



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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Moore, First Hosts Night to Shine

by Jacob King



'Sending Lab' Equips, Enhances Church Planting

by Messenger Staff



Church News



‘PATHWAY OF PROGRESS’ 2025 PRIORITY OF PREACHING

by Messenger Staff

Pastors and church leaders from across Oklahoma attended the 2025 Priority of Preaching Conference on Monday, Feb. 3. Hosted at Oklahoma City, Quail Springs, and presented by Oklahoma Baptists, this year’s theme was “The Pathway of Progress” which focused on constructing sermons that are both Scripturally sound and easy to understand.

This year’s featured speakers were Scott Pace and Tony Merida, both experienced pastors and church leaders. Pace has ministered as a pastor for over 20 years in a variety of full-time and interim roles through three states. Merida is the founding pastor of Imago Dei Church in Raleigh, N.C., and is the vice president of Planter Development for Send Network. Each gave valuable insights on how to construct a sermon well through five different sessions.

Pace focused on the overall structure of a sermon, advising pastors to boil down sermons into one main theme word and asking themselves “How does the text support the main idea?” He also emphasized the importance and timelessness of Scripture and how pastors cannot force it to work within their sermon, rather make sure that Scripture supports their sermon.

“Scripture is revelation,” he said. “It is how God reveals Himself to us through written text.”

Pace also advised pastors on how to utilize the different types of Scripture and encouraged them to remember the spiritual work they do.

“I hope that we don’t lose sight of the spiritual work that we’re doing,” he said.

Merida’s session focused on the context of Scripture and understanding that before building a sermon. He outlined a five-step plan on how to develop a sermon using the context of any given Scripture: study the text, unify the redemptive theme, outline the text, develop the function elements and then add an intro and conclusion. One main point he focused on was ensuring that text from Scripture is not taken out of context. An example he gave was Philippians 4:13.

“We all know Philippians 4:13, ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,’” Merida said. “But what we sometimes forget is that verse is speaking about contentedness.”

For over a decade, the Priority of Preaching Conference has been a way for pastors to gain practical advice. It is the entry point of training strategy to help pastors make progress in their preaching.

Brett Selby, regional ministry partner for Oklahoma Baptists, has organized the conference every year and believes that no matter how experienced a pastor can be, there is always room to grow.

“We feel like progress in preaching (1 Timothy 4:14) is mandatory for every pastor and preacher,” Selby said. “There is no ‘key’ to becoming better; rather there are a series of steps that a pastor can take toward this objective. The Priority of Preaching Conference tries to lay out some of those steps for our preachers.”

For more information on upcoming pastor events, visit www.oklahomabaptists.org/pastors.



MOORE, FIRST HOSTS NIGHT TO SHINE

by Jacob King

On Friday, Feb. 7, at 6:00 pm, Moore, First will host Night to Shine, an amazing prom night experience, centered on God's love, for people with special needs ages 14 and older. Sponsored by the Tim Tebow Foundation, this worldwide event is complimentary for people with special needs. Since they are hosted by churches across the world, each event is unique in its theme and location.

They all have cornerstone activities including a red-carpet entrance complete with a warm welcome from a friendly crowd and paparazzi, hair and makeup station, limousine rides, catered dinner, karaoke and more. The night concludes with a crowning ceremony where every guest is honored as a King or a Queen, just as God sees them every day.

Honored Guest registration is full, but there is still room to register as a volunteer, called buddies. A buddy at Night to Shine will accompany and assist an Honored Guest throughout the evening. They will provide companionship and needed assistance to their Honored Guest during the event. Those who want to serve as buddies must be at least 16 years old.

Night to Shine is hosted by churches all over the globe who desire to share the love of Christ with people who have special needs. Each host church is responsible for planning their own version of Night to Shine using resources from the Tim Tebow Foundation.

For more info about Night to Shine or to learn about becoming a host church visit timtebowfoundation.org/night-to-shine.

Photos courtesy of Moore, First.



'SENDING LAB' EQUIPS, ENHANCES CHURCH PLANTING

by Messenger staff

On Jan. 31 and Feb. 1, Oklahoma City, Bryant Avenue hosted 40 participants in a two-day Send Network Sending Lab. A Sending Lab is a workshop that teaches churches how to develop a vision and plan for sending out church planters. This collaborative experience connected pastors on similar journeys while also guiding them on how to identify the next steps for finding, developing and sending church planters.

"There is a need in our state and in my city for healthy churches that plant healthy churches," said one pastor.

The event began Friday evening with a dinner, welcome and introductions. The first of six sessions were held that evening, titled "Why Sending?" Saturday, Feb. 1 contained the remaining sessions.

The event allowed pastors to connect with each other, share common struggles and learn of the need for more church planters in Oklahoma.

"The Sending Church Lab instilled both an urgency and a practical path forward to confront the growing lostness in our state," said another pastor.

Send Network Oklahoma is a partnership between Oklahoma Baptists and the North American Mission Board to facilitate church planting in Oklahoma. Since 2010, Southern Baptists have planted more than 11,000 churches across North America. Send Network provides resources for churches wanting to multiply by equipping those who want to bring the hope of the Gospel to more cities.

For more information about Send Network, visit namb.net/send-network.



CHURCH NEWS

RETIREES



Carolyn Varble (center) retired after 43 years of service on staff at East Central Baptist Association. She is pictured with Andy Latta, representative with Oklahoma Baptists Historical Commission and former Directors of Missions Ed Baker and Joe Taylor and DOM Kevin Russell.



Vernon Smith (center) retired after serving as pastor at Akins Baptist Church in East Central Baptist Association for 49 years.

A poster for the Oklahoma Baptists Women's Retreat. The background is a light beige color with a decorative border of colorful, intricate patterns. At the top, the Oklahoma Baptists logo is displayed. Below it, the text "women's retreat" is written in a large, cursive font. Underneath, the dates "APRIL 11-12, 2025" and the location "FALLS CREEK CONFERENCE CENTERS" are listed, along with the website "OKLAHOMABAPTISTS.ORG/WOMEN". At the bottom, four circular portraits of the speakers and worship leader are shown, each with their name and role below it: Kelly Minter (Speaker), Caroline Saunders (Speaker), Melissa Spoelstra (Speaker), and Matt Roberson (Worship). The Cooperative Program logo is at the bottom center.

CHURCH NEWS (CONT.)



WESTVILLE, BARON FILLS 850 CHRISTMAS BOXES

In 2024, Westville, Baron filled 850 boxes for Operation Christmas Child. The congregation consists of 35 - 40 members and they all pitched into accomplish this incredible feat. Shoe boxes filled with toys and supplies for children lined the walls of the church.

TRIBUTES



Frances Marie Roberts died Jan. 16. She graduated in 1955 from the OU School of Nursing. While at OU, she was very active in starting a Baptist Student Union program for doctors and nurses. She and her husband, Will J. Roberts, served as IMB missionaries for 38 years in eastern Africa. After retirement, she served alongside her husband when he served as pastor of Willow Baptist Church from 2003 to 2016.

Ruth King died July 11, 2024. She was a charter member of the Singing ChurchWomen of Oklahoma and wife of John King, retired pastor at Madill, Trinity Southern and Cumberland.



Mike Tompkins died Jan. 25. He served 20 years as DOM of the Commanche-Cotton Association, where he ministered to and served 53 churches. Tompkins had pastored in other states, including Alabama, Georgia, and Mississippi. He also served as pastor in three Oklahoma Baptist churches.

UPCOMING EVENTS/INFORMATION

DR Orientation/Credentialing – Feb. 22

Morris, Trinity Baptist Church
830 W. Ozark St., Morris 74445
[Register online here.](#)

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training – March 6-8

Naomi Paget, Instructor – Cost \$60.00
300 Johnny Bench Dr., Ste. 300, OKC, OK 73104
To register, please email
pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

DR Orientation/Credentialing – March 29

Location TBD
[Register online here.](#)

CISM Training – April 3-4

Greg Giltner, Instructor – Cost \$50.00
300 Johnny Bench Dr., Ste. 300, OKC, OK 73104
To register, please email
pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

DR Orientation/Credentialing – April 10

Online Zoom Training
[Register online here.](#)

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