

“For what is your life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away.”

— James 4:14 (KJV)

# M BAPTIST Message

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Volume 131 • Issue No. 2

www.baptistmessage.com

January 28, 2016

# Graham: ‘Only God can fix our country’

## Decision America rally in Baton Rouge draws 4,200

BY MARK H. HUNTER  
Regional Reporter

BATON ROUGE - The day after President Barack Obama delivered his last State of the Union speech, evangelist Franklin Graham declared, “the state of the union is broken.”

Graham spoke to an estimated 4,000 Louisianans in the capital city’s downtown N. Blvd. Town Square Park, as part of his ambitious 50-state “Decision America Tour” calling the nation back to biblical values, encouraging Christians to stand firm for their faith and to get involved in the political process.

“We’re here today because we see that our nation is in trouble - that’s the state of the union,” Graham declared as the crowd agreed – many waving miniature U.S. flags.

“We are in trouble spiritually, racially, economically and we’re in trouble politically,” Graham said. “No political party is going to be able to turn this thing around – only God can fix it.”

“I have zero hope in the Democratic Party,” he said to more cheers, adding, “but before you Republicans start high-fiving each other – I have zero hope in the Republican Party – or any other political party. The only hope for our nation is the Almighty God.”

Graham described how Nehemiah and the Jewish remnant rebuilt Jerusalem’s walls –

See **GRAHAM** on 9



The audience of 4,200 was asked to pray three times by Franklin Graham during the rally.

*“We are in trouble spiritually, racially, economically and we’re in trouble politically. No political party is going to be able to turn this thing around – only God can fix it.”*

Franklin Graham  
Decision America Tour  
Baton Rouge Rally



Franklin Graham told people to “fervently pray” for America at Baton Rouge rally.



Mark H. Hunter photos

A crowd of 4,200 heard Franklin Graham declare “the state of the union is broken” during his “Decision America Tour” stop in N. Blvd. Town Square in downtown Baton Rouge on Jan. 13. He exhorted the audience to “fervently pray for America.”

Bobby Kranz (right) baptizes Evelyn Rugg in a horse trough. Since Kranz became pastor of Mt Ararat Baptist Church in Downsville, 20 people have been baptized, including eight on one Sunday.

Kathy Antley  
Photo



## New life for church translates into more lives for Christ

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

DOWNSVILLE – In early 2015, Bobby Kranz was brokenhearted.

Facing personal setbacks in his own life, the long-time pastor was searching for God’s direction and wondering if he would preach again,

so he prayed for direction.

God answered those prayers and led him to a church seeking a pastor who would join them as they headed down the path in search of brighter days.

When he became pastor of Mt. Ararat Baptist Church in

See **MT. ARARAT** on 5

### INSIDE

- Cenla Life March ..... 2
- Insight&Perspective ..... 4
- Mardi Gras Outreach ..... 8
- FYI/Notables ..... 11
- Kaleidoscope Preview ..... 3
- Religious Liberty ..... 7
- Classifieds ..... 10
- NOLA Mission Labs ..... 12

# Inaugural Cenla Life March to declare 'life is priceless'

By BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA/PINEVILLE –The inaugural Louisiana Life March in Central Louisiana will be held Jan. 30, and organizers say it has been a long time in the making.

The procession will begin on the Louisiana College campus and continue through Pineville on Main Street before crossing over the Red River at the Jackson Street Bridge to end at the Alexandria Riverfront Amphitheater.

Other Louisiana Life

Marches have taken place in Baton Rouge and Shreveport, most recently simultaneously on Jan. 23, but this is the first time such an event will be held in the central part of the state.

"I'm very excited and amazed at the strong response we have received so far from people throughout central Louisiana," said Ryan Verret, associate director of Louisiana Right to Life. "It has been our desire for quite a while to bring together the pro-life community of this part of the state as well as create a unified voice working together to end the great injustice of abortion that was imposed upon Louisiana women and unborn children in 1973.

"We are preparing for a historic event for our state with the Life March from Pineville to Alexandria on Saturday, Jan. 30," he continued. "We hope everyone who

can make it will please join us in prayer and solidarity as we continue our March to place abortion in the history books of Louisiana."

Preliminary events will begin at 9:30 a.m. with the actual walk beginning at 10 a.m.

Marchers will complete the 1.6 mile walk at noon and have the opportunity to hear pro-life supporters from various denominations and organizers speak, including Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Director David Hankins.

"Unfortunately, it's not breaking news that life in the womb is not valued in our nation," Hankins said. "Legalized abortion has been the law of the land for decades. But when we may have thought the abortion industry could not become more grisly and calloused, we've learned about the selling of baby parts through Planned Parenthood and others.

"It is heartbreaking to know so many view unborn babies as a commodity to be sold rather than a life to be cherished," he said. "Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to continue to speak, to organize, to pray, and to minister until our culture sees life in the womb as sacred."

LC President Rick Brewer, who will speak to the crowd at the start of the event, said the Life March represents a walk of faith.

"Our country and our college were founded upon the truths of the Judeo-Christian ethic," Brewer said. "Similarly, the Louisiana College curricula are reflective of a Christian worldview; it is the fabric of who we are and what we teach.

"This Christian worldview embraces and propounds the truths of God's Holy Word, which teach us that all life is God-given and is therefore sanctified and sacred," he continued. "Science increasingly confirms what Christians believe, and that is life – human life, and not mere nameless protoplasm – begins at conception. This is what we believe. This is what we teach. And this is what we will continue to stand for."

See CENLA on 4



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Fax: 318-445-8328  
editor@baptistmessage.com  
PO Box 311  
Alexandria LA 71309  
www.baptistmessage.com

(USPS 042-860) (ISSN 0740-2104)

Published biweekly Thursdays by the Louisiana Baptist Message, 1250 MacArthur Drive, Alexandria, Louisiana 71303.

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Two weeks before change is desired, send new address (with zip code and street address) and mailing label from this copy of the *Louisiana Baptist Message*. Periodicals postage paid in Alexandria, Louisiana, and additional mailing offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Baptist Message, 1250 MacArthur Drive, PO Box 311, Alexandria LA 71309-0311

Volume 131 January 28, 2016 Number 2

# Women's conference offers a 'Kaleidoscope' of family helps

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

PINEVILLE – Several major life experiences have shaped the character of Debbie Stuart but perhaps none has been more impactful than her own prodigal son's wanderings. In October 2010, Stuart was on staff at Prestonwood Baptist Church in Plano, Texas, when her son Jarrad was arrested at the age of 27.

"That journey was the most painful season of our lives and led us to unexpected places with the Lord and taught us about obedience, forgiveness, deliverance and a few other very important lessons about life and ministry," she said. Stuart will share the rest of her story – relating it to Paul's shipwreck experience reported in Acts 27 – during the Kaleidoscope conference on Feb. 6 at First Baptist Church, Pineville.

"In this passage we will discover a few reasons why the Lord allows shipwrecks especially in the lives of people who are trying to be faithful and obedient," Stuart said. "We will learn how to have a

successful shipwreck as well as what to do when the Lord takes us to unexpected places for unknown reasons."

The overall theme for the event is "Delight," based on Psalm 119:174 and organizers are expecting 300 women to attend.

A Shreveport native, Stuart served on staff at Willow Point Baptist Church from 1994 to 2003. She is excited to return to Louisiana and senses God is moving in the lives of women in the state.

"He has given me an important message of encouragement from Acts 27 that I believe will be personally helpful and spiritually enriching," said Stuart, recently named director of ministry initiatives at Hope for the Heart ministries in Dallas, Texas. "It is my utmost desire to speak truth into their lives and champion their faith."

Nearly 300 women are expected to attend the annual Kaleidoscope conference at First Baptist Church in Pineville. The theme of the conference is Delight, based off the verse Psalm 119:174.

Stuart will speak during the opening and closing sessions of the conference, which runs from 9 am to 3:15 pm. Laura Meadows, who serves on the women's ministry team at Prestonwood Baptist Church, will lead music for the event.



Debbie Stuart

Breakout sessions will be offered between the main sessions with topics on how to strengthen your walk with God through time in His Word; how to engage multiple generations of women in the church; and how to minister to women during times of crisis.

Lunch will be offered as well.

"The breakout conferences are planned to meet a woman's spiritual needs, personal growth, her family and how we work as women in our church," said Janie Wise, women's missions and ministries strategist for Louisiana Baptists. "This is for the woman, not just the leader."

Wise said while spiritual enrichment will be at the forefront of Kaleidoscope, the pos-

sibility and hope of someone accepting Christ can happen, which happened during last year's conference. She encourages all women planning to attend to bring others along.

"We always want to give an opportunity not just for strengthening our discipleship, but for others come to know the Lord," Wise said. "Don't come alone; bring someone with you. Bring your friends, both saved and unsaved. Bring your friends who have difficul-

ties and are facing challenges.

"This is truly for every woman in our churches," she continued. "We want women to take time away, even for just one day, to be refreshed, to be redirected and to follow Christ and seek His leadership in all they do."

After that, the cost increases to \$40. The final day to register is Jan. 29.

For more information and to register, go to <https://louisianabaptists.org/event/kaleidoscope/>



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with Dr. Rick Brewer  
President  
Louisiana College

*January*

- 17 - FBC Delhi, w/VOICES of LC
- 20 - FBC Houma, Inside/Out
- 24 - Parkview BC, Baton Rouge, w/VOICES of LC
- 30 - Speaker, Right to Life March

*February*

- 8 - FBC Ruston, Senior Adults  
"Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs"
- 14 - FBC Lacompte, w/VOICES of LC
- 20 - CEC Seminar, Calvary BC Alexandria
- 21 - Esler BC, Pineville, w/VOICES of LC
- 25 - FBC Haughton, 11 a.m. Senior Adults  
"Psalms, Hymns & Spiritual Songs"
- 25 - Kingsville BC, 6 p.m.

*March*

- 9 - Sale Street BC, Lake Charles, Inside/Out
- 13 - Fairview BC, Coushatta, w/VOICES of LC
- 20 - Christian Challenge, Pineville

*April*

- 10 - Pilgrim Rest BC, Eunice, w/VOICES of LC
- 14 - Speaker, LASCP Conference
- 17 - FBC Haughton, w/VOICES of LC
- 25-26 - Speaker, Dry Creek Baptist Camp



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# Louisiana Baptists are pro-life from the womb through eternity!

BY WILL HALL  
Message Editor

ALEXANDRIA – Louisiana Baptists are strongly pro-life!

Moreover, we care about the individual in the womb but also throughout all stages and circumstances of life—and this second point is important.

Too often during January, Sanctity of Life Month, the pro-abortion crowd tries to mischaracterize Christians as only caring about the life in the womb but not after it is born—and nothing could be further from the truth.

Louisiana Baptists' Mobile Pregnancy Care Center (Children's Home and Family Ministries) provided services to more than 1,100 women last year and even helped place several of the expectant mothers in foster maternity homes. But our care about human life did not stop there.

Louisiana Baptists also provided:

- residential ministry to 219 children and family members (Children's Home and Family Ministries);

- foster care services for 85 children and adoption assistance to 21 couples (Children's Home and Family Ministries);

- professional Christian counseling to nearly 1,800 individuals (Granberry Counsel-

ing Centers); and,

- life and job skills to 52 women (Christian Women's Job Corps).

Additionally, our international orphan care ministry Orphan Embrace touched the lives of 1,900 children in Nicaragua, Guatemala and Haiti, last year.

In fact, we are embarking on the construction of a ministry center in Haiti (a joint project among the individual congregations, Children's Home and Family Ministries and the Louisiana Baptist Convention) that will include orphan care and medical services, and, serve as a church planting hub.

A sign of things to come in Haiti was revealed this summer when a 43-member team representing 18 LBC churches ministered in the city of Croix-des-Bouquets and the rural area of Canaan. During the seven-day trip, more than 800 men, women and children received medical care, 16 families received safe drinking water systems—and 181 people professed Christ and were connected with local churches.

In all, Louisiana Baptists touched the lives of 4,900 children, families and individuals through these com-

passion ministries.

Louisiana Baptists support one of the largest prison ministries in the country.

At the Louisiana State Penitentiary in Angola, we have a four-year college program through the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary that has graduated about 250 inmates since 1995. Once known as the bloodiest prison in Louisiana, officials say in the two decades since implementation of the program violent incidents have

dropped by 80 percent. This ministry also is credited with reducing the rate of recidivism – criminal behavior that lands someone back in prison – among those who are released.

Louisiana Baptists also partner with Southern Baptists from other states for a number of compassion ministries that allow us to have a presence not just in Louisiana but across the nation and around the world.

Our churches contribute to hunger relief funds which are distributed to projects here in Louisiana (20 percent), the United States (20 percent) and abroad (60 percent).

Our funds for the nation

and overseas are combined with contributions from other Southern Baptist congregations. In 2014, that meant 250,000 persons overseas received food either as part of community development projects or disaster relief efforts. Meanwhile, in North America, \$1 million was distributed to more than 1,000 hunger ministries—providing 4.5 million meals.

In fact, since 1974, Southern Baptists together have contributed more than a quarter of a billion dollars to fight world hunger.

Louisiana Baptist disaster relief teams are active in our state but are also part of a larger Southern Baptist organization that counts 90,000 trained volunteers and 2,000 mobile units (chainsaw, mud-out, command, communication, child care, shower, laundry, water purification, repair/rebuild, generators, and others) among the resources contributed by state conventions, local associations and individual congregations. Together, we compose the third largest disaster relief organization in the United States, and we provide much of the volunteer labor to the Red Cross and Salvation Army (the largest and second largest U.S.-based disaster relief entities).

Notably, during Hurricane Katrina relief operations, the

Red Cross credited Southern Baptists with serving 90 percent of meals provided at Red Cross sites.

For that matter, our Christian Women's Job Corps program is part of a larger effort coordinated by the Woman's Missionary Union which was cited by both Al Gore and George W. Bush as the best of its type in lifting women out of government dependency and helping them become self-supporting wage-earners.

Finally, Louisiana Baptists also participate in World Changers, a Southern Baptist ministry that since 1990 has rehabilitated more than 15,000 homes, mostly in inner cities, and unlike Habitat for Humanity, at no cost to the home owner.

Importantly, we minister in these many different ways with no strings attached.

Still, when we offer to a person a loaf of bread or a cool drink of water, we also take the time to present Christ as the Living Bread and the Living Water, sometimes by simply saying, "Jesus loves you."

So, the next time a pro-abortion activist tries to condemn you for your pro-life beliefs, be sure to let him or her know Louisiana Baptists are passionate about protecting the unborn.

However, also make sure he or she understands we are pro-life about the individual from the womb through eternity.



DR. WILL HALL  
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## Cenla from page 2

The Louisiana Life March is a chance for different denominations, ages and ethnic and racial backgrounds to march together and pray to declare their opposition to the Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade decision that legalized abortion in 1973. The theme for this year's march is "Life Is Priceless."

According to the Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals, preliminary numbers for the state in 2013 (latest data available) showed that 10,211 abortions were performed, an average of 28 abortions per day. This was an increase from 9,976 abortions in 2012, continuing a trend from 2011 (9,225) and 2010 (8,955).

For more information on the Louisiana Life March, visit [LALifeMarch.com](http://LALifeMarch.com) or call 866.463.5433.

# Mt. Ararat from page one

Downsville, March 2015, attendance for Sunday morning worship was around 30. Today, the congregation regularly has 100 in worship and has baptized 20 people, including eight on one Sunday.

Kranz believes the growth is nothing he has done as pastor but rather a gift from the miraculous hand of God.

"If I had to boil it down to one word, it's brokenness," Kranz said. "This church was broken-hearted over strife. They realized if something didn't change, and quickly, the life of the church could be gone.

"I've been at a lot of churches and I've never seen anything like it," he continued. "It's all to the glory of God. It's not about me. It's about Him."

Early in his Christian life, he attended a church where Wayne Jenkins, now the Evangelism and Church Growth Director for Louisiana Baptists, served as pastor. There, Kranz learned about the value of fulfilling the Great Commission by reaching the lost.

He decided to apply the same principle at Mt. Ararat.

They began by distributing gift bags to those in the community and inside homes of guests who visited on a Sunday or Wednesday. Inside each bag were Gospel tracts, a New Testament, pens and a coffee cup with the church logo.

"Rather than sit and cry about the condition of the

church, we began going outside its walls," he said. "Everywhere we went, we gave people these bags. People began to come and God began



Members of Mt Ararat Baptist Church in Downsville used outreach gift bags like these to spread the love of Christ to their community. Inside each bag are a New Testament, coffee mug with the church logo, gospel tracts and a pen.

to save people."

### LIFE-CHANGING CHURCH

Two of those who accepted Christ and were baptized are Derek and Elizabeth Joy Littleton.

For 15 years, Derek and Elizabeth Joy lived in the same home together and had four children but were not married.

Their lives were transformed in August 2015, after receiving an invitation from long-time member C.C. Bayles to attend Mt. Ararat.

Derek and his wife Joy said that day during the worship service he first felt the presence of the Holy Spirit, and he

committed his heart and life to Christ.

Meanwhile, unknown to him, the Holy Spirit similarly presented Himself to Elizabeth Joy.

When the invitation was offered, Derek came forward and moments later, Elizabeth Joy, who had been listening to the service over the intercom in the nursery, walked into the worship center also to make a public re-dedication.

A few weeks later Derek and Elizabeth were two of eight people baptized on Sunday, and, they also were married.

"We didn't preplan it or talk about it before the service," Derek said. "We were both in separate rooms and felt drawn by God to come down the aisle. This church has shown me the right way to treat people and proves Christians can make an impact where they live."

Elizabeth Joy said she knew she and Derek needed Christ in their lives since the pair met in 2000.

"If it had not been for the church's persistence in reaching out to us and seeing the light of Christ shine through them, this may never have happened," she said. "I love them all with a passion I can't describe. I'm so grateful to have eternity to praise Him, because it will take an eternity to thank God for saving my family and leading us to Mt. Ararat."

C.C. Bayles, who along with his wife Sue issued the invitation to Joy Littleton during a visit at a local retail

store, said he has never seen a church change so much in just a short period of time.

"The Lord has allowed the Holy Spirit to energize us," said Bayles, a deacon at the church. "We don't want any credit but are giving all the glory to God. It thrills my soul to see God completely change a family like the Littletons, along with many more like them. It's unbelievable and thrills my soul to see God at work."

Even with the growth already experienced by Mt. Ararat, Kranz believes God is

not done with them, yet. He prays the congregation will continue to have a burden for the lost on their hearts.

"I knew all along what God was doing is a very unusual thing, particularly in a church our size," he said. "But there is just no limit to what He can do.

"That is why I want us to stay humble, broken and thankful," Kranz said. "I want us to continue to be burdened for the lost and the people who aren't in church. I know God will honor our efforts if we continue to do so."

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# IMB fires 30 as part of 'reset' after overspending \$210 million

By WILL HALL  
Message Editor

ALEXANDRIA – In a Jan. 14 press statement, the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention announced it was eliminating its Richmond Communications Center, firing 30 personnel and transferring another 10 to other positions.

The move comes as the IMB completes its release of 600-800 missionaries who

were asked either to take a Voluntary Retirement Incentive (offered to personnel 50 and older with five or more years of service) or be volunteers in a Hand Raising Opportunity which “offers missionaries and stateside staff members the opportunity to transition outside the IMB if they believe God is leading them to a new place of involvement in mission.”

IMB described the overall number of terminations in voluntary terms stating no mis-

sionaries were “required” to leave the mission field as part of its “two-phase reset.”

However, the fired Richmond staff members include career veterans who have deployed around the globe, including in dangerous restricted areas, in order to get the stories of Southern Baptists’ cooperative mission work overseas.

## SELF-INFLICTED

Moreover, the termination actions for all involved IMB personnel were dictated by a financial crisis IMB President David Platt described as its own doing.

“The challenge we’re addressing is that despite increased giving to the IMB over the last four years, for example, we have consistently spent more money than has been given to us each year,” Platt explained during a conference call Aug. 27.

“What we realized,” he said, “is as we got into the budgeting process this year – even since the SBC—that not only did we have that \$21 million shortfall in 2014, but we were also using global property sales to cover some of our expenses in 2014 that was to the tune of \$18 million.

“So when you add those two numbers together you real-



File photo

The International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention announced it was eliminating its Richmond Communications Center, firing 30 personnel and transferring another 10 to other positions.

ize in total, in 2014, we were spending \$39 million more than people were giving to us – and that was just one year,” he summarized.

Platt offered that IMB had been doing this “going back to 2010,” and the organization had covered the overspending by dipping into reserves as well as by selling global properties, adding “our organization has spent, combined, \$210 million more than people have given to us.”

An IMB spokesperson later told the *Baptist Message* the overspending was not a surprise to IMB leaders, just part of a deliberate process to draw down funding available in contingency reserves.

But she did not explain why the IMB overshot the goal – in an intentional drawdown – to the extent it was placed in a financial crisis requiring drastic

force cuts on the field and now the staff in Richmond.

## UNCERTAIN FUTURE

Unfortunately for the fired Richmond staff, it appears they will not receive pay or benefits after April 29, because they did not volunteer for the VRI, if they qualified. All of them are eligible for the HRO option, but the IMB has not released details of what this entails except to say it would be more than expected in “the scope of a normal resignation.”

It is not known whether IMB will institute a hiring freeze – not hire de facto replacements for the fired Richmond staff – after taking such drastic action against these 30 Southern Baptist workers.

During his August call with the media, Platt said the IMB would continue to hire 300 missionaries a year while terminating the relationship with 600-800 seasoned field missionaries.

The most recent statement said “IMB leaders have sought to guard the integrity of the process to avoid swaying IMB personnel as they make their decisions.

“Leaders indicated they strongly desire personnel to receive clarity from God regarding His leadership in their lives,” it further read.

According to the press release at least 600 field-experienced missionaries have been let go by IMB as a result of these two rounds of layoffs and the final numbers will be announced at the end of February.

## RELATED STORY:

Platt: IMB reducing workforce by 600-800, overspent \$210 million since 2010  
<http://baptistmessage.com/platt-imb-reducing-workforce-by-600-800-overspent-210-million-since-2010/>

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# Homosexual group targets Southern Baptist colleges & universities

By WILL HALL

Message Editor

ALEXANDRIA – The homosexual activist group Human Rights Campaign has targeted 23 institutions of higher learning with Southern Baptist ties in a report that also names 35 other colleges and universities with distinct Christian identities.

Released just before the 2015 Christmas season, the report, “Hidden Discrimination: Title IX Religious Exemptions Putting LGBT Students at Risk,” asks Obama Administration education officials to increase reporting requirements for these 58 schools because each was granted “exemptions of interest” relating to either “gender identity” or “sexual orientation” or both.

Unlike President Obama’s 2014 executive order on LGBT rights, affecting federal employees as well as contractors, which did not allow exemptions for religious organizations, the Title IX law does not apply to an educational institution “controlled by a religious organization” that has “contrary religious tenets.”

However, individual schools must apply for specific exemptions

and confirm they are either a divinity school or department, or, an educational institution that requires faculty, students and employees to be members of a specific religion, or, a college or university that essentially is an extension of a religious organization.

Christian schools have been forced into a position of requesting such exemptions because Title IX provisions – which were drafted in 1972, in general, to shield women from sexual harassment and give them equal access to education and athletic programs – have been expanded under President Obama beyond providing protections on the basis of biological sex (born male or female) to include behavior such as homosexuality and the mental self-concept of gender identity.

Now, any school receiving federal money must comply with these expanded rights, or in the case of faith-based organizations, request specific waivers with regard to admissions, housing, facilities, athletics, codes of conduct, employment, counseling, financial assistance and health insurance.

Although the HRC acknowledges

President Obama’s administration “has little discretion to deny requests by religiously affiliated colleges and universities” regarding Title IX exemptions, and, despite the fact each of these schools seek exemptions because of their well-known Christian beliefs, the activist group nonetheless asks the Department of Education to force each school to publicize:

- “the number of exemptions” it requested and received
- “the scope” of each exemption that was granted
- which Title IX provisions are not exempted

The HRC claims these actions would prevent LGBT students from finding themselves “enrolled at schools that are granted the legal right to discriminate against them partway through their degree program.”

The Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee lists 49 colleges and universities affiliated with, or otherwise partners of, Southern Baptists, not including seminaries, on [www.SBC.net](http://www.SBC.net), but only 23 have requested Title IX exemptions, according to the HRC report:

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# Mardi Gras outreach to offer the Good News in the city of good times

By BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

In just eleven days (Feb. 9), thousands of festival-goers will descend upon the state for Mardi Gras and Louisiana Baptists are working to make sure the message of Jesus is the highlight of their experiences of a parade, king cakes and beads.

Using different outreach methods, churches will be sharing the same Good News of Jesus Christ to those coming to the city for good times.

“Our city knows how to party, admittedly often for the wrong reasons, but we

see no better time to engage them with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” said Dean Ross, pastor of Restoration Church in Metairie.

For the third year, his congregation will host Restoration Fest -- a block party on Feb. 6 featuring food, games, inflatables and opportunities to share the Gospel.

Three churches are assisting in the effort: Broadmoor Baptist, Madison, Miss.; Agricola Baptist, Lucedale, Miss.; and Vaughn Forest, Montgomery, Ala.

Every year, Ross and others are able to use the event to share the Gospel with people

lining the parade route which runs near the church.

During Restoration Fest in 2015, volunteers engaged a neighborhood Muslim family waiting for the parade to begin.

“We offered them a time-before the parade came to our end of Veterans Boulevard--to come grab something to drink and eat while their kids played on inflatables,” he said. “We were able to pray for them, share the Gospel and give them information about our church while making balloon animals for their children. All tribes and tongues show up for Mardi Gras. What better way to fulfill the Great Commission.”

A team from HOPE Church in Metairie plans to blanket the neighborhood—knocking on doors and praying for the needs of those who answer, and leaving door knob hangers at homes where no one responds. During the parade, the team will wear HOPE Church shirts and will hand out Koozies with information about the church printed on them.

A mission team plans to canvas the neighborhood Feb. 5-10, but Pastor Matt Tipton said more volunteers are needed, as well as the funds



Message file photo

For the third year, Restoration Church in Metairie will host Restoration Fest, a block party featuring food, games, inflatables and opportunities for members of the church to share the Gospel. Two churches from Mississippi – Broadmoor Baptist in Madison and Agricola Baptist in Lucedale – along with Vaughn Forest Church in Montgomery, Ala. will assist in the effort. The Festival allows the church to share with others attending the parade whose route runs near the church.

to cover this effort. Help and money can be donated by calling him at 504.330.7246.

Metairie Church will focus its main outreach efforts on Fat Tuesday.

Volunteers from the congregation will serve breakfast to early risers hoping to grab a prime spot on the avenue. They also will host a community worship service.

Afterwards the team will offer hot and cold drinks to the public to warm up and use restrooms in its building, and share the Gospel.

Pastor Jared Stacy said not everyone they engage will visit Metairie Church but his

prayer is all of them will be impacted by the Gospel.

“At the end of the day,” Stacy said, “we’ll have had hundreds of conversations, and our facilities will be dirtied, and no financial profits will come out of the more than 1,000 cups of hot chocolate we serve.”

“But this isn’t a real cost in terms of life,” he said. “There will come a day where love costs more, so we often calibrate ourselves by saying, ‘you didn’t come to church today, you are the church.’”

“When Jesus’ people grasp the grace of their identity, they respond with a love that costs because the Gospel is worth it,” he continued. “This response makes the Gospel a symphony in the ears of their neighbors, which we pray leads to repentance and ultimately makes Jesus famous.”

Last year’s efforts still are making impressions on those in the community, according to Stacy.

In early January, he and a group leader in his church visited with a waitress at a local restaurant. When she learned they were from Metairie Church, she mentioned she had been blessed to drink some hot chocolate the church gave out during the 2015 parade.

“She hasn’t visited Metairie Church in the past year, but I think this was a great picture of how good works add a weight to the word of the gospel,” Stacy said. “God is the author of the moment. We simply need to be faithful and position ourselves to love our neighbors by showing and sharing Jesus every way we can.”

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## Graham from page one

destroyed by the Babylonians – in 52 days.

“Our moral walls are down,” he said. “Our politicians, our educators and our pastors are more concerned about political correctness than God’s truth and righteousness.”

“The most important thing we can do is pray,” Graham said. He asked the audience to pray three times; once out loud for repentance of America’s sins of abortion, same sex marriage – “a sin against God,” he said – and the entertainment industry that churns out sex and violence.

The plaza buzzed with voices, some soft and others loud.

A second, silent prayer was offered in confession of personal sins, and a third, silent prayer was made to confess “the sins of our fathers.”

Graham presented a concise, simple plan of salvation, and said, “no matter what else you remember from this today – remember that God loves you.”

“You know, Mohammad didn’t die for your sins, Buddha didn’t die for your sins, only one person in all of history, Jesus Christ the son of God, died for your sins,” Graham declared, wagging his finger in the air reminiscent of his evangelist father Billy Graham.

“Jesus Christ said, ‘I am the way, the truth and the life.’”

He lamented how secularism has changed America since he grew up in the 1950’s and ‘60’s.

“There is no difference between secularism and communism,” Graham said. “They are both godless. The secularists are led by people with very appealing names like ‘progressives.’ If you ever hear someone say they are progressive you better watch out. They most likely oppose the standards of God.”

He read a pledge that called for: living by biblical principles in the home; honoring God in public by serving the needy; getting involved in local governments and school board; and, voting for candidates who uphold biblical principles.

Graham told anyone who wanted to sign the pledge digitally to get out their smart phones and dial 51555 and text “America.” Many in the crowd did.

He also encouraged everyone to go home and form small groups to continue to pray for the nation.

### GOOD SHOW OF BAPTIST SUPPORT

The Louisiana Baptist Convention promoted the event beforehand as did most of the Baton Rouge area churches via announcements, social media, sermon mentions and promotional videos. Many in the crowd were Baptists.

“I thought it was great,” said David Hankins, LBC executive director, afterward. “Quite a number of our pastors and laymen (were present). We had a good representation of Louisiana Baptists.”

Jeff Ginn, senior pastor of Istrouma Baptist, mentioned it in his Jan. 10 sermon and posted a link to the Tour’s promotional video on his Facebook page. “Our families, our churches, and our nation need a healing that only the Lord can provide,” he wrote. Dozens of Istrouma members were scattered throughout the large crowd.

Florida Blvd. Baptist’s and other Baptist churches’ vans were parked along the downtown’s side streets.

Ben Hackler, pastor of First Baptist in Sterlington, brought 13 members and some of them posed for phone-selfies in front of Graham’s tour bus before the rally.

“I think this is a great opportunity for young and old to unite just to pray and ask God to bless our nation – there’s no political agenda – but just for us to know that God is in control of all of it,” Hackler said.

“We’re not going to be stressed out about the future because we know who holds it.”

His father, Dennis Hackler, added, “Our nation is in bad need of a spiritual awakening and we believe Franklin Graham is going to be a big part of that. And we want to say that Louisiana gave a warm welcome to Franklin Graham coming here and we’re awfully glad he did.”

Sammy Morrow, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist near Pollock, said, “the body of Christ has been very lax in the past 75 years or so. We’ve taken a lot for granted with regard to our nation. If we are one nation under God we need to turn to him to so



Mark H. Hunter photo

Ben Hackler, pastor of First Baptist Church Sterlington, his dad Dennis Hackler, and Sammy Morrow, pastor of Pleasant Hill Baptist Church in Pollock, pose for photos at one of two Franklin Graham Decision America Tour busses in downtown Baton Rouge on Jan. 13.

we can be the nation he has called us to be.”

Sam Russo, a member of Celebration Church in New Orleans, was passing out free flags to anyone willing to wave it during the rally.

“I’m here because I believe this is the kind of change our country needs,” Russo said. “The message that’s being sent is one that we should all listen to and pay attention to.”

Several Baptist lawmakers and government officials stood just offstage during the rally, and were asked for their

thoughts as musician Dennis Agajanian warmed up the crowd with some patriotic songs.

“This is important that we as Christians come together,” said state Sen. Gerald Long. “We’re commanded to pray, especially for those in positions of authority and leadership.”

Rep. Mike Johnson, added, “this is important to show our values and Louisiana certainly stands for religious freedom in our bedrock principles. It is our deep religious heritage that has made us

great. We move away from that at our peril.”

After the rally Graham met briefly with local reporters.

“It was a great crowd, a lot of energy, a lot of excitement,” Graham said.

“This (event) is for a lot of people to go back to their communities and not to stop the prayer process,” he said. “Can you imagine if every community in Louisiana had a group of people praying for their community and for their country and for God to bless us?”

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Tommy Thomas, Laura Coverstone, and Ed Poff of JobfitMatters are assisting the Search Team in the selection of UMobile’s next President. To view an Introductory Video and download the full Opportunity Profile, please visit:

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Located in Mobile, Alabama, on an 880-acre campus near Gulf Coast beaches, the University of Mobile is an institution of liberal arts and sciences and professional programs, intentionally dedicated to Biblically-based Christian culture in heritage, faith, and practice. More than 1,600 students are enrolled in over 40 undergraduate and graduate programs. Founded in 1961 by Alabama Baptists, the University of Mobile is affiliated with and supported by the Alabama Baptist State Convention.

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# NOLA church plants above national average for baptisms

By WILL HALL  
Message Editor

There is good news in New Orleans. Preliminary data for 2015 indicates baptisms by Louisiana Baptists' church plants in the city are above the national average within the Southern Baptist Convention.

The numbers compiled by the Louisiana Baptist Convention Missions and Ministry Team and released to the *Baptist Message* indicate the 19 church plants, ranging from one month to three years old performed one baptism for about every 7 weekly worship attenders.

By comparison, information shared by the North American Mission Board for the 757 churches in its Class of 2010 showed each typically baptized one new believer for about every 13 weekly worship attenders. This is the latest information NAMB has shared about its church plants formed in 2010 or after, and was highlighted by NAMB President Kevin Ezell in his report at the 2015 SBC Annual Meeting which was held in Columbus, Ohio.

Meanwhile, figures published in the SBC Annual indicate that among established Southern Baptist congregations, one baptism is performed for every 18 or so weekly worship attenders across the denomination.

John Hebert, director of the LBC Missions and Ministry Team said LBC church plants are not in competition with other states or the SBC, but that the numbers should encourage Louisiana Baptists.

"Our strategy," Hebert said, "is to evangelize then disciple people. The result of those actions is a church plant."

James Jenkins, director of church planting on Hebert's team, offered additional insights about the strategy.

"The reason for our success is we have established a church planting culture as opposed to other groups which have a church planter culture."

In total, 146 converts were baptized by the LBC church plants in New Orleans in 2015 and they averaged a combined 978 in weekly worship attendance.

Importantly, another 150 individuals made professions of faith but have not yet been baptized. Members of the start-up congregations reported 40,627 contacts were made and the Gospel was shared 4,670 times.

The report comes as Louisiana Baptists commissioned six new church planters Jan. 20 during a ceremony at the central missions offices in Alexandria.

**Jacob Crawford** – Grace Point, Simmesport (sponsored by Life Point, Mansura)

**Matthew Delaughter** – Immanuel Community, NOLA (sponsored by Immanuel Baptist, Louisville, Ky.)

**Dexter Gaspard** – Revival Life, Houma (sponsored by Crosspoint, Cut Off)

**Guillermo Mangieri** – Istrouma en Espanol, Baton Rouge (sponsored by Istrouma Baptist, Baton Rouge)

**Miguel Angel Flores-Olivera** – Jefferson Hispanic, Baton Rouge (sponsored by Jefferson Baptist, Baton Rouge)

**Ryan Rice Sr.** – Life Church, New Orleans (sponsored by Istrouma Baptist, Baton Rouge)

The LBC has a goal of planting 300 churches from 2010 through 2020 and is nearly halfway toward the mark, with 124 already established.

# LOUISIANA NOTABLES

## REVIVAL

■ United Baptist Church, Jena: Revival Services, Jan. 29, 6 p.m. Speaker: **Carl Gulde**.

■ Morehouse Revival Crusade Jan. 31-Feb. 3. Pre-session music: 6 p.m. Sunday, 6:30 p.m. Monday-Wednesday 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Worship: **11th Hour**. The event will be held at the Morehouse Activity Center. Director of Missions: **Jerry Price**.

## LAGNIAPPE

■ **Jim Garlington** is available for supply preaching, pastorate, interim or Bible studies. If interested, please call 318.312.2339 or 318.312.2338.

■ First Baptist Church, Anacoco: **Kingdom Heirs in concert**, Jan. 29, 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Durhl Davis

■ Tall Timbers Conference Center, Woodworth: **Louisiana Campers on Mission** will kick off their 2016 schedule Jan. 24-29 with its annual **work week at Tall Timbers Conference Center in Woodworth**. The major project to be undertaken will be the continued construction of the Georgia Barnette Conference Center. There will be a variety of other projects from general cleaning, landscaping and remodeling. All skill levels are welcomed. Having an RV is not necessary; Tall Timbers has accommodations. For reservations contact Tall Timbers at 318.445.6797 or email to talltimbers@talltimbersbcc.org or for more information call COM President Keith Brown at 225.926.9410.

■ Bayou Baptist Association, Gray: **French Rally**, Jan. 29, 5:30 p.m. meal, 6:30 p.m. worship. This event will be held at the BBA office located at 4494 West Main Street in Gray. DOM: Joe Arnold.

■ First Baptist Church, Vidalia: **Defending the Fatherless**, Jan. 30, 9 a.m. to noon. This is for current and inquiring foster or adoptive parents and families. Speakers: **Alethia Lawrence** (social worker); **Chassity Cannon** (lived through foster care), and **Calley Reed** (will share the need to be obedient and defend the fatherless. Pastor: Bill McCullin.

■ Greenwell Springs Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: **BAGBR World Missions Conference**, Jan. 31, 6 p.m. The Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge will hold its World Mission Conference at Greenwell Springs. Director of Missions: **Tommy Middleton**. Pastor: **Jeff Meyers**.

■ First Baptist Church, Pineville: **First@First Business Leader**

**Luncheon**, Feb. 1, Noon. Speaker: **Texas businessman Charles Hott**. His topic will be "Why the Bible Talks about Money More Than Anything Else." He will share his fascinating journey through his struggles with homosexuality, a love of money, and his ultimate surrender to the love and grace of God on Jan. 31, 10:15 a.m. at First Pineville and will speak to local business leaders at First@First the following day on the financial teachings of the Bible. Cost: \$10 and you may pay at the door. Please RSVP to Melinda Langford (mlangford@fbcpineville.net. Pastor: Stewart Holloway.

■ First Baptist Church, Tioga: **BeastFeast**, Feb. 5, 6 p.m. Bring your favorite wild game dish, a side or a dessert. Speaker: **Kevin Willis**. Pastor: Tim Hisaw.

■ Judson Baptist Retreat Center: **Adult Fish Fry**, Feb. 8, Registration: 9:30-10 a.m., Music: 10 a.m. Fish Fry: 11 a.m. Cost: \$10 per person (please call by Feb. 4 to reserve your place at 225.634.7225). Worship: **Hunter Erwin**. After lunch, there will be a prayer walk or prayer drive at the JBRC.

■ Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Couples Retreat**, Feb. 12-13 at Nottoway Plantation. Cost: \$169 [includes free breakfast on Feb. 13. Travel and dinner will be on your own. Dinner reservations can be made through Nottoway at www.nottoway.com. The retreat is being led by **Sean and Pam Keith**. Space is limited. Sign up in church office at 318.442.0754 or email Debbie@pbc-ministry.com. Pastor: Philip Robertson.

■ Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Sandi Patti – Forever Grateful**, Feb. 14, 7 p.m. Tickets can be purchased at www.premierproductions.com or by contacting 318.686.1470 during business hours // promo code: "premier" and ticket costs vary. Pastor: Aaron Burgner.

■ First Baptist Church, Haynesville: **Brad Mount in concert**, Feb. 14, 6 p.m. Pastor: Shelby Cowling.

■ **Experiencing God Tour 2016 with Tom Blackaby**: Natalbany Baptist Church, Natalbany, Feb. 16, 9:30 a.m. – noon; Louisiana Baptist Building, Alexandria, Feb. 16, 6- 8:30 p.m.; Northwest Louisiana Association Office, Shreveport, Feb. 17, 1-3:30 p.m. Cost: \$10. Registration deadline is Feb. 11 at noon. For more information, contact Jeff Ingram by phone at 318.448.3402 or 800.622.6549 or by email at Jeff.Ingram@LouisianaBaptists.org.

■ Riverview Baptist Church, Alexandria: **Brian Free & Assurance in concert**, Feb. 19, 7 p.m. Cost: A love offering will be taken. For more information call 318.443.5555 or 318.613.6505. Music Minister: Mike Boone. Pastor: David Newton.

## Scripture Crypto

By CHERYL VAUGHN  
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The Scripture Crypto is a Bible verse in which one letter has been substituted for another, thus encoding the verse. To find out what the verse is, you must determine what each letter is a substitute for. An "a," for example, may stand for a "t" in this week's issue of the ScriptureCrypto. Next week, "a" could stand for a "d." Each week, each letter is different. Solve by trial and error. The answer will be given next week. Note: All numerals, such as those in the scripture reference after the verse, are spelled out.

xmkjgmv, he smpiqzmz sjmwxjmv, xkwx viw niz

lxibmv wxm uiij iy wxfb dijpz jflx fv ykfwx, kvz xmfjb iy

wxm gfvnzih dxflx xm xkwx ujihfbmz wi wxmh wxkw

piqm xfh?

okhmb wdi:yfqm

Clues:  
X = H; M = E

Answer to January 14 Scripture Crypto:  
Job four: two

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