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Submitted photo

A volunteer and a female driver exchanged smiles during a food and Bible distribution by the Compassion Center on the campus of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries.

Compassion Center Bible distribution: Bread of life 'better than food' for one

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MONROE, La. (LBM) – Compassion Center staff and volunteers recently witnessed Matthew 4:4 in action when 170 recipients of a food distribution, Feb. 17, were elated to receive Bibles.

"We had so many testimonies of people who were

happier to get a Bible than they were to get food," Compassion Center Director Matt Hancock told the *Baptist Message*. "Many of them just talked about how much it meant to them. We had one lady who kissed her Bible and said, 'this is better than food,'" evoking allusions to Matthew 4:4, "Man shall not live by bread alone but on

every word that comes from the mouth of God."

For several months, a staff member had prayed that Bibles would be donated for distribution by the Compassion Center, which is housed in a 16,000-sq.-ft. facility on the campus of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and

See BIBLES, page 19



File photo

Longtime minister and most recently Louisiana Christian University administrator, David Jeffreys, has succeeded Perry Hancock as president and chief executive officer of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries. A native of New Iberia, Jeffreys and his family (from left) Kyle, Ellie, David, Stephanie, Gary, Aaron are excited about what God has planned.

Jeffreys begins new chapter as LBCHFM president, CEO

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MONROE, La. (LBM) – David Jeffreys, a longtime minister and most recently Louisiana Christian University administrator, will succeed Perry Hancock, effective Feb. 16, as president and chief executive officer of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries.

Jeffreys told the *Baptist Message* he is excited about leading a time-honored institution that has impacted so many families.

"The Children's Home has always been one of those ministries where you get to do some incredible things and to really reach out and help people in their time of need with physical and emotional support, but also with the Gospel," Jeffreys said.

SAVED, CALLED

A native of New Iberia, Jeffreys turned to Jesus at 14 years old while attending a youth camp at

See JEFFREYS, page 17

Emerson named governor's chief of staff

By Staff
Louisiana Baptist Message

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – State Rep. Julie Emerson, a member with First Baptist Church, Lafayette, has been named chief of staff for Gov. Jeff Landry.

Most recently, Emerson ran for the U.S. Senate, but on Jan. 22 ended her campaign citing a "diminished" path to victory once Congresswoman Julia Letlow entered the race.

"As we all know when God closes one door, he of-

ten opens another," Emerson told the *Baptist Message*. "The offer from Gov. Landry came as a surprise, but after much prayer, it was clear that this was the best way I could continue

See EMERSON, page 19

Life Marches: 'Love them both'

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – More than 100 CENLA Life March participants braved chilly temperatures to proclaim their love for life as they continue to fight for the rights of the unborn.

PRO-LIFE LA

David Jeffreys, newly elected president of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries

but then serving as vice president of denominational and church relations with Louisiana Christian University, welcomed the crowd at the starting point of the celebration walk, Jan. 31, thanking them for their commitment to the pro-life movement.

"We have made many strides in the right to life movement through the last few years, but we have a long way to go," said Jeffreys. "And you being here shows commitment to that. We, as Louisiana Baptists, partner

with our other brothers and sisters in Christ, to say that we love the unborn. We love the mothers and the fathers, and we are here to do and to help to everything we can to make sure those babies are taken care of and see life."

In his prayer before marchers began their 1.4-mile trek from LCU to the banks of the Red River, Jeffreys asked for God's continued hand on the fight for life.

"Lord, we just continue to pray for the state of Louisiana and our nation



Brian Blackwell photo

CENLA Life March participants trekked from the campus of Louisiana Christian University and continued down Main Street in Pineville.

that we would continue to fight for the unborn, and that you would change hearts and minds," Jeffreys prayed. "Lord, that's truly the only way that change can take place in our nation. So, we pray for the revival of hearts and minds to you. We just pray that others will see Christ in us, Lord, just in the simple way of how we want to help and provide for mothers and for the unborn in any way that we can. Father, we just pray that there would be hearts turned and hearts strengthened towards what you consider just precious – life in the womb."

The life march was the last of four held in the state in January. While Baton Rouge, Lafayette and Lake Charles hosted marches, marches scheduled to take

place in Monroe/West Monroe and Shreveport/Bossier City were cancelled because of inclement weather. "Love them both" was the theme for all the events.

"Facing cold weather across the state, pro-life citizens continued to show their love for both mother and baby at marches and other events," Louisiana Right to Life Executive Director Ben Clapper told the *Baptist Message*. "We must now 'march' every day through our prayer and action to protect life and help moms."

PRO-LIFE USA

Thousands gathered near the U.S. Capitol for the 53rd annual March for Life, Jan. 23, advancing the theme,

See LIFE, page 15

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APOLOGETICS 101 (Part 2):

Science confirms the Bible's creation account

By Will Hall
 Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – When Bible critics attack the creation account, they almost always first argue that “every religion has a creation story” or make some similar dismissive statement that attempts to shut off discussion without looking at the facts.

However, lumping the Bible’s creation account in with other religions’ creation mythologies is an act of sophistry (deliberate lie) or fallacy (unintention-

al deception) because it ignores the extraordinary differences that make the Bible’s record of events distinct in its trustworthiness.

Outside of Christianity, regardless of the religion or the culture, creation stories tend to fall into one of several categories: (1) The world resulted because of fighting among various gods. (2) The world resulted from intimacy between a fertility goddess

and another god. (3) Some creation myths describe their gods as emerging from the world (i.e. the world always existed, and their god was produced by nature – not the other way around).

In stark contrast, only Genesis 1 narrates an orderly process that is scientifically plausible: By a measured and stepwise process, God, who has always existed, formed light (day one), at-

mosphere (day two), land, water, all green vegetation (day three), seasons (day four), water creatures and birds of the air (day five), and land animals, man and woman (day six).

Importantly, these are not simply details. Instead, each physical element that God formed combined with the specific sequence in which He made each provide a penetrating truth about the biblical account of creation. What Genesis describes are the very conditions needed for the process known as **photosynthesis**, which the science of biology describes

as the basis for sustaining all life on our planet.

Photosynthesis requires **light** (day one) and **CO2** (day 2), as well as **nutrients** (found in soil), **water**, and **chlorophyll** (found only in green plants) (day 3). Moreover, each of these elements were established before God breathed life into any creature, man or beast -- all of which depend on photosynthesis for life.

In an orderly fashion, God purposely created a sustainable system to support the physical nature of

See CREATION, page 12

Read the 12-part series “Evangelism 101” on BaptistMessage.com.



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16TH

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23RD

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30TH

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RIVERSIDE BAPTIST CHURCH: VIDALIA, LA

Denham Springs senior awarded prestigious 2026 Smith Scholarship

By Elizabeth Clarke
LCU News

PINEVILLE (LCUNews) --Rachel Henry, a student with Live Oak High School in Watson, has been awarded the Louisiana Christian University Smith Scholarship for 2026.

Henry will receive full four-year tuition, room and board.

"I am so honored to have received the Smith Scholarship," Henry said. "It means the world to me that I was chosen for this prestigious honor, especially after meeting the students that I was

competing against, who were amazing, highly qualified people. I am so grateful for the opportunity I have been given, not only to learn about my future career, but to put Christ at the center of my education. I am so excited to see what God has in store for me through LCU."

Henry is the daughter of Marty and Keith Henry, and is a four-year member of the track team. She has been playing piano for 12 years and served as an FCA officer.

Henry said she plans to major in psychology with a clinical focus, aiming to become a counselor with her

own practice.

Byron Broussard, of Woodworth, is a senior at Glenmora High School in Rapides Parish and has been awarded the Presidential Scholarship. He is the student council vice president, chaplain of BETA, and a member of the powerlifting team

He will receive full tuition for four years.

"I am extremely happy to win this scholarship," Broussard said. "Combined with my TOPS (Taylor Opportunity Program for Students), I should be able to attend college debt-free, an opportunity many people do not receive."

Clay and Lisa Broussard, Broussard's parents, are both LCU alumni, and several members of his family previously participated in the Smith Scholarship competition, he said.

"I was very honored to be invited for this great opportunity," Broussard said. "Because of the ties my family has with LCU, it has always



Karen Carter photo

Louisiana Christian University Executive Director of Enrollment Management Jana Lucky, Smith Scholarship winner Rachel Henry, and LCU Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs Henry Robertson stood proud at the Smith Scholarship award ceremony.

been my first choice for my life after high school. This scholarship takes me one step closer to achieving my goals."

Broussard said he plans to double major in history and biblical studies.

Eight students competed this year in the competition, said Sarah Payne, director of the C.S. Lewis Honors Program.

"Each of the applicants demonstrated outstanding achievements, and their participation alone is a mark of high honor," Payne said. "We are pleased to welcome Rachel Henry as the Smith Scholar and Byron Broussard as the Presidential Scholar this fall."

LCU President Dr. Mark

Johnson congratulated Henry and Broussard on this accomplishment.

"They both represent the very best of what we hope to cultivate at LCU, academic excellence, servant leadership and a sincere commitment to Christ-centered learning," Johnson said.

To participate in the Smith Scholarship Competition, each student must have earned 28 or higher on the ACT and submit a portfolio that contains past awards, recognitions and accomplishments. Two letters of recommendation are required, along with an essay explaining the major features of a Christian Liberal Arts education.

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Winter Storm Fern survivor finds Christ

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

WEST MONROE, La. (LBM) – John Broussard, a Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief chaplain and assessor as well as a member with Live Oak Baptist Church, Watson, had assessed a house damaged by winter storm Fern when he experienced a “God moment,” Feb. 2.

Moments after praying with a homeowner, two other assessors “happened” to arrive on scene when she shared about the personal struggles of her grandson, Eric and asked for prayer for him. Through a series of questions, Broussard sensed the young man did not have a relationship with Jesus.

Initially, Eric did not turn to Christ, but he soon accepted the Lord, Broussard recalled for the *Baptist Message*.

“It was no coincidence that two other assessors arrived at the house when we were about to pray for Eric,” Broussard told *the Baptist Message*. “It was no coincidence that I am a chaplain at a recovery house where I get to minister to people like Eric. And it was no coincidence that I had left my cap at the house and when I called to see if the homeowner had it, she wanted me to come back and lead her grandson to a relationship

with Jesus.”

Clark Fooshee, white hat for the incident management team working out of the facilities of McClendon Baptist Church, West Monroe, said the incident was a reminder of the ultimate purpose of disaster relief.

“We want to let them know there is help and through that we can then tell them the Lord wants us to assist those in need,” he said. “And we let them know there is hope and healing in Christ, who will never leave them alone.”

STORM & RESPONSE

Eric was among 11 people who made decisions to accept Christ since DR teams began helping those impacted by Fern. Teams began working in the area, Jan. 27, soon after the storm came through the area.

The financial impact of Fern was significant, with estimates of damage and economic loss totaling between \$105 billion and \$115 billion.

The storm, which extended 1,300 miles, affected 200 million people in the Southeast, led to tens of thousands of canceled flights, schools and business closures, and caused supply chain disruptions.

Fern contributed to 153 deaths, including nine in Lou-

isiana, and caused significant loss of power. At the height of the storm more than 1 million homes and businesses lost power in the eight states affected by the storm.

Since Jan. 29, teams working from the campuses of McClendon Baptist Church, and First Baptist Church, Delhi, have completed 585 chainsaw jobs and prepared 3,294 meals.

Joining Louisiana in relief efforts were state Baptist teams from Arkansas, Missouri and Oklahoma as well volunteers with Texans on Mission and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention.

LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR

“Operation Love Your



RHM photo

A Rolling Hills Ministries feeding team prepared food that was delivered and served by an American Red Cross Shelter in Monroe.

Neighbor,” held Feb. 14-19, allowed faith-based and civic teams to take a one-day mission trip in the Monroe-West Monroe area, and Louisiana

Baptist churches used the opportunity to show the love of Christ by clearing of debris

See FERN, page 19

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Nehemiah 4:14

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Port ministry: A second home for seafarers

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

GONZALES, La. (LBM) – After years of pastoring, Kerry Ash’s call in life pivoted to spending the day in the ports along the Mississippi River and ministering to merchant marines from around the world.

Since he first became director of the Seaman’s Center, Ash has made it his mission to offer hospitality and the Gospel to thousands of men and women who seek to rest from long weeks on the ocean.

“Many of the seafarers are just looking for a ride to go shopping when they call but are excited to find helpful men and women willing to show them around and host them in our center,” Ash told the

Baptist Message. “Between shopping and returning to their ship, they will often relax around the ping pong table or pool tables or just use free Wi-Fi to contact family back home. This gives us an opportunity to get to know them on a personal level or one-on-one basis.”

The Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge Seafarer Center, founded in 1997 after consolidating two centers in Baton Rouge and Convent, moved to its current location in Gonzales in 2000. Staff and volunteers share Jesus’ love to seafarers in conversations and by distributing personal hygiene items with Gospel literature.

Since he came on as director, Ash has seen 400 men and one woman enter a relationship with Christ. One of his favorite

salvation memories took place last year.

While sharing with a group who had disembarked ships, Ash told a story of how his son came to Christ and asked if anyone wanted to do the same.

Six people indicated they desired to follow Jesus, hailing from Egypt, South Africa, the Philippines and Russia.

“There was a gentleman from Ukraine who commented that he had much to think about after the events [Russian invasion of his homeland] of the last few years had made him doubt if God truly exists,” Ash said. “He did accept a Gideon’s New Testament, and we continue to pray for him.”

As they press forward in sharing the Gospel with the world, Ash asked for continued prayers that

volunteers would join the ministry and that a church would offer space to establish a satellite office.

“Geographically, we serve along 74 miles of the Mississippi River on both sides with only two bridges,” he said. “If we had a satellite office that could minister to the northwest section from Plaquemine to Port Allen, we could minister to at least 25 percent more people in need of the Gospel.”

He also offered his ministry for “field training” of church members in soul winning.

“If you have someone who is interested in evangelism at your church, but they just don’t have confidence yet in sharing the Gospel with others on their own, send them to me and let them volunteer for a little while,” he said.

“Send me someone who’s interested in evangelism and I’ll send you back a soul winner. Once someone leads another to the Lord, he or she will be on fire for evangelism.

He also said churches can participate by organizing a drive to collect personal hygiene items, Bibles and devotional guides that could then be distributed by the center staff and volunteers.

“The Seaman’s Center is a way to be a part of the Great Commission by sharing the Gospel with people all over the world,” he continued. “Last year, we saw guys from our people from 25 different countries, and the year before that it was 32 different countries. I don’t know too many missionaries that have ministered in that many different places in one year.”

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“The kingdom of God is like this,” He said.
“A man scatters seed on the ground;”

Mark 4:26, HCSB

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Baptist leaders ask Supreme Court to hear McRaney lawsuit against NAMB

By Staff
Baptist Message

WASHINGTON (LBM) – Fifty former and active leaders with the Southern Baptist Convention as well as Baptist state conventions, associations and local congregations across the country have signed an amicus brief asking the U.S. Supreme Court to hear former Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware executive director Will McRaney’s lawsuit against the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

McRaney alleges that NAMB interfered in his employment with the BCMD, resulting in his termination, and afterward influenced other Baptist groups not to hire him.

NAMB has claimed various defenses, including “ministerial exception,” which is also known as the “ecclesiastical exemption doctrine” – a historic legal precedent which prevents the government from interfering in matters of faith and doctrine as well as religious governance, which includes employment disputes.

The signers of the “friend of the court” brief assert that the key doctrine of Baptist polity is at stake, “church autonomy” which emphasizes freedom from hierarchy in relationships between Baptist bodies.

They shared that “Bap-

tists lack any ecclesiastical forum empowered to adjudicate disputes between autonomous Baptist Bodies.” Thus, a civil court is needed “to resolve ordinary civil wrongs by legally separate entities when adjudication does not require deciding questions of faith, doctrine, or ecclesiastical governance.”

BACKGROUND

In April 2017, McRaney filed his lawsuit against NAMB in Mississippi state court. However, NAMB successfully argued to move the case to federal court, specifically the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi, which found “this case would delve into church matters” per the “ecclesiastical abstention doctrine” (also known as the church autonomy doctrine) and dismissed the case on April 24, 2019.

McRaney appealed that ruling to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, and a three-judge panel within it (Stephen Higginson, Barack H. Obama appointee; Kurt Engelhardt, Donald J. Trump appointee; Edith Clement, George W. Bush appointee) ruled unanimously in McRaney’s favor stating, July 16, 2020, that “many of the relevant facts have yet to be developed” and that it was not clear the lawsuit would require the court “to address purely ecclesiastical questions.”

The appeals court panel

sent the case back to the district court and instructed it to determine “(1) whether NAMB intentionally and maliciously damaged McRaney’s business relationships by falsely claiming that he refused to meet with [NAMB president] [Kevin] Ezell, ... (2) whether NAMB’s statements about McRaney were false, defamatory, and at least negligently made, ...; and (3) whether NAMB intentionally caused McRaney to suffer foreseeable and severe emotional distress by displaying his picture at its headquarters” The panel also conceded that if further proceedings showed the issue was one of “interpreting religious procedures or beliefs,” the district court should consider NAMB’s motion to dismiss.

In response to this setback from the three-judge panel, NAMB requested (August 2020) a hearing before the full 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals (i.e. an en banc hearing) but was denied by a 9-8 vote (November 2020). NAMB subsequently appealed (February 2021) to the U.S. Supreme Court which denied (July 2021) NAMB’s petition to review the circuit court’s ruling.

The case was then remanded to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi, which in August 2023 granted NAMB’s request for a summary judgment and dismissed McRaney’s lawsuit, stating that pro-



File photo

Numerous Baptist leaders have signed an amicus brief asking the U.S. Supreme Court to hear former Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware executive director Will McRaney’s lawsuit against the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

ceeding with the case would require impermissible inquiry into religious matters – thus setting up McRaney’s second petition to the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and now his appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court.

SIGNERS (excerpt)

from amicus brief)
E. Randall Adams
Ph.D., Director and Senior Bible Teacher, Capitol Ministries, Washington, D.C.; Executive Director and Treasurer, Northwest Baptist Convention (2013–

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McRaney from page 7

2025); Church Outreach Team Leader, Baptist General Convention of Oklahoma (2004–2013)
Grant Arinder, Pastor, Bridgeway Church, Starkville, MS; Executive Committee Member, Mississippi Baptist Convention; Executive Committee Member, Golden Triangle Baptist Association
Bill Barker, Pastor, Wolfork Baptist Church, Rabun Gap, GA (2019–present); Associational Missions Director for the Rabun County Baptist Association (2020–2023); NAMB National Missionary to Appalachia and the Mississippi River Delta (2001–2017)
Alex Barrett, Pastor, Ridgeview Church, Fontana, CA
John Batts, former Pastor, First Baptist Church, Clear Lake, WA; former Trustee, Southern Baptist Convention Exec-

utive Committee; former Member, Southern Baptist Convention Nominating Committee
Joel Breidenbaugh, Ph.D., Executive Director of Missions, Greater Orlando Baptist Association, Orlando FL; Pastor, Gospel Centered Church, Apopka, FL; President, Florida Baptist Convention Pastors Conference; Associate Professor of Preaching and Pastoral Ministries, Liberty University; holds a Ph.D. in Christian Preaching from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary with a minor in Baptist History
Jimmy Brumfield, layperson and leader, former First Baptist Church, Jackson, MS; Member, First Baptist Church, Madison, MS
Jim Brunk, Pastor, Cookson Baptist Church, Cookson, OK; former Associational Mission Strategist, Baptist Gen-

eral Convention of Oklahoma; former Director of Missions, Grady Baptist Association
Dr. Tom Buck, Senior Pastor, First Baptist Church of Lindale, Lindale, TX (2006–present); former Senior Pastor, Riverside Baptist Fellowship, New Port Richey, FL; doctorate from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, KY
Harold B. Bullock, Senior Pastor, Hope Church, Fort Worth, TX (1978–2020)
Ken Cavey, Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church, Ellicott City MD; former NAMB missionary; former staff, Baptist Convention of Maryland-Delaware; Moderator, Flat River Baptist Association; former Trustee, Golden Gate Seminary
Bruce M. Conley, Director of Missions, Blue Ridge Baptist Association, Boonsboro, MD
Randy Covington, Director, Capitol Ministries North America; former

Executive Director and Treasurer, Alaska Baptist Resource Network Jimmy Crosby, former President, Jacksonville Baptist Theological Seminary, Jacksonville, FL; Member, First Baptist Church, Starke, FL
Steve Dennis, Pastor, Fellowship Bible Church, Muscogee, OK; Moderator, Muskogee Baptist Association, Muskogee, OK
Joe Flegal, former Director of Evangelism & Church Health, Northwest Baptist Convention, Vancouver, WA
Russell Fuller, Ph.D., former Professor of Old Testament (tenured), The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary
Warren Gilpin, Pastor, First English Baptist Church, Frostburg, MD
Dr. Bobby Gilstrap, Executive Director, Michigan Baptist Convention (2011–2014); Executive Director, Stone Mountain Baptist Foundation (2016–2020); Associational Director of Missions, Huron and Southeastern Baptist Associations, Michigan (2001–2010)
Adrian W Hall, transitional interim Pastor; retired Evangelism Director, Northwest Baptist Convention
Thomas Hardy, Pastor, Peninsula Baptist Church, Portland, OR
Dr. Jeff Hessinger, Senior Pastor, Eagles Nest Baptist Church, Fruitland Park, FL; Pastor, First Baptist Church, Thompson Falls, MT; former

Associational Missionary Strategist, Southeast Arkansas Baptist Network; former evangelism staff, Florida Baptist Convention
Dr. S. Grant Hignight, Associational Mission Strategist, Mercer & Thomas County Baptist Associations, Thomasville, GA
James Bo Holland, retired Church Planting Director, Oklahoma Baptist Convention; retired Associate Director, Tulsa Metro Baptist Network
Donna Jefferys, retired Executive Assistant and Officer Manager, Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware; Member, The Church at Covenant Park, Columbia, MD
Dale Jenkins, retired Pastor, Airway Heights Baptist Church, Airway Heights, WA; former Trustee, Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee; former President, Northwest Baptist Convention
Macy Langan, Member, East Pickens Baptist Church, Pickens, SC
David Leavell, Ph.D., Pastor, Faceville Baptist Church, Bainbridge, GA; Executive Board Member, Mid-South Baptist Association; former Executive Board Member in five Baptist associations; Executive Board Member, Tennessee Baptist Convention; former President, Tennessee Baptist Convention; Trustee,

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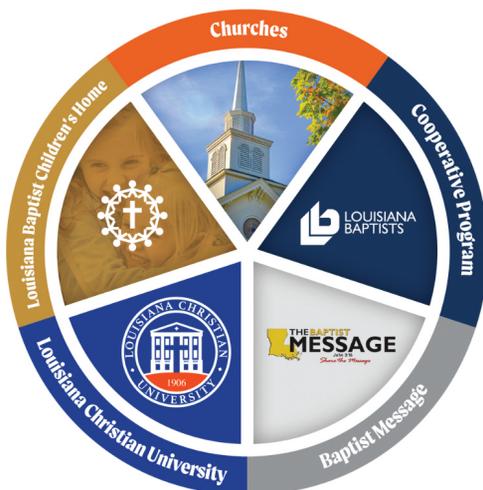
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McRaney from page 8

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
Daniel A. Lee, Pastor, Bethel Baptist Church, Greenville, SC; active in Three Rivers Baptist Association

Rod D. Martin, J.D., former Executive Committee Member, Southern Baptist Convention; Founder and Chief Executive Officer, The Martin Organization, Inc.; Member, Conservative Baptist Network

Pat McCoy, Executive Committee Member, West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptist; Pastor, South Berkeley Baptist Church, Inwood, WV (2016–present); Church Planter, NAMB; American Association of Christian Counselors

Tom Melzoni, Senior Vice President, Horizons Stewardship, Cabot AR; former Senior Executive Pastor, First Baptist Church, Dallas, TX; former Pastor, Central

Baptist, Oak Ridge TN; Chair, Committee on Resolutions, Southern Baptist Convention (1988)

Gus Nelson, Detman Law PSC; University of Virginia Law School (1988); ordained Baptist preacher and current Bible teacher

Dan Panter, Pastor, McKenzie Road Baptist Church, Olympia, WA; President of the Northwest Baptist Convention (2021–2023)

Rick Patrick, Pastor, First Baptist Church, Sylacauga, AL; former Moderator, Bessemer Baptist Association, Bessemer AL; former Trustee, Alabama Baptist State Board of Missions

Dennis Phelps, Pastor, Coronado Baptist Church, Hot Springs Village, AR; formerly J.D. Grey Professor of Preaching, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; Chair, Committee on Resolutions, Kentucky Baptist

Convention (2003)
Dr. Timothy Pigg, Director, Conservative Baptist Network; Lead Pastor, Fellowship Church, Immokalee, FL; Adjunct Faculty, Northeastern Baptist College, Bennington, VT; Church Planting Trainer, NAMB

Chris and Judy Riley, Members, Island Church, Tierra Verde, FL

Robert D. Rodgers, retired Vice President and Chief Financial Officer, SBC Executive Committee

Martha and Bill Salters, Members, Park Place Baptist Church, Pearl, MS

William Schmautz, Pastor, East Valley Baptist Church, Spokane Valley, WA; former Moderator and Chair of Missions Committee, Inland Empire Baptist Association

Dr. Clint E. Scott, Senior Pastor, Hilltop Baptist Church, Green River, WY

Mike Stone, Pastor, Emmanuel Baptist

Church, Blackshear, GA; Chairman, SBC Executive Committee (2018–2020); President, Georgia Baptist Convention (2017–2018)

David L. Thompson, former NAMB Trustee and Chairman of the Church Planting Division of NAMB (1999–2009); Secretary Treasurer, Southern Baptist Convention (Pastor's Conference) (2006); Pastor of North Pointe Community Church (1999–2014), Nashville TN

Hadley Thompson, lay leader, Director of Family Ministries in Greenville Community Church (Baptist Church)

Ben Trigsted, Pastor, First Baptist Church Castle Rock, WA; Vice President, Northwest Baptist Convention

Alton K. Vandevender, lay leader and Member, Riverside Baptist Church, Pascagoula MS

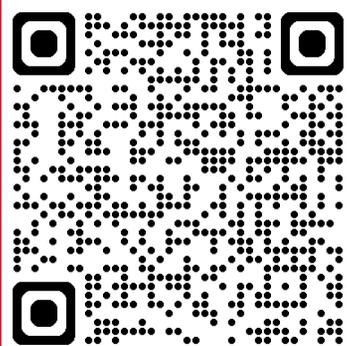
William Wolf, Executive Director, Center for Baptist Leadership

Steve Wolverton,

Pastor, Canton Baptist Church, Baltimore, MD; former Trustee, Baptist Foundation, Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware

Tim Yarbrough, Executive Director and Editor, Arkansas Baptist News (2010–2020); Church Relations Director, North American Mission Board (2002–2010); Communications Director, Missouri Baptist Convention (1995–2002); former Program Editor, Southern Baptist Brotherhood Commission (1989–1995)

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Ponchatoula mission team spots a hometown bus in Honduras

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

MARCALA, Honduras

(LBM) – A team from First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula, experienced a “God-wink moment” during a

recent mission trip to Honduras. While serving in the village of Marcala, the

team stumbled upon a school bus formerly used by the Tangipahoa Parish School District, where Ponchatoula is located. Associate Pastor Robert Parkin said the group felt it was another confirmation that God had called them there to serve.

“The best way to describe it is just a clear reminder of God’s faithfulness and his calling for our church to serve these people,” Parkin told the Baptist Message about the sighting of the bus, which was bought by someone with no connection to the team. “How else do you end up with the school bus from your parish in the same community that you are committed to serving and reaching with the Gospel? So, it was quite shocking to see, and (Honduran) Pastor Juan thought I was crazy, because I had to chase down the bus while going up switchbacks in the mountains, to get a photo of it.”

Parkin was among 14 members of the mission team that served in Marcala, Jan. 31 - Feb 7, as part

of a medical effort that served 575 patients (ranging from two months to 94 years), providing them with everything from glasses to heart medicine and basic wellness checks.

On top of providing the medical care needed, each person heard a clear gospel presentation and was individually prayed for before they left the clinic. This led to more than 600 Gospel conversations held with the people of Honduras.

Since 2022, FBC Ponchatoula has been taking mission trips to Marcala, after a conversation with Tony Bonilla, a member of FBC Ponchatoula who was raised in Marcala, revealed the many needs there.

For Parkin, the 2026 trip was a full-circle moment. He preached in the same church that a construction team from FBC Ponchatoula had built during a mission trip to Marcala in 2024. He said that it is always

See **PONCHATOULA**, page 13

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Creation from page 3

our human existence. All other creation narratives are simply tall tales.

The first article in this series revealed that science validates Genesis 1:20 and the watery state of the world in the beginning (as opposed to the long-held trope of the science community that our planet’s water arrived via the ice carried by comets or meteorites that crashed into Earth). Meanwhile, this second installment offers the key distinction about the Bible’s account that sets it apart from any other religion’s claim about the beginning.

Importantly, both Part 1 and Part 2 provide verifiable evidence that should reassure a believer’s confidence in the Word, especially in the face of attack from those who wrap themselves in the cloak of science. But remember “we walk by faith, not by sight” (2 Cor. 5:7). Evidence will help believers “give a defense for the hope that is in you” (1 Pet. 3:15). However, evidence is not a substitute for that **hope!**

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Call Melissa at 337.639.2127 or melissa@joneshilllaw.com for scheduling. Slots are filling fast.



Submitted photo

In Marcala, Honduras, a First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula, mission team stumbled upon a school bus formerly used by the Tangipahoa Parish School District (the church's parish). Associate Pastor Robert Parkin said the group felt it was another confirmation that God had called them to serve in Marcala.

Ponchatoula from page 12

such a special opportunity to stand before the congregation and proclaim God's word to those who were so eager to hear that they traveled for miles on foot to worship with other believers.

Parkin said the mission trips to Honduras are one of many outreaches FBC

Ponchatoula does in their community and beyond. These include providing "blessing bags" filled with food for needy students every Friday, serving in a local shower ministry, and combining with other churches in Ponchatoula to support ongoing discipleship in Southeast Asia.

REGISTER NOW: Brazil mission trip

By Staff
Louisiana Baptist Message

MANAUS, Brazil - David Denton is urging Louisiana Baptists to join an annual Brazil summer mission trip to see a Gospel harvest in a city the team has not visited since 2015.

Scheduled for early July, the team will partner with Brazilian Baptist churches in Manaus, Amazonas, to reach local communities with the Gospel. The registration deadline is March 7, and a \$500 non-refund-

able deposit is due at that time.

"The trip provides an invaluable experience in partnering with believers from the United States and Brazil to fulfill the Great Commission," said Denton, pastor, Highland Baptist Church, New Iberia, and director of Beyond the Walls ministry.

Last year, 69 participants saw a harvest of 700 Brazilians and the construction of the 75th church facility in the country since Beyond the Walls began its annual mission

efforts there in .

The team will leave for Brazil July 10 and return July 21.

The ministry, Beyond the Walls, uses a multi-team approach that combines visitation, drama, construction and cooking for evangelistic outreach. The cost of the trip is \$3,220, and covers housing, meals, airfare, daily transportation, airport transfers, insurance, tips and team t-shirts.

Email denton@hbcni.org, or call 337.359.7689, for more information.

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479.381.1170, evangelistsammoore@gmail.com

Sam is a full-time vocational evangelist. He has the gift and calling of an evangelist. He served as a pastor for 22 years before going into evangelism in 2009. He is available for Crusades, Revivals, Harvest Days, Wild Game Supper Events and evangelism training. Now scheduling for 2026-27. Call or email to schedule your event

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Financial FAQ's

Louisiana Baptists have partnered with Compass Financial Ministry to provide churches inspiration and resources relating to Biblical Stewardship and Financial Discipleship. See the end of the article for more information.

Whether you're a church or an individual, we all have questions related to money.

A recent search engine inquiry found that nationally, student loans were top of mind for most people. In Louisiana, the same question generated interest related to budgeting.

Here are other common questions related to finances:

- Should I give when I am paying off debt?
- Should I pay off credit cards first or save for retirement?
- What steps should I take to prepare for the unexpected?
- How do I instruct my kids (and grandkids) to manage their money well?

We live in an age where we can buy groceries on installment payments, place sports bets online, apply for credit for small home repairs, or transfer money to friends (and even strangers) with only a phone number. We need God's timeless truths to light the way!

Did you know Scripture contains over 2,350 verses about money and possessions? Biblical principles are truths that never change, so we can act with confidence when we consult God's Word on finances.

Prosperity is not about income—it's connected to obedience.

If you've got questions, God's Word has answers. This year, let God's Word help you manage finances His way.

If you would like a

FREE
resource

relating to the 2,350 verses on money and possessions, visit:



compassfinancialministry.org/2350-verses



Rhea Fix is the Executive Director for Compass Financial Ministry serving Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and West Tennessee. She has more than ten years teaching financial literacy and discipleship.





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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 SENIOR PASTOR

Central Baptist Church, North Little Rock, Arkansas, is seeking a senior pastor. Three years minimum senior pastor experience required; seminary experience preferred. Send résumé to cbcnlrpastorsearch@gmail.com. **DEADLINE TO APPLY: JANUARY 31, 2026!**



YOUTH MINISTER NEEDED

Grace Fellowship Baptist Church in Tickfaw, La is seeking a part-time, Christ centered, energetic youth minister. Someone to guide middle school and high school students during Wednesday night, Sunday morning, and Sunday night classes, Bible studies, and multiple youth events/conferences. Applicants must have a strong walk with Christ, a clear call to youth ministry and good leadership skills. Please send your résumés to amanda.foy@tangischools.org.



SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR

Eola Baptist Church in Bunkie, LA is seeking a bi-vocational Pastor. A parsonage is available

Send résumés to: EBC, P.O. Box 417, Bunkie, LA 71322 or email résumés to Mrobertson50@mymedia3.com or call Mike Robertson at 318.305.3613.

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SEEKING INTERIM OR BI-VO **PASTOR**

Grand Caillou Baptist Church, Houma, La. is presently seeking an interim or bi-vocational pastor. Please send résumés to rosemarie6755@aol.com.

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SEEKING BI-VOCATIONAL **PASTOR**

Bi-Vocational pastor needed at **Harmony Baptist Church, Provencal, La.** Please send résumés to Pastor Search Committee P.O. Box 550 Provencal, La. 71468

SEEKING A FULL OR BI-VOCATIONAL **PASTOR**

Little Pass Baptist Church, Charenton, La. is seeking a full-time or bi-vocational pastor. Send résumés to: Little Pass Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 326, Charenton, La. 70523 or email to: sherri@lpbc.brcoxmail.com (Attention: Warren Guidry)

SEEKING A FULL TIME **YOUTH MINISTER**

Bonita Road Baptist Church is currently seeking a full time Youth minister. Please email inquiries to Simple7ministries@yahoo.com.

Seeking a full-time **PASTOR**

NEW Hope BAPTIST CHURCH

New Hope Baptist Church in Choudrant, LA is looking for a full-time pastor. If interested, please send résumé to nhbcpastorsearch26@gmail.com or call 318.768.2720.

magnolia BAPTIST CHURCH

SEEKING FULL-TIME /BI-VOCATIONAL **PASTOR**

Magnolia Baptist Church in Holden, Louisiana is seeking a full-time/bi-vocational Pastor. A parsonage is included. Please send résumés to: dewayneh1965@gmail.com

Life from page 2

“Life is a gift.”

U.S. House Speaker Mike Johnson, a member of Cypress Baptist Church, Benton, told the crowd that the right to life is an unalienable gift from God and he highlighted recent legislative victories as a turning point in protecting the unborn.

“We measure our success on the number of lives we save and the lives we improve and uplift with common-sense, life-affirming policies,” he said. “It’s you, my friends, who will help us to usher in America’s new golden age, as President Trump says.”

Johnson shared that he was the product of an unplanned pregnancy and was thankful his parents chose life.

“We all have a reason that we march,” he said. “We all have a reason that we believe so strongly in this principle. And my life story is that one. And in two sentences, I was the product of an unplanned teen pregnancy exactly one year before Roe in January of 1972. And a lot of people tried to convince my very young parents that they should just take care of that problem. But I am eternally grateful that they allowed me the chance at life.”

“I think of the millions of children that did not have that same opportunity,” he continued. “And every single child deserves the opportunity to fulfill their God-given potential. And it is up to us to defend that freedom and that right, that essential freedom to be born, the inalienable right

to life that is imperiled in our generation. And we’re so grateful that you are willing to march and stand and speak for that issue.

“Every single one of you has the power to change hearts and minds and ultimately to save lives,” he said. “And we can never forget that. And I know that you won’t. I want to thank you all for coming out, braving the cold and the weather that’s on the way. It’s worth it. We’re going to save lives together.”

Gary Hollingsworth, interim president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty

Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention, echoed Johnson, adding some strong pro-life sentiments on behalf of Southern Baptists.

“Every year, tens of thousands of people from across the world take to the streets of our nation’s capital, standing shoulder to shoulder to send a powerful message: life is a gift,” Hollingsworth said. “As Scripture tells us, from the moment of conception, every person is a gift from above, made in the image of God and worthy of protection.”

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Ellerbe Baptist Church in Shreveport

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Carey Baptist Association in Southwest Louisiana, which serves 67 churches in a thriving region of the state, where growth and opportunity abound, seeks résumés for Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist). A bachelor’s degree is required; a masters degree and/or doctorate in a related field is preferred. A minimum of seven years experience serving in a Southern Baptist church, a State Baptist Convention, or Southern Baptist association is required. Please call 337.474.1865 for more information or to send your résumés to: office@careyassoc.org

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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@baptist-message.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

- Cas, wife Kayla, Sullivan have been called to be the new BCM Director for the University of Louisiana at Lafayette.
- David, wife Stephanie, Jeffreys new President & CEO of the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries, effective February 16, 2026.
- Mark, wife Karen, Robinson is the new interim pastor at Longview Baptist Church, Deville.
- David, wife Debbie, Martinez called as an associate Pastor at First Baptist Church, Zwolle.
- Corey Coleman is the new pastor at Bethesda Baptist Church, Shreveport.
- Marty Wright is the interim pastor at Oak Hill Baptist Church, Plain Dealing.
- Kelly McGuffee is the new Children's director at South Bossier Baptist Church, Bossier City.
- Jeremy Fortenberry resigns as music director at Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport to go to Knoxville, Tenn.
- Carlos Schmidt to retire effective March 31 as the church planning strategist for the Louisiana Baptist Mission and Ministry team.
- Eric Sonnier has resigned as pastor at First Baptist Church, Jennings.

REVIVAL

- Beaugard Memorial Baptist Church, Longville: Spring Revival, March 1-4, Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Walter Edwards.
- First Baptist Church, Mansfield: Spring Revival, March 1-4, Sunday 10:45 a.m.; Sunday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: Tory Dardar. Worship: Broken Vessels. Pastor: Chad Hardbarger.
- Sweetwater Bible Conference, Quitman: March 4-6, 6 p.m. nightly. Evangelists: Bill Britt, Bob Pittman, Casey Johnson, Gevan Spinney, Herb Reavis and George Pordea. Worship: WeRcalled. Pastor: Wilton Wall.
- North Shreve Baptist Church, Shreveport: March 8. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Cecil Marr.
- First Baptist Church, Gilbert: Revival, March 8-11. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Bubba Ezell.
- Beulah Baptist Church, Many: Spring revival, March 15-18, Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Kenneth Leach.
- Judson Baptist Church, Walker: Life Action Revival, March 15-18, Sunday morning 10:15 a.m.; Sunday through Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Through meaningful times of worship and biblical

teaching, this conference is for our entire church family—from children to senior adults, there is a place for everyone. Pastor: David Lane.

- Gray Baptist Church, Jefferson, Texas: Spring revival, March 22-25. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Roy Davis.
- Gray's Creek Baptist Church, Denham Springs: Spring Revival, March 22-25.; Sunday, 3 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: Worship: Greg Sullivan Ministries. Pastor: Derek Wall.
- North Central Baptist Association's Cluster Revivals, February 25-27, Speakers: Steve Horn and Craig James. Wednesday, 6 p.m., First Baptist, Crowville, Steve Horn, Temple Baptist, Winnsboro, Craig James; Thursday, 7 p.m. Friendship Baptist, Baskin, Craig James, First Baptist, Gilbert, Steve Horn; Friday, 7 p.m., Harmony Baptist Church, Delhi, Steve Horn, Turkey Creek Baptist, Gilbert, Craig James.
- Clarks Baptist Church, Clarks: Spring revival, March 29-April 1. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell.
- Fort Necessity Baptist Church. Fort Necessity: Spring Revival, March 29 - April 1. Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: John Bradley.
- Lake St. John Baptist Church, Ferriday: Spring revival, April 2-5. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Mark Richardson.
- Oakview Baptist Church, Livingston: Resurrection Week Spring Revival, April 5-8, Sunday (Resurrection Day), 10:30 a.m., there is no evening service; Monday-Wednesday 6:30 p.m. Guest Speaker: Alfred Willis. Worship: Mark Lane, The Lindsey's and other groups. Pastor: Evan Griffin.

LAGNIAPPE

- First Baptist Church, Coushatta: Seeking a full-time youth minister, full-time children's minister and part-time worship leader. Please send resumes to julie.fbccoushatta@gmail.com.
- Shiloh Baptist Church, Keatchie: Seeking a bi-vocational pastor. Please send resumes to JR Smith, 964 County Road 466, Carthage, TX 75633 or email sjohnr1@gmail.com.
- First Baptist Church, Logansport: Seeking a director of discipleship and coordinator of facilities. Position open to be filled as either full time or part time. Housing options are available. Please send resumes to FBClogansport-personnel@gmail.com.
- First Baptist Church, Many: Searching for a worship leader. The worship leader's main responsibility will be selecting and leading our music for morning worship on Sundays. This is a part-position. If interested, please contact the church office for an application or email resume to fbcmany@yahoo.com as soon as possible.
- First Baptist Church, Bossier City: The Collingsworth Family's Spring '26 CLASSICS & HYMNS Tour, February 25, 7 p.m. Pastor: Brad Jurkovich.
- Cheniere Baptist Church, West Monroe: Second annual Cheniere Baptist Church Sportsman Night of

Worship, February 26, 5-7:30 p.m. Cost: \$20. Sponsorship are available. There will be a wonderful meal and chance to purchase raffle tickets for some great prizes. For more information call: 318.3962275. Pastor: Zachary Anderson.

- Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill: Pickin' and Praisin' with the Chords of Truth Gospel Band, Feb. 27, 6 p.m. Pastor: Michael Evans.
- Old Zion Hill Baptist Church, Independence: Spring Bible Conference - A walk through Ephesians, February 27-March 1, Friday, 6 p.m., Saturday, 4:30 - 6 p.m., Sunday 9 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Dinner on the grounds following the worship service. Speaker: Jake Roudkovski. Worship: Riverside Revival Band. This is an area wide event and all ages are welcome. Pastor: Gary Dennis.
- Jena Community Center, Jena: Mystery Bible Character Night, February 28, 6 p.m. Cost: \$15 and a meal is provided. All money raised goes toward youth and kids camp. For tickets or more information call or text Anna Cooper at 318.481.0858 or Bailey Moss 318.374.9008.
- First Baptist Church, Mandeville: Everyman Conference 2026, February 28, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. FBC Mandeville will host a one-day men's conference where you will be challenged, and encouraged, enjoy good fellowship, and sing with a room full of men. Main session speakers will be Jeff Crook (Lead Pastor of Christ Place Church in Flower Branch, GA) and Pastor Ronny Cooksey (Senior Pastor of FBC Mandeville). Other guest speakers will lead break-out sessions on relevant topics including "Creationism", "Spiritual Formation of Man", "Church Security", "Sharing the

Gospel", "Image of God in an AI World", and others. Other activities include good food, classic cars, and giveaways. Registration details can be found under the events tab on the FBC Mandeville webpage at fbcmandeville.org/event/ec26. Cost: \$50. A discount is offered to groups of 8 or more. There will also be a Man Lunch and snacks provided. Pastor: Ronny Cooksey.

- Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City: Men's Feast Fish Fry, March 1, 6-8 p.m. There will be a \$10 donation. All proceeds go to missions. Pastor: Terry Young.
- Gray's Creek Baptist Church, Denham Springs: The Southern Plainsmen in concert, March 1, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Derek Wall.
- Unity Baptist Church, Spring Craft Fair, March 7, 10 a.m. - 4 p.m. All proceeds from the indoor fair will go toward sending our children to church camps. For more information contact Sandy Barmore at 337.540.7921.
- New Prospect Baptist Church, Dry Prong: Renew, Restore, Refresh Women's Community-wide conference, March 7, 10 a.m.-noon. A luncheon will follow. Guest speakers: Bonita Preuett-Armour, First Dry Prong; Polly Brinker, Kingsville Baptist and Tammy Hodnett, Hebron. Worship: Kelly Springer, First Dry Prong, Lana Roberts, Jenna Stanley, Cindy Sanders, Bentley, Pentecostal, Erin Stokes, Liberty University. Pastor: Trey Lewis.
- First Baptist Church, Abbeville: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, March 8, 10:45 a.m. Pastor: Russell Landry.
- Faith Baptist Church, Tioga: Hymn Sing, March 8, 6 p.m. Congregation sings the great hymns of faith. This is not a Southern Gospel or contemporary

Christian music gathering, just hymns. There are no soloists, no groups performing, no choirs, no volunteers from the audience. We sing as a congregation for one hour. We're accompanied on the piano by Sylvia Murrell. There's no band. Worship Director: Kevin Boles. We also read Scripture and pray. We are located at 1842 Elizabeth Lane. Come up the Old Shreveport Highway and turn right at Crazy Cajuns. In two blocks you'll see us. Pastor: Clark Palmer.

- First Baptist Keithville: Men's retreat, March 13-15, North Toledo Bend State Park. The \$100 registration fee includes two-night lodging in the bunkhouse, Saturday steak dinner and Sunday breakfast. The weekend includes a fruit jar fishing tournament and cornhole on Saturday. For information, contact Tim Tipton at 318.347.4616 or Chris Falls at 318.286.3762.
- First Baptist Church, Swartz: Cross-Walk: An Easter Family Experience, March 21, 9 a.m. until noon. Cost: \$10 per family. Picnic lunch is provided. Looking for a meaningful way to prepare your family's heart for Easter? CrossWalk is a hands-on experience designed to help parents intentionally disciple their children while focusing on the true meaning of the season. Spots are limited, so be sure to register your family by March 17th. Register online at swartzfbc.org/events. Pastor: Jarrett Fix.
- Esler Baptist Church, Pineville: Jonathan and Jongie on causey in concert, March 22, 6 p.m. Pastor: Joshua Timothy.
- Midway Baptist Church, Bedico: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, March 22, 10:30 a.m.

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.

umd jgqhubnr gkn osmrv: qunt gkn gss

mzrlkgrq, qunt gkn gss vwbo vlzd, qunt hgrrlq

ogky; dsnnemrz, stmrz vljr, slemrz ql dswbonk.

mdgmgu imiqt-dmp:qnr

Clues:
M = I; Q = T

Answer to January 29, Scripture Crypto:
Mark twelve: thirty-four

Jeffreys from page one

Acadian Baptist Center, Eunice. His parents and other members with Highland Baptist Church, New Iberia, continued to disciple him until he left to attend Louisiana College (now LCU) in 1988.

During his sophomore year, while working as a summer camp counselor at Dry Creek Baptist Camp, Jeffreys responded to the Holy Spirit's call for him to pursue vocational ministry, he said, noting that LCU Professor Welby Bozeman encouraged him to submit his resume to churches.

"I shared my call and believed I had to finish seminary to serve in a church," Jeffreys said. "And then he just looked at me, held his Bible up and said, 'Well, show me where it says in the Bible that you need to wait if God's calling you.'"

Soon after, Jeffreys landed a youth internship for the school year with First Baptist Church, Pineville, and for the next 36 years, he served with local churches: First Baptist Church, Pitkin (1990-91); Old Zion Hill Baptist Church, Albany (1992-1995); First Baptist Church, Magnolia, Miss. (1995-2002); and Highland Baptist Church, New Iberia (2002-2021).

'BITTERSWEET' MOMENT

Jeffreys, who along with his wife, Stephanie, graduated from Louisiana College in the early 90's, said he has mixed emotions about leaving his alma mater.

He served a six-year term on the school's board of trustees (2014-2020) and returned in 2022 to serve as executive vice president. During his time as a staff member with the school, Jeffreys has served as vice president of denominational and church relations (June 2025-Feb. 2026), acting president (March 2024-May 2025) and executive vice president and chief operating officer (January 2022- March 2024).

"It's always bittersweet when you have invested so many years of service in one place," he said. "I definitely will miss the relationships I have built with faculty, staff and students.

"It's been uplifting to watch students for a full four-year cycle, as I was able to see them come in as fresh-

men and leave as seniors," he added. "I saw the difference that God makes in their lives and pray they go out and do greater things."

GOD'S PLAN

It was while pursuing his master's degree in Christian education and a doctorate with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, that he first developed a friendship with Hancock, Jeffreys said. Their relationship grew when Highland Baptist Church participated in various ministry opportunities offered by LBCHFM.

Consequently, when he learned he was being considered to follow Hancock, Jeffreys said, he was humbled at the chance to continue Hancock's legacy.

"He's been a mentor to me in ministry and just as a friend for 30-something years now," he said. "He has done an amazing job of leading the Children's Home over 22 years.

"Dr. Hancock has led and expanded the Children's Home to do many different ministries, and I can't be Dr. Hancock," he continued. "I've been around long enough to realize I can only be me.

"But I can definitely follow in the footsteps of someone who's left the ministry in such incredible shape," Jeffreys added. "I just pray that God will continue to help the Children's Home to grow and to continue to have a Gospel impact. I know that's Dr. Hancock's prayer and his hope as well."

PREPARED TO SERVE

Jeffreys and his wife, Stephanie, have four children, two who are adopted: Aaron (wife, Emily and daughter, Amelia), Gary (wife, Peyton and daughter, Remi), Kyle and Ellie. Their family reflects an emphasis on adoption that is a large part of the Children's Home's mission.

LBCHFM's Connect1Child initiative focuses on foster care, adoption and supporting families, grounded in the Matthew 25:40 and James 1:27 that mandate Christ followers to care for vulnerable children. It also connects Louisiana Baptist church-

es with foster children to provide hope, resources and community-based support for families.

"Unfortunately, we have an incredible number of children just in Louisiana who are in the foster care system and are needing a home," Jeffreys said. "We help meet this need through on-campus care, as well as equipping families within Louisiana Baptist churches to be foster parents. The way you meet such an overwhelming need is just one person at a time."

GOD-SIZED VISION

During his startup, Jeffreys plans to build relationships with LBCHFM staff and residents and churches before finalizing a plan to forward.

"My goal is to come in and to learn the organization from the inside out," he said. "We have roughly 90 full- and part-time people who work for the Children's Home on our Monroe campus and across the state of Louisiana. I will continue those external relationships with our churches in the

Louisiana Baptist Convention and those who support the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home.

"I'm someone who follows the Henry Blackaby approach to servant leadership – see where God is at work and join Him there," he said. "I can have all the greatest and grandest plans in my own mind and my own vision for the Children's Home, but if it's not from God, then it's not going to work."

Jeffreys said that as he discerns those next steps, he will encourage churches to visit the campus and learn more about the entity's ministries. Tours of the campus and opportunities to work in the compassion center are among the options available.

"There's so much more to the Children's Home than most people realize," he said. "Many people love the Children's Home and have a passion for what we do. I would love for more groups to come and experience first-hand what we're all about. Come visit us and be the hands and feet of Christ. We have a large network of people who love and support

the Children's Home, and we want to continue to see that grow."

PRAYERS NEEDED

Jeffreys requested Louisiana Baptists to pray for his family as they make the transition.

"We need prayers to get moved in, establish relationships within the Children's Home and out in the community, for God's favor and direction, and find a new church home."

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Perry Hancock, who will officially step down as LBCHFM president and CEO on Feb. 27, was enthused about the naming of Jeffreys as his successor.

"Having known Dr. Jeffreys for many years, we joyfully celebrate his election as the new president of LBCH&FM. With great expectation, we look forward to seeing how God will bless and use his leadership in the days ahead to guide and strengthen this wonderful ministry."

See JEFFREYS, page 18

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Jeffreys from page 17

Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn echoed Hancock's praise. "Today is a great day for Louisiana Baptists," Horn said in a statement to the Baptist Message. "The Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries has enjoyed exceptional leadership, most recently with Dr. Perry Hancock. I am confident that this kind of leadership that the Children's

Home needs and expects will continue with the election of Dr. David Jeffreys. Louisiana Baptists who have yet to meet him will love David and his wife, Stephanie." LBCHFM Board Chairman Jason Lupo, pastor of First Baptist Church, Hornbeck, voiced his gratitude for the search committee and for Jeffreys. "It is an honor to serve on the LBCH&FM board, and I

am thankful for the diligence and integrity our search committee used as they sought and called Dr. David Jeffreys to serve as President and CEO of LBCH&FM," he said. "His ministry has a history of faithfulness and strength as he has cared for Louisiana Baptist in the name of Christ. I am convinced he will work alongside our staff, churches, donors, and partners to continue to follow God's direction for LBCH&FM." Meanwhile, Bob Bozeman, who served as the

search committee chair, added, "We are grateful to God for leading us to Dr. Jeffreys, his passion for ministry, servant-leadership and love for people align perfectly with the mission of LBCH&FM. We believe God has prepared him for this season." LCU President Mark Johnson said Jeffreys was a Christ-centered leader during his time with the school. "During seasons of transition and responsibility at Louisiana Christian Universi-

ty, he provided much-needed leadership," Johnson said. "His love for children and families is not theoretical; it is lived out in prayerful decisions, relational leadership, and commitment to the mission of Christ. Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries is receiving a leader of faith and compassion. I am confident God has prepared Dr. Jeffreys for this moment, and I rejoice in what lies ahead for him and Stephanie and this vital work."

La. Baptists among state's longest married couples

By Staff
Baptist Message

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – Three Louisiana Baptist couples are among the runners-up for the distinction of longest-married couples in the state, released by the Louisiana Family Forum on the day before Valentine's Day: Billy and Billie Crooks, members of New Friendship Baptist Church, Dry Prong; Margaret and James Mohr, members of Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport; and Bobby Earl and Pat Hicks, members of First Baptist Church, Marion.

Louisiana Family Forum is a pro-life, pro-family, faith-based think tank that also advocates for First Amendment and limited government public policies.

Based on submissions LFF received, Leland and Gussie LaCaze of Robeline were named the longest married couple (79 years).

The LaCazes and ten runners-up were honored with a proclamation from Gov. Jeff Landry and induction into LFF's 2026 Marriage Hall of Fame:

- Marion and Jean Hess, Metairie, 78 years
- Billy and Billie Crooks, Dry Prong, 77 years
- Angelo James and Josie Lewis, Shreveport, 75 years
- Margaret and James Mohr, Shreveport, 74 years
- Jeanette and Harrison Matherne, Raceland, 74 years
- Bobby Earl and Pat Hicks, Marion, 74 years
- Nettie and Conrad Simoneaux, Shreveport, 73 years
- Nettie and Leo Honeycutt, West Monroe, 73 years
- Louis and Barbara Rogge, Baton Rouge, 71 years
- Mike and Darlene Campagna, Baton Rouge, 71 years

2026



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SWEETWATER BIBLE CONFERENCE

Wednesday,
March 4th
6:30 pm

Thursday,
March 5th
9:00 am
Lunch Provided
6:30 pm

Friday,
March 6th
9:00 am
Lunch Provided
6:30 pm



Bill Britt



Worship led by



Casey Johnson



Bob Pitman



Gevan Spinney



Herb Reavis



George Pordea

Fern from page 5

in yards, encouraging homeowners and sharing the Gospel in neighborhoods. LBDR Associate and Volunteer Mobilizer Mark Morelock said that half of the work orders were for cutting down and removing trees.

“None of this is possible without the tireless

efforts of our volunteers, not only just from Louisiana but within the Southern Baptist Disaster Relief family,” Morelock shared. “It is all made possible because of them and the faithful giving of our Louisiana Baptist churches. Thank you to all involved.”

Bibles from page one

and Family Ministries. The Bible would be included with food, school supplies, diapers, shoes, new clothing and other life essentials the Compassion Center provides. Those prayers were answered in early February by a gift from two individuals which was enough to purchase 500 Bibles.

Hancock said he expected all the Bibles would be distributed in a week, and he invited others to help purchase more copies of God’s Word.

“This has been an answered prayer because while we always have given out Gospel tracts and taken time to pray with people, we wanted more opportunities to make a

deeper connection with those we serve,” Hancock said. “Every Tuesday and Thursday our staff and volunteers get together and pray specifically for our clients. We want them to know Jesus loves them, hasn’t forgotten about them and has a purpose and a plan for their lives.”

Since it opened in May 2025, the center has distributed more than 600,000 pounds of food.

According to the 2020 U.S. Census American Community Survey, 34.9 percent of Monroe residents live at or below the poverty level.

To donate Bibles, food or other items to the Compassion Center, email matt@lbch.org.

Emerson from page one

to serve the state I love so much.”

Landry in a statement commended Emerson, saying her skill set is such a good fit for this position.

“Julie Emerson is a proven leader with a deep understanding of Louisiana’s people, our state legislature, and the work that needs to be done to move Louisiana forward,” he said.

“Her experience and commitment to conservative reform makes her the perfect person to help lead this administration as we continue fighting for a stronger, safer, and more prosperous Louisiana.”

During her time as a state representative, Emerson served as the chair of the House Committee on Ways and Means and was the first

woman to chair a finance committee in the state’s legislative history. Moreover, she has sponsored consequential legislation, including bills to cut state income taxes, provide school choice and to end abortion.

Emerson, R-Carencro, is a graduate of Westminster Christian Academy in Opelousas, the University of Louisiana at Lafayette (Bachelor of Science) and the University of South Carolina (Master of Business Administration). Emerson is a leader in the state (10 years in the legislature), the local community (small business owner, Lagniappe Communications Group) and her faith community (13 years as a trustee overseeing Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky).

MINISTRY PANEL DISCUSSION

FAIR/FESTIVAL MINISTRY

MARCH 12 • 1:00 PM

MEMORIAL ROOM • LOUISIANA BAPTIST BUILDING

With Louisiana having an abundance of fairs and festivals, this will be a learning opportunity on how we may engage the events around our state evangelistically. Don Lum and Rena Register have been engaged in these efforts for decades and have a vast amount of knowledge about evangelism strategies for large events. They both have successful strategies that yield fruitful results.

DON LUM
Director of Evangelism for Mississippi Baptists

RENA REGISTER
Association Mission Mobilizer for Jones County Baptist Association

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APRIL 21 First Baptist, Pineville
APRIL 22 Maplewood Baptist, Sulphur
APRIL 23 First Baptist, Covington

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Questions? Call 318.448.3402, ext. 227 or email: Catherine.Hall@LouisianaBaptists.org or Kevin.Ulmer@LouisianaBaptists.org

LOUISIANA BAPTISTS

School chaplains bless students, teachers

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Stan Statham may be known by Louisiana Baptists as the state director for Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief, but residents of Alexandria may recognize him as the volunteer chaplain with Cherokee Elementary School.

Since the start of the 2025-2026 school year, Statham has served in a chaplaincy pilot program, showing Christ's love through weekly encouragement on the campus.

"Teachers, staff, students and their parents are facing problems in everyday life and having that chaplain there to just be an ear to listen to, to vent to and to pray with does more than we realize," Statham told the Baptist Message. "Schools that have chaplains often have seen an increase in morale amongst teachers, staff and students. Chaplains can help schools connect to local churches who in turn, support that school in many ways, such as providing school supplies or helping schools recognize their teachers during Teacher Appreciation Week."

BACKGROUND

In 2024, state Sen. Mark Abraham, a member of Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, championed Senate Bill 123 that was signed into law by Gov. Jeff Landry as Act 293, allowing "Each city, parish, or other local public school board" to "employ or accept as a volunteer a certified chaplain to provide support, services and programs for students, staff, and parents."

The bill passed overwhelmingly in the Senate, 36-0-3, and House, 73-26-3, because of research Abraham shared about the success of chaplain programs in 30,000 schools:

- drastic drops in teen pregnancy
- zero suicides
- lower teacher attrition

Importantly, the volunteer school chaplain program does not promote a specific religion or denomination and allows schools to set the time and place for volunteers to come on campus.

Additionally, by law, state and federal background checks must be performed for each candidate (sex offenders or child predators are prohibited from serving). Furthermore, chaplains are held responsible for any action or statement that is "maliciously, willfully, and deliberately intended to cause harm to harass or intimidate those seeking support, services and programs."

OPPORTUNITIES

Statham plans to announce school chaplaincy training dates soon. Contact him by email, stan.statham@louisianabaptists.org, for more information.

However, Statham said there are other opportunities for Louisiana Baptists to become involved in chaplaincy, specifically in disaster relief responses. He said three training sessions for DR chaplains already are scheduled (7:30 a.m.-4 p.m.): **Feb. 28**, First Baptist Church, Lafayette; **March 28**, First Baptist Church, Pineville; **April 11**, Temple Baptist Church, Ruston.



KALB screenshot

Rapides Parish School Board member Willard McFall (left) discusses with Superintendent Jeff Powell (far right) on a proposed policy that would have aligned the parish's schools with state law regarding volunteer school chaplains. Board member Wally Fall (center) listens to the discussion.

Rapides Parish School board nixes volunteer school chaplain policy

By Staff
Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – After months of delaying a decision about volunteer school chaplains, the Rapides Parish School Board voted 5-4, Feb. 3, to kill a proposed policy that would have aligned Rapides schools with state law.

In 2024, state Sen. Mark Abraham, a member of Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles, championed Senate Bill 123 that was signed into law by Gov. Jeff Landry as Act 293, which allows "Each city, parish, or other local public school board" to "employ or accept as a volunteer a certified chaplain to provide support, services and programs for students, staff, and parents."

DISCUSSION

Documents show that a proposed school policy was prepared as early as May 2025. But public information indicates that it was not an agenda item until October 2025, when a motion was made by Superintendent Jeff Powell, after receiving unanimous approval from the education committee. The matter was assigned to the next monthly meeting but was not included on the consent agenda that would have allowed a vote. After discussions by the board during that November 2025 meeting, the policy was returned to the education committee for more discussion in January 2026, finally coming forward for a board vote on Feb. 3.

Among the five dissenting board members, questions and concerns were raised throughout the months-long process about the policy, including what religions would be represented and possible disinformation that could be spread.

Powell maintained that the program would not allow "the propagation of a specific religious or denominational doctrine," and reaffirmed that the vetting process would be like an existing one for volunteers, adding that each principal would have the final say about the time and place for volunteers to come on his or her campus.

After the defeat of the motion, Feb. 3, Powell commented that the lack of a policy for Rapides schools does not negate state law. He said that the policy he brought forward simply reflected "what the legislature passed" and noted that although Rapides voted not to have a policy "it doesn't

change the fact that there is a law on the books that allows for chaplains in schools."

DATA

The public discussion during the multiple board meetings in 2025 and 2026 did not appear to focus on the research that lawmakers considered when they passed Abraham's bill (unanimously by the Senate and by a super majority in the House) in 2024. Abraham then testified that 15 states had bills in the legislative process and that two other states (Texas, Florida) had passed volunteer school chaplain laws. He also referred to research that indicated chaplains in schools had a beneficial impact.

"In these 30,000 schools, teen pregnancies are drastically down; suicides are zero; and it [chaplain program] has been helping with mental illness – not only for the students, but also for the teachers," Abraham told the state Senate Education Committee, March 13, 2024. "There has been less teacher attrition because of chaplains in these schools."

The law requires state and federal background checks of candidates; prohibits sex offenders or child predators from serving; and provides immunity to chaplains except for any action or statement that "was maliciously, willfully, and deliberately intended to cause harm to harass or intimidate those seeking support, services and programs."

CONTACTS

Board members who opposed the policy: Wilton Barrios, wilton.barrios@rpsb.us, 318-640-4274; Stephen Chapman, IBD2thDOC@aol.com, 318-448-4382, 318-473-4346; Wally Fall, wally.fall@rpsb.us, 318-451-7946; Sandra Franklin, sandra.franklin@rpsb.us, 318-487-8394; Willard McCall, willard.b.mccall@gmail.com, 318-445-2358.

Board members who supported the policy: Marie Ashmore, marie.ashmore@rpsb.us, 318-487-0888; Steve Berry, steve.berry@rpsb.us, 318-613-2710; Mark Dryden, mark.dryden@rpsb.us, 601-446-1044; George Johnson, george.johnson@rpsb.us, 318-729-5425.

Contact information is published by the Rapides Parish School Board on two web pages: rpsb.us and go.boarddocs.com/la/rpsb.