



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

DIGITAL EDITION | NOV. 5, 2025

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ON OCT. 25 OBU OFFICIALLY RE-OPENS THE NEW SHAWNEE HALL

by Bryan Painter, Oklahoma Baptist University Marketing Communications Director

SHAWNEE — Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) officially re-opened Shawnee Hall during a well-attended public kickoff event in the new Mabee Lecture Theatre at The Weekend celebration on Oct. 25, marking a pivotal moment in the university's storied history.

Local, state and federal officials offered personal messages of support during the ceremony and an OBU student and a faculty member shared heartfelt comments. These powerful remarks reflected a shared commitment to the university's renewal and future.

The event was also simulcast to another large room in Shawnee Hall to accommodate the overflow crowd of students, alumni, donors, faculty, staff and other friends of the university.

Reflecting on the past 30 months, OBU President Heath A. Thomas expressed excitement about Shawnee Hall's transformation and future as well as the many remaining opportunities through the Shape the Future campaign.

Thomas began by honoring the deep partnership that has long united the university and the community:

"It was 115 years ago," Thomas said, "that our founders forged OBU in partnership with the city of Shawnee and Oklahoma Baptists. This is why our first building, in which we stand today, is named Shawnee Hall. City and University bound together for the common good."

He then reflected on OBU's enduring promise and mission since its founding:

"From our beginnings in 1910," Thomas said, "we whispered a promise – fragile, ephemeral, contested – the promise of a Christian university. The whisper that OBU would ensure our common good with Christian education and our graduates would add value to the city, the county, the state, the nation and – indeed – the world, all of life, all for Jesus. Now, 115 years since its fragile beginning, that whisper has grown to a triumphant shout resounding throughout the world."

Looking to the present, Thomas spoke about the university's resilience and renewal following the devastating 2023 tornado.

"Today, in these hallowed halls that have been raised from the rubble of our Shawnee tornado of April 19, 2023," Thomas said, "our students are living testimony to the promise of the power of our Christian education. Our future shapers are leaders, difference-makers, promise-keepers, hard-workers, problem-solvers and industry innovators for our businesses and communities. It is for them and for our future and for our God, that we stand



OBU OFFICIALLY RE-OPENS THE NEW SHAWNEE HALL (CONT.)

He then recognized the generosity of those who made the building's rebirth possible:

"The tornado was devastating," Thomas said. "But broken things were meant to be mended. And true to the spirit of Oklahomans, our partners and friends joined us to rebuild. We received a gift of \$2 million from the J. L. Mabree Foundation for the Mabree Lecture Theatres, a gift of \$1.5 million from Lingo Construction for the Lingo Labs. And we received a series of significant gifts from a family who wishes to remain anonymous in the amount of over \$5 million. These gifts were matched with so many others who are identified in the facility on donor plaques and the more than 4,200 donors who have given to the Shape the Future campaign have made this day possible. Thank you, friends."

Thomas then reflected on the deeper meaning behind the building's restoration and the university's enduring mission.

"This is more than steel, stone and students," Thomas said. "Shawnee Hall's renewal is testimony that God still provides miracles as we live all of life, all for Jesus. Future shapers will be equipped here and every investment in this facility is an investment in the lives of students, communities and eternity. Our work does not stop here today, nor does our renewal. But we bring our eyes to Heaven to thank our God for divine favor and to thank you for celebrating with us. May God bless you and may God continue to bless OBU."

OBU has completed extensive renovations to Shawnee Hall, preserving its historic architecture while introducing modern design and technology. The renewed facility now houses the Henry F. McCabe Family School of Education and the Division of Behavioral and Social Sciences, including the Marriage and Family Therapy program.

Shawnee Hall features a 259-seat auditorium with advanced audiovisual systems and a motorized partition for flexible use. The building also features modern classrooms, collaborative student centers and offices designed to enhance academic engagement. Gathering areas feature exposed brick, a greenery wall and reclaimed-wood bison sculptures, blending tradition with innovation. Students will soon return to classes in the building.

A new Lingo Lab supports OBU's growing graduate health sciences programs in Physical Therapy, Occupational Therapy, Speech Language Pathology and Physician Associate Studies.

The graduate health sciences programs—offered in hybrid formats and completed in two years or less—equip students for careers in healthcare and service.

The building's design fosters learning, reflection and community, while also providing a welcoming new home for OBU's admissions offices, where prospective students and families begin their visit to Bison Hill.

The "Shape the Future Campaign" features strategic priorities including academic investment, facility transformation and enhancing campus life.

In the coming months, key facilities such as Raley Chapel and Thurmond Hall will undergo extensive renovations to provide world-class learning and spiritual environments.

Recognizing that a vibrant campus experience extends beyond the classroom, the campaign will also improve residence halls, dining, outdoor spaces and athletics facilities to foster a Christ-centered, holistic environment.

Throughout the event, Thomas emphasized that the heart of the campaign is people—the students, faculty and staff who make OBU a uniquely life-changing institution.



WHAT TO ANTICIPATE AT THE 2025 OKLAHOMA BAPTISTS ANNUAL MEETING

by Messenger Staff

Next week, Oklahoma Baptists will gather at Oklahoma City, Southern Hills for the 119th Annual Meeting. Hundreds of messengers are expected to attend to participate in fellowship and conduct convention business.

In anticipation of what to expect at this year's Annual Meeting, here is a list of items and activities that will make it a "can't miss" experience.

Pastors' Conference

Prior to the Annual Meeting, Oklahoma City, Southern Hills will host the 2025 Oklahoma Baptists Pastors' Conference. Numerous speakers will be presenting at the conference, exploring the theme of "Dig Deep, Reach Wide." Send Network Oklahoma will host a free lunch during the event for all pastors who attend.

"We have an exciting Pastors' Conference coming up for you," said Jeremy Freeman, pastor of Newcastle, First and president of the 2025 Pastors' Conference. "We're talking about the importance of evangelism and discipleship in the life of a pastor and the church."

Fellowship Opportunities

There will be plenty of time to connect with other Oklahoma Baptists from across the state. You can chat with others in the exhibit area where numerous booths from Oklahoma Baptist affiliates will be set up, join in one of the many times of worship and discuss take-aways from the different sessions that will be held during both the Pastors' Conference and Annual Meeting.

While schedules and programming are important, impromptu meetings and unplanned interactions with friends are just as important. They serve as times to encourage and support each other.

Powerful Sessions

Hear powerful and inspiring messages from notable speakers from across Oklahoma. This year's scheduled speakers include David Wallace, pastor of Roosevelt, First; Oklahoma Baptists' President Michael Butler, pastor of Chickasha, First; and Oklahoma Baptists' Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher.

Great Giveaways

There will be many enjoyable items available to grab and giveaways held in relation to the various ministries affiliated with Oklahoma Baptists. A longstanding Annual Meeting feature continues this year with Dippin' Dots in the Exhibit Area! That, and a large number of other ministries will offer giveaways hosted by WatersEdge Financial Resources.

Reports from Affiliates

Baptist Village Communities, Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children, Oklahoma Baptist University and WatersEdge are the four affiliated ministries of Oklahoma Baptists. Leaders from these ministries will be sharing the great work they have been doing over the past year that has helped Oklahoma Baptists advance the Gospel together.

For more on Annual Meeting, visit oklahomabaptists.org/annual-meeting/.

Convention Committees

The following persons were appointed to serve on various committees for the 119th Annual Meeting at OKC, Southern Hills.

Credentials Committee

Andy Harrison, chair, Pauls Valley, Trinity; Jeff Moore, Altus, First; D. J. Carney, Bristow, First; Troy Taylor, Lawton, First; Mark Custalow, Oklahoma City, Glorieta; Vern Charette, Coweta, First; Jon Johnston, Oklahoma City, Exchange Avenue; Michael Martin, Cushing, First.

Nominating Committee

Kelly King, chair, Oklahoma City, Quail Springs; Joshua Clayton, Claremore, First; Eric Costanzo, Tulsa, South Tulsa; Libby Gandy, Ada, First; Steve Hall, Noble, First; Mike Keahbone, Lawton, First; Emily Kuykendall, Owasso, First; Stacie McCracken, Minco, First; Rachel Miller, Hobart, First; Danny Mills, Hugo, First; Kevin Moss, Spencer, Antioch; Nathan Presley, Newcastle, First; Landon Warren, Snyder, First; James Wilder, Shawnee, Immanuel; Christy Kendrix, Madill, First.

Tellers Committee

Travis Markes, chair, Blanchard, First; Reid Jackson, Oklahoma City, South Lakes; Bill Bergstrom, Ardmore, First; Jim Lewis, Coalgate, First; Kent Jagers, Clinton, First.





WHEN THE EVENT ENDS: HOW TO TURN THE MOMENT INTO DISCIPLESHIP

by Dee Humphrey, Women's Ministry Leader at Grove, First



My heart still lights up when I think about the Oklahoma Baptist Women's Ministry Trainings. Weeks before, I felt led to invite a sister church that had been praying about starting a women's ministry.

I wasn't sure they'd come, but on the day of the event, they came! Each person loved the sessions, connected with other leaders, and one woman in their group even surrendered her life to Christ!

As the evening ended, I thanked God for doing something deeper than an event. He started a relationship! And I didn't want that connection to stop there. Since then, our women's ministry has "adopted" this sister church. They now joyfully join us in our community outreach and fellowship events. We pray for each other and swap ideas on how to reach more women for Christ. What a beautiful gift to see how discipleship flourishes when women link arms instead of going at it alone.

That experience changes how I view events. Retreats and Conferences are fabulous for creating excitement, but discipleship happens in the days to follow. Now I see that events are the spark, but follow-up is the flame that keeps the fire burning bright! We must intentionally plan with discipleship in mind. Only then can every gathering become a launching pad for transformation.

Hebrews 10:24 says, *"Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds."* Here are some ways to help women's ministry leaders be intentional:

1. Pray for One Another. Ask God to show you a nearby women's group that could use encouragement. Then reach out.

2. Invite, Don't Ignore. Welcome an unchurched woman or a struggling sister church to your next bible study or fellowship. Never underestimate the power of a phone call or personal invite.

3. Share Resources. Offer them additional Bible studies, prayer guides, or training materials. And yes, your décor.

Sometimes generosity is what helps jump-start a ministry.

4. Encourage Leaders. Reach out to another women's ministry leader. Send a quick text, give a handwritten note, or go for coffee/tea to remind her she's not alone in this journey.

5. Adopt a Sister Church. Stay in touch, pray with each other, and look for ways to support each other. Growth happens in community.

6. Celebrate Together. Rejoice for new believers, faithful small groups, and successful first events. Let's cheer each other on! And, yes, I'll bring the confetti!

When we treat ministry connections as opportunities for long-term discipleship, God brings the harvest. Imagine if every women's ministry in Oklahoma began to pray for, partner with, and pour into a sister church. Our events would no longer be the finish line, but the starting point of revival. So when the event ends, don't let the moment fade. Discipleship truly begins when women in ministry walk together, long after the lights go out.



CHURCH NEWS

THE BOYS RANCH TOWN FINDS SUCCESS IN AND OUT OF THE SHOW RING

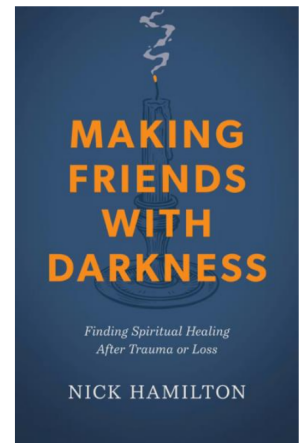
At the 2025 National Junior Angus Show (NJAS), Tre Boome's steer Mr. Black won the Grand Champion Steer award. He and his mentor, Bo Blakey, acknowledge that a success like this could only come from God. For the last three years, Boome has called The Boys Ranch Town in Edmond his home. This program, directed by Blakey and affiliated with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for children, houses boys who need help getting back on their feet. They accomplish this by empowering the boys with skills that'll help them become productive members of the community and by sharing the love of Christ with them. [Read more here.](#)



Photo by the Angus Journal

FORMER NAVY CHAPLAIN PROVIDES SPIRITUAL COMPANION IN LATEST BOOK

In Nick Hamilton's new book 'Making Friends With Darkness' releasing Oct. 14 by B&H Publishing Group, Hamilton brings his military experience and clinical expertise to help every reader face their darkest moments. Drawing from 25 years of chaplaincy experience, Hamilton offers a rare and powerful perspective on trauma and spiritual recovery. He serves as the director of ethics at Mercy Hospital in Oklahoma City.



UPCOMING EVENTS/INFORMATION

119th Oklahoma Baptists' Annual Meeting November 10-11, 2025

Oklahoma City, Southern Hills
8601 S Pennsylvania Ave.

[Click here to register!](#)

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training - March 5-6

Naomi Paget, Instructor – Cost \$60.00

Baptist Building

300 Johnny Bench Dr., Ste. 300

Oklahoma City, OK

To register, please email

pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

DR Orientation/Credentialing – March 28

DR Team Center

7180 NW Expressway

Oklahoma City, OK

Register online at okdisasterhelp.org

CISM Training - April 2-3

Greg Giltner, Instructor – Cost \$50.00

Baptist Building

300 Johnny Bench Dr., Ste. 300

Oklahoma City, OK

To register, please email

pjones@oklahomabaptists.org

