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Falls Creek 2023: Grateful for the goodness of God

>> TODD SANDERS



More than 200 attend Worship Arts Camp for Kids

>> BOB NIGH



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Native American LINK celebrates 25 years during 2023 Indian Falls Creek



>> PHOTOS: CHRIS DOYLE

1) Gus Smith opens the celebration sharing brief history of Native American LINK; 2) Sandy Wisdom-Martin offers words of praise for the ministry work of Native American LINK; 3) Native Praise will celebrate 25 years next year with plans of doing a choir tour.

>> by Chris Doyle
MANAGING EDITOR

DAVIS—The word “ambassador” was used multiple times during the event. Those in attendance knew the description was deserving.

Native American LINK (Living in Neighborly Kindness) celebrated 25 years of ministry with a celebration ceremony during Indian Falls Creek on Aug. 2. The most prominent element of Native American LINK is the Native Praise choir, which sang songs in native languages as well as in English during the program.

Native American LINK provides ministry opportunities; supports, promotes and participates in mission work; provides training opportunities; and offers outreach programs in Western Oklahoma.

Augusta “Gus” Smith, executive director of Native American LINK, emceed the celebration ceremony, paying tribute to Willene Pierce, founder of the ministry, who passed away in 2014. Smith recalled what Pierce said when she stepped down as executive director.

“She gave us options of how we can handle the ministry,” Smith said about Pierce. “The last option she gave us was to disband. Then she walked away and said, ‘You all decide.’ We decided we would not disband. That would be so disrespectful of everything she accomplished. We have carried on, and we are excited about beginning the next 25 years!”

Native Praise also was founded by Pierce, and the choir will celebrate its 25th anniversary next year with plans of doing a choir tour.

“Indeed, you are our ambassadors,” said Emerson Falls, Native American ministry partner for Oklahoma Baptists, during the celebration event. “Every chance I get, I recommend this group to sing. They’ve been all over the nation and the world having represented us well.”

Native Praise sang twice at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, in 2002 and in 2014. The choir also performed and did mission work in England and in Ukraine.

Smith mentioned a special moment for Native Praise happened when Anthony Jordan retired as executive director-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists.

“The only thing Dr. Jordan requested for his retirement celebration is to have Native Praise sing,” Smith said. “He looked at us as Oklahoma Ambassadors.”

Todd Fisher, current executive director-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists, spoke during the celebration event, commending Native American LINK and Native Praise.

“LINK and Native Praise are some of the greatest ambassadors to Oklahoma and to our nation of the importance of Native American ministry,” Fisher said. “And the other thing is the role that women play in our churches and in the


various ministries. Women have such an important role reaching so many people and serving in so many ways. I want to say ‘thank you.’”

Others who spoke during the event were Amy Cordova, missions and women’s ministry partner of Oklahoma Baptists; Julie Busler, Oklahoma WMU president; and Sandy Wisdom-Martin, executive director-treasurer of the national Woman’s Missionary Union.

“What you do matters,” Wisdom-Martin said to members of Native American LINK. “Your influence, your ministry, your life—it will reverberate for all eternity. Thank you for what you do. We celebrate 25 years with you.”

IFC ‘victorious’ with attendance and spiritual decisions

Total attendance for Indian Falls Creek (IFC) was 2,539. IFC also witnessed 104 professions of faith in Christ with 326 total spiritual decisions. The decisions included 27 committing to vocational ministry, and IFC also observed 12 baptisms during the four-day camp.

“IFC was an amazing camp, which resulted in our churches experiencing victory after victory!” said Victor Cope, IFC program director. “God showed up in a miraculous and mighty way! Indian Falls Creek is the largest gathering of Native Christians in the world. All in all, I and the IFC Board of Directors are very pleased at what God did at 2023 IFC.” 

Falls Creek 2023: Grateful for the goodness of God

>> by Todd Sanders

FALLS CREEK PROGRAM DIRECTOR

"But be sure to fear the Lord and serve him faithfully with all your heart; consider what great things he has done for you" (1 Sam. 12:24).

We experienced the goodness of God this summer. He once again showed His power as He moved during Falls Creek youth camp weeks. We are grateful. You joined us this year in praying for a number of things. We saw the Lord meet many of our requests.

We prayed for salvation. A record number of students in our evening services indicated they professed Jesus as Lord and trusted Christ for salvation this summer. A total of 2,672 students called on the name of Jesus and were saved.

We prayed for students to respond to a call to ministry on their lives. The Lord called nearly 500 students into ministry this summer.

We prayed for spiritual growth this summer. Students were challenged each week to live a disciple-making lifestyle by practicing the discipline of personal evangelism. Leading the spiritual growth opportunities over the summer, Oklahoma Baptist Youth Ministry staff trained more than 30,000 attendees in personal evangelism in the morning teaching time.



We prayed for the church to be stronger and more unified. Leaders have reported significant spiritual work in their groups and tighter community among their students during and following camp.

We prayed for an explosion of evangelism and baptisms. We prayed—as we have been praying—that students would continue to follow through on decisions made this summer.

We prayed for Gospel impact in communities around the state and nation. We prayed for global reach from what God does in lives each summer at Falls Creek Youth Camp.

Much of this work remains to come to life. Although the real picture of lasting impact will come weeks, months and years down the road, we have already received encouraging reports. Students are following through on their commitments. They returned home and are planning to impact their schools and communities and invest in their churches, youth minis-

tries, and beyond. In addition, several thousand students expressed interest in missions of some kind in varying levels of commitment.

Much work of follow-through is yet to be done from the work God did this summer. We are grateful for opportunity ahead. We anticipate celebrating for years to come what God did this summer. What a privilege we have to participate with one another in this way, to serve together.

Would you continue pray? Pray for follow-through for growth, for continued spark in churches and communities from what the Lord did this summer? Would you pray for the Summer of 2024?

We ask Jesus to continue to do what only He can do—save souls and change lives. Pray that God would continue to allow us to see more and more of Jesus through Falls Creek.

Jesus first. Jesus only. Jesus now. Jesus always. Jesus. Period. [m](#)

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More than 200 attend Worship Arts Camp for Kids



>> PHOTOS: PROVIDED

1) Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief provided meals each day at WACK; 2) Children representing 15 area churches participated in the musical 'DiscipleSHIP Adventure,' directed by Wynn Anne Hook; 3) Fabric Arts was one of the tracks provided for children during WACK.

>> by Bob Nigh
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

More than 200 students attended Worship Arts Camp for Kids (WACK) day camp July 24-26 at Oklahoma City, Quail Springs. The event was sponsored by the Metro Baptist Association, and was open to children who had completed 3rd-6th grades.

Lunch and dinner were provided to the campers and leaders each day by Oklahoma Baptists Disaster Relief (DR) volunteers, who prepped meals in the church's kitchen and served them in its Fellowship Hall. The DR crew of 21 volunteers prepared and served 250 meals twice daily.

"A total of 220 kids and sponsors from 15 area churches participated in WACK this year," reported event coordinator Angela Lee. "This year's mu-

sical, 'DiscipleSHIP Adventure,' was directed by Wynn Anne Hook. The message of the musical was simple: Jesus wants us all to follow Him and share the Gospel just like Peter did when he left his nets to fish for men."

In addition to learning the musical, the children at WACK participated in recreation, missions, worship and "Deep Dive" music activities. Each child also selected a "Worship Arts Track," and every track was incorporated into the musical presentation on Wednesday evening.

This year's tracks included Banners, Cartooning, Drama, Fabric Arts, Flag Corps, Handbells, Legos, Percussion, Photography, Set Design, Sign Language, Stomp, Ukulele, and Woodworking.

"Watching the children develop specific talents during track times and come to understand how they can use those talents to worship God was one of the highlights for me," Lee said. "Another highlight was hearing almost 150 children's voices sing 'I Have Decided to Follow Jesus' in two-part harmony!"

"WACK wouldn't be possible without the help of so many dedicated volunteers from churches across our association who love children and want to help them learn to worship God not just with music, but with their whole lives," Lee concluded. "I know that the prayer of those who helped with WACK is that every child who attended will decide to follow Jesus and worship Him all the days of their lives!" [m](#)

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Coming events

AUG 27. Enon Association is hosting the Equip Conference at Ardmore, First. Doors open at 3:30 p.m. with breakout sessions beginning at 4 p.m. Keynote speaker is Ron Edmondson, pastor of Lexington, Ky., Immanuel. Ministry Expo and snacks will be offered. Nursery is available by RSVP at 580/223-1473. Children's Rally and Student Rally also will be offered. For more information visit enonok.org. 



SEPT 17. The Big God Little Church Conference will meet at Tulsa, First, 4-8 p.m. James Swain, president of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children will be the keynote speaker. The purpose of the conference

is to strengthen the leadership in smaller churches. To register email susan@tmbn.net. For more information contact Manny Parker at 405/708-2406. 

OCT 1-4. Del City, Sunnyslane is hosting the Faith Comes By Hearing Bible Conference. Speakers include Bill Britt, Stephen Rummage, Bob Pitman, Todd Fisher and Rickey Capps. Music by Master's Voice. Services at 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 1. Services at 6:30 p.m. on Oct. 2-4. 



VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

OKLAHOMA

On-going opportunities for volunteers:

Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, OKC and Community Food Bank of Eastern OK, Tulsa—both locations, call 405/972-1111 (Not a Baptist ministry, but many Oklahoma Baptist churches receive food from them for local food pantries.)

Arms Around Broken Arrow—food pantry, clothes closet—918/258-7714 or bryan@armsaroundba.org

Lake Texoma Baptist Resort Ministry—Monty & Tammy Wood, directors, 580/916-2181 2034 Max Rd, Mead 73449 email: thehelm2034@gmail.com

Cherokee Baptist Assembly, Cherokee—918/506-5482 email: cba_tahlequah@yahoo.com

Campers on Mission—If you are interested in helping with church building projects, sewing and evangelizing, please contact Paul Day at 405/509-0396 or paul.l.day@att.net.

DISASTER RELIEF

Training:

Sept. 14—Chaplaincy Refresher Course \$10—OKC Baptist Building (endorsed chaplains only)

To register, email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

Sept. 16—Disaster Relief Orientation & Credentialing—8:30 a.m.-12 p.m.; Weatherford, First, 1510 E. Davis Ave. Register at okdisasterhelp.org

2023 Annual Meeting Resolutions

All resolutions for consideration during the 2023 Oklahoma Baptists' Annual Meeting, other than those generated by the committee itself, must be received by Resolutions Committee Chairman Chad Balthrop no later than September 20. Balthrop is the executive pastor of Owasso, First.

Those submitting resolutions are asked to provide a copy to the Oklahoma Baptists Leadership Office. Resolutions may be mailed to Resolutions Committee, c/o Chad Balthrop, First Baptist Church, PO Box 1020, Owasso, OK 74055, with copies addressed to Resolutions Committee, Oklahoma Baptists, 3800 North May Avenue, Oklahoma City, OK 73112. Resolutions sent by e-mail should indicate Resolutions Committee in the subject line and be addressed to chad@themission.net and lwarren@oklahomabaptists.org. Resolutions may also be submitted online through September 20 at oklahomabaptists.org/business/#resolutions.