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Children experience many mission opportunities at Mission Ignition

>> CHRIS DOYLE



DR continues serving Oklahoma Panhandle in wildfires aftermath

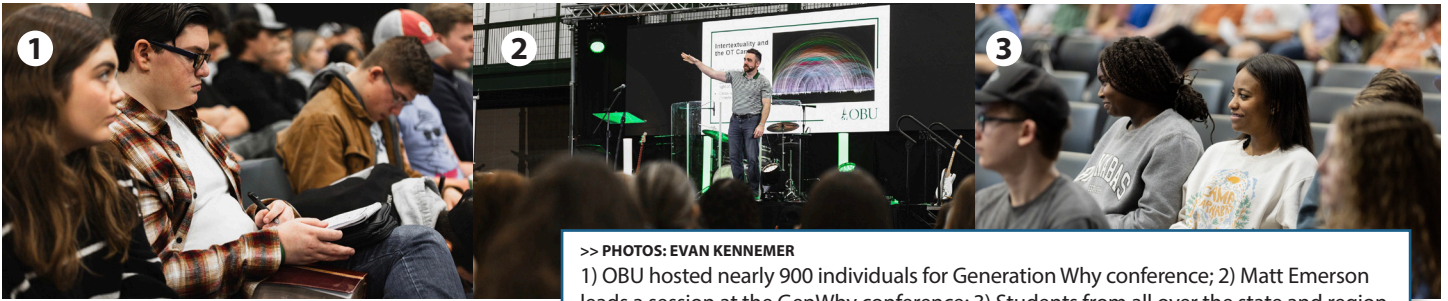
>> BOB NIGH



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'Generation Why' apologetics conference draws nearly 900 at OBU



>> PHOTOS: EVAN KENNEMER

1) OBU hosted nearly 900 individuals for Generation Why conference; 2) Matt Emerson leads a session at the GenWhy conference; 3) Students from all over the state and region attend GenWhy; 4) Brian Baldwin, Oklahoma Baptists student missions and evangelism ministry partner, connects with students at GenWhy; 5) GenWhy allowed students to engage deeply with their faith and gain practical tools to articulate it in a changing world.

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

SHAWNEE—Oklahoma Baptist University's (OBU) annual youth apologetics conference, Generation Why, attracted students, youth groups and college ministry groups from around the state and region with about 900 individuals attending.

Meeting on March 2, on the OBU campus in Shawnee, the event aimed to enlighten and equip attendees to understand the significance of reasonable faith in a post-Christian age.

Generation Why, often referred to as "GenWhy," addressed a notable shift in identity, with organizers noting that faith once defined individuals throughout much of the 20th century. The conference, designed for middle school, high school and college students, focused on deepening participants' faith and providing them with tools to defend their beliefs effectively.

With the theme of "Biblical Apologetics," attendees explored topics such as the reliability of Scripture, the teachings of Jesus, and the forma-

tion of the biblical canon. The one-day conference featured informative sessions and a time for worship.

Abby Gish, a student from Lawton, said, "I learned that we are a kingdom of priests. We are all working together towards one goal and that's to profess the love of Christ to others. That was really powerful."

The conference boasted an impressive lineup of featured speakers, including Matthew Y. Emerson, Craig A. Evans, and Jonathan T. Pennington.

Emerson, OBU co-provost and dean of theology, arts and humanities, specializes in biblical studies, hermeneutics and systematic theology.

Evans serves as the John Bisagno Distinguished Professor of Christian Origins at Houston Christian University. He is a renowned biblical scholar and archaeologist and is recognized for his extensive research on the historical Jesus and the New Testament. His contributions to biblical archaeology and textual criticism enriched the conference's content.

Pennington, who holds a Ph.D. in New Testament Studies from the University of St. Andrews (Scotland), is a professor of New Testament Interpretation at Southern Seminary.

Generation Why provided an opportunity for students to engage deeply with their faith and gain practical tools to articulate it in a changing world. With its focus on equipping the next generation with a deeper understanding of their faith, the conference continues to be a significant event for students seeking to navigate the complexities of contemporary Christianity.

"I learned there were 6,000 references from the Old Testament to the New (Testament) all intertwined, telling a giant story altogether," said Ben Pollard, youth ministry director for Lawton, Dayspring Community.

"I think it's just a great wake-up call," Gish said. "It refocuses you on your faith. I think it's a great opportunity to reset yourself to make sure you know what's important in life." [m](#)



Children experience many mission opportunities at Mission Ignition



>> PHOTO: CHRIS DOYLE
 1) Tyler Johnson, center, receives a special award at Mission Ignition. He is featured with Mark Jones and Sarah Hagar, Oklahoma Baptists childhood ministry partner; 2) Pastor Eric Costanzo of Tulsa, South Tulsa shares a Gospel presentation; 3) Jason Yarbrough, Oklahoma Baptists Disaster Relief (DR) director, tells children about DR ministry; 4) Children learn about mission work in Washington, D.C.; 5) Keith Wilkinson offers an example of a different culture for children during a mission stop.

>> by Chris Doyle
MANAGING EDITOR

Mission Ignition is the annual Oklahoma Baptists event that provides hands-on missions experience for children in 1st through 6th grades.

On Saturday, March 2, three Oklahoma Baptist churches hosted regional meetings of Mission Ignition, including Del City, First Southern; Tahlequah, First; and Tulsa, South Tulsa.

All three locations had great turnouts. Tulsa, South Tulsa recorded 399 in attendance; Del City, First Southern

had 355, and Tahlequah, First drew 215 individuals. Overall, the three sites featured 151 missionaries and volunteers who shared with children how they can be involved in missions.

Activities included mission stops, worship sessions, fun times with games and inflatables.

A combined total of 52 churches participated, and 22 churches received awards for children involved in mission work.

Tyler Johnson of Oklahoma City, Quail Springs received a special award. Mark Jones, children's minister at Quail Springs, reported on Facebook about Tyler's award.

"So proud of Tyler for achieving this Mission Ignition award because of his serving heart each week at church," Jones said. "We had a wonder day at Mission Ignition. Our kids loved it! Thank you to all the wonderful missionaries and leaders for making this event happen." [m](#)



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DR continues serving Oklahoma Panhandle in wildfires aftermath



>> PHOTOS: PROVIDED
1) An area in the Oklahoma Panhandle that was affected by the Feb. 26 wildfire; 2) DR volunteers will begin working in cleanup and fire recovery on Wednesday, March 6. Pictured are DR volunteers doing ash-out from a past wildfire.

>> by Bob Nigh
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

Jason Yarbrough, Oklahoma Baptists Disaster Relief (DR) director, reported 22 DR volunteers will begin working Wednesday, March 6, in cleanup and fire recovery in areas located in the Oklahoma Panhandle.

DR has been serving in Gage and other parts of Ellis County since wildfires spread through the area on Wed., Feb. 26. Yarbrough said volunteers delivered pallets of water and snacks to those affected by the fires. He said he is appreciative of the work DR volunteers regularly do to serve.

“As we prepare to deploy for the first time in 2024, let me start by saying thank you for being DR volunteers and being the hands and feet of Jesus!” Yarbrough said in an email to DR volunteers. “Let’s not lose sight of why we do what we do... We meet the physical needs people are experiencing to see a door opened for us to speak into the spiritual needs

they have. Remember, we do what we do with God’s help, for God’s glory!”

DR volunteers are still needed to serve on ash-out team and supporting units—such as laundry, showers, assessor and feeding units in the upcoming weeks.

“Things are fluid on deployment dates because of safety issues with the fire and how hot the ash is still,” Yarbrough added. “We are in contact with potentially 13-14 homeowners as of now.”

The Deputy Emergency Management director for Ellis County said Monday, March 4, that ash was still too hot for volunteers to enter.


Assistant DR director Ryan Deatherage said an Oklahoma Baptist DR assessor was in the field in Fargo along with chaplains who were ministering to those impacted by the fires.

“When we deploy, we will be staying at the Northwest Baptist Association Camp,” Deatherage said. “We

have teams coming in the evening of Tue., March 5 that will begin work on Wednesday. Please be in prayer for all who have been affected by these fires and for those traveling to serve.”

These wildfires have devastated the landscape, impacted ranchers, and posed challenges for firefighters in both Oklahoma and Texas. Authorities urged the public to stay informed, take precautions, and support firefighting efforts during the critical situation.

The Smokehouse Creek Fire, in Hutchinson County, the largest recorded wildfire in Texas history, had killed two people so far. By Sun., March 3, it had burned nearly 1.1 million acres (1,600 square miles) and was only 15 percent contained, the Texas A&M Forest Service said. It is only one of several fires driven by parched land and high winds in the two states.

Visit okdisasterhelp.org for more information or to donate. 

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People in the news



QUIGLEY HONORED WITH OBU'S CARROLL AWARD AT ADVANCE CONFERENCE. From left, Oklahoma Baptist University President Heath Thomas and Walter Wilson, Oklahoma Baptists African American ministry partner, are shown presenting the J.M. Carroll Award to Alan Quigley, Oklahoma Baptists associate executive director for church resources, during the Advance Conference on March 4.

The J.M. Carroll Award is given to recognize outstanding denominational service in Oklahoma. It is named for J.M. Carroll, who served as OBU's first president, helping establish the foundation upon which OBU's tradition of excellence has been built.

Quigley has served two tenures with Oklahoma Baptists, from 2003 to 2009 as evangelism director, then from 2013 to the present in various leadership capacities. [m](#)

Coming events

APRIL 6. Ada, First, 521 S. Broadway Avenue, is hosting a Car Show, 9 a.m.-4 p.m. All proceeds support summer camps for grades K-12. Special awards will be given for best of show, best motor, best interior, best paint and kid's choice. Register online at fbcada.org/spring. [m](#)

APRIL 16. Lawton, First, 501 SW B Avenue, is hosting SBC Family Meeting at 10 a.m. Pastor Mike Keahbone will serve as host of this one-day information rally. Two of the primary topics heading into the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting will be the report from the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force (ARITF) and the second vote on the Law Amendment. Josh Wester, ARITF chairman, will be speaking as will Mike Law, the author of the Law Amendment. A Q&A session will be observed.

For more information and to register, visit fbclawton.org/events. [m](#)

VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

OKLAHOMA

On-going opportunities for volunteers:

Tulakogee Conference Center, Wagoner—918/462-3212 or info@tulakogee.com

The Spring, a faith-based shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence or human sexual trafficking and their children, Sand Springs—Mychaela Burris, 918/947-4679

Hospitality House of Tulsa provides family centered lodging, emotional and spiritual support for family members of patients traveling to Tulsa for medical care. 918/794-0088 or hhtulsa.org

Hospitality House of Oklahoma provides for the physical, spiritual needs of families with loved ones incarcerated in McAlester. Lodging available. 918/429-0142

OK Jail & Prison Ministry needs volunteers to go into the jails and share the Gospel each week. For more information call 405/917-2242 or email ojpm@ojpm.org

DISASTER RELIEF

Training:

March 8-9—Orientation/Credentialing – Baptist Village of Owasso. Register online at Orientation & Credentialing | Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief (okdisasterhelp.org)

April 11-12—Assisting Individuals in Crisis – 9 a.m.-4 p.m. – \$50** Baptist Building, 3800 N. May Ave., Oklahoma City, To register, please email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

** For endorsed chaplains only

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