

The Oklahoma Baptist Chronicle



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CONTENTS

40th Anniversary of Hope Pregnancy Centers.....	4
Fisher Addresses Historical Highlights.....	9
2024 Awards Photos.....	22
9-11 Anniversary Evokes Memories.....	24
Memorials.....	30

From Heartache to Hope; Jordan Spurred HPC Growth 40 Years Ago

by Bob Nigh, Oklahoma Baptists' Historical Secretary

In 1978 Anthony Jordan and his wife, Polla, heard news that he said, “rocked our world.” After 10 years of trying to conceive, they were told they could not have a biological child.

“Shock and heartache struck us deeply,” Jordan recalls. “In God’s timing, I was a young pastor in Jackson, Mo., and had just been elected to serve on the Board of Managers of the Missouri Baptist Children’s Home. I learned about ministry to young women who were in crisis pregnancies. So, it was short step for us to consider adoption, and in 1979 we welcomed our son, Adrian, into our home.”



Anthony Jordan

“On Sept. 11, 1985, the Jordans welcomed their second child, a daughter named Alisha, lovingly called “Sissy” by her dad, to their home.

God often uses heartache to move believers to action. Logically, the issue of abortion weighed heavily on Jordan’s heart. After becoming pastor of Oklahoma City, Northwest, the Lord put a fire in his heart with a passion to confront the evil of abortion through positive action for life.

In those days, pro-life supporters usually gathered outside abortion clinics, peacefully protesting the horror of abortion, praying and confronting those entering the clinic with the hope of changing their minds.

“While I supported that movement, I felt the need to have long-term impact and especially to minister to the people involved in tangible ways,” Jordan said. “In my research, I discovered the ministry of Crisis Pregnancy Centers (CPC) where clear information was given to women, support was offered to help them carry their child to birth, and connection to adoption services was provided if they could not care for a child beyond birth.”

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After much research on the CPC approach, Jordan met with Lowell Milburn, special care ministries director for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO), and some of his staff to discuss Oklahoma Baptists becoming involved in this ministry.

"I found a responsive friend in Lowell Milburn, Jordan said. "He walked by my side as we reached others who saw the CPC as a viable opportunity to have a positive impact for life and a major deterrent to abortion."

Soon, they took a trip to see a CPC founded by Eules, Texas, First under the leadership of Jimmy Draper.

"They were such a great help in giving us information and encouragement to begin this ministry in Oklahoma," Jordan said. "I reached out to other pastors like Alan Day, Bill Merrill, Charlie Graves, Rod Masteller, Jerry Fielder and others. They were supportive and led their churches to give monthly support to the development of a CPC in Oklahoma City. At the same time, I engaged some pastors and lay leaders in Tulsa who had interest in starting a CPC there."

Jordan and Milburn met with Joe Ingram, the BGCO executive director-treasurer, who applauded their efforts and committed \$25,000 to the work in Oklahoma City and Tulsa, where the convention's first CPC was opened in January 1986.

On April 27, 1986, the Oklahoma City CPC was formally dedicated at 10806 N. May Ave.

"Many people got involved in the remodeling and preparation of the facility," Jordan said. "Dana Humphreys led the effort to provide a beautiful, welcoming, and comfortable environment for women coming to the clinic."

Volunteer counselors were recruited and trained. Sylvia Boothe, a former IMB missionary, became the first director of the CPC.

The CPC movement and Oklahoma Baptists involvement in the pro-life cause was accelerated in November 1985. God in his providence prompted Masteller, president of the Oklahoma Pastors Conference, to ask Jordan to speak at the conference.

"While originally assigned another topic, I asked Rod to allow me to preach on abortion, a subject not addressed in such a setting in Oklahoma before," Jordan said. "He whole-heartedly supported the idea. God had placed burning passion in my heart and gave me the message to preach. The outline was simple. I oppose abortion for three reasons: medical, biblical, and personal.

"The ending of my message touched people beyond the words and left the crowd in tears. I had my wife, Polla, bring our 5-month-old daughter to the stage and stand beside me. I spoke of Oklahoma Baptists' ministry to unwed mothers. How the mother had chosen life for her baby rather death through abortion.

"'Abortion for me is not just a sermon,' I said. 'I oppose abortion for a very personal reason. You see, this little girl before you was

saved from being torn from her mother's womb and destroyed through abortion because of the ministry of Oklahoma Baptists. Oklahoma Baptists loved the Catholic girl who reached out to them on an abortion hotline. She chose life for her little girl. This little baby you see is *My* baby girl! She joins her adopted brother in our family. My closing word is simple; as long as I have a voice and breath in my lungs, I will stand against abortion and for life."

Today, there are HPCs across the state of Oklahoma in Alva, Ardmore, Edmond, Oklahoma City (2), Shawnee and Tulsa. In 2020, the 27-foot RV Patty Ann Mobile Ministry Unit began serving women in the Oklahoma City metro area who are unable or unlikely to come to a brick-and-mortar center. Since 1986, Oklahoma Baptists' HPCs have served 54,820 clients; provided 21,928 ultrasounds; and seen 3,832 people accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Most importantly, 13,468 "documented" babies have been born to mothers who visited one of Oklahoma's CPCs, according to Gayla White, HPC director.



Tony Lauinger, long-time Rose Day Committee member, presents Anthony Jordan with the Rose Day "Pro-life Champion" award in 2018 while his wife, Polla (At his right) looks on.

"The number is surely higher, but it only represents the babies we know have been born because their parents responded when we called them after their due date and those who participated in parenting classes until or after their babies were born," White said. "If we knew the outcome for each client, it would likely be three times this number."

"This did not happen because of one man," Jordan emphasized. "God may have given me the vision to act, but many important individuals played a significant role in seeing it to where it is today. I'm just a boy from Skiatook whom God allowed to lead this effort. The

real story is the hundreds of heartbroken believers who grew to become thousands and stepped up and are still stepping up today.”

Jordan also played a major role in helping establishing and promoting the annual Rose Day Pro-Life Indoor Rally at the Oklahoma State Capitol, which has grown into the most longstanding faith-based, pro-life event in Oklahoma.



Alveda King began and concluded her time at the 2018 Rose Day rally in song, first singing, ‘How Great Thou Art’ and concluding with, ‘This Little Light of Mine’.

Established in the 1980s by a small group of Catholics, Rose Day participants offered red roses and a note to elected state officials, encouraging them to make policies that protect the unborn from abortion. During the 1990s, Oklahoma Baptists, based on their biblical convictions to protect unborn life, became involved.

In 1990, Jordan, then pastor of Oklahoma City, Northwest, chaired the first-of-its-kind major pro-life rally on the steps of the Oklahoma State Capitol. National television reporter Connie Chung reported that some 20,000 pro-life supporters attended the rally.

Jordan, who retired as Oklahoma Baptists’ executive director-treasurer in 2017, was thrilled with the success but recognized that the event, which happened on a Sunday, could have had more impact at a time when legislators were at the Capitol. Seeing an opportunity with the Rose Day event, Jordan and others reached out to the event organizers and became involved in the early 1990s.

“If you really want something to take off,” said Joan Naylor, co-founder of Rose Day, “get the Baptists involved.”

Now years later, Oklahoma Baptists help lead the Rose Day rally in coordination with other faith groups.

Through the years, Rose Day has featured numerous leaders within the pro-life movement, including Abby Johnson, pro-life spokeswoman and former Planned Parenthood center director; Alveda C. King; Lila Rose, pro-life activist and President of Live Action; and Fr. Frank Pavone of Priests for Life.

King is the niece of civil rights activist and preacher, Martin Luther King, Jr. She is also a voice for the “Silent no more,” campaign in which she uses her testimony of two abortions to tell others of God’s forgiveness and healing. King grew up in the middle of the

Civil Rights movement, and now she sees the pro-life movement as a vital continuation to fight for human rights for all humans.

This year's featured speaker for Rose Day on Feb. 4 was Mia Armstrong, actress and pro-life advocate who was born with Down syndrome. Being born with Down syndrome has not prevented Mia in any way from living a full life and spreading joy wherever she



Mia Armstrong

goes. Later in life, Mia became a renowned SAG-AFTRA actress, voice over artist, pro-life advocate and author who made history as the first child with Down syndrome to voice act a cartoon character.

Mia's mother, Cara, gave her testimony before her daughter spoke.

"Before I held a microphone or ever stood at a podium, I was just a mom receiving news that I never thought that I would hear," Cara said. "That the daughter I had dreamed about my whole life, that I had prayed for, would have Down syndrome."

Cara spoke about how disheartened she was to hear the news, but she wasn't defeated. Despite numerous doctors advising her to have an abortion, she did not listen and kept her child, all while keeping her heart and eyes directly on God.

"God does not wait for perfect conditions," she said. "He releases purpose in the middle of disruption. The world looks at an unplanned pregnancy or a pre-natal diagnosis as inconvenient and says, 'end it.' God looks at the same circumstances and says, 'this is where I will show My glory.'"

"My parents chose life for me, and today I am standing up for life," Mia said. "People always ask me, 'why are you so passionate about ending abortion?' I say it's because I am living proof that every life has purpose."

At the rally, White presented statistics about how chemical abortion pills have become the dominant form of abortion. She also emphasized that women who have taken the abortion pill still have a chance to reverse it if they seek help within 72 hours of taking the pill.

"There is a 66 percent chance of saving the baby and 100 percent safe for both the mother and baby," White said.

Those who wish to reverse an abortion pill can find help through ministries such as Hope Pregnancy Centers.

SBC Cooperative Program, *Baptist Faith and Message* 100 Years Old

Editor's note: This article is an edited version of the Executive Director-Treasurer's address delivered by Todd Fisher to the Messengers at the 2025 Oklahoma Baptists Annual Meeting on Nov. 10 at Oklahoma City, Southern Hills.

Tonight is a very important night. This is a milestone for us, not your average run-of-the-mill annual meeting, as we celebrate the 100th anniversaries of the Cooperative Program (CP) and the *Baptist Faith and Message* (BF&M). So, if you will allow me, I'm not going to really preach a sermon tonight. I have prepared an address, and this will be a little bit more dry than what you've heard me say before, but I do hope that you will listen, because I believe the things



Todd Fisher addresses the 2025 Oklahoma Baptists Annual Meeting on Nov. 10 at Oklahoma City, Southern Hills.

that God has laid on my heart to share tonight about our history, our present and our future are very important as we think about the days and the years ahead as Oklahoma Baptists. Tonight, I want to focus on history, and I want all of us to look back on the rich history that we have as Ok-

lahoma Baptists and as Southern Baptists. I want us to not only celebrate our legacy but also learn from it as we think about our future. Our theme this year is "Prevail."

How does Jesus' church prevail? Well, it's going to prevail because of the promise Jesus made to Peter that upon his confession that Jesus is the Christ, the Messiah, the Church will prevail. The gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Tonight, I want us to think about two things: our commitment to the Word of God and our passion for the Great Commission. I believe these two things will be what God uses to enable Oklahoma Baptists to help our churches prevail in a culture.

You recall that Jesus brought his disciples to the pagan hotbed when he asked them, Who do you say that I am? Right there at Caesarea Philippi, and what did Peter say? You're the Christ, the Son of the living God. We must make that confession as well in a culture that would stand against us. Learning from our history to help us in the present is something we see countless examples of, just in history in general. Let's think about it for a moment.

Winston Churchill is known as the man who led Great Britain to victory against the onslaught of German air raids in World War II in what we call the Battle of Britain. But the strength of Churchill's leadership was formed from what he had learned in his own history: Gallipoli, the sinking of the Lusitania, the gold standard in the market, and his opposition to Gandhi and Indian independence. In short, Churchill learned from his past that enabled him to be strong in the present. Thomas Edison had thousands of failed efforts at creating a light bulb until he found the correct way. When a journalist asked him about his many failures at inventing the light bulb, he reportedly answered, "I didn't fail thousands of times at making a light bulb. I learned thousands of times how not to make a light bulb."

In the lead up to December 1903, the year the Wright Brothers made the first powered flight, they had made thousands of glider flights seeking to learn how to build their first airplane. Orville survived eight crashes and many broken bones on the path to building the world's first fully functional aircraft in 1905.

As we gather this evening in our annual meeting as Oklahoma Baptists, we do so in remembrance and celebration of a long and rich history of obedience to God's word and faithfulness to the mission He has given the church. Our cause tonight for gratefully looking back at our heritage are, as I said, the Centennial anniversaries of both the CP and the BF&M. In light of these milestones, we would do well to learn from our history to help us in our present and our future.

I am reminded of the address an aging Joshua gave the leaders of Israel in Joshua 23 as he looked back on the history of his people. He used that history to help encourage the leaders of Israel to remain focused on those two things: the Word of God and the mission that God had given them. We would do well to do the same if we want to prevail. Let me invite you to turn in your Bible to Joshua 23 and to look at that address with me this evening. I want to use this as just an example for us to do as Joshua did in this text, in calling the people to remember their history and what they can learn from it.

Joshua 23, verse one: *"A long time afterward, when the Lord had given rest to Israel from all their surrounding enemies, and Joshua was old and well advanced in years, Joshua summoned all Israel, its elders and heads, its judges and officers and said to them, I am now old and well advanced in years, and you have seen all that the Lord your God has done to all these nations for your sake. For it is the*

Lord your God Who has fought for you. Behold, I have allotted to you as an inheritance for your tribes, those nations that remain, along with all the nations that have already cut off from the Jordan to the Great Sea in the West. The Lord your God will push them back before you and drive them out of your sight, and you shall possess their land, just as the Lord your God promised you.”

Verse six: *“Therefore be very strong to keep and to do all that is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, turning aside from it neither to the right hand*

nor to the left, that you may not mix with these nations remaining among you, or make mention of the names of



COOPERATIVE PROGRAM

their gods, or swear by them, or serve them, or bow down to them, but you shall cling to the Lord your God, just as you have done to this day. For the Lord has driven out before you great and strong nations. And as for you, no man has been able to stand before you to this day. One man of you puts to flight a thousand, since it is the Lord your God who fights for you, just as He promised you. Be very careful therefore to love the Lord your God. For if you turn back and cling to the remnant of these nations remaining among you and make marriages with them, so that you associate with them and they with you, know for certain that the Lord, your God will no longer drive out these nations before you, but they shall be a snare and a trap for you, a whip on your sides and thorns in your eyes until you perish from off this good ground that the Lord your God has given you.”

In the first five verses of that text Joshua has called the leaders, the elders of Israel, together and encouraged them to be filled with gratitude over their past. He calls them to review this common experience of God’s blessings, to remember what incredible things the Lord has achieved and the immense changes they have witnessed from which they daily benefit. It is always a sound spiritual instinct to follow the exhortation in Psalm 103, verse two: *“Bless the Lord, O my soul and forget not all His benefits.”*

The key in this passage, I think at least these first five verses, is verse three. Joshua says, you have seen all that the Lord your God has done. It is the Lord your God, Who has fought for you. And Joshua reminds them that the blessings they enjoy currently are not due to anything of their own accomplishment or merit, but rather the work of God in their midst. As a result, the people were to give God thanks and give Him glory for what He had done, not what they had done.

Joshua is no doubt remembering from his history the words Moses spoke to the people before they entered the promised land in

Deut. 6:10-12: *“And when the Lord your God brings you into the land that He swore to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac and to Jacob to give you, with great and good cities that you did not build, and houses full of all good things that you did not fill, and cisterns that you did not dig, and vineyards and olive trees that you did not plant, and when you eat and are full, then take care, lest you forget the Lord Who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.”*

I think the other thing we see in this passage of Scripture is the fact that Joshua calls all of the leaders together. The inherent idea in here is unity. Joshua has brought all the leaders together and said, “Listen, we’ve got to be in this together.” A commitment to the Word, a commitment to the mission, and unity are essential as we look at who we are as Oklahoma Baptists. We would do well to look back at our history and the incredible work that God did to unite our state around shared beliefs and mission.

As I travel around the state, people know I’m a history nerd. I get asked from time to time, “Hey, tell us a little bit about Oklahoma history.” And oddly, one of the questions I’m asked is why did it take Oklahoma so long to become a state? There were people in this area for a long time. The answer to that question is that Oklahoma before statehood was two territories: the Indian Territory and Oklahoma Territory. The reason it took so long for them to become a state is the two territories could not agree on the impact statehood would have on each of them, politically and economically. Accordingly, there were two primary Baptist conventions in Oklahoma before statehood: the Baptist General Convention of Indian Territory and the Oklahoma Baptist State Convention.

Finally, the territories reached a point where statehood could be formally considered, and President Teddy Roosevelt signed what was called the Enabling Act of 1906, which paved the way for a constitutional convention to be convened and for the vote for statehood to be put before the people in 1907.

Likewise, the two Baptist conventions, seeing the imminent reality of statehood and the merging of the two territories, began to formally discuss merging the two conventions, and after a series of meetings for both sides, the two conventions agreed to become one.

On Nov. 9, 1906, the Baptist General Convention of Indian Territory met inside the First Baptist Church of Shawnee. You now know that building as Stubblefield Chapel on the campus of Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU) and they formally approved the merger. The Oklahoma Baptist State Convention met inside the First Methodist Church of Shawnee. Don’t hold that against them. And they voted to merge as well. At 10 a.m. on Nov. 9, 1906, both groups, after voting to merge independently, walked out of the two churches and met on Main Street in Shawnee. There were 400 messengers in total that day. They walked down Main Street in pairs, side-by-side

in a long line of twos. On one side was a representative of Indian Territory. On the other side was a representative of Oklahoma Territory, and that's how they walked to the Shawnee Opera House, where they had their first meeting.

As Bob Ross stated in *The Two Became One*, his history of Oklahoma Baptists, they were no longer competitors, but brothers sharing a common faith and commitment. That commitment was to the Word of God and the Great Commission. As they walked, they sang the old hymn, "Blessed Be the Tie that Binds." And inside the Opera House, they had their first annual meeting as a unified convention.

Each Convention had their own gavel they used in their annual meetings. And one of the (symbolic) things they did before they met in the Opera House that day was hire a craftsman to take the two gavels and merge them into one gavel as a symbol of their unity.

I am holding that gavel. This is a 118-year-old gavel. One side of the silver band at the top says Oklahoma Baptist State Convention. The other side says Baptist General Convention of Indian Territory. The gavel is split right in half. One half is dark wood; the other half is light wood. What a beautiful symbol of our unity. After the opening prayer, the first song they sang was "All Hail the Power of Jesus' Name." God, through His purpose and power, had united the two conventions.

Article Four of the Constitution they adopted to define their purpose and commitment says: "The objects of this convention shall be to promote missionary operations, Sunday School work, the dissemination of religious literature, the cause of Christian education and our denominational enterprises in general, and to develop our people in missionary enterprises at home and abroad."

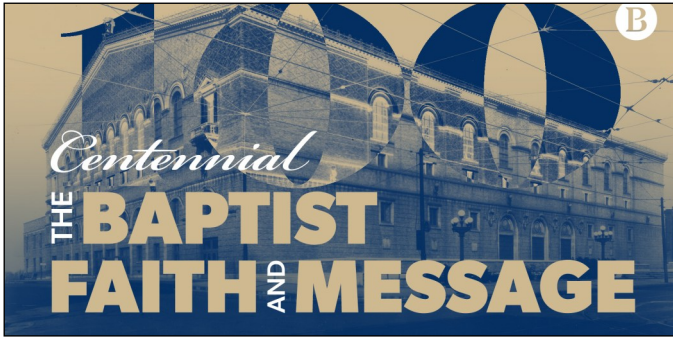
That purpose and commitment has not changed today: the Word of God and the Great Commission. Neither has the unity that they experienced almost 120 years ago changed. That moment has not faded from the ranks of Oklahoma Baptists today.

As I travel across our state, I have interactions also with leaders and other state conventions. It never ceases to amaze me the incredible unity we have as Oklahoma Baptists. Herschel York stood here this afternoon and looked out at our pastor's conference and said, 'It really is amazing what you Oklahoma Baptists have. There's something special here. It is a gift from God.'

Oklahoma Baptists are united in our firm commitment to the inspiration, sufficiency, authority and inerrancy of the Bible, and we are united in our passionate zeal to reach our communities, state, nation and the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We look back at a history that united us. May we work in the present and look to the future, undeterred and undistracted from that same unity as we work together as churches for the advance of the Gospel.

When you get to verses 6-11 in Joshua 23, Joshua unpacks this call to obey the Word and the mission. Look back on the history. This is what God has called you to do. This is what we must do in the future if we are to prevail. And so, in calling the leaders to be united in obedience to the Word of God, Joshua's word choices are very vivid. Verse 6: be very strong, keep and do. This reminds us of the author of Hebrews' admonition to pay much closer attention to the Word. Obedience to the Word of God, Oklahoma Baptists, deserves our best intentional efforts. We are not to turn aside from that, or as it says in verse 7, mix with it any of the world's ideologies. Joshua says if we do that, we are guilty of idolatry.

Our world today pressures us to be weak, not strong, to let slide, not keep, to ignore, not do the teaching of Scripture. We are told today to make Christianity relevant, and to do so, we must view the Bible through the lens of culture. Brothers and sisters, we cannot



make that mistake. We must rather view the culture through the lens of the Bible. There are parts of the Bible

that are unpalatable to worldly ideologies, but here we must not be embarrassed about the Bible, or turn aside from it, or mix it with what a secular world says.

And here we must again be like Joshua, follow his example, and we take our cue from history.

So tonight, we come to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the *Baptist Faith and Message*. Have you ever thought, "Why in the world do we even have a BF&M?" Well, I want to share a little history with you. Please don't be bored with this, because what I think I'm going to teach you in the next few moments is incredibly important.

Why do we have a BF&M? Well, let's go back to the 17th Century. Prior to the 1600s, the vast record of humanity saw God, or some deity, as the foundation of existence and source of knowledge. But Rene Descartes changed all of that in the mid-1600s when he declared, 'I think therefore I am.' This was a monumental shift, stating that the foundation of existence and knowledge and truth were no longer God, but man and his ability to reason. This, my friends, was the onset of the Enlightenment.

You move to the end of the 18th Century and the beginning of the 19th Century, and Friedrich Schleiermacher became the leading

voice attempting to make Christianity compatible with the tenets of the Enlightenment. He is known as the father of liberal theology. Knowledge of God, he argued, is based on human experience and reason, rather than the Scripture and history. He deviated from an orthodox understanding of the cardinal doctrines of Christianity related to Christology, soteriology and the doctrine of Scripture.

You move a little further ahead. Schleiermacher's beliefs begin to take root in the 19th Century in Germany, where liberal theology flourished under the teachings of Ritschl, von Harnack, Strauss and later Heidegger and Tillich. Add to this theological malaise the onset of naturalistic evolution, presented by Charles Darwin, and by the 20th Century, modernism is in full swing and begins to be influential at this time in the United States.

Let's move to America now. Mainline denominations in the U.S. became embroiled in the battle regarding liberal theology, which found its zenith in the Presbyterian Church of the United States (PCUSA) of America, one of the largest Protestant denominations in America at the time. This battle was known as the fundamentalist-modernist controversy, and it reached a peak in 1922 when Harry Emerson Fosdick, a Baptist preaching in a Presbyterian Church—go think on that one for a minute—in New York City, preached a bombshell sermon titled, "Shall the Fundamentalists Win?"

In his sermon, he blatantly denied the cardinal doctrines that Christian conservatives held dear: the virgin birth, the substitutionary atonement, the inspiration, authority and inerrancy of Scripture, supernatural miracles in the Bible, and the Second Coming. In short, Fosdick did kind of what Schleiermacher tried to do. He suggested that modern people possess scientific knowledge that rendered traditional understandings of the Bible untenable. One thing that made Fosdick's sermon so influential is that the richest man in the world at the time was a liberal Baptist named John D. Rockefeller, who personally paid for 130,000 copies of Fosdick's sermon to be printed and mailed to every Protestant pastor in America.

Presbyterian pastor and leader Clarence McCartney fired back with the sermon, "Shall Unbelief Win?", which is virtually a line-for-line rebuttal to the Fosdick sermon. J. Gresham Machen wrote the book, *Christianity and Liberalism* in response to Fosdick, where he argued that historic Christianity and modernism were not simply two shades of the same faith, but rather two completely different religions. A fight within the PCUSA erupted with the modernists winning, and they removed conservative leaders from the denomination and conservative professors such as Machen from Princeton Theological Seminary.

What's more, just two weeks before the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) annual meeting in Memphis in 1925, it was announced that a landmark trial would take place in Dayton, Tenn. that would come to be known as the Scopes Monkey Trial. And even

though William Jennings Bryan and the state of Tennessee emerged victorious over Clarence Darrow, who defended science teacher John T. Scopes for teaching evolution in his classroom against state law, the trial swayed the court of public opinion in America toward the belief in modernism rather than historic Christianity.

Now, why do I say all that this evening? Why so much history? Here's why. It is important for you to know that our Southern Baptist forebears were watching all of that. And our forebears—E. Y. Mullins, George McDaniel, Lee Scarborough, George Truett—did not want the same thing that happened to the Presbyterians and the Methodists to happen to our convention. And they sought a way to safeguard our biblical orthodoxy. Mullins and company thus sought to have the SBC adopt a confession of faith. They largely emulated an existing confession, the New Hampshire Confession of Faith, which was written in 1833 and they called it the *Baptist Faith and Message* (BF&M).

There were three factions within the SBC at that time. The first were called the anti-creedalists. They were concerned that Baptist distinctives of liberty of conscience, soul competency and religious liberty would be threatened under such a confession. They feared that the BF&M would become a creed seeking to make all within the SBC abide by a strict, narrow code of theological and polity positions. The second faction were known as the radical fundamentalists, led by the combative and often controversial C. P. Stealey. If the name sounds familiar to some of you Oklahoma Baptists, at the time, Stealey was the editor of a paper known as the *Baptist Messenger*.

Stealey was an associate of the controversial J. Frank Norris, who shot and killed a man in his office and sought to make amendments to the BF&M narrowing its scope, but the amendments were soundly defeated.

The third faction were known as the conservative fundamentalists, represented by Mullins and Scarborough and the like, and they wanted the BF&M to hold the line on the cardinal doctrines of the Bible, while at the same time allowing for Southern Baptists to be able to disagree on secondary or tertiary matters. I don't know why they thought that Baptists would never disagree.

The BF&M actually today does just that. It sets the guard rails narrow enough to ensure that we are faithful to the principal doctrines of Scripture.

What do we see in the BF&M? Here's what we see. We see the inspiration, authority, inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture. We see the Trinity. We see creation. We see humanity created in the image of God, with two genders and our sinfulness. We see the full deity and humanity of Jesus, the virgin birth, His sinlessness, His death, His bodily resurrection and His return to Earth. We see substitutionary blood atonement and justification by faith. We see the church, its

nature, its ordinances and offices, and that qualified men are to hold the office of Pastor, elder and overseer. The family and marriage to be between one man and one woman, and the importance of the Great Commission. The BF&M includes Baptist distinctives: eternal security, autonomy of the church, soul competency, religious liberty. And the BF&M includes the importance of cooperation among our churches for the advance of the Gospel. The BF&M has guard rails narrow enough to do all of this, to hold us within biblical orthodoxy, to keep our Baptist distinctives, and at the same time, the BF&M is broad enough to allow us to have differences.

You cannot in one breath champion the autonomy of the church, and then in the very next breath say that all those churches must be exactly alike. Listen to me say this: we as Southern Baptists should not try to seek uniformity. We, instead, must seek unity around our commitment to the Word and the Great Commission.

Here's the thing. In the BF&M, you've got to believe in the Second Coming. Tonight, you may have separated yourselves. Some of you are historic pre-millennialists, and you're all dispensational, and you're all post-millennial. And guess what? There's room for all of that in the BF&M. But what we must agree on is that Jesus is coming back bodily to make all things new. We've got to believe in that, right?

Hey, listen, there's room in the SBC about soteriology. There's a center aisle in this church. For all I know, all of you have divided yourselves tonight, and over here (He pointed to the right), you are reformed in your soteriology, and you are not reformed in your soteriology over here (He pointed left). Guess what? There's room for that in the BF&M. What we must agree on is that Jesus Christ died on a cross and gave His life and shed His blood for the remission of our sin, and that only through faith and the person and work of Jesus, and not ourselves, are we ever right with God, and have salvation and eternal life. That's the beauty of the BF&M.

So, 100 years ago, our forebears wanted a confession of faith and not a creed that would draw the circle so small that we would all have to embrace this uniformity and thus violate liberty of conscience and church autonomy. Rather, they sought for us to have unity in the non-negotiable doctrines of our faith, and that despite our differences on secondary or tertiary matters, there exists a strong willingness to cooperate for the greater advancement of the Gospel. As we look back on our history, may we be thankful for our confession of faith and what it does to hold us in obedience to the Word, just as Joshua sought for his people.

The final thing that I want us to see from Joshua is this passion for the mission. As we look at verses 12 and 13, even though the nations are being pushed back for Israel to possess the land, the plan was always that through the faithfulness of Israel, God wanted the pagan nations to know that He alone was God. God's covenant

with Abraham established that *“all peoples on Earth will be blessed through you”*. Solomon in First Kings proclaimed at the dedication of the temple that one of the results of the worship there would be that *“All the peoples of the Earth may know Your name and fear You, as do your people, Israel.”* Isaiah, the prophet, described Israel as a covenant for the people and the light for the Gentiles, and that God’s salvation would reach to the ends of the Earth.

Many would argue that the mission of God’s people in the Old Testament is what theologians call centripetal, that people came to them, as opposed to the mission of the church in the New Testament, which is centrifugal: we go to the people. But regardless of your view on that, God’s people have always been placed on mission by God to point the nations to Him. The references to the nations in Joshua’s speech are a reminder of the mission of God’s people. In verse 12, Joshua warns them that they cannot turn back to the ways of the world if they do not hold to obedience to the Word and neglect their mission. Then he says in verse 13 that the power of God will abandon them, and how true that is for us today. We will fail to see God working in and through us for His Kingdom if we neglect the Word of God and our mission.

Again, as Joshua does, we want to look back at our history, and this is important. Just as the BF&M helps us remain faithful in biblical orthodoxy, those who came before us helped us remain faithful to the mission through something they called the Cooperative Program (CP). At the onset of the 20th Century in America, many Christians held the millennial view of postmillennialism. They saw the world as becoming a better place. But World War I ended the popularity of that view at the time. We saw the evil and depravity in the world that would senselessly send millions of men to their deaths and cause millions more intense suffering.

So, in 1919, after the war ended, the SBC sensed a renewal for the need to carry out the Great Commission to a world in such obvious need of the Gospel. Our forebears, principally George Sherrord and Lee Scarborough, came up with something called the 75 Million Campaign. This campaign in 1919 asked SBC churches to make a five-year pledge that they hoped would equal \$75 million.

Prior to 1919, missions funding in the SBC was principally done through what is called societal mission funding. Mission societies or groups helped fund missionaries overseas. Missionaries had to leave the field and return to the U.S. to speak at churches and societies to raise money. Eventually, these societies and missionaries wanting to remain on the field and not have to spend time raising money began to hire professional fundraisers.

Now, here are the problems with professional fundraisers. It’s twofold. One, those fundraisers kept about 20 percent of the money they collected for themselves, and two, they only went to the largest churches that could give the most money. So, in this paradigm of

mission funding, the smaller in attendance church was left out, and not all of the money raised went to the mission field.

So, the 75 Million Campaign, which will be known in Southern Baptist history as perhaps our greatest successful failure, was launched. The churches pledged not \$75 million. They pledged \$92 million, way more than the 75. That was awesome. They were excited in 1919, but at the end of the five years in 1924 they only collected \$58 million. But here's the thing, that \$58 million was almost the same amount that the SBC had collected for missions in its 74-year history. We collected the same money in five years through this system as we did in 74 years.

Our forebears knew then they were onto something, and so M.E. Dodd helped orchestrate the adoption of the CP in 1925. Instead of asking churches to make pledges, they asked churches to contribute a percentage of their undesignated receipts into a common pool called the CP. Now, instead of a professional fundraiser, the fundraiser was the local church.

The genius of the CP is that it allows every church, on the basis of percentage, to play a significant part in funding missions. I look across this crowd, I see some pastors of smaller-in-attendance churches. I see some pastors of larger attendance churches. Some of our smaller-in-attendance churches may give 8 percent to the CP, and the total amount might be \$2,000. I see some larger churches represented here, and maybe they give 8 percent and the total dollar amount is \$200,000. But here's the genius of the CP: \$2,000 from this church and \$200,000 from this church, is still 8 percent. And the genius of the CP is that it puts all our churches on the same level ground in terms of sacrifice and generosity. We need to learn what our forebears learned, and we are fools if we cut out our smaller-in-attendance churches from the missions enterprise.

What a powerful tool the CP has become to help us advance the Gospel. Ready for some numbers? This is amazing. Since 1925, more than \$20 billion, that's with a B, have been given through the CP. Oklahoma Baptists in our history have been responsible for more than \$1 billion of that \$20 billion. Since 1925, the International Mission Board (IMB) has commissioned more than 25,000 missionaries in 185 countries. One small SBC church could not afford to fund a family on the mission field. But add that small-in-attendance church to 1,700 other Oklahoma Baptist churches and almost 48,000 Southern Baptist churches in the country. And what do we have right now? We have more than 3,500 missionaries on the field, fully funded, with the IMB plus their 3,000 children sharing the Gospel in some of the hardest to reach, most difficult places in 185 countries.

There are countless numbers of students who have been trained in our six seminaries for work in the church, in the mission field.

Churches are being planted. Chaplains are being commissioned through the North American Mission Board (NAMB). At home, the CP is supporting Falls Creek and CrossTimbers. On those two campuses, just this past summer, more than 3,000 students and children committed their lives to follow Christ. Right now, the CP is helping fund 39 Baptist Collegiate Ministries (BCM) in Oklahoma, disaster relief, Oklahoma Baptist University (OBU), Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC), Baptist Village Communities (BVC), WatersEdge and much more.

Listen, we could not do what we do for the Kingdom of God on this scale without the cooperation of every one of our local churches giving and serving together. We do more together than we do apart. The CP really is the one thing we do that affects all that we do.

I want you to just look across the room with me for a moment. If you've ever served with the IMB, would you please stand? Thank you for your service. If you've ever attended one of the six Southern Baptist seminaries, would you stand? Keep standing. Keep standing. If you stood, keep standing and hold your applause, if you would. If you've ever attended OBU, stand. If you're a disaster relief or a Campers on Mission volunteer, stand. If you've ever attended a BCM, stand. If you've ever been a part of a Send Oklahoma church plant, stand. If you or a loved one has ever lived on a BVC campus or been served by its ministry, stand. If you or a loved one who ever lived on an OBHC campus or been served by its ministry, stand. If your church has ever had a loan from WatersEdge or been served by its ministry accounting service or estate planning, would you stand? If you've ever attended the Haskins School, stand. And I guess this is going to get all the rest of us. If you've ever attended Falls Creek or CrossTimbers, stand.

Would you look around the room? I want you to stand one more time. And here's what I want you to think about: how many of you could have stood multiple times? This is the impact of the CP.

Yes, we have differences. Yes, we're facing challenges right now in the convention, in the SBC, that need to be addressed. They need to be worked out. Yes. But I'm telling you Oklahoma Baptists, we cannot let these things hinder or distract us from our cooperation. There is too much at stake. There are 6,500 people on the mission field right now that are counting on us to get our act together and keep them funded to proclaim the Gospel to the nations. There are pastors, there are churches, students that are depending on the CP, and most of all, there are countless lost people in our communities and the world that are waiting to hear the Gospel of Jesus that may well be brought to them through someone because of the CP. I pray we will see the value and the importance of the CP. I pray if the Lord delays His return that the CP will still be allowing churches to be involved in global missions and ministry 100 years from now.

So let me close. As the Christmas season approaches, many of us will again watch one of our favorite Christmas movies, "It's a Wonderful Life." Now, as a history nerd, I kind of like "It's a Wonderful Life" because it's based on something called counterfactual history. Now counterfactual history, that almost sounds like you're trying to revise history. But, that's not really what it's doing. Counterfactual history asks the question, what if something didn't happen in history, or if it happened differently, what would the world be like today? Well, that's "It's a Wonderful Life." It explores the community of Bedford Falls and the lives of its inhabitants. What would it have been like had George Bailey never been born? Counterfactuals are fun. They're not academic.

So, "It's a Wonderful Life" is about counterfactual history. Now I want you to think about this. There have been books written on counterfactual history. I want you to think about some of these, and about the impact if one of these would have gone differently. What if the rowers under the command of Themistocles had not prevailed against the Persians at Salamis? If the Greeks lose that battle and the Persians conquer Greece as they would have, then Western society and culture would almost certainly not exist in the way we know it today. What if Charles Martel doesn't defeat the Moors at the Battle of Tours in modern day Spain in 732 A.D.? If he doesn't win that battle, all of Europe is conquered by adherents of Islam, changing the cultural and religious landscape of the continent and greatly impacting the course of world history.

A little closer to our time and home. What if U.S. naval aviator Wade McClusky doesn't follow his instincts and decide to expand his search for the Japanese fleet at the Battle of Midway in 1942? Just at the threshold of reaching a point on fuel where they had to turn back, McCluskey spotted four Japanese carriers, all with planes being fueled and armed on the decks. He led his 33 dive bombers to attack the carriers, winning the Battle of Midway. If the U.S. loses Midway, we have no aircraft carriers. Hawaii and maybe even the West Coast of the U.S. are open to Japanese invasion and U.S. involvement in the European Theater would have been greatly changed.

Now, all that's interesting, but let me close by asking you this question. What if we never had the *Baptist Faith and Message*? What if our forebears didn't respond to the threat of modernism when and how they did? Where would we as a convention be theologically? What if the Cooperative Program had never been formed? How many millions might possibly have never heard the Gospel? How many churches may have been left out? Where would our seminaries be today? How would the gospel impact of our churches through the convention be diminished? And how would you be affected today if there had never been a Cooperative Program?

2025 awards presented at annual meeting



The family of women's ministry leader Willa Ruth Garlow accepts an Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame certificate in her honor.



Bethel Acres, Blackburn Chapel representatives accept the Gaskin Church History Award.

2025 Awards



The family of Debbie Lipscomb accepts an Oklahoma Baptist Hall of Fame certificate in her honor.



Walter Mullican's family surrounds him as he holds the Distinguished Service Award.

'Hard to get there; impossible to leave'

9-11 Attacks Anniversary Evokes Memories of Oklahoma Response

Baptist Messenger Managing Editor Bob Nigh was among six Oklahomans who were essentially the first SBC volunteers to travel to New York City after the Sept. 11, 2001 terrorist attacks. As the 25th anniversary of that tragic episode in American history approaches, what follows is an edited version of his Sept. 27, 2001 article in the *Messenger* which chronicled the group's trip to Ground Zero.

God paved the way for the group's experience, even enlisting a "providential gatekeeper" to allow the Oklahomans direct access to what was to become known as Ground Zero in Manhattan.

Making their way to the south toward Ground Zero from their hotel in New York on foot, the chaplains encountered hundreds of bewildered New Yorkers who were virtually lost amid the towering skyscrapers as their old, familiar landmarks—the twin 110-story World Trade Center (WTC) towers—no longer were visible in the Manhattan skyline. The chaplains edged closer to the site of the terrorist attack and eventually walked up to the first checkpoint at the extreme edge of the perimeter which had been established by NYC emergency officials.

Each of the chaplains wore their official OSBDR ID badges dangling from a yellow lanyard around their necks—with the exception of Oklahoma City police chaplain Jack Poe, who had donned his blue uniform and OKCPD ID and helmet—and wore distinctive white hard hats with the SBC disaster relief logo displayed on each side. Familiar yellow DR wind-breaker jackets completed their outfits.

It began to look like Disaster Relief Director Sam Porter and the others were going to have to abandon their mission to get to Ground Zero when a New York City police lieutenant inside the perimeter gate came up to them as they peered through the chain link fence which cordoned off the street and he greeted them after seeing their "chaplain" hard hats.

"Are you guys tired? Do you need to get some rest?" the officer asked.

After doing double takes at each other, Porter finally said,

“No sir. We’re just now getting here and hope to be able to minister to first responders and others at the site.”

“You’re not hearing me,” the lieutenant said firmly. “You guys look like you can use some rest. I’ve got some cots inside a nearby school where you can take a break.”

The officer’s message finally connected with the group, and after motioning for the group to follow him through the checkpoint, the officer led them inside the school building, pointed out the cots in a room, and said, “OK. Now that you’re inside the perimeter, head south and go to work.”

Over the next two weeks, the Oklahoma group never encountered that officer again as they walked to Ground Zero each day and went through the strata of checkpoints again and again.

Groups in charge of accessing the WTC site seemed to change day-by-day, and Porter was kept busy securing newly



BGCO DR Director Sam Porter, right, and fellow chaplain Paul Bettis visit with U.S. Marshalls at Ground Zero in New York.

required ID badges for his compatriots from each level of bureaucracy, including the New York Mayor’s Office of Emergency Management, and the national Federal Emergency Management Agency. Later, another ID badge was necessary from the Salvation Army Emergency Disaster Ser-

vices, which set up a huge kitchen near Ground Zero.

Nigh’s first person account follows:

“We thought it was difficult getting here, but once we finally reached the Financial District at the southernmost tip of Manhattan after a three-day blur of on-again, off-again, hurry up-and-wait preparations for the 1,500-mile journey from Oklahoma City to York City, we found it virtually impossible to leave.

“It wasn’t that we couldn’t snake our way through the five blocks or so north of what just days earlier had been the

'financial heartbeat' of the country to the innermost checkpoint at Chambers St., our hearts simply wouldn't permit it. What began as a 'ministry of presence' just four days after the World Trade Center's Twin Towers toppled, quickly turned into 16-hour, 18-hour, and on more than one occasion for two of our team, 26-hour shifts, although we weren't doing more than anyone else.

"We took on a duty none of us really cherished—providing prayer support in the temporary morgue. It was a duty, nevertheless, that none of us was readily willing to surrender, either.

"The north entry to the World Financial Plaza on Vesey St., a portal normally traveled by shoppers, tourists and business-people, had been turned into a causeway used by firefighters, police officers and an army of other rescue and recovery workers to make their way south and east to "the pile," a mountain of 1.2 million tons of debris left behind when the towers collapsed. Pedestrian traffic flow was continuous as platoons of men and women marched in long rows either in or out.

"These going in walked with a spring in their step, many of them carrying shovels, sledgehammers or ropes, their faces full of anticipation and hope; those coming out walked a bit more wearily, their shoulders stooped and aching from the long hours of either digging and clawing through rubble, or from standing in "bucket brigades," helping to remove the debris under which thousands of people were buried. Their haggard faces were drenched in sweat, their clothing coated by the ubiquitous cloud of dust that covered everything.

"A few feet away stood our duty station, a small area screened from public view by white plastic tarp walls. The temporary morgue was a private place of honor and respect. Each black body bag carrying the remains of someone who had died was accompanied either by either firefighters or law enforcement officers. Identified firefighters often were escorted by an entourage of members of the company with whom the victim served.

"As we made our way up Vesey St., Friday morning and afternoon, Sept. 14, we shook hands with hugged, or chatted with some of the multitudes of rescuers. Many times, we'd be talking to someone when another person would pass us by and give us a pat on the back, saying 'thanks for coming' as they made their way towards the perimeter.

“We reached the temporary morgue and encountered a catholic priest from Washington, D.C. who had been serving there since the day of the terrorist attack. He needed to return to Washington and was seeking someone to take over the detail.

“BGC0 DR director Sam Porter volunteered to organize the available chaplains on site and establish a schedule. Eight-hour shifts were set up, with either a Catholic, Episcopalian or Greek Orthodox priest paired with a Southern Baptist partner. Two pairs were assigned to each shift; one duo served at the morgue, while the other went to the “pile” to minister to those who were recovering the bodies of victims. That schedule remained in place for the bulk of two days until chaplains from other states arrived to help.

“The mix was essential, considering that out of 14,000 New York City firefighters, about 85 percent were Roman Catholics.



BGC0 DR Director Sam Porter (Yellow Jacket) and Oklahoma City Police Chaplain Jack Poe, left, help organize chaplains at the temporary morgue near Ground Zero in New York City.

“The presence of six Southern Baptist chaplains from Oklahoma seemed to visibly lift the spirits of the men and women whose lives had been shattered beyond belief by the events of the previous four days. Their eyes often lit up when they

saw the word “Oklahoma” on our bright, yellow windbreaker jackets and hard hats. They reached out to us in gratitude as we did our best to try to provide a comforting or encouraging word. Many times, all we could do was utter the typical New York greeting, ‘How you doin’?’, followed by a nod or smile.

“Time after time, New Yorkers expressed gratitude to the Oklahomans for coming. They understood that many of us had been through what they were going through, albeit on a much smaller scale, when 168 people were killed when the

Alfred P. Murrah Federal Building in downtown Oklahoma City was destroyed by a truck bomb ignited by Timothy McVeigh on April 19, 1995. Many also remembered the 44 lives taken as a result of the tornadoes that swept across Oklahoma's midsection on May 3, 1999.

"Oklahoma City police chaplain Jack Poe and BGCO prison chaplaincy consultant Paul Bettis established an immediate rapport with police, firefighters and other law enforcement officials. Porter and Leslie Sias, BGCO chaplaincy specialist, teamed up to help cut through massive layers of bureaucratic red tape and to establish the chaplaincy ministry in the morgue area.

"Bearing the bulk of the load as team leader, Porter struggled to secure proper credentials for chaplains on hand, while Sias kept in touch with officials with the Southern Baptist Convention's North American Mission Board (NAMB) to keep them updated. A half-dozen or so additional Southern Baptist chaplains from Georgia and Texas, as well from the New York Association of the SBC, also waited for credentials, signified by a red identification tag hung on a lanyard worn around the neck that became the key to entering the surreal world into which the borough of Manhattan had been transformed.

"Each of us heard story after heart-breaking story. It was difficult to really comprehend the magnitude of what had happened just a few hundred yards away from the nation's premier symbol of freedom—the Statue of Liberty on nearby Liberty Island. The green icon with the torch of liberty lifted high often was shrouded or partially obscured by the clouds of smoke that still rose from "Ground Zero" almost a week after the two hijacked jetliners smashed into the twin towers.

"Leo,' a local resident who proved to be invaluable in cutting much of that red tape to secure credentials for the chaplains, talked about being at the doorway of the North Tower on his way to work at Merrill Lynch when the first jetliner hit. He immediately turned back and returned to the ferry he had just taken across the East River. He was dealing with survivor's guilt and the image of the faces of those he passed as they continued to make their way into the building, many, if not all, of them now deceased.

"A police officer offered a story of uncommon patriotism. He had searched frantically for a U.S. flag and finally spotted a small store. Outside the door, an obviously homeless man

sat against the wall, clutching a small American flag. The man asked the cop for a few bucks, and the cop, who only had a \$20 bill, said 'I'll see you when I come out,' thinking he would have some change after he purchased a flag in the store. When no flag was available inside, however; the cop stepped outside and offered the man the \$20 for his flag.

"The homeless man, who probably hadn't eaten for some time, said, 'This flag isn't for sale,' then looked up and added quietly as he offered the Stars and Stripes to the cop, 'But, I'll let you have it.' The cop, fighting back tears, nodded, took the flag and scurried on his way.

"A burly Brooklyn firefighter solemnly talked about his buddy of 15 years who had just been transferred to a Manhattan company, and who was among the several hundred firefighters missing. He also talked about another firefighter only two days away from retirement whose name also was listed among those missing.

"A teacher at the prestigious Peter Stuyvesant High School located only blocks from the World Trade Center asked for advice to help her students deal with the tragedy when they returned to school on Thursday. The 10-story school, which had been converted into an emergency supply center, served 3,000 students who felt the powerful shaking force of the towers' collapse as they sat in second hour classes on Sept. 11.

"As Poe and I talked with her, hungry emergency workers, national guard members, firefighters and police officers lined up for the hot meal being served in the school's second floor lobby. A few feet away, volunteer masseurs and masseuses provided neck and back massages free of charge.

"And back at Ground Zero, other hopeful rescuers continued their efforts to find survivors as workers in the nation's largest city attempted to return to their places of employment and tried to restore some sense of normalcy to their shattered lives.

"Meanwhile, the smoke continued to rise."

NECROLOGY

Jan. 1–Dec. 31, 2025

Barnett, Mary Jo died Aug. 2. She was the mother of Jennifer Barnett, chairperson of the Indian Falls Creek Board, and the widow of Bill Barnett, former NBGCO board member. They served together at Muskogee, First Indian. Later Mary Jo served alongside Bill at the Albuquerque Indian Mission in New Mexico.

Bates, Billy Michael died Dec. 1. He was pastor at Irving Church in Mullins Association.

Baugh, Ronnie died Sept. 3. He was known to the Conference Centers' staff as "Hollywood," serving as laundryman at Falls Creek for 10 years.

Brock, Patsy died June 20. She was the mother of Gayla White, executive director of Hope Pregnancy Center ministries.

Clark, Merlene died Aug. 24. She was the wife of Don Clark, longtime Oklahoma pastor and former DOM.

Dyer, Gerald died March 18. He pastored at Inola, Catoosa, Claremore and churches in Texas and Kansas. He served as DOM for Northeastern Association.

Dunning, Alan died Jan. 11. He was the father of Jeremy Dunning, Oklahoma Baptists' Information Technology Helpdesk Manager.

Fowler, Pat died Dec. 2. She was the mother of several Oklahoma pastors.

Frank, Tom died Dec. 2. He served as a bi-vocational pastor in Mannsville, Russet and Madill, Trinity Southern.

Gaches, Harold died June 19. He was senior pastor of Lawton, First West and the brother of Robert Gaches, pastor of Kellyville, Sunrise.

Hickman, Billy died April 29. He pastored churches in Tulsa, Holdenville, Francis, Arkoma, Lawton, Broken Arrow and Enid. He was the DOM for Sans Bois Association for 16 years and served as interim pastor for numerous churches in Oklahoma.

Hunt, Margaret died March 18. She was the mother of Rob Hunt, Falls Creek Hotel Manager.

Hunt, Randy died Sept. 21. He was the brother of Buddy Hunt, Oklahoma Baptists' Southeast Regional Ministry Partner.

Jacques, River Lee and **Faye Michelle** were stillborn March

March 20. They were the great-grandchildren of Kenny and Pat Jones, Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief and Chaplaincy ministry assistant.

Karch, Teressa died Nov. 20. She was the wife of Charles Karch, pastor of Arkoma, First.

Kellogg, Kent died March 24. He pastored seven churches across Kansas, Oklahoma and Texas, and was DOM for Muskogee Association.

Kellogg, Kent died March 24. He was the father of Robert Kellogg, CEO of WatersEdge Advisors/Ministry Services.

Kennedy, Carolyn died May 23. She was the mother of Kelly King, women's minister at Oklahoma City, Quail Springs and former Oklahoma Baptists' women's and missions ministry partner.

Kersey, Jerry died Feb. 22. He was a BGCO Brotherhood Associate.

Kirk, Jim Bob died April 28. He was MVP Pastor at Stigler, Antioch and former pastor at Whitefield.

Lam, Ted died Dec. 1. He was Language Mission Specialist and Director of Church Planting for the Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (BGCO). Following retirement, he served as an BGCO Outreach Team Consultant. He helped found the Tulsa International Church and was the first president of the Asian American National Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Lassiter, Richard died Feb. 4. He was a member of the Singing Churchmen of Oklahoma as a vocalist and trombonist and a volunteer with Oklahoma Baptist Disaster Relief, Oklahoma Baptist Builders, Union Baptist Association (UBA), Campers on Mission, and the Home Mission Board.

Lehew, Jimmy died July 31. He was Director of the Baptist Student Unions (BSU) at Murray State College in Tishomingo, and Cameron University in Lawton. He was pastor and interim pastor for several churches throughout the Lawton area. Each summer, he could be found at Falls Creek Baptist Assembly in Davis, where he led the Safety Patrol.

Maness, Trent died Nov. 27. He was pastor of Ravia Church.

Neal, Matt Bradley died Sept. 2. He was pastor of Sulphur, Love for nine years and, most recently, pastor of Fort Cobb, First.

Parker, Kerry died Sept. 7. She was the wife of Manny Parker, pastor of Mannford, New Hope.

Powell, Kerry died Aug. 10 and his wife, **Carolyn**, died Aug. 20. They were the parents of Jamie Powell, DOM/AMS for Comanche-Cotton association.

Roberts, Frances Marie died Jan. 16. She and her husband, Will J. Roberts, were appointed missionaries with the IMB in 1962 and served in eastern Africa for 38 years before retiring and Will then served as pastor of Willow Church.

Ross, Robert L. (Bob) died May 31. He served for 22 years as pastor of Baptist churches in Oklahoma and Texas, including Round Grove, Ponca City, Panola, Wilburton, Greenwood, Weatherford, Texas; San Antonio, Drumwright and Oklahoma City, Knob Hill. In 1977 he joined the staff of the Baptist Foundation of Oklahoma (BFO) as vice president of communications. He later was elected BFO president in 1986, serving there until retirement in 2022. He also served on the BGCO board of directors; the board of trustees for OBU; the SBC Foundation and Association of Baptist Foundation Executives. He authored the definitive history of Oklahoma Baptists, *The Two Became One* in 2006.

Salamy, Phyllis died Oct. 10. She was the Executive Assistant to the president of Oklahoma Baptist Homes for Children (OBHC).

Selby, Billye died April 12. She was the mother of Brett Selby, Oklahoma Baptists' regional ministry partner.

Shomo, Stanley died Dec. 5. He was pastor of Durwood Church.

Springwater, Clifford died Oct. 11. He was pastor of Ponca City, New Faith.

Story, Rick died April 1. He was the father of Leslie Osborn, Oklahoma Baptists' Chief Financial officer.

Tompkins, Mike died Jan. 24. He was DOM for Comanche-Cotton Association and pastored at El Reno, Southern Heights; Leedy, First; Oklahoma City, Knob Hill and Fletcher.

Weast, Patricia died Aug. 3. She and her husband, Forest, served with the SBC Home Mission Board (HMB) in Pennsylvania, Virginia and Maryland before returning to Oklahoma to serve several churches across the state.

White, Ben died Aug. 29 and his wife, **Susan**, died Aug. 31. Ben served on the Baptist Village Communities (BVC) Board for many years and then as an advisor to the Board.

Williams, David died March 29. He was the father of Richard Williams, Oklahoma Baptists' Maintenance Assistant.