

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

— Matthew 5:20
(NASB)

LOUISIANA BAPTIST Message

Newsjournal for Louisiana Baptists



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June 18, 2015

June 26-27, 2015

THE IRON MEN ARE COMING

Louisiana College hosting Bi-Vocational/Small Church National Celebration

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

PINEVILLE – Hundreds of Ironmen will convene upon Louisiana College next week, but not for a grueling 140.6-mile triathlon.

Called by some as the Iron Men of the Southern Baptist Convention, these bi-vocational ministers, pastors of smaller churches and their wives will meet for the annual Bi-vocational and Small Church Leadership Network National Celebration.

Scheduled for June 26-27 at LC, the theme for the annual conference is “God Has A Plan For You And Your Church.” The focal scripture will be Jeremiah 29:11.

Philip Caples, Vice President of Integration for Faith and Learning at LC and director of this year’s conference, said the school and the Louisiana Baptist Convention are trying to connect with bi-vocational pastors in the state to encourage them to come to the event because of the much-needed training it will provide for their congregations.

“One reason that we are excited about this opportunity is because



IRON MEN of the SBC

National Bi-Vocational & Small Church
Leadership Network Celebration

Louisiana College wants to be a resource for all churches in our state,” said Caples, a member of the Bi-vocational Small Church Leadership Network. “However, with approximately 70 percent of Louisiana’s Southern Baptist churches having less than 100 in worship attendance, we have an opportunity to invest directly into many of the churches across the state at one time.

“Also, this event gives pastors an opportunity to visit our campus on a Friday and Saturday,” said Caples, “when they are not working at their other jobs.

“I believe this celebration will offer pastors who attend an opportunity to experience a refreshing moment in their ministry,” added Caples. “And this will bring transformation in the pastor’s life

and in the life of his congregation.”

Fred Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans and former president of the Southern Baptist Convention, will be the keynote speaker. The Blackwell Family from Pineville will lead worship.

Pastors attending the conference will take part in six to eight breakout sessions designed to encourage and train them further.

Topics for the breakout sessions include equipping your church, living a balanced life, remaining faithful during trials, building a strong family and discipleship that matures membership.

The pastors’ wives in attendance will have the opportunity to attend a section just for the ladies on the evening of June 26 and the morning of June 27.

Jan Morgan, wife of Louisiana Baptist Church Administration strategist Stacy Morgan, will lead the breakout sessions for the ladies on June 26 while Jean Beachum, president of

See **IRON MEN** on 8



LC receives update from SACSCOC on status

BY NORM MILLER
LC Communications

PINEVILLE – Louisiana College president, Rick Brewer, received notice today that the college’s probationary status has been extended to allow the college to provide more information regarding Comprehensive Standard 3.2.4, External Influence.

“Our accreditation remains intact,” Brewer said, “and our academic reputation speaks for itself. We remain encour-

aged because of the recent upsurge of interest in and support for the college.

Our stakeholders continue to entrust their students into our care as evidenced by our enrollment numbers that are on track,” Brewer added.

An official of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACSCOC) notified

Brewer of its governing board decision via telephone, saying that a detailed letter about the matter is forthcoming.



LC President
Rick Brewer

During the coming weeks, officials from both SACSCOC and LC will confer prior to the college filing an official response later this year.

“We are crafting several academic and revenue development initiatives that we anticipate

launching this year. We believe these efforts underscore our commitment to preparing graduates and transforming lives in a culture that is relational, rigorous and relevant,” he said.

“We are confident that the good work God began on the hill in Pineville back in 1906 will continue for his glory and the sake of the gospel,” Brewer said. “Our commitment to the intellectual and spiritual growth of LC’s students remains firm and strong.”

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Submitted photo

Lee Dickson welcomes the crowd at a senior adult camp at Clara Springs Baptist Camp. Dickson says he has a great love for camps because of their impact on the lives of young people.

District Eight DOM Lee Dickson announces he's retiring in October

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

NATCHITOCHES — This year, 2015, marks several significant milestones in the life of Lee Dickson.

Not only will he celebrate his 50th wedding anniversary to his wife and partner in ministry, Barbara, but he also plans to officially retire as coordinator of missions and ministries, also known as director of missions (DOM) for five Baptist associations in west central Louisiana, a challenging responsibility he has held for the past 38 years.

A native of Natchitoches Parish, Dickson's experiences leading up to the position of CMM/DOM have been diverse, which he says has proved very helpful.

He has served as a bi-vocational and full-time pastor, serving on staff of both smaller and larger membership churches, while working in sales and management for a large corporation. Dickson also served as a chaplain in the military, both active and reserve, for more than 35 years, rising in rank from a private to a colonel.

These were challenges that he believes helped him in ministering to the leaders of 125 churches of various sizes in both town and rural settings, along with numerous missions and mission ministries sponsored by the churches.

DIVINE INTERVENTION

It all started, Dickson said when his life took a major turn

at age 16. After a period of juvenile mischief and a long discussion with the local sheriff, who he says was not there to give him a "Boy Scout Award," he turned his whole life over to Jesus Christ.

"It was a day that reshaped my life for eternity, and could be described as the worst and the best day of my life," Dickson said. "I experienced the amazing forgiveness of God."

Dickson and his wife, Barbara, met while attending college at Northwestern State University in Natchitoches. Both became active in the Baptist Student Union (now called Baptist Collegiate Ministry), where he later became BSU president on the main campus,

See DICKSON on 9

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CP giving in Louisiana for 2015 mirrors increase in SBC

BY STAFF

Baptist Message

ALEXANDRIA — Through the first four months of 2015, Louisiana Baptists gifts through the Cooperative Program have mirrored the increase reported by the Executive Committee of the Southern Baptist Convention.

"Through April, Louisiana Baptists have given 2.5 percent more through the Cooperative Program than the same period last year," said John Kyle, communications director for Louisiana Baptists.

According to a Baptist Press article, year-to-date contribution to SBC Cooperative Program giving stood at 2.57 percent ahead of last year's projection and 2.09 percent above contributions received during the same time frame last year.

Dale Lingenfelter, business and IS director for Louisiana Baptists, added that the gains in the first four months of the year coupled with a decrease in the budget, have put Louisiana Baptists in a favorable position heading into the busy summer months.

"Even with a decrease in May gifts versus last year, the generosity of our people has provided a 1 percent increase this year whereas

last year at this time we were behind the budget by 1.4 percent," Lingenfelter said. "This is almost a 2.5 percent swing of which we are very grateful to the Lord and the faithfulness of God's people."

Efforts to increase missions and ministries through the Cooperative Program are gaining momentum in the state.

Steve Horn, pastor of First Lafayette and current LBC president, is heading up a pastor-led initiative called "The Pledge."

First announced during the Louisiana Baptist Executive Board meeting on May 5, The Pledge is a plan to challenge churches giving less than 3 percent to the Cooperative Program to move to 5 percent; churches giving between 3 and 8 percent are encouraged to increase by 2 percent; and churches giving between 8 and 9.9 percent to go to 10 percent.

Churches who already give 10 percent in their Cooperative Program gifts will be thanked and encouraged to prayerfully give something more; that could be increasing by 1 percent or just reaffirming a commitment to continue giving.

Since a May 14 meeting of 20 pastors at the Louisiana Baptist Building in Alexandria, commitments to

the Pledge are increasing.

"We're excited about Dr. Horn's leadership on the Pledge," Kyle said. "The early reports are good and encouraging."

Results of The Pledge campaign will be shared during the Annual Meeting of the LBC, Nov. 9-10 at First Baptist Church in Bossier City.

The year-to-date total received by the SBC represents money received by the Executive Committee by the close of the last business day of May and includes receipts from state conventions, churches and individuals for distribution, according to the 2014-15 SBC Cooperative Program Allocation Budget.

The \$128,551,618.17 received by the Executive Committee for the first eight months of the fiscal year, Oct. 1 through May 31, for distribution through the Cooperative Program Allocation Budget represents 102.57 percent of the \$125,333,333.33 year-to-date budgeted projection to support Southern Baptist ministries globally and across North America.

The total is \$2,633,111.07

or 2.09 percent more than the \$125,918,507.10 received through the end of May 2014.

Designated giving of \$156,407,635.19 for the same year-to-date period is 5.61 percent, or \$8,312,960.60, above the \$148,094,674.59 received at this point last year.

This total includes only those gifts received and distributed by the Executive Committee and does not reflect designated gifts contributed directly to SBC entities.

Designated contribu-

tions include the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for International Missions, the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for North American Missions, Southern Baptist Global Hunger Relief and other special gifts.

May's CP allocation receipts for SBC work totaled \$17,363,411.14.

Designated gifts received last month amounted to \$24,064,963.92.

For more information or resources regarding the Cooperative Program, churches are encouraged to visit www.LouisianaBaptists.org/CP.

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 4. By faith, I invite Jesus Christ into my life. From this time on, I want to live in a loving relationship with Him. (I receive Jesus Christ as my Savior and Lord.)
- But as many has received him, to them he gave the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in his name. (John 1:12)*

When you make your decision for Jesus Christ, contact a local Southern Baptist church for guidance and connection. Talk with God about this, and with a committed Christian.

You should also continue reading the Bible — the New Testament book of John is a good place to start — and go to a Bible-believing church on Sunday, where you'll find many of the answers to your questions, and good people to worship God.

Is Christianity a lost cause in the United States?

There's been a lot of talk about the recent Pew report announcing the growth of "nones" in the United States during 2007-2014.

Overall, the number of adults in the nation grew by nearly 18 million during that seven-year span, expanding from 227 million to 245 million, and the "unaffiliated" segment (atheists, agnostics, and those who named "nothing in particular" as their religious preference) picked up all this gain and then some, growing from an estimated 36.6 million to 55.8 million.

At the same time, those who claimed a Christian identity fell in actual numbers, 178.1 million to 172.8 million, dropping from 78.4 percent to 70.6 percent of the adult population.

The mainstream press played up the angle that this decline points to signs Christianity is dying in our country, and evangelical commentators were quick to object:

■ Some dismissed the sweeping changes as nothing more than "nominals" – those who are Christian in name only, and not committed to the faith – finally being honest that they really are "nones."

■ Others took solace in the fact the actual number of evangelicals increased by an estimated 2 million new members, even if "market share" possibly dropped by about 1 percent.

■ One argued there is a type of "near-Christianity" in the Bible belt to

blame (NASCAR was mentioned, no less) and offered a "good riddance" to the departed (perhaps a great sound bite in stumping for why "smaller is better," but not a great way to communicate concern about these lost individuals).



DR. WILL HALL
Editor
Louisiana
Baptist Message

But these and similar points raised about Pew's findings missed the mark, largely because the more important issue is not whether Christianity is dying in our country but whether it is a "lost cause" – or more precisely, whether it is still a cause about reaching the lost.

Frankly, the jury on that point is still out.

There are some hopeful signs:

■ The Billy Graham Evangelistic Association reported in April that it had reached 1 million new believers through its Internet ministry since November 2014. It's a worldwide total, and the published information does not break out how many of these salvation decisions took place in this country. But it's hard not to celebrate the success of this online outreach (PeacewithGod.net).

■ In 2014, Saddleback Valley Community Church celebrated a major lifetime milestone of 40,000 adult baptisms, and 2,835 of those happened that year, nearly 12 percent of its 24,342 average weekly worship attendance. That's much better than the 2013 standard for a typical Southern Baptist congregation which baptized

5.3 percent of its normal Sunday morning crowd (the data for 2014 is not yet out). Put another way, the average SBC church reported one baptism for every 19 people in worship services, but Saddleback achieved a ratio of 1 baptism for every 9 people who attended each week.

But there also is cause to be concerned about the state of evangelism in America, and not just because of small struggling ministries.

For example, last year, two of the largest SBC congregations reported thriving numbers for church planting, missions (each has people in the field both at home and abroad) and membership. However, both trailed most Southern Baptist churches in reaching the lost:

■ One hosts nearly 12,000 people each week on five campuses and baptized 200 new believers: A total that in actual numbers would place it among the top 100 baptizing churches in the Convention. But, in terms of effectiveness, it only baptized 1.7 percent of its weekly worship attendance, well below the standard (5.3 percent) for the average Southern Baptist congregation. Moreover, its ratio of baptisms to worship attendance was 1:59, suggesting it was much less effective than the Convention as a whole.

■ The other, which has a great name for discipleship training and international missions, and, even hosts conferences that draw other congregations, listed 58 baptisms in its annual internal report and an average of about 4,600 attending weekend services. In

other words, it baptized 1.3 percent of its average audience. Among the top 1 percent in attendance within the SBC, it placed in the bottom half of the Convention in terms of reaching and baptizing the lost (a point underscored by its ratio of baptisms to worship attendance of only 1 to 79).

It has been about 10 years since Bobby Welch completed a two-year campaign to energize the churches of the Southern Baptist Convention with the message "Everyone Can!" reach the lost. It was met with mixed reactions and results, but the two annual meetings he presided over had the highest attendance of any others during the last decade. Moreover, if you were part of any of the many visits he made around the country, actually being part of evangelism efforts, you were sure to come away with the sense that if given more time he could have led the SBC to a million baptisms in a year.

Now, Southern Baptists are set to gather in Columbus, Ohio, under the theme of "A Great Awakening," which is a noble goal, or perhaps an appropriate prayer and plea, for the Convention.

Christianity is bigger than just the 16 million members of the Southern Baptist Convention. Evangelicals, alone – of which we are a part – number around 62.2 million. But, Southern Baptists were once known as people who wept over lost souls, and a great awakening (a revived passion for reaching the lost in our country) has to start somewhere.

Pray that in Columbus, a "lost cause" in America might begin with us.

Surprising insight about the Apostle Paul

"I am glad about the coming of Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus, for what was lacking on your part they supplied. For they refreshed my spirit and yours. Therefore, acknowledge such men"

(1 Corinthians 16:17-18)

Amazingly capable in ministry, brilliant in theology and bold in his witness, the Apostle Paul still needed others.

Does that surprise you as much as it does me?

Paul readily admitted his need for people in his life, complimented them for ministering to him, and credited them with acts of sacrifice and generosity to him. He grew lonely when no friends were nearby, appreciated good company, and was quick to pay tribute to those who went the extra mile to find him and offer assistance in His labors.

We would expect such a trailblazer – a pioneer in spreading the Gospel, the first international missionary, and the theologian of all theologians – to be a loner, a one-man show needing nothing from anyone and making sure we all knew it.

But Paul's writings reveal he was anything but a loner:

■ *"Greet Priscilla and Aquila, my fellow-workers in Christ Jesus, who risked their own necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but also all the churches of the Gentiles."* (Romans 16:3-4).

■ *"That you may know my affairs and how I am doing, Tychicus, a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord, will make all things known to you;"* (Ephesians 6:21).

■ *"I have no one like-minded (such as Timothy), who will sincerely care for your state."* (Philippians 2:19-24).

■ *"Tychicus, a beloved brother, faithful minister, and fellow servant in the Lord, will tell you all the news about me...."* (Colossians 4:7).

■ *"Onesimus, a faithful and beloved brother ... Aristarchus, my fellow prisoner ... Mark the cousin of Barnabas...and Jesus who is called Justus. These are my only fellow workers for the Kingdom of God ... they have proved to be a comfort to me"* (Colossians 4:9-11).



JOE MCKEEVER
Retired Pastor,
Author
New Orleans

And we must not miss Paul's final testimony to the value he placed on the presence of a few friends (from his cell in Rome, waiting his second and final trial before Caesar):

"Be diligent to come to me quickly. For Demas has forsaken me ... Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry ... At my first defense, no one stood with me, but all forsook me ... Do your best to come before winter." (2 Timothy 4:9ff.)

From this we can conclude: Paul was lonely and needed friends during times of great trials; Paul felt badly when faithful friends deserted him, or worse, forsook the Lord; he appreciated those who could be counted on; and, he asked the help of others in his work.

Too often pastors prefer to work alone, when the ministry was never meant to be a one-person job.

I've watched enough nature shows to know that when the roaring lion begins stalking, and "seeking whom it may devour" (1 Peter 5:8), it does not take on the whole herd. It looks for stragglers, animals too sick, old, young or headstrong, to stay with the herd.

Once the lion finds the loner, it has its next meal.

Pastors press members to take care of one another and to fully participate in small groups. Then these same men cut themselves off from their peers using such excuses as being too busy or having no denominational peers in the area to create barriers to reaching out.

But the inimitable Vance Havner said an excuse is the skin of a reason stuffed with a lie.

Pastors need the fellowship of prayer partners who understand each other. They need encouragers and affirmers, buddies and friends.

It was not for nothing that our Lord sent His disciples out in twos or even more.

Church leader: Pray for your pastor and encourage him to build friendships with other ministers in the area.

Pastor: Pray for the Lord to make you aware of your need—your desperate need! – of faithful brethren in His work. Ask Him to lead you to one or two – or ten – to whom you can reach out. You will be as big a blessing to them as they are to you.

If Paul needed friends, it's a lead-pipe cinch you and I do, too.

State DR teams watch, wait, prepare to respond to flooding

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL
Message Staff Writer

Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief officials are making preparations now to respond to those directly impacted by the floodwaters of the Red River – and every Louisiana Baptist has a chance to participate.

According to Louisiana Baptist state Disaster Relief Director Gibbie McMillan, four areas in north and central Louisiana likely will serve as staging areas when disaster relief teams are activated. Teams will use locations in Shreveport, Coushatta, Natchitoches and Alexandria as ministry hubs to sleep and eat at themselves. It is not certain that feeding for the public will be needed until the assessments are completed.

Though trained disaster relief team members will be working, Louisiana Baptists who have not completed official training may also serve, McMillan said.

Donations to the response along with prayers also are needed.

Those interested in volunteering should call the disaster relief office at 318.448.3402. Donations can be made by going to louisianabaptists.org/disasterrelief or by mailing checks to Louisiana Baptist Conven-

tion, Attn: Disaster Relief, PO Box 311, Alexandria, LA 71309.

Out-of-state teams are expected to join LBC units in helping victims of the flooding.

McMillan said the teams currently are on alert and are waiting for flood waters to

recede enough for damage assessment before working on homes.

About 15 blue hats – directors – of teams on June 10 met for training and loaded supplies onto disaster relief trailers in anticipation of a response.

“In disaster relief we are here to help people who may have lost everything they have,” McMillan said. “All of this is very emotional for victims, no matter how badly damaged their homes are. We want them to know that God loves them and that Jesus cares.”

As of June 10, 84 homes in the Shreveport/Bossier City area were flooded, McMillan said.

Streets in the area also saw floodwater, including a small portion of the Louisiana Boardwalk in Bossier City and near the SciPort museum in Shreveport.

In addition to street closures, some portions of I-220 were blocked off as well as some off and on ramps.

Around 250 homes were

See **FLOODING** on 9



Joe Dupree photo

Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers spent several hours on June 10 loading equipment onto trailers that will be used if teams are activated to areas affected by floodwaters of the Red River. Prayers, donations and even availability to volunteer on-site are needed in the coming weeks.

“I DON'T HAVE TO WORRY ABOUT BEING COLD, HUNGRY OR GOING WITHOUT MY MEDICINE.

IT IS SUCH A BLESSING

TO KNOW I CAN PAY MY BILLS ON TIME.”

— VIRGINIA PANGLE, widow of Rev. Hazen Pangle

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District 8 Director of Missions Lee Dickson announces his approaching retirement.

After 38 years as DOM/Ministries Coordinator, Brother Lee has decided to step down effective Oct. 1, 2015, which would be his 72nd birthday.



Anyone desiring to apply for the position of Ministries Coordinator/Director of Missions should send a resume' by June 30 to

DOM SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIRMAN

C/O First Baptist Church

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or email to Tommy Rush at trush@fbcnatchitoches.net

6 Bi-Vocational Pastor Greg Gaspard

Experienced Gaspard has learned the dos, don'ts of being a bivo

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

OPELOUSAS – When it comes to serving as a bi-vocational pastor, Gregory Gaspard knows the dos and don'ts of ministry.

A bi-vocational pastor for all but the past six years of his 23 years at Unity Baptist Church in Opelousas, Gaspard has enjoyed seeing nearly a quarter-century of planted seeds grow into a harvest of mission-minded members.

"In my 23 years here, I have never looked for something bigger and better," he said. "I have embraced this church, taking it as a serious calling. We've enjoyed the great fellowship of people here and seeing them reach out to our community through outreach."

Gaspard's path to ministry began in 1973 at Emmanuel Baptist Church in his native Eunice, two years after marrying his wife Elizabeth. While at Emmanuel Baptist as a layperson, Gaspard taught Sunday school and Royal Ambassadors, in addition to serving as a deacon.

His involvement there prepared him for his eventual call to the pastorate. He made that decision public in 1989 and became interim pastor at Prairie Home Baptist Church in

Eunice.

"Serving with the different ministries stirred up in my heart that desire to pastor a church," said Gaspard, who became pastor of Unity Baptist in 1992. "I talked with my pastor and told him how I was reluctant about pastoring. He said God doesn't have closet preachers, that you have to come out. I made the step and it's been great ever since."

Gaspard, who did not graduate from a seminary, said continuing education was a vital part of serving his congregation well. In addition to building connections with pastors in the area who served as mentors, he attended seminars and conferences such as the Louisiana Baptist Evangelism Conference.

Gaspard said attending conferences and developing friendships with other ministers is just one piece of advice he would have for pastors.

Other tips for pastors include:

Keep one's marriage fresh and alive.

Gaspard, who has been married to Elizabeth for 44 years, said when he felt times of loneliness, she was by his side to encourage him. He said her ministry of serving others has been inspiring.



Submitted photo

Gregory Gaspard assists in preparation of cracklins during a large fellowship at Unity Baptist Church in Opelousas. A bi-vocational pastor for most of his 23 years at Unity Baptist, Gaspard has enjoyed seeing nearly a quarter-century of seeds planted grow into a harvest of mission-minded members.

"I've seen too many pastors and their families crumble and I didn't want any part of it," Gaspard said. "We kept our marriage fresh. As busy as I was, we scheduled weekends at least on a quarterly basis. I made our marriage a priority, above my work and church. We have a great marriage and that's been my greatest strength."

Rely on church members to ease the burden on the pastor.

Gaspard worked at Frito-Lay full time until 2009. He said when he wasn't able to physically be in the office or in the community, knowing he could count on his church

members was a relief. Delegating responsibilities was key, he said.

"There were quite a few days when I felt burned out at Frito-Lay and the fact that my people were trained to reach out to the community was a huge help."

If a church sponsors a mission, make sure experienced individuals join the new work.

"If you start mission work, you need to send people who are seasoned," Gaspard said. "Your mother church needs to be there a year to see the church started. A lot of churches may not get off the ground much because there is no foundation."

Not everyone wants to unite the church.

"A friend told me to be cautious because in a new church start you will have a lot of traffic by people from other churches who are disgruntled," he said. "Be wise. If you will be the pastor, you may think everyone loves God's word and wants to do it that way. That's

not always the case."

Pastor the people.

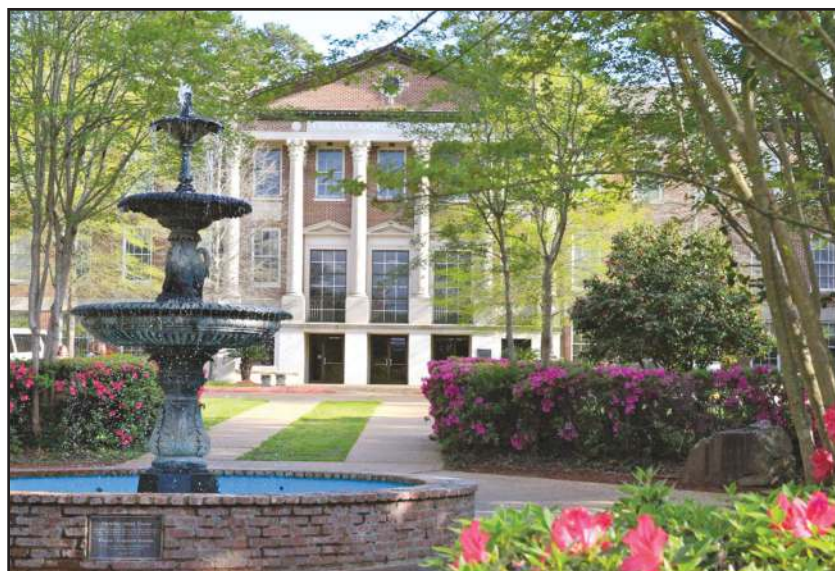
"Keep it simple and just pastor the people," he said. "Never compromise with the word of God. Gain trust with the people. Even people who don't agree with you may soften up if you get that trust."

Be teachable.

"All my deacons know if I am out of order in any way, they better come to me," Gaspard said. "I am still in the teaching mode. My calling is different from yours, but we all are teachable. My church knows I can fall and I have problems with my marriage and kids from time to time and they know that. Make sure you are transparent with the congregation."

"I have learned and am still learning that in order to be pleasing to my heavenly father, a good husband, a good father and a good pastor to my church family, I must constantly resist a deceptive lie. And that lie is

See GASPARD on 8



The Louisiana College Board of Trustees announces the Inauguration of Dr. Rick Brewer As Ninth President of Louisiana College

Thursday, September 17, 2015 - 11:00 a.m. Chapel Service, 7:00 p.m. Inaugural Worship Service
Friday, September 18, 2015 - 2:00 p.m. Inaugural Ceremony
More information to Follow



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Bivo Mark Crook equips his church to follow God's lead

By BRIAN BLACKWELL

Message Staff Writer

Editor's Note: Every year two pastors are named Exemplary Bi-Vocational Pastors of the Year. In 2014, Mark Crook, pastor of Trees Baptist Church in Vivian, and Gregory Gaspard, pastor of Unity Baptist Church in Opelousas, received the award for dedication and hard work at their secular job and congregation.

VIVIAN – The bivocational pastorate was an idea unknown to the search committee of Trees Baptist Church when they first interviewed Mark Crook in June 2010.

But once they and the congregation discovered how the position would benefit both Crook and Trees Baptist, they knew this was God's direction for revival in the church and future tremendous growth.

"I think that many do not understand the term or at least define it in different ways," Crook said. "I explained to [the search committee] that I would still be on call 24 hours, 7 days a week, however the bulk of my salary would be paid by my full-time employer which would free up some funds to add additional staff in the future. They issued the call and 42 people were present to vote for me as their pastor."

Since that day he was called to serve as pastor, Crook has seen God move in mighty ways at the Northwest Louisiana church.

When he first arrived, attendance on a Sunday averaged between 30 and 40, a far cry

from the 110 who once attended every week for worship services. Six of the 12 deacons felt led to leave the church and those remaining members were heartbroken over the loss of family and friends who felt God leading them to leave, according to Crook.

But healing eventually settled into the church.

Now, between 120 and 130 show up every week for worship services. Sunday school attendance draws about 110 weekly and in 2014, 55 were baptized.

To accommodate the growth from the influx of young families, Trees Baptist added a full-time worship and media minister along with a full-time minister of education and students.

Crook credits his congregation for following God's leading throughout the growth.

"I am honored to pastor the finest people on the planet," Crook said. "I am grateful for the remnant that felt compelled by God to stay at the church during those hard times prior to my coming. They humbled themselves and sought God through pain and heartache and God was faithful. Without a doubt their faithfulness to turn to God is the reason I was honored with this award."

Without the support of his church and immediate family, Crook said it would be difficult to balance his role as pastor of Trees Baptist with his secular job at Louisiana Baptist University and Seminary in Shreveport, where he is associate vice president and dean of psychology and Christian counseling.



Brian Blackwell photo

Mark Crook works at Louisiana Baptist University in Shreveport and also is pastor of Trees Baptist Church in Vivian. Since he came to Trees Baptist in 2010, attendance has grown from 30 to 110.

In fact, Crook said he would not be able to serve as pastor without the full support of his wife, Karen.

"My job as pastor is not to do all the work of the ministry but to equip the saints for the work of the ministry," said Crook, who has served on staff at seven different Louisiana Baptist churches in the Shreveport area and one Oklahoma Baptist

church before coming to Trees Baptist. "Karen and I strive to lead by example. We don't serve because I am the pastor and she is the pastor's wife; we serve God because that is what we all are supposed to do."

"A pastor, the church staff and the congregation must stay focused on the mission that Christ has called us too," he continued. "Our mission

at Trees is simple – share the gospel with as many as we can and disciple those who dare to believe. Our strategy is simple – use our worship services as the front door, our Life Groups to close the back door and then move people to the open door of missions, local, state, national and International. We must all become active in winning the lost and discipleship."



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Leadership Network Celebration

JUNE 26, 2015

- 8:30 a.m. Organizational Meetings
Church Planting Network
DOM Network
Educators Network
PALS
State Convention leadership Network
- 10:00 a.m. Coordinating Council and Business Meeting
- 12:00 p.m. Lunch on your own
- 1:00 p.m. CELEBRATION Registration
- 2:00 p.m. Special Music – Blackwell Family
- 2:15 p.m. Devotional – Dr. Rick Brewer
- 3:00 p.m. Breakout Session No. 1
- 4:15 p.m. Break (Provided by 1st Baptist Church Pineville)
- 4:45 p.m. President's Address – Cliff Woodman
- 5:00 p.m. National Coordinator Report and Reports
from the field
- 6:00 p.m. Dinner (Provided by Christian Health Care Ministries)
- 7:00 p.m. Special Music – Blackwell Family
- 7:30 p.m. Message – Dr. Fred Luter
- 8:30 p.m. Afterglow Fellowship (Provided by
Louisiana College Caskey Center)

JUNE 27, 2015

- 8:30 a.m. Special Music – Blackwell Family
- 8:45 a.m. Devotional – Darrell Fletcher
- 9:00 a.m. Breakout No. 2
- 10:15 a.m. Break (Provided by 1st Baptist Church Pineville)
- 10:45 a.m. Special Music – Blackwell Family
- 11:00 a.m. Message – Dr. Fred Luter
- 12:00 p.m. Dismiss and Box Lunch (Provided by
Louisiana College Caskey Center)

Iron Men from page one

Partners Assisting the Lord's Servants – will lead the sessions for the women on June 27.

First Baptist Church in Pineville and the Louisiana Baptist Convention are helping make the conference possible.

Prior to the conference, the coordinating council and executive leadership will meet on June 25. Then on June 26, organizational meetings for various groups take place at 8:30 am, with registration opening at 1 pm.

Activities that day include a devotional by LC President Rick Brewer, breakout sessions, special music by the Blackwell Family, a message by Luter, the president's address and a time of fellowship.

Activities on the final day in-

clude music by the Blackwell Family, a devotional by coordinating council member Darrell Fletcher and a message by Luter.

Brewer said the event demonstrates the school's ongoing commitment to invest in pastors across the state.

"We are deeply pleased to partner with the LBC to advance the Kingdom of God through men who are committed to the hard work of biblical ministry for the sake of the gospel," Brewer said.

THE NEW BIG

Of the 46,124 churches that are a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, more than 38,000 are smaller churches.

Those with Sunday school attendance of 125 or fewer are considered small churches.

Gary Mitchell, bivocational and smaller church specialist for Louisiana Baptists, said "small" is the new "big" and the conference at LC underscores the importance of those churches in the life of the SBC.

"The bottom line is this," Mitchell said. "The size of our big ministries is determined by the fruitfulness of our smaller churches. Small churches are a plan A in SBC Great Commission strategy."

To register for the event, please go to BSCLN.net. Then go to RESOURCES and click on 2015 National Celebration. Once there, click on registration to complete the form for the conference.

Gaspard from page 7

I am too busy to be still and know that God is God."

Exercise regularly.

"A preacher told me 25 years ago and said that I know God has called you to preach, but you can't preach without a body," Gaspard said.

"He said take care of your body. Without having a healthy body, there is no way I could have done what I have done," Gaspard added. "Put God first, then my wife and then myself. I have seen a lot of pastors whose bodies did not follow through."

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Gaspard believes God is

positioning Unity Baptist for a fruitful year in 2015.

Last year, Gaspard baptized 12 people, six more than its annual average.

He is optimistic that Unity may surpass this year the 2014 figure with the planned outreach efforts by the congregation.

"God is taking us to another level outside our church walls like never before," Gaspard said. "This year will be focused on outreach and going beyond our walls."

"We're going to be even more visible at public functions and make those connections with the community," said Gaspard.

Currently, the church is planning on constructing a new wor-

ship center that will seat 250 to 300 people.

Its current structure holds 125 and many Sundays the building is 75 percent full.

Debt-free, the church plans on moving forward with the new worship center by paying for it as the project moves forward.

The church also recently ordained a long-time member of the church as associate pastor.

Peter Vidrine, who is married to Aline, has been a member for 15 years.

"I pastor a great church that really cares about reaching this area," Gaspard said. "We're focusing on the future and how we can reach more and more people for the Lord."

University Baptist hosting a patriotic musical 'like none other'

BATON ROUGE – A pianist, a former state Speaker of the House and the Voice of the LSU Tigers may seem like an unlikely combination for a patriotic musical celebration.

But the three will join many others for "A Patriotic Salute to America" at University Baptist Church in Baton Rouge on July 2. Because of limited seating, an RSVP is required. To RSVP, visit ubc-br.org or call 225.766.9474.

These vocal and instrumental musicians from area churches and organizations will join the musical group Celebration for the pre-Independence Day event. A community choir – composed of some members of the Baton Rouge Symphony Chorus and other volunteers, the Baton Rouge Concert Band and Jim Hawthorne, who serves as the Voice of the LSU Tigers,

are just some of the organizations and people participating in the event.

Keeping in step with the patriotic theme, all veterans will be honored with a musical tribute to current and former members of the armed forces. Also former Speaker of the Louisiana House of Representatives Hunt Downer will present a patriotic reading complimented by a musical slide and video presentation.

Pre-event music kicks off at 6:30 pm, with the show officially beginning at 7 pm.

Randy Gurie, who is a member of Celebration and University Baptist Church, said the event promises to get a person in the patriotic mood while reminding those in attendance of the nation's beginnings.

"It seems that we have

See PATRITOTIC on 11

Jesus Said, "Be sure of this, - I am always with you..."
Matthew 28:20

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Flooding from page 5

affected in Coushatta, with 50 having water in them, according to McMillan. Natchitoches was expecting flooding as well but McMillan was not certain how many homes were affected.

Lane Moore, director of missions for Northwest Louisiana Baptist Association, Ron Thompson, assistant to the coordinator of missions and ministries at District 8 Baptist Convention that encompasses five associations itself, and Robert Daniel, director of missions for Big Creek, Central Louisiana and North Rapides associations, said their offices had not received any reports of floodwaters reaching churches in their respective associations.

ASSESSING DAMAGE, SHOWING STRENGTH

Governor Bobby Jindal's

Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness had recovery teams assessing damage in Northwest Louisiana on June 9. Information gathered will be used to coordinate with the Federal Emergency Management Agency to develop a request for President Barack Obama to issue a Major Federal Disaster Declaration because of the flooding.

"We want to make sure everything is done to help people and communities impacted by the Red River flooding," said GOHSEP Director Kevin Davis in a press release. "The work these assessment teams perform is the first step in determining if federal assistance may be available. GOHSEP wants to make sure this information is gathered as quickly as possible to help secure a presidential disaster declaration."

GOHSEP, the Louisiana

Army National Guard and other state agencies are working with emergency managers in affected communities to mitigate as many problems as possible before the crest of the river. Assessment teams are meeting with leaders in those communities that are impacted by the disaster.

Louisiana Rep. Mike Johnson, R-Bossier City, said the community has pulled together and shown tremendous strength to the disaster.

He said this is a characteristic of the community, which is part of the district he represents, and that he expects the residents will get through the disaster.

"From our earliest history to the present day, northwest Louisiana has always been known for our resilient spirit," said Johnson, a member of First Baptist Church in Bossier City. "We face our challenges head on, and we never lose faith. We'll get through this one, too, and be even stronger when the waters

recede. You can count on it."

Johnson added that Louisianians should be proud of how the state and local agencies and officials have handled the crisis.

"The coordination has been exceptional, and the flow of information constant," he said. "All of us should be proud of the dedicated public servants who have been working long hours to see this through. Our local churches and volunteer organizations will continue to play a vital role in this as well, as the waters recede. Our area will be recovering from this for quite some time."

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Though disaster relief teams were not activated as of June 10, Louisiana Baptists had begun helping.

Some disaster relief volunteers spent June 9 surveying damage along the Red River levee.

They used four-wheelers to ride along the levee, from the Caddo Parish line down to Coushatta, a 18-mile journey.

Meanwhile, the Rolling Hills Resort Ministry thrift store in Bossier City assisted a victim of the flooding with clothing. Rolling Hills Director David Abernathy said such action fulfills one of Christ's commandments.

"When we do it to the least of these, we do it to Him," Abernathy said. "There will be a great need for this in the weeks to come."

James Irvine, a blue hat for a team from Mount Alive Baptist Association, said responding to a disaster has its challenges at times but is rewarding work.

"This can be a nasty job but it's very rewarding in the end," Irvine said. "People are overwhelmed that we come in and provide our services at no charge. We do it to help other people out because it's our calling in life as Christians."

Dickson from page 2

and she became president at the NSU nursing campus in Shreveport. They were married shortly after graduation, and their lives took on multiple careers.

It was not long however until they felt God leading them to move to Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth, Texas, to prepare themselves for a lifetime of ministry.

Little did they realize then the doors that God would open for them, nor the scores of people who would encourage them, guide them, and pray for them as they sought to carry out God's will for their lives.

Dickson said they never dreamed that 50 years later they would still be serving God's wonderful people in a part of Louisiana where they both were reared, an area known locally as District Eight.

INSPIRED BY DICKSON

Tommy Rush, who is chairman of the search committee to find the next coordinator of missions and ministries, said Dickson and his wife are true examples of what district and associational missions is all about.

When the pulpit committee from First Baptist Church in Natchitoches contacted Rush more than 12 years ago to ask of his interest in becoming pastor, the first person he called to ask about the congregation was Dickson. Rush said that Dickson was a big influence for his move from a church in Alabama to serve First Baptist Natchitoches. He said other pastors throughout District 8 Convention likely

have similar stories.

"Lee Dickson is our pastor," Rush said. "He has ministered to the ministers with grace and strength. He continues to demonstrate a passion for missions and constantly stands before our churches calling us to stay focused on the Great Commission and to engage in Kingdom work."

CHRISTIAN ENCOURAGER

Dickson views his life as that of a Christian encourager. He says that in his life experiences, but especially through the tragic loss of his young U. S. Marine son, and seeing God's strength and grace provided to keep going, he realized that almost every family, even ministry families, walk through deep valleys in their own lives.

Dickson states that if God is willing, he will transition to his next ministry challenge on or around his 72nd birthday. How-

ever, like many other Christians, he says he is seeking a fresh word from God regarding where and what to do next, because he has not found much on "retirement" in the Bible.

But for now, Dickson is looking forward to the next chapter for his wife and him.

"It has become my prayer that, no matter what happens, our faith in God will grow stronger and stronger as we move forward in our lives, knowing that God's very best for all of us is yet to be realized."

SEEKING A FULL TIME SENIOR PASTOR

New Hebron Baptist Church in Waskom, Texas is seeking a full-time senior pastor.

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Please send resumes to: Harmony Baptist Church, Pastor Search Committee, P.O. Box 1056 • Glenmora, LA 71433 or email to richardh61143@gmail.com

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Please send resumes to: Fellowship Baptist Church 487 Fellowship Road Trout, LA 71371 Fax to: 318.992.6119 or e-mail to: fellowshipbctrout@yahoo.com

First Baptist Church of Folsom, LA is seeking a **FULL-TIME PASTOR**
Please send resumes to: Pastor Search Committee P.O. Box 106 • Folsom LA 70437

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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 resume to beth@lbch.org or send to Louisiana Baptist Children's Home, P.O. Box 4196, Monroe, LA 71211.

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ON THE MOVE

- **Michael McGrath** new as minister of students and families at First Baptist Church Natchitoches.
- **Donald Turner** new as minister of music at Live Oak Baptist Church, Denham Springs.

IN REMEMBRANCE

■ **Forrest Post**, a Southern Baptist minister for 65 years, passed away June 6 at the Reeves Memorial Medical Center in Bernice at the age of 87. He was laid to rest at the Mt. Union Baptist Church cemetery on June 10. Post was licensed to the Gospel ministry in September 1946 and ordained in December 1947 by Camp Creek Baptist Church. A 1969 graduate of Louisiana Tech University, Post served as pastor of Mt. Sterling Baptist Church, Bernice; Calvary Baptist Church, Jennings; Wayside Baptist Church, Pollock; Corinth Baptist Church, Dubach; Mt. Patrick Baptist Church, Bernice; Mt. Union Baptist Church, Spearsville and Camp Creek Baptist Church, Spearsville, where he was still a member. His ministry and desire to share the Gospel allowed him to preach many revivals over the years, serve in every capacity in the Concord/Union Baptist Association, be instrumental in obtaining and serving on the board of directors of Harris Baptist Encampment in Homer, as well as, numerous committees of the Louisiana Baptist Convention and its Executive Board. He also travelled to South Korea, Africa, and Brazil on numerous mission trips during the course of his ministry. He is survived by his wife of over 70 years, Celeste Nash Post; two daughters, Denise Boatright and husband Buddy, Donna Langley and husband Steve; four sons, Jim Post and wife Carol, Steve Post and wife

Angelique, Marc Post, and Tim Post and wife Carmen; 15 grandchildren, and 25 great-grandchildren.

HOMECOMING

- Johnson Bayou Baptist Church: **80th anniversary celebration**, June 21, 10 a.m. Speaker: Les Fogleman, former pastor will be bringing the message. Lunch will be served following the service. Pastor: Jack Gandy.
- Alabama Baptist Church, Arcadia: **130th Anniversary**, June 28. Pastor: Lamar Skinner.
- First Baptist Church, Welsh: **112th Homecoming**, June 28, 11 a.m. Speaker: **Dore Langley**. Special Music: **Mark Touch**. Dinner on the grounds will follow the service. Pastor: Pat Deshotel.
- First Baptist Church, Jackson: **180th Homecoming**, June 28, 9:45 a.m. (Bible study) and 11 a.m. worship service. Lunch will be served immediately following worship service. Pastor: Joe Nesom.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **Homecoming**, June 28, 10 a.m. Dinner on the grounds will follow the services. Speaker: **Kevin Roberts**. Pastor: Philip Robertson.
- Crossroads Baptist Church, Marthaville: **Homecoming Celebration**, June 28, 10:30 a.m. with dinner on the grounds to follow the service. Speaker: **Tim Leach**. Pastor: Earnest Little.

LAGNIAPPE

- Hebron Baptist Church, Denham Springs: **The Per-rys in concert**, June 18, 7 p.m. A love offering will be received. Pastor: Joe Alain.

N.C. June 16-18. Campers on Mission is an organization of evangelical Christians who own RV equipment and participate in various mission projects across the United States. The program will include Christian comedians, Gospel singing groups, seminars and inspirational speakers. A registration form may be found at campersonmission.org. For additional information contact Jeb41938@gmail.com.

- First Baptist Church, Lafayette: **Reception honoring Steve Horn** on his 10th anniversary as pastor of FBC Lafayette, June 21, 6 p.m. Reception will be in the fellowship hall. Pastor: Steve Horn.

■ First Baptist Church, Minden: **Basketball camp**, June 22-26, 9-11:30 a.m. The camp, which will be held in the FBC Minden Family Life Center, is for grades 1-6. There will be an awards luncheon in the dining room at 11:30 a.m. on June 26. Cost: \$50 (Camper's meal is included in the cost.) Sign up at www.firstminden.org or call the church office at 318.377.9711.

■ Sale Street Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **David Crowder in concert**, June 26, 7 p.m. Cost: \$25 for general admission and \$40 for VIP admission. For more information or to purchase tickets, go to www.salestreet.org. Pastor: Randy Edwards.

■ First Baptist Church, Chalmette: **Grand opening of Global Café**, June 26, 4-11 p.m. Music: local Christian musicians. The coffee house, which is located inside FBC Chalmette, will serve as the setting for Fourth Friday's (each fourth Friday of the month). There will be coffee, beignets, music and fellowship. For more information, contact Fourth Friday Ministry Coordinator Tiffany Thomas at 906.204.4780 or tiffany.fbcchalmette@gmail.com.

■ Norwood Baptist Church, Norwood: **Auction (live and silent) fundraiser event**, June 27, 6 p.m. Jambalaya dinners with all the trimmings will be available for \$6 before the auction at 5 p.m. Services, garden equipment, toys, kitchenware and much, much more will be

auctioned off. Pastor: Rickie Wilson.

■ Alabama Baptist Church, Arcadia: **Song Fest**, June 27, 7 p.m. Pastor: Lamar Skinner.

■ Ebenezer Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **Patriotic Music**, June 27-28. Pastor: Randy Lee.

■ First Baptist Church, Mandeville: **Mandeville Celebrates America**, June 28, 5:30-9 p.m. There will be fireworks, inflatables, antique cars, snowballs, food, live music, military displays, games, door prizes. Pastor: Ken Schroeder.

■ First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula: **Patriotic Celebration**, June 28, 9:20 a.m. and 10:40 a.m. The Sanctuary Choir & Orchestra will present music about God and country. All military, past and present are invited to come in their uniform. Pastor: David Cranford.

■ First Baptist Church, Natchitoches: **Patriotic Celebration**, June 28, 9:30 a.m. The choir will lead the church in a patriotic-themed service to prepare everyone for the July 4th weekend. Pastor: Tommy Rush.

■ Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Movie Night – Do You Believe?**, June 28, 6 p.m. This stirring new film from the creators of God's Not Dead is more than a movie; it's a question we all must answer in our lifetimes: DO YOU BELIEVE? Pastor: Randy Burdeaux.

■ First Baptist Church, Jonesboro: **"America – We Must Not Forget"**, June 28, 10:30 a.m. The adult Choir of First Baptist Church of Jonesboro will present the musical during the morning worship service. Pastor: Charles Wesley.

■ First Baptist Church, Pineville: **FIRST@FIRST Business Leader Luncheon**, July 6, 12-1 p.m. in the Fellowship Hall. Speaker: Laurie Johnson, principal of Lessie Moore Elementary in Pineville. Admission: \$10 (lunch included). The luncheon is held each first Monday and is open to the business community. RSVP by 8 a.m. on May 1, to Melinda at mlangford@fbcpineville.net. For more information, visit www.fbcpineville.net.

Patriotic from page 8

veered from the ideals that helped shape our nation," said Gurie, who also serves as executive director of Cadets of the Ole War Skule, LSU's official organization for military alumni. "It is important that we continue to promote those

values and ideals as we seek to strengthen the nation's foundation for future generations. This night will be a way for us, as a community, to come together to support our nation, to celebrate who we are and who we will continue to be."

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.

cqn tpaqdp mjp aphvm qa mjp zhvvqypd, njpc

wpvev bcpn mjhm jrv jqed jhv iqkp mjhm jp vjqeus

spzhdm qem qa mjrv nqdus ecmq mjp ahmjpd, jhyrex

uqyps jrv qnc njrij npdp rc mjp nqdus, jp uqyps mjpk

ecmq mjp pcs.

wqjc mjrdmppc:qcp

Clues:
J = H; R = I

Answer to June 4, Scripture Crypto:
Ezekiel forty-one: nineteen

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Guide available to protect churches from 'sexual liberty'

By TOM STRODE

Baptist Press

WASHINGTON (BP) – The Southern Baptist Convention's religious liberty entity has collaborated with a leading legal advocacy organization to provide guidance for churches and other institutions in the face of the advance of "sexual liberty" and same-sex marriage.

The Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission (ERLC) and Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF) have published "Protecting Your Ministry," a legal manual for Southern Baptist churches, schools and ministries. The 44-page booklet is designed to equip SBC and other evangelical churches and institutions with legal protection against sexual orientation and gender identity lawsuits.

The manual includes checklists to guide Christian institutions on maximizing their religious liberty protections under the law and maintaining their freedom to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus. It also provides sample documents – such as a membership agreement, facility use policy and article for a statement of faith – to assist churches and other ministries.

ERLC President Russell Moore said he is thankful to work with ADF

"to produce this resource to help equip churches on how to remain faithful to our mission in a culture that often disagrees with our message."

"Without soul freedom we have no other liberties," Moore said in an ERLC news release. "The church cannot outsource our convictions to the state."

ADF President Alan Sears said his organization is honored to cooperate with the ERLC "as fellow servants of churches and Gospel ministers across America who are looking for answers to the challenges against our fundamental freedoms of religion, speech and conscience."

The release of the legal manual comes at a time when the expansion of same-sex marriage – as well as sexual orientation and gender identity ordinances – has resulted in a growing clash between "sexual liberty" and religious liberty. Especially in the marriage context, the rights of gay couples have typically triumphed over the religious freedom of individuals and organizations.

Florists, bakers, photographers and other business owners who have conscientious objections to providing their services for same-sex ceremonies have been penalized by courts or com-

missions or are facing penalties. The booklet provides several examples of business owners and schools who have been pressured by government entities to violate their religious convictions regarding sexuality and marriage.

Among its checklist items, the ERLC/ADF guide urges each church and/or ministry to:

- Include a statement on gender, sexuality and marriage in its confession of faith.

- Establish formal policies for church membership and discipline.

- Institute a policy describing the weddings a church's pastors will participate in and the church will host in its buildings.

- Enact religious employment requirements – such as agreement with its confession of faith and standards of conduct – for employees.

- Create and apply a facility use policy faithful to its beliefs.

The enactment of "sexual orientation, gender identity ordinances" by cities has prompted, at least in part, the need for such protections, according to the legal guide.

"These ordinances place terms like 'sexual orientation' or 'gender identity' in the same category as race or religion,"

the ERLC/ADF manual says. "But they are not designed for the innocent purpose of ensuring all people receive basic services. Rather, their practical effect is to legally compel Christians to accept, endorse, and even promote messages, ideas, and events that violate their faith."

Sexual orientation normally includes homosexuality and bisexuality, while gender identity, or transgender status, refers to what sex a person identifies with, regardless of his or her physiological make-up.

Dean Inserra, senior pastor of City Church in Tallahassee, Fla., said the advance of same-sex marriage in particular has resulted in "new waters" for many pastors.

"[W]e must equip ourselves with the resources available to do ministry in the 21st century without compromising our convictions and [to protect] the rights to actively maintain those convictions," Inserra said in the ERLC release. He is a member of the ERLC's Leadership Council.

The guide may be accessed online without cost at ERLC.com/store. Copies will be available at the ERLC exhibit booth during the annual SBC meeting June 16-17 in Columbus, Ohio.

