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LC's 166th commencement honors God, celebrates graduates

U.S. Congressman Mike Johnson not only gave the keynote address during the Louisiana College commencement ceremony May 8 but also received an honorary doctorate from the school. Johnson is a member of First Baptist Church in Bossier City.



By Elizabeth Clarke

LC News

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – U.S. Congressman Mike Johnson told the Louisiana College Class of 2021 graduates that there were “only a handful of institutions in America where God could be honored” the way he was at the Louisiana Baptist Convention college’s 166th Commencement Saturday at the Rapides Coliseum.

In his commencement address,

Johnson, who represents Louisiana’s fourth congressional district, offered the students words of encouragement on the beginning of their journeys as college graduates.

“Walk with the Lord; it’s that simple,” Johnson said. “Be humble and faithful in the little things God entrusts you with today. God will reward your faithfulness with more, and you will be set apart.”

LC conferred 178 undergraduate

See COMMENCEMENT, page 4

LBC Executive Board urged to ‘change me’

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – Recognizing the need for personal revival, Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn announced a 28-day personal revival guide that he hopes hundreds of churches and members will engage with later this year.

“We are in a desperate situation,” Horn told Executive Board members during their May 4 meeting at Tall Timbers Conference Center in Woodworth. “We are doomed. I am asking the Lord and seeking the Lord about what could be my part in helping that. I am not even sure we are ready for revival in terms of mass evangelism right now, but instead what we are desperate for is personal revival.”

State missions services staff began a joint focus on personal revival May 9 and will conclude June 5, using Horn’s booklet, “Change Me.” The effort is based on Psalm 139:23-24.

“It is my prayer, my vision and my dream that we will have hundreds of churches in Louisiana at the end of 2021 or to start 2022 that will seek the Lord for personal revival,” Horn said. “And, so, pray for us as a staff over the next 28 days as the Lord brings that to your attention and pray that each one, most of all me, would have a sense of God doing something new, fresh and real in our lives and bring us to a point of leading others in thinking about doing the same in their lives.”

Louisiana Baptist Convention President David

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Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn presents Associate Executive Director Dale Lingenfelter with a copy of “Change Me,” a booklet that focuses on personal revival.

Revival, awakening mark special services at FBC Pineville

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – After months of the Holy Spirit working on his heart, Will Sharbino, 11, finally was convicted of his need for a Savior, during

a revival service, March 23, at the First Baptist Church, Pineville.

Leading up to that night, Sharbino had been soaking in biblical truths from his family as well as faithful teaching by his FBC Pineville Sunday

school teacher, he shared with the *Baptist Message*. After that revival service, he went home and prayed with his parents, repenting of his sins, and committing to follow Jesus as Lord.

See REVIVAL, page 2



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Revival from page one

"I realized I was a sinner and knew Jesus had forgiven me for what I had done," Shabringo said. "I then knew He lives inside my heart and that I would now go to live in Heaven one day with God."

INTENTIONALITY

Sharbino, along with six others, publicly shared his faith decision during a special baptismal celebration, March 28, at FBC Pineville.

The baptisms were visible evidence of the rejuvenation experienced by the congregation from the four-day revival services. Stephen Rummage, pastor of Quail Creek Baptist Church, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, preached and the FBC Pineville worship team and choir led music each night, March 21-24,

and the congregation hosted a meal beforehand.

Pastor Stewart Holloway prepared members for FBCP's first revival in 20 years by preaching a series of sermons about revival, and the congregation prepared by praying for the Holy Spirit to bless the services, which averaged 260-290 in attendance each night.

"As we prayed about re-opening after the pandemic, I felt it was something we needed to do," Holloway said. "Praying and other ways of preparing built up a receptiveness in our people. The Lord really was able to speak through Dr. Rummage. Our people walked out encouraged in their faith and wanting to invite people. It will be one of those things we look back and say God did something there. I'm confident we will see public decisions in the months to come.

SIGNS AND WONDERS

Despite the pandemic, the church has experi-

enced numbers of blessings:

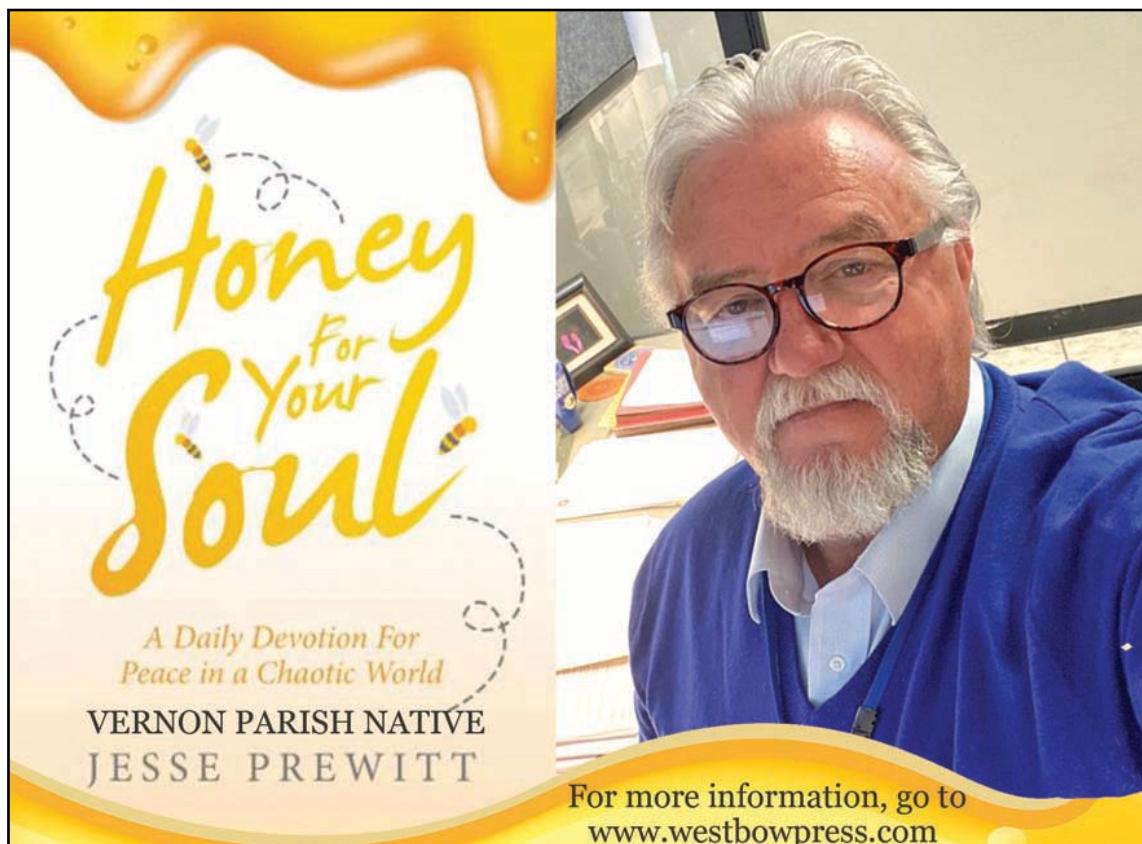
-- The congregation's Upward sports ministry celebrated the highest overall attendance of its nine-year history, with 264 first through sixth graders participating in either basketball or cheerleading during January and February.

-- The church also had 402 in worship on March 28, the highest since before the onset of the pandemic, when 414 came to the March 8, 2020 service.

-- April 16-18, FBCP hosted an exhibit to raise awareness about how Compassion International works to help bring children out of poverty around the world.

Moving forward, members will travel in June to minister to the impoverished of Appalachia in Tennessee. Locally, there will be summer outreach events such as Connect Camp, a day camp, July 5-9, which will feature messages, games, and

See REVIVAL, page 3



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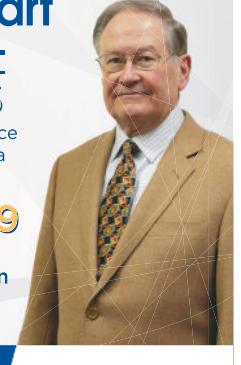
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CHANGE OF ADDRESS

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Board from page one

Cranford, in his message to Executive Board members, echoed the need to seek personal revival.

Cranford, citing Haggai 1:7 and 2 Corinthians 15:1-5, said that Louisiana Baptists must examine their own hearts and consider who God has called them to be.

"I think we do need to carefully consider our hearts concerning the path that we are going to take," said Cranford, pastor of First Baptist Church in Ponchatoula. "My prayer for us is that exactly this passage of scripture is our heart. That exactly this wonderful sort of encapsulated message is not only who we are but it's who we want to be and it's the path that we want to take."

"I pray it's our heart," he continued. "And if it's anything else, I'm not sure the path that we are going to take in the future. If it's anything else, I'm not sure that I want to go along with who we are as Louisiana Baptists and Southern Baptists. So, I think it's time for us to consider our hearts."

BUDGET REPORT

Horn also told Executive Board members that money given to the Cooperative Program from Janu-

ary to April is \$158,000 more than during the same time period last year.

He noted the increased giving could signal a trend in the right direction for the remainder of the year.

"So, we thank the Lord for that and believe that is a sign of good things to come," Horn said. "Obviously, it needed to be that way because of what happened around March 15 or 17, 2020, which sort of tanked the rest of March and April for the Cooperative program. But \$158,000 better is certainly a good sign because we started the year 2020 rather well and so when you look at all of that to be 158,000 dollars ahead is very good news for us and I believe points us in a good direction for the remainder of 2021. We are still some behind in the projected allocations budget, but we have a real shot of making that up, whereas last year when we got behind there wasn't really a lot of hope that we could make that up. This year I don't think that is the case."

ENTITY REPORTS

Louisiana Baptist Foun-

dation Executive Director Jeff Steed, in his report, reminded Executive Board members that the foundation has a 1.45 percent interest rate on their short-term fund that has daily liquidity higher than what banks offer. Additionally, he said the foundation can help Louisiana Baptists be good stewards of their assets by impacting their church and other ministries through special gifts such as non-cash gifts, estate gifts and other ways.

He noted that the foundation can provide publications on special gifts to churches as well as teaching about estate stewardship in churches and assisting with church loans and church payroll services.

"Please call us," Steed said. "We are glad to help. Those are all some ways we can help you, add value to you in our church. I want to thank you Louisiana Baptists as we advance the Kingdom together, one dollar at a time, one ministry at a time, one life at a time around the state."

Louisiana College President Rick Brewer said God has blessed the school in many ways, including being ranked the safest campus in the state and the second most diverse campus by niche.com. He

said LC was named a Top 30 Christian College by BestValueSchools.org, too.

Looking to the future, Brewer shared that the school recently secured \$860,000 for future academic programs.

He asked board members to keep the school in their prayers.

"We are going to keep pressing on," Brewer said. "Pray for us. Send us your students. We are not kowtowing to political correct-

ness. We are just striving to be biblically correct."

Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries President and CEO Perry Hancock noted in his report that one of their residents of the HomePlace (the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries program for homeless children and their mothers) trusted Christ and publicly pro-

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Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana College President Rick Brewer and others congratulate Earl Heard moments after he received an honorary doctorate from the school. Heard attended LC during the 1960s and is now a Houston-area businessman and media mogul.

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Commencement

from page one

and 65 graduate degrees at the day's ceremony, which also included many of the 2020 graduates, whose commencement exercises last year were cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

President Rick Brewer recognized the first seven graduates from the C.S. Lewis Honors College.

Four students from the first cohort (2017) of C.S. Lewis Honors College graduated Saturday: Aaron Howe, B.S., biology; Ragan Delrie, B.S., biology; Carson Elliott, B.S., biology and chemistry; and Caitlyn Scheibal, B.S., biology.

Three students from the 2018 cohort also completed their degree and Honors College requirements in three years: Margaret Avant, B.A., education with math concentration; Lillian Berry, B.S., criminal justice; and Samantha O'Banion, B.A., theatre arts.

Brewer also noted that

the first cohort of students in the pre-engineering program were graduating.

"You all know our three R's—relevant, relational and rigorous," Brewer said to the graduates. "But you all have earned a fourth R—resilient," alluding to the last 14 months of quarantining, hurricanes and snow storms these students have had to overcome.

Several graduates were chosen to share part of their LC journey.

"The road was long, but today we celebrate and look forward to new journeys and opportunities," said Tanner Guidry, a missions and ministries graduate. "One of the greatest things we learned—adversity is something to overcome because of the One who lives inside us."

In addition to conferring of the degrees, Brewer recognized several with honorary doctorates and distinguished service

awards, bestowing honorary doctorates on Rep. Johnson, who currently serves as vice chairman of the House Republican Conference, and on Houston-area businessman and media mogul Earl Heard, who attended LC in the 1960s. A posthumous honorary doctorate was awarded the late Louisiana Gov. Jimmie Davis, Class of 1924.

Brewer recognized four with distinguished service awards: Janie Wise, women's missions and ministries strategist for Louisiana Baptist Convention; The late Bill Robertson, pastoral leadership team director for Louisiana Baptist Convention (posthumous award); and Dr. Dewey Dunn ('56) and his wife, Bobbie Dunn ('57), of Nashville.

Dr. Dunn taught at Vanderbilt University, and specialized in gastro-

See COMMENCEMENT, page 6

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Junction congregation rebuilds after Laura

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

JUNCTION, La. (LBM) – Nine months after Hurricane Laura damaged the worship center at Calvary Baptist Church in Junction, the congregation celebrated completion of renovations to facilities in late April.

The \$50,000 project, which was started in January after delays in obtaining materials, included installation of a new ceiling, roof and walls. Members met in the fellowship hall until they were able to resume services, April 18, inside the rebuilt 175-person capacity worship center.

Pastor Jim Miers told the *Baptist Message* he is grateful the rest of the structure was spared from damage so the 60 members could concentrate on outreach to the community in the weeks following the storm.

"We focused on what

we could do rather than what we lost," Miers said. "God saw us through all of that, which we are so thankful."

Miers, who rode out the hurricane inside the building with 20 other church members, said his congregation became the hands and feet of Jesus a few hours after the storm passed through the area in August 2020.

During the ensuing weeks, members helped distribute bottled water, food boxes, tarps, and other supplies. They also cleaned up debris-covered yards and delivered generators to widows.

More recently, members have shared Christ's love in other ways: shopping and preparing meals for the sick, widows, widowers, elderly and homebound individuals; and collecting items that will include dolls and puppets for inclusion in Operation Christmas



Submitted photo

Calvary Baptist Church in Junction recently completed renovations to their worship center that was damaged by Hurricane Laura last year. The congregation has scheduled a re-dedication of the facility tentatively for June 13.

Child shoeboxes that will be distributed to needy children throughout the world later this year.

Moving forward, Miers anticipates that God will continue to use Calvary Baptist in a mighty way in Merryville.

"We are a small country church with a big heart willing to step up when any need arises in our community," Miers said. "Our church has future plans to one day build a family life center and possibly provide classes on life skills such

as sewing, gardening and canning, all to reach those around us with the changing power of Jesus."

A re-dedication of the renovated worship center is scheduled, tentatively, for June 13 at 10 a.m.

WHO'S READY FOR A MESS?

Perhaps it's happened to you. You're driving down the interstate and right between the lanes there's an egg crate, then a box and then something even bigger, like a recliner! Someone left a mess on the interstate. Something came untied in the back of the truck and a few things, large and small, came tumbling out for drivers to dodge like a live action game of Mario Kart. What a mess!

If you're a parent, you've probably had a few moments when you came home from work and were greeted by a mess. You saw pizza boxes, toys, gym clothes, empty juice boxes and dirty dishes – everywhere. As you prayed for patience, you felt your blood pressure rising as your inner prosecuting attorney demanded accountability, "who made this mess?" and "who is going to clean up this mess?"

Mess-aversion is a generational issue. Your parents didn't like it when you made a mess and you don't like it when your kids leave a mess.

But the truth is a mess indicates activity. A mess indicates life, in all its aspects. It's evidence that someone was there, that something happened.

Solomon shares some God-given wisdom in Proverbs 14:4 when he says "without oxen a

stable stays clean, but you need a strong ox for a large harvest." (NLT)

As I read this chapter, this verse caught my spirit – especially the word harvest. I want to see a harvest – a harvest of souls. We need to see a harvest and better yet, God promises a harvest. Don't miss what it takes for this desire to become reality – a strong ox. A strong ox equals a large harvest.

Let that visual sink in – a strong ox. More than likely this implies the ox is fairly large. An animal of this stature can be temperamental and stubborn. A large ox takes up a lot of space, requires a lot of attention, needs a lot food and yes – leaves a big mess, an unpleasant mess!

However, the question God left in my spirit was, "are we willing to put up with a mess to see a large harvest?" A harvest of this magnitude is going to be messy. The harvest may make a mess of your schedule. A harvest of this nature may make a mess of your finances.

Clean. We like clean. Organized. Everything is where we put it. We can afford clean. There's minimal preparation for clean. But don't miss it – clean equals no oxen. No harvest.

Reaching those far from Christ is often messy. Sin has wrecked their relationships, their finances, their reputations and even their health. Messy people sometimes scare us because we're not sure what to do with them.

But the larger truth is if we are going to see a harvest – the harvest that God promises exists, we will have to get in the middle of messes. Our hands will get dirty. Our schedules will be interrupted. At times it may be unpleasant – even costly. However, we need to remember Jesus is with us and He's the Master over the messes.

A clean stable requires little effort, but a messy one requires constant attention.

A clean stable keeps the people content. A messy stable causes the angels to rejoice.

Watch the news. Check your social media feed. How much longer can we stay in our clean stables and watch the lost pass by?

Where is that big ox? Who's ready for mess?

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Alaina Nokes photo

Seven students from the graduating class were selected to share, during the commencement ceremony, memories of their journey at Louisiana College. The school conferred 178 undergraduate and 65 graduate degrees.

Commencement from page 4

enterology and internal medicine at the VA Center in Nashville. He is a founding member of the Baptist Medical Dental Fellowship; and the Dunns have served together on more than 100 mission trips.

It was a day of celebration for the college, Brewer said, who added he had not shaken that many hands since COVID introduced us to the term social distancing last spring.

"It's a blessing to be able to have commencement and to be back together to honor so many well deserving individuals for their accomplishments," he said. "The Lord has truly blessed us."

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Robinson 'followed God's call,' earns LC degree at 71

By Elizabeth Clarke

LC News

PINEVILLE, La. (LC News) – When Mary Robinson came to Louisiana College in 2016, she had already experienced a full lifetime of professional and personal accomplishments—as a teacher, a mother and grandmother—the Peabody Montessori elementary teacher was happy with the challenges God had placed before her.

But the Lord knew Mary was up for a new challenge.

"My journey was God's journey," Mary said. "I enjoyed working with the children, but I heard the call from God to go back to school."

So that's exactly what she did at age 67.

Mary, now 72, earned her degree in missions and ministries, with a psychology minor, last year during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

She participated in Louisiana College Commencement ceremonies May 8.

Mary, who grew up in Shreveport, said she has had the call of God on her life since the age of 15. As an adult, she spent many years living all over, as a military wife, finally settling down in Cenla.

Robinson worked at Pinecrest State Hospital in Pineville for 30 years, 28 as a manager, before retiring in 1998.

Always active in church—the Rose of Sharon Missionary Baptist Church is her current church home—but she has also visited many times at Zion Hill Baptist Church,

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Elizabeth Clarke photo

Mary Robinson received encouragement during her years at LC from Zion Hill Pastor and LC Associate Vice President Joshua Joy Dara. He offered Robinson congratulations on her accomplishments May 8 at the Louisiana College commencement. Robinson earned her bachelor's degree in 2020, but participated in the 2021 ceremony, along with more than two dozen other 2020 graduates.

where LC Associate Vice President for Engagement and Enrichment Joshua Joy Dara is head pastor.

"Mary has a positive attitude to self-development," Dara said. "She loves to talk about the Word of God, and she is quick to share her faith with anyone. I was so glad when she came to Louisiana College to further her education. I knew she could do it. She is self-motivated, conscientious and hardworking. Also, she is an enthusiastic learner who seems to enjoy school and going to church. Today, I see the value of the support she provided both in the church and student life. I am so proud of her accomplishment."

See ROBINSON, page 7

Robinson from page 6

Another of Mary's life's passions has been singing.

"I've been singing since I was knee-high to a duck," she said. "I've done piano and voice all my life."

When she came to LC, she said she didn't see as much diversity as she would like—not necessarily in the student body, but in the types of activities and music that students had available to them. An example, she said, was that students had Chapel Band and Voices, but those didn't offer a lot of diversity of music.

"I was tired of seeing students standing around like wallflowers," Robinson said.

I know it wasn't the kind of music some of the students were used to. I tried to tell them, 'either way, you need to praise God.'

Still, Mary believed she could have more of an impact on campus.

"I started singing every morning when I got to campus," she said. So much so, in fact, that when she was not around, people took notice.

Mary is a 35-year member of the Evangelical Board of Gospel Music Workshop of America, started by James Cleveland in 1968, and now has 150 chapters and 300,000 members.

She went to LC Presi-

dent Rick Brewer about bringing some diversity to campus music.

Robinson smiled when she talked about her involvement in the annual summer workshops held all over the world.

"Dr. Brewer knows all about it," she said. "And so, we started the LC Gospel Choir."

Brewer said Mary always encouraged him and everyone she met with her "And Then Some" attitude and spirit.

"Age is only a number with Mary as she engaged the College's learning and student life experience beyond the classroom just like a traditional age student," Brewer said. "She and I share a deep love for 'Old-School Gospel Music.' Launching the LC Gospel Choir enabled this passion to become reality. Mary Robinson will ALWAYS be part of the LC 'family.'

The Gospel Choir was finally able to hold a concert on campus in February—with social distancing and masks in place due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Robinson said one of her other favorite activities at LC was being on the Wildcat Debate Team under the tutelage of Coach Brian Manuel.

"It has been a joy to watch the journey Mary has

taken to obtain her degree at LC," Manuel said.

"I know she will be using her degree to make a kingdom impact for years to come."

Manuel said Mary's energy, wit and Christian worldview are only matched by her drive to show others the love of Christ.

"I loved every minute of it, the camaraderie, the learning and discussing different topics," she said of her time in Debate. "Everything starts with good communication."

Robinson said she enjoyed all her classes, making special mention of her major adviser Marvin Jones, and Christian education Professor Tylitha Whatley.

"Dr. Jones created such a great atmosphere in the classroom," she said. "Each of us gave a scripture from the Bible. I gave one from Proverbs that says 'a man who says there is no god is a fool.'"



Submitted photo

Though she had a lifetime of professional and personal accomplishments, Mary Robinson decided at 67 to pursue a degree at Louisiana College.

She said that she and

Jones began praying intentionally for a student in the class who identified as an atheist.

"Before the end of the semester, he had become a Christian. We didn't pressure him. We didn't force

God. God did it."

Even though her studies at LC are completed, Mary said she still comes to campus occasionally—and still calls and encourages students not to "ever forget God. There is nothing like being in the arms of Jesus."



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Prayer calls, twice each day, spark renewal

By Brian Blackwell

Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Corporate prayer at 7:14 every morning and evening, in the months following the onset of COVID-19, have sparked a renewed commitment to discipleship and evangelism among Louisiana Baptists.

At least 30 members of Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, have joined the prayer movement, based on 2 Chronicles 7:14, “if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.” The twice-daily prayer times, in effect since mid-March and the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, also attract 150 others from across the nation to participate regularly.

The call is sponsored by

Project 200, a nationwide community of men passionate about the Great Commission which includes an emphasis on discipleship.

Jeff Draughon, a CBCA member as well as a member of the Project 200 board, said prayer calls have been a “game changer” for so many individuals and families across the country and even internationally. He noted that more than 700 calls have taken place since March 19, 2020.

“The powerful, spirit-filled devotionals have been led by people of all walks of life and all levels of spiritual maturity,” Draughon told the Baptist Message. “For me, personally, the 7:14 a.m. call has been like a pre-game locker room spiritual boost before the day begins and the 7:14 p.m. call has been a spiritual rejuvenation to cap off the day. For the rest of my life, I will never read 2 Chronicles 7:14 or see 7:14 on the clock



Dennis Watson, pastor of Celebration Church in the New Orleans area, has helped lead daily prayer calls since COVID-19 pandemic struck in March 2020.

without remembering these special calls.”

Jerry Blackmon, also a Calvary Baptist member and a member of Project 200, said the prayer calls have taken his spiritual walk with the Lord to an even deeper level.

“Our main goal is to encourage one another to make disciples,” Blackmon said. “These guys are all soul winners. Our big emphasis is to raise up other disciples. I think that’s where the church fails at times.”

Blackmon has been passionate about sharing Christ with others since he led a childhood friend to Christ 45 years ago as part of an evangelistic door-to-door outreach in Winnsboro. Blackmon, who was a member of First Baptist Church in Winnsboro at the time, said seeing someone accept Christ is a joyful experience unlike any other.

Today, he takes every opportunity to plant Gospel seeds with the hopes of a harvest. Blackmon, who is retired from a granite company in Pineville, has even used his retirement days to share the Gospel and disciple others as marketing director for a sandwich shop in Alexandria, where several co-workers have turned to Christ.

Blackmon said the prayer call has given him great encouragement each morning and evening to continue his task of sharing the Gospel.

“The intentionality is a huge deal,” Blackmon said. “We walk past people every day who need to know Jesus. But when we are faithful to ask God to put somebody in front of us, we better be ready because He’s going to do just that. When

we look at them through Jesus’ eyes we see them.”

Dennis Watson, lead pastor of Celebration Church in the New Orleans area, said that since March 2020, more than 100 members and other individuals have tuned each day to the Facebook Live stream or listened to the recorded broadcast later in the day. He anticipates they will continue the daily prayer calls, which he said have been the longest continuing time of corporate prayer in Celebration Church’s history.

Watson noted that some who were unable to return to church for many months throughout the pandemic found the daily prayer calls as a way they can remain engaged in the church’s ministries.

“We have seen God at work in people’s lives in so many incredible ways in response to our prayers,” he said. “We’ve had people with no hope for survival and they rebounded physically and are now doing well. We had a number of people who have needed jobs, and God blessed them with new work opportunities. We’ve had people tell us in the prayer times that their marriage was over, and yet a week or two later they were reconciled with their spouses. People who were haphazard in their prayer lives have become consistent prayer partners and prayer warriors.”

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BACKGROUNDER: Smoking pot is toxic!

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) — Legislators are considering a slate of bills that in one way, or another, moves closer to legalizing recreational pot smoking. But the reality is that whether pot smoking is approved for “medicinal” or recreational use, it poses a peril.

Part of the reason is that every grower breeds different pot strains that have greater or lesser concentrations of certain elements. Generally, however, there are over 400 chemical entities in a cannabis plant, including a known 113 cannabinoids (THC, CBD, CBN) -- many with opposing effects on the mind and body.

Indeed, a study, reported by CNN.com, Jan. 11, found that burning mari-

juana produced dangerous chemicals known to cause permanent damage to the body:

- Naphthalene (used in mothballs and is associated with liver and neurological damage);
- acrylamide (used to make paper, plastics and dyes and is associated with cancer); and
- acrylonitrile (used in manufacturing plastics and fibers and is also associated with cancer).

None of these chemicals are added to pot. Instead, they are byproducts of burning and the natural reaction of some of the organic elements in the plant after exposure to heat.

On top of that, the pot grown today is much more potent than the pot of the 1960s and 1970s. Pot was 1-3 percent THC then. Now pot is up to 30 percent THC. As a result, studies show that chronic

CULTURAL NEWS

pot smoking (recreational or medicinal) causes:

- greater violence among PTSD patients [Journal of Clinical Psychiatry, September 2015 (2,276 PTSD veterans): “In this observational study, initiating marijuana use after treatment was associated with worse PTSD symptoms, more violent behavior, and alcohol use.”];

-- increased psychosis, paranoia, and schizophrenia [Lancet, March 1, 2015 (King’s College, London – six-year study), as reported by medicalxpress.com, Feb. 16, 2015: “Compared with those who had never tried cannabis, users of high potency skunk-like cannabis had a threefold increase in risk of psychosis... those who use every day... a fivefold increase ...”]; and

-- results in permanent brain damage [Psychological Medicine, Nov. 27, 2015 (King’s College, London), as reported by medicalxpress.com, Nov. 26, 2015: “We found that frequent use of high potency cannabis significantly affects the structure of white matter fibres in the brain, whether you have psychosis or not. This reflects a sliding scale where the more cannabis you smoke and the higher the potency, the worse the damage will be.”].

Finally, the pot lobby has circulated false hope that pot smoking would revolutionize pain manage-



Louisiana legislators are considering multiple bills during the 2021 regular session that deal with different issues of legalizing the smoking of pot.

ment and reduce opioid use:

-- Steven P. Cohen, MD, director of pain research at Walter Reed Army Medical Center in Washington, D.C., treats chronic pain in patients with major war injuries. In 2010, for an Aug. 30 article on medpagetoday.org, he observed that any pain relief from smoking marijuana was substantially less than what was experienced even from the few effective drugs that were available then: “When considered in the context of the higher incidence of minor and serious side effects with medical marijuana, cannabinoids

should remain a third, or fourth line, drug for neuropathic pain.” Meanwhile, Timothy A. Collins, MD, of Duke University’s Pain and Palliative Care Clinic, added his concerns with smoking pot as the delivery system: “As a

See POT page 12

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Board from page 3

fessed her faith through baptism at North Monroe Baptist Church in Monroe. Just nine months earlier, she came to campus as a professing atheist.

“Our entire staff was rejoicing when we heard about her decision to follow Christ,” he said. “This young mother now has everything she needs to move forward with God’s plan for her life. Thank you, Louisiana Baptists, for being an important part of our life-changing ministry at the Children’s Home.”

Cranford delivered the Baptist Message report (with an Office of Public Policy update) in place of Executive Editor Will Hall who was in the Capitol as the Louisiana Baptist Office of Public Policy director, rallying support among state legislators for several pro-family bills.

Among the most noteworthy developments for the Baptist Message has been focusing more on improving its online reporting and social media presence, shortening the publication schedule from

24 to 14 editions each year, acquiring more than 6,000 cartoons that the publication has begun posting online and is considering including in the print edition, and reporting on numerous developments within the Southern Baptist Convention and across the state, Cranford said.

Meanwhile, the Office of Public Policy continues to track numerous bills that have the potential to impact the home lives, work, and ministries of Louisiana Baptists, he added.

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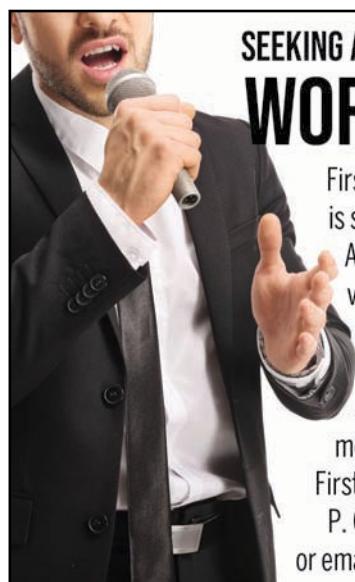
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EDITOR'S NOTE: Do you have a Revival, Homecoming, a new pastor, a community outreach or a concert? The Baptist Message would love to share your church news with the rest of the state. It is very easy to do, just send in your information (who, what,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

ON THE MOVE

■ **Jesse Balch** is the new pastor at Bosco Baptist Church, Monroe.

■ **Charley Westbrook** has resigned as pastor from Hebron Baptist Church, Denham Springs and is available for pulpit supply.

■ **Mark Talbot** is the interim pastor at Hebron Baptist Church, Denham Springs

HOECOMING

■ Beech Springs Baptist Church, Minden: **150th Anniversary**, September 2021. The church is in the process of looking for prior/current members for whom they have lost contact in preparation for its anniversary celebration. Please send name(s), address, phone and email to beechspringsbs2@suddenlink.net. Pastor: Randy Brown.

REVIVAL

■ New Hope Baptist Church, Calcasieu: The Mackey Willis Family in concert, June 5. Worship: **Mackey Willis Family**. Pastor: Robert McLane.

■ Laurel Hill Baptist Church, LaCamp: **Revival**, June 6-9, Sunday at 10 a.m. and 5 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. Evangelist: **Bill Blackmon, Wesley Jackson**. The church is located at LaCamp. Pastor: Millard Monk.

■ Bethel Baptist Church, Colfax: **Vacation Bible School**, June 6-10, 6 p.m. Join us for a fun week of Destination Dig VBS for children 3 years old thru 6th grade (just completed). You can pre-register at <https://kideventpro.lifeway.com/myEvent/?id=59366>. Pastor: Carl Gulde.

■ Peniel Baptist Church, Glenmora: The **Mackey Willis Family** in concert, June 13. Worship: **Mackey Willis Family**. Pastor: Courtland Stokes.

■ Open Door Baptist Church, Ragley: **Harvest Sunday**, June 20. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor: Sonny Simpson.

■ First Baptist Church, Eunice: **Excavate the Truth 2021**, July 5-9, 9 a.m.-noon. Children who have completed Kindergarten - 6th grade are welcome! During the week the children will learn fun new songs, bible stories, play games, do fun activities, and more. The church is located at: 331 Park Avenue, Eunice, LA 70535. Pastor: Brent Shoalmire.

■ Pilgrim Home Baptist Church, Coushatta: **Revival**, July 11-14. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Shawn Beard.

■ Broadmoor Hispanic Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Harvest Sunday**, July 18. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Daniel Hernandez.

■ First Baptist Church, Princeton: Harvest Sunday, July 25. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Darrell Cooper.

■ Temple Baptist Church, DeQuincy: Revival, August 7-11. Evangelist: Sam Moore, Pastor: Bruce Austin.

■ Brushy Creek Baptist Church, Bancroft: Harvest Sunday, August 15. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Michael Streams.

■ The Stable, Bossier City: September 7, 6:15-7:30 a.m. (Breakfast will be provided. Evangelist: Bill Britt. The Stable is located at 2195 Swan Lake Rd, Bossier City, LA. Leader: Mark Rodie.

LAGNIAPPE

■ A **Wurtzler piano** that is in pristine condition is being given away to either a church or individual in need by retired Pastor Bob Galloway. If interested, call 318.473.8803. The piano must be picked up from Galloway's home, which is located 150 Christine Drive, Boyce, La.

■ **Larry Baldridge** is available for pulpit supply. If interested, call 337.250.3954 or email him at larry.bal01@gmail.com.

■ First Baptist Church in Coushatta, LA is seeking a **youth minister**. For more information, please call 318.932.4023 or visit the website at www.fbccoushatta.com.

■ First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Sporting Clay Classic**, May 29, 2021 for the FBC Haughton Student Ministry Annual Fundraiser at Los Paloma Sporting Clay Range and Event Center. Registration & skill contests begin at 8:30am with a shotgun start at 9:30am. The entry is \$100 per person or \$400 per 4-man team. For more information, contact Joey at 318.573.9580. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.

■ North Monroe Baptist Church, Monroe: **Ben Waites** in concert, May 30, 9 a.m. Pastor: Bill Dye.

■ French Corner Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: **Greg Sullivan** in concert, May 30, 11 a.m. Pastor: Eric Hattaway.

■ First Baptist Church, Zwolle: **Memorial Day church-wide Fish Fry**, May 30. For more information call 318.645.4492. Pastor: Marty Williams.

■ Cross Branded Cowboy Church, Pineville: **The Southern Plainsmen Quartet** in concert, May 31, 7 p.m. Pastor: Steve Speer.

■ Highland Baptist Church, Bogalusa: **Greg Sullivan** in Concert, June 6, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Jeffrey Mizell.

■ Longview Baptist Church, Deville: VBS 2021 – **Destination Dig**, June 7-11, 8:30-11:30 a.m. It is open to all children who have completed pre-K through seventh grade. Children and workers can register online <https://kideventpro.lifeway.com/myEvent/?id=57814>. Pastor: Robby Poole.

■ First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Destination Dig** – VBS, June 7-11, 8:00am – Noon, Pastor: Gevan Spinney.

■ Esler Baptist Church, Pineville: **Vacation Bible School kickoff party**, June 12. There will be a community parade, nachos, games

and VBS registration. Vacation Bible school begins June 14-19 at 8:30 a.m. Pastor: Joshua Timothy.

■ New Prospect Baptist Church, Dry Prong: **VBS 2021 – Treasured**, June 13-18, 6-8 p.m. June 13, 6 p.m. is registration and kick-off activities. This is for Kindergarten through sixth grade. Pastor:

■ Kingston Baptist Church, Frierson: **The Southern Plainsmen** in concert, June 12, 6 p.m. Pastor: Buddy Puryear.

■ Beulah Baptist Church, Oak Grove: **Ben Waites** in concert, June 13, 10 a.m. Pastor:

Kenny Herring.

■ Fish Bayou Baptist Church, Winnboro: **Ben Waites** in concert, June 20, 10:30 a.m. Pastor:

Jim Goodman.

■ Trinity Baptist Church, Pineville: **Vacation Bible School and Upward Basketball camp**, June 21-25, 8:30 - 11:30 a.m. (for those who completed K-6th grade). Following lunch, Trinity will hold Upward Basketball camp from 1-4:30 p.m. Kids can come to one or both camps. There will be a small fee for the upward basketball camp - but VBS is free! Pastor: Kevin Roberts.

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.

HQX GTCBHFQ DW BZTS ZHX BZT GZHCNT DW BZT

SFQFKBTFCQN PTKKTEK, BZHB BZTO KZDREX YCFQN

BZTS FQ HQX DRB YO BHET.

WFCKB GZCDQFGETK QFQT:BJTQBO-TFNZB

Clues:
G = C; D =

Answer to April 29 Scripture Crypto:
Mark eleven:eighteen

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U.S. Rep. Scalise meets with Louisiana Baptist pastors

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM)—U.S. Representative Steve Scalise (R-Jefferson Parish), who as minority whip is the number two ranking Republican in the House, took time May 10 to speak to members of the Louisiana Baptist Committee on Moral and Social Concerns.

The group was holding its spring meeting in Baton Rouge at the Pentagon Barracks office of Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser.

Scalise thanked the committee for Louisiana Baptists' strong pro-life stances and shared about his efforts in Congress to force a vote on the "Born-Alive Abortion Survivors Protection Act." The legislation, which has been blocked by the Democrat majority in the



Gabe Firment photo

U.S. Rep. Steve Scalise, the number two ranking Republican in the House, spoke with members of the Louisiana Baptist Committee on Moral and Social Concerns, Monday, May 10, 2021, during their spring meeting, which was hosted at the Pentagon Barracks office of Lieutenant Governor Billy Nungesser. Travis Sanders (left), pastor, Hebron Baptist Church in Dry Prong, joined Scalise with Brian Gunter (fourth from left), chairman of the Committee on Moral and Social Concerns and pastor, First Baptist Church in Pollock. Scalise attended the meeting at the invitation of Louisiana Rep. Gabe Firment (third from left), who is a member of Gunter's congregation.

House, would mandate that babies who survive

an abortion procedure be given the same standard

of medical care offered to a baby of the same gestational age who is born prematurely.

"Who would have ever guessed we would have to debate in America whether a baby born alive should be protected?" Scalise said. "But our ability to protect innocent life has never been more in jeopardy."

Scalise added that

President Joe Biden's rolling back of protections for the unborn was a key reason Republicans needed to get focused on "taking back the House in 2022."

Scalise attended the meeting at the invitation of state Rep. Gabe Firment, a member of the First Baptist Church in Pollock, who also spoke to the committee.

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PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
Ray Swift, Director

Pot from page nine

physician, I don't think I would ever encourage a patient to smoke anything."

-- A study about traumatic injuries reported, June 2018, in the journal, Patient Safety in Surgery, found that "marijuana users who did not use other drugs consumed significantly more opioids and reported higher pain scores than non-marijuana users."

In fact, a review of the research (International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, February 2020) about pot and violence observed that participants in one study who consumed marijuana "under the illusion that it would help

them cope with their conditions" actually "worsened their conditions."

"What individuals are unaware of when it comes to self-medicating," the researchers said, "is that the marijuana they consume does not have compounds that alleviate their pain or conditions; the marijuana they consume has many compounds that negatively alter their perceptions, which leads to worse conditions."

The pot lobby uses strawman arguments that have been unchallenged, claiming that "smoking" pot is safer than _____. The reality is that science shows smoking pot is dangerous, period.

Moore to leave ERLC for Christianity Today

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) – Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, announced on russellmoore.com, May 18, he had “struggled with the decision” but that he was leaving his position with the Southern Baptist Convention to join Christianity Today as “public theologian and as director of a new venture, the Christianity Today Public Theology Project.”

Moore had served since 2013 as head of the Nashville, Tennessee-based ERLC. Prior to that he was “provost and dean of the Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, where he also taught theology and ethics,” according to his website.

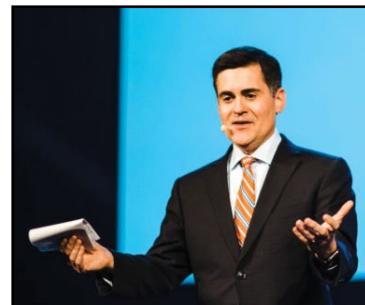
Sharing his gratitude for the opportunity to serve Southern Baptists, he made special mention of his work on “national conferences such as MLK50 and Caring Well” as well as “a string of special successful engagements on matters of public policy.”

He also praised his team for their “work of evangelism and cultural engagement.”

Moore is staunchly pro-life and worked diligently to support pregnancy care centers by providing ultrasound machines through the ERLC’s ongoing Psalm 139 Project. The sonograms these medical devices produce have been exceptionally effective at convincing women to choose life for their unborn children. The ERLC is on pace “to place between 20 and 25 machines in Tennessee and beyond during 2021,” according to Baptist Press, May 18.

As the national public policy voice for Southern Baptists, Moore had established a working relationship with the Obama Administration but had opposed Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy because of Trump’s highly publicized moral failures. His disdain for the former president extended also to Trump’s evangelical supporters, who largely backed Trump, despite his flaws, because of his pro-life promise and commitment to appoint conservative judges.

Although he made two



Russ Moore

highly publicized apologies for his criticism of fellow believers, Moore’s relationship with rank-and-file Southern Baptists as well as many prominent SBC pastors did not appear to recover.

More recently, the ERLC had filed a flawed amicus brief with the U.S. 5th Circuit Court of Appeals in McRaney v. North American Mission Board, wrongly describing the SBC as a “hierarchy” that serves as an “umbrella Southern Baptist governing body over all the various groups of churches.”

In February, the SBC Executive Committee, a Nashville, Tennessee-based entity, which is charged by the SBC Bylaws to “act in an advisory capacity on all questions of cooperation,” accepted a report from a task force which found: the ERLC is both “appreciated” and a source of “significant distraction”; ERLC’s handling of the controversial amicus brief was “unacceptable”; without quick and significant changes by the ERLC, there is “the potential for a measurable [CP] decline in the near future and beyond”; and noted that there is “considerable conversation ... as to whether the ERLC is the most effective and efficient structure and means for addressing the public policy concerns of Southern Baptists.”

Baptist Press reported May 19 that Moore’s resignation would be effective June 1.

YOUTH MINISTER

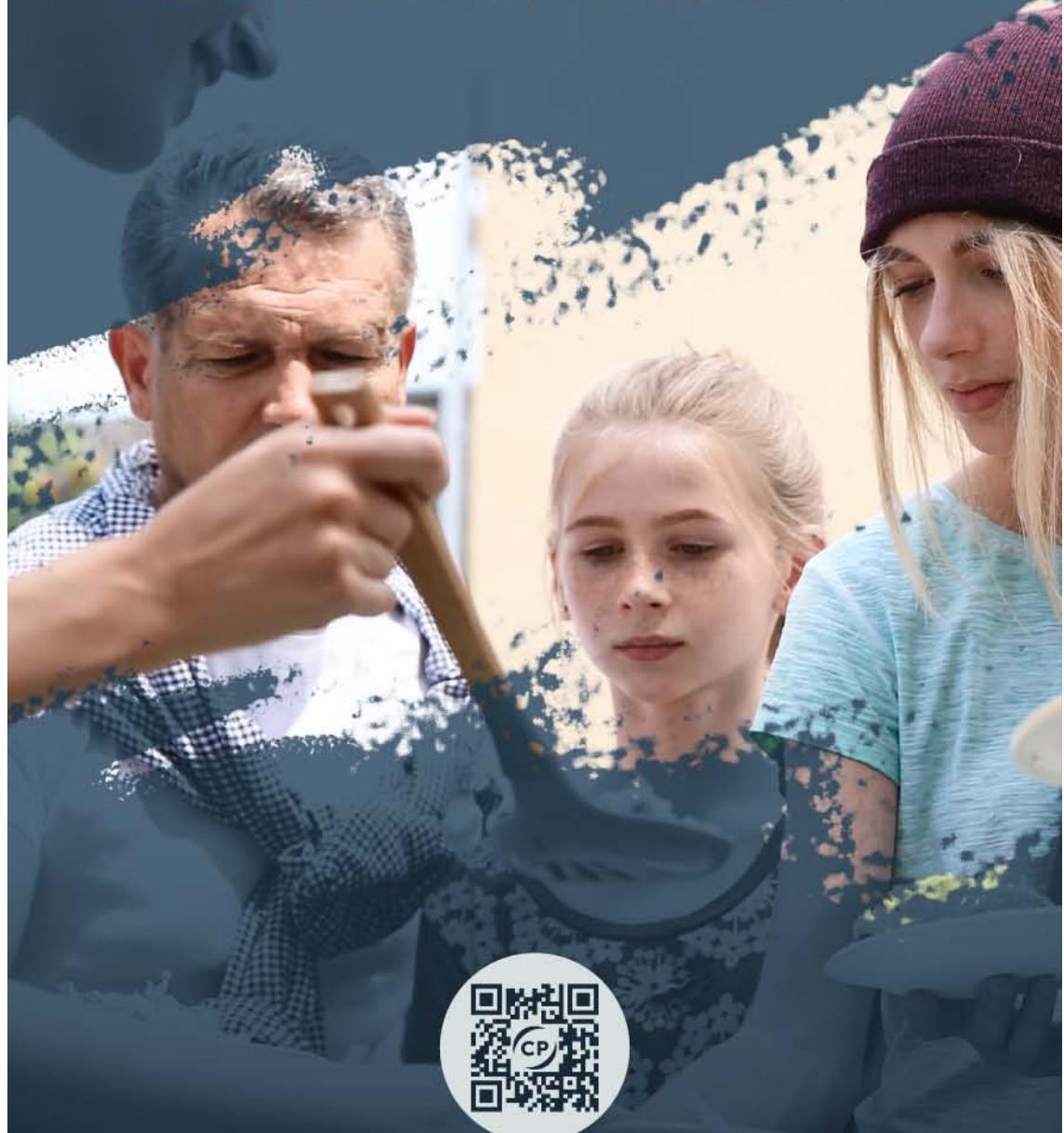
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FRC plans Baton Rouge expansion of its nationwide operations

By Brian Blackwell

Message staff writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – The Family Research Council has purchased the former Trinity Lutheran Church and Christian school campus in Baton Rouge to use as an additional location for its nationwide operations.

FRC President Tony Perkins told the Baptist Message that COVID-19 restrictions, the “tense and turbulent atmosphere” in Washington, D.C., and a need for additional studio and video production space prompted the acquisition.

The organization still will use its other office, headquartered in Washington, D.C., and Perkins plans to have a presence at both locations. He has commuted from his home in Baton Rouge to Washington, D.C., for the last 18 years.

“The nation has experienced a lot over the last year and we should not be quick to dismiss it as a one-time occurrence,” Perkins said. “What this last year did was expose vulnerabilities and opportunities going for-

ward. In a conversation I had with Dr. Ben Carson, who served on President Trump’s coronavirus task-force, he predicted that it was very improbable that life would return to the way it was pre-pandemic.”

Perkins, who shared the news with a roomful of 25 pastors at the Baton Rouge location, May 7, said the FRC’s future will include a hybrid of in-person and virtual communication because people now consume information and interact with others differently than before March 2020.

“That reality, combined with the media’s increasing indifference, if not outright hostility toward the views of Bible-believing Christians, is fueling this expansion,” Perkins told the pastors.

Perkins first noticed the vacant Lutheran church in spring 2020 and inquired about its availability in the summer. FRC then purchased the building at the beginning of this year and plans to begin remodeling the facility in six to eight weeks.

Once the remodeling is completed in March



Patrick Dennis photo

David Goza, pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, and Tony Perkins, president of the Family Research Council, pray over U.S. Congressman Garret Graves during a pastors’ breakfast, May 7.

2022, the organization plans to operate multiple studios for television, web-based programs and its “Washington Watch” radio show that airs Monday through Friday at 4 p.m. The facility also will have offices and production suites to facilitate the organization’s expansion, and will host conferences, town hall meetings and special services in the worship center, which has been renamed the Faith and Freedom Chapel.

David Goza, pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, attended the May 7 meeting and expressed excitement about future possibilities in Louisiana.

“Tony Perkins and the staff of the Family Research Council are the leading voice for the biblical worldview today,” he said. “They are a voice that represents thousands of churches and millions of Christians.”

Moving forward, Per-

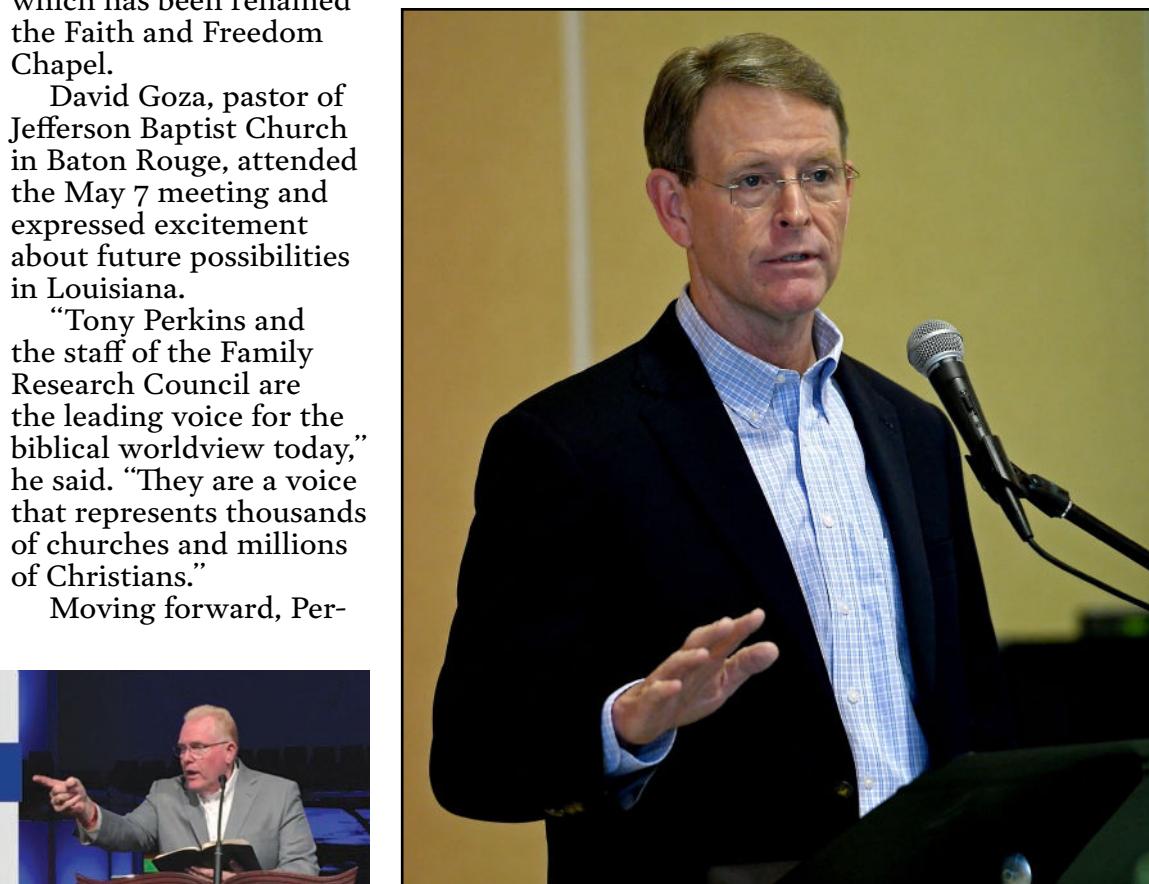
kins said the addition of the Louisiana office will help the FRC further its mission of articulating and advancing a family-centered philosophy of public life that it has strived to do since its founding in 1983.

“For me, this will be the best of both worlds, as I can return to being involved in the political and cultural activity of Louisiana here at home

while continuing our national presence and voice,” Perkins said.

Perkins said that as their activities begin to ramp up and expand in Baton Rouge, they eventually will hire others, part-time, to assist with video production and distribution.

Interested individuals should contact Randy Burt via email at RWB@frc.org.



Patrick Dennis photo



Family Research Council President Tony Perkins shares with pastors about how the organization will utilize its second nationwide location recently purchased in Baton Rouge.

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Bush to Moore: White evangelical churches are ‘political instruments’

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – “Churches have become, particularly the White evangelical churches, have become political instruments,” former President George W. Bush told Russell Moore, president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Bush made the accusation during an online conversation, “Immigrants and the American Future,” sponsored by the Bush Center in Dallas and moderated by Moore.

“The comments were stunning for a president whose 2004 reelection campaign relied in part on energizing those White evangelicals using the issue of same-sex marriage,” reported the *Washington Times*.

Warren, Saddleback Church ordain three women pastors

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

LAKE FOREST, Calif. (LBM) - Saddleback Church, a Southern Baptist Convention congregation founded by pastor and “Purpose Driven Life” author Rick Warren, has come under fire for ordaining three women as pastors.

According to a Facebook page entry, Saddleback Church ordained Liz Puffer, Cynthia Petty, and Katie Edwards on May 6, calling it a “historic night.”

“We’re so grateful to share this moment with you,” the post read. “Our best days are ahead of us!”

R. Albert Mohler, president of Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and a candidate for SBC president, wrote in his blog, May 10, that the action taken by Saddleback Church is contrary to the SBC’s Baptist Faith

& Message 2000. That consensus statement on doctrine reads in part, “while both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.”

Mohler added that such “moves represent an attempt to redefine and reformulate the convolutional foundation of Southern Baptist faith and cooperative ministry. The theological issues have not changed since the year 2000 when Southern Baptists spoke clearly and precisely in the Baptist Faith & Message. More importantly, the Holy Scriptures have not changed and cannot change.”

It is not yet known what impact the action will have in June at the SBC Annual Meeting, particularly with the Credentials Committee, which can recommend the disfellowship of a church.

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then-candidate Donald Trump, said nothing to dispute Bush’s accusation.

The former president’s comments were a response to Moore’s claim that support for immigration by U.S. Christians has flagged in recent years.

But legal immigration to the United States has not dropped below 1 million per year since 2013 (990,553) under the Obama Administration. Moreover, refugee resettlements under former President Trump were on par year-for-year with Bush’s first term.

The pandemic likely impacted immigration in 2020, but information for 2019 indicates that refugee resettlement was a major effort, at least until then, of six of the largest faith-based aid organizations (Catholic Relief Services, \$928

million; BCFS Health and Human Services, \$537 million; World Vision, \$1 billion; Church World Service, \$74 million; World Relief, \$60 million; Lutheran Immigration and Refugee Service, \$63 million), which receive generous government grants composing major portions of their respective budgets (54%, 99%, 31%, 57%, 60%, 83%).

Southern Baptists also have a major refugee and immigration ministry.

In its 2020 Annual Ministry Report, the SBC’s North American Mission Board reported that its Send Relief Center in Clarkston, Georgia, is charged with ministry to refugees and immigrants (the city is a major resettlement hub in the United States). No budget information is publicly available.

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