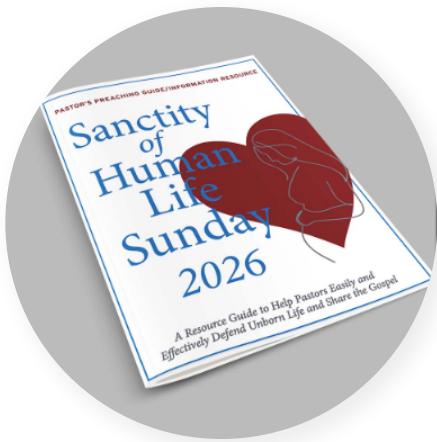


THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

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WHAT IS THE LOTTIE MOON CHRISTMAS OFFERING?

by Messenger Staff and IMB Reports

On July 7, 1873, Charlotte "Lottie" Moon was appointed as a missionary to China. She dedicated her life to sharing the Gospel with the people of China, serving faithfully until her passing on Dec. 24, 1912. In letters home, Moon encouraged churches to support missions through their prayers and giving. Today, Southern Baptists across the nation honor Moon's wishes through the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering.

Growing up in Virginia, Moon and her siblings first chose to rebel against Christianity. However, at 18, Moon's life turned around and put her faith in Christ, being baptized soon after. When she was 33, she sailed to China as a Southern Baptist missionary and saw firsthand the world's greatest problem—lostness.

In letters to Southern Baptists in America, Moon asked for an increase in prayer and giving. Her letters resonated with churches who began to send more missionaries to China. To continue Moon's wishes, the Christmas Offering is held where 100 percent of donations go directly to missionaries and every dollar given helps take the Gospel to those who have never heard it before.

Churches and pastors should first pray about their involvement then set a goal to give to the offering. The 2025 national goal for the offering is \$210 million, and every penny donated during the Christmas Offering will go directly to that goal.

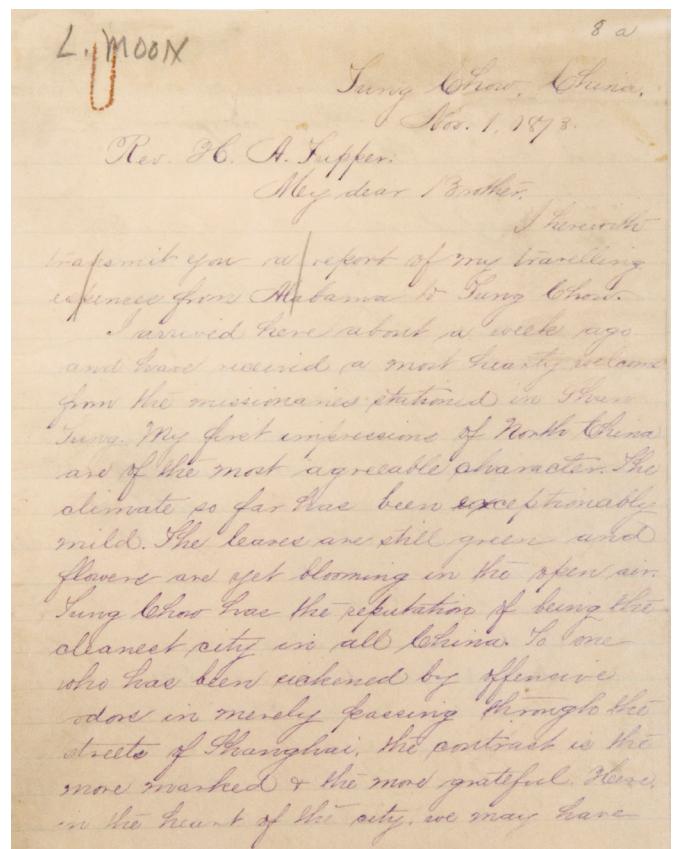
Another way churches can support the offering is by participating in the annual Week of Prayer. Between Nov. 30 – Dec. 7, churches can participate in prayer for specific mission areas. This year's countries of focus are Spain, Korea, West Africa, Chile, Central Asia, Japan, Brazil and the Horn of Africa.

Resources available online include everything churches need to help promote the Christmas Offering including videos, bulletin inserts, posters, social media posts and more. These are available in numerous languages.

To access these resources and to learn more about the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering, visit lottiemoon.com, or contact Oklahoma Baptists at (405) 942-3000.



Portrait of Lottie Moon. IMB Photo.



Letter sent by Moon. IMB Photo.

2026 SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE SUNDAY RESOURCES NOW AVAILABLE FOR CHURCHES

by Messenger Staff

Since 1984 pastors, churches and pro-life organizations across the United States have been using the third Sunday in January to raise awareness to the ongoing battle against abortion. For 2026, Sanctity of Human Life Sunday (SOHLS) falls on Jan. 18. This day, along with Rose Day on Feb. 4, places an urgent focus on promoting the sanctity of human life and protecting unborn children with the goal of bringing legalized abortion to an end.

To help churches promote this important day, Oklahoma Baptists partner with Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC) to create helpful and impactful resources that can be used to spread awareness and observe SOHLS. These resources include an updated 2026 Pastor's Preaching Guide and Information Resource, a new bulletin insert and promotional videos that can be shown during worship services.

Included in the front of the guide is a letter from Oklahoma Baptists Executive Director-Treasurer Todd Fisher and OBHC President James Swain asking churches to set aside Jan. 18 as a time to recognize SOHL.

"Every week, you are faithful to proclaim the Gospel as you preach God's Word," the letter says. "One particular biblical teaching that is vital is the Sanctity of Human Life—that life is valuable from the womb to the end of life, and that all people are made in God's image."

The guide also contains sermons from pastors across the state that emphasizes the value of life and God's design that is human life. The sermons included are as follows:

- "Fighting for Life" by Ryan Smith, pastor at Broken Arrow, Arrow Heights
- "Back to the Beginning" by James Swain
- "God's Wonderful Workmanship" by Michael Butler, pastor at Chickasha, First
- "Defining Life and Love" by Kenny Mossman, pastor at Carnegie, First

On the SOHLS web page, there are also three new training videos for students and adults that explain the importance of the sanctity of human life, the truth about abortion and how to become a culture changer in the battle against abortion.

SANCTITY OF HUMAN LIFE

The "Sanctity of Human Life" video is an introduction to the video series. It begins by explaining the importance of human life, how life starts from conception and why fighting against abortion is important.

THE TRUTH ABOUT ABORTION

In the second video of the series, various types of abortions are explained to help viewers better understand what churches, pastors and prolife organizations are fighting against. It also presents statistics about abortion.

BECOMING A CULTURE CHANGER

The third and final video in the series is a call to action for those watching to be active in combating abortion. It also gives examples of famous individuals who are either abortion survivors or those who had a personal experience with abortion and how that impacted their lives.

Additionally, Falls Creek Program Director Todd Sanders has created a Sunday School or Small Group lesson plan titled "*Imago Dei*." This lesson emphasizes that everyone is made in God's image and how we can live out the image of God.

For more information about SOHLS, to access the resources, visit oklahomabaptists.org/erlc/life/.





FIRST-PERSON: FOLLOWING A HIGHER PLAN

by David Lawrence, pastor at Gotebo, First.



From the moment I stepped into Gotebo, First, I felt something guiding beyond my own plans. My journey to Gotebo began years earlier, winding through classrooms, churches, and a lifetime of service that God quietly authored while I was busy drafting my own path.

I grew up in church, but I did not make a personal decision for Christ until later. High school at Newkirk, graduation in 1979, and a growing curiosity about pharmacy led me to Southwestern Oklahoma State University (SWOSU) in Weatherford. While at SWOSU, my ambitions shifted from pharmacist to math teacher and football coach. The summer of 1980 changed everything.

I joined the Marines and found salvation during boot camp. Baptism followed on July 4, 1981, at Weatherford, Emmanuel, marking the decision where my faith became personal, not just familiar.

Education carried me forward: a BS at SWOSU, then an M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Oklahoma. I taught college mathematics from 1983, married in 1988, and returned to Weatherford to teach at SWOSU in 1992.

Our family joined Emmanuel, and in 1994, I was ordained as a deacon. A pivotal moment came in February 1997, after preaching on Baptist Men's Day. At 35, God called me to preach and pastor. What began as supply preaching blossomed into a multi-vocational ministry, a path I walked for five years.

In 2002, I stepped into full-time ministry and pursued seminary studies to strengthen the calling. My path shifted again in 2007, when I returned to Weatherford, Emmanuel, as their pastor. As my journey unfolded, I cycled to Emmanuel three times.

First, as a SWOSU student baptized at Emmanuel. Second, as a church member at Emmanuel, who was ordained as a deacon and later ordained as a minister of the Gospel; and third, called as Emmanuel's Pastor.

Retirement from full-time pastoral work came in August 2018, after more than two decades across four churches. My plan was simple: teach at SWOSU until Social Security could beckon. I continued serving as a pulpit supply. The COVID era brought a surprising turn. In early 2021, I was asked to supply preach at Salem Church in Rocky, and later that year, a Sunday at Gotebo, First turned into something more lasting. COVID brought tests, and Gotebo

offered opportunities. God had a purpose. He had a higher plan.

In November 2021, I was asked to supply preach as the current preacher moved through a family COVID illness. One Sunday turned into three Sundays in a row. Then I learned the church wanted me for ongoing service. It turned out their previous pastor had passed away a year and a half earlier and they were seeking their next pastor.

In January 2022, I stepped in as interim. In February 2022, the search committee asked me to consider becoming their pastor. I had retired to travel and spend time with grandkids, and the thought of a new job felt far from the plan. But the church's warmth, their faith, and a sense that this was God's timing nudged me toward "yes."

The church and I prayed. I talked with some retired mentors who were currently serving as a multi-vocational pastors in their retirement. I listened to them and I listened to God's leading. May 2022 arrived with a clear sense that this door was meant to stay open. So, I became Gotebo's multi-vocational pastor, and the journey accelerated in ways I hadn't imagined. The church welcomed me; I welcomed them. They needed me, and I needed them. Together, we learned to bloom where God plants us.

Since then, God has blessed Gotebo in tangible ways: baptisms, new members, rising attendance, and stronger giving. The church feels revitalized, and I feel humbled by what's unfolded. My plans keep yielding to God's higher plan.

Three lessons stand out from this winding road. First, bloom where God plants you. When alignment happens—between a pastor's heart and a church's heartbeat—blessings multiply. Second, plans are good, but God's plan is better. Retirement isn't a badge that shuts doors; it can be a doorway into deeper ministry when God calls. Third, small churches need a pastor who loves them and a pastor they can love back. The mutual love strengthens faith, sustains hope, and fuels growth.

Today, I remain grateful for the path that led here. The journey isn't just about the miles traveled or the titles earned; it's about the shared moments of faith, service, and renewal. Gotebo has become more than a place to preach; it's a community where God's plans unfold. And as Jesus invites us to follow, that invitation continues to guide every step—one Sunday at a time, one baptism, one new member, one smile, one generous gift at a time.

CHURCH NEWS

CHURCH, COMMUNITY RALLY TO HELP PASTOR WHO NEEDS KIDNEY

On Sat, Nov. 1, Ada, Lovelady members and their community held a community benefit for their pastor, Coy Howry. Howry is in need of a kidney transplant, so the community held the event to raise money. Starting at 11:30 a.m., the community auctioned off various items to raise money for the medical bills. Items auctioned included two Brent Venables signed footballs, a fifth wheel RV and a fishing trip for four. "I'm very thankful, and I'm very humbled," Howry said. "We sure appreciate what people have done."



UPCOMING EVENTS/INFORMATION

Chaplain Manual/OSFA Training - March 5-7

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

FOSTERING HOPE FUNDRAISER

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 7TH NOON TO 4PM



100% OF SALES

WILL GO TO

FOSTERING HOPE

BENEFITTING FOSTER CHILDREN AND FAMILIES IN CLEVELAND, MCCLAIN AND GARVIN COUNTY.

SHOP IN-STORE OR ONLINE.



February 2, 2026 | 10:00am

FBC Moore, OK

Registration opens September 11

oklahomabaptists.org/POP

Conference is free. Register by 12/31 to receive a free book!

