



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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COLLEGIATE WEEK: MOBILIZING A GENERATION

by Carissa Jones, Oklahoma Collegiate Ministries Assistant

DAVIS — For many college students throughout the nation, August signifies the beginning of a new semester. Collegiate Week, a national event hosted at Falls Creek, helps students start the school year with a renewed mission and purpose. The event aims at mobilizing this generation to be Kingdom builders in their homes, on their campuses and to the ends of the earth.

This year 1,900 college students and collegiate ministers participated – the highest attendance in several years. In all, at least 24 states were represented with attendees coming from as far as Alaska and Hawaii as well as Canada.

Mark Robinson, Director of Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) for Louisiana Baptists and chairman of the Collegiate Week planning committee, notes, “Collegiate Week at Falls Creek was a profoundly blessed and Spirit-filled gathering where God moved powerfully among students from across the nation.”

Messages from Timothy Ateek, Julius Tennial II and Jeff Iorg explored the believer’s calling, identity and mission and offered opportunities for students to respond however God might be leading them. Other services included a panel discussion on mental health and exhortations from the SBC’s two primary sending agencies – the North American Mission Board and International Mission Board. Four SBC seminaries were also on hand to meet with students throughout the week.

Attendees also raised more than \$10,000 to support collegiate ministry in emerging regions – areas of the U.S. and Canada with minimal gospel presence. Ken Harmon, Director of Northwest Collegiate Ministries in Oregon and Washington, said, “I think (this offering) is a testament of this generation’s commitment on a personal level to see the gospel movement spread on campuses throughout North America by going and giving.”

Terry Thomas, BCM Director at Rose State College, testifies to the Spirit’s work among students in his group. “Two of our students met with IMB personnel to begin the Journeyman application process, another is looking into a missions residency program she learned about, and

two others have decided to go on to seminary after they finish at Rose State.”

“These are not just ‘camp high’ commitments,” notes Thomas. “These students have been praying about these things but got that extra affirmation and encouragement they needed to move forward. It’s been a great week!”

In addition to breakout tracks for students and leaders, Collegiate Week offers a track specifically for those exploring a call to ministry, with nearly every session packed to capacity this year. Robinson states this is “a clear sign of hunger for biblical truth and leadership development.”

Through praying, giving and serving, Oklahoma Baptists play a key role in helping Collegiate Week accomplish its goal of mobilizing a generation. “We are deeply grateful to Oklahoma Baptists for their generous investment in the next generation of ministry leaders,” says Robinson. “Your hospitality and commitment to Falls Creek continue to shape the future of the Church in America.”





HASKINS SCHOOL OF CHRISTIAN MINISTRY CELEBRATES 17 GRADUATES

by Philip Jones, Oklahoma Baptists Multi-Vocational Pastors Partner

Oklahoma City, Trinity was the setting Aug. 9 for a joyful celebration as the Oklahoma Baptists Haskins School of Christian Ministry honored 17 graduates who earned either certificates or diplomas after completing the school's academic requirements.

The graduation ceremony opened with a warm welcome from Oklahoma Baptists Associate Executive Director Alan Quigley. Other participants included Ever Borunda, Dean of the Haskins School; Amy Cordova; Emerson Falls; Philip Jones; and Walter Wilson.

Graduates received recognition in several categories.

Jose Agnel Funez Salinas received a Diploma in Advanced Pastoral Ministry.

Daniel Alberto Silva and Jose Angel Funez Salinas received a Diploma in Pastoral Ministry.

Diamond Becenti, Balkis Lizeth Hunt and Jose Angel Funez Salinas received a diploma in Church Ministry.

Trey Eason, Gavin Jackson, Joey Landara, Chris Peters, Jeremy Rhodes, Michael Christian Ridgway, Nicholas-Starkey-Martinez, Ismael Suarez, Thure Tolson and Francisco Vasques received a Certificate in Pastoral Ministry.

Pamela Gettens, Jennifer Leann Johnson and Evelyn Villalba received a Certificate in Church Ministry.

Following the ceremony, graduates, staff and guests enjoyed a reception, sharing in fellowship and reflecting on the accomplishments of the day.

The Haskins School of Christian Ministry was created by Oklahoma Baptists, with its first class offered in the fall of 2016. Since then, the school has continued to grow, adding classes and programs to better equip ministry leaders across the state.

"Oklahoma Baptists have a long history of equipping Pastors and staff within our ethnic churches and smaller in attendance churches," said Quigley. "Haskins School is an

extension of that commitment which was first envisioned by Robert Haskins for whom the school is named. The school provides training for men and women who have felt God's calling but are not in a season of life that would allow them to go to a college or seminary at this time in their life."

Most recently, Borunda introduced two new advanced diploma programs—the Advanced Diploma in Pastoral Ministry and the Advanced Diploma in Evangelism and Missions—to provide continuing education opportunities for graduates seeking to further their skills and knowledge.

"The Haskins School is a valuable resource available to every Oklahoma Baptist church," said Borunda. "My hope is that more pastors and churches will utilize the Haskins School to train leaders who will help advance the Kingdom of God throughout our state and beyond."

The Haskins School serves a diverse student body, including pastors, church leaders and ministry volunteers, offering both foundational and advanced training for effective ministry. Some students traveled from other countries to receive their degrees from Haskins.

One of these students was Suarez who traveled from the central region of Mexico to receive his Certificate in Pastoral Ministry. Suarez is a retired medical doctor in Mexico whom God called to ministry. He decided to study with Haskins to help him be better equipped to pastor his local congregation in Rioverde, San Luis Potosí, Mexico.

The Haskins School offers non-accredited diplomas and certificates in any of the five different programs (Small in Attendance Churches, Native American, African American, Women and Hispanic). The graduates recognized on Aug. 9 represent a commitment not only to personal spiritual growth, but also to serving churches and communities with excellence.

Prospective students may learn more at haskinsschool.org or by calling Oklahoma Baptists at 405/942-3000.

CAUTIONARY TALE FROM ICELAND UNDERScores NEED TO VALUE THE VULNERABLE

by Luke Sills, Pastor and Member of Oklahoma Baptists'
Ethics & Religious Liberty Committee

Iceland, a nation celebrated for its natural beauty and progressive policies, has garnered international criticism for a far more sobering reality: the near-eradication of Down syndrome births through prenatal screening and abortion.

Since the early 2000s, about 80–85 percent of Icelandic women choose to undergo prenatal testing, and nearly all who receive a positive result for Down syndrome end their pregnancy through abortion. Today, only one or two children with Down syndrome are born in Iceland annually—usually due to testing errors.

The Icelandic Ministry of Welfare insists this is not about eradicating a genetic condition, framing the policy as a matter of personal choice and informed consent. Yet for the global Down syndrome community and many pro-life advocates, the numbers tell a different story.

They see an unspoken societal message: that people with Down syndrome are burdens rather than blessings. This runs counter to the very mission of ministries and advocacy groups dedicated to affirming the inherent value of every person, regardless of ability.

Mia Armstrong's life and work offer a powerful rebuttal to that message. Born with Down syndrome, Mia has become a history-making SAG-AFTRA actress, voiceover artist and advocate. She broke barriers as the first child with Down syndrome to voice a cartoon character and to star in a leading role in a Christmas movie. She has addressed national audiences, appeared on major media platforms, and in 2025, she opened the National Pro-Life Summit with a call to celebrate life in all its forms.

Mia's advocacy extends to the written word. Her children's book, *I Am A Masterpiece*, offers an honest, first-person glimpse into the joys and challenges of growing up with Down syndrome. The book, named an Amazon Editor's Pick and highlighted by Good Housekeeping as a "must-read," was honored among the Top 18 books written by authors with disabilities. Its central message is anchored in Ephesians 2:10 (NLT): *"For we are God's masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago."*

The contrast between Iceland's statistics and Mia's story is striking. Where Iceland's system quietly assumes that a life with Down syndrome is best avoided, Mia's life testifies to the richness, potential and purpose embedded in every human being. She is living evidence that individuals with Down syndrome can contribute to the arts, inspire change, model resilience, and, most importantly, glorify God.

In 2026, Mia and her mother, Cara Armstrong, will share their story at Rose Day on Feb. 4, 2026 at the Oklahoma State Capitol, an event dedicated to honoring the sanctity of life. Their message will echo what her own life proclaims: that God intentionally designs every person, and no prenatal test can measure the value of a soul.

The debate over Iceland's policies is not simply about medical ethics or women's rights—it is about the kind of society we choose to cultivate. Will it be one that quietly eliminates those who don't fit a certain mold, or one that embraces the full spectrum of humanity? Mia Armstrong's journey offers an unambiguous answer: every life has purpose, every life has value, and every life is, indeed, a masterpiece.

For more information, visit <https://www.roseday.life/>.

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Mia Armstrong, SAG-AFTRA actress, voiceover artist, advocate, author and will speak at 2026 Rose Day.

CHURCH NEWS

UPCOMING EVENTS/INFORMATION

DR Orientation/Credentialing – August 23

Location TBD

Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training – September 4-6

Naomi Paget, Instructor – Cost \$60.00

South Tulsa Baptist Church

10310 S Sheridan Rd, Tulsa, OK 74133

To register, please email

pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

DR Orientation/Credentialing – September 20

Location TBD

Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

CISM Training - October 2-3

Greg Giltner, Instructor – Cost \$50.00

South Tulsa Baptist Church

10310 S Sheridan Rd, Tulsa, OK 74133

To register, please email

pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

Camp Gibson, Hardesty

Contact Tom Freeman at 580-338-6259 or

email at pbaok221@gmail.com

Families Feeding Families Meal Center, Durant

580-230-9142 or familiesfeedingfamilies.org

Hope Pregnancy Centers

South OKC 405-688-8700

North OKC 405-755-5433

Edmond 405-330-0200

Ardmore 580-223-7232

Tulsa 918-622-3325

Shawnee 405-585-0693

Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children Campuses

Oklahoma City – 405-691-7781

Edmond – 405-341-3606

Madill – 580-564-2218

Owasso – 918-272-2233

MUSKOGEE, GRANDVIEW CELEBRATES 65TH ANNIVERSARY

Muskogee, Grandview Baptist Church (3608 S Cherokee Dr) will be celebrating 65 years of ministry on Sunday, September 28th. Special Services will start at 9:30 am with music led by Kyle Fisher. Former pastors Kevin Clarkson and Danny Mills will be speaking. There will be a potluck dinner on the grounds after the service. "Past, Present, And Future In Faith"—all are invited to join. For more information email gbcmmuskogee@outlook.com.



Save the Date!

4PM TO 8PM

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SEPT 21

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Faith Comes By Hearing Bible Conference

"So then, faith comes by hearing and hearing by the Word of God" Romans 10:17

Bill Britt, David Allen, Fred Luter, Robert Smith, Jr., Music By: Joey Johnson

October 5
10:30am & 6:00pm

October 6-8
6:30pm each night

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