



# THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

January 16, 2020  
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EVANGELISM CONFERENCE  
A LOUISIANA BAPTISTS/NAMB JOINT VENTURE

## First Lafayette to host ECON, Istrouma to hold 'Who's Your One'

By Brian Blackwell  
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) -- Pastor Jeff Ginn stood before Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge in March and challenged every member to pray for and share Christ with one person in 2019.

His congregation wholeheartedly responded to and embraced the "Who's Your One?" evangelistic strategy and, by the end of the year, saw many come to a relationship with Christ, including more than 90 who were baptized, an all-time single-year high for the 100-year-old congregation that averages around 2,000 in Sunday morning worship attendance.

Ginn hopes to equip others with resources to carry out the initiative when Istrouma Baptist hosts the Who's Your One Tour and evangelism training, Jan. 26-27.

The training precedes the annual Louisiana Baptist Evangelism Conference (ECON), Jan. 27-28, which will be held at the First

See ECON, page 4



Baptist Press photo

Frank Pomeroy, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sutherland Springs, Texas, lost 26 members of his church, including his own daughter in a mass shooting there November 5, 2017. He will speak at this year's 2020 ECON.

## A BEACON OF HOPE

ECON: Sutherland Springs' Pomeroy to share hope that transcended shooting

By Brian Blackwell  
Message Staff Writer

LAFAYETTE (LBM) -- One week after a shooter gunned down 26 people attending a worship service Nov. 5, 2017, at First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, Pastor Frank Pomeroy, whose daughter, Annabelle, was killed, too, stood before the remaining congregants and other guests and presented a message of hope found in Christ.

"We have the freedom to choose, and rather than choose darkness like the young man did that day we choose the light," Pomeroy said in his message under a tent on the church grounds.

Two years later, Pomeroy told the *Baptist Message* that a day does not pass when he fails to remember that fateful morning.

But instead of focusing on the tragedy, which took the life of his 14-year-old daughter (there are five surviving Pomeroy children) and killed close friends in his congregation, Pomeroy stressed how the faith community around the world comforted and strengthened his family, the church and the small Texas town they serve.

Prayers of support

and donations poured in following the shooting, and the North American Mission Board funded construction, through the Cooperative Program and other gifts, of the church's new multi-purpose facility. Completed in May 2019, the building houses a worship center, education space, kitchen area and fellowship hall.

Pomeroy, who will share his testimony during the Tuesday, Jan. 28, evening session of the 2020 Louisiana Baptist Evangelism Conference, said the outpouring of support has reminded him of when Jesus told his mother and siblings that his biological family extended much further than just them.

"We all have a biologi-

## Beloved pastor's death saves many lives

By Brian Blackwell  
Message Staff Writer

TERRYTOWN (LBM) -- A sense of anxiety overcame Pastor Dennis Watson as he stepped into the Jefferson Parish Correctional Center on June 19, 2019,

to offer words of forgiveness to Todd Williams, who three days earlier

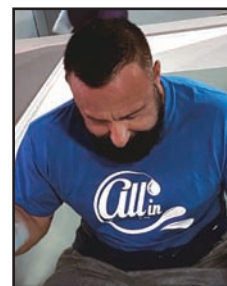
had driven his vehicle into an embankment of the Westbank Expressway and subsequently caused the death of Claude Williams, a beloved pastor of the Celebration Church Westbank campus.

The two Williamses are not related.

Miraculously, Todd Williams received forgiveness during the meeting with Watson, lead pastor of Celebration Church with 10 campuses in the New Orleans area and the Northshore, on behalf of the congregation and Claude Williams's wife, Twila; and, he also gave his life to Christ.

"He wept as I prayed for him and then told me that he needed God in his life," Watson told the Baptist Message. "That's when I led him to pray for salvation."

"In the months that followed, I kept up with what



James Summerville

See BEACON, page 6

See BELOVED, page 11



# Skills of a church planter: Responsiveness to the community

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)-The Areopagus is just a bare marble outcropping near the Acropolis in modern-day Greece. It is an important tourist attraction because at one time it was the place where major decisions were discussed in the city of Athens – even court sessions were held there, especially murder trials.

By the Apostle Paul's day, it was a place where

new ideas were heard by the philosophers of the city.

More importantly for our purposes, it was the place where Paul made a speech to city leaders known as the sermon on Mars Hill.

In that speech Paul skillfully adapted his message using cues from the culture to more effectively communicate the Gospel, piquing interest by put-

ting the message in terms that made sense to the locals.

He was responsive to the community.

Serious church planters and leaders should always **be responsive to the communities** they are trying to reach. He must speak the language of the community -- not just the dialect, but the local narrative or context, especially the prevailing elements of the culture.

In Athens the narrative was philosophical in nature, and it's clearly visible in Paul's approach recorded in Acts 17:22-23. "So Paul stood in the midst of the Areopagus and said, 'Men of Athens, I observe that you are very religious in all respects. For while I was passing through and examining the objects of your worship, I also found an altar with this inscription, 'TO AN UNKNOWN GOD.' Therefore what you worship in ignorance, this I proclaim to you.'"

As Paul passed through the city he was observant, "taking the pulse" of the



**JOHN HEBERT**  
Team Leader  
Louisiana Baptist  
Missions & Ministry

city in order to determine how to communicate with them. He paid attention to the sights, sounds, conversations, and activity in the city. He paid attention to the lens they used to view issues and events, and he keyed in on their core values. He

used all of this native perspective to contextualize the Gospel to the people in the marketplace of ideas.

Communicating the Gospel in ways that make sense within the local cultural context -- being responsive to the community -- is a critical leadership skill. Moreover, it is something that is very easy to learn. You simply need to know where to look and how to listen, and, you have to go outside of your own "view" of things.

Everyone looks at the world in their own way, a view that has been shaped by the values they hold, the life experiences they have accrued, the level of self-awareness they maintain, and a number of other human development

issues.

Leaders need to account for their own lens in terms of evaluating the community they are trying to reach.

Likewise, leaders need to focus on how to reach individuals and groups in their present condition.

That does not mean we excuse sin, or even downplay the seriousness of sinful lifestyles. It means we try to understand them to do what Paul did at Mars Hill -- relate to them.

It takes contemplation, study, and most of all prayer.

Of course, the purpose of trying to understand the perspective of the community is to develop a well-organized outreach plan.

Fortunately, members of your congregation are members of the community, and no one speaks the local language better than the locals.

Make sure they are ready to be sensitive to needs they will discover and, as a congregation, be prepared to meet those needs.

As an example, I am presently the interim pastor working with a wonderful group of Christians at Simpson Baptist Church in Vernon Parish, Louisiana. Last year the local high school won the state championship in both basketball and baseball. There might be a number of ways to engage the community -- music camp, art camp, etc. But, with the excitement about the school's athletic successes, my inclination would be to hold sports clinics for younger kids.

See **SKILLS**, page 15

Pastor Clark Stewart and New Zion Baptist Church, Covington, LA will host a Sheepdog Seminar

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JAN. 27-28, 2020

MONDAY AFTERNOON

**Steve Horn**  
**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**  
**Veritas**

**LOUISIANABAPTISTS.ORG/ECON**



## ECON from page one

Baptist Church in Lafayette.

"We are so excited about hosting this event," Ginn told the *Baptist Message*. "I know that God will challenge us all to be more intentional in praying for others and sharing the Good News with them. We implemented the 'Who's Your One' strategy at Istrouma and, to my knowledge,

we baptized more people in 2019 than in any other year of our 100-year-existence. One key to evangelistic effectiveness is marshalling God's people to engage. This is a tool to help that happen."

Conference leaders hope combining the two events will better equip Louisiana Baptists with the necessary tools to reach individuals with

the Gospel in the state. The Who's Your One Tour begins at 6 p.m. Jan. 26 and ends in time for participants to attend the first session of ECON, which begins at 1:30 p.m. Jan. 27.

"The combination of the Who's Your One Tour and ECON maximizes our ability to bring some of the best leaders in the nation to Louisiana to equip and encouraging church members and staff in evangelism and disciple-making," said Keith Manuel, Louisiana Baptists evangelism and church growth team director. "These three days may be the catalyst for spiritual renewal that many of our churches are seeking."

### WHO'S YOUR ONE?



Johnny Hunt

The event at Istrouma Baptist will feature a Sunday evening rally with Johnny Hunt, senior vice president

of evangelism and leadership for the North American Mission Board.

The following morning, participants may attend evangelistic workshops designed for pastors, church staff and lay leaders.

While the tour is free, registration is required to attend the Monday morning workshops.

The rally also will include worship led by the Jason Lovins Band, a Christian contemporary band from Ashland, Kentucky.

In early 2019, NAMB and Southern Baptist Convention President J.D. Greear launched the Who's Your One initiative to encourage and equip pastors with resources that can be used to challenge church members to focus on reaching one lost person.



Steve Horn

in 2017.



Philip Robertson



Luke Hockenjos

According to the Annual Church Profile database, Southern Baptist congregations baptized 246,442 people in 2018, a 3.02 percent decline from the 254,122 baptisms reported

**To register for the Monday morning session, visit [who-s-your-one.com](http://who-s-your-one.com).**

### ECON LINEUP

The first two sessions of ECON on Jan. 27 will include messages by Steve Horn,

Louisiana Baptists executive director; Philip Robertson, pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church with campuses in Deville and Alexandria, Luke Hockenjos, an evangelist from Haughton, and Chip Luter, pastor of the Sulphur Springs

See ECON, page 5

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## ECON from page one

campus of Idlewild Baptist Church in Tampa, Florida.

Prior to Luter's message that will take place during the final session of the night, students will gather at the church's youth building at 5:30 p.m. for a pizza party and entertainment.

Student Night will emphasize reaching the lost souls of the next generation and build on the challenge "to share Christ with others" presented in November



Chip Luter

during the 2019 Youth Evangelism Celebration in Alexandria. Brandon Lewis, Louisiana Baptists youth ministry strategist, is praying that some of the students who attended YEC will invited their friends to ECON or one of the simulcast parties being hosted at satellite locations throughout the state.

"We're excited to have Chip Luter as our speaker at ECON Student Night," Lewis said. "God has used Chip in powerful ways we believe this is a great opportunity for students and adults to hear the Gospel, respond to the Gospel, and be inspired to share the Gospel with their friends."

Organizers are encouraging churches unable to travel to Lafayette to host a live stream of Luter's message as a way to broaden the geographic reach of this evangelistic event.

The broadcast will begin at 7 p.m. Churches may log onto louisianabaptists.org/livestream to find instructions for access.

Last year, numerous churches hosted rallies via livestream.

The remaining sessions of ECON will be streamed live over the Internet as well, and each message will be downloadable soon after the original broadcast by

using louisianabaptists.org/econ.

The final day of ECON will feature James Jenkins, Louisiana Baptists director of church planting, David Burton, founder of David Burton Ministries in Orange Park, Florida, Chad Williams, a former Navy SEAL and currently a Christian speaker, Frank Pomeroy, pastor of First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs,



David Burton



James Jenkins



Chad Williams



Frank Pomeroy



Jason Lovins

Texas, and Hunt.

At 1 p.m. Tuesday, Williams will also be the keynote speaker at the annual Senior Adult Luncheon which is being catered by the Petroleum Club in Lafayette.

The praise and wor-

ship lineup includes the Jason Lovins Band, Veritas, a quartet from Franklin, Tennessee, and Kate Stanford, an artist from Baton Rouge. All sessions will be livestreamed at louisianabaptists.org.

The conference also will feature breakout sessions and the senior adult luncheon featuring Williams, both on Jan. 28.

**For more information about ECON, visit LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON.**

TUESDAY, JANUARY 28 • FIRST BAPTIST, LAFAYETTE

# SENIOR ADULT LUNCHEON

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Chad Williams/SEAL of God  
2:45 Sr. Adult Breakouts

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# First West reaches lost, raises \$3.5 million for medical needs

By Brian Blackwell  
Message Staff Writer

WEST MONROE (LBM) —The First Baptist Church in West Monroe witnessed more than 90 people make some type of decision for Christ during its 2019 Christmas show, and also raised enough revenue from ticket sales and donations to pay off

\$3.5 million in medical bills for hundreds of residents in Ouachita Parish.

The congregation's annual Northeast Louisiana Christmas Celebration consisted of three 90-minute performances attended by 4,500 people from Dec. 20-22.

"This was a great opportunity to show the community we care about them," Michael Wood, pastor of First West, told the *Baptist Message*. "The people who will have their medical debt taken care of will experience the blessing of not having bondage to debt. But more importantly, they will see that they also can have freedom from their sins through a relationship with Christ."

Church members will follow-up on each decision made during the performances -- preparing new converts for baptism and connecting everyone who made any decision with discipleship classes to further their spiritual growth.

"This is greater than one weekend," Worship Pas-

tor Brad Jett said. "It will benefit our area for years to come. What's validating is we not only met a physical need but a spiritual need. Our ultimate goal as a church is to spread the Good News of Christ."

The church worked with RIP Medical Debt, a nonprofit organization that

works with debt collectors to resolve medical debt that sits in collections for people in a specific area. The parish has one of the highest rates of unresolved indebtedness in the state, with nearly \$23 million in collections, according to

See **FIRST WEST**, page 8

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

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## Hope from page one

cal family but it was wonderful to have a spiritual family who came together as a million member family to help us through a trial that was beyond imagination of most people," he said.

Pomeroy, who has served as pastor of the church since 2000, said the situation reminded him of the need to avoid complacency in one's spiritual

walk and that the hope of Christ is essential in the midst of tragedy.

"We chose to be a beacon of hope," Pomeroy said. "Rather than be the victim, we showed the world the victor."

"The great thing is that incident doesn't define us," he continued. "We were a very lively church before and have been even much more since then. Do

I negate what happened with the 26 martyrs? No. But God is still moving in mighty ways. There's so much growth and joy and the spirit is still moving in a mighty way."

Since the shooting, the church has experienced significant spiritual growth.

During that time, Pomeroy has baptized 30 converts, and average worship attendance has increased from 50 during the first few weeks after the fatal shooting to around 175 in late 2019.

Members also have given back to the community through ministries that include an annual delivery of toys to children and a "store" that distributes food, clothes and furniture to needy individuals. The church also helps its members grow deeper through men's, women's and student's small discipleship groups, and has taken mission trips to Alaska, Guatemala and South Dakota.

Looking toward the future, Pomeroy is excited about the church's ministries and an upcoming campaign for the state Senate District 21 seat. He will face state Sen. Judith Zaffirini, a Democrat who has served in the legislature for more than 30 years.

"At first, I didn't want to subject my wife and I to the media attention like in 2017, but I prayed about it and surrounded myself with godly men and women who He used to confirm to me this was the direction to take," he said. "I am not running because I am a politician. I am running because God told me to do. If we can get more Christians to run for office, maybe we can stop the decline of this nation. We are to obey God and seek Him to the best of our ability."

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- AMISH - APR. 24-MAY 2
- BIG BEND - MAY 12-18
- CHICAGO BY TRAIN - MAY 18-22
- GRAND CANYON - MAY 25-JUNE 4
- RED ROCK CANYONS - JUNE 15-27
- YELLOWSTONE - JULY 1-10
- CANADIAN ROCKIES - JULY 13-28
- GREAT RIVER ROAD - JULY 15-24
- NOVA SCOTIA - AUG. 24-SEPT. 9
- EASTERN CANADA - SEPT. 9-20



- CAPE COD - SEPT. 11-21
- COLORADO - SEPT. 21-OCT. 1
- CANADA FALL FOLIAGE - SEPT. 23-OCT. 2
- ALBUQUERQUE BALLOON FEST - OCT. 5-8
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2003-254 salvations

2005-Hurricane Katrina

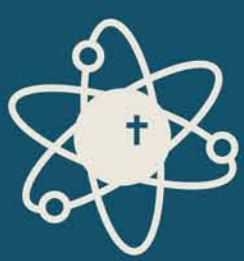
2011-Over 3200 attendees

2018-Over 30,000 Missionlab campers cumulative

SUMMER 2020

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WK 2:	June 7-12	Dr.DJ Horton
WK 3:	June 14-19	Irvin Wasswa
WK 4:	June 21-26	Brandon Langley
WK 5:	June 28-July 2	Matthew Weaver
WK 6:	July 5-10	Dr.Blake Newsom
WK 7:	July 12-17	Ryan Rice
WK 8:	July 19-24	TBA
WK 9:	July 26-31	Rob Wilton

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## First West from page 6

First West officials.

Founded in 2014 by two former debt collection executives, RIP Medical Debt began as a response to the impact of debt on the lives of poor Americans. According to its website, since its founding, RIP Medical Debt has helped more than 520,000 families eradicate more than \$1.1

billion in medical liabilities.

RIP Medical Debt will take the collected money and work with creditors to resolve the debt of Ouachita Parish's neediest first, and recipients will be notified within six to eight weeks.

In 2018, the Christmas show consisted of two

performances: Donations from the first were used to pay off more than \$5,000 in layaway orders for shoppers at a local Wal-Mart; and, the second performance yielded a \$10,000 donation to the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries, whose campus and administrative offices are located in Monroe.

In 2019, the congregation charged \$5 for tickets and added a third performance which boosted attendance.

But the jump in funds raised, year-to-year, resulted from many charitable gifts.

Beyond the Northeast Louisiana Christmas Celebration, the church shares the love of Christ through operation of a thrift store, an after-school program, and visits to area prisons. The church also sponsors Refuge Church and Faith Baptist Church in New Orleans and sends members on mission trips throughout the United States and the world.

"Our church has a great



First West photo

First West working with the non-profit RIP Medical Debt used the money raised from ticket sales for its annual Christmas performance - Northeast Louisiana Christmas Celebration -- and donations to help erase \$3.5 million worth of medical debt for the needy in Ouachita Parish.

legacy of being a generous church," Wood said. "We are grateful to have so many people who care deeply about impacting their community for Christ."

First West, with a wor-

ship attendance of 2,468, recorded 131 baptisms in 2018, according to the Louisiana Baptist Convention's Annual Church Profile data. Information for 2019 has not yet been submitted.

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# Two pastors won't let unity die

By Craig Franklin  
Special to the Message

JENA (LBM) -- When L&A Missionary Baptist Church Pastor Jimmy Ray Young moved back to Jena from Detroit, Michigan, in 2007, he found his hometown preoccupied in what would become known as the Jena Six case, which involved six black high school students who severely beat a white classmate.

The "L&A" in the name is a tribute to the Louisiana and Arkansas Railway that donated the land for the site of the church's building.

"I was not the pastor of L&A when I first moved back but I was concerned about what was going on," said Young, who is African-American. "I started attending meetings and other events to see how I could help and during that time I met some lifelong friends from the white commu-

nity."

Prior to a massive event on September 20, 2007, where thousands of out-of-town protestors flocked to the town in LaSalle Parish, area pastors organized a community prayer event at First Baptist Church in Jena (a predominately white congregation but includes members of multiple races).

"During the prayer service, we were divided up into smaller groups to pray," Young said. "It was in that small prayer group I first met Pastor Jimmy Keene."

Keene, the White pastor of the Temple Baptist Church, a mostly white congregation in Jena.

The two Jimmy's prayed together in the same small group and became friends. However, it was not until the Jena Revival of 2008 their friendship really blossomed.

This spiritual renewal in the community began

in February that year at Midway Baptist Church (also a mostly white congregation) and continued for nine weeks - with services being held in five churches (including -- black congregations), the JHS gym, and the Ward 10 ballpark under a tent.

At the time of this massive revival, Young was the new pastor of L&A while Keene was one of the longest serving pastors in Jena at Temple Baptist Church.

"I was actually out of town for the first two weeks of the revival and when I got back I started attending," Keene said. "For those who did not experience those services, well, you just can't explain how powerful they were. God did a work in all of our lives during that revival that changed us forever."

Perhaps one of the greatest changes was in the area of unity among the town's



Craig Franklin photo

(From left to right) Temple Baptist Church Pastor Jimmy Keener and L&A Missionary Baptist Church Jimmy Ray Young, friends for the past 11 years, share a laugh recently during a lunch at a Jena restaurant.

black and white residents. Just a year before, outside groups had labeled Jena as one of the most racial towns in America; but Keene, Young, and residents of the town knew differently.

"Jena has always been a friendly town and residents (black and white) had gotten along, but what this revival did was draw us together in a way that only God could," Keene said.

"It went from just getting along to being involved in each others' lives and Jesus was the difference in that."

The friendship that occurred from the Jena Revival among Keene and Young and the cooperation between their churches was something neither of them wanted to lose once the services of 2008 concluded.

See UNITY, page 10

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# Unity from page 9

"That November, we decided to do something neither of us, or our churches, had ever done," Keene said. "We decided to hold a Thanksgiving service together."

They agreed to come together the third Sunday

of November at L&A and that during the service, the visiting church would sing and preach while the host church would provide the meal afterwards.

"It was a great service and our people loved it so much we decided to do it

again the following year," Young said. "Eventually, we decided to alternate each year, with the same format of the visiting church providing the singing and preaching."

For 11 years the churches have continued the tradition. On Nov. 17, last year, the service was back at L&A, where Keene once again delivered the message.

"A lot of people talk about unity but you've got to put action to your words," Keene said. "I'm thankful for both of our churches and their desire to keep that unity alive."

But the two bodies, according to Young, have done much more than just conduct Thanksgiv-

ing together.

"We're always looking for ways to be involved with one another and our people enjoy it," he said. "And it's not just church stuff, we also go out to eat with our wives and honestly, just enjoy being with each other. We have a lot in common."

This year during Easter, Temple members joined with L&A members to conduct an Easter event at Tarver Park. They divided the cost of the event and members worked side-by-side in cooking hamburgers for residents who live there and hiding eggs for the children.

"That revival (in 2008) changed our lives," Keene

said. "It moved me from being 'program oriented,' which is the way I was brought up in the Baptist church, to doing things that made a difference - it really changed the entire way I pastor."

Young also noted it changed Jena as there is more fellowship among the black and white churches.

"There was a turning point in that revival when our District Attorney Reed Walters stood before the black community when the services were held at L&A, and shared his heart," Young said. "It was at that point walls came down and our people saw him as a man serving God and simply trying his best to do the right thing. When the congregation, both black and white, gathered around him and prayed for him, it changed the entire mentality of our community."

Young said the difference in Jena and the unity now enjoyed was the result of a movement by God and nothing else.

"That's the reason God gets all the credit for what happened and what continues to happen," he said. "Only God can do something like this."

Although Keene and Young are doing everything they can to keep the unity strong, they both admit there is still much to do in bringing all of the churches together."

"It's really sad all of our churches are not more unified but to be honest, even when we had that massive move of God not all of our churches were involved in that either," Keene said. "It's a long process and it will take God to do it. We haven't moved any mountains but we are doing all we can to keep striving for complete unity among our churches."

"We don't have any grand ideas but our hearts are the same with the common desire to work together for the kingdom of God," he added.

In regards to Jena's change regarding black and white unity as a community, both men





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See UNITY, page 13



Beloved from page one

was happening with Todd Williams in prison, and visited with him again,” he continued. “He shared with me that he feels as though his life has really changed, and now he’s telling others in prison about how the Lord can forgive people and free them from their struggles and strongholds. And while he will be in prison for some time, when he gets out of prison he wants to go to schools and tell teens to stay away from drugs and alcohol and to put their trust in the Lord.

“The Lord can redeem anyone and anything in our life with the power and forgiveness,” he said. “There is hope for everyone no matter what mistakes we make. For our congregation, for his [Todd Williams’s] wife and children, and for Pastor Williams’ family, it was a demonstration that God can bring good out of the worst of circumstances.”

TRAGEDY TO TRIUMPH

The conversion of Todd Williams – who is serving a 21-year sentence for driving his Chevrolet Impala into Claude Williams and two others as they were helping two teenage girls change a flat tire June 16 – is just one example of how God has brought hope out of tragedy.

Two days after the accident, Twila Williams shared on WDSU-TV in New Orleans that she had forgiven the man who was responsible for her husband’s death. She also had encouraged her sons to do the same.

“The Bible tells us to forgive,” she said during the interview on WDSU. “I’m not happy with what happened, I don’t care for the individual that did this, but I have to forgive that person. The acronym JOY, Jesus, Others and Yourself. That’s how my husband truly lived his life.”

During two memorial services held June 21 and 22, one in Claude

Williams’s hometown of Natchitoches and the other on the Metairie campus of Celebration Church, 70 individuals accepted Christ, including the teen girls whom Claude Williams and two other men had stopped to help.

On June 23, members and guests gathered inside a packed worship center on Celebration Church’s Westbank campus for the first worship service after Claude Williams’ death.

In his message, Watson told members that their attendance showed their trust in God and love for Pastor Claude Williams and his family. During the service, 15 people turned to Christ.

David Ford, the campus pastor since early December, told the *Baptist Message* that he and his wife, Daniela, are humbled to honor Claude and Twila Williams’s legacy.

“Our prayer is the same as theirs, to see God’s love reign and rule on the Westbank,” said Ford, who served as the campus student pastor at Celebration Church’s Westbank campus in 2015. “For every single person that has a hurt, habit or hang up to know they can be healed. My



Celebration Church photo

Pastor David Ford prepares to baptize James Summerville during Christmas Eve services at Celebration Church’s Westbank campus. Ford baptized nine new Christians in December, bringing to 22 the number of people to stir the baptistery waters since the death of Claude Williams, the beloved campus pastor who died June 16, 2019.

hope is that everyone would grow in relationship with God and others resulting in changed lives, homes, communities, cities and world. Because we believe everyone needs Jesus. We hold on to the promise in Isaiah 43:19, ‘Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it? I will make a way in the wilderness and rivers in the desert.’”

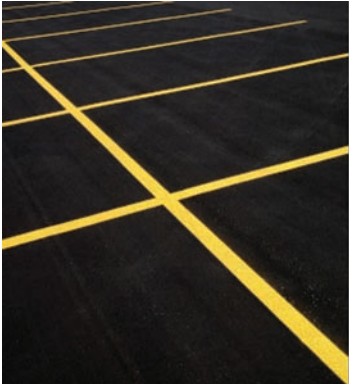
In the final service of 2019, the congregation

had their second largest non-Easter Sunday worship service attendance (434) and baptized four new believers.

Ford baptized nine new Christians in December, bringing to 22 the number of people to stir the baptistery waters since Claude Williams’ death.

Watson, who had a deep friendship with Claude Williams and continues to check on Twila Williams and her sons weekly, said that great days lie ahead for Celebration Church’s Westbank congregation.

“The congregation was devastated but they have demonstrated great resiliency,” he said. “While they have grieved, they have remained faithful. The campus has spent prayer and sought Lord throughout the last few months. God has positioned that congregation to make an impact on the Westbank for many years to come.”



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# Louisiana Baptists begin rebuild of Bahamas

By Brian Blackwell  
Message Staff Writer

PELICAN POINT, East Grand Bahamas (LBM)--In early December, Louisiana Baptists began a mission to rebuild the 128-year-old St. Matthew Baptist Church that was destroyed by Hurricane Dorian Sept. 2, 2019, and the ongoing effort is expected to continue for at least six more months.

According to Gibbie McMillan, Louisiana Baptists' disaster relief strategist, a team of 13 people from the Louisiana and Mississippi Baptist state conventions worked from Dec. 4-10, 2019, to establish a base camp for future teams that will rebuild the church in Pelican Point on the East Grand Bahamas Island.

The team built a portable shower and bathroom facilities; constructed a floor for a tent used for lodging; installed electrical lines that provide power from a generator (lent by Philadelphia



Submitted photo

Members of the Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief team unload a tool chest on December 4 while establishing a base camp for future teams that will rebuild St. Matthew Baptist Church. The team consisted of 13 volunteers.

Baptist Church in Deville) for the tent; and, set up a washing machine, refrigerator, stove, freezer and griddle other teams will use at the base camp. The crew also brought 60 cots and 80 blankets that were donated by the American Red Cross.

"We are providing a

place of worship for the first church established on the Grand Bahama Island," McMillan told the *Baptist Message*. "We are taking part in building back the oldest church in the Bahamas. They are a lovely people that need to know that God has not forsaken them. They

are very appreciative and very respectful of those who come to help. Their world, literally, was turned upside down and they are in dire need of help. They cannot help themselves and that is why we are there."

St. Matthew Baptist Church is one of nine of the 13 Baptist churches on the islands severely damaged or completely destroyed by the storm that packed 185-mile-per hour winds at the height of the storm.

Louisiana is among several states participating in 'Bahama Rebuild,' a joint partnership with the International Mission Board and Baptist Global Response. Louisiana and Mississippi are sending teams to rebuild St. Matthew Baptist while the Alabama and North Carolina Baptist state conventions are sending additional teams to undertake other rebuild projects on the islands.

Two weeks after the team returned to the United

States, the St. Matthews Baptist congregation worshiped underneath the tent for their first Sunday service together since Dorian.

Another team is scheduled to leave for the Bahamas Jan. 18. The group will comprise 25 members from Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi who will demolish the existing concrete walls and begin building new ones. They are the only crew scheduled to work on St. Matthews Baptist Church as of now, but future units will be formed, McMillan said.

The project will cost between \$225,000 and \$250,000, according to John Hebert, Louisiana Baptists' director of missions and ministry. Hebert encouraged Louisiana Baptists to provide funds and consider being a part of one of the teams.

"These churches hit hardest by the storm are the center of the communities," Hebert said. "Without

See BAHAMAS, page 13



I was eating with a friend and the subject of *Here for You* came up. We talked about the creativity and quality of the commercials, the great response to the Super Bowl, Final Four, digital components, and the way we were using the campaign to reach people who have never set foot in a Louisiana Baptist Church. My friend said, "I hope it goes well because I know how important *Here for You* is to you." Their sentiments and wishes were greatly appreciated — but as I pondered that comment over the next several days I thought, *Here for You* is not about me. It's not for me. I know where I'm going. I have a relationship with Jesus. *Here for You* is about them.

**Them.** Let that sink in for a few seconds ... *Here for You* is about them...

In his book, *The Purpose Driven Life*, Rick Warren begins with this statement, "It's not about you."

In our self-focused, narcissistic culture this truth often gets lost. It's not about us, it's about them.

**Here for You is about them.**

As was their practice, the Pharisees were trying to trick Jesus. Whoever drew the short straw that day was tasked with their latest attempt. He approached Jesus and blurted out his question. "What is the greatest commandment?" Without hesitation Jesus responded "to love the Lord your God with all of your heart, soul, mind and strength" and before the Pharisee could insert his cleverly-devised follow up question, Jesus continued "and the second one is like it — love your neighbors (them) as you love yourself."

Think about that for a moment — Jesus listed them (your neighbor) number two, right behind loving God. In politics and sports it's often "us" versus "them." But Jesus is clear, the church, "we," need to make loving and reaching them a priority.

Jesus always kept the focus on **THEM!**

- He came to seek and to save that which was lost — i.e. them
- When He saw them (the crowds) He had compassion on them.

- For God so loved the world (them) that He gave his only son ...

- Go into all of the world and make disciples of all nations — them.

Even as He was dying on a cruel Roman cross, He thought about them— "Father forgive them for they do not realize what they are doing."

Somehow we've subtly, but consistently transitioned our focus from them to us:

- We don't like the music
- We don't agree with a certain decision
- We don't like the schedule change
- We don't like what the pastor did/didn't do.

The "we" list is "we-ally long" — pardon the pun.

Don't misunderstand, we know about them. Them is a frequent topic within the walls of the church.

- We talk about them
- We research them
- We'll occasionally pray for them
- We'll even give money every now and then to help reach them

**Jesus loves them and we're called to follow His example.**

But we rarely go get them— even though Jesus said the fields are full of them.

What's wrong with them? Or — should the question be what's wrong with us? Have we left our first love? What keeps us from obeying Jesus? Are we afraid of them?

I'm not sure, but I know this — Jesus loves them and we're called to follow His example.

Them is so important that in one of his parables Jesus instructed us three different times to go into the highways and hedges and compel them to come in (Luke 14).

Understand this, them is one of the reasons you're still here — why we're still here. As long as Jesus delays His return, we have the opportunity, the responsibility and the assignment to reach them.

You can begin reaching them by regularly praying for those you pass every day, by going to *HereforYou.org* and sharing your favorite *Here for You* commercial via social media, or by identifying your "one."

No matter your age, health, experience, vocation or location, there is something you can do to reach them— and them is counting on us!

"How can they hear unless someone tells them?" Romans 10:14

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## Unity from page 10

agree the revival of 2008 helped to bring about a more openness among all residents.

"I'll give you a for instance," Keene said. "In our church, we have blacks that attend regularly and nobody thinks anything about it. Young agreed.

"You also see it at our high school," he added. "Go up there and walk the halls and you'll see them walking side-by-side, friends, hanging out together and doing stuff

together. I think it's safe to say the black/white relations are much different today than before the revival."

Both Jimmy's noted that because of cultural differences, Jena will not be a "utopia" of race relations ... "that will come when we all get to Heaven!"

"I mean, we just live differently," Young said. "We are culturally different but it doesn't mean we can't live together, worship together, and

serve our Lord together."

The two men laughed as they thought about their differences.

"We were talking earlier about eating fish and the fact that I like filets and he (Young) likes the bone," Keene said. "In many things we are different but in the main things, like serving Jesus, we are the same."

"And we will not let our cultural differences divide us on our spiritual responsibilities," Young said. "We know and understand what is important and what is not."

## Bahamas from page 12

the intervention of outside help, the process for them to rebuild would be extended an unbelievably long time because they don't have the resources to get it done. It might take years. The money given is going to help speed up the work for the Kingdom. We want to encourage our churches to give and to go. Contact our offices to

sign up to be a part of this amazing rebuild that will touch many lives in ways we may never know."

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### 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](mailto:steve@westside.life) or via mail at 6834 Hwy 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, 71457. For more information, call 318.352.2383.

### SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR

Fellowship Baptist Church of Central, Greenwell Springs, LA is seeking a full-time pastor.

Please send your résumé to [jerryjacobsen12@yahoo.com](mailto:jerryjacobsen12@yahoo.com) or mail to FBC of Central, ATTN: Doug Carroll, 14512 Greenwell Springs Road, Greenwell Springs, La. 70739





**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](mailto: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

■ **Josh Lewis** is the interim pastor at Northwoods Baptist Church, Shreveport.

## REVIVAL

■ First Baptist Church, Robeline: Revival, January 19-29, Sunday, 10:30 a.m. and 6 p.m.; nightly: 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Worship Music: **WeRcalled**. Pastor: Brian Ray.

■ Koran Baptist Church, Haughton: **Harvest Sunday**, January 19, Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor: Michael Reichard.

■ First Baptist Church, Haynesville: **Winter Revival**, January 26-29, 6 p.m. nightly. Guest Speaker: **Len Turner**. Special Music: **Rand Buford** (Sunday morning), **Chapman Family** (Sunday evening), **Steve Reeves** (Monday), **Louisiana Tech BCM**

**Praise Band** (Wednesday evening). Pastor: Jeff Tinsely.

## LAGNIAPPE

■ 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.

■ Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: **18th Annual Men's Brotherhood Wild Game Supper**, January 18, 5 p.m. Guest Speaker: **Gevan Spinney, pastor of First Baptist Haughton**. The event begins with a large variety of wild and tame food in the church gym. This is followed by a time of worship and a hunting-oriented message by Dr. Spinney. The night ends with the distribution of a healthy amount of door prizes. Cost: \$10. All proceeds go into the Brotherhood Disaster Relief Fund of the Association. Pastor: Steven Kelly.

■ Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: Enlistment Sunday, January 19, 9 & 10:30 a.m. Speaker: **Ken Freeman**. Pastor: Philip Robertson.

■ Cypress Baptist Church, Benton: **Man Up Men's Conference**, January 24, 4:30 p.m. doors open; 5 p.m., free catfish dinner in the field house; 6 p.m. worship, 6:45

message. Speaker: **Steve Gaines**. Worship: **Seth Whorton**. Admission is free. The Conference is specifically designed to address the needs of men today. Men of all ages in the Shreveport, Bossier & Ark-La-Tex area are invited to come to this event. Pastor: John Fream.

■ Fair Park Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Marriage Retreat**, January 24-26, Pastor: Waymond Warren.

■ First Baptist Church, Haynesville: **Wild Game Supper**, January 25, 6-9 p.m. Speaker: **Luke Hockenjos**. Pastor: Jeff Tinsely.

■ Esler Baptist Church, Pineville: **Men's Wild Game Cook-Off**, January 25, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Bring your wild game to cook for a feast to share with other hunters and fishermen. A representative from Louisiana Wildlife and Fisheries will be on hand to answer questions. For more info, contact Buddy at 318.201.2054. Pastor: Joshua Timothy.

■ First Baptist Church, Jonesville: **Ladies Conference**, January 25, meet and greet from 9:30 a.m. — 3 p.m. Speaker: **Ilonka Deaton, Nashville, TN**. She will be speaking on human trafficking and sex slave. Meet, greet and visiting will be from 9:30 to 10:00 a.m. in the Conn room of the church with coffee, juice and sweet rolls. Conference will begin at 10 a.m. and go to noon. There will be a lunch break (\$5) in the church gym. The conference will resume in the sanctuary from 1-3 p.m. For information or to pre-register for the conference and lunch contact Ruth King at 318.403.4789 or Marybeth Boothe at FBC, 318.339.9068. There is no charge to attend the conference but a love offering will be received to help Deaton in her ministry. Pastor: Todd Whittington.

■ Bellaire Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Northwest Louisiana Baptist Association Call to Prayer V**, January 26, 6 p.m.

DOM: Lane Moore.

■ Louisiana College, Pineville: CENLA Proudly Pro-Life Dinner, January 30, 6 p.m. at the Granberry Conference Center. Doors open at 6 p.m. and dinner is served at 6:30 p.m. Speaker: Dr. Haywood Robinson, former abortionist. Cost: \$60 individuals, \$500 for Friends of Life, \$750 for Defender of Life; \$1,000 Champion of Life, and \$2,500 for Lifesaver. For more information and to register online visit [ProLifeLouisiana.org/Cenla](http://ProLifeLouisiana.org/Cenla).

■ **Man Up! Conference 2020**, January 31, 6 p.m. at the Ruston Civic Center. Guest Speaker: **Bernie Carbo, Major League Baseball Hall of Famer**. Cost: \$15 per person (includes a fish dinner). Seating is limited to the first 600 and no tickets will be sold at the door. RSVP by calling the Concord Union Baptist Association at 318.255.9030/5241. DOM: Barry Joyner.

■ First Baptist Church, Logansport: **Gold City in concert**, January 31, 7 p.m. Doors will open at 6 p.m. No ticket is required but a love offering will be taken. For further information, contact the church, which is located at 1009 Gum Street, Logansport, at 318.697.4481. Pastor: Shawn Thrapp.

■ LaSalle Baptist Association, Jena: **Man Up! 2020: Seeing Clearly God's Expectations for Biblical Manhood**, January 31, 6:30 p.m. at the Jena Community Cen-

ter. Speakers: **Rubin Weaver and Casey Johnson**. Special Music: **Graceway**. This is a free event for all men and boys. A meal will be provided. Sign up at any church in the LaSalle Association or call the Mission Center at 318.992.8864. DOM: Buddy Willis.

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## Skills from page one

Being responsive to the character of the community lets them know how much you care about them.

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sage of the Gospel.

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## Scripture Crypto

The Scripture Crypto is a Bible verse in which one letter has been substituted for another, thus encoding the verse. To find out what the verse is, you must determine what each letter is a substitute for. An "a," for example, may stand for a "t" in this week's issue of the ScriptureCrypto. Next week, "a" could stand for a "d." Each week, each letter is different. Solve by trial and error. The answer will be given next week. Note: All numerals, such as those in the scripture reference after the verse, are spelled out.

emo fpx xmbh tfdx jbev, b go dbhq? fvj emo fpx

xmbh jrdlhrsxsj rv gs? mbus xmbh rv ybj: cbp r dmfcq

osx upfrds mrg cbp xms msqu bc mrd tbhvxsfvts.

udfqq cbpxo-xeb:crws

Clues:  
J = D; F = A

Answer to December 12 Scripture Crypto:  
Exodus sixteen: two

TRAINING *Passionate*  
FOLLOWERS of *Christ*

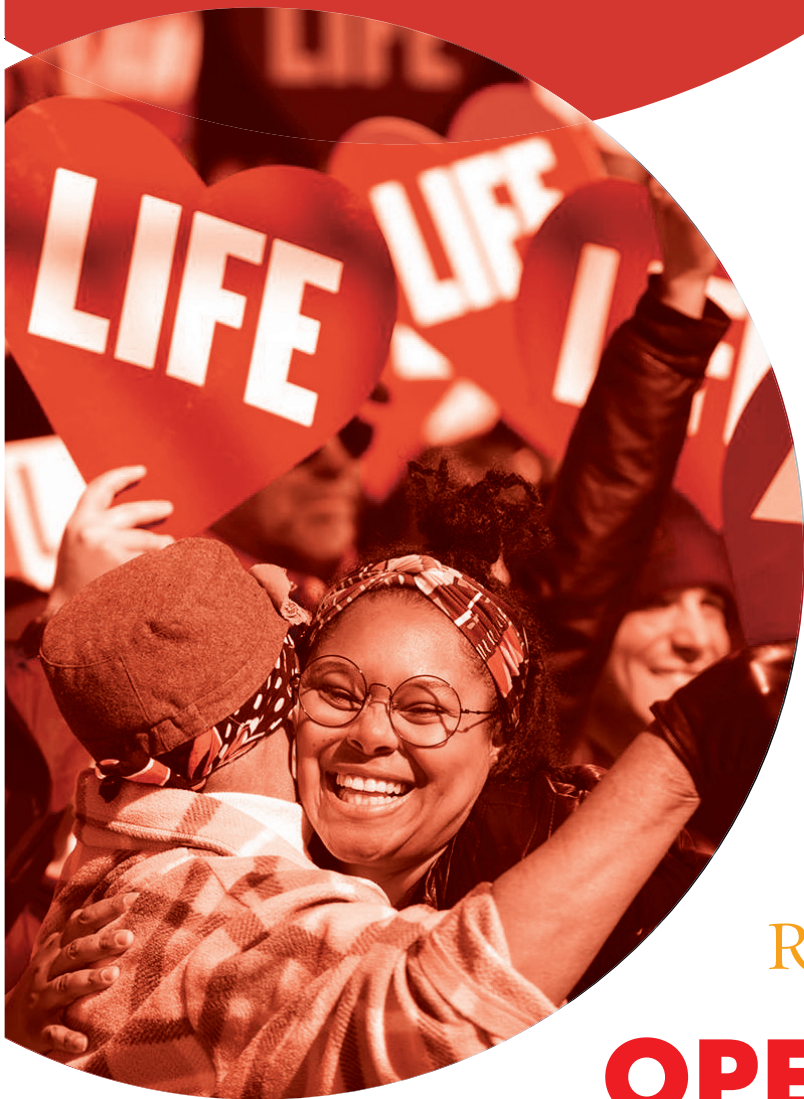
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## **NORTHWEST**

SHREVEPORT-  
BOSSIER

Sunday, Jan. 19, 2020  
2PM-4PM

## **SOUTHWEST**

LAKE CHARLES

Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020  
6PM-8PM

## **SOUTH**

BATON ROUGE

Saturday, Jan. 25, 2020  
10AM-NOON

## **NORTHEAST**

WEST MONROE-  
MONROE

Sunday, Jan. 26, 2020  
2PM-4PM

## **CENLA**

PINEVILLE-  
ALEXANDRIA

Saturday, Feb. 1, 2020  
10AM-NOON



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