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2025 ADVANCE CONFERENCE 'ENTRUSTS' PASTORS TO BECOME DISCIPLE MAKERS

by Messenger Staff



On March 3-4, Oklahoma Baptists attended the Advance Conference at Mustang, Chisholm Heights. The theme of this year's conference was "Entrust", based on Timothy 2:2, *"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others."*

Monday's first session began with a word from Ever Borunda, Oklahoma Baptists Hispanic ministry partner. Borunda took the theme verse of the Advance Conference and applied it in the perspective of a bivocational ministry pastor. Borunda placed a heavy emphasis on the duty of bivocational pastors, which is to equip disciple makers.

Then, Cordell, First Senior Pastor Terrell Romberg focused on how God can call anyone to be a pastor, using Acts 1 as the scriptural foundation. One of the major things Romberg said he learned while studying to become a pastor was to always trust and seek God.

"Seek God's presence. Trust God's power. Rely on God's provisions," he said.

Next, Katie Mitchell, a 19-year-old college student, shared her testimony. Mitchell grew up with a difficult childhood. She was invited to church but would put it off. Then, she felt led to attend a mission trip to Nicaragua. Provisions were made that allowed her to go to Nicaragua. On the second day of that mission trip, Mitchell gave her life to Christ. After, she became more plugged into church and continued to further her walk with God.

Oklahoma City, Emmanuel Senior Pastor Terry Buxton then began his segment of the session. He began by reading from Mark 1:1-8 which describes the arrival of John the Baptist. Buxton emphasized that we, as Christians, need to be living the life that lifts up the name of Jesus.

After a lunch break, James Wilder, director of missions for the Pottawatomie-Lincoln Association, delivered a message focusing on Acts 3. He explained that Peter and John always looked to those in need and addressed their needs which in turn displayed the power of God. Wilder reminded pastors that power does not come from us, it comes from the name of Christ.

Next, Charlie Blount, senior pastor from Moore, First, spoke on how to finish ministry work strong and faithfully. He concluded by reminding pastors that they don't get to choose what they are entrusted with but must still be faithful with it.



Oklahoma Baptists Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher

ADVANCE CONFERENCE ‘ENTRUSTS’ PASTORS TO BECOME DISCIPLE MAKERS (CONT.)

Host church Mustang, Chisholm Heights Senior Pastor Griff Henderson then preached from Phil. 1:1. He challenged listeners to ask themselves who Paul is in their life and ask who Timothy is in their life.

After this, Catherine Renfro, national director of women’s ministries at the North American Mission Board (NAMB), shared her testimony. When she was 13, she went on her first mission trip. During that trip, she realized she needed Christ in her life and made her profession of faith when she returned home. Using her own experiences in life, she has lead others to Christ.

To conclude session two, Gary McNeil, senior pastor of Durant, First, spoke on having the heart of a disciple maker. He emphasized not questioning the circumstances of those we minister to but rather just care for them no matter what.

The final session of Monday opened with a word from Oklahoma Baptists Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher. He spoke about how his recovery from the automobile accident he was involved in last year has strengthened him spiritually, relying on God for every step of the way.

Following this, Oklahoma Baptist University professor of religion Bobby Kelly spoke on 2 Timothy. He focused on the historical context of the letter, where Paul wrote the letter while being in prison for the second time. Kelly compared Paul’s entrusting of the Gospel to Timothy to the current generation of pastors needing to entrust the Gospel to the next generation of pastors.

Oklahoma Jail and Prison Ministries (OJPM) President Luis Ruiz followed that with his testimony. Ruiz grew up in a Christian household, but later on in life got involved with bad people and was arrested multiple times. During one of his times in prison, Ruiz woke up in a panic and didn’t recognize where he was, asking himself how he had gotten there. During this panic, a portion of Rom. 6:23 came to his mind, “for the wages of sin is death...”

From that point on, Ruiz began to change drastically. Upon being released from prison, Ruiz asked for guidance on how to navigate his new life, to which God gave him Matt. 6:33, *“But seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

Jamie Dew, president of New Orleans Seminary, concluded the first day of sessions with a word from 1 Cor. 4, asking pastors how they can be sure they’re making disciples correctly. To answer this, he told pastors to also ask themselves if they are making servants or not.



Mustang, Chisholm Heights Senior Pastor Griff Henderson



OJPM President Luis Ruiz



New Orleans Seminary president Jamie Dew

ADVANCE CONFERENCE ‘ENTRUSTS’ PASTORS TO BECOME DISCIPLE MAKERS (CONT.)



Advance Conference’s second day began with breakout focus groups for pastors to attend. These included children’s ministry, African American leaders, foster care, Hispanic ministries, worship and many more.

Beginning the fourth session, Falls Creek Program Director Todd Sanders promoted the 222 Challenge. This challenge asks pastors to meet with two people two times a month and pray for two people over the duration of a year with the intent to multiply disciples.

Then, Chad Higgins, senior management of church equipping at Lifeway, spoke on what it means to be a disciple. He reminded pastors that they need to make sure that they are using the same words to mean the same thing. Higgins concluded by reminding pastors that they need to be accountability models to those they are discipling.

Country Club Hills, Ill., Hillcrest senior pastor Adron Robinson then spoke on how God has entrusted us with the Great Commission and how we have been commanded to go out and make disciples. He challenged pastors to not get too comfortable in their churches, but to go out and seek those who need to hear the Gospel.

Following this, Tarvoris “Coach Tee” Uzoigwe, Oklahoma Baptists evangelism and apologetics ministry partner and his daughter, Avaria, shared their testimonies. Just like her father, Avaria often shares the Gospel with her friends and those around her when she gets the chance.

The final speaker for 2025’s Advance Conference was Shane Pruitt, national next generation director for NAMB. His time focused on making sure what pastors believe and teach about Jesus is consistent with what the Bible says Jesus was like.

This year’s Advance Conference was a time of fellowship and growth for pastors across Oklahoma. The next Advance Conference is scheduled for March 3-4, 2026. Visit oklahomabaptists.org/evangelism for more upcoming events.



Chad Higgins, senior management of Church equipping at Lifeway



NAMB national next generation director Shane Pruitt



ARMY SGM BILLY TAYLOR INAUGURAL RECIPIENT OF NEW ANNUAL AWARD NAMED AFTER HIM

by Jacob King

On February 22, Army Sergeant Major (SGM) (Ret.) Billy Taylor was presented with the SGM Billy Taylor Logistics Excellence Award at the Cattlemen's Event Center during the Logistics and Maintenance Ceremony. He then presented the award to three more recipients. There were 104 attendees consisting of Taylor's peers and coworkers.

This new award is comparable to a Hall of Fame award. To receive this award, potential recipients must have a minimum of 20 years of service in logistics with the army and demonstrate remarkable selfless service, according to Army Chief Warrant Officer 5 Jeffery Stice.

"When we presented this idea, his name, it was a moment I'll never forget, it was unanimous," said Stice. "He touched us in one way or another throughout our career."

Taylor was drafted into the army in 1970 and served as a combat medic and medical operator. He served for 28 years in active duty then returned to the U.S. as military police. In total, he has served for 44 years. Before that though, Taylor was serving in a different way at Oklahoma City, Mayridge.

In 1966, Taylor began serving as a Sunday School teacher at Mayridge, and continues to do so. He also served as the youth director for 12 years. Even though the 70s were a difficult time for military members, Mayridge was always supportive of Taylor.

"The church has been very supportive all my life," he said. "The comradery is strong in the military. That same comradery is in the church when we are doing the work of God."

Taylor knew that the award was going to be presented to him as he was informed about it four years ago when a board of 44 began authorizing the award.

Taylor was very grateful for the award and those who have been by his side.

"It's one of those things where you don't know how to say it," Taylor said. "It was those people who are out there supporting you that got you there."

Now retired, Taylor continues to serve as the Chariman of Deacons at OKC, Mayridge.



Above: Taylor's final day in uniform before retirement.

OKC, QUAIL SPRINGS' 75TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SET FOR APRIL 6

by Brian Hobbs

This year, Oklahoma City, Qual Springs (QSBC) is celebrating its 75th anniversary, and the church is recognizing this ministry milestone on Sun., April 6. That morning, QSBC members and guests will gather for two identical worship services at 9:30 and 11 a.m. in its Worship Center, featuring a special message from Hance Dilbeck, who served as QSBC pastor for 15 years and who now serves as President of GuideStone Financial Services.

That evening, a church-wide reception/celebration will be held at 6p.m., filled with fun for the whole family and a special surprise all ages will enjoy. Several recognitions will be made, and refreshments will be served. Former staff and members, as well as people from the community, are invited to attend this celebration event with the church (14613 N. May Ave., Oklahoma City).

QSBC was established in 1950 as Nichols Hills Baptist Church under the leadership of founding pastor Rupert Naney. The church originally met on Grand Boulevard in Oklahoma City then moved to its current location on North May Avenue in 1982 under the leadership of pastor Charlie Graves. Its name was changed to Quail Springs Baptist Church in 1989.

Throughout its history, QSBC has been a leader in the areas of Cooperative Program giving, the sending of missionaries, church planting, hosting ministry events,

and Gospel-related community outreach, as well as being a leader in baptisms.

Among its former pastors, several have served in leadership roles at both the state and national levels. Naney served four terms as president of the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma—now known as Oklahoma Baptists. Graves served two terms as Oklahoma Baptists' president. Dilbeck served two terms as Oklahoma Baptists' president and also Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) second vice president. Stephen Rummage served as SBC Pastors' Conference president, and he now serves as state executive director for Florida Baptists.

In the weeks leading up to the April 6 event, the church has produced multiple feature-length videos that celebrate the church's storied history, which are viewable on Facebook. [com/QuailSpringsBC](https://www.facebook.com/QuailSpringsBC).

QSBC Executive Pastor Ray Griffin said, "For 75 years, God has used QSBC to impact lives, and as former QSBC Pastor Charlie Graves often reminded us, 'We sit in the shade of trees we did not plant.' Let's come together to honor those who came before us, celebrate what God is doing now, and look forward to the future."

For more information, visit www.qsbc.org.





OKLAHOMA DISASTER RELIEF RESPONDS TO WILDFIRES OVER THE WEEKEND

by Messenger Staff

On the weekend of March 14, an onslaught of wildfires driven by hurricane-strength winds swept through many areas of the state. The fires left significant damage, destroying homes and other structures including a historic Native American church.

“More than 130 fires were reported across Oklahoma and nearly 300 homes were damaged or destroyed,” Oklahoma Gov. Kevin Stitt said Saturday.

By the morning of March 15, volunteers with Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief (DR) were already working to bring hope, help and healing to the situation. A feeding site has been set up in Stillwater to serve at the shelters there as well as in Guthrie and Pawnee according to Jason Yarbrough, state director of Oklahoma Baptists DR.

Ryan Deatherage, who serves as associate director for Oklahoma DR, says that they are now receiving orders for assistance in ash clean-up efforts, which DR will be prioritizing. Fire damage leaves hot spots even after the main fire has been extinguished, meaning that clean up efforts are delayed in fire damaged areas until those hot spots cool down.

“We can’t start our cleanup efforts on a property for several days due to the ashes remaining too hot to handle and getting the guidelines from the state/county/city officials,” Yarbrough said. “But like any disaster, we will be there for Oklahomans impacted by the disasters, trying to provide help, healing and hope—the hope that only Jesus can give.”

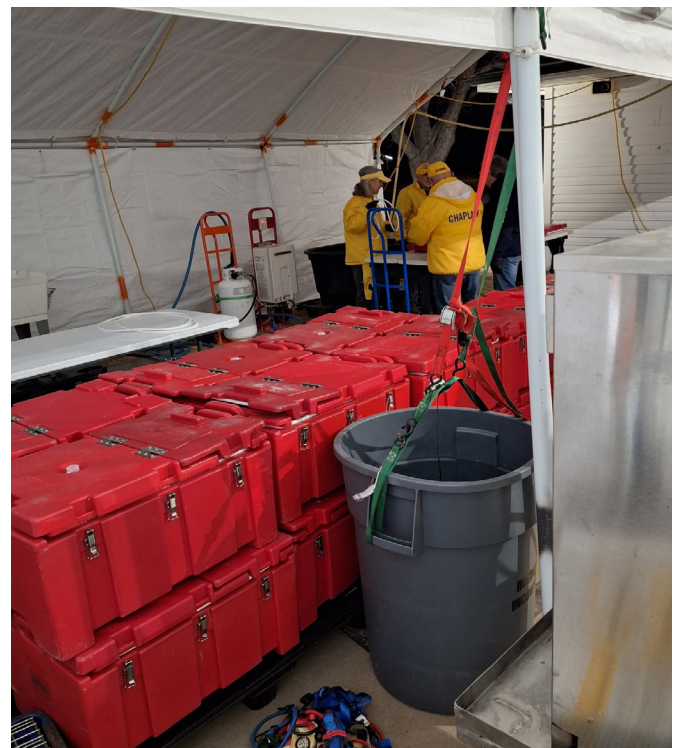
State officials reported more than 130 wildfires in 44 of the 77 counties in the state March 14. Major blazes were reported in Mannford, Stillwater, Guthrie, Leedey, Norman, Oklahoma City and Little Axe. Flames also flared up in Alfalfa, Beckham, Blaine, Canadian, Choctaw, Cleveland, Comanche, Creek, Dewey, Grant, Grady, Dewey, Harper, Johnston, Kay, Kingfisher, Latimer, Lincoln, Logan, Love, Major, Marshall, Mayes, McClain, McIntosh, Murray, Muskogee, Oklahoma, Okfuskee, Osage, Ottawa,

Pawnee, Payne, Pittsburg, Pontotoc, Pottawatomie, Roger Mills, Seminole, Sequoyah, Stephens, Tulsa, Wagoner, Washington, and Woods counties.

Officials have also confirmed four people have died due to fires or high winds from Friday’s fire outbreak. Additionally, there are a total of 142 injuries.

DR volunteers have provided hundreds of meals that were served in areas including Mannford, Cleveland, Terlton, Guthrie, Stillwater and Pawnee. DR has already provided 1,200 meals for lunch and dinner on March 16, and on March 17 prepared 1,200 more meals to be served in coordination with other relief organizations.

For future updates or to make a tax-deductible donation to Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief, visit <https://www.okdisasterhelp.org/donate/>



CHURCH NEWS

LEADING INTO EASTER, CHURCH TO HOLD 'PASSION WEEK SERVICE' EVENT

Churches and believers across Oklahoma are invited to a special Passion Week Service at Southern Hills Baptist Church (SHBC) on Wednesday, April 16, at 6:00 PM in the Worship Center. This powerful gathering will feature Robert Smith, Jr., a world-renowned preacher and professor whose ministry has impacted congregations worldwide. All are welcome to attend this transformational evening of worship and biblical teaching. Churches and individuals are encouraged to bring friends, invite their congregations, and prepare their hearts for Passion Week.

For more information, visit www.myshbc.com or call (405) 682-1636.



OBU ADJUNCT PROFESSOR INSPIRES NEXT GENERATION OF ENGINEERS



On Fridays and Saturdays, Grove Elementary's robotics teams use Oklahoma Baptist University's (OBU) engineering building to program and troubleshoot their robots under the guidance of Roger and Lori Farris. Roger Farris has more than 30 years in career and technical education. This partnership between OBU and Grove Elementary is part of a larger mission to foster engineering talent in the Shawnee community.

UPCOMING EVENTS

DR Orientation/Credentialing - March 29

DR Team Center
7180 NW Expressway, Okarche, OK
Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

CISM Training - April 3-4

Greg Giltner, Instructor
Cost \$50.00
Location TBD
Register online [here](#).

DR Orientation/Credentialing – April 10

Zoom Online Training
Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

