waterloo Road, right, attends the SBC meeting with two of his children.

to be the first statement from a religious convention or denomination on the development and use of artificial intelligence. Other resolutions dealt with issues of immigration and “gender transition.”

Messengers voted to “re-affirm our confessional heritage, grounded in Scripture, and recognize” only two biblical offices and “to

encourage churches to uphold all the biblical qualifications for those who hold either office of bishop/elder/pastor or deacon.”

David Sons, chair of the SBC Resolutions Committee, says he believes the resolutions point to who Southern Baptists are becoming.

12,000-plus messengers attend

There were 12,737 registered messengers for the annual meeting. Aside from the 15,726 in Nashville in 2021, it is the largest group since 1996 in Atlanta, when 13,706 messengers attended. Last year’s gathering in Anaheim brought 8,133 messengers. The annual meeting drew 435 registered messengers from Oklahoma. Including guests and exhibitors, the total number of those present at the annual meeting came to 18,901.

The next SBC Pastors’ Conference and SBC Annual Meeting are set for June 9-12, 2024, meeting at the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis. [m](#)

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Amending the article on the church in the ‘Baptist Faith and Message’

Messengers voted to amend the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000*, the statement of faith of the Southern Baptist Convention, to clarify the role of pastor.

The amended Article VI on the church now reads: “In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its two scriptural offices are that of pastor/elder/overseer and deacon. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”

Motion to amend SBC Constitution over pastor role clears first hurdle

Messengers initiated a two-year process to amend the SBC Constitution after two-thirds of messengers approved a motion initially brought last year by Virginia pastor Mike Law.

The motion is to amend, or specifically, add a sixth point under the first para-

graph of Article III that lists characteristics of churches in friendly cooperation with the SBC. The sixth point would describe churches that affirm, appoint or employ “only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture.”

Texas pastor Juan Sanchez brought a friendly amendment to Law’s original version that both deemed to be more positive language. The SBC Executive Committee announced at its June 12 meeting that Law’s motion would go before messengers. However, the EC registered its opposition to the motion itself over its placement within the constitution rather than addressing a theological matter through the *Baptist Faith and Message*.

The motion will be brought before messengers again at the SBC annual meeting in Indianapolis. Another two-thirds vote in the affirmative will amend the Constitution.

Full slate of resolutions passed in New Orleans

Messengers passed nine resolutions. They include what is believed

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.

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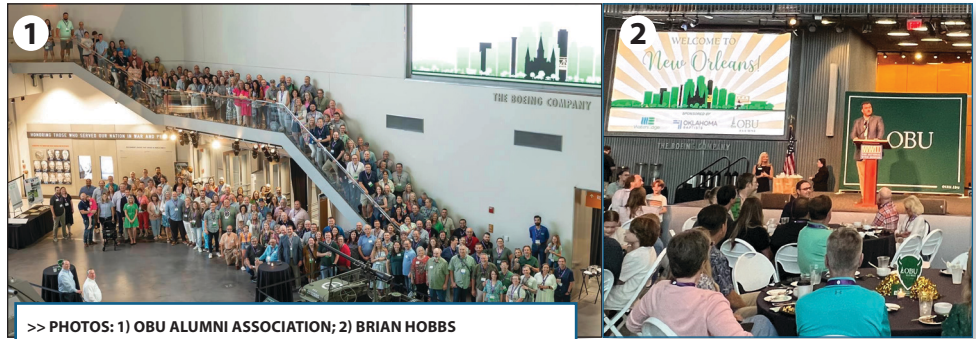
OBU at SBC: reception, award, announcement

Oklahoma fellowship draws 440

>> by *The Baptist Paper*

NEW ORLEANS, La.—Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) welcomed 440 guests to an Oklahoma reception at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting June 13.

The National WWII Museum's U.S. Freedom Pavilion Boeing Center in New Orleans hosted the event, which was open to all Oklahoma Baptists in addition to OBU alumni. The reception was sponsored by the OBU Alumni Association, WatersEdge (formerly The Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma) and Oklahoma Baptists.



>> PHOTOS: 1) OBU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION; 2) BRIAN HOBBS
1) OBU's reception at the National WWII Museum had 440 Oklahoma Baptists attending; 2) Todd Fisher encourages attendees with key updates during his talk at the reception.

"It was a great partnership between these entities to bring all Oklahoma Baptists together," said Lee Ann Quirk, director of the OBU Alumni Association, who spoke at the event.

Heath A. Thomas, OBU president, and Todd Fisher, executive direc-

tor-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists, also spoke. Thomas gave an update on tornado recovery at OBU, and Fisher encouraged attendees with key updates about Oklahoma Baptists.

The Bollinger Canopy of Peace, which stands above the museum at 148 feet tall, was lit up in green and gold in honor of OBU's event that evening. [m](#)

OBU honors Dew with Hobbs Award

>> by Brian Painter
**OBU MARKETING
COMMUNICATIONS DIRECTOR**

NEW ORLEANS, La.—Oklahoma Baptist University President Heath A. Thomas presented the Herschel H. Hobbs Award for Distinguished Denominational Service to James "Jamie" K. Dew June 14 during the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting in New Orleans. Dew serves as president of New Orleans Seminary (NOBTS) and Leavell College.

"OBU is delighted to honor President Jamie Dew for his incredible leadership at New Orleans Seminary," Thomas said. "He continues to lead effective revitalization at this strategic seminary. It is fitting that we honor Dr. Dew with the Herschel H. Hobbs Award for Distinguished Denominational Service. We pray God's continued blessings on his ministry."



>> PHOTOS: OBU ALUMNI ASSOCIATION
Jamie Dew receives the Hobbs Award during the SBC Annual Meeting. At the award presentation are, from left, NOBTS First Lady Tara Dew, President Dew, OBU First Lady Jill Thomas, and President Heath Thomas.

The Hobbs Award is named to honor the noteworthy Southern Baptist denominational service of Dr. Herschel H. Hobbs, a prolific author, preacher and radio program host. Hobbs was pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City from 1949 until 1972. He died in 1995. He is also the namesake of OBU's Herschel H. Hobbs School of Theology and Ministry. [m](#)

OBU's Center for Baptist Renewal announces new name

The Center for Baptist Renewal at Oklahoma Baptist University has been renamed the David S. Dockery and Timothy F. George Center for Baptist

Renewal in honor of Dockery, president of Southwestern Seminary, and George, founding dean of Beeson Divinity School. Shown at the June 13 announcement are, from left, OBU President Heath A. Thomas, Dockery and Larinee Dennis, OBU dean of Business, Health Science and Education. [m](#)



Rite of passage: 'Where are Elisha's bears?'



Walker Moore

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Several years ago, I made the mistake of playing baseball with some teenagers. When it was my turn at bat, the students started chanting, "The old man is up, the old man is up," making fun of the difference in our ages.

Every time a teenager teases me, I go to 2 Kings 2:23-24 for comfort. In this story, some young people made fun of Elisha, and he put a curse on them. *"As he was walking along the road, some youths came out of the town and jeered at him. 'Go on up, you baldhead!' they said. 'Go on up, you baldhead!' He turned around, looked at them and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the youths."*

Isn't that one of the greatest passages in the Bible? I have prayed Elisha's prayer on several occasions, but I have yet to see any bears come out of the woods. You would think such a powerful prayer would produce at least a squirrel or two, even today.

Since the prayer of Elisha doesn't seem to work in Tulsa, I had to think of another one that would teach these young people a lesson. As I stood with my bat on my shoulder, I remembered the way Samson prayed, asking God for extra strength one more time before he brought the house down.

"Lord, I beseech you by the mercy of God, please granteth me a home run-neth. In Jesus' name, Amen." (When I pray in King James English, the Lord knows it's a top priority prayer).

As their chanting grew louder, the young people began to move in, drawing well inside the infield. The pitcher moved up to within 10 feet of home plate. The centerfielder came to second base, and the second baseman came to the pitcher's mound. I continued my prayer, "Lord, please granteth me strength one more time."

As the pitcher released the ball, I knew it came straight from God. I leaned back and pulled the bat forward with all my strength, connecting with a loud "crack." As the ball sailed upward, I took off and ran, and ran, and ran, and finally made it to... first base. I scanned the outfield.

Some of the students were standing in a daze, and others were chasing after the ball. I ran to second base and looked out again to see one of the outfielders picking up the ball. That gave me time to run to third base. As I stood on third base, I saw the second baseman catching the ball. Looking toward heaven, I said another little prayer, "Lord, I'm coming home." Then I took off, running toward home plate.

Halfway there, my life entered the "Chariots of Fire" mode. I could see myself, running in slow motion. In my peripheral vision, I could see the baseball, traveling at the same speed. I knew it would be close, so I decided I would just slide into


home plate—yes, this overgrown baseball player dove into the plate, hitting the junior high kid-catcher and plowing both of us into the backstop.

But I DID IT! I hit a home run! Being the mature one of the bunch, I started chanting back at the students, "Na, nana na na; I hit a home run."

They looked horrified. One of them said, "Brother Walker, look at your knee." Looking down, I realized I had torn my knee wide open on the edge of home plate. As the blood continued to spurt from the wound, I looked up at the students and began to jump and down, yelling, "Na nana na na, I hit a home run!!!"

That day, I learned a great truth: When you hit a home run, the pain doesn't matter. Every woman who has given birth knows what I am talking about. The joy of seeing your child for the first time outweighs the struggles of the last nine months, and especially the pain of the last few hours of delivery.

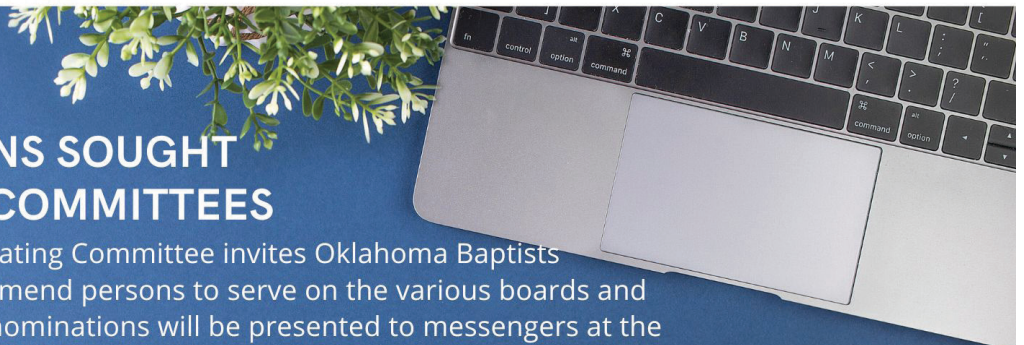
This also holds true when you walk out God's Word in your parenting skills. Raising children is not easy. At least three times a day, you want to use the prayer of Elisha. But when you do see your children begin to become capable, responsible, self-reliant adults; the pain goes away, and joy fills its place.

By the way, if Elisha had lived in Tulsa, when he prayed that prayer, I wonder what animal God would have chosen as His animal of correction for those teenagers? A possum? 

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BAPTISTS

RECOMMENDATIONS SOUGHT FOR BOARDS AND COMMITTEES

The Oklahoma Baptists' Nominating Committee invites Oklahoma Baptists from across the state to recommend persons to serve on the various boards and committees. The committee's nominations will be presented to messengers at the Annual Meeting on November 13-14. For more information, visit www.oklahomabaptists.org/recommendations



Church news



EDMOND, HENDERSON HILLS HOSTS ESL WORKSHOP.

Edmond, Henderson Hills hosted an English as a Second Language Workshop, April 28-29. Eleven participants attended, representing several Oklahoma Baptist churches. Those who received certificates of completion were, from left, Amanda Jordan, Madison Childress, Judi Boyer, Eric Roseberry, Kathleen Pendleton, Karin VanderHamm, Craig Boyer, Connie Crew, Bruce Neidenfeuhr, and Yajie (Catherine) Li. The workshop leaders were Avery Turner and Stacy Neuschaefer. [m](#)



BVC SIGNS AGREEMENT WITH ENID'S GOLDEN OAKS VILLAGE.

Baptist Village Communities (BVC) and Golden Oaks Village have announced their plan for BVC to acquire the Enid campus. BVC is Oklahoma's largest not-for-profit provider of senior adult housing and services and currently operates eleven communities and home health across the state. Golden Oaks Village, a Christ-focused 501(c)3 organization, was founded in Enid in 1988 and is one of the largest providers of senior adult housing in Northwest Oklahoma. For more information visit baptistmessenger.com/bvc-gov. [m](#)

VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

OKLAHOMA

On-going opportunities for volunteers:

Camp Gibson, Hardesty—Tom Freeman—580/338-6259—pbaok221@gmail.com

Families Feeding Families Meal Center, Durant—580/230-9142—familiesfeedingfamilies.org

Hope Pregnancy Centers—South OKC 405/688-8700, North OKC 405/755-5433, Edmond 405/330-0200, Ardmore 580/223-7232, Tulsa 918/622-3325

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children Campuses

Oklahoma City – 405/691-7781
Edmond – 405/341-3606
Madill – 580/564-2218
Owasso – 918/272-2233

DISASTER RELIEF

Training:

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

Register at: Orientation & Credentialing | Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief (okdisasterhelp.org)

Sept. 23—First Aid/CPR Class—9 a.m.-3 p.m. – \$20, DR Team Center, 7180 NW Expressway, Okarche, to register, please email Ryan Deatherage rdeatherage@oklahomabaptists.org

Oct. 11-13—Chaplain Manual and Operational Stress First Aid—\$60, Baptist Building, 3800 N. May Ave, to register, please email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

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