



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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Sanctity of Human Life Sunday

January 19, 2025



Oklahoma Baptist
Homes
for CHILDREN

A Different Young Man
by James Swain



**A Day in the Life of a
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Churches to Pray for
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by Messenger Staff

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY 2025

by Messenger Staff

In January 1984, President Ronald Reagan designated the third Sunday of January as National Sanctity of Human Life Day. Since then, pastors, churches and prolife organizations across the United States have been using this day to bring awareness to the ongoing battle against abortion. This year, Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (SOHLS) falls on Jan. 19. SOHLS, along with Rose Day, places an urgent focus on promoting the sanctity of human life, protecting unborn children with the goal to bring legalized abortion to an end.

Each year, Oklahoma Baptists partner with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) to create helpful and impactful resources that churches can use to spread awareness and observe SOHLS. These resources include an updated 2025 Pastor's Preaching Guide and Information Resource, a new bulletin insert and promotional videos that can be shown during worship services.

Included in front of the guide is a letter from Oklahoma Baptists Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher and OBHC President James Swain that asks churches and pastors to set aside time to recognize SHOLS.

"We are living in times in which Biblical principles are under attack," the letter says. "One of those principles is the Biblical teaching of the Sanctity of Human Life, that life is valuable from the womb to the end of life. That is why we are asking you, once again, to set aside Sanctity of Human Life Sunday, January 19, 2025, as a key time to lead your church in standing for life."

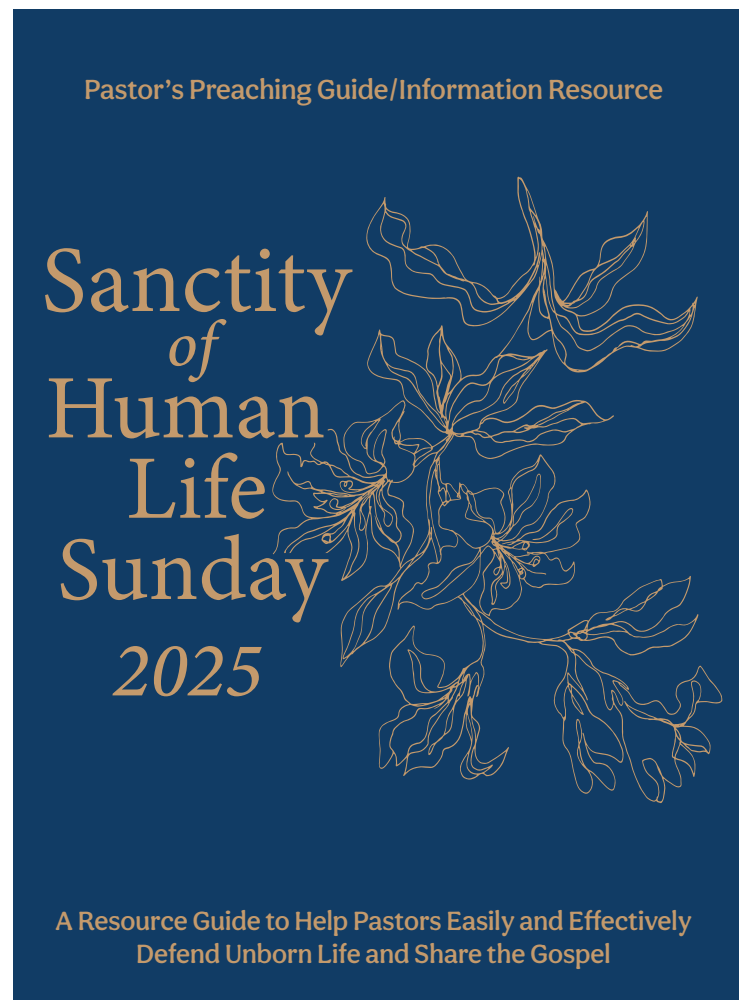
This year's preaching guide and information resource contains sermons from pastors across the state that emphasize the value of life and God's workmanship that is human life. The sermons included are as follows:

- "God's Wonderful Workmanship"* by Michael Butler, Pastor at Chickasha, First
- "A Gift Realized"* by Tristan Martin, Pastor at Norman
- "Defining Life and Love"* by Kenny Mossman, Pastor at Carnegie, First
- "A Baby's Cry that was Never Heard"* by Walter Wilson, Pastor at Lawton, Friendship
- "Valuing Life Like God Does"* by Heath Tucker, Pastor at Edmond, Waterloo Road

The testimony of Mandi Parkhurst, Director of Hope Pregnancy Center Edmond, is also included in the guide. Additionally, Falls Creek Program Director Todd Sanders created a Sunday School or Small Group lesson plan titled "Imago Dei." This lesson emphasizes that everyone is made in God's image and how we can live out the image of God.

In 2022, a major victory was won in the battle against abortion with the overturning of *Roe v. Wade*. This overturning made abortion a states' rights issue rather than a federal constitutional right. In the same year on May 25, Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt signed HB 4327 into law which prohibited "the performance of abortion except under certain conditions" (HB 4327). Yet, the fight against abortion nationwide is raging. SHOLS is important because it shows the unity of churches, pastors and congregations across the nation against abortion and for life.

For more information about SOHLS, to access the Oklahoma Baptists SHOLS resources and to view the promotional videos, visit <https://www.oklahomabaptists.org/erlc/life/>.



A DIFFERENT YOUNG MAN

by James Swain, President, Oklahoma Baptist Homes for children

One of the great joys of my job is the opportunity to share the story of our work in churches across our state. Recently, I was privileged to be in a church that is many miles away from any of our campuses but has experienced the impact of our ministry in a profound way. The story of this impact on this young man and his church has captured my heart.

I met the young man last spring when I was in the Owasso area preaching, and the young men from the Brooks Cottage at Baptist Children's Home came to the service. As we visited, this young man shared where he was from, and we talked about the community and the church there. Knowing the community and the church caused a natural connection that led to a brief conversation every time we interacted over the next months on the campus and at events. I observed, and this young man's houseparents confirmed, that he was doing well, and our ministry was making a difference in his life.

A few weeks ago, I was on campus and did not see him. I learned he had gone home because of how well he had done with us. I reached out to his pastor to check on him, and the response of the pastor was such a blessing. He said, "He came home a different young man!" He shared

with me how appreciative the family is and the impact of his testimony on the church and asked me to come and preach and share about our work. Their experience has opened the eyes of the church to our work and has reminded me of the vital partnership between the ministry of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) and the churches of our state.

Thank you!

I pray this story encourages your heart like it does mine! Because of your faithful support, we can show and share the love of Christ to children and their families. We can come alongside churches and strive to bring Hope by providing help and homes to children and their families. I pray this story will be multiplied over and over as we see those we serve experience the transforming power of God and become His faithful servants. If you feel led to support this ministry, please visit our website at www.obhc.org.

Thank you for partnering with us in the pursuit of our mission and vision!



FIRST PERSON: A DAY IN THE LIFE OF A MILITARY CHAPLAIN SERVING GOD IN THE SKIES AND ON THE GROUND

by Chaplain, Major Andy Peck

Sunday morning, I preached an expository sermon from 1 Peter on living as resident foreigners and enduring hardships for the sake of Christ. I began by leading our congregation in prayer for persecuted believers in Sudan. Afterward, we enjoyed a fellowship lunch where I introduced three new Airmen to some of our retirees—men and women who were serving long before these young Airmen were born.

This might sound like a typical day for any Baptist pastor, but for a military chaplain, it's just the beginning.

Monday, I joined a training mission with a flying unit aboard a HH-60 Pave Hawk helicopter. Before takeoff, I spent time talking with five aircrew members about their families and adjusting to life at our base. As we prepared to depart, the pilot turned to me and asked, "Chap, you want to say a prayer for our flight?" "Absolutely," I replied, praying over the mission and crew.

During the flight, we trained at a gun range where Special Mission Aviators fired a .50-caliber machine gun at old tanks and vehicles. Later, while practicing combat landings, I spotted an elk running through the forest. "Elk at 3 o'clock!" I called out, and to my surprise, the pilot turned the aircraft, giving the crew a moment to marvel at God's creation before we resumed training.

Back at the hangar, a young maintainer stopped by my office. "Got a minute, chaplain?" he asked. "You bet!" I replied. Within moments, we were discussing deep struggles—relationships, grief, struggles at work, or thoughts of suicide. In these confidential conversations, God often uses chaplains to restore hope and help service members reconnect to Him.

This is just a glimpse of the life of a military chaplain—a unique ministry that touches lives on the ground and in the skies. If you've ever wondered what this calling looks like, I invite you to watch [this short video](#).

We are also hosting Military Chaplaincy: Explo 2025, A Day in the Life at Tinker Air Force Base Friday, March 7, 2025, from 9:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m. Oklahoma pastors, church leaders, and members are invited to learn more about military ministry, tour aircraft and vehicles, and share an encouraging word with our service members.

Visit <http://www.tinyurl.com/tinker2025> or scan the QR code for more info and to sign up. Who in your church might be called to serve as a chaplain or religious affairs specialist? I hope to see you there!



LAUNCH
YOUR HIGHER CALLING

MILITARY CHAPLAINCY
EXPLO 2025: A Day in the Life

FRIDAY 7 MARCH 2025
9:30AM - 4:30PM

TINKER AIR FORCE BASE,
OKLAHOMA

FREE LUNCH

RSVP BY 5 FEB: tinyurl.com/tinker2025

PRO DEO ET PATRIA

UNITED STATES AIR FORCE
CHAPLAIN CORPS

UNITED STATES NAVY
CHAPLAIN CORPS

The poster features a collage of images: a pilot in a helmet, a helicopter, a chaplain with a child, and a chaplain with a service member. It includes a QR code in the top right corner and logos for the Air Force and Navy Chaplain Corps at the bottom.



OKLAHOMA BAPTISTS EQUIP CHURCHES TO PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES

by Messenger Staff

Each year, Oklahoma Baptists produce a Cooperative Program (CP) Missionary Prayer Guide, which features various missionaries serving around the world.

The 2025 (CP) Missionary Prayer Guide is now available online at www.oklahomabaptists.org, even as print copies are being sent to churches across the state in coming days.

The purpose of the prayer guide is to unify Oklahoma Baptists to pray for missionaries throughout the year, including lifting up their specific prayer points that were given by the missionaries themselves. Each week, a specific individual or family serving on the mission field is highlighted, while some weeks feature various missions topics and focal points.

Todd Fisher, Oklahoma Baptists' executive director-treasurer, said, "The Lord has taught me so many life lessons about the power of prayer. When God's people pray, we are acknowledging our total dependence upon Him. This year marks the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program, and this 2025 Oklahoma Baptists' Cooperative Program (CP) Missionary Prayer Guide is an excellent tool to help you pray for others who are supported through the CP."

The missionaries featured in the 2025 CP Missionary Prayer Guide can be:

- Highlighted in a worship service, Sunday School class or any prayer ministry, as PowerPoint slides of each missionary are available to download online.
- Sent a note of encouragement by email, as Oklahoma Baptists are given a contact point to connect with the missionaries directly
- Shared on social media, church newsletters or elsewhere.

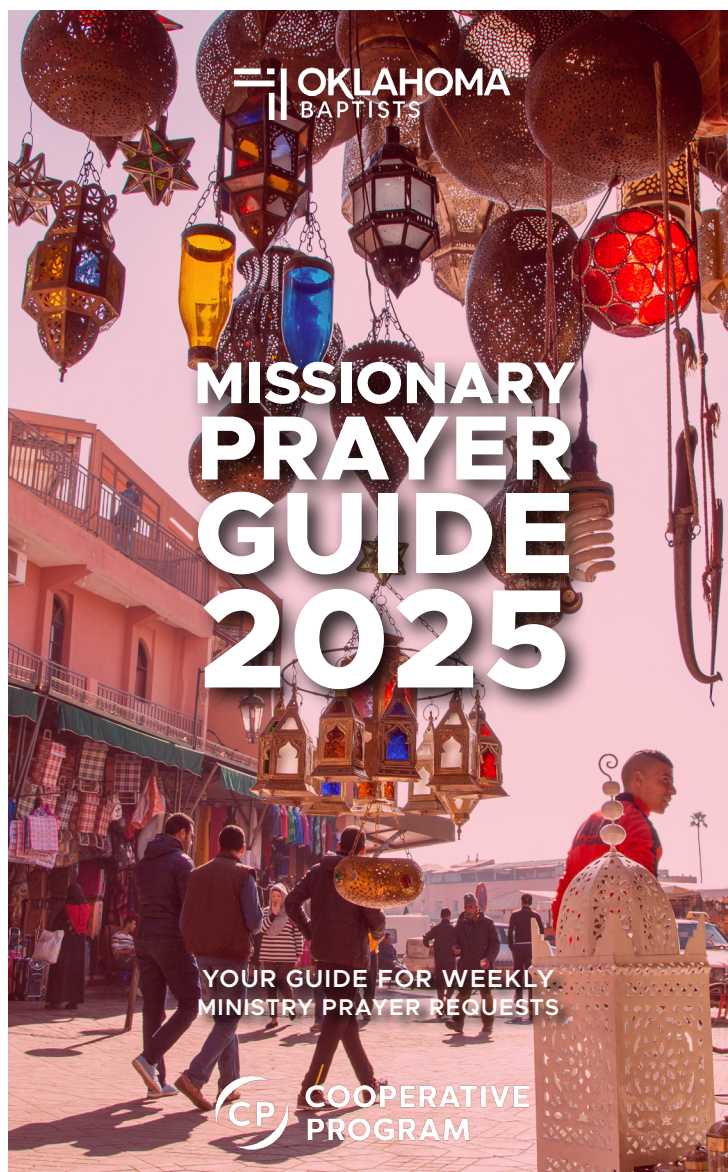
One section of the guide prompts individuals to pray for missionaries serving in secure countries. "Pray for the Oklahoma Baptists who are serving through the International Mission Board in areas of the world that are so dangerous we cannot reveal their names or where they serve, not just for the safety of these missionaries, but for those under their care who choose to follow Jesus. The majority of these workers serve in countries where other religions and spiritism are deeply entrenched in the cultures. These are some of the greatest challenges to overcome," said the Prayer Guide.

Missionaries featured in this resource all have a connection to Oklahoma, and the Prayer Guide lists their church connection points. In addition to individuals, the Prayer

Guide details various topical areas of missions importance that churches could lift up in prayer, church planting connections, ministries and more.

"By praying for the individuals and ministries found in this (resource), you will be joining many others who, through intercessory prayer, will unite in partnering and laboring together for the cause of Christ throughout the world," Fisher added.

For more information, or to download the resources, visit www.oklahomabaptists.org.



CHURCH NEWS

GRESHAM RETIRES AT VERDEN, FIRST



Lawrence Gresham, pastor for the past six years at Verden, First, retired from the pulpit on Dec. 31 because of several health issues. Gresham has been in ministry for more than 40 years. He also served as pastor at Lone Wolf, First; Blair, First; Enid, Calvary and Marlow, Lakeside (19 years).

UPCOMING EVENTS

DR Orientation and Credentialing

Feb. 22/Mar. 29/April 11-12

Locations TBD

Register online - okdisasterhelp.org

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training

March 6-8

Cost is \$60 - Location TBD

Register [here!](#)

CISM Training

April 3-4

Cost is \$50 - Location TBD

Register [here!](#)

Dynamic Marriage Class

Begins Jan. 19 - 4:00 PM

This is a 9-week course that will help you discover how your marriage can thrive and be more fulfilling than you ever thought possible.

Cost is \$130 per couple which includes books, signup and other things.

Visit <https://qsbc.org/equip-classes> before Jan. 14 to register.

TRIBUTES



Brad Allen died Dec. 14. He was the pastor of Comanche, Countryside and previously served as pastor at Duncan, First; Lawton, Central and Sentinel, First. He was the father of Randy Allen, pastor of Duncan, Parkview, and Dan Allen, formerly on staff at WatersEdge.

Michael "Mich" Ray Dershem died Dec. 12. He was associate pastor of Yale, Fellowship. He also served as youth minister at Nash, Bethel Hawley and Yale, First. He served as a member of Oklahoma Baptists' Historical Commission.



VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES

Tulakogee Conference Center, Wagoner

918-462-3212 or info@tulakogee.com

The Spring

Sand Springs, OK

A faith-based shelter for women who are victims of domestic violence or human sexual trafficking.

918-947-4679

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

You're Invited

Crosstown Church is gladly inviting all former members of the Baptist Temple Church, Oklahoma City, to attend a ceremony and dinner to commemorate the giving of the Baptist Temple church facility to Crosstown Church.

Come join us on Sunday, March 9th, 5:30-8pm at
2433 NW 30th St., Oklahoma City, OK 73112.
Doors open at 5pm.

We look forward to honoring you for this great gift.

Please RSVP to (405) 445-4523 or info@crosstownokc.org.

NOW HIRING

VILLAGE MANAGER

Do you have a desire to serve older adults in a Christian environment?
Baptist Village Communities is looking for a manager for our independent living community in Cleveland.

Skills and Qualifications desired...

- EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION
- ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS
- COMMUNITY OUTREACH
- MISSION MOTIVATED

Baptist Village Communities

Apply at baptistvillage.org