



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

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Brian Blackwell photo

Ed Newton congratulated students who came forward during the final session of the 2019 Youth Evangelism Celebration at the Rapides Coliseum in Alexandria. During the two-day conference, more than 500 participants made a decision for Christ.

6,000 youth rally for YEC

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – Ed Newton commissioned more than 6,000 students to leave the Rapides Parish Coliseum and be salt and light in their schools, communities and world during the 2019 Youth Evangelism Celebration.

“I believe as the world grows darker, the light gets brighter,” Newton told the students. “And I believe God is rallying a group of teenagers who will say ‘We are the salt of the earth! We are the light of the world! God’s got a mission for us!’”

“You have a choice to make,” he continued. “Are you going to



Brian Blackwell photo

A student lifted his hands in a time of worship at the Youth Evangelism Celebration.

be a thermostat or a thermometer? God’s trying to raise up thermostats in the world that will change the atmosphere of their campus, that will change the atmosphere of locker rooms, that will change the atmosphere of

friendships that you have. God wants you to embrace that you are salt and that you are light.”

EMBRACE THE CALL

Newton, pastor of the 27,000-member Community Bible Church in San Antonio, Texas, headlined the gathering, Nov. 24-25. Newton challenged Louisiana Baptist teens in multiple sessions to share what Christ has done in their lives, and encouraged them to change the world for the Lord.

By the end of the two-day spiritual encounter, 500 students had made some type of

See YEC, page 4

Collision with Christ changed LA evangelist

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

HAUGHTON (LBM) – Luke Hockenjos was on a collision course with death until the Holy Spirit intervened and prevented him from killing another man at the end of a high-speed chase near Ruston on Nov. 2, 2014.

Hockenjos, now a Louisiana Baptist evangelist, experienced life transformation on the interstate that day, finding hope in Christ.

“I had the nose of his truck on the other driver’s side and was going to push him over the guardrail on the interstate and in the process kill myself,” Hockenjos told the *Baptist Message*. “God intervenes at the perfect moment because He’s a perfect God.”

“I heard, ‘This is not the plan I have for you, it’s time for you to go.’ So, I put my truck in reverse, got out of there and a few hours later I stopped using drugs and surrendered it all, he recounted. “I told God I would do whatever He wanted me to do.”

“I went to places and people who had seen me live that false lifestyle and I confessed my sins to all of them,” he continued. “I traveled wherever God led me, which was all over the place.”

Hockenjos will speak during the Jan. 27 evening session of the 2020 Louisiana Baptist Convention Evangelism Conference at First Baptist Church in Lafayette, as part



Luke Hockenjos

See COLLISION, page 3

Bayou Church marks 50th year with 153 baptisms

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE (LBM) – Nora Mire knew a great deal about religion as a young adult, but she knew

very little about Christ.

After losing a spouse to cancer in 2008, Mire was introduced to the living hope found in Jesus. She did not accept Christ at the time, but the seeds

that were planted guided her through a journey that ended in Mire’s acknowledgment of her sins. Her desire to become a Christ

See BAYOU, page 10

Cross on I-20 reminds believers Jesus watches over them

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

RAYVILLE (LBM)--The community of believers in Rayville has erected a 120-

foot cross near Interstate 20 to remind motorists that Jesus watches over them.

The cross, which can be seen up to two miles from

its location, was envisioned in 2017 by Timmie Ray Thames, a member of the First Baptist Church in Rayville. Thames was inspired after having noticed electrical wires near his backyard form the image of a cross.

Several months passed and on Aug. 21, 2017, Thames's longtime friend, Joe Bruynickx, noticed a giant cross on the side of Interstate 55 in Batesville, Mississippi. The friends previously had discussed different varieties of

crosses, but Bruynickx said God revealed to them at that moment they should place the same design in Rayville.

"I was on my way back from the solar eclipse in Missouri and called Timmie Ray to help me stay awake on the drive home," he recalled. "We had finished discussing the eclipse when Timmie Ray made the statement that 'I just don't know if God is in this.' It was at that very moment that I noticed the cross at Batesville, and

I was stunned and awe struck, as was Timmie Ray when I told him what I was witnessing. I snapped that picture and sent it to him. We both then knew what God wanted done. To drive to that point at Batesville after traveling many, many miles of bumper to bumper traffic on I-55 and to be at the location of the cross at the very instant TR made the statement—that was a God moment."

After further conversations with Bruynickx, a member of Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Rayville, and Eddie Wren, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Rayville, Thames pitched the idea to his fellow members, and the quest to raise the needed \$200,000 began.

"Through this process, I have been shown so many times God is in this venture," Thames said during the April 7 worship service broadcast on the church's Facebook page. "A door will open at just the right time. People will step forward at just the right time. It's been amazing. There is no doubt in my mind whatsoever this is a calling."

"All of us are called to be a witness," he continued. "The cross will stand as a witness that this community is a Christian community and is a good place to raise your children with good Christian morals and Christian faith."

Thames passed away in August, and during his funeral multiple people mentioned his vision to erect the cross, Wren said. Afterwards more than \$50,000 was given by those who had attended.

See CROSS, page 11



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Collision from page one

of a two-day program of speakers.

He will be joined in the program by Steve Horn, executive director for Louisiana Baptists; Philip Robertson, pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church with campuses in Deville and Alexandria; Chip Luter, pastor of the Sulphur Springs campus of Idlewild Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida; James Jenkins, director of church planting for Louisiana Baptists; David Burton, founder of David Burton Ministries in Orange Park, Florida; Chad Williams, former Navy Seal; Frank Pomeroy, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas; and Johnny Hunt, senior vice president of evangelism and leadership for NAMB.

The musical lineup will include Jason Lovins Band, a Christian contemporary band from Ashland, Kentucky; and Veritas, a quartet from Franklin, Tennessee.

JOURNEY TO REDEMPTION

The day after the road rage incident, Hockenjos began the first leg of a two-week road trip that took him to cities as far away as Memphis, Tennessee, and Chicago, Illinois. Most stops were not planned ahead of time, but guided by the Holy Spirit, he said.

Hockenjos's first stop was Broadmoor Baptist Church in Shreveport, where he reunited with Herb Armentrout, who served as director of the Louisiana Baptist

All-State Youth Choir that Hockenjos was a member of in high school.

"I told him I shared a false testimony when I sang with the group because I was not even a believer," he said. "It's amazing how God put him there when I just happened to drive by the church and felt led to stop in. I was now sober and full with the joy of the Lord. I told him I was going to travel the world and share the Gospel."

Armentrout gifted him some money to purchase gasoline, which he used to travel to Natchitoches and apologized to Corwyn Aldredge, who coached him when he was a member of the Cedar Creek High School football team in Ruston.

"I told him I was sorry for not being who I should have been on the team, putting my efforts, instead, into destructive habits like alcohol and drugs," he recalled. "He gave me a hamburger and I was ready to continue my journey to Memphis."

JOURNEY TO PURPOSE

After stopping momentarily in Ruston to pick up a suitcase at his mother's home, Hockenjos traveled to Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tennessee, one of the churches where he sang with Armentrout's group.

While there, a minister opened the Bible Hockenjos's mother had given him several years before and directed him to 2 Corinthians



5:17: "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!"

"He showed me that verse in the very same Bible my praying mother had given me when I was strung out on meth," he said. "It really hit home what Christ had done for me, and that I was a new creation and my old life was dead."

Armed with a full tank of gas and a food voucher, courtesy of Bellevue Baptist, Hockenjos ventured farther north until he stopped to refuel his truck in St. Louis, Missouri.

"On the door at the gas station they had a sign that said, 'Now taking applications for snow shoveling,'" he recalled. "I remember thinking 'I'm from Louisiana, we don't do snow. God, get me away from here.'"

Immediately, Hockenjos performed an internet search

of the largest 100 churches in America and felt led by the Holy Spirit to travel to Willow Creek Community Church in Chicago, ranked No. 7 on the list at the time. When Hockenjos arrived at the church, he learned they were hosting a Celebration Recovery meeting later that evening. The Christ-centered Celebrate Recovery ministry, modeled after Alcoholics Anonymous, encourages individuals to break the chains of bondage to alcoholism, drug use and other addictions and dysfunctional

behaviors.

During the Celebrate Recovery meeting, Hockenjos said the Holy Spirit directed him to attend a Casting Crowns concert at their tour stop with the First Baptist Church in Woodstock, Georgia. Hockenjos arrived in the arena with the song "Overcomer" playing in the background.

"Hearing 'Overcomer' brought it home that what happened to me recently was real," he said. "I had overcome that which Satan was chaining me to. For the next week I became a Casting Crowns groupie, and followed them to several concert stops. Along the way

See COLLISION, page 9

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May this Christmas find us standing in amazement that hundreds of years before Jesus was born, the prophet Isaiah spoke these prophetic words:

*"For a child will be born for us,
 a son will be given to us,
 and the government will be on His shoulders.
 He will be named
 Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
 Eternal Father, Prince of Peace."* (Isaiah 9:6)

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year

From the State Missions Services Staff of Louisiana Baptists

YEC from page one —

faith decision: 198 statements of belief, 73 responses to a call to ministry, 158 acts of repentance to restore fellowship with Christ and 71 other commitments.

The theme of “Resolve” was based on Paul’s instructions in Ephesians 5:15-17 to “Pay careful attention, then, to how you live...making the most of the time...understand what the Lord’s will is.”

The two-day event also included award-winning Christian artist Zach Williams, event master of ceremonies, comedian and illusionist Jared Hall and Community Bible Church praise band “Central Wx-ship.”

Throughout the evangelism conference, students and adult leaders were asked to intentionally reach out to classmates, family members, co-workers and others with

the message of the Gospel. Moreover, during the Monday afternoon session, Newton led a training session using a strategy called “My 8.”

The eight-session study, developed by Newton, asks students to identify eight people in their lives who need Christ and to commit to pray for them faithfully. Additionally, students are challenged to memorize eight verses of Scripture that will help them biblically share the Gospel in those divine appointments God has designed for them.

This is the fourth of a multi-year rotation to equip students with various tools to share Christ. Those who began the training as seventh graders during the 2016 YEC will be familiar with seven different evangelistic tools by the time they are seniors.

Brandon Lewis, youth ministry strategist for Louisiana Baptists, told the *Baptist Message* he was

encouraged by the commitment by thousands of students to share Christ once YEC concluded.

“I’ve had the unique privilege of attending YEC as a student, bringing groups as a youth pastor, and am now honored to lead this incredible event that God has used to change lives for 32 years,” Lewis said. “It was so much fun to stand on the floor of the arena and listen to 6,000 teenagers and adults sing praises to our King. Then, as the coliseum emptied on Tuesday evening, I couldn’t help but think about how each family, church, and city will be affected by their passion for Christ as they return home. I can’t wait to begin hearing those stories.”

“It takes a lot of people to make YEC happen,” he continued. “I’d like to say thank you to (youth ministry strategist) Julie Woodrum, everyone who volunteered, all our ministry partners both on and off the stage and every church that made a way for their

students to participate.”

ANSWER THE CALL

Jaydon Bryant, a sixth grader from the Gathering Place’s West campus in Pineville, was among the students who experienced salvation at YEC. He repented and plans to be baptized as soon as possible.

“I gave my life to Christ because I knew I was a sinner,” Bryant told the *Baptist Message*. “I sin a lot, but it never occurred to me until this morning at YEC.”

Aubrie Rosteet, a seventh grader from Houston River Baptist Church in Sulphur, was inspired by Newton’s messages.

“I took away how much Jesus loves me and I am to be the light to the world,” Rosteet said. “When I get back home, I will try to stand out more and not blend in with the crowd.”

Brendan Brunson, a twelfth grader from Longstraw Baptist Church in Choudrant, said the event took him back to a time

when he accepted Christ at YEC.

“It’s great seeing others do what I did five years ago -- walk down the aisle to publicly declare their trust in Christ,” Brunson said. “Ed Newton encouraged me in his messages to be a leader as a member of the football team and to shine for Christ there.”

FOUNDATION FOR THE CALL

Newton told the students they can have a profound impact and prolific influence on the culture if they follow Christ and grow in their knowledge of Scripture.

“We believe in your generation,” Newton said. “We believe that Jesus will become further famous to the ends of the earth because of your willingness. But that cannot happen if we do not understand the significance of God’s Word. His Word is tried and true. And may you build your life upon the Word.”

See YEC, page 9



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a Child is born,
unto us a Son
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Isaiah 9:6

**Merry Christmas
From Our
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To Yours!**

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The joy of sharing the Good News

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) - As my alarm radio sounded on the morning of December 13, 2003, the first thing I heard was, "Though no official word has been given, Prime Minister Tony Blair is now giving his own confirmation that Saddam Hussein has been captured." Simultaneously my wife and I sat up in bed as if to say without words, "Did you hear that?" No snooze this morning—indeed we had heard correctly what everyone would soon know.

"Have you heard the good news," I asked the lady who sold me coffee. "Praise Jesus," she said, "That is good news." I walked outside the store to

see the newspaperman filling his machines. He knew. In fact he was lamenting that Sadaam's capture did not happen early enough to be in the paper. "You will sell all of your papers tomorrow," I assured him. My next stop was an early morning prayer group. None of those men knew yet. I had the great pleasure of telling them the good news.

Later that day I thought of the good news the shepherds heard that glorious night in Bethlehem. "Fear not: for, behold I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you is



STEVE HORN
Executive Director
for Louisiana Baptists



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See **HORN**, page 6

Operation Christmas

BATON ROUGE (LBM) -- Colombia is a South American country that is near and dear to my wife and me because we served there as missionaries with the International Mission Board. It has endured a bloody civil war for many decades. Across the years more than 200,000 people have lost their lives and millions more have been displaced by the violence of that conflict.

For years their government tried to defeat and disarm the rebels, all to no avail. In a desperate and creative step, they turned, of all places, to a marketing executive named Jose Miguel Sokoloff and his communication company. Perhaps words could do what weapons could not.

He and his team created

a campaign called "Operation Christmas." Through research they had discovered that the rebel forces were more likely to defect and lay down their weapons at Christmas than at any other time of the year, and they decided to capitalize on that fact.

As Christmas approached, elite units of the Colombian armed forces flew Black Hawk helicopters deep into the jungles where the rebel forces ruled. They selected 10 enormous trees along well-traveled paths. Camouflaged soldiers decorated each of these trees with thousands of Christmas lights. They also rigged trip wires so that any passing rebel fighter would trigger



JEFF GINN
Pastor
Istrouma Baptist Church
Baton Rouge

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"Each day Americans spend roughly 42% of their waking hours in front a screen"*

During this season, people will spend even more time on their devices. Let's meet them there and plant a seed of God's truth in their hearts.

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*<https://1079thelink.radio.com/blogs/kelly-meyers/heres-how-much-time-you-spend-looking-screens-lifetime>

Follow the righteous example of Mary and Joseph

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – The Bible is filled with people—all kinds of people. You find the truly evil in the Bible.

Herod the Great ruled Israel with an iron hand. He bought his kingdom and did everything in his power to keep it. He killed his favorite wife and several of his sons because he thought they threatened his kingdom.

Near the end of his life,

he even slaughtered the infants of Bethlehem in hopes of killing the child who was “the born king of the Jews.”

In the Bible you find lost people, people who lived for themselves and left God out of their lives. Jesus told us of the life of the “Rich Fool” whose love of



WAYLON BAILEY
Pastor
First Baptist Church
Covington

money and things kept him from seeing God. These are the people who live tragic lives. Nothing is more tragic than living apart from God.

You also find good, Godly people in the Bible who failed. David comes immediately to mind. Though a man after God’s

own heart, he failed and tragically harmed his family and his nation because of his failure. His failure—like ours—harmed the work of God in the world.

But there’s another group of people in the Bible. These are the people who humbly bow before

God in their weakness and ask Him to make them strong.

At this point Mary and Joseph come at the top of the list.

What set Mary and Joseph apart was their standing in life. They

See BAILEY, page 13

Ginn from page 5

the illumination of those lights as well as an accompanying banner that said, “If Christmas can come to the jungle, you can come home for Christmas. At Christmas anything is possible.”

Amazingly, hundreds of rebels did lay down their weapons and defect. In 2016 a peace accord was signed, finally bringing that bloody civil war to an

end.

Two thousand years ago the eternal Word of God came to the “jungle” of our world and illumined it. Isaiah 9:2a says, “The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light.” Because of Christ-

mas, we can find peace and go home to our Father! That is the true and original “Operation Christmas.” Yes, at Christmas “anything is possible.”

Jeff Ginn is pastor of the Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge.

Horn from page 5

born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.” And then the shepherds “made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.”

As I thought about the shepherds’ joy, I felt a little bit awkward about my joy. Indeed, Saddam’s capture was good news, but very small in comparison to the good news that a Saviour has been born for all people.

The Christmas Season is likely the easiest time of all to share the good news about Jesus. Everyone is already talking about Jesus. Granted, they may not realize that they are talking about Jesus, but every time someone says, “Merry Christmas,” they are talking about Jesus. Let’s capitalize on this season and share the good news about Jesus.

Merry Christmas everyone, and let’s go tell the good news.

Steve Horn is executive director for Louisiana Baptists.

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A gift for the Magi

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) —The Christmas story is so special to me because it declares the Savior has come; and, I find it remarkable in its message because of the multiple perspectives it shares to extend that message to every person in the world:

-- Mary and Joseph are humble parents with royal blood.

-- Zacharias and Elizabeth are faithful ministry servants whose obedience to God is rewarded beyond their wildest imaginations (She was the first person recorded to have called Jesus "Lord"; and, their unborn son was the first to worship Him, leaping for joy in Elizabeth's womb at the presence of the Christ in Mary's womb).

-- The shepherds are the unlikeliest of invitees to the birth of the King of kings, and yet are the special guests of Heaven.

-- Simeon and Anna are honored for their dedication, being present in the temple to proclaim to Israel that the Messiah has arrived.

But, perhaps no other

individual or group speaks to me as much as the Magi who came from Babylon to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.

All the others have bloodlines to Israel, but not the Magi, and for me their special part in the Christmas story has implications for the salvation message.

Indeed, their inclusion in the account of Jesus's birth on earth gives texture to Isaiah 49:6, which declares it "too small a thing" that Christ should come just for the benefit of Israel and that He is "a light to the Gentiles" so that salvation "may reach the ends of the earth."

A PLAN FOR THE AGES

Remarkably, God's plan to include these Gentiles in the special events surrounding the birth of His Son could be seen to unfold 600 years or so before the angels sang "Glory to God in the highest" to announce Jesus's birth.

Included in the many reports of faithfulness recorded in the Book of Daniel is an often-missed detail: after Daniel revealed and interpreted

the king's dream, Nebuchadnezzar named him chief of the wise men in Babylon. These were the Magi, a guild of astronomers recognized as priests and sometimes referred to as Chaldeans to identify them as men of learning and wisdom.

But the key point is Daniel was named chief among them.

Moreover, it is obvious Daniel taught them to look for the coming Messiah and likely shared with them his prophecy about the timeline for the birth of the Christ (Daniel 9:24-27) and the prophecy a star would mark His birth (Numbers 24:17).

I can imagine Daniel caused those early scientists, whose predecessors had plotted the movements of stars and planets for hundreds of years, to redirect their work for the

See GIFT, page 11



The three wisemen traveled between 800 to 900 miles following a star that had been prophesied would appear more than 600 years before the birth of Christ, our Savior.

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Backpacks to needy filled with gifts from Santa, Christ's love

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

MANY (LBM) – Christmas will be merrier in Louisiana and seven other states for more than 11,000 needy families, who have received a backpack filled with gifts and a message of hope for the holiday season.

Included in that number are 4,500 backpacks filled with hygiene items, snacks, canned food items, school supplies, clothes, a Bible and a booklet of the Christmas story, contributed by 20 Louisiana Baptist churches and ministries.

Throughout December, the Louisiana-based Mississippi River Ministry has coordinated the distribution of the backpacks to families at Christmas parties and other outreach events.

Since the backpack giveaway began in 2015, more than 34,000 backpacks have been distributed



Brian Blackwell photo

Members of Life Point Community Church in Mansura were among 20 Louisiana Baptist churches and ministries who distributed backpacks to needy families in an effort coordinated by Mississippi River Ministry.

that have resulted in 1,100 professions of faith in the eight-state region served by the ministry, according to Mississippi River Ministry regional backpack coordinators Marshall and Janell Ingle. Alabama's Women on Mission has adopted the ministry and provided

most of the backpacks since 2015.

"The backpacks are more than just gifts to children who are marginalized," Janell Ingle told the *Baptist Message*. "The backpacks not only meet physical needs but they are used as a bridge to meet

a spiritual need. Every backpack represents a child or family that will hear the Gospel and have an opportunity to respond."

Jacob Crawford, pastor of Life Point Community Church in Mansura and director of missions for Louisiana Baptist Association, said churches in his association planned to distribute the 800 backpacks they received, collectively, during individual outreach events throughout December. He is thankful for how God has used the Ingles and the Mississippi River Ministry to touch thousands of lives across the Delta region.

"Imagine 800 Gospel conversations just in our association," Crawford said. "For our church we will be using the backpacks to look for people of peace who we can build relationships with to eventually start discovery group Bible studies. This is a great way to be missional and make

disciples."

Ingle said they are excited about how God will use the backpack distribution to reach many who are in need of hope this Christmas.

"Thank you to all that donated Christmas backpacks to be given out," Ingle said. "With every backpack there is a story. Check for more posts on our Facebook page over the next weeks as the Mississippi River Ministry touches thousands of lives across the Delta Region."

The Mississippi River Ministry was founded in 1992 by the Home Mission Board (now North American Mission Board) and the Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union to share the Gospel with those in poverty along the Mississippi River Delta. For more information visit facebook.com/MarshallJanellIngle or mississippiriverministry.com.

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YEC from page 4

Newton, citing Matthew 5:13, encouraged the students to not blend in with the culture, but instead stand out.

"God called you not to camouflage Jesus but to completely convey Jesus at the highest level" Newton continued. "You must choose to go down this road, the narrow road, not the broad road. In order to do that, you have to make a decision.

"Your decisions today

Collision

from page 3

I stopped to share my story about what God had done."

Hockenjos finally made it back to Ruston on Nov. 23, 2014, and preached his first sermon at Unity Baptist Church in Oak Grove.

"I was nervous and called my uncle and he said, 'Son if you just give them Jesus, he will give you the rest,' he said. "It was at that moment that it took off. Through God's faithfulness it will be five years, three months of being free from bondage to a lifestyle of sin.

"Looking back on my journey, God provided what I needed when I needed it," he said. "To this day I have been in full time ministry. I have never missed a bill."

Hockenjos said his life of evangelism would not be possible without the support of his wife, Olivia, who he married Feb. 24, 2018. They are members of the First Baptist Church in Haughton.

"In my life, Jesus and my wife are top priorities," he said. "She supports me. The greatest thing about having her is she supports me but keeps me humble too. I'm on the road a lot. It would be hard to have a wife who was against what God has called me to do. She frees me up and allows me to do things, knowing that no matter what I would not put the ministry above her. I have such a wonderful life now and am blessed that God allows me to share the hope I found in Him with others, for His glory."

To learn more about Hockenjos' ministry, visit <https://www.facebook.com/Give-em-Jesus>.

determine your future," he said. "Are the choices that you are making and the decisions that are being made in public being lived out in your life when nobody is watching? Are you compromising the very conviction that maybe you have made at this particular setting? Do you proclaim 'Jesus is my everything' here, but then two weeks later go back to your old way of life?"

"Jesus wants to use you in such a way to provide direction, warn of danger and also expose darkness. If there



Speaker Ed Newton encouraged Youth Evangelism Celebration participants to embrace a life of service. were not Jesus followers on the planet, how corrupt would our world be? The reason why God possibly is holding off his judgment is because he

is allowing the light in you and me to expose the darkness."

ACCEPT THE CALL

Newton closed the celebration by making a charge to the crowd to build their lives on the rock of Christ and to reject the relativism that so many follow today.

"Jesus would help us understand that the Word of God is absolute truth," he said. "It's true for all people, all places, all times. The Word of God is more relevant than any social media platform

you can ever look at. It's more relevant than the *USA Today*. Jesus and His words are what you and I are called to build our life on. Jesus would help us understand that religion won't save you. Only Jesus can save you."

He also encouraged the students to embrace a life of service.

"It's not what your church can do for you," he said. "It's what you can do for your church. You've got gifts, talents, abilities, and they need to be leveraged for Kingdom purpose in your church."

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Bayou from page one

follower was sparked after hearing the Gospel presented at The Bayou Church in Lafayette, just days into the month of October.

"I kept hearing Pastor Sean Walker say that it [baptism] is a symbol, just like his wedding ring, and that it is an outward display of an inward commitment to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior," Mire told the *Baptist Mes-*

sage. "I understood. My parents made the decision to baptize me as an infant ... I am making the choice for myself, professing my faith, my belief that Jesus Christ is my Lord and Savior."

LIVES THAT LAST

Mire was one of 67 new believers baptized at The Bayou Church on Sept. 29. The catalyst for the

mass baptism service came from the culmination of a sermon series, "Unleashing A Life that Lasts," in which Senior Pastor Mike Walker shared what God says about a life of significance.

"The mission of The Bayou Church has always and will always be to transform lives," Pastor Mike Walker said. "Jesus was about the Father's business, and that is what we must be about too. Sunday was an awesome reminder that God is real, and He is still transforming lives. Seeing 67 people step forward to declare their faith in Christ and follow in obedience with baptism was an exclamation point on my 35th year of ministry as senior pastor at The Bayou Church."

Since January, 153 believers have been baptized at The Bayou Church, which recently celebrated its 50th anniversary. The church, which started out in 1969 with 31 people worshipping inside a furniture store in Lafayette and in 1971 relocated to its current location off Kaliste Saloom Road, now averages 2,000



Submitted photo

Sean Walker, executive pastor at the Bayou Church in Lafayette, baptized one of the 153 new converts who have stirred the waters in 2019.

people during its three Sunday morning worship services.

Throughout the week, members grow their relationships with Christ and each other through one of 87 small groups.

Locally, members share the love of Christ at the Festival International de Louisiane, host a Christ-

mas party for children in foster care and their families through a partnership with the Department of Children & Family Services, and invite educators to its campus for an annual breakfast.

Globally, members have taken mission trips to Alaska, Guatemala and Haiti.

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Gift from page 7

new purpose of identifying the date and place of the birth of the Savior. And they passed along this mission to the next generation of stargazers, who did

likewise.

The Christmas story reveals Daniel changed the spiritual trajectory of that influential group in Mesopotamia, because 600

years later at least a team of them traveled between 800 and 900 miles, likely a trip of more than 30 days, to ask, "Where is the one who has been born king of the Jews? We saw his star when it rose and have come to worship him" (Matthew 2:2).

When the sign that Daniel predicted finally manifested itself, the Magi did not just record the event for prosperity, but instead went to Jerusalem seeking Him.

AN ETERNAL RESPONSE

Herod responded to their question by sending for the chief priests and key teachers, who shared the prophecy of Micah 5:2

that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem.

What happened next was extraordinary:

-- The priests, knowing Jesus would be born in Bethlehem and being part of the priesthood that anticipated His coming for more than 1,400 years, chose to return to the temple, about a four minute walk from the palace.

-- Later, Herod, fearing Jesus had been born in Bethlehem, chose to send troops to try to kill the King of kings.

-- But the Magi, who had received the passed down Good News from Daniel, shared nearly 600 years earlier, chose to travel five more miles to worship Christ. They truly

were wise men!

The Bible notes the Magi brought gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh to honor the Savior. But their response to the Good News passed down to them after 600 years, showed they realized the "light to the Gentiles" was a gift to them – salvation that reaches "the ends of the earth."



Brian Blackwell photo

Joe Bruynickx and Eddie Wren saw a dream of the late Timmie Ray Thames become reality when a 120-foot cross was placed Nov. 6 near the Interstate 20 exit in Rayville. Thames, a member of First Baptist Church in Rayville, died in August.

Cross from page 2

"His dream became a reality as the community really rallied around it," Wren told the *Baptist Message*. "It's inspiring and amazing to know a bank here donated the land and so many people got behind this effort to give money because of one man's idea from God."

"This wasn't a First

Baptist thing but a community effort involving many churches, businesses and people," he continued. "Mr. Timmie Ray was an inspiration to our community and so many people loved him. I miss him, but I'm thankful that the vision the Lord pressed upon him became reality."

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Native Americans lead revival in state, and among Navajo nation

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

You are a sleeping giant, the original American. You are now awakening. Just around the corner, you may become a spiritual superpower in this country that could change not only America but the world.

-- Billy Graham, 1975, speaking to a group of Native American lead-

ers in Albuquerque, New Mexico

God often chooses to use the 'least' of the peoples, much like He used the Israelites when He delivered them out of bondage. "These people are connected to indigenous peoples around the world. Should they gain a sense of divine purpose for their lives, they could travel down an established highway to carry the good

news around the world. Henry continues to pray that God will begin a revival in a least-likely place among a least-likely people so that God receives all the glory.

-- Richard Blackaby, son of Henry Blackaby, founder of Blackaby Ministries, in a 2019 statement to the Baptist Message.

ELTON (LBM)—An eight-week camp meeting in Oberlin and Elton has sparked revival in central Louisiana and among the Navajo nation in New Mexico, and there are no signs that it will end soon.

The All Nations Camp Meeting kicked off Oct. 2 under a tent on the campus of Oberlin Baptist Church, located in a community of 1,800 people. But it since moved, Nov. 2, to the grounds of the Coushatta Tribe of Louisiana in Elton.

Randy Carruth, founder of Louisiana-based I Am Able Ministries that reaches out to Native Americans, said this is the first time

such a revival has taken place on the Coushatta reservation.

Two people have professed Christ as Savior, but scores of others have repented for restoration of their fellowship with Christ during the revival, which has meetings scheduled daily through the end of March.

"When we read the two statements by Dr. Graham and Dr. (Henry) Blackaby and experience Native people coming from all over North America, paying their own way, by faith, you have to believe that we are no longer talking about revival," Carruth said. "For we are in revival. Pray that this spark ignites throughout the world and many will come to Oberlin and Elton to experience what only God can do. May people come to Jesus in numbers we have never experienced before."

Native Americans from 19 nations in seven states and Canada have supplied guest evangelists and musicians, and the Billy Graham

Evangelistic Association has offered prayer support. Henry Blackaby Ministries also is aware of the events and is praying and seeking God in how they can assist.

John Cerneck, pastor of Indian Bible Church in Elton, which is the host church for the services on the Coushatta reservation, said God is moving among the Native Americans like at no other time in the 35 years he has served as pastor of the church. He said prayer has helped sow the spiritual harvest.

"Indian people love to meet other Indian people, so when the guest preachers from other Indian nations get up and share their testimony, it encourages the local people here," Cerneck told the Baptist Message. "It's hard to describe how God is moving. You have to come and experience it."

"I've read about awakenings and this feels like what I've read about," he continued. "I was vaguely aware of what Billy Graham said regarding how God would use Native Americans to bring about revival, but I'm now believing and understanding what he referenced. No one knows the mind of God and only He knows how long this will continue."

For the remainder of the story, go to www.baptistmessage.com.

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Bailey from page 6

were young--very young. They did not come from wealth or stature. They were peasant people from a nondescript town who surrendered themselves to be obedient to God. Neither Mary nor Joseph was perfect. Mary was a virgin, but she was also a sinner who needed a Savior.

Mary and Joseph serve as an example for us. When God called, they surrendered to God. Though God called them to do astounding things that were unique in history, they followed God's plan.

Liz Curtis Higgs beautifully depicted Mary's uniqueness: "God didn't choose Mary because she was unique. Mary was unique because God chose her. He knew her tender heart, her trusting nature, her abiding faith, her humble spirit. He who formed Mary in her mother's womb would soon form his Son in Mary's womb."

God also chose Joseph. What was the outstanding characteristic about Joseph? While we can't see Joseph's heart, we can see his actions. Joseph was a man of action.

Again and again, we see Joseph receiving revelation from God and acting on it.

God told Joseph not to be afraid to take Mary as his wife. After the birth of the child, God also told him to get up immediately and take the child and his mother and flee to Egypt. Joseph did all of this.

When Herod the Great died, God told Joseph to return to the land of Israel. Joseph again acted and followed God's direction. When Joseph learned that Herod's son Archelaus reigned in the place of Herod, Joseph moved back to Nazareth and raised his son and cared for Mary (Matthew 2:19-23).

There is so much we don't know about Joseph. How old was he? Did he die after Jesus' twelfth birthday and before the beginning of Jesus' earthly ministry? While there is much we don't know about Joseph, we know this. "God entrusted His Son to Joseph, and Joseph was up to the task. He cared for Mary and the child and raised a family. When danger arose and action became necessary,

Joseph acted" (Liz Curtis Higgs).

Joseph gives us the wonderful picture of a man who pleases God by being faithful in family relationships and decisive when circumstances and God's leading demand action.

We all get to choose how we will live, both at Christmas time and all of our lives. Everyday you are choosing one of these kinds of lives. This very

moment you are deciding what kind of life you will live.

Let me encourage you to choose wisely, and let me encourage you to commit to follow the example of Mary and Joseph who chose the good way.

Waylon Bailey is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Covington and a former president of both the Louisiana Baptist Convention

and the LBC Executive Board.



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~ The late Dr. Roy Fish, Former Director of Evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary

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to prelmor54@gmail.com.
or mail your résumé to the church.

SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR
First Baptist Church
Sicily Island, LA is seeking
résumés for a bi-vocational
pastor. Email résumés to
amswalter@gmail.com
or mail to Search Committee,
c/o Walter Myers, Jr.
2676 Hwy 8 • Sicily Island, LA 71368
For more information, call 318.758.4412

STUDENT MINISTER
Thompson Road Baptist
Church in Slidell, La.,
is seeking a part-time
student minister.
Anyone interested can
submit their résumé
to Randy Boyett
at rbttrbc@yahoo.com.
For more information,
call 985.690.6077.

PART-TIME YOUTH LEADER
St. Clair Baptist Church
is seeking a part-time
youth leader. Please
submit résumés to:
Search Committee,
c/o Dennis Ellis,
27 Penn Mar Drive,
Boyce, LA 71409.

SEEKING A STUDENT PASTOR
Westside Baptist Church, Natchitoches is seeking a Student Pastor. Join us in this wonderful community on Cane River near the beautiful Northwestern State University campus as we seek to make disciples in Natchitoches & the nations. This is a full-time position paying a very competitive salary plus group health benefits.
Submit résumés to our search committee through Steve McAlister, Senior Pastor, via email at steve@westside.life or via mail at 6834 Hwy 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, 71457.
For more information, call 318.352.2383.

SEEKING A WORSHIP TEAM LEADER
Calvary is a growing church of mostly younger adults and students in western Louisiana seeking an individual with a heart for God and people who will work with staff and volunteers to lead the church in worship. The church sings ancient and modern music in a contemporary format led by a worship team rather than a choir. There are many musically talented individuals in this exciting church. We are looking for the one who can lead them and us in worship.
Send résumés to: Calvary Worship Team, 105 Peterson, Many, LA 71449
or email to calvarymany@gmail.com. For information, call 318.256.2871.

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Seeking a praise and worship
MUSIC MINISTER
Heflin Baptist Church,
Heflin, LA is seeking a
part-time praise and
worship/music minister.
Blended music preferred,
but not required.
Send your résumé
with references to:
Music Search Committee,
143 S. Church St.,
Heflin, LA 71039

SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR
Fellowship Baptist Church, Dubach, LA
is seeking a full-time pastor
Please send résumé to:
Dr. William H. Green,
Chairman Search Committee
625 Hunt Road • Dubach, Louisiana 71235
or call 318.245.9858

SEEKING A BIVOCATIONAL PASTOR
Mowata Baptist Church
Eunice, LA is seeking
a Bi-Vocational Pastor
Please send your
résumé to:
kabg11@gmail.com

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SEEKING A WORSHIP MINISTER
Hebron Baptist Church in Denham
Springs, LA is seeking a part-time
Worship Minister. Please send résumés
to Hebronwlds@gmail.com or mail
to Hebron Baptist Church
24063 LA-16
Denham Springs, LA 70726

SEEKING PART-TIME WORSHIP MINISTER
The Open Door Church in Lafayette, LA is seeking a part-time Worship Minister. This paid position requires about 15 hours per week. The Worship Minister will need strong leadership, a sincere love for Christ and people and a strong understanding of what true worship really is. Additionally, our church is seeking to reach out to our community and grow significantly over the next 5 years, moving the position to full time.
Please email résumés to search@opendoorla.org.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Do you have a Revival, Homecoming, a new pastor, a community outreach or a concert? The Baptist Message would love to share your church news with the rest of the state. It is very easy to do, just send in your information (who, what, where and when) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. To get your event in the paper, please submit your information three weeks prior to the event.

ON THE MOVE

- **Terrell Suggs** is the interim pastor at Calvary Baptist Church, Slidell.
- **Jimmy Pitson** is the new pastor at Baskin Baptist Church, Baskin.
- **Cody Roberts** is the new youth minister at Red Bluff Baptist Church, Folsom.
- **Nichole Deline** is the new music director at Serenity Baptist Church, Tickfaw.
- **Codie (wife Kenzie) Smith** is the new youth pastor at Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City.
- **Randy (wife Chelby) Ziegler** is the new youth pastor at First Baptist Church, Bossier City.
- **Stephen (wife Amy) Cloud** is the new youth pastor at Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- **Tim (wife Casey) Purvis** is the new children's minister at Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- **Chad Jackson** has resigned as pastor at Liberty Baptist Church, Calhoun.
- Eastside Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: **Pastor Wayne Hollie** passed away on October 4, 2019. Eastside has called **Charles Bigner** on November 17. He was unanimously voted to be the next pastor. Pastor Hollie will be greatly missed by all.

REVIVAL

- New Prospect Baptist Church, Pioneer: December 14. Evangelist: 4TALK42 Ministries. Pastor: Robin Cox.

LAGNIAPPE

- First Baptist Church, Many: **Billy Burkett will be honored** December 14, 2 p.m., at First Baptist Church in Many for his 90th birthday. Burkett is pastor at Bethany Baptist Church in Marthaville and has served 70 years in ministry, most which has been at churches within the District 8 Convention.
- Washington Baptist Church, Washington: **Volunteers carpenters needed** to install a stud wall inside a metal building. Approximately a 2-3 day

project. Visit historic Washington and enjoy good Cajun hospitality with us. Call Pastor Louis Charrier at 337.308.0336 or email louis.charrier@yahoo.com if you can help.

- Cotile Baptist Church, Boyce: **The Fabulous Blackwood Quartet** in concert, December 13, 7 p.m. Pastor: Johnny Miller.
- Calvary Baptist Church, Merryville: **Third annual A Night in Bethlehem – a walking live Nativity**, December 13-14, 6-8 p.m. Come wander through the town of Bethlehem as we depict the time of the birth of Jesus Christ. For He is the true reason we celebrate Christmas. Cost: free. Refreshments are free and children receive a take home bag. Pastor: Jim Miers.
- First Baptist Church, Covington: **The Story of Amazing Love – A Christmas Musical**, December 13, 7 p.m. and December 14 at 2 and 6 p.m. Christmas Eve services will be held at 3 and 5 p.m. on December 24. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.
- First Baptist Church, Mandeville: **A Mandeville Christmas – featuring a live walk-through nativity**, December 13-15, 6 to 8 p.m. Pastor: Corey Fontan.
- First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: **Christmas Spectacular 2019 – “One Holy Night,”** December 13 and December 15, at 7 p.m. The spectacular will feature the sanctuary choir and orchestra, wise men, shepherds, angels and banners. Music Minister: Chip Vickers. Pastor: David Cranford.
- Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport: **2019 Fa La La Fest**, December 13, 4-9 p.m. Make plans now to shop with our amazing vendors, eat some wonderful food, and sing along with our carolers! There will be something for everyone from the young to the young at heart. This event is FREE and open to the public. Pastor: Chuck Pourciau.
- Ridgecrest Baptist Church, Ridgecrest: **Trevor Thomas Drama Ministries**, December 14, 6 p.m. Pastor: Dennis Baker.
- North Monroe Baptist Church, Monroe: **The Sounds of the Holidays**, December 14, 7 p.m. Featuring the Monroe Symphony Orchestra. Cost: \$30. The Monroe Symphony Orchestra will be having their December concert in the Main Worship Center at North Monroe. Pastor: Bill Dye.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Light has Come**, December 14, 6:30 p.m.; December 15, 10 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.; December 16, 6:30 p.m. For more information, call the church at 318.442.0754 or email madelyn@pbcministry.com. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
- Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Christmas with the Blackwood Quartet**, December 14, 5 p.m. A love offering will be taken.

Pastor: Jim Wolfe.

- First Baptist Church, Slidell: **Carols by Candlelight**, December 14-15, Saturday, 7 p.m., Sunday, 10 a.m. Presented by the music ministry of First Baptist Church, Slidell. **Christmas Eve service**, December 24, 5 p.m. Pastor: Casey Stark.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Colfax: **Let Earth Receive Her King! – A musical for Christmas**, December 15, 10:45 a.m. The musical is being presented by the Bethel Baptist Choir followed by Christmas Dinner in the Family Life Center. Pastor: Carl Gulde.
- Goldonna Baptist Church, Goldonna: **Trevor Thomas Drama Ministries**, December 15, 5 p.m. Pastor: Jason Wommack.
- First Baptist Church, Zwolle: **“Silent Night” – Christmas Cantata**, December 15, 10:30 a.m.; **church-wide Christmas fellowship**, 6 p.m.; **Candle Light Communion Service**, December 22, 6 p.m. Pastor: Marty Williams.
- Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport: **A Night of Hope**, December 15, 5-7 p.m. Join us for a musical Night of Hope presented by the Summer Grove choir and orchestra as we celebrate Christ's birth! Pastor: Heath Peloquin.
- Alto Baptist Church, Alto: **His Name Is Jesus cantata**, December 15, 10:30 a.m. **A Candlelight Lord's Supper Service** will begin at 6 p.m., with a Christmas fellowship to follow. Music minister: Jay Ellerman. Pastor: Alan Miller.
- Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport: **A Christmas Celebration**, December 15, 6 p.m. Over 250 voices and 30 instrumentalists will share familiar carols and brand new favorites, all celebrating the birth of our Savior. Cost: Free. Childcare is provided from birth to two years of age. Doors open at 5:30 p.m. and the concert begins at 6 p.m. in worship center north. Pastor: Chuck Pourciau.

- Rocky Branch Baptist Church, Rocky Branch: **“Christmas Message” Cantata**; December 15, 10:45 a.m.; Music Director: Phillis Gates. Pastor: Terry Mims.
- First Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **Song of Joy! Christmas musical**, December 15, 6 p.m. Come join with us as we celebrate the birth of our Savior, Jesus Christ. After the Cantata join with us for a potluck supper and a wonderful time of fellowship. Pastor: Brian McAllister.
- Longview Baptist Church, Deville: **Messiah Heaven's Glory Cantata**, December 15, 10:30 a.m. Presented by the Longview choir. **Christmas Candlelight Service**, December 22, 6 p.m. Pastor: Robby Poole.
- Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Slidell: **Song of Joy Christmas Cantata**, December 15, 10:15 a.m. The cantata will be presented by Grace Memorial's adult choir and orchestra. **Christmas Eve Candlelight service**, December 24, 6 p.m. Pastor: Dennis Phelps.
- Jerusalem Baptist Church, Hammond: **Christmas Program**, December 15, 10:30 a.m.; **Christmas Eve service**, December 24, 6 p.m. Pastor: Phil Weaver.
- First Baptist Church, Winnsboro: **An evening of Christmas Music with Jon & Friends**, December 15, 6 p.m.; **Christmas Cantata**, December 22, 6 p.m.; **Christmas Eve Vespers Service**, December 24, 6 p.m. Pastor: Craig Beeman.
- Mount Vernon Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Christmas at Mount Vernon; The Carols of Christmas**, December 15, 10:15 a.m.; **Christmas Family Worship**, December 22, 10:15 a.m.; **Candlelight service**, December 22, 6 p.m. Pastor: Randy Burdeaux.
- Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: **“This Hope” in concert**, December 20, 6:30 p.m. A love

offering will be taken. Pastor Steven Kelly.

- First Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Northeast Louisiana Christmas Celebration** at First West, December 21-22, 6 p.m. The NELA Christmas Celebration is your opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of the Christmas season. You will experience all the comforts of the Christmas season. You'll celebrate the birth of Jesus and reflect on the silent night by candlelight. Help us eliminate the medical debt of Ouachita Parish by purchasing a \$5 ticket to the Celebration. We're doing this through a partnership with RipMedicalDebt. RIPMedicalDebt works with collection agencies to pay pennies to the dollar on medical debt. Pastor: Michael Wood.
- Family of Grace, Alexandria: **Christmas 3-N-1 Service**, December 22, 10:30 a.m. at Coughlin Saunders Center. Pastor: Brad Webb.
- First Baptist Church, Ruston: **Winter Worship Night**, December 15, 6-7 p.m.; **Touch Ruston Christmas – pack a grocery bag**, December 21, 10 a.m.; December 23-24, 5:30 p.m., **Candlelight Service**. Pastor: Chris Craig.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Special Speaker**, December 29, 10:30 a.m. Guest Speaker: **Luke Hockenjos**. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Colfax: **New Year's Eve Bash**, December 31, 6 p.m. Bring your favorite snacks of finger foods and come enjoy the fun and fellowship. There will be family fun, games, food, and fireworks. Pastor: Carl Gulde.
- First Baptist Church, Haynesville: **Joyful Remembrance Celebration Concert**, January 5, 6 p.m. Pastor: Jeff Tinsely.
- First Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Foto Sisters in concert**, January 15, 10 a.m. A senior adults are invited to this Golden Years event. A complimentary lunch will be served following the concert. Pastor: Michael Wood.

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.

qzf ven yebxn sbzmknmqvwbz br ven sewxfknz br

wakqnx cpkcpknf qmqwzav cbana qzf qqkbz wz ven

ywxfnkznaa. nhbfpa awhvnnz:vyb

Clues:
C = M; Q = A

Answer to November 28 Scripture Crypto:
Joel two: thirteen

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Philip Robertson

MONDAY EVENING

Luke Hockenjos
Chip Luter

TUESDAY MORNING

James Jenkins
David Burton

TUESDAY AFTERNOON

Chad Williams

TUESDAY EVENING

Frank Pomeroy
Johnny Hunt

MUSIC

Jason Lovins Band
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