

*“Behold, I am
with thee, and
will keep thee in
all places whither
thou goest.”*

– Genesis 28:15 (KJV)

M BAPTIST Message

Newsjournal for Louisiana Baptists

Helping Louisiana Baptists impact the world for Christ



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May 26, 2016

‘All in’ soul-winning effort unveiled for LBC

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

WOODWORTH – Louisiana Baptists are being asked to commit to a massive two-year evangelism initiative that could be the largest joint effort ever by the denomination to share the Gospel.

WIN THE STATE

During the Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Board’s spring meeting at Tall Timbers Conference Center, state leaders announced a Harvest Initiative whose end goal is involve at least 700 churches to pray for and share Christ with every household in Louisiana.

“The spiritual impact could be enormous,” said Wayne Jenkins, evangelism and church growth director for Louisiana Baptists. “It could be the thing God could use for a genuine awakening in the life of our state.

“If 700 churches would get involved, it would create a greater concern for the lost,

create a greater impact in our local churches for winning people for Christ and better discipleship, and create a greater excitement in the life of the church. What would it be like if we could say at the end of 2018 we have prayed for and shared with every dwelling place in Louisiana the Gospel? The thought of what could happen is exciting.”

PILOT & PREPARE

After spending 2016 planning and enlisting leaders and churches, and using 2017 to conduct statewide evangelism training and piloting different initiatives, Louisiana Baptists will join together across the state in 2018 to reach the lost via door-to-door outreach and mass evangelism events.

“From the inception, pastors and church staff, associational DOMs and staff and convention staff worked together to develop the idea,” said Keith Manuel, evangelism associate for Louisiana Baptists. “This is a true partnership in that all areas of Louisiana Baptists’ work influenced the strategy, starting with the first meeting and continuing to this day.”

Churches will pray for every home and share the Gospel with every person, and the effort will include multiple approaches, including one-on-one evangelism, multi-church crusades, single-church revivals and other harvest events which take advantage of compassion ministries to share about the love of Christ.

“That may seem impossible but there are ways they have come up that we can definitely do that as Louisiana Baptists,” Jenkins said.

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LIFE CHANGING MOMENTS



Brian Blackwell photo

(Left photo) Youth minister Stuart Sasser baptizes James Morgan during a service at Philadelphia Baptist Church. (Right photo) Minister of education and outreach Andrew Orr baptizes Cynthia Woodruff. Pastor Philip Robertson is hopeful his church will surpass last year’s 70 baptisms.

Lifting Christ up results in six baptisms for children’s ministry

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

DEVILLE – Six young children from Philadelphia Baptist Church in Deville made a declaration that was simple, yet life-changing, after an Awana meeting on a Wednesday evening in March.

The fifth and sixth graders approached Children’s Ministry Director Tracy Orr and called out in unison, “We want to get saved.”

“All of you?” Orr responded, who was overjoyed by furiously yes-nodding heads and lots of excited laughter.

Each of them prayed to ask for forgiveness of their sins and to commit their lives to Jesus

within a week, and they were baptized.

Orr saw them smiling with excitement prior to their baptisms and was reminded of the miracle of salvation.

“Watching them, all in their white robes, they almost seemed to sparkle and shine with the new life that bubbled up inside them and spilled out,” she said. “They weren’t afraid. They were in love with Jesus, the only one who can do such miracles.”

The six children are among 19, of all ages, who have been baptized at Philadelphia Baptist Church this year. Pastor Philip Robertson is hopeful the congregation will equal or surpass last year’s 70 baptisms.

See **PHILADELPHIA** on 2



Stuart Sasser prepares to baptize Hannah Crooks.

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He said that baptizing is part of the Great Commission given to the church in Matthew 28:18-20.

It is a natural result from sharing the Gospel, he said, adding that his congregation works hard to grow believers through individual discipleship training with another believer, or with others in small group Bible study.

"When they accept Christ, their first step of obedience is to follow Him in baptism," Robertson said. "Baptism is the best barometer we have of those who have accepted Christ and aren't ashamed of Him, but take that step of obedience."

"We want to facilitate them in their walk with Christ and see their relationship with Christ grow," he continued. "As newborn baby Christians, they are dependent on someone else to nurture them and help provide them with

protection and care. As they grow, they become more and more self-sufficient."

LIFTED UP

Cynthia Woodruff felt that once she was baptized April 17, God lifted a weight off her shoulders.

"I felt completely wrapped up in His love," she said. "For the longest time, I felt unworthy to receive His love. But at that moment of baptism, I felt truly worthy."

The baptisms are an example of yet another spiritually-rich year for Philadelphia Baptist Church, which now is seeing its reach expand geographically.

Around 100 members of the Deville congregation have committed to serve for at least one year at a satellite campus in Alexandria. The team and other church members are renovating facilities at Horse-

shoe Drive Baptist Church in preparation for the first service Sept. 18 as a merged congregation.

Horseshoe Drive leaders approached Robertson about a merger a little more than a year ago, and since then the relationship has moved forward with unity between the two congregations. Now, the sanctuary, fellowship hall and preschool department at the Alexandria campus are being re-done, and a campus pastor has been named.

Robertson said his church discussed in 2006 possible

locations for a multi-site congregation, but nothing materialized until now, and he is convinced God was waiting until the time was right.

"The relationship between our congregation and their congregation has been amazing," Robertson said. "From the beginning, you couldn't ask for a better match. Just the excitement of knowing we are coming has really been a big boost for them," he said, noting an almost doubling in worship attendance at Horseshoe Drive "without any of our people there."

Robertson said the excitement on the part of the transition team has exceeded anything he or other church leaders imagined, with so many signing up for the revitalization effort and evangelistic emphasis at the Horseshoe Drive campus.

"These 100 people sense a calling, something they view as called by God to do," he said. "Our biggest struggle with them is holding back the reins. They are chomping at the bits and are so excited. They feel called by God to reach unchurched people in

'HomePlace' expands to assist mothers & children transition to independence

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

MONROE – The Louisiana Baptist Children's Home is now northeast Louisiana's second largest residential provider for homeless children and their families.

Grinning with excitement, Children's Home President and CEO Perry Hancock told trustees during the entity's

spring board meeting that the news from the Northeast Louisiana Home Coalition only reaffirms fulfilling a vision that was first dreamed of six years ago.

"The need is so great because domestic violence is so high in northeast Louisiana," Hancock said. "This creates a place to stay for a while and train the homeless mothers and their children in ways

they can provide a better life."

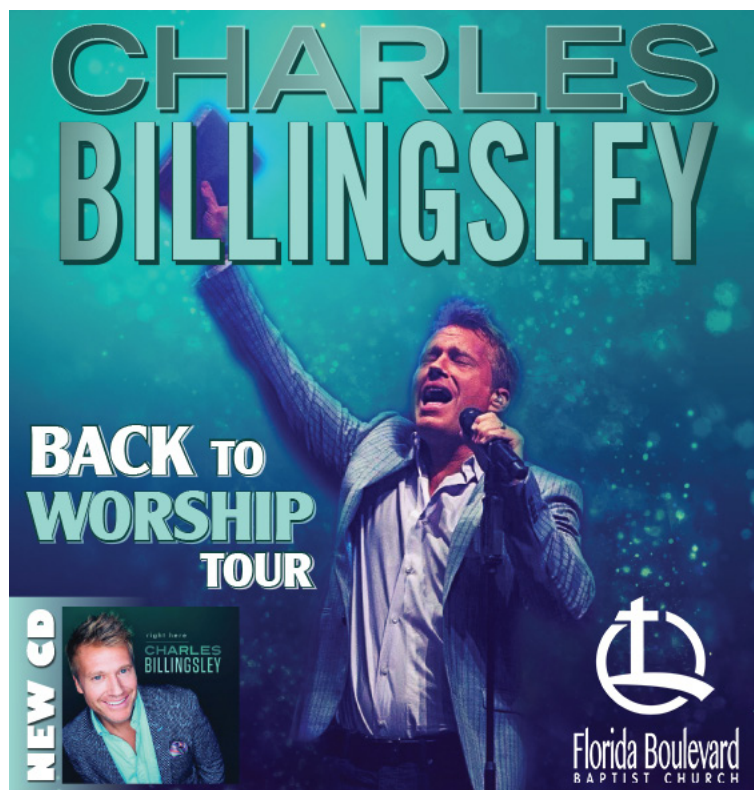
Started in 2012, HomePlace provides homeless women and their children a place to stay for six to 12 months at no cost to the residents. While there, the women receive a high school equivalency degree and life and employment skills training through the Christian Women Job Corps. In April, some residents moved into a new cottage, offering an array of amenities to offer a true home environment for the women and their children in this transitional setting as they prepare for independent living.

Since inception, 80 percent of the women participating in HomePlace have successfully earned a degree and completed necessary training to land a job outside the campus.

In addition to news about the success of HomePlace, Hancock told trustees the Children's Home has reached another milestone – surpassing the 100th child in its off-campus foster care ministry.

In 2015, the foster care and adoption program served 219 children, including 85 off-campus. The program began just three years ago.

See HOMEPLACE on 4



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Unveiled

from page one

2020 VISION

This Harvest Initiative is an outgrowth of the 2020 initiative, affirmed by messengers during the 2014 Louisiana Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, which seeks to reach every generation and every people group in Louisiana with the Gospel by the year 2020. Among the 10 action steps in the 2020 initiative is to equip churches with a proven evangelistic growth process, which the Harvest Initiative seeks to accomplish.

Planning for the Harvest Initiative began late 2015, after Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Director David Hankins announced 2017 and 2018 would be years of harvest. A group of 12 Louisiana Baptist pastors, evangelists, directors of missions and state evangelism and church growth staff met together for the early planning and that number soon expanded to 90.

Nine teams are meeting to discuss ideas that will be included in an evangelism manual that will include ideas on how to share the Gospel and coordinate a harvest event. Teams include the areas of prayer, harvest events, post-event follow-up and sermon ideas.

This fall, an effort will take place to begin enlisting the 700 churches.

Jenkins hopes all Louisiana Baptists will begin praying now for what role they might play during the Harvest Initiative.

"If we are going to impact the state, we will need 700 churches," Jenkins said. "If the goal is to pray for every single dwelling place and share with every single person the Gospel, we need as many as we can."

Pray for the development that we might truly know the mind of Christ. And pray for the enlistment of churches."

DISASTER RELIEF UPDATE

Soon after record rainfall flooded areas of the state in mid-March, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams responded – completing 2,230 jobs, serving 69,730 meals, donating \$27,544 and even leading 50 people to a decision to follow Christ.

LBC Disaster Relief Director Gibbie McMillan shared in his report, how work is winding down in the state with teams staying in North

Monroe until May 13, completing some mud-out jobs in the Bastrop-Morehouse area as well as in Haughton.

Further south, a disaster relief team from Illinois plans to return to Leesville on May 20 to work at a site where one of their own members, Don Fulkerson, died from a heart attack on March 29. His widow, Margie, is returning to work as well.

McMillan said Fulkerson's widow and the rest of the team are returning because of the generosity and kindness shown by Louisiana Baptists. The LBC offered to pay for the embalming and flying of Fulkerson's body back to Illinois; however, Illinois had insurance to cover these expenses, so the LBC will use the same amount of money to assist in the rebuild of the home.

"I am proud to be a part of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Convention," McMillan said. "I hope you are a part of making a difference in building the kingdom for the Lord."

CHURCH PLANTS THRIVE

For his part, John Hebert told board members that since 2010, 136 new churches – including 27 in New Orleans alone – have been planted in the state. If that pace continues, the goal set forth in the 2020 report of planting 300 churches by 2020 should be met, said Hebert, missions and ministry director for Louisiana Baptists.

Of the churches planted, 60 percent are non-Anglo, which falls in line with another goal of the 2020 report of having a church for all nationalities.

Hebert thanked the board and Louisiana Baptists for investing resources in starting new churches across the state.

"Praise the Lord because these dollars are spent starting churches where there is no witness for the kingdom," Hebert said. "These churches are started in places where people are hearing about Jesus, coming to Christ. We are approaching the 10,000 professions of faith mark in our church plants since implementing the 10-3-1 associational strategy in 2010. God is richly blessing and he is blessing because our convention has had the foresight and connected to the vision of God to reach people in Louisiana."

HERE FOR YOU

During his report, Louisiana Baptists communications director John Kyle updated board members on Louisiana Baptists multi-media outreach strategy, "Here for You" (formerly called Highways & Hedges).

The strategy, launched in response to KAIROS 6, the sixth goal of 10 goals outlined in the 2020 Initiative, made its debut in the second half of 2014 in southwest Louisiana. Estimates show that during the six-month pilot, about 90 percent of the 45,000 - 50,000 young mothers in the area were engaged at least 25 times through the commercials which aired on broadcast and satellite television outlets, Kyle said. The second pilot began its run in northeast Louisiana in November 2014 and was lengthened to nine months based on lessons learned in the first pilot. By the time the pilot concluded in mid-2015, it's estimated that 98 percent of 60,000 - 65,000 young mothers living in that area saw the spots 57 or more times.

After examining information from the first two pilots, pilot three was launched as a three-year effort in southeast Louisiana in August 2015 in conjunction with the 10th

anniversary of Hurricane Katrina. Since then, the commercials have aired more than 9,100 times and about 3,000 people have visited the splash page, LouisianaBaptists.info. There also have been 193 searches for area churches and 14 views of the Gospel presentation.

Kyle also noted that several social media platforms popular with young mothers have demonstrated impressive numbers for "Here For You."

"Pinterest, Instagram and Twitter have generated in excess of 2.2 million delivered impressions and 378,000 video clicks," he said.

New spots focusing on men from ages 50-65 years old are being filmed later this month and in June.

"We are doing it because Jesus has commanded us to go into the highways and the hedges, the intersections of life where people live, where they work, where they play and compel them to come in. We want to plant the seeds of God's truth in the hearts of those living in Louisiana and then we want to water those seeds and ask the Lord to grant a harvest.

"Here for You" will take us to places we normally couldn't go," Kyle emphasized, "impact people we normally couldn't get to, and do so more times than we could ever do on our own."

MORE THAN A PLEDGE

Hankins updated the board on "The Pledge," a pastor-

driven initiative designed to reinvigorate Louisiana Baptists' cooperative missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program.

The Pledge is a plan challenging churches giving less than 3 percent to the CP to move to 5 percent; churches giving between 3 and 8 percent are encouraged to increase giving by 2 percent; and churches giving between 8 and 9.9 percent are encouraged to reach for 10 percent.

Churches already giving 10 percent of their undesignated receipts through the Cooperative Program will be thanked and encouraged to consider a 1 percent increase or simply reaffirm a commitment to their current level of giving.

Churches are asked to reach their goals by the year 2020.

During the first phase, 120 pastors committed to "The Pledge," primarily through pastors sharing with other pastors individually.

The second phase will utilize a group approach, where one pastor will invite several others he knows to ask them to consider accepting the challenge of saying "yes" to "The Pledge," with the goal of 300 churches joining "The Pledge."

"It's very simple," Hankins said. "We are thankful that our pastors are willing to lead their own churches and then ask other pastors to lead their churches to do more through

See **UNVEILED** on 5

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Steve Gaines: 'We've got to be soul winners'

By WILL HALL

Message Editor

MEMPHIS – Describing what his presidential priorities might mean for the Southern Baptist Convention, Steve Gaines emphasized during an exclusive interview the need to pray for revival in our churches and a spiritual awakening in our country, and an equally critical need to train to be soul winners again.

Moreover, Gaines said there is a stewardship problem among Southern Baptists – starting with personal budgeting, and he made the point that “the Cooperative Program is by far the very best way to support Southern Baptist missions,” not

societal giving. In that regard, Gaines said there needs to be greater emphasis on the value of local associations and state conventions in order to have healthy and growing national programs and entities.

Finally, on the issue of Calvinism, Gaines said he believes “anybody can be saved” and that although there is room in the SBC tent for different beliefs, “I do not believe that Calvinism should be taught as the optimal exclusive theological position in our schools, whether our seminaries or our colleges.”

Read the entire interview
at www.baptistmessage.com

David Crosby: Cooperation in missions, compassion through ministries

By WILL HALL

Message Editor

NEW ORLEANS – David Crosby, pastor of the First Baptist Church in New Orleans, shared with the *Louisiana Baptist Message* some of his thoughts about what his possible election as president of the Southern Baptist Convention might mean for the denomination, emphasizing that “the work we do together is about the Great Commission and the Great Commandment.”

Speaking by phone, Crosby said on that point “We’ve got to do both proclamation and incarnation. I think the Gospel requires behavior as well as words.” He added he would work with our national entities to underscore compassion ministries as a way to unleash churches to reach the lost.

Crosby also expressed “alarm” about the multi-

year trend of designated giving -- the focus on independent work instead of cooperative ministries -- outpacing gifts through the Cooperative Program.

Likewise, he expressed grave concern about the “almost accidental” downsizing of the International Mission Board, asking “Why didn’t we have a conversation about this?” instead of “just being blindsided by it.”

Regarding the impact of Calvinism on the Convention, Crosby said Southern Baptists always before have been able to live together “with some tensions but in relative peace for years and decades,” but now there is too much passion in “defending our particular point of view, instead of sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ and God’s love for lost people.”

Read the entire interview
at www.baptistmessage.com



J.D. Greear: (declined to do the interview)

By WILL HALL

Message Editor

Despite making an appointment for a phone interview and after a substantive conversation, J.D. Greear declined to participate in a live question and answer session with the *Louisiana Baptist Message* about his run for the presidency of the Southern Baptist Convention.

During the exchange, Greear made several special requests, some that were acceptable and one that was not.

He asked for questions to be submitted in writing.

The *Message* declined to grant this privilege because the two other candidates for SBC president – Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church

in Memphis, Tennessee, and David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church in New Orleans – agreed to the live format, which requires the interviewee to be thinking on his feet and avoids getting typed responses “written by committee.”

For the record, to start their respective interviews, Gaines and Crosby each were asked to reflect on the axiom “keep the main thing the main thing” and then explain what the “main thing” would be in his presidency. Follow-up questions essentially were the same for both but were asked naturally during the respective conversations.

Greear would have been treated the same.

Read the entire article
at www.baptistmessage.com

HomePlace from page 2

To keep up with the growth in this phase of ministry, the Children’s Home has social workers in Alexandria, Baton Rouge, Monroe, New Orleans and Shreveport. More information about adoption and foster care can be found through its Connect 127 network.

Hancock said this fulfills one of the goals of the 2020 Report – a carefully drafted seven-year strategy in which

Louisiana Baptists can do a more effective job of reaching and engaging the lost for God’s Kingdom – regarding developing strategies that help Louisiana Baptists minister to children in distress.

“Our Connect 127 foster and adoption network of churches is growing,” Hancock said. “The Children’s Home can now provide churches with the tools needed to establish

life-changing foster and adoption ministries for the 4,500 foster children in Louisiana.

“Network churches are creating foster and adoption support groups that reach unchurched families in their community,” he continued. “The goal is to have all of Louisiana’s foster children living in a Louisiana Baptist home, going to a Louisiana Baptist church where they can experience the love of God in Christ.”

Hancock also shared with trustees that renovations to Peace Cottage should be com-

plete by mid-summer. Once finished, all eight residences on campus that were built in the 1970s will have received new flooring, an updated kitchen and the removal of paneling inside the homes.

Grace and Feazell cottages were the first to receive renovations in 2013. Since then, Joy, Rucker, Love, Hope and Faith also have been renovated.

The day concluded with the Children’s Home annual celebration banquet at North Monroe Baptist Church. At-

tended by 250 people including donors, house parents, trustees, residents of the Children’s Home and school teachers, the event recognized each child on campus with awards and other presentations.

“This is an affirmation for the children of how well they are doing and it builds up their self-esteem,” Hancock said. “The Children’s Home is not their first choice, but having events allows us to make life on campus a little better for them and show them Christ’s love.”

Unveiled from page 3

the Cooperative Program than we've ever done before."

'GREAT OMISSION'

While most believers are familiar with the Great Commission and the Great Commandment, Executive Board President David Cranford believes many are less familiar with another instruction of Jesus – the need for discipleship.

Cranford called this neglect of discipleship "the Great Omission" in his message to the board.

"This [neglected] command is today being called the Great Omission," said Cranford, pastor of First Baptist Church in Ponchartroula. "We're drifted away from making disciples."

This lack of discipleship has produced ineffectual, casual, impotent Christians, Cranford said. He added that the absence of discipleship can even lead to a lack of evangelism.

"Discipleship is the church and the church is discipleship," Cranford said. "When one suffers, the other suffers."

"When someone is discipled, transformation should follow. A disciple of Jesus is transformed by the renewing of the mind and is being remodeled in Jesus' image," Cranford said.

"Christian discipleship is not about being a better us," he urged. "It's about being Him."

ENTITY REPORTS

The directors of LBC entities shared encouraging news.

Louisiana College President Rick Brewer voiced appreciation for the students who accepted Christ this academic school year. Brewer also said he was thankful the Southern Associations of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges removed LC off probationary status in December 2015, as well as the new academic programs and staff who have come on board.

One challenge LC faces is reaching its goal of at least 300 new students enrolling this fall.

The school's budget relies on reaching that number, but Brewer is optimistic

that goal can be attained.

"By faith, I'm confident we can get there," he said. "The numbers are looking better. The strategies and innovations that we have put in place over the last year are going to bare some fruit moving forward."

Louisiana Baptist Foundation Executive Director Wayne Taylor encouraged board members to sign up at baptistmessage.com or through a form in the print edition of the Baptist Message for a chance to win \$1,000 to give to a Louisiana Baptist ministry of their choice through the Give-A-Gift program.

"By telling you about this Give-A-Gift program, you are giving them the idea of how we can help them make gifts to you," Taylor said. "The foundation exists simply to make gifts."

Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries President and CEO Perry Hancock said the first new cottage built in more than 40 years was dedicated on April 22.

The HomePlace cottage designed to provide transitional living for women and their children as they prepare for independent living.

Hancock also said soon the final of its existing cottages will be renovated. Built in the 1970s, the cottages have received new flooring, an updated kitchen and the removal of paneling inside the home for five to seven children and two house parents. The renovations began in 2013.

Hancock said he continues to be amazed at God's blessings at the Children's Home, particularly those who recently have accepted Christ.

"These first three months we've had so many of our children accept Christ and Savior and some of the mother's in our HomePlace ministry through the churches they go to

each week," he said. "The Lord is still changing lives through the Children's Home."

LBC EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

David Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention used his message to offer insights about the priorities he has set for determining who will get his vote in the upcoming election for the president of the Southern Baptist Convention; and, he encouraged Louisiana Baptists to do their homework as well and go to the SBC annual meeting and vote.

Hankins said he would not vote for anyone who "had little use for state conventions and local associations," nor for anyone who devalued those partnerships and "openly called for the defunding" of such work.

Hankins pointed out the grass roots nature of state conventions and local associations, saying, "You've been here all day, seeing and voting and hearing about what we do together as Louisiana Baptists" and for a candidate to be dismissive of and devalue this work to reach the lost in the state "is wrong," he said.

"We've been systematically trying to destroy our infrastructure as southern Baptists, all the while our measurable statistics are going in the tank and we've never made the connection yet. The reason we aren't having any reach is because we have gotten rid of the people who are doing the reach," Hankins explained. He also said he could not support someone who supported societal giving over cooperative giving.

"Great Commission Giving [societal, or selective, giving] was adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention as a way to 'not make people feel overly bad' about the fact they didn't support the Cooperative Program," Hankins said.

But, he said, the new category passed only after

an extended debate during which messengers forced the proponents to reaffirm the Cooperative Program "as the most effective means of mobilizing our churches and extending our reach."

Hankins commented on other issues as well, ending his message by saying these were his opinions, and urged Louisiana Baptists to take part in the upcoming Southern Baptist annual meeting.

"I would encourage you to elect your messengers, go to St Louis and vote for someone who believes in the Cooperative Program and in our partnerships together, and the evangelism of the whole world, believing everyone can be saved, and, who wants to hold to the traditions, practices and morals of Southern Baptists that God has used to bless us and bless the whole world."

The 2016 SBC Annual Meeting is scheduled to be held Tuesday-Wednesday, June 14-15 in St. Louis, Mo. The presidential vote will take place the afternoon of the first day.

LBC PRESIDENT

LBC President Gevan Spinney closed the meeting by encouraging the board members to never forget the call God has placed on their

lives.

Basing his message off 1 Timothy 4:12, Spinney said that call should excite them every morning when they wake. Just like Paul told Timothy, pastors should remember not to neglect God's calling on their lives to preach and be an example to the church in word, conduct, love, spirit, faith and purity.

When tempted to say or act in an ungodly manner, Spinney said they have a commitment to edify Christ in all they do.

"There are times in our walk with Christ that we desire to live by the flesh, but we don't because of a prior commitment to Christ," said Spinney, pastor of First Baptist Church in Haughton. "We don't live by the flesh but we conduct ourselves in a way that gives glory to Christ."

Spinney said that while the work of a pastor can be discouraging at times, he encouraged them to press on because God has set them apart for His work.

"You don't have to be the best; you've got to be you," Spinney said. "God wants to use you because He's given you a gift. He's called you. He's set you apart."

The next LBC Executive Board meeting is scheduled to be held Sept. 27 at Tall Timbers.

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Churches advance Gospel through service projects

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE – One day, Caleb Lanclos' tooth ached, so he turned to the Lafayette Community Health Clinic to have it removed.

On April 16, Lanclos returned to the clinic with a different purpose – to give back to a business that was there for him in a time of need.

Armed with a rake and pressure washer, Lanclos and fellow members of First Baptist Lafayette spent a few hours that Saturday morning cleaning up the grounds of the clinic. By the end of the day, the team had accomplished the name of their effort – First Baptist Loves Lafayette.

“Because I was a recipient of their services, I knew this was a way I could give back to them,” Lanclos said. “This day is my favorite day of the year. You can be selfless and help someone out. It doesn't even feel like work and you are there to serve those who live in your community.”

Lanclos' and his fellow team members were among 449 people from the church involved in some ministry project across Lafayette, to love their city in practical ways. These 26 projects included placing pine straw underneath shrubs on the University of Louisiana-La-



Submitted photo

Two women from First Baptist Lafayette sort through books at the First Baptist Christian School library. Nearly 450 people from the church spent a recent Saturday performing acts of service all through Lafayette to complete 26 projects.



Submitted photo

(Top photo) A team from First Baptist Lafayette cleans a sign that motorists see while traveling along I-10 in the city. (Bottom photo) Members of the church spruced up flower beds on the campus of the University of Louisiana-Lafayette.



fayette campus, laying mulch at an area park, cleaning city murals and picking up trash along a stretch of a bayou.

The ultimate goal, said missions minister Andrea

McKenzie, is for Bible study classes within First Baptist Lafayette to form a long-term partnership at a site which allows participants to use their spiritual gifts in a tangible way, and the work becomes an evangelism platform.

“We have some people who say this day is why they joined our church, because we are able to dedicate a set date to work together to show Christ's love in our community,” McKenzie said. “This is a way for us to have an impact on our community and show love to everyone we can. In the end, we spur people to do more missionally.”

GO DAY REAPS A HARVEST

More than 1,000 people from Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge took a short-term local ‘mission trip’ of sorts April 17, resulting in multiple decisions for Christ.

In its seventh year, the annual Go Day allowed members of Istrouma Baptist to participate in 40 different projects around Baton Rouge. These included holding block parties, hosting a picnic for special needs families, deliv-

See SERVICE on 7

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Service from page 7

ering gift baskets to firemen and policemen, performing landscaping for a Christian school and volunteering at a nursing home.

During a block party at a mobile park targeted toward Hispanic individuals, two people accepted Christ, and, at a sports clinic, multiple people made the decision to follow Christ.

The sports clinics at six BERC parks and gyms were led by coaches and student-athletes from area high schools. Attendees received free sports equipment, participated in a Bible lesson and enjoyed a hosted lunch.

At the end of the clinics conducted by the Baton Rouge Sports Initiative – a

collation of churches, educational and non-profit groups headed by Istrouma Baptist Church's sports ministry – the Gospel was presented.

Participants also took home a gift Bible.

Missions Pastor Dwayne Pitre said his members were moved when those they had served as part of this outreach

accepted Christ.

"We try to make sharing the Gospel a priority in serving and are always looking for ways to talk about it," Pitre said. "In our conversations with people, we try to get to the Gospel and thankfully were able to see some trust

and dried clothes for Baton Rouge residents, and in the process shared about Christ.

"The Laundry Love Project provided a wonderful opportunity to meet people where they are," she said.

"We were able to minister to needs, engage in

conversation and share the love of Jesus," Arcement continued. "As people from many backgrounds and nationalities came to do their laundry on Go Day, we were there offering to pay for their loads of clothes, provide refreshments, fold clothes, and give coloring books to children. These acts of service were received with surprise and gratitude. All those who participated

came away thankful for this opportunity to be a blessing to others."

Meanwhile, at Connections for Life, a women's Bible study class hosted a picnic for residents of the housing program for females transitioning from prisons, treatment facilities and battered women's shelters.

God for a decision to follow Him.

"In the end, the Great Commission informs us to make disciples and do that by sharing the Gospel," he continued. "And that's what we saw happen during our GO Day."

Peggy Arcement was among the team that washed



Youth from Istrouma Baptist in Baton Rouge clean the yard of a homeowner during the church's Go Day. By the end of the day, members of the church had participated in 40 different projects throughout Baton Rouge.



Submitted photo

A member of Istrouma Baptist holds a child, as they both try to pop bubbles during the church's Go Day. The one-day effort involved more than 1,000 people from the church, who took a short-term local 'mission trip' on April 17.

While the women hosted a party, the men's Bible study class assembled tables used to store clothing inside the organization's thrift store.

Among the highlights of the day, one resident received a visit from her young daughter.

Volunteer Diane Courville said this allowed the resident a chance to interact with her daughter and allowed the young girl a chance to learn how to accept her mother again.

This is the second year the classes have spent their Go Day at Connections for Life, allowing for the formation of a continuing relationship between the residents and Istrouma members. Courville said her class came away refreshed knowing they impacted the residents' lives.

"The ladies know they are accepted just for who they are and that they are loved," Courville said. "As we go back, they begin sharing their struggles and how difficult it is to become normal again. They say this thing we are doing for them is helping bridge that because they feel less constrained when they meet people and they may be worth talking to."



A youngster takes a swing at a pinata during a block party that Istrouma Baptist in Baton Rouge hosted recently as part of its Go Day. By the end of the effort, which took place on a Sunday, relationships with residents and directors of area non-profits were strengthened and many seeds planted. Multiple individuals also indicated their decision to accept Christ as their Lord and Savior.

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Louisiana College photo

Louisiana College awarded degrees to 101 graduates during its spring commencement. Evangelist Jay Strack brought the keynote address at the ceremony. Prior to his message, three graduating seniors shared how their passion for Jesus was strengthened during their

time at LC. The event also remembered 22-year-old David Marler, who was on pace to graduate with his classmates. However, in 2015, he passed away in his sleep. LC President Rick Brewer awarded Marler with an undergraduate degree posthumously during the ceremony.

Strack: LC grads inspire hope 'America will be great again'

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

PINEVILLE – Standing before the Louisiana College 2016 graduating class, evangelist Jay Strack said they are a reason he believes America still has a chance to be great again.

"Don't be one of those who are very fearful about the future," he told the soon-to-be alums during his May 7 address for Louisiana College's 160th Commencement. "Don't be one of those that believe America has lost its mojo and will never be great again. I believe with all my heart the Lord still has a plan for this nation and the reason is these students and these professors. You keep us optimistic about the future."

Throughout his speech to the 101 graduates, Strack challenged them multiple times to remain passionate about Christ and follow their God-given dreams.

"I want you to 'know' your dream," Strack said. "I want you to dream. I want you to think about your dream. I want you to think 'If God is for me, who can be against me.'"

Strack illustrated his point by sharing with the students and others in the crowd how he once was passionate for the wrong things.

During his teenage years, Strack fell into a life of drug addiction. Then, during a Bible

study when he was 17-years-old, Strack was challenged to stop following the popular crowd and instead chase after Christ.

That evening, Strack gave up his drugs and alcohol and said "yes" to Jesus.

"I had a lot of passions in my life that were not godly, that were not healthy, that were demonic, that were of the devil, that were destructive and literally could have consumed me," Strack said.

"But Jesus came into my life. I asked him to be Lord in me at 17. Somehow, somehow Jesus transformed my life."

"He said 'Jay, if you make (Me) the greatest passion in your life, I will consume any other passions that [arise] in your life,'" he continued. "For over 40 years, I've watched Him move. You've got to ask yourself 'Is Jesus going to



Louisiana College photo

Jay Strack challenged the graduates during his commencement address to remain passionate about Christ and follow their God-given dreams. He told the students they are the reason he believes America can be great.

be the greatest passion in my life?"

Prior to Strack's message, three graduating seniors shared just how their passion for Jesus was strengthened during their time at LC. Two of those seniors – Zachary Fleming and Jessica Johnson – were among the seven students to receive the award of summa cum laude – the highest award given by the school.

help make a difference and let my patients know there is hope and that there is a cure," she said. "No matter what it takes, I want to provide the best care and treatment for them. Giving up is not an option because with God there always is a right cure."

Fleming is one of many in his family to graduate from LC. His great-grandfather was the first, earning his degree

from LC in 1927. Joining Johnson and Fleming were Katelyn Persick, Mollie Stuart, Eli Sanders, Hannah Shields and Rebekah Weatherford.

Johnson will attend graduate school to pursue further study she hopes eventually will land her a job as a clinical psychologist to minister to those suffering from mental illnesses. She said her experience at LC helped give her the confidence, determination and ambition to continue to hunt for her dream.

"I want to

from LC in 1927.

Initially, Fleming thought of breaking the family tradition, but during a tour of campus, he believed it was where God wanted him to attend college.

Four years later, not only does he not regret his decision, he is confident God inspired it.

While he and other students experienced such changes as a new president, renovations to campus buildings and a new attitude among his peers and faculty, Fleming said one aspect has remained the same – the Gospel.

"That is what makes LC different," he said. "It is on that truth that this college is founded. It is in that truth that every assignment and activity was rooted. And it is through that truth that lives, including mine, are changed on this campus."

Finally, Hillary Husband shared a testimony of how she survived not one but two bouts with cancer to earn her diploma. Husband said her professors went the extra mile to help her graduate on time, meeting with her via Skype teleconferences when she was in the hospital.

Husband said it was during those difficult times of suffering when she grew the most.

She told her fellow graduates that regardless of trials

See GRADS on 13

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Kelley to NOBTS grads: Be hope-bearers for a hurting world

BY MARILYN STEWART
NOBTS Communications

NEW ORLEANS – New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley challenged the school's 2016 graduates to rely on the certainty of God's love as they bring hope to a hurting world.

"His love will never loosen its grip on you," Kelley said at the May 14 graduation ceremony. "Whatever you go through, remember the love of God always triumphs in the end."

REMAIN COMMITTED

Kelley acknowledged some graduates may have turned down other, more lucrative career paths to answer God's call to theological education and ministry, and but he said they must focus on "the love of God" that drew them to seminary in the first place.

Consider the "unspeakable sacrifice" of Christ, Kelley said, adding that while other religions have altars and sacrifices of incense, grain or even animals, only the Christian faith has "God himself as the sacrifice."

Going further, Kelley said the cross of Christ, the "center-piece of the New Testament," won salvation and eternal life for any person who comes seeking forgiveness, regardless of past sin and failure.

"That is good news," Kelley said. "God must love us because of what God did for us."

Continuing, Kelley caused an obvious moment of serious reflection, several seconds of silence, when he asked, "Is it worth it? Is God's love worth the path you have taken?"

ALWAYS ASSURED

Using an analogy about a young child who tumbles down the stairs, Kelley said a parent, at that moment, picks up and comforts the child rather than giving the child a lecture about center of gravity and tipping points.

While the explanation is true, it is "useless," Kelley said, adding that what's important to a hurting child is the parent's reassurance of his love.

"When you know that you are in the grip of an all-powerful God ... a God who knows

your name and loves you and demonstrated his love for you at great cost and sacrifice, it makes all the difference in the world," Kelley said.

Kelley pointed to Romans 8:28 to say that believers are never separated from God's care.

"You may be attacked, but you will be delivered. You may be wounded, but you will be healed. You may be persecuted, but you will not be forsaken. You may be alone, but you will not be abandoned. You may be knocked down, but you will never be knocked out," Kelley said.

Because no life is ever beyond redemption, Kelley said believers must remember what God has done for them and be faithful to tell others that God's love will change lives.

"This is who you are – bearers of hope," Kelley said. "Spend the rest of your life, dear friends, remembering when you came to the foot of the cross and the love of God changed you."

NOTABLES

The 2016 NOBTS and



Gary D. Myers photo

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley issues his charge to graduates during the seminary's commencement service May 14.

Leavell College class included 241 graduates.

NOBTS conferred 138 graduate degrees and certificates, including four doctor of philosophy (Ph.D.) degrees, four doctor of educational ministry degrees, and fourteen doctor of ministry degrees (D.Min.) during the May 14 ceremony. Among the doctor of ministry recipients, Andrew Anderson, a

squadron chaplain with the U.S. Army's 10th Mountain Division, earned the degree for his project: "Developing the Skill of Life Application Preaching for Soldier Spiritual Resilience at Warrior Chapel, Baghdad, Iraq."

An additional 103 graduates received Leavell College certificates and degrees in a separate commencement service May 13.

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LBF trustees discuss 'free money' and other updates

By JERRY LOVE

LBF Communications

ALEXANDRIA – The Louisiana Baptist Foundation Board of Trustees met for their second quarterly meeting of the year at the Louisiana Baptist Building, April 26, 2016, with the morning dedicated to meetings by the investment committee and operating committee and the afternoon spent in general session by the entire body to consider committee reports and other business.

INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

Jim Prince, trustee from Lafayette, chaired the morning investment committee meeting, which included a report by Barbara Bell, certified public accountant and controller for the Foundation.

She reviewed the account holdings for the first quarter of the year, stating assets under management as of March 31, 2016, were \$167,840,414.05, an increase of approximately \$3.4 million since the end of 2015.

Bell explained the increase as a result of strong

deposit activity.

Investment returns for the major components of the LBF portfolio were reviewed by Jim Prince, who gave the following information as the official data calculated for the end of the quarter March 31, 2016:

Short Term Fund: 0.55% Annualized Yield

Fixed Income Fund: 2.11% Total Return

Equity Fund: -0.51% Total Return

The Group Investment Fund which is comprised of various market sectors reflected a -0.05% total return year to date.

Lee Morris, an investment consultant from Graystone Consulting, also spoke, noting the “different world” which now defines investment opportunities.

Morris said the market assumptions of his firm’s global investment committee expect that average growth over the next seven year period will be less than the historical average, and that Graystone will be looking for opportunities to enhance income from value oriented companies and other types

of investments, such as preferred stock, to maintain healthy total returns for the Foundation.

The investment committee approved policies for the Convertible Securities Fund and the Managed Futures Fund. Both funds were added to diversify the overall portfolio of the LBF.

OPERATING COMMITTEE

John Carroll of Columbia, Louisiana, chaired the operating committee, offering that a review of the operating budget reflected a reasonable surplus for the first quarter – revenue was ahead of expectations while expenses were lower than budgeted so far this year.

Jerry Love, planned giving director, reported on several new gifts received in the first quarter, including proceeds from two estates.

He said these gifts would benefit missions offerings and a local resort ministry in Louisiana.

FREE MONEY

Love also reported on the

“Give a Gift” promotional strategy implemented in February.

The Foundation works with the *Louisiana Baptist Message* to promote a \$1,000 giveaway each month in 2016.

The promotional allows an individual – selected at random from entries by Louisiana Baptists – to direct this money from the Foundation to a Louisiana Baptist ministry.

The first two recipients were reported to be FBC Mandeville and FBC Lake Providence.

The operating committee also heard from Executive Director Wayne Taylor regarding the development of a statement of faith and religious purpose.

Taylor committed to continue seeking legal counsel in forging this statement and its incorporation with existing policies of the Foundation.

GENERAL SESSION

Board President Julian Johnston, of Calhoun, gave overviews of the information presented in both commit-

tee meetings, and trustees approved a recommendation regarding investment policies for the two newly created funds.

In his executive director’s report, Taylor gave an update on the proposed implementation of a new accounting system, Stellar iPhi, with trustees granting approval to move forward, pending a positive review of the contract by legal counsel.

The Louisiana Baptist Foundation was established in 1944 to encourage and assist individuals with gifts in support of Louisiana Baptist churches and ministries, as well as provide asset management for the churches and institutions affiliated with the LBC.

To learn more about the work and ministry of the Louisiana Baptist Foundation, to see a list of current Trustees, or to review investment returns for the LBF managed funds, go to www.LBFinfo.org.

The next meeting for the Louisiana Baptist Foundation Board of Trustees is scheduled for July 26.

Editor’s report: ‘Good news’ for Louisiana Baptist Message

By BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA – In a day when reports of demise for news media are common place, the *Baptist Message* is bucking the trend, according to Editor Will Hall.

“We have good news about your *Louisiana Baptist Message*,” Hall told board members during their recent spring meeting. “About what we’ve been able to do the last six months, what we are looking to do the next six months, and beyond that.”

Hall said the *Message* dedicated a good part of the year, so far, documenting recovery efforts after the record rainfall which devastated many parts of the state.

“Early in the season, our focus was on the flooding across the state and Louisiana Baptists’ response to the tragedy through our comprehensive disaster relief efforts,” Hall said.

“More than 18,000 homes were affected, according to FEMA. Importantly, most of these were in the north where most of our churches are located and most of our DR volunteers. So we emphasized the valiant work of our DR teams.”

Hall reviewed several of the compelling stories published on the *Message*’s website and promoted through social media streams, and described how these articles translated into growth in online presence. The website and Facebook platforms now register an average 20,000 views per week for each.

Though the *Message* has reported on positive news around the state, the multimedia news outlet also has navigated difficult, controversial issues this year, Hall said.

This included the reportedly voluntary resignations by seasoned international Mission Board field missionaries, he said, and the firing of 30 IMB commu-

nicators with incredible credentials.

Hall explained the *Message* is not a “crusading, investigative outlet,” but added that when critical issues and developments arise and entities seem less than open about the matters, the news outlet must be willing to ask the questions and pursue the answers so that Louisiana Baptists are fully informed to participate in the Southern Baptist community of faith.

“We are committed to transparency and to informing Louisiana Baptists so they can capably serve in their critical role of directing the work of local associations, the state convention and the national denomination,” Hall said.

FUTURE PLANS

Looking ahead, the *Message* plans soon to launch the baptism promotion initiative announced in the fall. Hall said this special section on the website will

feature photos of baptisms by Louisiana Baptist churches and this new feature will roll out with the launch of the newly designed online edition of the *Message*.

Hall reminded board members that inspiring more baptisms also is a focus in the print edition, with these stories assigned “top billing” on each front page.

Hall also announced his desire to emphasize soul-winning in 2017-2018 in conjunction with plans announced by the LBC to designate these as Harvest Years – a two-year initiative to share the Gospel in every home in Louisiana.

He said he had submitted a one-time funding request to the LBC Executive Board to print 175,000 copies of a special issue on the Harvest Initiative in order to attempt to reach every Louisiana Baptist household.

“We will be putting a greater focus on the LBC evangelism initiative for

2017 and 2018 to stress an ‘all hands on deck’ focus to get Louisiana Baptists engaged at all levels in the all-out effort to evangelize our state,” Hall said.

OTHER BUSINESS

The trustees approved an operations policy manual that addresses issues such as editorials, letters to the editor, online comments, political advertising and obituaries.

The document also provides guidelines on article basics, a style guide and writing tips.

Trustees approved the development of a personnel policy manual, added inexpensive short-term disability coverage for *Message* employees and gave the go ahead to look at the feasibility of establishing an endowment to train freelancer writers in honor of long-time writer Mark Hunter, who unexpectedly died of a heart attack April 24.

Hollywood to Haughton, DR volunteers aided Louisianans

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL & PHILIP TIMOTHY

Message Staff

For the past 25 years, Liz Landers has cooked for some of Hollywood's most notable actors.

But since late March, Landers' kitchen has been at First Baptist Church in Haughton, preparing meals for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers stationed there.

A former resident of Slidell, Landers said her house was severely damaged by Hurricane Katrina in 2005, and that she feels this was a way she could give back to disaster relief volunteers who helped her restore her home.

According to Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief leaders, almost every meal served to the hundreds of volunteers working out of First Baptist Haughton has been planned and prepared by Landers.

Landers shared with the *Louisiana Baptist Message* her day during the flood recovery efforts regularly started at 4:30 a.m. and ended around 7:30 p.m.

"When the flooding happened I knew I had to do something," said Landers, a member of Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport. "I can never repay what they did for me after Katrina but the best I can do is try."

Landers, who prepared her last meal at First Baptist Haughton May 12, is among hundreds of volunteers, many from across the United States, who have helped with disaster relief efforts in the various regions of Louisiana impacted by record flooding which began in March.

Through May 12, volunteers have registered 9,658 days of work, logged 3,473 ministry contacts, prepared 70,368 meals, provided 4,042 showers, washed and dried 2,548 loads of laundry, completed 3,421 jobs – and led 50 people to faith in Christ.

The historic rainfall left more than 18,000 homes flooded, according to the Federal Emergency Management Administration, and countless lives impacted. An estimated 85 percent of Louisiana's disaster relief volunteers were among those affected, Louisiana Baptist leaders noted,

but churches rallied nonetheless, rushing to help those in desperate need.

The Southern Baptist Convention helped coordinate the DR units mobilized by state conventions to assist this state, and volunteers like Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief Southeast Regional Coordinator Tom Long, welcomed their help.

"Everybody was really worn out," Long said. "Our teams worked almost two months in parts of south Louisiana."

"It is sad people are going through heartache and destruction but at the same time it's a tremendous opportunity to reach out to people beyond their physical needs and listen to their stories," he continued. "Everybody has a story. Everybody wants to be heard."

One of the most touching moments in his time at the incident command center at Woodland Park Baptist Church in Hammond was a conversation his team had with a man who felt he had no one to turn to after the storm. After sharing ways they could meet his physical needs – with regard to repairs for his home – the team met his spiritual needs, Long said.

That evening, Long said he witnessed the man accept Christ as his personal Lord and Savior.

"He left our office rejuvenated and encourage, knowing someone was willing to sit down and give him direction," Long said. "We were overflowed with joy, knowing he walked in and was so open and receptive. That's a reason we do disaster relief – while we are there to meet a need such as helping mud-out their home, we are there to hopefully lead others to Christ."

MORE WORK TO DO

While much of the work is complete in most affected areas, state leaders emphasize the next phase of disaster relief has just begun in others where floodwaters only recently subsided.

Louisiana Baptists also are forming teams to help rebuild homes as well.

Rob Tibbitts, pastor of Crossroads Baptist Church in Vinton, said nearly 30 homes

will be rebuilt by volunteers in his community, and he expects that number to grow.

"We've found some families open now to the Gospel that we are rebuilding homes for," Tibbitts said. "It can take up to six weeks to rebuild a home and that gives us the opportunity to build that relationship long-term so we can share the Gospel long-term because we are there with them days, weeks and months helping them get in their homes."

Crossroads Baptist Church hosted one of the incident command centers for disaster relief operations and the community came together, too, to help neighbors in the weeks following the flooding.

Tibbitts said assistance by Louisiana Baptists and our Southern Baptist partners made a good impression on neighbors, and planted seeds in the hearts of many who received help.

"We are a tiny church that can't do much on our own," Tibbitts said. "But then others came from our Carey Baptist Association and outside the state to help us knock this thing out."

"You get in a situation like this that's overwhelming and while you know God will pull through, you wonder how He is going to come through," he continued. "Then others show up with tools, resources and a smile on their face. It's a great sense of relief and a great sense of knowing that we're going to make this and that we will get through this with flying colors."

He said the disaster reminded him of God uses even tragedies to help us grow spiritually.

"God gives us more than we can handle so we will depend less on ourselves and more on Him," he said. "In this situation it was more than we could handle. He showed up and did what His people couldn't do. People are real quick to give Crossroads a lot of credit. The truth is it's not Crossroads but the body of Christ that made the difference."

John Cowling, head of operations for the state incident command center at Rolling Hills Ministries in Ruston, said as of May 12, almost 70



NAMB photo

Dezzie Jackson, a 45-year resident at her home on Woods Street in Minden, asks for prayer with Gevan Spinney, pastor of First Baptist Church in Haughton, after she received a phone call telling her that her vehicle was a total loss due to flood damage.

days after the rains began, only two incident command centers remained in operation to handle the remaining 29 mud-out projects.

"The volunteers have been an answer to prayer," Cowling said. "We had and still continue to have this opportunity to serve people and fulfill that calling as disaster relief volunteers to help those who really need the help."

David Abernathy, director of Rolling Hills, added his appreciation for churches that sent volunteers week after week to help others in need.

"Just because this phase is beginning to come to an end for us, the long-term recovery will last for some time," he said. "It's not over yet. We still have a great opportunity for ministry for local churches."

"I can't say enough 'thank you's' to churches who have bent over backwards, as well as all the state disaster relief teams who came in," he said. "It's been a phenomenal response."

CHURCHES REBUILDING

Zenoria Baptist Church was one of the 14 church facilities hardest hit by the historic flooding.

The small, rural church in Trout has quite a history where it is sited, only a short

distance from the Little River. Its building survived the great flood of 1927, as well as lesser floods in 1953, 1988 and 1991, but it was not as fortunate this year.

Rapidly rising waters caught everyone by surprise and the structure's interior was destroyed, but not all was lost.

"What began as a little water in the church yard quickly turned into a raging flood that almost filled the inside of the church," said Steve Campbell, the church's treasurer. "Thankfully, with the help of men from First Baptist Church, Jena, we were able to remove the pews, the pulpit and most of the furniture before that happened."

While the quick actions saved much of the furnishings, nothing could be done for the building itself.

"When we finally got back into the building, the ceiling had cracked, the walls had moved out and the floors came up," said Campbell. "It was a terrible thing to witness."

The 50-member congregation voted 22-0 to rebuild, but realized doing so would take a God-sized miracle.

"I was very encouraged the night we voted. We were unified," Campbell said.

A miracle is close to

See AIDED on 15

Church start revitalizes founding congregation

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

WEST MONROE -- Good Hope Baptist Church of West Monroe was an integral partner in founding Fair Park Baptist Church in 1949, but as the years passed the West Monroe congregation declined.

Still, even with few in number, the people of Good Hope desired to see the Gospel spread in their community.

Through the leading of the Holy Spirit and the vision and direction of Fair Park's Pastor Waymond Warren, Fair Park set out to help their founding church.

For about a year, Fair Park sent members to lead music and preach on a weekly basis at Good Hope. But after a while the smaller congregation expressed a desire for stability in the pulpit.

At that time, Good Hope moved their services from 11 a.m. to 8 a.m. to allow Fair Park Pastor Warren and Minister of Worship Darris Warren to lead services at Good Hope and have time to return to Fair Park, about 2 miles from Good Hope, for the 10 a.m. worship there.

Fair Park also helped with outreach activities -- such as a fall festival, a live nativity at Christmas and a commu-

nity parade -- to bring others from the community onto the Good Hope campus. As time passed, the two congregations began to feel like one church, and that led to a vote to merge the two congregations in late June, 2015.

Exciting things are happening on the Good Hope Road campus, Warren said. Plans are to continue regular worship at the Good Hope Road location, and continue to reach people for Christ.

Recently the church broke ground on Hope Park, which will provide an outdoor pavilion, restrooms, children's play area and walking track, and will be built in phases using volunteer labor and donations.

"God was preparing us for several years to help Good Hope, our mother church," Warren said. "I hate to see any church struggling and it has been a blessing to be able to be a part of what God is doing on the Good Hope campus. I am so glad that we are all part of the same church family now." Warren continued.

"We have been able to minister to and love on the congregation there, just as they have us. They don't realize what a blessing they have been to us and what a blessing it has been to serve with them."

Grads from page 8

they may face in the future, God will equip them to overcome any obstacle set before them.

"In the darkest times of my life with cancer I've grown the most," she said. "Suffering is never in vain and always has a way of bringing about broken maturity. This is true for whatever trial we may face, now or in the future."

While the graduation ceremony provided a time of celebration, the event also provided a chance to remember 22-year-old David Marler, who was on pace to graduate with this classmates but in December 2015 passed away in his sleep.

LC President Rick Brewer honored Marler with a posthumous undergraduate degree, and Jim White, an LC alum, shared how Marler had such a

positive influence on friends, family and the youth group he worked with each week.

White said those closest to Marler repeatedly mentioned Marler's strength of character.

Brewer commended the young scholars who spoke during the commencement service.

But he pointed out they are only a sample of so many in the student body who exhibit the best of character, scholarship and faith which Louisiana College intentionally fosters.

"Many already have embraced the truths that my friend Jay Strack noted, as evidenced by their outstanding academic achievement and their spiritual commitments," Brewer said. "Such students and graduates are the result of our efforts to prepare graduates and transform lives."

LOUISIANA NOTABLES

ON THE MOVE

- James Brantley, wife Letha, Bryan is the new pastor at Mt. Hope Baptist Church, Oakdale.
- Joe Dunn retires as senior pastor from Bethlehem Baptist Church, Albany.
- Kimberly, husband Wes, Aguilard is the new Children's Minister at First Baptist Church, Pineville.
- Jerry Elgin is the interim pastor at Pilgrim Home Baptist Church, Benton.
- Ryan Perry resigns as youth pastor at Trinity Heights Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- Bill Stroud is the new pastor at Caddo Prairie Baptist Church, Hoss-ton.
- Susan, husband Steve, Brown is the new children's minister at Eastwood Baptist Church, Haughton.
- Wayne Dubose is the interim pastor at Cook Baptist Church, Ruston.
- John Lary is the new pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- Ryan Sidhom resigned as youth pastor at First Baptist Church, Vivian.

IN REMEMBRANCE

- Nathan Dyer, 82, died May 10. He was employed with the Louisiana Baptist Convention from Jan. 1, 1981 until his retirement on June 30, 1998. He served as an Associate Maintenance Director at Tall Timbers. Please be in prayer for his family.

HOMECOMING

- Faith Baptist Church, Livingston: 26th Homecoming and a 10th anniversary celebration of Trey Cowell as pastor, May 29 at 10:30 a.m. A reception will follow morning worship service. For more information, call 225.276.8087. Pastor: Trey Cowell.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: 131st anniversary, June 5, 10:30 a.m., Charles Billingsley and his Back to Worship Tour will be leading worship during Sunday morning services as part of the church's anniversary celebration. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.
- Mt. Pisgah Baptist Church, Mount Herman: 175th Anniversary, June 5, 9:30 a.m. Former pastors and members are welcomed and will be in attendance. Speaker: Tom Hodge, pastor from Venice Baptist Church in Florida. Come join the fun and fellowship. Pastor: Scott Spinks.
- Temple Baptist Church, DeRidder: 65th Anniversary, June 5, 10:45 a.m. Former pastors, charter members and past members are welcomed and will be recognized. A covered dish meal will be served following the service. There will be special music and a poem is being written by current members of the church. Pastor: A.J. Ott.
- Pine Hill Baptist Church, Leesville: 123rd Homecoming, June 5, 10 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow the service. Speaker: Durhl Ray

Davis. Former pastor and members are welcomed. Pastor: Tri Evans.

LAGNIAPPE

- Richey Baptist Church, Deville: Gospel Concert featuring Reborn from Jonesboro, AR., May 28, 6 p.m. For more information, call 318.447.9047. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Grady Dodge.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Colfax: Fifth Sunday Singing, May 29. Friends and family are invited to share in the singing. Pastor: Carl Gulde.
- Florida Boulevard Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: Charles Billingsley and his Back to Worship Tour in concert, June 4, 7 p.m. Tickets available online for \$12.50 at www.fbbsc.org. Pastor: Jason Bland.
- Ouachita Baptist Church, West Monroe: SonWest Roundup Vacation Bible School, Registration and hot dogs, June 5, 6 p.m. VBS, June 6-8, 6-8:30 p.m., for ages 4 years old through sixth grade. Pastor: Mike Holloway.
- First Baptist Church, Pineville: First@First Business Leader Luncheon, June 6, Noon. Speaker: Haywood Joiner, Louisiana State University at Alexandria professor and Chair of the Department of Allie Health at LSUA. Cost: \$10 and you may pay at the door. Please RSVP to Melinda Langford (mlangford@fbcpineville.net. Pastor: Stewart Holloway.
- Trinity Baptist Church, Hammond: Barnyard Roundup VBS, June 6-10, from 9 a.m.-noon for all children age, kindergarten (completed) through the sixth grade. To register online, go to www.pumpkincenter.org and click on Barnyard Roundup on the home page, or call the church office at 225.294.5536. Pastor: Bob Adams.
- Richey Baptist Church, Deville: Barnyard Roundup Vacation Bible School, June 6-10, 6-8:30 p.m. For more information, call 318.466.5115. Pastor: Grady Dodge.
- First Baptist Church, Pineville: Submerged Vacation Bible School, June 6-10, 6-8:30 p.m. To register online go to www.fbcpineville.net. Children's choir will perform VBS musical Submerged, June 12, 6 p.m. Pastor: Stewart Holloway.
- Alto Baptist Church, Alto: Pet's Unleashed: God Cares Fur You Vacation Bible School, June 11-12, Saturday, 8:30 a.m.-2 p.m. and Sunday, 10:30 a.m.-noon for pre-K through 6th grade. For more information, please call Sandy Miller at 318.623.4444. Pastor: Alan Miller.
- New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Denham Springs: COW-a-bunga-Farm, Growing with our Faithful God VBS, June 13-17, 6-8:30 p.m. The age group for VBS includes all students entering K-4 through the sixth grade next school year. For more information, call the church at 225.664.7532. Pastor: James Courtney.
- First Baptist Church, Slidell: Submerged Vacation Bible School, June 13-17, 6-8:30 p.m. Register online at www.fbcslidell.org. Pastor: Ricky Cummings.
- First Baptist Church, Sulphur: VBS Music Camp, June 14-15, 10 a.m. - 1 p.m. Cost: \$15 includes CD, T-shirt and lunch for both days. Submerged Vacation Bible School, Jun 20-24, 5:30-8:30 p.m. VBS musical, June 26, 10:30 a.m. To register, go online at www.fbcsulphur.org/vbs2016.

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.

fuw helu aeln efw aero wjul, aeln rugdjolw f

kylfa pzdarazwl js sroelo: fuw aelry ula myfql.

Dzql srxl:ort

Clues:
W = D; R = I

Answer to May 5 Scripture Crypto:
Joshua twenty-four:three

14 Classifieds

Message Classified Ads

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First Baptist Church in Haynesville, LA, is actively seeking a senior pastor/preacher whom God has prepared to lead, guide, and minister to our congregation and to the community.
If interested, please send résumé by **June 30, 2016**, to
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First Baptist Church, New Roads, LA is seeking a part-time youth minister or a summer intern.
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Highland Baptist Christian School (PK-12) of New Iberia, LA is accepting applications for School Administrator to begin July 2016.
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as school administrator/principal/head of school
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State's pastors speak out, take stand over transgender directive

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

An order by the Obama administration that public schools and universities permit transgender students to use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to the gender identity of their choosing has drawn opposition from many Louisiana Baptists.

An order by the Obama administration that public schools and universities permit transgender students to use restrooms and locker rooms that correspond to the gender identity of their choosing has drawn opposition from many Louisiana Baptists.

Issued on May 13, the order signed by Department of Education and Justice officials threaten to pull federal funding for schools that do not comply.

A letter on the matter was sent to all school districts in the U.S.

"Schools have a responsibility to provide a safe and nondiscriminatory environment for all students, including transgender students," the letter said. "Harassment that targets a student based on gender identity, transgender status, or gender transition is harassment based on sex, and the Departments enforce Title IX accordingly. If sex-based harassment creates a hostile environment, the school must take prompt and effective steps to end the harassment, prevent its recurrence, and, as appropriate, remedy its effects. A school's failure to treat students consistent with their gender identity may create or contribute to a hostile environment in violation of Title IX."

The letter said a school can provide separate facilities based on the gender, but transgender students must have access to those facilities for which sex they identify. "A school may not require transgender students to use facilities inconsistent with their gender identity or to use individual-user facilities when other students are not required to do so," the letter said. "A school may, however, make individual-user options available to all students who voluntarily seek additional privacy."

FAITH-BASED COMMUNITY TAKES ACTION

Addressed by pastors of both large and small churches throughout the state, their message was loud and clear – the directive puts innocent school children in danger and the faith

Louisiana AG: Obama's transgender mandate 'unlawful' and 'improper'

BATON ROUGE – Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry announced he would vigorously defend the state and its citizens from unlawful action threatened by the Obama Administration's recent mandate that public schools allow students to use bathrooms and locker rooms of the opposite sex.

In a letter to the leaders of the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Board of Regents, Louisiana High School Athletic Association, Louisiana School Boards Association, Louisiana Community and Technical College System Board, and Office of Juvenile Justice – Landry asserted the administration's threat to remove the state's Title IX monies jeopardizes the safety of the student body and creates a public education funding crisis.

"Let me be perfectly clear, President Obama and his appointees do not have legal authority to require our children to share locker rooms and bathrooms with children of the opposite sex," wrote Landry. "The administration's interpretation of Title IX constitutes an improper attempt to commandeer state-owned property

in pursuit of a federal policy that has uniformly been rejected by the federal courts."

"The policy position adopted by the Obama Administration irresponsibly creates an environment in which children may be more easily exposed to sexual predators," continued Landry. "Furthermore, these irresponsible and illegally promulgated rules place the mental well-being and privacy rights of ninety-nine percent of Louisiana's children at risk without any demonstrable evidence of benefit to the less than one percent of the population this policy purports to benefit."

"While there are opportunities for state lawmakers, school districts, athletic associations, and colleges and universities to address complex student safety issues in a nondiscriminatory manner – this mandate and threat of lawsuits and withholding of education funding is not a proper or legal approach," Landry wrote.

A full copy of this letter from Landry may be found at <http://www.agjefflandry.com/Shared/ViewDoc.aspx?Type=3&Doc=557>.

community should unite in this battle.

Waylon Bailey, pastor of First Baptist Church in Covington, said in an e-mail to the *Baptist Message* that he and pastors of two other large Protestant congregations in his community were deeply saddened about the mandate.

In a joint statement penned by Bailey, James Mitchell of St. Timothy on the Northshore and Steve Robinson of Church of the King, the pastors said they believe the policy is "wrong-headed and destructive," posing a danger to women and children. The pastors said they are concerned this policy will hurt instead of help society, opening doors in the future which cannot be closed.

"We fear grave and unforeseen consequences," they said.

The pastors added this issue is disruptive for administrators, teachers, students and parents, creating an additional burden on them in a day when educators' job is already difficult enough.

When unity is needed in the U.S., this policy will create division, they said.

"This issue is a common sense issue. It is also a moral and theological issue," the statement said. "God made us male and female. Jesus affirmed that from the beginning God made us male and female."

The pastors encouraged Louisianans to contact their

local school board representative, elected officials and the governor's office in regards to this issue.

"We want to remind you we will demonstrate our faith as we seek to 'speak the truth in love,'" the pastors said. "Simon Peter encouraged us to always be ready to give an account for the reason for our hope but to do so with 'gentleness and respect' (1 Peter 2:15). As you deal with this issue, seek God in prayer and be faithful to pray for all our leaders."

Steve Horn addressed the issue during his sermon Sunday morning at First Baptist Church Lafayette, where he serves as pastor.

After referencing the biblical character Daniel, who stayed true to his convictions about God and defied the king's decree not to pray, Horn then asked his congregation to pray for school leaders. First Lafayette posted the excerpt from his message on its Facebook page.

"We need to be praying for school superintendents all over the country tomorrow, that they'll have the courage to stand up, speak up, show up and say the letter I got last Friday does not apply to this school system," Horn said May 15. "May it be in these United States of America, and may we as a Christian body in conviction of God's word stand beside them in this fight against what's happening today."

First Baptist Church in Kenner enacted a restroom policy on Friday, soon after news broke about the edict by Obama's administration.

"The latest issue was the reason we pulled the trigger on it," Pastor Mike Miller said. "Churches are typically exempt from laws and lawsuits if their stated beliefs would be violated. We are articulating particulars about everything right now."

The new policy states that because First Baptist holds to the biblical position that gender is determined by God, as referenced in Genesis 1:27, First Baptist Church recognizes only male and female genders.

"Therefore, we do not encourage any expression or self-identity that stands in contradiction to a person's God-given identity and genetic composition, and we will work with individuals to help them find joy, peace, and contentment in who they are as God created

them to be," the policy says. "Furthermore, we reject the idea that transgenderism or any 'gender identity' other than that consistent with one's biological sex is a valid expression of one's identity."

"We welcome all people, regardless of their beliefs on these issues, to participate in our corporate activities, and we hope they will be received warmly. Our intent is to extend the love of God to everyone. Therefore, in order to provide the safest and most emotionally healthy environment for everyone involved, we require that all persons use only those restroom facilities that align with their biologically established gender."

Brian Gunter, pastor of First Baptist Church in Pollock, took to social media on Saturday morning May 14, calling the directive a means to make public schools an unsafe environment for children. He called upon Christians to stand together and refuse to comply.

Gunter wrote he believes local school boards, superintendents and principals likely do not agree with the order. Therefore, he cautioned against attacking school leaders and encouraged others to tell them they will do everything possible to oppose Obama's directive.

"Please do not treat our local schools as if they are the enemy," he said. "Give them the benefit of the doubt. If we support them, they will probably stand with us."

"We simply cannot allow our public schools to become a place where official policy would enable and give opportunity to those who seek to sexually assault our children," he continued. "As a community, we must take this stand together – we will not allow our children to attend any school which does not require boys and girls to use separate bathrooms and locker rooms. We expect our schools to refuse to comply with this immoral directive because protecting our children from sexual assault is more important than

AIDED from page 12

becoming reality: May 8 land was donated 1.3 miles from the church to rebuild, and, May 13-14 the church raised \$5,200 from a bake and rummage sale that included music performed by a bluegrass band.

The church hopes to pour the concrete slab sometime in the fall, and has a 2017 commitment from Kingdom Build-

ers to start construction, after \$50,000 is raised.

Pastor Joel Johnson gives all the credit to God.

"We are rejoicing in Christ because He is showing us the way and increased our faith even more," Johnson said. "Everybody is excited that we actually have a place now that we're not in limbo."

Passion for the Word ignites at state Bible Drill

BY HOLLY JO LINZAY

Regional Reporter

PINEVILLE – Excitement soared as contenders in the state Bible Drill competition lined up, listened as a Scripture reference was called out, furiously flipped pages in their Bibles and stepped forward ready to respond.

“You can see a passion for the Word in these students’ competing, and seeing that fires up my spirit,” said Jennifer Thomas, who was attending the State Tournament for Youth and High School Bible Drill & Speakers’ Tournament for the first time. This year’s event was held April 30 at First Baptist Church in Pineville.

The Bible Drill competition is part of a discipleship program designed to assist youth in developing useful skills and knowledge of the Bible. During the tournament, participants compete in tests of their knowledge about the books of the Bible, basic Scripture references, different approaches to the plan of salvation and Scripture references relating to key beliefs and doctrinal convictions.

Chloe Whitehead, a ninth-grade student from First Baptist Church in Gonzales, has competed for the last six years in the Bible Drill tournament.

“It’s been a fun way to learn the Scripture and to have the answers for different questions that even I have had

growing up,” Whitehead said about the tournament and preparation for the event.

Her father, Mike Whitehead, remarked how the studying and preparation process for the Bible Drill tournament has made a positive impact on their entire family.

Steve Maltempi, youth strategist for the Louisiana Baptist Convention, agreed and said he is a big believer in the impact the tournament makes on families.

“There is nothing more important than hiding God’s Word in your heart,” Maltempi noted. He said for most youth and their families preparing for the Bible Drill tournament is a year-long commitment.

“Most of them stick to it to the end, a total commitment. We hope the end result is that they’ll have a faith that transfers into college and into their marriage,” Maltempi added.

Carter Byrd, a seventh-grade student from Mt. Nebo Baptist Church, said this was his fourth year to participate in the Bible tournament.

“It’s fun to learn the scriptures. Each year I like to challenge myself to always do better,” Byrd said.

Two of his eight siblings competed in this year’s competition. Stephanie Byrd, his mother, said the time and commitment to studying in preparation was “a

lot of work” for her children, but worth “every minute.”

“The Word is what will stand, and it’s our offensive weapon against the things of this world,” she said, adding that her children gain more knowledge each year they compete in the Bible Drill.

About 160 students competed in the 2016 state tournament, and two were selected to represent Louisiana Baptists at the National Youth Bible Drill Tournament: Mitchell Bearry, from Woodlawn Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, will compete in the 12th grade level at the national competition, and, Chloe Whitehead, from First Baptist Church in Gonzales, will compete in the 9th grade level.

Other winners at the state level include:

7th Grade -- Five Bible Drill winners were recognized in two groups: Gaige Lavigne, FBC Gonzales; Emeline Soileau, FBC Covington; Ashley Lewis, Fellowship Baptist, Greenwell Springs; Hannah James, Fellowship Baptist, Greenwell, Springs; Allie James, FBC Montgomery

8th Grade -- Four people were named Bible Drill winners in three groups: Florence Caraza, Quitman Baptist; Liliana Talazac, FBC Covington; Kaitlyn Ezell, New Chapel Hill, West Monroe; Anna Starnes, FBC Gonzales.

9th Grade -- The first and second place Bible Drill winners for each of two groups were: Chole Whitehead, FBC Gonzales, and Jonah Brown, FBC DeRidder; Ashlyn James, FBC Montgomery, and Chris Pugh, Ascension Baptist, Gonzales.

10th Grade -- The overall winner was Lathan Lasyone, Atlanta Baptist.

11th Grade -- Students with the three highest overall scores were awarded scholarships to Louisiana College: Noah Starnes, FBC Gonzales, received a \$4,500 annual scholarship for first place; Julianna Schober, Heritage Baptist, Shreveport, received a \$3,500 annual scholarship for placing second and Kendra Wilson, FBC Lafayette, received a \$2,500 annual scholarship for coming in third.

12th Grade -- Rachel Copland, FBC Copland, was named overall winner and Mitchell Bearry, Woodlawn Baptist, Baton Rouge, won the Bible Drill competition.

SPEECH COMPETITION

Students also participated in the Youth Speakers’ Tournament, a competition which asks students to write a speech and present it to a panel of judges, who assess the composition and delivery. This event is designed to stimulate growth toward Christian maturity by asking youth to think seriously about their Christian commitment.

Winners for 2016 include:

11th Grade -- Students with the three highest overall scores were awarded scholarships to Louisiana College: Joy Nettles, FBC Covington, earned first place honors and received a \$4,500 annual scholarship; Jacob Talazac, FBC Covington, placed second and will be rewarded with a \$3,500 annual scholarship; Kelli Hemphill, East Winnfield Baptist, earned a third place finish, which garners a \$2,500 annual scholarship.

12th Grade -- Jonathan Singletary, FBC Covington, earned the right to represent Louisiana Baptists at the national competition in Georgia.



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