

“Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees.”

– Matthew 5:20 (NASB)

# MISSISSIPPI BAPTIST Message

Newsjournal for Louisiana Baptists



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Helping Louisiana Baptists impact the world for Christ

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August 27, 2015

## GBO provides needed support for missions and ministries



Submitted photo

Joshua Holland, pastor of Level Ground Church in New Orleans, celebrates with a woman he baptized. Located in the Hollygrove neighborhood, the church ministers to those in one of the most downtrodden areas in the entire state.

### This year's offering seeks a goal of \$1.8 million

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

In the midst of challenging economic times, supporting missions and ministries in the state can prove difficult.

However, over the last 10 years

Louisiana Baptists have demonstrated a strong commitment to state missions by their growing support of the Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering. The offering has gone from approximately \$1.2 million in 2005 to just under \$2 million in 2013 [thanks in part to a large one-time gift], and \$1.6 million in 2014.

“Louisiana Baptists want to be a part of reaching the world and North America,” said David Hankins, executive director for Louisiana Baptists. “But when it comes to reaching those living inside our borders, it becomes personal. They want to do whatever needs to be done to reach the estimated 2 million people who don’t know Jesus.”

“Be Something” taken from Ephesians 5:1, where Paul encourages

the believers living in Ephesus to “be imitators of Christ,” is the theme for this year’s offering.

The offering is named after Georgia Barnette, the first elected and paid WMU executive director/treasurer in the state. She would travel by boat, pirogue, horse and buggy, and train

from her home in New Orleans to other areas of Louisiana to visit state missionaries who were planting churches.

Church planting, compassion ministries, Woman’s Missionary Union Scholarships to Louisiana College, Disaster Relief operations, mission projects, radio outreach and ‘Here for You,’ Louisiana Baptists new multi-platform media strategy, are among the wide array of missions and ministries supported through the

offering.

Sept. 13-20 has been set aside as the Week of Prayer for state missions and ministries. Resources, including videos, demonstrating the scope and impact of the Georgia Barnette Of-

“Our Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering and CP giving allow us to provide up to 30 percent of a new church’s first year budget in Louisiana. Current average grant per church plant is around \$13k per year. \$21k per year in New Orleans.”

Lane Corley

Louisiana Baptists Church Planting  
Mission Strategist in SE Louisiana

See **GBO OFFERING** on 2

## Brazil mission trip sees 3,500 accept Christ as their Savior

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

MANAUS, Brazil – Even a battle with cancer could not keep Wayne Jenkins from helping lead his 31st consecutive mission trip to Brazil.

“I’ve been doing this 31 years and I couldn’t see me not going,” Jenkins said.

Jenkins, who serves as evangelism and church growth director for

Louisiana Baptists, was among 162 men and women who were on mission in Manaus, Brazil, as part of the Louisiana Baptist-led evangelism outreach in the country.

While there, the teams participated in street evangelism, puppets, Vacation Bible Schools, drama, sports clinics, construction of churches, BMX demonstrations and medical,



Submitted photo

Louisiana Baptist Convention Evangelism and Church Growth Director Wayne Jenkins gives a thumbs up sign as his boat passes through the rain forest. Jenkins has led the trip since its infancy 31 years ago.

See **BRAZIL** on 9

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## GBO Offering from page one

-fering have been mailed to churches across the state. Additional resources are available online at [www.GeorgiaBarnette.org](http://www.GeorgiaBarnette.org). This year's offering goal is \$1.8 million.

Because of generous giving, Louisiana Baptists are able to continue the vision of Georgia

Barnette more than 100 years after she first led women to begin taking up an offering for state missionaries in 1907. The offering was named after her in 1937.

Lane Corley, church planting strategist for Louisiana Baptists, said church plants

who receive Georgia Barnette funding represent a fulfillment of a goal of the President's 2020 Report to plant 300 new churches in Louisiana. Already this year, Louisiana Baptists are on pace to plant 35 churches, up from the 2014 total of 28.

Corley hopes Georgia Barnette funds can be used by church planters in parishes like St. James Parish, which has only one Southern Baptist Church to minister to the 22,000 people living there.

"Much of the population growth in state has occurred along the I-10/I-12 corridor in south Louisiana," said Corley. "If we're serious about reaching our state, we must plant more churches who can in turn, engage their communities with the Gospel."

Among those benefiting from Georgia Barnette church plant funding is Progression Church in Baton Rouge, one of the churches featured in the Week of Prayer for state missions and ministries. The



Submitted photo

Girls worship during a Missions Jamboree event. M-JAM, Royal Ambassador Camp and other similar missions camps rely on Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering funding to strengthen mission education for preschool, children and youth.

church that meets on the LSU campus started with 20 attending its Sunday worship service when it first began in January 2014, and averaged 90 in the spring.

"The Georgia Barnette of-

fering allows us to practically accomplish the mission that God has given us – to plant a church in Baton Rouge to reach as many Millennials as possible and plant other churches that do the same," said Brian Crain, pastor of Progression Church.

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### A PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY



Janie Wise, women's missions and ministries strategist for Louisiana Baptists, noted that Louisiana Baptists share a responsibility to assist church planters, compassion ministry sites and others involved with missions around the state.

"The money given stays right here in the state, to help further the gospel," Wise said. "If we don't take care of the lost in the state, who will?"

Even though the week of prayer for the Georgia Barnette State Missions Offering is a few weeks away, churches are encouraged to begin promoting it now. Wise said churches that have not yet received promotional materials should contact her at 318.448.3402.

In addition to printed materials, online promotional pieces can be accessed at [www.GeorgiaBarnette.org](http://www.GeorgiaBarnette.org).

See GBO OFFERING on 9

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## President's Report | Summer Update



The Louisiana College campus thrives again with students as the fall semester is underway. As for your LC staff, we have been thriving all summer. The list of milestones below is but part of a more extensive, detailed list we mailed to our trustees, donors and others, and have posted on our website.

Thank you, Louisiana Baptists, for praying for and supporting Louisiana College as we continue to enhance, underscore and facilitate a relevant, relational and rigorous approach to a liberal arts education with a Christian worldview. Without your prayers and financial considerations, we simply could not hold forth nearly as effectively in what God has commissioned us to do at Louisiana College: prepare graduates and transform lives.

### **Academics**

Formalized a dual enrollment agreement with Rapides Parish School Board, allowing qualified high school students to enroll in six hours per semester.

Received a 10-year reaffirmation of accreditation for our Business Division.

Hired several highly credentialed faculty members.

Explored agreements with several higher education institutions to enhance LC's degree programs.

Engaged Dr. Marilyn Cooksey as Dean of Nursing.

### **Integration of Faith and Learning**

Inaugurated summer reading project requiring all new freshmen to read Ostrander's "Why College Matters to God," and all faculty to read "Conceiving the Christian College" by Duane Litfin.

Developed integration and faith training workshops for LC faculty, staff and coaches.

### **Athletics**

Hired several new coaches, including Super Bowl winner, Chris Boniol.

Added Jonathan Small as associate athletic director and sports marketing specialist.

### **Admissions**

Achieved a double digit percent increase in enrolling freshmen as compared to last fall.

Contacted scores of students through staff and trustees.

Finalized plans for LC teams to visit LBC churches every other Wednesday night.

### **Institutional Advancement**

Launched Board of Visitors and enrolled 15 at various levels of participation.

Hosted 20 local community leaders from CENLA in the past several weeks.

Visited with alumni and friends in Louisiana and Texas.

### **Student Development**

Completed plans for students activities.

Updated student orientation manual and improved dorm policies.

Launched online satisfaction survey regarding events and summer camps.

Hired NOBTS grad Charles Robertson as director of campus security.

Added three admissions counselors, one to relate solely to homeschoolers.

### **Campus Maintenance/Upgrades**

Replaced roof on Hixson Student Center.

Renovated dorm bathrooms.

Upgraded equipment to increase Wi-Fi speed and reliability.

*Save the Date*  
**September 18, 2015**  
**Inauguration Ceremony**  
**for Dr. Rick Brewer.**  
**Dr. Don Wilton,**  
**keynote speaker**



# To our readers there is Good News in Louisiana!

ALEXANDRIA – Great reports are coming in about the impact of the Good News across Louisiana.

*Baptist Message* readers might have made note of George Warshaw in our last edition.

He became a babe in Christ in July at the age of 101 years old!

Warshaw has been a faithful attendee for many years at Calvary Baptist Church in Alexandria, and his wife Lou had been faithfully praying for his salvation since they married in 1991.

Other churches, large and small, have shared great reports about the power of the Good News working in their communities as well.

Pisgah Baptist in Forest Hill, which has about 70 worshippers Sunday mornings, reported baptizing 10 new believers this summer, 12 for the year (a marked increase over the 4 baptisms it averaged per year for the last decade or so). Likewise, First Bossier reported baptizing 22 born again disciples July 19, including 17

at Splash Kingdom, and has baptized 171 converts total through the first week of August. Meanwhile, Celebration Church in New Orleans baptized 92 during its “All In” weekend in July, bringing their total to 384 baptisms for the year and keeping them on pace to meet their goal of 520 baptisms by the end of the 2015.



**DR. WILL HALL**  
Editor  
Louisiana  
*Baptist Message*

Louisiana Baptists’ cooperative missions and ministries have experienced God’s favor as well.

Tall Timbers set attendance records again this summer for LBC-sponsored camps.

Youth Camp attendance was 994 total, about 4 percent higher than the record set last year. Clear Camp II was the highest attended among the three camps offered, with 398 campers. For comparison, last year the largest camp in this age group had 349 participants.

Kids Camp did well, too, with Kids Camp III producing the largest camp ever held at Tall Timbers: 458 registered kids.

In all, 991 children came to these three younger age camps.

The grand total of all campers this summer was 2,336, 4.5 percent growth over last year’s attendance.

Importantly, 126 campers made decisions for Christ at Tall Timbers!

Meanwhile, work on the Georgia Barnett Conference Center and Missionary/Volunteer Training Center is moving along nicely. The concrete slab was poured at the end of June, framing went up during July, and the structure is ready for setting the roof trusses by crane August 24.

Professionals poured the concrete and will lift the trusses into place. But volunteers have contributed the bulk of the labor for everything else.

More volunteers are needed in August through an estimated March 2016 completion date to help with electrical wiring, hanging and finishing sheetrock, laying floors, installing shingles and other work.

Meals and lodging will be provided, making it essentially an all-expenses

paid mission project for church volunteer groups. If you’re interested in helping, call or email Bill Temple (318.368.5129 or bjtemple71241@aol.com).

Meanwhile, Louisiana Baptists have planted 26 new churches together, so far, in 2015. Our goal is 30 church plants and we are on pace to launch 35. Yet, starting 40 is not out of reach.

And they are bearing fruit!

Our African-American church plants report 56 baptisms and 280 professions of faith for 2015, and our Hispanic church plants have baptized 83 to date and witnessed 380 salvation decisions. In all, three year groups of church plants have combined for 169 baptisms and are discipling 683 others who came to know Christ this year.

There is Good News in Louisiana!

If you have a great report to share about the Good News as encouragement for other Louisiana Baptists, call or write us at the *Louisiana Baptist Message*.

Our office number is 318.442.7728 and you can send photos or notes to Editor@BaptistMessage.com.

## Offering multisite as a strategy for church revitalization

What I’m offering today may not set well with many, but I believe it must be said. I’m a pastor who is becoming increasingly frustrated. I’m not frustrated in my ministry.

In fact, God has privileged me to serve in a gracious fellowship of believers that affords me the opportunities to preach and to lead the congregation to fulfill its particular mission in our community and beyond.

So why am I frustrated? I am frustrated because all around me I hear of the increasing number of declining and dying churches that represent only a portion of the churches in the Southern Baptist Convention have stopped growing.

To be sure, some churches will decline because the communities in which they are have declined in population. However, this is not the case for most of the ones I know. And if something does not change within these churches that they will continue to decline and will eventually cease to exist. This grieves our Lord, and it should grieve all believers.

Recently our denomination has focused much attention on church revitalization, and I am glad that we have done so. However, some have the mistaken idea that if we can infuse a declining church with some financial aid, some minor adjustments in their programming, and maybe even sending some people to them, then they will experience a turnaround.

Generally when this method is used, the church might survive a bit longer while sometimes a spike may indeed occur. However, without significant changes in the way the church carries out its work, the infusion only serves to prop up a congregation for a short period. Often a declining church needs more than an ad-

justment, but rather a complete shift from the way church functions.

My bigger frustration comes from a pervading attitude that implicitly says, “We’d rather die than change.” Whether this viewpoint comes from the pastor or from the congregation, it often will serve as the church’s own death sentence.



**KEN SCHROEDER**  
Pastor  
First Baptist Church  
Mandeville

For the past several years, I sensed the need to prepare our congregation for a strategy that would maximize our giftedness to reach more people. We sensed that the Lord wanted us to plant another church in our area. The experiences we gained from the planting a Hispanic congregation, which meets simultaneously on our campus, guided our preparations.

As we sought the Spirit’s guidance on strategies for church planting, we were drawn to the multisite church strategy. We identified several reasons for moving to such a strategy.

Multiplying the resources of God had entrusted to our church. God had equipped our staff and congregation to carry out Great Commission ministry. We had committed every aspect of our ministries to developing maturing follower of Jesus Christ.

Being able to utilize people resources within our congregation. Not only had our pastoral staff grown to take on greater responsibilities, but God showed us people from within the church to consider calls to ministry positions. In the last four years, two laymen have been added to our pastoral staff. We see this as a trend for the future and one that can be further developed as God adds ministry locations.

A perception that the unreached want a personal touch. Building a larger auditorium to accommodate a larger number of

people did not make sense when people kept telling us that they chose our church because they sought after a “smaller church.” Having multiple locations made more sense because we could take the church closer to where they lived, while providing a “full menu” of ministry offerings through centralized administration.

The possibility of coming alongside struggling congregation and reinvigorating them for kingdom ministry. Admittedly, this reason came about as a result of how the Lord has equipped and shaped me for ministry.

Throughout my ministry, I have reached out to pastors within our convention and beyond to help them lead their congregations. But now I sense that by engaging these congregations by including them in a multisite approach, we could utilize kingdom resources and do an even better job in reinvigorating them. We have since learned that more than one in three multisite churches began a new campus as the result of a merger.

In anticipation of what we sensed the Lord wanted us to do with regard to church planting and specifically, with developing a multisite church mentality, I led our pastoral staff and congregation to alter the way we approach the weekend services.

In particular, I knew our staff had to prepare for carrying out multisite church model at a single-site so that we could transition more readily when the time came to multiply the ministry.

For years, I knew that one of the most effective ways to lead the church comes through better planned Sunday morning experiences which translates to more meaningful experiences for everyone. Throughout my pastoral ministry, I had developed the habit of planning my preaching either weeks or a few months at a time. However, now I knew that we

needed to shift to a more elaborate planning model. This would make it possible for our creative team (which also had to be developed) to formulate the creative elements for each sermon series such as this music, set design, graphic design, promotional materials, drama skits, and videos. The shift also necessitated forming a teaching team to share the preaching responsibilities.

For years we had utilized the giftedness of others on our staff to fill the pulpit in my absence. But with the teaching team approach, we have more consistency in preaching the sermon series. Not only does this permit us to develop and preach better sermons, we have grown together in our ministry while developing a strategy for growing campus pastors.

Having personally observed and studied other multisite mergers in Tennessee, Missouri, and Louisiana, I know that extending the kingdom reach and maximizing our mission efforts can be accomplished by utilizing such a strategy. I have witnessed how the Spirit of God has infused new life, and the church now reaches new people.

Yet I also realize the heart wrenching difficulty that declining churches have in coming to terms with their futures.

I know that no one readily wants to admit, “We need help” or “Our church is dying.” These congregations have made sacrifices for the cause of Christ in ministry and missions; however, they now come to the critical crossroads of the future.

Therefore, I urge the leaders in these congregations to consider prayerfully seeking out a strong congregation in their area help them to breathe new life and to continue the legacy of their church’s contribution to the spread of the gospel. After all, it’s really not about you and your church. It’s about our great God receiving all the praise that He is due.



# New church plant Boots N Saddles uses horses, riding to share Gospel

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

FOLSOM – Addison Hill steps up onto the quarter horse, glowing with excitement.

Moments later, the 11 year old rounds the pin inside the Good Guys Farm arena.

A girl of few words, this first-time horse rider communicates the feelings of the other 15 youth present on a humid summer evening in south Louisiana.

“It’s fun and different,” Hill said. “I don’t have a horse myself and finally get to ride one, so I’m pretty excited.”

Fifteen minutes later, the horse riding stops momentarily while Pastor Louis Husser brings a message, not only about the horse, but the hope of Jesus Christ. Riding his team roping/heel horse, Husser brings a 20-minute ‘Sermon on the Mount,’ mixing stories about the relationship of trust and voice command he has with his horse with sharing details about how to have a relationship with Christ.

“We’ve built a relationship where I expect him to recognize my voice,” Husser tells a crowd of 55. “I’m going to be patient with him so he’ll hear my voice.”

“How you hear from God is very simple,” he continues. “God will speak to us through His word, through the Bible. If we listen, God’s word will tell how to have a relationship with Him.”

This is the fourth time this group of cowboys has met for Boots N Saddles, a church plant of Crossgate Church in Robert where Husser has served as pastor for nearly 24 years. Unlike the other three cowboy churches that Crossgate Church has planted, Boots N Saddles is geared primarily toward equestrian and gospel training for beginners.

Leading up to the launch dates of Sept. 13 and 20, Husser and other leaders in the church will teach beginners free lessons of true horsemanship, care for horses and spiritual lessons. Husser believes a growing number of young people in rural areas are not being exposed to horses and he hopes this ministry will help bridge that gap.

“There is so much relevance between our relationship with the horse that God uses for us to learn about our relationship with him,” Husser said.

Lonnie Wascom, director of

missions for Northshore Baptist Association, said once Boots N Saddles is established, it will be just the second Cowboy Church in the association.

In addition to planting a church in Folsom, Crossgate has planted cowboy churches in Zachary, Loranger and Des Moines, Iowa. Crossgate Church planted in 2006 the first in the association, Crossbrand Cowboy Church in Loranger. That church now boasts an attendance of 120, has averaged 30 baptisms a year and has seen well over 100 people accept Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

Wascom said leaders of Boots N Saddles bring down barriers only seen by the unchurched.

“When you’re living in horse culture, schedules become a real hassle, as does language,” Wascom said. “They pose the same principles and challenges

that are readily accepted with language work or other ethnicities. Cowboys, thorough bread breeders, wranglers, kids and all kinds of folk are drawn to horses. From there, it’s a short ride to positive gospel responses.”

Though the Boots N Saddles has not yet officially launched, 20 leaders in all areas of equestrian and ministry have signed on to help reach those of all ages with the gospel through horsemanship. One of their goals is to lead 100 young people to Christ by September 2016.

“The horses are the hook to introducing them to Christ,” said Hugh Exnicios, who has been instrumental to helping get Boots N Saddles off the ground. “Most kids love horses, so they learn how to ride them and in the end not only gain experience riding horses but hopefully come to know Christ for a lifetime.”



Leah Ried photo

Boots N Saddles, a church plant in Northshore Baptist Association, uses horses and riding to spread the Gospel. The new church plans to launch on Sept. 13 according to Louis Husser.

For more information on how to help with Boots N Saddles, go to bootsnsaddlesfol-

som.net or the group’s Facebook page at facebook.com/BootsNSaddlesFolsom.

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# Kelly takes over as Gulf Coast Baptist Association bi-vo DOM

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

MORGAN CITY – A Morgan City pastor has begun serving as bi-vocational director of missions for Gulf Coast Baptist Association.

An association of 15 churches primarily in St. Mary Parish, Gulf Coast Baptist Association previously shared with a director

of missions with Evangeline Baptist Association. Steven Kelly assumed his role as director of missions on Aug. 1.

Bert Langley, who has retired as director of missions for Evangeline Association, but is remaining as interim, approached Kelly with the



Bert Langley

idea a few months ago and the churches in Gulf Coast Baptist Association agreed the timing was right to make the move.

“Before, we shared a director of missions with an area much larger than our own,” said

Kelly, who is pastor of Bayou Vista Baptist Church, where the new associational office will be located. “Bi-vocationally I can give it the same attention a new director of missions would do. For our churches, we now have our own identity.”

Kelly will continue to serve full time as pastor and will work one day a week as director of missions.

While his role as pas-

tor will prevent him from serving as an interim pastor at other churches on Sundays, Kelly plans to meet with pastors during meal times, in the evenings and on Saturdays for special events.

Most of the congregations are located near Bayou Vista, which allows Kelly close proximity to visit with them. Half are led by bi-vocational pastors.

Only three of the churches average more than 100 on Sunday morning worship services.

“It’s been stated at our state convention that at least half of our pastors are bi-vocational,” Kelly said. “Because I am local,

that gives me the ability to meet those needs of pastors who are closeby and maybe can’t meet during the daytime because some of them are bi-vocational.”



Steven Kelly

Throughout his six years as pastor of Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Kelly has gotten to know most of the churches in the association, which has included two years as moderator.

One of his goals as director of missions is to bring increased unity among the churches.

“In the day we live in, where external attacks are greater than ever before, we

See KELLY on 7



**AVAILABLE TO SPEAK**

Lauren Busbee is available for speaking engagements for Women's Conferences or sessions. Topics can range from Practical Biblical Insights, Missions (was a missionary in Moscow), and Living Life Abundantly (as a wife and mother to 4 boys). Busbee has a B.A. in Christian Ministry from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and is the author of the Christian fictional book 'Bean Me Up.'



To schedule an event or to order her book through her website, visit [www.BowTieEndings.com](http://www.BowTieEndings.com)

## Louisiana Baptist FOUNDATION

The Louisiana Baptist Foundation is pleased to publish its Statement of Financial Position for the year 2014. The Foundation presents this statement on-line and annually in the Louisiana Baptist *Message* for public review.

The financial statement presented was prepared from the books and records of the Louisiana Baptist Foundation. A copy of the audit report for the calendar year that ended December 31, 2014, issued by independent certified public accountants can be reviewed upon request and is available at the office of the Louisiana Baptist Foundation.

Please call the Foundation if you have further questions regarding its financial position.

**Louisiana Baptist Foundation**  
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### Statement of Financial Position - December 31, 2014

| <b>ASSETS</b>   | <b>2014</b>                  |
|---|------------------------------|
| Cash and cash equivalents                                   | \$ 12,303                    |
| Accrued receivables   | 14,567                       |
| Prepaid expenses  | 11,504                       |
| Furn., equip., leasehold improvements - net of depreciation | 138,232                      |
| Other assets  | 721                          |
| Investments in LBF managed accounts                         | 7,262,532                    |
| Beneficial interest in trusts and endowments                | 14,786                       |
| Beneficial interest in split interest agreements            | 266,899                      |
| Assets held for agencies and trusts                         | <u>161,823,037</u>           |
| <b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>   | <b>\$ <u>169,544,581</u></b> |
| <b>LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>                           |                              |
| <b>LIABILITIES</b>  |                              |
| Accounts payable  | \$ 2,230                     |
| Accrued liabilities   | 148,636                      |
| Liabilities for split-interest agreements                   | 167,466                      |
| Due to agencies and trusts                                  |                              |
| Short Term Fund managed accounts                            | 68,224,827                   |
| Realized/Unrealized losses not allocated                    | 58,934                       |
| Other managed accounts                                      | <u>93,539,276</u>            |
| Total Liabilities   | 162,141,369                  |
| <b>NET ASSETS</b>   |                              |
| Unrestricted  |                              |
| Operating   | 679,227                      |
| Designated for impaired losses                              | 250,000                      |
| Designated for donor advised funds                          | 6,359,766                    |
| Permanently restricted                                      | <u>114,219</u>               |
| Total Net Assets  | <u>7,403,212</u>             |
| <b>TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS</b>                     | <b>\$ <u>169,544,581</u></b> |

“In our opinion, the financial statements referred to above present fairly, in all material respects, the financial position of Louisiana Baptist Foundation as of December 31, 2014..., and the changes in its net assets and its cash flows for the years then ended in accordance with accounting principles generally accepted in the United States of America.”

from the 2014 Independent Auditor's Report prepared by Payne, Moore and Herrington, LLP, Certified Public Accountants



Enhancing Trust



# Fred Lowery headlines 2015 E4 Preaching Conference

BY STAFF

*Baptist Message*

PINEVILLE – A former president of both the Louisiana Baptist Convention and Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference is the keynote speaker for the seventh annual E4 Preaching Conference.

## Kelly from page 6

need cohesion," Kelly said. "We are entering a time in the life of our country where the churches cannot afford to go at it alone, so we will have to depend on the association and other bodies that link us together.

"My goal is to enhance the fellowship and help us become more interdependent," he continued. "There is strength in numbers. This latest ruling by the Supreme Court on same-sex marriage should be a wake-up call that if we stand alone, we won't hold together like we need to. So at associational level we need to hold together regionally. The devil attacks you by yourself normally. If he can isolate you, he can win."

A native of Chalmette, Kelly graduated from both the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and the University of New Orleans.

Fred Lowery, who is pastor emeritus of First Baptist Church in Bossier City, will bring messages during three sessions of the conference Sept. 18 at First Baptist Church Pineville.

In addition to Lowery's messages and music by the First Baptist Pineville praise team, the conference will also

With more than 25 years in pastoral ministry, he has served on staff of churches in other areas of the state, as well as in Iowa and Mississippi. In addition to Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Kelly has served in Louisiana as pastor at Circle Baptist Church in Baker, First Baptist Church in Doyline and First Baptist Church in Many.

He also served as a summer missionary in San Francisco, Calif., where he sensed the call to ministry as well as met his wife, Tamilee, who was a partner on his team during the summer of 1986. The couple has three children, two who are grown.

"What excites me the most about remaining at Bayou Vista as pastor and serving bivocationally as director of missions is that I get to love my church and serve our region at the same time," Kelly said.

feature break-out sessions on such topics as Preaching Jude, Preaching the Story of David and Goliath, and Three Essentials for Effective Ministry. Professors from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary will lead the breakout sessions.

Those attending the conference will have the opportunity to win numerous giveaways, valued at a total of \$5,000, thanks to the North American Mission Board, LifeWay, and friends of the E4 Conference. Logos Bible software will also be on hand to present information about their software that helps pastors in preparation for sermons.



Fred Lowery

Church in Orlando.

"We are looking forward

The E4 Conference began in 2009 with a vision to exemplify, encourage, equip and empower our pastors to preach expositional sermons. Past speakers have included Don Wilton, pastor of First Baptist Church in Spartanburg, SC, and David Uth, pastor of First Baptist

to our seventh E4 Preaching Conference," said Stewart Holloway, conference organizer and pastor of First Baptist Church in Pineville. "This day will be beneficial to every pastor's ministry. Don't miss it!"

Sponsored by the LBC pastoral leadership team, the conference begins on Sept. 18 at 9 am and ends at 7 pm. The cost of the conference is \$75 for ministers and \$25 for students. Lunch is provided at the church.

Participants can register online at [louisianabaptists.org/e4](http://louisianabaptists.org/e4) or call 800.622.6549, ext. 292.

SEEKING FULL TIME SOCIAL WORKERS

The Louisiana Baptist Children's Home is seeking a full-time social worker for the Alexandria area.

The ideal candidate must possess a MSW, have previous child-welfare experience, be an active member of a Southern Baptist church, and be committed to serving God by ministering to children and families through foster care and adoption services.

If interested, please submit a résumé to [beth@lbch.org](mailto:beth@lbch.org) or send to Louisiana Baptist Children's Home, P.O. Box 4196, Monroe, LA 71211.





First Baptist Church  
P.O. Box 488  
Gonzales, LA 70707

### Pastors' Conference

September 10-11, 2015

First Baptist Church is excited to have Dr. Jim Shaddix lead the Fall Pastors' Conference on the topic of preaching.

Find more info or register today by visiting [www.fbcg.net!](http://www.fbcg.net)



**Schedule:**  
Thursday, 9/10/15  
4:00 - 8:30pm  
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## SEPTEMBER 10-13

**CHURCH GROUP DISCOUNTS**



# Family Serve weekend a unique chance for parents, children to serve together

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

LAKE CHARLES – Parents and children will have the opportunity to serve alongside one another during the upcoming Family Serve

weekend in Lake Charles.

Scheduled for Sept. 25-26, Family Serve will encourage families to be on mission through a variety of local ministries in the city.

The weekend begins on Sept. 25 at 5:30 pm, with a dinner, opening worship and mission team social at First Baptist Church in Lake Charles. The following day, families will eat breakfast and worship together before heading out to work at mission sites.

Mission opportunities on Sept. 26 include sharing the gospel at block parties, prayer walking in neighborhoods, operating free well-

ness checks at a block party and assisting church plants with outreach. The Louisiana Baptist Children's Home will have its Mobile Pregnancy Care Center stationed at Mt. Pilgrim Baptist Church to offer free ultrasound and pregnancy testing.

Family Serve weekend will conclude with a worship celebration, led by Jeff Slaughter who wrote songs for LifeWay Christian Resources' Vacation Bible School for 16 years.

The \$40 registration cost per person includes program fee, three meals, church lodging, t-shirt and funds for local ministries involved in Fam-

ily Serve. Lodging at a hotel instead of the church is an option at an additional cost.

Sept. 2 is the registration deadline. To register or for more information, visit [louisianabaptists.org/familyserve](http://louisianabaptists.org/familyserve).

"Our prayer is that this mission trip would encourage families to continually serve together and live a missional lifestyle that glorifies God," said Jess Archer, children and youth missions strategist for

## Baptist Children's Home and Family Services SEEKS DIRECTOR

The Illinois Baptist Children's Home seeks an Executive Director to replace retirement of current director at the end of 2016.

Applications are to be received by January 2016 to fill the position by October 2016.

For details, go to [www.bchfs.com/employment.html](http://www.bchfs.com/employment.html)



September 17 • 6:00 p.m.

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## American Sniper's widow to share testimony Aug. 30 at First Bossier

BOSSIER CITY – The widow of American Sniper Chris Kyle will share her testimony during two worship services at First Baptist Bossier City on Aug. 30.

Taya Kyle will share about her husband's commitment to fighting for his country and the impact his Christian faith had on him. Throughout his book that became a New York Times bestseller, Chris Kyle mentions numerous times of his reliance on Christ.

Known as the most lethal sniper in US military history with more than 160 kills, Kyle was honorably discharged in 2009. He died in 2013 while visiting a shooting range with a friend when another man, Eddie Ray Routh, allegedly killed the two men.

His story was made into the movie "American Sniper" and was released in 2014.

She will speak during the 9:15 and 10:45 am worship services as part of the church's "Honor Our Heroes Sunday." Active military, police, firemen and first responders will be honored during the services and at a breakfast reception at 8:15 am



Taya Kyle

and lunch at 12 pm.

Brad Jurkovich, pastor of First Bossier, said the day allows his church to actively serve those who protect them.

"We need to encourage these families as much as possible," Jurkovich said. "They all are on the front line. As a church, as representatives for Christ, we need to be encouraging them and sharing there is hope beyond this life."

## E4 CONFERENCE

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SEPTEMBER 18, 2015

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**NEW ORLEANS**  
BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY



# Brazil from page one

cal, dental and eye clinics. The majority of those ministering in Brazil were from Louisiana, though a handful came from Canada and states including Alabama, Florida, North Carolina, Oregon, Texas and Utah.

By the end of the group's mission trip, 3,500 people accepted Christ as their personal Lord and Savior.

Among those who went on the trip was Brad Bennett, who led the BMX and gospel presentations. Bennett is president and founder of Real Encounter Ministry of Springfield, Mo.

"We counted it a blessing to be able to work with the Louisiana Baptist Convention on the mission trip to Brazil," Bennett said. "We were able to do ministry shows in some spiritually oppressed areas and it was incredible to see people pass from death to life. I believe God blessed all our efforts and we will cherish it for all of eternity."

James Agnor said that of the 16 churches he has helped build during his mission trips to Brazil, the one on the last trip stood out in his mind the most.

With 48 members, the church has a five-year goal that Agnor said would be the envy of some of the largest churches in the US.

Their goals include make 1,500 disciples of Jesus, implant 300 small groups, send and financially support 10 missionaries, plant two new

churches and construct a home church. Agnor, who went on the trip with his wife Nancy, said the pastor of the church emailed him with news of five decisions for Christ and one request for baptism since they returned to the US.

"The church is engaged in training Brazilians to go out through the state of Amazonas," Agnor said. "They expect 20 students to train with them for three months. After they complete their training they will be sent out to live in primitive conditions for two years ministering to the people of the Amazon jungle."

"I guess you can see why I am excited about being a part of such a church," he continued.

For his part, Steve Masters led an LSU team of students.

Some worked from 6:30 am to 7:30 pm for six days building a church while another group of students was involved with evangelism in schools.

Masters, who is Baptist Collegiate Ministry director at LSU, said the team is just some of the 5,000 college students serving Christ around the world through various mission endeavors.

"The students enjoyed seeing the commitment from the people at the church they worked with and building those relationships all week," Masters said. "Those working in the schools enjoyed sharing the gospel with hundreds and

hundreds of other students. It was very encouraging to see the faith and commitment of the Brazilian Christian youth there."

Jenkins said with the three churches the college students and others on the trip built, teams in the 31-year history of the Brazil trip now have constructed 59 churches. His goal is to eventually reach 100.

Sean Keith, Sunday school and discipleship strategist for Louisiana Baptists, spent much of his time handling logistics. In the midst of several times of frustration, Keith said he could see God at work.

"I was thinking that I wanted to be out there with the other team members and here I am inside a hotel room," he said. "Then I would see someone walk in from a member and they would get all excited, sharing with me things God was doing."

When Keith was able to get out into the city, he enjoyed seeing God moving, especially within his daughter, Leslie, who served on a medical team.

"Being able to be with my daughter and seeing her use her abilities and gifts was incredible," he said. "It was an experience we both will never forget as father and daughter serving together."

That generational service of Keith and his daughter and others is one of the fondest results that come from the more than three decades of mission trips to Brazil, Jenkins said.

"The children and grandchildren who go with their parents or grandparents become mission minded," Jenkins said.



Submitted photo

Brazilians worship alongside the mission team that built the church building. Teams worked to build three churches during the week they were in the area.

"I can testify that people go and become stronger church people after going to Brazil. They meet the missionaries

that we support as Southern Baptists and come back to their churches as an advocate for the Cooperative Program."

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# GBO Offering from page 2

Once there, users can access videos of churches and ministries featured for each day of the week of prayer, drama and sketch ideas, sermon outlines, teaching guides, promotional tools, clip art, a list of speakers and worship ideas.

John Kyle, director of communications for Louisiana Baptists, noted that in light of recent court decisions and other events in our culture, there has rarely been a more urgent time to pray for and contribute to this effort.

"Our state is dark and is getting darker," Kyle said. "The only way for the darkness to win is for the light to retreat. It's time for us who claim the name of Jesus to be the salt and light He commanded us to be and that our state so desperately needs."

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**ORGANIST NEEDED**  
An organist is needed at First Baptist Church, Pineville for Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings.  
Contact Chris Turner in the church office at 318.448.8221 if interested

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South Winnfield Baptist Church is seeking a part-time Minister of Music.  
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# LOUISIANA NOTABLES

## ON THE MOVE

- **Harry, wife Brooke, Brown** is the new pastor at First Baptist Church, Ringgold.
- **Justin Hardin** is the new minister of youth at Beulah Land Baptist Church, Haughton.
- **Brandon, wife Lacey, Lewis** is new minister of youth at First Baptist Church, Haughton.
- **Tom Descant** is the new associate pastor to families at Hillcrest Baptist Church, Franklinton.
- **Scott Teutsch** is the new interim pastor at Plain Dealing Baptist Church, Plain Dealing.
- **Tom Cole** is the new music minister at Shreve City, Shreveport.
- **Jeff Triplett** is the new youth minister at First Baptist Church, Haynesville.
- **Joe Bob Alexander** is the new interim pastor at Ferry Lake Baptist Church, Oil City.
- **Mark Caruso** is the new associate pastor/youth minister at Pine Grove Baptist Church, Livingston.

## HOMECOMING

- Red River Baptist Church, Benton: **166th anniversary and homecoming celebration**, Aug. 30, 10:45 a.m. Speaker: **Wayne Dubose**. Morning worship celebration will be followed by dinner on the grounds. All former members, pastors and staff are welcome to attend. Pastor: Josh Cagle.
- Bethel Baptist Church, Colfax: **Homecoming**, Sunday, Aug. 30, 10:45 a.m. Following the morning service there will be covered-dish dinner and fellowship in the Family Life Center. Speaker: **Joe Reynolds**. Pastor: Carl Gulde.
- First Baptist Church, Independence: **Homecoming**, Aug. 30, 10 a.m. Services will begin with singing and testimonies. Worship: **Price Harris and others**. Pastor: Mitch Williams.
- Christ Baptist Church, Houma: **60th Anniversary**, Sept. 11, 12, 13. Associational singing will be held on Sept. 11; recalling memories of the past & dessert social on Sept. 12. Church anniversary celebration, Sept. 13, 10 a.m. Speaker: Past Pastor **Marcell McGee**. A dinner on the grounds will follow Sunday's services. There will be a celebration featuring testimonies and memories of what the church has meant to lives in the community and special music at 1 p.m. Pastor: Thurman Callais.
- Big Island Baptist Church, Deville: **126th Annual Homecoming**, Sept. 13, 10 a.m. A potluck lunch will follow the service. Guest Speaker: **Shaun Fontenot**. Pastor: David Gatch.

## REVIVAL

- Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill: **Proclaiming God's Word in Revival**, Aug. 23-26. Sunday, 10:30 a.m. Speaker: **Wayne Jenkins**; Sunday evening, 6 p.m. Speaker: **Keith Manuel**. Monday, 7 p.m. Speaker: **Carl Gulde**. Tuesday, 7 p.m. Speaker: **Bill Robertson**. Wednesday, 7 p.m. Speaker: **Kevin Boles**. Music: Bobby Mills. Pastor: Michael Evans.
- First Baptist Church, Oakdale: **Terrific Tuesdays revival meetings**, Sept. 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29. Speakers: **Carl Scroggs (9/1)**; **Bill Robertson (9/8)**; **Mark Tolbert (9/15)**; **Robbie Rollins (9/22)**; **Herb Dickerson (9/29)**. Pastor: Michael McIntosh.
- Woodland Baptist Church, Springfield:

**Revival**, Sept. 13-16. Evangelist: **Steve Carrier and Megaforce Ministries**. Pastor: Josh Powell.

■ New Prospect Baptist Church, Dry Prong: **Revival**, Sept. 20-23, 10:30 a.m. Speaker: **Joe Aulds**. Pastor: Trey Lewis

## LAGNIAPPE

- **Josiah Miller is available** for interim, bi-vocational or pulpit supply in a 50 mile radius of Alexandria. To contact him, call 318.227.1616 or 318.446.5472.
- Campers on Mission: **Work week at Camp Harris Baptist Center, Minden**, Sept. 6-11. Come join Louisiana Campers on Mission group for their annual work week. They are a variety of projects to accomplish and all skill levels are welcomed. Having an RV is not necessary, as Camp Harris has motel-like accommodations. For reservations contact Camp Harris at 318.927.3706 or email mail@harrisbaptist.com. For more information, call COM President Keith Brown at 225.926.9410
- Acadian Baptist Camp, Eunice: **Back-to-School Retreat**, Aug. 28-29. This is for middle and high school students. Contact John Hebert at 337.339.0017 or oddjobsdoneright2014@gmail.com for more information.
- First Baptist Church, Slidell: **10 Years after Katrina - To God Be The Glory anniversary service**, Aug. 30, 10 a.m. Pastor: Ricky Cummings.
- First Baptist Church, Bogalusa: **Bogalusa Homecoming Concert (Lead Me to the Rock)**, Aug. 30, 6 p.m. A church-wide ice cream fellowship will follow. Pastor: Greg Whaley.
- First Baptist Church, Pineville: **FIRST@FIRST Business Leader Luncheon**, August 31, 12-1 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Speaker: Will Hall, editor of the *Louisiana Baptist Message*. Admission: \$10 (lunch included). The luncheon is held each first Monday and is open to the business community. Please RSVP to mlangford@fbcpineville.net by 8 a.m. on the day of the meeting. For more information, visit www.fbcpineville.net.
- First Baptist Church, Arcadia: **Beth Moore Living Proof Simulcast**, Sept. 12. Cost: free. Lunch will be provided. For more information, call 318.263.8474.
- First Baptist Church, Covington: **Living Proof Live Simulcast with Beth Moore and Travis Cotrell**, Sept. 12, 9:30 a.m. till 4:15 p.m. in the ROC. Lunch will be on your own from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Tickets are available online for \$10, after Sept. 6 tickets may be purchased at the door for \$15. Limited childcare is available for preschoolers (two months and up) with reservation by Sept. 6. Email ddrivon@fbccov.org. For more information contact bshorter@fbccov.org or call the church office at 985.892.2149. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.
- First Baptist Church, Houma: **Living Proof Live Simulcast with Beth Moore and Travis Cotrell**, Sept. 12, 9:30 a.m. - 4:15 p.m. Doors open at 8 a.m. Cost of tickets is \$30 through Aug. 31 and \$35 after this date. Cost includes simulcast, view guide, continental breakfast, and lunch. Theme for simulcast is 'Audacious.' Books by that title will be sold the day of the simulcast. No child care will be provided. For more information or to buy tickets, contact church office at 985.851.2520 or Women's Ministry Director Tina Boquet at tina@fbchouma.com. Pastor: Steve Folmar.

■ First Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **Jackson Woman's Missionary Union 2nd Annual Crafty Café fundraiser for local missions**, Sept. 12, 8 a.m. - 2 p.m. There will be handcrafted items, antiques/collectibles, baked goods, and coffee bar. Breakfast and lunch options are available. For more information, call 318.623.7873.

■ Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, New Orleans: **Missions Conference**, Sept. 12, 8:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m. This year's missions conference at Franklin Avenue is being held in partnership with the IMB and is designed to address the issues of the urban and multi-ethnic churches that seek to participate in world missions. The conference is free and breakfast and lunch will be provided. Speakers: **Donald Burgs, Tony Matthews, Alan Duncan, Robert Williams, Lori McDaniel, Cornelius Tilton and Keith Jefferson**. An RSVP is required for the conference. To register, contact Trena Williams: twilliams@franklinabc.com or 504.488-8488 (ext. 124). Pastor: Fred Luter

■ First Baptist Church, Slidell: **Marriage Conference, Sept. 18-19**. Speaker: Tate Cockrell. Cost: \$40 per couple or \$20 per person and

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 Pastor Jeremy McCrory  
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includes conference materials, meals, snacks, and childcare (if reserved). Registration is online at www.fbcslidell.org. For more information, email Kelly.singletary@fbcslidell.org or call the church office at 985.643.3456.

■ First Baptist Church, DeRidder: **Unshakable Faith - Women's Ministry Conference**, Sept. 19, 9 a.m. - 2 p.m. Speaker: Beth Greer. Tickets: \$20 (includes lunch). Tickets are available in the church office. Pastor: Lindsey

Burns.

■ Old Zion Hill Baptist Church, Independence: **WorldCrafts Marketplace Event**, sponsored by Northshore Associational WMU, Sept. 26, 9:30-10 a.m. Hear from a missionary speaker from Italy, a time of fellowship, shopping, door prizes, and lunch with a unique flavor. Please RSVP by Sept. 17 to office@northshore-baptists.net or by calling 225.567.5086.

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All meals provided beginning with dinner at 5 p.m. on Friday.  
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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.

g j x n p k h f a b l k h g j x f p b k q t a b k h n h p k g a x b n , g j x

h y s w p n p y i n p k r u b w p n x k h n a y r p b u ; q y a n p k r

q k g a k x p b u , l k f g s h k g o o n p k t k y t o k i g h g h n y j b h p k x

g n p b h x y f n a b j k

u g a e k o k c k j : k b w p n k k j

Clues:  
 X = D; G = A

Answer to August 13, Scripture Crypto:  
 First Chronicles nine: twenty-eight



# In wake of videos, Louisiana, two other states, defund Planned Parenthood

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

BATON ROUGE – Louisiana is among three states that have eliminated state funding for Planned Parenthood.

After Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal announced the state's Department of Health and Hospitals was canceling its Medicaid contract with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast as of Aug. 3, Alabama and New Hampshire followed just a few days later.

New Hampshire's Executive Council made its decision to terminate the state's contract on Aug. 5 while Alabama ended its Medicaid agreement with Planned Parenthood on Aug. 6.

While some states have canceled contracts with Planned Parenthood, supporters of defunding in the U.S. Senate fell short in their attempt Aug. 3. Senators voted 53-46 to bring to the floor a bill to eliminate federal funds for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America (PPFA) and its affiliates. While a majority of senators favored consideration of the proposal, the attempt to invoke cloture, as it is known, fell short of the 60 votes needed to begin debate on the legislation and establish a path to its passage.



Baptist Press photo

Louisiana is among three states that have eliminated state funding for Planned Parenthood following the release of shocking videos of alleged activities taking place at their facilities across the country. Louisiana Gov. Bobby Jindal was the first to order the Department of Health and Hospitals to cancel the state's Medicaid contract with Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast on Aug. 3.

"In recent weeks, it has been shocking to see reports of the alleged activities taking place at Planned Parenthood facilities across the country," Jindal said in a news release. "Planned Parenthood does not represent the values of the people of Louisiana and shows a fundamental disrespect for human life.

It has become clear that this is not an organization that is worthy of receiving public assistance from the state."

The action came after videos surfaced showing Planned Parenthood senior directors and others affiliated with the organization discussing the sale of body parts from aborted children.

Jindal then asked for an investigation into the organization.

Planned Parenthood Gulf Coast does not offer abortion services at its Baton Rouge or New Orleans offices. The group is trying to build a new facility in New Orleans, where it plans to perform abortions.

Benjamin Clapper, executive director of Louisiana Right to Life, commended Jindal on the decision.

"PPGC is a big abortion business that our tax dollars should not be subsidizing," Clapper said in a news release. "In 2012 Planned Parenthood affiliates sold 327,166 abortions, and PPGC plans to sell more at a regional abortion center that is building on Claiborne Avenue in New Orleans.

"In legislative testimony, former PPGC employee Abby Johnson exposed that Planned Parenthood imposes abortion quotas on its employees," he continued. "The videos showing the harvesting and haggling over prices of unborn children's body parts is simply another confirmation that Planned Parenthood is a big business that commodifies human life. Women's health services are available at the many public and non-profit health units that understand that abortion is not healthcare."

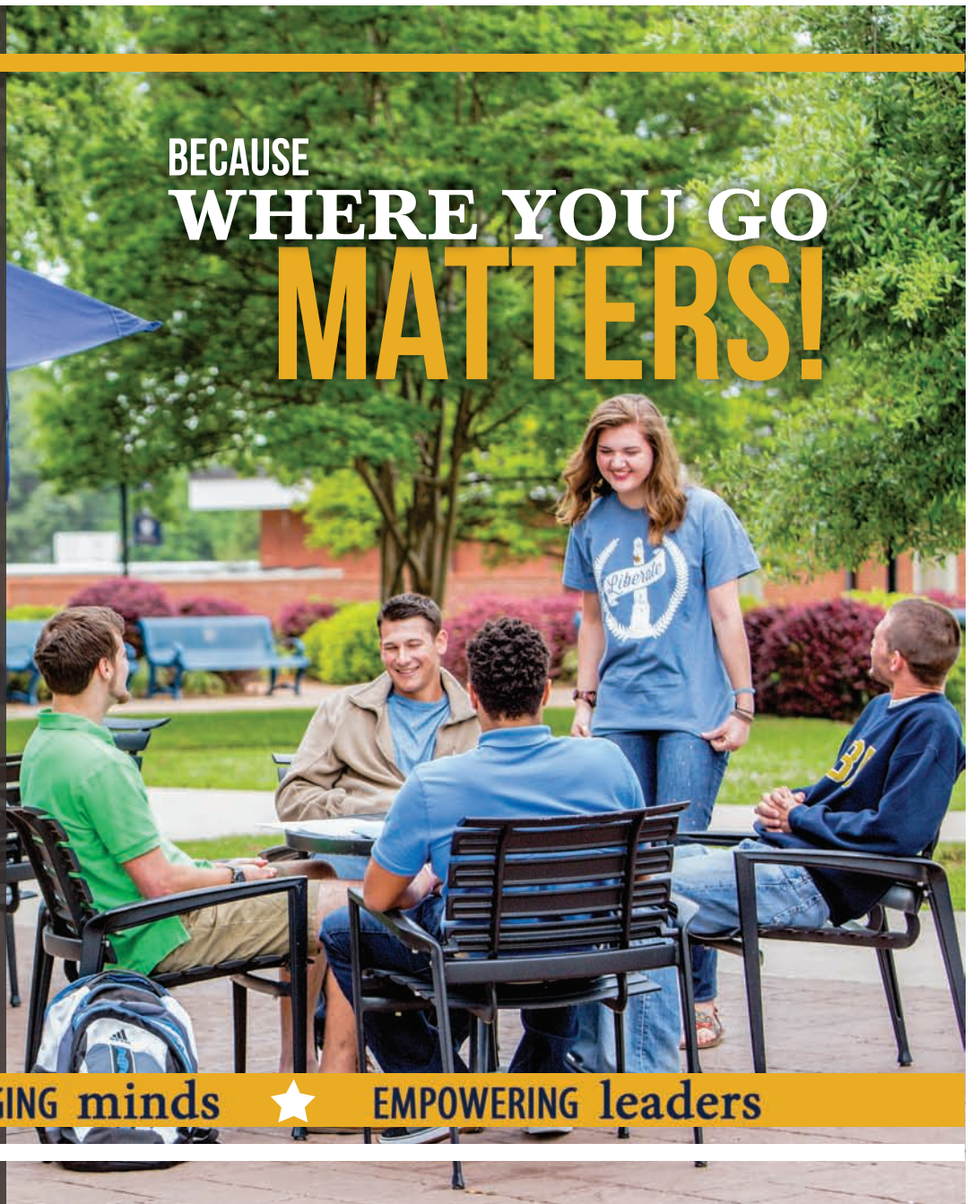


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August 29,  
2005  
10 ~~X~~ Years  
After

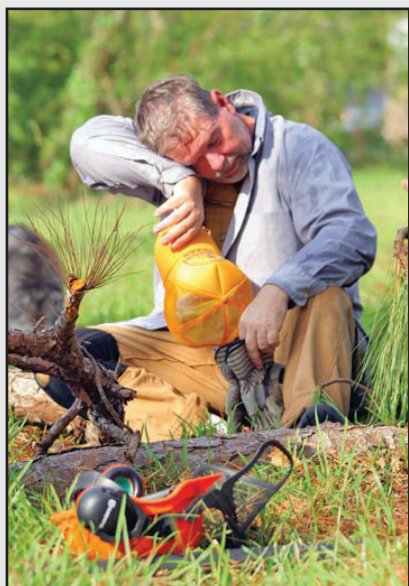
# Katrina:

## A life-changing storm



ANNIVERSARY EDITION  
AUGUST 27, 2015





A disaster relief volunteer takes a breather from work and the Louisiana heat. After Katrina, Southern Baptist Disaster Relief crews completed 17,033 chainsaw and mud-out jobs.

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## ON THE COVER

(Top right) Pastor Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, wipes away a tear as he surveys the damage caused by Hurricane Katrina to his church and the surrounding area. **Photo by Norm Miller.** (Center) The message on the shirt of this volunteer at Celebration Church's disaster relief site tells the story of what Southern Baptists did following Hurricane Katrina. **Photo by John Frady.** (Bottom Right) Franklin Graham gives a moment of assurance to displaced Lower Ninth Ward resident Eric Jones during a visit through Hurricane Katrina-devastated areas of New Orleans in March of 2006. **Photo by Jerry Ward.**

## Credits

The section was designed by Managing Editor Philip Timothy and edited by Editor Will Hall and Timothy. Stories were written by David Hankins, Hall, Gary Myers, Marilyn Stewart, and Mark H. Hunter. Photos were courtesy of Baptist Press, First New Orleans, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church, Celebration Church, First Covington, Joe McKeever, Keith Manuel, Loy Seal, Norm Miller, John Frady, Marilyn Stewart, FEMA, Louisiana National Guard, the U.S. Coast Guard and Allan Campbell.

## Go Online

For additional coverage of the 10-year anniversary of Hurricane Katrina, which includes stories, photos and videos, go to [www.baptistmessage.com](http://www.baptistmessage.com).



Baptist Press photo

Planting the Christian flag in New Orleans, said Bobby Welch (center), president of the Southern Baptist Convention, is "an expression of our hope the Gospel of Jesus Christ will go forth as never before in New Orleans." Accompanying Welch: David Hankins (left), executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention; Fred Luter, New Orleans pastor, (striped shirt) and Stephen Trammell, Baton Rouge pastor.

# Hankins: 10 years later, we remember

**A**LEXANDRIA – It's hard to believe it has been 10 years since Hurricane Katrina left her mark across southeast Louisiana. Who can forget how we felt when we saw the broken levees, the flooded homes and churches, the devastation at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, the Superdome refugees and the broken lives.

Just a month later, approximately 200 miles to the west, Lake Charles and southwest Louisiana were coming to grips with the devastation left in the wake of Hurricane Rita.

As Louisiana Baptists from New Orleans returned home to the devastation, Southern Baptists were there with hot meals, prayer, counsel and their own sweat to start the processes of rebuilding. While we helped those in need, opportunity after opportunity occurred and Southern Baptists shared the transforming gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Dennis Watson, pastor of Celebration Church in New Orleans, saw first-hand the combined strength of Southern Baptists. "Two weeks after Hurricane Katrina, the Celebration Church Relief Center served over 117,000 families. This was for a period of 9 months and with the help of over 20,000 volunteers," (most were Southern Baptists).

Through all of the disaster relief, recovery and rebuilding, thousands of people came to faith in Christ and Celebration Church reaches more people now than it did before the storm.

David Crosby, pastor of First Baptist in New Orleans, relays a similar experience: "Our local association, state convention and national entities were very important in the immediate aftermath of the storm and through years of rebuilding.

"Katrina washed our people out of the building and into the streets of our city," Crosby said. "This may be the reason God allowed the storm to come – to change the way we do church."

From across the country, hundreds of volunteers from churches and schools came to help with the recovery. Over 3,500 volunteers from 404 churches, 34 state

conventions and multiple associations assisted with the rebuilding of First Baptist in Chalmette. Pastor John Jeffries says the storm refocused their evangelistic endeavors.

Down the road from Chalmette is Poydras where John Galey serves as pastor of Poydras Baptist Church. "We had five feet of water throughout all three of our buildings (auditorium, educational building and fellowship hall). Almost all of St. Bernard Parish was under water," Galey recounts.

When he returned in October of 2005, he was the first Southern Baptist pastor in the parish. The Missouri Baptist Convention adopted St. Bernard parish and volunteers from Missouri poured into the area. Galey noted that, "Missouri Baptists helped us when we could not even help ourselves."

Since Katrina, churches like Celebration, First Baptist and others are experiencing the phenomenon of members engaging the community in multiple and creative ways. New churches have started in the New Orleans area that reflect a passion to reach various people groups that live in the heart of the city and surrounding areas.

Today we are better prepared for a disaster. We know more about mobilizing people and resources for relief and rebuilding. We've learned the value of communicating and networking together. For Louisiana Baptists, we've learned afresh the importance of Southern Baptists cooperating together with the goal of permeating one of our nation's great cities with the gospel.

This fall, in conjunction with the 10th anniversary of Katrina, Louisiana Baptists will launch the Here for You initiative. This multi-platform, multi-year media strategy is designed to give every person in the area the opportunity to say "yes" to a relationship with Jesus.

So 10 years later, we remember the prayers, support and volunteers who flooded into our state. We remember how blessed we are to be a part of a family of believers that rally around each other during such catastrophic times. And we remember the challenge of our Lord to share His love with those living in New Orleans and beyond.



David Hankins  
Executive Director  
of Louisiana Baptists



# Faithfulness, courage lift state past Katrina

By Will Hall, Message Editor

**N**EW ORLEANS – A decade ago, it was difficult to see anything more than the devastation that accompanied Katrina as she swept across Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama and Florida. But looking back now, it's possible to see the triumph that emerged from the tragedy.

After passing over the Florida panhandle as a moderate Category 1 hurricane, then weakening to a tropical storm, Katrina grew in ferocity fueled by the warm waters of the Gulf of Mexico, growing in intensity to a 200-mile wide Category 5 tempest.

But before it made a predicted direct hit on New Orleans, dry air from the Midwest absorbed some of its energy, dropping it to a strong Category 3 system and causing it to shift

direction, making landfall about 25 miles east of the city, according to the *Houston Chronicle*. Moreover, the winds over New Orleans (where the weakest part of the storm passed) reached only Category 1 levels and the storm surge failed to top the levees as predicted.

But, where a natural disaster of the predicted magnitude failed to materialize in New Orleans a manmade one burst forth.

Levees along the Mississippi River held, but some holding back Lake Ponchartrain, Lake Borgne and the waterlogged swamps and marshes to the east and west of New Orleans were built atop sandy and erodible soil, and these failed, resulting in about 80 percent of the city being flooded, in some places up to 19 feet.

A Louisiana Department of Health and Hospitals study found that around 400, mostly elderly, residents drowned, largely in the neighborhoods near the compromised levees, and nearly 550 died from acute and chronic diseases in hospitals, nursing homes and private residences because of the interruption of hospital and emergency services.

Additionally, about 70 percent of all occupied housing in New Orleans suffered damage. The Data Center stated in its 2014 analysis.

Elsewhere, Katrina's winds and storm surge had a more direct impact.

Mississippi's coastline was devastated by a 27-foot storm surge, CBS News reported, and

See **FAITHFULNESS** on 15



FEMA photos

**80%**

Of the city of New Orleans was flooded by the storm, and when the levees failed.

Several boats, part of a large scale search and rescue mission into the flooded regions of the city, depart at dawn.

**1,800**

More than 1,800 persons lost their lives during and after the storm and flooding.



# After Katrina: What God brought out of chaos



Photo courtesy of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church

Hurricane Katrina flooded Franklin Avenue Baptist Church with nine feet of water. In January 2006, worship services began taking place in New Orleans, Baton Rouge, and Houston where many of its members had fled to escape the storm.

By Fred Luter, pastor, Franklin Avenue Baptist Church

**N**EW ORLEANS – Ten years ago our lives were drastically changed by Hurricane Katrina. Not only did it impact our city physically, but it impacted us spiritually and emotionally. It was a time we will never forget.

It was a test of our faith. It was a test of our belief. It also was a test of our willingness to come back and rebuild. I don't know anyone who wasn't determined to come back and rebuild.

It took us 2 ½ years to get here back in the church. In the meantime we worshiped at several campuses – First Baptist Church in New Orleans, Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Florida Boulevard Baptist Church in Baton Rouge and First Baptist Church in Houston.

Before Katrina we were the church

gathered. After Katrina we were the church scattered.

Now we are back. However, there are still a whole lot of folks who are still displaced and would love to come back home, but have not had the opportunity.

I have great hope that things will continue to grow and our city will continue to be impacted and grow. We will never be the city we had before. But I think God has great plans for us in the city of New Orleans.

## ALWAYS COMMITTED TO RETURNING

Once we came back and saw the devastation in the city and our church, it was horrific. I was determined from day one

See **FRANKLIN AVENUE** on 13

By David Crosby, pastor, First Baptist Church New Orleans

**N**EW ORLEANS – Genesis 1:2 recounts: “Now the earth was formless and empty, darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters.”

Here in New Orleans nearly 10 years ago, shapes were buried in the water; large colorful forms distorted by shimmering waves lined the neutral ground of West End Boulevard for miles.

Ahead was the ribbon of Interstate 610 with the facilities of First Baptist New Orleans just beyond. We would soon set down the helicopter on a section of the parking lot that had emerged from the flood. Eleven days after the storm the church facility was an island in the sea.

To the right was the 17th Street Canal that failed in the storm. Lake Pontchartrain lay behind us to the north. To the

left, looking east, the city of New Orleans glistened in the floodwaters as far as the eye could see.

A parade of military helicopters thumped the air along the perimeter of the south shore of the lake. Enormous bags of sand swung beneath them, part of a futile effort to plug the hole in the levee and stop the sea's invasion of the city.

“Cars,” I said to myself and then to the pilot over the headphones. “Those are cars beneath the surface.”

In 10 days West End Boulevard would finally be dry. In six months its entire three-mile median, almost a thousand feet wide, would become a dump site segregated into ruined appliances, trees and vegetation, furniture and household goods, and the debris of gutted houses

See **FIRST NEW ORLEANS** on 13



Photo courtesy of First New Orleans Baptist Church

Because of a decision by its building committee, First Baptist New Orleans was spared any flood damage all because the church had been built higher than required. It became a focal point for recovery efforts in New Orleans.

By Dennis Watson, pastor, Celebration Church

**N**EW ORLEANS – On the weekend before Hurricane Katrina we had 2,051 people in worship. God was blessing our ministry and we were growing significantly.

Then Hurricane Katrina came.

Both of our campuses were inundated by the waters of Hurricane Katrina. Our largest campus on Airline Drive was hit with a seven foot wave of water. It was under water for two and a half weeks. We lost everything at that campus.

Our smaller campus on Transcontinental Drive that we had just procured was also flooded. Fortunately it was flooded by the rainwater of Katrina—the fresh water not the salt in the sewage canal that flooded our Airline campus.

We were able to get in quickly and gut out the facility with the aid of volunteers from around the nation and resume

services one month after Katrina.

The day that Katrina hit, I was in Lafayette. I had said I would never evacuate for a hurricane, but my daughter and my son-in-law came to me with my two little grandsons and said ‘we’re not leaving if you don’t leave.’ I couldn’t imagine those two little boys having to swim out. One was just a tiny baby, and I couldn’t risk them.

So we all evacuated. I saw the satellite images of the storm; saw the pictures of the broken levies where water was pouring into the city. I watched in horror as the city was devastated. I also saw a picture of our Airline campus under water.

That night I went to bed more depressed, more discouraged than I’ve ever been in my life. I’ve had a lot of tragedy

See **CELEBRATION CHURCH** on 13

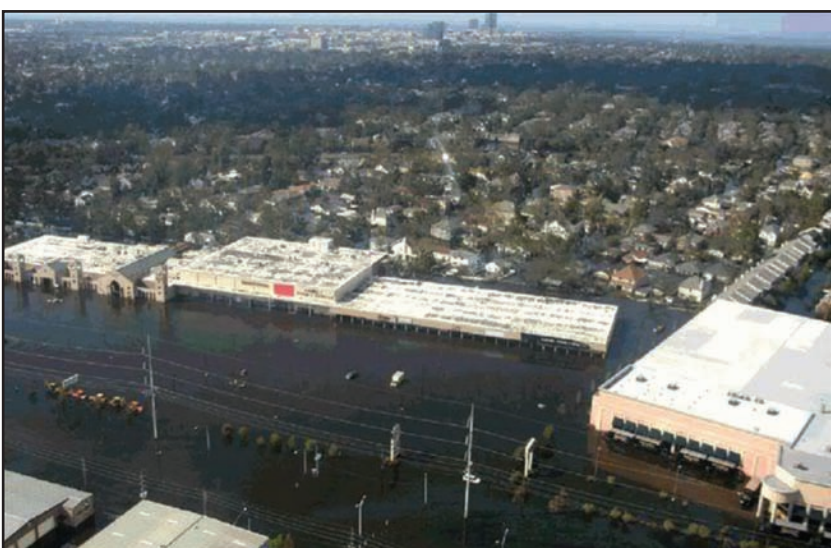


Photo courtesy of Celebration Church

Pastor Dennis Watson watched as boats launched into the flood waters around his Celebration Church. One month later, the congregation that was reduced to one-quarter of its size met for worship in a facility at Utica St. and Transcontinental Ave. The property was a purchase the congregation had finalized just two weeks prior to the storm.

**\$1.63 Billion**

Hurricane Katrina caused a lot of damages as all 64 Louisiana parishes were included in the Presidential Disaster Declaration

**1.4 Million**

Louisiana residents were displaced across 50 states and caused the largest housing shortage in history.



# New Orleans' Katrina story is still being written

By Joe McKeever, former DOM for New Orleans Baptist Association

**N**EW ORLEANS – From the divine perspective, 10 years is a blip, one nanosecond in a timeless eternity. For us earthlings, it's one-eighth of a life expectancy.

Even so, it's a convenient time to pull over and take inventory. Since Aug. 29, 2005, when Hurricane Katrina changed New Orleans forever, everyone wants to know: "What is God doing in this city? How are things now?"

For one day, New Orleanians thought they had "dodged a bullet" as the hurricane's primary damage lay to the east, along the Mississippi coastline where entire communities were destroyed.

Then, the levees protecting this sunken city broke under the strain in several places. Soon this great city was literally drowning.

One million residents were evacuated voluntarily or otherwise from the hurricane's onslaught. Over 1,800 who refused to leave were drowned in their homes. Entire neighborhoods ceased to exist. Several church buildings would never be found.

And now?

Almost anything you say about New Orleans at this moment would be correct to

some extent.

## THE CITY IS BETTER OFF IN PLACES.

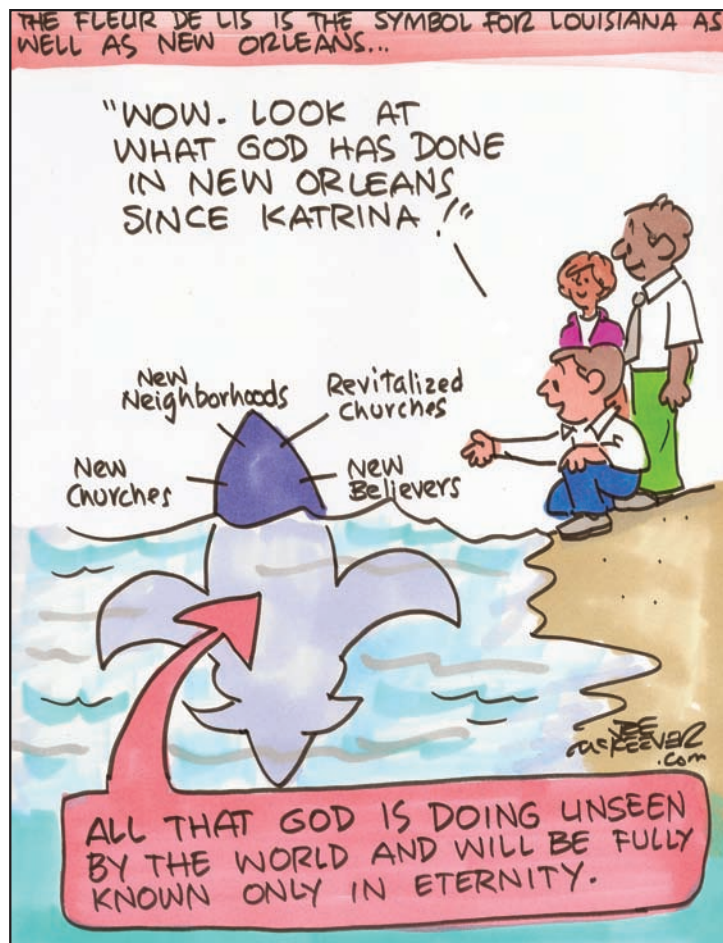
The old housing projects, breeding grounds for crime and human misery, have been razed and multi-income-level housing erected in their place. Columbia Parc, an amazingly beautiful array of nearly 700 apartments, stands where St. Bernard Housing Development once stood. The landscaping is impressive, the architecture is award-winning, the interiors are luxurious.

The levees have been raised five feet, and a king's ransom has been invested in new pumping stations to keep the city from flooding in the future. Neighborhoods such as Lakeview are seeing new construction on every block, with the price of lots skyrocketing.

## THE CITY IS WORSE OFF IN PLACES

Columbia Parc, however, appears as an island paradise. Nearby, large vacant areas indicate where houses were destroyed

See **KATRINA'S STORY** on 14



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Petty Officer 2nd Class Shawn Beaty looks for survivors of Hurricane Katrina as he flies over New Orleans in a Coast Guard rescue helicopter. Photo courtesy of U.S. Coast Guard

# God does a work on New Orleans during, after storm

By Marilyn Stewart, Regional Reporter

**N**EW ORLEANS – From the belly of a Coast Guard helicopter, Aviation Maintenance Technician 3rd Class Allan Campbell snapped photos of Edgewater Baptist Church in New Orleans days after the levee breaks of Hurricane Katrina that left 80 percent of the city under water. The church steeple dangled perilously on its side. Its tip pointed downward into deep water.

For Campbell, the devastation was personal. Two months earlier, he had walked his bride down the aisle on their wedding day and out through doors now submerged in water.

“My heart seemed to stop,” said David Platt, International Mission Board president but Edgewater staff evangelist at the time, on seeing Campbell’s photos for the first time.

“This was the place where I gathered together with the people in New Orleans I loved the most. The people I laughed and cried with. The people I worshiped with and served alongside,” Platt said. “I knew that we would likely never gather together there again in the same way.”

Hurricane Katrina crossed the tip of Louisiana early Monday, Aug. 29, 2005, pushing water over the tops of homes in lower Plaquemines Parish, then overwhelming the Mississippi River Gulf Outlet in New Orleans to flood the city’s east side. To the north, Slidell took the brunt of Hurricane Katrina’s storm surge as water was lifted out of Lake Pontchartrain and pushed into homes.

A timeline published by the *Times-Picayune* of New Orleans showed that levee walls broke at various points across the city throughout Monday morning as the storm lumbered by.

The Industrial Canal break, next to the Lower Ninth Ward, released torrents of rushing water that pushed homes off foundations and tossed cars around like toys.

Water rose through the night in New Orleans and on Tuesday morning, the nation woke to learn of the storm’s second punch that helped put Hurricane Katrina on the record books as one of the deadliest



Baptist Press photo

**Fred Luter, aboard a helicopter after Hurricane Katrina, cries as he surveys the damage to the flood-ravaged Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans where he is pastor.**

and costliest storms in history.

Bobby Welch, Southern Baptist Convention president, toured the area the following day.

“This is a disaster of biblical proportion, and it demands a biblical response – now,” Welch said, in an S.O.S. call to Southern Baptists as reported by *Baptist Press*. “How can I be more explicit? This situation is dire...”

Joe McKeever, then director of missions for the Baptist Association of Greater New Orleans – renamed later the New Orleans Baptist Association – began his first blog after the storm with the ominous words: “They’ve been telling us the big one was coming. Finally, they were right.”

Southern Baptist Disaster Relief units rolled in the day after the storm, moving in tandem with the Red Cross and the Salvation Army, in what would be an unprecedented effort that would earn Southern Baptists a commendation by the White House six months later.

After authorities gave the clear to re-enter the

city, McKeever surveyed the damage, driving past miles of closed businesses, schools, and banks. At Edgewater Baptist, he stopped and prayed.

“It’s not just a house here, or a business there. It’s the whole thing,” McKeever said he prayed. “And Lord, I don’t know what to do about it.”

God’s answer was clear.

“This is not about you. This is about Me,”

McKeever said God told him. “I can’t tell you how comforting that was.”

For three years prior to the storm, Edgewater members had prayed, “God give us this city and do it in such a way that only you get the credit.” The congregation changed the prayer to “give us the nations,” not knowing that the eyes of the world would soon be fixed on New Orleans.

“The more we processed through the implications of Katrina, the more we realized that God was working behind the scenes in all of this in ways that we never could have imagined,” Platt said. “He was doing a work in our city that would send us out across that city, and around the world in the days to come.”

Devastated by loss, a young pastor emailed McKeever a month after the storm expressing his dismay.

“My friend, you are about to see something you will be talking about the rest of your life,” McKeever said in his reply. “God is about to do a work that will change your ministry forever and you will always be grateful you were there to see it happen.”

## ‘RISE UP, MAN OF GOD’

With a safety harness strapped to his waist, Fred Luter saw his church, Franklin Avenue Baptist New Orleans, for the first time as it sat in 7 feet of water. With Luter in the helicopter that day was SBC president Bobby Welch and David Hankins, executive director of the Louisiana Baptist Convention.

“Even from the helicopter, you could smell the stench of dead bodies,” Luter said. “At that moment, I thought, ‘This is it, everything is over.’”

See **WORK** on 7

**\$25 Million**

Southern Baptists invested millions to build or re-build some 500 homes and 26 water-damaged churches, schools and ministry centers were repaired.

**26,500**

Participated in disaster relief, recovery and rebuilding efforts that took place in New Orleans and surrounding parishes.



## Work from page 6

With more than 7,000 members, Franklin Avenue was the largest Southern Baptist church in the city.

In the heart of the city, military personnel wielding M16s met pastor David Crosby as he stepped out of a helicopter onto the church parking lot at First New Orleans, then went before Crosby as they searched every room of the building. As many as 30 people had sought refuge inside as water rose up the front steps and then stopped. The church had been an island in a putrid sea.

To the west, just over the Orleans Parish line into Metairie, Dennis Watson, pastor of the 2,500 member Celebration Church in Metairie, came in by police escort two days after the storm to the Causeway Avenue and Airline Boulevard interchange near his church where boats were launching off the Causeway Avenue ramp. They could go no further. The water was too deep.

And in the east, First Chalmette and St. Bernard Baptist took on more than water as the oil refinery in the city's center added a million gallons of oil into the mix.

"The immediate affect of Katrina was that everybody was in a mess. Everybody. The world does not understand that," Crosby said. "150,000 houses; 100 square miles. There's no place to put your foot down; no neighbors to call on; no stores; no barber shop."

Waylon Bailey, pastor of First Covington, told of a single mom with young children who came to the church asking for food. Hours after the storm, the Southern Baptist Convention feeding units had not yet arrived.

"We had nothing," Bailey said. "Our janitor came out with 2 jars of peanut butter. He was living in the church trying to care for the 200 people living there. That's all he had and he gave it to her. We all broke down and cried."

By Wednesday, First Covington's parking lot was covered in SBC disaster relief units, and in New Orleans to the west, at Williams Boulevard Baptist and First Kenner; and soon at Calvary Baptist and Westwego Baptist Churches to the south.

Across Louisiana, SBC units served evacuees and emergency workers at Prairieville, Baton Rouge, Alexandria, Lafayette, Bogalusa, and in Hammond.

By Oct. 5, a record 6 mil-

lion meals had been served by SBC units in the Hurricane Katrina affected region of the Gulf Coast. By Day 80 of the response—Nov. 18—Louisiana SBC units crossed the same threshold, said Loy Seal, then LBC Disaster Relief Director.

As Southern Baptists opened their hearts, special funds set up to help victims swelled. Gifts from Cooperative Program funded entities came in almost immediately with 2.5 million from the International Mission Board; 10 million in low-interest loans to churches from the North American Mission Board; \$6 million from LifeWay; the guaranteed continuation of benefits and retirement plan protection by Guidestone; and gifts to pastors from the Louisiana Baptist Convention, and others.

A continuous stream of volunteers poured into the city to care for stunned residents trickling back in to face deserted neighborhoods and loss that was layers deep: home, church, job, stores, schools, friend and family connections, gone.

After surveying damaged church sites, McKeever blogged, "I spent all day Thursday with three good friends and it was one of the worst days of my life."

Luter became a circuit-rider serving three campuses as First Baptist Houston and Istrouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, welcomed in Franklin Avenue members, and at home, First New Orleans.

"Going through Hurricane Katrina, I couldn't see it as God's will, though it obviously was," Luter said. "There are no mistakes with God."

Buzzing with activity as a distribution center for supplies and a point for ministry, First New Orleans' campus remained unlocked for four months to accommodate workers, Crosby said. Volunteers numbering to 100 slept nightly in the fellowship hall.

"Something about those days just changed the way we thought," Crosby said. "We tried to plan, but realized... that we couldn't plan anything because things changed daily. We ended up living day by day, hand to mouth."

In the year before the storm, First New Orleans' relocation from Uptown to mid-city came with a fresh commitment to serve its community. Baptist Crossroads, a housing initiative to help break the cycle of poverty, was set in place weeks prior to the storm.



Keith Manuel photo

Gentilly Baptist Church, like so many other parts of New Orleans, provided a silent but graphic testimony of Hurricane Katrina's sorrowful legacy. No part of the church facility was left untouched by the floodwaters caused from the breaks in the levees. Six to eight feet of water rose through halls where weeks before worshipers walked.

"We kicked [Baptist Crossroads] off in June; Hurricane Katrina kicked us in the gut in August," Crosby said. "For miles around, nobody lived here. For months, we had no babies in the nursery. No youth in the youth group. Zero."

For others, the storm meant sudden death. Dozens of churches in the association closed their doors.

Kenneth Foy, pastor of New Life Ministry Baptist Church, a healthy, African-American congregation of over 100 prior to the storm, became a casualty of the storm with every member

relocated.

"We could not overcome Katrina," Foy said.

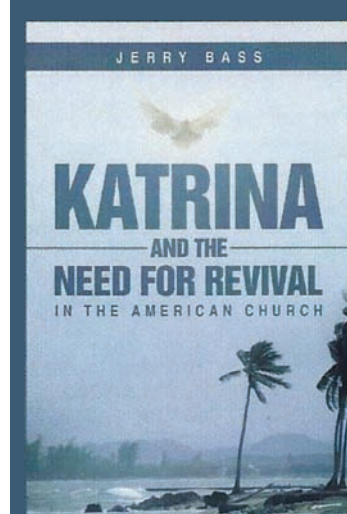
Delacroix Baptist Church, built over water at Delacroix Island, averaged 25 in attendance. After the storm, only "a few of the pilings were left," McKeever said.

For Dennis Watson, the low point of the storm came in the early hours after the levee breaks. With cell phone towers down, Watson had received no word from staff, church members, and friends.

"I've been through a lot of

See **WORK** on 9

Spiritual Awakening in the country begins with REVIVAL in the American Church



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COOPERATIVE PROGRAM





The campus of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary sustained heavy damage from Hurricane Katrina and from the subsequent flooding when the levees broke.



Members of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association's Rapid Response Team pray with a seminary family Oct. 5, 2005. Volunteers spent five days on campus ministering to hurting students, staff members and professors.



A New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary student removes debris following Hurricane Katrina. Even though displaced by the storm, many students pitched in to help.



NOBTS President Chuck Kelley goes to his knees as he seeks the Lord during services at First Baptist Church in Dallas, Texas, on Sept. 11.

## 1,000

Hurricane Katrina displaced more than 1,000 campus residents, and, students were scattered across 29 states.

Sixty percent of the seminary's campus housing received significant damage from the storm and flooding.

## 60%

## 137

NOBTS celebrated a historic graduation Dec. 17, 2005 – its first since Hurricane Katrina. In spite of the storm at the start of the semester, 137 graduates completed their degrees.

## Light in the Darkness

*In early October, just over a month after the storm, the steeple of Leavell Chapel was the only light visible for miles and miles. This lone point of light shining in a sea of darkness represented the hope many have for the seminary and city – a hope rooted in Jesus Christ. Seminary President Chuck Kelley said that this one point of light represented the way God would use the seminary in the coming months – as a leader in the redevelopment of New Orleans and the re-establishment of area churches.*

## NOBTS celebrates God's redemption

By Gary Myers, NOBTS Communications Director

**N**EW ORLEANS – The story of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's Katrina decade is immersed in grace and redemption and punctuated by hope. On the tenth anniversary of the storm, the seminary community is counting blessings rather than losses and leaning into the future with anticipation.

"Here we are 10 years later," said NOBTS President Chuck Kelley. "What is my conclusion? We serve an amazing God who delights in doing awesome work to care for his children and to extend the work of His kingdom."

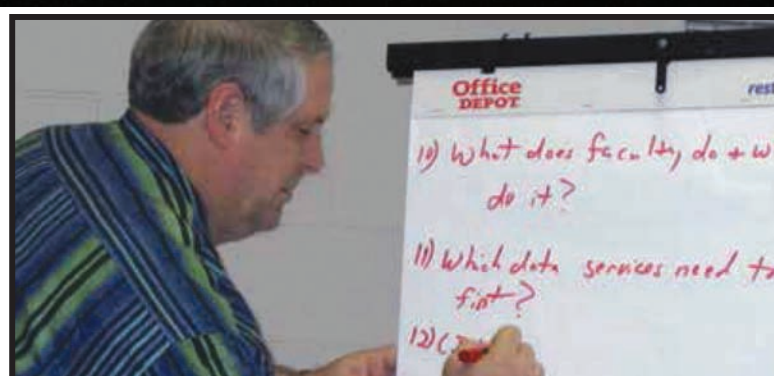
"We are grateful that God was able to pull out of the rubble of Katrina a city of New Orleans that

has more energy and has more vitality than it has had in a very long time," he continued. "And out of the rubble, the seminary is now strong, healthy and doing well."

During the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in June, Kelley put an exclamation point on the recovery story when he announced that NOBTS recorded the largest enrollment in school history last school year.

The future looked much bleaker after Katrina slammed ashore east of New Orleans Aug. 29, 2005. The storm left a wide path of destruction stretching from New Orleans to Mobile, Ala. Multiple

See **NOBTS** on 12



President Chuck Kelley leads the Post-Katrina planning session at the North Georgia Campus Sept. 1. During the meeting, the team of administrators, professors and staff members developed a plan to continue fall classes.





Southern Baptists' feeding units, like this one, played a key role in serving more than 6 million meals.

Baptist Press photo

## Work from page 7

tragedy in my life – my father died when I was young, my brother-in-law was killed in a tragic accident—that day was the darkest day of my life,” Watson said. “It seemed like everything I had prayed for, dreamed for, hoped for, and worked for was gone in a single day.”

The clock read 6:33 a.m. when the first call came through on his cell phone, two days later. The call from a pastor-friend in Johannesburg, South Africa, jolted him out of depression, Watson said. For 8 hours, the friend had prayed for Watson, his church and the city.

“He said to me, ‘Dennis, my son, I know that you are devastated. Rise up, oh man of God, for what you perceive to be a day of devastation is actually the destiny God has called you to,’” Watson recounted.

“Then he told me, ‘The Lord has revealed to me that while this is indeed a great tragedy, out of this tragedy will come the greatest opportunity your nation will ever have to experience spiritual transformation. Rise up, man of God,’” Watson said.

### GOD'S PLAN, GOD'S WAY

Celebration Church soon realized that God had been at work all along, Watson said. Two weeks before the storm, the church had purchased property across town and assumed another church's debt to prevent the site from becoming a Muslim mosque, Watson said.

“We didn't need the indebtedness. We didn't need the campus,” Watson said. “We just felt like the Lord wanted us to take it over to save the reputation of that church and ministry.”

The newly acquired property was quickly recoverable and served as worship center and headquarters as Celebration Church ministered to a hurting community.

The parking lot of the flooded main campus became a relief center distributing 1,500 tractor-trailer loads of supplies and serving 5,000 meals daily. An additional 1,000 persons daily received other supplies, Watson said.

Before the storm, the congregation had prayed for greater opportunities to minister in the community. “With 6,000 people a day coming to our campus, I'd say that prayer was answered,” Watson said.

At First New Orleans, 200 air scrubbers and dehumidifiers were hooked to a 400kw generator on loan from an Illinois farmer who had loaded it on a trailer and driven to New Orleans. Though floodwaters had not entered the building, First New Orleans' bill topped \$3.5 million as wind and mold damage took its toll.

Surrounded by need, the church set up a home recov-

ery ministry, eventually deploying 21,000 volunteers to gut flooded homes and build new homes through Baptist Crossroads, surpassing its original goal of 40 new homes to complete 91.

“Nobody can overstate the contribution that Southern Baptist relief teams made at the height of this disaster,”



John Frady photo

People gathered for a time of prayer at Celebration Church's Airline campus.

Crosby said. “They were here from the very beginning. They were just tremendous in every way.”

At Edgewater Baptist, four blocks from the London Avenue canal break, heavy damage and a fear that the neighborhood would not rebound kept the facility untouched for weeks.

Philip Robertson, LBC president then, received a phone call from a friend, Dan Spencer of Thomasville Baptist Church, Thomasville, Ga., asking for his help in finding a church to adopt. The result was a partnership with Edgewater that helped fund evangelism and rebuilding efforts and paid the pastor's salary for two years.

Charles Ray, deacon and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary professor, said the three-way phone call from Robertson and Spencer was “like seeing daybreak” after a long night. “We realized we wouldn't have to face this alone,” Ray said.

### NEW DOORS FOR THE GOSPEL WERE FLUNG OPEN

Louisiana native and former Edgewater member Randy Bond, then director of the New London Collegiate Ministry, New London, Conn., led teams of U.S. Coast Guard cadets and college students to gut homes in

Edgewater's neighborhood. Most were unbelievers.

A NAMB appointed Mission Service Corps missionary, Bond said his students came from a gospel-hardened area and had a small view of Christianity, but that seeing Christians' response to those in need impressed them.

One student, a self-identified secular humanist, noting that secularists were visibly absent from the recovery effort, told Bond, “I've got to rethink my worldview,” Bond said.

But the new day for Southern Baptists and the Gospel came at a high price.

Soon after the storm, Watson invited pastors of all denominations to meet. One African-American pastor addressed the group frankly and said that the white pastors had never before cared about the African-American pastors or churches, Watson said.

“So we had a time of repentance,” Watson said.

Out of that meeting grew a citywide pastors' coalition that led prayer walks into the areas most damaged by the storm and neighborhoods most affected by crime.

Writing recently, Crosby noted that Bourbon Street and the “flesh markets” of the city were untouched by the flood, but that churches and thousands of homes of faithful believers were destroyed. He wrote, “I have come to believe that God was purifying His church in the midst of this storm.” Washed out of the pews and into the street, Crosby wrote that

Christians were experiencing a revival to “the central command of Jesus to love your neighbor.”

God's long-term plan for the association came into focus as Duane McDaniel, pastor of Hawaii Kai Church of Honolulu led seven teams to rebuild homes of Franklin Avenue members so they could return to minister to their neighbors.

In 2009, McDaniel stepped into the position of New Orleans Baptist Association executive director and charted a new direction for the association. McDaniels' dream of a clinic to serve the underserved in the Lower Ninth Ward came to fruition last year, 3 years after his untimely death.

McKeever said that long before the storm, he had considered the churches of the New Orleans association to be isolated and insulated from each other, but that the storm changed everything.

“A lot of churches went out of business. Some needed to. Some were spending all of their resources just to keep up an old building,” McKeever said. “The storm put a stop to that.”

Camaraderie grew as the pastors met weekly at First LaPlace, a fellowship that often lasted 3 hours, McKeever said.

See **WORK** on 11



# LSU students pitched in to help Katrina evacuees

By Mark H. Hunter, Regional Reporter

**B**ATON ROUGE – As soon as thousands of evacuees began flooding into Baton Rouge, hundreds of LSU students stepped up to help including Joshua Timothy, then the senior resident assistant in Kirby Smith (all male) Dorm, who now works as a youth pastor.

“It was probably some of the craziest moments of my life,” said Timothy, who was a 20-year-old junior at the time. “I’m not gonna lie to anybody – I was scared to death.”

Some of his residents were from the flooded areas of New Orleans including one who saw his family on the national news sitting on their roof waiting to be rescued, he said.

One of his RAs was from Slidell and when they drove there to find his father, “there was no power - it was so dark you couldn’t see past the truck’s headlight beams,” Timothy said. “We found his dad – he was hiding in a freezer – a tree had fallen on their house.”

“When we pulled into the driveway people actually started walking toward us from their homes asking if we were there to help,” Timothy said. “We put as many as we could in my truck – including some who were insulin-dependent and needed to be brought back so they could get to a hospital.”

Upon their return, they found the LSU campus, especially the track at Bernie Moore Stadium, had been transformed into a landing zone for the helicopters and the Pete Maravich basketball arena had been turned into a makeshift MASH unit and morgue.

Black Hawk helicopters flew over the dorm day



Michael Rieger/FEMA photo

**Dr. Mona Aknana of FEMA’s D-MAT team TX-4 takes care of patients at a makeshift hospital. MASH units were set up in both New Orleans and Baton Rouge to treat the injured and sick. Michael Rieger/FEMA**

and night bringing in the elderly, the sick and the dying while buses from New Orleans arrived with other survivors said Timothy.

“The Black Hawks were carrying in victims who were stranded on roofs. Buses began to arrive from New Orleans with many other survivors. I will never forget the sound of those helicopters constantly flying over the campus and landing at the track,” he said. “Now, I know what it would sound like in a war zone.”

Without hesitation, Timothy and the staff from Kirby joined other LSU students helping to unload those helicopters and transport them into the P-MAC where the clinic had been set up.

“We worked for hours helping get people off the

helicopters,” he said. “Many were dazed, exhausted and in bad shape from the ordeal. A lot made it but some didn’t. For those who didn’t, all we could do was to say a quick prayer for them and get back to work. It wasn’t easy for any of us.”

Later, after doing all they could at the landing site, they turned their attention to the Baton Rouge River Center which had become a massive and overcrowded refugee shelter.

“There were so many people who wanted just to talk to someone,” he said. “It was very emotional hearing people tell stories of seeing water coming through their doors and climbing into their attics and cutting holes in the roof – not seeing any of their stuff again. That was the sad part.”

“We witnessed to people. I don’t know if anybody was saved – but we planted lots of seeds,” Timothy said. “That was the story – you’ve gotta have faith. In dark times you have to walk by faith and not by sight.”

The best part of the experience, he said, “was to see our guys come together - a group of guys who stood up and said we want to make things better and help these people.”

The worst part, he said, was working at the Baton Rouge River Center and passing through security checkpoints manned by armed military and police officers.

“People wanted out and people wanted in,” Timothy said. “To me that was scary – soldiers were armed in riot gear – emotions were running high.”

But being able to talk to people and help them is what God called him to do, he said. “That is why I

See **LSU STUDENTS** on 12

# North Shore Association born from Katrina’s destruction

By Mark H. Hunter, Regional Reporter



First Covington photo

First Covington Pastor Waylon Bailey stands on a stump that first Sunday after the storm in the parking lot for services because there was no power.

**H**AMMOND – Before Hurricane Katrina slammed into the Gulf Coast there were three small Baptist associations in the southeast part of Louisiana and now there is one, the Northshore Baptist Association.

“That was one of the many positive outcomes from that horrible time,” said Lonnie Wascom, Director of Missions for the 90-some church association headquartered in Hammond.

Wascom, like Ron Lambe, former administrative pastor at Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, remembers Katrina in Dickensian terms, “the best of times and the worst of times.”

“The first week and a half was definitely the worst of times,” Wascom said during a recent phone interview.

Katrina’s winds and its colossal storm surge that rolled up to six miles into southeast Louisiana wiped out tens of thousands of homes and businesses, made many thousands of people homeless and wrecked most major infrastructure like power lines and highways. Parts of Interstate 10 were closed for months because bridges were destroyed.

“This may sound terrible but – the best of times was when the levees breached in New Orleans – because of that, all of a sudden, it got the attention of everyone – especially the Baptists,” Wascom said. “If it would have only been our local damage we would have had some help from area Baptists but we wouldn’t have had the national outpouring that came because of the levees breaching in New Orleans.”

Many of the association’s churches were shut down, he said, and those who had enough members left, who did not evacuate, worshipped outdoors.

“I can still see Waylon Bailey (First Baptist Covington) standing on a stump that first Sunday out in the parking lot because there was no power and their normal 2,000 crowd was about 300,” he said.

North Shore Church, a recent plant at that time, located in Slidell, had been meeting in a small shopping center, “and the storm raised the water in the drains revealing the construction had been short-changed and there was no outlet for underground drainage and lifted the 24 inch slabs like an earthquake,” Wascom said. Instead of 400 for the Sunday service they had 11.

Wascom was the first to drive his pickup into First Baptist of Slidell in knee deep floodwater and was looking for the association’s Disaster Relief trailer filled with tools and chainsaws. No phones or cell phones were working.

“I was worried about getting stuck because the mud was pretty deep and I don’t know what caused me to do it, but I looked up and there it was up in a tree!” Wascom said. “It had all the equipment in it – so it wasn’t light! The water came into Slidell with so much force it lifted it several feet up off the ground – I wish I had taken a photo of it!”

At Grace Memorial Baptist, near Interstate 10, he said he ran into a Disaster Relief unit from

See **NORTHSHORE** on 12



# Baptist response warms hearts to the Gospel

By Marilyn Stewart, Regional Reporter

**R**aw emotions bubbled to the surface as people struggled to process the losses brought about by Hurricane Katrina. As Southern Baptists faithfully offered care to those suffering from the storm, hearts warmed to the Gospel.

## THE POWER OF RELATIONSHIP

When the local news warned that those remaining behind must write their social security numbers on their arms so bodies could be identified later, Kelli and George Esler knew it was time to leave.

The couple went to Grenada, Miss., where John and Candy Saxon, a couple who had befriended them the previous year, found them a place to stay. John was a New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary student. Candy taught school in Chalmette with Kelli.

When the news of the devastation in Chalmette reached them, Kelli realized her perfect life was over.

“Living on the floor of some lady’s house, in a city I’d never heard of, in a state I’d never visited, that was the breaking point,” Kelli said. “I knew how out of control all of this was.”

Kelli saw how far downward they had fallen when her husband, George, a computer programmer, took a job sweeping the floor of a sawmill. As George worked alongside John at the mill, he came to faith in Christ.

The following Sunday, Kelli bowed her head and prayed, “I don’t know what this means, but I know I have no other option but to follow You.” When finished, Kelli said the world appeared more in focus. “The color was so much clearer to me,” Kelli said.

But the couple’s journey to faith had started long before the storm as their friendship with John and Candy bloomed. Kelli said her friends had faithfully shown her Jesus, though she didn’t realize it at the time.

“I recognized that there was something about them that was attractive, something that we wanted,” Kelli said. “Something I wanted.”

As the two couples spent time together, John brought up faith, salvation and the Bible. Through relationship, the hurdles that kept Kelli and George from the Lord were cleared away one-by-one, Kelly said.

Today, the couple is active at Westwego Baptist Church where Kelli is assistant to pastor Jay Adkins. Looking back, Kelli said she knows God was at work every step along the way.

“It is the power of relationship,” Kelli said. “They invested in us and got down to where we were and brought us to where they were.”

## SAVED

Jason Bezou decided God didn’t exist by the time he was 13 years old. As a mathematical, solutions-oriented person, Jason thought Christians “sounded crazy” when they talked about the Holy Spirit.

But the day before the Hurricane Katrina set its sights on New Orleans, Jason sat in a restaurant with

Sara Blackwell, the woman who would later become his wife. When the conversation turned to their pasts, Jason said they drew a line and decided the past was over, never to be brought up again. Jason’s “drawn line” became a lesson in forgiveness. “That’s what Jesus does,” Sara explained.

But as Sara described the Holy Spirit as the guide who helps believers remain faithful, the moment became a “turning point,” Jason said. For the first time, he understood what Christians believe.

As a nurse at a Denham Springs nursing home, Sara awaited patients and evacuees the next day, with Jason at her side. Though he had come to help others, he soon realized his own family was in danger. His grandmother had not left New Orleans and his father remained in Waveland, Miss., ground zero for the storm’s landfall along the Mississippi coast.

When all efforts to find Jason’s family members failed, Sara suggested they pray. Though he scoffed at first, Jason decided to give God a chance.

“Just for this moment, I’m going to believe,” Jason said.

As Jason prayed, everything they had discussed about God synced, Jason said. The comfort and reassurance he received as he prayed became the turning point that sealed his commitment to Christ, Jason said.

“In all of the moments leading up to the storm and in the aftermath, there was one thing that was certain. Jesus was with me,” Jason said. “I didn’t know he was there all the time, but I’m glad he waited for the right moment to reveal himself.”

Active at First New Orleans, Jason shares his testimony and the story of the rescue of his family members in his book, “Saved: One man’s salvation through Hurricane Katrina,” and through speaking engagements and his non-profit media producer, [www.savedproducer.org](http://www.savedproducer.org).

## PART OF THE FAMILY

Depression had been a part of Kathi King’s life for some time, but after losing her home in Hurricane Katrina, life became harder.

“Things started to fall apart,” Kathi said. “I went through the worst depression of my life. I didn’t want to live.”

Kathi said she and her husband “washed ashore in California” after the storm, returning to New Orleans 8 months later. For 4 years afterwards, the couple lived in an RV as they rebuilt their home next to the London Avenue canal, not far from where the levee broke.

The strain of rebuilding took its toll. One Sunday, Kathi felt compelled to walk into the service at Edgewater Baptist Church, a place she had never stepped into before.

A church member who recognized the look of someone struggling with depression, suggested to another member that Kathi needed a hug. That day, a bond formed, Kathi said.

“The church just took me in. They were God’s people taking care of me,” Kathi said.

Cole Gilbert, wife of pastor Chad Gilbert, took long walks with Kathi through the Gentilly neighborhood, talking about God and faith as they went. “She disciplined me,” Kathi said.

Soon, Kathi began to realize that God had led her into the church that day for a reason.

“Before, I was kind of an agnostic,” Kathi said. “But, not anymore.”

Kathi prays for her husband’s salvation and prays that God will use her to reach others. When she looks at the difference in her life since the storm, Kathi adds, “Being part of God’s family is the best thing that ever happened to me.”

## ADOPTED

Richard Scesny grew up in church, but left it all behind when he joined the U. S. Navy as a young man. For decades, he lived “as far from God as you can imagine,” Richard said.

As Hurricane Katrina barreled toward New Orleans, Richard, then 67, gathered up his mother, sister, nephew and his wife and their two young children, and left. With the cash savings he had at his house, Richard braved evacuation traffic, checking his family into a hotel in Beaumont 18 hours later.

As news reports over the next few days showed the deteriorating situation in New Orleans, Richard grew anxious. Fearful for the children, he prayed one evening, “Lord, we need some help.”

The following morning, the family drove to a restaurant for breakfast but drove off when they saw the line formed to the street. As they parked at a second restaurant, a woman pulled up behind them and asked if they were from New Orleans.

Beth Smith, wife of Robert Smith, pastor of Pinewood Baptist Church some 15 miles away, told Richard and his family that her church wanted to “adopt” a family from New Orleans.

Church members helped the Scesny family settle in a temporary home as they waited to return home to Marrero, on the west bank of the Mississippi River.

At prayer meeting days later, Richard knelt and committed his life to the Lord.

“I was all choked up and bawling like a baby,” Richard said. “It was happiness more than anything else.”

While in Pinewood, Hurricane Rita forced Richard and his family to evacuate once again. This time, Robert and Beth Smith took the Scesny family with them and headed north. When they returned to Pinewood weeks later, Richard and his family found that the house they had stayed in had been spared the damage others had suffered.

Back home in Marrero weeks later, Richard sought out a Southern Baptist church. As he drove, he passed Ames Boulevard Baptist Church and stopped. He told his mother later, “I’ve found the church for us.”

Baptized at Ames Boulevard three months after the storm, Richard remains a faithful member.

## Work from page 9

As First New Orleans opened their facility to Franklin Avenue for worship and ministry, the two racially different congregations developed a lasting bond.

“Through disaster, God allowed a beautiful partnership to come together between a predominantly Anglo church and a predominantly African-American church that produced relationships that still are strong to this day,” Luter said.

For Watson, Southern Baptists’ outpouring of help

strengthened his bond with his fellow Baptists. Four months after the storm, Watson spoke at the LBC Evangelism Conference.

“I’ve not always been a very good Baptist,” Watson said he told the crowd. “But today, I’m proud to be a Southern Baptist.”

Delacroix Baptist experienced an opening for the Gospel and an explosion of professions of faith. A church of another denomination donated its facility and the congregation grew again.

But for some, the road back was long and difficult. With all members scattered, Foy took a pastorate in Huron, Ohio, not returning to New Orleans for 2 years. The task of starting New Life Ministry

Baptist Church over from scratch was too hard, Foy said.

But God’s prompting made him both uncomfortable and refreshed, Foy said. His congregation’s first Sunday “back” included only 8 members, all of them family.

Today, Foy’s church is thriving in New Orleans East in a newly refurbished facility. For the first time in its history, the congregation has classroom space for children’s and youth ministries.

“We don’t fully understand how we got here, but we do understand that God got us here,” Foy said. “We’re waiting to see what great things God is going to do next.”



## NOBTS from page 8

levee failures around the city left 70 percent of New Orleans underwater. Sixty percent of the seminary's campus housing received significant damage. Students were scattered across 29 states; the faculty evacuated to nine states. The task of training ministers was put on hold.

Three days after the storm, NOBTS administrators summoned key faculty and staff members to Atlanta to formulate a relief and recovery plan. Courses were reformulated into an online, discussion format and a plan was developed to relaunch classes in October. Eighty-five percent of the students who were enrolled at the main campus before the storm opted to continue their studies online or at one of the seminary's extension centers that semester.

### A CALL TO RETURN

Meeting on Sept. 26 and 27, 2005, less than a month after the storm, the NOBTS trustees convened in Atlanta to discuss the future of the school. Kelley reviewed the damage with the trustees and presented a plan to restore the campus. New Orleans-area contractor Mike Moskau assured the trustees that a full restoration could be completed in time for the 2006 fall semester.

In their discussions, many of the trustees expressed the desire to rebuild the New Orleans campus as a "call" from God. With awareness of the monumental task facing the seminary, the board unanimously approved a return to New Orleans.

"Our trustees looked into the unknown, but they looked at it with the lens of the grace and redeeming power of God and the needs of Southern Baptist churches and the opportunity to reach a broken city," said Kelley. "And they said, 'We want to be all in.'"

Financial help poured in from SBC entities, state conventions and individual SBC churches. Early on, the money helped address the human side of the storm, providing financial assistance to the displaced members of the NOBTS community. Later, the gifts and volunteer labor helped the seminary offset the rebuilding expenses that were not covered by insurance.

The reconstruction took eight months and the campus reopened in time for the fall 2006 semester. The cost of the rebuilding project swelled to \$75 million.

### A NEW DAY FOR THE GOSPEL

The city of New Orleans, now on the cusp of its 300-year anniversary, experienced dramatic changes following Katrina. One of the most notable changes, a new openness to the gospel, can be traced to the Southern Baptists and other evangelicals who poured into the city to help provide relief and recovery.

"There is an openness to our witness that never existed before," Kelley said. "I don't know how long we will see this ... it's already waning some ... but there has been an openness to the gospel in the city of New Orleans that was not present before the storm."

Southern Baptists responded to the relief needs in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast region in unprecedented numbers. They cleaned and restored homes, they listened to heartrending stories of loss and they lovingly shared the gospel.

According to Kelley, the SBC response has forever changed the image of Baptists in the city.

The city has experienced an economic and cultural renaissance since the storm. The movie industry and tech startups have joined tourism as leading economic drivers. The food and music industries are flourishing. Creativity is in the air. The public school system, notoriously underperforming before Katrina, is experiencing dramatic reform. This renaissance is bringing young people to the city in unprecedented numbers.

"Millennials are flooding to the city. This is the largest influx of young adults in the history of New Orleans," Kelley said. "It just feels vibrant."

The fresh energy in New Orleans has spilled over to the seminary community. In recent years, Kelley has

seen students become more engaged in the life of city. Many embrace the city rather than fear it. They want to be involved in the energy and they are looking for innovative ways to have a greater witness for Christ in New Orleans, he said.

"They just aren't threatened by the city anymore," Kelley said. "New Orleans is still a challenging place, but it's a place where a higher percentage of our students become excited about and embrace."

That has not always been the case. When Kelley was a student 40 years ago, he said it was common for students only to leave campus for church, to buy groceries and an occasional trip to get coffee and beignets.

"Now there is a general sense of concern, care, respect and love for the city, rather than fear and intimidation. That's a very good thing," Kelley said. "Southern Baptists have always been strong in small towns. We have to learn how to do life and to enjoy life in the urban context in order to reach cities for Christ. We are watching the students of NOBTS do exactly that."

Kelley said that reaching the millennial generation is shaping up as the greatest challenge in the history of the Southern Baptist Convention. However, as millennials flock to New Orleans, he hopes the seminary and local churches will find ways to reach them with the gospel.

### CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES AT NOBTS

While the students who come to the NOBTS main campus in New Orleans are more engaged in the city than ever, Kelley acknowledges that it has been harder to get students to move to New Orleans since the storm.

Only part of that can be attributed to Katrina and the difficulties of the urban context. The changing landscape of higher education accounts for much of the shift. Accessibility, a long-time buzzword at NOBTS, has become the norm in higher education. While NOBTS celebrated the largest enrollment in school history last year, a larger percentage of those students are studying at extension centers and online than ever before.

"Our strategy for pushing seminary training off of the main campus is what prepared us to survive the Katrina experience," Kelley said. "Katrina was a time machine for the future of theological education. Our once avant garde strategy is now the mainstream of theological education."

Kelley doesn't see residential theological education going away anytime soon, but he believes fewer seminary graduates will earn their degree exclusively on a residential campus. He believes this is the future at most seminaries, not just NOBTS. Students are tailoring their education to their calling and life circumstances. This is driving the accessibility efforts throughout theological education. Kelley said NOBTS will continue to innovate to meet the needs of students and churches.

Funding has been and will continue to be a challenge for NOBTS, he said. The accessibility initiatives are more expensive and receive less Cooperative Program funding than traditional models. The CP provides less support to extension center students and no funding for online students.

"We have to remember that God is the one doing the calling," Kelley said. "So when people are answering the call of God, we have to figure out a way to train them and prepare them that connects with their calling. God's call to them is a call to us. We are called to teach them."

### LASTING LESSONS OF KATRINA

During his long look back on the decade of recovery Kelley is still amazed by God's "inexhaustible supply of redemption." His biggest take away from the Katrina experience is that no matter what the believer is facing, he or she can put aside fear and trust solely on God.

"Katrina did not take God by surprise nor worry Him about how he would care for me and our seminary, our seminary family, all Baptist work in the city, all the people who stayed," Kelley said. "Our God is a redeemer and He is able to take any circumstance we are in and out of it, bring glory to His name and good to His people."

## LSU Students from page 10

continue to do the things I do in the ministry. God calls me to get up and help people each morning."

### BCM AT LSU STUDENTS PITCHED IN

More than 300 BCM students at LSU participated in Katrina response ministries of some kind, according to a report by LSU BCM Director Steve Masters, as documented in a October 2005 message to the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge.

Over 2,000 LSU students volunteered in a variety of ways.

Masters and his family rode out the hurricane inside the BCM building on the campus and two days later began helping people. Here is a short excerpt from his report:

*WEDNESDAY – A man came up to me and asked if I was Lindsay's dad. I said yes and he said she helped him and his three year-old son a lot when they arrived, and I should be proud of her. This was at 7 p.m. At 5 a.m. the next morning I was looking for Lindsay to take her home. She was holding the three-year-old boy. On the way back to the BCM, Lindsay told me the man, his wife, his mother-in-law, and the boy had to cut a hole in their attic to escape the water. A helicopter came to rescue them. Only two could go so the mom and dad wanted the baby and mother-in-law to go. The helicopter rescuer said it had to be a parent if a child was involved so the mom had the dad go with the boy so she could stay with her mom. That is what they did and now they cannot find the mom or the mother-in-law."*

For the rest of the story go to [www.baptistmessage.com](http://www.baptistmessage.com)

## Northshore from page 10

Olive Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla., who was already on scene, five days after the storm, without even being asked to respond.

"That is the wonderful thing about Baptists," Wascom said. "They told me 'you guys helped us during (Hurricane) Ivan' and they didn't wait to be dispatched because they knew we needed their help."

### THE VALUE OF COOPERATION

When Wascom was asked to name one lesson learned from Katrina he quickly replied, "the value of cooperation. When you look at the core values of local churches all the way down – notice I said down – to the Southern Baptist Convention – we've always talked about cooperation, given lip service to it sometimes – but Katrina taught me it is right up there with the values of biblical authority, prayer and missions."

When we created the new association, we deliberately listed cooperation third below biblical authority and prayer as numbers one and two, Wascom said. "Our official watchword is prayer from I Timothy 2, but our unofficial watchword is 'better together.'"

Zoar Baptist of Central and Istrouma Baptist of Baton Rouge, both large churches, sent relief teams as well as did many small membership churches, he said. "While some of our (destroyed and dispersed) churches were wandering around with that 'deer in the headlights look' there were other churches who just showed up and said 'can we help you?' You could see these bonds lock down."

"Folsom churches found they needed help from Springfield churches, who were willing to help Mandeville, who wanted to help in Hammond and who helped over in Slidell, who helped up in Bush," Wascom said.

Wascom compared the cooperation of Louisiana's Baptist churches to the bonding soldiers often experience during the stress and distress of battle, he said.

"That is the best of times," he said. "We are bound by geography, we are bound by culture, we are bound, most of all, by the gospel."



## Franklin Avenue

from page 4

one that I was going to come back. We have been such a vital part of our community that I could not see us not come back. Franklin Avenue has been a beacon of light and hope. If there was any chance the neighborhood would come back, Franklin Avenue would have to come back.

There was never a doubt at all we wouldn't come back. I didn't know it would take us this long.

One thing I vividly remember, when I was living in Birmingham and coming back and forth every week to the city, one of the members had put a cardboard sign in front of the church "Pastor Luter, where are you?"

That brought tears to my eyes. To see that person concerned about her pastor and whether or not I was doing well was one of the stories that always sticks to me.

### PROUD OF BAPTIST RESPONSE

After the storm, one of the things I was most proud about was the response by our Southern Baptist Disaster Relief teams. I brag about our disaster relief efforts. There are not a lot of organizations that have been able to do what we were able to do successfully. Our teams came here, not knowing what was going to happen and what they were going to be confronted with. They went to every area of the city and not to help out just Southern Baptist churches. They helped anyone who needed to be helped.

The Times-Picayune ran an editorial at a time when the rebuilding process was going slowly. The editorial said that if Southern Baptists would have been responsible for rebuilding the city, it would have been rebuilt by now. That made me so proud.

I want to thank all of those who came across the country to help us out here in New Orleans. We would not be where we are without the assistance and prayers.



First New Orleans photo

First New Orleans Pastor David Crosby reflects back to the days following Hurricane Katrina and the herculean task of cleaning up and rebuilding.

## First New Orleans

from page 4

insulation, sheetrock and lumber. The piles would be 30 feet high stretching from side to side and running the entire length of the median.

I followed two soldiers with lights on their M-16 rifles. Electricity would not be restored for months. They entered every room in the church facility before they gave me permission to retrieve the things I needed. We found two dogs in the preschool area with their food scattered in the lobby. Someone who slept on my office couch had scrawled a thank you note and left a telephone number on a chalkboard.

Half of my staff did not return. I know they did the right thing. Half of the congregation relocated permanently. I thought about it. But I strapped myself in literally and figuratively when we lifted off the parking lot for the return flight back to Texas.

The Spirit of God hovered over the floodwaters on that day so filled with shock and awe. Anticipation rattled around in my soul, though I could not identify it on the helicopter flight. I was overwhelmed, but God was up to something. I was tumbling in the hurricane, but God, who rides upon the storm, was about to create something out of the chaos.

More than a million volunteers flooded into the Gulf Coast in those first 30 months after Hurricane Katrina's landfall on Aug. 29, 2005. The Red Cross mounted the largest relief effort in its 124-year history, receiving and spending nearly \$2.2 billion for Katrina relief (see [www.redcross.org](http://www.redcross.org), "Unprecedented Disaster").

Hundreds of thousands of church members from thousands of churches came to help the people of New Orleans in the wake of the storm. I suspect it was the greatest effort of voluntary assistance in the history of the American church and surely the greatest in the history of my own denomination. Our church facility, like

many others, became a disaster relief center with the Red Cross, the Salvation Army and Southern Baptist Disaster Relief, the "yellow caps," working together to serve thousands of meals and distribute tons of water, food and cleaning supplies.

First Baptist New Orleans gave significant time and effort to the building of 91 new homes in cooperation with Habitat for Humanity and Baptist Community Ministries. Our Home Recovery Ministry helped 1,100 homeowners, mostly by gutting flooded homes. Southern Baptists deployed 21,000 volunteers to these two projects.

I rode the wave of Katrina into a new perspective on the work of Christ's church. This great disaster means in part that God has given our city and its churches special attention for His own eternal purpose. He only chastens those He loves.

"Katrina" means purification. I have come to believe that God was purifying His church in the midst of this storm. The flood did not touch Bourbon Street and the famous flesh markets of our city. Rather, the flood destroyed hundreds of houses of worship and the homes of thousands of the faithful.

And the storm washed us out of our pews and into the streets and lanes of our city. This is the revival of true faith that has already happened and continues to this day in the city of New Orleans and across the nation. Thousands of congregations are rediscovering the central role of deeds of compassion in their faith journey. Young believers in our churches are drawn to this "hands-on" ministry that incarnates the Good News in the places where they live and work.

Words alone are not enough. The Word must be made flesh. A revival of faithfulness to the central command of Jesus – "love your neighbor" – that is what God has brought forth from the great flood.

## Celebration Church

from page 4

in my life. My father died at an early age, my brother-in-law was killed.... I know what it means to grieve, but that night I felt lower than I had ever felt because it seemed like everything I prayed for, dreamed for, hoped for, worked for was gone in one day."

It was an unbelievable event" I said. I remembered the shock of seeing a city devastated and depopulated before our very eyes and the helplessness I had felt watching as it happened.

He continued his story, "The next morning, my cell phone wasn't working because the cell phone towers were down. I couldn't contact anyone. I had no way to communicate with anyone. I had no way to see if others were safe, and they couldn't see if I was safe. I did not know what had happened to my staff or the people of Celebration. But at 6:33 that morning, my cell phone miraculously rang. It was a pastor from South Africa, the pastor of the church where I am going to be this week. Hundreds of people were trying to reach me, but this pastor from all the way around the world was the only one who was able to get in touch with me.

It was more than incredible. It was miraculous. This pastor from Johannesburg, South Africa, where I am going tomorrow, called me. He is pastor of the third largest church in South Africa. His was the only call which got through to my cell phone that morning.

These were his words to me: 'Dennis, my son, I know that you are devastated, but rise up man of God, for what you perceive to be your day of devastation is actually the destiny that God has called you to. I've been on my knees and my face these 8 or 9 hours praying for you, your family, your church, and your city, and the Lord has revealed to me that while this is indeed a great tragedy, out of this tragedy will come the greatest opportunity your nation has ever had to see a major city experience spiritual transformation. Rise up, man of God!'

No other calls got through to me that morning. For me, that call was the voice of the Lord speaking to me and it helped me out of my depression.

That is when I knew that God had spoken to me and that I had to return to New Orleans and help people find help, hope and healing through Christ. That is when I knew that no matter how hard it was to see the devastated and depopulated city, God was doing something much greater than Celebration Church. He was giving us the opportunity to see a city transformed by the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We did not know how many people would show up at that first service after Katrina.

Prior to Hurricane Katrina, we were a very multi-racial and multi-cultural church. We had thirty five different nations represented in our congregation. We were about thirty percent African American. Almost all of our African Americans and internationals lost their homes, as well as our St. Bernard Parish people. We permanently lost almost sixty five percent of our pre-Katrina attendees because they had lost their homes and everything. We started back with twenty-five percent of our pre-Katrina attendance, 550 people. In fact, on that first Sunday as we worshiped together at this new location that God had provided for us two weeks before Katrina, we had no carpet, we had no pews, we had no inner walls.

All we had was the Spirit of God and one another. When I stood to preach that day, our people stood and cheered for five minutes.

Understand, they were not cheering for me, they were cheering for the Lord. Many of them had lost everything and they were cheering the Lord. Up to that moment, I had wondered if we would survive as a church. Well, at that moment I knew we would survive because our people's faith in God was bigger than their fear of the circumstances.



## Katrina's Story from page 5

and nothing built in their place. Alongside Interstate 10 east, block after block of nothing indicates missing shopping centers.

The Lower Ninth Ward appears snaggle-toothed from the occasional home rebuilt, surrounded by a weedy emptiness.

Drive through Gentilly, not far from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, and you will see an odd mixture of lovely new homes, old homes that have been rebuilt and elevated, and vacant lots.

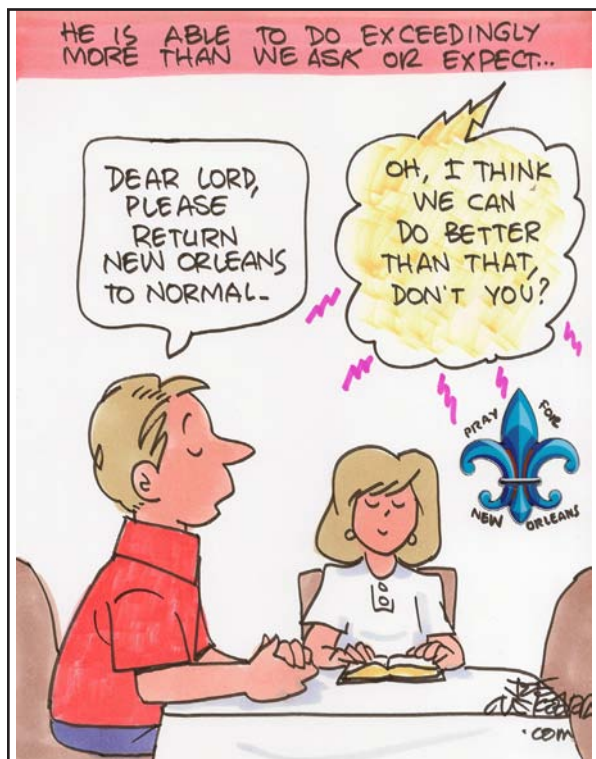
### THE CITY IS UNCHANGED IN PLACES

Crime still leads the nightly news. Politicians still try to enrich themselves at the expense of the taxpayer and to the shame of the electorate. Two political leaders in post-Katrina life, New Orleans Mayor C. Ray Nagin and Jefferson Parish President Aaron Broussard, were convicted of corruption in separate circumstances and sent to prison. The NOPD keeps rotating superintendents in search of someone who can weed out the corruption from within and safeguard the city.

The city's population is down 75,000 from 10 years ago while the larger metro area is at pre-Katrina levels. African American numbers are slightly down; the Hispanic population has increased dramatically.

### THE BEST NEWS OF ALL: GOD IS AT WORK ON EVERY BLOCK

When the living God undertakes something everlasting, He loves to start small, use unexpected means, and take His own good time, thus much that He is doing today will be known only in eternity.



Over the last decade, the Lord has shuttered many churches and given new life to others. After Katrina, seniors whose children lived elsewhere moved away from the hurricane zone.

In their place came large numbers of young professionals who love this city and are planting their lives here. Many churches are filled with young adults and growing families. The unity in these congregation tends to be a pastor's dream.

Jack Hunter, executive director of the New Orleans Baptist Association, leads an aggressive program of church planting and ministry. A com-

munity health outreach has been established in the Ninth Ward, staffed with a medical team called by God and supported by our churches.

Startup churches are being sponsored by multiple churches around the country, replacing the former system of one mother church birthing one mission.

Baptists are still hailed as heroes by many. Following the storm, churches from across the country sent hundreds of mission teams to rebuild this city. Fresh-faced teens and collegians blanketed the city, sharing the love of Christ. Friendly seniors went from door-to-door offering kindness, supplies and a paint brush.

A typical comment was voiced recently: "When we evacuated, we were taken in by Baptists in Texas. And when we returned home, the Baptists were painting our house. We love the Baptists!"

### THE WORK GOES ON

Throughout this 10th summer, God's churches continue to send teams to share the Gospel and bless our people. The seminary's MissionLab and churches like Oak Park, Williams Boulevard and Gentilly host a relentless stream of mission teams who travel here to serve people in Jesus' name.

Chuck Kelley, our seminary president, used to say, "The churches of New Orleans want to reap a harvest in a field they have not sown." Since Katrina, he says, "No city on earth has been so thoroughly sown with the Gospel as New Orleans." We are praying for the promised harvest.

We are eternally grateful to all who have ministered to us, who still believe God with us for revival, who pray for New Orleans, and who continue coming to share His love.

## 2015 GEORGIA BARNETTE STATE MISSIONS OFFERING

# DO SOMETHING DUE

BE IMITATORS OF CHRIST.  
EPHESIANS 5:1

## WEEK OF PRAYER FOR STATE MISSIONS

SEPTEMBER  
13-20, 2015

## STATE GOAL \$1,800,000

GEORGIABARNETTE.ORG





Courtesy of the Louisiana National Guard

Trucks from the Louisiana National Guard bring people rescued from the rising flood waters to the Louisiana Superdome days after Hurricane Katrina hit the Crescent City.

## Faithfulness from page 3

and an estimated 90 percent of structures were flattened within half a mile of the coastline. The surge was so large and powerful that it traveled as much as 6 miles inland over land, and 12 miles up bays and rivers.

Winds of about 127 miles per hour tore through the state, snapping trees in half and leveling homes.

President Bush declared a state of emergency for the entire state, but the greatest damage occurred in the lower two-thirds of the state, and the Federal Emergency Management Agency provided full federal assistance to 49 of 82 counties – about 1 million of 2.9 million Mississippians were seriously impacted.

A storm tide about half the height of the one in Mississippi hit Alabama with the estimated 14-foot surge nearly destroying the infrastructure and the fishing fleet in Bayou La Batre. Tornadoes were spawned around Brewton and power was lost for nearly a week for about 600,000 in the state of 4.5 million residents.

In all, more than 1,800 persons lost their lives; the federal government spent about \$120.5 billion (\$75 billion in emergency relief operations); and, insurers paid out about \$41 billion in claims — making Katrina the largest natural disaster in U.S. history, CNN summarized.

Southern Baptists launched and maintained one of the largest sustained disaster relief operations in its history — 196 continuous days, according to Baptist Press. Indeed, on the order of 21,000 trained Southern Baptist volunteers and 500 Southern Baptist Disaster Relief units re-

sponded just in Louisiana and Mississippi. Nearly 15 million hot meals were served, 17,000 homes were cleared of mud and downed trees, while almost 8,000 children were cared for.

After emergency relief operations wound down, long-term operation began like Project NOAH (New Orleans Area Homes) Rebuild.

Southern Baptists invested nearly \$25 million to build or re-build some 500 homes in the most ravaged of New Orleans neighborhoods, and, 26 water-damaged churches, schools and ministry centers were repaired, too.

Importantly, another 26,500 Southern Baptists participated as volunteer workers.

Homes were restored, so was hope,

and, the message of eternal hope was shared as well.

When all was said and done, Southern Baptists had ministered to tens of thousands of storm victims and disaster relief responders, and, shared the good news to those who would receive it, with thousands responding by submitting their lives to Christ.

*Baptist Message* has produced a package of 15 stories that retells a number of the triumphs that emerged from the tragedy, with a special focus on the courage and faithfulness of Louisiana Baptists in facing the storm and the work and ministry that followed.

We trust readers will be blessed while recalling the many miracles God worked for us — some through us, some in us — while our state recovered and the nation looked on.



First Slidell photo

As the flood waters receded, the damage caused by the levee break is evident everywhere.



COTF1/FEMA photo

Colorado Task Force 1 Hazardous Materials Technician Jeff Meyers carries an infant to safety after being discovered floating on a furniture cushion inside of a house where the parents were incapacitated.



U.S. Coast Guard photo

Petty Officer 1st Class Steven Huerta hoists two children into a Coast Guard rescue helicopter during the ongoing rescue mission which went on for several weeks.

217 square miles

Hurricane Katrina destroyed 217 square miles of Louisiana coastal wetlands and 113 oil and gas platforms in the Gulf.

1,550

Disaster Relief units, supported through Cooperative Program giving, numbered only 800 at the time of Katrina, but now numbers 1550.



# 10 YEARS AGO...

Hurricane Katrina delivered a devastating blow that left its mark on New Orleans and parts of Southeast Louisiana.



# 10 YEARS LATER...

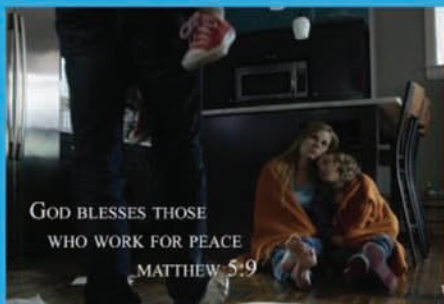
Louisiana Baptists launch *Here for You*, a multi-year, multi-platform media strategy designed to leave its mark on every heart and every home in Southeast Louisiana.



Please pray God will use this effort to give everyone living in one of our most populated areas the opportunity to say "yes" to a relationship with Jesus.



GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO REALIZE THEIR NEED FOR HIM. MATTHEW 5:3



GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO WORK FOR PEACE. MATTHEW 5:9



GOD BLESSES THOSE WHO MOURN... MATTHEW 5:4



GOD BLESSES THOSE WHOSE HEARTS ARE PURE... MATTHEW 5:8

Visit [www.LouisianaBaptists.info](http://www.LouisianaBaptists.info) and post the spots on your church website and Facebook page.