



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

June 20, 2024

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Louisiana Baptist Convention baptisms soar 31 percent

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Recently released information that updated the Annual Church Profile database for 2023 shows

that the number of baptisms performed by Louisiana Baptist congregations jumped to 8,770 in 2023, a surge of 2,080 more baptisms, or 31.1 percent above the numbers for 2022.

This growth nearly

doubles the 1,060 additional baptisms reported in 2022 (6,690), which was an 18.8 percent rise above 2021 (5,630).

The Southern Baptist Convention also reported increases for both years,

almost 26 percent in 2023 and about 16 percent in 2022.

The soaring LBC numbers coincide with what has been described as a “rebound” from the COVID pandemic in 2020, but

also occur with the launch of a soul winning emphasis by Louisiana Baptists that was announced preceding the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting, which was held

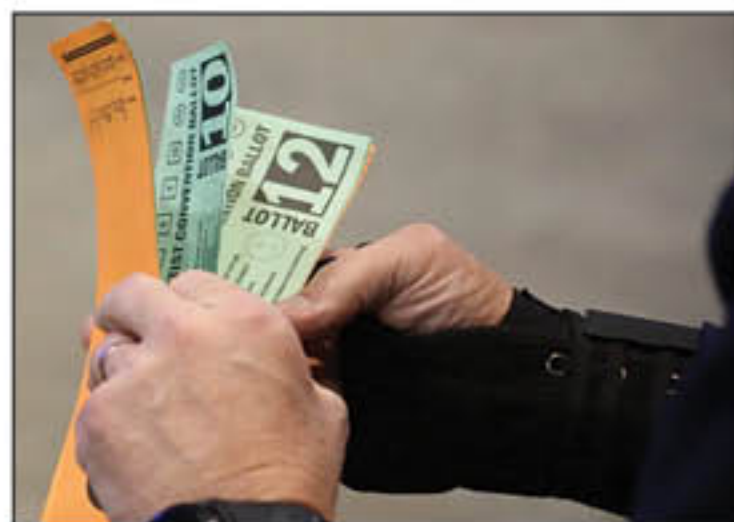
See BAPTISMS, page 10

INDIANAPOLIS 2024



Submitted photos

(Left to right) Josiah Jones won the national Pinewood Derby. Clint Pressley was elected SBC president. Messengers cast ballots on the Law Amendment.



SBC HIGHLIGHTS

Southern Baptists conduct business, enjoy fellowship, share the Gospel

By Staff
Louisiana Baptist Message

INDIANAPOLIS (LBM) – Here are the highlights from the 2024 SBC Annual Meeting, June 10-12.
Law Amendment (ban on

women pastors)

Messengers cast 5,099 ballots in favor (61.45 percent) of the Law Amendment and 3,999 against (38.38 percent). However, the majority fell short of the two-thirds (66.67 percent) threshold needed to amend the SBC Constitution.

Last year, in New Orleans, 80 percent of messengers approved the measure to ban women pastors.

However, failing in 2024 means the issue is dead for now because any constitutional amendment needs to be passed by the su-

permajority of messengers in two consecutive annual meetings.

Disfellowshipped (legacy Virginia congregation)

Nearly 92 percent (6,750) of ballots sustained the Credentials

See ROUNDUP, page 7

SOUTHERN BAPTISTS CONDUCT BUSINESS, ENJOY FELLOWSHIP, SHARE GOSPEL

Crossover yields 185 decisions for Christ

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

INDIANAPOLIS (LBM) – A variety of evangelistic efforts preceding the Southern Baptist Conven-

tion Annual Meeting produced saving knowledge of Jesus in 185 new believers.

According to the North American Mission Board, 44 churches in the Indianapolis area participated

in Crossover, which took place June 3-8 in the city. The events had 1,469 volunteers who shared the Gospel with 5,393 people.

See CROSSOVER, page 6

Knuckles grateful for God's faithfulness after brain surgery

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By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

DERIDDER, La. (LBM) – Alan Knuckles was a year into his first pastorate after retiring as a director of missions when he sustained an injury that forever changed his world. But he was reminded of God's goodness by the love

that was shown to him by Louisiana Baptists from across the state.

Knuckles, on August 20, 2019, had just attended a meeting in the Louisiana Baptist Building, Alexandria, when he fell and injured his head in the parking lot. An ambulance transported him to Rapides Regional Medical Center,

where doctors determined he needed surgery to remove a tumor in the brain.

In the ensuing months, Knuckles received prayers, visits, calls and text messages that helped him persevere through the trials.

"I had great support from people around the state and can remember people sitting with me in the emergency room and later in my private room," Knuckles told the *Baptist Message*. "I can't tell you the names of everyone who was there to see me, but I appreciate each and every one of them so much because they were a real blessing to me."

After physical rehabilitation, Knuckles continued serving as pastor of Shiloh

Baptist Church, DeRidder, faithfully teaching through Facebook videos while the congregation was not meeting in person due to the pandemic. He resigned in the summer of 2020, and now he and his wife, Helen, are members of Dry Creek Baptist Church.

Knuckles said his time as a pastor and director of missions were a blessing.

"I did everything I could to encourage the pastors and to be there for them," said Knuckles, who was honored in November as a 2023 Louisiana Bi-Vocational Pastor and Retiree of the Year. "I put a lot of miles on a vehicle as I visited the pastors as director of missions. I tried to have strong relationships with them."

A native of Atlanta, Georgia, Knuckles grew up in Southern Baptist churches but did not accept Christ until he was 24 while attending a Billy Graham Crusade in Raleigh, North Carolina. Shortly after, he felt the call to ministry and en-

See KNUCKLES, page 16

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FBC Baton Rouge to celebrate 150th anniversary

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, has a series of scheduled events to coincide with a 150th anniversary that will give members a chance to remember their storied past as well as look to a hopeful future.

“First Baptist Church Baton Rouge has stood as a beacon of faith, hope and love for a century and a half,” FBCBR Music Minister Christian Vige told the Baptist Message. “This milestone is not just a marker of time, but a celebration of countless lives transformed, hearts touched and communities served. It’s a time to reflect on the rich history of the church, honoring those who laid the foundation of faith and those who have continued to build upon it.

“The sesquicentennial anniversary provides a unique opportunity to reflect on the church’s journey and renew our commitment to the mission and vision that God has placed before us for the future,” he added. “As we look back on the past 150 years, we are reminded of the countless ways God has worked through our church to spread His love and message.”

EVENTS

The church will kick off its anniversary with “Stars, Stripes and Sounds: A Patriotic Musical Celebration” July 4 at 7 p.m. The event will honor the country’s heritage, faith and freedom through music and dancers from the Baton Rouge Ballet Theater. Afterward, those in attendance will be able to head to the Mississippi River front near the church for a

city-wide fireworks display.

The following month, FBCBR will host its second Gathered Voices concert. Scheduled for Aug. 17 at 6:30 p.m., the evening will feature a diverse and interactive worship experience blending liturgical and Gospel choral music with a background of singers and orchestra players.

And on Sep. 29, the church will wrap up its festivities with a sesquicentennial 150th anniversary celebration at 10 a.m. The special service will feature remarks from Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn, music led by a mass choir comprised of past and present choir members, full orchestra, organist and responsive readings.

REFLECTIONS

Long-time member Monica Eskine was part of

the church when it commemorated 100 years of ministry and is looking forward to another grand celebration this year.

“Here we are now 50 years later, and it’s a big privilege to be able to serve and to show that First Baptist Church is still a viable part of the city,” she said. “We can still be a shining light for God to show Himself.

“A lot of contemporaries of mine were also married in the church and the people have such long-time loyalty to First Baptist,” she continued. “Our new pastor is going to be a young influence on our church. I think that First Baptist is going to need to be flexible and show that we still have what God wants for the city and that we can grow and show that Baton Rouge is still going to be able to be a witness for God.”

Bob Reeves, another

long-time member, said he is looking forward to how God will use FBCBR in its 150th year and beyond.

“Many of the members have been here a long time and they are dedicated to seeing the church be a beacon to the community both in downtown and other parts of the city,” he said. “So, I’m confident we’re in God’s will and are excited about what’s going to happen.”

FBCBR was founded in 1874 after 18 members met in a rented hall off what is known today as Fourth Street in Baton Rouge. Since then, the church has been led by 22 pastors, started 29 mission churches, relocated to its current location, completed several building additions on the property, helped construct the Baptist Student Center at Louisiana State University and, most importantly,

See ANNIVERSARY, page 11

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Preparing Graduates ♦ Transforming Lives

Alabama native Ingram retiring to Mississippi after 16 years of Louisiana ministry

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – For the past 16 years, Jeff Ingram has traveled the state helping Louisiana Baptist congregations discover how to better carry out the God-given mandate to make disciples.

Ingram, who is set to retire June 30 from the Evangelism and Church Grown

team, told the *Baptist Message* he is thankful for having had the opportunity “to serve the churches.”

“I really value the relationships I’ve had through the years with our LBC staff, but also with associational mission strategists, pastors, church staff and lay leaders,” he said. “Just ‘thank you’ for the opportunity to get to know you, to work with you and to see how God is work-

ing through Louisiana Baptists to reach and minister to the people in their communities.”

CALLED TO SERVE

Ingram grew up in a home where church attendance was a priority, but during his teen years he became less engaged. After he graduated high school and began attending the University of South Alabama, he felt the need to join the Baptist Student Union and attend Spring Hill Baptist Church, Mobile, Alabama, he said.

However, it was during a revival service at Agricola Baptist Church, Lucedale, Mississippi, that Ingram



Jeff Ingram

made his relationship with Christ personal.

During the next 39 years, Ingram devoted himself to vocational Christian ministry and served the Lord through several congregations: youth minister,

Agricola Baptist (1984-1986); minister of youth, First Baptist Church, Sanford, Florida (1986-1988); minister of education, youth minister, children’s minister and senior adult minister, First Baptist Church, Wiggins, Mississippi (1988-1996); minister of education, Highland Baptist Church, Vicksburg, Mississippi (1996-2000); and minister of adults, First Baptist Church, Brandon, Mississippi (2000-2008).

In 2008, Ingram accepted the call to join Louisiana Baptists as the adult ministry strategist. Ten years later, he took on the added role of church administration strategist.

During his time on the state mission services team, Ingram served churches through coordinating Sunday school and discipleship training events that ranged from one-to-one meetings to large group events with several hundred attendees.

“Over these past 16 years that I’ve been here I have thoroughly enjoyed working with the different churches around the state,” Ingram said. “Louisiana is a very interesting state with great

See INGRAM, page 5

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Ingram from page 4

diversity. I've enjoyed getting to know the pastors and the church staff and the lay leaders, leading adult Sunday school meetings around the state and meeting so many different people. That's been a real joy and a fun part of this position. Also, assisting churches with senior adult ministry and church administration topics has been rewarding.

"I also am certainly thankful for the people here in the Baptist Building that I've worked with, including Keith Manuel, Catherine Hall and the many others who have given their support all these years."

WORDS OF GRATITUDE

"Jeff Ingram embodies the mission of the Executive Board of the Louisiana Baptist Convention to seek the lost, strengthen churches and support our cooperative missions and ministries," Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn said. "Whether he was volunteering on a mission trip, providing consultation to a local church or fulfilling his primary role on the Evangelism and Church Growth team, Jeff has always been willing to say 'yes.'"

"We are going to miss his easy-going personality, dry sense of humor and calm demeanor," he continued. "We pray the very best for Jeff and (his wife) Suzanne as they transition into retirement and find God's calling in this new season."

Louisiana Baptist Evangelism and Church Growth team Leader Keith Manuel added his appreciation for Ingram's service to churches.

"I am thankful for Dr. Ingram's unwavering dedication and tireless efforts to

partner with and strengthen our Baptist churches throughout Louisiana," he said. "His commitment to reaching and discipling people, particularly senior adults, has profoundly impacted countless lives. Our team is deeply grateful for his compassionate leadership and inspiring service. We pray the days ahead are just as fruitful for Jeff and Suzanne as they transition into this new phase of life."

PRESSING ON

Moving forward, Ingram anticipates spending more

time with Suzanne as they move to the Jackson, Mississippi, area, and traveling to see their son, Lance, daughter-in-law, Anna, and granddaughter, Maggie, who reside in Memphis, Tennessee.

"I've enjoyed my time in Louisiana, but I just felt like it's time for me to slow down a little bit," he said. "This fall after we get settled, I'd love to do some

supply work and perhaps even do some interims in churches.

"I'm very thankful for my wife and the support she's given me through the years of our marriage and what she's done in my ministry," he continued. "Her love and support have been a key part in helping me with my work through the LBC and with churches in Mississippi."

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Robin Cometet photo

Jessica Bronson of Living World Baptist Church in Indianapolis prayed for Wayne and Marty Miller as they waited in the food distribution line during Crossover, June 9.



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Crossover from page one

Throughout the week-end, efforts included block parties, door-to-door witnessing, compassion projects and more evangelistic events.

Sixty-five students and professors from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary participated in evangelism classes each morning and in the afternoon shared the Gospel door-to-door around the city.

NOBTS had the largest group, with 20 NOBTS and Leavell College students and evangelism professors Preston Nix and Jeff Farmer. By the end of the week, NOBTS team knocked on 1,756 doors and had 227 Gospel conversations that resulted in 33 decisions to follow Christ.

“Several of our students



Preston Nix/NOBTS photo

A New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary student shared the Gospel outside a home in Indianapolis. He was part of a larger group of students from four seminaries who participated in a week of evangelism classes and door-to-door witnessing in the city.

led their very first person to faith in Christ and they were thrilled,” NOBTS Professor of Evangelism and Evangelistic Preaching Preston Nix told the *Baptist Message*. “Now that they have seen that the Lord can use them to help bring people to salvation, they will do it again. Mission accomplished by this evangelism professor.”

Among the most memorable moments for Nix was when a NOBTS team led a mother and her son and two daughters to Christ at their home along with another individual nearby to a relationship with Jesus.

“While one team member was leading the mother to Christ, which by the way was the first person she has ever won to Christ, another team member shared with her kids and led three of them to Christ,” he said. “Meanwhile, the third team member engaged a guy working on a nearby house when he was walking back to his work truck parked in front of the lady’s home. All of them finished praying to receive Christ at virtually the same time and there was great rejoicing in that Indianapolis front yard that afternoon. Hallelujah.”

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ROUNDUP

from page one



VanPayne/The Baptist Paper photo

FBC Alexandria Pastor Robert Stephens responded to the motion to unseat messengers from his congregation. He was given three minutes to speak against the recommendation of the Credentials Committee.

Committee's recommendation to oust the historic First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia. The congregation, which has a female pastor on staff, was found not to "closely identify" with the SBC.

The move comes a year after messengers, during the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting, disfellowshipped three churches who were found to be "not in friendly cooperation" with the SBC: Saddleback Church, Lake Forest, California

(three ordained women pastors), Fern Creek Baptist Church, Louisville, Kentucky (female senior pastor), and Freedom Church, Vero Beach, Florida (mishandling of sex abuse allegation).

ARITF recommendations

Two years after voting to form a task force to investigate sexual abuse allegations in SBC churches, messengers approved two recommendations:

(1) expand a ministry toolkit (to include a five-step program to combat sexual abuse: train, screen, protect, report and care), establish a ministry check website and create a permanent home for abuse prevention and response; and

(2) assign the SBC EC to finalize the structure and funding to implement and support these objectives, and report back to messengers next year.

Meanwhile, the ARITF reported that after two years the ministry check website, sbcabuseprevention.com, still has not been populated with names of known sexual offenders connected to SBC church-



VanPayne/The Baptist Paper photo

Members of the SBC Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force fielded questions during a press conference in Indianapolis.



VanPayne/The Baptist Paper photo

GCR Evaluation Task Force Chair Jay Adkins, pastor, First Baptist Church, Westwego, addressed messengers during the group's report.

es. However, they told messengers that around 100 past cases have been investigated and the abuses confirmed, so the perpetrator's names will be released on the website once remaining insurance hurdles are cleared.

GCR Evaluation Task Force

Messengers approved six recommendations by the six-person GCR Evaluation Task Force (chaired by Jay Adkins, pastor, First Baptist Church, Westwego) that was formed last year to study and report about the impact the 2010 Great Commission Task Force recommendations have had on "the effectiveness of our North American Gospel mission effort ... and ... on the relationships between SBC ministry partners."

The GCR Evaluation Task Force recommended that the SBC:

(1) "cease using the

See ROUNDUP, page 8

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Roundup from page 7

category of, and any language related to "Great Commission Giving" in favor of reaffirming "the Cooperative Program as the primary method of giving for Southern Baptist churches";

(2) "restructure and simplify the ACP in an effort to effect more participation from churches, limiting the SBC requested information to a total number of 6 categories and 2 questions" (amended to clarify that CP giving still would be reported);

(3) request NAMB to "conduct an annual survey of the status of churches planted, revitalized, or otherwise assisted using CP funds 10 years out from their launch" to specifically report: how many still exist; how many remain SBC connected via CP giving & ACP reporting; and report this information to messengers at each annual

meeting and publish the data in the Book of Reports;

(4) request the SBC EC use its CP allocation to increase IMB's CP allocation to 51 percent by 2026-27 (as voted by messengers in 2010);

(5) request the Southern Baptist Historical Library and Archives to index the audio recordings of the 2010 Great Commission Task Force meetings to ready the materials for "public access" by June 16, 2025, when a 15-year embargo ends;

(6) request the SBC EC to propose governing document changes that require "entities, institutions, committees, or commissions of the Convention to report on the action they have taken on messenger approved recommendations coming from special work groups or task forces" (including all such



VAN PAYE/THE BAPTIST PAPER photo

Messengers elected a slate of new SBC officers. Clint Pressley, president; Brad Graves, first vice president; Eddie Lopez, second vice president; Don Currence, registration secretary; and Nathan Finn, recording secretary.

matters in the Book of Reports).

ELECTIONS

Clint Pressley, pastor of Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina, was elected SBC president (from among six candidates) after winning a second runoff with 4,244 votes (56.12 percent)

to Tennessee Pastor Dan Spencer's 3,305 votes (43.71 percent).

In other office races, messengers elected:

-- Brad Graves (pastor, First Baptist Church Ada, Oklahoma), first vice president;

-- Eddie Lopez (pastor, Hispanic ministry, First Baptist Church, Forney, Texas), second vice presi-

dent;

-- Don Currence (administrative pastor, First Baptist Church, Ozark, Missouri), registration secretary; and

-- Nathan Finn (provost, North Greenville University, South Carolina), recording secretary.

See ROUNDUP, page 9

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Roundup from page 8

MESSENGER COUNT

The annual meeting drew 10,946 messengers, including 310 from Louisiana.

Messenger counts for other recent SBC annual meetings:

- 2023 (New Orleans), 12,737
- 2022 (Anaheim, California), 8,133
- 2021 (Nashville, Tennessee), 15,726
- 2020 pandemic (no annual meeting)
- 2019 (Birmingham, Alabama), 8,183
- 2018 (Dallas, Texas), 9,632

HOWDY IN DALLAS for '25

Now that the 2024 Annual Meeting has concluded, messengers will prepare for next year's gathering of Southern Baptists. The 2025 Annual Meeting is scheduled June 10-11 in Dallas.

RESOLUTIONS SUMMARIES

- On integrity in SBC leadership (emphasizes repentance and accountability for leaders who commit a disqualifying sin)
- On Defending Religious Liberty (opposes "any effort ... to establish Christianity as the state religion of the United States of America")
- On Just War and the Pursuit of Peace (restates the "historic, Christian principles" of "Just War Theory")
- On Justice and Peace in the Aftermath of the October 7 attack on Israel (condemns Hamas' terrorist attacks on Israel as well as anti-Israel and pro-Hamas activities on university campuses)
- On the Ethical Realities of Reproductive Technologies and the Dignity of the Human Embryo (expresses concerns with in vitro fertilization, which

assists couples with reproduction but often results in the "destruction" or "stockpiling" of embryos which are not implanted)

- On the God-given Rights and Responsibilities of Parents (affirms "that parents are the primary stewards of and decision-makers for their children, rather than teachers, doctors, or the state")
- On Evangelism and the Great Commission (urges Southern Baptists "to make every effort ... to share the [G]ospel message")
- On Appreciation for Indianapolis (expresses gratitude to all those who contributed to the 2024 SBC Annual Meeting and related events).

Two additional resolutions were not considered because of time constraints:

- On the Pro-life Ethic in a Pro-Roe Society
- On the Danger of Abusing No-Disclosure and Non-Disparagement Agreements

SUMMARY OF MOTIONS

Messengers adopted a motion to unseat members from the First Baptist Church, Alexandria, Virginia, (related to the issue of a woman pastor on staff).

They rejected a motion to abolish the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission, another that would have censured SBC leaders for signing an amicus brief that was considered harmful to sexual abuse survivors, and five more that requested:

- a BF&M 2000 review
- fact-finding about the Abuse Reform Implementation Task Force
- elimination of earthly pledges of allegiance during SBC activities
- examination of NAMB's legal matters (2017-2024)
- permission for ERLC to raise funds from non-SBC sources

Other motions were referred for entity responses:

SBC EC

- improve SBC.net
- include emerging regions' members on boards, committees, etc.
- reallocate all CP funds from ERLC to IMB
- add sexual abuse awareness and prevention ministry assignment to ERLC, or create new entity to do same
- amend trustee qualifications
- allow more time for questions during entity reports
- add Nicene Creed to BF&M 2000
- affirm Apostles', Athanasian and Nicene Creeds in BF&M 2000
- require two-thirds vote to amend BF&M 2000
- revise Credential Committee process (messenger vote is final)

See **ROUNDUP**, page 12



GBOM

GEORGIA BARNETTE

MARK 1:38

LOUISIANA MISSIONS OFFERING

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Baptism from page one

in New Orleans. In May 2023, LBC Executive Director Steve Horn shared with LBC Executive Board members his desire to restore a “culture of evangelism” among Louisiana Baptists. His vision accompanied the announcement of Send Network Louisiana, a church planting partnership (launched in August 2023) with the SBC North American Mission Board that includes a God-sized task to see His Kingdom expanded in Louisiana by one percent over the next decade. Researchers estimate that 62.4 percent of 4,648,794 Louisianans are lost (or, 2,789,276). If successful, 28,875 Louisianans will be added to the Kingdom through 231 new churches planted in the state by 2033 (based on each reaching 125 people with the Gospel). These salvations will be in addition to those recorded by already established Louisiana Baptist congregations.

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Top 5 Churches in Baptisms - Worship between 1 and 75

Congregation	Association	TotalBap	Worship
Bogalusa	Washington	42	60
Natchitoches	Natchitoches	40	55
First, Baker	William Wallace	37	26
Rescue II, West Monroe	Northeast Louisiana	24	65
First, Converse	North Sabine	22	60

Top 5 Churches in Baptisms - Worship between 76 and 250

Congregation	Association	TotalBap	Worship
First, Gilbert	Deer Creek	78	150
Grace Community, Iota	Acadia	40	80
United Outreach, Shreveport	Northwest Louisiana	38	175
Youngsville Community, Youngsville	Evangeline	34	182
First, Leesville	Vernon Baptist	32	181

Top 5 Churches in Baptisms - Worship greater than 250

Congregation	Association	TotalBap	Worship
Celebration, Metairie	New Orleans Baptist	395	4058
Cypress, Benton	Northwest Louisiana	285	2020
Journey Church, Pineville	CenLa	176	877
North Monroe, Monroe	Northeast Louisiana	154	1882
Trinity, Lake Charles	Carey	134	1513

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September 9-10 | Open Door Community Church, Lafayette

Quitman Baptist RA wins national Pinewood Derby at SBC

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

INDIANAPOLIS (LBM) – Josiah Jones, a fifth grader from Quitman Baptist Church, recently won the national Royal Ambassador Pinewood Derby in the same city where the famed Indianapolis 500 is held each year.

Held June 9 prior to the 2024 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, the race featured eight finalists from around the SBC who competed inside the exhibit hall. Jones, who won the Louisiana Baptist RA Congress Pinewood Derby race in March, expressed excitement about coming in first place on the national level, and thanked Louisiana Baptist Men's Ministry Strategist Stan Statham and Southern Baptist Woman's Missionary Union consultant for RAs, Challengers and Youth on



Josiah Jones

Mission Keith Gates (also a member of First Baptist Church, Winnsboro) for coordinating the event.

"It was a unique and fun experience," Jones told the Baptist Message. "I'm thankful to my church, Quitman Baptist; my pastor, Brother Donald Rudd; and my RA leader, Corey Rowe, for making this possible through RA Congress."

Anniversary from page 3

has seen thousands of people come into a relationship with Christ.

The church, on June 16, will welcome its 23rd pas-

tor, Andrew Ogea. He is the son of the church's interim pastor, Reggie Ogea.

Vige said the church's anniversary service will serve as a memorial to God's unwavering providence, favor and guidance and compared it to when Joshua set up 12 stones as a memorial to God for leading the Israelites out of the Jordan River, as told in Joshua 4:21-24.

"Just as the Israelites set up stones to remember God's faithfulness, our church's 150th anniversary will serve as a memorial to God's unwavering providence, favor, and guidance," he said. "As we celebrate this milestone, we also will look ahead with anticipation and faith. The future of First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, is filled with potential for growth, outreach, and even deeper community impact. God's work is not done, and we are privileged to be part of the unfolding story He is writing in our church and community."

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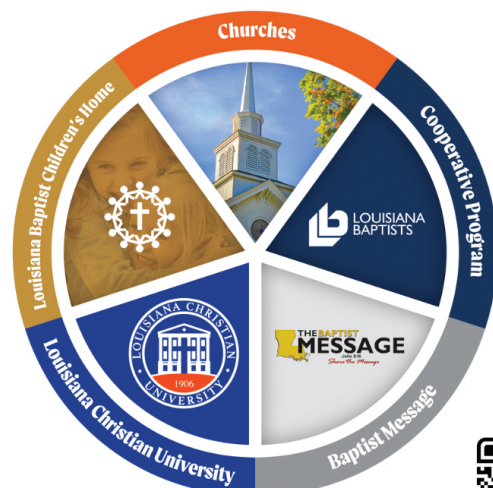
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SBC EC declines transparency motions

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

INDIANAPOLIS – Leading up to the 2024 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, the Executive Committee declined to act on two motions that called for enhanced transparency in the financial reports provided by Southern Baptist entities.

Presented by messengers during the 2023 SBC Annual Meeting in

New Orleans, the motions would have required Convention entities to provide Southern Baptists with detailed information about highly compensated individuals -- like other tax-exempt organizations that are mandated to submit the Form 990 to the Internal Revenue Service.

The motions would not have required entities to submit Form 990 to the IRS, but only provide the detailed breakout information about executive sala-

ries to Southern Baptists.

Instead of requiring such transparency, the EC urged Convention entities to uphold all current reporting standards and promised to review the Business and Financial Plan "to determine ways to enhance transparency and clarity of reporting to the Convention, and will report its findings and recommendations to the messengers at the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting in Dallas."



Jeff Iorg gave his first official report to Southern Baptist messengers as the Executive Committee president and CEO.



Philip Robertson, pastor of Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville, was re-elected to a second term as Executive Committee Chairman.

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"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ;" Ephesians 4:11-12

ROUNDUP from page 9

- give timely access to proposed resolutions ahead of annual meeting
- publish messenger names on both sides of nametags
- publish all money spent on legal matters (2021-24)

- publish contact information for entity trustees
- require entities to publish conflict of interest policies
- require greater financial transparency by entities
- require entities to disclose all financial information required by the IRS

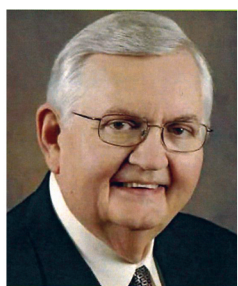
- on Form 990
- study effects of vaccine mandates on IMB missionaries
- study elders and deacons in local churches
- study how to minister to special needs community

See ROUNDUP, page 13



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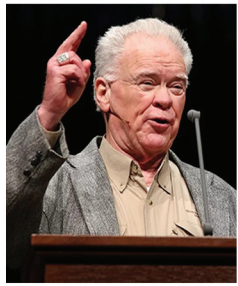
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Baptisms mark launch of FBC Moss Bluff's second campus

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

DERIDDER, La. (LBM) – Sensing God's call to plant a church for several years, Bubba Sharpton said it was easy to say "yes" in June 2023 to an invitation to become pastor of a second campus of First Baptist Church, Moss Bluff.

Ten months later, the church's second campus celebrated its first service, March 31, with four baptisms and 420 people packing the congregation's temporary home at the Wooten Theater in DeRidder.

"We were overwhelmed and humbled at the tangible joy and excitement experienced by all who were able to join us," Sharpton told the *Baptist Message*. "God exceeded our expectations and moved in a powerful way through baptism, song, and the sharing of the Word."

BACKGROUND

In 2020, Sharpton was enjoying a career in the chemical plant industry when he and his wife,

Brandi, who were both members of FBCMB at the time, sensed that God wanted them to get their finances in order. As the couple began to pay down their home mortgage, FBCMB staff conducted a survey on the church's health and readiness to take the "next step" in following God. Compiling the inputs, a plan emerged to plant a second campus in DeRidder.

By early 2023, FBCMB Pastor Bryan Carter believed Sharpton was the man to lead the church's north campus. Sharpton became a staff member of the church, completed North American Mission Board church planting assessment and assembled a core team of 26 members and a launch team of 75 members of FBCMB.

Together they began to pray and dream about how God could use them to reach DeRidder.

After meeting in small groups and for worship services throughout March 2024, the first official service finally took place on Easter Sunday.

Carter said this has

been a time of faith-building for the FBCMB congregation.

"For our church, we truly are embracing the commands of Christ to take the Gospel not only to the ends of the earth, but across the street and into towns near Moss Bluff," Carter said. "Our heart and our vision are to obey God's will and that has included multiplication."

"It's challenging but exciting at the same time to see how God has orchestrated this, and we get to see His blessings come from that obedience," he continued. "I'm so grateful for a church that encourages following God's lead."

FUTURE FORWARD

With the first month
See **MOSS BLUFF**, page 16

Roundup from page 13

-- study the feasibility of remote participation in annual meetings
-- enable remote participation in annual meetings

NAMB

-- submit to a forensic audit
-- study the need for Christian schools in impoverished or rural areas
-- study how churches can be more evangelistically effective (baptisms)

IMB

-- study Philippine indigenous Baptist pastors

LIFEWAY

-- produce homeschool curriculum and resources

ALL ENTITIES

-- do not use pro-LGBT law firms
-- revise codes of conduct regarding alcohol
-- do not promote Calvinism / Reformed Theology
Meanwhile, eight mo-



New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Jamie Dew.

tions were ruled out of order (investigate SBC response to sexual abuse; ban politicians from annual meetings during election years; examine NAMB court documents since 2017; request resignation of ERLC president; affirm Nicene creed; set aside prayer time during Pastors Conference; prohibit CP funds for entity personnel to attend annual meetings as messengers; require entities to release statements of support for Israel).

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Please send resume to: kathy@lbch.org or Granberry Counseling Centers, PO Box 4196, Monroe, LA 71211.

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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.

SEEKING A PASTOR
Bellevue BC in Jena, LA is seeking a full-time or bi-vocational pastor. Mail résumés to Pastor Search Chairman, 124 Meadowood Dr, Jena, LA 71342 or email to rsteale_71342@yahoo.com.

SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR
Sandy Bayou Baptist Church, Columbia, LA is seeking God's man to lead this small community church and help it grow. Parsonage is available as part of compensation. Send résumé to William Parker, search committee chairman, 6441 Highway 559, Columbia, LA 71418 or email to SBBC2024@yahoo.com.

SEEKING PASTOR
Alabama Baptist Church, Arcadia is seeking a full-time or bi-vocational pastor, however the Lord leads. Résumés should be submitted to: Pastor Search Committee 305 Pinecrest Road Arcadia, LA 71001

SEEKING A PASTOR
First Baptist Church in Bastrop, La. Is seeking a pastor. Please email your résumés to: pastorsearch@firstbastrop.org

Music MINISTRY
Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jasper, Texas is seeking a FT Minister of Music/Worship to lead a blended style of music. Experience in audio/visual technology is needed. If interested, send résumés to debbiereed@hbcjasper.com, 409.384.3371. A full job description can be requested.

SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR
Jerusalem Baptist Church in Hammond, LA seeking a full-time pastor. Please mail résumés to Jerusalem Baptist Church, 11109 Jerusalem Church Rd, Hammond, LA 70403 or email to accounting@jbcpc.org.

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Music Ministry
First Baptist Church, Natchitoches, Louisiana is seeking a Full Time Minister of Worship/Music to lead a blended worship ministry. If interested, send resumes to jendris@fbcnatchitoches.com or call 318-352-3737. A full job description can be found at www.fbcnatchitoches.org.

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Lee's Creek Baptist Church, Bogalusa La., is currently seeking a full-time or part-time minister of music. Please send your resumes to 1803 Lees Creek, Church Road Bogalusa, LA 70427 or e-mail Lcbcpastor1@gmail.com.

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EDITOR'S NOTE: The Baptist Message provides churches an opportunity to share with other Louisiana Baptists an upcoming revival, homecoming, new pastor, new staff member, a community outreach, or a concert in Louisiana Notables. **To place your event in the paper, send your information (who, what, where, when, time) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. Please submit your information four weeks prior to the event to insure placement in the Message.**

ON THE MOVE

- Andrew Ogea is the new pastor of First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge. His father, Reggie Ogea, has been Interim pastor at FBCBR since April 2023.
- Kevin, wife Melainie, Ulmer is the new Louisiana Baptists evangelism strategist on the Evangelism/Church Growth Team. He begins on July 1.
- Chuck Clinton is the new music minister at First Baptist Church, Greenwood.
- Russell, wife Hope, James is the new youth minister for Bonita Road Baptist Church, Bastrop.
- Kevin, wife Nichole, Seefried is the new student past at Mount Vernon Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- Lane Noakes is the new youth minister at First Baptist Church, Dry Prong.
- Riley Robertson is the new music minister at Victory Baptist Church, Monroe.
- Jeff Hoffman, Pastor of FBC Arcadia, is the next Director of Missions at the Bienville & Webster-Claiborne Baptist Association. He replaces Randy Hales who is retiring.

REVIVAL

- Topsy Baptist Church, Lake Charles: Spring Revival 2024, July 7-10, Evangelist: Scott McDowell. Worship: The Mackey Willis Family. Pastor: Lloyd Carroll.
- Mitchell Baptist Church, Converse: Harvest Sunday, July 14. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: None.
- Hurricane Creek Baptist Church, Dodson: Spring Revival 2024, July 14-19. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Travis Hampton.
- First Baptist Church, Keithville: Harvest Sunday, July 21, Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Mike Stowell.
- Palestine Baptist Church, Grant: Spring Revival 2024, July 21-24. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Worship: The Mackey Willis Family. Pastor: Hardy Estes,
- First Baptist Church, Princeton: Harvest Sunday, July 28. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Darrell Cooper.
- Welcome Home Baptist Church, Hebert: Spring Revival 2024, July 28-31. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Jim McKeithen.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Livingston: Revival, July 29-August 1. Evangelist: Malcolm Ellis. Pastor: James Courtney

LAGNIAPPE

- First Baptist Church, Minden: June Jubilee – A collective worship concert, June 29, 6 p.m. Featuring: First Baptist Minden, First Baptist Pineville & LeCompte, First Baptist Church, Arcadia, City on a Hill Pentecostals, Jake Cowley, Point of Grance (June 29th only) and The Cox

Family. Admission is free. Pastor: Leland Crawford.

- Alto Baptist Church, Alto: GOD & COUNTRY DAY, June 30, 10:30 a.m. Speaker: Dr. Ralph Abraham. Worship: Brothers in Christ. A barbecue lunch will be served following the service. Pastor: Alan Miller.

- First Baptist Church, Pineville: June Jubilee – A collective worship concert, June 30, 6 p.m. Featuring: First Baptist Minden, First Baptist Pineville & LeCompte, First Baptist Church, Arcadia, City on a Hill Pentecostals, Jake Cowley, Point of Grance (June 29th only) and The Cox Family. Admission is free. Pastor: Stewart Hol-loway.

- First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: The music department of First Baptist, Baton Rouge presents Stars, Stripes and Sounds, July 4, 7 p.m. Join us for an evening of celebration as we honor our country's heritage, faith, and freedom through the power of music. Following the concert, head to the riverfront for spectacular fireworks display that will light up the night sky. Admission is free, and this event promises to be a great experience for the whole family. Come and be a part of this patriotic celebration. Pastor: Andrew Ogea.

- Red Oak Baptist Church, Livingston: Chronicles in concert, July 7, 11 a.m. Pastor: Carl Varnado.

- Ashland Baptist Church, Ashland: Ivan Parker In Concert, July 7, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taking. Pastor: Danny Slack

- Indian Village Baptist Church, Kinder: Southern Plainsmen of Hornbeck in concert, July 7. Pastor: Kevin Willis.

- Cedar Crest Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, July 14, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Bruce Worrell.

- Fardoche Baptist Church, Fardoche: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert with The Journeys, July 21, 5 p.m. Pastor: Toby Delahoussaye.

- Grangeville Baptist Church, Pine Grove: Chronicles in concert, July 21, 11 a.m. Pastor: Mike Cotton.

- Beech Springs Baptist Church, Quitman: Ben Waites in Concert, July 28, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Jason Womack.

- Rose Park Baptist Church, Shreveport: Mark Trammell Quartet in concert, August 4, 10 a.m. Pastor: B.J. Maddox.

- Grace Baptist Church, Goldonna: Southern Plainsmen of Hornbeck in concert, August 4, 9:45 a.m. Pastor: Myron Thompson.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

- First Baptist Church, Mansfield: Breaker Rock Beach VBS 2024, June 16-20, 6 - 8:30 p.m. Sign up at myvbs.org/fbcmansfield. Pastor: Chad Hardbarger.

- Atlanta and Sardis Baptist Churches, Atlanta: Vacation Bible School, June 17-19, 6-8 p.m. Pastor: Chad James.

- Bayou Oaks Baptist Church, Monroe: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17 – 20, 9 a.m. til noon. Pastor: Clyde Sanchez

- North Monroe Baptist Church, Bastrop: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17 – 20 5:30 – 8:30 p.m. Pastor: Kevin Crim

- Ouachita, Baptist Church West Monroe: The Great Jungle Journey VBS, June 17 – 20, 5:30 – 8:15 p.m. Pastor: MikeHolloway

- Liberty Christian Church, Colfax: Vacation Bible School, June 17-21, 6-8 p.m. Pastor: None.

- Hebron Baptist Church, Dry Prong: Vacation Bible School, June 17-21, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m.. Commencement Sunday, June 23 at 11 a.m. Pastor:

Travis Sanders.

- Fair Park Baptist Church, West Monroe: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17 – 21 8:30 – Noon. Pastor: Waymond Warre n.

- South Winnfield Baptist Church, Winnfield: Scuba VBS, June 17-21, 5-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Jack Miller.

- Bethany Baptist Church, Bethany: Vacation Bible School, June 17 – 21, 5- 8 p.m. Pastor: Marvin Cooper.

- First Baptist Church, Natchitoches: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17-21, 9 a.m. – noon. This is for all who have completed pre-k 4 through 6th grade. To sign up for VBS go to <https://forms.gle/292fQ6nRSrSA3488>. Pastor: Tommy Rush.

- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: Breaker Rock Beach, June 17-21, 6-8:30 p.m. Online Pre-registration is open through Wednesday, June 12. After June 12th, must register in person on campus. Open Registration for Completed Kindergarten through 6th Grade. Kindergarten Note: Maximum of 45 Kindergarteners. Pastor: Philip Robertson.

- Judson Baptist Church, Walker: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17-21. For more information, contact the church. Pastor: David Lane.

- Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Lisbon: "Stepping Up" Sports Camp, June 17-21, 5-8 p.m. Pastor: Chris Stephens.

- Cook Baptist Church, Ruston: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17-21 from 9 a.m. til noon each day. To sign up or if you have any questions please contact Mrs. Dandy or register at <https://cookbaptistchurch.churchcenter.com/.../2290305>. Pastor: Joseph Fowler.

- Lakeside Baptist Church, Winnfield: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17-21 5:30-7:30 p.m. Pastor: Mitchell Miles.

- Springhill Baptist Church, Jonesville: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 17-21 6- 8 p.m. Pastor: Don Cardin.

- Liberty Christian Church, Colfax: Vacation Bible School, June 17-21 6:00 - 8:00 Pastor: None.

- Hebron Baptist Church, Dry Prong: Vacation Bible School, June 17-21, 5:30 - 8:30 p.m. Commencement Sunday, June 23 at 11 a.m. Pastor: Travis Sanders.

- First Baptist Church, Winnfield: Vacation Bible

School, June 30-July 3, 5-&-30 p.m. Pastor: Jerry Pipes.

- Southside Baptist Church, Mansfield: Vacation Bible School, June 18-22, 6-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Gary Orr.

- First Baptist Church, Tullos: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 23-27, 5:30 -8:30 P.M. Go to www.tullosfbc.com for more information. Pastor: Scott Smith

- Indian Village Baptist Church, Kinder: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 23-27, 5-7:30 p.m. To register go www.indianvillagebc.org/2024/vbs-2024.html. Pastor: Kevin Lewis.

- Holloway Baptist Church, Deville: The Great Jungle Journey, June 23-27, 5:30-8 p.m. Go online to register. Pastor: Tim Shields.

- First Baptist Church, Keithville: Scuba Vacation Bible School 2024, June 23-26, 6-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Mike Stowell.

- Woodlawn Baptist Church, Iowa: Start the Party VBS, June 24-27, 6-8:30 p.m. To register go to <https://fb.me/eyJNldE4uw>. Pastor: Richard Louviere.

- First Baptist Church, Dry Prong: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, 5:30-8:15 p.m. To register go to <https://www.fbcdryprong.com/vbs>. Pastor: Trey Lewis.

- Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, 8 a.m.- Noon. Pastor: Eric Green.

- Olivet Baptist Church, Sulphur: Breaker Rock Beach, June 24-28, 9 a.m.-noon. To register go to <https://www.olivetbaptistsulphur.com/vbs>. Pastor: Kevin Craft.

- University Baptist Church, Lake Charles: Seven Days of Creation VBS, June 24-28, 9-11:30 a.m. Pastor: John Astling.

- First Baptist Church, Hackberry: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, 5-8 p.m. Pastor: Monty Rowse.

- First Baptist Church, Iowa: Proof Pirates Vacation Bible School, June 24-28, 6-7:30 p.m. To register go to <https://www.iowafbc.org/vbs>, Pastor: Brandon Oliver.

- First Baptist Church, Jennings: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, PreK 4 – Kindergarten | 8:30 – 11:30 a.m. and 1st – 6th Grade | 8:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

- To register go to fbcjennings.com/VBS. Pastor:

- Sale Street Baptist Church, Sulphur: Mega Sports Camp – Blaze the Trail, June 24-28, 5-8 p.m. To register go to <https://www.salestreet.org/megasportscamp>. Pastor: Drew Mills.

- First Baptist Church, Maplewood: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, 9 a.m.-noon Pastor: Jeremy Blocker.

- Mt. Olive & Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church: Breaker Rock Beach, June 24-28, 5-8 p.m. This is for ages K-12th grade. Pastor: Braylon Harris (Mt. Olive) and EJ Kemper (Mt. Pilgrim).

- First Baptist Church, Mandeville: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, 9 a.m.- noon. Pastor: Ronny Cooksey.

- University Baptist Church, Lake Charles: Seven Days of Creation VBS, June 24-28, 9-11:30 a.m. For kindergarten through the fifth grade: Pastor: John Astling.

- First Baptist Church, Hackberry: Breaker Rock Beach, June 24-28, 5-8 p.m. For kindergarten thought sixth grade (completed). Pastor: Monte Rowse

- First Baptist Church, Iowa: Proof Pirates, June 24-28, 6-7:30 p.m. For ages kindergarten to 12th grade. Registration: <https://www.iowafbc.org/vbs>. Pastor: Brandon Oliver.

- Faith Baptist Church, Bastrop: The Keepers of the Kingdom VBS, June 23 – 27, 6 – 8:15 p.m. Pastor: Stan Wyant.

- Lakeshore Baptist Church, Monroe: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 23 – 27, 5:30 – 8 p.m. Pastor: William Smith.

- Bethel Baptist Church, Bastrop: The Great Jungle Journey VBS, June 24 – 28, 9-11:30 a.m. Pastor: Tim Post.

- Greater New Antioch Baptist Church, Monroe: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24 – 28, 5-8 p.m. Pastor: John Russell.

- Northside Baptist Church, Montgomery: Vacation Bible School, June 24-27, 6 - 8:30 p.m., Pastor Scott Tilton.

- First Baptist Church, Jennings: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 24-28, Pre-K-kindergarten (8:30 – 11:30 a.m.); 1st-6th grade (8:30-11:30 a.m.) Registration: fbcjennings.com/VBS. Pastor: Eric Sonnier.

- Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe: Breaker Rock Beach VBS, June 26 – 28, 5:30 – 8 p.m. Pastor: Jim Wolfe.

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.

AMY ORIJ RN AMY SVXMAU SYL GWY OWRTYL, GLF

AMYU AMGA JAQSODYF GWY XVWA IVAM JAWY LXAM.

NVWJA JGSQYD AIR: NRQW

Clues:
R = D; N = O

Answer to May 23, Scripture Crypto:
Deuteronomy twenty-six:six

Knuckles from page 2

rolled at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary.

While in seminary, Knuckles began his first pastorate, Greenvine Baptist Church, Burton, Texas (1977-83). He subsequently served with two more Texas congregations: Powderly Baptist Church, Powderly (1983-91), and First Baptist Church, Fredericksburg (1991-92). Then Knuckles began his Louisi-

ana ministry: First Baptist Church, Crowley (1992-2000), Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, DeRidder (2000-2010), and Shiloh Baptist (2019-20). He was director of missions for the Acadia, Louisiana and Mount Olive Baptist Associations from 2010-19.

Looking to the future, Knuckles said "I just want to continue to serve God in the best way I can."



Van Payne/The Baptist Paper photo

Messengers voted on a new president, 50 motions, eight resolutions and other important matters during the 2024 SBC Annual Meeting in Indianapolis. The annual meeting drew 10,946 messengers, including 310 from Louisiana.

Moss Bluff from page 13

behind them, the church has begun to dream of their future.

The original three small groups have expanded to five and the church hopes to build their own facility within two years.

"We are filled with excitement and antici-

pation for the amazing work that God is doing in and through His people," Sharpton said. "We are expectant for the incredible ways He will use First North to bring hope, healing and transformation to the community. The best is yet to come."

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SOUTH

AUG. 10, 2024

First Baptist Church | Moss Bluff

KEYNOTE

PHILIP ROBERTSON

Pastor | Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville

WORSHIP

SCOTTY BLACKWELL

Minister of Music | First Baptist Church, Minden

NORTH

AUG. 24, 2024

Cypress Baptist Church | Benton

KEYNOTE

JAMES PRITCHARD

Pastor | First Baptist Church, Lafayette

WORSHIP

GLENN PRICE

Minister of Music | Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville

Registration and details at LouisianaBaptists.org/ReGroup24