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# Horn: Be passionate about reaching Louisiana for Christ

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) -- In his executive board report, May 5, Louisiana Baptist Executive director Steve Horn highlighted the Convention's vision statement -- seek the lost, strengthen churches and support cooperative missions and ministries.



LBC Executive Director Steve Horn

## SEEK THE LOST

Horn said Louisiana Baptists baptized 8,984 new converts in 2025. This marks the fifth consecutive year of an increase in baptisms.

"I want to continue to keep this before us and believe the Lord for at least 10,000 baptisms a year," Horn said. "This is doable. We can do that, and with the Lord's help, we will be seeing 10,000 baptisms I pray, even in this current reporting year. One of the things that we have been able to do to, I hope, is foster that kind of culture and foster that kind of environment."

## STRENGTHEN CHURCHES

-- Evangelism Strategist Kevin Ulmer has created a class for pastors on Evangelistic preaching;

See HORN, page 2



Brian Blackwell photo

Executive Board President Tim Williams, pastor, Williams Boulevard Baptist Church, Kenner, reminded board members about the need for laborers for the harvest.

## EB President reminds board laborers needed for harvest

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) -- Executive Board President Tim Williams, pastor, Williams Boulevard Baptist Church, Kenner, reminded board members about the need for laborers for the harvest.

Williams drew from his experience as a "missionary kid" in Liberia, West Africa, to explain an idiom used in that country, "I hold your foot."

"If you have something I want and you don't want to share with me, I'm begging you or pleading with you, by saying 'I hold your foot.'"

He added that if someone needed relief from the chief or a judgment in their favor, they would get on their knees in front of the chief, hold his foot and say, "I beg you. I plead with you. I hold your foot."

Williams also explained that it is an expression of intense gratitude, when someone has done something you didn't deserve, something above and beyond what you could expect. "You would fall on your face before them, and you would hold their feet!"

See HARVEST, page 2



Brian Blackwell photo

LBC President Kirk Jones, pastor, Fellowship Church, Prairieville, reminded board members that as a Convention we need to recommit ourselves to principals, practices and patterns that define the model for biblical cooperation.

## LBC President: Recommit to biblical cooperation

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) -- Louisiana Baptist Convention President Kirk Jones, pastor, Fellowship Church, Prairieville, reminded board members that they need to recommit themselves to principals, practices and patterns that define the model for biblical cooperation.

Drawing from 1 Corinthians 16 and the example of the collection taken up for the saints in Jerusalem, Jones underscored that "we exist for the propagation of the Gospel" both at home and abroad, underlining the need to be

intentional and sacrificial in our investment in winning souls.

Moreover, Jones said the biblical model for cooperation is defined by:

-- "accountable cooperation" (a group of men delivered the offering to see firsthand the need);

-- "humble leadership" (leaders who make themselves available to what God is doing in His Kingdom, and not create a necessity for their leadership);

-- "strategic partner-

See COOPERATION, page 12

## LCU honors grads with baccalaureate, commencement

By Staff  
Baptist Message

PINEVILLE, La. (LCU News) -- Louisiana Christian University held a two-day event to celebrate 196 graduates who earned degrees this year.

### BACCALAURATE

The festivities began Friday evening, May 8, with the school's first-ever baccalaureate service, hosted by First Baptist Church, Pineville.

FBCP Pastor Stewart

Holloway encouraged students to continue believing in God even though they might feel uncertain about the future. Meanwhile, LCU President Mark Johnson told them to expect

See GRADUATION, page 7

# Horn from page one

-- Baptist Collegiate Ministry students sowed Gospel seeds through GOLA (Go Louisiana) VBS in Louisiana and Wyoming (GOLA VBS is an LBC BCM emphasis that allows students to serve on teams who share God's love through what is the largest evangelistic outreach of the year for many congregations); and

-- Work continues in the effort to create a church self-insurance organization that is open to churches of all faith

traditions.

Horn noted that a bill is moving through the state legislature that would fix three out of four items that are holding up the launch of the program. What is missing is language to remove a "joint and several liability" stipulation that as of now exposes potential members to the deficits or adverse loss experience of other members.

"This framework [joint and several liability] materially undermines the risk

pooling objective and may deter participation by otherwise suitable entities," Horn said.

He explained that Sen. Rick Edmonds, a former Louisiana Baptist pastor and current pastor with First Baptist Church, McComb, Miss., and Rep. Gabe Firment, a deacon at First Baptist Church, Pollock, continue to work on passable amended legislation that would make the program marketable.

"And so please continue to pray," he said. "The legislative season ends June 1.

"It's pretty critical," he said. "To ask our church-

es continue to wait is going to be difficult. And so please, please pray in these coming days."

Support cooperative program and ministries  
Horn shared that 28 listening tour sessions related to the Cooperative Program have been attended by 433 people representing 287 churches, with five more scheduled.

During each stop, Horn and other Louisiana Baptist leaders pose such questions as "What can we do better? What are we committed to doing moving forward? What should we be doing that we are not doing? What are we doing that Louisiana Baptists want us to stop doing? Where have we lost trust in this cooperative endeavor to

do more together than we can do by ourselves?"

Horn said he learned there is a clear consistency in what Louisiana Baptists are doing well and what they are not doing well, offering that there also is a clear contradiction on one thing with half of the listening tour crowds in favor of it and half opposed.

"We have to tell our story better," he said. "We are doing some great things. We are doing some things that our churches really, really value."

"But not everyone knows that we're doing these things," he continued. "And so, my promise to you is that we will tell that story better in the days ahead. We will do that."

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LOUISIANA BAPTISTS

# Harvest from page one

Sharing from Luke 10, Williams said Louisiana Baptists must fall at the feet of God and cry out.

"I sometimes wonder if we throw 'praying for the lost' around pretty flip-pantly -- and praying for workers. We do pray but is it a deep desire?" he asked.

"Pray to the Lord of the harvest," he said. "And

so, as we gather to deal with our business today and answer questions and deal with issues, let us be reminded that our priority is to pray. Pray to the Lord of the harvest with desperation, with earnestness, and pray that God would bring people to a saving knowledge of Him."

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# APOLOGETICS 101 (Part 5): Evidence of the Exodus

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Many Bible critics attack the historicity of the exodus by arguing that the royal records of ancient Egypt do not offer an official account about the 10 plagues, the escape of millions of slaves and the crushing loss of pharaoh's elite chariot corps.

However, these naysayers ignore the obvious -- that ancient rulers rarely documented the failures of their leadership.

Moreover, these same detractors also brush aside the glaring evidence of other sources that confirm many of the details of God's deliverance of Israel from captivity in Egypt. Indeed, some of the most dramatic examples prove the deniers wrong about their claims that Israel never dwelt in Egypt and did not serve as slaves to build the Egyptian empire.

First, the Papyrus Brooklyn 35.1446, which is

described by historians as "one of the most important surviving administrative documents from Egypt in the Middle Kingdom" (the timeframe just prior to the exodus) lists the names of 95 slaves, including 45 "Asiatics" (how the Hebrew people

were described by Egyptians at that time). What researchers concluded from these entries about a transaction (the sale or transfer of slaves) is that a high proportion of Semitic foreigners lived in Egypt during the 13th Dynasty (correlating to a timeframe within Israel's 430 years of captivity).

Second, Egyptian records, including two papyri in the British Museum and a leather scroll in the Louvre offer details about brickmaking, the use of straw as a binder, mandatory brick quotas and the mention of "no men to make bricks and no straw in

the district." On top of that, a painting in an Egyptian tomb dating to 1470-1445 B.C., depicts Nubian and Asiatic slaves (again, what ancient Egyptians called Semitic people from the Promised Land) making bricks for the Karnak Temple Complex

in Luxor, Egypt.

If that is not enough evidence, there are ancient Egyptian stone carvings/reliefs too:

-- The Soleb Inscription, which honors victories by Egyptian pharaoh Amenhotep III (one of the pharaohs who ruled Egypt during the captivity of Israel), depicts a captured enemy from "the land of the [nomads] of Yahweh" (one of the oldest references to the God of Israel outside of the Bible) and the carved likeness of the prisoner has Semitic features.

-- The Berlin Pedestal, an inscription housed in the

Egyptian Museum in Berlin, Germany, refers to "Ishrael" as a nation in Canaan, and the dating of the inscription confirms the time that the Bible says Israelites were there.

-- Meanwhile, a 10-foot-tall victory monument known as the Merneptah Stele, named for a pharaoh who ruled Egypt for about 10 years, mentions the name "Israel." Indeed, it is the first official record of the existence of Israel as a people group.

Then there are the mass graves of infants near the ancient city of Kahun, correlating to the Bible's description of pharaoh's decree to kill all male Hebrew babies. There also is evidence of the sudden abandonment of Kahun (with household items, tools and other possessions left behind), consistent with the hasty departure for the exodus described in the Bible.

Moreover, the ancient Egyptian manuscript known as the Ipuwer Papyrus (preserved in a Dutch mu-

seum) contains a poem that describes calamity and chaos, including statements that there is a "plague is throughout the land," "the river is blood," and widespread plunder, "the servant takes what he finds."

Jesus faced disbelief throughout His ministry on Earth. Indeed, after healing a man who had been beridden for 38 years, Jewish leaders ignored the fact that this was a sign that identified the Messiah and instead sought to persecute Jesus for performing the miracle on the Sabbath. Jesus admonished them for their rejection of Him, saying in part, "if you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote about me. But since you do not believe what he wrote, how are you going to believe what I say?" (John 5:46-47).

Importantly, His words then apply as well today.

Those who naysay the historicity of the exodus reject the proof about the life of Moses because it also is evidence of the existence of Christ.

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# LBC Executive Board updated on CP, entities

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – During its May 5 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 \$260,289.85 more than the 2026 budget for these three months. However, when compared to the same timeframe in 2025, churches have given \$85,582.16 less through CP so far this year than last year.

## ENTITY REPORTS

LCU  
Louisiana Christian



Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Board members received updates, May 5, about the Cooperative Program, entities and other ways God has moved around the state.

University President Mark Johnson shared that his recent inauguration as the school's 10th president was a chance to bring the community together.

He noted that the university has made significant progress in reducing its budget deficit through stronger financial stewardship, careful evaluation of spending, improved opera-

tional efficiencies and strategic leadership decisions across multiple areas of the institution.

Johnson also said the athletic department sees opportunities for future growth through the possible addition of new sports programs, while graduate and online education continue to gain momentum and expand their reach.

rebuild and reimagine it for the glory of God.”

## LBF

Louisiana Baptist Foundation Executive Director Jared Price said the ministry seeks to provide financial resources to strengthen Louisiana Baptist churches and other ministries as they advance the Kingdom.

He said that since July 1, 2020, \$106 million has been achieved toward the Foundation's Vision 200 (advancing the Kingdom with by \$200 million given in 20 years or less).

In 2025, the Foundation held 32 seminars on charitable giving, which he explained educated churches on ways they can use their financial resources that God has entrusted them to reach others for Christ. Additionally, the entity facilitated more than 3,000 gifts that had a more than \$5 million impact.

Price also highlighted that the Foundation's short term fund annualized yield remained at 4.5% and its

Johnson celebrated that students served 13 organizations and nine churches during the first SendLA Day, March 24. This concept is inspired by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Jamie Dew's "Serve Day" where students serve and evangelize their local community.

He thanked Louisiana Baptists for their support. "We're really focused on Proverbs 3:5-6 as we start to move in the right direction," Johnson said. "We're trying to rebuild, restore,

See LBC EB, page 5

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LBC EB from page 4

group investment fund saw a 12.91% return for 2025. The Foundation ended last year with more than \$314 million in assets under management.

He said this year they will continue to focus on growth that will have a Kingdom impact. This includes revamping the Legacy seminar that teaches individuals how to develop an estate plan that will advance the Kingdom. He also highlighted the upcoming ChurchBiz Conference in September, which is designed for pastors, treasurers and church finance teams to cover a variety of topics that enhance church business practices and support effective ministry operations.

"Thank you for your partnership in ministry," Price said. "We want to endeavor together to advance the kingdom one

dollar at a time, one ministry at a time and one life at a time."

*LBCHEM*

Newly elected President and CEO David Jeffreys shared that he is humbled and blessed to lead Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries as the ministry continues serving children and families across Louisiana and beyond.

As he shared his vision for the ministry's future, Jeffreys emphasized one of the organization's greatest current needs: couples willing to serve as cottage parents in residential childcare.

"We're two homes short on residential childcare on campus — not because we don't have the money, and not because we don't have the facilities, but because we don't have the people there," Jeffreys said. "We

need people to pray that God would call workers to this ministry and also help us recruit families who may feel led to serve as cottage parents."

Cottage parents play a vital role in the lives of children placed in residential care, he noted, adding that they provide stability, spiritual guidance, encouragement and the daily love and structure many children have never experienced.

Jeffreys also introduced a new ministry theme that reflects the unified mission of the organization:

"One Home. Eight Ministries. One Mission."

The theme highlights the many ways Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries serves children and families throughout its various outreach ministries, including:

- Residential childcare
- Granberry Counseling Centers
- Homeplace (provides transitional living

for homeless children and their mothers at no cost to them)

-- Women's Learning Center (Christ-centered education and job training for women)

-- Connect1Child (off-campus foster and adoption ministry)

-- Minister Care (free residential and counseling services to ministers and their families)

-- Compassion For Kids (partnership with Louisiana Reach Haiti)

Each ministry serves a unique purpose while remaining connected through one shared mission — providing love, care, and hope in Christ to children and families in need, Jeffreys said, reminding supporters and board members that the ministry exists to serve Louisiana Baptists and partner churches across the state.

He added that as Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Ministries enters this new

season of leadership and ministry, the organization remains committed to sharing the hope of Christ while meeting the practical and spiritual needs of children and families across Louisiana and around the world.

"We would love to come alongside you in any way that we can," he said. "Please continue praying for people to come and serve, and for the needs we have as we minister to children and families every day."

*LBM*

In his report, Executive Editor Hall reminded board members that the *Baptist Message* will move to a digital-only format in January 2027 but ensured them that the entity remains committed to Louisiana Baptists' emphasis on creating a culture of evangelism in the state.

Hall highlighted some of the work the Baptist

See LBC EB, page 6

# What would you do if ...

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In a recent survey, Louisiana pastors and church leaders were asked what the impact would be if more households in their church started tithing. Would they add staff? Would

they build a building? Seventy-nine percent (79%) indicated they would increase community outreach and seventy-two percent (72%) noted they would invest more to the missions efforts of others! Now that's Kingdom impact!

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Through the prophet Malachi, God challenged His people, including us, in this area. "'Test me in this,' says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it.'" Malachi 3:10, NIV.

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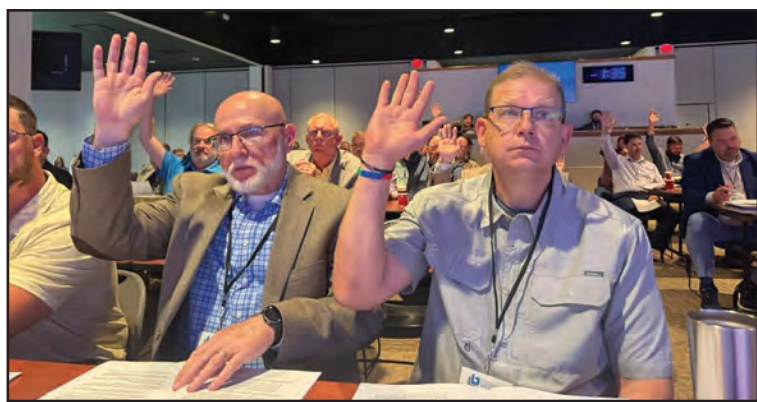
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Message completed in 2025 as part of this evangelistic focus, including: a

monthly series that started in 2025 about the basics of evangelism; the 527 spiritu-

al decisions, including 279 salvations, that were made during the West CENLA GO TELL America Crusade, April 12-15 in Leesville; and about Send Network Louisiana, a partnership with the North American Mission Board, which went into effect Aug. 1, 2023, that aims to help the state further its God-sized vision to see His Kingdom expanded in Louisiana by one percent over the next decade.

He also emphasized that the news services has put a premium on feature stories that build affinity among Louisiana Baptists, citing the account about home-schooler Anna Richerson, the daughter of Lewis Richerson, pastor with Woodlawn Baptist Church, Baton



Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Board members, among other business, voted on several recommendations presented, May 7.

Rouge, who led Parkview Baptist School to two state championships and was named most valuable player in both tournaments; and a feature about two Louisiana Baptists who contributed to the successful Artemis II 10-day lunar orbit mission.

Hall also encouraged board members to take note of the QR codes that are being placed in the print edition to help print readers migrate to the website.

In his Office of Public Policy report, Hall expressed optimism about several bills on interest to Louisiana Baptists: SB306 (authored by Sen. Rick Edmonds, former pastor with Calvary Baptist Church, Shreveport, and now pastor with First Baptist Church, McComb, Miss.), would make it a crime to obstruct the freedom of worship in the state; HB 294 would allow security teams to

forcibly remove people who interrupt worship services on church grounds; and SB 402, which removes the discrimination against Christian schools without stripping protections for students in pre-K programs.

Hall expressed appreciation for a Louisiana Baptist-led 2025 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), and urged board members to lead their congregations to take part in anti-human trafficking ministries.

STAFF INTRODUCED

Two newly hired strategists were introduced at the board meeting.

Matt Cate, formerly discipleship pastor with Istrouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, began work as Louisiana Baptist Sunday school/discipleship strategist on April 20. Jarrod Muller, pastor with Riverside Baptist Church, River Ridge, was approved by board members as the new director of communications, effective July 1.

GRANTS APPROVED

The Mission Support Committee, which also was affirmed by the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering Committee, approved First Unit Building Grants for two church plants: Church Acadiana, Lafayette, and Harvest Church, New Orleans. These grants are used for a church plant to purchase vacant land, an existing building that needs renovation or an ongoing new construction project.

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# Graduation from page one

life to hold highs, lows and everything between, but that God is in control of it all.

At the conclusion of the service, Johnson called all the seniors to the front of the worship center to allow faculty, staff, and families to pray for them. Following the baccalaureate service, seniors were invited to the president's home to share a celebratory (non-alcoholic) toast.

"This was a time of prayer and to show our thankfulness to God for the conclusion of this journey for these students," Johnson said. "Commencement is a time for awards and congratulations. The baccalaureate is a time for honoring the Lord with praise.

"Graduation is a time of disorientation," he said. "One day, you know exactly what you are. You have a routine, a schedule, and the very next day you don't."

## COMMENCEMENT

The festivities continued Saturday, May 9, with the school's 171st commencement exercises inside Guinn Auditorium.

Conferred were 72 master's degrees and 120 undergraduate degrees. Graduates included students who finished their degrees in December 2025, May 2026, and who will complete their coursework in August 2026.

The 10 a.m. ceremony included undergraduates who earned degrees from the School of Sciences, Computing and Artificial Intelligence, the School of Christian Studies, the College of Health and Professional Programs, the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, and the School of Media, Communication and Fine Arts.

The 2 p.m. ceremony included undergraduate and graduate students from the Ray and Dorothy Young

School of Business, the School of Education, and the School of Social Work.

Vice President of Academic Affairs Henry Robertson, who has served the university for 20 years, offered reflections about his time as a professor and as an administrator. This was his last LCU commencement in these official roles.

"This has been my biggest joy, to be your instructor," he said. "These are moments and times of service never to be forgotten."

He also thanked the faculty and staff for their commitment to the students, telling the graduates, "We are your biggest fans—the faculty and staff here."

## STUDENTS & FACULTY REFLECT

Camille Allgood, Student Government Association president and history major, said what she loved most about LCU is the sense of community.

"It's bittersweet to leave a place I love so much, but I'm excited to see what

happens next," she said. "It's not a goodbye, it's an 'LCU later.'"

Amy Chandler, assistant professor of educa-

tion, remarked about her own time graduation from LC and what an impres-

See GRADUATION, page 12

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Louisiana Baptist Children's Home & Family Ministries

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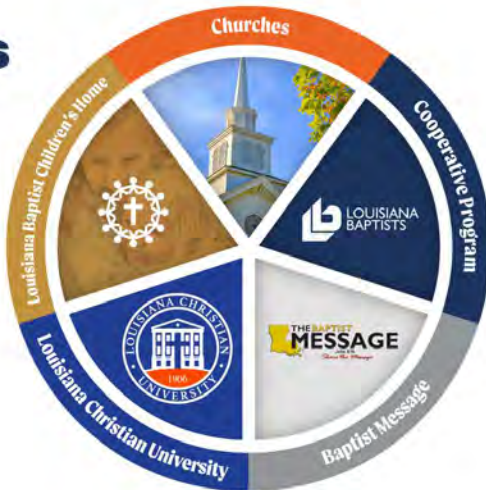
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# Good News: Louisiana Reach Haiti celebrates salvations, baptisms

**By Brian Blackwell**  
Message staff writer

CAP HAITIEN, Haiti (LBM) – Easter weekend was extra special for four residents of Louisiana Reach Haiti (an orphan care ministry), who celebrated their new lives in Christ during a special baptism service.

In front of other LRH residents and staff members, the teens were baptized in a joint event with the congregation of the Baptist Church of the Disciples, who baptized eight adults. The April 4 celebration marked the first time LRH has baptized four people in one service.

LRH President Darrin Badon, who was among 30 people present at the service, said the baptisms were the culmination of many years of pouring into the four youngsters by LRH staff, mission team members and himself.

“They approached me when I visited with them in January about their decisions to finally accept Jesus,” Badon told the *Baptist Message*. “The



Submitted photo

Louisiana Reach Haiti celebrated the baptism of four residents during Easter weekend. The teens were baptized in a joint event with the congregation of the Baptist Church of the Disciples, who baptized eight adults.

baptisms were a great way to symbolize they died to their old selves and were made new to the Lord. I’m so grateful for all those who supported us, as you had a part in this.”

Because they are all 18 years old, the four new believers have “aged out” of the Children’s Village that LRH operates and have moved into a nearby house that will be home to New Life Academy. This vocational school that opened

in January will train up the next generation of godly Haitian young adults and


teach them valuable skills needed in Haiti to become self-sufficient.

“Our heart is to reunify kids to their families, but we always knew we wouldn’t reunify every child,” Badon said. “We must continue to develop these young adults into mature adults.”

## RESCUED

Not only did was the weekend cause for celebration of baptisms, but the ministry also was jubilant because, the month prior, they rescued a second Haitian girl from slavery. The 14-year-old girl, whose

See HAITI, page 13



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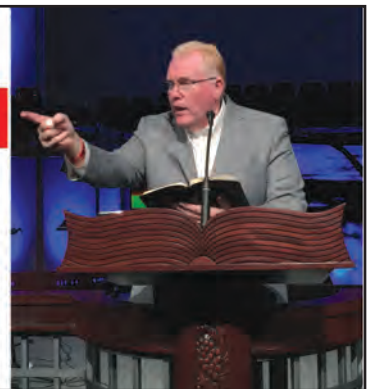
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# Landry's EO suspends June 27 congressional primaries

By Staff

Baptist Message

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – Louisiana Gov. Jeff Landry announced, April 30, that he had suspended the state's congressional primaries.

Landry's Executive Order pertains only to

the primary elections for the U.S. House – the one held May 16 and the other scheduled for June 27. Other offices and ballot measures were not impacted on May 16 and will not be impacted on June 27.

The Executive Order was issued one day after

the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that Louisiana's 6th Congressional District was unconstitutional because of racial gerrymandering.

In 2024, Louisiana passed a revised district map after a court mandate required a second Black-majority district. The uniquely narrow geographic footprint for the 6th District stretches from Baton Rouge to Shreveport generally along High-

way I-49. U.S. Rep. Cleo Fields, an African Amer-

ican politician, currently serves that district.

## LA Baptists named to SBC committees

ORLANDO, Fla. (LBM) – Southern Baptist Convention President Clint Pressley has named Louisiana Baptists to several committees ahead of the 2026 Annual Meeting, scheduled for June 9-10 in Orlando, Fla.

### TELLERS

James Gardner, associate pastor, McClendon Baptist Church, West Monroe; Jacob Gardner, youth minister, Trinity Baptist Church, Pineville, Chad King, pastor, First Baptist

Church, Anacoco, and Dale Lingenfelter, Louisiana Baptists' associate executive director/chief financial officer

### COMMITTEE ON COMMITTEES

Karen Middleton, member, Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, and Todd Strain, pastor, Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria

### REGISTRATION

Ray Swift, Louisiana Baptists' pastoral leadership director

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# Johnson's 'Uncommon One' ministry helps CENLA young girls find 'true identity'

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – Sheila Johnson became burdened years ago for the plight of young women who were asking, “Who am I?”

Eventually her burden for helping these girls find the answer in Christ became a call to form the

Uncommon One ministry, whose mission is to help young women “to seek and find their TRUE God-given identity.”

Formed in 2022 with her friend Cindy Nardini, the Pineville-based group empowers, equips and encourages young women via connection groups for 5th-12th grade girls. Licensed mental health profession-

als offer mental health tips. Meanwhile, community service and outreach projects as well as other events unite participants and inspire growth.

Johnson, wife of Louisiana Speaker Pro Tempore Mike Johnson and a member with First Baptist Church, Pineville, said her background in coaching (she served as head women’s basketball coach with Louisiana College, now Louisiana Christian University) helped prepare her for this calling. She also is the career scoring leader of LC’s women’s basketball team which contributed to her 2006 induction into the Louisiana Sports Hall of Fame.

“I’ve always had a heart and passion for girls and letting them know they are enough, that they can achieve and be anything



Submitted photo

Uncommon One empowers, equips and encourages young women via connection groups for 5th-12th grade girls.

they set out to be, and that God has purposed each one of us with gifting and calling on our lives,” Johnson told the Baptist Message. “When Cindy Nardini and I felt the calling on our lives, we believed the Lord placed on both our hearts a desire to make a difference in the lives of girls. We didn’t know at the time what would it look like, but we felt our calling was to impact young girls’ lives and help them look at who they are and their identity in Christ.”

Nardini said she was

thankful to answer God’s call to become involved with Uncommon One.

“God whispered to me about this ministry for years before I finally trusted Him and obeyed,” she said. “My reasons for ‘not’ were because of my already full schedule - work, family, church involvement, etc.

I recognized the need and even was passionate about the idea, but He had to do a work in me before I was ready to follow.”

See UNCOMMON, page 11



Submitted photo

Young women have received encouragement from one another and adult leaders through Uncommon One. This ministry has helped young women “to seek and find their TRUE God-given identity.”

Since 2019, Louisiana Baptists have followed this Biblical template and practical truth:

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Mark 4:28, HCSB



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# Volunteers help Cross ministry to point other to Jesus

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – George and Polly Marshall have heeded a call to distribute hundreds of free hand-made crosses painted with a simple message – “Jesus loves

you,” they shared in an interview with the *Baptist Message*.

They also said that through this effort that began Oct. 31, 2025, dozens have come to Christ and hundreds more have prayed with them as well as with members of var-

ious churches who man “pop up” locations on shopping center parking lots throughout Central Louisiana.

The Marshalls serve as missionaries with Alpha-Omega Missions (a ministry that reaches individuals with the Gospel

in the U.S. and Mexico and receives support from multiple Baptist churches) and are members with Pine Ridge Baptist Church, Melder.

“Almost no one will turn down a free cross and we use that as a way to pull them into a conversa-

tion about Jesus,” George Marshall offered. “We don’t talk long but do say a quick prayer of encouragement and share the Gospel.

“We’re not pushy and aren’t here to debate,” he continued. “We just show

See CROSS, page 16



Submitted photo

Through a ministry that distributes crosses throughout the state, dozens have turned to Christ and hundreds more have been the recipients of prayer. The ministry also has encouraged team members to be bolder in their faith.

## Uncommon from page 10

She said the ministry has blessed her and allowed her to connect with other women who not only love the Lord but are willing to invest in other ladies for His Kingdom.

“The need for genuine connection among young women is so needed right now,” she said. “When that connection is based upon our connection/foundation in Christ and His truth, then there is something extra special about it.

“The world is hungry

for it, and He has called us to go and share,” she continued. “Uncommon One seeks to do that through small groups. He called me to serve and I’m so grateful He didn’t give up on me.”

Board member Tonya McIntosh said Uncommon One has allowed her to build on her passion in life – discipling women. Not only has she led Bible studies and mentored young girls and women in central Louisiana but even disciplined women at a drug rehabilitation facility in

north Louisiana.

“The women were eager to hear the Gospel, feel the love of other women, and know that our God is in the redemption business,” she said. “I received the blessing and privilege to take our Uncommon One movement to the facility. He is our identity.

“All other identities that we find in this life will crush us,” she added. “Being able to share the life-giving power of the Gospel is the reason I want to give and support this ministry.”

## How to BE the Pastor at VBS!

By David Anderson, Childhood Ministry Strategist, Louisiana Baptists

**Vacation Bible School** is still the largest evangelistic outreach of the local church every year. This opportunity is truly an all-hands-on-deck all church committed event. However, many pastors feel unsure about how they can help or be a meaningful part of such an impactful outreach for families. Below are 5 ways that a pastor of a local church can BE there for VBS.

**BE A PROMOTER** – Be a promoter for all things VBS. Help the VBS director work through the calendar and clear a path with people in the church. Knowing they have the pastor’s backing makes all the difference. Spend time cheering for and promoting the upcoming VBS. There are many people in the church that will gladly serve at their pastor’s prompting whom the VBS director may not even know. Encourage the children and their families to sign up and bring their friends. When the pastor is excited, the whole church gets excited.

**BE AVAILABLE** – Having an open door to your children’s minister or VBS director is often the greatest help you can offer. They

may never need to come and bounce ideas off you; however, simply knowing you are available to be part of their team speaks volumes. When they feel seen, by knowing that you consider them a valuable part of the church, they will have the confidence and assurance that their ministry truly matters.

**BE WILLING** – A pastor may never serve in the kitchen preparing snacks. He may never teach elementary Bible study for the children. He may not serve as a greeter during registration. HOWEVER, being willing to do all these things will have an impact bigger than one might imagine. Think of how comfortable the kids will feel with their pastor if he is the one teaching their Bible study or handing them snacks. Consider how connected those kids will feel to the larger church. Just being willing for whatever may come is a huge ministry in and of itself.

**BE VISIBLE** – Sometimes just being seen is the greatest encouragement to your people. Be visible throughout the week. Yes, be there for the gospel presentation,

but, also be there for the opening rally and in between classes each day. This makes the pastor visible to the children and they begin to feel like he is their friend. This builds credibility with your youngest congregants that extends beyond VBS. It will also encourage your VBS team to see that you care.

**BE PRESENT** – Finally, and this really happens with the other 4 points, be present before, during, and after VBS. Yes, there are sermons to write, and hospital visits to make, and deacon ministry to partner with. But, if for one week you are simply present, your church will notice and see you in a new light. I remember in seminary one of the biggest lessons that I remember learning is to practice the ministry of presence. This has been a great assurance as I have stood with families in times of grief and joy, often not being sure what to say. I remind myself that families are not looking for special words, they are looking for my presence. Practice that ministry during VBS week and you will see eternal rewards in the lives of children, their families, and your church.

# Graduation from page 7

sion the worldview taught at the school made on her future.

“It’s now up to you to apply your Christian worldview as you go into the profession you were called to,” Chandler said. “We are the builders of

civilization, and God is the project manager. Leave something better than you find it. Go and do great things in the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

Master of Social Work graduate Shequantna Sanders

gave a testimony about her nontraditional and often difficult journey while she was with LCU. A single mother who held down two jobs while working on her degree, Sanders fought through two cancer diagnoses, but she never gave up.

“God blessed me with some amazing professors and awesome classmates, who

prayed for me and prayed with me,” she said. “Let the Lord lead you. Keep God first. Put in the work. Treat everyone with grace.”

Marcia Hardy, dean of the Young School of Business, congratulated graduates on their accomplishments.

“We are excited for you,” she said. “You will have the opportunity to excel in what you do best, to bring your light into the world. Every day, you have the opportunity to bring your one tiny candle that can illuminate a thousand. Go light your world, and your LCU faculty, staff, and friends will continue to support you and uplift you.”

Victory Lindo-Lemons, dean of the School of Education, and an LC alumna, told students that the day was not simply about earning a degree but also about becoming the person God called them to be. She said that the school had not been her first choice when she applied to colleges, but that she became a Christian while a student.

“God has a way of planting us right where we need to grow and planting others you need to help you grow,”

she said. “Today, I want to honor your perseverance. Perseverance is holy work. Some of you are changing the generational outcome of your families forever.”

### KEEP THE FAITH!

After the conferring of degrees, Johnson offered the presidential charge to the graduates, encouraging the graduates to be faithful, regardless.

“The Lord never said to be successful,” Johnson said. “He said to be faithful. It may take you to places that even surprise you. So why be faithful instead of successful?”

When you hit hard times, if you keep the faith, the faith will keep you. He will hold you tight. It is faith that keeps us in the most difficult times of our lives.

“You will take hits, and you’re going to fall, but the Lord will be with you along the way. When you fall, you will get back up again. The Lord placed something inside you to get back up. You can face whatever you’re going to face because the Lord is with you.”

# Cooperation from page one

ship” (planning and communication);

-- “personal connection” (not just passing through, but getting together);

-- “faith-filled availability” (“when God opens a door ... walk through,” and develop a culture that encourages steps of faith);

-- “leadership elevation” (respect the skills and abil-

ities of those we’ve asked to take on a task in our Convention); and

-- “respectful and cooperative disagreement” (“it’s okay to have some disagreement, it’s not okay to be disagreeable,” disagree “the right way, with the right spirit, with the cooperative heart”).

“Be the voice (of cooperation),” he said. “You’re here because you’re a part of the cooperation. Be the voice of that cooperation, even when you have to be the voice of disagreement, because you’re going to have the spirit to do it good.”

Jones, who is a graduate of Louisiana College (now Louisiana Christian University), expressed gratitude for the investment Louisiana Baptists made in him throughout the years.

“Twenty-five years from now I hope there’s another Kirk Jones that the convention invested in,” he said. “We’ve inherited one of the greatest mission endeavors of all time. We have an opportunity to see it through, and it’s worth seeing through.”

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# Haiti from page 8

name is withheld for security concerns, spent five years working in hard labor before she was freed.

Badon is hopeful she will make the same progress as the 12-year-old they freed from slavery in January 2025.

“It’s been a God-thing to see her transformed from a girl held captive, abused and neglected to one who now experiences the love and compassion of Christ,” he said. “We were honored the Lord allowed us to have played some part in that. Daily, we are seeing her rebirth, post-slavery.”

### BACKGROUND

In 2015, a Louisiana Baptist team felt led to create a permanent presence in Haiti and partnered with Pastor Odvald Louis and members with New Evangelical Baptist Church in Croix-Des-Bouquets. The Haitian congregation

and Louisiana Baptist mission teams combined to complete a Children’s Village in Croix-des-Bouquets. They also

teamed up to dig a well and construct a church building and school in neighboring Canaan.

However, the facilities in both cities were overtaken and vandalized by gangs in early 2022, Badon

said.

LRH then refocused its ministry on multiple fronts.

In February 2022, the Children’s Village relocated to the Florida House, a Florida Baptist Convention-owned home for missionaries in Port-au-Prince. The facility housed 21 children and six staff members. After more than a year in the Florida House, the gangs started infiltrating this area as well.

Meanwhile, God opened doors in New Orleans, allowing LRH leaders to help relocate Pastor Odvald Louis and his family from Haiti,

which he fled after surviving an attempt on his life.

Additionally, LRH began partnering with Connect International Church, a congregation in New Orleans that in April 2022 formed and hosted an international church (led by Haitian American Pastor Dawest Louis, a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary) that reaches out to Haitians and other nationalities.

Then, on the evening of July 4, 2023, Badon met the children and staff as they arrived in Cap Haitien after traveling all day to get out of

Port-au-Prince, the capital city that had become too dangerous because of gang activity.

To donate to LRH or participate in the ministry, visit [louisianareachhaiti.org](http://louisianareachhaiti.org).

Go to the [BaptistMessage.com](http://BaptistMessage.com) and see hundreds of Christian cartoons.



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**SEEKING FULL-TIME PASTOR**  
Small established country church in Mt. Hermon, LA is seeking experienced full-time pastor for an active congregation with several ongoing ministries. Parsonage is included. Please send your résumés to [psch2025@yahoo.com](mailto:psch2025@yahoo.com).

**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**

■ **CORRECTION:** In the April edition of Notables in the *Baptist Message*, it stated Mike Schultz was the new senior pastor at Woodland Park Baptist Church, Hammond. That was incorrect. Kevin Hess is the new senior past at Woodland Park Baptist Church. *The Message* apologizes for the confusion.

■ Bruce, wife Erin, LePoint is the new Association Mission Strategist for the Carey Baptist Association. He will assume duties in July.

■ Kevin Woodson is the new Worship Minister at Judson Baptist Church.

■ Matt Simmons is the new Family Care Minister at Amite Baptist Church.

■ Monte Rowse has resigned as pastor of First Baptist, Hackberry to assume the position of senior pastor Highland Park Baptist Church, Texarkana, Texas.

■ Michael Stringer moves from interim to pastor at Countryside Baptist Church

■ Bill Lott moves from interim to pastor at Ida Baptist Church,

■ Michael Naquin is the new pastor at Belle Park Baptist Church, Haughton.

**HOMECOMING**

■ Esler Baptist Church, Pineville: Homecoming Sunday, May 31, Sunday School, 9:30 a.m. Worship service, 10:30 p.m. Guest Speaker: Jacob Crawford, Worship Music: Shane Longoria. Pastor: Joshua Timothy.

■ Centerville Baptist Church, St. Landry: 100th Anniversary Celebration, July 26, Sunday School, 9:30 a.m., Worship service 10:30 a.m. with dinner on the grounds to follow. Pastor: Jacob Guillory.

■ Macedonia Baptist Church, Effie: 125th Homecoming, September 20, 10 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow worship services. Pastor:

**REVIVAL**

■ The New Beginnings Baptist Church, Walker: Revival, May 24-27. Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6:30 p.m., Monday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Charles Smith.

■ Tensas Parish Revival 2026, St. Joseph, May 28-30, 6 p.m. nightly. Guest Speakers: Barclay Tullos, Cornerstone Church, May 28; Brandon Jones, First Baptist Church, Newellton, May 29, and Brian Snowden, St. Luke MB Church, May 30. The revival will be held at the Tensas Parish Ag Arena, 128 McConnell Rd, St. Joseph.

■ Southside Baptist Church, Jonesboro: Revival, May 31- June 3., Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 6 p.m. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Worship: led by Cathy Venable. Pastor: Wesley Venable.

■ Brushy Creek Baptist Church, Bancroft: Spring Revival. May 31- June 3. Sunday 11 a.m. & 6:30 p.m., Monday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Worship: Amber Eppinette Saunders (11th Hour). Pastor: Mike Streams.

■ Cypress Creek Baptist Church, Dodson: Revival, June 5-7. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Jesse Henderson.

Open Door, Ragley: Summer Revival, June 21. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: James Blankenship.

■ Richey Baptist Church, Deville: Revival, June 21-24, Sunday 6 p.m., Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Grady Dodge.

■ Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Winnfield: Harvest Sunday, July 5. Evangelist Scotty McDowell.

■ Crossroads Baptist Church, Tullos: Revival, July 12-15. Evangelist Scotty McDowell.

■ Madison Baptist Association Revival and worship, July 12-15. Sunday-Monday 7 p.m. nightly, First Baptist Tallulah and Tuesday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. nightly, Waverly Baptist Church. Evangelist: Rubin Weaver. Worship: Tim Post. There will be a fish fry Sunday, 5:30 p.m.

■ Indian Mound Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: Revival, July 12-15. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Dwayne Rogers.

■ First Baptist Church, Keithville: Harvest Sunday, July 19. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Mike Stowell.

■ Palestine Baptist Church, Grant: Revival July 19-22. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Worship: The Mackey Willis Family. Pastor: Hardy Estes.

■ First Baptist Church, Princeton: Harvest Sunday. July 26. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Darrell Cooper.

■ Welcome Home Baptist Church, Columbia: Revival, July 26-29. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Charles Wesley.

■ First Baptist Church, Marion: Revival, August 2-5. Evangelist Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Bubba Hoggatt.

**LAGNIAPPE**

■ Roland Fontenot, Sr., a retired pastor of 30 years, is available for pulpit supply and revivals in the New Iberia area. If interested or for more information, call 337373.0532 or email Born2preach2000@Fox.net.

■ DaySpring Baptist Church, Ruston: Seeking a song leader/pianist. Please you're your resumes to 3191 S Vienna St., Ruston LA 71270-9605. Call 318.255.2119 for more information. Pastor: Ken Weaver.

■ Prospect Baptist Church, Dubach: Dubach Gospel Singing Jubilee, May 30, 5 p.m. Featuring The Roberson Family, Cory Telano, Scott Scallan, Tina Wise, Callie Mae Hockenjos, Ricky

Houck, The Cook Quintet, Laura Fussell, Mary Aulds, Cade Conterez and Vicki Solomon along with pianists Betty Ruth Perry and Brenda Grafton. A love offering will be received. Refreshments will be served afterwards. Pastor: Marvin Winham.

■ Epps Baptist Church, Epps: Brian Free and Assurance in concert, May 30, 6 p.m. A love offering will be received. Pastor: Edwin Fuller.

■ Jerusalem Baptist Church, Hammond: Vacation Bible School, May 31-June 5 will be May 31 - June 5, 5:30-8:00 p.m. for children entering first grade through sixthgrade. Register for VBS at www.jbcpc.org Pastor: J.P. Handy

■ Elizabeth Baptist Church, Elizabeth: Jonathanandjongideoncausey in concert, June 5, 6 p.m. Pastor: Jason Hazelton.

■ Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill: Jonathanandjongideoncausey in concert, June 6, 6 p.m. Pastor: Mike Evans.

■ First Baptist Church, Central: The Southern Plainsmen in concert, June 6. 5:30 p.m. Pastor: Daryl Purpera.

■ Parkview Baptist Church, Alexandria: Tribute Quartet's FOREVER Tour, June 13, 6 p.m. Multi-Dove Award nominated, Tribute, shares an evening of inspiration and songs from their latest recordings. Pastor: David Shaw.

■ Frierson Baptist Church, Frierson: Brian Free and Assurance in concert, June 19, 6:30 p.m. Admission is free. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Mel Campbell.

■ Oberlin Baptist Church, Oberlin: The Southern Plainsmen in concert, June 20, 6 p.m. Pastor: Brent Romero

■ Riverview Baptist Church, Alexandria: Karen Peck and New River in



Submitted photo

Louisiana Baptist Pastoral Leadership Director Ray Swift has received the Superintendent's Award in recognition of his dedication and service to the Louisiana State Police family. For the past seven years, Swift has faithfully served Troop E by providing guidance, encouragement, and support to Troopers and employees alike. Through his involvement with the LSP Troopers and Employees Assistance Program (TEAP) and peer support efforts, he has made a meaningful impact on the well-being of personnel and their families across the state. "Over the past year, Chaplain Swift spent countless hours conducting ride-alongs and visiting Troop facilities statewide, taking the time to personally connect with Troopers and Employees wherever they serve," the Louisiana State Police wrote in a Facebook post. "His willingness to show up, listen, and support others during difficult moments, as well as everyday ones, reflects the very best of the Louisiana State Police."

concert, June 27, 7 p.m. Pastor: David Newton.

■ First Baptist Church, Anacoco: Faith, Family and Freedom Festival, June 27, 11 a.m. Special Guest: Cochran and Co. Pastor: Chad King.

■ Blood River Baptist Church, Albany: Independence Day Celebration, June 27, 7 p.m. There will be food, homemade ice cream, water slide and games and fireworks. The fireworks are at 9 p.m. Pastor: Scott Cooksey.

■ First Baptist Church, Converse: The

Southern Plainsmen in concert, June 28, 10:45 a.m. Pastor: Brian Rankin.

■ Cedarcrest Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: Greg Sullivan Ministries in concert, July 5, 10:30 p.m. Pastor: Bruce Worrell.

■ Jerusalem Baptist Church, Hammond: Youth Garage Sale, July 9 - 11, 6 a.m. to 3 p.m. Sale will close at 2 p.m. on the 11th. Pastor: J.P. Handy

■ Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Joseph Haberdank in concert, July 11, 6 p.m. Pastor: Wilton Wall.

**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.

gkw xem qtyw tcmkmw xem vtbxe tr xem gjj,

gkw jem jgow bkxt sgqggv, pegx egnm o wtkm

bkxt xemm, xegx xetb egjx jvoxxmk vm xemjm

xeymm xovmj?

kbvsmjy xpmkxa-xpt:xpmkxa-molex

Clues:  
G = A; J = S

**Answer to April 30, Scripture Crypto:**  
First John four:one



Submitted photo

Since the first crosses were given out at an Alexandria store parking lot on Oct. 31, many shoppers have been blessed by the act of kindness.

## Cross from page 11

them the love of Jesus.” The Marshalls, who minister throughout Mexico several times a year and spend the remainder of their time in Woodworth, first became familiar with the cross ministry when they met Leo Lytle five years ago. Lytle, a professional wood maker in Pine Valley, Texas, and a former pastor of Lakeside Baptist, Pineville, travels around the country to share the Gospel during the cross distributions. Then in late 2025, the Marshalls felt led to start a similar ministry in Central Louisiana. On Oct. 31, they handed out 28 crosses in the parking lot of an Alexandria store, and prayed with passing shoppers, engaging in Gospel conversations with some. The ministry has en-



couraged shoppers and grown team members to be bolder in their faith. “Those who have handed out the crosses have gotten more comfortable in praying and asking others about Jesus,” George Marshall said. “We only have just a minute or two to talk to them, so it helps us

to really narrow down what we share. I’m seeing Christians wanting to get involved in this and they are getting excited about sharing the Gospel and leading people to the Lord.” Lyn Dousay, a member with Pine Ridge Baptist who has passed out crosses at several locations, recalled how one conversation with a young man at a nursery festival in Forest Hill led to his decision to accept Christ. “He walked in looking for a cross and walked out with Jesus,” Dousay said. “He knew about Jesus but didn’t know Him as his Savior. It has surprised me how the crosses are an easy way to start a conversation about Jesus.” **Learn more about the Cross Ministry: 318.623.4772.**

# A Father to the Fatherless

CHILDREN’S HOME SUNDAY ANNUAL OFFERING

**FATHER’S DAY - JUNE 21, 2026**

*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in His holy dwelling.” —Psalm 68:5*


**LOUISIANA BAPTIST Children’s Home**  
 & FAMILY MINISTRIES  
[lbch.org](http://lbch.org)