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— Matthew 5:16 (NASB)

LOUISIANA BAPTIST Message

Newsjournal for Louisiana Baptists

Helping Louisiana Baptists impact the world for Christ



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Volume 131 • Issue No. 7

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April 7, 2016

"It cost me my job, it cost me a lot of money, it cost me a lot of chaos for my family because we had to move and so forth, and it cost me my reputation." -- Former Angola Warden Burl Cain

Burl Cain, cleared of wrong doing, tells all

By BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

BATON ROUGE – Burl Cain, a long-time warden known for turning around what was once considered the most violent maximum security prison in America, has been cleared of any wrongdoing following investigations by three state agencies.

The inquiries were prompted by accusations of ethics breeches by a local newspaper in the fall that grew while newly elected Governor John Bel Edwards was preparing to take office.

Cain resigned in the midst of the turmoil, effective Jan. 1, and Edwards subsequently called for the reviews, giving the appearance of guilt on Cain's part.

Now Cain, with exonerations in hand, is telling why he resigned and what was behind the investigations.

POLITICAL BACKDROP

During an exclusive interview with the *Baptist Message*, Cain said he did not blame Edwards for requesting the inquiries. Rather, Cain placed the blame on the *Baton Rouge Advocate*, which he said was politically motivated against him, and a legislator who is a political foe.

Cain said he understood the difficulty

See **CAIN** on 2



Brian Blackwell photo

Burl Cain, the long-time warden of Angola State Penitentiary, resigned in the midst of turmoil Jan. 1, but has since been exonerated following three separate investigations. In an exclusive interview with the *Baptist Message* he told why he resigned and what was behind the investigations.

Making friends, encountering Jesus Christ at Tulane BCM

By BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

NEW ORLEANS – The friendship between the atheist Chinese student and the Georgian-turned-Cajun Tulane University Baptist Collegiate Ministry intern was almost instantaneous.

After meeting at a BCM dinner in the fall, Lucy (last name withheld for security reasons) had many questions about Christ and Laura Hamilton had the answers. Two to three times a week, the two met and Lucy seemed to grasp the concept of God.

However, she was not convinced, wanting to fully investigate Christianity before making a final decision to follow Jesus. Lucy and Hamilton continued attending Bible studies together and went to Metairie Church regularly.

But it was when she was alone with just her Bible at her residence a few hours after one of their Bible studies

See **TULANE** on 4

IMB's Platt denies endorsing Greear for SBC president

By WILL HALL

Message Editor

ALEXANDRIA – International Mission Board President David Platt denies he knowingly endorsed J.D. Greear for president of the Southern Baptist Convention, stating he was not aware Greear's request for a video clip was for the purpose of creating a campaign ad.

The controversy emerged when Greear, pastor of the Summit Church in Durham, N. C., and a leading member of Acts 29, a neo-Calvinist church planting network, began circu-



IMB President David Platt

lating a promotional video March 14 featuring a number of Southern Baptist personalities, including three SBC entity heads: Platt; Russ Moore, president of the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission; and, Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Platt responded to an IMB trustee via email March 23, explaining, "while I was overseas in the Middle East, J.D. asked me to shoot a 2-second video saying, 'It's tricky,'" a phrase repeated throughout the online commercial (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R2P2tqFIMnQ>).

"I had no idea what it was for," Platt clarified, although he said he knew beforehand Greear "had been nominated."

Jimmy Scroggins, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach, Fla., announced through a March 2 press release his intention to nominate Greear at the 2016 SBC Annual Meeting to be held in St. Louis, Mo., June 14-15.

Platt said it was only when he came back into the United States that he heard about Greear's use of his image and words for the electioneering piece.

"Please be assured (and please assure anyone who asks you about it) that I am not personally (and we are certainly

See **PLATT** on 5

Cain from page one

Edwards faced, just having taken office as governor shortly after charges were leveled.

"The Advocate and the investigative reporter got so adamant in chasing me that I had done something wrong and was creating such a storm," Cain said. "Here is

the new governor coming in and he wants to establish his new administration without any kind of chaos. And my very best friend is Jimmy LeBlanc, who is secretary of corrections – he and I have careers that paralleled each other for 40 years."

Cain described the legis-

lator as someone "who was really angry at me over some family matters that had happened 10 years before.

"He was real good friends with the governor and he was pushing real hard for something to happen to me.

Cain said he was protected by his civil service status, but the governor used the leverage of not reappointing his long-time friend in order to get him to resign.

Cain said he was concerned that with LeBlanc gone the progress made in establishing a presence by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and other moral rehabilitation programs at Angola would have been in jeopardy.

"I got caught in the political storm with the governor change and I am the one that was out there on the fighting lines," Cain said. "I wanted to be a noble warrior and a worthy warrior, and all of a sudden I got trashed.

"It was really important for me to be restored, espe-



Brian Blackwell photo

Burl Cain, who resigned as warden of Angola State Penitentiary on Jan. 1, details what transpired that led to his resignations. Cain was exonerated despite under going three separate investigations.

cially so Louisiana Baptists would know I didn't really stumble; it was a political thing."

Cain said he really wanted

LeBlanc reappointed "so our program would continue on." But he said the point came "that he told me they're not going to reappoint him unless I resign.

"They couldn't make me resign," he explained, "because I hadn't done anything wrong, and I had civil service protection.

"The whole point was if I would resign he would get reappointed. If I didn't resign, he wouldn't," Cain said. "Therefore, that would cause us to have a new secretary that may change everything we are doing."

Cain said he was glad to be exonerated, but the months of investigations by the state inspector general, the Department of Public Safety and Corrections and the state police took a toll on his family.

"It cost me my job, it cost me a lot of money, it cost me a lot of chaos for my family because we had to move and so forth, and it cost me my reputation," he said, adding that he trusts in God and looks forward to "what God has in store for us in the future."

See CAIN on 3

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POSTMASTER: Send address changes to the Baptist Message, 1250 MacArthur Drive, PO Box 311, Alexandria LA 71309-0311

(USPS 042-860) (ISSN 0740-2104)

Published biweekly Thursdays by the *Louisiana Baptist Message*, 1250 MacArthur Drive, Alexandria, Louisiana 71303.

Volume 131

April 7, 2016

Number 7

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MOVING ON

Cain said he never doubted he would be cleared of the charges, and is anxious now to get on with the next chapter in his life.

He is working with a North Carolina prison to establish a similar seminary program to the one run by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary at Angola. Likewise, he has other prison projects he hopes to resume in the Midwest and West.

He said he also was open to returning to prison administration if it was God's will for him.

A LEGACY TO BUILD ON

Cain became warden of Angola in February 1995, after leading the Dixon Correctional Institute in Jackson for 14 years.

Just a few months after he started at Angola, Cain said he experienced his first witness of a lethal injection execution – of an inmate convicted of murdering his mother-in-law. Cain, who is Southern Baptist, said he had not asked the man anything about his eternal security, and that fact burdened him to the point he knew he had to do something.

From that day on, Cain vowed to ask men about their relationship with God, knowing the eternal importance of a changed life. But, he also saw the pragmatics of moral rehabilitation in terms of lessening violence.

He said that is when the opportunity to set up a prison program with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, “just fell in my lap.” The four-year program, started in 1995, has produced 278 inmate graduates. Some have even transferred to other prisons as missionaries.

Now, Cain says, instead of inmates committing crimes, they are witnessing to other inmates, studying for a seminary test or holding a Bible study.

Thousands of inmates have professed Christ as Lord and Savior, and violence has decreased by 85 percent. Of the 6,300 inmates now held at Angola, nearly 50 percent are thought to be Christians.

In September 2015, NOBTS President Chuck Kelley dedicated a new 11,000-square-foot building that houses an extension center built by the inmates and funded by donors.

The Joan Horner Center has a computer lab, two classrooms, an auditorium and library, and is named in memory of bene-

factor Joan Horner, founder of Premier Designs of Dallas, who with husband Andy Horner were longtime supporters of the Angola ministry.

A month later, Washington Baptist Association accepted a church at Angola into its fellowship.

Grace Baptist Church is believed to be the first church at a prison that a Baptist association has approved for membership. The church is the only Southern Baptist congregation among the prison's 28 inmate-led churches.

Other correctional facilities have taken notice of the change inside Angola and adopted the seminary's programs:

- San Quentin State Prison, San Quentin, Calif.
 - Darrington Unit, Rosharon, Texas
 - Mississippi State Penitentiary, Parchman
 - Phillips State Prison, Buford, Ga.
 - Louisiana Correctional Institute for Women, St. Gabriel
- “Thank you so much for the prayers,” Cain said, speaking directly to Louisiana Baptists



Brian Blackwell photo

Despite no longer being the warden at Angola State Penitentiary, programs established by Burl Cain are being used as models at other prisons.

during the taping of the interview. “And thank you for your dollars. And thank you for being a good steward. Thank you for letting us have the opportunity to show how we can change lives in prison.”

“You see that prison thing in that seminary is unbelievable because it never should have happened,” he said. “I wasn’t that smart. You know the story. I didn’t figure it out, it just fell in my lap. Here we took off and

did a crazy thing and it worked. Can you believe that? It’s all over the country.

“Without your support we would never have been able to launch moral rehabilitation, nor would we have had a semi-

nary, which is really the game changer,” he said. “Without the support of the Louisiana Baptist Convention it wouldn’t have happened.”

Based on an interview with Baptist Message Editor Will Hall.

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Discipleship is a key aspect of the Christian walk at Baptist Collegiate Ministries throughout the state. Students at Tulane University's BCM enjoy a time of one-on-one fellowship and discipleship in early December.

Tulane from page one

that Lucy asked Jesus to be her personal Lord and Savior and fully committed her life to Christ.

"Throughout the whole study, God was amazing in how He gave her answers to deep questions, giving her understanding that amazed me each time," Hamilton said. "God very clearly said to me through this, 'I am the One who gives understanding. You just do your little part and I am the powerful One at work here.'"

"I remember lesson four in particular about the death of Jesus," she continued. "After reading and discussing Isaiah 53 and 1 Peter 2:22-24, we both sat in silent amazement at what Jesus has done for each of us. It was so fresh – she was hearing the depth of the Gospel for the first time and God was lining up everything in her life to bring her to Himself. I explained that her role was to respond by telling God that she wanted in – that she would dedicate her life to this relationship with Him and that she trusted in Jesus Christ as the only way to be reconciled with Him."

For Hamilton, Lucy's decision – which included baptism the Sunday following her conversion – represented how standing alongside a person seeking Christ can reap great rewards in the end, knowing the trials that lay ahead.



Photos courtesy of Tulane BCM

Metro BCM students gather for a Thanksgiving dinner for international students. The Metro BCM students are from Dillard University, Leavell College, Loyola University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern University at New Orleans, Tulane and the University of New Orleans. Corey Olivier, who is director of Metro BCM, said his students and interns are "reaching the nations who are coming to us."

"We discussed the cost of following Jesus, particularly because she will be going back to a country where she may have a hard time finding a Christian community," Hamilton said. "Lucy returned to her home country January 14th back to a family of non-Christians, but I believe that God will use her to teach the truth to her father and others around her. She is growing so much already."

The conversion of Lucy is an example of how the cooperative work of Louisiana Baptists is impacting college campuses with the Gospel, Metro BCM Director Corey Olivier believes. Dillard University, Leavell

College, Loyola University, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Southern University at New Orleans, Tulane and the University of New Orleans comprise Metro BCM.

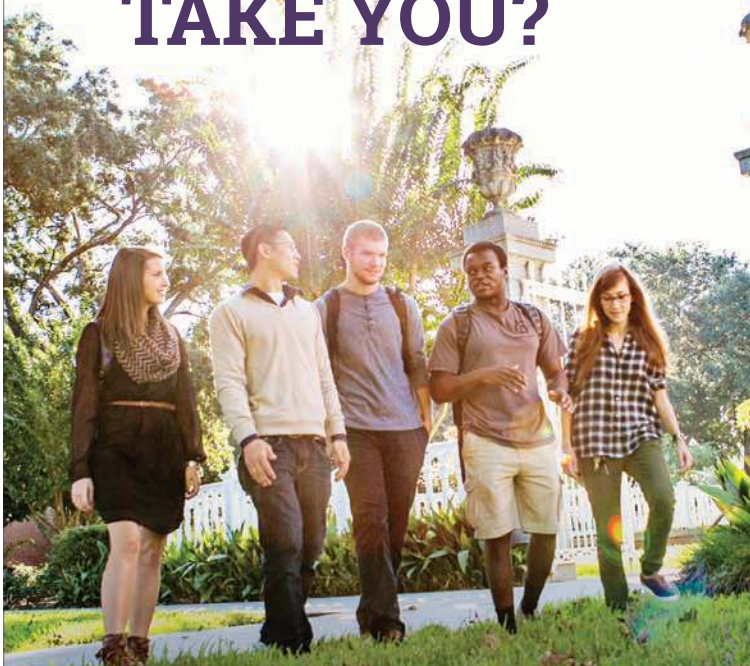
The local association, the Georgia Barnette Offering for State Missions and other money given by Louisiana Baptists all fund the work of BCMs around the state, and, volunteers from churches assist in other ways.

"The cool thing about this story is the ability for her to come in contact with the Gospel is really on all levels of our cooperative work," Olivier said. "A lot of times we have to remember when we give we don't see an immediate return on investment. But just know that your money is being used all over the state to expand the Gospel, especially on our college campuses where the majority of us have sort of an international ministry. We are reaching the nations who are coming to us."

Once a student accepts Christ, he or she is then disciplined by others in the BCM. Olivier believes that if a student learns how to disciple others, then he has succeeded as a BCM minister.

"It does give you a sense of pride that you played in a role somehow, someday," he said. "It's a testament of our desire to make disciples. The best thing I can do as a campus minister is graduate students who make disciples. That's what churches need. Our desire is not to create great BCM students but great disciple makers who will carry the local church for generations."

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Baptism movement has engulfed Miller French in Iota

By BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

IOTA – A baptism movement has taken over at Miller French Baptist Church – and it doesn't appear to be slowing down anytime soon.

When Kevin Colson became pastor of Miller French Baptist in August 2015, the congregation was averaging around 50 people on a good Sunday and had not baptized a single person in a while.

Colson encouraged the

church to set a goal of baptizing at least four people each month – a goal they wholeheartedly embraced. Since October, Colson has baptized 20 people, from as young as eight to as old as 60. An additional 10 people have accepted Christ and are awaiting baptism.

Colson said the congregation did not set the goal as a quota to meet but rather as a way to give them focus moving forward.

"The idea wasn't on one

particular number but an idea that we can do this," Colson said. "My congregation saw that if we can reach four, it's doable and something that is possible to do again.

"We want to reach as many people as we can," Colson said. "It's been exciting to see God honor and bless that."

Corrine Deshotel is one of those whose life has changed since her baptism on Oct. 18, 2015. She doesn't know where she would be if it hadn't been for the love of Christ shown through the people of the Miller French congregation.

"I've met loving, kind, understanding people and because of that a lot of my family is in church now," Deshotel said. "When I was baptized, I felt renewed and free but most of all so loved."

Excitement like that of Deshotel is the norm at his church, now, Colson said. The congregation has placed an increased emphasis on reaching out to the community, through the new welcome center inside the worship center

and starting a new children's church service on Sundays to reaching out to those in their community.

"As we have moved forward, they have shown very positive attitudes," Colson said. "When I came and shared my vision, their response was let's get to work."

"If we want to meet God, we have to go outside the camp," Colson said. "We've come to that place where we've met Christ at that de-

serted place. We have no great programs but know that God can meet us anywhere."

Alan Knuckles, director of missions for Acadia Baptist Association which includes Miller French, said the church revitalization has taken place at the church because the church took the time to evaluate their willingness to reach outside their walls and into the community.

See MOVEMENT on 12

Platt from page one

organizationally) endorsing anyone for SBC president," Platt wrote, noting he would "be thrilled" to serve alongside Greear or Steve Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., named a candidate March 9 by Johnny Hunt, pastor of First Baptist Church, Woodstock, Ga., or, "any other faithful Southern Baptist pastor who might be nominated to serve in this important role."

Since Platt's email, David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist Church, New Orleans, was named a candidate by Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, also in New Orleans, on March 24.

"When I heard about the video, I called Steve Gaines to assure him that I was not in any way 'endorsing' J.D., and I expressed my delight in the prospect of Steve potentially being in that role," Platt stated. "We had a great

conversation about his vision for the SBC, and I am completely confident in the Lord's leadership in whoever serves in this role for the next couple of years. I hope that gives some background, and again, please feel free to pass this on to anyone who contacts you about it."

Platt also noted disappointment with how Greear's use of him in a campaign video had created an unnecessary distraction, saying, "It's definitely frustrating to come back to issues like this after a couple of weeks overseas, seeing massive needs among unreached refugees who are suffering and dying, and spending concentrated time with our front line leaders around the world discussing how we can take the gospel to them."

"May God give us grace together across the SBC to keep our focus on that which matters most, here in the U.S. and around the world."

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6 FOCUS on the Louisiana Baptist Foundation

Cheryl Robinson first Give-A-Gift recipient selected by Foundation

Each month in 2016 the Louisiana Baptist Foundation is giving away \$1000 ... and you decide where it goes!

The first drawing was held this week and Cheryl Robinson of Mandeville was selected at random from over

90 submissions since late February.

Robinson chose First Baptist Church of Mandeville to receive the \$1000 gift because of the love she bears for her church and knows the gift will be used "to the Glory

of God."

According to the LBF Executive Director Wayne Taylor, the Foundation is using Give A Gift to illustrate how the Foundation assists individuals with gifts that benefit Baptist churches and

ministries.

Look for the Give A GIFT form in each issue of the *Baptist Message*, fill it out and mail it to the Foundation office. At the end of each month, starting in March, a name will be drawn from the

forms submitted.

The person selected will have the opportunity to direct \$1000 to the church or ministry of their choice.

Go online to BaptistMessage.com/give-a-gift/ for information and rules.



In a 2015 study by Natural Marketing Institute 37 percent of people who were regular in their tithes and gifts to faith-based organizations would likely include a gift to their church or other ministry as part of their estate plans.

37% are waiting to be asked

BY JERRY LOVE

LBF Communications

Statistics. Webster says statistics is "a branch of mathematics dealing with the collection, analysis, interpretation and presentation of masses of numerical data."

In other words, statistics uses raw data to tell a story. Sometimes the revelation from the data can be surprising, confusing, or even overwhelming, but there are times when we should give the numbers a little more attention.

Take for instance the study released last fall by the Natural Marketing Institute which revealed a numerical picture of the heart and attitudes of regular givers.

Their study called the 2015 Healthy Aging Database studied the giving patterns of adults over 40 in a wide range of situations. The one element that stood out from the rest was this:

Of those surveyed who were regular in their tithes and gifts to faith based organizations, 37 percent would likely include a gift to their church or other ministry as part of their estate plans. Over one third of regular givers would likely leave a gift. Of those surveyed, 19 percent were VERY likely to leave a gift in their will or in a trust. That's a pretty strong response.

The sad news is that only 3 percent had already taken action to implement a plan to give to a church or ministry from their estate. The underlying implication is many will give... if asked!

There is much competition for the money of donors/givers. Educational institutions (including Christian education), arts and cultural societies, international aid, health care, human services – the list is long. The difference between most of these organizations and churches/ministry organizations (faith based organizations) is that these "other" organizations ask! Many of these institutions have whole departments dedicated to "making the ask."

I am not proposing that every church or ministry create a staff position to solicit gifts. However, with a little thought and planning - and help from the Foundation – you can prompt your members and supporters to prayerfully consider leaving a gift from their estate. Here are a few simple suggestions:

- Include a simple statement such as "Remember [church or ministry name] in your estate plans" in your printed communications (Sunday bulletins or newsletters, mailers). The same statement can be included in any regular electronic news communications.

See ASKED on 11

Making the right financial decisions at the right time

BY JERRY LOVE

LBF Communications

Elva Sumner Ruple's earliest memories were of a father who did his best to raise her by showering her in love.

Her mother died when she was just a toddler but her father, a godly man, loved and raised her to be a faithful servant of the Lord.

Elva's father remarried when she was five years old which brought her, not just a step-mother, but a "new" mother who loved her as though she were her own. "People said we favored one another," Ruple would say.

Unfortunately tragedy struck again in Elva's teens when her father was killed in a logging accident. She and her mother, though, stood fast in their faith and leaned on one another through the grieving process.

Although losing her father was tragic, he had purchased enough life insurance shortly before the accident that made it possible for Elva and her mother to live without financial stress. Mrs. Ruple would say, "God provided for the two of them."

When Ruple left to attend Louisiana Polytechnic Institute, now Louisiana Tech, in Ruston, her mother packed up the family home and moved with her to provide support and encouragement.

Shortly after arriving in Ruston, Elva met and later married Harvey D. Ruple.

Following graduation, Elva went to work for the state of Louisiana as a parish home extension agent and she and her husband became very active in her local church and the work of Louisiana Baptists.

Friends recall the Ruples as a couple who loved the Lord, loved their pastor, and were always ready to serve where they were needed in the church and community. They also cared for Mrs. Ruple's mother who lived with them for her entire life.

Harvey and Elva Ruple started their relationship with the Louisiana Baptist Foundation in 1963 following a message given by Executive Direc-

tor Herschel Pettus at FBC Homer. She said, "my husband and I thought we were the only ones to have heard his message."

They wrote their wills so as to be good stewards of what God had blessed them, and the Ruples began a relationship with the Foundation that would span the tenure of four different directors.

Following her husband's death in early 1983, she sought the assistance of the Foundation to help her make financial decisions such as the selling of timber, land, and eventually her house and car.

From those decisions, Ruple was able to establish two trusts, which with the help of the Foundation, would assist her in her later stages of life and the remnant of her assets following her death to benefit Baptist works.

In 1989, she moved to the Baptist Retirement Center, which is now called Leslie Lakes, in Arcadia. She hand-picked her room in the facility's new wing and resided there until her death in the spring of 2007.

As she reached and passed her 90th birthday, Mrs. Ruple gradually turned over more of her personal and financial decisions to the Foundation.

In those latter years, Foundation Executive Director Wayne Taylor met with Ruple's attorney, doctor, and pastor to help make important decisions on her behalf. Because of her foresight and advanced planning, Mrs. Ruple's "support team" was able to ensure she was well cared for.

Because of the trusts she established 20 years earlier, Mrs. Ruple was sustained financially until her passing.

Through prudent management by the Louisiana Baptist Foundation, there were more dollars in the trusts when her life ended than when they were established. Now, those two trusts are known as the Mr. and Mrs. Harvey D. Ruple Cooperative Program Endowment. The income from this endowment benefits all the ministries support-

See RUPLE on 11



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Audience lifts Edwards up in prayer at 52nd Governor's Prayer Breakfast

BY MARK H. HUNTER

Regional Reporter

BATON ROUGE - Just as dawn was breaking in the middle of Holy Week, more than 1,400 Louisianans filled a large River Center ballroom for the 52nd annual Governor's Prayer Breakfast.

For more than an hour, public officials, community leaders and clergy prayed for newly-elected Gov. John Bel Edwards, the state, Louisiana families suffering from the recent flooding, the legislature, the military, emergency responders -- all concluding "In the name of Jesus, amen."

In his closing remarks, Edwards quoted I Thessalonians 5:18, "In everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."

"That is not the only reason they were praying, it is why we are praying as well," Edwards said. "And while we face challenges in Louisiana, we don't face anything that our God can't handle if we will just ask him to help us."

We certainly have to do our part, he added, asking the audience to "continue to pray" for the people of Louisiana, for one another, for our military, those who risk their lives to protect us, and, "may we pray for guidance and for wisdom for all of our leaders in the nation, our state and certainly myself included."

Noting the prayer breakfast was held a few days before Resurrection Sunday, Edwards declared, "It is the emptiness of the tomb that gives fullness to our lives. And meaning and purpose to who we are. And may we never forget that. And may we always call upon Him just as we are doing today."

Prayer Breakfast Steering Committee Chairman Tom Harrison, executive pastor at Broadmoor Baptist in Shreveport, was all smiles after the meeting was closed with a prayer offered by Edwards' pastor, Rev. Mark Beard of St. Helena Catholic Church of

Amite.

"Our goal was to lift high the name of Jesus," Harrison said. "It is our goal that people might come to a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The plan of salvation was clearly presented throughout."

Scripture readings highlighted salvation, videos emphasized the biblical foundations of our government, and the inspirational voices of Veritas, a men's quintet from Nashville, combined to create an especially worshipful time.

Jay Johnston, executive pastor of First Baptist, Covington, co-chaired the event and will lead next year's prayer breakfast, which will also be held at the River Center. He said he was pleased with "a great turnout, a great spirit and great encouragement by Jim Dennison (the main speaker) and Gov. Edwards."

David Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention, said he appreciated Harrison's and Johnston's leadership in the steering committee, the governor's address and the main speech by Jim Denison, who "reminded us to keep praying."

"Gov. Edwards seems to be a very sincere and serious about his faith in Christ and we applaud that and thank him for that," Hankins added. "I think he intends his faith to inform him in his leadership."



Mark H. Hunter photo

Jay Johnston, co-chair of the 2016 Governor's Prayer Breakfast and administrative pastor at First Baptist Covington, led more than 1,400 people attending the event in a series of 'table prayers' for various areas of government, culture, education and family. Praying at the head table is (from left) Rose Long with Fr. Mark Beard, Gov. John Bel Edwards with Tom Harrison, chairman and executive pastor at Broadmoor Baptist, Shreveport. The breakfast was held in the Baton Rouge River Center March 23.

Sen. Gerald Long and his wife, Rose Long, both long-time committee members and Southern Baptists, read one of the scripture passages.

"I'm grateful that our governor embraces what we believe is the cornerstone of good government and that starts with prayer," Sen. Long said. "Like most of us he understands he is on a journey and that every day he grows into this role as governor but he's also growing as an individual who understands the connection between

government and prayer and faith. He's beginning to have a deeper understanding of who we are in Christ and how our church can walk beside

our leaders in government to strengthen and build a better state."

See **BREAKFAST** on 8



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Jim Denison challenges prayer breakfast audience to love, serve

BY MARK H. HUNTER

Regional Reporter

BATON ROUGE - There is a worldwide revival underway with an estimated million people each week becoming Christians, Jim Denison told more than 1,400 people gathered at the River Center for the 52nd Governor's Prayer Breakfast.

But in America the number of atheists and agnostics has quadrupled in recent years, he contrasted.

"Our fastest-growing religious demographic is those who have no religion," Denison said while showing a series of slides where Christianity is booming, like Nigeria, where 90 percent of

the people attend church on Sunday.

Denison is a longtime Baptist pastor who, since 2009, has been operating the

read by 113,000 subscribers worldwide, and, he refers to himself as a cultural apologist.

"Why are we not seeing the spiritual awakening that is sweeping the nations?" he asked. "All across Scripture, our God is a King. Jesus taught us to 'seek first the Kingdom of God' (Matthew 6:33). He called us to 'repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew 4:17). When he returns, his name will be King of Kings and Lord of Lords (Revelation 19:16)."

"Tragically, in our culture God is a hobby, not a King," Denison continued. "He is for Sunday, not Monday. He is for religion, not the 'real world.' He is for the spiritual, not the secular."

"I promise you this, when you stand before Jesus one day He will not ask you about your title He will ask you about your towel."

Jim Denison
speaker at 52nd annual Governor's Prayer Breakfast

Denison Forum on Truth and Culture.

He writes a daily commentary on current events



Mark H. Hunter photo

"Self-sufficiency is spiritual suicide," Jim Denison, a Baptist pastor and Christian thinker, told more than 1,400 people gathered at the Baton Rouge River Center for the 2016 Governor's Prayer breakfast held March 23. "We need God in our lives if we want to be blessed."

"But the challenges of our day show that we need God to be more than our hobby. We need him to be our Lord and King, every moment of every day."

"Self-sufficiency is spiritual suicide," he said. "If you would make Christ your King, you've taken the first step toward the redemption God intends for your people in this day."

Denison applied the John 13 example of Jesus, who, after the Last Supper, washed the disciples' feet and told them they should wash each other's feet.

"Then our Lord made his point: 'A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another,' (vs. 34-35)," Denison quoted.

"Challenges show us that

we need God and that we need each other. When we serve each other, we serve our Lord," Denison said. "When we serve our Lord, we will serve each other. When you stand before Jesus one day, He will not ask about your title. But He will ask about your towel."

On the internet: www.denisonforum.org, and www.jimdenison.org

Breakfast

from page 7

Jeff Ginn, lead pastor at Istrouma Baptist in Baton Rouge, said he was "very impressed" with the event, especially the scriptures and prayers offered. "This was very gospel centered," he added.

Reggie Bridges, senior pastor at Temple Baptist in Ruston, said "I thought Christ was uplifted – it was a tremendous time."

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Twenty years of prayer prove you should never give up

By BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

MORGAN CITY – For 20 years, Bobby Powell invited his neighbor to attend worship services at Bayou Vista Baptist Church, only for that neighbor to turn down his invitation year after year.

Still, Powell never gave up hope and continued his prayers and invitations.

Recently, those 20 years of faithful outreach produced a harvest when Powell's neighbor walked into a revival service at Bayou Vista Baptist Church and after the message asked Jesus for forgiveness and committed his life to following Him.

Two nights later, the neighbor's son walked into the church, repented and gave his life to Christ as well.

"I have experienced an-

swered prayers many times in my life, but never one that spanned over 20 years. We just have to wait on the Lord for His timing," he said. "That story is just one of many happening at Bayou Vista Baptist Church these days."

Pastor Steven Kelly believes this south Louisiana congregation he pastors is on the edge of something great about to happen.

"I have seen a positive change in where we are headed as a church,"

said Kelly, who also serves as director of missions for the Gulf Coast Baptist Association. "Since the beginning of the year, we've had the best finances we had since I came here as pastor and our attendance is moving up slowly. We've always been a healthy church but what happened in February has helped bring us to another level spiritually as

a congregation."

At the heart of the spiritual change of Bayou Vista Baptist Church is prayer.

During February, the congregation gathered for Ten Days of Prayer, focusing on Psalm 139:23-24, "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Each night the congregation sent the first 10 minutes searching their hearts before God, before moving to the focus of prayer for that evening, which included the youth, children, each Sunday school class by name and the lost.

The congregation averages 180 in worship services on Sunday, and each night between 21 and 40 people attended, although on a Sunday evening 90 people came.

During that service, Kelly focused on 2 Chronicles 7:14 and preached on five areas for

See PRAYER on 12



Bobby Powell



Bayou Vista Baptist Church photo

Bayou Vista Baptist Church music minister Bobby Powell said two neighbors, a man and his son, who he had prayed for 20 years, gave their lives to Christ during a revival held at the church and led by evangelist Bill Britt.

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Asked from page 6

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Ruple from page 6

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LOUISIANA NOTABLES

ON THE MOVE

■ **Mike, wife Dawn, Holloway** is the new pastor at Ouachita Baptist Church, West Monroe.

■ **Terry, wife Rhonda, Horowitz** is the new pastor at Carson Baptist Church, Zwolle. He recently resigned as pastor of Paradise Baptist Church, Ball.

■ **Matt Simmons** is the new minister to students at Watson Baptist Church.

HOMEcoming

■ Emmanuel Baptist Church, Shreveport: **75th Anniversary Celebration**, April 17, 10:45 a.m. Former members and staff are invited to the service at 10:45 and the luncheon to follow. Please RSVP by calling (318) 686-7548 by April 10. Pastor: Chad Hardbarger.

■ First Baptist Church, Benton: **Homecoming Celebration, April 17**. A continental breakfast will be served beginning at 9 a.m., worship, 10:30 a.m. followed by lunch. Former members can contact the church at 318.965.2351 for more information. Pastor: Robert Beadle.

REVIVAL

■ Colfax Baptist Church, Colfax: **Revival**, April 7-10. Evangelist: **Lyndon Longoria**. Pastor: Gary Howard.

■ Ft. Jesup Baptist Church, Many: **Revival**, April 10-13; Sunday, 11 a.m. Monday-Wednesday, 6 p.m. Evangelist: **Michael Courtney**. Pastor: George Treutlein.

■ Richey Baptist Church, Deville: **Revival**, April 10 – 13; two services Sunday 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday 7 p.m. Evangelist: **Lloyd Whitman**. Music: **Damon Kirk**. Pastor: Grady Dodge.

■ First Baptist Church, Zwolle: **Revival**, April 10-13. **Baptist Men’s Day** will begin the revival and Spencer Lovett will be speaking Monday through Wednesday. Evangelist: **Spencer Lovett**. Music: **Joe Jones**. Pastor: Jerry Penfield.

■ First Baptist Church, Harrisonburg: **Revival**, April 10-13, Sunday 10 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Monday–Wednesday 6:30 p.m. Speaker: **Scotty McDowell**. Pastor: Philip Caples.

■ First Baptist Church, Dubach: **Revival**, April 17-20. Music: **The Mackey Willis Family**. Pastor: Cory Bruce.

■ Ouachita Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Revival**, April 17-20, Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m.; Monday-Wednesday, noon-1 p.m. and 6:30 p.m. Evangelist/Music: **Lisemby Family Ministries**. Pastor: Mike Holloway.

■ Superior Avenue Baptist Church, Bogalusa: **Outreach Sunday**, April 17, 10:30 a.m. Church picnic and concert, 5-7 p.m. Evangelist: **Joe Aulds**. Pastor: Clay Norwood.

CONFERENCES

■ New Prospect Baptist Church, Dry Prong: **Big Creek Baptist Association will be hosting a Prophecy Conference**, April 17-21. Evangelist: **Al Gist**. The schedule includes: April 17, The Rapture, 5 p.m.; April 18, God’s Plan for Jewish People, 6:30 p.m.; April 19, Time of the Gentiles, 6:30 p.m.; April 20, Tribulation and the antichrist, 6:30 p.m., and April 21, Millennial Kingdom, 6:30 p.m. A study booklet that goes along with the messages will be available for \$6. We will need an estimate of attendees from each church that are interested in the booklet so enough will be available. For more information, please call Carl Gulde at 318.627.3131. Pastor: Trey Lewis.

LAGNIAPPE

■ Clara Springs Baptist Camp, Pelican: **Campers on Mission work week**, April 10-15. There will be a variety of projects from general cleaning to landscaping to construction/remodeling. All skill levels are welcomed. Having an RV is not necessary, Clara Springs has accommodations. For reservations contact Clara Springs at 318.796.3875 or clarsprings@cp-tel.net. For more information, call COM President Keith Brown at 225.926.9410.

■ Sale Street Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **Matt Maher in concert with his 2016 Spring Tour**, April 7. Tickets are on sale at www.salestreet.org.

■ Northeast Baptist School, Monroe: **Annual Golf Tournament**, April 8, Noon, registration/lunch, 1 p.m. shotgun start at Chenault Park, 4-man scramble, Cost: \$100.

Registration forms available at the school, at Northeast Baptist Association center or online at www.nelba.net. For more information, call the school at 318.325.2077 or log on to www.mynbs.org.

■ First Baptist Church, Hornbeck: **Fourth annual Lo La Li Ladies Night Out** in the Fellowship Hall, April 8, 6:30 p.m. Speaker: **Non Key**. Pastor: Jack Bell.

■ Fair Park Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Fourth annual Race2Grace 5k, 10k and 1 mile fun run**, April 9, 8 a.m. Proceeds from this race will help FPBC Children Ministry send kids to attend Centri Kid Camp this summer. For more information, call 318.396.6306. Pastor: Waymond Warren.

■ Judson Baptist Retreat Center, St. Francisville: **Angels on Angels Ladies Retreat**, April 15-16, Friday, 6 p.m. registration, supper, 7 p.m. The retreat will end Saturday at 2:30 p.m. Speaker: **Becky Brown**. Worship Leader: **Paula Payne**. Afternoon horse rides will be available and will begin at 2:30 pm and continue at 3:30 and 4:30 if there is enough riders. COST: \$80/person for motel; \$70/person for cabin (Must bring linens, towels, pillow, blanket, etc.); Horse Ride is an additional \$25. To register go to www.judsonretreat.org. For more information, call 225.634.7225.

■ First Baptist Church, Head of Island: **The Barber Brothers in concert**, April 16, 6 p.m. The church invites everyone to a Gospel singing and a time of fellowship. For more information, please call Terry or Sharon Simoneaux, 225.698.6654. Pastor: Rocky Brown.

■ Friendship Baptist Church, Dubach: **Mark Lanier in concert**, April 17, 11 a.m.

■ New Zion Baptist Church, Kentwood: **4-Wheels-4 Him Car Show**, April 20, Pastor: Clark Stewart.

■ First Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Priscilla Shirer simulcast**, April 23, 7:50 a.m. Cost: free and no reservations necessary. For more information, contact Rhonda Moody, women’s ministry associate at 318.322.5104.

■ Richey Baptist Church, Deville: **Classic Car Show**, April 23, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. New or classic models will be on display at the church. Entry fee: \$20. For more information, contact Grady Dodge at 318.447.9047 or Penny Harmson 318.715.5115 or email pharmson@suddenlink.net. Pastor: Grady Dodge.

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Scripture Crypto

By **CHERYL VAUGHN**
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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.

dqy mtuhxft yt zhgt vhsdptdhut cwqv pzt rsdb’f

ehkhut, hdl sp yhf dqp vttp cqw xf pq ftt pzt rsdb’f

lsfzqdqxw, pztwtcqwt zhgt yt ftdp hdl utwpsestl

pzt rsdb;

tiwh cqxw:cqxwpttd

Clues:
P = T; H = A

Answer to March 24 Scripture Crypto:
Hebrews three:six

Prayer from page 9

which he offered opportunities for individuals to respond as the Holy Spirit touched their hearts.

Around 20 people came forward to repent and another 30 responded when Kelly offered the chance for them to simply humble themselves before God.

Two youth group members were among those who gave their lives to Jesus that night – including Karen Breaux's son.

Breaux is one of the high school department Sunday school teachers and she said the decisions by the youth were part of a larger movement of God at Bayou Vista Baptist Church.

"Every night got better and better as it went along," Breaux said. "We have many other youth in our church who are on the cusp of making a decision and are asking lots of questions. By the end of the Ten Days of Prayer, our church was closer together and was

shown the importance of putting the Lord first in everything we do."

The Ten Days of Prayer preceded a four-day revival later in February featuring nightly messages by Bill Britt. By the end of the revival, 25 people had made some form of spiritual decision, including some repenting for restoration and others finally deciding to follow through in obedience to be baptized.

The revival ended in early March, but the congregation's desire to grow closer to God has not stopped.

While the church has never experienced major internal strife, Kelly said God has used the Ten Days of Prayer and the revival as catalysts to bring the church closer together.

"There's a positive movement happening here," Kelly said. "We've always been a healthy church with no conflict or splits,

but every church could use spiritual revitalization. Our core's sensitivity to spiritual matters has grown even stronger."

Kelly encourages all churches to have similar prayer gatherings, but says to start on a smaller scale, such as the five-day prayer event Bayou Vista Baptist Church held in early November.

He adds that churches should not expect instant results but must be patient in waiting on God in His timing.

"What we have to understand with prayer is far too often we want to see instantaneous results," Kelly said. "Zechariah prayed decades for a son and may have stopped praying for that when his wife got past child bearing age. So let's be persistent and remember God moves in his timing.

"If every church in Louisiana could have a series of prayer meetings over a season and get 10 percent of their church to show up to deal with spiritual issues, we would change this state," Kelly said. "We just need to get together as a body before God and seek Him through prayer."



Pastor Steven Kelly

Movement from page 5

"Out of that came a desire to learn how to personally share Christ through their testimonies and giving new people an opportunity to pray to receive Christ one on one," said Knuckles, interim pastor prior to Colson's arrival. "That involved training sessions about witnessing. The new leadership developed that which would allow new ideas and a new vision to reach people outside the walls of the church."

For the church that is struggling and thinking of closing its doors, Colson encourages a season of prayer.

"Get on your knees and start in prayer," he said. "When we engage God and go out there to the people, the devil is nervous."

He said that a church averages as few as 10 people can double their attendance in a week by having each member bring one person to a worship service.

"There are people in a community that need to know the Lord," Colson said. "Give your people a vision. Wherever you are, be faithful. Take what God's given you and he'll bless it if your agenda is on Kingdom work.

"If a church told me they were wanting to follow Jesus, know He's out there," he continued. "You'd be surprised how many people are hurting and wanting to be loved. Think about how God had to come into our lives. He didn't call those who had their stuff together. He called anyone who wanted to come."



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