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2025 SBC Annual Meeting: Highlights from Dallas

WRAP UP

By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Message

DALLAS (LBM) -- Southern Baptist Convention messengers and guests gathered June 10-11 in Dallas, Texas, to conduct business, elect officers, enjoy times of fellowship, receive updates on mission work done by Southern Baptists across the world and hear inspirational messages.

TRANSPARENCY FAILS

Messengers rejected an amendment, June 11, that would have required the Southern Baptist Convention to publish detailed financial information like disclosures that are made on IRS Form 990, the public tax document that shows executive compensation, major salary expenses and other financial details.

The vote on the motion (to force greater financial transparency from denominational entities) presented by South Carolina messenger Rhett Burns was defeated by a show of ballots. Jeff Iorg, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee, strongly opposed the amendment,

See WRAP, page 3



Van Payne photo

In Dallas, Texas, messengers raised ballots during the 2025 Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting.



Timothy Cokes photo

NOBTS and Leavell College President Jamie Dew expressed deep gratitude for the ministry and support of Southern Baptists during his report to messengers.

Dew to pastors: 'Don't quit' (offers four truths of encouragement)

By Grace Thornton
The Baptist Paper

DALLAS (The Baptist Paper) - Jamie Dew told pastors that he had one simple but honest question for them — “Do you ever want to quit?”

“I can think of a million reasons we might feel that way,” said Dew, president of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, as he spoke to the Southern Baptist Pastors Conference in Dallas on June 9. “The most important task to be done on earth right now is

the proclamation of Jesus Christ — to stand in hard places, dark places, broken places, places where the oppression is thick and strong, and there in the darkness, preach Jesus Christ,” Dew said.

Preaching from 2 Timothy 2:8-13, he encouraged them that the Apostle Paul had talked about how ministry would come with a lot of difficulties and struggles, but he called pastors to remember the truths of the faith

See DEW, page 5

Crossover yields 711 decisions for Christ: NOBTS students, faculty share Gospel

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

DALLAS (LBM) – A variety of Crossover yields 711 decisions for Christ:

NOBTS students, faculty share Gos-

pel efforts preceding the Southern Baptist Convention

Annual Meeting produced saving knowledge of Jesus in 711 new believers.

See CROSSOVER, page 4

EVANGELISM 101 (Part 6): How to prepare? Pray!

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – M.E. Dodd, the former pastor of First Baptist Church, Shreveport, is most often celebrated for his leadership in establishing the Cooperative Program, Baptists’ primary funding channel for state and national cooperative missions and ministries, but the focus of his efforts on this initiative is too often underemphasized – soul winning.

Indeed, Dodd’s entire ministry was defined by soul winning.

During his first month with FBCS, he preached a revival, adding 98 new believers to the 600-member congregation. In early 1918 (as WWI raged), he volunteered to be a U.S. Army chaplain, eventually settling to be a camp religious worker with the YMCA attached to the Second Army and recorded 5,000 professions of faith that year. For the duration of his 50 years of

ministry, he recorded 7,000 baptisms.

Importantly, as part of the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the formation of the Southern Baptist Convention, Dodd led a South-wide simultaneous crusade with “the ideal of at least one revival in every church throughout the South in 1945.” Especially noteworthy, his detailed plans for organizing the yearlong South-wide simultaneous crusade included at the church level “a band

of personal soul-winners as prayer partners.”

Moreover, the soul winning Dodd became fast friends with Evangelist Billy Graham, inviting the venerable revivalist to conduct a 1951 campaign in Shreveport. In news reports at that time, Dodd recounted a visit to Fort Worth, Texas, to conference with Dr. Graham and to attend one of the services there.

“There is only one explanation to Billy Graham,” Dodd said. “He’s a God-intoxicated man. He ascribes all his power and influence and success to God. He urges everybody over and over to pray and pray more and pray more earnestly.”

It might seem odd in the middle of a series of articles about the mechanics of evangelism to emphasize the need for prayer. But this series was launched on the premise that evangelism begins with a humble heart. “If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves ... (2 Chronicle 7:14). What follows when this spiritual condition is met is prayer and seeking the face of God, two intertwined spiritual processes (“communicating with God” with the desire to “grow

closer to Him”).

Notably, M.E. Dodd and Billy Graham acknowledged prayer as an essential element in their respective soul winning efforts because of Christ’s example. Jesus defined Himself as a soul winner (“for the Son of man has come to seek and save that which is lost,” Luke 19:10) and immediately after the Last Supper during which He taught some last lessons to His

apostles and right before He went to the Garden of Gethsemane to be betrayed, Jesus declared that He prays “for those who will believe in Me through their word” (John 17:20). Earlier this year, Ouachita Baptist Church in West Monroe was preparing along with five other congregations to take part in an area-wide crusade that was scheduled for March 30-April 2, with their preparations anchored in focused prayer. The crusade was successful, drawing about 400 for each of the services and producing 10 salvation decisions. But the Ouachita congregation experienced an unexpected blessing from the Holy Spirit during the

See PRAY, page 7



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WRAP from page 1

arguing that Southern Baptist entities fought legal battles decades ago to establish First Amendment protections from such reporting requirements -- although these disclosures would have been for the benefit of Southern Baptists and not the government.

ERLC RETAINED

Messengers voted to keep the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission, June 11.

Originally proposed by Florida messenger Willy Rice, the motion to abolish the SBC entity failed with 3,744 (56.89 percent) votes to retain while 2,819 (42.84 percent) messengers voted to abolish it.

Rice was among the messengers who spoke in favor of the motion, while former ERLC President Richard Land was among the messengers who spoke against it.

In recent years, some Southern Baptists have raised concerns about the ERLC's direction, prompting calls to reduce or eliminate its funding through the Cooperative Program.

'ONLY MEN' FALLS SHORT

The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) states in Article VI. The Church, "While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor/elder/overseer is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

However, there have been multiple attempts in recent years to amend the SBC Constitution to bar churches from seating messengers if they have a woman pastor.

Constitutional amendments require two-thirds approval at two consecutive annual meetings.

In 2023, by at least two-thirds of raised ballots, messengers passed the motion that SBC cooperating churches must "affirm, appoint, or employ only men as any kind of pastor or elder as qualified by Scripture."

Last year, messengers voted overwhelmingly in favor of the same motion, dubbed the "Law Amendment" (5,099 votes for, or 61.45 percent, to 3,185 votes

against, or 38.38 percent), but because it did not meet the two-thirds threshold, the amendment was not adopted.

This year the vote was 3,421 to 2,191 — 60.74% to 38.90% — in favor of a motion to "clarify" only churches with male pastors are considered in "friendly cooperation" with the SBC. However, falling short of a super majority of ballots cast, the measure failed, again.

CP CELEBRATED

Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn joined other state executive directors and leaders of SBC entities and ethnic fellowships for a celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program.

"Throughout this convention, we are erecting memorial stones of 100 years of cooperation demonstrated through the Cooperative Program," SBC Executive Committee President Jeff Iorg told messengers and guests. "We point to missionaries sent, churches started, students educated, institutions built and most of all people saved because Southern Baptists have contributed more than \$20 billion through the Cooperative Program in the past 100 years."

The celebration on stage comes a month after Baptist leaders from across the nation gathered in Memphis, Tennessee, to sign a Declaration of Cooperation that celebrated the 100th anniversary of the Cooperative Program. Seventy-three of the more than 175 individuals gathered for the May 13 celebration inside Renasant Convention Center in Memphis, Tennessee, made it on stage to sign the document on the podium once used by M.E. Dodd, pastor with First Baptist Church, Shreveport (1912-1950), who brought the idea of the CP to Southern Baptist Convention messengers in 1925.

GREAT COMMISSION CALL

The North American Mission Board shared that last year Southern Baptists saw a 13 percent increase in church plants and that they baptized more than 250,000



Elijah Hickman photo

Dwight McKissic (left) senior pastor with Cornerstone Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas, presented Fred Luter (second from right) with the National African-American Fellowship Legacy Award during the 2025 NAAF George Liele Missions Banquet. Also photographed were NAAF President Gregory Perkins (second from left) and Kenneth Curry, NAAF western region director. Luter is pastor with Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

people, a 10 percent increase over the previous year and the most baptisms since 2017.

Additionally, the International Mission Board appointed 58 new missionaries in a sending celebration. Messengers and guests watched at the newly appointed missionaries took the stage to share about where they will serve to further the Great Commission. The appointed missionaries are part of an IMB force of more than 3,500 missionaries and their families serving in 155 countries.

NOBTS UPDATE

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary celebrated a successful year marked by multiple milestones, including more than 100,000 Gospel presentations and 10,000 professions of faith through the Caskey Center for Church Excellence since its founding in 2014.

NOBTS President Jamie Dew, in his report to the messengers and guests, said their support has helped enable students to be trained to share the Gospel from the city to the nations. He added that the Cooperative Program provides an education for \$25,000-30,000, compared to the \$80,000 it may cost to receive that same degree at a non-Southern Baptist seminary.

"So that support is absolutely essential for us as we

train up that next generation of servants that are going to come back to your churches and labor there with the Gospel for you," Dew said. "So, we express our gratitude to you."

Earlier in the day during the NOBTS Alumni and Friends Luncheon, Dew invited Louisiana Christian University President Mark Johnson on stage for prayer. Johnson assumed the LCU post on June 1.

LUTER HONORED

Fred Luter, pastor with Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans, was honored with the Legacy Award during the National African American Fellowship. He was honored for having served as the first and only African American president of the SBC.

ELECTIONS

Clint Pressley (pastor with Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Charlotte, North Carolina) was re-elected SBC president after defeating David Morrill (author and member of Applewood Baptist Church, Wheat Ridge, Colorado). Pressley received 5,567 votes (92.64 percent) to Morrill's 408 votes (6.79 percent).

Meanwhile, Daniel Ritchie (evangelist and member of the Summit Church, Durham, N.C.) was elected first vice-president with 5,409 (87.84 percent), while Larry Helms (pastor with Fort Lawn Baptist

Church in Fort Lawn, S.C.) got 722 votes (11.72 percent).

Craig Carlisle (associational mission strategist, Etowah Baptist Association, Gadsden, Alabama and member of First Baptist Church, Gadsden) was elected second vice president. He received 3,765 votes (56.46 percent), while Tommy Mann (pastor, Highland Terrace Baptist Church, Greenville, Texas) got 2,057 votes (30.85 percent) and Christopher Rhodes (pastor, Dover Baptist Temple, Dover, Ohio) received 806 votes (12.09 percent).

In other office races that were unopposed, messengers elected:

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

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

MESSENGER COUNT

The annual meeting drew 10,599 messengers, including 491 from Louisiana.

Messenger counts for other recent SBC annual meetings:

-- 2024 (Indianapolis, Indiana), 10,946

-- 2023 (New Orleans), 12,737

-- 2022 (Anaheim, California), 8,133

-- 2021 (Nashville, Tennessee), 15,726

-- 2020 pandemic (no annual meeting)

Crossover from page 1

According to the North American Mission Board, 89 churches in the Dallas area participated in

Crossover, June 2-8. The events had 2,955 volunteers who shared the Gospel with 17,058 people.

Efforts included block parties, door-to-door wit-

nessing, compassion projects and student rallies.

NOBTS SOUL WINNERS

Seventy-five students and professors from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Leavell College, 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 and in the streets around the city. They also handed out flyers promoting block

parties, held June 7, at 15 churches.

By the end of the week, a team of 30 NOBTS students and evangelism professors knocked on 2,080 doors and had 217 Gospel conversations that resulted in 12 decisions to follow Christ.

"I told my students at Crossover that they were answers to my daily prayers for laborers for the harvest," Professor of Evangelism and Evangelistic Preaching Preston Nix told the Baptist Message. "I also shared with them that I had prayed for them by name, specifically for their feet, because Romans 10:15 says, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news.'"

"My students had beautiful feet this week as their feet took them to many lost souls throughout the Dallas/Fort Worth metropolis who needed to hear the message of the Gospel," he said. "I am so proud of my students who overcame their fears of doing door to door evangelism and street witnessing and endured the hot Texas sun every afternoon in the church communities to share the Gospel during Crossover Dallas 2025."

Among the most memorable moments for Nix was when NOBTS student Jamar Alexander led his Uber driver, Melvin, to a relationship with Jesus.

"I told my students at our last class session on Friday that they needed to

take what they learned and experienced during the intensive week of Crossover and let it carry over into their personal witness and ministries in their local churches and communities," Nix said. "If they did not, they would fail themselves after taking this class. I told them the only time you fail as a witness is when you fail to witness. Jamar took to heart what I shared and led someone to Christ, his Uber driver, on his way to the airport before he even made it back home."

NOBTS student Titilope Oluwasola used the pain of attending the recent funeral of her grandmother (who was murdered by a family member) into a testimony of forgiveness as a way to introduce a man named Mike to Christ.

"Mike decided to enter a relationship with Jesus Christ last week at Monday Crossover Dallas," Oluwasola said. "He had a church home but no relationship with Jesus. I shared the Gospel of Jesus Christ with Him and sharing what Jesus did on the cross for me is what gives me the divine ability to forgive those who have harmed me, even the relative who took the life of my beloved grandmother."

"I shared with Mike the hope that Jesus brings me here on earth and even on this other side of eternity: knowing that I'll spend it with Him and other brothers and sisters in Christ," Oluwasola continued. "Mike prayed a prayer of repentance, asking for forgiveness, and receiving the mercy Christ has made available to him by the sacrifice Jesus made on the cross for him. Mike seemed excited at the prospect of Pastor Rocky helping him to 'work out' his walk with Christ and to grow in the Lord."

NOBTS student Trey Williams, who serves as pastor with Tammany Hills Baptist Church in Covington, said that while he has shared his faith many times, he was challenged at Crossover to step out of his comfort zone to use the Three Circles evan-

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SAT., AUG. 9

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DEW from page 1

that would bolster their spirits.

“He’s giving us reason to continue,” Dew said, noting four realities that should encourage pastors to keep going.

Remember that Christ has been raised victorious.

“There may be bad things that happen, but the bedrock of our faith is that empty tomb,” Dew said. “It’s the truth that no matter what Satan may throw against our Lord, no matter what the world might do to try to squash our hope, our God is powerful enough to raise His Son, Jesus Christ, from the dead, and if that is true, we constantly forever have hope.”

Because Christ has been raised, when pastors preach, they offer hope to a world that desperately needs it, he said.

Remember that God’s people are worth the struggle.

Dew said sometimes it might not feel like people are worth the pain that can

come through ministry.

“You can get frustrated, and you can grow weary,” he said. “But deep down we’ve got to remember that behind every set of eyes we look through is someone that God loves.”

Paul said he endured all things for the elect of God because they are worth the labor.

Dew said sometimes Southern Baptists can get discouraged because of their differences, but “at the end of the day, Southern Baptists are humble, hardworking people who love Christ with all of their heart, and they want to make Him known.”

On his hardest days, that reality motivates him to get up and keep going in ministry. Dew referenced Philippians 1:23 where Paul said he was torn because he longed to be with Christ but knew the reason he was still on earth was for the sake of God’s people.

Dew said he understood that feeling.

“I long for the day that

this world will no longer weary my soul. I long for the day I will no longer have to fight my sin,” he said. “I long for the day I will finally cast my eyes on the One who created me and loved me.”

What keeps pastors here is the people of God, Dew said. “My friends, don’t ever forget the fact that the people of God are worth it.”

Remember the hope of the gospel itself for you and for me.

“Our union with Christ presupposes our very own death,” Dew said, noting that Paul talks often about dying in Christ.

“When we come to faith in Jesus Christ, there is this very real sense in which we have died to ourselves and now rise up to live in Christ,” Dew said.

With that comes the promise that God’s people will rule and reign with Him, he said. “Our King is coming, and His Kingdom is coming with Him, and you and I get to be heirs of that

Kingdom one day.”

That makes suffering worth it, Dew said.

Remember God always fulfills His promises.

In Exodus 2, the people of God cried out for help, and God heard them and remembered His promises to them.

“It may not happen the way you think it should happen, it may not happen when you think it should happen, but you just remember that the tide of God’s Kingdom is coming. Therefore, don’t quit,” Dew said. “Continue on. Be faithful.”

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CROSSOVER from page 4

use the Three Circles evangelistic tool that illustrates God's design, brokenness and the Gospel.

"My team found ourselves in a very affluent neighborhood, and most of the people that we had

talked to had little to no felt need for the Gospel," he said. "As we were approaching the final houses for that day, a car pulled up and parked across the street. A young man named Dewy got out of

the car, and I struck up a conversation with him.

"As I dove into the Three Circles presentation, my hand was shaking so badly that I couldn't even draw a circle," he continued. "I fumbled and bumbled through the entire

Gospel presentation. I am convinced that it was the worst Gospel presentation that I have given in several years.

"As I finished the presentation and asked Dewy what circle he thought he was in, he told me that he was in the broken circle

but wanted to be in the God's Design circle," he said. Dewy prayed to receive Christ, and this experience humbled me and reminded me that it was not my ability to give a slick Gospel presentation, but it was the drawing power of the Holy Spirit."

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PRAY from page 2

two months of prayer ahead of the crusade – 20 salvation decisions and multiple other spiritual commitments.

Prayer precedes soul winning.

-- Pray for God's will to be revealed.

- Pray to be in His will.
- Pray for personal revival.
- Pray for an awakening among the lost.
- Pray for the lost in general.
- Pray for the lost by name.
- Pray for a harvest

among men.
-- Pray for laborers to reap the harvest.
Most importantly, pray believing that you will receive these things "and you will have them," according to the Word of God (Mark 11:24).

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SBC resolutions

By Staff
Baptist Message

Dallas (LBM) -- Messengers to the Southern Baptist Convention adopted eight resolutions during the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting, June 10-11, including one that called for overturning Obergefell v. Hodges, the 2015 U.S. Supreme Court decision that made same sex marriage legal in the US. Additionally, that resolution called for defunding Planned Parenthood and "for public funds to be directed to life-affirming healthcare providers."

The resolutions messengers adopted were:

-- On Appreciation for the City of Dallas expresses "heartfelt thanks" to those who contributed to the 2025 SBC Annual Meeting and related events.

-- On the Centennial Anniversary of the Cooperative Program celebrates 100 years of cooperative missions and ministries supported via \$20 billion contributed through the "comprehensive funding mechanism for like-minded Baptist churches."

-- On the Harmful and Predatory Nature of Sports Betting urges curtailment of "sports betting in all its forms."

-- On Banning Pornography exhorts parents and guardians to protect the innocence of children and urges public officials to "pursue a permanent end

to pornography."

-- On Restoring Moral Clarity through God's Design for Gender, Marriage, and the Family rejects the "normalization of transgender ideology" and calls for laws that support "God's design for marriage" and "the biological reality of male and female," as well as for overturning laws and court rulings that defy God's design in marriage and human sexuality.

-- On Standing Against the Moral Evils and Medical Dangers of Chemical Abortion Pills warns about hemorrhaging, sepsis, infection, and emergency surgery from increases in chemical abortions, and calls for governmental action to end "all forms of abortion."

-- On Advocating for International Religious Freedom laments global religious persecution and implores Southern Baptists to "speak up for our brothers and sisters" to advance religious freedom.

-- On Honoring the Centennial Anniversary of the Baptist Faith and Message (1925) and Celebrating the 25th Anniversary of the Baptist Faith and Message (2000) affirms Southern Baptists' latest consensus statement of faith as sufficient for "doctrinal identity" and "as the grounds of our cooperation for the sake of theological clarity and biblical unity."

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Temple Baptist RA wins Pinewood Derby at SBC

By Staff
Baptist Message

DALLAS (LBM) – Callen Breaux, a sixth grader from Temple Baptist Church in Ruston, recently won the national Royal Ambassador Pinewood Derby.

Held June 9 prior to the 2025 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, the race featured 11 participants from around the SBC who competed inside the exhibit hall. Breaux, who won the Louisiana Baptist RA Congress Pinewood Derby race in

April after competing in the state competition for two years previously, expressed excitement about coming in first place on the national level.

Luke Richardson, a first grader from First Baptist Church, Lafayette, placed second overall. Additional-

ly, Louisiana Baptist Women's Missions and Ministry Strategist Christine Gill won the Pinewood Derby race against other Woman's Missionary Union state directors.

RA Consultant Keith Gates (also a member of First Baptist Church, Win-

nfield) coordinated the event and Goldonna Baptist Church's RA ministry provided the track.

"I was really surprised and excited at the same time," Breaux told the *Baptist Message*. "I just wanted

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WMU/SBC photo

The 2025 national Royal Ambassador Pinewood Derby was won by Callen Breaux, a sixth grader from Temple Baptist Church in Ruston.

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*Rates are subject to change. The Louisiana Baptist Foundation is not soliciting funds but is endorsing its ministry partner Church Finance Corporation in providing investments for individuals.

LBC seeks resolutions and nominees to serve

By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) — Louisiana Baptists are invited to recommend candidates to serve on state convention boards and committees and are asked to submit resolutions for possible consideration by messengers during the 2025 Louisiana Baptist Convention.

of Business; and Resolutions. Nominations should be sent no later than Aug. 11 to Joseph Fowler, pastor, Cook Baptist Church, Ruston, who is the committee chair, via email, joseph@cookbc.org, or the U.S. Mail, Dr. Joseph Fowler, Cook Baptist Church, 2000 Cooktown Road, Ruston, LA 71270.

Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries, Baptist Message, and Baptist Foundation.

Nominations should be sent no later than Aug. 11 to Greg Bath, associate pastor, Trinity Baptist

Church, Lake Charles, who is the committee chair, via email, gbath@tbclc.org, or the U.S. Mail, Rev. Greg Bath, Trinity Baptist Church, P. O. Box 5090, Lake Charles, LA 70606.

BOTH

Please submit the candidate's name and identify the committee or board for

See RESOLUTIONS, page 11

COMMITTEES

The Louisiana Baptist Committee on Committees is beginning its work to fill 18 openings on five committees: Credentials; Moral and Social Concerns; Nominations; Order

BOARDS

The Louisiana Baptist Committee on Nominations also is beginning its work to fill 27 vacancies on the LBC Executive Board as well as the trustee bodies of the Louisiana Christian University, Louisiana

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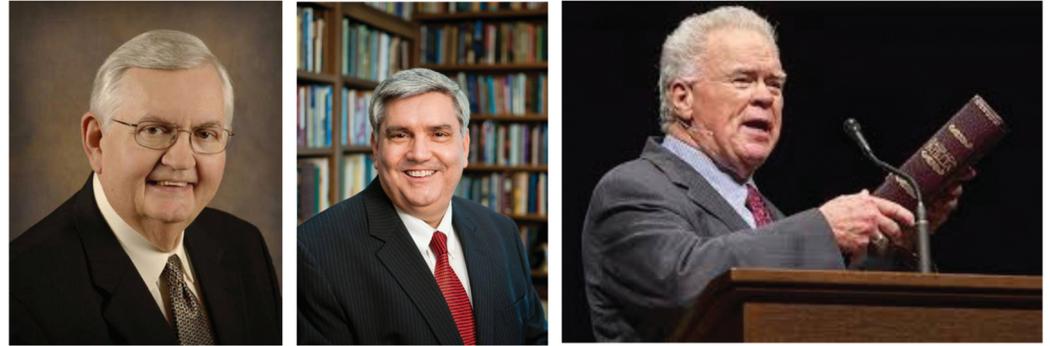
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IMPACT REPORT

CP ▶ MAXIMIZING GOSPEL IMPACT

When your church supports missions through the Cooperative Program — *where does it go and who does it reach?*

Here are some examples of how your gifts help maximize Gospel impact in Louisiana and beyond.

📍 IMB

- IMB announced that the pipeline of missionary applicants has reached more than **1,500—the highest number in 15 years**.
- In 2024, more than **78,000 individuals** participated through digital engagement strategies resulting in **428 in-person meetings and 201 professions of faith**.
- Over **200 students** are expected to learn about missions this summer as part of youth labs hosted by IMB missionary teams. The labs are for those entering their junior or senior year of high school.

📍 NAMB

- The Send Network welcomed **217 newly endorsed church planters**.
- The NAMB Evangelism Team **led in-person training** for more than **17,448** pastors, church staff, and ministry leaders in 2024.
- Send Relief hosted **Serve Tours in San Diego and Virginia Beach**. These opportunities engaged more than 1,600 volunteers, served more than 9,600 people, and saw over **80 people come to faith in Christ**.



📍 LOUISIANA BAPTISTS

- ECON (the state Evangelism Conference) kicked off the new year by welcoming **850** participants and **400** additional online participants. This culture of evangelism is catching on!
- The Forum hosted over **40 youth leaders** at Temple Baptist in Ruston. Youth leadership evaluated current ministry plans and studied key elements of what a healthy ministry should look like.
- Women from **23 associations representing 47 churches** participated in Embrace. Attendees brought hygiene products to give to The Hub in Shreveport as part of a statewide mission project.



📍 HERE FOR YOU

- In 2024, there were **7,864 views of the Gospel** presentation and **244 indicated decisions for Christ**.
- The first quarter of 2025 generated **2,675 views of the Gospel** presentation and saw 11 indicated decisions for Christ.
- A new arrangement with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association provides the **names and emails of those making decisions** for Christ in Louisiana. **Pray they will be receptive** to efforts to direct them to a local church and receiving a free Bible.

LouisianaBaptists.org/CP

Resolutions from page 9

which you are nominating him or her and include information about the nominee's church membership and current employment.

No more than the pastor and two members from any church may serve on all boards and committees, combined, at any one time. Likewise, no more than one member of the same

church may serve on the same board or committee at any one time.

RESOLUTIONS

The first Committee on Resolutions meeting is scheduled for October 21 and submissions are requested to be sent as early as possible for consideration. Resolutions may be submitted

for review and consideration no more than 90 days and no fewer than 15 days prior to the LBC annual meeting, Nov. 11, providing a window of opportunity from Aug. 13 through Oct. 27.

All statements should be typewritten, titled, and dated, and accompanied by a letter – from a church qualified to send a messenger to the annual meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention – certifying that the

person submitting the resolution is a member in good standing. The letter should include complete contact information for both the person submitting it and his or her church.

No person may submit more than three resolutions per year.

Shawn Ostoj, pastor of First Baptist Church, Greensburg, is the Committee on Resolutions chair. You may send proposed resolutions to

the committee via fax, 318.449.4287, email, Hello@LouisianaBaptists.org, or U.S. Mail, ATTN: Resolutions Committee, c/o Communications Team, Louisiana Baptist Convention, P. O. Box 311, Alexandria, LA 71309.

If you desire assistance with wording or formatting, please contact LBC Public Policy Director Will Hall by phone, 318.448.3402, or email, Policy@LouisianaBaptists.org.



RA from page 8

to compete. Never thought I might win.”

Breaux's win marked the second consecutive year a Louisiana Baptist has won the national RA Pinewood Derby. Josiah Jones, then a fifth grader from Quitman Baptist

Church, won the 2024 national Pinewood Derby in Indianapolis, Indiana.

“Our prayer is that through Royal Ambassadors, boys and young men will grow to be men on mission for Christ,” Gates said. “Fun activities like

derby races and campcraft make an impact and foster opportunities for making disciples. The focus and excitement apparent on the boys and leaders face as they participated in the national RA championship derby race on Monday says it all.”

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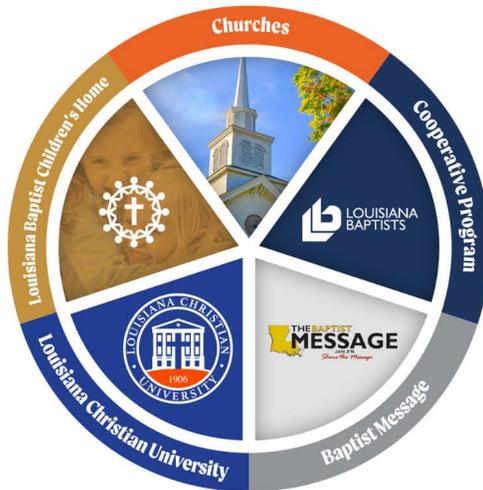
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Burney completes 58-year ministry journey at FBC Lafayette

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

LAFAYETTE, La. (LBM) – Luther Burney recently completed nearly seven decades of faithful service with Louisiana and Texas churches, including 58 of those with First Baptist Church, Lafayette.

Having retired, April 27, Burney said there were many people along his ministry journey who helped sustain him.

“When it comes to longevity a lot has to do with the leadership of the church,” Burney told the Baptist Message. “I’ve had great support from (former pastor) Dr. Steve Horn and (current pastor) Dr. James (Pritchard), for they have allowed me to serve in a way that I had never expected.”

A native of Alto, Burney was active in music as a youngster. After graduating from Ouachita Parish High School, where he served as president of the senior class and sang in the choir, Burney enrolled at Northeastern Louisiana State University (now University of Louisiana at Monroe), earning a bachelor’s degree in music education and later attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Afterward he was the minister of music with Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe (1956-1961) and the minister of music and education with Caddo Heights Baptist Church, Shreveport (1961-1962). He also served with two churches in Texas before joining FBC Lafayette in 1967.

While with FBC Lafayette, Burney served as minister of music and administration until he retired from full-time ministry in 2005. However, the church quickly called him back to a part-time role as assistant to the pastor, and since 2020 he has served as

minister to senior adults. Among his most notable accomplishments at FBC Lafayette were leading 16 music groups with of more than 600 from preschool through senior adults; large-scale productions like the Living Christmas Tree and the Lafayette Passion Play; leading student choirs who went on tour in the U.S., Canada, England, Germany and Mexico; and partnering with “Experiencing God” author Henry Blackaby (before the book was published) on multiple choir tours in Saskatoon, Canada, while Henry was pastor.

Burney also was a charter member of the Centurymen, a group of 100 ministers of music selected to represent Southern Baptists. They toured China in 1988 and Chinese Television produced a 90-minute special aired throughout that country and recorded three programs that aired on NBC.

Additionally, Burney was devoted to service to Louisiana Baptists outside his church roles, including Executive Board member in 1988 and leading the Prime Time Singers, a group of senior adults who presented concerts in area churches including in April at FBC Lafayette and his home church, First Baptist Church in Swartz.

TRIBUTES

Horn, who served as pastor with FBC Lafayette from 2005 to 2019 and now is the Louisiana Baptist executive director, said he was honored to serve with Burney, calling him “an excellent musician and an even better pastor.”

“Brother Luther was exemplary in his personal life,” he said. “Those who endure are going to leave a legacy of purity in their public and private lives.”

See BURNERY, page 20

LSUE BCM reinvigorated for the Gospel

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

EUNICE, La. (LBM) – Seeds planted during a Thursday night Bible study at the Louisiana State University-Eunice Baptist Collegiate Ministry recently led to two students turning to Christ, according to LSUE BCM Director Michael Rae Taylor.

The two collegians, who were baptized May 7 by Taylor in a campus pool, reflect a movement of God within the BCM, he said.

“One of the girls was all smiles after she got saved, and then a month later her friend got saved as a result of the Bible study as well,” Taylor told the Baptist Message. “The night her friend got saved at our office they ran and hugged each other, just praising Jesus together.

“Then, they said that they wanted to be baptized,” he continued. “They just knew they were supposed to do it and that’s faithfulness. They wanted to do it on campus so their friends could see it, and I thought that was precious and sweet.”

Taylor, who became BCM director in March, has enjoyed seeing Gospel fruit reaped in such a short time.

After he assumed his role, Taylor re-started a Thursday evening Bible study. Four of the six students attending already were believers and befriended the two women who were not Christ followers.

The next month, one of the students was convicted of her need for the Savior, and in May the other student followed during a conversation with Taylor at the BCM building. Andrew Bates, pastor with First Baptist Church, Eunice, shared a Gospel presentation before Taylor conducted the baptisms and the women were given baptism certificates and t-shirts to celebrate the moment in front of friends and even some university faculty.

“As a BCM director, I was incredibly pleased,” Taylor said. “This is a

picture of why we are here on earth – which is to share the Gospel and make disciples. I’ve shared the Gospel a lot over the last few years with a lot of different people and had a lot of polite declines; and to see these two gals just in tears and in smiles over the good news of Christ is what it’s all about.”

While the baptisms were a highlight of his brief time at the BCM, Taylor said God has just begun His work with his students.

In mid-June, Taylor and others in his community hosted a GOLA (Go Louisiana) team of Louisiana BCM members who served a Vacation Bible School at Indian Village Baptist Church, Kinder. The students serve on teams who spend the summer sharing God’s love through what is the largest evangelistic outreach of the year for many congregations. Churches in which the teams conduct a VBS normally have low baptisms and would have trouble coordinating such an event without the help of the GOLA VBS team.

Additionally, one of his students served on a summer missions team in Wyoming.

Before the start of the fall semester Taylor plans to take some of his students to National Collegiate Week at Falls Creek Conference Center near Davis, Oklahoma.

Once the new school year begins, Taylor will host free Monday lunches, Thursday evening Bible studies, and weekly worship services. He will lead the BCM to distribute Bibles each semester on campus. Taylor said support and encouragement from local churches has been vital to the BCM in these different emphases and that he is excited about such in the future.

“Our mission statement is to know Christ and to make Him known,” Taylor said. “And I think that parallels exactly the mission statement of the church.



Submitted photo

LSUE BCM Director Michael Rae Taylor baptized one of his students in a campus pool on May 7.



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See LSUE, page 16

June 26, 2025 • www.baptistmessage.com • Louisiana Baptist Message

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Seeking a Full Time/Bi-Vocational pastor

Old Bethel Baptist Church, Clarks Louisiana is seeking a Full Time (or bi-vocational) Pastor. A parsonage is provided. Please send a résumé to: Old Bethel, PO Box 95, Clarks, LA 71415 or email to: obbc1831@gmail.com.

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Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association seeks Associational Missions Strategist

The Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association, Walker, LA, is looking to hire an Associational Missions Strategist. For questions, or to send a résumé, e-mail karetha@elbamissions.org by July 15, 2025.

SEEKING PART-TIME MUSIC MINISTER

First Baptist Church of DeQuincy in DeQuincy, LA is seeking a part-time music minister. Please email résumés to music@fbcdq.org

Seeking full-time Student Pastor



Mt. Vernon Baptist Church is seeking a full time Student Pastor. We are a growing church in West Monroe, LA, with about 300 in Sunday attendance and about 30 students each Wednesday. We are looking for someone with a passion for engaging students in relational discipleship and a love of Jesus and His Word. Please send résumés to chad@mvmvcwm.com.



SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR

Hodge Baptist Church in Hodge, LA is seeking a full-time pastor. Please mail résumés to the Pastor Search Committee in c/o Hodge Baptist Church, P O Box 340, Hodge, LA 71247 or email to: hodgebaptist@yahoo.com.



SEEKING A FULL-TIME YOUTH PASTOR

Fellowship Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs, Louisiana is seeking a full-time youth pastor. Candidates must have experience. If interested please contact Mardy Guidry, Pastor @936.229.0611 or email: office@fbcofcentral.org

SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR

Emmanuel Baptist Church 5850 Buncombe Road, Shreveport, LA. Excellent opportunity to join a Christ-centered fellowship and build a vibrant youth program. Email résumé to: resume_ebc@mail.com



Sandy Bayou Baptist Church Columbia, LA 71418 is seeking a bi-vocational Pastor. Parsonage available as part of compensation. Send résumés to SBBC, 4803 Hwy 559 Columbia, LA 71418 or e-mail delaneab@yahoo.com

Seeking a Full time

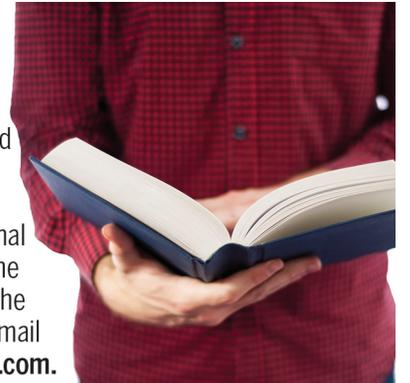
PASTOR

Seeking Full time Pastor for Emmanuel Baptist Church, Minden, La. Send CVs/résumé to MindenEmmanuel@gmail.com. For full job description visit www.emmanuelbcminden.org



Seeking a Bi-Vocational PASTOR

Friendship Baptist Church, located between Saline and Jonesboro Louisiana (16511 Hwy4, Bienville, La 71008) is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. In addition to the salary, the parsonage is available as part of the compensation package. Please email résumés to salinebrown@yahoo.com.



Westside Baptist Church seeks a

PASTOR

Westside Baptist Church, Natchitoches, LA is seeking a pastor. Résumés can be mailed to Pastor Search Committee, Attn: Mike Newton, 6834 Hwy 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, La. 71457 or submitted to Mike Newton via email at westsidenatchitoches@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

- Calvin Hubbard, Pastor, retired from pastorate to Christus Schumpert Chaplaincy, Shreveport.
Brad Kirby, Pastor, resigned from Eastwood Baptist Church, Bossier City to City Bridge Church, Plano, Texas.
Mike Brown, music minister of First Baptist Church of Dubach retired Sunday (May 25) after serving 46 years.
Bruce Baker, Associational Mission Strategist for the Carey Baptist Association, has announced he is retiring at the end of 2025.
Keith Jesselink has resigned as pastor of Mt Tabor Baptist Church, Bernice.
Eric Hayes is the new pastor of Unity Baptist Church, Cotton Valley.
Keith Sheridan in view of a call to First Baptist Church, Franklinton on June 8. Preaching at 8:15 a.m. and 10:45 a.m. services.

HOMECOMING

- Pisgah Baptist Church, Forest Hill: 136th anniversary/homecoming June 25-29, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Mike Schultz.

CRUSADE

- Madison Baptist Association Crusade, Tallulah: Revival & Worship, July 13-14, 7 p.m. First Baptist Church, Tallulah, and July 15-16, 7 p.m. at Waverly Baptist Church, Tallulah. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Worship: Richard Ainsworth.

REVIVAL

- Bushy Creek Baptist Church, Merry Revival: Revival, June 1-4, Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Mike Streams.
Lake St. John Baptist Church, Ferriday: Spring Revival, June 4-7. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Mark Richardson.
Southside Baptist Church, Jonesboro: Spring Revival, 8-11. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Wesley Venable.
Cypress Baptist Church, Dodson: Spring Revival, June 13-15. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Jesse Henderson.
Open Door Baptist Church, Ragley:

- Harvest Sunday, June 15, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: James Blakenship.
Indian Mound Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: Revival, June 22-25, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Dwayne Rogers.
Nebo Baptist Church, Nebo: Guest speaker Scotty McDowell, July 10. Pastor: Randel Camardelle.
Bayou Macon Baptist Church, Gilbert: Summer revival, July 13-16, Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Larry Russell.
Oak Grove Baptist Church, Rhinehart: Summer Revival July 20-23. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Union Hall Baptist Church, Coushatta: Special Speaker Bill Britt, July 20, Pastor: Shawn Beard.
Palestine Baptist Church, Grant: Summer Revival, July 27-30. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Hardy Estes.
First Baptist Church, Princeton: Evangelist Bill Britt, July 27, 2025. Pastor: Darrell Cooper.
Hargrove Baptist Church, DeQuincy: Summer Revival. August 3-6. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Beulah Baptist Church, Many: Summer Revival, August 10-13. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Kenneth Leach.
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Columbia: Revival, August 17-20. Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: Robert Cook.
Richey Baptist Church, Deville: Revival, August 17-20. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Grady Dodge.
Fort Necessity Baptist Church, Fort Necessity. Revival, August 21-24, 2025, Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: John Bradley.
North Shreve Baptist Church, Shreveport: Evangelist Bill special speaker, August 24, 2025. Pastor: Cecil Marr.
Milldale Baptist Church, Zachary: Bible Conference, August 29-September 1, 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman. Pastor: Jeremy Pruitt.
Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Jena: Revival, August 31-September 3. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Ricky Gresham.
Pine Grove Baptist Church, Castor: Summer Revival, September 7-10. Evangelist. Scotty McDowell. Pastor: James Lovell.
Pine Grove Baptist Church, Bernice: Summer Revival. September 14-17. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Steve Barrett.
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.
New Hope Baptist Church, DeQuincy: Summer Revival, September 7-10 (September 7 at 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; September 8-10, 6:30 p.m.) Evangelist: David Hanna. Worship: weRcalled.

- Pastor: Roland Hebert.
First Baptist Church, Spearsville: Fall revival, September 14 -17 (September 14 at 11a.m. and September 15-17 at 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: David Hanna. Pastor: Neil Everett.
The Church at Oakgrove, Ringgold. Revival, September 11-14, 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman. Pastor: James Hester.
Outreach Baptist Church, Columbia: Fall Revival, September 28- October 1. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Buster Duplissey.
Fellowship Baptist Church, Jena: Bible Conference, November 8-9, 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman. Pastor: Shad Tibbs.
Rescue Fellowship, West Monroe: Fall revival, November 9-12, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Russell Caldwell.
Antioch Baptist Church, Farmerville: Harvest Day, December 7, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Ruben Weaver.

LAGNIAPPE

- Grangerville Baptist Church, Grangerville: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert with Jessica Horton, June 22, 10:45 a.m. Pastor: Mike Cotton.
The Lighthouse Baptist Church, Independence: By Greg Sullivan Ministries with Jessica Horton June 22, 6

- p.m. Pastor: Gene Hoyt.
Cedarcrest Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: Guest concert Greg Sullivan, July 13 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Bruce Worrell.
Salem Baptist Church, Plain Dealing: The Cox Family in concert, July 13, Pastor: Larry Earhart.
Mt. Patrick Baptist Church, Bernice: One-Step Higher, a Gospel group from First Baptist, Farmerville will be in concert July 19th. 6 p.m. Pastor: Philadelphia Baptist Church, Alexandria Horseshoe campus: Ben Waites in concert, August 17, 9 a.m. Pastor: Stuard Sasser.
Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville campus: Ben Waites in concert, August 17, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
Eastwood Baptist Church, Houghton: Worship Louisiana, presented by Semsen Music beginning September 5, at 10 a.m. This is a two-day conference for worship leaders, praise teams, choirs, worship musicians, pastors and church tech teams. Created by worship leaders for worship leaders and their teams. For more information visit www.worshiplouisiana.com.
Victory Baptist Church, Hammond: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, September 7, 10:45 a.m. Pastor: Johnathan Watts.
New Hope Baptist Church, DeQuin-

- cy: Louisiana Revival – We R Called, September 7-10, 6:30 p.m. Pastor: Roland Hebert.
Maurepas Baptist Church, Maurepas: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, September 14, 10 a.m. Pastor: Glynn Reine.
Fordoche Baptist Church, Fordoche: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, September 14, 5 p.m. Pastor: T oby Delahoussaye.
Cedar Grove Baptist Church, Lecompte: Ben Waites in concert, September 21, 10:30 p.m. Pastor: Robert Daniel.
Beulah Baptist Church, Oak Grove: Ben Waites in concert, October 12, 11 a.m.

VACATION BIBLE SCHOOL

- Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill: VBS: Magnified, July 7-11, 8:30-noon. All are welcome for this fun-filled week. Commencement will be held July 11, 6:30-8:30 p.m. Pastor: Michael Evans.
Bethany Baptist Church, Bethany: Vacation Bible School – Magnified, August 4-8, 5 – 8 p.m. For more information, go to the website at www.bethanybaptistla.com, or call the office at 318.938.5028. Pastor: Marvin Cooper.

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.

izw pfgz mgbxb bip qfiq fg izbpgygw

wvbhyggqsu, fg bivw xzqr fvd, qfrx iyq zrq niy

yrd qfg evztrd rn trw. izw zr diz inqgy qfiq

wxybq ibe fvd izu lxgbqvrz.

diye qpgskg:qfvyqu-nrxy

Clues: G = E; Y = R

Answer to May 22, Scripture Crypto: isaiah fifty-six:ten

SELA BCM: A year of discipleship, missions and soul winning

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

discipleship and just go out on their own, under their

own initiative, to share the Gospel on campus,” Luna

said. “They are understanding the vision. That’s

something that we’ve been
See SELA, page 17

HAMMOND, La. (LBM) – The Baptist Collegiate Ministry at Southeastern Louisiana University recently wrapped up a fruitful year that saw more students engaged in discipleship and missions, SELA BCM Director Joe Luna told the Baptist Message. Most importantly, he said, 12 students professed faith in Christ.

“It’s been really cool to see how many of the students are trained in

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So, I’d say the BCMs really exist to share the Gospel on campus, but also to be conduits to drive students into the local churches who have been very good to us. So, I think that partnership is crucial as we continue to work together to make Christ known on our campus and beyond.”

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praying about for a long time.”

Luna shared that the SELA BCM celebrated other victories in 2024-25 as well:

- nearly \$9,000 was raised for missional causes;

- 56 students were mobilized for mission trips in Mexico, Texas and North Carolina;

- 20 students will serve on mission this summer;

- more than 50 students were involved in campus evangelism, resulting in more than 1,500 Gospel conversations;

- more than 5,000 meals were served to students on campus; and

- more than 100 students participated in discipleship small groups.

Luna said the number of students who were engaged in discipleship, evangelism and missions increased by at least 50 percent from the 2023-24 academic year, explaining that students have embraced the Great Commission.

“A lot of them have just come from a cultural Christian background, so they have tried to be good and moral people but didn’t necessarily understand that God commands us to be on mission and make disciples,” Luna said. “They are starting to understand their identity in

Christ and living it. They also have learned how serving combined with sharing the Gospel forges community and this makes missions more appealing to them.”

Among the most memorable moments for Luna was when a student named Eli accepted Jesus after attending multiple discipleship meetings and worship services at the BCM.

Though Eli previously believed he was a Christ follower, he discovered that never was the case.

“He thought he was a Christian, but he had never heard the Gospel before,” Luna said. “I was able to share Jesus with him, and he surrendered his life to Christ.”

“Christ has so radically transformed his identity that obviously he understands that to follow Jesus means I need to be like Jesus,” he continued. “He has started investing in other people too and recently led another guy to the Lord. So, you have this guy who wasn’t even a Christian in September, surrendered his life to Christ and now has reached other students. That’s something that we really like to celebrate, and I would love to see it happen more often with some of our other students.”

Looking to the next



Submitted photo

The number of students with the Southeastern Louisiana University Baptist Collegiate Ministry who were engaged in discipleship, evangelism and missions increased by at least 50 percent from the 2023-24 academic year, said BCM Director Joe Luna, explaining that students have embraced the Great Commission.

school year, Luna asked for prayers for an additional \$400 a month to provide financial support for campus missionaries (BCM associate directors), more female involvement

in leadership roles, connections with incoming freshmen during summer orientation.

“Our BCM mission statement is: ‘Equipping students to be mature fol-

lowers of Jesus that impact the campus and transform the world,’” he said. “Please continue to pray for us as we seek to raise up the next generation of Christian leaders.”

CENLA Pregnancy Center blessed with growth

By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – The CENLA Pregnancy Center celebrated several “wins” last year that helped give women and their babies hope in Christ, according to its recently-released 2024 Impact Report.

The Alexandria center (along with centers in Marksville and Vidalia) served 512 women, experienced 2,307 client visits, conducted 472 pregnancy and 357 ultrasound tests, and provided 3,552 resources through counseling, referrals, classes and material support. Additionally, the center

expanded its hours of operation at the Miss-Lou Pregnancy Center in Vidalia, distributed \$29,330 worth of sundries and relocated the Avoyelles center to North Monroe Street in Marksville.

“We are so just unbelievable excited about how the Lord moves and how many people he has brought to our ministry to provide services to,” CPC Director Kim Lyons told the Baptist Message. “We are so proud of so many of our moms for choosing life, and we’re proud of them for being brave and stepping into our center and trusting us with their story and the life of their baby.”

SAVING LIVES

Since 2017, when the Alexandria location was launched on the campus of the Louisiana Baptist Building, the CPC has added two locations and served a combined 2,000 women, performing 2,574 pregnancy tests and 1,828 ultrasounds (a vital service to the decision-making process for many pregnant women).

Lyons said the centers saved lives by offering counseling (pregnancy decision coaching by trained advocates), free pregnancy tests, free ultrasounds, information about pregnancy options, referrals to mental health counselors and

obstetrician-gynecologists, safe house and affordable housing recommendations, adoption support (referrals to assist expectant mothers with an adoption plan and limited financial assistance), post-decision support that includes parenting education and material assistance for up to two years into the child’s life, as well as post-abortion ministry to women who regret their decisions to take the lives of their unborn children.

Additionally, the center meets basic needs for mothers, fathers, and babies by distributing food, baby beds, diapers, women’s hygiene products, car seats and clothing.

The ministry also offers abortion pill reversal services. The center is listed on a national hotline that connects CENLA Pregnancy Center staff with women seeking to reverse the effects of the first pill taken for a chemically induced abortion.

Lyons said the CPC continues to be thankful for the many volunteers who contribute financially and in other ways. She said they save the ministry more than \$25,000 a year through serving in our centers. Most volunteers commit to 3 hours per week helping with the reception area, client intake

See CENLA, page 18

(non-medical), shopping in our boutique, community outreach and more.

She also expressed appreciation to Louisiana Baptists who provide, for \$1 yearly, the 5,660-sq.-ft. Alexandria facility on the campus of the Louisiana Baptist Convention state mission center, a \$72,000 annual benefit.

The ministry will celebrate all those who support the center at its annual “Gift of Life” banquet, Sept. 18 at 6 pm inside the Randolph Riverfront Center in Alexandria. A full lineup that includes a guest speaker and emcees should be announced during the

summer for its largest single fundraiser.

Additionally, Lyons said the Baby Bottle Campaign (donations of the coin-filled baby bottles) has now been extended from only an emphasis in January to year-round, noting that Mother’s Day has become a special emphasis, too. The change has resulted in a 10 percent increase in organizations that have signed up to participate in this effort to meet the ministry’s financial needs.

“I would encourage every church, if you’re not connected, to find the best fit for connecting to the ministry of the pregnancy



center.” she said. “I highly encourage them to reach

out, come take a tour. Come see firsthand this

life-affirming ministry. You won’t regret it.”

Backyard global missions: Churches prepare for Meta

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

RICHLAND PARISH, La. (LBM) – Since Meta, a social technology giant formerly known as Facebook, which now is the parent company of Facebook, Instagram and Threads, announced in 2024 that it would build a \$10 billion artificial intelligence facility in northeast Louisiana, area churches have been preparing for what will be a global mission field right in their backyards.

Much of their way of living and ministering have been centered around agriculture for decades, so now the churches will need to adjust to include a mission focus on sharing the Gospel and meeting ministry needs among a surging population with ties to the social media technology industry. The challenges as well as the potential spiritual harvest will be greater than anything they have experienced before, Richland Association Mission Strategist Johnny Smith told the Baptist Message.

BACKGROUND

According to a news release by Louisiana Workforce Commission, Meta projects the data center will support 500 or more

direct new jobs in Richland Parish and Louisiana Economic Development believes another 1,000 indirect jobs may be created in the region. At the peak of construction, Meta estimates 5,000 construction workers will be at the 2,250-acre former Franklin Farm mega-site that sits between Rayville and Delhi.

Additionally, Meta expects construction to continue through 2030 and has committed to invest more than \$200 million in local infrastructure improvements, including roads and water systems.

GOLDEN OPPORTUNITY

Site work began in December 2024 and churches already have responded.

On May 5, 25 volunteers fed 400 construction workers on the campus of Bethel Baptist Church, Rayville, located 200 yards from the site. The team served to-go plates and offered prayer. From this simple ministry effort, a few of the workers accepted Christ. Follow-up contact and ministry with these new believers has been referred to pastors in the different areas closest to where the workers reside.

Smith said a team will continue feeding the construction workers at the church on the first Monday night of each month and shared that more outreach is planned. He has spent the last several months rallying associational churches to take advantage of the golden opportunity that lies before them in building relationships with Meta and other companies that will play a part in making the historic project happen.

“We have been told that more than 7,000 workers eventually will be here at one time, so the salvations that happened from the first feeding time are just a taste of what is to come,” Smith explained. “We’re trying to put our heads together to do what best we can and reach as many as we can. Our hope, as this moves further along, is to reach families as they move here and build relationships with those from the company. Once we get that trust built, we are praying the doors will open and we can reach many with the Gospel.

“But right now, we are just getting to know and love on them,” he said. “We want them to know we appreciate them; are glad they are here and are encouraged by our wit-

ness.”

Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief State Director Stan Statham said because so many of the workers will be coming from outside the “Bible Belt,” they may be unfamiliar with the Gospel. Hence, churches must be ready, and more Louisiana Baptists will be needed to be trained in chaplaincy and other evangelistic roles.

“There will be opportunities one day for Louisiana Baptists to participate in mission trips in that area,” he said. “But for now, people need to pray for the churches of Richland Association, who are in a rural area that in the next few years will see their landscape changed. They are getting internationals coming and the community there will feel the impact. So, we as Louisiana Baptists must be ready.”

Louisiana Baptist Church Planting Strategist Jacob Crawford agreed.

“Right now, the emphasis will be equipping local churches to make disciples with the temporary workers who are coming in,” he said. “In there years ahead, there will be continued opportunities for cross-cultural mission projects. It’s exciting because the world is coming to that area

and we will be able to see new churches started to hopefully win many to the Kingdom.”

Louisiana Baptist Church Health Consultant Leroy Fountain, who lives in Monroe, about 25 miles west of the Meta site, has been working with churches to help them reach workers at the facility. He said building relationships is key to planting churches.

“Culturally, it may be challenging, and our churches will encounter some of the workers who will become ill, have kids in school, shop in their community, get married, have babies and even die,” Fountain said. “Churches must prepare to be good neighbors and not fail to minister to the strangers in their neighborhoods.

“Their worldview likely will be different from ours,” he continued. “So, we need to be prepared to reach those folks who are different than us. Once we build those relationships, then it is possible to invite them to our house for a Bible study and from there invite them to help start or attend a new church. The opportunities are here to reach the world for Jesus, and I pray we are mindful of how we can best do that.”

SC executive director (Louisiana native) shares Cajun fishing lessons

By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Message

DALLAS (LBM) – South Carolina Baptist Convention Executive Director Tony Wolfe invited messengers to cast bread on the water to remember the generation who drove the growth of the Cooperative Program and to unite as the generation that continues its impact.

“The Cooperative Program is not a foolproof investment,” Wolfe said. “But it is the best strategy we have to turn diverse, disparate tributaries into one roaring river.”

Citing Ecclesiastes 11:1-6, Wolfe, a Louisiana native, shared memories of fishing on the riverbanks on the Comite and Amite Rivers and related them to the challenges Southern Baptists face today while urging them to push ahead with their cooperative global mission.

Wolfe grew up in Baton Rouge, where his dad, Jim, was pastor with Brookstown Baptist Church (today, he is

pastor with Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe). Tony also served in Louisiana — as music minister with Northside Baptist Church, Denham Springs, from 1999-2003.

Wolfe emphasized that May 13, 1925 was a “watershed moment” for the Convention, when a group of Southern Baptists that included M.E. Dodd (pastor with First Baptist Church, Shreveport, at the time) gathered in Memphis, Tennessee, to found the Cooperative Program.

“The Cooperative program was born that day, and soon to follow, a consensus of our faith in the Baptist Faith and Message,” he said. “That was a pivotal meeting where our forefathers cast their bread upon the water, and the Gospel has streamed magnificently ever since, from the waters to the nations. And here we are today, 15,000 of us from among about 12.5 million across the United States who call themselves Southern Baptists and cooperate

on missions. Here we are today, gleaning from the edges of that Great Commission cooperation that has been entrusted to us from a century past.”

Wolfe said despite any challenges Southern Baptists may have, he was enthusiastic about the effort.

“It is my prerogative to stay joyfully, sacrificially and strategically engaged doing everything I can to move us toward greater clarity, greater missional effectiveness. ... I’m still casting lines in this flowing river.”

He reminded messengers that the Gospel message is urgent and they should not waste a single day to carry out their mission.

“As a Southern Baptist people, never have we possessed more technology, more intelligence, more global access, more financial resources or more organizational strength than right now,” Wolfe said. “Yet still, the question persists: Will ours be the generation that sees the retrenchment of our global war on lostness?”

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BURNEY from page 12

Bro. Luther has done exactly that.

“Brother Luther was established in the precepts of the faith,” he continued. “He knew what he believed and lived what he believed. I have heard him say hundreds of times that in choosing music, he was always careful about the lyrics. He wanted the congregation to sing lyrics that theologically matched what we believed.

“I want to finish well,

and Bro. Luther is a great example of what it means to finish well.”

Sharon Ringo, who played the piano for 30 years under Burney’s leadership, offered that he displayed a heart for people and God used it for His glory.

“Luther is a born leader, musically, and able to gather a crowd to follow his ideas,” she said. “He took adult choirs and youth choirs on many mission

trips. Some were quite an adventure. We were blessed under his leadership and musical direction to sing praises every Sunday. The adult choir did many special programs that required choreography. You can imagine how a bunch of non-dancing Baptists looked trying to learn the steps. It was a lot of fun. Some of us even had rhythm. Luther is well thought of and loved by our congregation.”



Submitted photo

Luther Burney was honored during a special service with FBC Lafayette.



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Prior to becoming a Supreme Court Justice, McCallum served as an Assistant District Attorney until he was elected as a member of the Louisiana House of Representatives where he served for 11 years. He was then elected as trial judge at the Third Judicial District Court, serving for 15 years. In 2018, he was elected without opposition to serve on the Second Circuit Court of Appeal.

Justice Jay McCallum began his tenure as an Associate Justice of the Louisiana Supreme Court on November 13, 2020. He was elected from District 4, the largest Supreme Court District in terms of geographical size and number of parishes.

McCallum serves on several committees including the Louisiana Sheriff’s Executive Management Institute, the Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement and Administration of Criminal Justice, and the Supreme Court of Louisiana Historical Society and was appointed by his fellow justices to serve on the Louisiana State Law Institute.

In addition to an undergraduate degree from Northeast Louisiana University and a law degree from Louisiana State University, McCallum holds a Master of Divinity from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Justice Jay, as he is known to many of his constituents, is a much sought after motivational and inspirational speaker for various religious, civic, business, and trade groups.

Justice Jay and his wife, Deanna, are members of First Baptist Church, in Farmerville, Louisiana, and have two children and three grandchildren.