



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

April 9, 2020

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You are doing great, Louisiana Baptists!

ALEXANDRIA, (LBM)--You might be tired of hearing that we are living in unprecedented days, and, of listening to endless reporting about the crisis, quarantine, social distancing, stay-at-home orders, and flattening the curve. I know I am.

So, how about some good news?



STEVE HORN
Executive Director
Louisiana Baptists

Our churches are responding to the challenge with online worship, online giving, online Sunday school, and online prayer meetings. [I haven't heard of an online dinner on the grounds, but I'm ready when someone tries that!] Others are doing drive-in church.

We are at our best when our motto is: "Whatever it takes!"

And you know what?

You are doing great Louisiana Baptists!

Louisiana Baptists also are providing real solutions to real problems in other ways:

-- Louisiana College's Pre-Engineering Department is making protective face shields and masks for hospitals.

-- Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief has established a prayer line, distributed at least 24,000 N-95 respirators, and are participating in food distribution.

-- Our Business Office, in cooperation with our Office of Public Policy and Communications Team, is helping associations and churches interpret the CARES Act which provides financial assistance for churches.

You are doing great Louisiana Baptists!

This week our State Missions Offering Committee, the group tasked with setting goals for all mission offerings and disbursing our convention's Georgia Barnette State Missions offering, granted \$305,000 from Georgia Barnette gifts to our 38 associations. The amount of each grant was based on the size of the association and each association will be able to use those funds in a way that

See HORN, page 9



Brian Blackwell photo

With 'social distancing' in place, Tioga First Baptist Church employed a drive-in service to encourage its members and others from the community Sunday, March 22.

Churches surge amid COVID-19 outbreak

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)--Louisiana Baptist churches continue to lean into their Gospel mission, finding creative ways to reach their respective communities, and beyond, despite the coronavirus outbreak and the resulting state government restrictions on public gatherings.

CROWD BANS

Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards issued a proclamation, March 13, banning events with more than 250 participants, through April 13. Two days later he decreed even tighter limits, restricting gatherings to no more than 50 people, leaving many people of faith wondering how to worship on Sundays

and conduct other church-related activities. Then he issued an additional proclamation, March 22, narrowing public meetings to no more than 10, effective March 23.

DRIVE-IN MINISTRY

One innovation is the "drive-in" church service.

See SURGE, page 5

FBC Ponchatoula makes way for new believer's baptism

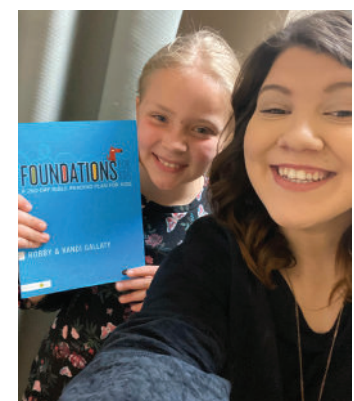
By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

PONCHATOULA (LBM) - Sadie Laird, 9, recently made a special declaration of hope in

Christ that was two years in the making.

Since 2018, Laird's parents, extended family and children's leaders at First

See PONCHATOULA, page 11



Madison Cody, who serves on staff at First Baptist Ponchatoula, and Sadie Laird celebrated her baptism March 22.

Evangelists set to livestream Easter message

By Message Staff
Louisiana Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) - The Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists has planned a special online

outreach event Easter weekend.

The one-hour program will be livestreamed on Facebook, April 9 at 7 p.m., and will be available on-demand throughout

the weekend. The special broadcast will feature music and a message by COSBE President Sammy Tippit, who will co-host

See LIVESTREAM, page 3

Skills of a church planter: Building team cohesion

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)—Unity is a key spiritual principle expressed in the Bible: two who walk together are in agreement (Amos 3:3); it is better to have two working together so that one can pick up the other if the other stumbles (Ecc. 9-12); and, a strand of rope consisting of three cords has great strength (Ecc.

3:12). Cohesion, working together for a single purpose, is an element of unity, which Jesus prayed about in His plea to the Father for you and me, living today (John 17:20-23). Building cohesion within a group is a primary task every leader must perform, so it is critically important to learn and

develop this leadership skill.

POWER OF COHESION

Draft horses are a good example for explaining the power that is created by building cohesion. These animals are bred especially for pulling heavy loads. They are amazing beasts of burden with huge muscles, large hearts and lungs.

A single draft horse weighing about 1,700 pounds can pull almost five times his body weight or 8,000 pounds.

Moreover, yoked together, two of these herculean creatures can pull even more. Most people



JOHN HEBERT
Team Leader
Louisiana Baptist
Missions & Ministry

likely would guess the tandem could pull up to 16,000 pounds, but they would be wrong. Typically, two good draft horses working in tandem can easily pull 24,000 pounds -- that's three times what either properly prepared equine could pull alone.

But, that's not the only surprise.

If two draft horses pulling together have trained together and learned to work as a cohesive team that capacity surges to 32,000 pounds, or four times what either could pull solo. Working as a unit in agreement quadruples what either of the two

steeds could do on their own.

COHESION KEY TO TEAMWORK

You can see from the example of a teamed pair of draft horses that building team cohesion is a very special skill that all church planters, pastors and ministry leaders should master -- cohesion multiplies the amount and effectiveness of the work that we can complete.

The key to creating harmony, a necessary component of cohesion, is to stay on top of potential or actual points of conflict -- address them quickly and resolve them biblically.

Even in being swift to start the process for resolving a conflict, take the time to allow the Holy Spirit to cause people at odds with each other to set aside their personal agendas and prejudices when they are off the mark.

Make sure those involved know the underlying spiritual principles in the resolution process and use fairness -- no favoritism, and, a laser focus on the objectives or completing the task -- to guide you and them. Be sensitive to

See **COHESION**, page 11

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Louisiana Baptists urged to pray for Louisiana's evangelists

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM)—Louisiana Baptists are urged to pray for evangelists, whose collective ministries are among the most negatively impacted by the Coronavirus Disease 2019 crisis.

"Pray for our evangelists," Keith Manuel posted on his Facebook page. He is the director of the Louisiana Baptist evangelism and church growth team.

"So many people will not be aware of the potential economic hardship they are facing. Most, if not all of them, are having months of meetings cancelled. If you are a partner with them, maybe the Lord will put it on your heart to help financially or in another way," Manuel explained. "Most of our evangelists are living on a very small income. Pray for their needs to be met as you pray for so many others who will lose their incomes during this crisis."

Louisiana Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists President Gary Bowlin said the cancellation of revivals due to COVID-19 come at what is tradition-

ally the busiest time of the year for evangelists.

"The biggest thing is that we are not able to share the Gospel and see people saved," Bowlin, founder of Gary Bowlin Evangelistic Association in Summit, Miss., told the *Baptist Message*.

"Cancellations have shut down the majority of our ministry income. Most of us are in faith ministries that rely on the love offerings from the churches where we preach to pay our bills and feed our families. We have no backstop like church ministers or denominational workers who have regular salaries. I know that some way the Lord will provide for us. He always does. How He does that is yet to be seen, but that is why it is called a faith ministry."

Bill Britt, founder of Compel Outreach International in Haughton that plants churches and orphanages around the world and maintains a Bible university for pastors



The Coronavirus Disease 2019 crisis has impacted evangelists like Gary Maroney.

in India, said he respects the decision of pastors who are navigating uncharted waters.

"I have been impacted by various events being cancelled," Britt said. "No one knows how long it will be until churches are able to have corporate worship

services again. That in turn affects us financially."

"The evangelist doesn't receive a salary like other ministry positions," he continued. "All, or a majority of, evangelists' income consists of revival love offerings. I lead a global ministry and the needs in these various locations around the world still have to be funded. I am trusting in the Lord to provide for our ministry, however He may choose."

"I would like to ask everyone who reads this to pray for an evangelist you know, or do not know, for that matter," he added. "Contact them and encourage them in these days. Also, after this crisis is over, call an evangelist and schedule them to come to your next event."

Evangelist David Hanna said eight of his outreach

events have been postponed.

"Please pray for the churches and pastors as God continues to move in the hearts and lives of these individuals," said Hanna, founder of David Hanna Ministries in Coushatta. "At this time I am secluded in my home and really trying to get a clear word from God. The Bible says, be still and know that I'm God."

"I'm not sure that this is a judgement of God on our land, but one thing for sure, He has virtually brought our nation to its knees," he continued. "Let's join together in prayer and ask God to heal our land. Everyone you talk to is praying for God to give us a revival. We need a spiritual awakening in our land. And maybe we need to pray the prayer of Habakkuk, who said, 'Revive thy people in the midst of the years.' Lord God, please do it."

Livestream from page one

the meeting with Richard Hamlet, president and CEO of Global Ministries Foundation in Memphis, Tenn.

The event, "Covered by the Cross," will feature the powerful stories of men and women who found a place of hope at the cross.

Luke Hockenjos of Haughton, and Keith Fordham and Kim Stanely, both of Fayetteville, Ga., are among those who will share their testimonies. Musicians Joe and Kim Stanley, Russell and Kristi Johnson, all of Conway, S.C., and Amy Stockwell, of Katy, Texas, will lead a time of worship by song.

Tippit will conclude the evening with an invitation to follow Christ.

COSBE has asked for churches, associations and state conventions to partner and participate in the effort

by sharing the video on their websites or Facebook pages, or by requesting a link for the organization's Vimeo channel that also will livestream the event.

Churches also can download the broadcast and create a short introductory video by their pastors that can be uploaded to their social media sites.

Churches that use Vimeo or incorporate the video introduction from their pastor are requested to inform Tippit so COSBE can track the event.

To receive the Vimeo link or for more information about the event, e-mail: stippit@sammy-tippit.org. The organization's Facebook page can be accessed at [Facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com/conferenceofsb), then typing in the keyword phrase: Conference of Southern Baptist Evangelists.

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Louisiana Baptists donate 24,000 N-95 respirators

By Staff
Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)--Louisiana Baptists recently donated 10,000 N95 respirators to Ochsner Medical Center in New Orleans, and another 14,000 to other medical centers around the state to help the fight against the coronavirus crisis.

John Hebert, Louisiana Baptists missions and ministry team director, told the Baptist Message he was glad to put to use these disaster relief materials that were donated to help Louisiana Baptists respond after floods, hurricanes and other natural and manmade disasters. The N95 respirators are used by Louisiana Baptist volunteers in the removal of dried mud and reconstruction efforts.

The respirators are



Submitted photo

Louisiana Baptist Convention Disaster Relief Chaplain Stan Statham unloaded 500 N95 respirators and 250 Tibex protection suits March 25 for the Baptist Community Health Services to use.

in short supply among healthcare centers since the COVID-19 pandemic and President Trump issued a personal plea for construction companies and other organizations to donate what they

could to hospitals facing shortages while manufacturers sped up production.

"We are doing everything we know how to help stop the spread of COVID-19 and to min-

ister to the needs of the sick everywhere," Hebert said. "We had a stockpile of N95 respirators that we have been drawing down since Hurricane Katrina in 2005.

"God knew we would need them one day and I'm happy He did preserve them for a time like this," he continued. "I just pray getting those masks to Ochsner Hospital may save someone's life."

DR ASSISTS NOLA MED MINISTRY

NEW ORLEANS (LBM)--The Baptist Community Health Services in New Orleans was a recipient of 560 N95 respirators and other much needed supplies thanks to the New Orleans Baptist Association and the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Alex Brian, business and communications director and neighborhood ministry coordinator for NOBA, said the doctor, nurses and staff had been reusing masks and had depleted their supply of gloves before the association discovered some one of their mud-out trailers. Brian delivered 60 N95 respirators, along with two boxes of gloves, to the BCHS clinic on Monday, March 23. Two days later, LBC Disaster Relief delivered an additional 500 N95 respirators and 250 Tibex protection suits.

BCHS operates five medical clinics (New Orleans, Chalmette and Mandeville) and is the only known federally qualified health center connected to a Southern Baptist local association of churches, according to Shawn Powers, CEO and a full-time NOBA missionary at the clinic.

"Thank you LBC family," he said. "We love you and give thanks to God for you. Your gift is literally changing lives and providing us further opportunity to share Christ."

FEEDING THE HUNGRY

LAKE CHARLES (LBM)--A Louisiana

Baptist Disaster Relief feeding unit, joined by two members from Slidell and set up at Trinity Baptist Church, has teamed up with members of Mount Olive Baptist Church in Lake Charles for distribution of food -- an initiative being funded by United Way, as part of Southwest Louisiana VOAD, to provide meals for hungry school children, elderly and their families.

According to Reggy Saxon, a blue hat for the Carey Baptist Association disaster relief unit out of Lake Charles, the United Way notified the association that the Calcasieu Parish School Board had paused its feeding program last week. The United Way offered to provide the food and asked if the disaster relief unit would find a way to cook and serve the meals.

From Friday, March 27, to Wednesday, April 1, the disaster relief team cooked 2,075 meals at Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, and then transported them to Mt. Olive Baptist, whose congregation has helped team members serve meals to families through a drive-thru lane.

Saxon said they plan to continue cooking and serving meals through April 10. He added that an additional feeding trailer arrived Sunday, March 29, to accommodate the growing demand for meals, which began with 212 served on Friday and increased to 633 provided on Monday.

"We see the same ones coming back day after day, and they have smiles on their faces," Saxon said. "We are providing for their physical needs, but are also passing out evangelistic tracts with the meals and offering encouragement, and pointing them to lean on Jesus during these times. We are there to be the hands and feet of Jesus, and we look forward to what God has for us in the coming days."

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Surge from page one

Tioga First Baptist Church's drive-in service has been attended by as many as 40 vehicles, including several guests from churches whose services were online-only.

"The drive-in church exceeded my expectations," Hisaw told the *Baptist Message*. "It was good to see everyone's face, even if we couldn't shake hands or hug necks. Like the Marines, the church will improvise, adapt and overcome."

TFBC averages 120 worshippers for a typical Sunday

service.

Alto Baptist Church reported that its drive-in church service boosted attendance more than 50 percent above its weekly average of 100 active members.

Pastor Alan Miller said the Richland Parish Sheriff's Department helped direct traffic during its first service, which seldom occurs in the community.

"Our church family is very close and it was important for us to worship together and remain compliant to

federal and state coronavirus mandates," Miller said. "Drive-in church, similar to the old-fashioned drive-in theater, was one of our best ministry opportunities to reach our rural community with the Gospel."

Westside Emmanuel Baptist Church in Bogalusa held a drive-in service at the church, March 22, with 100 cars lined up. But he said they had to relocate to another site, March 29, to accommodate the 175 cars that turned out.

The church also experienced an online blessing, logging more than 3,000 views for its first, ever, Facebook Live worship service, March 22.

In 2019, the congregation recorded a weekly attendance of 200.

"While only some of the worship team was able to participate due to current restrictions, those in attendance participated with honks and flashing lights as the name of the Lord Jesus was proclaimed," said Pastor Marcus Rosa, who received numerous prayer requests via text message during a time of response at the close of the services.

WWW.MINISTRY

Perhaps it is the burgeoning use of Facebook and YouTube to livestream and record services that has been the greatest surprise, and an incredible blessing, to congregations and their communities.

Like Westside, the First

Baptist Church in Vidalia is another congregation, among many others, that has utilized multiple digital tools to reach its audience.

Keeping the small group connection was essential, church leaders said, so they created a Facebook group for every Sunday school class to maintain connections within each throughout the week.

Meanwhile, Sunday school lessons were taught through Facebook Live or Zoom.

During the week, Carrie Vest, who leads the children's ministry, uses Zoom to engage young ones by equipping their parents with games and Scripture.

The worship services have been broadcast simultaneously on YouTube and Facebook through Castr, software that facilitates livestreaming on two separate online platforms. Pastor Wes Faulk said the live stream, during its March 22 service, had more than 3000 views, well beyond its weekly average of 400 people on campus.

"Reflecting back on [March 22], neither digital small groups nor services are a replacement for real person-to-person fellowship," Faulk said. "That said, we are using those means to encourage our people to reach out and be the body throughout the week. We challenged our young adult to serve our over-60s, and communicated the need for all to minister and encourage our widows in this season."

New Hope Baptist Church in Elmer reached 915 viewers on Facebook Live March 29, well above the 125 who attended worship services in early March. They also had 20 cars show up for a drive-in service.

"It would have been difficult to get into homes with more than 900 people, but this has opened the doors to people in the community," Pastor Rob McLane said. "There are a whole set of people who love that and we need to continue to use that means of connection."

Pastor Brad Jurkovich said the First Baptist Church in Bossier City has experienced adversity before and is confident they will rise to the challenge again. Campus facilities were heavily damaged, Dec. 10, 2018, but on Sept. 29, 2019, they broke ground on a \$20 million rebuild project.

"After our church experi-

enced a dramatic fire across our campus we had to affirm in a very important way that stuff doesn't ultimately matter and that Jesus truly does," Jurkovich said. "He is our identity and hope."

The congregation typically averages 1,700 worshippers on Sunday morning, but 4,000 online visitors had viewed the Facebook production of its service by the end of March 22, and they had broadcast the message on the church website as well.

Jurkovich said online platforms have allowed his members to continue their connections with others and for the ministry to reach a new audience.

"We are able to share Jesus with many more each Sunday now as we've become more strategic due to this crisis," Jurkovich said. "we are praying the Lord uses all of this in a powerful way."

First Baptist Church in New Orleans, located in an area that has one of the highest rates of known COVID-19 cases and deaths so far in the nation, has streamed services on Facebook and its website; and, viewers had the opportunity to share their needs and prayer requests, respond to the invitation and give their tithes online.

Christi Gibson, who serves on staff at the church, estimates they have reached 300 families through their streaming services, up from nearly 250 families who met on campus prior to the contagion outbreak.

Gibson said they also have used the Zoom online meeting tool to hold worship planning meetings between church staff and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Jamie Dew and Professor Bo Rice -- both have helped give pastoral leadership while the church is without a pastor. Additionally, small groups have met through Zoom and Facebook Live.

"This is an amazing number to me, because everyone had to learn a new skill and make a real effort to be there," Gibson said. "We're challenged, but not defeated," she said.

"God is teaching us new ways to connect and to pray together," she continued. "He's showing us what matters most, and making us depend on Him. People are being given a chance to respond to the gospel who might not come to the church building.

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LC helps with coronavirus response

By Norm Miller
LC News

PINEVILLE (LCNews) – An idea that began with the discovery of a social media post originating in Montana has quickly flown south to Louisiana and nested in the heart of Natalie Maxey, Assistant Professor of Engineering at Louisiana College.

Using a 3D printer in the school's engineering lab, Maxey began on Wednesday, March 25, making frames for the protective face shields that are in demand by hospitals and clinics amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

Maxey, who was looking for an opportunity to help, jumped in without hesitation. "My sister is a doctor, and I couldn't bear the thought of her running short of what she needed to protect herself."

All health care workers

are somebody's loved one, Maxey added, noting that local publicity on social media has fostered numerous companies to fire up their 3D printers and help. "This response represents my vision, because I can't print the frames as quickly as the hospital needs them," she said.

Based on a Facebook post, Maxey called the President of Louisiana College Rick Brewer about the project. Brewer called Jason Cobb, FACHE, Rapides Regional Medical Center Chief Executive Officer.

Brewer said Louisiana College could produce the much sought-after N-95 face mask – a 4-hour process on the 3D printer. Cobb said that he had an ample supply of those. Exercising foresight, however, Cobb later contacted Brewer, saying the hospital needed about 100 of the face shield frames. Each shield requires 75 minutes to

create.

"We are thankful to our Louisiana College friends as they use their resources to help our community," Cobb said. "As our hospital staff continue to care for patients on a daily basis, during a time in our history that's unlike any we've ever known, it's reassuring to know that community partners and friends are working with us to make sure we have everything we need to provide the best care possible. As always, our goal is to provide exceptional care to our patients while keeping our RRMC team and our Central Louisiana community healthy and safe."

While Maxey was in the lab working, Brewer was a guest on KALB's Good Day Cena. There he shared a few details about the project. Within an hour, Brewer received notice that a church wanted to donate \$500 to the project. And before 24



Posing with the shield she made is Natalie Maxey, Assistant Professor of Engineering. To the left is her sister, Samantha Zeringue, MD, a trauma surgeon at Rapides Regional Medical Center, and to the right is Michelle Butler, NP with Trauma Services. (Courtesy photo)

hours had passed, more than \$5,500 had been donated to help defray expenses and help buy another 3D printer.

"All across the United States, corporations and companies both large and small are pitching in to help others in these challenging days," Brewer said. "I am glad for Louisiana College to do its part through the servant heart of Dr. Maxey, who came to us through

God's providence."

Brewer recounted the partnership agreement that he and Louisiana Tech President Les Guice signed in September 2015 regarding Louisiana College's pre-engineering students completing their degree at Louisiana Tech in Ruston.

A few months later at a Sunday lunch with a few

See LC, page 7

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2020 Commission Update: Engage churches in compassion ministries

By Staff

Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – Louisiana Baptists are in the final year of the President's 2020 Commission Report, an initiative undertaken during the leadership of Waylon Bailey, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Covington, and the LBC president in 2012-2013.

Approved by messengers at the 2013 Louisiana Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, the 2020 initiative seeks to reach every generation and every people group in Louisiana with the Gospel by the end of the year through the avenues of congregational revitalization, church planting, communications and collaboration.

The 2020 recommendations were crafted collaboratively by a commission of 400 Louisiana Baptist leaders, staff

members and laypeople, working in 20 subcommittees of 20 members each. Ten "key actions in reaching our state" – known as KAIROS – were developed to engage two audiences – the next generation and every people group.

This article is part of a series to report what successes have been achieved toward the ambitious goals as well as what remains to be done.

KAIROS FOUR

Engage Louisiana Baptist Convention congregations in compassion ministries.

Jeff Cook, compassion ministry strategist for Louisiana Baptists said that much progress has been made toward this objective.

Nearly 70 percent of Louisiana Baptist churches have started a compassion ministry, he said, compared to 25 percent in 2013, allowing congregations around the state to meet human needs, build trust in relationships, fully share the Gospel and connect others to the local church. Churches are engaged in disaster relief,

feeding ministries, teaching English as a second language, job skills training and addiction recovery programs, among the many ways they are now engaging their respective communities.

Cook said his team has hosted "Start Something" small group leader conferences to encourage churches to start new compassion ministries. Additionally, his team will soon schedule "Bridges Out of Poverty" conferences around the state, that will take place in the fall, in an effort to better equip church with methods to help the poor more effectively.

Cook also mentioned the Rose Long Foundation that has been established through the work of an ad hoc panel on human trafficking set up by the Moral and Social Concerns Committee.

Will Hall, director of the Office of Public Policy for Louisiana Baptists and the staff liaison for the MSCC, said the Foundation has received a \$100,000 grant from the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and a \$25,000 contribution from the First Baptist Church in Arcadia to sup-

port the work of enlisting parents to be trained in specialized trauma care and to have their homes certified to take in one of the estimated 428 children rescued in the state each year from sexual trafficking.

"This began with a resolution against human trafficking passed by messengers in 2016," Hall said. "Rose Long [a former chair of the MSCC and the deceased wife of Gerald Long, the immediate past president pro tempore of the Louisiana Senate] had a passion for restoring the health and growth of children caught up in this modern slave trade, and cham-

pioned this compassion ministry, inspiring Louisiana Baptists to make this a priority.

"Now," Hall continued, "her vision has resulted in what we hope will be a statewide effort to help heal the broken lives of some of the most hurting among 'the least of these' in our society."

Anyone interested in serving in this newly formed compassion ministry is asked to contact the Rose Long Foundation district coordinator for Louisiana Baptists, Melinda Wallace, via email: Reclaimed@Louisiana-Baptists.org; or, phone: (318) 449-4348.

LC from page 6

church members, Brewer met Maxey and discovered she was facing an inconvenient relocation her employer would soon make. She could relocate or resign. Brewer knew right away he had found a professor to teach the pre-engineering courses needed to utilize the Louisiana Tech agreement.

With Maxey on board, Louisiana College still needed an engineering classroom. That's when the Tara Terrill Engineering classroom in Cavanaugh Hall became reality. Tara's parents Jim and Mary Terrill donated \$100,000 to outfit the room, including a 3D printer.

"I find it amazing, but not really surprising how God works," Brewer said reflectively. "What we planted in 2015 is bearing life-saving fruit today. God has produced this harvest for such a time as this."

Maxey said she is "doing what God created me to do. If what I do helps the community, shows the love of God, and glorifies our Lord, then that's what I want to do."

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CARES Act loans available for churches, evangelists

By Will Hall

Message Executive Editor

WASHINGTON (LBM)—Congress has approved a \$2.2 trillion coronavirus impact aid bill that provides economic relief to workers and businesses; and, because of the work of many concerned lawmakers, these provisions extend also to 501(c)(3) entities, which include churches, Christian schools and other religious bodies.

Importantly, evangelists are eligible for the payroll protection loans provided in the legislation, too.

Basically, churches and other Christian ministries may receive a loan equal to 2.5 times the 12-month average of all salary costs. Essentially, this means each nonprofit will receive a loan equal to 2.5 months of payroll costs.

Up to 100 percent of these loans may be forgiven, based on employee retention.

There are two time-frames (either Jan. 1, 2020, through Feb. 29, 2020; or, Feb. 15, 2019, through June 30, 2019) for calculating the baseline monthly average of employees and this figure will be compared to the average number of employees still employed during the month of June 2020. The percentage of retention will amount to the percentage of the loan that will be forgiven.

The U.S. Treasury has issued guidance that can be found using the URL, <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/top-priorities/cares-act/assistance-for-small-businesses>.

Church leaders seeking a loan should create a spreadsheet, totaling all annual payroll costs per employee, not to exceed \$100,000 per employee, from March 2019 through February 2020. Costs may include:

- salary
- group health care benefits
- paid sick, medical, or family leave
- insurance premiums
- commissions, or similar compensations
- telephone reimbursement
- travel reimbursement
- retirement
- housing allowance

Divide the total annual cost by 12 and then multiply this number by 2.5 to determine the qualifying loan amount.

Also, nonprofits can include requests that the loan also cover:

- payments of interest on any mortgage obligation (which shall not include any prepayment of or payment of principal on a mortgage obligation)
- rent (including rent under a lease agreement)
- utilities
- interest on any other debt obligations that were incurred before the covered period

CULTURALNEWS

However, only up to 25 percent of the amount of the loan related to non-payroll costs will be forgiven.

Evangelists qualify for the payroll protection loans and the other provisions for nonprofits if they have set up a 501(c)(3) for their respective ministries. Otherwise they qualify at least for payroll protection loans as self-employed individuals, and may apply under the same terms and conditions of other self-employed applicants.

The loan form can be accessed with this link: <https://home.treasury.gov/system/files/136/Paycheck-Protection-Program-Application-3-30-2020-v3.pdf>.

Governor's office clarifies guidelines for 'drive in' church

BATON ROUGE (LBM)—Responding to questions regarding guidance about the “drive in” service many churches are conducting, Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn contacted the governor's office for clarification about how state mandates about public gatherings apply in this instance.

“I am grateful that Louisiana Baptist church-

es have made news for innovation in providing worship during this crisis rather than our non-compliance or outright defiance,” Horn told the *Baptist Message*. “I learned that the proclamation does not prohibit individuals from driving to their houses of worship for such services.”

Horn said Adren Wilson, the governor's deputy chief of staff for programs and planning, stated this type of service was “a reasonable solution if strict practices are followed,” which include:

- worshipers may not exit their cars for any reason and must keep windows up;
- restroom facilities on campus must remain closed;
- no one may sit in the bed of a truck; and,
- lawn chairs may not be used on church grounds.

Horn was positive about the conversation and urged Louisiana Baptists to comply with the guidelines.

“Let's continue to be good neighbors, stop the spread and be good witnesses to the watching world,” he said.

SBC cancels annual meeting

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM)—The Southern Baptist Convention has canceled the annual meet-

ing that had been scheduled for this summer in Orlando, Florida.

Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, made the announcement, saying it was a decision “that has not been made in 75 years,” referencing 1945, during World War II, when the U.S. government banned meetings of groups larger than 50 people.

Floyd said the action was consistent with Article XI.4 of the SBC Constitution, which includes the provision, “The Convention officers, the Executive Committee, and the executive heads of the Convention's boards and institutions acting in a body may, in case of grave emergency, cancel a regular meeting or change the place of meeting.”

“In light of the COVID-19 global pandemic which we believe constitutes a grave emergency, it is in the best interest of the SBC to cancel the Annual Meeting ... out of a deep concern for the health and safety of messengers and attendees,” Floyd said.

His announcement was preceded by a 75-0 vote by the SBC Executive Committee to cancel; combined with a unanimous vote to the same effect by Convention officers and SBC entity heads.

The 2021 SBC Annual Meeting is scheduled for June 15-16, 2021, in Nashville.

Louisiana Baptists add confidential prayer line to battle COVID-19

By Staff

Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) — Louisianans struggling through difficulties associated with the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) now have a confidential place to turn, thanks to a prayer line established by Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief.

The line is toll-free at 800.410.3492. Calls are answered by Louisiana Baptist DR chaplains from 8 a.m. to 8 p.m., seven days

a week.

“If someone has a concern and wants to talk it over with one of our chaplains, we are here by the phone to pray for you,” said Stan Statham, a DR chaplain and associational mission strategist with the Baptist Associations of Southeast Louisiana.

Statham said the prayer line is another way to minister to those impacted by the situation.

Joe Arnold, a DR chaplain and associational



The toll free phone number to the Louisiana Baptists Coronavirus Prayer Line is 1-800-410-3492. All calls are confidential.

mission strategist with

the Bayou Baptist Associ-

ation, said this prayer line can infuse much needed encouragement.

“A lot of people need someone to talk to, pray with and just express themselves,” Arnold said. “Many times we work it out better when we express those feelings and have someone to talk with. We want to make it available so people remember the Lord is still in control and God is still God. In the process of all that is happening, those things have not changed.”

First Columbia goes outbound, reaches homebound with meals

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message Staff Writer

COLUMBIA, La. (LBM) – When Union Central Elementary School notified First Baptist Church in Columbia they needed assistance distributing meals to students homebound because of school cancellation due to the coronavirus outbreak, Pastor Eric Harriman quickly assembled a group to respond.

From March 17-25, multiple teams that included 10 First Baptist church members, law enforcement members, Union Central Principal Kim Adams, a FBCC member, cafeteria workers and other school personnel -- distributed nearly 1,200 meals (600 for breakfast and 600 for lunch) prepared daily by Caldwell Parish School

cafeteria personnel into neighborhoods and housing projects in Columbia and other parts of the parish.

Adams thanked First Columbia, the non-denominational Life Church in Columbia and the school district's special education director, speech therapist and school psychologist for their assistance during this difficult time.

"It was encouraging not only to see the churches come together but the many volunteers from the school district step up," Adams said. "This was a truly team effort, which is what we do here in Columbia. That's the normal for us here. We don't think much about it, we just do it."

Harriman said he is proud of the effort put for by his congregation and others in

the community.

"I am extremely proud of our church members, but am not surprised," he said. "They always step up to the challenge. Our people want to know how they can help during times like this. Anytime we have shared a need, they have stepped up."

Harriman said such times have reminded how the body of Christ can extend beyond denominational lives to serve others in His name.

"Different volunteers from different churches with different denominations are all working together during this time," he said. "It was a way for us all to get on the same page as we stressed the need to be safe but not panic. When you are a pastor in a small parish like I am, you find out you are not just the pastor of your church, you

become a pastor in and for the community. We really try to work together, especially in times like these."

The lunch distribution is among the many ways First Baptist has ministered to its members and community during the current situation.

First Baptist's deacons have shopped for senior citizens who are unable to leave their homes, and, the church has livestreamed its worship services, Bible studies and a children's spiritual enrichment program.

Harriman said staying connected to critical during a time when disconnection from others can happen.

"When we open up again, and gather again, I think our Easter Services are going to be even more special than

they are each year," he said. "It will be an incredible time to reconnect and fellowship and worship with other believers."

"I think we will realize what a privilege it is to be able to come together several times each week as believers and worship and study and share life together," he continued. While we wait for that day, we will continue to stay connected while we attempt to keep our community safe."

Horn from page one

is most needed in their area. We were able to do this because of the faithful giving of Louisiana Baptists through the years.

You are doing great Louisiana Baptists!

Since February of last year, Louisiana Baptists have been going to the highways and hedges of people's homes across the state via our "Here for You" media strategy. Using broadcast and cable TV, billboards, social media and streaming services, you have seeded God's word in literally tens of thousands of hearts and homes.

Last year, who knew we'd be facing a pandemic that would force most of Louisiana's residents to stay and work from home thus increasing the opportunity to impact our neighbors with these Scripture-based commercials? God knew!

You are doing great Louisiana Baptists!

We are more engaged in prayer than any time in my memory. We've had countless calls to prayer, but crisis moves us to prayer as nothing else can.

Churches are calling for fasts.

Our Governor has called us to fast and pray

every Tuesday during lunch.

I know many are asking the same question I'm asking: "Is God using this crisis to bring about revival and spiritual awakening?"

This would be the best news of our lifetimes! Keep praying.

You are doing great Louisiana Baptists!

Habakkuk ended his prophecy like this:

Though the fig tree does not bud and there is no fruit on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will triumph in Yahweh; I will rejoice in the God of my salvation!

Yahweh my Lord is my strength; He makes my feet like those of a deer and enables me to walk on mountain heights! (Habakkuk 3:17-19)

Habakkuk was not always in a posture of praise. In fact, if you read the whole biblical account about his ministry, he was often far from it.

Habakkuk most likely prophesied just before the beginning of the exile when the sin of Judah was at its peak.

He questioned God as to how long He would allow

sin to reign in Judah (1:1-4)? God answered that He was preparing the Babylonians to deal with Judah's sin (1:5-11).

His second question concerned God's use the Babylonians, who were wicked, to be the instrument of judgment against Judah (1:12-2:1). God's answer helps us to learn some important truths:

1. God is always at work even if we do not see how He is at work.

2. God will speak at the right time.

And so, we must learn to walk by faith.

Habakkuk's name in Hebrew means "one who embraces" or "one who clings." That's what we must do—cling to or embrace our faith in God. In fact, sometimes, that's all we can do.

Maybe today your prayer sounds like Habakkuk's words of his praise. Maybe your prayer goes like this:

Though talk of a disease called COVID-19 has overtaken every conversation, and has changed all we know to be normal. Even though the economic uncertainty is more than I can comprehend, yet, I will rejoice in the Lord! Yet, I will rejoice in the Lord! He

is my salvation and hope!

You only get to those last words by faith!

Keep looking up, Louisiana Baptists! Keep looking up to THE ONE who is the author and finisher of our faith! Keep looking up because our redemption draws near!

Either way, we win!

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Ponchatoula from page one

Baptist Church in Ponchatoula had poured biblical truth into the youngster and on March 8 their spiritual harvest came to fruition when she said "Yes!" to Jesus.

ONWARD, DESPITE COVID-19

Importantly, Laird was anxious to move ahead in her obedience to God by being baptized.

So, surrounded by a few family members and church staff, March 22, in a worship service that was only seen through the church's Facebook page because of attendance restrictions by the state in response to the coronavirus outbreak, Laird walked down into the baptismal waters inside the

First Baptist worship center that was nearly empty of members but filled with the presence of the Holy Spirit.

"Trusting Christ means I get to live with Jesus," Laird told the *Baptist Message*.

Her grandmother, Ann, added that Sadie woke up the morning of the baptism beaming with excitement.

"She hadn't quit smiling since she woke up this morning," Ann noted the day of the baptism.

Pastor David Cranford, also president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, noted the circumstances were not the most ideal situation for a baptism, but that Laird did not want to delay sharing her public testimony. Laird is among

three new converts who have been baptized since January.

"We decided to go ahead with Sadie's baptism because it was still very much public since it was livestreamed and certainly a great testimony to faith in Jesus when so many are searching for an anchor," he said. "Today, we cannot touch each other, but we are not out of touch. We actually have an online opportunity like never before to reach people for Jesus.

"There is a natural openness to the Gospel in days of crisis like these," he continued. "With time on their hands, people begin asking questions and thinking about issues of life and death and life after death. But because of technology, the world is wide-open to hear the Gospel.

"The Roman world was open to the Gospel due to roads, relative peace, and a common language and culture," Cranford continued. "The book of Acts re-

cords the persecuted early church taking advantage of the openness of their day, going on their way 'preaching the message of Good News,' as told in Acts 8:4. That's my prayer for Louisiana Baptists – that we will take advantage of the openness of our day, that as we go on our digital way, we will preach the message of good news and that many will come to Jesus."



Submitted photo

Pastor David Cranford baptized a joyful Sadie Laird, March 22, at First Baptist Church in Ponchatoula. The youngster was baptized two weeks after professing her faith in Christ.

ONWARD, ONLINE

Like other churches, First Baptist has been forced to great creative in its ministry efforts.

Throughout the week, members have used technology to help them grow deeper in their relationship with Christ and each other through one of 16 adult, nine youth and six children's small groups who have met through the Zoom video conferencing platform.

Staff members also have maintained connections to members and prospects by reaching out to them through daily social media, e-mail, text messaging and phone calls.

Additionally, the church has posted on its Facebook page staff-authored devotionals and a daily Bible study, "Crisis 101: Back to the Basics" by author Robert Morgan.

"Technology is a way of making private declarations public," Minister of discipleship Josh Dickson said. "Let's be the church even if we can't gather corporately, all in one room."

Cohesion from page 2

each person as a brother or sister in Christ.

Importantly, remember that individuals will differ from each other and that creating harmony is not demanding sameness of opinion. Instead, it is facilitating oneness through Christ!

In that regard, do not think it is your job to "make them work together." Your role is to "help" them be responsive to God's will in every matter. Keep it spiritual!

Yet, even in being focused on the spiritual nature of a situation, be sure to provide some logical information to all involved. People can deal with facts in context.

"Truth" is the best guide, and the "Truth" is our standard.

Too many times someone will exert that "facts are not our friends" – but this is a phrase used to often to bully others into just accepting someone's opinion on a matter.

Also, be aware of what it felt like when an adult told you as a child, "Because I said so!"

It is not an effective way to motivate children, and it is not a successful approach with adults.

Make your communications with team members count – be clear and on message. Listen to your people. Be keenly sensi-

tive to the signs of a bad attitudes – they are contagious and need to be addressed before they impact the morale of the group. Find out what new team members are good at and integrate them into the team quickly. It makes them feel valued and extra hands make the work lighter for everyone, keeping long-term members refreshed and adding a spark of fresh fire to their enthusiasm.

WORDS TO LIVE BY

In one of my favorite books, "Wooden," legendary UCLA Coach John Wooden (10-time NCAA basketball champion) concludes a chapter on cooperation by saying, "Ten strong field horses could not pull an empty baby carriage if they worked independently of each other. Regardless of how much effort they exerted individually, the carriage wouldn't budge without their mutual cooperation."

I would only change his words of wisdom to state them in the positive sense: When ten strong horses work together as a cohesive unit, they can pull a locomotive.

You will find that to be true as you help your leaders and team members work together for the Kingdom of God.

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.

DQY MTUHXFT YT ZHGT VHSDPTDHDUT CWQV PZT RSDB'F

EHKHUT, HDL SP YHF DQP VTTP CQW XF PQ FTT PZT RSDB'F

LSFZQDQXW, PZTWTCQWT ZHGT YT FTDP HDL UTPWSCSTL PZT

RSDB;

TIWH CQXW:CQXWPTTD

Clues:
R = K; T = E

Answer to March 26 Scripture Crypto:
Ezra four: fourteen

You Can't Quarantine Good News!

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Louisiana Baptists are busy sharing God's Good News.



State Missions Staff and DOM's are personally reaching out to every church and offering assistance and resources.

Local congregations are finding ways to creatively connect with each other and their communities.



Tioga First Baptist Church, *Baptist Message*
"Louisiana Baptist Churches Drive in, Logon to Adapt During COVID-19 Crisis"



Disaster Relief chaplains are providing stress counseling.

God's truth is being shared in hearts and homes across the state via *Here for You*.



Louisiana Baptists, you are connecting people to the Gospel - even in these disconnected times.

Continue to honor the Lord with your tithes and offerings through your church. Keep praying! Keep sharing!

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