



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

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John 3:16

Share the Message

Jesus' birth was meant for you and me

By Will Hall, Baptist Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – When I read the Word, I try to remember that every verse is intended to reveal something about the character of God and to unveil something about the nature of the relationship He seeks with us.

This is especially important when we celebrate the birth of our Savior -- He is the reason for the season; and the reason for His birth was to bring hope to you and me.

Nothing underscores this fact more than the creation account, which shows that God designed the earth and the things in it and on it to sustain man's physical existence (Gen. 1:1-31):

-- On day 1, God said all that He

had created was "good." He did so again on days three, four and five. All that He had done up to that point He said was "good."

-- Even on the sixth day after creating all the animals on the earth and the creeping things (and before He was done with creation) the Bible records that "God saw that it was good."

-- But it was not until the end of the sixth day, after He had created man and established all of earth to sustain the life of man, that God "saw everything that He had made, and indeed it was very good," and then He rested.

Man is the crown of God's creation!

All of creation -- the cattle of the field, the birds of the air, the fish of the sea, the creeping things, the plants, the trees, the land, seas, stars -- was made according to God's vision, but only man was made in His image (Gen. 1:26-27).

He created man and established the earth all to His own glory. But He formed all of nature to sustain the physical existence of man, the crown of His creation.

This is particularly evident in the special relationship God formed with man in the Christmas account, especially in view of His relationships with other of His creations, including angels.

See BIRTH, page 15





Brian Blackwell photo

Roger and Janie Wise are members of First Baptist Church, Pineville. She will retire Dec. 31 as Louisiana Baptist women's missions and ministry strategist.

Great Commission champion Janie Wise will retire Dec. 31

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) - For the past 33 years, Janie Wise has been on mission to help Louisiana Baptists embrace a Great Commission lifestyle.

Wise is set to retire Dec. 31 as Louisiana Baptist women's missions and ministry strategist, but her quest to further the Gospel from Jerusalem to the ends of the earth is far from complete.

"The greatest highlight has been the opportunity to work with girls who eventually became women that God still is using to make a difference in the world for Him," Wise told the *Baptist Message*. "It's beyond words knowing that I was able to have

some part in God's plan for them."

CALLED

Wise's journey began as a 15-year-old attending an Acteens camp for teenage girls in the New Mexico mountains in 1970. After seeing her cabin mate share the plan of salvation with another camper, Wise realized she had never made her relationship with Christ personal, she said.

"I said at that moment, 'Lord, I need you,'" Wise said. "I have never doubted God since."

A year later, Wise accepted the call to full-time ministry.

Over the next 27 years, Wise served the Lord in various capacities including secretary in the brotherhood and evangelism department of the Baptist Convention of New Mexico; secretary for the Billie Hanks Evangelism Association, Fort Worth, Texas; circulation assistant for

Branch-Smith Publishing, Fort Worth, Texas; and adults division director and administrative secretary for Academy Baptist Church, Albuquerque, New Mexico.

In January 1988, Wise accepted the call to become Louisiana Baptist Acteens/Baptist Young Women/Girls in Action camp director. Wise remained in that role until April 2007, when she was named women's missions and ministry strategist.

During her time in the state, Wise has strongly promoted the Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering, named after the first elected and paid WMU executive director/treasurer in the state (1915-1929), according to LBC officials.

The LBC budget shows that many missions and ministries are dependent upon the state missions offering: church planting; compassion ministries;

See WISE, page 3

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Wise from page 2

prison outreach; ministry to victims of sex trafficking; Disaster Relief efforts; Louisiana Baptists' multi-media outreach strategy, "Here for You"; and Woman's Missionary Union scholarships for women to Louisiana Christian University as well as the six Southern Baptist seminaries.

Multiple news reports document that she also has helped organize an annual outreach at the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, St. Gabriel, in partnership with the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge. The range of ministry activities there included a gift box distribution, worship services, baptisms and meals on the prison grounds.

Wise, who has overseen summer camps for GAs and Acteens, said the camps have led to some of the young girls making professions of faith and even feeling a call to full-time Christian ministry.

"Serving Louisiana Baptists has been a God-given opportunity I could not have imagined as a 16-year-old," Wise said. "Every day I am grateful that God's plan for my life has allowed me to follow the footsteps of women like (state women's missions directors) Georgia

Barnette, Kathryn Carpenter, Nelda Seal and Cindy Townsend who built a strong foundation for WMU/missions education and women's ministry in this state. The words to a great hymn come to mind, 'Footprints of Jesus that make the pathway glow; we will follow the steps of Jesus where'er they go.'"

LOVED & ADMIRER

Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn said Wise is known throughout Louisiana as an encourager.

"Janie is best known for being Louisiana Baptists' strongest advocate for missions education," Horn said. "In addition to being the strategist behind the promotion of Southern Baptist and Louisiana Baptist special missions offerings, she has stayed connected to missionaries called from Louisiana and to their parents. Janie has served Louisiana Baptists with love, compassion, gentleness, and most of all cheerfulness. We pray that God will give (husband) Roger and Janie many years together in retirement continuing a ministry of encouragement and mission involvement."

Louisiana Baptist

children/youth missions strategist Jess Archer said she has been blessed during the eight years she has worked with Wise.

"Mrs. Janie has a heart for Jesus, missions and Louisiana Baptist women," Archer said. "I'm so thankful for all of the love, wisdom and insight that she has shared with me through the years."

Stewart Holloway, pastor of First Baptist Church, Pineville, said her presence will be missed at various Louisiana Baptist missions events his church has hosted. Wise is a Mission Friends leader at First, Pineville.

"Few people have a heart for both women and missions like Janie or work harder to pursue their callings," he said. "I have marveled at her ability to juggle her travel schedule and numerous meetings and still manage to be at church every Wednesday to lead our preschool Mission Friends. Janie is a woman on mission and has led countless other women to be the same."



Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana Christian University presented Janie Wise with a distinguished service award during its May 2021 commencement.

While Wise is stepping away from her role with Louisiana Baptists, her commitment to the Great Commission has only begun.

She plans to spend more time with her husband, children and grandchildren who live in both Alexandria and Virginia. Wise

also plans to continue serving in various ministries at First Baptist, Pineville.

"I know I'm not done," Wise said. "Sometimes I wonder what I will do when I wake up on January 2. I have no idea, but I do want to be used by God however He wants and help wherever He needs."




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YEC 2021: 719 students make decisions for Christ

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Organizers and participants of the recent Youth Evangelism Celebration celebrated the 719 students who made a decision for Christ.

After moving to a regional format in 2020 because of COVID-19 concerns, YEC returned, Nov. 21-22, to its traditional home at the Rapides Parish Coliseum in Alexandria.

“It was so good to be back at the Rapides Parish Coliseum and to hear more than 4,000 voices singing to Jesus,” Louisiana Baptist Youth Strategist Brandon Lewis told the Baptist Message. “God moved and hundreds of lives were changed.”

YEC challenged 4,600 Louisiana Baptist teens to share their story of how Christ changed their lives



Brian Blackwell photo

More than 4,600 students and adults participated in times of worship during the 2021 Youth Evangelism Celebration and were encouraged to share their stories (testimonies) with others about how Jesus changed their lives. More than 700 of those participants made decisions for Christ.

through messages by evangelist Clayton King.

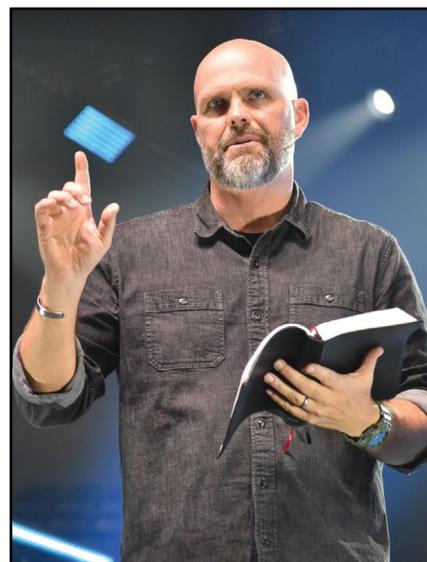
“Every story that is represented at YEC matters to

God,” King said. “Your life matters to God.

“You don’t have to have a Ph.D. in theology, you just have to tell people how Jesus saves you,” he said. “You don’t have to have a Ph.D. in systematic theology or New Testament hermeneutics, you just have to have a story to say here’s who I was before I met Jesus, here’s how Jesus saved me and here’s how Jesus is changing me now. That’s the power of your story.”

During all four sessions, students were offered a chance to step forward and declare a decision for Christ.

By the end of the two-day spiritual encounter,



Clayton King

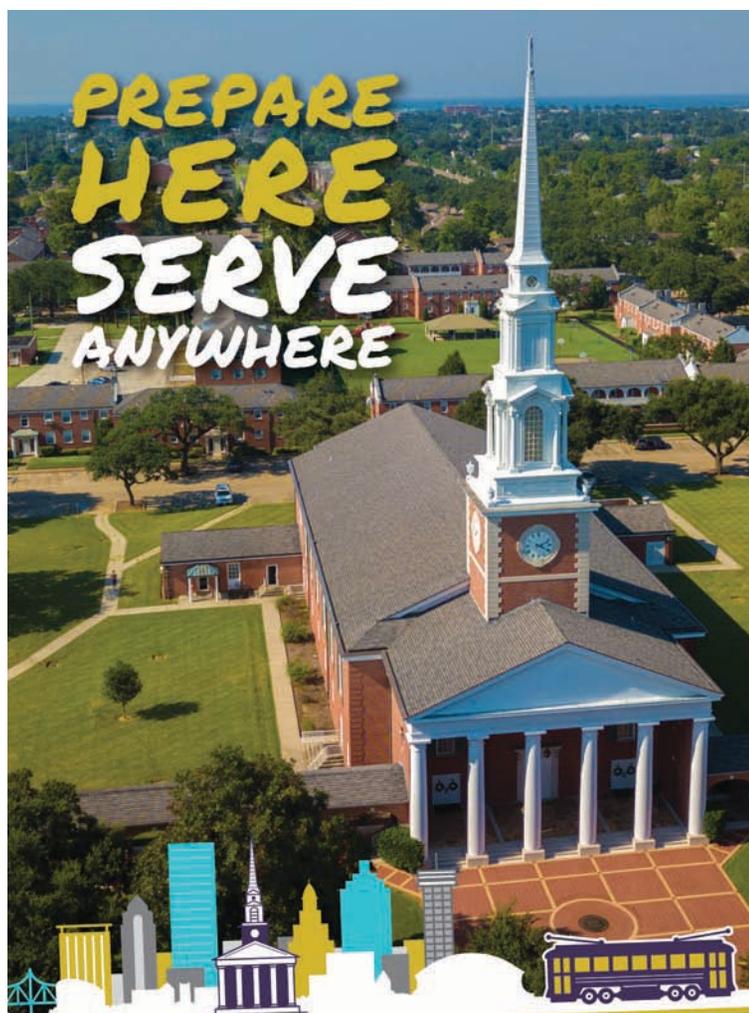
719 students had made some type of faith decision: 240 professions of faith, 161 responses to calls to ministry, 296 acts of

repentance to restore fellowship with Christ and 22 other commitments. Students will now be connected with a local church for follow-up, and baptism will be encouraged.

In addition to messages by King, participants enjoyed music by the Jason Lovins Band, comedic performances by 321 Improv and prayers led by students around the state. YEC 2021 concluded with a concert by Crowder, an award-winning contemporary Christian artist.

Students and adult leaders also were challenged to share their tes-

See YEC, page 5



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Brian Blackwell photo

Students who felt a calling to ministry came forward during the closing session of the Youth Evangelism Celebration.

YEC from page 4

testimonies with classmates, family members, co-workers and others. During the Monday afternoon session, King's son, Jacob, explained how this was an effective way to share the Gospel with others.

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

STUDENT DECISIONS

All seven students from Temple Baptist Church, DeRidder, came forward the first night of YEC to make their decisions for Christ public.

Student Pastor Charlie Williams said he was

emotional when he saw his entire group headed for the tent for spiritual counseling. Among those who accepted Christ were his son, Hunter, and his granddaughter, McKenna.

"I hardly slept that night," Williams recalled. "If God can do that in just a couple hours, I was excited to see what He was going to do all day the next day. If what happened at YEC doesn't excite your spirit, something is wrong."

Madox Forrest, a student from Spring Creek Baptist Church, Kentwood, made a commitment to Christ at YEC.

"I was scared and nervous about standing up and walking down in front of so many people," Forrest said. "At the same time, I was also happy and excited about trusting in Jesus."



Brian Blackwell photo

Times of worship led by the Jason Lovins Band and a concert by Crowder were highlights of the 2021 Youth Evangelism Celebration.

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Woman renews her faith during celebration of restored facility

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

LAKE CHARLES, La. (LBM) – Alexis Benoit was a faithful follower of Christ as a child until, at age 14, she succumbed to the desires of the world.

But a recent invitation to attend services at Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles, brought the 22-year-old mother of two children back to church for the first time in eight years, and she renewed her relationship with Christ through baptism, Dec. 5, at a grand opening service of Trinity's remodeled central

venue worship center.

"It had been heavy on my heart and mind to take this step," Benoit told the Baptist Message. "I was sitting in the church service after my baptism and realized all my anxiety and negative thoughts had gone away. I am just trying to be a better example for my kids because they deserve a mom who is deeply committed to Jesus."

RESTORED

Benoit was among three believers baptized during the special service, while another three con-

verts stirred the baptismal waters, Dec. 1, during a special prayer and dedication time at the facilities.

Since September, Trinity Baptist has baptized 21 persons who have made first time professions of faith, that compares to 29 for the prior 12 months, September 2020 to August 2021.

David Doyle, pastor of students and evangelism at Trinity, said the recent baptisms symbolize the church's passion for reaching others for Christ.

"Jesus says the Great Commission is to lead people to Jesus and baptized them," Doyle said. "Our goal each week is to see life change in the Lake area. It's been such a blessing to be a part of this and see God change lives."

LIGHTHOUSE

More than 1,600 members and guests packed the newly remodeled central venue worship center, Dec.



Submitted photo

The grand re-opening service of Trinity Baptist Church's remodeled central venue worship center included four baptisms. Since September, 21 new believers have been baptized.

5, for two special services.

The center, which sustained heavy damage from Hurricanes Laura and Delta, was a key lighthouse to the community during the multiple natural disasters of 2020 and 2021, serving as a hub for ministry to hurricane survivors, relief workers and law enforcement personnel.

"Lake Charles dealt with COVID like everyone else did, then when you added two hurricanes, then had the freeze in February and then the floods in May, you have the makeup for a very challenging year," Pastor Steve James said. "Our folks were up to the challenge. We have got a core of people at Trinity who helped us carry on despite all of the difficulties we faced."

Renovations to the 27,000-square-foot central venue that began in January 2020 were completed last month. With theatre-style seating for 1,000, it is the largest of three venues used for various worship services on the 39-acre campus: the central venue

hosts blended-style worship, the north venue features contemporary worship, and the chapel venue is home to the Hispanic service.

Disaster relief volunteers with state Baptist conventions from around the country and as well as with other organizations joined with up to 50 Trinity Baptist members each day to use the church as a launching pad for ministry as part of disaster relief efforts. Moreover, local law enforcement utilized the campus as a staging area, creating even greater visibility for the campus within the community.

In addition to the central venue, Trinity also is remodeling other areas of the campus, including its education and office spaces. Work is expected to be completed by January.

"This has been a long process," said Greg Bath, Trinity's executive pastor of administration. "The pandemic, then three hurricanes, a flood, and a ma-

See RENEWS, page 15

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Louisiana Baptist Hispanics rally to ‘pay forward’ disaster relief help

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

LAPLACE, La. (LBM) – Not long after Hurricane Laura and Delta caused significant damage to homes and businesses in 2020, numerous churches and mission teams came to help Iglesia Hispana Houston River, Sulphur, to rebuild.

A year later, the church, which sustained damage to the roof and took in some water during the two hurricanes, has given back to those who helped them to share the love of Christ in Lake Charles area. Pastor Jose Us and church members delivered supplies, in September, to residents in Kenner, and served 150 meals to residents in Houma.

Us’s brother, Ruben, who pastors Emmanuel

Hispanic Baptist Church, Deridder, took his members in October to deliver food to give away to residents of Kenner.

“It was a blessing to help them because we know how it felt to lose much,” Jose Us told the *Baptist Message*. “Our Spanish church was really happy because a lot of people helped us. People loved us and now it was time to love people in their time of need.”

The response by Hispanic churches was not limited to the two congregations in Sulphur and DeRidder.

Carlos Schmidt and seven of his members from Iglesia Bautista el Renuevo, Lafayette, traveled to LaPlace in early September and removed Sheetrock and furniture from the home of Carlos Lopez, pastor of Iglesia

Bautista Hispana Marantha, LaPlace. Schmidt is pastor of First Baptist’s Hispanic congregation and serves as the Louisiana Baptist Hispanic church planting strategist.

Schmidt said one of his members, an African American woman who is active in ministry to Hispanics, had never taken a mission trip before and was moved by the experience.

“She had never seen destruction like this or helped others on this level,” Schmidt said. “It was a reminder to all of us of how fortunate we are.”

Schmidt said the efforts by the Hispanic congregations are an example of Louisiana Baptists’ heart for reaching their state for Christ.

“Everything we do is



Submitted photo

Numerous churches stepped forward to help Hispanic churches severely damaged following Hurricanes Laura and Delta. Those same churches paid back the kindness by assisting congregations in the New Orleans area impacted by Hurricane Ida.

about pointing people to the Lord,” Schmidt said. “We do disaster relief because we want to see people come to know Jesus. Lots of times we may not see the end result, but

it’s a blessing when we can see what happens to a person, from the time he or she is in need and then all the way up to when they are introduced to Jesus.”



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Pastor celebrates more than seven decades of ministry

By Norm Miller
Special to the Message

GRAND CANE, LA. (LBM) -- Not many pastors celebrate 14 successive years of ministry at one church, and fewer still do so when 89 years-old.

Wayne Roberts first preached at Wood Springs Baptist Church in Grand Cane, Louisiana, in a pulpit supply role 14 years ago, he told the Baptist Message. He's still preaching and his wife Bobbie, 87, still plays the piano, and they both continue to exude spry spirits as well as a deep love for the Lord's work and His people.

"Wood Springs believes in missions," Wayne said. "We give to home and foreign missions. Our people gave about \$100,000 for the new ministry building at Toledo Bend."

The church also helps people in the community after personal tragedies and sickness, and aids those who are in financial straits. "We use God's money wisely," Roberts said.

"We may be small, but Wood Springs is probably the most mission-minded church we ever served," his



Submitted photo

Wayne Roberts, 89, has served more than seven decades in ministry. His wife, Bobbie, has served alongside him at churches he pastored.

wife added.

The pandemic cut worship attendance in half, but about 25 have remained faithful.

"Wayne isn't a long-winded preacher. That's why the people like him," she explained.

"About 15 minutes is as long as you can keep anybody's attention," he reasoned. "I don't care what

you're talking about."

Roberts said he heard about a pastor who preached a 45-minute sermon. "That's about 20 minutes too long," he observed. "The people are building houses and cooking dinner before you get done with that sermon."

The pastorate is a second ministry career for him, leading worship in

song was his first passion.

His life-long love for music started when he was a teenager in church -- and that's where he found his other life-long love, Bobbie. She played the piano, and he led the music at Avondale Baptist Church in Texarkana, Texas. He was 14 years old, and she was two years younger. Two years later, in 1949, they became Mr. and Mrs. Roberts.

"I wasn't even thinking about marriage. I had school to finish," she confessed. "But Wayne talked me into it."

"I think it turned out alright," he quipped.

Drafted into the U.S. Army in 1953, Roberts continued in ministry as a chaplain's assistant, becoming the music director for Sunday chapel in what he recalled was the first Southern Baptist mission work established in the state of Washington.

He later worked for a newspaper in Texarkana while she finished high school, and they both continued serving the Lord at Avondale until 1960. The couple moved to Shreveport, where he ultimately retired from the *Shreveport Times* after 40 years.

Church music ministry offered Roberts bi-

vocational employment for more than six decades as the couple served northwest Louisiana churches with names like, Westside, West Lake, Salem, First Baptist, Barron Road, Fairy Lake, Pine Croft, Mansfield Road, Bethel, and Calvary.

"These churches had no music program," he said. "They had nothing."

At each place, by the time the couple left, she noted that "every church had a complete graded music program from pre-school on up."

The search committee at Fairy Lake Baptist Church initially did not want him as music minister. "They thought I was too sophisticated," he said.

"It wasn't his music," she noted. "It was that he wore a nice shirt and tie."

Starting with only eight women, the choir eventually grew to have more men than women. "We had a great program, there," Roberts said.

The couple fondly recalled when the Fairy Lake choir joined three others in an outdoor Easter Sunrise Service at a park by Caddo Lake.

"Fishermen would pull into to that dock and hear that music, and they would

See CELEBRATES, page 12

Merry Christmas

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Technology is church plant's secret for success

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

HAHNVILLE, La. (LBM) – When Pastor Terry Nash planted City of Hope Community Church, Hahnville, (a suburb of New Orleans) in 2019, he dreamed of a church that would use technology as the primary way to introduce the community to Jesus.

Instead of meeting for in-person services, he used Facebook Live to share messages and music, and to announce ministry opportunities.

So, when many churches began to meet virtually in March 2020 because of pandemic-related in-person restrictions, his congregation already had established a base of 34 viewers for Facebook Live services each Sunday and enjoyed 1,100 followers on the church's Facebook page.

Although in-person restrictions have been lifted, City of Hope Community Church has chosen to remain an online ministry, for now, and has retained 23 worshipers, on average, who tune in for Sunday morning services and mid-week Bible studies.

"It has been a humbling and gratifying experience," Nash told the *Baptist Message*. "God shows you just how far you can reach virtually, that you cannot do physically. There are people whom I don't know but who have seen me and said, 'Hey, you are City of Hope,' and I'm like 'Wow, God, you are truly amazing.'"

LBC INNOVATION

City of Hope Community Church is one of five Louisiana Baptist church plants that have adopted a virtual planting model since the state church planting team implemented this strategy in 2019.

James Jenkins, LBC church planting director, said that most churches will continue to utilize

in-person meetings, but that the strategy has been effective for some church plants to gather an initial core group and then implement ongoing discipleship. Jenkins said the goal is for virtual church plants to build enough of a core group to eventually hold in-person meetings.

He explained that Facebook Live will be the primary online tool to conduct worship services because of it already is widely used by millions and statistics can be

tracked by church planters and the state convention's church planting team.

"We have the opportunity to reach hundreds of thousands of people with just one click of a button on Facebook," Jenkins said. "Let us take seriously the opportunities for evangelism available at our fingertips. My question as always is, 'What would (former missionary) Annie Armstrong do?'"

For City of Hope Com-

munity Church, they plan to continue meeting online. However, they recently held their first in-person outreach event on Thanksgiving, when members met at a designated location for a meal distribution to needy families in New Orleans. In 2022, they hope to begin holding in-person worship services at a yet-to-be-determined location.

Until then, Nash plans to continue sharing the hope of Christ to the

church's virtual audience in the New Orleans area and beyond.

"One day we will meet in a building, but we will never abandon our online model," Nash said. "This virtual platform has allowed us to reach others, with some even messaging us to let us know they received Christ. For some, the online model makes them more comfortable to communicate and if it weren't for the Internet, we may never be able to reach them."



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@baptist-message.com or call 318.449.4345. To get your event in the paper, please submit your information three weeks prior to the event.



Pastor Robert Leach was recognized for 40 years of service at Friendship Baptist Church, Bienville on Nov. 28.

ON THE MOVE

- **Rusty, wife Sandy, Richardson** is the minister of education and discipleship at Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City.
- **Billy Flowers** is the new pastor at First Greenwood Baptist Church, Greenwood.
- **Lee R. Darbonne** is available for pastorate supply. He is a seminary graduate that lives in the Rayne, LA area but will go where needed.

Please call 337.257.4787.

- **Rick McPherson** resigns as administrator after 30 years at Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- **Bruce Butts** is the new pastor at Shiloh Baptist Church, DeRidder.

REVIVAL

- Mount Olive Baptist Church, Logansport: **Revival**, January 9-12. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Pastor: Rich Tull.

LAGNIAPPE

- Bayou Rouge Baptist Church, Evergreen: **Furniture for sale**. 22 15-foot long pews (light maple in color) padded back and seat; matching Lord's Supper table; matching pulpit; two matching flower stands and two matching pulpit pews. If interested, please contact David Townsend at 337.945.3866, if no answer leave your number and he will call you back or Sam Pearce at 318.346.2166. To see the pews or to come pick them up call for an appointment. The church is located 100 Church St., Evergreen, LA 71333.
- First Baptist Church, Mandeville: **The Foto Sisters in concert**, December 18, 6-8 p.m. Pastor: Corey Fontan.
- First Baptist Church, West Monroe: **NELA Christmas Celebration**, December 18, 6 p.m. The NELA Christmas Celebration is your opportunity to experience the sights and sounds of the Christmas season. You will experience all the comforts of the Christmas season. You'll celebrate the birth of Jesus and reflect on the silent night by candlelight. Cost: \$5. Call the church office for tickets or more information at 318.322.5104. Pastor: Michael

Wood.

- Social Springs Baptist Church, Ringgold: **Mark Lanier in concert with Andrew Ish-ee**, December 19, 6 p.m. Pastor: James Hester.
- Longview Baptist Church, Deville: **Christmas Candlelight service**, December 19, 6 p.m. Pastor: Robby Poole.
- First Baptist Church, Haynesville: **"Christmas All Year Long" -- Christmas cantata and drama**, December 19, 6 p.m. Pastor: Jeff Tinsley.
- Mangham Baptist Church, Mangham: **Musical presentation by the MBC adult choir**, December 19, 10:30 a.m. Come celebrate the birth of our Savior as we sing to His glory. Community fireworks program, 6 p.m. We will share the Christmas Story with the entire community. There will be hot chocolate and a place for lawn chairs and blankets to watch the fireworks. Pastor: Rick Aultman.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Christmas worship service**, December 19, 9 & 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church at Horseshoe Drive, Alexandria: **Christmas worship service**, December 19, 9 & 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Stuart Sasser.
- Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Lisbon: **Christmas cantata -- "A Breath of Heaven," presented by the Rocky Springs Choir**, December 19, 10:30 a.m.; **Christmas Eve candlelight service**, December 24, 6 p.m. Pastor: Chris Stephens.
- First Baptist Church, Covington: **Christmas Eve service**, December 24, 1, 3, 5 p.m. Childcare will be by reservation only. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.
- First Baptist Church, Ruston: **Candlelight service**, December 23 & December 24; Thursday, 6 p.m.; Friday, 4 & 5:30 p.m. Come cel-

ebtrate with family. Pastor: Chris Craig.

- First Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Christmas Eve worship service**, December 24, 5-6 p.m. Pastor: Brad Jurkovich.
- First Baptist Church, Winnfield: **Candlelight Christmas Eve Service**, December 24, 5 p.m. Pastor: Jerry Pipes.
- First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Christmas Eve Service**, December 24, 5 p.m. Pastor: Chad Gilbert.
- Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Christmas Eve Service**, December 24, 2-3 p.m. and 4-5 p.m. Pastor: Heath Peloquin.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Christmas Eve Service**, December 24, 5 p.m. Come join us for worship through singing, preaching, the reading of God's Word, and participating in the Lord's supper. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.
- First Baptist Church, Lafayette: **Christmas Eve Service**, December 24, 3 & 5 p.m. Pastor: James Pritchard.
- First Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Christmas Eve candlelight service**, December 24, 5 p.m. Pastor: Steve Graves.
- Istrouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: **Candlelight Christmas Eve Services**, December 24, 4 & 5:30 p.m. at the Baton Rouge and Ascension campuses. Istrouma's Candlelight Christmas Eve services are a Baton Rouge area tradition. Pastor: Tim Keith.
- Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: **Christmas Eve candlelight service**, December 24, 6 p.m. Pastor: Steve Kelly.
- Cypress Baptist Church, Benton: **Christmas Eve service**, December 24, 6 p.m. This service will be a joyful time of reflection with some fun sprinkled in, too. Bring the whole family and enjoy a memorable time of worship, laughter, candlelight, and celebrating the Christmas season. Pastor: John Fream.
- First Baptist Church, Pineville: **First@First Business Leader Luncheon**, January 5, noon. Speaker: **Kenny Holt**, dean of Louisiana Christian University's Ray and Dorothy Young School of Business. Please RSVP to https://

fbcpineville.secure2.agroup.com/events/firstatfirst/2022-01-05+11%3A50%3A00. Pastor: Stewart Holloway.

- First Baptist Church, Slaughter: **Mark Lanier in concert**, January 9, 6 p.m. Pastor: Basil Wicker.

IN REMEMBRANCE

- **Robert Earl Walden, 96**, died on Dec. 4. He was born and grew up in Knoxville, Tennessee where he graduated from Knoxville High School. He joined the U.S. Marine Corps on February 5, 1944 and served until May 17, 1946 with the Third Marine Airwing on Guam and at the Ewa Naval Air Station on Oahu, Hawaii. After his time in the Corps, he went to Carson Newman College where he earned a Bachelor of Arts from there and a Master's of Divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Employed with the Louisiana Baptist Convention from October 1, 1958 thru December 31, 1990, he served as the Baptist Collegiate Director at USL, currently known as UL Lafayette from 1958 thru 1971. He left the UL BCM to serve as associate in the student division at the LBC until his retirement in 1990. Walden was preceded in death by his parents, Lance Earl Walden and Marion Elizabeth Ruggles Walden; his wife of 51 years, 8 months, Helen Marie Hodgson Walden; sister and husband, Marion Maxine Walden Walker (David); brother and wife, James Alexander Walden (Frances); and one grandson, Jonathan William Walden. He is survived by his loving wife of 10 years, Frances Kathleen Myers Walden; four sons, John Robert Walden (Annette) and David Earl Walden, John Gill (Vickie) and Travis Gill (Michele); one daughter, Melanie Hebert (Roland); ten grandchildren, Matthew Walden, Christopher Walden, Cherie Walden, Madelyn Futrell (Nathan), Maggie Doyle (Jordan), John Hebert (Grace), Ro Hebert (Kinsley), Mikey Hebert (Alexis), Colton Gill, Grace Sonier; and 12 great grandchildren.

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.

LIS NQLN JVWC L KQZPS NQWG QLBN XIWAI NQR QWPM

BKVZHNGVRB, AQZKQ LVR LEPR NW CLXR NQRR AZBR GINW

BLPTLNZWI NQVWGYQ JLZNQ AQZKQ ZB ZI KQVZBN DRBGB.

BRKWIS NZCWNQM NQVRR:JZJNRRI

Clues:
Q = H; R = E

Answer to November 25 Scripture Crypto:
Joel two:thirteen



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Celebrates from page 8

stop and pull off their hats and listen till we got done," he said.

"They gently shut their car doors. They didn't slam them," she offered, adding that some men just stood by their cars and others joined the congregation.

She said that whenever she and he planned for a children's musical, "we had kids from the Pentecostal Church, the Catholic Church, the Church of Christ, the Methodist church, and First Baptist in Oil City. We had to bring in chairs."

"The Lord used that. The parents just ate that up," he reflected about those days.

"We reached people that adults would never reach. If God can use a couple fish and some bread to feed 5,000, he can take a few little kids and reach a bunch, I'll tell you that," Roberts said, recalling a program based on Noah

and the Ark.

Meanwhile, she remembered that one pair of great-grandparents saw that musical, "and in all the years we were there, that was the only time we ever saw them at church."

Enthusiasm for that musical spilled over into other churches, who borrowed the backdrop and the props. "That thing went on for four or five years," Roberts said.

Everything in his ministry "just fell in place," he continued. "If you'd have asked me before it all happened, I'd said, 'You're nuts.' God just worked it all out. God prepared me for different steps all along the way. We'd get things done in one church and God would move us to another one."

At almost every church, Roberts served as associate pastor and music director, with only a few difficulties dotting his path along the



Brian Blackwell photo

About 25 members worship each Sunday morning at Wood Springs Baptist Church, Grand Cane. Wayne Roberts has served as pastor of the church for 14 years.

way.

He resigned from one church because of the new pastor's administrative style and vision. At another church, he was instrumental in helping a handful of people realize

that their disruptive behaviors were not welcome. After those people left, the church's harmony and mission grew, he said.

Roberts advises any young man headed for ministry to "simply tell

God, 'Here am I, send me. I am here, and You are going have to make the provisions.'"

"You have to believe that God is going to do the

See CELEBRATES, page 15



Thank you to Louisiana Volunteers and other State Convention volunteers. Also thank you to individuals that have given to support DR in southeast Louisiana.

Training Dates and Information:

New Orleans

Jan 28-29, 2022

First Baptist, New Orleans

Baton Rouge

Feb 4-5, 2022

Jefferson Baptist Church

Lake Charles

Feb 18-19, 2022

Trinity Baptist Church

Ruston

February 25-26, 2022

Temple Baptist Church

Deville

March 4-5, 2022

Philadelphia Baptist Church

LouisianaBaptists.org/drtraining

Bibles continue to reap bounty in Belarus

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MINSK, Belarus (LBM) – Andrew Ryzhkov has good news about an international partnership to share with churches in our state: Though Louisiana Baptists are 6,000 miles away, they are helping to change the spiritual future for thousands of Belarusians, one Bible at a time.

GIVING

Ryzhkov, founder of the Byelorussian Mission in-country ministry, said financial gifts from Louisiana Baptists have helped purchase some of the more than 30,000 Good and Evil Illustrated Bibles that have been distributed in the country from January through early November, compared to 27,000 Bibles that were handed out in 2020.

He said that four out of 10 people who have received the special Bibles have turned to Christ, and such evangelistic success only cost just \$10 per Bible.

“With Louisiana’s help, we can be stronger and go to even 40,000-50,000,” he said. “We need Bibles. And we need people to come and join us in spreading the Gospel.”

GOING

Louisiana Baptists have been actively engaged in evangelizing Belarus since 2014, helping to establish local churches, complete

construction projects and conduct training of pastors and lay people.

This year a major focus of the ministry has been on the younger generation. With the help of volunteers from five states and three countries, the ministry held a conference for 250 students that yielded 30 decisions for Christ, trained 90 leaders to open a day care center in their respective communities and hosted 7,000 students for summer camps.

Tommy Middleton, director of missions for Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, has taken six mission trips to Belarus since 2016. He said the Belarusians’ passion for sharing Jesus keeps him passionate about returning to the country each year.

“It’s a great opportunity to go into an environment that is receptive to evangelism,” Middleton said. “The Christians there are fearless and make me want to step up my game when I return from a mission trip there.”

Middleton along with members of Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, Walker Baptist Church and First Baptist Church, Rayville, traveled to the country in September. While there, they shared the Gospel in classes they taught at a university and several coffee shops.

He said the Belarusian Christians continue to embrace discipleship and plant churches, which has helped strengthened them to be bold witnesses to the

country.

“When you can disciple those people who speak the language and know the culture, they have the ability to reach many more than we can during our short time in the country,” he said. “We are seeing young people especially embrace this lifestyle of discipleship and they are filling the churches. They make for great Gospel partners.”

Jason McNaughten, pastor of Walker Baptist, echoed the thought.

“Belarus never disappoints,” he said. “We are primarily planting Gospel seeds, and God is bringing a harvest. It was my fifth time to travel there and each time I come back home more determined to pray for and support Belarus as well as reach my mission field here at home.”

Ryzhkov asked for continued prayers as plans are being shaped for future ministry to Belarus.

“Pray for revival, especially among young people,” he said. “And pray for those



Submitted photo

Andrew Ryzhov, founder of Byelorussian Mission, presented a copy of a Bible to a woman in Belarus. Louisiana Baptists have helped provide thousands of Bibles that have been distributed in the European country.

who receive the Gospel to grow stronger. And pray for leadership, for us, so we can go where God wants us to go. Join us and see first-hand how the Lord is moving in Belarus.”

To contribute to the

purchase of the Good and Evil Illustrated Bibles or for more information about a mission trip in 2022, email Andrew@byelorussianmission.org or visit byelorussianmission.org.

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First West celebrates 100 years of changed lives

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

WEST MONROE, La. (LBM) – More than 1,200 members and guests of First Baptist Church, West Monroe, gathered in late October to celebrate 100 years of impactful ministry, missions, baptisms and changed lives in northeast Louisiana and beyond.

The 100th anniversary weekend at First West included a panel, Oct. 23, featuring Pastor Michael Wood, Associate Pastor

Mark Fenn (also the longest-tenured staff member) and former pastors Dennis Swanberg, David Uth and John Avant.

Swanberg, who served from 1991-1995, uses humor at events to encourage others around the world; Uth, who served from 1996-2005, is pastor at First Baptist Church, Orlando, Fla.; and Avant, who served from 2007-2013, is president of Life Action Ministries, Buchanan, Michigan.

The following day, members and guests

gathered for a special worship service that featured a prayer time at the altar and three baptisms. Since the church began, more than 9,500 new believers have been baptized.

“I’m so grateful for what God has done in this church over the last 100 years,” Wood told the Baptist Message. “Words don’t describe the incredible honor to get to be a small piece of what God has done and is doing in this church.”

Both Avant and Uth enjoyed returning to campus and reminiscing about God’s faithfulness to First West.

“It is exceedingly rare to have four pastors together like this who all love each other, all four love the church, and the church loves all of us,” Avant said. “This is one of the reasons why this smalltown church has seen such God-sized movements over the years.”

Uth added, “I was able to visit some Life Groups this weekend, and in talking with some of those people that were a part of our time at First West, I said ‘You



Submitted photo

Baptisms were a part of the 100th anniversary celebration at First Baptist Church, West Monroe. The church has baptized more than 9,500 new believers since it was founded in 1921.

left a mark on us; on me and my family, and that mark looks just like Jesus because we grew up here; and in fellowship, we grew together”.

First West was founded in 1921 after W.L. Stephens, a member of the

board of directors at First Baptist Church, Monroe, and Herman Driskell, the church’s first pastor, discussed the need to start a church across the Ouachita River in West Monroe. Sixty families agreed to be a part of the group that began meeting at Crosley Elementary School in West Monroe.

Since then, the church has started campuses in Fairbanks and Calhoun, begun a thrift store on the church property (whose proceeds have provided more than \$1 million for local ministries) and formed partnerships with churches and missionaries in Kenya, Wales, Greece, New Orleans, Slovenia, Asia, Germany and Canada.



Submitted photo

Members and guests of First Baptist Church, West Monroe, participated in a time of prayer during the church’s 100th anniversary weekend.

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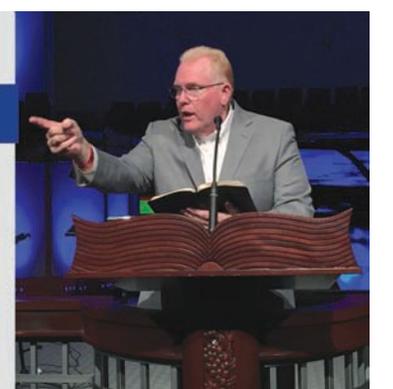
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Birth from page one

Angels have played a significant roll throughout history:

-- God placed a cherubim as a sentinel when He cast man out of the Garden (Gen. 3:24).

-- An angel brought God's vision from Jesus to John the Beloved (Rev. 1:1).

-- Cherubim are described in majestic terms by Ezekiel (Ezek. 1:5-23, 10:) and are visualized for John in a scene of heavenly worship around the throne (Rev. 4:7-8). Meanwhile, Isaiah saw seraphim in his vision of worship in Heaven (Is. 6:1-3).

-- The archangels Michael and Gabriel both spoke to Daniel and are mentioned in his prophecies.

-- Gabriel announced the coming births of John

the Baptist (to Zecharias, Lk. 1:11-20) and Jesus (to Mary, Lk. 1:26-38).

-- Michael declared "the Lord rebuke you" in the dispute about Moses' body (Jude 9); and he led two-thirds of the angels in Heaven to cast out Satan and his angels from above (Rev. 12:7).

But even with these extraordinary roles that angels have played throughout the history of the universe, God desires an even more special relationship with mankind, with you and me.

Hebrews 2:16 declares that God does not give aid (salvation, redemption, forgiveness) "to angels, but He does give aid to the seed of Abraham." And His Word specifies that the "seed of Abraham" are those who have faith in Christ (Gal. 3:29).



Renews from page 6

mor freeze have impacted material and labor resources in our area, but we are so thankful to finally see these projects being completed and the reopening of our entire campus."

James said the renovated facility helps to position the church to continue reaching the Lake Charles area for many generations.

"A generation ago God

gave our church a vision and a task to accomplish and almost 22 years ago through prayer, faith, and financial sacrifice; we relocated our campus to South Lake Charles," said James, Trinity's pastor for more than 25 years. "Today, we see a new generation looking to sustain the future of Trinity's mission to reach and minister to the Lake area for years to come."

Celebrates from page 12

impossible with you even though you think you are not capable of doing it," he encouraged. "God will show you that you can. But you've got to keep 'I' out of it."

She has been his partner in a lifetime of ministry, together.

When asked to recall how God has blessed her, she replied, "How has he not blessed us? I love people. And I love working with kids."

Not blessed with children of their own, she said God gave them hundreds in children's choirs.

"One woman had two of the sweetest little boys you ever saw," she recalled. "That woman told me,

"You and Brother Wayne love kids and work with them so well. I used to wonder why God didn't allow you to have children of your own, but I know now. My kids was going to need y'all."

"That was one of the greatest compliments we could ever have," she said. "God used us. When you stop and think about it, if we don't stand in God's way, he can use anyone."

Reflecting on his decades of ministry, Roberts was thankful.

"I've had a message in my heart ever since I was a teenager, and I just got after it," he said. "I stayed with it. Me and the Lord, we've had a great time."

Likewise, God made it known that this difference in the relationship He has with man and that which He has with angels is intentional -- that the Gospel, salvation and redemption are intended only for mankind -- explaining that these aspects of His relationship with man are things "angels desire to look into" (1 Pet. 1:10-12).

Finally, the Christmas account itself makes clear

that Christ's birth further solidifies the special relationship God intends to have with man.

The prophecy by Isaiah declares "for unto us" (to man) a Child is born and "unto us" (to man) a Son is given (Isaiah 9:6).

Finally, even the angels declared this to be so in their announcement to the shepherds.

On Christ's birthday, an angel declared to the shepherds, "I **bring you**

good tidings of great joy which will be to **all people**" and he emphasized this point again, saying "there is born **to you** this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ the Lord" (Luke 2: 10-11).

So, as we celebrate Jesus as the reason for the season, we should remember that the gift of His birth is not for the angels, and not for anything or anyone else, but just for you and me.

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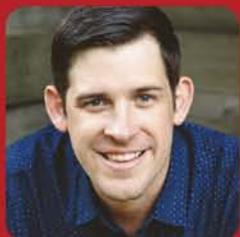
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