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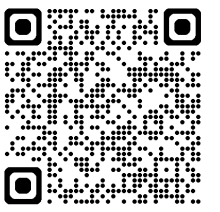
August 27, 2026
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John 3:16

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Danny Akin headlines E4 conference

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – Danny Akin, ambassador with Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, Wake Forest, North Carolina, is the keynote speaker for the 2026 E4 Preaching



Danny Akin

Conference, which will be hosted by First Baptist Church, Pineville, Sept. 15. Akin,

who served as SEBTS president from 2004-2026, will bring messages during the general sessions of the annual conference.

This year's event will feature breakout sessions for pastors and ministers' wives.

Topics for pastors include prayer, preaching on the fear of the Lord, insights from 1 Peter, preaching a metanarrative (anchoring individual sermon texts within the Bible's grand, overarching story of creation, fall, redemption and restoration), pastoral preaching and

See E4, page 2



Submitted photo

Members of a Louisiana Baptist mission trip, July 10-21, sponsored by Beyond the Walls, prayed in the streets of Manaus, Brazil. (Right) Martha Jenkins, wife of the late Wayne Jenkins, co-founder of Beyond the Walls, shared the Gospel with a woman in Manaus, Brazil.

647

More than 600 saved in 'Heart of the Amazon'

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MANAUS, Brazil (LBM) – During a mission trip to a city located in the center of the Amazon rainforest, Louisiana Baptists experienced a Gospel harvest of 647 Brazilians.

"The theme for this year was 'Hope for Manaus,'" David Denton, senior pastor with Highland Baptist Church, New Iberia, told the *Baptist Message*. "We partnered with local churches to help them fulfill the Great Commission in their vicinity. Much like Louisiana,

Manaus was hot with high humidity. We sweated a lot but had great Gospel conversations."

GOSPEL HARVEST

Fifty members of Beyond the Walls, a Louisiana Baptist-led mission team from Louisiana, Texas and Utah ministered, July 10-21 in Manaus, known as the "Heart of the Amazon."

While there, they split into 12 ministry teams and participated in personal visits, drama minis-

try, construction, street ministry, Vacation Bible School, medical ministry and compassion ministry that included distribution of food baskets – each as a bridge to Gospel conversations.

IN THEIR WORDS

Among those Denton saw come to Christ was Jonathan, a recovering drug addict he met during a visit to a local park. During the

See BRAZIL, page 7

GBO: Vital resources for urgent Gospel needs

By Staff
Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – More than 2.4 million Louisianians do not know Christ, but thanks to Louisiana Baptists' gen-

erous gifts to the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering, life-changing ministry is possible around the state through church plants, compassion ministries, disaster relief efforts, church construc-

tion, scholarships and media outreach.

This year, Louisiana Baptists are asked to pray about what they might contribute to this offering

See GBO, page 5

E4 from page one

grief counseling. Professors from Louisiana Christian University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Ouachita Baptist University will lead the workshops.

DeeDee Williams, adjunct professor with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and

a Thrive instructor in the seminary's Ministry Wives Certificate Program, will lead the ministers' wives track.

"After eighteen years of hosting E4, I don't know that I've ever been more excited about a conference than I am this year," Stewart Holloway, pastor with FBC Pineville, told the *Baptist*

Message. "Danny Akin and our outstanding team of breakout leaders bring a remarkable depth of experience, wisdom and practical insight. I believe this year's E4 will encourage, equip, and strengthen every pastor and ministry leader who joins us."

The E4 Conference began in 2009 with a vision to exemplify, encourage, equip and empower pastors to preach expositional sermons. Past speakers have included Don Wilton, pastor, First Baptist Church, Spartanburg, South Carolina; Fred Lowery, pastor emeritus, First Baptist

Church, Bossier City, Louisiana; David Uth, pastor, First Baptist Church, Orlando, Florida; Steve Gaines, pastor, Bellevue Baptist Church, Cordova, Tennessee, and former SBC president; Jamie Dew, president, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary; David Allen, professor, Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary, Cordova, Tennessee; Waylon Bailey, senior pastor, First Baptist Church, Covington; and Fred and Chip Luter, pastor and associate pastor,

Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans.

Registration: 8 a.m. through 4 p.m. Costs: \$75 for ministers, \$85 for minister & wife couples and \$25 for students. Lunch will be provided on location. Group discounts are available through local associations (contact your director of missions/associational mission strategist). Register online via fbcpineville.net (click the "E4" carousel at the top of the webpage).

Pastor/wife 'welcome' set for Sept. 22

By Staff
Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – The Louisiana Baptist Pastoral Leadership Team has scheduled an event to begin at 9:30 a.m. on Sept. 22 to welcome to new pastors and their wives.

The program will be held in the Louisiana Baptist Building in Alexandria and will include: remarks by Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn; briefs about the state missions ministries by their respective directors; and greetings from the leaders of the four Louisiana Baptist entities. Participants also will receive a tour

of the state missions center and have a time of fellowship during a catered lunch.

"This invitation is a special way for us to connect and then to strengthen relationships and partnerships across Louisiana," Louisiana Baptist Pastoral Leadership Director Ray Swift told the *Baptist Message*. "If you are looking for a way to hear about the mission and ministries of Louisiana Baptist this is the way to receive that information. You will be enlightened and greatly encouraged by attending."

RSVP via louisiana-baptists.org/events/kickstart-2026.

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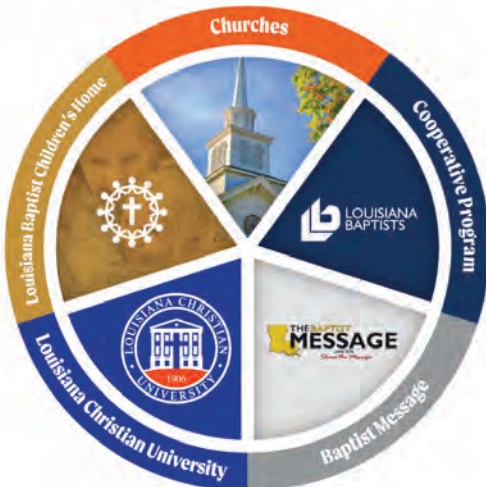
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Number 8

APOLOGETICS 101 (Part 8): The epic of Jonah is not a 'fish tale'

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM)—For critics of the Bible, the account of Jonah's evangelistic mission to Nineveh is just a "whale of a story."

But they and many Christians miss the point of Jonah's message. The issue is not "how" God delivered Jonah to Nineveh. Instead, the takeaway for readers should be "the impact" of God's message on this great city of the powerful Assyrian empire.

Indeed, the "moral of the story" is at least four-fold:

-- God can accomplish His good purposes even through reluctant obedience (1 Samuel 15:22; Hosea 6:6; Mark 12:33).

-- God's offer of salvation extends to the whole earth, Jews and Gentiles alike (Isaiah 49:6).

-- God truly does not wish anyone to die, but for

everyone to repent (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 2 Peter 3:9; James 2:13).

-- God desires us to love our enemies enough to share the Gospel with them (Matthew 5:43-48).

But Jonah's time "in the belly of the fish" (Jonah 1:17) was important.

In addition to bringing Jonah to repent of his arrogant disobedience of God, Jesus used the example of those "three days and three nights" to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees with the prophesy about His coming crucifixion, burial and resurrection (Matthew 12:40-41).

PROOF OF JONAH

The evidence confirming Jonah's account does not include proof about his days and nights in the

belly of a fish. He and God are the sole witnesses to that miracle.

However, there is archaeological affirmation of

Jonah's reluctant visit to Nineveh, specifically in the accuracy of the details he recorded about the "exceedingly great" size of the city (Jonah 3:3), such that it could accommodate a population

of 120,000 (Jonah 4:11).

It is important to note that until 1830 or so, Assyria was a nation "only on paper," and the Bible was the primary source for information about it. Nothing physical had been discovered about this once great ancient empire, and Bible naysayers pointed to the absence of imperial cities, monuments and other artifacts to claim this empire was merely fable and lore.

Likewise, it did not help that Greek and Roman historians mixed fable, myth and loose geography in their limited writings about Assyria.

Consequently, Jonah's account of a vast city requiring three days to traverse gave critics ammunition to dismiss his description as exaggerated myth.

Then, between 1846 and 1851, British archaeologist Sir Austen Henry Layard excavated the earthen mounds covering Nineveh and discovered a massive city enclosed by 7.5 miles of imposing walls and spread across more than 1,800 acres—an area Jonah could easily have taken three days to cover while preaching in every neighborhood, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" (Jonah 3:4).

But once Layard's excavation confirmed Nineveh's vast size, critics shifted their argument: instead of

saying Jonah exaggerated the city's size, they claimed it was too small to hold the large population he reported.

However, 120,000 people living within Nineveh's roughly 2.8-square-mile walled city equals about 67 people per acre—dense, to be sure, but hardly impossible. By comparison, at its peak around A.D. 275, ancient Rome held an estimated 200 to 300 people per acre inside its famed Aurelian Walls. Both cities accommodated high-density populations through multi-story dwellings, much as large cities do today.

FURTHER PROOF

Additional discoveries at Nineveh confirmed other biblical accounts, further strengthening the Book of Jonah's credibility

See APOLOGETICS, page 5

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



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ReGroup South, hosted Aug. 1 by First Baptist Church, Lafayette, drew 415 attendees. The conference featured messages by Reggie Bridges, pastor with Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, music by Crescent City Worship (a worship team collective from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary), and age-graded breakout sessions for leaders in the areas of worship, adults, young adults, college, youth, children, preschool, men and women.



ReGroup North, hosted Aug. 8 by Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, had 272 participants. The conference featured messages by Temple Baptist Pastor Reggie Bridges, music by Firm Foundation (a worship band from Ruston) and age-graded breakout sessions.

Louisiana Baptists challenged to regroup

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

RUSTON, La. (LBM) – Nearly 700 small group leaders and pastors, collectively, were encouraged to strengthen their discipleship efforts during recent multiple ReGroup events.

ReGroup South, hosted Aug. 1 by First Baptist Church, Lafayette, drew 415 attendees. Meanwhile, ReGroup North, hosted Aug. 8 by Temple Baptist Church, Ruston, had 272 participants.

Reggie Bridges, pastor with Temple Baptist, Ruston, was the keynote speaker for both events. Leading worship were Crescent City Worship, a worship team with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary (ReGroup South), and Firm Foundation, a worship band from Ruston (ReGroup North).

The conferences featured age-graded breakout

sessions for leaders in the areas of worship, adults, young adults, college, youth, children, preschool, men and women.

Louisiana Baptists' evangelism and church growth team also offered a drawing at each location for a marriage discipleship retreat at WinShape in Rome, Georgia. Scott Beardsley, pastor with East Ridge Baptist Church, Lake Charles (ReGroup South), and Brent Shoalmire, pastor of discipleship and administration with First Baptist Church, Natchitoches (ReGroup North), were the winners.

"Both ReGroup conferences were wonderful," Louisiana Baptist Evangelism Strategist Kevin Ulmer told the Baptist Message. "I heard so many encouraging comments from the participants, volunteers, and leaders. The general sessions were inspiring, and the breakout sessions were encouraging and insightful. There were breakout leaders from various locations and backgrounds that brought a diverse range of sessions covering numerous discipleship contexts."

"I am grateful for everyone who made this year's ReGroup a success," he said. "May God use the ReGroup conference to yield fruitful discipleship ministries across our state."

Dusty Durbin, associational mission strategist with Evangeline Baptist Association, provided funds for 94 small group leaders and pastors in his association to attend ReGroup South.

"Louisiana Baptists provide an excellent training focusing on discipleship and Sunday school," he said. "So, we believed one way for us to serve the churches of EBA and help

See REGROUP, page 8



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Apologetics from page 3

as a historical record.

In 1830, British Colonel Robert Taylor discovered a six-sided cylinder—ironically, in the “Prophet Jonah’s Mound.” Its cuneiform text remained unde-

GBO

from page one

which has a 2026 goal of \$1.8 million. This amount will supplement the financial support for statewide ministries given through the Cooperative Program, the primary funding channel for state and national Baptist causes.

Named for the first elected and salaried executive director of the Woman’s Missionary Union in Louisiana, the offering will be promoted throughout September via a video for each Sunday of the month plus print and electronic articles.

This year’s four featured stories show how the state



special offering strengthens missions throughout the state:

-- “Gift boxes” tells

how hygiene products show inmates of the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women that they are loved by God;

-- “Vietnamese Hope Baptist Church, Baton Rouge,” relays how the congregation is reaching Vietnamese families and connecting Asian Baptist leaders across Louisiana;

-- “New Friendship Baptist Church, Pollock,” offers hope through the details of how they rebuilt their campus after a devastating fire in 2023; and

-- “Mission Builder” describes how volunteers are helping Church Acadiana establish a permanent Gospel presence in a rapidly growing community.

Resources (e.g. videos, prayer guides, social media kits, small group lessons, and sermon outlines) are available via GeorgiaBarnette.org.

ciphered for two decades. But when it was translated in 1851, it detailed Assyrian King Sennacherib’s siege of Jerusalem and his attempt to extract tribute from King Hezekiah of Judah, confirming many details of the biblical account about this encounter (2 Kings 18:14-16).

Meanwhile, Layard’s excavations uncovered 12 carved stone panels in Sennacherib’s palace depicting the Assyrian siege of Lachish, a Judean city, aligning with the biblical accounts in 2 Kings 18-19, Isaiah 36-37, and 2 Chronicles 32.

ENDURING LOVE

In a striking twist of irony, after being forgiven himself, Jonah—angered that Israel’s enemies in Nineveh had repented and cried “mightily to God” (Jonah 3:8)—complained that He is “a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm” because He spared Nineveh (Jonah 4:2).

Yet, mercy defines God’s character and is intrinsic to His very nature.

Indeed, as another example of His patience, even though He ordered the utter destruction of the Amorites as part of Israel’s conquest of the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 20:17), God used the 400-year captivity of Israel in Egypt to allow the Amorites time to repent of their evil (Genesis 15:16).

God is “not slow in keeping his promise, as

some understand slowness. Instead, He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repen-

tance” (2 Peter 3:9).

That is the message of Jonah—not the miraculous transportation of him in the belly of a great fish.

Message Board meets Sept. 8

The Baptist Message Board of Trustees will meet Tuesday, Sept. 8, for its regularly scheduled meeting at the Baptist Building in Alexandria. Committee meetings will begin at 10 a.m., with lunch at noon and the full board meeting at 1 p.m.

This will be the final board meeting of the year for the Baptist Message.

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Volunteers packed 1,000 boxes in 2025 that were distributed to inmates of the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women. Louisiana Baptist women's and missions leaders are praying that number is matched this year. Some of the funds for the gift box distribution comes from the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering.

Georgia Barnette gives hope to LCIW inmates

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ST. GABRIEL, La. (LBM) – This fall, Louisiana Baptists will have multiple opportunities to provide inmates of the Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women with hygiene boxes that meet physical needs but often lead to spiritual decisions.

Churches are invited to participate in a gift box packing day, Sept. 25, 10 a.m.-1 p.m., in the Granberry Conference Center on the

campus of Louisiana Christian University, Pineville. Alternatively, they may donate, prior to and on Sept. 25, complete gift sets containing items from an approved list provided by the Louisiana Baptist women's missions and ministry office.

Volunteers will distribute the boxes on Oct. 15, and LBWMM leaders are praying that 1,000 boxes are packed.

"The boxes are a reminder to the women that they are not forgotten and they are cared for," Christine Gill, LBWMM strategist, told the Baptist Message. "Those who go into the prison are working together to help bring light to a dark place."

The effort began in 2006, when Louisiana Baptists learned that LCIW inmates were needing additional hygiene supplies. Last year, a record 1,000 boxes were donated, surpassing the 2024 mark of 700.

"The thing that those ladies need is hope that they're not forgotten, that their lives are not ended, that God actually has a plan and a purpose for their lives," said Chaplain Debi Sharkey, a graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

Some of the funds for the gift box distribution comes from money given through the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering.

Named for the first paid executive director of the Woman's Missionary Union in Louisiana, the offering will be promoted throughout the month of September. This year's goal is \$1.8 million.

Gill said Louisiana Baptists also can pray for:

- the gift boxes to open hearts to hear the Gospel inside LCIW;
- the hundreds of church volunteers who collect supplies and pack, transport and distribute boxes each year; and
- Sharkey and those who provide ongoing spiritual care to the LCIW women.

To learn more about gift box ministry, email the LBWMM team via WMM@LouisianaBaptists.org.

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Brazil from page one

the conversation, Denton shared the Gospel and the young man accepted Jesus.

"He was tuned into what we were saying, and you could tell he was interested," said Denton, director of Beyond the Walls. "He even spent his last paycheck on water he bought for our team and a meal for himself. I gave his name and number to the Brazilian Baptist Convention, who, when I called them after we returned, told us that they in fact had made contact with him and that he was attending church locally."

Craig Beeman, pastor with First Baptist Church, Winnsboro, participated in his fifth mission trip to Brazil and fourth with Beyond the Walls.

While walking through downtown Manaus, Beeman met and shared Jesus with a man named Marcio.

Many years ago, Marcio

attended church but never accepted Christ. Beeman then offered him an invitation to do so.

"I asked him if there was anything preventing him from accepting Christ and making that decision to follow Jesus," Beeman recalled. "He said 'No,' and then looked at me and smiled. I asked, 'Would you like to do that today?' He said 'Yes,' and accepted Christ."

"He then looked at me with a big smile on his face, and I told him, 'You have been forgiven,'" Beeman continued. "His smile got even bigger. There are people on the verge of accepting Christ all around us. It is up to us to engage them where they are."

Brandon Edwards, worship pastor with Highland Baptist, led a team who shared the Gospel during in-home visits. At one house, they met three

young men "who were up to no good, making money in dangerous ways," he said. "Through the conversation, the team members believed God had placed the men there to hear the Good News."

"Their hearts seemed to be fertile soil for the Gospel to take root," he said. "They were not satisfied with the way they had been living and ultimately prayed to receive salvation."

Later in the week, team members met brick layers at a construction site who not only accepted Jesus but invited their co-workers and supervisor to hear the Gospel.

"I think one of the biggest takeaways for me on this trip is that people were hungry for the truth," Edwards said. "The only thing standing in the way was our willingness or unwillingness to share it. Some Christians cite fear as why they don't share. I have come to realize it's not fear, but a lack of love



Submitted photo

A member of the Beyond the Walls construction team helped build a chapel in Manaus, Brazil, July 10-21.

for the individual in front of them. If we truly loved

them, we'd tell them the truth."

Any Questions?

Life is full of questions. Think about it, if you had a dollar for every time your toddler/young child asked, "why," you wouldn't be reading this – you'd be on vacation – at the beach!

God is not afraid of your questions. Our challenge is often understanding His answers.

With that in mind...

- Why does God bless us?
- Does giving create happiness?
- Is tithing a rule or a choice?

God blesses us so His goodness can flow through us. Paul reminded the believers in Corinth that God provides what we need so we can abound in every good work, 2 Corinthians 9. Generosity is simple: God gives generously to us, and someone else is blessed when we share it.

When we give regularly, we're saying: "Thank You, Lord. I trust You to keep providing. I want to be faithful with what belongs to You."

Tithing is one practical way believers practice open-handed trust. Giving back to God a portion of all He

provides is an act of gratitude and worship. Your giving blesses others and helps the church thrive. It reminds our hearts where our provision comes from.

Jesus reinforced this truth when He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts 20:35 NIV.

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Rhea Fix is the Executive Director for Compass Financial Ministry serving Louisiana, Arkansas, Mississippi, Oklahoma, and West Tennessee.



LBF board meeting celebrates financial blessings

By Staff

Louisiana Baptist Foundation

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBF) – The Louisiana Baptist Foundation Board of Trustees met June 23 to conduct the business of the entity, with Ray Swift, di-

rector of pastoral leadership for Louisiana Baptists, providing a devotional message rooted in Psalm 13.

INVESTMENTS

Representatives from Graystone Consulting

presented their report to the Board, highlighting the Foundation's overall growth in its investments, ongoing adherence to its investment policies and discussing market forecasts for the remainder of the year. Jared Price, the Foundation's

Executive Director, reported that as of May 2026, the entity's assets under management had exceeded \$339 million, the annualized yield for the short-term fund was 4.5 percent and the group investment fund's year-to-date performance was 7.6 percent while its trailing 12-month performance was 16.9 percent.

AUDIT

The Board approved the independent audit, presented by Becca Nation, certified public accountant with Payne, Moore & Herrington in Alexandria, which stated that the Foundation's financial statements presented fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of the entity as of Dec. 31, 2025.

OPERATIONS

Price reported that as of May, operational expenses remained under budget, and reserves were in a healthy position.

STRATEGIC PLAN

Price also reported on

the Foundation's progress toward its strategic plan to advance the Kingdom by \$200 million in 20 or fewer years by facilitating charitable gifts, managing money and providing other services that strengthen Louisiana Baptist churches and ministries. He noted that from July 2020 through May of this year, the Foundation has helped to advance the Kingdom by over \$132 million. Price shared additional remarks regarding future plans for realigning systems, services, and practices for simplicity, efficiency and overall progress.

RECOGNITION

The Board concluded its meeting with a recognition of outgoing board member Kay Fleming and retiring staff member Kim Deville.

"The Louisiana Baptist Foundation remains thankful for the support of Louisiana Baptists and remains committed to advancing the Kingdom: one dollar at a time, one ministry at a time, one life at a time," Price said.

Regroup from page 4

promote the event was to cover the registration cost for members of EBA churches."

Andrew Bates, pastor with Calvary Baptist Church, Ruston, said his

church enlisted 32 of its leaders to attend ReGroup North.

"As the Church, Jesus's last words are our first work - to make disciples," he said. "ReGroup offered us a chance to offer training to many of our leaders to deepen our disciple making efforts across all ministries.

"Many of our leaders immediately implemented some of the practical take-aways they received at the conference within their ministries and are already seeing fruit," he continued. "I'm grateful to the LBC team for prioritizing discipleship as well as Dr. Reggie and Temple Baptist Church for graciously hosting us."

Next year ReGroup is scheduled for Aug. 7 (First Baptist Church, Haughton) and Aug. 14 (Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles).

Westside Baptist Church celebrates baptisms of Anglo, Hispanic students

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

NATCHITOCHES, La. (LBM) – Westside Baptist Church has embraced a cross-cultural approach to the Gospel and has reaped a spiritual harvest this year as a result.

Since January, 22 individuals have expressed their faith in Christ to and been baptized by the Natchitoches congregation. Ten of those – half were Hispanic – were baptized in a joint service, Aug. 2, of its Anglo and Hispanic congregations. The average Sunday worship attendance is 407, including 35 for the Hispanic service.

Most of the decisions took place during M-Fuge camp at Mississippi Christian University, Clinton,

Mississippi, June 22-26.

During the camp, 10 out of 45 students made decisions for salvation.

“One night during our church group sharing time, I was prompted to ask, ‘Are we stuck in the follow through?’” Student Minister Peyton Spears told the *Baptist Message*. “Why are we not taking that next step?”

“When I asked who wanted to talk about salvation or be baptized, 10 hands went up out of 45 students in the room,” he continued. “It was a great night that set the stage for a powerful moment when we celebrated the students’ baptisms. This was cool and really powerful to see 10 students take that step boldly and do it together.”

Mikayla Slaughter, a junior who has attended

Westside her entire life, took that step of obedience two years after she had accepted Christ. She did so alongside her good friend Kallie Guidroz and the other eight students.

“We all have been going to church, some longer than others,” she said. “It was cool we all got to do that publicly. It was nerve racking to think about doing this, but once it happened, I wasn’t scared.

“For those who put this off for a while like me, don’t be scared,” she continued. “Just do it.”

Westside Hispanic Pastor Gaby Ruiz said he was proud of the students for publicly declaring their faith through baptism.

“It allowed us to have a little slice of Heaven,” he said. “As Scripture says, we will one day confess that



Westside Baptist Hispanic Pastor Gaby Ruiz baptized a student, Aug. 2. Since January, the church has baptized 22 people.

Jesus is Lord. During the service, we have multiple nations represented who were worshipping Christ together.

“We just celebrate and praise God that we were able to witness not just one or two, but 10 bap-

tisms, and it’s just evidence that God is still saving people,” he said. “He’s still changing lives and He’s still building His Church.”

Ruiz, who became pastor of the church’s Hispanic congregation

See WESTSIDE, page 12

RENEE JADA TONY DOROTHY
DIANA DUSTIN MERCEDES
JEN MARISSA ALEXIS DARRIN
TRACY DOUGLAS ANGELI TED
LARRY JAMES TREDDIE
DOTTYE MELVIN CONNIE
MIRANDA KAIJHA MONICA

The people listed above have recently indicated a decision for Christ through *Here for You*. Pray they will grow in their faith and get connected to a local church.

HereforYou.org

- Sharing God's truth with those far from God, but near your church.
- Visit LouisianaBaptists.org/hereforyou to discover how you can let your community know you're part of the *Here for You* campaign.





BOXES OF HOPE WOMEN'S PRISON MINISTRY

The boxes meet more than just physical needs; they open hearts to the Gospel. A recipient of the boxes, Demetricy, says the message of the boxes is, "God loves you. God sees you, and he wants you to, at least today, have a smile on your face. And that's what those boxes did for us."



REACHING THE WORLD VIETNAMESE HOPE BAPTIST

With support from the Georgia Barnette Louisiana Missions Offering, Asian church leaders gathered in January for the Asian Leaders' Retreat hosted by Vietnamese Hope Baptist Church. Leaders from different Asian backgrounds encouraged one another and shared ministry strategies.



STILL THE CHURCH NEW FRIENDSHIP BAPTIST CHURCH

The fire started while church members were preparing food for a funeral. Within forty-five minutes, the building was gone. Shocked, they gathered outside the burned remains of the church and prayed. After praying, they committed to rebuild.



NO PLACE LIKE HOME CHURCH ACADIANA

For two decades, Church Acadiana met in many temporary locations. When they purchased five acres of land in 2021, the area around it was mostly undeveloped. Now, neighborhoods and young families have filled the area — and the church is excited to engage their new neighbors with the Gospel.

GEORGIA BARNETTE

MARK 1:38

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HOMEcoming



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ST. LANDRY, LA

SEPTEMBER 27
10:30 A.M.

MESSAGE - COREY CHERAMIE
MUSIC - JAKE GORDON
PASTOR - B.J. HOOD



Submitted photo

Ten students were baptized by Westside Baptist Church, Aug. 2, during a joint service of its Anglo and Hispanic congregations. Most of the decisions took place during M-Fuge at Mississippi Christian University, Clinton, Mississippi, June 22-26. During the camp, 10 out of 45 students made decisions for salvation.

Westside from page 9

in February 2020, has enjoyed seeing Hispanic members integrate into the life of Westside. First, he encouraged the children to start attending Sunday morning classes with the English-speaking youngsters. Within a couple of years, the youth and their parents followed.

Additionally, the two congregations periodically share a meal on Wednesday evenings, host fundraisers for camp, and have a combined Sunday worship service where praise and worship music as well as messages are shared in English and Spanish.

Beyond the baptisms, Westside continues to focus on helping its mem-

bers grow deeper in their relationships with Christ through discipleship training on Sundays and Wednesdays. On Sept. 3, the church will launch a Thursday evening worship service and fellowship for college students (and others who are 18-26 years old).

"We desire to mobilize the church to fulfill its purpose of making disciples of Jesus Christ," Pastor Zach Anderson said. "As we look to the Great Commission, we can see that we are called to both make and mold disciples.

"We strive to help our people understand that church isn't just an organization they belong to, but

a part of who they are as followers of Jesus Christ," he continued. "It is very important for us that our people get plugged into small groups that emphasize the need for living in biblical community. As the church is growing, we want to make sure our focus is on the Lord and bringing Him glory in what He has called us to do. Roughly 50 percent of the surrounding area in Natchitoches Parish is unchurched. We want to find ways to engage our community to see Jesus through us. We don't want to be the best church in our community; we want to be the best church for our community."

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Former Louisiana pastor promoted to rear admiral as Navy chaplain

By Timothy Cokes
NOBTS news editor

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) -- U.S. Navy Chaplain Robert Christian, an alumnus of both New Orleans (M.Div., 1989) and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminaries (D.Min., 1996), was recently promoted to rear admiral (lower half), a one-star flag rank.

His promotion was confirmed by President Donald J. Trump on May 18 and by the U.S. Senate on July 16, and his official celebration was held on July 17 at the Naval Support Activity, Hampton Roads, Virginia.

Rear-admiral (lower-half) is the second highest rank for Navy chaplains, and no active-duty Southern Baptist has held the rank since 1970.

In July Christian began serving in dual roles as the U.S. Navy deputy chief of chaplains (second highest ranking chaplain) and as the chaplain of the U.S. Marine Corps (highest ranking chaplain among U.S. Marines).

The Marine Corps is a separate military branch within the Department of the Navy, but it relies on the Navy for medical, religious, legal and operational support personnel. Navy chaplains also meet the religious needs



Debbie Christian "pins" new shoulder boards on her husband, U.S. Navy Chaplain Robert Christian, who officially celebrated his promotion to rear admiral (lower half) on July 17. He is a native of New Orleans and served as a pastor for 11 years before being commissioned as a naval officer in 2000. Photo courtesy of the U.S. Navy

of the U.S. Coast Guard, which operates under the Department of Homeland Security but may be transferred to the Department of the Navy during wartime.

Christian will be providing strategic leadership for more than 500 different chaplains and other personnel representing nearly 200 different religions or faith groups. In the Navy alone, these chaplains attend to the spiritual needs of more than 300,000 active-duty service members.

"It's very humbling to receive this rank, and I am honored to serve such great chaplains," Chris-

tian said. "I've always had an affinity for those in the military, and during my early years of ministry I discovered the military was the people group I was called to serve."

Christian described the military as offering a unique opportunity for daily ministry.

"What's different about military chaplaincy is that you are fully immersed in the world of service members," he said. "It's almost like incarnational ministry. You are on the same ships, you do the same field exercises, you're eating and sleeping next to these same people. You experi-

ence their world, live life with them and talk about spiritual things with them. There is a lot of opportunity to talk about these things in these environments."

Christian is a Louisiana native, having worshipped as a young man with First Baptist

Church, Lafayette.

He also served as a minister with three Louisiana Baptist congregations (pastor, Liberty Hill Baptist Church, Jonesboro, 1984-1987; assistant to the pastor of evangelism, First Baptist

See PROMOTED, page 16

SEEKING SENIOR PASTOR

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Ascension Baptist Church is prayerfully seeking a Senior Pastor called by God, grounded in the Baptist Faith and Message 2000, and ready to shepherd a faithful congregation into its next season of Spirit-directed growth.

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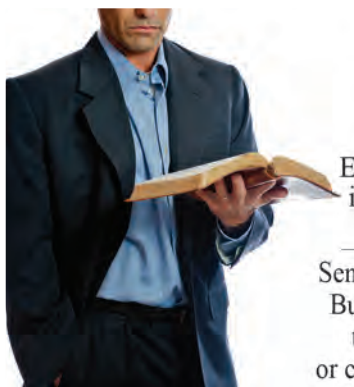
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EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Baptist Message provides churches an opportunity to share with other Louisiana Baptists an upcoming revival, homecoming, new pastor, new staff member, a community outreach, or a concert in Louisiana Notables. To place your event in the paper, send your information (who, what, where, when, time) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. Please submit your information four weeks prior to the event to insure placement in the Message.*

ON THE MOVE

- Jamie Pullin was ordained ,July 26, into the Gospel Ministry as he begins his first pastorate at Oak Hill Baptist Church, Bastrop.
- Scott, wife Zandra, Gray is the pastor at First Baptist Church, Pitkin.
- Wilton McMorris is the new pastor at First Baptist Church, Livingston.
- Jerod, wife Jessica, Gann is the new pastor at Ebenezer Baptist Church,
- Frank (wife Ann) Valenzano is the new associate pastor of discipleship and missions at Cedar Crest Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- Jamie, wife Kristin is the new pastor at Oak Hill Baptist Church, Bastrop.
- Tracy (husband Robert) Satterfield is the new director of children's ministries in Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- Brett and Erin Tooley join New Chapel Hill Baptist Church, West Monroe staff. Brett is the family and youth pastor and Erin is the new family and children's director.
- Greg (wife Mary Lea) Dunn is the new pastor at Rescue Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- Darren (wife Lacy) Guess is the copastor at Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe.
- Mason Bartlett is the new pastor at Friendship Baptist Church, DeRidder.
- Arthur Bennett retires Old Union Springs Baptist Church, Shongaloo.
- Jeff Smart is the pastor at Old Union Springs Baptist Church, Shongaloo.
- Merrick, (wife Emily) Nunn is the new senior pastor at Istrouma Baptist Church. He began on July 5.
- Travis Hampton retires from Hurricane Creek Baptist Church, Dodson.

HOMECOMING/ANNIVERSARY

- Red River Baptist Church, Benton: 177th Anniversary Celebration, August 30, 10:30 a.m. Guest Speaker: Mike Palmer. Worship: Chris Tubbs and Steve Flowers. A covered dish lunch in the Family Life Center will immediately follow the worship service. Former members, pastors and guests are invited to attend. Pastor: Mike Palmer.
- Macedonia Baptist Church, Effie: 125th Homecoming, September 20, 10 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow worship services. Pastor: Adam Thornton.
- Amiable Baptist Church, Glenmora: 198th Homecoming, Celebration, September 13, 10 a.m. Guest Speaker:

- Doug Doyle. Please bring side dishes and desserts for the meal following the worship service. Pastor: Glenn Rhame.
- Hebron Baptist Church, Bush: 95th Homecoming Celebration, September 20, 10 a. m. Guest Speaker: Sam Greer. A delicious potluck lunch will follow. All are welcome. Pastor: Rickie Wilson.
- Lone Pine Baptist Church, Lone Pine: 100th Homecoming, September 27, 10:15am Worship: Jake Godon. Pastor: B.J. Hood.
- Cross Point Baptist Church, Bossier City: Homecoming Celebration, September 27, 11 a.m. Pastor: Shane Nugent.
- Bonita Baptist Church, Mer Rouge: 100th Anniversary. September 27, 10:30 a.m. Special Guests: Believers in Christ! Pastor: Ron Vollmar.
- Conway Baptist Church, Farmer-ville: Homecoming, September 29, 10 a.m. Pastor: William Englerth.

REVIVAL

- Fellowship Baptist Church, Trout: Fifth Sunday Revival Service, August 30, 6 p.m. Guest Speaker: Jeff Hurst, Pastor Paron Baptist Church, Sterling-ton. Worship: K A Worship. Following the service a meal will be shared. Meat will be provided and side dishes and dessert are invited. Pastor: Shad Tibbs.
- Antioch Baptist Church, Farmer-ville: Revive NELA Conference, August 30-September 2, Sunday morning 8:30 a.m. & 10:45 a.m.; Sunday-Wednesday evening at 6:30 p.m. Guest Speakers: Bill Britt Sunday 8:30 and 10:45 a.m., Gevan Spinney , Sunday 6:30 p.m., Jeremy Pruitt Monday, 6:30 p.m., Nick Flowers, Tuesday, 6:30 p.m. and Luke Hockenjos, Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Worship: Roger McClanahan Family. Pastor: Rubin Weaver.
- Old Zion Hill Baptist Church, Independence: Hot Autumn Nights Revival Series, Aust 30, September 6, 13, 20, 27, 5 p.m. August 30, , Speaker, Bronson Addison. Theme: Kingdom Kids Night. September 6, Speaker: Mike Young, Youth Ignite Night; September 13, Speaker: Jason Glascock. Theme: Young Adults. September 20, Speaker: Colt Wagner. Theme: Family Night. September 27. Speaker Gary Dennis. Theme: Men's Night. A nursery will be provided for ages 4 and under. Pastor: Gary Dennis.
- New Sunrise Baptist Church, Otis: Revival – Spirit of the Living God, September 13-16, Sunday evening, 5 p.m. and Monday-Wednesday, 6 p.m. Evangelist: Wayne Jones. Pastor: Larry Laurent.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Bastrop: Re-vival. September 13-16. Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m. Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Music: Jay Ellerman. A nursery will be provided for all services. Pastor: Tim Post.
- Outreach Baptist Church, Columbia: Revival, September 13-16. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Buster Duplissey.
- First Baptist Church, Independence:

- Fall Revival, September 13-18, Sunday 10:30 a.m. & 6 p.m. Monday-Wednes-day, 6 p.m. nightly. Speaker: D.R. Harrison. Pastor: Wilton McMorris.
- Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Choudrant: Revival, September 20-23, Sunday, 6 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: Lonnie Scarborough. Pastor: K.T. Swann.
- Faith Baptist Church, Baker: Revival, September 20-23. Evangelist: Lyndon Longoria. Special Music: Kerry Longoria. Pastor Arnold Austin.
- Community Fall Revival at the Wild Horse Ministries multi-purpose building in Trout, September 24-26. Thursday, 5:30 p.m., free supper, 6:30 p.m., service begins; Speaker: Casey Johnson. Worship: Janet Thompson, Houma. Friday, 5:30 p.m., 6:30 p.m., service begins; Speaker: Kenny Bratton, Colfax. Worship: Todd Rogers, Pineville Saturday, 5:30 p.m. free supper, 6:30 p.m., service begins. Speaker: Shad Tibbs, Trout. Worship: Kim and Craig Franklin family. Pastor: Paul Daily.
- Bellaire Baptist Church, Bossier City: Harvest Sunday, September 27 8:15 & 10 a.m. Evangelist: Lyndon Longoria. Pastor: Randy Harper.
- Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Revival. September 27-30. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Wilton Wall.
- Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association, Monroe: Senior Adult Progressive Revival, September 28-30, 10 a.m. Speaker: Waylon Bailey. Worship: Waylon McCormick, Ouachita Baptist Church and Corbin McCormick, First West Monroe. Churches hosting to revival will be McClendon, West Monroe, North Monroe, Monroe and Fair Park, West Monroe. Lunch will be served by host churches for \$8 a plate. A love offering will be received each day for the revival team.
- Bellwood Baptist Church, Proven-cal: Fall Revival, October 4-7. Evange-

- list: Lyndon Longoria. Worship: Kerry Longoria. Pastor: Roger Matkin.
- Blood River Baptist Church, Albany: Fall Revival Services, October 4-7, Evangelist: Pastor: Scott Cooksey.

LAGNIAPPE

- Jerusalem Baptist Church, Ham-mond: Free community event, August 29, 10 a.m. – 1 p.m. Jerusalem Baptist Church, located at 11109 Jerusalem Baptist Church Road, Hammond, LA 70403, is having a fun-filled day of “water” activities. There will be water slide, slip n slide, Fire Truck, bubble pools, splash pad, water balloons, music, hot dogs, popcorn, snow cones and more. Don't forget to wear your Bathing suit and bring a towel. Pastor: J.P. Handy.
- Victory Baptist Church, Hammond: Next Generation Sunday, August 30, 6 p.m. There will be food afterward. Speakers Camdyn DeVincent, Logan Watts. Worship Bailey Watts, Kendy Ortego and Isabel Fitch and Victory Ensemble. An offering will be received to go towards Arise 2027. Pastor: Jonathan Watts.
- First Baptist Church, Converse: Fifth Sunday singing, August 30, 6 p.m. Message Grant Blackwell (337.718.7717) with your name and song choice or just bring your CD and come ready to sing. Pastor: Brian Rankin.
- Southside Baptist Church, Jones-boro: The Hootens in concert, August 30, 5 pm. A love offering will be received. Pastor: Wesley Venable.
- Cotile Baptist Church, Boyce: AWANA starts back, September 2, 6-8 p.m. This is for children ages K-12. There will be a meal at 5:30 p.m. The program offers cancel time, book times (Bible) and game time. For more information call the church at 318.793.8847. Pastor: Rob McLane.
- Summer Grove Baptist Church,

- Shreveport: 2026 Sportman's Night Out, September 3, 5 p.m. Guest Speaker: Hank Parker. The evening begins with the SGBCTailgate Party, 5-6 p.m. at the Bell Tower Entrance 1, and Jambalaya will be served. Hank Parker will begin at 6:16 p.m. Cost: \$15 for individual tickets only. There will be a \$2 service fee for online transactions. Deadline to purchase is Sunday, August 30. There will also be a Special Ministry Donation Drawing for a Single Antler Shed and a Garmin 10" live scope system. Each \$10 donation receives one entry. Pastor: John Roach.
- Calvary Baptist Church, Shreveport: Thank you Jesus concert, September 4, 6:30 p.m. Singers include: Johnny Parrack, Sonja Barber, Thomas Keys III Ammer Gayle Whately, Philip Green , Rose Park Choir, Shawn Drewett Family and Todd Allen Family. Pastor: John Lary.
- North Monroe Baptist Church, Mon-roe: Sportsman Banquet. September 10, 5 p.m. (doors open), Dinner, 6:30 p.m.) Register now before it's too late. For more information go to nmsports-mansbanquet26.pushpayevents.com. Pastor: Bill Dye.
- Dry Creek Baptist Encampment, Dry Creek: SW Louisiana II Men's Retreat, September 10-12. Cost: \$175. For more information call Justin Weley, 318.471.7889.
- Brushy Creek Baptist Church, Ban-croft: 11th Hour in concert, September 11, 7 p.m. A love offering will be received. Pastor: Mike Streams.
- First Baptist Church, Longville: 2026 Bible Conference (Isaiah – Salva-tion through all the ages), September 11-12, Guest Speaker: Terry Iles, Director of PhD program at NOBTS and assistant professor of Old Testament and Hebrew. Cost: \$15. Childcare is available with pre-registration.

See NOTABLES, page 16

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.

gsviv rh lmv ozdtrevi, dsl rh zyov gl hzev zmw

gl wvhgilb: dsl zig gslf gszg qfwtvhg zmlgsvi?

qznhv ulfi:gdvoev

Clues:
R = I; W = D

Answer to July 30, Scripture Crypto:
Second Chronicles thirty:seven

Promoted from page 13

Church, New Orleans, 1987-1990; and pastor, Dutchtown Baptist Church, Prairieville, 1998-2000), and he shared that his role as pastor greatly helped him serve the men and women in the U.S. military.

Moreover, he em-

phasized that when he "sensed a call to vocational ministry, that call was coupled with a call to minister outside of the local church."

Importantly, Christian said NOBTS was vital to his preparation to serve as a pastor and as a military chaplain.

"I enjoyed the deep

theological conversations among my fellow students at NOBTS, whether it was on-campus or in the community," Christian said. "That was really helpful to me as I sorted through some theological topics. My time at NOBTS taught me how to have a dialogue about faith with others.

He also said that NOBTS "excelled in

emphasizing evangelism from multiple approaches,"

"It opened my mind to think outside the box in bringing the hope of the Gospel to whatever community you live in," he explained.

Finally, Christian said NOBTS expanded his way of thinking "to find practical applications in a missional context as well."

"These hours of instruction were helpful for my years of local church ministry, but they have also been helpful for the breadth of assignments I experienced within the military."

Originally published by Baptist Press.

Notables

from page 15

Registration will close on September 6. Pastor: Corey Townsley.

■ Ellwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill: 11th Hour in concert, September 12, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Mike Evans.

■ Searcy Baptist Church, Trout: 11th Hour in Concert, September 13, 9 a.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Steve Jensen.

■ Northwest Louisiana Baptist Association, 44th annual Men's Fish Fry, September 14, 5:30 p.m. (serving time). Cost: \$15. Registration: Bethany Camp & Conference Center, 318.938.1221. Speakers: John Roach, pastor at Summer Grove Baptist Church, Jason McGuffie, pastor at Eastwood Baptist Church, and Chris Culpepper. Worship pastor at Eastwood Baptist Church.

■ New Zion Baptist Church, Covington: 14th Annual Blessing of the Hunt, September 17, 5 p.m. (doors open). There will be free food. 6 p.m. program begins. Guest Speaker: Gevan Spinney, First Baptist, Houghton. There will gun giveaways, door prizes, Grand Prize will be an ATV. Pastor: Clark Stewart.

■ Oak Forest Baptist Church, Leesville: Nathan Areno live in concert, September 19, 5 p.m. There will be supper in the Fellowship Hall. Pastor: Joe Call.

■ Colyell Baptist Church, Livingston: Sportsman's Banquet, September 24, 6 p.m. (dinner), a live duck dog presentation will follow. Guest Speaker: Johnny Morgan. There will be door prizes and a free dinner. Pastor:

■ Ebenezer Baptist Church, Jonesboro: 2026 Family Retreat, September 25-26 at Jimmie Davis State Park. Guest Speaker: Rubin Weaver/. Music: Ebenezer worship and friends. Doors open, Friday, 4 p.m. with crockpot-luck soups and desserts requested.

■ First Baptist Church, Keithville: FBK Men's Ministry Sportsman's Night Out, September 26, 5-8 p.m. Guest Speaker: Evangelist Kyle Williams. There will be fish, gumbo, chicken strips and meat prizes. In addition, there will prizes, gun raffles and live auction (must be present to win). Cost: \$10. Pastor: Michael Stowell.

■ Cedar Crest Baptist Church, West Monroe: Ben Fuller with special guest Band Reeves: The Black Sheep Tour, October 2, 7 p.m. Pastor: Greg Clark.

Labor Day Conference

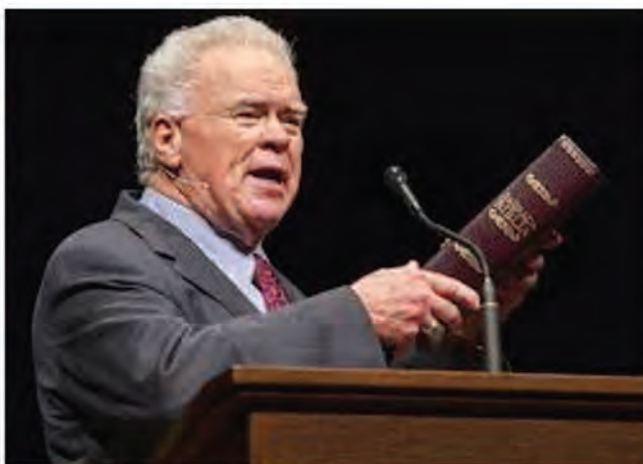
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FIRST PERSON: Are you noticeable?

By John Kyle
Special to the Message

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) -- You can't help but see it. You try looking away, but you quickly look back. For whatever rhyme or reason, you can't take your eyes off _____ (fill in the blank).

What makes something or someone noticeable?

Are you noticeable? If not, why not?

I'm not talking about drawing attention to yourself. There is too much of that occurring in today's grab-a-selfie culture. I'm referring to something about you that stands out. Something that identifies you -- as you! Something that those who know you would immediately recognize that it's you. Something that even those who do not know you would notice about you.

Your mind might de-

fault to things like your hair, smile, laugh, voice, or a talent that sets you apart from others. There's certainly nothing wrong with any of those things, but there's a distinct difference between being noticed and being noticeable.

JESUS SAID TO BE THIS.

When Jesus delivered what many call the "Sermon on the Mount," He told those seated on the hillside they were the "salt of the earth" and the "light of the world" (Matthew 5:13, 14).

What do those materially different things have in common? They are noticeable. Indeed, they are noticeable when they are present and when they are not.

He goes on to say we're to "let our light shine in such a way that they may see your good works and

glorify your Father in Heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

In other words, Jesus said live in such a way as to be noticeable -- not in a way that makes us look good. Not in a way that draws attention to us so we can post it on our so-

cial feeds. But so that God looks good -- so that you draw attention to Him.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE!

The New Testament has many admonitions to be noticeable:

-- Jesus said everyone will know we belong to Him if we love one another. The way we talk to and treat each other is to be noticeable (John 13:34-35).
-- After Jesus returned

See NOTICEABLE, page 18

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Noticeable from page 17

to Heaven and sent His helper, the Holy Spirit, people noticed – see Acts 4:13. The change Jesus made in their lives was noticeable!

-- Paul told the believers in Rome that they needed to bear fruit for God (Romans 7:4). What's fruit? Noticeable! What's the

lack of fruit? Noticeable!

WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE?

Being noticed makes us look good. It's generated by our efforts and often, our vanity and pride.

Being noticeable makes God look good. It's a result of our growing relationship

with Him.

Peter reminds us that we're to conduct ourselves in such a way that even those without Jesus can't help but notice the way we live our lives (1 Peter 2:12).

If we're honest, as Christ-followers, we're often noticed for behaviors and language that reflect poorly upon the One we claim to love and follow. Ask almost any server who regularly waits on

churchgoers after Sunday services. They dread the Sunday lunch crowd because we're often rude, demanding and, dare we say it, cheap. We'll sometimes compartmentalize our faith to a specific time and place where we talk and act differently, but outside of those times, we're often poor representatives of Jesus to those we encounter.

James, the half-brother of Jesus, said this kind of inconsistency is unacceptable (James 3:10).

Being noticed is an act of the flesh, but being noticeable is the work of the

Spirit.

A NOTICEABLE CHALLENGE.

What would our world, our nation, our cities, and even your home look like if we were noticeable?

This week, ask God to help you be the salt and light He's left you here to be. If you'll let Him have His way, you'll be noticeable, "Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky" (Philippians 2:15).

John Kyle is the recently retired director of communications for Louisiana Baptists.



Children's Baptism Sunday

Lead your church to be part of this special celebration! Join Louisiana Baptist congregations across the state on Sept. 20 to baptize children and their families who have made decisions to follow Jesus during summer activities.

Prayer stirs growth at Big Cane

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

BIG CANE, La. (LBM) – When Benji Richard became pastor in November 2023, Sunday morning worship attendance averaged 12-15 people. But through fervent prayer meetings and community outreach, that number has grown to more than 100.

Additionally, the church has celebrated 49 baptisms since November 2023, including several individuals who turned to Christ through ministry after Tropical Storm Arthur.

How?

By centering on prayer as a catalyst to win souls, according to the pastor.

Richard became pastor, the church began to gather on Wednesday evenings for "old-fashioned prayer meetings" that at times lasted four hours. Those prayer meetings continue once a month on Wednesday evening.

"I believe that we serve a God that honors the obedience of a praying church," Richard told the *Baptist Message*. "We gather in the sanctuary and we shut everything down. There isn't any preaching or singing, just instrumental music in the background. There'll be people praying in the balconies, praying in the Sunday school rooms, praying on the altar and praying over all the pews for each family. Also, many are praying with each other."

PRAYER MOVEMENT

Three months after

See BIG CANE, page 20

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Special needs Champions Camp slated, Sept. 11-13

By Staff

Baptist Message

WOODWORTH, La. (LBM) – Individuals with special needs will experience a full slate of activities during the upcoming Champions Camp, Sept. 11-13, hosted by Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center, Woodworth.

The camp will match participants with buddies who will accompany them throughout the weekend. The camp will feature games, activities, crafts, karaoke, worship and Bible study designed for children and adults, ages 8 and up, who have intellectual or

developmental disabilities.

Champions Camp began with 20 participants in 2018 and surged to 55 campers in 2024. In 2025 that number nearly doubled to 100 and already, there are 80 registrants for 2026 with expectations that it will surpass last year's total.

Champions Camp Director David Anderson, who also serves as the Louisiana Baptist children's ministry strategist, had always dreamed of bringing the camp to Louisiana so people with special needs like his daughter, Chloe, could have a chance to experience camp like so

many others.

Anderson has been blessed to see the camp grow and to further fulfill his goal of expanding opportunities for individuals with special needs to experience spiritual enrichment at events hosted just for them.

"Families that are impacted by special needs and disability are in all of our communities," Anderson told the Baptist Message. "This camp is a great opportunity to partner our local churches with those families and offer them an incredible experience that will hopefully extend beyond the weekend of the camp."

Register as a camper or as a "buddy" for a camper via talltimbersbcc.org/summercamps/champions-camp.



The 2025 Champions Camp offered a variety of activities including fishing opportunities for special needs campers. Nearly 80 campers already are registered for this year's event, Sept. 11-13, at Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center, Woodworth.



Submitted photo

Students will gather in the Laborde Earles Coliseum, Alexandria, for the 2026 Youth Evangelism Celebration, Nov. 22-23. This largest annual gathering of Louisiana Baptists will feature inspiring messages, high-energy music and times of fellowship.

Lineup announced for popular 2026 YEC

By Staff

Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Organizers have announced the lineup for the Nov. 22-23 Youth Evangelism Celebration in the Laborde Earles Coliseum, Alexandria.

This largest annual gathering of Louisiana Baptists will feature Logan Grantham, youth evangelist and student pastor with Johnson Ferry Baptist Church, Marietta, Georgia, who will challenge students from God's Word, and Dylan Novak, a

Tennessee evangelist who is known for sharing the Gospel with celebrities and cultural influencers, who will help students think practically about how they can boldly share Jesus in their own circles of family and friends.

The event will include Sunday evening music by Cliff Preston, a Christian artist from Arkansas who was featured on this year's WinterJam tour. During Monday morning and afternoon sessions, Firm Foundation (a Christian

See YEC, page 20

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Big Cane from page 18

"You can ask anybody in Big Cane Baptist Church how special these prayer nights are and why God has done what He's done, and they'll tell you those old-fashioned prayer meeting" has been the fuel of our future here at Big Cane Baptist Church," he said. "Little is much when God is

in it. The key that unlocks the portals of Heaven is the fervent effectual prayer life of the Church."

BEYOND EXPECTATIONS

Most recently, Big Cane Baptist provided Sheetrock to 100 homes that were impact-

ed by Arthur, which dumped more than two feet of water in Avoyelles Parish. They also housed more than 60 volunteers from various faith-based organizations (including One Voice Nola, Belle Chasse; C.R.E.W. Missions, Houma; God's Pit Crew, Danville, Virginia; and Minuteman Disaster Relief, McKinney, Texas), distributed several hundred hygiene kits and joined One

Voice Nola and C.R.E.W. Missions to serve 3,000 meals to those in the community.

"This has been my first experience with disaster relief efforts to this degree and on a Wednesday night service I brought the burden to help our community before the church," Richard said. "We didn't have the resources. We didn't have an exact direction. But we were available and would walk by faith to be used.

"Our goal is to make heaven crowded," he continued. "Immediately, the Lord started paving the way and providing everything we needed – the people, the passion and the plan moving forward. It was definitely a God thing to see how everything has come together."

Once all the supplies were distributed, Big Cane Baptist hosted a community-wide celebration event. Held Aug. 1, "Big Cane and Friends Community Day" provided free food and fun, including water slides, inflatables and games for 250 who attended.

"This experience has defi-

nately increased the value of getting outside of the walls of the church to reach the local community," he said. "People in our communities are looking for something that's real and personal. They want to really see how much the church really cares, not just in word but in deed."

EXCITED ANTICIPATION

Looking toward the future, Richard said he is excited about how God has moved through Big Cane Baptist.

"We have some people driving an hour just to come here," Richard explained. "We have gone from having no Sunday school to building a children's ministry and ladies' Sunday school class and are prayerfully considering opening a Christian school. People have been really receptive to the Gospel.

"Big Cane was hanging on for dear life, but if God starts something, He'll always finish it," he continued. "There's a big God in Big Cane, and the best is yet to come."

YEC from page 19

worship band from the Shreveport area) will lead worship by song. Meanwhile, Christian recording artist Micah Tyler will help bring YEC to a powerful close Monday evening. Jay Barbier, a Ponchatoula native, speaker and Tennessee youth pastor, will serve as host and emcee, bringing his trademark energy to the coliseum stage

"This is the event you want to get your teenagers to," Louisiana Baptist Youth Strategist Lee Myers told the *Baptist Message*. "They're going to hear the Gospel clearly, be challenged to live out their faith and be equipped to share the Good News when they go home.

"There's just something powerful about seeing thousands of students

from churches all over Louisiana come together under one roof," he said. "It reminds them that they're part of something bigger and that they're not alone in following Jesus.

"This year's message to Louisiana students is simple," he said. "It's time to be bold."

For more information, visit yeclouisiana.org.



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