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me and my house,  
we will serve the  
Lord.”

— Joshua 24:15 (KJV)

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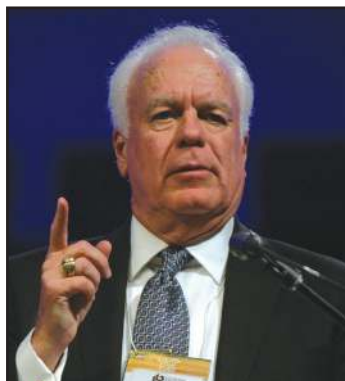
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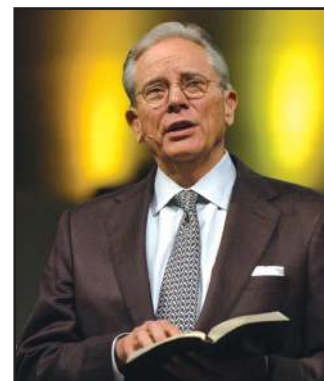
LBC President Gevan Spinney stressed the need to repent before God sends a Harvest.



LBC Executive Director David Hankins gives an update during his report to the messengers.



Cypress Baptist Pastor John Fream delivers the convention sermon. He based his message on 1 Chronicles 13.



Guidestone Financial Resources President O.S. Hawkins provided the convention Bible study.



SBC President Steve Gaines urged messengers to have a more intentional prayer life.

## TIME FOR THE HARVEST HAS ARRIVED

### Messengers hear about Harvest gains, elect officers

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

BATON ROUGE – The time for Harvest has arrived, Louisiana Baptists were reminded during the 2017 LBC Annual Meeting Nov. 13-14 at Istrouma Baptist Church.

The largest statewide evangelism effort by Louisiana Baptists on record, 873 congregations have signed on through Nov. 15 to participate in the Harvest commitment to “pray for every home and share Christ with every person.”

After two years of developing

a strategy, enlisting churches and piloting methods, a strong push will take place in 2018 for concentrated prayer and intentional soul-winning. The cooperative effort includes a diversity of mass evangelism strategies as well as one-on-one evangelism approaches: multi-church crusades, door-to-door outreach, one-on-one evangelism, single-church revivals and other activities which leverage compassion ministries to share about the love of Christ.

“Our current Harvest emphasis

See HARVEST on 9

Tommy Middleton, Director of Missions for the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, joins other Louisiana Baptist messengers during at the request of LBC President Gevan Spinney. Participants came forward and committed to read the book “Tell Someone” and share Jesus with at least one person prior to April 1, 2018.



## ‘Troubled waters’ welcomed by First Moss Bluff

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

MOSS BLUFF (LBM) – While the outer bands of Tropical Storm Harvey caused a tempest in the Gulf of Mexico as it approached southwest Louisiana Aug. 27, three people at First Baptist Church in Moss Bluff were troubling some waters in their own way.

Becky Toney was immersed after proclaiming her profession of faith, just moments before the same experience was celebrated by Carli Beth Sharpton and Nadyah Bustillo, two young girls she had counseled four

months earlier about salvation, an encounter God used to bring her to obedience with regard to baptism.

Toney had surrendered her life to Christ in 2014, but had to be baptized.

“God led me to speak to one of the girls and then little by little He started revealing to me my need to get things straight and in the right order,” Toney said. “That’s when I was convicted that now was the time to follow through with obedience.”

The three baptisms are among 65 that First Baptist Moss Bluff had recorded for the first 10 months of 2017. The church acknowledges each

See WATERS on 4

A young girl is baptized by Executive Pastor J.J. Cox during a worship service Nov. 5 at First Baptist Church in Moss Bluff. The church has baptized 65 people in 2017. To celebrate each baptism, the church lights a bulb in a mural to help spell out the word ‘life.’ Last year the word was ‘believe.’





# Wayne Sheppard set to 'redeploy' to reach the lost

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – For the past nine years, Wayne Sheppard has been on mission with Louisiana Baptists, fulfilling a Great Commission commitment in a number of ways. He has given leadership to a project to build a pastor's training center and children's village, helping Louisiana Baptists establish a strategic foothold in Haiti. Likewise, he led the effort to engage Louisiana Baptists in the evangelization of Belarus through the distribu-

tion of Bibles – with 4 in every 10 recipients surrendering their lives to Christ!

Now Sheppard is set to retire, Dec. 31, as missions partnership mobilizer for Louisiana Baptists.

However, he will continue to pursue his passion for reaching the lost – as pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Casa Grande, Arizona.

"I never dreamed God would have allowed me to serve Louisiana Baptists in this role by connecting them with missions opportunities here in the United States and around the world,"

Sheppard said. "But the Lord opened that door to help me live out a passion of helping churches do missions to the ends of the earth. We've been able to make so many connections and build so many relationships to see some significant things happen since we've been here."

## CALLED TO GOD, MINISTRY

Sheppard has worked in ministry for 37 years, but he did not become a Christian until he was 19 years old as a student at the University of Texas at Arlington.

He said his spiritual journey began largely in part because of the witness of Paula Whitworth, who would become his wife. Sheppard said he was influenced in particular by the obvious joy she exhibited, and went with her during his first semester of college to a tent revival in Dallas, Texas.

It was there, on Oct. 19, 1969, that the Holy Spirit revealed his need for Christ.



Submitted photo

Wayne Sheppard (left) prays during a baby dedication he officiated at the New Evangelical Baptist Church in Croix-des-Bouquets, Haiti. He was part of a 44-member mission team that conducted Vacation Bible Schools, held medical/dental clinics, completed construction projects and evangelized.

"I came under conviction I was a sinner," he said. "I understood why Jesus died on the cross, why He died for me and that I needed to enter into a relationship with Him, and that became the most monumental decision of my life, one that would shape the rest of my life."

Through the next 11 years, Sheppard graduated from college and then worked in Texas in the medical field, managing a department of 23 employees at Blue Cross Blue Shield of Texas. During that time, God increasingly placed a desire in his heart to pursue ministry.

This call to vocational service was confirmed during a worship service at Oakland Heights Baptist Church in Longview, Texas, a week before Sheppard was to begin a job as chief financial officer at Good Shepherd Hospital in the town.

See SHEPPARD on 4

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# LBC DOMs' offer hope, gift cards to Texas pastors, DOMs

By BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) — Two Louisiana Baptist directors of missions took a recent out-of-state road trip to deliver a heartfelt love offering to Texas pastors and directors of missions whose homes were damaged by Hurricane Harvey.

Ron Thompson, director of missions for District 8 Baptist Convention, and Stan Statham, director of missions for Baptist Associations of

Southeast Louisiana, on the behalf of the Louisiana Directors of Missions Fellowship, visited 12 associations along the Texas Gulf Coast, Oct. 24-25. By the end of the tour, they had given nearly \$30,000 in gift cards to 12 directors of missions to distribute in \$300 bundles to 95 pastors.

Two of those directors of missions also were given a \$500 gift card.

Thompson, who is treasurer of the Louisiana Directors of Missions Fellowship,

told the *Baptist Message* that every association in the state participated in some way, from praying to giving money during a four-week period leading up to the two days of gift cards distribution, and, he said the effort to give back to Texans who helped Louisianans during the 2016 floods was heartwarming.

"Like any disaster relief work, we're always able to do far more together than we are separate," Thompson said. "When we found out there were close to 100 individuals needing monetary assistance, we realized it was something not just one association could do. Not every association was able to contribute money but all were there in spirit and prayer."

"We sat there and listened

See CARDS on 11

## Gun laws & churches

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)—Louisiana is an open carry state, meaning any gun must be in plain sight unless the bearer has a concealed carry permit.

But in both instances, open and concealed carry, there are restrictions: Guns are prohibited on school campuses, federal facilities, and places that serve alcoholic beverages, for instance (not a complete list).

Moreover, private property owners, including churches, can restrict people from open

carrying on their respective properties, too.

Importantly, according to Louisiana Revised Statute 40:1379.3, it is illegal to conceal carry in a church, unless:

- the pastor approves weapons on campus;
- the congregation is informed that weapons are present;
- the person with the weapon has a normal concealed carry permit, and,
- that person completes eight hours of additional "tactical" training, annually.



David Williams (center), director of missions for Trinity River Baptist Association in Liberty, Texas, is all smiles after receiving several gifts cards from Stan Statham (left) and Ron Thompson for delivery to pastors impacted by Hurricane Harvey. Statham is director of missions for Baptist Associations of Southeast Louisiana and Thompson is DOM for District 8 Baptist Convention.

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## Sheppard from page 2

"While sitting in that service, it became clear God was changing my direction," he said. "In fact, God spoke to both of our hearts in that service, separately. The next day I told the hospital of my change in plans, and I began my studies at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary soon after."

Over the next 28 years, Sheppard served as pastor of four churches in Texas, and as a church planter for Living Waters Church in Gilbert, Arizona.

### WORLD TRAVELER

He assumed his role with

Louisiana Baptists Oct. 1, 2008.

Sheppard has travelled in 16 countries and 23 states while engaging Louisiana Baptists in missions.

Each partnership has been rewarding in the relationships that have developed, he said, and the spiritual harvests God has provided. But he shared that there is a special place in his heart for the work Louisiana Baptists are doing in Haiti.

The country was devastated by a 2010 earthquake that killed more than 250,000 people and left hundreds of thousands homeless. Louisiana Baptists were among the first to provide

disaster relief, and since then have maintained a ministry presence through mission trips that include construction projects, pastor training, medical clinics, food, water and clothing distributions, evangelism, children's Bible clubs and Vacation Bible School.

Since acquiring land in September 2016, volunteers have completed a 200-foot-deep well that provides water for residents of the surrounding community and built a wall with security tower in prelude to construction of the first dormitory on the campus scheduled to start in 2018.

The Louisiana Reach Haiti project is an effort sponsored by the LBC, Haiti Baptist Conven-

tion, New Evangelical Baptist Church of Croix-des-Bouquet, Haiti, Louisiana Baptist Children's Home and Family Services and 35 Louisiana Baptist churches.

"With Haiti, there is a deep love for those people that will always stay with me," said Sheppard, who plans to participate in additional mission trips to the country. "To see God work in their life has been a thrill. We are very thankful the Children's Home has felt led to partner with that work because we wouldn't be here at this stage if it were not for them."

As Sheppard looks to start a new chapter in his life, he is excited about pastoring a church and also having a chance

to strengthen his connections with family, having a son Mark, daughter-in-law and two grandchildren in Houston, Texas, and another son Douglas, daughter-in-law and seven grandchildren in Phoenix, Arizona.

"When Paula and I got married, we made a commitment to seeing our family as much as possible and now it will happen much more often being available visit with them," Sheppard said. "Coming out of a family whose members did not know Christ when I was a kid, we decided by God's grace we would change the legacy of the name Sheppard. Being able to retire and invest more time into them is reason alone to begin this next part of our lives."

## Waters from page one

symbolic act with the symbolism of lighting a bulb in a display of lights that spells out the word 'life.'

Last year, the lights spelled out 'believe.'

Pastor Steve Bennett said the congregation has caught on to this idea for celebrating others being born again.

"We set out as a staff and looked at a word that relates to the life we have in Christ," Ben-

nett said. "Our people rejoice with clapping and enthusiastic joyful words when one is baptized because we know that it is the public beginning of a lifetime of walking with the Lord. Most remember their public declaration of faith when another is baptized."

Since Bennett became their pastor in 2013, the congregation has witnessed 321 baptisms, according to the Annual Church

Profile database. Sunday morning worship attendance also has increased, growing from 643 regular attenders to 1,229.

First Baptist Moss Bluff is a leader in growth among most Southern Baptist churches in North America, according to a report by New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Professor Bill Day.

According to Day, a healthy, growing church is one that has experienced 10 percent growth over a five-year period, recorded at least one baptism annually

during that timeframe and saw an attender to baptism ratio of 15:1, or less.

Lane Corley, a church planting strategist for Louisiana Baptists, said research showed that in 2015, only 5.4 percent of the more than 46,000 SBC churches in North America were healthy and growing by that definition. The same trend is true among the 1,650 Louisiana Baptist congregations, he said.

One reason for the growth of First Baptist Moss Bluff is the emphasis on small groups and

evangelism, said Beau Guidry, director of small groups at the church.

Members of the more than 40 small groups that meet at the church and in homes make outreach into the community a top priority. These outreach efforts have included block parties, coordinating camps for children and youth and sending mission teams both in Louisiana and beyond.

"These groups are relational, accountable, safe and discussion driven," Guidry said. "A key in both home groups and Sunday School is multiplication. As groups grow there is a need to multiply into two or three. In order to do this, there must be a multiplicity of leaders within each group. Growing groups are healthy, therefore they create leaders from within themselves."

"Through home groups we have seen adults saved, baptized and beginning to serve," he continued. "In home groups we have seen people saved, baptized, had big and small prayers answered, marriages healed and good solid Biblical community and everything that goes along with it take place. These small groups have created an army of people to serve and reach out to so many in our community and impact our area for Christ."

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# Pastors urged to 'be still, hear God'

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

BATON ROUGE (LBM)--Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Frank Page said too many times when pastors encounter difficult circumstances they are prone to believe God has forgotten them.

But, he said during those encounters it is important they remember the sound of God's voice from other times in their lives and to be still and listen for Him, again.

"You may have come here tonight dry as the bones we just sang about," Page said during the Pastors' Conference, held Nov. 12-13 at Istrouma Baptist Church in Baton Rouge. "You may believe, 'God doesn't know where I am,' and, 'He doesn't know my name.' But He does."

Citing 1 Samuel 3:1-10, Page explored the call of Samuel who was attentive for the sound of God's voice.

"Every time we come before the Lord (we need to say) 'Lord, speak, I'm listening,'" Page said.

He said God placed Samuel, who later became a prophet, not in the most appealing city but rather in Shiloh, a community where few people visited. However, that is where God revealed himself to Samuel.

"You may think that God doesn't know your name and doesn't know where you are," he said. "But He does know where you are. Maybe, where you are, you may think, 'It's a backwater place.' You may think 'It's where no one else really wants to go.' But that may be where God does his greatest work in

your life. It may be your Shiloh, because that's where God is going to show up."

Before his message, Page shared about his visit with the surviving members of First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas, where 26 men, women and children were killed during Sunday worship service and 20 more wounded during an attack Nov. 5.

Page, who was accompanied by other Southern Baptist leaders, said he was reminded how



Philip Timothy photo

**Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee President Frank Page said in difficult times pastors should be still and listen for the sound of God's voice.**

blessed he is to be a member of the denomination: The Texas Baptist Convention pledged to continue paying Pastor Frank Pomeroy's salary; the North American Mission Board offered to pay for the funerals of those who died; and, three individuals pledged to build a new church building at another location at no cost.

"If there's any time it's obvious we can do more together than we can separately, it's now," Page said. "There at Sutherland Springs God's people have surrounded those people."

"Please pray for them," Page said. "It makes me thankful I am part of a family of faith called Southern Baptists."

## LUTER

When discerning the will of God in their lives, Christians should follow the example of King David, whom God called "a man after My own heart," Fred Luter said during his message.

"It is God's design and desire that we, as His sons and daughters, would know God's will for our lives when it comes to spiritual things," said Luter, pastor of Franklin Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

"Every day of our lives we are faced with choices. How we respond to those choices can lead us to being a blessing or being a burden."

To know the will of God, Luter, who drew from Psalm 143:7-10, said Christians must know the Savior, the Holy Spirit and the Bible.

"God never leads one of His sons and daughters to do anything that is contrary to the word of God," he said. "And that's

the problem with the society that we are living in today. We live in a society where people have a lot of opinions about a lot of things. However, for the believer, for the Christian, for those of us who are born again, the problem begins when we totally ignore what the Scripture says and go along with what the world says, with what society thinks, or even worse we go along with what's politically correct. I am convinced that absolutely nothing can be politically right if it is biblically wrong. Too many believers today are compromising our values and compromising our morals and compromising our principles by agreeing with society instead of agreeing with



Brian Blackwell photo

**New Pastor Conference officers for 2018 are (from left) Justin Clark, vice president, First Baptist Church, Lake Providence; Kirk Jones, president, Fellowship Church, Prairieville; and, David Goza, secretary-treasurer, Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge.**

the Scripture."

## MIDDLETON

Tommy Middleton opened the second day of the Pastors' Conference reminding pastors and other believers to prioritize time alone with God.

Basing his message on Psalm 46, Middleton said King David even found comfort underground, reminding pastors and laymen alike about the need for separation from the world to enjoy fellowship with God.

"There is a time, often on a daily basis, we all need to become cave dwellers," said Middleton, director of missions for the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge. "We need time alone with God."

This allows believers to know God in a more intimate way.

"When we get alone with God, the world should be different when we come out," he said. "What happens in there should not stay in there."

Middleton ended his message with a challenge.

Though some pastors may be in a season of reflection, Middleton said not to remain in that stage permanently. Instead, make a commitment to move on with Christ's call on their lives.

"With all the carnage and with all the devastation in a world that sometimes is in

chaos, we were born for such a time as this," he said. "Keep your wits about you. Pause. Think about it. Reflect. Reset. Renew. Do your job in what God's called you to do. This may be a pause time. But don't leave it on pause."

## WOOD

In his message, Michael Wood challenged pastors to forgo any pride in their lives and accept they are merely ambassadors for Christ, with the privilege of representing Him to a hurting and lost world.

Referencing John 3:22-30, Wood said pastors and believers must take the attitude of John the Baptist, who gave up his vibrant ministry to accept his role of serving Christ.

Wood, who serves as pastor of First West, said doing that can be difficult for pastors. Many times, ministers have a feeling of being needed by their members and others in the community.

"If our measure of success in ministry is simply outworking other pastors and churches, we will never take time to pause, and we're merely fighting a self-serving but ultimately losing battle," he said.

Wood said pastors should be the hardest working people out of any profession because they

See PASTORS on 8



Louisiana College recognized (center) Craig Beeman, pastor of First Baptist Church, Winnsboro, for excellence in the pastorate within according to worship attendance up to 125. Beeman is flanked by LC's Philip Caples and Pastor Conference President Jason McGuffie.



Louisiana College recognized (center) Casey Johnson, pastor of Bonita Road Baptist Church, Bastrop, for excellence in the pastorate within according to worship attendance up to 126-500. Johnson is flanked by Pastor Conference President Jason McGuffie and LC's Philip Caples.



Louisiana College recognized (center) Paul Watts, pastor of First Baptist Church, Franklinton, for excellence in the pastorate within according to worship attendance of 500 or more. Beeman is flanked by LC's Philip Caples and Pastor Conference President Jason McGuffie.

Brian Blackwell photos





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## Pastors from page 5

are in a battle for lost souls.

“Stirred by such a great salvation, an opportunity to be an ambassador on the King’s behalf, and the brokenness and lostness all around us should move us to lead, preach and fervently pray in such a way that glorifies God,” Wood said. “The flame of the Gospel should burn so hot in us that our passion for sharing the Gospel should be unquenchable.”

### LITTON

During his message, Ed Litton told pastors to stand firm in the midst of fear.

Pastor of Redemption

Church in Saraland, Ala., Litton lost his first wife, Tammy, to a car accident in 2007; and, he thanked God for helping him get through his pain and grief.

In the days following his loss, he constantly was reminded the God he trusted was there to comfort him.

“He is where trouble is,” Litton said. “He’s not a God who is afraid of trouble. We serve a God who refuses to abandon us. Our relationship with Jesus Christ changes our relationship to fear.”

Two years after the accident, Litton married Kathy Ferguson, whose pastor husband had died.

“We are two people who

understand what it is to have a God who is our refuge,” Litton said. “And it’s a joy because he is a refuge in everything. He is where we turn in times of trouble.”

In the same way as he faced difficulties, Litton said pastors must do the same with their battles.

“When your life’s foundations crumble, the all-sufficient Christ is your refuge and your strength,” he said. “Everything you and I learn to trust in, all of these things shall pass away. But what we can trust is that our God in his all sufficient grace through his all sufficient son will endure forever. He is our refuge and strength.”

### KELLEY

Sometimes in life, God hits the pause button to make pastors ponder certain realities in ministry.

“If you’re a pastor, that moment is going to stare you in the face,” New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley said. “You need to remember He who called you saw that moment when He called you. And your trouble, your problem, hasn’t scared God.

“He’s hit pause perhaps for you to reassess things, perhaps to admit that you’ve made some wrong decisions, taken some blind alleys, perhaps to put you on a different path,” he continued. “But what He wants you to do is to keep on.”

When the time to pause arrives, Kelley said pastors should consider three questions, referencing Philippians 1:21-26:

-- Who else needs to hear about Jesus?

-- What on earth is more important or desirable than what is in heaven?

-- What do I do now?

“Let us make a commitment, you and me, that when God hits the pause button we are going to know it’s for a fresh path, a new path, a different path,” Kelley said. “It may be the same place. It may be a different place. It may be a different kind of ministry. But let’s covenant together. Let’s keep doing what God called us to do until God says lay it down and come home.”

### CHARLES

In a time when even churches are no longer a place of complete refuge, there is safety found in one place – almighty

God.

For with God, there is safety in His power, presence and purpose, H.B. Charles, pastor of Shiloh Metropolitan Church in Jacksonville, Fla., said in the final message of the Pastors’ Conference.

At times, God may permit trouble to come, but when that moment arrives He will protect and renew us, he said.

“God is our refuge when we are attacked,” said Charles, who will serve as president of the 2018 Southern Baptist Convention Pastors’ Conference. “But He is also our strength when we are assaulted.”

When life turns from calm to chaos, if God is one’s refuge and strength, Charles said there is nothing to fear.

“Faith and fear cannot coexist,” he said. “They are mortal enemies. When one shows up, the other runs away.”

To help in this fight with fear, Charles contends pastors should take their worries to God in prayer and keep their eyes on the Lord, keeping in mind all He has done.

“Do our work in confidence,” Charles said. “The Lord Jesus Christ will have the last word.”

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“  
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**AND LOOK AT THE FIELDS,**  
**FOR THEY ARE READY**  
**FOR HARVEST.**”

”

**JOHN 4:35**

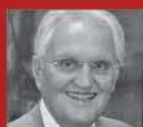
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# Harvest from page one

phases involve serious praying for every home as well as aggressive going,” Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Director David Hankins told messengers and guests attending the annual meeting. “Engaging evangelism at the local area church and churches is still extremely effective. I’m thankful for the new initiatives going on with evangelism in the evangelical world. If anybody’s going to help reach this state for Christ, Baptists ought to do their part.”

One of the pilot projects this year was a crusade in late August involving 12 of the 15 churches that are members of Gulf Coast Baptist Association. Director of Missions Steven Kelly shared that despite the threat of tornadoes and rain from Hurricane Harvey some nights, attendance averaged more than 200 per night and resulted in 30-40 decisions.

Messengers also heard about the miraculous harvest by Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles during its revival, which resulted in 198 salvation decisions (and 134 other spiritual commitments). Fifty-one of those individuals were so moved by their born again experience that they requested and were baptized during the revival.

## GEVAN SPINNEY

In his message, LBC President Gevan Spinney told messengers he believes the harvest will not take place until pastors allow God’s spirit to break them of sin in their life.

“It’s hard to tell people about Jesus when there’s sin that’s unconfessed,”

said Spinney, pastor of First Baptist Church in Haughton, referencing John 4:28-35. “God will never send a harvest until we repent. God will never send a harvest until the disciples realize it’s not on your timetable. You’re not the one in control. The harvest is now.”

## ELECTIONS AND BUDGET

Messengers approved the leanest Cooperative Program budget in 20 years.

The 2018 financial plan is based on expected Cooperative Program contributions of \$19,507,905, a decrease of \$535,426. Cooperative Program projections are based on actual receipts from August 2016 thru July 2017.

The allocation formula for distributing Cooperative Program gifts between the Southern Baptist Convention and Louisiana Baptist causes remains unchanged, with 63.26 percent supporting ministries in the state and 36.74 percent forwarded to fund national entities. This equates to \$12,340,701 in Cooperative Program funds for Louisiana Baptist missions, a decrease of \$338,710 from 2017.

Messengers also elected Eddie Wren, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rayville, president; Jay Johnston, associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, first vice president; and, Michael Evans, pastor of Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill, second vice president. All three pastors were elected by acclamation.

## RESOLUTIONS

Messengers affirmed seven resolutions, including a statement of appreciation to Is-



Michael Linton, pastor of First Baptist Church, Sulphur, opened the Annual Meeting’s evening session Monday, Nov. 13, with a powerful prayer for the victims of First Baptist Church in Sutherland Springs, Texas. Linton who spent time in Sutherland Springs, read the names of the victims. Friends with Pastor Frank Pomeroy and his wife Sherri he asked God to remember all those who died, were wounded and affected by the horrendous shooting and that He would be glorified in this tragedy.

trouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, for hosting the annual meeting and to individuals who contributed in important ways in the production of the two-day event.

Another honors the 50th anniversary of Southern Baptist Disaster Relief; and, a third resolution expresses gratitude on the 100th anniversary of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for the spiritual impact it has had on the state, the nation and the world.

A fourth resolution denounces all racism as sin; and, a fifth consensus statement affirms the Bible’s teaching that “God loves every sinner everywhere and desires their salvation” and declares “He has provided for the forgiveness of anyone’s sins through the death of Jesus on the cross.”

The final two resolutions ask state lawmakers to enact policies with incentives to help keep marriages and families together. The first promotes pre-marital counseling for couples considering marriage and the last aims at reconciliation counseling and other classes for couples who have children and are considering divorce.

## O.S. HAWKINS

During three Bible study sessions, O.S. Hawkins, CEO of GuideStone Financial Resources, reminded messengers the time is short for the harvest, and he asked them to (1) look out to the harvest fields, (2) look up to the motivating factor of the early church for its growth and (3) look in at the admonition of the Lord.

“Jesus said for us to lift up our eyes and look upon the fields, for they are white already upon the harvest,” he

said, observing that there are “so many people” and “so little time” to reach them.

Hawkins said he believes the church has lost two of its youngest generations, who crave meaningful relationships but are also caught up into immediate gratification, getting something for nothing, guilt-free living and a thirst for prosperity.

Citing Ephesians 1:7, Hawkins said, “As we lift up our eyes and look outward, something those folks they think they need is really someone,” he said. “And his sweet name is the Lord Jesus.”

Hawkins emphasized that today’s Christians must do as the early church did – walk in the fear of the Lord, a forgotten concept in the church today, he said.

“Walking in the fear of God is not the fear that God will put His hand upon you in retribution,” he said. “It’s the fear that God may take His anointing and blessing off of you.”

“What would happen if we preachers in Louisiana began to live every day with that kind of an attitude and that kind of an environment walking in the fear of God? It would make a difference in how you lead your church,” he said.

Addressing pastors, Hawkins said they should ask four questions from time to time in their journey through ministry: Am I a servant? Do I have a sense of calling? Do I understand the difference between a first century message and 21st century methodology? Am I keeping an eternal purpose about everything I do?

“Somewhere there is somebody to reach for Christ that no one can reach like you

can reach,” he said. “Somewhere there is a job to do that no one else can do like you can do because God has assigned that area of influence to you.”

## JOHN FREAM

In his convention sermon, John Fream, pastor of Cypress Baptist Church, Benton, challenged messengers to join God where He is moving.

Basing his message on 1 Chronicles 13, Fream stressed the need to seek godly counsel and act upon what the Lord desires, despite the temptation to please others.

“I like to be liked,” Fream said. “I don’t like being liked more than I like pleasing God. At the end of the day, it’s about old-fashioned fearing God.”

Fream said what churches need are pastors with conviction.

“There comes a point when you need your folks to approve what you’re doing,” Fream said. “But one of the dangers is doing that in place of being obedient to what God wants you to do.”

## STEVE GAINES

Southern Baptist Convention President Steve Gaines urged messengers during the closing message to have a more intentional prayer life.

“It’s the need of the hour in the lives of Christians in the United States of America,” said Gaines, pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Cordova, Tenn. “Your Christian life is no better than your prayer life. If you’re not talking to Jesus sincerely, intimately, there is a lot of room for growth in your life.”

Citing Daniel 9, Gaines said Christians should follow the example of Daniel, who prayed to God three times a day for many years. By having that intentional prayer life, Gaines said Daniel was able to experience success because he sensed the presence of God.

Just as it was in the time of Daniel, Gaines said that today prayer moves the hand of God, reveals the will of God and blesses the heart of God.

“Your real level of genuine Christianity is parallel with your prayer life,” Gaines said. “Don’t say that you love God if you don’t talk to him more than 5-10 minutes a day.”

“God has already drawn near to you,” he said. “It’s time for you to draw near to God. And when you do, He will even draw near to you.”



Newly elected officers of the Louisiana Baptist Convention were introduced at the end of the annual meeting. (from left) Mike Evans, pastor of Elwood Baptist Church, Forest Hill, second vice president; Eddie Wren, pastor of First Baptist Church, Rayville, president and Jay Johnston, associate pastor of First Baptist Church, Covington, first vice president. All three men were elected by acclamation.



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## Cards from page 3

to their stories," he continued. "It was encouraging to find out churches were doing what was needed in the communities despite the challenges they faced ahead."

Satham, who serves as president of the Louisiana Directors of Missions Fellowship, thanked his organization, churches and individuals who came together for the effort.

"In the two major floods that impacted south Louisiana in 2016, a couple of DOM colleagues, one from Alabama and another from Tennessee, sent me gift cards to help pastors and their families," he said. "As I prayed about how we might could help pastors in Texas, the Lord laid it on my heart to have the DOM Fellowship spearhead a campaign to raise funds for pastors and DOMs who were flooded in Texas."

As time passes, Thompson realizes areas hit hard by Harvey could be forgotten. However, he encourages all Louisiana Baptists to keep the area in their prayers and consider taking a team to come alongside pastors, churches and residents who still face a long road to recovery.

"When you see people who could throw in the towel and be frustrated, but instead are serving with joy, you are filled with a sense of wanting to help," Thompson said. "Just like we know here in Louisiana, all the flooding and damage does not subside quickly. They will have a long road to recovery."

## LOUISIANA NOTABLES

## ON THE MOVE

■ **Ken Schroeder** has resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, Mandeville.

■ **Kenneth Austin** has resigned as pastor of First Baptist Church, Simmesport.

## HOMECOMING

■ First Baptist Church, Delhi: **12th Anniversary Celebration**, December 2, 6:30 p.m. Special Music: Sanctuary Quartet, Southern Revelation, Ben Waites, Chad Tingle, and Keith Lee. Pastor: Stacy Morgan.

## REVIVAL

■ Ridgcrest Baptist Church, Ridgcrest: **Revival**, November 26-29. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Special Music: **Mackey Willis Family**. Pastor: Dennis Baker.

■ Open Door Baptist Church, Moss Bluff: **Harvest Sunday**, December 3. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor: Sonny Simpson.

■ Willow Point Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Harvest Sunday**, December 10. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor: Billy Stephens.

## LAGNIAPPE

■ First Baptist Church, Slidell: **"Pia Noel" -- Christmas piano concert by a group of the area's outstanding pianists**, November 26, 6 p.m. The concert is at the beginning of the Advent season. Cost: Free. Pastor: Casey Stark.

■ Greenwell Springs Baptist Church, Greenwell Springs: **The Foto Sisters in Concert**, November 26, 9 a.m. Pastor: Tony Perkins.

■ Riverview Baptist Church, Alexandria: **The Perrys in Concert**, December 1, 7 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: David Newton.

■ Sale Street Baptist Church, Lake Charles: **Shane & Shane and Phil Wickham Christmas Concert Tour**, December 1, 7 p.m. Cost: \$25 (general admission) and \$40 (VIP). Pastor: Randy Edwards.

■ Cedar Crest Baptist Church, West Monroe: **Journey to Bethlehem**, December 2-3, 2-5 p.m. at the Pecanland Mall, Monroe. This walk through biblical drama features live animals and people in costumes portraying characters from long ago. The scenes will carry you back in time to the birth of our Savior. Bring your children and grandchildren and see their eyes light up as they pet the



Brian Blackwell photo

Six churches accepted into membership of the Louisiana Baptist Convention during the 2017 Annual Meeting were honored during a reception Nov. 13. The reception featured prayers for the churches, encouraging words from several speakers and a time of fellowship. Seating messengers for the first time during an annual meeting – the final step for LBC membership – were: Grace Community Church, Baton Rouge, Titus White, pastor; Iglesia Bautista El Alfayla Omega, Leesville, Jose Us, pastor; St. James Baptist Church, Lafayette, Cory Young, pastor; Gethsemane Baptist Church, Brusly, Daniel Johnson, pastor; New Life Baptist Church, Baker, Gary Richerson, pastor; and Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Ringgold, Danny Slack, pastor.

animals and see the potter, coppersmith, seller of cloth, fisherman selling his catch, other traders, and of course, baby Jesus. Cost: free. Pastor: Greg Clark.

■ Hickory Grove Baptist Church, Coushatta: **Southern Plainsmen Quartet**, December 3, 10:30 a.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Mike Fort.

■ Cypress Baptist Church, Benton: **Christmas at Cypress**, December 3, 9:15 and 10:45 a.m. This concert of Christmas music features the Sanctuary Choir, the Cypress Praise Team, the Cypress Contemporary Band and guest instrumentalists. Pastor: John Fream.

■ Magnolia Baptist Church, Mansfield: **Southern Plainsmen Quartet**, December 3, 6 p.m. A love offering will be taken. Pastor: Amador Santos.

■ First Baptist Church, Gonzales: **Christmas at First Gonzales with the Foto Sisters**, December 3, 5 p.m. Pastor: Jim Law.

■ Bluff Creek Baptist Church, Clinton: **Christmas Cantata - "The Savior is Born"**, December 3, 6 p.m. Fellowship to follow. Music Director: Rhonda Herrod. Pastor: Cole Permenter.

■ First Baptist Church, Pineville: **First@First Business**

**Leader Luncheon**, December 4, noon. Speaker: **Matt and Darlene Tullis**. Cost: \$10 and you may pay at the door. Please RSVP to Stewart Holloway (sholloway@fbcpineville.net.) Pastor: Stewart Holloway.

■ First Baptist Church, Jonesville: **A Christmas Celebration** featuring singer/songwriter Mark Lanier and a four piece Nashville band, December 4, 6 p.m. Pastor: Todd Whittington.

■ Piney Woods Baptist Church, Downsville: **A Christmas Celebration featuring singer/songwriter Mark Lanier and a four piece Nashville band**, December 5, 6 p.m.

■ First Baptist Church, Many: **Christmas Choir Performance and church-wide meal**, December 10, 11 a.m. Pastor: Jonathan Bost.

■ Hebron Baptist Church, Denham Springs: **Gloria Divine - Christmas at Hebron**, December 10, 6 p.m.

■ Temple Baptist Church, Jena: **A Christmas Celebration featuring singer/songwriter Mark Lanier and a four piece Nashville band**, December 6, 6 p.m. Pastor: Jimmy Keene.

■ Northeast Baptist School, West Monroe: **Jingle Bell**

**Beach, A Christmas singing competition of pitch perfect proportion**, Dec. 7, 6 p.m. Cost: \$10 adults, \$6 non-performing children. Dinner included. Auction items will be available. Please purchase tickets by December 4.

■ First Baptist Church, Mandeville: **A Mandeville Christmas - Live Nativity**, December 8-10, 5:30-8:30 p.m. Stay in your car and see the complete story of our Savior's birth, life death and resurrection. The line moves quickly. Cost: Free.

■ Eastside Baptist Church, Zachary: **Christmas Concert**, December 9, 7 p.m. Pastor: Keith Cox.

■ Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville: **A Philadelphia Christmas**, December 9-10, December 7 p.m. and December 10, 10 a.m. & 7 p.m.; and December 11, 7 p.m. Pastor: Philip Robertson.

■ First Baptist Church, Jonesboro and First Baptist Church, Ruston: The choirs will combine to present the **Cantata, All Is Well**, December 10, 6 p.m. in the sanctuary of First Baptist Jonesboro, followed by a "Tasting Tea" fellowship in the Family Life Center. The choirs will perform at First Baptist, Ruston on December 13, 6 p.m.

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## Scripture Crypto

The Scripture Crypto is a Bible verse in which one letter has been substituted for another, thus encoding the verse. To find out what the verse is, you must determine what each letter is a substitute for. An "a," for example, may stand for a "t" in this week's issue of the ScriptureCrypto. Next week, "a" could stand for a "d." Each week, each letter is different. Solve by trial and error. The answer will be given next week. Note: All numerals, such as those in the scripture reference after the verse, are spelled out.

piwtietw jlt aiwh jlf sih nraa dtbh jlt liwbjtj

gpibs jltp, objra jltp jlgj gwt atkj, gbh lrht

jltpdtaetd kwip jltp, ut htdjwifh.

htojtwibipf dtetb:jntbjf

Clues:  
R = I; L = H

Answer to November 9 Scripture Crypto:  
Matthew twenty-one: thirty-six:



# Triumph emerges from Puerto Rico tragedy

BY BRIAN BLACKWELL  
Message Staff Writer

PONCE, Puerto Rico (LBM) -- Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief team members are rejoicing about 14 souls saved by Christ during a recent mission effort in Puerto Rico.

The team of 10 from Baton Rouge, Eastern Louisiana, North Rapides, Two Rivers and Washington Baptist Associations arrived in Puerto Rico Oct. 28 to a scene of nearly complete destruction caused by Hurricane Maria in early September.

They worked alongside six college students from the Canadian National Baptist Convention and a missionary of the International Mission Board, performing a variety of tasks to help meet physical needs of the island's residents during the eight-day trip, but also attending to the peoples' eternal needs.

"Very quickly we realized the Holy Spirit had gone before us to prepare the hearts of those we encountered," Bruce Worrell, pastor of Sherwood Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, told the *Baptist Message*. "Although we met some strong believ-

ers in Christ, most of those we encountered had no assurance of salvation. But they were ready to hear what the Word of God said, and they listened attentively to the plan of salvation, and asked through genuine repentance for God to forgive them of their sins.

"They acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God, crucified and risen from the dead," he continued. "Then they asked Him to be their Lord and Savior.

"We planted even more seeds through witnessing, and handing out New Testaments and Tracts," Worrell added. "In it all, we give God the glory, honor, and praise for what He did in their lives."

While in Puerto Rico, the team placed tarps on damaged roofs and used chainsaws to cut through debris, and, they



A Louisiana Baptist Disaster Relief team worked alongside a team of college students from the Canadian National Baptist Convention and a missionary from the International Mission Board during their recent trip to Puerto Rico. The team witnessed 14 people accept Christ while there.

distributed 200 pounds of beans and 200 pounds of rice to families.

The volunteers also served meals alongside members of the Rio Chiquito Baptist Church, whose building served as a temporary home for the disaster relief unit. The building did not have electricity, but the team produced drinking water using a gravity purification system.

Worrell said there was some concern the first two days there,

when no one responded to the Gospel. But, on the third day, he said, 12 people accepted Jesus.

Among the more memorable encounters for Stan Statham, director of missions for Baptist Associations of Southeast Louisiana, was the conversion of four people at homes the team visited to place tarps on roofs. At one house, the team led a

grandmother, Carmel, and her granddaughter, Ileanette, to Christ. The next day, members returned with a supply of beans and rice. Ileanette's husband, Ramon, and his friend, Ruben, were there to take possession of the food but in the end received an even more precious gift -- a relationship with Christ.

"We checked on them physically to see what we could do," he said. "If they needed food

we provided the beans and rice. That just naturally led to a spiritual conversation.

"It was like the Lord sent us to the right people where He wanted us to be," Statham said. "It was neat to see the Lord work."

Statham said another special memory was witnessing a father and son accept Christ on their front porch. As the two men were led to a relationship with Christ, the wife, who already was a Christian, was speechless.

"When we began to witness to her husband, she had tears of joy," Statham said. "When he asked the Lord to save him, she was just excited. It was like she had been waiting for it to happen for years."

Blue Hat Freddie Arnold, Eastern Louisiana Baptist Association's associate associational missions coordinator, said God gave them favor in their work and their witness.

"We were able to accomplish what we set out to do, and to see many changed lives" Arnold said. "The pastor and the church were very excited as we celebrated together all God did through us that week."

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