

“But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

– Romans 5:8 (NIV)

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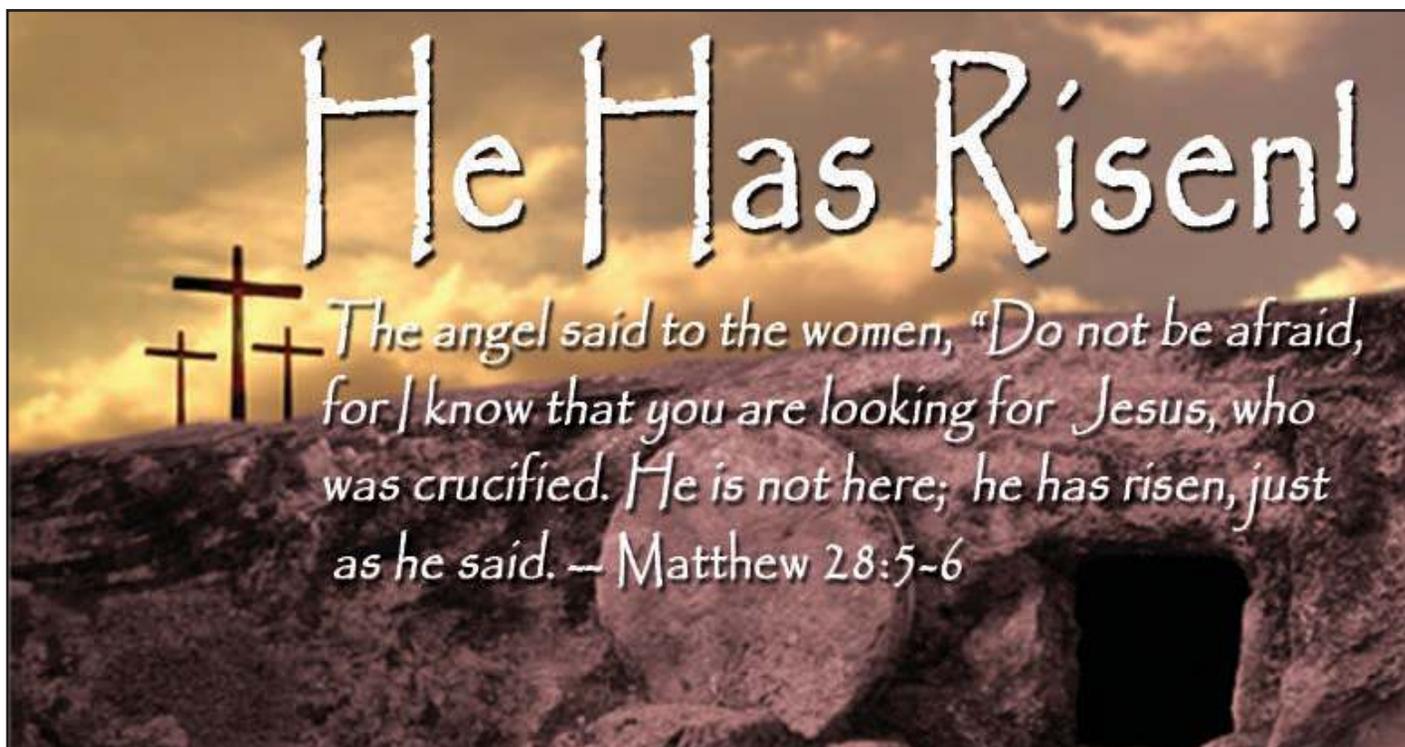


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Volume 132 • Issue No. 7

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April 6, 2017



Another year of healthy & growing LA church plants

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA – Louisiana Baptist church plants enjoyed great health and growth during 2016, and to date are on pace for another banner in 2017.

A BANNER YEAR

According to a recent report by Louisiana Baptists' missions and ministry team, church plants recorded 26,933 evangelistic contacts and 1,329 decisions to follow Christ in 2016. In all, 33 new churches were started and 360 people baptized by new congregations last year.

A STRONG START

With only partial data for 2017, things are looking good for this year as well.

In January, church plants reported 1,859 evangelistic contacts and 83 new commitments to Christ. Also during that month, five new churches were started and 12 were baptized.

The number of new church plants for February and March will be reported together at one time in April.

However, baptisms and evangelistic contact statistics were released for February, showing church plants had baptized 60 people and recorded 4,615 evangelistic contacts.

See **PILATE** on 7

See **CHURCH PLANTS** on 2

The Gospel according to Pilate

BY DAVID HANKINS • LBC Executive Director

“Pilate had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read, JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Many of the Jews read this sign, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city, and the sign was written in Aramaic, Latin, and Greek. The chief priests of the Jews protested to Pilate, ‘Do not write ‘The King of the Jews,’ but that this man claimed to be king of the Jews.’ Pilate answered, ‘What I have written, I have written.’” – John 19:19-22, NIV

Anatole France's tale “The Procurator of Judea” features an elderly Pontius Pilate reminiscing with an old friend about their time in Judea decades before. When the friend inquires about Jesus who was crucified by Pilate, he murmured, “Jesus – of Nazareth. I cannot call Him to mind.”

The author is trying to suggest the unlikely possibility that Jesus' crucifixion was so incidental that the governor probably wouldn't remember Him. But, even if Pilate could not recall

the tumultuous events accompanying Jesus' death, the name Pontius Pilate is inextricably woven with the name of Jesus of Nazareth.

In history, Pilate is always and only remembered for his connection to Jesus' crucifixion as is so eloquently stated in the Apostles' Creed, “and He suffered under Pontius Pilate.”

And the relationship is heightened by the placard Pilate had placed on Jesus' cross.

Three years of revival and still going

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

BASTROP – Bonita Road Baptist Church has been in revival for three years and all signs point to this spiritual renewal continuing for the foreseeable future.

Since Casey Johnson joined this Morehouse Baptist Association church as pastor in 2015, worship and Sunday school attendances have increased and more than 70 people have been baptized.

Furthermore, the congregation is in the midst of constructing a new 11,000-sq.-ft. worship center that will seat 500 people to accommodate the growth – with even more new members added from revival services that took place in early March.

“It has been an absolute joy watching God change so many lives in such a short time,” Johnson said. “I think the greatest thing, apart from

See **REVIVAL** on 12



Submitted photo

Bonita Road Baptist Church in Bastrop has been witnessing a spiritual renewal for the last three years as is evidenced by the large crowds that attended a recent revival.

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ERLC officers fault politics, Russell Moore blames 'prosperity gospel' in 'Seeking Unity'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) – Trustees and the embattled president of the Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission issued separate comments in a joint “Seeking Unity in the Southern Baptist Convention” statement published by *Baptist Press*, March 20.

The combined official release, meant to sooth “tensions in our denomination over the state of American politics and the role of religion,” comes about three months after Moore issued an online article, “Election year thoughts at Christmastime,” to address criticisms, and, follow by about a month the actions taken by the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention to form two committees to study actions by national entities that are causing churches to withhold support

for national causes.

For their part, the ERLC officers cited the “challenging political” cycle and Southern Baptists’ disagreement with Moore’s “delivery, tactics and approach” for the denominational rift which has made national headlines. Moore, on the other hand, faulted his failure to “separate out categories of people well” and his use

of words “particularly in social media, that were at times overly broad or unnecessarily harsh.” He said he was not “intending to talk about Southern Baptists,” but was meaning to target “most often prosperity gospel teachers.”

A complete report on the most recent developments can be read at www.BaptistMessage.com.

Church Plants from page one

A REASON FOR HOPE

Lane Corley is optimistic that when the numbers for how many churches were planted in February and March are released, the trend will show Louisiana Baptists are on track to plant 35 new churches this year.

If that happens, 2017 would be the third consecutive year of having planted 30 or more new churches in Louisiana.

“We are excited to see new churches being planted,” said Corley, a church planting strategist for Louisiana Baptists. “We’re also excited about partnerships that are flourishing with associations and with sponsor churches taking ownership of the mission to start new churches.

“And most importantly we’re excited to see the evangelistic impact of church planting across the state, with now over 10,000 new commitments to Christ reported by church plants since 2010,” he continued. “It’s my prayer that by 2020, we’ll see not only the 300 churches planted, but 25,000 new commitments to Christ through this 2020 Initiative.”

The President’s 2020 Commission Final Report, which was affirmed by messengers during the 2013 LBC Annual Meeting, set a goal of 300 new churches to be planted between 2010 and 2020.

With just four years remaining, Louisiana Baptists must plant 135 more new churches to hit the mark, so 35 new works in 2017 will keep the effort on pace.

For the complete story, go to www.baptistmessage.com.

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'Amazing Grace' a message for the Harvest

HAUGHTON -- With Easter just a couple weeks away, every Christian church is gearing up to herald the greatest message concerning the greatest event in human history: God Himself stepped out of Heaven, came to this rotten world, died on a Roman cross, was buried in a borrowed tomb and was raised alive to offer all sinful humanity grace rather than judgement.

The message of Easter is the message of God's amazing grace offered to His creation.

GOD'S AMAZING SAVING GRACE

"Amazing grace, how sweet the sound, that saved a wretch like me. I once was lost, but now I am found, was blind, but now I see."

John Newton wrote these words in 1772 after receiving that grace. Newton was right – the grace of God is amazing!

Do you remember when you received the grace of God for salvation? I do.

I was a senior in high school and my life was as good as it could be from my perspective.

I was seventeen years old and living for every minute. I was raised in a home where both of my parents were very involved in my life.

We were a good, law-abiding, tax-paying family that was respected in our little town.

However, it often seemed as though something was missing in my life. Like many of my friends, I filled my life with things and people I felt would complete me.

I remember times of

searching, usually in the stillness of a deer stand or in the quiet of my bedroom, and I would catch myself thinking, "There has got to be more to this."

On a Wednesday night in November I found the answer to my searching. Sitting in a metal folding chair in the youth room (of the church I now pastor) I was introduced to Jesus. That night I was saved and I received the amazing grace that John Newton wrote about.

GOD'S AMAZING SUSTAINING GRACE

"Through many dangers, toils and snares I have already come, 'tis grace has brought me safe thus far and grace will lead me home."

The grace of God not only saves us, but by his grace God sustains us.

The story of Peter's denial is a vivid reminder of God's sustaining grace.

After his arrest, Jesus is before the high priest and Peter is standing close by warming himself by a "fire of coals."

In John 18:17, Peter is asked by a servant girl, "You

are not also one of this man's disciples, are you?" and Peter said, "I am not".

That evening Peter denied knowing Jesus two more times, and experienced one of the lowest points of his life.

Fast forward to John 21, where we learn that after the resurrection Peter decided to go fishing, and six other disciples went with him.

They fished all night and caught nothing. But as the sun rose the next morning Peter saw Jesus on the shore.

After a brisk swim to the beach Peter found himself in a "Twilight Zone" moment. John tells us in verse 9, "then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a 'fire of coals' there."

The scene was set that morning to remind Peter of his moment of denial. The warmth of the morning sun, the smell of the smoke from the "fire of coals".

This is it! This is what we've been waiting for -- Jesus is about to blast Peter with shame for his walking out on Him.

We expect it, because that's how we handle others when they wrong us.

Surely, He will begin His verbal assault with, "I can't



GEVAN SPINNEY
Pastor
First Baptist
Haughton

believe you of all people would do this" or maybe, "you really disappointed me".

Wait for it, here it comes, we think.

But, instead, those red letters in verse 12, read, "Come and eat breakfast."

Wow, his guilt trip is worse than we can even imagine. How could anyone have an appetite at a moment like this? This takes punishment to a whole new level. Jesus must be planning to serve Peter his dose of shame as dessert.

So, we think, "Here it comes in verse 15."

But, we read, "So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?'"

Two more times He would ask Peter that question, wanting Peter to hear himself repeat, "Lord, You know I love You."

Jesus asked Peter that question three times, one for each of the times Peter had verbally denied Him.

If that weren't enough, the Lord follows those questions up with the statement, "Follow Me."

You mean to tell me that Peter's denial didn't disqualify him from being used by Jesus?

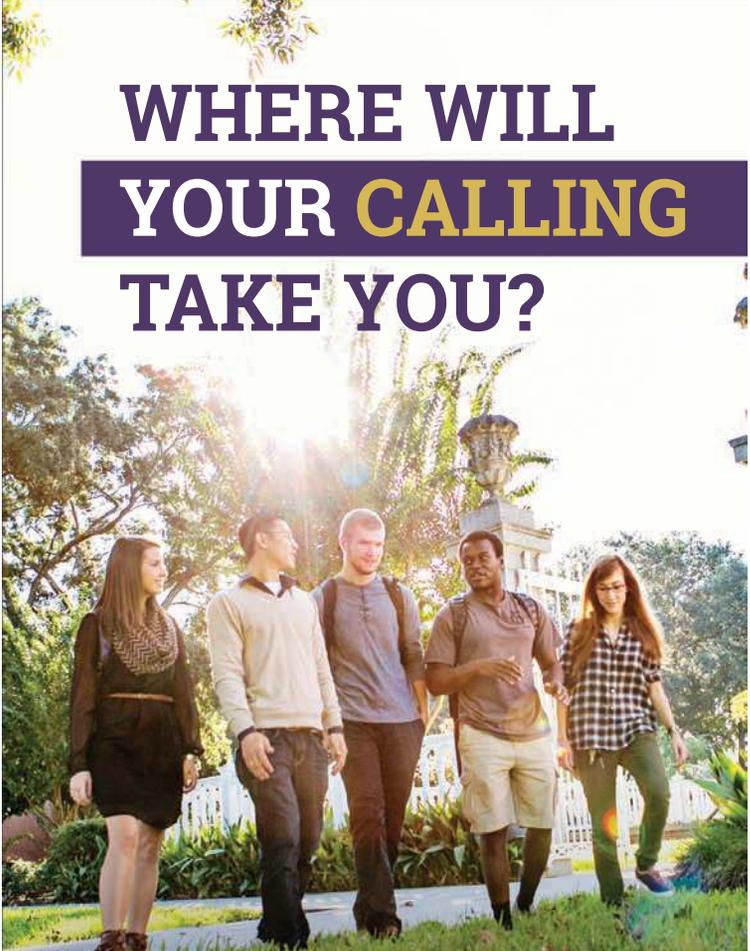
No, and neither does mine, and neither does yours.

As we continue to think strategically about the Harvest evangelism initiative, Easter gives us a great opportunity to share with our neighbors and friends the message of God's amazing grace.

Gevan Spinney is pastor of the First Baptist Church in Haughton, Louisiana, and serves as president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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Don't let others miss out on Jesus Christ!

WALKER —“20,000 eggs from a helicopter,” said the younger pastor from another church in our association. I questioned, “What?!” in my head.

Someone had told me all the younger pastors were Calvinists. I don't know if he was a Calvinist, but he was crazy! While we've been putting our eggs out with a wheel barrow, they've been using a helicopter. Maybe that's why we had a hundred people at our egg hunt last year and they had a thousand!

There were about ten churches at the meeting and I committed Judson. “We're all in!” I said. “Just don't put me in the helicopter dropping eggs.”

I did something “non-mid-fifty years old” in a “warrior dash” last fall and broke my wrist. I have a big scar on my arm to prove it – which makes a great witnessing tool: “Look, I broke my arm, did you know the world is broken?”

So I am semi-crazy al-

ready, just an older crazy.

This would not be the first “crazy” event I had experienced with this younger pastor and some of the other church leaders gathered in the room.

Last August, Livingston Parish flooded – all of it. News reports claimed a rainfall of about three times the volume of Lake Pontchartrain.

It was a crazy time and these were the same churches who came together to share resources in rescuing, housing and feeding thousands – days before any other assistance arrived. We knew “crazy” and we knew “cooperation” and it didn't scare us.

However, now, I had to go back to my 127-year-old church and tell them I had committed us to taking off on a Sunday afternoon and evening to do an outreach in the city park.

At least I didn't have to

worry about the charter members, they never disagree. But, seriously, we are flexible. Judson Baptist is a mission-minded church: We give and we go. But, like some of you, they have been giving and going a long time.



DAVID LANE
Pastor
Judson Baptist
Walker

On the chance your church might not be quite ready to participate in the Harvest events coming up in the next two years, I would like to

share with you a brief outline of the message I delivered a couple of weeks before the egg drop. It might help your members “count the cost” of missing out.

Three ‘Don’ts’ to Avoid Being Knocked Out of the Harvest

DON'T BE DECEIVED

“Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. Whoever sows to please their

flesh, from the flesh will reap destruction; whoever sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.”
-- Galatians 6:7-8

The material, temporary pursuits and values of this world have a way of taking over our top priorities.

It is like they come looking for believers vying to become our main purpose and supplant the eternal values and goals that God has taught us in His word and reinforced through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit.

None of us are immune at any stage in life from being deceived by pursuits that appeal to the flesh, the part of us that is attached to this world and its system. For a believer, at the very least, such an over pursued attachment will destroy abilities and opportunities to reap in the Harvest that will result in eternal life for the souls around us.

I know a guy named Mike, who is a few years older than me (I am a young 50-ish person). We cross paths at the Gym early in the mornings.

Mike is a financial planner and he talks money constantly (a lovely conversation at 6:00am) with other people at the Gym – 401(k), Roth IRA, you name it, he knows all about it.

But I have noticed this about Mike: he eventually brings the Lord into the conversation. It may not be the first or second thing he mentions.

But some time in his exchange of ideas, he is going

to bring up what matters most. He is a man who handles literally millions of dollars a week, but he is not deceived by the temporary nature of it.

DON'T BECOME WEARY

“Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.”
-- Galatians 6:9

If we ever lose heart and quit pursuing holiness, then weeds will grow in our relationship with the Lord.

If we ever lose heart and quit cultivating and sowing seeds of the Gospel out in the community, then grass will grow in our ministry.

It is tiring work and can grate on your psyche until it wears you out, and getting too tired can knock you out of the harvest.

I planted the world's biggest garden one time when I pastored in Union Springs, Louisiana.

It wore me out, but I had old timers encouraging me and a dream that pushed me (of bowls of corn, peas, butter beans, and of tomato sandwiches).

However, I also took time off to rest each week.

You will not grow weary before the harvest if you will receive the encouragement of God's promises, take in the counsel of His servants, hold onto the promises of the harvest to come as well as make time to rest.

See CHRIST on 5

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Even a hotel Bible has Good News

SHREVEPORT – During the Louisiana Baptist Convention Evangelism Conference in Ruston, I was challenged and encouraged to step up my pace in spreading the Gospel of Christ, especially by the messages of Gevan Spinney, pastor of First Haughton and also LBC president, and Evangelist Bill Britt, both calling us to be urgent in sharing the Good News.

That night I had borrowed a Gideon's Bible from my room, and I did not realize how this seeming

"chance" occurrence would provide a divine opportunity.

After the session and arriving at the hotel, the owner and his assistant were in the lobby – as if waiting for someone. They noticed the hotel Bible in my hands, and I explained how I had borrowed it for a meeting, and that piqued their curiosity about where I was from and why I was staying at the hotel.

This opened the door to share about my being a pastor and attending an evangelism conference "at the church with the big steeple" (Temple Baptist

Church).

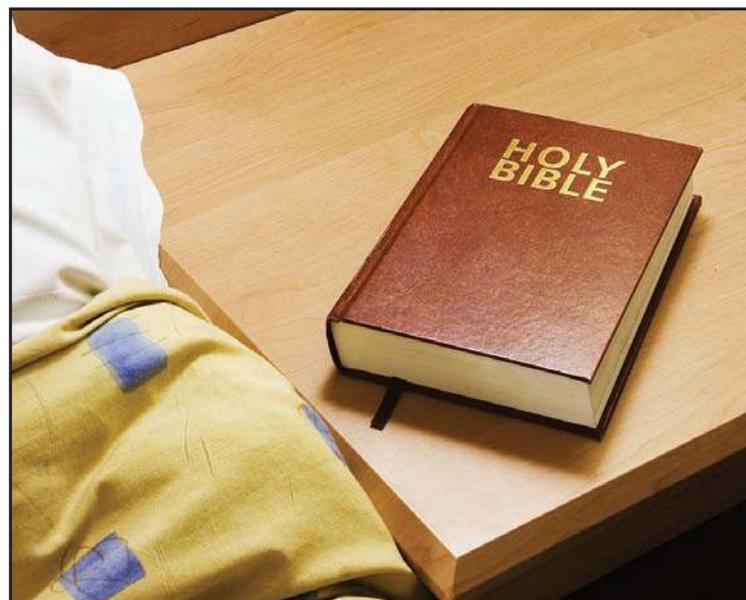
As we chatted, I sensed in my spirit, inspired by that night's messages, the need to tell them about Jesus.

Seeking some common ground, I talked a little bit about what I knew of "Ghandi," and used this part of our conversation as a jumping off point to share "about a Friend who is greater than he."

They were eager to let me know that in their country, "We have many gods." But they were so receptive when I told them that my Friend was the Son of the true God.

They showed real interest, and listened intently as I opened the hotel Bible and shared the Roman Road passages.

Their facial expressions changed as we progressed through the Scripture, reflecting a heart change in each – which was confirmed at the end of my presentation, when they repented and



Using a Bible from his hotel room, Pastor Carlos Meza, who was attending the 2017 Evangelism Conference in Ruston, led the hotel owner and an employee to Christ.

confessed Jesus as Lord and Savior.

The owner has since invited me back to visit with his wife to share the Gospel with her – all because of a hotel Bible and a call to be urgent in sharing the Good News.

As we approach the celebration of Christ's resurrection this Easter, let me

encourage you as Gevan and Bill encouraged me: Be urgent in sharing the Gospel (even with a hotel Bible)! To God be the Glory!

Carlos Meza is pastor of Calvary Spanish Mission in Shreveport, Louisiana, and second vice president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Christ from page 4

DON'T MISS THE OPPORTUNITY

"Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers." -- Galatians 6:10

The moment to minister to a person in their need is when they need it, which is usually not when I feel I need to!

When is the right time for our church to start getting ready for a harvest campaign? About 2 months

before we think we are ready to start getting ready!

God chooses when the harvest is ready, but we must do everything we can to be ready for it and jump in on it when it is time!

Pray for every home; share the gospel with every person. Get ready for the Harvest!

David Lane is pastor of Judson Baptist Church in Walker, Louisiana, and first vice president of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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You can believe Jesus died, but that He also lives!



PINEVILLE -- Death by crucifixion was a public spectacle and a huge crowd had gathered on a small hill just outside of Jerusalem that day. Roman soldiers, politicians, common people, a few followers of Jesus, even Mary, his mother, and John the Apostle were there to witness the death of Jesus the Christ on a cross. Normally, onlookers observed a public display meant to symbolize justice was being served yet again. But this time witnesses experienced an act of justification that would not need repeating.



MARVIN JONES
Professor
Louisiana College
Pineville

him, some were laughing, some were contemptuous, and some were indifferent. But a few were grieving Him as He took His last breath.

Importantly, all of them saw a man suffer a torturous punishment, although He had committed no crime.

Already, he had been beaten with whips designed to tear the skin from the body, and the trauma to the muscles was so intense that he could not walk steadily. His veins were bared; His scalp pierced with thorns; and, His back was nothing but quivering ribbons of flesh ripped by the beatings.

They saw Him nailed to a cross, and raised up so the weight of His body stretched His bones out of socket -- not broken, but still causing excruciating pain.

They saw His labored breathing, His forcing Him-

self up to gasp for air as He fought asphyxiation.

They saw Him denied water for His aching thirst.

Adding insult to injury, they saw soldiers gamble for His royal robe.

They heard Him question God, "Why have you forsaken me?" Then they saw the sky darken just as he summoned the strength to shout, "It is finished."

They saw him die a cruel death for you and me.

THE KING'S PUBLIC 'CRIME'?

John 19:20 reveals Jesus' only supposed crime was to claim to be King of the Jews. But His was a valid claim and the Sanhedrin's rejection did not make it any less true.

Moreover, the King came into the world to conquer sin, and He was not defeated by death. To the contrary, His death defeated sin.

He fulfilled an eternal,

See **HE LIVES** on 8

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Pilate from page one

Why did Pilate describe Jesus' offense as "The King of the Jews?" Why was he unwilling to modify the statement even when the religious leaders protested? Was he just stubborn? Was he trying to aggravate the Jews for all the aggravation they gave him?

Whatever the case, as the old folks say, Pilate said a mouthful. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, Pilate proclaimed the Gospel.

Pilate's sign declared more than he ever knew about Jesus!

When Pilate asked, "Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered, "It is as you say." And that is the truth even if Pilate didn't believe it. Jesus is the promised one, the anointed one, the Messiah and the savior of the Jews and the world. Pilate's placard became God's placard. It is the same Gospel we declare today. Whether men believe or not, Jesus is the King.

Pilate's sign revealed more than he ever intended about himself.

Jesus' crime was there for all to see. It was in three languages—all could know the truth. As He struggled along the *via dolorosa*, everyone could read, "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews."

Except that was no real crime, and Pilate had already determined that Jesus



was innocent of breaking Roman law.

But ignoring his wife's warning, he gave into political expediency, and callousness, and cynicism. He sentenced the innocent Son of God to death, and thus Pilate's heart is laid bare.

The accused becomes the judge and the judge becomes the accused.

Pilate washed his hands and said, "I'm not guilty of this man's death." But, oh, he was!

There were plenty of hands in Pilate's basin that day: There were the soldiers who nailed Jesus to the cross and said I'm just doing my job; there were

the critics who said let him save himself if he is the Chosen One; and, there were the would-be disciples who shouted "Hosanna" on Sunday and "crucify him" on Friday.

And there are many hands in Pilate's basin today. We scrub, scrub, scrub as we say, "I'm not guilty!" But we are guilty. This is the Gospel: All we like sheep have gone astray but the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

Pilate's sign offered more than he ever dreamed about salvation!

That day, many people walked by the dying savior and read the sign above his head. Many read and walked away, never understanding, never caring. But some who read were changed for eternity.

The two thieves who were crucified with him, one on either side, exemplified the response. One railed at his defeat; one rallied to his defense. One bemoaned

See PILATE on 8



Antonio Ciseri's depiction of Pontius Pilate presenting a scourged Christ to the people. "Ecce homo!" (Behold the man!)

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- **Is a loved one already in a nursing home or receiving care? Find out why it may not be too late to save their estate!**

He Lives from page 6

divinely orchestrated plan devised by the Trinity to offer salvation to all humanity.

Revelation 13:8 proclaims Jesus is “the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world” and 1 John 2:2 declares He paid the price for the sins of “the whole world” but effectively only for those who receive Him and believe on His name (John 1:12).

King Jesus reigns in vic-

tory over sin and Satan, and brings peace to those who accept His offer of salvation by grace.

THE KING’S PUBLIC MIRACLE

Ten disciples ran away from Jerusalem during the Lord’s trial. The Bible does not record their hiding place but it does state they came back to Jerusalem. Indeed, they were assembled togeth-

er when the news arrived that Jesus’ body was missing.

His death was undeniable and verified by Roman soldiers who speared him.

But His resurrection was witnessed by Roman soldiers as well.

Matthew 28 details how the guards of His tomb “shook with fear” upon seeing Him alive. Some returned to Jerusalem “and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened.”

Even so, despite hearing firsthand testimony about Christ’s resurrection, the religious leaders rejected His divine nature, paying the guards a large sum to keep quiet that He was again alive.

But Christ also appeared in the city, once before 500 witnesses at one time (1 Cor. 15:6); and, for forty days straight He preached the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3).

If that’s not enough, His resurrection was authenticated by the restored lives of others.

Matthew 27:51-53 records that upon Jesus’

resurrection “many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised” and that coming out of the graves, “they went into the holy city and appeared to many.”

Think about it – even as the religious leaders were trying to quash the news of Jesus’ conquest of death, many followers of the Way who had died returned to their neighborhoods, and their resurrections gave proof to the news that Jesus lived again.

In the twenty-first century world of skepticism it seems absurd to believe in an ancient miracle.

But given the historical evidence, it seems foolish not to believe.

There was no hoax by the apostles, and the con-

spiracy of silence conceived by the religious rulers failed under the sheer weight of the eyewitness accounts of the day.

Even more convincing is the evidence we can see today.

Transformed lives attest that Jesus is alive.

His power to change you and me is proof He is risen! He is risen, indeed.

Marvin Jones, Ph.D., is professor of Theology and Church History at Louisiana College. His column is part of a series of commentaries provided by Louisiana College relating to the Southern Baptist Convention’s calendar of Special Emphasis Sundays.

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Pilate from page 7

his weakness; one believed his power. One found death in death; one found life in death.

What was it the dying thief rejoiced to see? Had he seen Jesus performing miracles some time earlier? Did he remember the teachings of this one come from God?

Did he understand the name on the sign means “God saves?” He pled, “Lord Jesus, when you come into your kingdom, remember me.” He found salvation.

No wonder: “*The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day; And there*

may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away!”

It is quite ironic, is it not? Unbelieving Pilate – cynical and vicious Pilate – became the first evangelist to show a lost sinner how to be saved. He put it on a sign: JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. This is the Gospel. It was declared unwittingly by Pilate. It is declared unapologetically by Scripture. Rejoice!

David Hankins is the executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

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Investors beware!

By JERRY LOVE &
WAYNE TAYLOR

LBF Communications

ALEXANDRIA – Investment consultant and financial author Charles Ellis is attributed with saying, “Las Vegas is busy every day, so we know that not everyone is rational.”

Oftentimes in the course of our lives we receive “good news” or we are presented with an opportunity that elicits the response “That’s just too good to be true!”

All of these “too good to be true” moments can be initially exciting. However there are times when these moments occur around the presentation of investment opportunities. At these times our antennae should be up, radar tuned in and a healthy dose of “rational” close at hand.

There is a fundamental principle in the world of finance regarding risk and return: The greater the potential return, the greater the risk. If a salesperson offers a product that purportedly is going to bear a higher than normal return, you have to find out what the risks are.

If the salesperson claims this high yielding investment has “no risk” or that the investment is “guaranteed,” slowly back away from that “opportunity.” Either the salesperson does not understand the risk themselves or they are being dishonest.

This type of situation merits a special word of caution to pastors and church leaders: Any sales-oriented job is built

on establishing relationships. There are many trusted advisors who are plugged into their local churches, participating in Bible study classes and other aspects of church life and are wonderful servants of the Lord. However there are some in the investment arena who will target churches or church groups to build a client base.

A great amount of discernment should be used when allowing any sales personnel access to church members. The church or pastor should not put themselves in the position of tacitly endorsing a person or product without fully understanding the circumstances.

Let’s walk through some basic thoughts to consider before handing over money to an investment advisor.

WHO IS THE GUARANTOR?

When a guarantee is offered or implied you must find out who is providing that guarantee. There is a major difference between the guarantee of a low rated insurance company and the guarantee of the federal government. Keep in mind that insurance companies, banks, and investment firms can fail. Lehman Brothers, Washington Mutual Bank come to mind in recent years; the FSLIC crisis in the 80’s is another reminder.

Also find out “what” is being guaranteed. A recent TV advertisement was hawking a gold coin as “Government Guaranteed”. As it turns out the value of the coin was not guar-

anteed; only the weight of the coin was guaranteed by the mint of a foreign government that struck the coin for this private coin seller.

ALWAYS, THERE IS RISK

A quick internet search shows at least 9 different types of investment risk. The types of risk can range from how quickly or easily I can get my money back to the solvency of the institution backing the investment. Most sales pitches that include the phrase “no risk” are referring to fluctuations in the market value only. Risk can be mitigated or reduced somewhat but never eliminated.

FRAUD IS A POSSIBILITY

This one is a tough one. I remember an investment opportunity involving timber contracts a number of years ago that turned out to be a Ponzi scheme.

Quite a few people were able to invest and make a higher than normal return. Unfortunately many, many others lost a sizeable portion or even all of their invested money when the scheme fell apart. Even worse, most of the sales staff members recruited by the perpetrators were reputable individuals who became victims as well. There are far too many situations like this that occur including, unfortunately, one involving the Arizona Baptist Foundation in the late ‘90’s.

So what’s an investor to do?



DO YOUR HOMEWORK

Find reputable advisors representing reputable firms. Talk to friends and co-workers regarding their choice for advisors.

If possible, observe the conduct of the advisor in various public and private settings. Be certain to check with licensing and regulatory authorities to discover any complaints or problems.

Do as much research as you can on the product being offered and don’t hesitate to get a second opinion from another advisor.

SET RISK BOUNDARIES

Find reputable advisors representing reputable firms. Talk to friends and co-workers regarding their choice for advisors. If possible, observe the conduct of the advisor in various public and private settings. Be certain to check with licensing and regulatory authorities to discover any complaints or problems. Do as much research as you can on the product being offered and don’t hesitate to get a second opinion from another advisor.

DON'T BLINDLY INVEST

Ask questions and get the details on fees, guarantees or any area of concern.

A number of investment products come to mind that can appear simple on the surface but can be complex: viaticals, equity indexed annuities, deferred annuities, real estate investment trusts (REITs), master limited partnerships – all MAY provide above normal returns but each have pitfalls. All of these have complexities that the average investor may not fully comprehend.

God clearly calls us to be wise stewards of the assets he places in our hands and investing can be a healthy part of stewardship. There are times when our investments can provide a positive “too good to be true” moment. Just remember, in the world of investments if it looks “too good to be true,” it usually is!

The Louisiana Baptist Foundation was established in 1944 as agency of the Louisiana Baptist Convention to assist with stewardship through gifts supporting Baptist ministry.

Eternal impact, starting at the bend of the bayou

ALEXANDRIA – The story has been told numerous times already, but it is worth telling again.

The boat ride began on a beautiful summer day under the cool shade of live oak trees that spread across the bayou with the sunshine glistening on the water. Pushing the boat to its limits in the small confines of a curvy narrow waterway was both thrilling and fun.

And then it happened...

There was no warning ... no “check engine” light or bells or chimes. One minute the boat owner was cruising along and the next minute he was adrift, drifting in the bend of the bayou where his boat broke down.

St. Clair Bower was the boat operator on that glorious day in the early 1930’s. It was supposed

to be a day off from his pastoral duties in the communities of Maragouin and Krotz Springs and points all along the bayou in between.

As he went ashore to find help, he encountered a mother and her son and began to share Jesus with them. Right there near the bend of the bayou, close to where the boat lost power, this mother and son, who had not heard the Gospel before, accepted Christ as their Savior.

Two new souls won to the Lord turned into many days of Gospel meetings, and, not long after, a church was built ... all near the bend of the bayou where the boat broke down.

This was the life St. Clair Bower and his young wife Annie came to love so much.

They spent a lifetime to-

gether sharing Christ in an area almost untouched by the Gospel in those days.

The Bowers served at least eleven different churches officially through the years but helped plant many others across South Louisiana. He also spent four years as an Air Force Chaplain and 10 years in the field working for the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

Although his early desire was to pastor a “large, growing church” in his home state of Alabama, God revealed his life work was to be among the people and places of Acadiana.

The Bowers went on to Heaven, he in 1996 and she in 2004. But their story continues beyond their lifetime because of their planning to support ministry even after their deaths.

In 1985 Bro. and Mrs. Bower established a Charitable Gift Annuity with the Louisiana Baptist Foundation. Their modest gift into the annuity provided them with additional income as long as they were living. In fact, over the next 19 years the Bowers received more in cumulative income from the Gift Annuity than the amount initially given.

Now, here is the “rest of the story.”

Today in the area they loved so much, St. Clair and Mrs. Annie still are ministering.

When they established their Gift Annuity, they designated any remaining funds would be used for specific ministry purposes.

Each year, the endowment that bears the Bowers’ name pays income to their church in

Lafayette for two purposes: 1) to provide Bibles to the community through the outreach efforts of the church; and 2) to provide scholarships for students pursuing Christian ministry as a vocation.

After all these years, the Bowers still are providing the Word of God and supporting Ministers of the Gospel, not too far from the bend of the bayou where the boat broke down.

The Louisiana Baptist Foundation can assist with Charitable Gift Annuities, Charitable Remainder Trusts, Donor Advised Funds and other gifts that support Baptist churches and ministries. Call our office at 877.523.4636 or go to www.LBFinfo.org to learn more about gift opportunities.

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HOMECOMING

■ Brookwood Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Happy Birthday Brookwood** (63rd Anniversary), April 9, 8 a.m.- 1 p.m. at The Gathering Place.

REVIVAL

- Macedonia Baptist Church, Holden: **Revival**, April 5-7, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: **Terry Booth**. Worship: **Linda Burleigh**. Pastor: Roger Dunlap.
- New Hope Baptist Church, Calcasieu: Revival, April 9-12. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria**. Worship leader: **John Howe**. Special music: **Kerry Longoria**. Pastor: Rob McClane.
- Horseshoe Baptist Church, Mer Rouge: **Revival**, April 9 - 12, Sunday 11 a.m. and 6 p.m. Monday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. Evangelist: **Mickey Bounds**. Pastor: Bob Lonadier.
- Magnolia Baptist Church, Crowley: Revival, April 13-15. Evangelist: **Casey Johnson**. Music: **Brad Mount**. Pastor: Ron Ferrington.
- Social Springs Baptist Church, Ringgold: Revival, April 14-21, Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Pastor: James Hester.
- Southside Baptist Church, Jonesboro: Revival, April 16-19. Evangelist: **Scotty McDowell**, chalk artist. Pastor: Wesley Venable.
- Liberty Baptist Church, Spearsville: Revival, April 16-19. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria**. Worship: **Kerry Longoria**. Pastor: Glenn Neimeyer.
- First Baptist Church, Jonesville: Spring Revival, April 17-20, 6 nightly. Speaker: **Rubin Weaver**. Music: **Ben Waites**. Pastor: Todd Whittington.

LAGNIAPPE

- Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Dallas Holm in concert**, April 7, 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. For more information, call 337.463.6611. Pastor: Danny Wilson.
- Fifth Ward Baptist Church, Marksville: **2nd annual Cast Iron Cook-Off**, April 8, 10 a.m. - 5 p.m. Enjoy food, music and arts & craft. Cost: \$10 donation for a sampling ticket. Pastor: Keith LaMartiniere.
- First West Baptist Church, West Monroe: **First West NELA Egg Fest**, April 8, 11 a.m. - 12:30 p.m. Join us at West Monroe High School, Sterlington High School, and West Ouachita High School at 11a.m. Some 100,000 eggs will be scattered across these three fields. Kids up to 5th grade will be able to pick up eggs in this family-friendly event.
- Sale Street Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **Celebrate Easter, a free community event**, April 8, 11 a.m. 1 p.m. The event which features the Easter story, face painting, hot dogs, photo booth and, of course, an Easter egg hunt, will take place at the Prien Lake Park Indian Pavilion. Pastor: Randy Edwards.
- Houston River Baptist Church, Sulphur: **Risen Son Spring Festival**, April 8, 3- 5 p.m. This community-wide event is free. There will be games, food, balloons, bike drawing and Easter Egg Hunt (4,000 EGGS to be found); **Come to the Well Women's Conference**, April 29, 9 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. Doors open at 8:15 a.m. Cost: \$30 (includes a continental breakfast, lunch and snacks). Registration runs until April 17. Speaker: **Jen King**. There will also be eight breakout sessions. Pastor: Lonnie Gothrup.
- First Baptist Church, Winnsboro: **The Love Jesus, an Easter musical**, April 9, 10:55 a.m.; Good Friday Egg Hunt, April 14, 10 a.m. this for children ages 3 to 10 years of age. **Easter sunrise Service** will be held on the parsonage

- lawn, April 16, 6:45 a.m. Pastor: Craig Beeman.
- Progression Church, Baton Rouge: **Community Egg Hunt** on the LSU Parade Grounds, April, 9, 1 p.m. There will be food, games, door prizes, crafts, and of course, an egg hunt with 2,000 eggs. Pastor: Brian Crain.
- Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: **"I Am a Friend of God" musical** performed by the Children's Choir, April 9, 6 p.m. Pastor: Steven Kelly.
- First Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Easter Egg Hunt**, April 9, 4-5:30 p.m. This FREE event is for children birth through 6th grade & their parents and includes arts & crafts, the telling of the Easter story, snacks, and our annual Easter Egg Hunt. For more information or to register, contact faye.scott@fbno.org. Pastor: David Crosby.
- Longview Baptist Church, Deville: **Children's Easter Egg Hunt**, April 9, following dinner on the grounds. **Easter services**, April 16, 8 a.m. and 10 a.m. Pastor: Robby Poole.
- The Bayou Church, Lafayette: **Annual Spring picnic and Easter Egg Hunt**, April 9, 4:15 p.m. All children (birth-5th grade) are invited to search for 7,000 eggs packed with candy and prizes in one of four designated fields. Then, we'll continue the festivities with family fun games such as sack races, three-legged races, and more. Pack a picnic for your family or enjoy a hot dog meal (includes chips, drink, dessert) for \$3. There will be live music and a good time. Pastor: Mike Walker.
- Hebron Baptist Church, Denham Springs: **Palm Sunday**, April 9, 10 a.m. Easter egg hunt will follow the worship service. Lunch will be provided; **Maundy Thursday**, April 13. This is a service of remembrance and communion will be observed; **Good Friday**, April 14, Movie night featuring the movie -- **"Risen"**; **Resurrection Sunday - He Is Risen**, April 16, 10 a.m.
- First Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **"The Living Last Supper"**, April 9, 6:00 p.m. The men of the church will portray Jesus and His disciples while the choir performs the music by composer Ruth Elaine Schram. **Worshipping the resurrection of our Lord and Savior on Easter Sunday**, April 16, 8:30 a.m. Following service, brunch will be served in the Family Life Center. Music Minister: Russ Givens. Pastor: Stuart Toms.
- First Baptist Church, Vidalia: **Easter egg Hunt**, April 9, 10 a.m. There will be a bounce house, games, eggs with prizes and an Easter egg hunt. Bring your own basket. Solemn Assembly, April 12, 6:30 p.m.; Good Friday Service, April 14, 7 p.m.; Worship the Risen Savior, April 16, 8 a.m. and 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Wes Faulk.
- Brookwood Baptist Church, Shreveport: **annual preschool & kids Easter Egg Hunt**, April 9, 12-2 p.m. Lunch will be provided under the covered area at the north end of the building and there will be inflatables, crafts and egg hunts for preschool age kids as well as school age kids. Bring your Easter baskets and an appetite.
- First Baptist Church, Bogalusa: **He's Alive Easter musical**, April 9, 10 a.m.; Good Friday Worship, April 14, 7 p.m.; day of prayer, April 15, 6 a.m.; **Easter Sunrise Service at Cassidy Park**, April 16, 7 a.m.; **Easter Sunday Worship Celebration**, April 16, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Greg Whaley.
- Jerusalem Baptist Church, Hammond: **Easter Musical**, April 9, 10:30 a.m. **Easter Sunrise Service**, April 16, 7:30 a.m. (joint

- service with Trinity Baptist Church). Pastor: Phil Weaver.
- Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Slidell: **"Because He Lives . . . Amen!"** presented by the Adult Choir and Orchestra, April 9, 10:15 a.m. Pastor: Dennis Phelps.
- Bethlehem Baptist Church, Albany: **"He Loved Me With a Cross" Easter pageant**, April 9, 2:30 and 7 p.m. and April 10, 7 p.m. The annual **children's egg hunt** will be April 8, at Ms. Heather's Strawberry Patch. Pastor: Preston Nix.
- Trinity Baptist Church, Hammond: **Good Friday services**, April 14, 7 p.m.; **A joint sunrise service will be held with Jerusalem Baptist Church**, April 16, 7:30 a.m.
- Leesville High School Fellowship of Christian Athletes presents **"Chosen"** on April 12, 5:30 p.m. at Leesville High School's Wampus Cat Stadium. Speaker: **Derek Griffon**. Worship: **Bush Baby, Fully Fledged, and Generation Rising**. This is a Fields of Faith event. Students 7th through 12th grade are invited, along with school club and church youth groups. For more information or to register, call Kevin McAllister at 337.424.8494 or email kevinmcallister@vpsb.k12.la.us.
- First Baptist Church, Lafayette: **Saviour, A Modern Oratorio**, April 13-14, 7-8:30 p.m. Ballet Magnificat! joins the First Baptist Choir and Orchestra to present this Easter musical. The presentations are free and tickets are not needed. Pastor: Steve Horn.
- First Baptist Church, Tioga: **Good Friday Family Easter Celebration** (for children infant to sixth grade), April 14, 10 a.m.; **Good Friday service**, observance of the Lord's Supper, April 14, 6 p.m.; **Youth 'Glow in the Dark' Egg Hunt**, (for students 7th - 12th grades) April 14, 7 p.m. There will be food, craft, games, and story time for the children and food, games and fun for the youth. Because He Lives presented by the Sanctuary and children's Choirs, April 16, 10 a.m. Pastor: Tim Hisaw.
- Bellaire Baptist Church, Bossier City: **An-**

- nual Bellaire Baptist Church Cross Walk**, April 14, 8 a.m.- 3 p.m. Walk will begin at Parkway High School at 8 a.m. and carry the Cross through the neighborhoods of South Bossier and ending at the Bellaire Baptist Main Campus. Pastor: Randy Harper.
- University Baptist Church, Thibodaux: **Easter Egg Hunt**, April 15, 1-3 p.m. at Eagle Park. This is for babies thru 10 years old only. Bring your own basket or bag. For more information, call 985.446.5818.
- Trinity Heights Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Community Easter Egg Hunt**, April 15, 10 a.m. - noon. There will be 15,000 eggs, a petting zoo, face-painting and great door prizes. Pastor: Collin Wimberly.
- Milldale Baptist Church, Zachary: **Easter Egg hunt and Fellowship event**, April 15, 10 a.m. There will be 10,000 eggs with candy and prizes inside. Some eggs will be dropped from a helicopter. There will be blow-ups for kids and free food. Cost: Free. Everyone is welcomed. For more information, call 225.654.8168. Pastor: Dennis Terry.
- Elm Grove Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Easter Egg Hunt**, April 15, 11 a.m. There will be more than 3,000 eggs and this is for children from birth thru 5th grade. **Easter Sunrise Service**, April 16, 7 a.m. at the Red River Marina Pavilion Pastor: Brian Prucey.
- First Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Scramble Up South Highlands 2017** (Egg Hunt), April 15, 9 a.m. Pastor: Jeff Raines.
- Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Easter Egg Drop**, April 15, 10-11:30 a.m. Pastor: Terry Young.
- Barksdale Baptist Church, Bossier City: **Community Easter Egg Hunt**, April 15, 2-4 p.m. There will be food, games, crafts, bouncy houses and egg hunts for toddlers- 5th grade. Pastor: Calvin Hubbard.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: **Community Easter Egg Hunt**, April 15 at the Lawson Bo Brandon Sports Complex, 10 a.m.-noon. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.

- First Baptist Church, Winnfield: **Community Easter egg hunt**, April 15, 10 a.m. at the Earl K. Long Memorial Park. There will be the egg hunt, face painting, inflatables, picture with the Easter bunny, snacks and refreshments. **Community Easter sunrise service**, April 16, 7 a.m. at the Earl K. Long Memorial Park. This event is sponsored by the Winn Ministerial alliance. Pastor: Steven Smithson.
- First Baptist Church, Ruston: **Easter Egg Hunt**, April 16, 10:15-10:45 a.m. located inside FBC. Easter Service, April 16, 9 a.m. and 11 a.m. Pastor: Chris Craig.
- North Monroe Baptist Church, Monroe: **Easter at the Coliseum**, April 16, 10 a.m. Pastor: Bill Dye.
- First Baptist Church, Many: **Easter Musical "Because He Lives - Amen!"** on Easter Sunday, April 16, 11 a.m. Pastor: Jonathan Bost.
- North Monroe Baptist Church, Bastrop Campus: **Easter services**, April 16, 10:30 a.m. The Bastrop campus is moving services to the M.A.C. Morehouse Activity Center on Easter Sunday.
- Immanuel Baptist Church, Hammond: **Good Friday Service**, April 14, 7 p.m.; Sunrise service in the North foyer, April 16, 7 a.m., Breakfast fellowship, 8 a.m., **Easter egg hunt**, 8:30 a.m., **Resurrection celebration service**, 9:30 a.m. Pastor: Mark Goree.
- First Baptist Church, Slidell: **Choir and Orchestra Easter Sunday special program**, April 16, 10 a.m. Pastor: Terrell Suggs.
- Calvary Baptist Church, Slidell: **"Christ is Risen" Easter cantata**, April 16, 11 a.m. Pastor: Arron McGuffee.
- Celebration Church, Slidell: **Easter services**, April 16, 9 and 10:15 a.m. In the children's services there will be carnival type games, an amazing message of the meaning of Easter, and a Blacklight Easter egg hunt. Pastor: Sidney Hidalgo.
- **East St. Mary Ministerial Alliance Easter Sunrise Service**, April 16, 7 a.m. at Lawrence Park in Morgan City.

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.

amhuhqeu h amry ykzam amh weul; ghmewl, z

czww vkya amhh quei eqq amh qkvh eq amh

hkuam; amzy nhku amer ymkwa lzh, ghvkryh

amer mkya akrtma uhghwwzes ktkzsy amh weul.

dhuhizkm achsan-hztma:yzjahhs

Clues:
H = E; A = T

Answer to March 23 Scripture Crypto:
Acts twelve: five

Revival from page one

the salvations, has been watching people truly understand the freedom they have to worship God because of their identity in Christ. From a pastor's perspective that is a treasure and a victory worth celebrating."

In the time Johnson has been pastor of Bonita Road Baptist Church, worship attendance has grown from 200 in one worship event to a combined 375 in two morning services. Sunday school attendance now stands at 230, up from 130.

He points to a concentration on prayer as a catalyst for the positive change. Johnson preached a series on prayer leading up to the recent March revival.

Now, people are responding during invitations by bringing the Bible with them to the altar and praying a passage of Scripture to God.

"It's important to build our foundation on the Word of God and prayer," Johnson said. "They have grabbed hold of the Word and the power of prayer, and are growing so very much as a church. We pray the Word of God back to Him because God will always fulfill His Word."

Among the members embracing prayer is Stacy Sharp.

Of the three women's Bible studies she has led, two have focused strictly on prayer. Additionally, a women's

retreat she attended in 2015 included moments of prayer, which Sharp said was a key factor for the growth the congregation has experienced.

"After that night of the retreat, we saw many miracles, such as marriages healed, people being cured of physical illnesses and more," Sharp said. "It's because of prayer that we at Bonita Road are a people who are closer as a church and are experiencing much freedom in our worship, personal life and relationship with Christ."

REVIVAL AFTER THE REVIVAL

During the most recent revival services, the worship center was filled to capacity each evening. In the end, two people came forward to accept Christ as their personal Savior, but many more made other spiritual decisions – a call to ministry, a commitment to share the Gospel more fervently, or, a need to be obedient through baptism.

Since the end of the revival, Johnson has talked with many who attended, including some who expressed a desire to follow Christ.

"When we had the revival, the place was packed each night but we weren't seeing people come to us to make a salvation decision," Johnson said. "Instead we saw God moving in the hearts of the Christians and people there. We are seeing lingering effects even after the revival meeting,

which has been huge to us."

After the revival ended, the congregation made a decision to cover their future worship center with prayer. Nearly 225 people took markers and wrote a scripture, inspirational thought or prayer on beams and the concrete floor.

Johnson said that was a symbolic move for how his congregation believes about the power of prayer for their future worship center.

"It was a powerful moment for us as a church body," Johnson said. "We believe our best days are ahead of us and we think the Word of God and prayer will pave the way to greater things."

"So seeing families walk through the new sanctuary writing scriptures and prayers on the walls and foundation was a moving experience," he continued. "One of our men said a few days later he was moved to tears going back through and reading some of the words that were written on the walls."

CHURCH WITHOUT WALLS

One mindset Johnson tried to instill in his congregation when he arrived there is they are a church without walls, a people who minister to the community in a variety of ways.

Members are given business-sized cards to hand out at restaurants,

stores or other locations around Bastrop. On one side are the words "Live Love Ministries" and on the opposite side is an encouraging word, with an invitation to attend a worship service or other activity at Bonita Road Baptist Church.

The goal is to bless recipients and let them know they are loved and welcomed by the congregation.

The effort has paid off, with many people coming to visit the church.

During a recent service, a family attended because a member paid their meal tab at a local restaurant, leaving one of the cards that says "You've been blessed by Live Love Ministries of Bonita Road Baptist Church."

Yet another of its ministry effort is the church's Just One Discipleship Initiative. A member is paired up with another person to invest in the person for a year through one-on-one discipleship.

"The Bible says to reach the whole world, but this allows our members to have a personalized outreach to people closer to home," Johnson said. "We are trying to get outside the walls and be the church. These are simple approaches that make ministry very personal."

"We like to say we are a Drive-way Church," he continued. "Whether they are at the gas station, restaurant or ballfield, our members are getting outside our walls and talking about Jesus."

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