



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

DIGITAL EDITION | DEC. 11, 2024



Newcastle, First Opens New Worship Center and Atrium



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Church News



NEWCASTLE, FIRST OPENS NEW WORSHIP CENTER AND ATRIUM

by Jessie Prewitt

GROUNDBREAKING

On July 9, 2023, the Newcastle, First (FBCN) church family gathered together to break ground on their new building project. Living the Vision for the Next Generation is the next step in a decades old vision for the church.

Adults, children, teens, and multi-generation families gathered in the parking lot where the future Worship Space would be built. Members of the engineering, design, and construction teams joined in as the various teams took turns breaking ground on the new space.

After a time of prayer and worship, the people spread out around the build area to chalk prayers and scriptures.

BEAM SIGNING

The FBCN staff and leadership worked with the construction team to find a safe time for the church family to enter the space in the midst of construction. The goal was a time of prayer and dedication of the space.

Church members gathered the evening of April 4, 2024 just after the completion of the beam structures. Executive pastor, Nathan Presley, gave an overview and a dedication of the space, followed by a time of prayer.

Then, much like the Groundbreaking, the people spread out to write Scripture and prayers over the space. This time using permanent markers so that the words would cover the space for years to come.

GRAND OPENING

Nov. 10, 2024 brought the anxiously-awaited Grand Opening of FBCN's new Worship Center and Atrium space! Early that morning, the worship team and media team gathered to prepare for the services.

"Today was beyond anything I could have expected," said FBCN Senior Pastor Jeremy Freeman.

The Prayer Team and Leadership also gathered to pray over each person who would enter the space. They prayed for the Holy Spirit to be present, for lives to change, and for believers to grow in their walks with the Lord.

More than 1,500 people arrived for the 9 AM and 10:30 AM worship services. Students and Welcome Team members were in the parking lot and at the doors ready to greet and direct guests. The Worship and Media Team led the congregation in worship, following 6 live baptisms.

Freeman, preached a sermon titled "This is Us" highlighting the church's mission to live out the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20) and their church verse Col. 1:28 "Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ."

OPEN HOUSE & RIBBON CUTTING

The following day, on Mon., Nov. 11, FBCN staff and many church members gathered with members of the community for an Open House.

Mayor Karl Nail shared a few words and Freeman, Newcastle's Chamber of Commerce attended for the Ribbon Cutting to officially open the space. All in the community were welcomed to come and see what's happening at FBCN!





OKYM FORUM 2024 EQUIPS LEADERS TO THRIVE

by Todd Sanders, Youth Ministry Partner, Oklahoma Baptists

The Oklahoma Youth Ministry Forum (OKYM) hosted by Oklahoma Baptists Youth Ministry at Falls Creek, has been a place of connection, collaboration, challenge, community and conversation through practical training for youth ministry leaders for more than 30 years.

Todd Sanders, Oklahoma Baptists Youth Ministry partner, explained this year's theme, "We focused forum this year on the spiritual, mental and emotional health of ministers, leaders, students and ministries. We understand that Healthy ministers feed healthy ministries. We recognize that we often don't take time to give attention to what is most important. When we get pressed, we abandon those things that make the biggest difference. We want leaders to thrive in life and ministry."

This year's forum welcomed close to 200 leaders from across the state. Zac Workun and Julie Busler led main sessions and Stephen and Rachel Patterson and Cody Dunbar led worship. Attendees also had more than 15 breakouts on topics related to the theme to choose from.

OKYM is for any adult leader involved in their church's youth ministry, no matter their role.

Bret Lalli, McAlester, First, commented that OKYM was the only conference he attends that "allowed him to be empowered while also empowering others."

Alexandra Bays, OKC, Southern Hills, values OKYM "because of the community that it fosters and provides. You're welcome! It is always really good for me and my soul!"

Jason Peck, Moore, First, benefits from Forum because if "rekindles my passion for youth ministry and breathes life into me as a youth pastor."

Brandon and April Baumgarten from Hazel Dell added, that they "enjoyed... learning more about effective youth ministry and how to thrive in many ministry areas such as home, church, marriage, family, and with students."

Sarah Wooten, Oklahoma Baptists Youth Ministry Partner, commented that the hope is that "OKYM Forum

will continue to find a place of relevance for new and experienced leaders." Sanders furthered the thought, "We enjoy a strong, healthy youth ministry network in Oklahoma. We want to see new generation of leaders engage in the community. Forum is an important part of that."

OKYM is the fourth official meeting of the year for the Oklahoma Youth Ministry Network. OKYM 2025 is set for Nov. 20-22 at Falls Creek. Registration opens in June. For more information, visit oklahomabaptists.org/forum.



IN MEMORY

STEADFAST PASTOR ARBUARY G. RITTER DIED NOV. 27

Longtime Oklahoma pastor Arbuary Gene Ritter, 86, died on Nov. 27 at home in Marlow. Ritter was born in Marlow on Oct. 25, 1938, to Arbuary M. Ritter and Willie Lois Ritter. He was saved at age 15 at Marlow, Eastside, where he soon felt the call to ministry, dedicating his life to serving his Lord and his community.

Arbuary's ministerial journey included pastoring several congregations, including Denton Church near Marlow; Purnell, First; Geronimo, First; and Randlett, Union Valley in Cookietown. For more than 60 years, he faithfully served as pastor of Union Valley, retiring on Aug. 22, 2021—a record in the Southern Baptist Convention.

Beyond his role as a pastor, Arbuary served as a uniformed chaplain for the Oklahoma Highway Patrol, offering spiritual support to officers and their families. Arbuary also dedicated many years to being an educator. He served in various roles at Burkburnett ISD in Texas. He retired in Texas as Superintendent

of Bellevue ISD and later retired in Oklahoma as Superintendent of Big Pasture Schools in Randlett. In a story published by the *Baptist Messenger* in 2018, Ritter talked about God's faithfulness during his ministry service. Both he and the church have stood the test of time.

When he felt the Lord calling him to preach, he told the pastor at Eastside.

"He told me, 'Okay you're surrendering to preach, you get to preach next Sunday,' and that's when I started," Ritter said with a laugh.

As a high school student, Ritter pastored his first congregation at Denton in Mullins Association from 1955-57. He was ordained in that time, on March 29, 1956.

Ritter emphasized that ministry success is "follow where (Jesus) leads, and he will make your path straight."

LONGTIME STATE BAPTIST LEADER GLENN BROWN DIES

Longtime Oklahoma Baptist servant Glenn Austin Brown, 92, died Dec. 1 in Fort Worth, Texas.

Brown served as a Minister of Music, Education and Youth at Tulsa, Springdale; Tulsa, First; Sallisaw, First; and Oklahoma City, Britton and as Minister of Education at Ada, First. In 1971, he accepted an invitation to join the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO) as the Associate Director of the Department of Religious Education. He also worked as the Associate Director of Planning and Promotion for the BGCO for several years before becoming the Director of Communications and Editor of their weekly newspaper, the *Baptist Messenger*. He became well-known and respected among Oklahoma Baptists through his writing and preaching engagements in churches across the state.

Brown was born Sept. 6, 1932 in Porum to Charles and Lavada Brown. With two grandfathers as preachers and his parents both devout Christians, he grew up with a legacy of faith. His parents lived out their faith as they cleaned up an abandoned school near their farm in Danville, Ark. so they could have Sunday School and worship services in that area. Because of their teaching and example, he accepted Jesus Christ as his Savior at a young age.

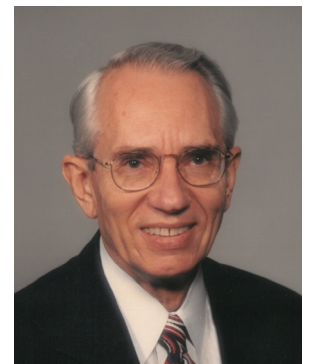
Upon graduating from high school in Shawnee in 1950, Brown attended Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) to begin his college career. It was there that he met his first love, Jean Stith, and they married Dec. 22, 1951 during their sophomore year of college. During the next few years, he felt God was calling him to the ministry. He completed

a B.A. in Religion and Philosophy with a minor in music from Tulsa University in 1962 and an M.A. in Educational Psychology from the University of Oklahoma (OU) in 1968.

Brown led stewardship conferences in several states and served as president of the Stewardship Development Association (Association of state stewardship development directors). He also served on the faculty at Glorieta Baptist Conference Center. He participated in short-term mission projects in 16 foreign countries and worked with denominational and mission leaders in Hong Kong, South Africa and Zimbabwe at the invitation of the Foreign Mission Board (Now the International Mission Board) to develop a plan for stewardship development projects.

Upon his retirement in 1997, the Browns moved to Fort Worth to be closer to their daughters and grandchildren. During his wife's last several years, she required constant care due to dementia. The family watched him care for her patiently, taking care of her most basic needs.

Two years after Jean's death in 2011, Glenn found love again, marrying Euna Hancock, who was a friend of theirs from church. They enjoyed being involved in their church, where Glenn was their Sunday School teacher and an active deacon.





THE CHILD THAT FULFILLS EVERY PROMISE

By Bobby Kelly, Ruth Dickinson Professor of Religion, Oklahoma Baptist University

Luke 24 relates the account of Jesus, immediately after the resurrection, on the way to Emmaus with two travelers who have not yet recognized they are walking with the resurrected Jesus. They were discussing the events that had transpired the past couple of days, including Jesus' crucifixion.

Luke comments that Jesus, *"beginning with Moses and all the Prophets, interpreted to them what was said about himself in all the Scriptures"* (Luke 24:27). "All the Scriptures" is a reference to the Old Testament.

Jesus taught them that day that He is the key that unlocks all of Scripture; the unifying thread that binds it all together. There is no Old Testament book or passage that is not finally about Christ. Nowhere is this truth more evident than in the Christmas story in Matthew's Gospel.

A virgin will conceive (Matt. 1:22-2/Isa. 7:14)

Joseph had received the bewildering report that Mary, the young Jewish woman to whom he was engaged, was pregnant. He knew he was not the father. As he considered how to handle the situation, an angel appeared to him and announced that the child that Mary was carrying was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Matt 1:20-21).

Matthew then added: *"All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel, 'God with us'"* (Matt 1:22-23).

While criticisms have been raised about the historicity of the virginal conception for 2000 years, the truth is that the early Christians repeatedly affirmed and proclaimed that Mary conceived apart from sexual contact with Joseph or any man. That Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit establishes His deity; that He was "born of a woman" establishes Jesus' true humanity.

Born in Bethlehem (Matt. 2:5-6/Micah 5:2)

Those looking for the coming of the Messiah might have expected a birth in a more celebrated location. Bethlehem was a tiny village about five miles from Jerusalem, but it was the ancestral hometown of David, Israel's greatest king. Jesus' birth here affirmed that he was "son of David."

This fulfills what the Prophet Micah had written: *"And you, O Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who will shepherd my people Israel"* (Matt 2:6). Born in the city of David, whose name means "house of bread," the bread of life was born.

Exile in Egypt (Matt. 2:13-15/Hosea 11:1)

Herod the Great responded with murderous hostility to the report of the wise men that the "king of the Jews" had been born in Bethlehem. To protect the child, an "angel of the Lord" commanded Joseph to seek refuge for the family in Egypt.

The echoes of the Exodus story, with the threat to infant Moses because of Pharaoh's decree, are unmistakable (Exod 1:15-2:10). Jesus and the family seeking refuge in Egypt is the ultimate fulfillment of Hosea 11:1, *"Out of Egypt have I called my son."*

Moses led the Exodus out of Egypt, but a new Exodus was coming led by a new Moses. Jesus is not only son of David; He is also the new Moses who will liberate His people from their sins.

Jewish mothers weeping for their children (Matt. 2:16-18/Jer. 31:15)

The family's escape to Egypt only adds to Herod's rage. When Herod can't find his potential rival, he decrees to kill all the male babies in Bethlehem two years and under.

Matthew saw in the grieving of those Jewish mothers a reenactment of the grieving Jewish mothers during the Babylonian invasion & exile in 586 BC: *"A voice was heard in Ramah, weeping and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children"* (Jer 31:15).

The fulfillment, however, is more than the shared grief between Jewish mothers across six centuries. Both scenes point to the promise of the end of exile. Rachel wept for her children, but God offered comfort.

The next verse, Jer 31:16 promised, *"There is hope for your future . . . your children will return to their own country."*

(continued on next page..)

(*'The Baby that Fulfills Every Promise' cont.*)

And so, just as their exile would be followed by return to Israel, so the present mourning would be swallowed up by joy through God's Beloved Son.

He shall be called a Nazarene (Matt. 2:23)

The final fulfillment passage in Matthew's birth story is the most difficult to interpret. Matthew does not point to a specific Old Testament passage, rather he sees Jesus being taken to Nazareth as a toddler as an indirect fulfillment of the "prophets."

Matthew saw in the prophets a pattern. The Messiah would come from an obscure, tiny, hick village. Isa. 52-53 affirms the Messiah would be obscure and despised. Only a Messiah of such humble origins could identify with and liberate people otherwise forgotten and despised.

At Christmas, we celebrate the fulfillment God's promises in a baby, born of a virgin, raised in an obscure hick village, of the lineage of David, a liberator like Moses. Thanks be to God that all of God's promises find their "yes" in Him. Merry Christmas!

CHURCH NEWS TRIBUTES

Pat Fowler, 93, died Dec. 2. She was the mother of several state pastors and music ministers.

Tom Frank, 92, died Dec. 2. He was bi-vocational pastor who served at Mannsville, Russet and Madill, Trinity Southern.

Teresa Karch died Nov. 20. She was the wife of Charles Karch, pastor of Arkoma, First.

VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

Families Feeding Families Meal Center, Durant

580-230-9142

familiesfeedingfamilies.org

Hope Pregnancy Centers

South OKC - 405-688-8700

North OKC - 405-755-5433

Edmond - 405-330-0200

Ardmore - 580-223-7232

Tulsa - 918-622-3325

Shawnee - 405-585-0693

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children Campuses

Oklahoma City - 405-691-7781

Edmond - 405-341-3606

Madill - 580-564-2218

Owasso - 918-272-2233

UPCOMING EVENTS

DR Orientation and Credentialing

Feb. 22/Mar. 29/April 11-12 (2025)

Locations TBD

Register online - okdisasterhelp.org

Send Network Sending Lab

Jan. 31 - Feb. 1 2025

OKC, Bryant Avenue

Register [here!](#)

