



THE BAPTIST MESSENGER

Informing and Inspiring Oklahoma Baptists Since 1912
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Rite of passage: The alphabetical Bible

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Jernigan's journey through Parkinson's

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April Advance: Oklahoma Baptists meet for rescheduled Advance Conference at OKC, Quail Springs



>> PHOTOS: 1) BRIAN HOBBS; 2-3) CHRIS DOYLE
 1) The exhibit hall at the Advance Conference provides opportunities to connect with Southern Baptist seminaries and affiliated ministries; 2) The Advance Student Worship Choir with Kindred Souls leads a time of worship; 3) Doug Matlock leads a focus group on discipleship.

>> by Chris Doyle
MANAGING EDITOR

Oklahoma Baptists came to Oklahoma City, Quail Springs to attend the 2023 Advance Conference, April 3-4. The conference, previously known as the State Evangelism Conference, was rescheduled from January because an ice storm prevented the Advance Conference from occurring on the original dates.

Thankfully, many faithful Oklahoma Baptists were in attendance, and most of the speakers originally scheduled for the Advance Conference were still able to speak this year.

The theme for the Advance Conference was “Together,” emphasizing how both evangelism and discipleship are most effective when both are utilized together by the church.

Many Oklahoma pastors and leaders made up the list of Advance Conference speakers, as well as a pastor from Georgia. They include Mike Murray, pastor of Tahlequah, First; Vern Charette, pastor of Coweta, First; Emmitt Mckenzie, an Oklahoma voca-

tional evangelist; Andy Taylor, Oklahoma Baptists regional ministry partner; Robert Haskins, longtime Oklahoma Baptist leader; Danny Gandara, pastor of Del City, Sunnyside; Stephen Rummage, pastor of Oklahoma City, Quail Springs; Kevin Williams, pastor of Villa Rica, Ga., First; Mark Custalow, pastor of Oklahoma City, Glorieta; Robert Kellogg, CEO of WatersEdge Financial Services; and Todd Fisher, executive director-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists.

Times of worship through music were led by Geron Davis and Kindred Souls with a special appearance Monday evening by the Advance Student Worship Choir.

The Advance Conference also featured time for different ministry focus groups to meet. On Tuesday morning, April 4, sessions were offered for topics such as **Sending Church Training**, led by Rusty Gunn; **Scripture Guided Worship**, led by Joe Crider; **Reaching and Discipling Women**, led by Marilyn Fine; **Starting From Scratch: Building a Discipleship Ministry**, led by Doug Matlock and

Prophet Bailey; **Student Ministry: Evangelistic Teaching/Preaching with Effective Invitations**, led by Todd Sanders; **Children’s Ministry**, led by Sarah Hagar; **Going Global with Your Church**, led by Mike Wall; **Great Commission Vision for the Multi-vocational Pastor**, led by Philip Jones; **Evangelism Tools for Every Occasion**, led by Alan Quigley; and **Great Commission Strategies for the Hispanic Church**, led by Alvaro Orozco.

An exhibit hall provided opportunities to connect with Southern Baptist seminaries and ministries affiliated with Oklahoma Baptists.

At the conclusion of the Advance Conference, two attendees won trips to the Holy Land. Joe Jones, pastor of Meeker, First, and Brad Thatcher, youth pastor at Chickasha, College Heights, were the two recipients, and they will be traveling to the Holy Land in January 2024 on a trip hosted by Todd Fisher, executive director-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists. [m](#)

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What they said: Quotes from Advance Conference speakers



"The Word of God is as powerful today in 2023 as it was in Paul's day. And we can rely on the power of the Word of God as we share Jesus Christ with others"—**Mike Murray, pastor of Tahlequah, First.**



"You and I don't have to worry about our mission. We have the Great Commission right here, and the reason it is called 'Commission' is because Jesus is with us, and we are not alone. It's His mission"—**Vern Charette, pastor of Coweta, First.**



"There are people just like (I was) out there—in a state of lostness—who can impact the Kingdom just like I can"—**Emmitt McKenzie, Oklahoma vocational evangelist.**



"Perhaps the greatest need for the church today is to get focused... We need to focus and shepherd the flock of God, exercising loving care and oversight over the people"—**Andy Taylor, regional ministry partner for Oklahoma Baptists.**



"Not everybody is called to be an evangelist, but all of us as Christians are called to evangelize. As laypeople, don't push that off on

your pastor; don't push that off on the professional evangelist. That's for every Christian. We are all supposed to be about the job of evangelizing, telling people about Jesus"—**Bob Haskins, longtime Oklahoma Baptists leader.**



"That simple message of (Jesus') death, His burial, His resurrection can literally revolutionize somebody's life. And God can do it powerfully from the inside out"—**Danny Gandara, pastor of Del City, Sunnyside.**



"Jesus was dying in your place, for your sins on the cross of Calvary. Jesus Christ was not a martyr dying for a cause; He was a Savior dying for your sins"—**Stephen Rummage, pastor of Oklahoma City, Quail Springs.**



"We must have urgency in sharing the Gospel. Pastors, if it's not urgent to you, I can promise you it's not urgent to your people. You have to guide that. That's got to become you. You have to take that over and let it ooze out to your congregation"—**Kevin Williams, pastor of Villa Rica, Ga., First.**



"We employ missionaries all around the globe who tell us that our world is largely unreached. It is more un-

reached than it ever has been, percentage-wise. That is certainly the case here in North America. We have more people living here than ever before and fewer in percentage who are followers of Jesus. Brothers and sisters, that's on our watch and should keep us up at night"—**Mark Custalow, pastor of Oklahoma City, Glorieta.**



"What stirs our hearts and what transforms our lives is the Gospel message. We need to invest in it and memorize it, not to recite it for a group... so that it becomes heartfelt and who we are. Then evangelism doesn't become something you do out of compulsion, but it comes out of what is natural and in you"—**Robert Kellogg, CEO of WatersEdge financial services.**



"Christianity has never been about balancing deeds. It is about cancelling them. I don't care how good a person you are. You can have all the good deeds in the world. You can be the best person in the world. But if you don't have faith in Jesus, you are spiritually dead"—**Todd Fisher, executive director-treasurer of Oklahoma Baptists.**

EDITOR'S NOTE: In coming weeks, videos of each sermon will be available online at oklahomabaptists.org/advance. 



Rite of passage: The alphabetical Bible



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I am thinking about designing a new study Bible. I see these popular Bibles in bookstores: men's study Bibles, women's study Bibles, second coming study Bibles—the list goes on.

I want to put together the Alphabetical Bible, one with all the books in alphabetical order. I have seen people struggling when our pastor says, "Turn in your Bibles to the fourth chapter of the book of Jonah, verse 2." I've watched people flipping from one end of the Bible to the other so fast that it created a slight breeze across the congregation.

If our pastor ever preaches a four-week series on the book of Jude, it will take most people five weeks to find it. I think sometimes it would help if he would have all of us just turn to the Index and look up the page number for a particular book.

I also think this Alphabetical Bible would be a help to those who are unfamiliar with the books of the Bible or studying it for the first time, like new believers or deacons. It would start with Acts, Amos, 1 Chronicles and 2 Chronicles, and when you got to the J's, you would find Jonah, Joshua and Jude.

Move on down to the last two books, and you would find Zechariah and Zephaniah. The end is a good place for them, because we Baptists don't usually know they're in the Bible in the first place.

However, this new Bible would probably be outlawed for all children's Bible Drills contests. If you're not familiar with Bible drills, they were a normal part of church life when I was a child.

To start the drill, all of the children would line up. The leader would call out, "Attention," and all of the children would stand straight and stiff with their Bibles at their sides. The next command was "Draw Swords," when the children would bring the Bible up in front of them with one hand placed firmly on top of the book and the other on the bottom. At that point, the leader would call out a book, chapter and verse and yell, "Charge!" The children would frantically flip through the Bible looking for the verse. The first one to find it would step forward and read it aloud.

And since we had learned the ABC's song long before we could read, we got a head start. I had a college student do some filing for me who had to sing the ABC song to get the file folders in the right place. I'm sure that singing or humming the ABC song at a Bible drill would be forbidden.

All kidding aside, your children need to learn the books of the Bible. Not only do they need to know the order of the books, but they also need to learn that the books of the Bible are grouped into categories: Law, Historical Books, Major Prophets, Minor Prophets, the Gospels, Pauline Letters and more. Within each section, every book has its own order and purpose.

The Bible was not just thrown together at random but laid out with a divine plan and direction. And the more you know why a book was written, to whom it was written and who is its author, the more you will marvel at the Holy Book that contains it.



The Bible was written over a 1,600-year period by approximately 40 authors. The first words were penned in 1500 B.C. and the last in 100 A.D. The Bible was written on three different continents in three different languages on a thousand different subjects, yet with one central theme: God's love and redemption of mankind from sin by the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. It is a book that will set you free.

"To the Jews who had believed him, Jesus said, 'If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'" (John 8:31, 32).

Maybe it is time for you to blow the dust off your own Bible and begin to rediscover for yourself the incredible Word of God. My young grandson, River, is now learning the ABC song. So far he has only gotten to the C part. And don't blame the kid for being slow; it takes his poppy an hour and a half to watch *60 Minutes*. But as soon as Titus learns his ABCs, I want to make sure he learns this:

The B-I-B-L-E

Yes that's the book for me.

I stand alone on the Word of God

The B-I-B-L-E. 

Church News

VOLUNTEER MISSIONS OPPORTUNITIES



JERNIGAN'S JOURNEY THROUGH PARKINSON'S.

Singer/songwriter/author Dennis Jernigan has a new book in which he shares wisdom, humor and lessons he learned through his journey through Parkinson's Disease. Jernigan's book is available in paperback, ebook and audiobook formats at <https://tinyurl.com/2mn5dp3U>. 

OKLAHOMA

On-going opportunities for volunteers:

Regional Food Bank of Oklahoma, OKC and Community Food Bank of Eastern OK, Tulsa—both locations, call 405/972-1111 (Not a Baptist ministry, but many BGCO churches receive food from them for local food pantries.)

Arms Around Broken Arrow—food pantry, clothes closet—918/258-7714 or bryan@armsaroundba.org

Lake Texoma Baptist Resort Ministry—Monty & Tammy Wood, directors, 580/916-2181 2034 Max Rd, Mead 73449 thehelm2034@gmail.com

Cherokee Baptist Assembly, Cherokee—918/506-5482 cba_tahlequah@yahoo.com

DISASTER RELIEF

Training:

April 15—Disaster Relief Orientation & Credentialing—8:30 a.m. – 12 noon; Stillwater, Countryside, 2124 S. Western

April 22—First Aid/CPR Class – 9 a.m.-3 p.m.—\$20 DR Team Center, 7180 NW Expressway, Okarche
To register, email Darrell Knapp, dknapp711@gmail.com



CHOCTAW NATION HONORS MINGS, PASTOR OF VALLIANT, FIRST.

The Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma chose Pastor Mike Mings of Valliant, First to be the April "spotlight" for the tribe. Mings has been pastor of Valliant, First since 2001 and also leads Garvin, Watering Hole Cowboy Church. He also spent 10 years in prison ministry before he became a full-time pastor. To watch Mings tell his story, visit choctawnation.com/bios/pastor. 

Coming events

APRIL 22 AND 29. Bethany, Tulakes, 6715 N.W. 50th, is hosting two Gospel music concerts provided by the Oklahoma United Gospel Music Association. Both concerts will begin at 7 p.m. On April 22, Randy and Gigi Burgess and The New Tulsans Quartet will be singing. The April 29 concert will feature Becky Lercher and the Stanley Jones Singers. Visit ougma.org for more information, or call 405/324-2144. 

Messenger Insight Podcast

2023 Men's Retreat

Hear Brad Clay and Bubba Burcham talk about the great lineup of events and activities offered for men at the April 28-29 Men's Retreat at Falls Creek.

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