



# THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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**2024 Pastors' Conference**  
*by Messenger Staff*



**Ministry Milestones**  
*by Sarah Sutton and  
Messenger Staff*



**Church News**



# Invested

1700+ Churches 40 Associations 1 Kingdom

## 2024 ANNUAL MEETING OKLAHOMA BAPTISTS 'INVESTED' IN GOSPEL ADVANCE

*by Messenger Staff*

MOORE—On Nov. 11-12, 2024, 885 Oklahoma Baptist registered messengers, plus guests, from 400 churches, attended the 118th Annual Meeting of Oklahoma Baptists, hosted at Moore, First.

The two-day event included times for key business, worship through song, preaching, prayer, ministry exhibits, special meal fellowship events, times to honor Oklahoma Baptist missionaries and more.

On Monday evening, the 118th meeting of the Oklahoma Baptists began with a time of worship led by the renowned singing group, Native Praise Choir, which is celebrating its 25th year of ministry and has performed around the world.



That evening, Oklahoma Baptists' Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher delivered his annual address.

During this time, Fisher shared key ministry updates for Oklahoma Baptists, including how the convention will continue to support and serve pastors and churches. Fisher also unveiled plans to add one more regional ministry partner in 2025.



He also shared an update on the move of WatersEdge, Oklahoma Baptists, Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children and Baptist Village Communities to the newly acquired Sonic Building in Bricktown. WatersEdge staff is relocating this month, with the others to make the move in coming weeks. Several videos throughout the meeting highlighted the many benefits for this strategic office move.

Fisher then shared a powerful and emotional testimony of how God saved his life during a serious automobile accident last July and how the prayers of others have carried him on his journey to recovery.

He detailed how, in providential timing, two men came along and provided life-saving care for him immediately following the crash until medics could be on the scene.

Fisher encouraged those in attendance who are going through any kind of struggle, with what the Lord has taught him throughout the crash and recovery process.





"God sees you. God fights for you. And He is always ultimately at work for our good, even when we may not realize or understand it," Fisher said.

To conclude the Monday evening session, pastor and Indian Falls Creek executive director Victor Cope closed in prayer for Fisher and for the work of reaching the state, including Native Peoples, with the Gospel.

After the evening session concluded, Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) held a reception for guests that celebrated the 100-year anniversary of BCM/BSU ministries.



The following morning, Tue. Nov. 12, The Singing Church Women of Oklahoma, who are celebrating their 35th year, led the worship session to begin the second day of the Annual Meeting.

WatersEdge CEO Robert Kellogg then delivered a ministry report, emphasizing the Kingdom impact of WatersEdge and speaking about the move to its new office ministry headquarters.

Following this, Bill Pierce, president of Baptist Village Communities (BVC), offered the BVC ministry report. He shared how the BVC is revitalizing senior adult ministry and thriving at its ministry locations. BVC is 66 years old as a ministry and "the future of the next 66 years looks bright," said Pierce.



Following this set of reports, the business session began. Michael Butler, who is serving as president for Oklahoma Baptists, was elected to a second one-year term as president during the morning business session. Butler preached from God's Word during the morning session, offering the president's address and connected his message to the theme of "Invested."

"You are the missionary God has raised up to reach your community for the Gospel," Butler said.

In the afternoon, OBU President Heath Thomas shared a ministry report which included the Gospel impact of OBU and the "Shape the Future" campaign that aims to propel the mission of OBU.



James Swain, president of Oklahoma Baptists Homes for Children, then gave a report about the growing foster care ministry, Hope Pregnancy Centers, residential campus ministries and more.

BCM State Director Cris Lowery then led a time of recognition for BCM's 100th anniversary and how the Gospel has impacted 39 campuses across the state.

Brent Prentice, lead pastor of Stillwater, Eagle Heights, delivered the annual sermon on Tuesday afternoon. He preached from Psalm 43, sharing about finding encouragement in the Lord when facing discouragement.



During the Annual Meeting, Oklahoma Baptists' messengers elected the following officers: Michael Butler, pastor of Chickasha, First as president; Owen Nease, pastor of Oklahoma City, Emmaus, as 1st Vice President; and Randy Hurt, director of missions for Atoka-Coal Association, as 2nd Vice President. Jacob Bice concluded the Annual Meeting with a closing prayer.

In business items, messengers to the annual meeting approved members to serve on various boards and committees. Messengers also approved the Cooperative Program (CP) giving objective for 2025 of \$24.5 million, as messengers looked forward to celebrating the 100th Anniversary of the CP next year. Throughout the two-day event, various meal fellowships and auxiliary events took place, include ones hosted by the Send Network Oklahoma, an Oklahoma Baptists' Missions Dinner, OBU Dinner and more.

Fisher expressed thanks to all who attended the Annual Meeting. He said, "What an amazing Oklahoma Baptists Annual Meeting we had! Incredible attendance and so thankful for the unity, love for one another, and focus on advancing the Gospel our churches and pastors have. What a joy to be part of these dear people and serve them. Grateful!"

The 2025 Oklahoma Baptists Annual Meeting is set to take place on Nov. 10-11 and will be hosted by Oklahoma City, Southern Hills. For more information, visit [this link](#).



From left to right: 2025 Annual Meeting Officers  
2nd Vice President Randy Hurt, President Michael Butler and  
1st Vice President Owen Nease.





# 2024 PASTORS' CONFERENCE 'WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANTS!'

by Messenger Staff

Leading into the 2024 Annual Meeting, the Oklahoma Baptists Pastors' Conference (OKBPC) provided a time of fellowship, worship and encouragement to Oklahoma Pastors.

The theme of this year's Pastors' Conference was "Well Done," based on the words of Jesus from Matt. 25:23: "His master replied, 'Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master's happiness!'"

This year's theme encouraged pastors to stay strong in ministry and highlighted the concept of faithfulness in five key areas of a pastor's life: family, preaching, leadership, longevity in ministry and personal life.

Speakers included Pastors Keith Wigington, Mark Clifton, Michael Gabbert, Jared C. Wilson and Rob Lindley, who each offered insight from personal experiences and the Scriptures.

On Monday morning, Wigington's sermon focused on family life and how surrendering to Christ is at the center of a Christian's life.

Clifton shared from his personal journey as a pastor and church planter, offering encouragement to Oklahoma Baptist pastors and those in the ministry.

"We have a complete revelation in God's Word. Jesus exceeds every expectation we could ever have," said Clifton.

Gabbert shared with pastors about the importance and impact of longevity in pastoral ministry.

"Our calling is to impact lives, to impact people for the Lord," said Gabbert.

Wilson offered biblical encouragement to attendees of the conference.



"It's not your job to hand out religious busy work. It is your job to proclaim the Gospel and God as the author of that Gospel," said Wilson.

The final speaker for the Pastors' Conference, Lindley, encouraged Oklahoma Baptist pastors in the ministry of the local church.

"God takes broken things and makes them beautiful, as only He can," said Lindley.

As a new feature of the Pastors' Conference, 2024 Pastors' Conference president Luke Holmes, who serves at Duncan, Immanuel, presented the inaugural J.B. Rounds Bi-Vocational Pastor of the Year Award. The award went to David Boggs of Butcher Pen Baptist Mission to recognize "his hard work and dedication as a Bi-Vocational Pastor." Holmes hopes the award continues in future years.

During the event, officer elections for future Pastors' Conference took place. The 2025 Pastors' Conference will be led by Jeremy Freeman, President; Jeff DeGiacomo, first vice president and Jase Hargrove, second vice president.

Oklahoma Baptists' Executive-Director Treasurer Todd Fisher closed the evening in prayer and invited all attendees to the Oklahoma Baptist Annual Meeting which followed the Pastors' Conference.





# Ministry Milestones

## BEHYMER RECOGNIZED FOR 50 YEARS OF SERVICE

*by Sarah Sutton*

Norman Behymer, Executive Pastor of Worship Arts and Ministry Strategy at Bethany, Council Road, was recently honored for 50 years of service. The celebration took place over a week with several events that included a choir and orchestra rehearsal and reunion and a 1970s and '80s youth and singles group reunion. It culminated on Sunday, November 17, with two worship services that included a special commendation from Oklahoma Governor Kevin Stitt, an honorary doctorate presentation by Oklahoma Baptist University President Heath Thomas and a service award from the Oklahoma Baptist Historical Society. Behymer's doctorate will be conferred at the OBU Winter Commencement where he is also the guest speaker.

Behymer surrendered to the Lord's calling on his life at the age of 17, promising the Lord that he would do whatever he asked that week. His first ministry opportunity happened later that week. After three internships, he was called to Council Road full-time, and he has never looked back.

He has served under all five Council Road pastors: Fred Wilhoite, Wendell Estep, Claud Thomas, Mark Hartman and Rick Thompson. Pastor Estep traveled from South Carolina to bring the message that morning. There were approximately 125 musicians onstage leading in worship.

Behymer has always kept people at the heart of his ministry by including anyone who felt called to serve. He always found a place for people to use their talent. He says God has been faithful to provide just the right people at the right time to fill needs, and He has also sent out many from Council Road to serve all over the country in various ministry aspects.

The thing that has meant the most to him is that he has been able to serve in the worship arts ministry with his wife, Denise, of 52 years, and that both of his sons, Jonathan and Jeffery, were raised at Council Road and accepted Jesus as their Savior in the children's ministry.

Behymer doesn't have any plans to slow down or retire, saying the Lord keeps fulfilling his promise to help do whatever he needs to do that week.



## MITCHELL'S 50 YEARS AS PASTOR CELEBRATED AT DAVENPORT, FIRST

*by Messenger Staff*



On Nov. 3, Davenport, First celebrated Pastor Mike Mitchell's 50 years of service as senior pastor. Numerous guests showed up to celebrate Mitchell's service and congratulate him for reaching such an incredible milestone.

Mitchell gave his life to Christ at the age of nine and in 1969, at the age of 16, he committed his life to ministry while attending Falls Creek.

Five years later, Mitchell preached his first sermon at the original Davenport, First location. His 50 years of ministry have demonstrated his deep commitment to the Lord, to being a pastor and to leading Davenport, First.



# CHURCH NEWS

## HISTORICAL COMMISSION PRESENTS AWARDS AT ANNUAL LUNCHEON

The Oklahoma Baptist Historical Commission inducted four outstanding Oklahoma Baptists into the Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame (HOF) at the Commission's annual luncheon Tues., Nov. 12. Held in conjunction with the 118th Annual Meeting of Oklahoma Baptists at Moore, First, the Commission also presented its Distinguished Service Award (DSA) and Gaskin Church History Award during the event, attended by almost 60 people.



Receiving the Commission's DSA was Bill C. Haggard, former director of the convention's Religious Education Dept. (1972-1993), State Sunday School Director, State Church Building Consultant and Falls Creek Program Director (22 years).

The Gaskin Church History Award went to Tishomingo, First, which celebrated its 125th anniversary in 2023.

Messengers to the Annual Meeting also elected new members of the Historical Commission, including Coen Barnes, member of Washington, First; Chris Rucker, pastor of Sapulpa, First; and Joe Sherrer, member of Oklahoma City, Capitol Hill. Historical Secretary Bob Nigh expressed appreciation to three outgoing members of the Commission: Michael Dershem, Yale; Richard McCullough, Perkins and Stephanie Parnell, Yukon.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

### OKYM Forum

Nov. 21-23 | Falls Creek Conference Center  
The OKYM Forum is open to all youth workers, not just church staff. For more information, visit [www.oklahomabaptists.org/youth/forum/](http://www.oklahomabaptists.org/youth/forum/).

### DR Orientation and Credentialing

Feb. 22/Mar. 29/April 11-12 (2025)  
Locations TBD  
Register online - [okdisasterhelp.org](http://okdisasterhelp.org)

## VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

### Tulakogee Conference Center

Wagoner, OK  
918-462-3212  
[info@tulakogee.com](mailto: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  
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  
[www.hhtulsa.org](http://www.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](mailto:ojpm@ojpm.org)

## NEW CONGREGATIONS/AFFILIATES

### Oklahoma City, Holy Temple (*New affiliate*)

Pastor: Frank R. McClarty  
1540 NE 50th St.  
Oklahoma City, OK 73111

### Purcell, Cornerstone Indian (*New congregation*)

Pastor: Ledtkey McIntosh  
P.O. Box 613  
Purcell, OK 73080

### Edmond, Deepen (*New congregation*)

Pastor: Cayo Cavalcante  
17860 N MacArthur Blvd, Ste I  
Edmond, OK 73012