



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

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2023 LBC: 'Pursuit' of soul winning

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Messengers to the 2023 Louisiana Baptist Convention Annual Meeting will be challenged with a theme of “Pursuit” to seek to grow a culture of evangelism as they celebrate the 175th anniversary of the state fellowship of churches, Nov. 14, in the facilities of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

“We look forward to being in New Orleans for the 2023 Annual Meeting of Louisiana Baptists,” Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn told the Baptist Message. “We are grateful for the hospitality of Dr. Fred Luter and the saints at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in hosting us. As Louisiana Baptists will recall, we were scheduled to be there in 2020, but had to alter those plans due to COVID-19. I am excited that we will be able to finally gather at Franklin Avenue.

“When Baptists gathered in 1848 in Mount Lebanon, Louisiana, to organize the Baptist State Convention of North Louisiana with 65 ministers, 88 congregations, and 3,650 members, I’m sure they could not envision the nearly 1,600 congregations and 425,00 baptized believers that comprise today’s Convention of churches,” he continued. “We will gather to celebrate their vision, their faithfulness, and God’s blessings. We stand on

See PURSUIT, page 11



Submitted photo

The 175th annual Louisiana Baptist Convention will have a theme of “Pursuit” to challenge Louisiana Baptist to do more to grow a culture of evangelism in the state. These New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary students embraced a culture of evangelism during the school’s monthly Serve Day, Sept. 28.

Responses reveal impact of La Baptists’ media outreach

By John Kyle
LBC Communications

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBC) – “I would like to know that I am not lost and will be forgiven,” Breau Bridge, LA

“I believe there is a God, but I need help really feeling He is there,” Hammond, LA

“I prayed that prayer and started

crying,” Belle Chase, LA

Quotes along the lines of those above are received on a regular basis in response to Louisiana Baptists’ multi-media outreach strategy, “Here for You,” according to Louisiana Baptist Communication Director John Kyle.

“We receive a monthly report from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association outlining responses

from the previous month,” Kyle shared. “Along with the stats, our friends at the BGEA include comments from some of those responding. It’s encouraging to know what Louisiana Baptists are doing is impacting lostness in our state.”

Kyle said there’s been over

See IMPACT, page 3

Former Louisiana Baptists aid violence-ravaged Israelis

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ISRAEL (LBM) – Mike and Suzanne Shumock watched in disbelief at footage from news out-

lets detailing the atrocities committed by Hamas forces against the Israeli people and knew they could not sit idle.

They boarded a plane and arrived in the country

in early October to serve on a Texas Baptist Men feeding team in southern Israel. Since then, the Shumocks have helped prepare

See ISRAELIS, page 3

Grant Parish grand jury returns true bill, indicts Daryl Stagg

By Will Hall
 Message executive editor

COLFAX, La. (LBM) – In a press statement, Oct. 16, Grant Parish District Attorney Jay Lemoine announced that a grand jury had indicted Daryl Ray Stagg on four counts of first-degree rape, five counts of sexual battery and one count of indecent behavior with a juvenile. In Louisiana, a grand jury conducts its inves-

tigation in secret with the state’s attorney and determines whether there is enough evidence to proceed to trial. Members only hear the government’s case against the defendant and do not render a verdict. Stagg, 61, was arrested June 8, 2023, and charged at that time with 12 felony counts of sex crimes against at least one child in Grant Parish. Union Parish leveled an additional four

charges, then, and noted that these crimes involved one juvenile victim in the Bernice area. The two parishes required a combined bond of \$1.45 million. During a joint press conference, June 11, the sheriff’s from Grant, Union and Rapides Parishes revealed there also was an investigation of Stagg in Kenosha County, Wisconsin. At the time of his arrest, Stagg was the associa-

tional mission strategist, since October 2018, for the Big Creek and CenLa Baptist Associations (Grant and Rapides Parishes, respectively), representing a combined 87 member churches, including multi-site campuses. His office was in the Louisiana Baptist Building of Alexandria, but he was not an employee of the Louisiana

Baptist Convention. Lemoine shared that the Grant Parish case against Stagg “is being handled by Assistant District Attorneys Renee Nugent and Alex Hooper.” “An arraignment date will be set, and a trial date will be set at the arraignment,” he added, noting that “Stagg remains in jail at this time.”



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A statement from Baptist Mission Center on the indictment of Stagg

The CenLa Baptist Association (Baptist Mission Center) board of directors released a statement after they learned of the grand jury’s decision to indict Daryl Stagg: “The Baptist Mission Center has learned that a former employee, Daryl Stagg, has been indicted by a Grant Parish grand jury. Our prayers and support are with the families and affected persons involved that God will surely bring justice and healing in this difficult situation. Mr. Stagg has not worked with the Baptist Mission Center since early June 2023 and is no longer employed at the Center. It is our understanding that the charges involve allegations solely within his family and have never involved any of his responsibilities or interactions while serving at the Baptist Mission Center.”

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Impact from page one

25,000 views of the Gospel presentation and more than 4,100 people have indicated a decision for Christ since 2019. There have also been over 1,400 searches for area churches through HereforYou.org. Individuals visiting the website have the opportunity to share prayer requests. Recent requests include:

“... I pray for healing release and deliverance from current and past traumas ...”

“... I’m going through a really tough time. My husband of 10 years wants a divorce for no specific reason.

... Please pray over us ...”

“I have been having health issues ... I’ve lost my job, including my insurance ... I can use all of the prayers for healing and that the doctors will know how to treat me ...”

Every prayer request received is forwarded to a “Here for You” prayer vol-

unteer who prays specifically for the request.

“We currently have 160 people who have committed to pray for those submitting requests,” continued Kyle. “We also send a quarterly prayer reminder updating our prayer volunteers on the progress of our media outreach strategy.”

Those interested in praying for people requesting prayer are encouraged to contact hello@louisianabaptists.org.

Kyle urges Louisiana Baptists to pray for the seeds of God’s truth being scattered across the state through the Here for You campaign.

“God promises some of those seeds find good soil,” he noted. “And those seeds that find the good soil produce a harvest for the churches to gather.”

In addition to praying, Kyle said churches should consider a “go” plan. “How are you going to ‘go’ to the



Submitted photo

Louisiana Baptists’ multi-media outreach strategy, “Here for You,” has garnered more than 25,000 views of the Gospel presentation and more than 4,100 people have indicated a decision for Christ since 2019.

people God is preparing for harvest?” he continued. “Jesus promises the harvest is plentiful, but He never said it would be delivered. It has to be gathered.”

Supported through the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering, the goal of the

Here for You is to direct people to the Gospel and to the church. Churches are encouraged to visit LouisianaBaptists.org/

hereforyou to discover ways they can let their communities know they’re behind this effort.

Israelis from page one

thousands of meals and seen first-hand the need to be a shining light for Christ amid darkness.

Shumock is the former Louisiana Baptist Mission Builders coordinator and now resides with his wife, Suzanne, in Mississippi.

“We have not been around many Israelis other than the few volunteers who were preparing meals when we arrived,” Shumock told the *Baptist Message*. “They are heartbroken and devastated to hear about the horrific events carried out by Hamas.

According to John Hall, director of com-

munications for Texas Baptist Men, the Shumocks are among 20 members of a Texas Baptist Men feeding team who are preparing meals that are delivered by Israeli volunteer teams to rocket-ravaged neighborhoods and a hospital in southern Israel. The team arrived in Israel on Oct. 10 and the next day prepared 2,000 meals. By Oct. 12, that number had increased to 5,000.

Hall said they have four mobile kitchens that TBM designed and built for responses in Israel. For the past two years, they have sent teams to the country to

understand the culture and how to cook Kosher meals.

The team will remain in Israel until Oct. 24, when another team of 20 members will arrive and continue the work. Additional states may be activated to assist TBM in the near future, Hall said.

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FIRST PERSON: LBC needs Louisiana Christian University

ZACHARY, La. (LBM) -- I am not a graduate of Louisiana Christian University. But I have served on the board of trustees, two years as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and then as an elected member for two terms.

In that time, I have come to love and support our university, and I believe we need LCU more than ever and that we need to support her like never before.

We need LCU because it is a distinctively Christian voice in an increasingly secular society.

There are many state universities that can prepare students for the job market. But none of them emphasize the Christian worldview in every discipline the way that LCU

does.

Unfortunately, when many of our Louisiana Baptist children go to state schools, they sit under professors who scoff at Christianity and even try to kill the faith that parents spent years nurturing in their children. Young people have shared with me about the ridicule they endured in classes because of their faith in Christ. Sadly, I have witnessed more than a few leave for school as active members

of the body of Christ only to return from college no longer living the faith they once possessed. Regrettably, research shows that 66 percent of Christian students leave their faith during college, and there is a strong argument to make that this dismal statistic reflects the secular ideol-

ogy that dominates state university classrooms.

We need LCU because it has not caved in to the culture, but instead intentionally holds firmly to the Bible and the Baptist principles we embrace. So, while attending LCU does not guarantee a student's growth in his or her faith, it does ensure that the student will engage with professors who promote a Christian worldview of the subject matter.

For that matter, LCU lifts high the name of Jesus in every facet of campus life, and a recent social media post makes the case: "It's midterm week! Studying on my way to class this morning, thanking Jesus for such a wonderful opportunity to attend such a wonderful university that puts Jesus at the center of our education! I'm so grateful for LCU!"

-- There are campus revivals and mission op-

portunities.

-- Groups like BCM, FCA and even the sports teams provide support and growth.

-- There are seminars with national speakers who equip students to defend their faith.

We need LCU because it is training the next generation of ministers as well as future businessmen and businesswomen, nurses, teachers, engineers and others to serve the Lord faithfully in their respective professions. Each discipline is taught through a biblical worldview, equipping the student to be technically proficient and to be a Christian in the workplace.

We need LCU because our world is in a crisis and LCU graduates are changing others' lives.

I am thankful for Rick and Jonann Byargeon who graduated from LC in 1980. He went on to become a pastor and seminary professor, and my mentor. He taught me so much about preaching and serving the church. They invited me in and nurtured and encouraged me in faith and ministry. I am grateful for

the training they received at LC, and when I look at the students who are there now, I see more "Ricks" and "Jonanns" who soon will be influencing others' growth in the ministry.

Since 1906, Louisiana Baptists have invested in our university and now we have a campus worth more than \$100 million. It is a hidden gem in Pineville.

It is such an important Kingdom asset that I personally invest in LCU. I don't give to my alma mater, also a Baptist school and worthy of my support. But I see LCU as a jewel and want to see it shine for the cause of Christ.

What's more, I have invested my son there. In August he began his collegiate career as a Wildcat.

I understand that not all students are called to LCU.

But pray about sending your son or daughter there. If you have questions, Dr. Brewer and his team would love to host a personal tour of the campus and introduce you and your student to the

See WREN, page 10

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6 LOUISIANANEWS

FIRST PERSON: What could the Lord do with your obedience?

By Marc Daniels

Special to the Message

AVONDALE, La. (LBM) -- I was reminded one morning of how nothing is wasted in the Lord's economy.

I have been pastoring at the same small church in the same hard-soil neighborhood for more than 22 years; and, at times, I get frustrated and wonder if my labor is making any kind of difference.

We're a community-based ministry and I've been a neighborhood pastor. Consequently, I often get calls from people I've never met, asking if I'd officiate a funeral for someone I don't know.

I try to make myself available as much as possible, but sometimes I feel a little bit hardened towards the idea because it seems such "outreach ministry" is unfruitful. Very few of such situated services I've presided over have resulted in people visiting the church, much less led to professions of faith.

But I found myself having to repent when I was forced to recognize that the Lord is always at work, and He rewards even the slightest obedience with great blessings.

My epiphany resulted from a phone call by a woman wanting to know if someone was available to lead a memorial service. I had to decline because of an out-of-town commitment on the requested date, but I offered to reach out to the other ministers on staff.

I was honestly relieved that I would be out of town because it's annoying that people reject the Lord and His Church in their daily lives yet seek out His ministers when tragedy strikes. But I soon was broken and repented of my sin!

While texting our youth and children's ministers to check their availability I started looking back through my files. Reading through the list

of the many funerals I've conducted through the years, two stood out and made me realize something about the grace of God.

The first was a service in early 2002 for a man I had never met. His grandson, Chris, was six years old at the time. Although I hadn't had any relationship with the man, Chris and his grandmother started attending our church soon after the funeral. Indeed, Chris then grew up in our church and has been a constant blessing to everyone.

Moreover, when his grandmother passed away, he even became a part of my family and for the last nine years has been the oldest of our four children. God gave us this precious son because of a funeral I conducted for a man I did not know!

Another service I officiated took place in the spring of 2003 in a house I had never visited and among a family I had not known. That day I met the man's two-year-old grandson, Miguel.

Years later, Miguel started attending our church with his sister and grandmother. Today he is the children's minister with our congregation and studying to become a pastor.

I am humbled and amazed that the Lord would use simple acts of obedience to do such amazing things.

I also wonder just how many times I've been deprived of incredible blessings because of simple acts of disobedience. How many times have I turned down opportunities to minister to those I don't know or don't find important enough to care about?

How many blessings could I have reaped decades later if I'd only been obedient?

What could He do with your obedience?

Marc Daniels is the pastor of the First Baptist Church in Avondale, where he has served since September 2001.

Big Win from page one

The practical impact will be that in future statewide emergencies, churches cannot be shut down while bars and casinos stay open.

Moreover, the amendment specifically states that the free

exercise of religion guaranteed in the state constitution "shall not be limited to the fundamental right to worship." Thus, naming this specific religious right does not diminish the broader constitutional rights pertaining to religion.

Students urged to sign up to reach classmates for Christ

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – The Student Missionary evangelism strategy, launched in early August, is a guided, school-year-long training program for students to learn how to be intentional about being an evangelist on campus.

Sixth to twelfth graders are commissioned by their respective churches to reach their classmates for Christ. Then each student is matched with a coach who will help him or her to grow in Christ and develop the skills needed to share Jesus with their classmates. Additionally, the student will have at least four prayer partners who will adjust their intercessions according to monthly updates from the student.

Steve Masters, coordi-



Submitted photo

Louisiana Baptist Collegiate Ministry Team Director Mark Robinson shared a message about the prodigal son with students at the Louisiana State University BCM.

nator of the program and director of the Louisiana Baptist Collegiate Ministry at LSU, said he hopes many churches will partner with students and

help foster a foundation of discipleship that will carry on past high school. "Many seniors have checked out of their faith and student ministry

involvement by the time they reach the final year of high school," Masters told the Baptist Message. "The best place to reach students is our schools. If

we can walk beside our students, we can better help reduce that rate and help them reach their classmates."

Masters said once the student missionary graduates from high school, he or she then will have a passion for evangelism in college, the workplace, armed forces or other areas of life. The student will be encouraged to remain in contact with the mentor and church and participate in mission trips and become involved in a local church. If in college, the school's BCM director will pair them with an upperclassman for continued coaching.

The groundwork for the effort began in 2001, when a campus missionary strategy and manual were first introduced

See STRATEGY, page 10

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LBCH cottage parents stand in gap for children

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MONROE, La. (LBM) – Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries cottage parents Randy and Jan Lee have for nearly 10 years been "dad and mom" to 40 children.

Each day can present its own challenges, the Lees said, but they concurred there are eternal rewards that far outweigh any difficult moments.

"Just like with our own children, we try to be examples for the children in our care," Randy told the Baptist Message. "You live out in front of them how to be Christ-like and pray that they realize their need for Christ in the seeds we plant. We want them to see the different Christ can make in each of their lives."

The Lees were first drawn to serve as cottage parents in 2009 while Randy was on staff as children's minister at

Crosspoint Baptist Church, Baton Rouge. But the couple sensed from God that the timing was not right. Then, in April 2014, while Randy was serving as music minister at Dutchtown Baptist Church, Prairieville, the couple felt that God had finally told them it was time to embrace the call to serve as cottage parents.

Nine years later the Lees have continued to pour into the children, aged 5-17 years old, spiritual truths through daily devotionals, prayer times and weekly attendance at area church services.

Additionally, through this residential child-care setting they offer support by encouraging the kids as they complete daily chores, share a meal together, accompany them on a week-long vacation or at extra-curricular activities based on the interest of each youngster, whether music, sports or other something else.

Some of the children re-

main with them just a few days while others will stay in the cottage for several years.

The Lees emphasized that the short time spent with the children is a reminder of the importance to take every moment possible to invest in the children, including a few who have accepted Christ and been baptized while at the cottage.

"One of the most rewarding things is when we have younger ones who are hungry for Jesus and ask questions about how they can accept Christ and grow in their faith," Jan said.

"One of the hardest things for me is knowing we may have the kids for just a year or two and after pouring into them, they suddenly go back to a family that may not do the same thing. We pray they take the seeds that are planted, and they will continue to grow in their faith."

The Lees are two of eight cottage parents who



Eight cottage parents are part of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministry that cares for 90 children through residential child-care, off-campus foster care and the HomePlace transitional living program for homeless women and their children.

are part of the LBCHFM's ministry that cares of 90 children through residential childcare, off-campus foster care and the HomePlace transitional living program for homeless women and their children.

"Eight of the greatest cottage parents in the world who serve on our campus in Monroe – the Romeros, the Smiths, the Lees and the Vaughns,"

said Perry Hancock, LBCH&FM president and CEO. "Please pray for their work with our children. With changing regulations, children's homes across America are facing challenging times. LBCH continues to explore new ways to reach more children. Thank you, Louisiana Baptists, for your prayers and support."

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- **Connect 1 Child Foster & Adoption Ministries** – You provide foster and adoption specialists across the state whose vision is to connect all Louisiana foster children to Christian families and churches.
- **Compassion for Kids** – You provide basic life needs and a gospel witness to economically challenged children and families in Northeast Louisiana in partnership with local churches and other Christian ministries.
- **Orphans Embrace** – You provide this ministry in partnership with LA Reach Haiti that supports a children's village in Croix des Bouquets, Haiti.

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Submitted photo

Louisiana Tech University students participated in a time of worship during the Baptist Collegiate Ministry's weekly worship gathering.

Strategy from page 7

by the North American Mission Board. Eleven years later, the student ministry team of NAMB, under the leadership of Chad Childress, revised the "campus missionary" strategy and the manual.

In spring 2023, a team of state convention student ministry strategists and college ministers then took over

the ministry strategy and renamed it "student missionary" and revised the manual for the ministry. Team members included A.J. Ruff (middle school student pastor, Cypress Baptist Church, Benton), Bryant Laird (associate director of student ministry, South Carolina Baptist Convention), Jay Barbier (youth specialist, Tennessee Baptist Mission Board), John Nugent (minister of youth, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston), Lee Myers (Louisiana Baptist Youth Strategist), Mark Robinson (Baptist Collegiate Ministry team director, Louisiana Baptists), Matthew James (associate vice president for enrollment, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary), Sam Swann (team leader, Student Leadership Development and Evangelism, Baptist Convention of New Mexico), Shane Pruitt (national Next Gen director, North American

Mission Board), Warren Gassaway (student ministry specialist, Arkansas Baptist State Convention), and Masters.

"This is a similar discipleship leadership training I have used for 30 years on college campuses," Robinson said. "It was very effective. Students found an opportunity for deeper level commitment to their church and other organizations and were ambassadors for the Gospel. This approach has even shaped many students to be full-time ministers."

TESTIMONIALS

Louisiana Baptist and national student ministerial leaders have endorsed the effort.

"With more and more schools being closed off to youth leaders visiting them, the future of student ministry has to be raising up student

See STRATEGY, page 17

LOUISIANA BAPTIST CHILDREN'S HOME

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Wren from page 4

professors in any discipline of interest. If you are a pastor, bring your students to Pineville to see the school

and consider whether God is calling them to LCU.

Also pray about supporting LCU with your finances.

I know there are lots of organizations and causes competing for your attention and resources. But prayerfully consider giving to support the cause of Christ at Louisiana Christian University. Most Baptists don't have tens of millions of dollars to give. But all of us can afford to give something to help students grow in Christ while learning to serve Him as a pastor, teacher, nurse or engineer. Your gifts will help young men and women to attend LCU and make a difference in the world today and in the future.

Louisiana Baptists, we need LCU, and LCU deserves your support.

Eddie Wren is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Zachary and a former president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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Pursuit from page one

their shoulders.

"As we fellowship, conduct business, and worship, we will take time to celebrate the past, but will also anticipate the future using the theme 'Pursuit' originating from Philippians 3:14," he said. "Paul declared, 'I pursue as my goal the prize promised by God's heavenly call in Christ Jesus.' We are all on that pursuit. I am praying that God uses this Annual Meeting to remind us of the beauty and effectiveness of being on this pursuit together for maximum Gospel impact.

"Let me urge all Louisiana Baptists to come early for the Pastors' Conference on Monday," he said. "Michael Wood and his team have worked to provide an excellent opportunity for worship, preaching, and encouragement. Then, plan to stay all day on Tuesday as we hear reports and conduct the necessary business of the Convention."

LBC President Reggie Bridges echoed the thought, saying he hopes Louisiana Baptists will come to this annual gathering to "be a part of the Pursuit."

"How excited I am for our upcoming annual gathering," said Bridges, also pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Ruston. "Each year, God gives us this opportunity to join together as the Louisiana Baptist family to reconnect with one another, worship together, and advance His mission. In this instance, we will celebrate our 175th anniversary of ministry together while we also look forward to the future. Join us in New Orleans for the Pastors' Conference and stay for the Convention. Come hear Pastor Fred preach! Come listen to Dr. Dew as he teaches! Come worship with your Baptist brothers and sisters! Come help us move the mission forward! Come and be a part of the Pursuit!"

BUDGET PROPOSAL

As part of the business of the annual meeting, the Cooperative Program budget will be presented to messengers to consider for adoption.

The 2024 financial plan is based on anticipated Cooperative Program contributions of \$18,080,569, an in-

crease of \$502,560, or 2.86 percent. Cooperative Program projections are based on actual receipts from August 2022 through July 2023.

The allocation formula for distributing Cooperative Program gifts between Southern Baptist Convention and Louisiana Baptist causes changed for 2024, 62.87 percent forwarded to support ministries in the state (a decrease from 63.26 percent in 2023) and 37.13 percent forwarded to fund national entities (an increase from 36.74 percent in 2023).

OTHER BUSINESS

Other highlights of the meeting will include messages by Horn, Bridges, and Luter. Additional items on the agenda include a Bible study led by Jamie Dew, president, New Orleans Baptist

See PURSUIT, page 12



Philip Timothy photo

Messengers to the 2023 Louisiana Baptist Convention Annual Meeting will vote on officers, the Cooperative Program budget and other matters, Nov. 14, at Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.



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Redeeming the Times, because the days are evil
Ephesians 5:16



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Nov. 14

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2023

175TH

ANNIVERSARY OF THE
LOUISIANA BAPTIST
CONVENTION

Pastors to emphasize 'joy' during annual conference

By Staff
Louisiana Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Organizers of this year's Louisiana Baptist Pastors Conference in the facilities of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, hope to remind participants, Nov. 13, about the joy of ministry.

"Over the last three years of the COVID season, there has been much talk about persevering and not growing weary which is very important," Pastors Conference President Michael Wood, also pastor of First West, told the *Baptist Message*. "We want to shed light on what an incredible honor it is to have joy in serving Christ. Each guy will have a different element to share on the theme of joy."

The program will begin, 9:30 a.m., with music led by Nate Jernigan, assistant professor of music and worship, New Orleans

Baptist Theological Seminary, and others from the seminary, and messages by Leroy Fountain, an LBC church health consultant, and David Allen, professor, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Cordova, Tenn.

After lunch, the conference will continue, 1:30 p.m., with an afternoon session featuring messages by Ryan Rice, pastor, Connect Church, Algiers; Dean Inserra, pastor, City Church, Tallahassee, Fla.; and Clay Smith, pastor, Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Ga.

Chip Luter, senior associate pastor, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, and Clint Pressley, senior pastor, Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, N.C., will close out the conference with a message during the 6:30 p.m. session.

The conference also will include giveaways to pastors and wives and a panel of seasoned pastors:



Brian Blackwell photo

Franklin Avenue Baptist Church Senior Associate Pastor Chip Luter and Senior Pastor Fred Luter will be among those featured at the 2023 Louisiana Baptist Pastors Conference.

Carl Gulde, director of missions, LaSalle Baptist Association, Waylon Bai-

ley, First Baptist Church, Covington, and Fred Luter, senior pastor, FABC. "It'll be a time of encouragement for pastors," Wood said. "We have

tried to be very intentional with a great lineup of men from in and out of state. Those who attend will come away refreshed with that joy of serving."

2023 PASTORS' CONFERENCE



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SENIOR ASSOCIATE PASTOR
FRANKLIN AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH



CLAY SMITH
SENIOR PASTOR
JOHNSON FERRY BAPTIST CHURCH



CLINT PRESSLEY
SENIOR PASTOR
HICKORY GROVE BAPTIST CHURCH



DEAN INSERRA
LEAD PASTOR
CITY CHURCH



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RYAN RICE
LEAD PASTOR
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Pursuit from page 11

Theological Seminary and Leavell College; reports by the Convention's entities; other updates on state missions; consideration of motions and resolutions; and election of officers.

At press time, David Goza, pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, is the only known candidate whose name will be placed in nomination for the office of LBC president.

NOTABLES

Gatherings for Nov. 13 include:
-- discipleship collab-

orative, noon, Rom 134
-- African-American fellowship, 4 p.m., fellowship hall
-- young pastors fellowship, 4:30 p.m., Room 217



Jefferson Baptist Church Pastor David Goza is the only known candidate for the office of LBC president.

Gatherings for Nov. 14 include:
-- NOBTS alumni lunch, 12:15 p.m., Room number 208.

-- retiree/bi-vocational luncheon, 12:15 p.m., Fellowship Hall

-- Next Generation Roundtable/Youth and Children's Ministers lunch, 12:15 p.m., Room 217

-- Send Network Louisiana lunch, 12:15 p.m., Lakefront Airport

RESOLUTION 1:

ON PARENTAL RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

WHEREAS, Marriage is the first institution established by God, modeled after the relationship of Christ and His Church (Genesis 2:24; Ephesians 5:31-32), and fundamental to the family which is a key construct on earth (Genesis 1:28) and in Heaven (John 1:12; Romans 8:15, 29; Galatians 3:26, 4:6-7); and

WHEREAS, God has indicated the importance of the relationship between parents and their child, specifically highlighting this special bond in His first instructions to Israel on how to be a people of God (Exodus 20: 3-17); and

WHEREAS, The Bible calls for parents to pray for their child (2 Samuel 12:16; 1 Chronicles 29:16-19; Job 1:5); set an example for their child (Proverbs 20:7); provide their child with food, clothing, shelter and even an inheritance (1 Timothy 5:8; Proverbs 13:22); ensure the safety, supervision and control of their child (Proverbs 13:24; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 29:15; Ephesians 6:4; Colossians 3:21; Titus 2:1-5); and educate their child, especially spiritually (Deuteronomy 6:6-9; 11:18-21; John 8:21); and

24:15); and

WHEREAS, Louisiana law enumerates many of these biblical responsibilities in the Children's Code, including the Preamble (CHC 101) which specifies in part "that the relationship between parent and child is preeminent in establishing and maintaining the well-being of the child; that parents have the responsibility for providing the basic necessities of life as well as love and affection to their children; that parents have the paramount right to raise their children in accordance with their own values and traditions; that parents should make the decisions regarding where and with whom the child shall reside, the educational, moral, ethical, and religious training of the child, the medical, psychiatric, surgical, and preventive health care of the child, and the discipline of the child"; and

WHEREAS, Certain agendas and ideologies are being advanced by institutions and individuals, thereby corrupting children's views about the human condition and human sexuality (even to the point of secretly changing a child's name and pronouns from those consistent with his or her biological sex); and

WHEREAS, Such activism usurps parental guidance about such matters and rejects biblical instruction on these issues; now, therefore,

be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the 176th session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 14, 2023, do affirm God's design that the family be the fundamental unit of society for advancing His plan for the physical, emotional, intellectual and spiritual development of children; and be it further

RESOLVED, We submit to biblical instruction about the authority of parents and their accountability regarding the health and growth of their child; and be it further

RESOLVED, We reject attempts by some individuals and institutions to override parents in key areas of their child's development; and be it further

RESOLVED, We acknowledge the Bible as the supreme authority about these issues; and be it further

RESOLVED, We urge Louisiana Baptists to protect and exercise their biblical and legal authority as parents; and be it finally

RESOLVED, We call on state and national lawmakers and other leaders to adopt legislation and approve public policies that uphold parents' rights and responsibilities for their child, particularly with regard to teaching fundamental

Christian concepts about the human condition and human sexuality.

RESOLUTION 2:

ON PROTECTING CHILDREN'S INNOCENCE

WHEREAS, God created both man and woman in His image to glorify Himself (Genesis 1:26-27; Isaiah 43:7); and

WHEREAS, His design reflects two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female, to define the very biology of humanity (Genesis 1:26-27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6); and

WHEREAS, The Bible forbids a woman from wearing "anything that pertains to a man" and declares "nor shall a man put on a woman's garment," condemning such behavior as "an abomination" (Deuteronomy 22:5); and

WHEREAS, There are social and cultural forces at work against biblical and scientific truths, confusing children about their biological identities and defying the nature of God's creation; and

WHEREAS, Such sexual activism includes drag queen performances, and similar perversions of

See RESOLUTIONS, page 14



The poster features a dark blue background with a gold-colored ornate border. In the center, the name "GEORGIA BARNETTE" is written in large, stylized, gold-outlined letters. Above the name is a small "GBO" logo. To the left of the name is a white stork carrying a bundle in its beak. Below the name, the text "LOUISIANA MISSIONS OFFERING" is written in white. Below that, the "STATE GOAL: \$1,750,000" is displayed in large white letters. At the bottom, the website "GEORGIA.BARNETTE.ORG" is written in gold. In the bottom right corner, the Louisiana Baptists logo is visible, consisting of a stylized 'L' and 'B' followed by the text "LOUISIANA BAPTISTS".

RESOLUTIONS from page 13

God's natural order, in the presence of minors; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana laws ban obscene displays, performances, exhibitions, solicitations and enticements "in the presence of an unmarried person under the age of seventeen years," but do not specifically prohibit drag queen shows in the presence of such young people; now therefore be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the 176th session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 14, 2023, do affirm God's creation of male and female as the biological basis of human existence; and be it further

RESOLVED, We submit to His biblical guidance to condemn as "an abomination" the growing cultural phenomenon of transvestitism and the movement to normalize this deviancy among children; and be it further

RESOLVED, We call on Louisiana Baptists to work to protect children from such negative influ-

ences within their homes and local communities as well as the state and nation; and be it further

RESOLVED, We call on government officials and law enforcement agents at every level in Louisiana to enforce obscenity laws to the fullest extent, specifically to protect children's innocence; and be it finally

RESOLVED, We urge state and national lawmakers and other leaders to adopt legislation and approve public policies that prevent children from being exposed to drag queens and other attempts at sexualization that diminish childhood innocence.

RESOLUTION 3:

ON PROTECTING THE UNDERAGED FROM THE HARMS OF ALCOHOL

WHEREAS, Parents are instructed to intentionally and thoughtfully direct children for life, guiding them as carefully launched arrows (Psalm 127:4); and

WHEREAS, Underage drink-

ing is a plague in Louisiana, with our high school students ranking first in the nation among their peers in the abuse of alcohol; and

WHEREAS, Such behavior extends to 34 percent of our high schoolers, a statewide average higher than any single school district in the nation; and

WHEREAS, The 1984 National Minimum Drinking Age Act prohibits "the purchase or public possession ... of any alcoholic beverage by a person who is less than twenty-one years of age"; and

WHEREAS, Louisiana law allows anyone as young as 18 years old to work in bars and to enter bars, but technically bans them from purchasing or possessing alcohol; and

WHEREAS, On average, 75 percent of high school seniors in the state are 18 years and another 13 percent are 19 years of age, meaning 88 percent of high school seniors are eligible to frequent bars; and

WHEREAS, Drunk driving is identified as a leading cause of death among teens, with Nation-

al Highway Traffic Safety Administration statistics showing a quarter of fatal crashes involve underage drinking drivers; and

WHEREAS, Alcohol is involved in half of sexual assaults on college campuses, including 300 incidents reported at Louisiana State University in Baton Rouge last year; and

WHEREAS, Research published by the American Academy of Pediatrics shows "the stronger a state's restrictions on alcohol overall, the lower the teen death toll"; and

WHEREAS, The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data urges states to "strengthen enforcement of existing policies" and advocates for "zero tolerance laws" to combat underage drinking; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the 176th session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 14, 2023, condemn any lax attitude and approach to the scourge of

See RESOLUTIONS, page 16

YEC scheduled for Nov. 19-20

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Louisiana Baptist youth and adult leaders are gearing up for the 36th annual Youth Evangelism Celebration, a statewide assembly focused on preparing the next generation to share Christ with the world.

Scheduled Nov. 19-20 in the Rapides Parish Coliseum, Alexandria, the largest annual gathering of Louisiana Baptists will feature messages by Daryl Jones, founder of Point Ministries, high-energy music, times of fellowship and much more.

Last year's event drew more than 5,300 youth and resulted in 830 decisions for Christ.

"We are excited for this year's lineup," Louisiana Baptist Youth Strategist Lee Myers said. "I believe God is going to do some amazing things over the course of those couple of days. I'm asking folks to start praying even now before the event! Pray that God's presence is felt by every person that comes in the building. Pray for those on the program and those in attendance. I really sense big things are going to happen at this event! Don't miss it!"

Caitlin Rolon is one of those who will be making a return trip to YEC.

Rolon began coming to the event in 2006 as a student at Simpson Baptist Church and now as an adult chaperone at First Baptist Church, Leesville.

"YEC will always stir in me a passion to keep learning, growing my relationship with the Lord, and helping kids come to know Jesus," she said. "I even had my second date with my husband, Kaplan, at the Crowder concert during YEC 2021. YEC was a pivotal part in keeping me grounded in my faith and involved in church even after graduating high school."

Larry Emory, pastor of Longstraw Baptist Church, Choudrant, has taken his students to YEC since 2013. He said the event is a highlight for his youth each year.

"When we begin promoting it in May each year, I always tell the church, 'I am going to YEC; does anybody want to go with me?'" he said.

"From there, the excitement begins to grow.

"The only time I missed was when my wife, Judy, died the Friday before we were to leave on that Sunday in November 2021," he continued. "The youth and leaders said they would cancel the trip and I told them my wife would never want you to do that. I sent them on their way that Sunday.

"I do not want to miss YEC," he said. "It is inspiring to the church and to me personally."

Throughout the two-day event, Louisiana Baptist teens will be challenged to celebrate what Christ has done in their

lives and to share their stories of how Christ changed their lives, and they will be engaged in a number of different ways to experience a message about Him:

— weRcalled will offer worship music.

— The Skit Guys of Edmond, Okla., will present comedy and serve as master of ceremonies.

— The Exiles will provide entertainment.

— The conference will close with a concert by Cain.

The event kicks off Sunday, 7 p.m., and is scheduled to end by 10 p.m., Monday.

For more information, visit yecloouisiana.org



Submitted photo

The Youth Evangelism Celebration always includes a session to teach students a clear, practical way to share the Gospel. After completing YEC, participants will be equipped to share the Gospel with their peers throughout the state.

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RESOLUTIONS

from page 14

underage drinking that is plaguing our state's youth; and be it further

RESOLVED, We reject outright the undermining of the federal minimum drinking age of 21 years by such state actions as allowing underaged persons to enter bars while ostensibly prohibiting them to purchase or possess alcohol in such establishments; and be it further

RESOLVED, We urge parents and churches to instruct children and teens not to participate in debaucherous activities, warning them to avoid the dangers of drunkenness by abstaining from alcohol (Eph 5:8; Prov 23:20-21; Luke 21:34); and be it finally

RESOLVED, We appeal to lawmakers to protect those who are underaged from the harms of alcohol by passing commonsense legislation, such as preventing individuals under the age of 21 years from even entering bars and similar establishments, which too easily give them access to alcohol even with federal and state laws in place to prevent the purchase or possession of alcohol by those who are not of legal age.

RESOLUTION 4:

ON THE LBC'S 175TH ANNIVERSARY

WHEREAS, Baptists have a remarkable history of dedication and commitment in carrying the Gospel to the people of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, John Coulter, a faithful Baptist, departed the comfort of Kentucky to settle his family, circa 1797, in Fort Miro (now, Morehouse Parish) to become the first recorded Baptist in what is now the state of Louisiana; and

WHEREAS, Joseph Willis, a former Cherokee slave who swam the Mississippi River on the back of a mule to enter the religiously restricted territories of Louisiana, in 1804 preached in Vermilion (Lafayette) the first known Baptist sermon in Louisiana, west of the Mississippi River, and eight years later became the first resident Baptist pastor in the state; and

WHEREAS, The Half Moon Bluff Baptist Church, on the Bogue Chitto River in Washington Parish (east of the Mississippi River), was organized in 1812 and is recognized as the first Baptist congregation in

what is now the state of Louisiana, and a month later the Bayou Chicot (Calvary) Baptist Church was founded in Ville Platte (west of the Mississippi River) as the second Baptist Church formed in the state, and remains active today; and

WHEREAS, In 1848, 13 Baptists meeting in Mount Lebanon organized the Baptist State Convention of North Louisiana with 65 ministers, 88 congregations and 3,650 members (changing names in 1853 to the "State Convention of Baptists in Louisiana," and in 1886 to the "Louisiana Baptist Convention"); and

WHEREAS, Today, the Louisiana Baptist Convention includes nearly 1,600 congregations with more than 425,000 baptized members; and

WHEREAS, During the 175 intervening years Louisiana Baptists baptized more than 1,325,000 new believers in the state, contributed more than \$900 million through the Cooperative Program and ministered directly -- or through the support of cooperative missions and ministries -- to the ends of the earth; and

WHEREAS, The tasks of "to seek and save that which is lost" (Luke 19:10) remain daunting challenges in the state with 40 percent of Louisiana adults declaring they have no relationship with Christ or His Church (Association of Reli-

gion Data Archives); now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the 176th session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 14, 2023, praise God for His favor on Louisiana Baptists these 175 years; and be it further

RESOLVED, We celebrate the many good works that He has graciously allowed Louisiana Baptists to be part of with Him in our state, the nation and around the world; and be it finally

RESOLVED, We commit to continue to seek where God is at work and to pursue His Great Commission to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:18-20), but especially so in the unique mission field He has given

RESOLUTION 5:

ON EXPRESSION OF APPRECIATION

WHEREAS, Many individuals and groups have had a part in planning, preparing and conducting the 176th annual meeting of our Louisiana Baptist Convention; and

See RESOLUTIONS, page 21



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Strategy from page 10

missionaries to send onto campuses, because the schools can't keep those students out," Pruitt said. "The student missionary ministry is an incredible tool to help you do just that. Let's raise up student missionaries for the glory of God."

"Every healthy youth ministry is doing everything they can to see students come to know Christ and then to step up in their faith to share their faith with friends and family," said Nathan Iblings, student minister at First Baptist Church, Denham Springs. "Many student ministries struggle with preparing students for evangelism as well as sending students into the real world once they graduate. The student missionary ministry provides the structure, intentionality, and accountability to accomplish these goals."

"By involving the

broader body of church members, the students feel supported and loved in a way that spurs them on for further evangelism," he continued. "It also shows the student missionaries what having a life on mission can really look like. This shows the students how they can be disciple makers no matter their situation. Schools, colleges, workplaces, communities and more will all be blessed through the strong disciples and missionaries being formed in the student missionary ministry."

Richard Ross, senior professor of student ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas, said his prayer is these student missionaries will make a difference in their schools for Christ.

"On a Sunday morning every fall, in a tiny church with only one teenager, I pray that con-

gregation will have damp eyes as they commission that brave student to be a missionary to his or her school campus," he said.

"On a Sunday morning every fall, in a megachurch with hundreds of teenagers, I pray that congregation will have damp eyes as they com-

mission a multitude of students to be missionaries to their multiple school campuses. For the fulfillment of the Great Commission and for lifetime kingdom impact on the young, I greatly desire to see the public commissioning of teenage student missionaries

to become normative in SBC churches."

For more information on how to participate in the student missionary program, visit studentmissionary.com or contact Masters at 225.964.0830.



Submitted photo

Students gathered to learn more about their role in furthering the Great Commission during Missions Night at the McNeese State University Baptist Collegiate Ministry.


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BIVOCATIONAL WINNER

Arnold faithful during 26 years of trials, triumphs

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

GILBERT, La. (LBM) – For 26 years, Bobby Arnold has faithfully served Eureka Baptist Church amid his own personal trials.

Arnold, who suffered a stroke in April 2020, said while he has faced difficult moments, he never has considered resigning from a church who has supported him throughout.

"The Lord hasn't led me to go anywhere else," Arnold told the Baptist Message. "It's a definite call and is something that I have been blessed to be a part of for all these years."

Arnold was named a Louisiana Baptist Convention Exemplary Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year for his dedication to ministry.

Born in Franklin Parish in 1949, Arnold gave his heart to Christ as a 17-year-old at the weekly Sunday service at New Hope Baptist Church, Crowville, where he had started attending with his girlfriend at the time, Ruth Weems.

A year later, Arnold married Ruth, became a deacon at New Hope Baptist and felt the call to preach the Gospel. However, he denied the call multiple times even amid service as a deacon and lay renewal leader at Wayside Baptist Church, Vicksburg, Mississippi.

Finally, at 36, he surrendered to God's call and began to fill the pulpit at Turkey Bluff Baptist Church, Swampers (the church has since closed), and Midway Baptist Church, Richland Parish, in the spring and summer of 1985.

In October 1985, God called him to Hegwood Baptist Church, Epps. During his 10 years as bi-vocational pastor at Hegwood, the church experienced growth as he developed personal connections to share the Gospel, and engaged older adults and families in church activities and worship services.

When he first arrived at Eureka Baptist in 1995,



Brian Blackwell photo

Eddie Rhymes, Deer Creek Baptist Association director of missions, stood alongside Bobby Arnold and his wife Ruth after he received the Louisiana Baptist Convention Exemplary Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year award.

the average Sunday School attendance was four and worship attendance was 12, mostly women. Slowly, Arnold began to build relationships with the husbands and subsequently they joined the congregation. Today, attendance for Bible study and the Sunday morning service is around 30.

"One by one, those men became saved and eventually stepped up to take leadership positions in the

church," he said. "I was pleased to know so many of the men came with their wives and decided that church was a priority."

Arnold saw the love of God's people first-hand when he suffered the stroke, which impacted his cognitive abilities and short-term memory.

From the moment that he was admitted to the hospital, the church rallied around him and his wife to provide love and support.

Eureka's deacons and other men made daily phone calls to check on him, and stepped into the pulpit on those few Sundays that Arnold was unable to preach. Additionally, families in the church opened their homes to the Arnolds for Sunday meals and visits and, on many occasions, they provided transportation to medical appointments.

Arnold's wife also was a constant encourager.

Indeed, Ruth has poured into her husband words of affirmation and served as a pianist, Vacation Bible school director and Woman's Missionary

Union leader throughout his pastorates.

Together, the couple has raised five children who have served on the international mission field and in ministry roles in their local churches. Additionally, Arnold has baptized two of his children, a son-in-law and five of his nine grandchildren.

Throughout Arnold's time at Eureka, Eddie Rhymes, director of missions for the Deer Creek Baptist Association, has been a confidant, counselor and pastor's pastor to Arnold. His encourage-

See ARNOLD, page 19

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

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BIVOCATIONAL WINNER

Merelin McCon retires, returns to disciple others

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

WALKER, La. (LBM) – Merelin McCon retired from Judson Baptist Church in 2010 but returned “home” in 2016 to teach a Bible study and disciple others at the church he pastored for 33 years.

“It’s been awesome, and I have thankful I was able to return here,” McCon told the Baptist Message. “I didn’t even want to come to Judson to pastor here years ago. But I’m thankful I said, ‘Yes’ to that opportunity, and it’s been so special coming back and helping others grow in their walks with Christ.”

McCon (who actively pastored 55 years) was named a Louisiana Baptist Convention Exemplary Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year for his dedication to ministry.

A native of Colyell, McCon was 13 years old when he surrendered his heart to Christ during a service at Emmanuel Baptist Church, Baton Rouge. Four years later, McCon submitted to the call to preach the Gospel.

He began his education to prepare for ministry at Louisiana College (now Louisiana Christian University), in 1957, and during his senior year began



Brian Blackwell photo

Richard Blue, Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association missions strategist, stood alongside Edith McCon and her husband, Merelin, after he received the Louisiana Baptist Convention Exemplary Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year award.

a pastorate with the Twin Bridges Baptist Church in Alexandria, two days after he married his wife, Edith.

Later he served as pastor with Magnolia Baptist Church, Holden (1963-1967), Line Creek Baptist Church, Kentwood (1967-1977), Judson Baptist Church (1977-2010), and Northside Baptist, Denham (2011-2016).

While at Judson, McCon saw worship grow from 100 to 350, helped plant Live Oak Baptist Church, Watson, and Christ’s Community Church, Denham Springs, and baptized more than 600 people.

housed 100 people in their classrooms. The congregation built strong relationships with the evacuees, and some received Christ and followed through with baptism.

“It was awesome to say the least,” he said. “I had one of them one day tell me he had just moved out of Hell and moved into Heaven when he came to Judson. It was a real joy to see these people come to Christ, many of them had no church but finally found one here.”

Although McCon thought his ministry was completed when he retired, God had other plans. The leadership asked if he would return in 2016 and he rejoined the spiritual family he had spent many years nurturing as pastor.

“God promoted me from being a pastor to being a Sunday school teacher,” he said. “One of the most comforting thoughts of becoming an old man with a reduced ministry is

See MCCON, page 21

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Arnold from page 18

ment and mentorship have been invaluable to Arnold and his wife.

“It is a tremendous privilege to know and minister alongside Bro Bobby Arnold,” Rhymes said. “He loves his church family and is committed to the minis-

try of our local association, our Louisiana Baptist Convention, and our Southern Baptist Convention work around the world. He is a constant encourager to me and every person he meets.”



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Merger breathes new life into Marrero church

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MARRERO, La. (LBM) – Ames Boulevard Baptist Church had experienced a decline in membership and was looking for “next steps” to reach the community when they approached Cross Culture church about merging in August 2022.

The once-vibrant congregation had dwindled to 25 members who had seen just one baptism from 2015 to 2022, and they felt Cross Culture could help them better reach the community and ensure its survival for many years to come.

After several meetings and much prayer, both congregations finalized the merger and became Cross Community Church at Ames on April 30.

“It’s been a whirlwind,” Pastor Troy Gause told the *Baptist Message*. “People in the neighborhood are starting to come from all different walks of life and the church is having newfound excitement. I’m really excited what God has done and will do.”

ANSWERED PRAYER

For more than a year, Gause and other leaders of Cross Culture church had

prayed for God to provide resources to purchase a new facility and for them to team up with a struggling church for revitalization.

Gause in July 2022 was notified by Derek Kitterlin, son-in-law of Ames Boulevard Pastor Steve Foxworth, that the church property was in need of lawn maintenance. Gause, who owns a lawn care business, began taking care of the property for free without any discussion with Foxworth about a merger.

A month later, Foxworth approached Gause with the idea of a merger and on Sept. 11, 2022, the two churches held a joint worship service. Immediately, Ames Boulevard and Cross Culture developed a strong bond.

After multiple meetings, the churches became one, April 30.

See MERGER, page 21



Submitted photo

Paul Irons baptized his son, Micah, at Cross Community Church, Marrero. Since it was formed out of a merger in April, the church has baptized six new converts and averages 72 in worship.

2nd Annual Fellowship Baptist Bible Conference and Revival
November 1-5, 2023
487 Trout Road • Trout, La. 71371

CONFERENCE SCHEDULE

Wednesday, Nov. 1
6:30 p.m. -- Roger Haney with Worship Leader Scott Windham

Thursday-Saturday
9 a.m. -- Morning Prayer Meeting
9:30 a.m. -- Malcolm Ellis with worship leader Glen Price
10:30 a.m. -- Philip Robertson with worship leader Glen Price
11:30 a.m. -- Lunch
1 p.m. -- Ladies Session (Saturday only)
Martha Wright with worship leader Ella Tibbs
4 p.m. -- Evening prayer meeting
4:30 p.m. -- Scotty McDowell with worship leaders Glen & Penny Harrigill
5:30 p.m. -- Supper (provided)
6:30 p.m. -- Roger Haney with Glen & Penny Harrigill

Sunday, Nov. 6
9:30 a.m. -- Sunday School
10:15 a.m. -- Morning prayer meeting
10:30 a.m. -- Roger Haney with Worship Leader Scott Windham
5 p.m. -- Disciple Training
5:45 p.m. -- Evening prayer meeting
6 p.m. -- Scotty McDowell with Worship Leader Scott Windham

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Merger from page 20

Since the merger became official, Cross Community Church has baptized six new converts and averages 72 in worship, including a high of 120 on Easter Sunday. Additionally, the church has ordained its first two deacons and has planned its first community outreach events: a movie night, Sept. 23, and fall festival, Oct. 28.

"God has moved, and God is moving," Gause said. "We are excited to see how He will continue

to move among our body at Cross Community Church."

Debbie Sturino, a member of Ames Boulevard Baptist for 33 years, has many fond memories at the church she called home for more than three decades. But Sturino is excited about what God has in store for her new church.

"I wouldn't be the person I am without Christ and the church family that he has led me to serve and

be a part of," she said. "Although my church family is now called Cross Community Church at Ames, I know that I am loved by this body of believers and that we will continue to

go through life together and work to reach our community for Christ in Marrero."

Since 2015, 22 mergers have taken place among Louisiana Baptists. For

more information about merging with another church, visit louisianabaptists.org/church-mergers-in-louisiana or email lane.corley@louisianabaptists.org.

McCon from page 19

the fact that hundreds hear the Gospel every week through men who surrendered to ministry under our ministry."

Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association Missions Strategist Richard Blue called McCon one of the most respected individuals in the area and a friend to pastors in the area, having trained countless men who

later became pastors and leaders in their churches.

"He has a heart for God, people and missions," he said. "No doubt, Merelin McCon has been and remains an influencer in the lives of people in Livingston Parish. He has been faithful to his Lord, the Lord's Church and to the work of the Kingdom of God."

Resolutions from page 16

WHEREAS, The messengers of this Convention desire to warmly recognize and express appreciation to the following:

Dr. Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, as well as the staff and the congregation, for their assistance with details and for providing the use of their facilities for this annual meeting; and

Dr. Reggie Bridges, Convention president, and pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, for his warm, gracious spirit in leading, speaking and listening to Louisiana Baptists this year, and his gentle firmness in moderating this annual meeting; and

Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, for their commitment to sharing the Gospel in our state by graciously supporting Dr. Bridges's leadership of all the churches of the Louisiana Baptist Convention this past year; and

Nate Jernigan, music director for this annual meeting, who serves as worship pastor with First Baptist Church, New Orleans, and assistant professor of music and worship with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, for planning and coordinating the music, and the musicians and singers for their contribution of instrumental and vocal talents; and

Ronnie McLellan, chairman of the Committee on Order of Business, and pastor of First Baptist Church, Marrero, and the members of the Committee on Order of Business for planning this informative and inspirational annual meeting; now, therefore, be it

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the 176th Session of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans, Louisiana, November 14, 2023, express to each of the above, and to all who contributed, our deepest heartfelt gratitude.

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Please send resume to: Susan Nolan at snolan@lbch.org or LBCH, PO Box 4196, Monroe, LA 71211.

COTTAGE MANAGERS:

Part-Time Positions Available: Christian women needed in Monroe to serve in Home-Place, a transitional living ministry for homeless children and their mothers. Must have a sense of call and commitment to a ministry of service to children and families.

Please send resume to: Jonann Byargeon at jonann@lbch.org or LBCH, PO Box 4196, Monroe, LA 71211.

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SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH PASTOR

Central Baptist Church, Springhill, LA., is seeking a part-time youth pastor. Please send your résumé to the Central Baptist search committee in the mail: **Central Baptist Church, Youth Pastor Search Committee, 504 W. Church St., Springhill, LA 71075** or email: centralyouthpastorsearch@gmail.com



AVAILABLE

David Cox is available for interim or pulpit supply in DeSoto or Sabine parishes. Please call 318.461.2526 or 318.461.9388.



Seeking a Bi-Vocational **PASTOR**

Macedonia Baptist Church in Effie, LA is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. Please mail your résumé to Macedonia Baptist Church, Attn: Randy Littleton, PO Box 186, Effie, LA 71331 or email your résumé to mbceffie@gmail.com.



NEW PROSPECT SEEKS A CHURCH SECRETARY

New Prospect Baptist Church in the Prospect Community (Grant Parish) is seeking a church secretary. Applicants must be proficient in Microsoft Office. Must be willing to learn ACS (Realm) Church Management Software. Hours are 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m., Monday-Friday. Send résumé or request application to nbpshepard@gmail.com



SEEKING A FULL-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

Seeking a full-time youth minister at Bonita Road Baptist Church, 7204 Pine Grove Loop Rd, Bastrop, LA 71220. Résumés can be emailed to simple7ministries@yahoo.com



SEEKING BI-VOCATIONAL YOUTH/ASSOCIATE PASTOR

Cooper Baptist Church is seeking a bi-vocational Youth/Associate Pastor. Résumés can be mailed to 853 Cooper Church Rd, Leesville LA 71446 or sent to cooperbaptistchurch@yahoo.com



SEEKING A FULLTIME YOUTH PASTOR

Fulltime youth pastor, great opportunity leading a large youth ministry with lots of potential. Please send your résumé to Ed Colvin at ed@fbcruston.org or brenda@fbcruston.org



SEEKING HYMNALS

Riverview Baptist Church in Alexandria is searching for approximately 30 *Heavenly Highway Hymns* (preferably in large print.) Please contact Mike Boone, minister of music, at 318.613.6505 or email him at charnaboone@gmail.com.



Seeking a full-time **YOUNG ADULT PASTOR**

First Baptist Ruston, LA has a position with a large young adult group, lots of potential. Please send inquiries to Brenda Martin at brenda@fbcruston.org.



YOUTH MINISTRY

Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Lisbon is seeking a **part-time youth ministry director**. Email your résumés to rockysprings1845@gmail.com For a list of responsibilities, go to www.rockysprings1845.com



SEEKING A CHURCH SECRETARY

Seeking a full time (36 hour) church secretary for Swartz First Baptist Church. Please send your résumés to Personnel@fbcswartz.org



SEEKING BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR

Gateway Baptist Church, Ball, LA seeks a pastor with the education, experience, spiritual gifting, and leadership style to lead in revitalization. Email résumé to: Adam Basco adambasco1@gmail.com or call Adam Basco at 318.446.0971.



SEEKING A FULL-TIME WORSHIP LEADER

First Baptist Church Mansfield, La is seeking a full-time worship leader. Salary is negotiable. Please send résumés to churchoffice@firstmansfield.org



FULL-TIME PASTOR

New Hope Baptist Church in Choudrant, LA is seeking a full-time pastor. Please send your résumés to nhbcpssc2023@gmail.com.



SEEKING A YOUTH MINISTER

First Baptist Church, Dry Prong, which is located in Dry Prong, LA is seeking a bi-vocational, God-filled person to serve as our youth minister. If you feel called by God for this position, please send your résumé to: fbcdryprong@gmail.com



SEEKING PART TIME STUDENT MINISTER

Belle Park Baptist Church located in Haughton, Louisiana is seeking a part-time student minister. For information go to BellePark.org



Seeking a full-time or part-time **STUDENT MINISTER**

Plain Dealing Baptist Church, Plain Dealing, LA is seeking a full-time or part-time student minister. Please send résumés to: Search Committee Plain Dealing Baptist Church, PO Box 543, Plain Dealing, LA 71064 or email to pdbscla@gmail.com



FULL-TIME PASTOR

Woodland Baptist Church, Springfield, LA is seeking a full-time pastor. Please email cover letters and your résumés to Jessie Roberts, Chairman, of the Pastor's Search Committee at raymondjrroberts@bellsouth.net.



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 to four weeks prior to the event.

HOMECOMING

■ Andy Jacobson is the interim worship leader at Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles.

HOMECOMING

■ **Green Oak Baptist Church, Merryville:** 139th Homecoming, October 22, 11 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow the worship service. Pastor: Mark Norwood.

■ **New Prospect Baptist Church, Dubach:** Homecoming Sunday, October 22, 10:45 a.m. Guest Speaker: **Terry Ganey, Dunn Baptist Church.** Special Music: TBA. A potluck meal and congregational singing will follow. Pastor: Marvin Winham.

■ **Main Street Mission, Pineville:** Homecoming, October 29, 10:30 a.m.. Dinner on the grounds follows the worship service. Pastor: Sam West.

■ **Colfax Baptist Church, Colfax:** Homecoming Service Nov. 5, 11 a.m. Following the service enjoy a cake/coffee fellowship. Pastor: Shane Anderson.

■ **New Hope Baptist Church, Elmer: 150th Homecoming and Pioneer Days,** November 11-12, Saturday Noon-6 p.m.; Sunday 10 a.m.-1 p.m. There will be live music and Wild Horse Ministries. Pastor:

■ **Mangham Baptist Church, Mangham:** Homecoming, November 12, Pastor: Rick Aultman.

■ **Jerusalem Baptist Church, Pumpkin Center: 121st Homecoming,** November 12, Sunday School 9:15 a.m., Worship service: 10:30 a.m. Guest Speaker: **Greg Duncan, former music minister at Jerusalem, who is now a pastor.** There will be dinner on the grounds following worship service. Pastor: Chuck Stewart

REVIVAL

■ First Baptist Church, Mansfield: **Revival,** October 22-25. Revival starts Sunday morning and then 6:30 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: **Luke Hockenjos.** Worship: **Broken Vessels.** A nursery will be provided. Pastor: Chad Harbarger.

■ Hillcrest Baptist Church, Franklinton: **Fall Revival,** October 22-25, Sunday, 10:30 a.m. service followed by dinner on the grounds 6 p.m. service; Monday-Wednesday 12 p.m. service, 6 p.m. service. Guest Speaker: **David Allen.** Worship: **The Mackey Willis Family.** Pastor: Dustin Pierce.

■ Mt. Gilead Baptist, Vivian: **Fall Revival,** October 22-25. Evangelist: **Kyle Williams, World Recovery, LLC.** Pastor: William Treadway.

■ Cypress Baptist Church, Benton: **Harvest Sunday,** October 29, Evangelist: Bill Britt, Pastor: John Fream.

■ First Baptist Church, Jonesville: **End Time Prophecy Revival,** October 29-November 1, 6:30 p.m. nightly. Sponsored by Ouachita Baptist Association. Evangelist: Al Gist.

■ Fellowship Baptist Church, Trout: **Second annual Bible Conference and Revival** Nov. 1-5. Evangelist: **Roger Haney, Malcolm Ellis,**

Scotty McDowell, Philip Robertson. Worship: **Glen and Pinny Harrigill, Scott Windham, and Glenn Price.** For more information contact Shad Tibbs at 318.992.2874. 318.374.0235 or email broshadtibbs@myyahoo.com. Pastor: Shad Tibbs.

■ Sugartown Baptist Church, Sugartown: **Revival,** November 3-5 nightly; Sunday morning, 11 a.m. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria.** Special Music: **Kerry Longoria & Samuel & Sarah O'Kelley.** Pastor: Allen O'Kelley.

■ Washington Baptist Church, Washington: **Harvest Sunday,** November 19, 11 a.m. Evangelist: **Asa Longoria.** Special Music: **Kerry Longoria.** Pastor Louis Charrier.

■ Red River Community Church, Marksville: **Harvest Sunday,** November 19, 6 p.m. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria.** Special Music: **Kerry Longoria.** Pastor: Louis Charrier.

■ New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Denham Springs: **Revival,** November 26-29. Evangelist: **Bill Britt.** Pastor: Randall Gill.

■ New Beginnings Church, Castor: **Revival,** November 26-29, Evangelist: **Worship: Broken Vessels.** Pastor: David Bolyer

LAGNIAPPE

■ East Jena Baptist Church, Jena: **Southern Plainsmen in concert,** October 22, 10:45 a.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Mike Wilkison.

■ Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Lisbon: **Trunk-or-treat,** October 22, 4-6 p.m. There will be a cake walk, costume contest, and free hot dogs. Pastor: Chris Stephens.

■ Woodland Park Baptist Church, Hammond: **Fall Festival,** October 22, 5-7 p.m. There will be games, classic cars, hayrides, food, petting zoo, trunk or treat and much more. Pastor: Tim Moffitt.

■ Pineville Park Baptist Church, Pineville: **Fall Festival,** October 22nd, 11:30 a.m. - 1 p.m. Join us for an afternoon of carnival games, candy, prizes, hotdogs, cotton candy, snow cones, popcorn, and family fun... and it's all free. Wear your costume, and come enjoy the fun with your whole family. We will be giving away over \$300 in door prizes, and all you have to do is show up and be there for the drawing at the end. Pastor:

■ First Baptist Church, Mandeville: **2023 Fall Festival,** October 28, 6 p.m. Trunk or Treat, cookie decorating & crafts, Hayride, face painting and photo booth. Free Admission. Dinner is available for \$5/plate. Pastor: Ronny Cooksey.

■ Bonita Road Baptist Church, Mer Rouge: **Fall Festival,** October 28, 4-6 p.m. Bonita Road Baptist Church, Log Cabin: **Fall Festival,** October 28, 6-8 p.m. It will be an awesome day of fun, games and food. Pastor: Casey Johnson.

■ Trinity Baptist Church, Natchitoches: **Nobody's Gonne Die Today, Matt and Liana Branch;** October 28, 6 p.m. Cost: \$10. The meal begins at 5 p.m. There will be a gumbo supper, door prizes and giveaways. RSVP to Jaime: 318.214.8020 or email tbcnlasttudentministry@gmail.com

■ Emmanuel Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Family Fall Festival Trunk & Treat,** October 28, 2-4 p.m. This will take place in the church's back parking lot. There will be old-time cars, bounce houses, hot dogs, nachos and lots of treats. Free admission and everyone is welcomed. Pastor: Scott Shirley.

■ Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Slidell: **Fall Fest.** October 28, 10 a.m. – noon. There will be games, face painting, cake walk, petting zoo, hayrides and more. For more information call 985.643.6017. Pastor: Jerauld Smith.

■ Creston Baptist Church, Creston: **Southern**

Plainsmen in concert, October 29, 10:30 a.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Truman Leach.

■ First Baptist Church, Sibley: **5th annual Fall Festival,** October 29, 5-8 p.m. There will be Trunk-or-Treat, a Hayride, Chili, Costume Contest, and more! Come join the fun. We will also be hosting a food drive during the event to collect goods for families during the upcoming holiday season. Pastor: Brock Childers.

■ South Bossier Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Fall Fest,** October 29, 5 p.m. There will food, fun and games. Jump in the jump house, ride the hayride, try the chili for the chili cook off or win some candy. It will be a great time for the whole family. Pastor: Randy Ziegler.

■ Mangham Baptist Church, Manham: **Trunk or Treat,** October 29, 5:30 p.m. Pastor: Bill Aultman.

■ Watson Baptist Church, Watson: **Fall Festival,** October 29, 4-6 pm. Join us for Watson Baptist Church's Annual Fall Festival with Trunk-or-Treat and a Chili Cookoff. It will be a fun evening with lots of candy and games, an indoor walk-through a maze, and a Chili Cook-Off! Vote for your favorite pot of chili. Trophies will be given for the best chili and best Trunk. Any donations will go to benefit the Family Village, Walker. Pastor: John Pemberton.

■ First Baptist Church, Bossier: **Fall Festival,** October 29, 5-7 p.m. There will be games, inflatables, food trucks and lots of candy. This is a free event and will be held at Freedom Fields. Pastor: Brad Jurkovich.

■ First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Fall Festival,** a community wide event, October 29, 4-7 p.m. There will be a giant inflatable obstacle course, a 20-foot slide, a small bounce house for younger kids, Face Painting, free food, and many carnival games for candy prizes. This will be a free event for all who attend. Pastor: Chad Gilbert.

■ Longview Baptist Church, Deville: **Fall Festival,** October 29, 4-7 p.m. There will be games, free food, prizes and much more. Pastor: Robby Poole.

■ Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: **Fall Festival,** October 29th, 5-7 p.m. Pastor: Eric

Green.

■ Houston River Baptist Church, Sulphur: **Fall Fest,** October 28. Pastor: Lonnie Gothrup.

■ Gateway Baptist Church, Ball: **Fall Festival,** October 28, 5:30-8:30 p.m. There will be games, music, hayrides and prizes.

■ Westlake Baptist Church, Westlake: **Fall Fest at Pinederosa Park,** October 29, 4-7 p.m. There will be food trucks, Trunk or Treat, games, a maze and family friendly costumes, please. This event is being put on by Westlake churches and organizations.

■ First Baptist Church, Sulphur: **Light up the night,** October 29. 6-8 p.m. This event is free and there will be hot dogs, s'mores, popcorn, cotton candy, photo booth. Pastor: Michael Linton.

■ Little Pass Baptist Church, Charenton: **Fall Festival & Trunk or Treat,** October 29, 5-8 p.m. Pastor: Chris Holloway.

■ Friendship Baptist Church, Baskin: **Fall Festival,** October 29, 5-7 p.m. Bring the family and have some fun with a rib cookoff, Pinecar Derby, kid games with candy prizes, adult games, Gospel music. Pastor: Prentis Gandy

■ Searcy Baptist Church, Trout: **Fall Festival,** October 29, 5-6:30 p.m. There will be a Trunk-or-Treat, chili contest, hot dogs, frito pies, cake walk and face painting. Pastor: Steve Jenson

■ Sale Street Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **Trunk or Treat,** October 31, 5:30-7:30 p.m. Come join in on this free, safe community event. Pastor: Drew Mills

■ Westview Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Fall Festival,** October 31, 6-8 p.m. There will be games, candy, prizes, a firetruck, balloons. Pastor: Jason Hoychick.

■ Pine Hill Baptist Church, Leesville: **Fall Festival,** October 31, 6-8 p.m. There will be food, games, hayride and a chili cookoff. For more information call 337-353-1533. Pastor: Keith Dowden.

■ Pioneer Baptist Church, Pioneer: **Fall Festival,** October 31, . There will be food, games, fun and great fellowship. Everyone is invited. Pastor: John Cleveland.

■ Unity Baptist Church, Pineville: **Treats on a Trail,** October 31, 5:30 p.m. Come join us for

gumbo, treats on the walking trail, cake walk and much more. Pastor: James Brown.

■ Start Baptist Church, Rayville: **Trunk or Treat,** October 31, 5:30-7 p.m. Safe fun for the whole family. Pastor: Jeff Thomas.

■ First Baptist Church, Coushatta: **Fall Festival,** October 31, 6-8 p.m. Doors open at 5 p.m. Free entry. There will be plenty of games, fun and fellowship. Pastor: Philip Caples.

■ Bethel Baptist Church, Colfax: **Harvest Fest,** October 31, 6-8 p.m. This free family friendly event will be held in the Family Life Center. There will be inflatables, games, candy, prizes, cupcake walk, gumbo, nachos, popcorn and cotton candy. Pastor: Kenneth Bratton.

■ Riverview Baptist Church, Alexandria: **Down East Boys in concert,** November 3, 7 p.m. Pastor: David Newton.

■ New Hope Baptist Church, DeQuincy: **New Hope Harvest Festival,** Nov. 4, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. This is free entry. There will be games, bounce houses, food, popcorn, cotton candy, blood drive, hayride. Pastor: Roland Hebert.

■ Antioch Baptist Church, Rayville: **Sanctuary Quartet in concert,** November 5, 10 a.m. Pastor: Keith Evans.

■ Trees Baptist Church, Vivian: **Faith Promise Missions Missions Conference,** November 5, 9:30 a.m. -noon. Speaker: **David Whatley, founder of Watersprings Children's Home in Texarkansas (9:30 a.m.)** and **Steve Horn, Louisiana Baptists executive director,** 10:30 a.m. Lunch will be at noon. Pastor: Mark Crook.

■ Trinity Baptist Church, Natchitoches: **Worship Night – You Deserve the Glory,** November 5, 7 p.m. Special guest: **Josue Bustillo.** Pastor: Logan Brown.

■ First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: **Ernie Hasse + Signature Sound,** November 5, 6 p.m. Cost: \$20 per ticket and tickets are available at welcome center or church office. Pastor: David Cranford

■ Pine Grove Baptist Church, Effie: **Mark Lanier in concert,** November 12, 11 a.m. Pastor:

■ Mt. Paran Baptist Church, Shongaloo: **Mark Lanier in concert,** November 26, 6 p.m. Pastor: Edgar Bryan.

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.

nd rl wd wtg xdrsw hfs, hsu vkfsn jddu, hsu

vrfeu wtg tdr cg: hsu f jfee whmg leghcrkg fs fw,

hsu f jfee vg nedkfofgu, chfw t wtg edku.

Thnnhf dsg: gfntw

Clues:
X = M; H = A

Answer to October 12, Scripture Crypto:
First Peter Two: Twenty-five

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Join us for lunch and fellowship **PRIOR** to afternoon worship with:



Charles
BILLINGSLEY

Worship



Tim
LOVELACE

Comedy

JAN. 23, 2024

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To Register: LouisianaBaptists.org/SAL

For additional information, contact:

Jeff Ingram, Adult Ministry & Church Administration Strategist at 318.448.3402