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Oklahoma Baptists 'focused' on Gospel advance at 2023 Annual Meeting



2023 Pastors' Conference emphasized 'Be Satisfied in Him'

>> CHRIS DOYLE



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Oklahoma Baptists 'focused' on Gospel advance at 2023 Annual Meeting



>> by Staff

>> PHOTOS: CHRIS DOYLE

1) Mike Wall and Amy Cordova encourage Oklahoma Baptists to be even more involved in global missions; 2) Chris Wall delivers the president's address; 3) New Oklahoma Baptist officers for 2024 include, from left, Michael Butler, president; Manny Parker, first vice president; and Duncan Blackwell, second vice president.

DEL CITY—Del City, First Southern was the place to be for Oklahoma Baptists, Nov. 13-14, as the well-known church hosted the state convention's 117th Annual Meeting.

The two-day event's theme was "Focused," based on Phil. 4:8, and Oklahoma Baptists had their focus on uniting in advancing the Gospel and strengthening churches.

"Pastor, you may feel like a clay jar, but I assure you, the Gospel that you contain is priceless," said Todd Fisher, executive director-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists, who based his address on 2 Cor. 4:7-12. Titled "Strength in Weakness," Fisher's address encouraged pastors not to lose focus, while being selfless and centering their ministries on the eternal.

The Annual Meeting drew 826 registered messengers, who represented 369 Oklahoma Baptist churches. The count exceeded the attendance of the 2022 Annual Meeting, which had 700 messengers, representing 308 churches.

The Annual Meeting's first session started Monday evening, Nov. 13, and featured a presentation of Oklahoma Baptists who participate or serve in 27 different ministries that are supported through the Cooperative Program.

On the platform, these Oklahoma Baptists walked across and displayed signs of the various ministries, in-

cluding Hope Pregnancy Centers, Camp Perfect Wings, directors of missions, Disaster Relief, North American Mission Board Send Relief, Deaf ministry, men's ministry, Baptist Collegiate Ministries, pastoral care and ministry wives, Oklahoma Baptist University, International Mission Board missionaries, multi-vocational pastors and wives, Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children, GoStudents Network, African American churches, Native American ministries, Campers on Mission, WatersEdge, church planting, Baptist Village Communities and several Southern Baptist seminaries.

"As Oklahoma Baptists, this is where our focus should be," Fisher said, pointing to the signs on the platform, "and this is why we support the Cooperative Program."

The Tuesday morning session, Nov. 14, featured reports from James Swain, president of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children, and Robert Kellogg, chief executive officer of WatersEdge Advisors and Ministry Services.

Chris Wall, Oklahoma Baptists president, oversaw the business session's election of officers for 2024, including president and first vice-president. Michael Butler, pastor of Chickasha, First, was nominated for president by Jeff DeGiacomo, pastor of Shawnee, Immanuel. Butler was the sole nominee for the office and, by acclamation, will be president of Oklahoma Baptists in 2024.

Manny Parker, pastor of Mannford, New Hope, was nominated for first vice president by Scott Morie, director of missions in Cimarron Association. Parker won the election, 297 votes to 235, over David Hooks, pastor of Oklahoma City, Bryant Avenue, who was nominated by Doug Melton, pastor of Oklahoma City, Southern Hills.

Luke Holmes, pastor of Duncan, Emmanuel, served as chairman of the Constitution and Bylaws Task Force, and reported on their work, which reviewed the Constitution and Bylaws of Oklahoma Baptists for relevant and current language. The amendment was approved

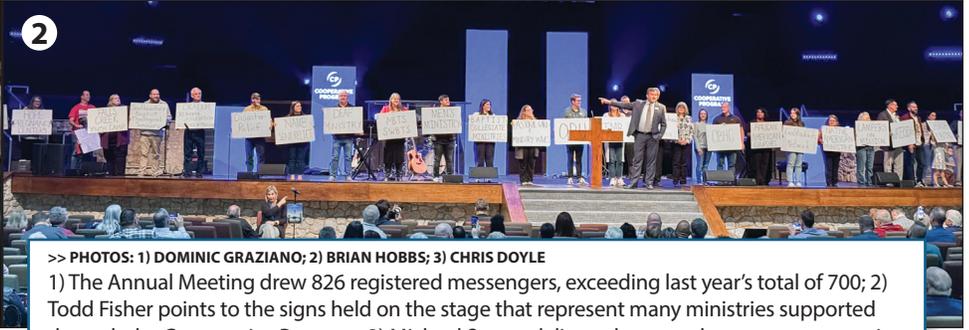
"I am so proud of this work," Wall said about the Constitution and Bylaws Task Force. "There was some tedious work. The Oklahoma Baptist Board wrapped their head around these (revisions), and I am just thankful for Dr. Fisher's leadership in evaluating our constitution and bylaws."

During the business session, Fisher presented the Board of Directors report. The CP 2024 Budget Objective is set at \$24.5 million, with 43 percent allocated to the Southern Baptist Convention, 42 percent to Oklahoma Baptists and 15 percent to Oklahoma Baptist affiliates.

Wall concluded the Tuesday morning session with the president's address.

>> CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE

Oklahoma Baptists 'focused'.. (cont.)



>> PHOTOS: 1) DOMINIC GRAZIANO; 2) BRIAN HOBBS; 3) CHRIS DOYLE

1) The Annual Meeting drew 826 registered messengers, exceeding last year's total of 700; 2) Todd Fisher points to the signs held on the stage that represent many ministries supported through the Cooperative Program; 3) Michael Staton delivers the annual sermon, encouraging Oklahoma Baptists to focus on sound doctrine and practice godly, biblical thinking.

Speaking from Acts 15:39-41, Wall encouraged Oklahoma Baptists to stop dividing and start multiplying, emphasizing the importance of being ministers of the Gospel.

"In all things, we have to clearly preach Christ," he said.

During his second term as president, Wall hosted a series of events

for Oklahoma Baptist pastors called "Coming Together" conversations. The discussion-based events, which took place at Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), covered a wide array of topics including "The Personal Life of the Pastor," "Ordination and Offices in the Church" and "Women in Ministry."

In his presidential address, Wall summarized and highlighted key discussion points from the meetings and also made available a printed synopsis from the meetings, which were composed by Holmes.

The Tuesday afternoon session had reports delivered from Bill Pierce, president of Baptist Village Communities and Heath Thomas, president of Oklahoma Baptist University.

A Cooperative Program report was presented, emphasizing the importance of global missions. Led by Mike Wall, global missions ministry partner for Oklahoma Baptists, and Amy Cordova, missions and women's ministry partner for Oklahoma Baptists,

the missions emphasis focused on Oklahoma Baptist churches becoming more involved in mission work with the theme "Send one. Take one. Be one."

The final officer election happened in the afternoon session, as Duncan Blackwell, pastor of Elk City, First, was the sole nominee for second vice-president and was elected by acclamation. Blackwell was nominated by Nathan Howard, pastor of Prague, First.

Michael Staton, pastor of Mustang, First, delivered the annual sermon. Speaking from Phil. 4:8, he encouraged Oklahoma Baptists to stand firm, be focused on sound doctrine and to practice godly, biblical thinking.

"In order to live right, we must think right," Staton said. "(The Bible) says the peace of God will be with us. God's peace produces active minds."

The next Annual Meeting for Oklahoma Baptists will meet Nov. 11-12, 2024, at Moore, First. [m](#)



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2023 Pastors' Conference emphasized 'Be Satisfied in Him'



>> PHOTOS: CHRIS DOYLE

1) John Avant emphasizes living in the fear of the Lord; 2) Adam Mask encourages looking to Jesus; 3) Jordan Easley challenges pastors to 'stay out of the spotlight'; 4) Pastors and church leaders observing a time of prayer as passages of Psalms are being read; 5) Drew Wright offers his testimony. He was one of three who offered testimonies during the Pastors' Conference; 6) the 2024 Pastors' Conference officers include, from left, Jeremy Freeman, first vice president and president-elect; Luke Holmes, president; and Landon Warren second vice president.

>> by Chris Doyle
MANAGING EDITOR

DEL CITY—Oklahoma Baptists Pastors' Conference started the gathering for the Annual Meeting, Nov. 13, at Del City, First Southern. With the theme of the event being "Be Satisfied in Him," this year's Pastors' Conference encouraged pastors to seek contentment in the Lord.

John Avant, president of Life Action Network, opened the Pastors' Conference, offering a message from Acts 9:31, emphasizing the importance of living in the fear of the Lord.

"Here is my definition of the fear of the Lord," Avant said. "The fear of the Lord is the dread of missing the presence and power of God... Are you leading your people toward that?... Are you focusing more on the fears of our day, or do you stand up with a smile on your face and say, 'Isn't it incredible that God has chosen us to live in this day?'"

Adam Mask, pastor of Coweta, Community, encouraged pastors to "Look to Jesus" in his sermon based on Heb. 12:1-3.

"What is it that we look to that brings us satisfaction to our soul?" Mask asked. "As John Piper has said, 'God is most glorified in us when we are most satisfied in Him.'"

Jordan Easley, pastor of Cleveland, Tenn., First, challenged pastors to "stay out of the spotlight," emphasizing that their ministry is "meaningless without the power of God."

"If God calls you, He qualifies you," Easley said. "Are you available and humble?"

Alton Fannin, pastor of Ardmore, First, opened his speaking time, sharing that he has been in pastoral ministry for 52 years. He preached from John 15:5 and encouraged pastors to abide in Christ.

"You are to be you, I am to be me, and we are both to be abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ," Fannin said. "And Paul would say it like this: Stay focused on Jesus, abide in Jesus, be sure you give all the glory to Jesus. And do you know what the byproduct of that would be? A satisfied life."

Philip Nation, vice president of Thomas Nelson Bible Publishers, preached from Hosea 14 and emphasized that to find true satisfaction, we must have "absolute unconditional surrender" to God.

"The Lord wants us to find our satisfaction in Him," Nation said.

Testimonies were offered by Drew Wright, executive pastor at Jenks, First, and Rusty Fuller, pastor of Ada, Trinity. Ethan Wolfe, youth pastor at Purcell, Emmanuel and full-time student at Oklahoma Baptist University, observed a recent tradition at the Pastors' Conference by delivering a message as an OBU pastoral student.

Throughout the Pastors' Conference were times of prayer, as passages of Psalms were read and pastors and others who attended were invited to come to the altar and pray through the passage that were shared.

Luke Holmes will be serving as president of the Pastors' Conference in 2024, as he served this year as president-elect. Jeremy Freeman, pastor of Newcastle, First, was elected to be the first vice president and president-elect of next year's Pastors' Conference. Landon Warren, pastor of Snyder, First, was elected to serve next year as second vice president. [m](#)



People in the news



OBU WINS BCM VOLLEYBALL TOURNAMENT. On Nov. 4, Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) hosted the annual Baptist Collegiate Ministries volleyball tournament. The home team claimed the tourney title, and the winning team is featured above. [m](#)

Coming events

NOV. 25. Bethany, Tulakes, 6715 Northwest 50th Street, is hosting a Gospel Music Concert at 4 p.m. The concert will feature a Hugh Kinsey Hymn Sing and Tom Nix. A love offering will be received. For more information, email jim@ougma.org or call 405/324-2144. [m](#)

DEC. 5. Mustang, Mustang Heights is celebrating its 50th anniversary. All current and former members and staff are welcome and encouraged to attend the morning service, beginning at 10 a.m. All are welcome to stay for a potluck luncheon following the morning worship service. For more information, contact Pastor Darrell Ray at 405/595-9416 or Terri Miller at 405/826-6448. [m](#)



DEC. 9. Oklahoma City, Northwest will host Let's Go. Sending Conference from 10 a.m.-4:30 p.m. The conference is for any church wanting to go on a short-term overseas mission trip. Space may be limited, so registering early will be helpful. To register visit oklahomabaptists.org/global-missions/lets-go-sending-conference. [m](#)

VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

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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. 29-March 2, 2024 – Chaplain Manual and Operational

Stress First Aid – \$60 Baptist Building, 3800 N. May Ave.,

Oklahoma City, OK 73112 Instructor: Naomi Paget.

To register, please email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

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