

“And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself...”

— 2 Chronicles 33:12 (KJV)

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LMCO falls \$12.8 million; AAEO down \$13.1 million

BY WILL HALL

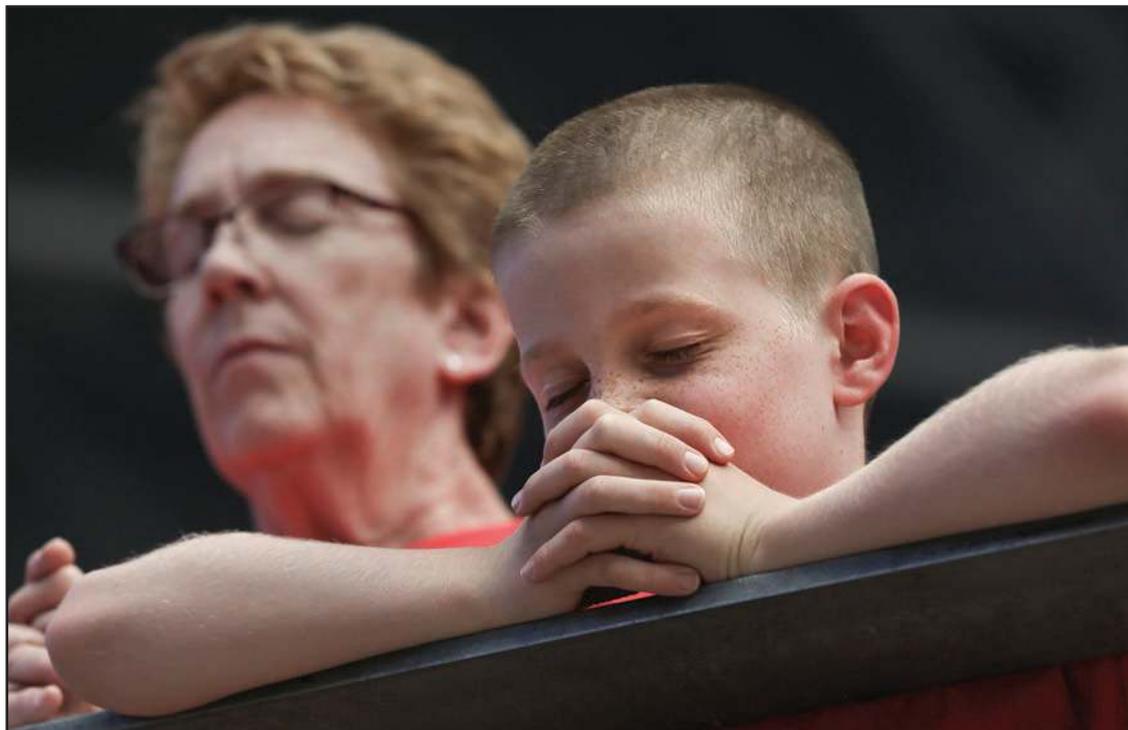
Message Editor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) —The Southern Baptist Conventions’ International Mission Board released final numbers, June 7, for its annual special collection, showing the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering has fallen short \$12.8 million, or greater than 7.7 percent, compared to last year.

Meanwhile, the SBC Executive Committee published data, June 2, indicating the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering, which composes 49 percent of the budget for the North American Mission Board, is down \$13.1 million, or more than 37 percent, year-to-date (only one month following Easter, and just four months before the end of the accounting year).

For context about the two special offerings, year-to-date giving for all national causes through the Cooperative Program has been relatively stable, but down about \$1.4 million, or off about 1 percent, compared

See **SHORTFALL** on 9



Matt Jones photo

Diane Sobol and her grandson, Killian, of Calvary Community Church in Phoenix, pray at Harvest America June 11 at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. More than 38,000 attended and there were 3,398 salvation decisions.

SBC’s Harvest crusade results in 3,398 salvation decisions

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

PHOENIX—Because of hearing the Gospel during a crusade service held June 11 in conjunction with the Southern Baptist Convention’s 2017 Annual Meeting, 2,904 persons made salvation decisions at the live event, and another 494 declared Christ as Lord while watching the service online.

A crowd of about 38,000 individuals gathered in the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Arizona, while an unknown number of persons assembled at 3,000 host sites to watch via the internet.

A CROSS EVENT

Although a multi-denominational endeavor, the crusade largely was a cooperative effort between Harvest America and Southern Baptists’ North



Adam Covington photo

Brandon Kiesling, left, instructor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, prays with Shane, center, during the conclusion of Harvest America June 11 at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. Shane came forward to rededicate his life to Christ and was moved to tears during their prayer time on the field.

American Mission Board, which scheduled the mass evangelistic appeal as the final event for Crossover, the annual outreach program conducted before the SBC annual meeting, held June 13-14 in

Phoenix, Arizona.

The evening service started with prayer for the nation and included worship by music performed by

See **HARVEST** on 8

Crusade in Red River nets souls for Christ

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

COUSHATTA — Before she attended a Red River Association Crusade in late May, Molly Pickett admits her life was filled with anger toward God.

But hearing a Gospel message by evangelist Sam Moore during one of seven evening services of the crusade changed Pickett, and also transformed two of her children.

All three of the new believers were baptized at Martin Baptist Church in Coushatta, Sunday, June 4.

“I was anxious at first but I decided to give my life to Christ,” said Pickett, whose husband encouraged her to attend. “I was so tired of living with the anger and anxiety, and I was not only surprised that my children accepted Jesus as their Savior that night, but also relieved. Now, I am feeling a sense of calm in all areas of my life.”

CRUSADE CONVERTS

Pickett and her children were among 19 people who professed Christ as Lord and committed their lives to Him, and were obedient in believer’s baptism at Martin Baptist Church and other churches in



Shawn Beard of Martin Baptist Church in Coushatta baptizes Molly Pickett June 4.

See **RED RIVER** on 12

Kelley: NOBTS centennial to focus on Gospel and missions

BY MARILYN STEWART
NOBTS Communications

PHOENIX (BP) – New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley greeted convention delegates with a good news/bad news scenario in his seminary presentation at the Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting Wednesday, June 14.

“Are you ready for some good news?” Kelley asked.

“Today, we are 100 years old at NOBTS.”

Centennial events launch Oct. 3 with special activities and emphases on campus and at extension centers continuing throughout the year.

But the NOBTS 100th birthday celebration must not be like any other celebration, Kelley said, “because of the present state of the Southern Baptist Convention.”

Kelley referenced findings by the NOBTS Leavell Center for Church Growth and Evangelism on the continued decline in baptisms in Southern Baptist churches. Presenting a chart of the findings to messengers, Kelley called the statistics “stunning.”

Kelley said church plants are “absolutely essential” but the drop in baptisms demands Southern Baptists’ attention, with the NOBTS centennial be-

ing no exception.

“We need to celebrate in a way that will strengthen our seminary and our churches,” Kelley said, issuing a challenge to the convention to join with the NOBTS family in a centennial initiative goal of 100,000 Gospel conversations and 100 mission efforts.

The call for action is in keeping with the charge given the seminary at its founding, Kelley said.

Kelley recounted the seminary’s history that began with a resolution at the 1845 convention in Augusta, Ga., calling on the Board of Domestic Missions, now the North American Mission Board, “to direct its effective attention to aid the present effort, to establish the Baptist cause in the city of New Orleans.”

Established by vote of the convention in 1917, NOBTS was directed to have as its “primary purpose the object of missionary propaganda,” Kelley recounted.

Through the NOBTS Caskey Center for Church Excellence, student scholarship recipients share the Gospel weekly, Kelley noted. In the three years since its founding, the Caskey Center has reported 17,973 Gospel conversations, with 6,987 asking for a re-



Adam Covington photo

Chuck Kelley, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, gives a report June 14 during the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting at the Phoenix Convention Center. The seminary is celebrating its 100th birthday this year, he reported. The New Orleans Seminary family will seek to have 100,000 Gospel conversations in the next year, he said.

sponse and 1,766 coming to faith in Christ.

Kelley echoed an observation made by NOBTS Caskey Center director Mark Tolbert that believers “drift” away from evangelism and that Gospel conversations must be intentional.

To remedy the drift from evangelism, Kelley suggested a “Monday morning prayer” asking God for the opportunity to share the Gospel during the week and courage to ask for a response. A special app for

reporting Gospel conversations and mission efforts is available at the Caskey website.

Along with centennial events, a \$50 million capital initiative is underway to help fund scholarships for students, strengthen endowments and provide needed campus renovations, Kelley said.

Continuing through Oct. 2, 2018, the centennial celebration will center around three focal points: celebrating the past, embracing the present and casting a vision for the future. Details are available at the seminary’s anniversary page.

In a heartfelt aside, Kelley recounted a “stain” on NOBTS’ history in which the seminary established a separate school to train African American students early in the 20th century. Today, that “dynamic has changed,” Kelley reported as steps toward a better relationship have been laid. Kelley pleaded with messengers to stand united against racism at every front.

Kelley concluded with, “May God use the occasion of our 100th anniversary to prepare NOBTS for the future and to prepare the SBC for a mighty movement of God.”

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Alt-right resolution & evangelism draw focus at SBC

By DAVID ROACH

Baptist Press

PHOENIX (BP) – Appointment of a task force to study how Southern Baptists can be more effective in evangelism and a resolution decrying “alt-right white supremacy” were among highlights of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting June 13-14 in Phoenix.

In addition, messengers honored 15-term registration secretary Jim Wells with a resolution of appreciation after hearing a report he is in the advanced stages of cancer. Attendees of the SBC Pastors’ Conference preceding the annual meeting elected Florida pastor H.B. Charles as the conference’s first black president.

The unofficial total of 5,018 registered messengers, down from 7,321 last year, expanded representation on the Executive Committee to include four states or defined territories which had not previously qualified for representation under Bylaw 30. Southern Baptists also gave the EC authority to sell the SBC Building in Nashville and received a multimillion-dollar gift through the Cooperative Program from the Florida Baptist Convention stemming from the sale of its building in Jacksonville.

When registered guests, exhibitors and others were included, the count of those at the annual meeting was tallied, as of June 15, at 9,318.

ALT-RIGHT RESOLUTION

A resolution on “the anti-gospel of alt-right white supremacy” decry “every form of racism, including alt-right white supremacy, as antithetical to the Gospel of Jesus Christ” and pledged to pray “both for those who advocate racist ideologies and those who are thereby deceived.”

A vote to approve the resolution June 14 was followed by a standing ovation from messengers.

In its initial report, the Resolutions Committee declined to recommend convention action on a resolution submitted by Texas pastor Dwight McKissic condemning the white supremacist movements sometimes known as “white nationalism” or the “alt-right.” Two June 13 motions to consider the resolution on the convention floor each failed



Adam Covington photo

Messengers raise their ballots as they overwhelmingly pass a resolution June 14 condemning the racism of the alt-right movement on the last day of the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting at the Phoenix Convention Center.

to achieve the requisite two-thirds majority. Amid ongoing discussion, however, the Resolutions Committee requested and was granted by the convention an opportunity to reverse its decision and present a resolution on alt-right racist ideology.

Resolutions Committee chairman Barrett Duke, in presenting the resolution, told messengers, “We regret and apologize for the pain and the confusion that we created for you and a watching world when we decided not to report out a resolution on alt-right racism.” The committee abhors racism, Duke said, adding the initial decision not to recommend a resolution condemning alt-right racist ideology did not reflect sympathy with that ideology.

EVANGELISM TASK FORCE

SBC President Steve Gaines, who was reelected to a second term, recommended creation of the evangelism task force to study how Southern Baptists can be more effective in personal soul winning and evangelistic preaching. North American Mission Board President Kevin Ezell made a motion, later

approved by messengers, that the convention authorize Gaines to appoint the group.

In the annual meeting’s final session, Gaines announced the members of the 19-person task force, including chairman Paige Patterson, president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. The group will report to the 2018 SBC annual meeting in Dallas.

Creation of the task force was in keeping with an evangelism emphasis in Gaines’ presidential address. “I want to encourage you to be a soul winner,” said Gaines, pastor of Memphis-area Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn.

A Tuesday-evening message by California pastor and evangelist Greg Laurie urged preachers to extend public invitations for people to follow Christ whenever they proclaim the Gospel. In his message, Laurie announced that Harvest Christian Fellowship in Riverside, Calif., where he is pastor, has begun cooperating with the SBC.

WELLS HONORED

The resolution of appreciation for

Wells, recommended by the Executive Committee, expressed “deepest and most sincere gratitude to God” that Wells “has fulfilled the role as an officer of the Convention with godliness, integrity, kindness, and thoroughness, assuring that each duly elected messenger from churches that cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention was properly certified and that each messenger’s ballot was accurately counted and reported in every balloted vote.”

Wells, who was first elected registration secretary in 2002, was not present at the annual meeting. The EC appointed his chief assistant Don Currence, minister of administration and children’s pastor of First Baptist Church in Ozark, Mo., as acting registration secretary. Messengers elected Currence as 2018 registration secretary on the second ballot from a field of five nominees.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE REPORT

Among 11 Executive Committee recommendations approved by messengers was one authorizing the EC

See SBC on 7

“The Lord has done great things for us, and we are filled with joy.” Psalm 126:3

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Regarding and respecting church leaders for their work

BY JUSTIN LANGFORD

Louisiana College

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) -- If you are reading this article right now, I have no doubt that you have been impacted tremendously by the minis-

try of a particular pastor or minister.

Maybe it was a pastor who instilled in you a love for the gospel at a young age.

Or maybe it was a youth minister who invested in your life, taught you the basics of the gospel, and who played an instrumental part in your decision for salvation.

Or perhaps you were in college and the ministries of the local church and BCM challenged you to grow stronger in the faith.

All of us, whether church member or staff person, have a rich heritage of faith.

Deep reflection on this heritage should bring us to a place of gratitude for those who have served well in discharging their duties as a minister of the gospel.

Paul describes the minister's duty plainly to Timothy in this way: *"But as for you, be serious about everything, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry"* (2 Timothy 4:5, HCSB).

Pastors have a high calling

and responsibility to shepherd the flock of God.

As biblical scholar Gregory K. Beale put it, they are "the doctrinal and ethical guardians of the church."

To increase an appreciation of our spiritual mentors, let's examine what Paul says about this in his correspondence to the Thessalonian church.

In 1 Thess 5:12-13 he states, *"Now we ask you, brothers, to give recognition to those who labor among you and lead you in the Lord and admonish you, and to regard them very highly in love because of their work"* (HCSB).

Paul is instructing a young church going through a time of adversity. He concludes his letter by reminding them of the importance of their leaders and how they can best honor them for their faithful work.

Paul's two primary exhortations for the church are "to give recognition" and "to regard them very highly."

Why?

He gives three reasons: their labor, their leadership,

and their admonishment. Shepherding a congregation is a high calling that involves self-sacrificial leadership.

Practically speaking, recognizing and highly regarding our spiritual leaders means we demonstrate to them no less than the same sacrificial love and respect they show us.

What about retired pastors and their wives?

On this topic I think of my own present experience.

At the church where I am a member we have a number of retired pastors and ministers.

Not only do these men engage faithfully in teaching and serving, they continue to set an example in ethics as well.

Some of the richest and most rewarding times for me are teaching the senior adults.

The wisdom and experience shared by former pastors in this context is so instructive that I feel I learn more from them than they do from me.

These servants are continuing to leave a legacy of faith by their commitment to serve well beyond a formal position in church leadership. Their example demonstrates the impact of their lifetime calling.

Many of these faithful stewards who have passed from this life have left behind a spouse. How can we go about honoring them as we did their husbands? We need go no further than Scriptural instruction. The Old

Testament mandate to care for widows is restated and emphasized in the New Testament as well.

One such example is James 1:27: *"Pure and undefiled religion before our God and Father is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself unstained by the world"* (HCSB).

Paul has a lot to say on this topic in 1 Timothy 5, especially in regards to how the system of widow care was being abused.

Nonetheless, Scripture mandates that we show care and respect not only for our leaders but those in the church who are more vulnerable in society as well. In doing so, we engage in "pure and undefiled religion" before God.

In conclusion, consider the following outcomes of living out Paul's exhortation to respect and highly regard our spiritual leaders. First and foremost, we walk in obedience to the commands of Scripture.

Second, we demonstrate to the body of Christ the joy, unity, and blessing that can come from mutual submission and respect.

Third, we perpetuate the legacy of faith left by our leaders and can then instill this heritage in future generations of leaders.

See MISSION on 7

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Burney blessed to have served for 50 years at First Lafayette

By BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE – You would think someone who has 50 years of memories and relationships accrued while serving on the staff at First Baptist Church in Lafayette would have plenty to tell.

But recently Luther Burney was left speechless when asked to recall how he managed to serve for a half decade at one church.

“You have to live long enough first,” Burney joked with the *Baptist Message* shortly after a reception honoring his service to First Baptist Lafayette. “We are in the people business and I love the people. And they in turn have loved me and have let me work here.”

Family, friends and others from the community gathered in the church’s fellowship hall April 30 to recognize Burney, who came to the church April 9, 1967 as a music and youth minister.

ENCOURAGED TO BE AN INNOVATOR

When he first got there, Burney was encouraged by the support of Pastor Perry Sanders who told him to pursue new ideas.

“I respected Perry and he respected me,” Burney said. “I was always trying to do new things. Perry said as long as I could pay for it, I had the freedom to do what I felt led to do, and I ran with that.”

As the years passed, Burney added new programs that became quite popular in Acadiana.

Through the Symphony of Song, Burney’s choirs were joined by invited guests such as comedian Jerry Clower and singer and song writer Pat Boone. Burney also instituted the Living Christmas Tree, which drew crowds so large the event was moved on occasions to the 12,000-seat Lafayette Cajundome, located on the campus of the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.

DEVASTATED BY FIRE

While many of his memories at First Lafayette are positive, there is one he wishes had never happened. After Wednesday evening activities were over June 9, 1999, Burney received a call no minister wants to get – a section of the church was on fire.

Though no one was injured, the blaze destroyed the worship center and some offices. While the fire proved devastating, Burney was fortunate in that he was able to salvage many of his own items from his office.

Four days after the fire, the church worshipped in the gymnasium across the street and continued meeting there until a new worship center was built on the site of the original one five years later. In fact, the columns that survived the fire are standing inside the lobby of the worship center.

“It was hard because you always are concerned about your personal stuff,” Burney said. “It was hard to believe that it was happening. But we looked at it and said the church is not the building, it’s the people.”

A year after the new worship center was dedicated, Burney’s time as music minister came to a close with his December 2005 retirement from the position the same year Sanders also retired, though he remained on staff as an assistant to Pastor Steve Horn.

Burney said one of the blessings during his career at First Lafayette was being able to serve as the music minister under just one pastor. He still served in the capacity for six more months in an interim capacity until current music minister John Frank Reeve came on board in May 2006.

In addition to his responsibilities of visiting hospitals and conducting funerals, Burney also serves as a chaplain with Hospice of Acadiana, teaches a men’s Bible study class on Sundays and is involved with sharing the Gospel through the FAITH Evangelism program.

BURNEY’S TENURE A RARE FEAT

Horn said serving anywhere 50 years is a rare feat and was honored to have served with Burney for 12 of his years at the church.

“Luther is well loved in our congregation and builds great rapport with everyone,” Horn said. “He’s very good at the pastoral ministry, so it was a win for me coming on board back in 2005 and continuing to serve with him once he moved to part-time status.”

Looking back on how he remained at one church for 50



Photo courtesy of First Lafayette

Luther Burney is honored during a worship service at First Baptist Church in Lafayette April 30. For 50 years, Burney has served in various roles at First Baptist Lafayette, including minister of music for nearly 40 years.

years, Burney said making the pastor’s job as easy as possible, along with other staff members, should be a high priority.

“Love the people, knowing not all the people will love you all the time,” he added. “Additionally, work hard and be innovative. When you are

talking about tenure of service such as mine, it says as much about the church staff and the members as it says about the individual.”

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Revival meeting altered Jerry Whitman's flight plan for life

By BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

DOWNSVILLE – As a teenager, Jerry Whitman's main passion in life was aviation.

He dreamed of one day flying an aircraft as a full-time job, and Whitman was on track to fulfilling his dream until a revival meeting in 1970. It was there God showed Whitman He wanted him to go on a different flight-path – one which would lead him to pastor Holmesville Baptist Church in Downsville for 40 years.

For his service to the Concord Union Baptist Association church, the long-time pastor was recently honored in a surprise celebration service that included a video tribute from Whitman's friends, presentations by Director of Missions Barry Joyner, Lincoln Parish District Attorney John Belton and an inspirational message by NASA astronaut Barry Wilmore.

"That Sunday I was thinking the service would go on as planned like any other time, but when I walked into the worship center I saw a plethora of people, including the astronaut in the suit, and knew something was up," Whitman said of the April 23 service. "Our church has blessed me and my family so much and this was an example of how they care for us. I was blown away by all they put into this for me. I'm not worthy of it."

A native of Choudrant, Whitman received his pilot's license during his senior year of high school and enrolled at Louisiana Tech with plans to earn a degree in professional aviation. But God began to turn his heart toward ministry when he became involved in leadership at the Baptist Student Union on campus.

During his sophomore year at Louisiana Tech, Whitman attended a revival service at First Baptist Church in Choudrant. There, God confirmed to Whitman that he should



Janna Crowe photo

Director of Missions for Concord-Union Baptist Association Barry Joyner (right) presented a plaque from Louisiana Baptists in "Appreciation for Faithful Service to the Lord" at Pastor Jerry Whitman's surprise celebration service in late April marking his 40th Anniversary as pastor at Holmesville Baptist Church, Downsville.

pursue a career in ministry.

"I felt the conviction I needed to go forward to confirm a call to ministry I had been sensing for some time," he said. "I wasn't sure exactly what area but I knew I should

commit to ministry as my career."

A year after the revival meeting, Pleasant Grove Baptist Church in Choudrant called Whitman as pastor. After nearly six years at the

church, Whitman sensed God moving him to another chapter in his ministerial journey as began serving April 10,

See **WHITMAN** on 9

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SBC from page 3

“to continue studying the advisability of a sale of the SBC Building, and to sell the property upon such terms and conditions, and at such a time, if any, as the Executive Committee may hereafter approve.”

Another recommendation approved by messengers granted EC representation to four regions even though they have too few church members to apply for EC representation under the provisions of SBC Bylaw 30.

The recommendation amended Bylaw 18 to list the Dakotas, Iowa, Minnesota-Wisconsin and Montana as each being entitled to a single EC representative.

During the EC’s report, Florida Baptist Convention executive director Tommy Green presented a check for \$3,156,500 to help fund SBC Cooperative Program ministries.

The gift represented 51 percent of proceeds from the sale of the Florida convention’s building.

EC President Frank S. Page said the gift brought 2016-17 CP Allocation Budget overage above last year’s surplus total.

Page’s report to the SBC included the launch of a convention-wide stewardship emphasis featuring a partnership with Ramsey Solutions, the organization led by radio host Dave Ramsey.

The stewardship emphasis continued June 14 with a president’s panel discussion on stewardship moderated by Gaines.

OFFICERS

In addition to Gaines and

Mission from page 4

Once again, we are indebted to Paul for his words of wisdom on this important aspect of the life of the church.

Justin Langford is assistant professor of Christian studies at Louisiana College. His column is part of a series of commentaries provided by LC faculty relating to the Southern Baptist Convention’s calendar of special emphasis issues. His focus on respect for leaders is a tribute to Mission Dignity Sunday, which highlights ministry to SBC ministers, workers and their widows



Adam Covington photo

Newly elected officers of the Southern Baptist Convention, left to right: Steve Gaines, president; John Yeats, recording secretary, back; Jose Abella, second vice president, front right; and Don Currence, registration secretary. Not pictured is Walter Strickland, first vice president.

Currence, newly elected SBC officers included first vice president Walter Strickland, a leader of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary’s Kingdom Diversity Initiative, and Jose Abella, pastor of Providence Road Church, a bilingual congregation in Miami. Recording secretary John Yeats was reelected to a 21st term.

Patterson was elected as the 2018 convention preacher.

MOTIONS

Messengers made 11 motions.

The only one to receive approval at the annual meeting was the proposal to cre-

ate an evangelism task force.

Two motions were ruled out of order, and eight were referred to SBC entities or committees.

Among motions to be referred were a proposal to study merging NAMB and the International Mission Board and a request that NAMB, the IMB and LifeWay Christian Resources consider expanding their trustee boards to grant broader representation.

A motion by Mark Collins of First Baptist Church in Yorktown, Texas, requested messengers to defund the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission.

The chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, Rod Martin, recommended the motion be ruled out of order because it was made after the convention approved the 2017-18 CP Allocation Budget, which establishes the percentage of CP receipts distributed to each CP-funded entity.

who served God faithfully, but in retirement need help in meeting needs for housing, food and vital medications. To find out more, visit www.MissionDignity.org.

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IN OTHER NEWS:

-- IMB President David Platt said the board’s finances are on “stable ground” and urged messengers to focus on the “present work we are doing” rather than “past financial struggles.” The IMB presentation included a commissioning service at which messengers gathered around newly appointed missionaries to pray.

-- In the NAMB report, Ezell said 732 new churches were planted by Southern Baptists in 2016 and 232 existing churches began cooperating with the SBC.

-- The annual Crossover evangelism emphasis and the tandem Harvest America crusade yielded 3,398 professions of faith.

-- A group of about 50 protesters gathered outside the Phoenix Convention Center June 13, asking the SBC to remove homosexuality and transgenderism from its “sin list.” The group distributed flyers that included the 2017 SBC logo and theme.

-- Messengers approved changing the IMB’s fiscal year to Oct. 1-Sept. 30.

-- The Global Hunger Relief Run June 14 allowed messengers and other annual meeting attendees to participate in either a 5K run or one-mile family-oriented fun run to raise money for hunger relief projects in North America and internationally.

-- A full 80 percent of members elected to the 2017-18 Committee on Nominations have never served on an SBC board

or committee, said Randy Davis, chairman of the Committee on Committees, the body which nominates the Committee on Nominations.

-- All speakers at the June 11-12 SBC Pastors’ Conference were pastors of churches with approximately 500 or fewer in average attendance.

-- A capacity audience of 1,933 at the 2017 Send Luncheon prayed for healing and strength New Orleans church planter and cancer patient Justin Haynes and prayed his family. He is the pastor of the Refuge Church in New Orleans. He called prayer one of the most powerful tools in church planting, and praying for planters is one way SBC churches can be on mission.

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Harvest from page one

NEEDTOBREATHE, Trip Lee, MercyMe, Jordin Sparks, Phil Wickham and Brennley Brown. But the emphasis for the evening was a Gospel message from Greg Laurie.

Laurie is pastor of Harvest Christian Fellowship, which has campuses in California and Hawaii. He also is the founder and featured speaker of Harvest Crusades and Harvest America large-scale public evangelistic events.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CROSS

In his message, Laurie shared about the anxieties and fears most Americans face. In Arizona, the number of suicides is significantly higher than homicides, resulting in 810 deaths annually, he said.

"We're living in a crazy world right now," Laurie said. "Our nation is lost in every state including Arizona. The threat of terrorism is real.

"People are scared, worried, in anxiety. But let's have theology without apology. People are hungry for that;

they're hungry to have an honest and hopeful conversation. The last thing that God wants is any man or woman created in His own image to go to Hell. Heaven is His place for all forgiven people and all people can be forgiven at any time if they believe and receive Him into their lives. That's the message we aimed to share during Crossover Arizona and at Harvest America -- a message of hope to the nation."

Laurie ended the evening by inviting people to the stadium floor if they wanted to begin a relationship with Christ.

"No matter what, come with your sins, come with your questions," Laurie said to a quiet crowd. "He will take you as you are."

NAMB is planning a similar partnership next year as the Southern Baptist Convention meets in Dallas.

Based on reporting by Josie Bingham for Baptist Press.



Matt Jones photo

Thousands of people worship together during Harvest America, an evangelistic crusade, June 11 at the University of Phoenix Stadium in Glendale, Ariz. Phil Wickham led worship, while other special musical guests included NEEDTOBREATHE, Trip Lee, Mercy Me, Brennley Brown and Jordin Sparks.

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Whether you're in a church with electric guitars or pipe organs, everybody should have an opportunity to give because from Genesis to Revelation giving is everything. You are saying, "Lord, above everything, I believe in You. It all belongs to You! This is a symbol of my complete belief, trust, and dependence on You to be my everything."
- 2. IT'S A PROMISE**
Here's the deal, the Lord says, "If you'll be faithful in this area of obedience, I promise you that I'll take care of everything you're going to need. Trust me in this. You cannot out-give me."
- 3. IT'S A TEACHER**
If you want to teach your kids the best way to handle money and to be financially responsible, teach them about the tithes. Tithing teaches us how to avoid the virus of materialism and learn the bliss of generosity.
- 4. IT'S A BLESSING**
Once you begin the journey of tithing and generosity, it will enrich your life far beyond any money you hold on to.
- 5. IT'S A PROVISION**
When you tithe, you're taking care of the facilities of your church, the minister(s) and their families. If your church gives through the Cooperative Program you are a blessing to ministries and missions all over the world.
- 6. IT'S A TEST**
Throughout scripture, God is continually testing those who follow him. From Genesis to Revelation we see men and women struggling with a God who dares them to trust Him a little more every day. But there is one area of our lives where God invites us to test Him. It is in this thing called the tithe. He says, "Test me! I dare you! I will come through."
- 7. IT'S AN INVESTMENT**
So much of the resources we spend are slippery. They're spent on things that will be broken, consumed, experienced, expired, and cast aside. The investment of the tithe is sure.
- 8. IT'S ETERNAL**
We are investing in a kingdom that is built to last. And last FOREVER!

8 MORE REASONS TO GIVE
"TEST ME NOW IN THIS" MAL 2:10

- 1. IT'S A MIRACLE**
When you open yourself up to giving through the tithe you get a glimpse into the supernatural. Ask a tither if supernatural provision has ever happened in their years of giving and inevitable the answer is, "Yes."
- 2. IT'S A FAITH BUILDER**
Tithing strengthens your faith muscles. Once you begin to trust your money to God, you'll find that it's easier to trust Him with everything else in your life.
- 3. IT'S A JOY**
There's a deep feeling of bliss that comes from giving with no regard for receiving. Givers are the happiest people on the face of the earth.
- 4. IT'S UNIEVING**
Tithing believers are believers that say to God and their church family, "I'm all in." Tithing husbands and wives are saying to each other, "There's something a whole lot bigger going on in our marriage than just us."
- 5. IT'S CONTAGIOUS**
Once tithers experience God in giving, they want to share with others about the grace and provision God has provided. As we share the joy of giving, others are inspired to give.
- 6. IT'S TAX-DEDUCTIBLE**
Yup, it's the most minor benefit. But it's a benefit!
- 7. IT'S A GREED SLAYER**
One of the most debilitating characteristics of unhappy people is greed and it spills over into every area of our lives. Unfortunately, greed can go viral - but so can generosity.
- 8. IT'S BIBLICAL**
Last, but not least, give because it's a Biblical principle and promise. "Bring the full tenth into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Test Me in this way," says the Lord of Hosts. "See if I will not open the floodgates of heaven and pour out a blessing for you without measure." Malachi 3:10

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Shortfall from page one

to the same time frame last year.

LOTTIE MOON

The Christmas offering hit an all-time high of \$165.8 million only a year ago, when Southern Baptists responded with generosity to IMB's revelations about chronic overspending and the need for

personnel reductions.

IMB leaders had forecast an even larger offering for this year, announcing in November 2016 it had crafted a balanced budget for 2017 using an anticipated windfall of what they predicted would be another record year of giving.

At that time, IMB leaders said "projected receipts (as of

October) for calendar year 2016 are \$170.5 million."

But they shared with trustees that they had developed the 2017 financial plan using only about \$163.1 million of that amount. The actual amount collected was just shy of \$153 million.

The LMCO composes more than 60 percent of the IMB's current budget.

In 2016, the IMB reduced its then 4,800-member personnel force by nearly a quarter,

or 1,132 field missionaries and U.S.-based staff, due to 6 years of spending "more than people were giving us," officials said, including in 2014 and 2015 the development of its operating budget based on expectations built on a \$175 million Christmas offering goal, despite years of not coming close to this amount.

The IMB adjusted its official goal this year to only \$155 million, but still budgeted on the larger amount it was counting on for the LMCO.

Rodney Freeman, IMB treasurer, released a statement, June 7, indicating IMB leaders now see last year's record LMCO total as "an exceptional response" related to "past financial challenges" and "not as the beginning of a new trend" in giving.

Meanwhile, David Platt, IMB president, told trustees, June 12, "due to our current expenses also trending below our budget for the year, we do not anticipate an overall deficit for the fiscal year," according to Baptist Press. However, he did not indicate what areas of operations were producing \$13 million of cost savings in the

\$270 million budget.

The accounting year for the LMCO is June 1 through May 31.

ANNIE ARMSTRONG

Southern Baptists set a near record in giving to the AAEO last year, contributing \$58.9 million, just shy of the \$59.3 million donated in 2008.

Mike Ebert, NAMB's executive director for public relations, said the \$13.1 million year-to-year decline, to date, in the special offering was consistent with variations in previous years when Easter was celebrated in late April instead of March.

In charts provided by email, he shared historical data showing this year's offering is on pace to reach about \$58 million.

"You can see, based on recent history, we are fully expecting the offering to catch up and finish strong again this year," he wrote.

NAMB officials set a 2017 AAEO goal of \$70 million, but only budgeted about \$60.5 million of this amount in its overall financial plan of \$123.8 million.

The accounting year for the AAEO is Oct. 1 through Sept. 30.

Whitman from page 6

1977 as pastor of Holmesville Baptist Church, a congregation that averages between 80 and 100 for Sunday morning worship.

During his four decades of ministry, Whitman has emphasized serving Christ beyond the walls of Holmesville Baptist Church. Members are involved in ministries including feeding the homeless at Grace Place in Monroe, giving to Southern Baptist missions causes and meeting everyday needs of the community.

True to the church's spirit of service outside its building, Whitman is chaplain for the Lincoln Parish Sheriff's Department and co-commander of the sheriff's department reserve deputy unit.

"Our main ministry is local," Whitman said. "We believe it's important where you are planted to have an effective example and response to people in regard to the Gospel. Let others see Jesus in you where you Long-time member Butch Pardue said Whitman is the type of pastor who puts his church first.

"He has a great commitment to the church and he and his wife are like family to us," said Pardue, a deacon at the church. "He has always been involved not just in our church's life but in many things throughout the community, which shows he is someone with a huge heart for service. We're just excited he chose to stick with us all these years and are looking forward to many more years ahead."

The formula to pastoring one church for 40 years is three-fold, Whitman said.



Jana Crowe photo

NASA astronaut Barry Wilmore (left) who piloted the Space Shuttle Atlantis in 2009 and commanded the International Space Station for six months in 2015 delivered the message on Jerry Whitman's special Sunday and presented him with several gifts from NASA.

They involve keeping God first, serving with a jubilant congregation and having a supportive deacon body. And, of course, knowing one's spouse and family stand by their pastor is another vital component.

"I've had opportunities to leave but the call of God is

for me to stay here," Whitman said. "These people I have served are wonderful, patient and ministering to me when I'm need of ministry. I've loved ministering to them and knowing they back their pastor is so encouraging. I wouldn't want it any other way."



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LOUISIANA NOTABLES

ON THE MOVE

- **Louis Charrier** resigns Lake Front Church, Catahoula and New Life Church, Arnaudville to plant a new church in Marksville.
- **Randy Bowman** is the new pastor at Lake Front Church, Catahoula.
- **Carl Sonnier** is the new pastor at New Life Church, Arnaudville..
- **Jeremy Glascock** is the new pastor at Colyell Baptist Church, Livingston.
- **Eddie Briery** has resigned from First Baptist Church, Vivian.
- **Dakota Meadows** is the new music director at Cross Point Baptist Church, Bossier City.
- **Beau Burton** is the new pastor at Hope Alive! Church, West Monroe.
- **Dylan Breshears** is the new student minister at North Monroe Baptist Church, Bastrop Campus.
- **Stefani Schneider** is the new youth minister and Nikki Castaldi is the new children's minister at Parkview Baptist Church, Monroe.
- **Byron Longino** is the new pastor at Holly Springs Baptist Church, Homer.
- **John Campbell** is the new pastor at Mt Lebanon Baptist Church, Gibsland.

IN REMEMBRANCE

- **Kenneth Nutt**, 87, passed away June 4, 2017. He was laid to rest at Hebron Cemetery in Arcadia on June 10. Born Dec. 14, 1929, Nutt served as a Louisiana Baptist pastor for more than 60 years. "Bro. Nutt" who surrendered to the ministry at the age of 16, was often described as one who had a sweet and gentle spirit, one who exhibited tremen-

dous kindness to others, and one who was a loyal servant to his congregation. He was remembered as ambassador for the Christian faith. After graduating from Louisiana College, he attended Louisiana Baptist Theological Seminary in New Orleans. He then began a path of ministry that eventually led him to Hebron Baptist Church (1955-2014) and Summerfield Baptist Church (1970-2016). He was recognized by the Louisiana Baptist Convention as the longest-tenured pastor in a Louisiana Southern Baptist Church. He would serve at Hebron Baptist Church for a total of 58 years. He was preceded in death by his wife of 39 years, Joyce, and his parents J.D. and Otha Nutt. He leaves behind three sons; Danny Martin and wife Kathy of Marshall, TX; Tim Nutt and wife Kim of Arcadia; and Kevin Nutt and wife Corinne of Ruston; eight grandchildren, seven great grandchildren, and a host of friends, especially his last friend for life, roommate George Jones.

HOMECOMING

- Calvary Baptist Church, Merryville: **80th Anniversary**, June 25, 9 a.m. - Meet & Greet; 9:30 a.m. - worship service. Speaker: **Tim Partrick, Beau-gard Director of Missions**. Dinner on the grounds will be provided by the church. Pastor: Jim Miers.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Homecoming 2017**, June 25, 10 a.m. followed by dinner on the grounds. Special Guest: **Fred Guilbert**. Pastor Philip Robertson.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church at Horseshoe Drive, Alexandria: **Homecoming 2017**, June 25, 6 p.m. Special Guest:

- Fred Guilbert**. Pastor Clay Fuqua.
- 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

- First Baptist Church, Minden: **Summer Revival Series**, July 9-23. July 9 - Speaker **Will Simmons**. Worship Leaders: **Joe & Jody Nida**; July 16 - Speaker: **Beau Barton**. Worship Leaders: **Jeremy & Lexie Scriber**; July 23 - Speaker: **Chris Fleming**. Worship Leaders: **Jake & Rachel Chapman**; July 30 - Speaker: **James Preuett, Philippians Dramatization**. Pastor: Leland Crawford.

LAGNIAPPE

- Mt. Patrick Baptist Church, Bernice: **Sanctuary Quartet in concert**, Saturday, June 24, 6 p.m.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Sporting Clay Classic**, June 24, 8:30 a.m. at Los Paloma Shooting Course. This is a major fundraiser for our student ministry. Contact the Student Ministry Office for more information, 318.949.2441. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.
- First Baptist Church, Many: **Third annual First Responders Recognition**

- Service**, June 25; 11 a.m. Area police, fire fighters, and emergency personnel will be recognized during the a.m. Worship service. A meal will follow the service in the fellowship hall. Speaker: Fred Raney. Pastor: Jonathan Bost.
- Fair Park Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Art Camp**, June 26-29, 9 a.m. - noon. Cost: \$45. This camp is for children who have completed first through fifth grade. Pastor: Waymond Warren.
- First Baptist Church, Vidalia: **Summer Music Activity Camp for Kids**, June 26-30, 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Cost: \$60 per child. The children will perform on July 2 ay 5 p.m. To sign-up call Carrie at 318.336.7111. Pastor: Wes Faulk.
- Trinity Baptist Church, Hammond: **Deep Sea Discovery at Vacation Bible School**, June 26-30 from 9 a.m. - noon, with a commencement ceremony on June 30 at noon. All children who have completed kindergarten through the sixth grade come dive into a life-changing adventure. Parents be sure to secure your child's place on the dive team by completing the online registration on our website (www.pumpkincenter.org). For questions or more information, call the church office at 225.294.5536. Pastor: Derek Wall.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **July 4th Celebration Sunday Evening**, July 2, 7 p.m., worship, 8 p.m. - Hot Dogs & Fellowship (Please bring your best dessert); 9 p.m. - Fantastic Fireworks! This is a combined service for Deville & Horseshoe Dr. There will be no p.m. service at Horseshoe Drive. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
- First Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **Patri-**

- otic music program**, July 2, 10:30 a.m. There will be dinner on the grounds following the program. The church will furnish fried chicken. So bring one (or more) of your favorite dishes and/or dessert, come early for the music and stay for the food and fellowship. Pastor: Stuart Toms.
- First Baptist Church, Pineville: **First@First Business Leader Luncheon**, July 3, noon. Speaker: **Henry Robertson**, associate professor of history at Louisiana College. Cost: \$10 and you may pay at the door. Please RSVP to Melinda Langford (mlangford@fbcpineville.net). Pastor: Stewart Holloway.
- 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.
- First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Creative Arts Camp 2017**. July 17-21, 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.



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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.

nhk or jrkr su ucrrv xhtmlx suakso: epa skr lhj

krapklrf plah acr ucrrvckf slf emuchv hn ohpk

hpqu.

nmkua vrark ajh:ajrlao-nmtr

Clues: R = E; V = P	Answer to June 1 Scripture Crypto: Philippians three:two
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Red River from page one

the area as a result of the Red River Association Crusade.

Richard Kaufman, pastor of Martin Baptist Church, was one of the organizers of the crusade. Preparation included a prayer walk at the Red River Parish Fairgrounds and counselor training at Social Springs Baptist Church in Ringgold, he said.

“We were thinking before the crusade started, if we could get just one, it would be all worth it,” Kaufman said. “But the Lord saw fit to bring in 19 to His Kingdom. He did a lot more than I thought would happen.”

Between 90 and 130 people turned out each night for the crusade, May 21-27.

Social Springs Baptist Church, First Baptist Church in Coushatta and the Red River Parish Fairgrounds hosted different nights of the crusade, which featured messages by evangelist Sam Moore of Bentonville, Ark., testimonies by Northwestern State University head men’s basketball coach Mike McConathy, Louisiana Baptist Convention President Gevan Spinney and First Baptist Coushatta Pastor Nathan Davis and music by Donna Weaver of

Tuscaloosa, Ala.

“Breakthrough night” was the Wednesday evening of the crusade, when 12 people came forward to publicly profess their faith in Jesus Christ,” Kaufman offered.

“I remember Sam would say to us that night that we are fixing to go to battle,” Kaufman said. “The counselors would spread out next the fence near where Sam was preaching and were prepared for a time of decision. One by one, we saw people come forward. To see a dozen people bowing their head at one time to pray to accept Jesus was very moving.”

Counselors collected contact information for those who came forward and those names, addresses, phone numbers and emails were passed along to area churches for follow up with each new believer.

“We encouraged each of them to make their decision public in the church of their choosing and then to follow through with baptism,” Kaufman said. “One of the key things is to hook them up with a church so they can get involved in ministry. We need one another, whether we admit

it or not. The Christian walk is going to be a struggle. You want people encouraging them along the way.”

Although the crusade is over, the evangelistic outreach is not yet done.

Moore returned to Martin Baptist Church June 4 to conduct additional evangelism training. Around 30 people attended the session, receiving tips for witnessing effectively and learning Scripture verses to be used in sharing the Gospel. At the end of the day, participants wrote out their individual testimonies and practiced and sharing it with others there.

The hope is that even more people in the area will become passionate about sharing Christ, Kaufman said.

HARVEST OF SOULS

The crusade is one of several Harvest events that have taken place this year. Harvest officially launched Louisiana Baptists’ two-year campaign to “pray for every home and share Christ with every person” in Louisiana.

The majority of Harvest events will take place in 2018, but a few already have been completed this year, including: -- Student Night, Jan. 24,



Hannah Pickett is baptized during the June 4 service at Martin Baptist Church in Coushatta. Pickett is one of 19 people who accepted Christ during the Red River Association crusade, held in late May.

during the Louisiana Baptists Evangelism Conference, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston (dozens came forward for prayer: 34 persons made spiritual decisions - 10 repented for salvation, 13 repented to restore their fellowship with Christ, nine made other commitments, two declared a call to vocational ministry);

-- a Hope, Love and Freedom spiritual renewal event for believers, April 3-5, at Southeastern Louisiana University in Hammond (200 attended the first night, building to more than 700 the final night); and,

-- the Real Hope crusade, April 30-May 3, at Jonesboro-

Hodge High School and Winfield Middle School (700 attended each night of the four-day revival; 25 repented in making first-time public professions of faith in Jesus, 35 repented and recommitted their lives to Christ, two surrendered to career ministry).

“I was encouraged by the unity,” Kaufman said. “The spirit of cooperation is a powerful thing. Psalms say how pleasant is it for brothers to dwell in unity. There is strength in numbers. Numbers represent people. I was thankful for everyone that came out for this life-changing week.”

There's a peace even when life is torn, friends desert you and you find that there is one that sticks closer than a brother. *Jesus* is the one. He is worthy knowing and He is worth sharing.

Harvest

Learn how you and your church can join this statewide strategy to pray for every home and share with every person in Louisiana.
LouisianaBaptists.org/Harvest