



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

May 22, 2025

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LCU photo

Newly elected Louisiana Christian University President Mark Johnson emphasized the need for the school to reflect a Kingdom mindset. Johnson, who was named the school's 10th president on Feb. 25 and officially assumes the position June 1, said LCU will modify its strategy from a national effort to a regional outreach as they aim to increase student enrollment.

LCU graduates urged to lean on God

By Staff
Louisiana Baptist Message

PINEVILLE, La. – Newly elected Louisiana Christian University President Mark Johnson challenged the school's Class of 2025 graduates to be strong in the Lord. "You are at a finish line, and you're headed to a new starting line, and the journeys will come," Johnson said during the 170th commencement inside Guinn Auditorium, May 10. "There will be obstacles and chal-

lenges that you're going to have to face, and you're going to have to lean on the Lord to get you through some of those difficult moments.

"Celebrate today," said Johnson, who assumes the presidency June 1. "Families, celebrate today. But as we know, in this life you will have tribulations. The Bible says to be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

The school conferred 219 degrees (154 undergraduate and 65 graduate) during two separate but identical ceremonies to accommodate the new alums and their guests, who received messages from several members of the Class of 2025.

In her speech, Kamryn West, a biological science and chemistry major, told the crowd that LCU taught her how to depend on God.

"LCU may be a small university, but it feels like a family," she said. "We stood together in good times and in difficult ones. We stood for each other, and next to each other. But God also put professors in my life, not just educators, but mentors who encouraged me and sometimes had to break me down, so that God could rebuild me."

See COMMENCEMENT, page 7

LBC EC: Seek, strengthen, cooperate

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – During the May 6 meeting of the Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Board in the Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center, Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn encouraged members to be passionate about reaching the state for Christ.

EVANGELISTIC VISION

In his report, Horn highlighted the Convention's vision statement –

seek the lost, strengthen churches, and support cooperative missions and ministries.

Seek the lost

Horn said Louisiana Baptists continue to see spiritual fruit through various evangelistic endeavors in the state:

-- 8,415 baptisms in 2024;

-- 75 congregations participated in John 3:16 Sunday (19,000 business-sized cards about the Gospel were mailed and distributed by them for the March 16 evangelistic outreach

See HORN, page 2

LBC EB updated on CP, entities

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – During its May 6 meeting, the Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Board received updates on Cooperative Program giving and the ongoing work of the four convention entities.

BUDGET REPORT

Board members learned that gifts through the Cooperative Program from January to March totaled \$232,035.00 more than budgeted for 2025, so far. However, from January to March, churches have giv-

en \$316,236.74 less through CP this year than the same timeframe as last year.

ENTITY REPORTS

LCU

Newly elected Louisiana Christian University President Mark Johnson emphasized the need for the school to reflect a Kingdom mindset. Johnson, who was named the school's 10th president on Feb. 25 and officially assumes the position June 1, said LCU will modify its strategy from a national effort to a regional outreach as they aim to increase student enrollment.

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Horn from page 1

effort);
 -- Youth Evangelism Celebration (501 spiritual decisions, including 108 to accept Christ);
 -- mass evangelism crusades in Beauregard, Grant, Livingston and Ouachita Parishes;
 -- "Here for You"

multi-media campaign yielded 7,864 views of the Gospel via commercials on TV or social media, with 244 trusting in Christ in 2024, while 3,379 views have yielded 14 decisions for Christ so far in 2025; and
 -- more children and

youth have registered for camps at Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center so far in 2025 than during the same timeframe in 2024.

Strengthen churches

-- training (sessions to strengthen engagement among churches have included the very first Rural Church Summit May 12-13 along with evangelistic, missions, pastor search committee, Sunday school/small group and Vacation Bible School training sessions); and
 -- creation of a church self-insurance organization

that is open to churches of all faith traditions.

Horn emphasized that the LBC only took the lead in helping to create the self-insurance cooperative for churches.

"(T)his is not a Louisiana Baptist Convention project now nor will it be," he said. "We are getting closer but the organization that has been formed to create the self-insurance program is not yet at a place where we can launch the program.

"If we can be successful here, this will free church dollars up to do ministry and thus we will have a

hand in strengthening the church. We will see, we will pray, and we will continue to work on your behalf when and where we see this opportunity."

Cooperative missions and ministries

Horn thanked Louisiana Baptist Foundation Executive Director Jeff Steed for his leadership as he approaches his May 31 retirement and voiced excitement about Mark Johnson assuming the presidency of Louisiana Christian University on June 1.

He shared that 138 missionaries and families serving with the International Mission Board have come from LBC churches and that \$4,315,331.12 was given by LBC churches to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering in 2024.

AMBASSADORS

Horn closed his report by asking board members to be ambassadors for the Cooperative Program and Louisiana Baptists' cooperative missions and

See HORN, page 3

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Revival spurs spiritual renewal at FBC Natchitoches

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

NATCHITOCHEs, La. (LBM) – Nearly 400 members and guests of First Baptist Church, Natchitoches, sought reconciliation during a recent four-day Thirst Revival Conference.

Hosted by Niles, Michigan-based Life Action Ministries, the gathering featured nightly messages on the need to trust in God even in the hard seasons of life, removing idols, dangers of bitterness and examination of one's love for the Lord and for others.

The conference also included high-energy music, children's programming and a women's luncheon led entirely by Life Action's ministry team.

In the end, the church came away more unified and ready for God's next step in their lives.

Tommy Rush, senior pastor of FBCN, told the *Baptist Message* that every night entire families filled the altar and others gathered in pews as they sought reconciliation within their families, and some individuals offered long-overdue encouragement, love and compassion

to their families.

"It was more of a focus on being refreshed and restoring relationships in our family and church," FBCN Senior Pastor Tommy Rush told the *Baptist Message*. "Sometimes you don't realize how hungry people in the church are to restore broken relationships.

"The revival focused a lot on families needing to be closer and dads stepping up to be spiritual leaders," he continued. "Our people were so hungry for this and every night we had a packed house. They were bringing friends and neighbors and family members

because it was such a good time of worship, and they wanted more of it."

Though the conference has ended, the revival among members has continued.

The Sunday after the conference, the church experienced an above average attendance in morning fellowship groups.

"They have a greater drive now for personal discipleship and a burden to reach the lost," FBCN Pastor of Discipleship and Administration Brent Shoalmire said. "Many have expressed a deeper concern for lost neighbors,

and we believe we will see that only continue for the foreseeable future."

Brett Rodriguez, who teaches a fellowship group, said his members were so impacted by the conference that they spent their allotted time the next Sunday discussing what had happened to them and others.

"People in the class were revived," he said. "Every person had something to say that stood out to them and the fact they are talking about this a week after it happened is a good sign."

Sarah Perot, another church member, said that prior to the conference her quiet time and fellowship group meetings dealt with some of the same subjects brought up by the Life Action team.

"God prepared me for the six months leading up to the revival by bringing up some of the same material that was preached on during the revival," she said. "God used that to prepare my heart for that time. I learned quickly that for the church to enter into revival, people have to be revived personally first and that definitely is what happened with our church."

Calvary Baptist Church, Many, will host a LAM conference, Oct. 26-29.

Visit lifeaction.org to learn how your church can host a conference.

Horn

from page 2

and ministries.

Moreover, he urged them to remain faithful to the task of soul winning which God has given them.

"4.6 million people are living among us in Louisiana, and every single one of them are in need of the Gospel," he said. "In fact, if today is an average day in Louisiana, 155 people are going to die among us. Some will go to Heaven. We praise the Lord for that. But many will go to Hell, right here from Louisiana. Let's be on mission to change that number as the Lord tarries and as the Lord gives us opportunity."

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2025 Q1: Send Network Louisiana yields 141 decisions, 68 baptisms

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Send Network Louisiana churches celebrated a Gospel harvest to start the new year, producing 141 decisions for Christ and 68 baptisms by 44 church plants during the first three months of 2025.

Additionally, the church plants reported 1,234 Gospel conversations and an average of 64 in weekly worship attendance, according to a recent first quarter report by Send Network Louisiana.

Send Network Louisiana Director Lane Corley said the partnership with the North American Mission Board, which went into effect Aug. 1, 2023, has helped the state further its God-sized vision to see His Kingdom expanded in Louisiana by one percent over the next decade.

“The Gospel continues to advance to new people in

Louisiana through church planting,” Corley told the Baptist Message. “We also continue to engage every people group with new Hispanic, Asian, Arabic and multiethnic works. Replanting continues to be a major priority with dozens of churches in need of radical revitalization. We need planters, re-planters and partner churches for opportunities all across Louisiana.”

Researchers estimate that 62 percent of approximately 4.6 million Louisianans are lost (about 2.85 million). If this church planting and soul winning initiative is successful in the state, 28,875 Louisianans will be added to the Kingdom through 231 new churches planted in the state by 2033 (based on each reaching 125 people with the Gospel). These salvations will be in addition to those recorded by already established Louisiana Baptist congregations.

Since the partnership be-

gan, the new church plants that currently receive Cooperative Program funding through the North American Mission Board and Louisiana Baptist missions and ministries team, have reported, collectively: 1,031 salvation decisions, 678 baptisms and more than 15,130 Gospel conversations.

Moreover, Corley said that replanting churches is still a significant need across Louisiana, as 25 churches close their doors for good every year. In April, more than 50 people came to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary specifically to attend the annual Replant Bootcamp, an orientation event for potential re-planters and pastors who want to get their respective churches involved in a replant project.

Currently, 11 replants are receiving funding and care through Send Network Louisiana.

Additionally, church

planting continues to help Louisiana Baptists grow in diversity. Sixty-six percent of current church plants are non-Anglo (11 Hispanic, nine multi-ethnic, seven African American, one Asian, and one Arabic).

“Church planters are being assessed, cared for and equipped,” Corley said. “Churches are stepping up to become Supporting, Sending, and Multiplying Churches. We’re glad to see momentum building for kingdom advancement through church planting.”

Corley said 2025 already is looking bright, noting that 15 church planting candidates already are in the pipeline to be assessed this year.

He added that support continues to remain strong among Louisiana Baptist congregations for partnering with church plants and developing future church planters. He said that 49 churches attended training events held in February and

March in Lafayette, New Orleans and Shreveport and were helped in designing a strategy and process to raise up, develop, and send out church planters, re-planters and missionaries from their membership.

Corley thanked the NAMB for investing in the state’s church planting efforts. In 2024, NAMB distributed \$319,828.35 in monthly church planter supplements, startup grants and planter benefits.

“We’re grateful for Southern Baptist churches who contribute through the Cooperative Program, and give to the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions and the Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering for investing in church plants that are reaching new people with the Gospel across Louisiana,” Corley said.

Interested in becoming a church planter or a sending church? Visit SendNetwork.com.



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Journey Church Executive Pastor Josh Poe assists Senior Pastor James Greer in baptizing Poe's son, James David. He was one of 52 baptized during the special lakeside sunrise Easter service, April 20.

Journey Church celebrates 100 baptisms in four months

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) - Journey Church started out the first four months of the year in record-breaking fashion with 100 baptisms, the most in the church's history for this timeframe.

According to Pastor James Greer, the milestone reflects a hunger by the church to grow more in Christ and to make Him known in the community.

EASTER CELEBRATION

Of the 100 baptisms, 52 took place during a sunrise service on Easter Sunday.

"This is something I will remember for the rest of my life," Greer told the Baptist Message. "What we witnessed was nothing short of supernatural - a clear move of God's power and presence. I want to thank every volunteer, every prayer warrior, and every person who invited someone. You helped make an eternal difference."

On the Saturday of that holiday weekend, 49 decisions were made for Christ during an evening service.

The following morning, 52 people entered the waters of Buhlow Lake in Pineville during a sunrise service and another 51 made decisions to follow Jesus during three morning services on the Journey Church campus.

Nearly 2,400 attended the weekend services

and 23 people joined the church.

Those who were baptized or made decisions have been invited to attend a pastor's luncheon to learn more about the church and to join a connection class to help them grow in their walk with Christ.

For Journey Church Executive Pastor Josh Poe, the Easter morning service was extra special. He had the honor of assisting with the baptism of his son, who is seven years old.

"James David has been ready to be baptized for over a month, but when we told him about Buhlow Lake, he wanted to wait and do it there," Poe said. "There's something special about being out in nature, especially as the sun comes over the horizon. A fresh start for the day and a fresh start for his life. As his dad, to be able to baptize him is one of the greatest joys in my life."

FORWARD THINKING

Originally known as Lee Heights Family Church in Pineville, the congregation moved in 2009 to the former site of Donahue Family Church and changed their name to Journey Church. Since then, the congregation (which averages 956 in

See JOURNEY, page 8

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Friends, family and members of Tioga First Baptist Church gathered April 27 to honor long-time Pastor Tim Hisaw, who retired April 30. He became pastor with TFBC on Jan. 11, 2009. Hisaw served as a *Baptist Message* trustee (2011-2017), including as president (2013-2015), the North Rapides Baptist Association moderator (2013-2015) and a LBC Executive Board member (2018-2024). "During my time as pastor, the church has loved Jesus, my family and the community," Hisaw told the *Baptist Message*. "Among my favorite memories were being with the people through the blessings and burdens of life. Baptisms, graduations, weddings and bidding farewell to those who have gone to be with the Lord have brought satisfaction and joy on my ministry journey."

Birthday weekend ends with two spiritual births

By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Message

MANSFIELD, La. (LBM) – More than 100 guests recently gathered for the 90th birthday celebration of long-time Calvary Baptist Church member Mary McDonald, but the celebration continued the following day with two individuals proclaiming their new lives in Christ through baptism.

"That was just a real uplift in my life," Pastor Alton Middleton told the *Baptist Message*. "The Lord is really working at this little church. People had just about written it off, with the last two pastors passing away before I got here. Now, we are using this to build momentum, and I believe the

Lord has greater things in store for us."

The celebration began April 12, with family members, church members and others gathered to offer gifts and flowers for McDonald. The next day, Joe Lagars and Caleb Maxwell came forward to profess faith in Christ following the morning worship service.

Middleton then baptized them in a cattle trough on the church property to become the first baptisms since 2019, according to the Annual Church Profile of church statistics.

Despite past challenges the church has faced, Middleton believes the baptisms will spark a fire among the congregation, which averages 20 in Sun-

See BIRTHDAY, page 8

“ Can God please save me today?
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Commencement from page 1

Logan Brimmer, who played defensive end for the LCU football team and earned his degree in criminal justice, cited Philippians 3:14 to emphasize the importance of pressing on towards the goal with humility and integrity.

“Paul writes, ‘I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Jesus Christ,’” he said. “This verse mirrors the athlete’s drive to a goal or championship, but it also points to a great purpose in life, not a trophy, but a life lived with service and integrity. As we leave here today, may we carry both the grit of an athlete and the grace of a believer. Lead with humility and live with purpose, knowing that through Christ, every step, every game, every challenge, has meaning.”

William Dunham, a music major, said his time at LCU reminded him that there is great joy in trusting the Lord.

“I truly believe that every change that happens in our lives, including this graduation, every change, is an opportunity to walk with and trust the Lord in a very intimate and deep way,” he said. “Because when you trust the Lord, when you walk with Him, it shows that, yes, you don’t have it all together, but you’re trusting the One who does.”

Karen Carter, LCU’s executive director of marketing, graduated with her Master of Strategic Leadership.

“For years, I’ve had the opportunity to capture the candid moments that tell the story of our time here,” Carter said. She encouraged her fellow students to “remember the beauty of what lies in between the shots.”

Jamel Owosu, who earned his Master of Business Administration, like Carter, earned his undergraduate and master’s

degrees at LCU. He also played basketball for the Wildcats.

“Faculty and coaches showed me how important it is to have Christ as the center of my life, and I’ll forever be grateful for that.”

Elisabeth McGrath, who earned her degree in business administration with an economics/finance concentration, transferred to LCU.

“When I first walked on this campus, I felt peace, purpose and the unmistakable presence of God,” she said. “The time here has been a personal spiritual journey with the Lord. Today marks the beginning of a new chapter but also stands as a testimony of how far we’ve all come.”

In a prayer he led for graduates, Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn asked God to bless them as they go out to serve.

“We ask your blessing upon these graduates as they depart into the world that you have given to

them in a place of service unto the King, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ,” Horn prayed. “We pray that in all these things they would be strong in the Lord, being reminded always that the same power that raised Christ Jesus from the dead is the power that works mightily in us and through us.

“Indeed, let us be strong

in the Lord,” he continued. “Our Father, we pray for these families today, for today marks a place of transition for them. We pray that You would give them courage as well to be strong in the Lord. And so, on this day of celebration, where we celebrate our graduates, God, we celebrate unto you, for you are the author and the finisher of our faith.”

LBC EB from page 1

“We want to win Louisiana,” he said. “The churches that launched Louisiana Christian University in 1906 deserve an institution that prioritizes transformation from the inside out. Before we reach the world, we must first reach our own students. Our calling is to raise up a generation rooted in faith and excellence, beginning right here in our state.”

He spoke candidly about the importance of relationships across campus and throughout the state, noting the energy and sense of purpose he felt during the presidential search process. He described his desire to foster an environment where faculty, coaches, staff and students are inspired to live out the university’s Christian mission in meaningful ways.

He expressed appreciation to board members for welcoming him into their churches and communities, and he reiterated his commitment to collaboration and mutual support.

“Know that you have a friend in Louisiana Christian University, and that we are not here to be served, but to also serve” he said. “So, tell us what we can do to help your ministries grow.”

Moving forward, Johnson said LCU will have a ‘Go Day’ every fifth Tuesday of the fall and spring semesters where students will go out into the community to serve and share the Gospel. This concept is inspired by President Jamie Dew of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary’s “Serve Day” where students serve/evangelize their local community.

“Our students need to be seen and known in the

community,” he said. “We want to make a meaningful difference in ways that align with our mission, and we want to be the kind of institution that would be missed if we weren’t here.”

Johnson concluded by sharing his belief that if the university stays focused on its Christian values, student enrollment and financial health will follow. “If we do the right things the right way, the challenge won’t be attracting students, but hopefully it’ll be finding space to put them.”

LBF

Louisiana Baptist Foundation Executive Director Jeff Steed said the ministry seeks to partner with churches and entities to advance the Kingdom in Louisiana through various services, including their ChurchBiz Services. This one-stop shop for church business includes podcasts, conferences, publications, comprehensive solutions and other offerings for churches. The ChurchBiz Services specifically include accounting services, capital/stewardship campaigns, cash management, church loans, computer support line, giving-gateway.net, online giving, and payroll services.

Furthermore, \$74.7 million has been achieved toward the Foundation’s Vision 200 (impacting the Kingdom with \$200 million given in 20 years or less).

He also said that Louisiana Baptists receive a good rate of return for supporting the Foundation’s ministry, explaining that every Cooperative Program dollar contributed to the

See ENTITIES, page 12



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Birthday from page 6

day morning worship, to reach the community for Christ. A business meeting is scheduled for late May with an agenda to discuss what Calvary members can do to reach out to Mansfield with the love of Jesus.

“The Lord is blessing us and it’s just a joy to

go to a church where the people are wanting to do something to reach their neighbors and friends for Jesus,” he said. “I don’t know what the Lord has for us, but we have an eager church that has a big heart to share the Lord and invite others to come experience what they have found.”

Journey from page 5

Sunday worship) has celebrated the baptism of 1,032 new members into the body of Christ and witnessed hundreds of other spiritual decisions, including repentances to restore fellowship with Christ, and commitments to vocational missions and ministry.

The congregation’s core value, “Growing People Change,” facilitates growth, Greer said.

Journey Church’s ministries include Celebrate Recovery, a Christ-centered, 12-Step recovery program designed to help individuals overcome

hurts, hang-ups and addictions; devotions and other spiritual growth resources published on Greer’s website; a television and online ministry; and children’s ministry featuring a trampoline park.

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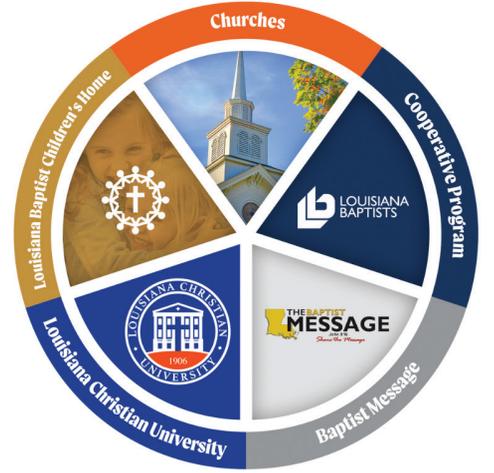
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LBCHFM celebrates opening of regional compassion center



Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries staff, trustees and supporters gathered for a ribbon cutting that marked the opening of the Compassion Center, April 10, 2025.

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MONROE, La. (LBM) – The Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries has opened a center that will provide the hope of Christ to those in one of the nation's poorest regions.

Supporters gathered April 10 for a ribbon cutting to mark the official launch of the Compassion Center, located at 501 Kansas Lane on the campus of the LBCHFM.

Approved by the entity's trustees during its May 12, 2023, meeting, the 16,000-sq.-ft. facility will provide food, school supplies, diapers, shoes, new clothing and other life-essentials. While Monroe-West Monroe area residents will benefit, LBCHFM officials note that 80 percent of the products will be distributed to Louisiana Baptist churches and associations outside the region that either have a compassion ministry or are interested in starting one.

Matt Hancock, executive director with Compassion for Kids, a LBCHFM ministry that will

operate the Compassion Center, told the crowd that the facility should serve 30,000-40,000 individuals a year. According to the 2020 U.S. Census American Community Survey, 34.9 percent of Monroe residents live at the poverty level.

"Luckily, all the time at the Children's Home we ask the question, 'Lord, where are the children and families who need us,' and we don't have to look very far for the answer," Hancock told the crowd "It's right here in our community, and it's all across the state. So, the Compassion Center will be here to meet physical needs, to build trust, to be able to share the Gospel and to give an unconditional love of Jesus."

LBCHFM President and CEO Perry Hancock recognized two families whose mothers donated a large amount of money to make the Compassion Center a reality: Mary Gallaspy and Susan Potter, both who have since passed away.

Whit Gallaspy, one of Mary Gallaspy's sons, noted that his mother had a heart for those like the ones served by the Compas-

sion Center.

"What an exciting thing this is," he said. "I just want to run around the block singing.

Perry Hancock shared about Potter, whose family was unable to attend the ceremony.

Potter previously funded construction of apartments for homeless women and their children on the LBCHFM campus. Hancock showed her a conceptual drawing of the Compassion Center, which at the time still was a dream.

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"It was just a matter of a few weeks that she made an incredible gift that made this facility possible," Hancock said. "And when I think of her, I actually think of women who have that kind of heart, particularly for

children. And because of these two wonderful women, they have a legacy of their own compassion. But it's a legacy of lives that are going to be changed by the power of the Lord our God."

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EVANGELISM 101 (Part 5): What now?

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

CONNECT

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Salvation is not the end of the Great Commission, but the beginning, because it is not enough that a person has a redeemed soul, they also need to live a redeemed life.

Importantly, Matthew 28:18-20 expressly states that Christ expects intentionality in what happens next for a new believer.

To be precise, we are instructed to evangelize the lost to become believers, mentor new believers to take that next step of obedience, baptism, and then grow them into mature followers by teaching them “all” that Christ taught His disciples.

There are some immediate connections that need to be made for the new believer.

1. Provide her or him with an easy Bible reading assignment to complete in the first week. Billy Graham had his counselors hand out a four-lesson study on the Gospel of John (“Living in Christ” is the one used in the “My Hope” mass evangelistic outreaches). This resource offers the basics in “Knowing Christ,” “Growing in Christ,” “Obeying Christ,” and “Witnessing for Christ,” while also teaching Bible memorization. It is a good way to start the person in the steps to spiritual health and growth (prayer, Bible

See EVANGELISM, page 15



LCU student runs for the “prize” of money to missions

Submitted Photo

Cade Fookes, a Louisiana Christian University student and member of Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, ran 100 miles to raise money that will go to aid refugees and children in Uganda. He began his journey at 6 a.m. May 9 and finished at 5:35 a.m. the following day. Fookes said that to endure the rain and fatigue he relied the prayers and support from fellow runners who joined him at various times. “I see running as a gift I’ve been given by God, and so I can use it to then glorify Him and spread His message,” Fookes told the Baptist Message. “Because I enjoy it and I’m pretty good at it, I was like I can do this and raise awareness for things and then ultimately lead people to Christ.”



From Pulpits to Politics: LCU President Leads Bold Season of Growth & Outreach Across Louisiana

From the church pulpit to the governor’s visit, softball fields to ribbon cuttings, Louisiana Christian University President, Dr. Mark L. Johnson, has spent the spring months fully immersed in advancing the mission of LCU across Louisiana and beyond.

Since early spring, Dr. Johnson has logged over 10,000 miles, meeting with donors, visiting churches, attending alumni events, and championing the cause of Christian higher education throughout the region. “It’s been a rich and rewarding season,” said Johnson. “The Lord is opening doors for LCU, and we’re stepping through them with boldness, vision, and gratitude.”

Celebrating students remained a top priority. Highlights included the LCU Ring Ceremony, spirited support for the university’s softball and baseball teams, and special graduation recognitions for student-athletes. Café Du Monde celebrations and engaging theatrical productions added further joy and creativity to campus life.

Off campus, Dr. Johnson preached at churches across Louisiana, spoke at the Director of Missions Conference, and participated in the Dr. Maggie Martin Marketplace Leadership Summit. He also opened a session of the Louisiana State Legislature alongside the Central Louisiana Chamber of Commerce and hosted Governor Jeff Landry for a special campus visit.

LCU also celebrated a generous and meaningful gift: \$50,000 was received from First Baptist Church of Lafayette in honor of Luther A. Burney’s retirement and decades of faithful service. The gift will benefit the university and stand as a testament to Burney’s enduring impact on Christian leadership and education.

In the civic arena, Dr. Johnson addressed the Central Louisiana Rotary Club, participated in local ribbon-cutting events, met with prospective students, and collaborated with business leaders on shared initiatives. “We’re not just educating students—we’re shaping Christian leaders who will make a difference in every sphere,” he noted.

Crucial to the university’s momentum, Dr. Johnson credited the exceptional executive team surrounding him. “I’m blessed with a group of leaders who bring wisdom, energy, and Christ-centered commitment to every table they sit at,” he shared. From academics to admissions, security to technology, and advancement to finance, each team member has helped guide LCU through this vital season of transition with excellence and care.

As LCU looks toward the future, Johnson remains energized by the progress and partnerships underway. “This is a season of favor and opportunity,” he said. “We’re moving forward—together.”

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Foundation Executive Director Jeffrey Steed to retire on May 31

By Will Hall
 Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) — Jeffrey Steed has announced he will retire on May 31 as Executive Director of the Louisiana Baptist Foundation, having served in this leadership role since April 1, 2020.

Steed plans to relocate to Arkansas. He will travel with his wife, Shana, and they will be spending more time with their children, Whitney (25) and Corey (22), who live in the Dallas-Fort Worth, Texas, area.

“I am thankful to Louisiana Baptists for the opportunity to serve the Louisiana Baptist Foundation over the last five years,” Steed told the *Baptist Message*. “It has been an honor to partner in ministry with many churches and other ministries around the state to advance the Kingdom. I am grateful that God has blessed the efforts at the Foundation’s ministry in tremendous ways for His glory.”

During Steed’s tenure, more than \$70 million has been achieved toward the Foundation’s Vision200 strategic plan (impacting the Kingdom with \$200 million in 20 years or less), and the Foundation has reached its highest Short Term Fund rate in more than 16 years.

The LBF Board of Trustees met April 23 and

named Director of Gift Planning Jared G. Price to serve as interim executive director, starting June 1. Price has served in his present post since October 2022.

Price and his wife, Aimee, are members of Alpine First Baptist Church, Pineville, and have four children: Adeline, Daniel, Nathaniel, and Amelia.

“I am grateful for the faithful leadership Dr. Steed has provided to the Louisiana Baptist Foundation over the past several years,” Price said. “It is an honor to be named Interim Executive Director, and I remain committed to serving Louisiana Baptists as we endeavor together to advance the Kingdom. Please pray for wisdom for our staff and board during this important time of transition.”

Following Steed’s announcement, LBF trustees released a statement expressing appreciation to him and reaffirming their commitment to the stewardship ministry they provide Louisiana Baptists.

“The Board and Staff of the Foundation are grateful to Steed for his five years of faithful service as Executive Director and are excited to embrace Price in his new role,” they wrote. “The Foundation looks forward to continuing God’s work to help advance the Kingdom... one dollar at a time... one ministry at a time... one life at a time.”



Brian Blackwell photo

Aimee and Jared Price with children (L to R) Daniel, Amelia, Nathaniel and Adeline. Jared Price will become interim executive director on June 1.

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Entities from page 7

work of the Foundation generates \$41 for churches and other ministries.

Steed, who has announced he will retire May 31, introduced Jared G. Price as the interim executive director. He also thanked Louisiana Baptists for their support.

"It's been an honor, and I mean that, to serve Louisiana Baptists," he said.

LBCHFM

Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries President and CEO Perry Hancock said the ministry celebrated the dedication of the Compassion Center on April 10. Located on the campus of the LBCHFM, the center will provide the hope of Christ to those in one of the nation's poorest regions and provide products for LBC churches and Baptist-related compassion ministries.

Approved by entity trustees during its May 12, 2023 meeting, the 15,000-sq.-ft. facility will distribute food, school supplies, diapers, shoes, new clothing and other life-essentials. Already,

650 families have signed up to receive food, and during the first week of May, 15,000 diapers were received and distributed to pregnancy care centers.

He invited churches and associations to contact the LBCHFM if they are interested in receiving items to distribute through their compassion ministries -- at no charge to the ministry. He said these items cannot be sold, must be picked up at the Compassion Center and the Gospel must be presented when distributing the items in their respective communities.

Hancock reminded board members about the upcoming Foster Care and Adoption Tour, a series of presentations throughout the year around the state where churches, who have invited LBCHFM, are educated and encouraged to develop foster care and adoption ministries that reach the next generation for Christ.

"We're finding churches that start foster care and adoption support groups draw in foster parents who

are not believers," he said. "They'll come to the church to get the support they need to take care of those children. Well, guess what happens? Every once in a while, they start showing up at church. And guess what? Every once a while, someone is saved because they took the time to meet their needs."

LBM

Horn directed board members to read the report from the Louisiana Baptist Message on behalf of Executive Editor Will Hall, who was at the state Capitol in his other role as director of the Louisiana Baptist Office of Public Policy.

Hall was in Baton Rouge to testify in favor of H.B. 371, legislation that would protect all churches from government infringements upon what ministries are hosted and when.

In the report, Hall wrote that the *Baptist Message* remains on solid financial footing, with advertising revenue slightly up and CP allotments steady. He also noted that during the fall trustee meeting the entity's board approved a change to reduce the number of print editions from 14 to 12 each

year, without changing subscription rates, thus helping the ministry to respond to the average 20 percent hike in goods since COVID.

Hall noted that the Baptist Message remains committed to Louisiana Baptists' emphasis on creating a culture of evangelism in the state, referencing stories that have been published about: a monthly series started in 2025 about the basics of evangelism; the 1,316 spiritual decisions, including 602 salvations, that were made during the Livingston Parish GO TELL America Crusade, March 16-19 in Denham Springs; the 56 salvations made during men's and women's retreats around the state; the positive resulted of the Send Network Louisiana church planting initiative; and the 20 baptisms that took place at Ouachita Baptist Church, West Monroe, leading up to a March 30-April 2 crusade in the area.

In his Office of Public Policy report, Hall said that on behalf of Louisiana Baptists, the OPP hosted a meeting during the 2024 LBC Annual Meeting to organize a human trafficking rescue effort that took place during the week leading up to Super Bowl LIX in New Orleans (resulting in the rescue of 15 children).

Meanwhile, in January, a Texas faith-based group reached out to the OPP for guidance on how to establish a church and religious nonprofit self-insurance pool (similar to the one for Louisiana churches that was approved by the legislature in 2023). He said that in April a Texas Baptist lawmaker introduced H.B. 3320 that offers to establish a property and casualty self-insurance pool for religious institutions in that state.

Regarding other OPP activities, he said that in March the Chief of Staff for U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson visited the OPP and was briefed about inputs for needed national legislation that would help the state's churches.

Additionally, Hall wrote that the OPP is facing a full slate of legislation for which they will provide testimony that reflects "consensus statements of values by Louisiana Baptists."

These include H.B. 570 (presented by Rep. Kim Carver, a deacon with First Baptist Church, Covington),

that would provide vital Internet protection for children, as well as other bills that protect children from sexual grooming; broaden protections against abortion coercion; and punish the sale of hemp consumables to individuals under the age of 21.

He wrote that the OPP will oppose legislation that proposes to legalize medical marijuana, create special protections for sexual orientation and gender identity, and offer exceptions to the total abortion ban in the state.

EB PRESIDENT

Executive Board President Tim Williams, pastor, Williams Boulevard Baptist Church, Kenner, said pastors must rest and trust in the Lord.

Sharing from Psalm 23, Williams said many times pastors find it difficult to be vulnerable because of past attacks. When those times come, pastors must resist the temptation to be stultified by the past, he urged and instead seek the Lord's presence.

"We've got to keep going," he said. "We've got to win the world for Christ."

LBC PRESIDENT

Louisiana Baptist Convention President David Goza, pastor, Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, reminded board members that they need the hand of God on their lives.

Drawing from Ezra 7 and Nehemiah 2, Goza said the Lord used Ezra and Nehemiah, who were godly leaders, were willing to count the cost, and seized the opportunity.

"They both had a God-given dream and vision for what God was calling them to do," he said. "They seized that opportunity, and that's what set them apart. They didn't let anything distract them. They had a burning passion, a zeal within their hearts. They were self-motivated. They were spirit motivated. They weren't distracted by the things of the world."

In the same way, Goza said board members must follow the example of Ezra and Nehemiah.

"Let nothing deter you from your task, your family, your church, your service to Christ," he said. "It's your calling from the Lord."

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EVANGELISM from page 10

study, worship, fellowship with other believers, and sharing Christ with others). Also, the Gospel of John especially emphasizes what all four Gospels underscore – Passion Week and Jesus’ self-sacrifice for us (about 43 percent of the Book of John). It is an ideal resource for new believers because the Gospel of John was written “that you may believe” (John 20:31).

2. He or she needs to be engaged with a local congregation. You might need to pick her or him up and bring that person to church with you. Or you might need to go to a congregation of his or

her choice. Remember to mentor people of the same biological sex as you, and if minors are involved, have someone with you (preferably the parents) whenever you are counseling or riding with a child.

3. Plug that person into a ministry right away – hospital visits, food pantry, Habitat for Humanity, etc. Do not wait for someone to “get comfortable” in a congregation.

4. Enroll her or him in a Sunday School class ... BUT ... know that a general small group Bible study is not sufficient to meet the discipleship needs of a new believer. Sunday School

connects that new person with the congregation and in the long term will minister to that individual’s educational and fellowship needs. However, there must be a new believer’s class that provides the basics of being a citizen of the Kingdom and a child of God. It is vital to explicitly teach new believers about how to “walk in the newness of life” (Romans 6:4).

GROW

Indeed, these initial connections need to be followed by a progression of studies for the new believer that includes a follow-on 6-week course of study about: the character of God (three Persons, One Being; holiness; etc.) and the nature of the relationship He seeks with each believer; how to pray; the power of His Word and why we study the Bible; the purpose of worship; the need for fellowship with other believers; what to do when sin happens; baptism as obedience; the Lord’s Supper as remembrance; the Gospel in the fullness of its five elements (virgin birth, sinless life, substitutionary death, bodily resurrection, imminent return); and how to start sharing Jesus with others, even as a new believer.

Afterward there should be a 6-month study about

holy living (Galatians 5:22-23) and how to be His disciple.

-- “Holy Living” could be taught in terms of the sanctification of Jacob (as an event and a process from being a “supplanter” of God’s plan to being a person, “Israel,” in whom “God rules.”

-- “How to be His Disciple” might be taught by walking new believers through the Book of Matthew, which essentially is a training guide for discipleship. Simply emphasize the five discourses Jesus shared with His followers:

(1) The “Sermon on the Mount” (Ch. 5-7) underscores Kingdom values and is also known as the “Ethics Discourse.”

(2) The “Missions Discourse” (Ch. 10) records the commissioning of His apostles as disciples to Israel and about their preparation for a worldwide mission among the Gentiles.

(3) Jesus used the parables of Chapter 13 to reveal secrets about the Kingdom, in context of His plans for His people, and this composes the “Kingdom Discourse.”

(4) Life as the Church is the focus of Chapter 18, which is known as the “Community Discourse.” In this passage, there is an emphasis on humility and forgiveness.

(5) Meanwhile, the

last of the intentional teachings by Jesus to His disciples is the “Olivet Discourse” (Ch. 24, 25), also known as the “End Times Discourse,” in which Jesus answers His disciples’ questions about Israel at “the end of the age.”

FOLLOW

Obviously, there are other possible paths of training and development that could guide the growth of new believers. However, the follow-up plan outlined above attempts to capture the intentionality God used (during the last year of captivity and the first months of the exodus) to grow Israel, relatively quickly, from having been Egyptian slaves for 400 years to being His people among all peoples. Likewise, it reflects Jesus’ purposeful plan for growing new disciples into being followers of The Way (with the Sermon on the Mount serving as a sort of induction day for the year or so of training He gave His disciples before He sent them out to preach the Gospel and heal the sick).

Regardless, know that salvation is not the end of your evangelistic effort with someone, but just the launching point for the work that is needed to help that person become useful for Christ.

Louisiana Notables

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

- Christian, wife Lorraine, Charrier is the new student minister at Parkview, Monroe
- John, wife Kristi, McKenzie is the new pastor at Pine Grove, Bastrop,
- Patricia Crawford is the new children’s Minister at Summer Grove in Shreveport. Ronney Joe Webb, Missions, Family Ministry at First Baptist Church, has resigned to become Director of Missions, Jones County, MS.
- Tim Purvis is the new Children to Family Pastor at Summer Grove, Shreveport.

HOMECOMING

- Pine Hill Baptist Church, Leesville: 132-year homecoming celebration. Guest Speaker: Jason Lupold, The homecoming service on June 1, will begin at 10 AM. There will be a meal after the service in Christian Life Center. Pastor: Keith Dowden.
- Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, DeRidder: 150 Anniversary, June 1, Sunday School, 9:15 a.m. and Worship service will be at 9:30 a.m. Come and experience a spirit-filled worship service, special music and a walk through the church’s rich history. Stay afterwards for food, fellowship and a celebration of God’s faithfulness. Pastor:
- Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill: Revival, Aug. 10-13; Sunday, 10:30 a.m., Speaker: Ray Swift; Sunday, 6 p.m., Speaker: Steve Speer; Monday, 7 p.m., Speaker: Jeff James; Tuesday, 7 p.m., Speaker: Josh Dickson; Wednesday, 7 p.m., Speaker: Brett Faulk. Pastor: Michael Evans.
- Morrow Baptist Church: Homecoming, May 25, 10 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow.

Speaker: J.D. Fail.

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:
- Southside Baptist Church, Jonesboro: Spring Revival, 8-11. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor:
- Cypress Baptist Church, Dodson: Spring Revival, June 13-15. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor:
- 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.
- 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 Bradley.
- 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, September 11-14, 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman Pastor: James Hester.
- Fellowship Baptist Church, Jena: Bible Conference, November 8-9 2025. Evangelist: Bob Pitman. Pastor:

LAGNIAPPE

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

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.

kl cbg adq gzjsw sizjwsgdipj, dq gjz cbww

vpbrrdivjv kl gjz zdiv bu rbqjq, ubw gjz isij gwskjq,

shwk xhzgp nqjnepvg hqp tjwp jbv ywvj vep mjqzi.

obqzxd ubxwgjji:gab

Clues:
D = A; Z=P

Answer to May 22, Scripture Crypto:
EphesianFoutee:two

Ouachita Baptist: Revival, 20 baptisms precede area-wide crusade

WEST MONROE, La. (LBM) – Leading up to the recent West Ouachita crusade, members of Ouachita Baptist Church prepared and prayed for God to move throughout the event.

What they did not foresee was an unexpected movement of the Holy Spirit ahead of the crusade that led to 20 baptisms as well as many other spiritual commitments by the congregation during the first three months of the year.

“People are beginning to re-evaluate their hearts and are thinking about their relationships with Christ,” OBC Pastor Mike Holloway told the *Baptist Message*. “Revival is a time of renewal, but it’s also evangelistic. Some people realized what they needed wasn’t

renewal but to get saved.

“And that’s been the blessing,” he continued. “We prepared for the crusade, but leading up to that people recognized they needed to get right with the Lord. It has been a fresh move of God for sure.”

Among those who turned to Christ during this time was Holloway’s grandson Cole (10). During the April 1 worship service of the West Ouachita Crusade, Cole realized his need for a Savior and came forward to make his decision public.

“I sat down with Cole to discuss his decision in the counseling room, and he understood what Christ did for him on the cross and what his responsibilities are in the future as a believer,” Holloway said. “He is the last of my four grandchildren to be

saved and I am excited to be able to perform his public baptism.”

The decisions reflect a spirit of spiritual renewal within the church and an evangelistic passion that has developed among members.

The crusade, March 30-April 2 at West Ouachita High School in West Monroe, featured evangelist Bill Britt and the band WeRCalled. The area-wide event was planned by six pastors in the community, drew 400 in nightly attendance and resulted in 10 decisions for Christ, four of whom Holloway has baptized.

Holloway’s congregation has grown in Sunday morning attendance from 150 in 2023 to 250 in late March. They hold services

on Sunday morning and evening, prayer and/or outreach in the community on Monday evening and various discipleship and prayer activities on Wednesday evening. Additionally, through Open Doors Missions (an organization Holloway co-founded 25 years ago), members regularly participate in mission efforts in the Ukraine, the Navajo reservation in New Mexico, Malawi and Zambia.

Looking toward the final nine months of 2025, Holloway is anticipating what the Lord will do.

“The crusade preparation brought a great renewal to the members of our church,” he said. “A spirit of revival and expectation has developed and is evident when we meet.”

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We are living at an unprecedented moment in history. Over the coming years, it is estimated that trillions of dollars in wealth will transfer from one generation to the next. This monumental shift presents a unique opportunity for us, as Louisiana Baptists, to reflect on how we can steward our wealth to advance the Kingdom.

SCRIPTURE REMINDS US OF THIS RESPONSIBILITY: **“HONOR THE LORD WITH YOUR WEALTH AND WITH THE FIRSTFRUITS OF ALL YOUR PRODUCE.”** –PROVERBS 3:9 (ESV)



2025 SBC Annual Meeting

Kay Bailey Hutchison
Convention Center
Dallas, Texas

June 7
Crossover Dallas
<https://www.namb.net/crossover/>

June 8-9
SBC Pastors' Conference
Convention Center, Hall F
Sunday
6:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Monday
8:00 PM – 9:00 PM
Convention Center, Hall F
<https://www.sbcpc.net/>

June 10-11
SBC Annual Meeting
Convention Center, Hall F
Tuesday
8:00 AM – 6:00 PM
Wednesday
8:00 AM – 6:00 PM
<https://sbcannualmeeting.net/>

Now, don't let the term "wealth" mislead you—this command is not just for the richest among us. In biblical terms, wealth includes everything God has entrusted to you—your home, bank account, retirement plan, and all the material blessings you have received. Stewardship is not merely about how we manage our resources today; it is also about how we plan for their use after we are gone.

As believers, we know that all we have ultimately belongs to God. He has called us to be wise stewards, not only for the benefit of our families but also for the advancement of His Kingdom. One way to extend our stewardship beyond our lifetime is by including a charitable gift in our estate plan to our church or other ministries that have impacted our lives. Including a charitable gift in your estate plan is a way to express gratitude for God's blessings and to ensure that His work continues beyond your lifetime. Throughout history,

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The resources God has entrusted to you today can serve His Kingdom long into the future. Honor the Lord with your wealth by including a charitable gift to your church or other ministries in your estate plan.

To learn more about how the Louisiana Baptist Foundation can assist you with establishing an estate plan that helps advance the Kingdom, contact us at 1-877-523-4636, email contact@LBInfo.org, or visit www.Giving-Gateway.net.

Jared Price, J.D., Director of Gift Planning

JUNE 2025
LAST WILL & TESTAMENT
A properly prepared Last Will & Testament is a common way to provide for your family and provide a charitable gift to your church or other ministries.

JULY 2025
BENEFICIARY DESIGNATION
Whether for life insurance or retirement plans, designating your church or other ministries as a beneficiary is a simple way to leave a charitable gift.

AUGUST 2025
ESTATE & GIFT TAXES
Charitable gifts to churches and other ministries can provide you with tremendous tax benefits while supporting work that advances the Kingdom.



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