



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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COLLEGIATE WEEK ALIGNS STUDENTS, LEADERS FOR CAMPUS MINISTRY

by Julia Bell, shared with permission from BCNet

Days before the start of a new school year, more than 1,730 college students and leaders gathered at Falls Creek Conference Center in Davis, Oklahoma, to learn how to live on mission and become passionate followers of Jesus. Groups from across North America – including Alaska, Hawaii, and Canada – gathered with International Mission Board (IMB) and North American Mission Board (NAMB) personnel for the five-day August event that included worship, teaching and fellowship. State convention collegiate ministry leaders partnered to plan and produce the event, which saw its largest post-Covid attendance this year.

Pastor Arjay Gruspe, of Pawa'a Community Church in Honolulu, also serves as the state director of Next Generation Ministries for the Hawaii Pacific Baptist Convention and was a member of the event planning team. This year he brought eight others from Hawaii, including four students, to "challenge them to be countercultural in the way they live and approach life on their campuses." He celebrates the report that more than 50 individuals prayed to receive Christ and that more than 200 responded to a call to ministry during Collegiate Week.

"It was great to see so many campus and church-based campus ministries interacting and planning ways to partner and pray for one another this fall. IMB always has a strong presence and did a great job in having students consider mission involvement," Gruspe says, adding that he was glad to see increased numbers of seminaries engaging with students this year.

Collegiate Week partners with Southern Baptist seminaries, Woman's Missionary Union, NAMB and IMB to introduce students and leaders to the full spectrum of available missions, vocational and educational opportunities. According to Registration Coordinator Carissa Jones of the Oklahoma Baptists, the event also seeks to help participants take their next steps in ministry leadership.

"The college years are pivotal. Students are often on their own for the first time and making decisions that will impact them for the rest of their lives. The world is there waiting for them, and the body of Christ needs to be as well," Jones said.

H.B. Charles, Shane Pruitt and Tommy Woodard were featured speakers during the 2024 Collegiate Week, with worship sessions led by Cody Dunbar and Matt Roberson. Participants shared decisions and requested follow-up contact through a QR code, and others responded during worship services, which saw hundreds of participants gather throughout the altar area.

First Baptist Denton, Texas, College Pastor Jared Gregory has brought students from his church's ministry to Collegiate Week since 2018 and has served in several planning capacities for the event over the years. He says it's a time for students to "connect with God, each other, and our mission agencies" before the back-to-school rush sets in. This year he brought 35 students from the University of North Texas, Texas Woman's University and North Central Texas College.

"It's such a good week to see students get right in their relationship with God before they start ministry to others. This year, we had a number of students come forward to confess sin in their lives that is holding them back from God, and three students declared a call to ministry," Gregory reports.

According to Stacy Murphree, campus minister at Austin Peay State University in Clarksville, Tennessee, the timing of Collegiate Week is a bonus, right before the beginning of fall semester. This year she brought about 100 BCM students from six different campuses, and appreciates that student and leader participants benefitted from networking and sharing ideas. The experience also "jumpstarts" her leaders, who had about one week before campus ministries officially started.

"I love that our students can hear about campuses in emerging areas – maybe they could feel personally led to serve in those areas, but this also broadens their perspective of campus ministry that's not just about what we do on our campuses. It's about what God is doing throughout the United States," Murphree says, adding that "no where else could they be with other students from other BCMs across the country and now be able to better pray for those campuses, too. This is such a valuable time."



GOD'S GATEKEEPER ENABLED OKLAHOMA CHAPLAINS' MINISTRY AT GROUND ZERO IN 2001

by Bob Nigh

Less than one hour after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center's twin towers in Manhattan and the Pentagon in Washington, D.C., Southern Baptist volunteers mobilized and began providing relief for victims, family members and the New York City community, in particular, at large.

And, when the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) ministry response officially ended 319 days later, Southern Baptists' legacy of love had a major impact as Southern Baptists volunteered in amazing numbers—3,800 in all from 32 conventions—to pray with and comfort survivors, serve a meal to recovery workers, clean apartments and distribute teddy bears and other stuffed animals to children who had lost a parent or to weary police officers and firefighters to take home and give to their own children.

Among the first to be called on was a group of chaplains from Oklahoma.

"They want us to come as quickly as possible," former Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief Director, Sam Porter said at mid-day Sept. 11, as he scrambled to organize a response. "We'll be responsible for assessing the situation and setting up the SBC's chaplaincy response to this tragedy. It's going to be so massive a job that we'll be trying to get a handle on quickly to get it under way. It's overwhelming to think about it."

Porter hustled to assemble a response team from Oklahoma to help get the job done. Also packing their bags for New York were Leslie Sias, chaplaincy specialist; Paul Bettis, prison chaplaincy consultant and Oklahoma City Police chaplain Jack Poe. Accompanying the group was *Baptist Messenger* managing editor Bob Nigh, who got "on-the-job" chaplain training over the next two weeks. Nigh later became the third North American Mission Board (NAMB)-endorsed disaster relief chaplain in the U.S. and the first in Oklahoma.

God paved the way for the group's experience, even enlisting a "providential gatekeeper" to allow the Oklahomans direct access to what was to become known as Ground Zero in Manhattan.

Making their way south toward Ground Zero, the chaplains edged closer to the site of the terrorist attack and eventually walked up to the first checkpoint at the extreme edge of the perimeter which had been established by NYC emergency officials. Unable to enter at first, the group ministered to hundreds of bewildered New Yorkers who were virtually lost amid the towering skyscrapers as their old, familiar landmarks—the twin 110-story World Trade Center (WTC) towers—no longer were visible in the Manhattan skyline.

It began to look like Porter and the others were going to have to abandon their mission to get to Ground Zero when a New York City police lieutenant inside the perimeter gate came up to them as they peered through the chain link fence which cordoned off the street and greeted them after seeing their "chaplain" hard hats.

"Are you guys tired? Do you need to get some rest?" the officer asked.

After doing double takes at each other, Porter finally said, "No sir. We're just now getting here and hope to be able to minister to first responders and others at the site."

"You're not hearing me," the lieutenant said firmly. "You guys look like you can use some rest. I've got some cots inside a nearby school where you can take a break."

The officer's message finally connected with the group, and after motioning for the group to follow him through the checkpoint, the officer led them inside the school building, pointed out the cots in a room, and said, "OK. Now that you're inside the perimeter, head south and go do God's work."



NEARLY 700 STUDENTS ANSWER 'THE CALL' TO MINISTRY

by Messenger Staff

SHAWNEE—There are countless ways students can spend their free time on the weekends—from time with friends, to watching movies, to catching up on homework.

On Saturday, August 24, nearly 700 middle school and high school students from across Oklahoma invested the entire weekend to lean into a ministry call from the Lord that they have each felt on their lives.

Students from 95 different churches in Oklahoma took part at the event, which took place on the campus of Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU).

The Call Conference was developed years ago for “individuals who are exploring or pursuing a call from God to ministry leadership,” and it is widely promoted at Falls Creek and other student ministry settings.

Keynote program speakers for the 2024 Call Conference included:

- Paul Chitwood, president of the International Mission Board, who spoke with students in attendance about how to confirm God’s Call in their lives.
- Brandon Smith, Chair, Herschel H. Hobbs School of Theology and Ministry Associate Professor of Theology and Early Christianity (OBU), who spoke about how students could grow in God’s Call. Smith is newer to OBU and most recently served at Cedarville University.
- Jeff Iorg, president of the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee, shared about “how to move forward in God’s Call.” Prior to stepping into his role at the SBC, Iorg served as President of Gateway Seminary and is author of the book *Is God Calling Me?*

The theme this year was “PREPARE[D],” which means “made ready for use.” The theme was based on Ephesians 2:10, which states: “For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”

Chitwood talked about the many opportunities to serve on the mission field with the IMB. He said, “I am excited to see so many young people seeking out how God will use them to impact eternity.”

Speaking during the morning session of The Call Conference, Chitwood shared a personal story from earlier in his life when a serious automobile accident caused him to reexamine his priorities and lean into his Christian walk.

The Call Conference, which is produced by OBU and Oklahoma Baptists with support through the Cooperative Program, also offered 14 topic-specific breakout sessions. The topics included the following:

Dual Career Ministry, Children’s Ministry, Church Planting, Evangelism, Leading Those Called, Leading Yourself, Media Ministry, Missions, Pastoral, Small Town Ministry, The Way God Calls, Women & Ministry, Worship Ministry and Youth Ministry.

Heath Tucker, pastor of Edmond, Waterloo Road, said, “The Call Conference at OBU was excellent. As the church we can do our part to affirm the young men and women who are called to ministry. Give them opportunities to develop, help prevent the enemy from derailing them, take the time to mentor them. Raise them up and send them out! Those in this (Call Conference) are our future pastors and ministers!”

For more information, visit oklahomabaptists.org/thecall.

COLLEGE MINISTRY GAINS ‘MOMENTUM’

by Carissa Jones

MOORE—More than 800 students and young adults from across Oklahoma descended on Moore, First on Friday, September 6 for Momentum. Momentum is a one-night worship gathering hosted annually by the Oklahoma Baptists Collegiate Ministry (BCM).

This year’s event featured pastor Mike Keahbone, of Lawton, First, preaching the Word. “Glad the City” led in worship through song. The Oklahoma Baptists Conference Centers, the International Mission Board and Southwestern Seminary each had ministry presence at Momentum.

Chad Coleman, Associate Collegiate Ministries Director for Oklahoma Baptists said of the event, “Momentum is a high-energy event aimed at helping BCM and church groups come together to kick off the semester and motivate students to live out the Gospel on their college campuses.”

“I think, this year, the most exciting thing was that we had several students respond to Mike Keahbone’s message,” said Coleman. “Several students came forward, the most I have ever seen go forward during the response time at Momentum. I think Mike did a really good job of motivating people to take seriously their personal role in sharing the gospel on their campus.”

Haiden Sides, a freshman at Redlands Community College, said Momentum “was such an amazing way to learn more about the Lord and worship him with other students.” This was Sides’ first time attending one of the statewide collegiate events, and she enjoyed hearing Keahbone share and getting to connect with new people. “It’s a great way to meet people and have fun.”

Danny Toombs, BCM Director at Cameron University, had a unique perspective at Momentum this year as Keahbone was part of the ministry of the Cameron BCM as a young adult. “It’s so encouraging to see what God can do in a student’s life. Knowing where and what he came from to how God is using him today is a reminder that [God] can do that in any student’s life,” said Toombs. “Never give up on a student or count them out.”

Momentum 2025 is scheduled for Friday, September 5, open to all college students and young adults (18-24), and the event will feature popular evangelist Shane Pruitt, who serves with the North American Mission Board.



CHURCH NEWS

BLACKBURN CHAPEL AT 125 YEARS . . . GLORY TO GOD!

Blackburn Chapel Church invites all past and present pastors, members, and friends to celebrate its 125th Anniversary, Oct. 20. The celebration begins at 9 a.m. with coffee and donuts, followed by Sunday School classes. Morning worship begins at 10:50. Lunch will be served about 12:30, with the afternoon service starting about 1:30. Looking forward to seeing you! For additional information, email blackburnchapelbc@gmail.com.

NEW CONGREGATIONS/ AFFILIATES

Tulsa, Greater New Grove

(New Congregation)

Pastor: Johnnie R Jones Sr.

14147E 12th St., Tulsa, OK 74108

Tulsa Metro Association

Stillwater, Mehan Union

(New Affiliate)

Pastor: Toby Tiner

8300 E 68th, Stillwater, OK 74074

Cimmaron Association

Oklahoma City, Providence

(New Congregation)

Pastor: Brett Middleton

2233 W I-44 Service Rd., Oklahoma

City,

OK 73112

Metro Baptist Network

FLOYD HONORED FOR 40 YEARS IN PASTORATE

On Sept. 8, Great Plains Association (GPBA) honored Charlie Floyd for 40 years ministry as pastor at Texola, First. GPBA director of missions Danny Ringer, left, presented Floyd a certificate from the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission, and former DOM Ralph Chapman presented Floyd with a certificate from the Association.



VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

Tulakogee Conference Center

Wagoner, OK
918-462-3212

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, OK
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.

Tulsa, OK
918-794-0088

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

The Spring

Needs volunteers to go to the jails and share the Gospel each week.

405-917-2242
ojpm@ojpm.org

UPCOMING DR EVENTS/ INFORMATION

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training Sept. 12-14

Naomi Paget, Instructor
Tulsa, South Tulsa
10310 S. Sheridan, Tulsa.
Cost is \$60

To register, email pjones@oklahoma-baptists.org.

Orientation/Credentialing Sept. 20-21

Southwest Baptist Assesmbly, Lone Wolf, OK

Register online at Orientation & Credentialing
(okdisasterhelp.org)

Assisting Individuals in Crisis (CISM) Oct. 24-25

For endorsed chaplains only
9 a.m.-4 p.m. - Cost \$50.

Tulsa, South Tulsa.

To register, email pjones@oklahoma-baptists.org.

(Continuing education for those who have completed Chaplain Manual and OSFA)

For endorsed chaplains only: Orientation/Credentialing Oct. 25-26

Grand Lake Assembly, Grove
Register online at Orientation & Credentialing
(okdisasterhelp.org)