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September 30, 2026
Volume 141 ● Issue No. 9

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Baptist Message partners to publish in print for 2027

By Staff
Batpist Message

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – The Baptist Message, Louisiana Baptists' news service, is working on a memorandum of understanding with The Baptist Paper to jointly provide a monthly print edition for Louisiana Baptist subscribers in 2027.

BACKGROUND

During a September 2025 meeting, the Baptist Message board of trustees approved a move to a digital-only format, beginning in 2027. Finances were the major factor in the decision because the news service will lose $100,000 in funding after 2026.

But with the trustees' vote in the most recent meeting, the Baptist Message will continue to offer a print product through a partnership with The Baptist Paper, launched in 2021 as a ministry of The Alabama Baptist newspaper which has been in print since 1843.

The Baptist Paper will print a monthly Baptist Message special edition with Louisiana Baptist content populating the front and back pages as well as four center pages. The Baptist Paper will invoice Baptist Message subscribers and Baptist Message advertisers will have access in this edition. Rates will be announced soon but are expected to remain close to what they are now. The board approved an addition of $30,000 to the 2027 budget to offset setup costs of S2,500 per edition.

Meanwhile, the Baptist Message will continue to work to expand its online offerings.

"We represent an affinity group, both in print and online," Hall told board members. "Our readers want to be Louisiana Baptists. They are tithers, and CP supporters, and it's important that we recognize their commitment and continue to serve them."

OTHER NEWS

The board also ad-

See **BAPTIST**, page **12**

APOLOGETICS 101 (Part 9):

Old Testament bits and pieces

By Will Hall
Message executive editor


Will Hall

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – The first eight installments of APOLOGETICS 101 presented archaeological discoveries that supported the trustworthiness of the Bible.

NOT JUST RELICS

However, it is important to remember that the physical proof for most of history has been lost simply due to decay, human destruction or natural catastrophe. Therefore, artifacts and monuments cannot be the only evidence used to verify historical accounts.

Instead, there are other valid ways to substantiate ancient records of persons, nations and events that go

See **APOLOGETICS**, page **10**

Eighty-one profess Christ during northeast Louisiana Serve Tour



Submitted photo

Anita Thompson and Dee Dee Iles, members with Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, prayed with an apartment complex tenant in Monroe during the Serve Tour in Morehouse, Ouachita and Richland parishes, Aug. 21-22, 2026.

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MONROE, La. (LBM) – A weekend of block parties, door-to-door witnessing, compassion projects and other evangelistic efforts produced a spiritual harvest of at least 81 known decisions for Christ during the Serve Tour in Morehouse, Ouachita and Richland parishes, Aug. 21-22.

The SEND Relief Serve Tour in partnership with the Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association and Louisiana Baptist Convention was an effort that involved 1,070 volunteers who participated in 48 service projects throughout northeast Louisiana as the foundation for evangelism. Projects included 10 block parties, eight grill walks, several church building upgrades, numerous school improvement projects and paying for others' laundry at four laundromats.

Steven Kelly, associational mission strategist with Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association, said he was thankful for those who helped during Serve Tour, which resulted in 1,350 Gospel conversations.

"Serve Tour defines what we have said for years about the importance of cooperation," Kelly told the Baptist Message. "What we have spoken of theoretically, we

See **SERVE**, page **7**

E4 Conference: Love, live, look for truth

By Staff
Baptist Message

PINEVILLE, La. (LBM) – Christians are called to love the truth because it originates in God, then demonstrate it through obedient living and love for one another, Danny Akin, former president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, said during the recent E4 Preaching Conference.

Citing 2 John, Akin told a crowd of more than 90 pastors, ministry staff and pastors' wives at First Baptist Church, Pineville, that the Christ followers must love the truth, live the truth and look for the truth.

"We should walk in the commandment to love and love the commandments in which we walk," Akin said. "And of course, Jesus reminded us, 'My commands are not burdensome.' They set us free. They release us.

"A lot of times people think, 'Well, isn't truth

See **E4,** page **16**



Brian Blackwell photo

Danny Akin, who now serves as an ambassador of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, after retiring as its president in July, encouraged pastors, church staff and pastors' wives during the E4 Preaching Conference, Sept. 15, 2026.

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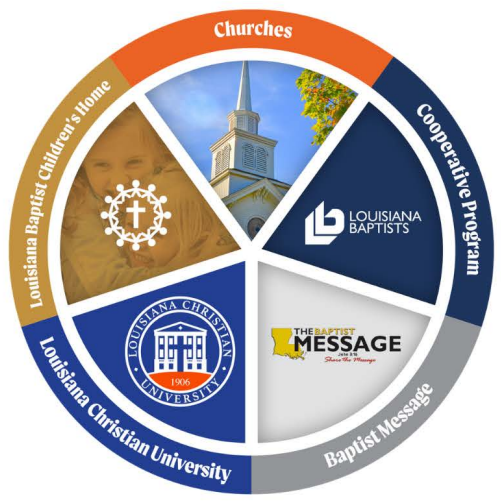
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‘Evangelist to the stars’ to speak to YEC

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – A youth pastor known as the ‘celebrity evangelist’ is on a mission to share the Gospel with some of Hollywood’s most famous men and women, and during the upcoming Youth Evangelism Celebration, Nov. 21-23, LaBorde Earles Coliseum, Alexandria, he wants to recruit Louisiana Baptist youth to join him in making Christ known across the state.

“My heart is really to see this next generation be bold in the Gospel and be bold in their mission field,” Dylan Novak told the Baptist Message. “At YEC, there’s going to be celebrity ministry stories from what we do but most importantly we are going to challenge people to share the Gospel in their mission field with their platform. I feel like a lot of times we’ll get up and say this, ‘You need to go out, and you need to evangelize,’ but we don’t properly explain ‘Here’s how you evangelize.’”

Novak, founder of Celebrity Evangelist Ministries, a non-profit outreach dedicated to sharing the Gospel with the world’s most famous figures, has shared Jesus with more than 2,000 individuals in the entertainment industry. During his time with YEC students and their adult leaders, Novak will share how they too can use a personal approach to reach others for Jesus.

“When sharing the Gospel, evangelism is not cookie cutter,” Novak said. “It’s not one size fits all. It’s different for each person.”

Novak said before approaching a celebrity, he tries to become familiar with where they stand on their faith journey. He then will share how much he loves them and will bring customized gift bags that include embossed Bibles.

“The Bible that we give people with their name embossed on the cover is a great starting point,” he said. “Many times, it can be what starts the conversation. They then may start opening up about some of their beliefs.

“I think a lot of times that is a way that we can all be practical in our evangelism is to just ask somebody where they stand because it’s conversational,” he continued. “We can ask what a person believes, where the person stands on faith. That’s how we can break down those walls and bring the message of hope in Christ alone.”

While not every celebrity has turned to Christ, Novak has seen some of them place their faith in Jesus soon after a conversation with them. He cited a heart-to-heart conversation in 2019 with Ferriday native and country music/rock and roll pianist, singer and songwriter Jerry Lee Lewis, who admitted he was not a Christ follower. A week later, Lewis informed Novak he had turned to Jesus.



File photo

The 2025 Youth Evangelism Celebration netted 571 decisions for Christ.

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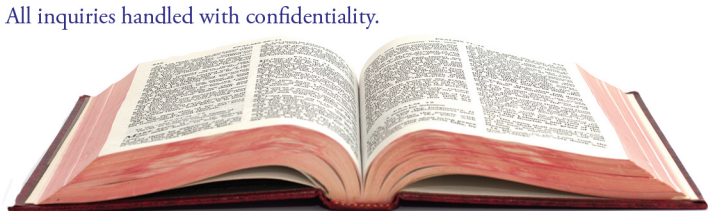
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Israeli ambassador urges support at Cypress leaders forum

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

BENTON, La. (LBM) – Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. Yechiel "Michael" Leiter dispelled myths about Israel's conflict in Gaza while thanking America for its support during a leader forum hosted by Cypress Baptist Church, Benton, Sept. 2.

WORD OF SUPPORT

CBC Pastor John Fream recounted during opening remarks how his most recent visit to Israel took place in the aftermath of Oct. 7, 2023, when Hamas-led attacks killed about 1,200 people in Israel and resulted in 251 hostages being imprisoned in Gaza. He said the ambassador's visit to the church was motivated by a biblical mandate and a desire to provide theological reasoning for standing with Israel. Leiter also shared his message during a service that evening.

"A big portion of this is to really offset the lies (about the conflict)," Fream told the crowd. "If we're not going to speak up, then who will for our friends in Israel?

"And then obviously we believe there's a biblical mandate," he said. "I believe that God is the same yesterday, today, forever. He says what He means. He means what He says. And He says, I'll bless you if you bless Israel. I'll curse you if you don't. And so, I believe we are to stand with God's people, and they're still God's people."

BACKGROUND

Leiter became Israeli's ambassador to the U.S. in January 2025.

According to the website of the Embassy of Israel's office in Washington, D.C., his prominent roles included advisor to the late Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, chief of staff to then-Finance Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (2004–2005), deputy director general of the Ministry of Education (2001–2004) and acting chairman of the

See **ISRAELI**, page **13**



Brian Blackwell photo

Yechiel "Michael" Leiter, Israeli ambassador to the U.S., looked on as John Fream, pastor with Cypress Baptist Church, Benton, shared that Christ followers in the U.S. have a biblical mandate and a desire to stand with Israel.



NOBTS Archaeology Institute participates in WWII excavation

By Timothy Cockes
NOBTS News

VETRALLA, Italy (NOBTS News) – An excavation team with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Michael and Sara Moskau Institute of Archaeology traveled to Italy this summer to search for the remains of fallen World War II soldiers.

The project was a partnership among multiple institutions and the Defense POW/MIA Accounting Agency. The DPAA is a U.S. Department of Defense agency which aims, to the fullest extent possible, to recover and identify the remains of missing American personnel from past wars.

The excavation featured archaeologists with LSU New Orleans (formerly University of New Orleans), Tulane and NOBTS as well as staff representing The National World II Museum. The trip further developed the archaeology institute's relationships with these neighboring organizations, while building upon an excavation that NOBTS and others completed last summer in Duncan Plaza.

NOBTS brought 16 participants (students, graduates and faculty) who investigated, during June and July, a central Italy location believed to be associated with a crashed World War II aircraft and lost American pilot.

Jim Parker, executive director of the Michael and Sara Moskau Institute and professor of biblical interpretation and archaeology, described the trip as "an excellent opportunity for our excellent students."

"The primary objective of getting our students on these trips is for them to learn how to excavate and all the practical things that entails," Parker said. "It is a priority for our program that our students get this practical experience so they can become well-qualified archaeologists."

In addition to practical experience, NOBTS classes were offered to students as part of the trip.

While higher education has largely abandoned the field of archaeology, Parker explained three crucial reasons why the seminary has invested in its archaeology program.

1. To be able to send missionally-minded archaeologists to certain parts of the world.
2. To continue to build the reputation and academic legitimacy of the institute.
3. To gain a seat at the table of archaeological interpretation, building upon the work of Christian archaeologists of years past.

Parker said the latest measures of success for the archaeology program include its recent partnerships in Israel, the new hiring of Gary Myers as associate director of the Institute and a steady influx of students.

Among those students is Meghan Williams, who graduated with her Master of Arts in Biblical Archaeology this May and immediately geared up for the Italy initiative.

"Trips like this summer's greatly help the reputation of our archaeological institute by allowing us to demonstrate the skill, knowledge and character that NOBTS students and graduates possess," Williams said.

"As a recent graduate of the archaeology program, I find these types of trips absolutely necessary. Participating in these digs allows me to develop and hone my skills as an archaeologist, as well as build important professional relationships within the field.

"For me, the highlight of the trip was participating in a worthy mission. America would not be what it is today without the men and women who willingly laid down their lives as a sacrifice to gain and maintain our freedoms. There is something compelling and sobering about participating in a mission to recover the remains of one of those individuals, and playing a small role in honoring a fallen member of our military was the privilege of a lifetime."

Williams also echoed Parker's sentiment about the significant value of the field of archaeology to Christianity.

"Archaeology is critical for Christians to study because it illuminates our understanding of God's Word by providing critical cultural context to even the most seemingly simple things and also serves as an apologetic for the skeptic," Williams said. "The NOBTS archaeology program is important because it trains students to approach archaeology from a scholarly perspective that is informed by our Christian worldview, allowing us to contribute meaningful papers that benefit the broader discipline while also deepening our understanding of the Scriptures.

"All archaeological finds must be interpreted, and many in the field of Biblical archaeology are not actually Christians," she added. "As students of God's Word, we ought to care about and invest in developing men and women of the Christian faith who are willing to enter the field of Biblical archaeology, not only to serve as missionaries to their colleagues, but also to bring a biblical perspective to the interpretation of finds."

Learn more about the NOBTS archaeology program and Institute via nobts.edu/archaeology.



NOBTS photo
Jim Parker, executive director of NOBTS' Michael and Sara Moskau Institute, (right) instructed a seminary student during a recent dig in Italy.





Submitted photo

Since its inception in 2000, Vietnamese/English Hope Baptist Church has baptized 134 new believers and has grown from 15 to 100 worshipers in Sunday worship and 80 participants in Sunday school.

GBO helps share Christ with Vietnamese

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – Vinh Nguyen believed he had found happiness when he was granted refuge in the United States near the end of the Vietnam War.

But six years later, he learned that true happiness required something more — a relationship with Jesus.

His life was so transformed by the Truth of the Person of Christ that he formed the congregation of Vietnamese Hope Baptist Church, Baton Rouge.

"God has been using us to connect with Vietnamese and other Asians," Nguyen told the Baptist Message. "The nations have come here, and some have heard the message of Christ, believed in Him, and become part of our church. We get to be a friend to them and let them know we are here to love them."

GUIDED BY GOD

Nguyen arrived in Hawaii in 1975 as the Vietnam War was ending.

Two years later, he began studying with the University of Florida and upon graduation he accepted a position with Exxon in Baton Rouge.

While living in Louisiana's capital city, he accepted a friend's invitation to attend a Bible study with Riverdale Baptist Church. The kindness and welcoming spirit of the church touched his heart and soon afterward he accepted Christ.

Three years later, he began a Vietnamese Bible study with Victoria Baptist Church. What started as a small class eventually became God's call for him to pastor and plant a church reaching the growing Vietnamese population in central Baton Rouge.

"I was saved and grew up in an American church," he said. "But God called me to work with the Vietnamese people. I came to Victoria just to start a Bible class, but later the Lord called me to the pastor position."

GENERATIONS GROW

Since the church's inception in 2000, he has baptized 134 new believers and has seen the church

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SERVE from page one

saw practically. Cooperative dollars from around the country poured into northeast Louisiana and made an impact. Volunteers from more than 10 states paid their own way to serve here. This gives us a mandate as churches to not just receive but to go."

Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn said the Serve Tour exceeded all expectations.

"Any time we can get that many churches involved in one common effort, we are going to have wins," he said. "We rejoice in the eighty people that moved from life to death. Heaven celebrates and so do we.

"The partnership with local churches, the Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association, our state convention and NAMB through Send Relief is a wonderful example of our strength when we cooperate."

A team from First Baptist Church, Rayville, helped prepare and deliver hamburgers to RV parks in Richland Parsh during a grill walk (an outreach effort where team members delivered food that was cooked on portable grills and used that as an inroads for a Gospel conversation).

Many of those in the RV park work at a multi-billion dollar Meta artificial intelligence facility that is being built at the 2,250-acre former Franklin Farm mega-site that sits between Rayville and Delhi.

Justin Clark, pastor with FBC Rayville, said he is aware of at least one decision for Christ through the grill walks at the RV park.

"What an absolutely incredible day," Clark said. "Our church is trying to see the Meta workers as God bringing the nations to our own backyard and we want to do everything we can to make sure they hear and respond to the Gospel."

Gene Ford, a member with Lakeside Baptist Church, Monroe, led two women to the Lord in an apartment parking lot near the church. Shortly after, two of their neighbors turned to Jesus during an in-home visit. In both instances, Ford explained that good works and being a good person would not get them to heaven but rather they had to trust in Christ.

"Both times were very special," Ford said. "It's just a blessing to me to be able to go out and then see people receive Jesus."

Teams from Bonita Road Baptist Church, Bastrop, and Hill Station Baptist Church, Goshen, Ohio, helped members of Pine Grove Baptist Church, Bastrop, renovate their building. The teams recarpeted the worship center, installed new flooring in the foyer and prayer room and expanded and updated a bathroom, including a new ceiling and Sheetrock installation.

John McKenzie, pastor with Pine Grove Baptist, said it was an example of how Christ followers can unite around a common purpose.

"The whole group was just a blessing to me and I watch them worked hard to see the work complete," he said. "It was just a pleasure to see how God works and the on Sunday morning our people came in and were amazed at the transformation of our building."

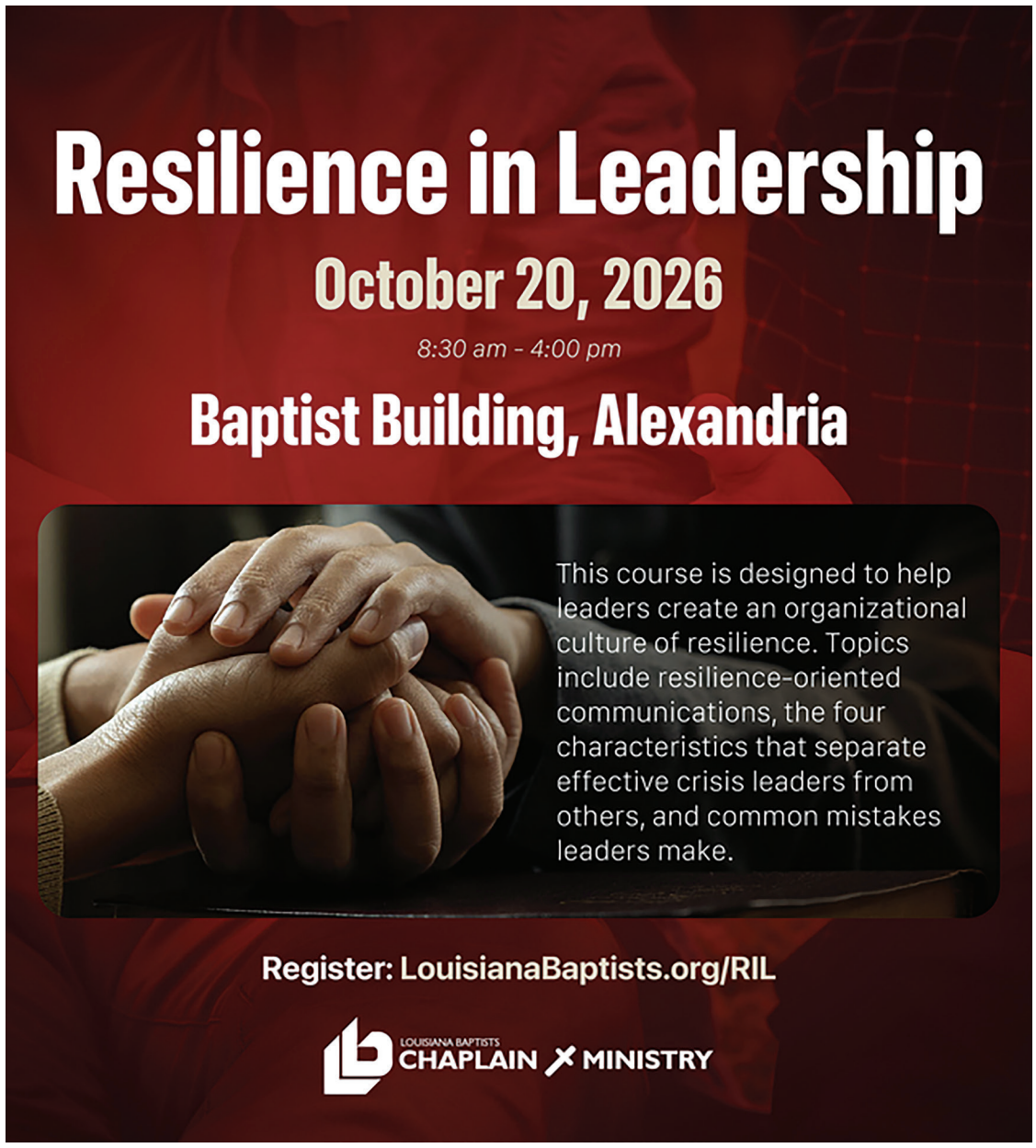
For their part, teams with North Monroe Baptist Church served at various projects including multiple block parties and construction projects.

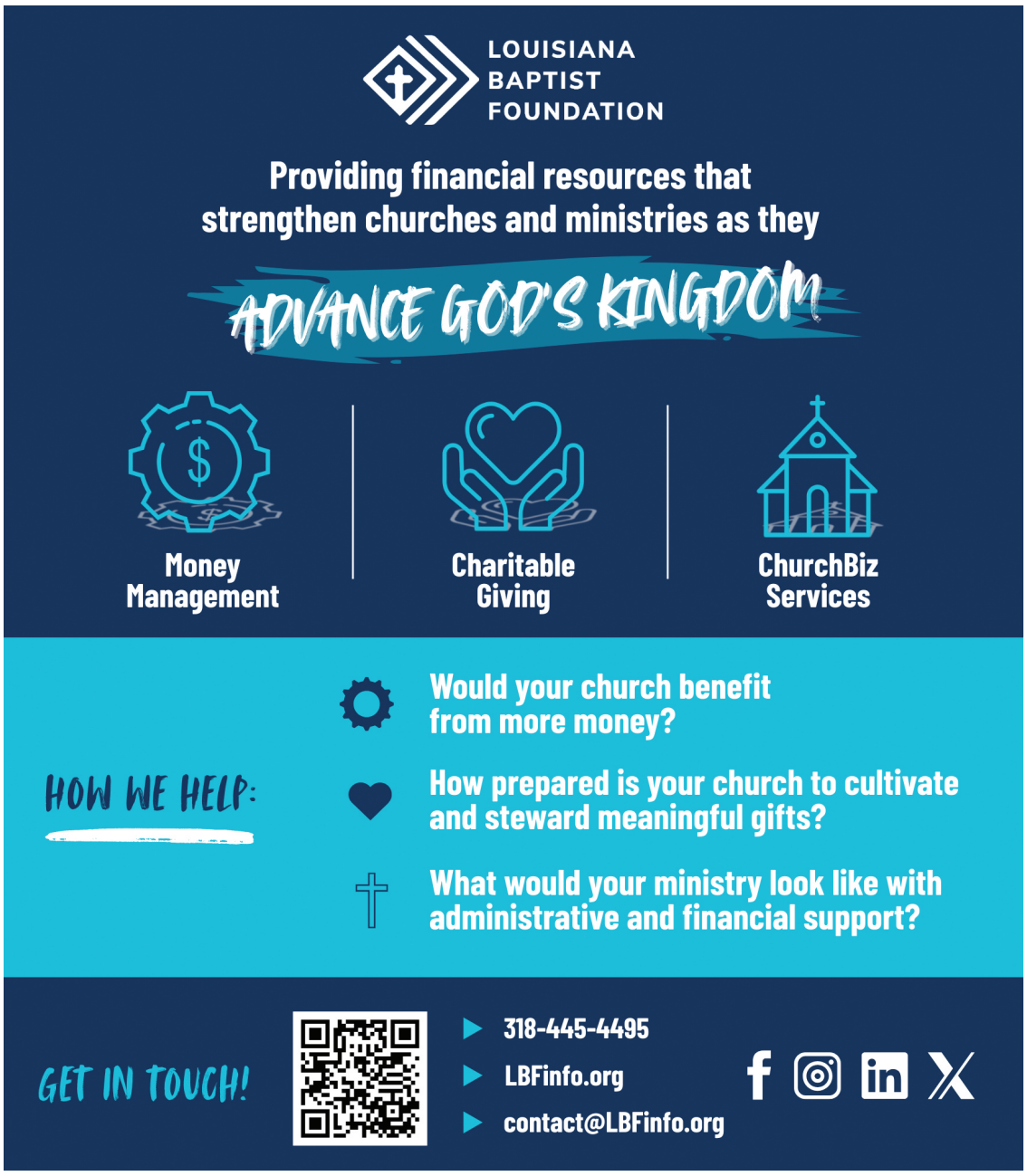
Bob Webber, a member with North Monroe Baptist, enjoyed seeing people from multiple states join Louisianans as they served the community.

"There's something special about people coming together and trying to give glory to God," he said. "It was not about us, but about showing our love for the Lord by doing projects to help in our community. Even though it was hot, everyone had a great attitude and a smile on their face."

Teams with Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria, helped members of Memorial Baptist Church, Monroe, install carpet inside their worship center. The nursery also received a fresh coat of paint, along with new blinds and carpet.

See **SERVE**, page **16**





Franklin Avenue prepares for Luter legacy to continue

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Fred Luter was in his 35th year of pastoring Franklin Avenue Baptist Church when he called his son to talk about the future of both men and the church.

"Chip was pastoring in Florida, and he said 'Dad, you know, you're 65 next year. You think about retirement?'," Luter recalled of the March 2021 conversation. "I said, 'Well, my retirement plan is in Florida. Are you thinking of coming home?'"

Soon after, his son resigned as campus pastor with Idlewild Baptist Church's Sulphur Spring campus in Tampa, Florida, and returned to the church where he was raised, and where he previously served as the pastor of students.

On Oct. 18, Fred Luter will retire and the following Sunday, his son will succeed him.

The church will host a celebration musical, Oct. 16, 6 p.m., featuring the FABC choir, who will sing Luter's favorite Gospel songs.

"Just looking back on from when it started to up until now, it's been a joy pastoring Franklin Avenue," Luter told the Baptist Message. "To see what God has done in this church, with a guy who never pastored before, and then being a part of a church that grew to be one of the largest churches in the state has been a blessing.

"And I look at it as God rewarding my faithfulness," he continued. "I've been faithful to God, to His Word, to my wife and family, and to this church."



Brian Blackwell photo

On Oct. 18, Fred Luter will retire as pastor with Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans, and his son, Chip, will succeed him, having received a 97 percent congregational vote on Nov. 3, 2025. The church will host a celebration musical, Oct. 16, 6 p.m., that will feature the FABC choir singing Luter's favorite Gospel songs.

FRUITFUL MINISTRY

Luter began serving with Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in September 1986 when the congregation consisted of only 65 members, mostly women, who were faithful attenders.

Just before Hurricane Katrina made landfall in 2005, the church had become the largest Southern Baptist congregation in Louisiana, with more than 8,300 members and averaging 5,855 in weekly worship attendance.

The church had purchased 90 acres of land near the former Six Flags theme park to build larger facilities, but Katrina derailed those plans by scattering members across the country.

Many formed "remote" worship groups, meeting on other church campuses – First Baptist Church, New Orleans, Istrouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, Florida Boulevard Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, and First Baptist Church, Houston – until repairs were completed on Franklin Avenue Baptist Church's facilities in April 2008.

In the aftermath of Katrina, Luter led a rejuvenation of the congregation at its former home, growing to nearly 5,900 members with an average of 4,760 in Sunday services by the time he was elected president of the Southern Baptist Convention in 2012. He was the first African American to hold that post.

When land became available in East New Orleans, the congregation opted to build a new home there. That $35 million facility, which opened in December 2018. includes a 3,500-seat worship center, a fellowship hall, offices, a kitchen, conference rooms, Sunday school rooms and youth and children's areas.

Today, the church averages 3,200 in Sunday worship and reaches its community through backyard Bible clubs in an apartment complex, sharing the Gospel door-to-door and on its campus, community block parties, free food distributions and back-to-school giveaways.

FATHER-SON RESPECT

During a specially called meeting, Nov. 3, 2025, the younger Luter, associate pastor of the congregation, was officially elected to his new leadership role by a 97 percent vote.

The elder Luter noted that his son was qualified because he was a Christ follower who was baptized by FABC and has served as pastor of high school students with Concord Church, Dallas (2007-2009), pastor of youth and young adults with FABC (2010-2015), campus pastor with Idlewild Baptist Church's Sulphur Spring campus (2015-2021) and now as associate pastor of FABC.

Chip Luter said the greatest lesson learned from his dad is how faithful he is to his family and church.

"That's definitely stuck with me everywhere I've served," he said. "My dad has an accessibility he has maintained. He will sit at that desk and check every voice mail and call people from his office. He's really a shepherding pastor."

ONWARD IN MINISTRY

He also said he is thankful that his dad and mom, Elizabeth, will remain in the city and as members of the church.

"In Baptist life, transitions like this are uncommon no matter if it's a big, small, downtown, suburban or rural church," he said. "I'm just really grateful for how it's going, how my dad is led out with it, and how members have really followed the leadership."

Fred Luter said not only did he and his wife see something special about Chip, but others did too.

"During his senior high school, the church went through a 21-day fast we do every year and at the end he told me he felt called to preach," he said. "When he graduated from Dallas Baptist University, he mentioned to the church that he was called to the ministry and man, people stood up and cried tears."

Meanwhile, Chip Luter said serving with his childhood home congregation is humbling.

"It's an honor and also a prayer request because you still have people in this church who knew me when I was in diapers and now, I'm their senior pastor," he said. "We've been really blessed to have a really gracious church. We feel loved by the people and we love them. But most of all, we are grateful for the Lord who has His hand on this."

Looking to retirement, Fred Luter will serve as pastor emeritus starting in November. He hopes to preach at more churches on Sunday mornings, something he has not done because he has remained committed to preaching at FABC most weekends.

"My initial plans are to visit churches in the city around New Orleans that I've never had a chance to visit," he said. "I got a lot of friends around the city that I haven't been able to see on Sundays. I want to experience their worship service, sit in their pews, hear them preach and maybe even preach myself at some. I want to be there to support them just like they and so many others have supported me through these years of ministry at Franklin Avenue."

LePoint installed as Carey AMS

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

LAKE CHARLES, La. (LBM) – Bruce LePoint, a former Louisiana Baptist church member who left in 2010 to serve with the International Mission Board, has returned as associational mission strategist with Carey Baptist Association.

LePoint, who began his AMS role on July 20, is excited to mobilize others to become more involved in missions.

"I never thought I would live in Louisiana again, but God sent us back," LePoint told the Baptist Message. "I just I want to see our churches healthy and sending, and I feel that we can do that.

"We could be sending more people to plant churches, and we could be developing more leaders to serve as pastors," he continued. "And we could be sending Louisiana Baptists to places all over the U.S. that are 'under-churched' or haven't heard the Gospel."



Submitted photo

Bruce LePoint and his wife, Erin, are excited be back in Louisiana after serving as IMB missionaries. LePoint began his role as associational mission strategist with Carey Baptist Association on July 20.

CALLED TO SERVE

LePoint credited his involvement in Royal Ambassadors, a mission education and discipleship organization for boys in grades 1 through 6, when he was a member of Mooringsport Baptist Church, 18 miles northwest of Shreveport, as a major influence on his call to serve alongside his wife, Erin, as church planters in Turkey as well as team strategy leaders in Indonesia.

Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, was their sending church.

"I grew up in RAs, my sisters went to (Girls in Action) and Miss Jan lead Mission Friends on Sunday nights teaching us about missions and missionaries," LePoint recalled. "We had 60-80 come on a good Sunday and missions was taught frequently.

Still, LePoint said he did not think he would serve in missions, "but God in His infinite wisdom called me to go to the nations."

EXCITED TO SERVE

LePoint and his wife are thrilled to be back in the state. They met on a Louisiana Baptist disaster relief trip to Indonesia in January of 2005 after an earthquake and tsunami devastated the country. They have three children: Lillian, who is in her first year at LSU, and two sons, Elisha and Isaac, who attend Barbe High School, Lake Charles.

He asked for prayers as they strive to rally CBA churches around the Great Commission.

"God's call on my life to the unreached has not changed," he said. "There is an undeniable biblical flow of mission out of the local church to the field. If we as Louisiana Baptist are going to embrace our role and responsibility in Great Commission work, we need churches that are growing in spiritual maturity and their understanding of how they can be active in the core missionary task.

"One of the key aspects of seeing this realty is healthy pastors who cast vision and create space in our churches for this growth and sending," he continued. "I love my state and want to see Louisiana Baptists, starting with the Carey Baptist Association, become one of the top senders in the SBC. I feel like the role of associational mission strategist can support all of these areas for God's glory among the nations."

FIRST PERSON: Noticeably Kind

By John Kyle
Speical to the Message

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) — Rhinestones, big hair, a disarming smile, and an unmistakable voice helped make Dolly Parton - noticeable.



John Kyle

Born in the hills of east Tennessee, Dolly Parton was one of 12 children. She grew up poor but refused to let her family's lack of resources keep her from dreaming big. As accolades pour in from around the world, those whose paths crossed Dolly's routinely remember her kindness. Her obituary put it this way, " ...her wit, warmth and kindness that made us all feel like family."

Kindness.

Let that word sink in for just a minute. Simply defined it is warmheartedness, goodness, generosity, helpfulness. It is acting graciously and mercifully toward others, just as God does with us.

My guess is even during your most hectic day, you notice, you remember someone who showed you kindness. Someone who allows you to merge in front of them in heavy traffic. Someone who holds open a door when your arms are full. Someone who compliments you when you're struggling to hold it together, and you feel like a hot mess.

Kindness.

It was something that Paul regularly included in his letters to the churches of his time. He told the believers in Corinth that "love is kind." He admonished the Ephesians to "be kind to one another." Members of the church in Colossi were told to "put on kindness." Paul reminded the believers in Galatia that kindness was a fruit, or evidence of a growing relationship with Jesus.

Isn't it interesting that Paul found it necessary to repeatedly reminded believers, Christ-followers, to be kind?

When you look behind the curtain of many of the early churches, there was a void of common kindness. There were sharp arguments over who was the better or preferred teacher, Paul or Apollos? What was permissible regarding various behaviors and what was not? Who was welcome in their gatherings and who was not. In many cases Paul had to act as a referee between those who claimed to believe the teachings of Jesus when He instructed them to love one another – to be kind to one another, if you will.

Even today, a lack of kindness has splintered churches. First Baptist spins off Second Baptist, then Third, and the pattern continues. A former pastor of mine once observed that Baptists like to credit our church-planting to being mission-minded — but if we're honest, many new churches are born out of conflict, not calling. We simply don't extend kindness to one another.

How kind are you?

Don't mistake kindness for politeness. Politeness is often surface and can quickly evaporate. Kindness, the fruit Paul refers to in Galatians 5, comes from within and doesn't change when circumstances are unfavorable. While politeness is generated via habit and human effort, kindness is generated from a close relationship with the vine, the source. Jesus told his followers that He is the vine and we are the branches. Apart from Him, we can do nothing – including being kind.

If you find yourself being unkind, check your relationship with the vine. A healthy, continuous relationship with the vine, Jesus, will yield kindness that is – noticeable.

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

APOLOGETICS from page one

beyond excavating relics and man-made structures. These methods include studying linguistic links among people groups, comparing social systems between regions, identifying common or distinct human behaviors across geographical boundaries and noting historical details confirmed by multiple independent sources.

For instance, the Old Testament correctly identifies the deities Baal, Asherah and Dagan with the right people groups, strengthening the credibility to the writers of Judges, Samuel, Chronicles, Jeremiah and Hosea.

NOT JUST A NAME

Genesis uses accurate Egyptian titles to detail the circumstances of Joseph's life journey—including "chief of the butlers" and "chief of the bakers" (Genesis 39:4, 40:2) as well as "Lord of Pharaoh's House" and Ruler of all Egypt" (Genesis 45:8) —thus attesting to the Bible's accuracy.

Likewise, Genesis 50 accurately describes Egyptian embalming and burial practices, further verifying the scriptural record.

But even a single word can lend credibility to a biblical account.

For example, Genesis 14:14 uses the Hebraic term "hanakim" to describe Abram's "three hundred and eighteen trained servants who were born in his own house," whom he took to rescue Lot and recover his possessions. "Hanakim" is found only this once in the Bible, and it is used in a passage about an event that took place roughly around 2084 B.C. Archaeologists later found that "hanakim" parallels an ancient term used by the Hittites (who occupied southern Canaan during the time of Abram) which also describes "servants trained in a man's own household."

NOT JUST A CLAIM

In Psalm 30, Agur wrote "Every word of God proves true" (verse 5a), and increasingly, discoveries have forced skeptics to concede point after point that confirm the Word.

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

Point your smartphone camera at this QR code and click on the link.

Indeed, the Hittites are an example.

Many historians once dismissed the name as just an invention of Jewish writers because it was not mentioned outside the Bible. But beginning in the 19th century, archaeologists uncovered remarkable evidence, including more than 30,000 Hittite clay tablets. Consequently, today, more is known about the Hittites than any other ancient culture.

NOT JUST FACTS, TRUTH

In ancient times God spoke audibly to many people, and He can still do so today. However, He also speaks to us through His Word (2 Timothy 3:16-17), through life's events and circumstances (James 1:2; 1 Peter 1:6-7), and through prayer (2 Chronicles 7:14; Romans 12:2,12; 1 John 5:14-15).

But God primarily speaks to us now through the Holy Spirit, Who dwells in all those who believe (John 14:16-17; 15:26-27; 16:5-15; 2 Corinthians 2:1-16). This is where many historians, researchers, archaeologists and scientists stumble. They reject Him and His truth "without a reason" (John 15:25) because they are "without the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:14). Even when presented physical evidence of biblical history, they dismiss or reject it because such things are "discerned only through the Spirit" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

You and I can take comfort in the factual truth of the Bible (John 17:17) because Scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17. Indeed, our faith is "the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Hebrews 11:1).

Yet, we can also rejoice in the reassurances God provides through what is revealed, even if it is science and archaeology that uncovers the evidence that reinforces our defense of the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).



YEC from page three

because it's conversational," he continued. "We can ask what a person believes, where the person stands on faith. That's how we can break down those walls and bring the message of hope in Christ alone."

While not every celebrity has turned to Christ, Novak has seen some of them place their faith in Jesus soon after a conversation with them. He cited a heart-to-heart conversation in 2019 with Ferriday native and country music/rock and roll pianist, singer and songwriter Jerry Lee Lewis, who admitted he was not a Christ follower. A week later, Lewis informed Novak he had turned to Jesus.

"He told me, 'Hey, I got some something great. I want to tell all my fans. I'm going to do it through a Gospel album,'" Novak recalled of the conversation.



Submitted photo

Dylan Novak, founder of Celebrity Evangelist Ministries, a non-profit outreach dedicated to sharing the Gospel with famous personalities, has shared Jesus with more than 2,000 popular entertainers according to celebrityevangelist.org. He will share with students and their adult leaders during the 2026 Youth Evangelism Celebration about how they, too, can use a personal approach to reach others for Jesus.

Novak, who sensed a call to evangelism at 13 years old, said that just like himself, God has called each Christ follower to share about the hope found in Jesus.

"God has given you your platform for a specific reason, for a specific purpose, and a lot of times we may believe our platform is not big enough," he said. "One soul is worth it all.

"If we get to the end of our life, but we are able to share Jesus with just one person who accepted, that would have been worth every effort," he continued. "And so, my challenge to each person is to tell somebody about Jesus today because you have a platform with somebody. Somebody is looking up to you. Somebody respects you. Somebody loves you. And what greater love can you show them than inviting them to church, giving them a tract, or even asking them that uncomfortable question – If you were to die today, where you would spend eternity.

"It's going to turn some people completely off," he said. "But would you rather live a selfish life, wanting everybody to love you and accept you, or would you not want to miss your opportunity to stand in and help them know Jesus."

Louisiana Baptist Youth Ministry Strategist Lee Myers said his prayer is that those attending YEC will come away bolder in their commitment to share Jesus with their classmates, other friends, family members and others.

See **YEC**, page **13**







BAPTIST from page one

dressed policy matters, amended budgets and elected 2027 officers:

-The personnel committee announced it was researching a policy about health care benefits for future retirees, and that there will be a forthcoming recommendation to the board.

-Trustees rejected two requests to expunge articles and instead reaffirmed a policy that all published articles be preserved as a legal and historical record.

-The 2026 budget was amended to add $5,000 to fund two mail inserts designed to collect subscriber emails and phone numbers for a digital newsletter.

-The board added $7,500 to the 2027 budget for up to three anniversary inserts to seek gifts to fund a church plant in honor of the Baptist Message's 140th anniversary.

-Officers for 2027 are Ronny Cooksey, president (pastor, First Baptist Church, Mandeville); Woods Watson, vice president (adult groups pastor, First Baptist Church, West Monroe); and Tammy Sharp, secretary-treasurer (member, First Baptist Church, Hornbeck).

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Express your appreciation to those who serve the Lord and you!

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- Pray for them during a worship service
- Ask members to sign up for a day to pray for the pastor/staff
- Plan a church-wide fellowship
- Give them a love gift (a love offering or gift cards to local restaurants)
- Include appreciation for the entire family
- Write/send personal notes/cards
- Offer to mow the yard, clean the house, or wash their car
- Be faithful in attendance and giving

Be creative and be a blessing!

LOUISIANA BAPTISTS PASTORAL LEADERSHIP
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ISRAELI from page four

Israel Ports Company.

Throughout his career, he has managed international projects, collaborated with Jewish and Christian communities around the world and led strategic initiatives to strengthen Israel's position on the global stage.

Leiter is the dad of eight children and many grandchildren. His oldest son, Major Moshe Yedidya Leiter, a physician and Israeli Air Force officer, who is the father of six, died in battle while leading Israeli Defense Forces into Gaza on Nov. 10, 2023.

MISSION TO FIGHT FOR ISRAEL

Leiter said when asked by Netanyahu to become ambassador, he hesitated initially. But then, Netanyahu asked what his deceased son would advise him to do.

"And I knew that my son was looking down in Heaven, expecting me to go on living, but I didn't really have the gumption to do so," he said. "But when the prime minister said, 'This is your opportunity to get back into life,' I said, 'I've got to go for him.'"

FIGHTING ANTI-SEMITISM

Leiter acknowledged anti-Semitism is growing on some college campuses across the United States. He said one reason is because of a "big, bold lie being spread about Israel," which is they are committing genocide and causing starvation in Gaza.

He said Israel uses advanced command centers to monitor districts and facilitate population movement via cell phone communication so they can warn those in Gaza of an incoming attack on tunnels. He added that certain media outlets use emotive imagery (the use of photographs as well as mental pictures that trigger strong feelings) to misrepresent civilian casualties.=

To that end, Leiter said his office released in May the book "Manufacturing a Modern Blood Libel: Genocide, Starvation, and the Language of Dehumanization" that equips readers with tools to distinguish between truth and lies regarding allegations of genocide, ethnic cleansing and starvation by Israel in its conflict with Gaza.

Leiter reminded the crowd that some adversaries Israel has fought even used men, women, boys and girls as shields to protect targets.

"They sent civilians to protect their bases," he said. "There is no respect for human life. They've given up on the idea of every individual being created by God and the progressives on the left that support them have also given up on the idea that we are all individually created by God. So, it doesn't matter how many people they kill."

HONORING HIS SON'S MEMORY

He concluded his message by honoring his son's memory, emphasizing the importance of discernment in identifying friends, enemies and truth in a chaotic world.

Leiter shared that when an earthquake hit the Philippines in 2013, his son was serving as an IDF paramedic and officer and saw Israeli medical personnel saving lives there. Afterward, he shared with Leiter a desire to become a doctor so he could help others.

Leiter asked his son how his knees did not buckle under the weight he carried while training for battle.

'He smiled and said, 'Dad, I have weight," Leiter recalled. "I said, 'Come on, I'm asking a serious question. How do you carry all the weight? I'm telling you, you had weight.'

"He said, 'No, I'm serious. I had the hopes and prayers and dreams of my grandparents throughout the ages that one day will come back to their land. When I remember that I'm carrying your truths on my shoulders, I'm able to bear the weight, and I believe that we are all carrying the weight of our grandparents on our shoulders. And we have a responsibility for all those hopes and prayers that we have a better world.'"

YEC from page 11

bers and others.

"One of the things that stands out most about Dylan Novak is his fearless commitment to sharing the Gospel," he said. "He has an uncanny ability to walk up to celebrities and influential people without being starstruck because he sees them first as people who need Jesus. His boldness isn't driven by confidence in himself, but by a deep conviction that everyone deserves an opportunity to hear the Gospel."

Visit labaptistyouth.com/yec for more information.





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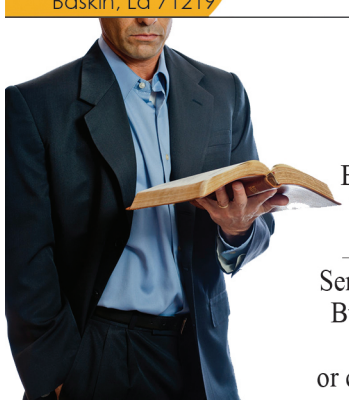
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Seeking a Full-Time Associational Missions Strategist

The WCB Baptist Association (formerly Webster-Claiborne & Bienville Baptist Association) is seeking a full-time Associational Missions Strategist position. Mail résumés to WCB Baptist Association, PO Box 1099, Minden, LA 71058-1099 attention Search Committee or email missioncenter@gmail.com by October 15, 2026.

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

■ Jeff Harper is the new pastor at Bellaire Baptist Church, Bossier City.
■ Brett, wife Erin, are the new Youth, Children and Family Ministers at New Chapel Hill Baptist Church, West Monroe.
■ Matthew, wife Andrea, Cormier is the new pastor at Hessmer Baptist Church.
■ Darren Guess is the new pastor at Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe.

HOMECOMING/ANNIVERSARY

■Olivet Baptist Church, Sulphur: 70th anniversary, Sept. 27, 10:30 a.m. Dinner on the grounds to follow worship. Pastor: Charles Burke.
■Bethel Baptist Church, Bastrop: 80th anniversary, Sept. 27, 10:30 a.m. Praise in the Park will follow later at 4 p.m. at Chemin-a-Haut State Park. Pastor: Tim Post.
■Lone Pine Baptist Church, Lone Pine: 100th Homecoming, Sept. 27, 10:15am Worship: Jake Godon. Pastor: B.J. Hood. Cross Point Baptist Church, Bossier City: Homecoming Celebration, Sept. 27, 11 a.m. Pastor: Shane Nugent.
■Bonita Baptist Church, Mer Rouge: 100th Anniversary. Sept. 27, 10:30 a.m. Special Guests: Believers in Christ! Pastor: Ron Vollmar.
■Conway Baptist Church, Farmerville: Homecoming, Sept. 29, 10 a.m. Pastor: William Englerth.
■Dean Baptist Church, Marion: Homecoming, Oct. 11, 11 a.m. Guest Speaker: Marty Black. Worship: Zach Smith. Pastor: Aleck Nyegaard.
■Summerfield Baptist Church, Colfax: 140th anniversary, Oct. 11, 11 a.m. Pastor: Jeremy Brister.
■South Winnfield Baptist Church, South Winnfield: Homecoming, Oct. 18, 10:30 a.m. A meal will follow the worship service. Evangelist: Lyndon Longoria. Pastor: Jack Miller.
■Parhams Baptist Church, Parhams: 225th Homecoming, Oct. 25, 11 a.m.

REVIVAL

■Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association Senior Adult Progressive Revival. Sept. 28, McClendon Baptist Church, West Monroe; Sept. 29, North Monroe Baptist Church; Sept. 30, Fair Park Baptist Church, West Monroe. Speaker: Waylon Bailey. Music: Waylon McCormick and Corbin McCormick. Lunch will be served by the host churches for $10.
■Friendship Baptist Church, Baskin: New preacher revival, Oct. 4 and 11, 6 p.m. Sam Johnson and Jarrod Donnell will preach on Oct. 4 and Justin Lord and Corey Carter will preach on Oct. 11. Pastor: Prentis Gandy.
■Plain Dealing Baptist Church: Revival, Sept. 27, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. and Sept. 28-29, 7 p.m. (meal at 6 p.m.). Evangelist: Thumper Miller. Worship: Herb Armentrout. Pastor: Robert Brown.
■Bellaire Baptist Church, Bossier City: Harvest Sunday, Sept. 27, 8:15 & 10 a.m. Evangelist: Lyndon Longoria. Pastor: Randy Harper.
■Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Revival. Sept. 27-30. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Wilton Wall.
■Northeast Louisiana Baptist Association, Monroe: Senior Adult Progressive Revival, Sept. 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, Provencal: Fall Revival, Oct. 4-7. Evangelist: Lyndon Longoria. Worship: Kerry Longoria. Pastor: Roger Matkin.
■Blood River Baptist Church, Albany: Fall Revival Services, Oct. 4-7, Evangelist: Pastor: Scott Cooksey.
■Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Rocky Branch: Church Revival, Oct. 5-7. Monday and Tuesday 6 p.m. & October 7, 6 p.m. Special Speaker: Rubin Weaver. Special Music: Gold City.
■Dean Baptist Church, Marion: Revival, Oct. 11-14, Evangelist: Rubin Weaver (Sunday) 6 p.m.; Josh Luellen (Monday); Robbie Lawson (Tuesday) and Bubba Moore (Wednesday. Worship: Zach Smith will lead all services. Pastor: Aleck Nyegaard.
■Weldon Baptist Church, Bernice: Fall revival, Oct. 18-17. Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: Michael Brookover.
■Pilgrim's Rest Baptist Church, Spearsville: Fall Revival, Oct. 21-23, 6:30 p.m. Worship: 11th Hour.
■NCBA Cluster Revival, Oct. 25-28. Oct. 25, 6:30 p.m. East Winnfield Baptist Church. Speaker: Casey Johnson. Hodge Baptist Church, Speaker: Kenny Bratton. Oct. 26, 6:30 p.m. Laurel Heights Baptist Church, Guest Speaker Kenny Braon. Ebenezer Baptist Church. Speaker Casey Johnson. Oct. 27, 6:30 p.m. First Baptist Church Winnfield. Speaker Casey Johnson. Southside Baptist Church. Speaker Kenny Bratton. Oct. 28, 6:30 p.m. Atlanta Baptist Church. Speaker Kenny Bratton. First Baptist Church, Jonesboro. Speaker: Casey Johnson.

LAGNIAPPE

■Mt. Zion Bapitst Church, Coushatta: Southern Plainsmen in concert, Oct. 11, 10:30 a.m.
■Dry Creek Baptist Champ: Family Camp, Oct. 23, 5:30 p.m.-Oct. 24, 2:30 p.m. Family Camp is a chance for families to have a fun get-away and spend time together at Dry Creek. A campfire, a scavenger hunt, plenty of food & snacks, and break-out sessions for children and parents are included. This is a great event that helps parents to make time to have fun with their children, get some pointers about parenting, and maybe enjoy a little relaxation. Children will enjoy playing in the beautiful surroundings of Dry Creek. Dorm is $63 per person and hotel is $80 per person. A multiple-family member discount will be applied manually after registration. Speaker: Seth Maggio. Worship: Abbie Maggio. Director: Todd Burnaman.
■First Baptist Church, Calhoun: Homecoming After Party, Sept. 26, 8:30 p.m.-midnight. The fun will include the annual wig switch, extreme twister, food, human wack-a-mole, karaoke and a 63 ft. obstacle course.
■Acadian Baptist Church, Eunice: Sportsman's Wild Game Dinner, Oct. 6. Cooking demonstrations 5-7 pm. The program begins at 7 p.m. Guest speaker: Kirk Jones. Music: Firm Foundation. Tickets are $15 and are available at the office. Camp director: James Newsom.
■First Baptist Church, Crowley: Harvest Fest, Oct. 16-17, 9:30 a.m.-3 p.m. Free family fun will include entertainment, fun jumps and a petting zoo. Pastor: Cullen Clark.
■Colyell Baptist Church, Livington: Fall festival, Oct. 24, 4:30-7 p.m. Please bring your family, friends and neighbors to an evening of free food, carnival games, face painting and trunk or treat. Pastor: Jeremy Glascock.
■Old Zion Hill Baptist Church, Independence: Fall festival, Oct. 25, 5-7 p.m. Everyone is invited for free food, hayrides, carnival games, pony rides, inflatables, silent dessert auction and, at 7 p.m., a trunk or treat. Pastor: Gary Dennis.
■First Baptist Church, Luling: Fell fellowship, Sept. 27, noon-2 p.m. Join us for a water slide and chili cookoff. Pastor: Cody Cunningham.
■Tioga First Baptist Church: Fall festival, Oct. 21, 5-7 p.m. Free hot dogs, candy, jumpers, prizes and more. Pastor: Kevin Ulmer.
■First Baptist Church, Abbeville: Truck or treat and gumbo cook-off, Oct. 31, 3-8 p.m. Pastor: Russell Landry.
■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: Jeremy Glascock.
■Crosspointe Baptist Church, Bossier City: The Cox Family in concert, September 27, 2 p.m. A love offering will be received.
■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.
■Temple Baptist Church, Ruston: The Collingsworth Family's Spring '26 CLASSICS & HYMNS Tour, October 3, 4 p.m. Pastor: Reggie Bridges.
■New Prospect Baptist Church, Dubach: A Night of Worship, October 3 & 4, 6 p.m. & 10:45 a.m. Truth Infusion Ministries. Pastor: Marvin Winham.
■Pine Hill Baptist Church, Olla: The Hooten Brothers in concert, October 4, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Corey Fowler.
■Mount Zion Baptist Church, Hall Summit: The Southern Plainsmen in concert, October 11, 10:30 a.m.
■Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: Gospel Music Hymn Sing, October 16, 7 p.m. Groups: Greater Vision, The Mark Trammell Quartet, The Whisnants and the Mylon Hayes Family. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
■First Baptist Church, Eunice: 5k and one mile fun run, 8 a.m., followed by a fall festival, 10 a.m.-noon, Oct. 24. Pastor: Nick Watts.
■Greenwell Springs Baptist Church: Fall Festival, Oct. 4, 5 p.m. Dads, invest in your family by bringing them to Fall Fest. We'll have tons of games, rides, and food to enjoy together! Doors open at 4:30pm. Family Game Show at 5pm. Food and rides following.
■First Baptist Church, Crowley: Harvest Fest, October 16-17, 9:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. There will be a petting zoo, fun jumps and entertainment. Concessions will be sold. All proceeds benefit local and foreign missions. Pastor: Cullen Clark.
■Benson Baptist Church, Converse: The Southern Plainsmen in concert, October 17, 6 p.m. Pastor: Jeff Feibel.
■Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Coushatta: The Southern Plainsmen in concert October 18, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Mike Fort.
■Lee Hill Baptist Church, Folsom: The Southern Plainsmen Quartet in concert, October 24, 6:30 p.m. Pastor: Ronnie Douglas.
■Westlake Baptist Church, Westlake: Annual Fall Fest at Pinederosa Park, October 24, 3-6 p.m. There will be food trucks, Trunk or Treat, games, and petting zoo. Family friendly costumes please.
■First Baptist Church, Eunice: F5K & 1 Mile Fun Run, October 24, 10 a.m. – noon. The Run will be followed by the fall fest which is a free event open to the public.
■Agape Baptist Church, Denham Springs: Annual Fall Fest, October 24. Additional details announced later. Pastor: Chris Hardison.
■Fellowship Baptist Church, Trout: Divinity Music in concert, October 17-18, October 17, 7 p.m. & October 18, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Shad Tibbs.



Friendship Baptist Church, Bienville, recently honored Jackie Lewis for her 50th year of service as their pianist.

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Additionally, members of Memorial Baptist distributed Bibles, bottled water and crosses while praying with those who received them in the parking lot.

Pastor Albert Kerr said he was overwhelmed by the generosity of the churches who volunteered.

"By Saturday afternoon I couldn't even look at people or speak to them without crying," he said. "It was a total outpouring of the Holy Spirit in God's love and mercy.

"God sent people to our little church and they poured the love of God into us," he continued. "We will be forever grateful and humbled by the way God used the Serve Tour experience to show us that. With God, all things are possible."

For their part, Grayson Baptist Church members shared the Gospel at several grill walks, helped with block parties at multiple locations, served food at a luncheon at the Louisiana Baptist Children's Home & Family Ministries and renovated the stage inside the University of Louisiana-Monroe Baptist Collegiate Ministry building.

"One of the coolest stories was meeting the pastor of Loch Arbor Baptist Church, Stan Wyant, only to realize he has family who are members at Grayson Baptist Church and that his first staff position in a church was as youth minister at Grayson Baptist Church," he said. "I am always proud to pastor GBC and this weekend was a reminder of why I am proud to be a Southern Baptist. Cooperating together for the Gospel is what we do best."

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grow from 15 to 100 for Sunday worship and 80 for Sunday school. Because he has been pastoring the church long term, Nguyen has baptized multiple generations who attend.

"To see some of them come as teens, then marry and have their own children has been a blessing," he said. "But then I have been able to baptize both generations which has been a blessing, too."

The congregation's reach now includes many nationalities: Vietnamese, Mexicans, Cambodians, Americans and others of all ages. For that reason, they are now known as Vietnamese/English Hope Baptist Church.

They also support a small Vietnamese mission group in Ruston – for more than 10 years -- and hope to reach additional Asian communities in nearby cities in the future.

OUTREACH STRENGTHENED

In January, Vietnamese/English Hope Baptist Church hosted an Asian Leaders' Retreat, drawing pastors of various Asian backgrounds who ...

Read the rest of the story at baptistmessage.com.

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something that you believe?,'" he continued. "Yes, it is. But truth is also something you live, and in the Bible, if you don't live it, you don't believe it. You may say that you do, you may use our vocabulary, but it does not have any reality whatsoever if it is not in your life, day in and day out. We must live the truth."

This year's conference featured music by the Midstate Homeschool choir as well as the worship team of First Baptist. Breakout sessions for pastors included topics on prayer, preaching about the fear of the Lord, insights from 1 Peter, preaching metanarrative, pastoral preaching, and grief counseling -- led by professors from Louisiana Christian University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Ouachita Baptist University.

Next year's conference, scheduled for Sept. 21, will feature H.B. Charles, pastor-teacher with Shiloh Metropolitan Baptist Church of Jacksonville and Orange Park, Florida.

FBCP Pastor Stewart Holloway told the Baptist Message ...

Read the rest of the story at baptistmessage.com.

