

“The Lord will indeed give what is good, and our land will yield its harvest.”

– Psalm 85:12 (NIV)

BAPTIST Message

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July 6, 2017



Brian Blackwell photo

Eighteen members of HIS Church in Pineville participated in a special lakeside baptism service June 4. The baptisms were the first for the church in 2017, with more outdoor ones planned before the year ends. Since the church began in 2006, 750 have been baptized.

Commitment to share the Gospel results in growth at HIS Church

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

PINEVILLE – Kayla Jordan had not one but two extraordinary reasons to celebrate God’s gift of life at Lake Buhlow, Sunday, June 4: She had recently learned she was pregnant with her first child, due in January, and, she was among 18 people participating in a lakeside baptism service sponsored by HIS Church, Pineville.

Moments after coming up out of the water, Jordan told the *Baptist Message* that just a few months ago she had reached a low point and realized her need to be reborn in Christ.

She confessed her sins and asked God’s forgiveness, and was anxious to also make a public profession of faith through baptism. So Jordan did not hesitate to sign up to

See **GROWTH** on 8



Brian Blackwell photo

Steve Speer, left, baptizes Ethan Busby as his dad, Chris, stands beside him during a lakeside service June 4.

HEALING: When you pray, pray believing, because miracles will happen!

BY WILL HALL
Message Editor

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – As Ricky Belgard spoke from the pulpit of Philadelphia Baptist Church at the Horseshoe Drive campus in Alexandria, he said he was thinking of the lengthy ramp that would have been needed only seven weeks ago for him to have made it up on the platform.

“Now, I’m standing on higher ground,” he celebrated.

Belgard shared with the congregation that evening, June 4, how God had healed him from being bound, long-term, to a wheelchair while facing the prognosis of a slow death from the combination of two deadly conditions.



Will Hall photo

Ricky Belgard gives his testimony during a recent service.

LIFE OR DEATH

“I have had Multiple Sclerosis for many years,” Belgard shared, “then the doctors discovered I don’t just have MS, but I have a problem in the brain

See **HEALING** on 4

Instead of ‘suicide by cop,’ Sparks finds life in Christ

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer



Brian Blackwell photo

John and Donna Sparks serve at Antioch Baptist Church in Florien, where he has served as pastor since Jan. 1, 2015.

FLORIEN (LBM) – As he looked down the bore of a loaded gun, John Sparks felt he was barreling toward death on that fateful fall day.

Wanted for first-degree murder, Sparks found himself surrounded by a SWAT team in a Salt Lake City restaurant, Aug. 17, 1977. Thankfully, the officer pointing his revolver at Sparks decided not to shoot, choosing instead to spare his life and take him into custody.

Sparks eventually would land in prison, but having been reprieved

from immediate death, he began a path that eventually would lead him to find eternal life in Christ.

WINDING PATH

“I told the guy I had taken a hostage. I told him I was going up the stairs and out the door to die,” said Sparks, now pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Florien. “When you have nothing else left ‘good’ in life and are the bottom scum of the earth, death seems like the only option. But thanks to my grandmother

See **SPARKS** on 4

Suburban Baptist Church rebuilds, recommits to community

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS – Four months after an EF-3 tornado heavily damaged Suburban Baptist Church, the congregation assembled Sunday, June 11, for the first gathering on its campus since the storm.

The message to the community during this block party was strong – the members have not given up and plan to return to full ministry in the neighborhood when their facilities are rebuilt.



Brian Blackwell photo

REUNITING & RENEWING

Many of the congregants who showed up shared moments of laughter and a few thankful tears about how far God had taken them since the tornado destroyed the worship center and damaged two other buildings, Feb. 7.

A crowd gathers at the Suburban Baptist Church campus for a block party, June 11, 2017. The event was the first time the congregation had gathered on the church property since an EF-3 tornado damaged its buildings four months earlier. More than 100 churches and individuals from across the United States have volunteered time and financial resources to the rebuild effort.

Myiah Scott, who joined the church a year after Hurricane Katrina wreaked havoc on the facilities in August 2005, said at first it was discouraging when she saw

news footage of the damage. But, like other members, Scott knew giving up was not an option.

“When a lot of the church seemed to be gone, we felt at first that we had nowhere

to go and a piece of us was gone,” she said. “This is the place we go to pray, to praise God with our songs and to have a good time. But God reminded me that our church is more than a building.

“I feel like God wants us to rebuild,” she continued. “This is showing how strong of a bond we members have and that is a great witness to the community. Now, when I pass by the church, it makes me happy in a sense because of what our future is like and the help from others we don’t even know are stepping in to help, like these young people

who have come to help us this week.”

MORE THAN DISASTER RELIEF

More than 150 students and senior adults from Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala., coordinated the block party, complete with the usual fare of food, games and music.

The next day and much of the remaining the week, they cleared out debris, put up drywall, painted rooms and completed other jobs to help

See REBUILD on 9



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Kairos Ministry is more than a gift to Monroe's at-risk youth

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

MONROE (LBM) – An ecumenical ministry to youth offenders has formalized an agreement with the Louisiana Office of Juvenile Justice and officials at Swanson Center for Youth in Monroe to establish a ministry inside the facility.

Now that the memorandum of understanding has been signed, the Louisiana Chapter of Kairos Prison Ministry International can move forward with plans for a three-day retreat and an

ongoing mentoring program at the facility.

"To get this signed is a major milestone," said Terry Sant, chairman of the Swanson Advisory Council and a member of the sponsoring church, Cedar Crest Baptist Church in West Monroe. "It's the first step in creating a relationship between the ministry and the particular institution."

"Having reached the agreement, it now leaves the ball back in our court to start gathering volunteers and prepare for a weekend in the fall," he said following

the June 8 meeting to sign the agreement. "After the weekend we will begin a six-month mentoring program one-on-one in a group setting which is necessary to be sure these guys get everything they need to turn their lives around."

Led by more than 30,000 Christian volunteers, Kairos is an ecumenical international prison ministry that has a presence in 37 states and nine countries, according to the organization's website.

Louisiana has a Kairos Inside ministry (a three and a half-day spiritual renewal event for adults in state and federal prisons), Kairos Outside ministry (which ministers to family members of men and women who are incarcerated) and Kairos Torch ministry (a program for youth ages 12-25 who live in centers for youth).

Kairos Torch, which will be implemented at Swanson this fall, allows the youth offenders to participate in a long-term one-on-one

mentoring and discipleship program.

Lasting between six months to a year, these once-a-week sessions for 20 youth offenders at a time are overseen by carefully screened volunteers.

Dan Hicks, a member of First Baptist Church in Chatham and a volunteer with the ministry, is hopeful that having mentors available to provide a listening ear will help redirect the youthful offenders' lives.

"God can turn things around," he said. "Our calling is to serve the Lord, tell them that Jesus loves them and tell them there is a better way."

"When you see how God works in someone's life, it is a tremendous blessing," he continued. "The change you see in a young man is enough to make you come back time and time again to be there for him."

An organizational meeting at Cedar Crest Baptist Church already has taken place.

During that time, volun-

teers learned how they could become involved in a variety of areas including mentoring, cooking food during the retreat, writing letters to the youth participants, praying throughout the retreat and setting up the room when meetings will be held at Swanson.

"To see this come to fruition is extremely exciting," Sant said. "Now it's time to begin the actual ministry."

"It's exciting to see who God will send our way in terms of volunteers and see how he will move through this ministry," he continued. "We see this as a beginning of a long-term ministry that will affect this community and the lives of these young men for years to come."

For more information about Kairos Torch or how to become a volunteer, email Sant at qualityland1@yahoo.com or Hicks at danhicks@centurytel.net, or reach both by phone, 318.372.0945.

Kelley credits Jesus for transformation of Angola, prisoners

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

PINEVILLE – Any given life can be transformed through Jesus Christ, even a prisoner serving a life sentence for murder at the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley said Monday, June 5.

"Never forget you can change your life," Kelley told those attending the monthly First@First Business Leaders luncheon at First Baptist Church in Pineville. "You can be transformed. A stale marriage can come alive. Kids that are breaking your heart can be made different and new. Jesus Christ can make anybody new."

"If you don't believe me, you come with me to the cell blocks at Angola," he continued. "And if you just walk around with me, you will pick

out our students instantly because you will see something is different about these guys. They will stand out."

Since 1995, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary has held classes at Angola to train inmates who were incarcerated in what was once known as the bloodiest prison in the United States. Now, instead of committing crimes, thousands have accepted Christ as their Lord and Savior and the prison has seen an 85 percent drop in violence.

To date, 319 inmates have graduated from the seminary's extension program, and some of these graduates have even transferred to other prisons as missionaries. Kelley said at least 100 inmates are baptized inside the prison every year.

NOBTS/Leavell College has active programs also at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women,

See **TRANSFORMATION** on 6



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Sparks from page one

who prayed I would not die until I came to Christ, I found hope in the prison cell.”

Raised in church, Sparks participated in Vacation Bible School and other biblically-based activities as a young boy. However, his first sip of alcohol at age 12 (during a fishing trip) sent Sparks’ teetering down the wrong path of serial addictions and destructive behaviors that led to a 50-year sentence for second degree murder.

FINDING JESUS

After landing in the hospital for attempted suicide only months upon entering prison, Sparks was questioned by a

physician about his personal struggles.

The doctor diagnosed Sparks as having anger issues and said he needed to face up to those problems.

Upon returning to his cell a few days later, Sparks kept thinking about the conversation. Then, he remembered a small red Bible his grandmother had given him not long after he arrived in prison.

Sparks picked up the Bible and confessed to God about his confusion.

“I tried to remember verses from when I was small but couldn’t make heads or tails of it,” he said. “I remember sitting on my bunk saying to God, ‘If

you are going to do anything, do it, because I don’t know what to do.’”

Immediately after this plea, as questions popped into his head, Sparks would “happen” to turn to a relevant passage.

After nearly an hour of this unusual “question and answer” time, Sparks knelt down by the bed in his cell and asked Jesus to forgive Him and to become Lord of his life.

“From then I have been a different person,” Sparks said. “Because of a law in Alabama that reduced time served for good behavior, I spent the next 14 years in prison, but spent every day a free man because Jesus saved me.”

TAKING VOWS

As the years passed, Sparks grew closer to Christ and even enrolled in a prison religious studies program, and his changed life led to his gaining the chaplain’s trust.

Sparks pored over religious books and periodicals, including an issue of the Alabama Baptist newspaper that had published a letter to the editor from a female seminary student who shared about her difficul-

ties while growing up with an alcoholic father. He wrote Donna about her troubles and eventually the two were regular pen pals.

The relationship blossomed and on Nov. 28, 1987 they were married in the prison chapel, and the two lived apart until he was released, Aug. 11, 1991.

FOLLOWING CHRIST

During the ensuing 26 years, God took Sparks on a journey that included stops at several churches in various ministerial roles, including his most recent one at Antioch Baptist Church.

Since Jan. 1, 2015, Sparks has been the pastor of this congregation which averages more than 100 in attendance at Sunday morning worship services.

He has led the congregation

to be mission-minded, taking members on annual mission trips to Honduras and Mexico, and sending the youth to help lead camps at various locations. He also is active in the local schools, with the focus of building relationships with students and faculty.

Looking back on God’s journey for him since that fateful day in 1977, Sparks is grateful how God has used his past experiences in prison to show others they too can escape the darkness of Satan.

“I get up each day and think I have the greatest job in the world to minister to God’s church and the community,” he said. “I get to pray and share Gospel with people and show them that there is hope. I am living proof that God can change a life and use what Satan meant for bad and use it for something good.”

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Healing from page one

stem. The brain stem controls all of your bodily functions that are supposed to be automatic -- like your breathing and your heart -- all those things you’re not supposed to think about.

“Well, mine started shutting down,” he explained. “And so, four and a half years ago, I’m in the hospital and I already know what’s coming up because this disease is terminal.”

BAD TO WORSE

Belgard had signed a “do not resuscitate” order and despite requests by the nurses and doctors to intubate him and put him on life support as his body was shutting down, he was steadfast in refusing extra measures to keep him alive, insisting instead, “Send me home. Send me home.”

At home, his condition worsened such that his son, a Department of Defense member and daughter-in-law were flown home from Germany to be with

him before he passed away.

“During this time, our prayer partners at church began to have a prayer meeting,” Belgard recounted. “They started a 24-hour prayer meeting just for me, just to pray for me and ask God to turn this around and for God to put His hand upon me and to heal me.”

But his condition continued to decline: His doctors limited visits to five minutes due to his frailty; his voice failed, and he was forced to “talk” via computer; and, he started having strokes, one behind another.

“I started losing all the ability in everything on my right side. I lost all the ability to move my arms and hands and legs,” he recalled. “They literally had to pick me up and pack me wherever I needed to go.”

POWER OF PRAYER

Belgard shared how God

See HEALING on 7

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NOBTS professor exposes Calvinistic tilt of study notes in LifeWay's new Bible (CSB)

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) — A noted scholar has published a focused assessment on study notes in the newly published Christian Standard Bible (CSB), saying non-Calvinists “will be disappointed” due to the heavy Calvinistic leaning in some of its comments about passages that address salvation.

Adam Harwood, associate professor of theology with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, described the actual Bible translation as a “theologically conservative resource,” but took issue with the “theological interpretation” of some study notes provided at the bottom of pages, saying, “those who affirm that God loves every person, Christ died for every person, and God desires to save every person will be disappointed.”

LifeWay Christian Resources is the publisher of the CSB.

LIFEWAY'S VIEW

Trevin Wax, Bible and reference publisher for LifeWay, has distributed copies of the newest LifeWay Bible to news media with an accompanying letter calling the translation accurate and readable “without compromise” — a view Harwood does not dispute.

But Wax also lauds the study notes developed by “renowned biblical scholars from multiple denominations,” saying the notes reflect “the Bible’s original context,” something Harwood refutes with regard to interpretations of several passages about salvation.

HIGHLIGHTS OF HARWOOD'S CONCERNS

Harwood prefaced his assessment with six notes, framing his comments as: -- “from a friendly perspective” (he calls Wax “a friend” and discloses that he

has a professional relationship with LifeWay’s B&H Publishing);

-- limited to “the study notes only, not the text of the Bible”;

-- focused on “only one doctrine, salvation”;

-- “not arguing for or against Calvinistic theology,” but just simply analyzing a selection of study notes about salvation “to determine whether the study notes are consistent with the interpretations of Calvinists only, non-Calvinists only, or both groups”;

-- respectful of the “impressive list of theologically conservative contributors,” and,

-- careful regarding the fact that some of the study notes “were originally written for the HCSB Study Bible, published in 2010” (and he promises “to address study notes as they appear in the 2017 edition,” only).

Likewise he identified six key texts for his study note examination: “three which are often cited by those arguing for Calvinistic theology (Acts 2:23, Rom 8:29–30, and Eph 1:3–9) and three texts which are often cited by those arguing against Calvinistic theology (2 Pet 3:9, 1 Tim 2:4–6, and 1 John 2:2).”

Harwood’s “Theological Review of the CSB Study Bible Notes” at AdamHarwood.com offers an extensive examination of LifeWay’s treatment of the concept of salvation in these select passages, but the highlights below are representative of his observations.

ACTS 2:23

Harwood said the study note on Acts 2:23 refers to both “the plan and foreknowledge of God” as well as “the free (and sinful) acts of human beings.”

Noting that most Calvin-

istic interpreters understand genuine human choice to be compatible with divine determinism, he said “they will probably not object to the explanation of this verse” and concluded “the study note on Acts 2:23 should satisfy all evangelicals, both Calvinists and non-Calvinists.”

ROMANS 8:29–30

Harwood said the study notes for this text contains “theological definitions and presuppositions affirmed by Calvinists only.”

Among other concerns, he specifically cited study notes that portrayed God as putting His “electing love” on some people but not on others “in eternity past” — an idea “consistent with Calvinistic presuppositions of eternal decrees and election to salvation,” he said.

“Other Christians, however, affirm that God knows in advance all things (including who will respond in repentance and faith to be saved as

See BIBLE on 6

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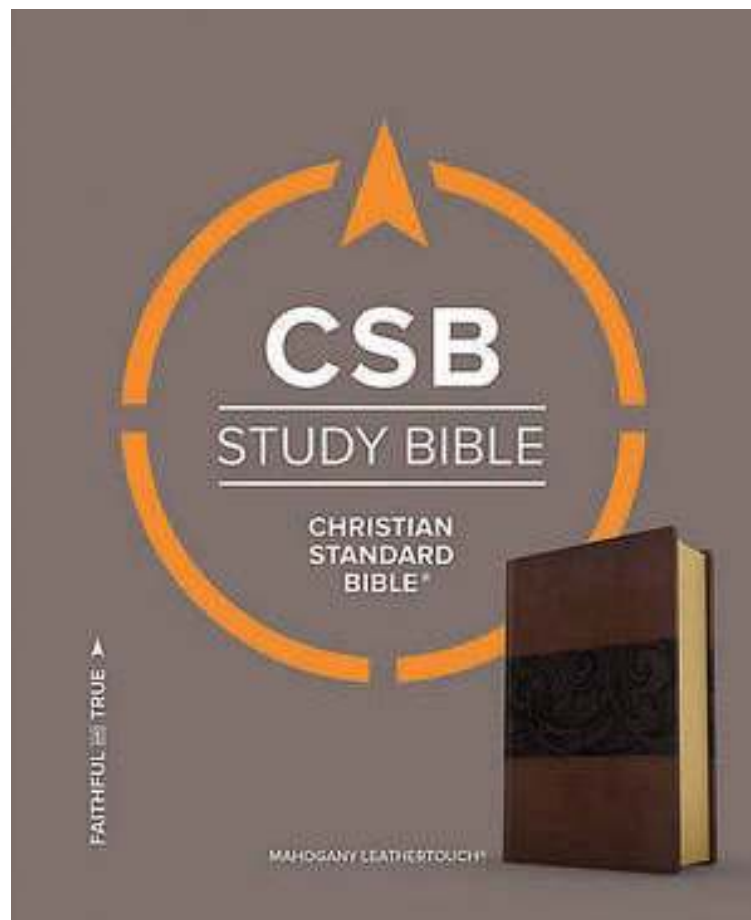
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2017

Bible from page 5

well as those who will not respond in repentance and faith but will be condemned),” Harwood said. “But they reject the view that God selects only some people and passes over others for salvation.”

Ephesians 1:3–9

Harwood felt the study notes on Eph 1:3–9 “can be affirmed by those who affirm Calvinistic theology as well as those who reject Calvinistic theology,” noting that the comments acknowledged election is best understood as God choosing us “in Christ.”

He said that “emphasizing God choosing in Christ is appropriate since God the Father referred to Jesus as ‘my Son, my chosen (eklegomai) one’ (Luke 9:35).”

He also pointed out that the note “mentions God’s work of ‘bringing persons to faith in Christ,’ which is another carefully worded state-

ment which could be affirmed by most Christians, because those who affirm Calvinistic theology will read the phrase with monergistic regeneration [regeneration before faith] in their mind while other Christians think of an offer by God of salvation which can be freely accepted or rejected.”

1 Timothy 2:4–6

Harwood said the study notes for this passage “favor ... an explanation consistent with Calvinistic theology.”

Specifically, he noted the comments on verse 4 included the remark, “‘This verse implies the universal offer of the gospel’” -- and he questioned why the study notes would contain such “an implication.”

“This study note fails to restate the proposition clearly contained in the verse, that God wants every person to be saved,” Harwood said. “Such an omission is consistent with

the Calvinist presupposition that God desires to save all kinds of people rather than every person.”

He also pointed out a key omission in this portion of the study note: “These verses provide the theological basis for the preceding statement that God wants people to be saved.”

Harwood said this comment omits the key word: “all.”

“This study note, consistent with Calvinistic interpretation, fails to affirm God wants all people to be saved – despite the Bible itself stating in verse 4 of the CSB that God ‘wants everyone to be saved,’” he said.

2 Peter 3:9

Harwood said “the study note on 2 Peter 3:9 seems to favor the Calvinistic interpretation in two ways,” saying it “fails to address a key phrase in the verse” – that God wishes “all to come to repentance” – “which would strengthen the case for the non-Calvinist interpretation.” He also said the comments favor a Calvinistic interpretation that the verse “‘should be understood as a promise of security for believers’” as opposed to the non-Calvinist interpretation that God desires

to save sinners.

Still, he allows that the note on this verse is written in such a way “that one could affirm the interpretation of the study note whether or not one affirmed Calvinism.”

1 John 2:2

Harwood concludes that the CSB study note about 1 John 2:2 “provides an interpretation consistent with Calvinistic theology but fails to present an interpretation consistent with non-Calvinistic theology.”

He cited the study note which states: “‘The phrase for those of the whole world does not mean the salvation of all people. It does mean that, in keeping with God’s promise to bless all the nations through Abraham and his descendants (Gn 12:3), Jesus’s saving death extends the offer

of salvation to all nations.’”

“This explanation of 1 John 2:2 supports particular atonement (that Jesus died for the sins of only the elect),” Harwood said, “rather than general atonement (that Jesus died for the sins of every person).”

Harwood is the NOBTS McFarland Chair of Theology, and serves as the director of the Baptist Center for Theology & Ministry and as editor of the Journal for Baptist Theology & Ministry.

Wax has served as managing editor of The Gospel Project, a LifeWay Bible study curriculum, and writes the Kingdom People blog hosted by The Gospel Coalition, a self-described network “in the Reformed tradition” [exclusively Calvinistic churches].

Transformation from page 3

St. Gabriel; the Mississippi State Penitentiary, Parchman, Miss.; Phillips State Prison, Buford, Ga.; and the Hardee Correctional Institute, Bowling Green, Fla.

In September 2015, Kelley dedicated a new 11,000-square-foot building that houses its extension center, built by the inmates and funded by donors.

The Joan Horner Center has a computer lab, two classrooms, an auditorium and library, and is named in memory of benefactor Joan Horner, founder of Premier Designs of Dallas. She and husband Andy Horner were longtime supporters of the Angola ministry.

Kelley told the business leaders that in the time NOBTS has held classes at Angola, none of the seminary graduates have asked him for a letter of recommendation to help them get an early release from the prison.

“They know they have

done bad things, but they know Jesus Christ can make them different,” he said. “And

they want something different to happen in their lives.”

In a question and answer time after his message, Kelley was asked how the seminary persevered after the campus was filled with water after Hurricane Katrina made land-

fall in August 2005. He said 10 days following the storm, the seminary faculty gathered at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary at Fort Worth, Texas, for a weekend retreat. There, they prayed, worshipped and in the final day mapped out a plan to move forward.

“In that one day under those very traumatic conditions they literally reinvented the entire curriculum of the seminary,” Kelley recalled. “And they came up with every single way classes could be taught.”



Chuck Kelley



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Healing from page 4

gave him an experience he described as “a trip to Heaven” – in order to emphasize that prayer works, and, to make him realize that God was about to do something to glorify Himself.

“I’ll just tell you this,” he offered, “that there is a place in Heaven that once you cross you can’t come back from. And you know that when you get there.

“I’m about to step over that place,” Belgard continued, “and I knew that once I did that I could never come back.

“God put His hand right on my chest, and said, ‘Not, yet.’

Belgard said he knew immediately why God was not allowing him in Heaven, yet: “Because of my prayer partners. Let me tell you something folks -- if you don’t know this -- prayer works. Prayer works!

“So I came back, and from that day forward I started getting better, and getting better, and getting better,” he said.

Importantly, he said he finally realized that he was in that wheelchair so God could demonstrate His power and receive glory.

“I knew I had victory,” he declared.

THE LAME LEAP

Belgard detailed how he began working his legs, exercising and building muscle tone, “trying to do what I could to get back on my feet again.”

Then he declared to his wife, “Honey, I’m getting out of this wheelchair.”

“And so, we just began to pray,” he said.

Sometime later, he just got up.

“I was like a newborn baby,

walking around like this and holding onto this and holding onto that,” he said while demonstrating how he wobbled at first. “And it got better and better and better.

“And you just saw me come up the stairs, not holding onto anything,” he pointed out.

“I’ve been in a wheelchair for four and a half years. I just come up those stairs and didn’t have to hold onto nothing. Somebody better praise the Lord!”

TO GOD BE THE GLORY!

Belgard said he knows now the Lord let him “ride four and a half years” so that people “all over” would praise God for the miracle.

“I tell you that the doctors cannot take credit for this. They still don’t understand why it’s happening,” he said, adding that CT scans and blood work have offered no medical explanation. “They don’t have a clue how this is working. It’s not supposed to work.”

Then Belgard shared about a particularly special blessing God gave him out of the ordeal.

Belgard was a former piano player who had to stop because

of the crippling effects the multiple strokes had created.

But he had faith.

“I began to just work on one song that kept going through my mind, over and over and over, again: ‘His Eye Is On the Sparrow.’”

Belgard said he worked on it for a year and a half, starting with just one finger, banging out something with his left hand, but with no control over his right one.

And he prayed.

“I said, ‘God, you know my time with You on that piano is my worship time,’” he shared, telling the crowd how his “alone” time was his special time with God.

Then using crossovers and pass-unders and manipulating the keys with runs and fills, he played “His Eye Is On The Sparrow,” “Goodbye, World, Goodbye,” and “Holy Ground.”

“I just want to show off my Lord, what my Lord will do when you pray, when you believe.

“In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus,” he reminded the audience as he closed his testimony.

Then he challenged them.

“Do you ever pray a prayer you don’t believe? Don’t waste your breath. Because if you’re



Ricky Belgard closed out his testimony by playing the piano. Belgard, formerly was unable to play because a brain disease caused the loss of use of his hands.


not going to believe it, don’t pray it. But when you pray it, believe it!

Ricky Belgard is prayer minister for Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville.

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Resolutions, nominees sought for Louisiana Baptist posts

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – Louisiana Baptists are invited to recommend candidates for service on state convention boards and committees, and, are asked to submit resolutions for possible consideration by messengers at the 2017 Louisiana Baptist Convention.

COMMITTEES

The Louisiana Baptist Committee on Committees is conducting its work, Sept. 7, to nominate persons to serve on various state convention committees. Currently, 17 nominees are needed for service on committees, including: Credentials; Moral and Social

Concerns; Nominations; Order of Business; and, Resolutions.

Scott Sullivan, First, Haughton, is the Committee on Committees chair, and recommendations should be sent to him, not later than August 18, via email, scott@fbchaughton.org, or through the U.S. Mail: 105 East Washington Avenue, Haughton, LA 71037.

BOARDS

The Louisiana Baptist Committee on Nominations is beginning its work to fill vacancies on state boards. At this point, 17 nominees are needed to serve on the LBC Executive Board and as trustees of Loui-

siana College, the Children's Home and Family Ministries, the Baptist Message, and the Baptist Foundation.

Lee Wesley, Community Bible, Baton Rouge, is the committee on nominations chair, and recommendations should be sent to him, not later than August 18, either electronically, paswes1@yahoo.com, or to this address: 1729 Monte Sano Avenue, Baton Rouge, LA 70810.

Please submit the candidate's name and identify the committee or board for which you are nominating him or her. Include the nominee's church membership and current employment.

Not more than two members from any church may serve on all boards and committees, combined, at any one time. Likewise, no more than one member of the same church may serve on the same board or committee, at any one time.

RESOLUTIONS

Resolutions may be submitted to the Committee for review and consideration no more than

ninety (90) days and no fewer than fifteen (15) days prior to the LBC annual meeting, Nov. 13-14, providing a window of opportunity from Aug. 15 through Oct. 29.

The first meeting of the Resolutions Committee is scheduled for Sept. 19.

Resolutions should be typewritten, titled and dated, and, accompanied by a letter – from a church qualified to send a messenger to the annual meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention – certifying that the person submitting the resolution is a member in good standing. The letter should include complete contact information for both the person

submitting it, and his or her church.

No person may submit more than three resolutions per year.

Scott Teutsch, Plain Dealing, is the chair of the Resolutions Committee.

Proposed resolutions may be faxed, 318.449.4287, emailed, Policy@LouisianaBaptists.org, or mailed (ATTN: Resolutions Committee, LBC Office of Public Policy, P. O. Box 311, Alexandria, LA 71309).

If you desire assistance with wording or formatting, please contact LBC Public Policy Director Will Hall by phone, 318.448.3402, or email, Policy@LouisianaBaptists.org.

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Growth from page one

be baptized during the lakeside service.

"I'm terrified of the water but somehow it didn't seem to matter on this day," Jordan said. "To me, this day feels like I am starting a new life. Now, with my little one on the way in January, he or she will grow up understanding their mother has a relationship with Jesus."

For Morgan Feazell, seeing her six-year-old daughter Ariel's baptism was one of the most cherished moments in her life.

"Words don't touch how I truly feel right now," said a teary-eyed Morgan. "Since I had children, I asked God that they would follow Him. Ariel has God's Spirit in her and is making this parent mighty joyful and proud."

ADDING UP

The baptisms at Lake Buhlow were the first for the church in 2017, but are among 750 performed since 2006, when Pastor Steven Speer started the congregation with 22 members.

Two additional large baptism services are planned for later this year -- at the Red River in Pineville -- and Speer expects the combined total for all three celebrations to reach 75. If they do achieve this mark, it would be the fourth year in a row they have witnessed more than 70 baptisms.

NOSTALGIC APPEAL

The average age of the church membership is 27 years old, and this largely Millennial congregation appreciates nostalgia such as lake and river baptisms that were common

in churches many years ago and even during biblical times, Speer said.

"Maybe we have attempted and come close to being successful at putting a grace message into a Millennial package," Speer said. "The numbers and success reflect the Lord's blessing. When we talk about the Lord at our church, we talk about Him in terms of 'It's not who we are; it's who He is. It's not what we've done; it's what He's done.'"

"The grace message from John is 'believe in Jesus for eternal life,'" he continued. "The grace message from the Apostle Paul is that 'salvation comes by grace alone through faith in Christ alone.'"

OLD FASHION COMMITMENT

Speer believes at the current rate of growth, the congregation could add its 1,200th member by July, just in time for the church's 11-year anniversary.

He is quick to point out that the baptisms and the increase in membership are because of the congregation's yield to God's calling on their lives to share Christ with their neighbors. Members are committed to a goal of distributing 10,000 copies of the Gospel of John in Pineville and beyond, he said.

"It has become apparent to us when God starts moving, He just kind of gets it done," Speer said. "It becomes pointing to Him and making sure HIS church is his church. When it is, great things are happening. When we take it away from him, much of what we have seen happen at our church will depart. That's why we have intentionally made it about Him."

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Rebuild from page 2

repair an education space and prepare a new place to worship (in an existing structure) for the 80 members who regularly attend Sunday morning services.

Until then, the congregation will continue worshipping at the New Orleans Baptist Association offices, nearly 8 miles northwest of its campus.

Pastor Jeffery Friend said with the help of others, they have not missed a worship service as a church family and are thankful for the help of Hunter Street Baptist and about 100 other churches who have volunteered their time and financial resources to help with the rebuilding effort.

"It's a miracle we didn't have to go without meeting for a single Sunday," Friend said. "It amazes me that people showed up onsite to do the work, the exact work I needed to be done. God preplanned and pre-trained individuals to work in the situation that was predestined to happen so I don't have to worry about if it wasn't going to happen. I just wondered who."

"We always preach and teach 'anyway you bless me Lord I'll be satisfied' and then when something happens, we panic," he continued. "I chose not to panic because I realized the Lord told me, 'Though you have no insurance, you have assurance in me,' and I found peace and comfort in that."

SERVANTS' HEARTS

Helping churches like Suburban Baptist overcome adversity is what has inspired Millie McMeekin to return to the city to do mission work for the 15th time.

"Every time I come, I find someone to help, and it makes me realize how blessed I am," said McMeekin, a high school junior from Hunter Street Baptist. "They have gotten hit time after time, and yet they come back. They need to know Jesus is love and not give up. Giving up a week to help shows them it's important to us."

Zach Dauwer, a senior from Hunter Street Baptist, said coming to help with the rebuild at Suburban Baptist is fulfilling what God has commanded of all Christians.

"I just like to help those



Brian Blackwell photo

During a recent block party at Suburban Baptist Church, Pastor Jeffery Friend enjoys talking with a member of Hunter Street Baptist Church in Hoover, Ala., which took a mission trip to minister to the congregation.

in need and serve others like the Lord has called us to do," he said. "All of us have different talents and skills that we can use for Jesus."

While various mission teams are scheduled to continue working on the Suburban Baptist rebuild, even more volunteer crews are still needed to help complete the project.

Louisiana Baptists Church Builder Strategist Robert Woods said if enough people come and help, the congregation could move back into their facilities by

September.

"Our brothers in Christ need help to get their building back to where they can meet," Woods said. "The quicker they can get back in the better. Throughout the time teams have worked here it's been a great outreach to the community and shows their neighbors Christ's love in action."

For more information on how you can get involved in the rebuild at Suburban Baptist, contact Woods at robert.woods@louisianabaptists.org. To



Brian Blackwell photo

Suburban Baptist Church Pastor Jeffery Friend, left, shares a laugh with Louisiana Baptists church builder strategist Robert Woods during a recent visit by an Alabama mission team helping with a rebuild at the church.

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FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH in Henderson, TX has job opening for full-time position of Youth Minister. Send résumés to dhiggs@thefbc.org or David Higgs, 207 W. Main St., Henderson, TX 75652.

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PART TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Fellowship Baptist Church, Trout, LA is seeking a bi-vocational/part-time youth minister.

Mail résumés to Fellowship Baptist Church 487 Fellowship Road • Trout, LA 71371 or email to fellowshipbctrout@yahoo.com

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Calvary Baptist Church of Homer, LA prayerfully seeks a pastor who

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FULL TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Woodland Park Baptist Church is seeking a full time Youth Minister .

Mail résumés to Dr. Scott E. Thompson 1909 J. W. Davis Drive, Hammond LA 70403 or email pastor.wpbc@gmail.com.

BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR

Willow Bayou Baptist Church is looking for a Bi-Vocational Pastor

Please send a résumé or video résumé to

Willow Bayou Baptist Church 1008 Willow Bayou Rd Tallulah, La. 71282

Emmanuel Baptist Church Part-Time YOUTH MINISTER

Emmanuel Baptist Church in Shreveport, LA is seeking a part-time youth minister. Email résumés to Youth Search Committee ronroseturner@bellsouth.net

Emmanuel Baptist Church, 5850 Buncombe Rd • Shreveport, LA 71129

Seeking a fulltime PASTOR

Mount Carmel Baptist Church in Florien, LA is presently seeking a fulltime pastor.

Résumés may be emailed to perrie_ryals@yahoo.com

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Pisgah Baptist Church in Forest Hill, LA is seeking a bi-vocational minister of music to lead worship service.

Email résumés to cjob928@aol.com or for more information, call 318.446.4320.

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Send resume or inquiries to bethanybaywood@outlook.com or mail to: Bethany Baptist Church 38313 Greenwell Springs Rd., Clinton, LA 70722

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First Baptist Church of Delcambre, LA is seeking a bi-vocational pastor.

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NOBTS adds faculty, OKs changes to curriculum

BY MRILYN STEWART

NOBTS Communications

NEW ORLEANS – The addition of a new faculty member and several curriculum changes were approved by the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary board of trustees' executive committee June 6.

Jeff Audirsch, elected as associate professor of biblical studies in the seminary's Leavell College, comes to NOBTS from his position as associate professor of Christian studies at Shorter University in Rome, Ga., and from prior service on the faculty of Brewton-Parker College in Mount Vernon, Ga., where he was named the 2010-2011 Outstanding Teacher.

In action related to curriculum, the board approved course content filling out the requirements for the Christian leadership major in the doctor of philosophy program. Approved in the October 2016 board of trustees meeting, the new major is designed to prepare students to lead in local congregations, teach at colleges, universities and seminaries or serve in administrative or leadership roles within the various boards, entities and commissions of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Christian leadership is one of the areas about which students express the greatest interest," NOBTS Steve Lemke said. "This new Ph.D. major, available either in person or online, offers training in the best practices of pastoral leadership, church administration and volunteer leadership. We are confident that it will soon become one of our more popular Ph.D. majors."

Also approved was the move toward user-driven concentrations in the doctor of education degree rather than prescribed majors. The change allows for student choice and management of course enrollment and opens opportunities for advanced coursework in student-selected fields.

Board-approved changes to the master of arts (theology) and master of arts (apologetics) marked refinement of program components to better provide students suitable preparation for entry into the Ph.D. program.

ON THE MOVE

- **Brian, wife Melanie, McAllister** is the new pastor at First Baptist Church, Jonesboro.
- **Chris Hoyt** is the new pastor at Mt. Calvary Baptist Church, Independence.
- **David Maxwell** is the new minister of education & outreach at New Zion Baptist Church, Covington.
- **Waylon McCormick** is the new associate pastor of worship at Ouachita Baptist Church, West Monroe.

HOMEcoming

- Lakeshore Baptist Church, Monroe: **63rd anniversary**, July 2. Pastor: William L. Smith.
- Parkview Baptist Church, Alexandria: **75th anniversary**, July 9, 10:45 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow the service. Special Music: **The Sanctuary Quartet**. Pastor: David Shaw.
- Salem Baptist Church, Plain Dealing: **173rd Homecoming Celebration**, July 9, Sunday School 10 a.m., Worship Service, 11 a.m. Lunch on the grounds, noon; singing, 1:30 p.m. Special speaker: **Ray Huddleston**. Pastor: Larry Earhart.

REVIVAL

- United Baptist Church, Jena: **Revival**, July 9-12. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria**. Pastor: Johnnie Phillips
- First Baptist Church, Minden: **Summer Revival Series**, July 9-23. July 9 – Speaker **Will Simmons**. Worship Leaders: **Joe & Jody Nida**; July 16 – Speaker: **Beau Bar-**

ton. Worship Leaders: **Jeremy & Lexie Scriber**; July 23 – Speaker: **Chris Fleming**. Worship Leaders: **Jake & Rachel Chapman**; July 30 – Speaker: **James Preuett, Philippians Dramatization**. Pastor: Leiland Crawford.

■ Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Revive – Rejoice and Refresh**, July 10, 17, 24, 31, 6:30 p.m. Evangelists: **Gevan Spinney** (July 10); **Bill Britt** (July 17); **Jerry Chaddick** (July 24); **Greater Vision** (July 31). There will be no Sunday evening service prior to Monday's events. Pastor: Philip Robertson.

- Bellaire Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Evangelism Emphasis**, July 16, 10 a.m. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria**. Special Music: **Kerry Longoria**. Pastor: Randy Harper.
- Ebenezer Baptist Church, Florien: **Harvest Sunday**, July 16. Evangelist: **Michael Courtney**. Pastor: Bill Blackmon.
- Fellowship Baptist Church, Columbia: **Revival**, July 17-20. Evangelist: **Rubin Weaver**. Pastor: Chris Bennett.

LAGNIAPPE

- First Baptist Church, Sterlington: **Free organ available** to any church that can use it. Just come and pick it up. For more information, contact the church at 318.665.4932. Pastor: Ben Hackler.
- **Southern Plainsmen Quartet 39th anniversary Homecoming**, July 7-8 at Leesville High School Auditorium (502 Berry Avenue, Leesville, LA 71446); Friday at 6:30 p.m. – **The Steeles, Sherman Andrus, Southern Plainsmen** and Saturday, 6 p.m., **Mark Lanier, Church Wagon Gang,**

Southern Plainsmen. For more information or to purchase tickets, contact Marcelle Slaughter 318.663.4812 or 409.791.0877.

■ First Baptist Church, Lafayette: **Worship Arts Camp**, July 10-14, 9 a.m. – 2 p.m. Cost: \$40.00 for ages completed first through sixth grade. Deadline to register is June 16. To register, call 337.593.3748. For more information, call John Frank Reeve, minister of music at 337.593.3755 or email him at johnfrank.reeve@fbclaf.org. Pastor: Steve Horn.

■ Bethel Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Sports Camp**, July 10-14, 6-8:30 p.m. For more information, call 318.325.5981318/318.376.3634 or email bethelbaptistwm@yahoo.com. Pastor: Dennis R. Hensley

■ First Baptist Church, Bossier City: **For King and Country at Red River Balloon Rally**, July 14, 6-10:30 p.m. at LSU-Shreveport. Pastor: Brad Jurkovich.

■ Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Gospel Music Concert**, July 15, 6 p.m. Music: **Mike Freeman, Wanda Hughes, and Southern Joy**. Cost: free. A love offering will be received. Pastor: Jim Wolfe.

■ First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Creative Arts Camp 2017**. July 17-21, early registration until May 31: \$50; registration from June 1 - July 9: \$75; the week of CAC: \$100. Register at www.fbno.org/cac. Creative Arts Camp (CAC) is an exciting experience for your child who has completed 1st-6th grade. The goal of CAC is for your child to get a taste of arts: visual arts, dance, cake decorating, exposure to instruments, singing and basic music theory through professional artists. CAC meets Monday-Friday, 12:30-4 p.m. immediately following VBS - with the

exception of Friday. On Friday, CAC will end promptly at 3:00 p.m. Pastor: David Crosby.

■ Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Basketball Camp**, July 18 – 23. Cost: Free. This camp is for children enrolled in kindergarten for the fall through those who have completed grade 6. The camp will be divided into four age groups Instructional Division (Must be enrolled in Kindergarten or above); Pee Wee Division (Must be 7 years old prior to camp); Junior Division (Must be 9 years old prior to camp) and Major Division (Must be 11 years old prior to camp). Instructional and Pee Wee Divisions will meet from 8 – 11 a.m. Junior and Major Divisions will meet from 1 – 4 p.m. Each session (morning and afternoon) will be limited to a maximum of 75 participants each. Register online at www.ridgeavenue.org. Pastor: Jim Wolfe.

■ Calvary Baptist Church, Slidell: **Family Fest Saturday**, July 22, 10 a.m. to noon. Pastor: Arron McGuffee.

■ Evergreen Baptist Church, Bernice: **Sanctuary Quartet in concert**, July 23, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Wayne Sistrunk.

■ Trinity Baptist Church, Hammond: **HIS KIDS Day Camp for those with special needs**, ages 10 – 25, July 24 – July 28, 9 a.m. – noon. Cost: Free. You're invited to the ultimate pep rally! Come out and join the fun as campers will learn about VICTORY through courage, obedience, faith, unity, and Jesus. Please complete the registration form on our website www.pumpkincenter.org. For more information, call the church office at 225.294.5536 or Christie Williamson, Camp Director, at 985.320.1091. The church is located at 42062 Pumpkin Center Road in Hammond. Pastor: Derek Wall.

Scripture Crypto

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.

gkkv dk olk pybt, jpp dk akkv yq olk kjbol,

nlsil ljck nbyrzlo lsg ertzakakfo; gkkv

bszlokyrgfkgg, gkkv akkvfkkgg: so ajd xk dk gljpp

xk lst sf olk tj d yq olk pybt'g jfzkb.

mkuljfsjl ony:olbkk

Clues:
S = I; G = S

Answer to June 22 Scripture Crypto:
First Peter two: twenty-five

First Haughton hosting DR training session July 28-29

BY STAFF
Baptist Message

HAUGHTON – First Baptist Church in Haughton will host a Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief training session July 28-29.

The two-day training will begin at 5:30 p.m. July 28, with training for those wanting to serve on a feeding unit. Supper is provided.

Liz Landers, a chef for notable Hollywood celebrities who volunteered on the feeding unit during

the March 2016 floods in northwest Louisiana, will lead the feeding training.

The following day, training for mud-out and chainsaw team volunteers will begin at 8:30 a.m. Breakfast is provided for those participants.

Marvin Leleux, pastor of Springhill Baptist Church in Ringgold, will lead the mud-out training.

Toby Wilemon, a commercial

construction superintendent and member of First Baptist Church in Blanchard, will head up the chainsaw training. Wilemon was among those Disaster Relief volunteers who helped with efforts to assist homeowners in DeSoto Parish clean up after storms caused damage in the month of June

in the area.

Registration costs vary. First-time

attendees will pay \$28, which includes a background check, training materials, ID badge, hat, shirt and lunch.

Those renewing their certification will pay \$13, which includes a background check and ID badge.

The background check alone will cost \$8. Those already certified but wanting to get trained in another area can do so at no cost.

For more information or to register, visit rollinghillsministries.com/disaster-relief-training.



WHAT DID YOUR GIFTS & EFFORTS ACCOMPLISH ACROSS LOUISIANA IN 2016? TAKE A LOOK.

BCM

- 4,800 students are active in the day-to-day ministries.

CHURCH PLANTERS

- Church planters reported 23,000 evangelistic contacts in 2016.

YOUTH

- Clear Camps had a record attendance of 1,000+ and YEC saw over 6K!

GRANBERRY

- 1,552 individuals and 91 Louisiana Baptist ministers' families were counseled.

LBCH

- Mobile Pregnancy Care Center provided a pro-life witness for more than 1,200 women.

EVEN THE FLOODS BROUGHT A HARVEST

In 2016 Disaster Relief had

18,104 volunteer days,

681,301 meals served,

1,646 Gospel presentations,

& 207 salvations.

HEREFORYOU.ORG

More than 325,000 people have viewed the spots. The spots aired in the Super Bowl and the Final Four!

To view the entire Annual Snapshot, or to download the 2016 Annual, visit LouisianaBaptists.org/Annual.