

Attendance

13,000

Decisions

1,316

Salvations

602

More than 1,300 spiritual decisions made in Denham Springs

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

DENHAM SPRINGS, La. (LBM) – The Denham Springs High School football stadium became a house of God during the Livingston Parish GO TELL AMERICA Crusade, March 16-19.

By the end of the four-day spiritual encounter, including all related outside events, 1,316 persons had made decisions for Christ, with 602 individuals stepping forward to accept Christ, according to Chris Palmer, GO TELL director of ministry outreach.

Evangelist Rick Gage, founder of GO TELL Ministries in Duluth, Georgia, shared that more than a year ago his team met with pastors and other leaders to plan a crusade that would help reach a parish that Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association leaders believe is 80-90 percent



Brian Blackwell photo

Rick Gage, founder of Duluth, Ga.-based GO TELL Ministries, urged the crowd to turn to Christ before it is too late. By the end of the four-day spiritual encounter, including all outside related events, 1,300 had made decisions for Christ, with more than 600 stepping forward to accept Christ.

See DECISIONS, page 4

LCU's new president excited to foster LCU 'community'

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. — Newly-elected Louisiana

Christian University President Mark Louis Johnson, Sr. has a bold vision to grow the school through fostering community for

the Kingdom.

"It's not about me, it's about us, all of us who make up the LCU community," Johnson told the *Baptist Message*. "We're all doing this together, because that's the only way Louisiana Christian University will grow.

"It is a presidency, not a president," he said. "I'm wanting to bring people together to lead this institution together. One person

goes fast, but a community goes far."

Trustees of LCU elected Johnson as the school's 10th president during a meeting, Feb. 25.

Johnson is a native of Anderson, Indiana, and has served as pastor of several churches, including Edgewater Baptist Church, New Orleans (2019-2021); chaplain for the Cleveland Indians (now Guardians), New Orleans Baby Cakes

minor league baseball team and Tulane University men's basketball team; and missionary. He also is the author of multiple books, a former professional basketball player in Europe and South America and a podcaster.

He currently is an assistant professor of evangelism and pastoral ministry and the director

See JOHNSON, page 3

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FIRST PERSON: Save your Facebook Live videos

By **Steven Haney**
LBC Couumunications

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) - Every Sunday my Facebook feed is filled with livestreamed services from all over Louisiana and across the country. It is great to see so many churches using this platform to share the Gospel with their communities! And it is a great option for a lot of churches -- easy to use, great connection with people, and an afford-

able livestream option for churches.

While nothing is changing with the Facebook Live part of Facebook, there are some changes coming about storage of those Facebook Live recordings that may impact your church.

No need to panic though!

The New Policy: Beginning on February 19, any new live broadcast videos can be replayed, downloaded or shared from your Facebook pages or profiles for 30 days, after which they will be removed automatically from Facebook. Previously these videos were stored indefinitely.

You will have 90 days to download your existing video content before it is removed. Facebook will notify accounts via email and the app when this starts.

Your Next Steps: If your church has sermons and services from the past stored on Facebook, start downloading those as soon as possible. Facebook has provided a great walk-through of how to download multiple videos here.

It would be a great idea for your church to create a YouTube account, so that those services can continue being available: Creating a YouTube Account.

See FACEBOOK, page 6

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Number 4

Johnson from page 1

of the Doctor of Ministry program with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Search committee chair Tommy Kiker, pastor of East Leesville Baptist Church, expressed excitement about the hire.

"After nearly nine months of praying, listening, and seeking the Lord's will, today's approval of Dr. Mark Johnson as the 10th president of Louisiana Christian University is a wonderful answer to our diligent work and prayers," Kiker said. "May God bless His school in the years ahead."

"He certainly has qualifications, incredible references, proven service in Southern Baptist and Louisiana Baptist life, but he has the ability to change the atmosphere of any room he walks into."

Johnson also brings experience in fundraising.

Recently he served as a trustee of Washington and Jefferson College, including chairman of both the Development and Alumni Relations

Committee and Student Success Committee. He also was a member of the Enrollment/Admissions Committee, and the Campaign Steering Committee advising on a \$200 million campaign.

Johnson earned a Bachelor of Arts from Washington and Jefferson College, Washington, Pennsylvania; a Master of Divinity and Theology from Princeton Theological Seminary, Princeton, New Jersey; and the Doctor of Divinity from NOBTS. He is finalizing a Doctor of Philosophy in Evangelism and Leadership from NOBTS, examining the evangelistic strategies of Fred Luter, senior pastor with Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

Johnson and his wife, Heather, have four children: Mark Jr. (20), Jonathan (18), Victoria (15) and Benjamin (13).

ENGAGING COMMUNITY

When he officially assumes

his role in June, Johnson said he will embark upon the P356 Tour, a series of 100 events in 100 days. Based on Proverbs 3:5-6, the effort will aim to engage the community and promote the university.

"It's not me creating this; we're doing this together," he said. "And I think that's the only way Louisiana Christian University will succeed."

"I'm wanting to bring people together to say, 'let's lead this institution together, not put it on one person, because that's not possible,'" he continued. "We lead together. That means we celebrate together."

Johnson shared that he and his family will live in the Lynn Alumni Center, the building previously occupied by several past presidents of the school. Robert Lynn was the last president of the school (1975-1997) to live in the home, according to LCU.

"I believe it is essential to host potential students, current students, faculty, alumni, staff, and potential friends of the university on campus," he said.

While at NOBTS, Johnson enjoyed living on campus, and

he desires the same experience with LCU. He and his family plan to eat meals with students in the cafeteria, support the sports teams, cheer academic success, enjoy various theatrical activities and seek opportunities to encourage students through Bible studies and prayer.

"On the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary campus most faculty live on campus," he said. "We see our students in the classroom, cafeteria, chapel and in our homes for sporting events, Bible studies, or just for a meal and good talk."

He recalled one recent morning on LCU that reminded him of the value of living on campus.

"My wife and I were up walking at six in the morning, and we heard a sound coming from the stadium," he said. "We see lights at the stadium. The football players are having preseason workouts."

"And then we see more lights over the tennis courts," he continued. "Tennis balls are going everywhere, so we run across to the tennis courts and

greet the team. You can't get those moments if you're not on campus."

"My family and I want to be a part of the LCU/Pineville community," he said. "I want them to know my heart and build long-lasting relationships."

PRAYERS SOUGHT

Johnson asked Louisiana Baptists to pray for him, his family and LCU in the coming years.

"Pray that we will be able to connect with like-minded alumni and friends of the university willing to join us in creating a campus atmosphere that will produce the kind of graduate-leaders who will make lasting contributions in both society and the Kingdom," he said.

"Make disciples who make disciples is a cliché found on mission statements, but that best describes my heart," he said. "We want to be a place where God trusts us with a generation of young people

See JOHNSON, page 7

Flourish

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Rebecca Holloway

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Decisions from page 1

unchurched. Over the next year, this group prayed prepared with anticipation of a mighty harvest.

"It's just been a great move of God, and it's an area that was ripe for a harvest," Gage told the *Baptist Message*. "We're seeing pockets of revival across the nation and a great move of God among the younger generation."

"And as you study

the moves of God and the revivals of the past, you learn that many of those great moves of God started with young people. Wasn't it two and a half years ago at Asbury College in Wilmore, Kentucky, that revival started with a bunch of teenagers. So, we give God the glory for all that He's doing."

The crusade also featured Garrett Nussmeier, starting quarterback for

Louisiana State University; Adrian Despres, former University of South Carolina football team chaplain and current speaker with Forge Ministries in Denver, Colorado; Al Robertson, the oldest son of Duck Dynasty's Phil and Kay Robertson; and Ken Freeman, founder of Ken Freeman Ministries in San Antonio, Texas, who brought Gospel messages. Meanwhile, award-winning Christian band Rush of Fools shared about Christ through music.

Additionally, Gage and Freeman presented a character development program, "On Track," in 11 local schools in front of an estimated 8,000 combined students.

PREPARED

Nearly 50 people were trained to serve as crusade ushers, decision and follow-up counselors and 500 prayer warriors were recruited.

Organizers also held several events to pray,



Counselors met with those who made a decision for Christ at the end of each evening of the Livingston Parish GO TELL AMERICA Crusade.

plan and reach the youth. Among those was a youth rally, Feb. 19, attended by almost 700 students hosted by First Baptist Church, Denham Springs. By the end of the rally, 60 students came forward and professed their faith in Christ.

"To see the students fill the front was so amazing," said Mike Fielding, minister of youth with Live Oak Baptist Church, Denham Springs, and youth team co-chairman. "My heart was beating watching in real time as hearts were surrendered to a God who sacrificed His own Son for their sake because of His love for each of those students. I am still in awe."

ELBA Mission Strategist Richard Blue applauded the cooperative spirit among the area

churches.

"Some of our churches committed to the crusade from the beginning; others slowly got on board," Blue said. "And even in the days leading up to the crusade itself we saw another surge of commitment from area churches."

"The Livingston Parish business community has been phenomenal in their support of the crusade along with the principals of most of our junior high and high schools in the crusade target area of the central and western side of Livingston Parish," he said. "School and school board administrative leaders had been highly cooperative along with city officials from Denham Springs and from the parish."

See DECISIONS, page 11

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On Tuesday, April 1, 2025, Eastwood Baptist Church in Haughton, LA will be hosting a golf tournament to send students to summer camp! The scramble tournament will kick-off at noon at Querbes Park Golf Course in Shreveport, LA. Lunch is provided, and every player will walk away with a prize. **Come help us send students to Camp!**

Teams

Teams are four-person scrambles at a cost of \$100/player. This cost covers 18 holes of golf, lunch, & enters you for a chance to win both individual and team prizes. Additionally, every team that plays covers half the balance for a student's camp!

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EVANGELISM 101 (Part 3): The Gospel conversation

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Regardless of the soul-winning approach used to spiritually engage someone (Confrontational, Conversational, Lifestyle, or Relational), each evangelistic effort must eventually narrow down to an intentional decision-making moment.

The conversation may begin in several ways depending on whether the opportunity follows a Sunday sermon, an area-wide evangelistic event, a conversation with a family member or a knock-on-the-door initiative.

Somone might prefer the Evangelism Explosion method of asking, “If you were to die today and stand before God, and He was to ask you,

‘Why should I let you into My Heaven?’, what would you say?”

Others might lean toward the F.A.I.T.H. Gospel conversation starter, “In your personal opinion, what does it take for someone to go to Heaven?”

But in the end, the culmination of the sowing and watering, whether brief or over an extended time, must conclude with reaping – and that involves a discussion about sin and debt, as well as forgiveness and the means to obtain it.

Again, there are multiple models to structure this conversation: Continuing Witness Training, Evangelism Explosion, Four Spiritual Laws, and The Roman Road. Each is effective in sharing the bad news, the good news and the “how to” of salvation.

However, under Billy Graham, or now his Billy Graham Evangelistic Association, tens of millions of people across the globe have repented for redemption (turn to Christ), restoration (return to Christ), or otherwise have made vocational commitments to become pastors or missionaries. Moreover, a great number of these persons were shepherded in their decisions using the BGEA “My Commitment” card, which offers a framework of key points for talking with an individual to help them understand what the Holy Spirit is trying to do in their lives.

Here is the basic flow for a conversation using the “My Commitment” outline for “How to Receive Christ.”

Would you like to

personally declare Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior?

If so, let me share what that means and how you can be assured of the commitment you are making because of a changed heart that the Holy Spirit has given you.

1.RECOGNIZE GOD’S PLAN – God desires that you have peace and enjoy an abundant life. But you can’t have peace in your life without having Christ in your life. Take a moment to read this verse from the Bible about what peace

looks like:
“For God so loved the world that He gave His one and only Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life,” John 3:16.
2.RECOGNIZE OUR PROBLEM – Having no rest and no peace is the result of being separated from God. When people choose to disobey God and follow their personal wills rather than God’s will for their lives, separation from Him is the result.

See CONVERSATION, page 6

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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

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Conversation from page five

This Bible verse describes the sad state of separation that engulfs the world:

“For all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God,” Romans

3:23. 3, RESPOND TO GOD’S REMEDY – Fortunately, God has a plan to fix the separation that man endures – and that

plan is fulfilled through the cross on which Jesus died. He sent His Son to bridge the gap between man and Himself. Christ provided this bridge, paying the penalty for the sins of the world when He died on the cross and confirming the hope for eternal life (for those who believe) with His resurrection. The Bible says:

“But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us,” Romans 5:8.

4. RECEIVE CHRIST – You can receive God’s remedy by declaring Jesus as Lord and Savior -- and meaning it. It is complicated in that God anticipated man’s need for Christ’s sacrifice before time even began. But it is simple in that to become a member of God’s family, forever, all you need to do is prayerfully (authentically) ask Jesus to forgive your sins. This involves believing that He died on the cross and rose from the grave, as well as publicly professing Him as Lord. Read this promise from God’s Word:

“Yet to all who received Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God,” John 1:12.

It is helpful to sum up this process for the person you are counseling, reminding him or her to “admit your need, by admitting you are a sinner and separated from God”; “be willing to repent, or turn from sin, with the help of the Holy Spirit”; all based on the “heartfelt belief that Jesus died for you on the cross and rose from the grave.”

Then it is appropriate to seal this experience with prayer.

There has been controversy about what some describe as a sinner’s prayer (in apparent reference to Luke 18:13 in which a tax collector cried out to God for mercy for him, a poor sinner). However, there should be no confusion about this prayer – by stressing that the prayer does not save anyone. Instead, redemption has resulted from the transformed heart, the changed heart of the “former” sinner. For that reason, I call this prayer, the “new believer’s first prayer.”

Remember a sinner and a saint are not defined by what they do but instead are either one or the other because of their relationship with Christ. A sinner does not have Him, and a saint does.



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Facebook from page 2

Another long term storage option for churches would be a Vimeo account. They have a free plan as well as several “for pay” options, based on how much storage you’d need: Creating a Vimeo account.

Understandably, this can be frustrating. However, with so many accounts using Facebook Live and storing videos on this platform, it would be impossible for Facebook to continue to store all that content indefinitely.

Facebook continues to be a great way to share the Gospel with your community. Hopefully, taking some “next steps” this will help set up your church to continue to impact your neighbors in the future.

Johnson from page 3

“Make disciples who make disciples is a cliché found on mission statements, but that best describes my heart,” he said. “We want to be a place where God trusts us with a generation of young people who not only achieve academically, socially, and professionally, but achieve spiritually because of their four years at Louisiana Christian University.

“I can’t tell you how full my heart is for those Louisiana Baptists and friends of the university who gave of their time, talent and financial resources to our institution for many years,” he said. “I owe them all a debt of gratitude and it is because of them that the administration, faculty, and staff are able to continue serving and I’m excited to be part of the journey.”

SAVED, CALLED

Johnson’s journey began as a seven-year-old when his mom, Kathy, extended an invitation to his twin brother,

Matthew, older brother, Blandon, and younger sister, Annetta, and himself while they were traveling by car. Three years later, his relationship with Christ became personal while his uncle, Johnny, was preaching at a revival service at Pilgrim Baptist Church, Indianapolis, Indiana.

Soon after, he was baptized by his father, Henry L. Johnson III.

“I just remember having this feeling in my heart that I’d never felt before,” Johnson said. “It has always been a collective salvation, where my brothers, sister, and myself all did it as like a kid’s fun game in the car with mom, ‘Yeah, I want Jesus.’ But during that revival night, something was different and I received Jesus for myself.

“I remember my father had tears in his eyes,” he continued. “I had tears in my eyes, and I realized I, too, was crying. And I remember accepting Christ at that age, and then I was baptized. And it was just one of those mo-



LCU President Mark Johnson and his wife, Heather, are excited to serve students, alumni and the community.

ments that I’ll never forget. I remember my parent’s tears of joy at my baptism. A moment that I will never forget because it started my on a personal journey to discover what God wanted to do next in my life.

Eleven years after he accepted Christ, Johnson sensed the call to full-time ministry while he was a junior at Washington and

Jefferson College.

“I remember going downstairs into the basement of Nazareth Baptist Church and looking myself in the mirror, and I said to the Lord, ‘What do you want from me?’ I remember hearing a voice in my heart saying, ‘I want you.’ And that’s when I broke down, and I knew I was being called into the ministry.”

SEARCH PROCESS

The hiring of Johnson ends a lengthy search to fill the position, most recently held by Rick Brewer, who retired in March. Between then and now, Vice President David Jeffreys served as acting president.

Since June, LCU has con-

See JOHNSON, page 16

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FBC Abbeville to celebrate its 130th anniversary

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

FERRIDAY, La. (LBM) – More than 50 current and former members and other

guests are expected to pack the worship center of First Baptist Church, Abbeville, April 13, to celebrate the congregation's 130th anniversary.

R.J. Landry, pastor with FBCA, said the service will provide an opportunity for the church to reflect on God's goodness through the years.

"Looking back to 1895, the three families that started this church were trusting in God to guide them," Landry told the Baptist Message. "From day one, God was involved. It wasn't about them. It was about preaching the Gospel to others. Above all, God was glorified."

The celebration will begin at 10:30 a.m. with a time of testimony from current and former members, special music and a message by

Landry. The anniversary will end with a special meal. Additionally, those attending the service will have a chance to view a wall showcasing the history of the church.

FBCA organized as Abbeville Baptist Church on April 20, 1895, by three families who had moved from Arcadia. In its early years, the congregation held services in the Vermilion Parish Courthouse and the Masonic Temple, before building their first facility in 1900 on the corner of St. Charles Street and Vermilion Street (across from the present building that was constructed in 1960).

As the church grew, it added Sunday school classes in 1897 and underwent multiple building projects: a parsonage in 1964, an educational wing in 1968 and a Family Life Center in the early 1980s. Additionally, through the years, the church started several mission churches: First Baptist Church, Erath; First Baptist Church, Delcambre; Esther Baptist Church; and Kaplan

First Baptist Church.

Landry said his congregation has become even more evangelistic and discipleship-focused since he became pastor in October 2023, growing from 20 to 35 in Sunday morning worship and baptizing three new converts.

Their efforts to share Christ's love with their neighbors include a trunk or treat, VBS, Bible study, basketball and skating in its gym and the city-wide annual Christmas Stroll shopping and dining event in the Abbeville's downtown historic district. This year, FBCA plans to add a school supply drive, Easter egg hunt, movie night and delivery of care packages to nursing home residents.

"We are going to show people even more that FBC is in the community and is a welcoming church," he said. "They have been a great congregation, and they have been supportive of the changes. We will continue to open our doors to the community, which is the way we will reach the lost. We have to go and meet them."



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Résumés may be submitted to Pastor Stewart Holloway at sholloway@fbcpineville.net or 901 Main Street, Pineville, LA 71360. We prefer that résumés include a cover letter from a reference and that further references are provided. www.fbcpineville.net.



More than 50 middle and high school girls spent time celebrating the truth of John 3:16 and discussing what a believer's response is to God's love for His people at Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria.

LA. Baptists share John 3:16 on 3/16

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Churches around the state heeded a challenge to share John 3:16 on March 16 and saw the Holy Spirit move through messages, mission activities and crusades. Designated as a day for all Louisiana Baptist pastors to preach John

3:16, the initiative aimed to catalyze soul winning across the state. Leading up to March 16, congregations were encouraged to follow a special 16-day prayer guide, beginning on March 1, and included a Bible verse to reflect on for each of three recommended times to pray (morning, noon and evening). Louisiana joined other state Baptist conventions for the

effort, which were coordinated through the North American Mission Board. Beauregard, Big Creek, Eastern Louisiana and Ouachita Baptist Associations were among those groups who scheduled evangelistic outreaches throughout the month to coincide with the special day. “I am thankful for every

See JOHN 3:16, page 10

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John 3:16 from page 9

pastor and church participating in John 3:16 day,” Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn told the *Baptist Message*. “The innovative and specific ways that individual churches decided to promote the day was inspiring to see. “A few things that I genuinely believe were captured in this day.

First, prayer is essential for all that we do evangelistically. This emphasis helped us to intentionally pray for the lost. Second, we always do better when we prepare. Churches, who prepared well for the day, saw the greatest results. Third, people will come to our churches when we personally invite them to

come. The 3:16 emphasis presented us with a specific reason to invite people to come. “Now, we must take these principles and incorporate them every week. Let’s keep building a culture of evangelism in Louisiana.” Trinity Baptist Church, Oak Grove, was among the churches that reported decisions for Christ because of the “3:16 on 3/16” initiative. After Pastor Courtney

Rainey presented his message, the Holy Spirit convicted a high school senior about his need for a Savior and another came forward during a service that evening. Rainey also baptized two new converts during the morning service. “This was a reminder that God is still saving souls,” he said. “We need to be faithful to tell others that they need Jesus and lead them to the cross. God is good.” For its part, Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, continued its four-week series on the passage and afterward hosted 50 middle and high school girls to celebrate the truth of John 3:16 and discuss what a believer’s response is to God’s love for His people. Women ranging from college age to senior adults spent time intentionally loving on and modeling for them what it means to serve others out of a love

for Christ. They also served them a meal and led “serve stations” in which the girls had the opportunity to practice serving one another in love. At First Baptist Church, Pineville, members turned in more than 450 names of lost friends and family the prior Sunday. The members then prayed for them throughout the week and issued an invitation to join them for church. Pastor Stewart Holloway said decisions for Christ were made in multiple Sunday school classes and many Gospel seeds were planted. “Both responded with heartfelt concern for their friends and family who need Christ,” Holloway said. “It was amazing to watch everyone bringing forward their prayer cards last week and encouraging to hear their comments after our service today.”

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Decisions from page 4

Leo Miller, pastor with FBC Denham Springs, said churches worked together to deliver door hanger bags containing a Gospel tract, DVD of the Jesus Film and crusade flyer to more than 45,000 homes in the area.

"The preparation for the crusade has involved much work and God has

reached across denominational lines in our parish to unite His church in this mission," he said. "We agreed to unite in reaching the lost in our parish by setting aside political and theological differences. We are united in our common beliefs that salvation is in Jesus alone and the Word of God is our

authority. What a joy it has been to pray together, serve together and share to glorious gospel of Jesus Christ together."

SAVED

Among the most impactful stories of the week was when a local man accidentally attended a leadership lunch at Northside Baptist Church on March 18.

"He told Rick 'I was

raised Catholic, and I've just have felt the felt like I'm missing something," Palmer said. "And I came last night, and I think that I'm learning what I'm missing."

At that lunch the man surrendered his heart to Christ.

"It was an unbelievable story and only the second time that has ever happened in Rick's ministry career," Palmer shared.

Palmer commended the area churches for their cooperative spirit and zeal to reach others.

"It's really the body of Christ coming in, sowing the seeds, and now we're reaping the harvest," he said. "Jesus said the harvest is plentiful. We come in and give the message of hope and peace through Jesus and the hearts are just ready for it."

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Former Chinese underground church member celebrates new life

By Brian Blackwell
 Message staff writer

LAPLACE, La. (LBM) – Guoybing Tang first came to faith as a member of a Chinese underground church in 2023 but only recently did he publicly celebrate his new life in Christ, having been baptized by the First Baptist Church, LaPlace.

Tang, who stirred the

baptistry waters Feb. 9, was greeted with thunderous applause from friends gathered for the service.

“It was my happiest day ever,” Tang told the Baptist Message. “Baptism is very important to me, and it represents I’m a true Christian with faith in God.

“Everything in my life has now put me in the right direction with God,” he continued. “I have no

pressure or no anxiety. Now I have joy.”

Tang arrived in the United States seven months after he accepted Christ on April 16, 2023, during a Bible study with an underground church (the location is undisclosed for security purposes). After passing by FBC LaPlace in December 2023, he decided to return the next Sunday for a worship service and has been faithfully attending ever since.

During the first “English as a Second Language” class he attended, Tang met church member Nick James and expressed his desire to be baptized. James and Pastor Shane Newton helped disciple him and ensured he was ready to take that important step in his faith journey.

As the months passed, the friendship between Tang and James blossomed. Every Monday, James has helped Tang improve

his grasp of the English language with the lessons presented during ESL classes. Additionally, they attend the same Bible study class on Sundays, where Tang uses an adult learner guide written in Chinese, augmented by a translator.

“This has been good for the church because we helped him grow more in his walk with the Lord and learn more about the English language,” James said. “He’s a young Chris-

See NEW LIFE, page 13

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Brian Blackwell photo

Pastor Shane Newton baptized Guoybing Tang, Feb. 9. Tang arrived in the United States seven months after he accepted Christ on April 16, 2023, during a Bible study with an underground church in China. After passing by First Baptist Church, LaPlace, in December 2023, he decided to return the next Sunday for a worship service and has been faithfully attending ever since.

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After fires, Trinity celebrates new ministry facilities

By **Brian Blackwell**

Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – Four years after separate fires destroyed

the fellowship hall of Trinity Baptist Church, Pineville, the congregation recently celebrated God's goodness through transformation of another

building on campus into a café and preschool area.

While a building that held many fond memories was destroyed, Pastor Kevin Roberts said

his members have been grateful throughout.

"Romans 8:28 has just been just our verse through this whole thing," Roberts told the Baptist Message. "What we thought was a tragedy and a loss at first, we saw God turn it and use it for His good and His glory."

The fires took place within a four-day peri-

od in April 2021. Crews responded both times to contain the fires to the fellowship hall. Rather than rebuild, the church chose to capitalize on the unused space in the other structure.

Remodeling began in January 2024 and by November the project was

See CELEBRATES, page 16

New Life from page 12

tian and very excited about learning all he can about the Lord. But also, this has helped me grow in my own faith and is a reminder that it doesn't take much to come alongside someone and help them grow; you just have to have the courage to step up and be available."

Newton commended James for his concern for Tang's personal walk with Christ.

"One of the best things about Tang coming is seeing Nick modeling life-on-life discipleship at our church," he said. "Nick has been God's instrument reminding us that we are called to make disciples, which happens through relationships.

"God continues to show us that He is at work among us at FBC LaPlace," he continued. "Tang's presence with us is a reminder that the Lord saw that He could trust our church family with loving him, discipling him, and encouraging Tang in His walk with Christ despite the language barrier. This is just another way that God is showing our church family that He is with us and at work among His people."

Tang is one of four individuals baptized at FBC LaPlace this year, with an additional three scheduled for baptism soon. One of those new believers was baptized when the worship center reopened Feb. 23,

after a three-year closure because of damage caused by Hurricane Ida.

"It has been a huge, answered prayer to be back in our new sanctuary to where God," he said. "It has been a very long time coming. It was very special our first Sunday, seeing the tears of joy with so many of our church family rejoicing at what God has done. We are praying that God will fill the new sanctuary with people in our community who are without Christ and do not have a church home because we have a place for them among our FBC LaPlace family to join in God's work."

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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

■ Heath and Jenny Peloquin has been called to pastor Rock Hill Baptist in Brownsboro, Texas and is leaving Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport. His last day at Summer Grove is March 30.
■ Andrew, wife Lydia, Ardoin, is the new pastor at First Baptist Church, White Castle Ardoin is the new pastor at White Castle after spending 15 years in theforeign mission field.

HOMECOMING

■ New Hope Baptist Church, DeQuincy: Homecoming Celebration, April 6 - Coffee Fellowship at 8 a.m. and Worship at 10 a.m. lunch will follow the worship services. Guest Speaker: Charles Gibbs (former pastor). Worship Leader: Broken Vessels. Pastor: Roland Hebert.

CRUSADES

■ West Ouachita Crusade, March 30-April 2, 2025, 6 p.m. nightly. The Crusade led by Evangelist: Bill Britt and Worship: WeRCalled will be held at West Ouachita High School. The crusade is hosted by churches of West Ouachita Parish.

REVIVAL

■ First Baptist Church, Lafayette: Revive 2025, March 23-26, MARCH 23, 5:00 pm -Students (7-12 Grade) - Food, Worship, Activities; College - Cookout on the lawn with games and music at the College House; Chinese - Gumbo at the Chinese House and 6:30 pm - Revival Worship Service; MARCH 24 - 5:00 pm - Fellowship Dinner & Family Night with fun jumps, bounce houses, games, and activities for all ages, preschool through 12th grade; 6:30 pm - Revival Worship Service. MARCH 25 - 5:00 pm - Fellowship Dinner; 6:30 pm - Revival Worship Service; MARCH 26 - 5:00 pm - Fellowship Dinner and 6:30 pm - Revival Worship Service. Evangelist" Dan Lanier, Evangelist and Retired Senior Pastor of Northcrest Baptist in Meridian, Mississippi. Pastor: James Pritchard.
■ Singer Baptist Church, Singer: Revival, March 30-April 2, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: Jerry Chaddick. Pastor: Jimmy Clark
■ Lismore Baptist Church, Lismore: Spring Revival, March 30-April 2. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Ken Gilmore
■ New Zion Baptist Church, Covington: Spring Revival, March 30-April 2; Sunday, 20:30 a.m. & 6 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m. Evangelist: Tim Lee. Music : Kyle Smith. A nursery will be provided. Pastor: Clark Stewart.
■ Westview Baptist Church, DeRidder: Revival, April 6-9; April 6, 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m.; April 7-9, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: Derek Griffon.
■ Cypress Baptist Church in South Shreveport, Shreveport: Revival, April 13, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor Kevin Flattmann.
■ First Baptist Church, Keithville: Revival, May 4. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Mike Stowell.
■ Hunter Magnolia Baptist Church, Mansfield: Spring Revival, May 11-14, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Amador Santos.
■ Little Pass Baptist Church, Charenton: Spring Revival, May 18-21, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Chris Hol-loway.
■ Bushy Creek Baptist Church, Merry Revival: Revival, June 1-4, Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Mike Streams.
■ Open Door Baptist Church, Ragley: Harvest Sunday, June 15, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: James Blak-enship.
■ Indian Mound Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: Revival, June 22-25, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Dwayne Rogers.

■ Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Columbia: Revival, August 17-20. Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor:
■ Fort Necessity Baptist Church, Fort Necessity. Revival, August 21-24, 2025, Evangelist: Sam Moore. John Brad-ley.
■ Milldale Baptist Church, Zachary: Bible Conference, August 29-September 1, 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman. Pastor: Jeremy Pruitt.
■ Fellowship Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: Revival, September 28-October 1 2025. Evangelist Bob Pitman. Pastor: Mardy Guidry.
■ Wallace Baptist Church, Pelican: Revival, September 7-10, Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: Jeff Jinks.
■ The Church at Oakgrove, Ringgold. Revival, Septem-ber 11-14, 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman Pastor: James Hester.
■ Fellowship Baptist Church, Trout: Bible Conference, No-ember 8-9 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman. Pastor: Shad Tibbs

LAGNIAPPE

■ First Baptist Church, Pine Prairie: Renewal Weekend, March 28-30, 6 p.m. (Thursday and Friday); 10:30 a.m. (Sunday) Evangelist: Jamey Ragle. Pastor: R.Lee. Walton.
■ Martin Baptist Church, Coushatta: Leo Lytle Ministries – The Door, March 29, 5 p.m. Come learn about the Cross Ministry. Pastor: Richard Kaufmann.
■ Parkview Baptist Church, Alexander: The Triumphant Quartet in concert, March 30. 2025, 6 p.m. For more in-formation call 318.61336505 or 318.445.5331. Pastor: David Shaw.
■ Judson Baptist Church, Walker: Beast Feast, March 30, 5 p.m. All are welcome to attend. The Judson Quartet will be singing. There will be a display board for Deer heads or fish. Bring your favorite wild game dish, meat or side dish. Special Speaker, Johnny Morgan, pastor of Live Oak Baptist Church. Pastor: David Lane.
■ Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport: The Gathering (Dinner on the grounds), April 3, 6 p.m. Cost: \$15/per-son at the event center along with pie baking contest. Special guest: Dennis Swanberg, Christian Comedian. To purchase tickets go to moorinfo.TV/gathering. Pastor: Chuck Pourciau.
■ Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City: Rummage Sale, April 4-5, 7 a.m.-1 p.m. Drop Off Donation Dates: March 30, 2-4 p.m. March 31, 7 a.m.-6 p.m., April 1, 7 a.m.-6 p.m. April 2, 7 a.m.- 6 p.m. All proceeds to missions. Pas-tor: Terry Young.
■ Westside Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: Car Show and Craft Fair, April 5, 10 a.m.-2 p.m. \$15 vehicle registration fee and booth rental. Free to the public. Concessions will be sold. For more information contact Terry Phinney (335.247.7704). Pastor: Andrew Stafford.
■ Lamar Baptist Church, Delhi: Wild Game Supper, April 4, 6 p.m. There will food & Fellowship with Guest Speak-er Tucker Crisp, World Champion owl and turkey caller, Member of the national calling champions Hall of Fame. Pastor: Jessie Nielson.
■ Walker Baptist Church, Walker: Annual Car, Bike Show and garage sale, April 5 from 9 a.m. For more information call or text Austin at 985.4744.5333. It cost \$25 to register for the show. All proceeds go toward funding summer camp for children and youth. Pastor: Jason McNaughton
■ Judson Baptist Church, Walker: Eggstravaganza, April 5, 10 a.m-1 p.m. Egg Hunts 0-4 yards at 10:30 a.m.; K-2nd grade at 11:30 a.m.; third and fifth grade at 12:30 p.m. Pastor: David Lane.
■ Longview Baptist Church, Deville: Spring Carnival, April 5, 11 a.m.-2 p.m. Entry is free. There will be free food, Carnival Games, Jumpers, sliders and much more. Pastor: Robby Poole.
■ New Hope Baptist Church, Choudrant: Easter egg hunt, April 5, 11 a.m.-1 p.m. Pastor: Michail Baldwin.
■ Greenlaw Baptist Church, Kentwood: Easter egg hunt, April 5, 10 a.m.-1 p.m. The day includes food, a spacewalk and an egg hunt.
■ Satsuma Baptist Church, Livingston: Easter extravan-ga, April 5, 10 a.m.-noon. Come enjoy food, games and an egg hunt. Pastor: Henry Shelton.
■ Point of Life Community Church, Plaquemine: Easter egg hunt, April 6, 12:30 p.m. Hotdogs and chips will be served for lunch followed by the Easter egg hunt. Prizes will be awarded for each age group. Pastor: Norris Landry.
■ Live Oak Church, Watson: Family Easter Event, April 6,

2025. We invite our entire church family to our annual Family Easter Event. Registration is required (https://bit.ly/43vKWBR), so we will have enough food for everyone. The deadline to register is Thursday, April 3rd. Schedule of events: 4 p.m. - Children's Activities4:30 p.m. - Egg Hunt; 5 p.m. – Dinner and 5:30 p.m. Games. Pastor: Mark Crosby.
■ Ebenezer Baptist Church, Hammond Flashlight Eggs-Travaganza, April 12, 6:30-8:30 p.m. An egg hunt at night with flashlights, of course. Invite a friend and register your kids here: https://forms.gle/XbRR1NqG6i-unp7Ux8. There will be Egg Hunt, Games, Crafts and Food. The egg hunt is for sixth graders and under. Pastor: Steven Campbell.
■ Kingston Baptist Church, Frierson: Easter egg hunt, April 12, 10 a.m.-noon. Easter egg hunt, pictures with the Easter Bunny and free food. Pastor: Michael Naquins.
■ Cypress Baptist Church, South Shreveport: Harvest Sunday, April 13, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Kevin Flattmann.
■ Little Pass Baptist Church. Charenton: Easter Cantata, April 13, 6 p.m.. Easter wih the Lord's Supper, April 20, 10 a.m. Pastor: Chris Holloway.
■ New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Denham Springs: Easter meal and egg hunt, April 13, 11 a.m. An egg hunt for the kids and a fellowship meal will follow the morning worship service. Bring a food dish of your choice and a friend. Don't forget the kids' baskets. Lots of fun, food and prizes. Pastor: Randal Gill
■ Vatican Baptist Church, Carencro: Easter egg hunt, April 16, 6 p.m. Pastor: Chad Thibodeaux.
■ First Baptist Church, New Orleans: This Easter sea-son we will have two opportunities to share about the Resurrection of Jesus to young families. On April 18, we will share at a Good Friday Community Service in Tremé with Harvest Church. The next day, April 19, we will host Passion Week Journey here at FBNO. For both events we will have easter egg hunts. We need your help to provide small candy for over 5,000 eggs. We already have pur-chased the eggs that will be needed. Please drop off your candy donations in the buckets located in the church foy-ers from now until Sunday, April 6. Pastor: Chad Gilbert.
■ Deer Creek Baptist Association: A performance of the Living Last Supper, April 17, 6:30 p.m. For more infor-mation contact Naomi Cordill 318.498.0094; Carolyn Thom-as (choir director) 318.237.3681; Kevin Bates (Disciple

director).
■ University Baptist Church, Thibodaux: From Gaves to Garden, April 11-12, 7:30 p.m. The true story of Easter Live. Join us for a story of redemption and hope as we explore the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Good Friday service, April 18, 6 p.m. Join us for a time of remembrance and reflection. The Lord's Service will be served. Easter Sunday, April 20, sunrise service 7 a.m. We would love to see you for a time of celebration, fellowship and worship. Please call the church office for any questions at 985.446.5818. Pastor: J.P. Cox.
■ Cheniere Baptist Church, West Monroe: 2nd annu-al Hope 4 Honduras Golf Tournament, April 14. Cost: 500 Four-Man Scramble, contact the church office at 318.396.2275. Where: Calvert Crossing Golf Course, Cal-houn. Prizes: Cash payouts, door prizes, closest to the hole and longest drive. Pastor: Zachary Anderson.
■ First Baptist Church, Ferriday: Resurrection egg hunt, April 16, 6 p.m. Calling all kids. Come be a part of our annual Easter egg hunt and discover the true reason we celebrate Easter. Pastor: Cory Bruce.
■ Antioch Baptist Church, Farmerville: Easter egg hunt, April 18, 10 a.m. Pastor: Rubin Weaver.
■ Fairview Baptist Church, Coushatta: Easter egg hunt and fish fry, April 18, 5 p.m. Pastor: Matt Endris.
■ Barksdale Baptist Church, Bossier City: Easter Egg Hunt, April 19, 2-4 p.m. Egg Hunts available for ages up to 5th Grade. There will be games, prizes, food and family fun. Pastor: Calvin Hubbard.
■ Cypress Baptist Church, Benton: Easter Family Day, April 19, 10 am-noon. Activities include Easter egg hunts (ba-bies to 5th graders), inflatables, face painting and food trucks. Pastor: John Fream.
■ Dunn Baptist Church, Delhi: Easter Egg Hunt, April 19, 2025, 10 a.m. Bring a basket with 12 candy filled eggs, Pastor: Bernard Duchesne.
■ Oak Gove Baptist Church, Eros: Easter Family Day, April, 19, 10 a.m.-noon at Seeker Springs, Eros. There will be food, egg hunts, games and much more. Pastor: Nicholas Wigley.
■ Barksdale Baptist Church, Bossier City: Easter egg hunt, April 19, 2-4 p.m. Fun for the whole family including games, prizes and an egg hunt for ages up through 5th grade. LifeShare Blood Center will also be on site. Pastor: Calvin Hubbard.

■ Mount Pleasant Baptist Church, Zachary: Easter service and egg hunt, April 20, 11 a.m. Pastor: Perry Jones.
■ Old Zion Hill Baptist Church, Independence: Easter services and Easter Egg Hunt, April 20 Pastor: Gary Dennis
■ Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport: Easter, April 20, Celebration 8:45 a.m., Life Group 10 a.m., 11 a.m. Elevate.
■ LSU BCM, Baton Rouge: A celebration of Steve Masters' 33 years of service as the Baptist Collegiate Minister at LSU will be held April 27, 2-4 p.m.
Compel Outreach Third Annual Golf Classic, Bossier City: May 16, 2025, The Golf Club @Stonebridge. There will be a four-man scramble, 18 hobbies, Mulligan s available. A \$10,000 prize for the first hole in one, longest drive and closest to the pin. Learn more about the event and regis-ter at compeloi.org.

REMEMBRANCE

Bro. Sammy Wallace Smith
May 26, 1937 - February 19, 2025

Sammy, age 87, went to his heavenly home on Wednes-day, February 19, 2025. For over 60 years Bro. Smith whole heartedly served his community pastoring church-es throughout Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. He left a legacy of service, and loving people in Jesus' name. Hun-dreds of loving couples were joined in Holy Matrimony by Bro. Sammy. His family and his Savior Jesus always came first. Sammy had a smile that would light up any room. His prayers for others, along with his attention and service for them made a tremendous difference in hundreds of lives. Bro. Sammy was a loving husband, father, grand-father, brother, uncle, and friend who is already dearly missed by all who knew and loved him.
Smith is survived by his loving wife of 69 years, Lena Dev-ille Smith; daughters, Donna Smith Bennett (Skipper), Joetta Smith Zieske (Gus); son, Samuel Menard Smith; grandchildren, Jason Guillory (Mary), Kevin Guillory (Deborah), Marley Stilley (Mike), Donetta Johnson (Brett), Sunny Raiford (Cody), and Jonah Zieske (Raegan); eleven (11) great grandchildren; and one (1) great great-grand-child; along with numerous nieces and nephews.
Smith is preceded in death by his son Michael DeWayne Smith; parents, George and Pearl Smith; sisters, Grace McGee, and Inez Lynn; and brother, Otis Smith.

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.

trzfr zd pri ijxcidp uw uax zcrixzpjcfi, acpzq pri

xinilhpzuc uw pri haxfrjdn huddiddzuc, acpu pri

hxjzdi uw rzd mquxo.

hridzjcd uci:wuaxpiic

Clues:
A = U; H = P

Answer to Ferbruary, Scripture Crypto:
leviticus eight:nine

Johnson from page 7

ducted a nationwide search for the 10th president of the nearly 120-year-old institution; and the search committee received applications and recommendations from alumni, community members and a national executive search firm.

More than 100 candidates showed interest, were recommended, or were contacted and of these 19 candidates emerged and from this group four semi-finalists were chosen.

The committee members included four trustees and two LCU faculty

members as selected by vote of the full board during their spring meeting last year. Additionally, the search committee enlisted CarterBaldwin Executive Search, one of the top 50 firms of its type in the United States. CarterBaldwin reports that it has completed more than 200 executive placements in higher education, K-12 schools, foundations and nonprofit organizations in the last five years, many of which are faith-based or church-related organizations.

TRADITIONAL GROUP OF THE YEAR (2009-2017)
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MARCH 30 • 6 p.m.
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Celebrates from page 13

completed. After settling into the new spaces, the church celebrated an open house for the community, Jan. 12.

The remodeled building includes a double-sided fireplace and TVs in

the lobby area, a new kitchen, additional bathrooms and preschool space and a small dining area to accommodate such gatherings as funeral meals, baby and bridal showers and Sunday

school fellowships.

"We did this using insurance money and remain debt free," Roberts said. "We are excited about that and what this facility will help us do in the years to come."



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