



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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2025 Falls Creek Spring Retreat April 4-6



OSU Men, OBU Women Win BCM Basketball Tournament Titles

by Jacob King



Board of Directors Meeting

by Brian Hobbs



Church News



FALLS CREEK SPRING RETREAT TO EQUIP AND INSPIRE COLLEGE-AGE STUDENTS ACROSS OKLAHOMA

by Carissa Jones

Young adults age, 18-24, have the opportunity April 4-6 to step away from daily distractions and spend time in worship and fellowship with their peers during the Falls Creek Spring Retreat (FCSR). Featuring focused worship times, relevant breakouts and numerous recreational options, FCSR offers something for everyone.

The event continues a longstanding tradition of equipping young adults to grow in their faith and be sent out to their homes, campuses, workplaces and around the world. Campus and church-based ministries from across the state have come together toward this purpose, leading to a steady increase in attendance over the years. More than 800 attended last year, and equal or greater numbers are expected for 2025.

"I am so looking forward to going to Falls Creek Spring Retreat this year," said Matt Holland, a member of the FCSR planning team and staff member at the University of Oklahoma Baptist Collegiate Ministry. "I am praying that God will help some of these (new believers who have come to faith on campus this year) join us and see that there are other Christians all over the state who are following Jesus and learning to obey Him while in college."

For collegiate and young adult ministers across the state, FCSR provides an opportunity for focused, intentional discipleship partnered with solid biblical teaching in a casual and fun environment.

"I'm thankful for the opportunity to spend strategic time with specific students that God has given me to invest in," said Holland. "I'm grateful and excited to see what Jesus will do with FCSR'25!"

This year's stage personalities include John Durham, Bertholomew "Prophet" Bailey, and Bailey Byers.

"I'm excited to have these guys because each of them serves the church faithfully and has a passion for young adults," said Chad Coleman, collegiate ministries director for Oklahoma Baptists.

Durham will speak during worship services on Friday evening and Saturday morning. Durham serves as the Lead Pastor at Waco, Highland in TX. He has a passion for ministering to young adults and several years of experience in the area, including ministering to the 1,200 college students who attend Highland.

Prophet Bailey will be sharing with the group Sunday morning. Bailey currently serves as the young adult discipleship and men's ministry partner for Oklahoma Baptists. Prior to taking on that role, he led the Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Langston University.

Byers and his team will lead the students in worship through music in each of the services. Byers, an Oklahoma native, is the Worship Director at Edmond, Frontline. He brings extensive experience, talent and passion to each event that prepares the way for participants to enter into authentic worship.

For more information or to register for the event, visit www.oklahomabaptists.org/spring-retreat or email Carissa Jones at cjones@oklahomabaptists.org.





OSU MEN, OBU WOMEN WIN BCM BASKETBALL TOURNAMENT TITLES

by Jacob King

On Feb. 14-15, the Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) hosted the annual Oklahoma Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) Basketball Tournament. Sixteen different BCM's from across the state participated in the tournament consisting of twenty men's teams and eight women's teams.

Even though it is presented as a basketball tournament, the event is a witness opportunity event for BCM students to reach out to their student bodies.

"I think it's a great outreach for students in their BCM to also reach out to their student bodies and invite their peers who may not really have a relationship with Jesus and introduce them to Christ through sports," said David Gardner, assistant director of OBU Bison Recreation and Wellness.

This event is sponsored by the Oklahoma BCM in partnership with OBU and was held at OBU's Recreation and Wellness Center, which has three basketball court. All teams competed in a single elimination/consolation bracket-style tournament with standard Oklahoma High School basketball rules.

In the women's bracket, OBU's team won in overtime against the University of Central Oklahoma (UCO) with a score of 33 to 28.

On the men's side, Oklahoma State University (OSU) retained their title as champions for the third year in a row, defeating UCO as well with a score of 61 to 44.

In the consolation bracket for the women's side, the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma (USAO) faced

off against Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU). USAO came out on top with a close score of 27 to 23.

On the men's side of the consolation bracket, NWOSU won against OBU with a score of 57 to 48.

Each of these teams were formed by their respective BCM's director, allowing the students and directors to build their relationships with each other and with Christ.

"The relationships each of the directors get to build with their students in activities outside the normal setting allow for memories to be made and friendships to develop," said Gardner.

To view a list of all upcoming events at OBU, visit events.okbu.edu.





OKLAHOMA BAPTISTS' BOARD MEETS IN OKC FOR FIRST TIME SINCE MOVING OFFICES

by Messenger Staff

Members of Oklahoma Baptists' Board of Directors met on Feb. 25 in Oklahoma City for a regularly scheduled meeting. This marked the first meeting of the board of the year and the first board meeting since the state convention moved offices to the WatersEdge Building (formerly Sonic Headquarters) in Bricktown.

After a time of touring the new offices in Bricktown in the morning, board members traveled to Oklahoma City, Exchange Avenue for the board meeting, which included times of prayer, conducting business, ministry reports, a fellowship meal and more.

Todd Fisher, Oklahoma Baptists' Executive Director-Treasurer, was in attendance. It has been more than seven months since his serious automobile accident. Fisher, who recently experienced a leg amputation, talked about God's grace on his journey to recovery.

"I am so grateful to you and to all the people who have prayed for me along this journey," Fisher said. "We are seeing a good recovery and healing since my surgery, and the process is nearing for me to get a prosthetic leg."

Fisher talked about how the journey has given him opportunities to share the hope of the Gospel.

"I have been asked more times, 'How do you feel about this?' I tell them that God has given me a deep peace and my belief that He will use everything that has happened and my future life as an amputee for His purpose. What an opportunity we've already had in this journey to point people to God and His Kingdom."

He added, "I thank God for helping me focus on what I've gained in this journey. My physical body has been diminished, but my spiritual life has been enriched. I've gained a greater perspective on not taking for granted the blessings God gives us every day—faith, health, marriage, family, and so many other blessings."

Fisher explained how the Lord has used this journey "the

last seven months to teach me in ways I could never have imagined on the importance of what is eternal, about the things of faith, and how that impacts the way I live today."

Pastor Michael Butler of Chickasha, First, serves as Oklahoma Baptists president and led the board meeting proceedings. Members of the board, who represent every area of the state of Oklahoma, heard various ministry reports.

WatersEdge CEO Robert Kellogg shared a report that stated that the "25 by 25" campaign has met and exceeded its goal of distributing \$25 million annually each year since its inception. Oklahoma Baptist University President Heath Thomas reported how OBU is seeing hundreds of salvations connected to its ministry, including through the OBU Prison Divinity Program, as well as giving a report on the "Shaping the Future" Capital Campaign.

Bill Pierce, president of Baptist Village Communities (BVC), shared how each of its campuses across the state is thriving and how the ministry is transforming the expectations of senior adults, mobilizing them as witnesses for the Lord. James Swain, president of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children, shared about the life-transforming impact the ministry is having through Hope Pregnancy Centers and on the various campuses offering homes for children.

In addition to affiliate reports, each of the board of directors committees delivered various reports, including the Executive Committee, the Church Resources Committee, the Communications/Cooperative Program Committee, the Finance Committee and the Support Services Committee.

Board members took action on recommendations, including affirming the 2026 Cooperative Program allocation of 40 percent to the Southern Baptist Convention, 45 percent to Oklahoma Baptists and 15 percent to Oklahoma Baptist Affiliates. This distribution remains the same as it is for 2025.

Leslie Osborn, CFO for Oklahoma Baptists, gave a report on church giving. "I want to express gratitude to the Lord for His perfect provision and for our staff for their great stewardship. Our (state convention) staff managed their budgets well for the fourth year in a row with an above average inflation rate," she said.

Osborn noted that the 2024 Cooperative Program giving objective of \$24.5 million was exceeded by \$394,722 in giving by Oklahoma Baptist churches. Board members allocated the overage to ministry causes, including investing in pastors in the areas of leadership and education. The Edna McMillan Oklahoma State Missions Offering for 2024 was \$1,306,646, setting a state record three years in a row.

Board members heard plans about celebrating the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program in 2025. Osborn added, "We see all of this giving as evidence of our Oklahoma Baptist churches cooperating together to advance the Gospel in Oklahoma and around the world, and for this, we are blessed and feel thankful."

Joe Ligon, Senior Associate Executive Director, shared a report how the Southeastern Oklahoma State University Baptist Collegiate Ministry (BCM) building is now fully operational, and the ministry is already reaching new students through the recently-constructed facilities. Ligon shared that plans are accelerating for a new BCM building for Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.

The board was also introduced to two new staff members serving as regional ministry partners. Bryan Pain, who most recently served as pastor of Duncan, First, is serving as Southwest Regional Ministry Partner.

Matt Spann, who has been serving as a director of missions in Oklahoma, will begin in April as regional ministry partner for the Northwest region. Spann replaces Griff Henderson, who stepped out of the role to be pastor at Mustang, Chisholm Heights.

With Pain and Spann in their respective regions, that means there are now five regional ministry partners for Oklahoma Baptists, including Brett Selby (Central), Andy Taylor (East Central) and Buddy Hunt (East). In addition, there are four affinity group ministry partners, Ever Borunda (Hispanic Ministry), Emerson Falls (Native American Ministry), Amy Petersen (Ministry Wives) and Walter Wilson (African American Ministry).

The meeting was punctuated with various times of prayer and worship through song. Fisher emphasized the continued work of the state convention is to "serve and support pastors and churches as we advance the Gospel together."

The next scheduled meeting of the Oklahoma Baptists' board will take place on May 20 at Oklahoma Baptist University in Shawnee.



Joe Ligon, right, leads a tour of the new Oklahoma Baptist Offices.

CHURCH NEWS

AFTON, LAKE CENTER CELEBRATES PAYING OFF MORTGAGE

Afton, Lake Center celebrated the paying off of the mortgage on their facility January 26, 2025, at their quarterly family meeting. The 30 year note was paid in 11 years with an incredible amount of giving in 2024 to finish it off. Pictured are (right to left), Church Member Roger Pelcher, and elders Austin Gillham, Don Brown, Tyson Murphy, and Bob Waller. Not pictured were elder Bill Pratt (hidden by Austin), treasurer Danny Smith, former treasurer Cliff Guffey, and pastor Jack Jacob.



OBU ENGINEERING SECURES FUNDING FROM POTT. COUNTY COMMISSIONERS

Oklahoma Baptist University has received \$300,000 in funding from the Pottawatomie County Commissioners to jumpstart its engineering program. The funding will support equipment purchases and facility renovations, furthering the university's mission to provide workforce-ready engineers for Oklahoma and beyond. The allocation includes funds for advanced equipment and for renovations to Thurmond Hall, the engineering program's primary facility.



UPCOMING EVENTS/INFORMATION

March 6-8 - Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training

Naomi Paget, Instructor - Cost \$60.00

300 Johnny Bench Dr., Ste. 300, OKC, OK 73104

To register, please email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

March 29 - DR Orientation/Credentialing

DR Team Center - 7180 NW Expressway, Okarche, OK

Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

April 3-4 - CISM Training

Greg Giltner, Instructor - Cost \$50.00

300 Johnny Bench Dr., Ste. 300, OKC, OK 73104

To register, please email pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

April 10 - DR Orientation/Credentialing

Online Zoom Training

Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Tulakogee Conference Center, Wagoner

Call 918-462-3212 or email 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.

Contact 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.

Call 918-794-0088 or visit www.hhtulsa.org

Hospitality House of Oklahoma

Provides for the physical, spiritual needs of families with loved ones incarcerated in McAlester.

Lodging available

Call 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