



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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Church Plant in Northeast Oklahoma City Thriving After First Year



OU BCM brings the Good News of Jesus 'to the Tabletop'

by Jacob King

SEE PAGE 4



Guest Column: Sharing Jesus from Home

by Diana Stewart

SEE PAGE 5



Church News

SEE PAGE 6

CHURCH PLANT IN NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA CITY THRIVING AFTER FIRST YEAR

by OKC, Northeast Fellowship Staff & Messenger Staff



Northeast Fellowship is a thriving new church plant located off Hefner Road in Northeast Oklahoma City that just celebrated its first year of ministry.

Oklahoma City, Northeast Fellowship's story, though, began much earlier with a church that met at its current location for many years—Lone Star Baptist Church. Started in 1959, Oklahoma City, Lone Star had met for decades. But due to challenges had to shut their doors in 2021.

The remaining members believed God was not through with them, and they didn't want to give up on their beloved fellowship. So they committed themselves to finding a way that God could continue to use the building and continue to work in their community.

The members reached out to Harvey Sparks, who serves as pastor of Oklahoma City, Portland Avenue. Sparks had previously served as interim pastor at Lone Star. Sparks suggested they reach out to the North American Mission Board and utilize the building for a new work, a new church.

That's when God began to move. Sparks approached Chris Gulley, pastor at Oklahoma City, Cherokee Hills because of the Pastoral Residency at the church.

In turn, they met with Stephen Brown, who was helping in their college ministry and a part of the Pastoral Residency program at the time. After talking with his wife Sabrina, speaking with close friends, and seeking the Lord through prayer, it became abundantly clear that God was calling him to begin a new Church in Northeast Oklahoma City.

The process was long and arduous. But through it all, God continued to affirm the call to plant.

When the announcement was made to Cherokee Hills that they would be the sending church for a new church plant, Stephen wasn't sure if anyone would come alongside or even want to join, but the members of Cherokee Hills stepped up in a big and faithful way.

Cherokee Hills ended up sending eight families, including Preston Norman to pastor alongside Stephen, and a few single folks to help start this new church plant. With those committed individuals and the two original couples from Lone Star Baptist Church on March 17, 2024, the first service was held at the newly established Northeast Fellowship with a humble membership of 25 adults and 10 children.

CHURCH PLANT IN NORTHEAST OKLAHOMA CITY THRIVING AFTER FIRST YEAR (CONT.)



The church has been active this past year. The identity of Northeast Fellowship is to be a church who “gathers to know Christ” and “goes to make Him known.”

These two things are the guiding principles in all ministries, teachings, and decisions. They’ve put on numerous community events and have had incredible responses.

In their very first Back to School event, Northeast Fellowship was able to give away more than 300 backpacks to children and feed over 400 people. They’ve also partnered with two schools, Britton Elementary and a homeschool group called Oaks Homeschool Co-Op. The church continues to serve the community with prayer walks, events, and meals.



As the church celebrated its first full year of ministry in March, Pastor Stephen Brown said, “We are blessed by all the Lord is doing. Northeast Fellowship is growing, and we remain confident that the Lord will continue to use our church to reach our community and make Christ known!”

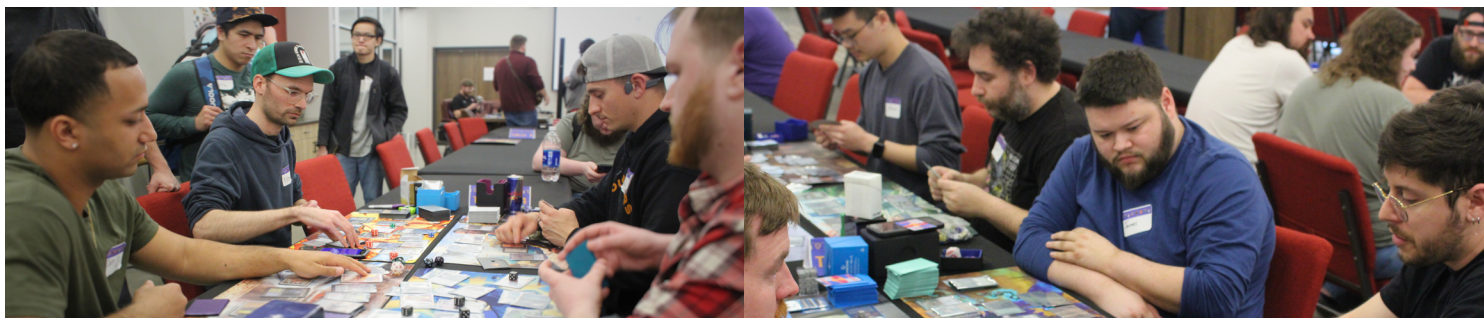


Reflecting on the journey that led up to this church plant, Harvey Sparks said, “At Portland Avenue, Kingdom growth is one of our core values, and church planting enables us to multiply our efforts in advancing God’s kingdom. Through new congregations, the influence of the Gospel reaches beyond the limits of our individual church, impacting more lives for Christ. Since partnering with Northeast Fellowship, we have witnessed God’s hand at work in remarkable ways. First, it has been inspiring to see a small, dying church—Lone Star—catch a vision for reaching future generations by investing all that God has blessed them with into a new work. It was not an easy decision for them to shut their doors and give their assets to a new work but they were willing to step out in faith for the sake of God’s glory.”



Sparks added, “We have seen how God providentially brought together various churches to help establish this new ministry. As a smaller church, we could not have done this alone, but through partnerships with Cherokee Hills, Surrey Hills, and the SEND Network, we have been able to be a part of something truly extraordinary. God receives all the glory for orchestrating it. We have seen God move within our own congregation.”

Send Network Oklahoma is a ministry partnership that exists to plant healthy, multiplying churches throughout Oklahoma. For more information about the Send Network Oklahoma, visit <https://www.oklahomabaptists.org/sendnetwork>.



OU BCM BRINGS THE GOOD NEWS OF JESUS 'TO THE TABLETOP'

by Jacob King

College students often have hobbies and favorite games that bring them together and occupy their time and interest. In recent years, tabletop trading card games have seen a resurgence in popularity.

In a post-pandemic world, tabletop games and trading card games (TCGs) have become popular to play at social gatherings, and the University of Oklahoma's Baptist Collegiate Ministry (OU BCM) are using TCG gatherings as an outreach opportunity.

On Saturday, March 8, OU BCM hosted their Mana Master's tournament at the OU BCM. This would have been the fourth time this event was held, with the first one being held last April. This began as a partnership of their in-house coffee shop ministry, Haystack Coffee, located right next to OU's campus.

"We had a buddy who worked with Haystack Coffee who loved TCGs and said that the community needed Jesus," said Wyatt Hebblethwaite, OU BCM freshmen ministry and organizer of Mana Masters.

Over 155 unique individuals have attended the event, making it one of the largest TCG tournaments in Oklahoma. Some even traveled from California to participate. Events like these provide opportunities for ministries to reach out and connect with people in the TCG community.

"We don't know many Christians who play [trading card games]," said Reid Meadows, OU BCM associate director. "This is an opportunity to reach out to the lost who may never find their way into a church."

During the tournament, the OU BCM provided a spiritual survey for those in attendance. This follow up survey, which was filled out by many of the players, paves a path for those who were interested in spiritual things to have a spiritual conversation. A local Baptist church partner, Norman, Bethel, has come alongside the BCM to connect with survey respondents.

The tabletop gaming community needs those who are willing to reach out to them and have Gospel

conversations with them. A challenge is the possibility of unintentionally offending members of the community who are disinterested in spiritual things.

One work around for this challenge was the survey which was completely voluntary but offered those who entered a chance to win a special trading card. Additionally, OU BCM staff would talk with individuals between rounds and have Gospel conversations with them.

This strategy worked and led to many Gospel conversations, showing that members of the community are open to Gospel conversation, but they just haven't been approached by believers.

"A lot of these people have not been approached by believers," said Hebblethwaite. "They want to accept people for who they are because they just want to be accepted for who they are."

OU BCM is in the process of creating a kick-start guide for other collegiate ministries wanting to start their own TCG tournaments, including ways those tournaments can be used to minister to the lost.

"You have to start with someone who knows the culture," said Meadows. "Those in the trading card community can tell if you are faking it."

Hebblethwaite advised that BCM's interested in starting a similar event need to make sure the purpose of the event is to talk about Jesus with people. He also suggested that BCMs need to reach out and meet people "where they are" rather than wait for people to come to them.

"Know your affinity groups and where they are and meet them there," said Hebblethwaite. "Join in what they are doing and use it as an opportunity to share Jesus."

For more information about the OU BCM, visit oubcm.com.



GUEST COLUMN: SHARING JESUS FROM HOME

by Diana Stewart

Most Christians I know recognize the fact that they have been commissioned by Jesus to go and make disciples. (Matthew 28:18-20) But talking to strangers about Jesus feels like an impossible task in the modern world. People don't answer their door and nearly everyone screens their phone calls. Walking up to strangers brings its own challenges. It is a dilemma and many believers long for a real way to obey Jesus' command.

By utilizing social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and TikTok, Groundwire brings the hope of the Gospel to the younger generations by placing well-produced, relevant video content on the most popular social media platforms. Our mission is to "connect people to God and to each other." Their vision is to see a world where everyone has the opportunity to experience a relationship with Jesus Christ.

Last year, Groundwire saw more than 1 million people make professions of faith in Jesus Christ through digital evangelism.

Groundwire buys millions of ads on social media for our 13 websites. Through a 30 second Hollywood style commercial dealing with depression, anxiety and loneliness, Groundwire is able to connect the generations who are active on social media.

The final moments of the commercial prompt users to "chat with someone who understands." When that user clicks the "chat now" button, they are redirected to Groundwire's online chatroom and one of the 900+ volunteer coaches begin to chat with them over text messaging. These volunteers have the privilege of leading thousands of people from around the world in prayer to receive Jesus right from the comfort of their home.

In order for someone to become a spiritual coach at Groundwire, they must be 18 years or older, have been a Christian for more than one year, active in a local church, are willing to volunteer two to four hours a week and must have access to a digital device with a reliable internet connection.

Training is provided free of charge. The total time to train is about seven hours but can be done at whatever pace is most comfortable. Serving the Lord as a spiritual coach at Groundwire gives ministry experience, right from the comfort of your own home.

If you are interested in being a spiritual coach at Groundwire, visit <https://groundwire.net/coaching>.



CHURCH NEWS

GREEN AND GOLD GALA HELD AT OBU



More than 700 alumni, friends and supporters of Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) gathered Tuesday night, April 1, on Bison Hill for the 10th Green and Gold Gala. Held on OBU's campus, the gala showcased the university's recovery from the tornado on April 19, 2023, that damaged every building. Attendees toured historic Shawnee Hall and Raley Chapel, both undergoing modernization as part of the university's ambitious Shape the Future campaign.

UPCOMING EVENTS AND INFORMATION

DR Orientation/Credentialing – April 10

Online Zoom Training

[Register online here.](#)

Oklahoma Capitol National Day of Prayer - May 1

Oklahoma State Capitol - 2nd Floor Rotunda

11 AM to 1 PM

For more information, email NDP@PrayOK.org

DR Orientation/Credentialing - August 23

Location TBD

[Register online here.](#)

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training - September 4-6

Instructor - Naomi Paget

Cost \$60.00

Location: Tulsa, South

10310 S Sheridan Rd, Tulsa

OK 74133

To register, please email

pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

DR Orientation/Credentialing

Location TBD

[Register online here.](#)

CISM Training - October 2-3

Instructor - Greg Giltner

Cost \$50.00

Location: Tulsa, South

10310 S Sheridan Rd, Tulsa

OK 74133

To register, please email

pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

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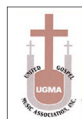
Baptist Village Communities is looking for a manager for our independent living community at Lake Texoma in Madill.

Skills and Qualifications...

- EXCELLENT COMMUNICATION
- ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS
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Apply at baptistvillage.org



Oklahoma United Gospel Music Association
Gospel Music Concert

Tulakes Baptist Church
6715 Northwest 50th St
Bethany, Ok 73008

Saturday
Apr 19, 2025
6 pm



Buddy Liles



Singing Bones

A Love Offering will be
Received for the talent

FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION
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