



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

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John 3:16

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Bill Robertson remembered as pastor's pastor, soul winner

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)--Bill Robertson, who served 12 years as director of pastoral leadership with the Louisiana Baptist Convention until he retired in November 2019 to serve as full-time pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Trout, was remembered by family and friends as a soul winner whose passion for the local church continued up to his death Feb. 24.

Faithful to proclaiming the Gospel until the end, Robertson was baptizing

new believers even to the week before his death – having baptized 20 people and added 15 new members to the church roll since he became interim pastor in May 2019. The congregation now averages about 200 worshipers in the Sunday morning service.

"Daddy could sit in a boardroom with trustees at meetings, yet he could minister with an oil field worker in Louisiana," Robertson's son, Trey, told the *Baptist Message*. "He could fit in with any crowd and loved all of them."

"He would share Jesus with people he met. He knew the Bible and lived

out the words inside that great book," continued Trey Robertson, a member of the First Baptist Church, West Monroe. "He was the finest man I ever knew and was the best pastor I have sat under. He wanted to see people's lives changed and watch them make an eternal difference for the Lord."

CALLED TO SERVE

A native of Oak Grove, Robertson surrendered his life to Christ at the



See ROBERTSON, page 6 Bill Robertson

Friendship Baptist being re-New-ed

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

FISHVILLE (LBM) – Lloyd Whitman remembers the day he preached a revival at Friendship Baptist Church and the pews were filled with a congregation passionate for spiritual renewal among them and hungering for a spiritual awakening within the community.

The church eventually dwindled to just a handful of members and closed its doors in June 2019.

However, Whitman did not forget how God moved during the revival service in 1982. Consequently, he began to pray, asking God to return the church to its former strength of service to the

Kingdom -- and it appears his pleas have been heard.

Whitman stood before a worship center filled with 143 people, Feb. 2, for the first service of the congregation as the New Friendship Baptist Church, a cooperative effort by the First Baptist Church in Dry Prong, the primary sponsor, and other churches in the Big Creek Baptist Association.

"I had 100 bulletins printed up because I figured we would only need that many, but God showed up by bringing in even more than I could have imagined to the point where we ran out of bulletins," Whitman told the *Baptist Message*. "When I looked across the church and remem-



Brian Blackwell photo

Pastor Lloyd Whitman and his wife, Wanda, were excited about the 143 people who turned out for the first worship service of New Friendship Baptist Church in Fishville. The church will hold just a Sunday morning service until after Easter, when Sunday evening and Wednesday night services will be added.

bered how I had stood there many years ago, it made me very joyful.

"Knowing that people who left are coming back

to this church makes me very excited about this church's future," he added. "My prayer is that God will use us to be obe-

dient and win people for Christ as we build a foundation based on Him."

See FRIENDSHIP, page 5

Salvations surge at First Broussard

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

BROUSSARD (LBM) – Mike Thibodeaux struggled with alcohol addiction and nearly lost his

marriage when his wife, Jessica, and children began attending First Baptist Church in Broussard in 2017.

But, even though he refused to attend worship

services while the rest of his family faithfully went every Sunday, they never stopped praying for the Holy Spirit to open his

See SALVATIONS, page 8

Skills of a church planter: Flexibility and Adaptability

ALEXANDRIA, (LBM)—Flexibility and adaptability are essential traits each leader needs to develop.

Academic training prepares the mind about broad concepts and specific ideas and strategic planning creates consistency and cohesion among diverse units on the battlefield.

But, it's all about being able to adapt to situations

as they actually exist that makes all the difference, whether on the battlefield or in the boardroom. It's about being flexible in situations in real time in the real world that require real action without which defeat or setback would occur.

When I was a

youngster enjoying my summers, I had friends who would come to our house after church on Sunday nights. Bobby and Ruby Ulmer were members of our church and had a family of five, the same as my parents, and kids about the same ages as my brothers and my sister and I.



JOHN HEBERT
Team Leader
Louisiana Baptist
Missions & Ministry

Our parents would not let 10 kids share the house with them while they were visiting, so they made us play outside...at night...in the dark. But, that was fine with us. We played active games like "Chase" and "Hide and Go Seek" in the dark.

At first playing in the dark was very challenging simply because it took time for your eyes to adjust.

But over a number of minutes your pupils would enlarge, letting in more and more of less and less light, until suddenly, you could see!

There are a lot of biological processes involved, but in common language, your eyes just adapt to the darkness. Sometimes it was as if it was broad daylight.

Being adaptable is just like that -- like walking into a world that is pitch black at first but after time visual adjustments allow you to see.

Like many skills, being flexible and adaptable comes natural for some leaders, but in others it is a learned skill.

Some think they are

gifted in this area, but in fact they aren't.

Some dismiss the ideas of adaptability and flexibility as poor substitutes for strong planning skills.


Some people just like to "fly by the seat of their pants."

To make things worse, those who do not plan and try to just be adaptable not only discourage those around them but often fail to achieve any success. Their ministry has no continuity or destination. They find themselves struggling all the time.

Being flexible and adaptable "expects the unexpected," "plans for disruptions," and, "stays on course in spite of developments that do not go as anticipated."


Adaptability means you must keep an open mind about the plans you've made especially with regard to the situation you actually will encounter. When you face different circumstances than you prepared for, you must adapt to the situation quickly.

See FLEXIBILITY, page 14



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2020 Commission Update: Promote stewardship to churches

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – Louisiana Baptists are in the final year of the President's 2020 Commission Report, an initiative undertaken during the leadership of Waylon Bailey, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Covington, and the LBC president in 2012-2013.

Approved by messengers at the 2013 Louisiana Baptist Convention Annual Meeting, the 2020 initiative seeks to reach every generation and every people group in Louisiana with the Gospel by the end of the year through the avenues of congregational revitalization, church planting, communications and collaboration.

The 2020 recommendations were crafted collaboratively by a commission of 400 Louisiana Baptist leaders, staff members and laypeople, working in 20 subcommittees of 20 members each. Ten "key actions in reaching our state" – known as KAIROS – were developed to engage two audiences – the next generation and every people group.

This article is part of a



series to report what successes have been achieved toward the ambitious goals as well as what remains to be done.

KAIROS THREE

Challenge congregations to regularly and intentionally promote biblical financial stewardship.

In 2018, Louisiana Baptists and LifeWay Christian Resources released the results of a state-wide survey indicating that 85 percent of Louisiana pastors felt it is very important to teach church members to give financially, but that fewer than a third of these pastors have a plan to proactively encourage congregants to do so.

In response to the survey, resources were

developed, promoted and distributed to Louisiana Baptist churches.

Undesignated gifts climbed immediately from \$254,529,710 in 2013 to \$263,983,912 the next year, according to John Kyle, director of communications for Louisiana Baptists. In 2018, undesignated receipts reached a high of \$289,015,985 before dropping to \$282,311,010 last year.

"This was a challenging KAIROS to measure,"

Kyle noted. "Our depressed state economy, particularly the energy sector, has taken its toll on churches and associations especially in south Louisiana."

"Without question this has effected the offerings received by the churches as well as what they forward through the Cooperative Program," he continued. "Unfortunately we've been unable to get an accurate measurement relating to 'increasing the number of tithers,' but efforts continue to challenge all Louisiana Baptists to give faith-

fully to the Lord through their local church.

"Although we are reaching the endpoint in terms of the goals for the 2020 Commission Report, our intentions are to continue to challenge Louisiana Baptists to examine their giving, understanding that at its core, giving is a heart issue."

New, downloadable stewardship resources are available to all Louisiana Baptist congregations at [//LouisianaBaptists.org/stewardship](http://LouisianaBaptists.org/stewardship).

Pastor Clark Stewart and New Zion Baptist Church, Covington, LA will host a Sheepdog Seminar

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Leslie Norris Townsend is easily one of the funniest, most entertaining comedians working today. Leslie 30+ television appearances include Comedy Central, A&E's An Evening at the Improv, and sketches seen on the Tonight Show with Jay Leno.

As a teenager, Townsend lost her mother to cancer and father to alcoholism. Left to raise her younger siblings, she never lost her positive outlook. She went from food stamps to Star Search grand champion finalist. Though she didn't win, Townsend saw God had bigger plans for her.

Leslie Norris Townsend

To register for the Women's Conference go to abccamp.com/women

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Louisiana Baptist Foundation reports strong final quarter for 2019

By Jerry Love
LBF Director of Planned Giving

Alexandria (LBM)-Louisiana Baptist Foundation Board of Trustees held their first 2020 meeting, primarily reviewing investment performances for 2019; but, they also entered executive session to discuss leadership succession issues relating to the announced retirement

of Executive Director Wayne Taylor.

NEW LEADERS

The Board also welcomed three new members: James Gardner, associate pastor, McClenodon Baptist Church, West Monroe; Amanda Pesnell, senior vice president, Progressive Bank, and, member, First Baptist Church,

Minden; and, David Cranford, pastor, First Baptist Church, Ponchatoula, and, president, Louisiana Baptist Convention.

The three were approved by messengers at the LBC annual meeting in November.

2019 PERFORMANCE

The trustees received an overview about the strong performances of the various investment segments in the LBF Investment portfolios performance for the calendar year of 2019 – with the total Foundation holdings achieving double digit returns for the year. The specific funds generated returns that were in line with their respective benchmarks and adhered to the investment policies

established by the Board:

-- Short Term Fund: 1.93 percent actual annualized yield;

-- Group Investment Fund, comprised of various market sectors: 18.31 percent total return; and,

-- Diversified Income Fund, conservative income-oriented fund: 6.81 percent total return.

The net assets under management stood at \$162,999,666 as of the end of December.

LAGNIAPPE

Taylor presented a spending rate policy of 2.66 percent for the LBF endowments. The spending rate is the percentage paid from the permanent endowments managed by the Foundation to the designated beneficiaries

(churches and institutions). The rate, which was approved by the Board, reflects an increase of 7.75 percent in actual dollars received by the beneficiaries.

Chuck Murray, the LBF's controller reported that testing of the new accounting system is going well, with the staff continuing to compare the new software with the existing software during the month-end and year-end accounting processes. He said he expects to continue testing for a few more months before officially activating the new system.

Murray also noted the LBF operating budget closed the year ahead of projections.

See FOUNDATION, page 14



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Chronicle

Friendship from page one

BEGINNING AGAIN

Friendship Baptist Church held its first worship service on Jan. 29, 1900, and drew people from throughout the Fishville community for nearly 120 years. But attendance waned over the years until the congregation voted in January 2018 to operate under a new name, Anchor Baptist Church. That effort was short-lived and the congregation voted on June 2, 2019, to hand over the property to the Big Creek Association.

A committee formed and prayed about God's direction for how they would use the property.

Associational Mission Strategist Daryl Stagg was joined by Whitman, Kevin Simmons, pastor of Wayside Baptist Church in Pollock, and Trey Lewis, pastor of New Prospect Baptist Church in Dry Prong and they concluded that the Holy Spirit was leading them to replant the church.

"When Anchor Baptist Church gave the church to us, my heart began to be heavy for that community," said Whitman, who was interim pastor at First Baptist Church in Montgomery at the time. "I didn't know what I was going to do but I knew we wanted to be a church. That community needs a church presence and through the process of my prayers I know God placed me there. When this came open, my heart became heavy to be the pastor."

Stagg added, "I am excited to see God working to replant this church. It has been a team effort. Pastors and lay leaders in our associational churches are working together to help struggling churches."

Drew Gardner, pastor of the First Baptist Church in Dry Prong, said his congregation is humbled for the opportunity to join with Whitman and New Friendship Baptist Church in the effort to reach the com-

munity with the Gospel. First Baptist supports New Friendship financially, and they send members on a rotating basis to serve as ushers, greeters and other roles on Sunday mornings.

"For the future, our hearts and hands are open toward whatever God might lead us to do," Gardner said. "The call to follow Jesus is a call to open-ended surrender, and we want to make our partnership with New Friendship an extension of that call. So as needs and opportuni-

ties arise there, we want to be ready and willing to meet them."

Looking ahead, Whitman said the future is bright for New Friendship Baptist. They will continue to hold just one Sunday morning worship service until after Easter, when they will add a Sunday evening service and Wednesday night prayer meeting.

"I believe as we develop this church into a good solid foundation of growth and getting people to come," Whitman said. "I see a church in the future that will be filling the sanctuary on a regular basis and will get out in the community



Brian Blackwell photo

Lloyd Whitman preached before 143 people who attended the first worship service at New Friendship Baptist Church in Fishville, Feb. 2. Whitman fondly recalled how God moved during the revival service in 1982 when the church was named Friendship Baptist Church.

to see people saved. I see a church that will function the way a church

is supposed to function. We want to build on Jesus."



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Robertson from page one

age of 9 at Temple Baptist Church in Winnsboro. Soon after, he sensed a call to ministry and at age 11 preached his first sermon, standing atop a Coke box inside Temple Baptist's worship center.

Robertson served 36 years on church staffs in Louisiana, including Turkey Bluff Baptist Church in Swampers, Cash Bayou Baptist Church in Sicily Island, Lismore Baptist Church in Monterey, Fellowship Baptist Church in Trout (three separate times, total), First Baptist Church in Dry Prong, Bistineau Baptist Church in Heflin, Trinity Baptist Church in Oak Grove, and Calvary Baptist Church in Monroe.

Robertson was serving as pastor of Temple Baptist in 2007 when God called him to serve as pastoral leadership director for

Louisiana Baptists.

FIRM IN HIS FAITH

When he was pastor of Calvary Baptist, his teenage daughter, Jennifer, was killed unexpectedly on Sept. 20, 1997. Trey Robertson saw his dad display a faith that could not be shaken by one of his darkest moments.

"He would always say, 'If I could see it like Jesus,'" and, 'I would have done it like Jesus,'" he said. "He had a faith that could be tested. Even though he missed Jennifer terribly, his faith was not shaken. He also would say, 'God is too good to do wrong, He is to wise to make a mistake, and he loves us too much to cause needless tears.'"

Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Director Steve Horn admired Robertson's faithful service

to the Lord and churches throughout the state.

"Bill did love the Lord," he said. "He recognized that Jesus had saved Him and given Him eternal life of which he was faithful. But he also recognized the Lord sustained him during life's most difficult moments, such as the passing of his daughter.

"He was a person of joy because of his relationship with the Lord," he continued. "I think of the verse 'Rejoice in the Lord always and again I say rejoice.' Bill also understand that the local church was ground zero for the mission of Christ. That's why Bill wanted to spend whatever years he had left, which ended up being months instead of years, as a pastor again. That is a good indicator of his love for the local church."

FISHER OF MEN

Joseph Tarpley, deacon chairman at Fellowship Baptist Church, said Robertson was passionate about seeing others come



Brian Blackwell photo

Louisiana Baptist Convention Executive Director Steve Horn (left) recognizes Linda and Bill Robertson on his retirement at the 2019 Annual Meeting in Alexandria. Robertson passed away suddenly Feb. 24, 2020.

to Christ during their 45-year friendship. Many times, Tarpley said, he accompanied Robertson as they shared the Gospel with others in the community and visited prospective members.

"He made friends easily and had one message, 'Jesus loves you and wants to save you,'" Tarpley said. "He just made you feel comfortable around him.

"His love for Fellowship came through in the

way he smiled and talked to people," he continued. "Most recently he talked to a guy we had tried to get to come to Fellowship for a while and just last Sunday he finally came. The man didn't make a profession of faith during the service, but Bill was so happy that he was coming. Jesus was his true passion in life."

John Hebert, Louisi-

See ROBERTSON, page 12

CALLED TO PREACH





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Louisiana argues for abortion protections before Supreme Court

By Will Hall

Message Executive Editor

WASHINGTON (LBM)—On March 4, Elizabeth Murrill, Louisiana's solicitor general, argued the state's position before the U.S. Supreme Court that the medical safety regulations outlined in Act 620, passed in 2014, protect a woman's health and are not an undue burden or restriction.

At issue, in particular, is the law's requirement that an abortionist obtain hospital admitting privileges to a facility within 30 miles of the abortion facility, in case of complications for the woman patient during or after an abortion.

This element of the case, known as June Medical Services LLC v. Russo, was amplified as the legal challenge to the law made its way through the federal court process. In 2019 a woman who had a botched abortion procedure at a Baton Rouge abortion facility experienced

complications that forced her to have emergency surgery which resulted in a total hysterectomy, meaning the killed baby was the last child she could have birthed.

Despite this development, Julie Rikelman, attorney for the Shreveport abortion facility, Hope Medical Group for Women, owned by June Medical Services, LLC, dismissed the concern about complications, arguing that such missteps are an exception in the abortion industry. She also said that requiring an abortionist to have admitting privileges within 30 miles effectively would close down the three abortion facilities in Louisiana because of the difficulty that abortionists face in obtaining such hospital privileges.

Murrill and then Jeffrey B. Wall, the deputy solicitor general for the U.S. government who spoke as a "friend of the court" supporting Louisiana, both countered Rikelman's points, alternately sharing that the claims of

CULTURALNEWS

undue burden for the abortionists were untrue, and that the law protected the health of the woman patient whose safety rights should override any inconvenience for the abortion clinics.

Murrill said the admitting privileges clause "was justified by abundant evidence of life-threatening health and safety violations, malpractice, [and] noncompliance with professional licensing rules..."

Testimony during the hearing confirmed that one of the six abortionists at the three abortion clinics in the state had punctured the uteruses of four patients, and that June Medical Services' license was suspended for regulatory violations.

Wall countered Rikelman's contention that the abortionists were blocked in their attempts to secure admitting privileges, by saying any attempts to obtain them were "pretty modest" at best.

"Doe 2 [one of six abortionists represented in the lawsuit] did not apply to a hospital where he used to have privileges," Wall testified, "and Doe 3 currently has privileges. Doe 5 got privileges at Touro Hospital in New Orleans and just needed to get a covering doctor in Baton Rouge."

He also pointed out that Doe 6, located in New Orleans, declined to apply at Touro, even though Doe 5 was granted courtesy privileges there.

Meanwhile, Murrill had pointed out that Doe 3 had "hired a radiologist and an

ophthalmologist to perform abortions at one point in time."

Two of Louisiana's legislative delegation in the U.S. Congress offered particularly insightful commentary about the Supreme Court case.

Rep. Mike Johnson, a member of the First Baptist Church in Bossier City, told Fox News that the

case "really is legitimately about the health and safety of women" and reasoned that this concern overrides any interest of the abortion clinics.

"If they [abortion busi-

See CULTURAL, page 9

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Salvations from page one

heart to hear the Gospel.

Their prayers were answered Oct. 27.

Although he rejected coming to Sunday worship, he did take his children to weekly worship rehearsals with Associate Pastor Adam Whitney. The Gospel seeds planted through this interaction produced a spiritual Harvest when he publicly professed his faith in Christ and subsequently was baptized Jan. 4.

He has continued grow-

ing in his faith through a weekly discipleship meeting with Whitney and one of his co-workers.

"As I began helping out at the rehearsals, Scripture verses that I had studied in the past started popping back into my head like it was yesterday. I realize now the Lord had been leading me to that moment for a very long time," Thibodeaux told the *Baptist Message*. "I became more and more active with

my kids with their ministry with the church.

"My wife is the one that stood strong through all of my ups and downs," he continued. "She stuck with me and didn't give up. It's because of her that all of that happened. While telling this story, I can't help but think how my wife was responsible for all of this. She was the family rock for us when I lost my way. If not for her patience, there's no way I would be walking along a path loving and wanting to know more about Jesus and live Christ-like. When God was writing my story, He knew what I would need to help me in my walk of becoming a Kingdom man."

2020 VISION

According to the Annual Church Profile of statistics, the church baptized 17 in 2015 and 27 the year before.

However, from 2016 through 2019, baptisms trailed off significantly.

But now, with many of the church's 150 regular



Submitted photo

Weldon Moak baptized Everett Laribas Feb. 9 at First Baptist Church in Broussard. Laribas is one of 10 new converts baptized at First Baptist Broussard since January.

worship attenders involved in multiple evangelistic efforts, Pastor Weldon Moak is anticipating a mighty movement of God in 2020.

Indeed, Thibodeaux's baptism is the 10th this year for First Baptist Broussard. With five more scheduled and more salvation decisions anticipated by mid-March, the church is on pace for a banner year in baptisms.

The difference is the intentionality about evangelism and discipleship, Moak said.

During the first few weeks of the year, Moak cast the theme "Vision 2020: His mission, our focus."

Church members participate in evangelism training and disciple classes on Sunday evenings.

The congregation also has become involved with "Here For You Acadiana,"

See SALVATIONS, page 13

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Cultural from page 7

nesses] have difficulty finding qualified providers for this service that they provide, that is not the problem, or the concern of the state,” Johnson said. “The state’s concern is in the health and safety of women. And for the abortion industry to come and complain to the regulators and say, ‘Gee whiz, we can’t find qualified doctors who can obtain omitting privileges to a hospital,’ is not a sufficient reason to strike down a common-sense constitutional regulation.”

Johnson, is chairman of the House Republican Study Committee. He helped lead an amicus brief in June *Medical Services v. Russo* in support of Louisiana on behalf of 207 members of Congress. Prior to his election to Congress, he represented the state in the Russo case, and as an attorney in private practice 15 years earlier, he represented a woman who almost died from unsafe conditions in

the Delta Women’s Clinic in Baton Rouge.

During a rally of support for the Louisiana law, Sen. John Kennedy, a member of the North Cross United Methodist Church in Madisonville, told the crowd he was “very proud” that Louisiana “is helping to lead our country’s pro-life movement” by pursuing this case before the Supreme Court.

“We cannot protect unborn children if we do not prioritize the health and well-being of their mothers,” Kennedy said. “The fact is that abortion providers routinely put the safety of women at risk.

“We want to make the health of children and the health of women a priority again,” he continued. The law that these nine justices will consider today, it is compassionate and is it common sensical.”

Kennedy has submitted a Senate bill, “The Pregnant

Women and Health Safety Act,” to ensure women have access to immediate medical care, requiring abortion providers across the nation to have admitting privileges at a hospital located within 15 miles of where the abortion is performed. An added provision mandates the abortionist inform patients where they can receive follow-up care if any complication arises from an abortion

MITCHELL: Marxist concepts have footholds at SEBTS, SBTS

PINEVILLE (LBM)—Speaking to Louisiana College students as part of a “Christ, Church, and Culture” series about current cultural issues from a biblical perspective, a national speaker on ethics explained the controversial concepts of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, and expressed worries that these Marxist ideologies have gained footholds among the faculty of the Southern Bap-

tist Theological Seminary in Louisville, Kentucky, and the Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina.

Craig Mitchell, president of the Ethics and Political Economy Center, an evangelical think tank based in Dallas, Texas, described Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as emerging from Marxist thought, which as its primary tenet declares that there is no God. He added that these two concepts also developed within the framework of different branches of thought that inform the Social Justice movement. But, ultimately, both of these concepts present a perspective that there is conflict between “an oppressor” and “an oppressed” and that the oppressor cannot know right or morality.

Consequently, Critical Race Theory perpetuates the notion that white people cannot know right and cannot be moral. Likewise, Intersectionality, which was shaped fundamentally by black feminist lesbians, declares that a man cannot know truth or the

moral thing to do.

“Is there injustice in society,” Mitchell rhetorically asked.

“There is,” he said, “because we live in a sinful, fallen world, and the best that this world has to offer is still pretty messed up.

“If you’re looking for perfect justice -- if you’re looking for perfect righteousness -- you’re not going to find it until Christ comes again,” Mitchell declared. “When you look at Revelation 20, Jesus Christ comes down and reigns in Jerusalem for a thousand years -- a thousand years of perfect justice, a thousand years of righteousness. Then, you know what happens? People rebel.”

Mitchell said justice and righteousness cannot be obtained through big government or little government, either. Instead, both will be restored by Jesus Christ “not right now, but in His timing.”

“The best thing you can do is share the Gospel of

See CULTURAL, page 13

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EDITOR'S NOTE: *Do you have a Revival, Homecoming, a new pastor, a community outreach or a concert? The Baptist Message would love to share your church news with the rest of the state. It is very easy to do, just send in your information (who, what, where and when) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. To get your event in the paper, please submit your information three weeks prior to the event.*

ON THE MOVE

- **Jeff (wife Nell) Ginn** resigns as senior pastor at Istrouma Baptist Church, Baton Rouge to accept a position as the International Mission Board's affinity group leader for the Americas. His last Sunday at Istrouma was March 1.
- **Jerauld Smith** is the new senior pastor at Grace Memorial Baptist Church, Slidell.
- **Don Meadows** resigns as pastor of Taylor Creek Baptist Church.
- **Bryan Ulmer** is the new youth minister at Mt. Vernon, West Monroe.
- **Todd Wooden** resigned as pastor at New Friendship, Bastrop.
- **Jeremy (wife Sarah) Fortenberry** is the new music minister from First Baptist Church, DeRidder.
- **Bob Colquette** is the new pastor at Bethany Baptist Church, Lake Charles.

HOMECOMING

- **Cotile Baptist Church, Boyce:** 36th Homecoming Service, March 15, 11 a.m. Lunch will follow the worship service. Pastor: Johnny Miller.
- **Pilgrim Rest Baptist Church, Eunice:** 150th Anniversary Celebration, March 15, 10 a.m. There will be a meal after the worship service but those attending should RSVP Peggy Watson at peggy.watson@abccamp.com. Guest Speaker: **Louisiana**

Baptist Convention Executive Director Steve Horn and former pastors from the church. Special Music: different people associated with the church (present and past). Pastor: Orville Rogers.

REVIVAL

- **Cotile Baptist Church, Boyce:** **Spring Revival**, March 12-14, 7 p.m. nightly. Speaker: **Ryan Perry**. Pastor: Johnny Miller.
- **First Baptist Church, Hornbeck:** **March Madness Revival**, March 15, 22, 29, 11 a.m. Sunday, March 15 emphasis on Adults. Speaker: **Brian Gilcrease**. There will be a pot luck lunch after worship; March 22 emphasis on youth. Speaker: **Tim Lee**. There will be pizza after worship; March 29 **wrap up with Lord Supper**. Pastor: Jack Bell.
- **Magnolia Baptist Church, Winnsboro:** **Revival**, March 22-25. Evangelist: **Casey Johnson**. Pastor: Ron Ferrington.
- **The New Beginnings Baptist Church, Walker:** **Revival**, March 22-25. Evangelist: **Scotty McDowell, chalk artist**. Pastor: Charles Smith.
- **Hillcrest Baptist Church, Franklinton:** Special Harvest Service, March 22, 10:15 a.m. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Tommy Smith.
- **Welcome Home Baptist Church, Hebert:** **Spring Revival**, March 22-26, Sunday, 6 p.m.; Monday-Thursday, 6:30 p.m. Evangelist: Sean Tabb. Music: Tabb Family. Pastor: Jim McKeithen.
- **First Baptist Church, Covington:** **Re-vive! Christ and His Church**, March 24, 9 a.m. – 3 p.m. Evangelist: **Richard Blackaby & Mark Clifton**. Cost: \$10 (includes lunch and two books). Sessions: "Christ's Presence and His Church," "Reclaiming the Glory," and "Living and Leading Out of the Overflow." Register at Northshore Baptist Association office at 225.567.5086 or of-

fice@NorthshoreBaptists.net.

- **New Ramah Baptist Church, Castor:** **Revival**, April 5-8, Sunday 11 a.m. and Sunday-Wednesday, 7 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Pastor: Steve Palmer.

LAGNIAPPE

- **Beauregard Baptist Association Women's Event: "I Love to Tell The Story,"** March 13, 6 p.m. at Beauregard Fairgrounds Exhibit Hall. Cost: \$15 (Deadline to purchase tickets, March 9); T-Shirts: \$20 (deadline to purchase t-shirts – February 27). For more information call the Beauregard Baptist Association at 337.202.4043. DOM: Tim Patrick.
- **Ridge Avenue Baptist Church, West Monroe:** **The McNeill Family in concert**, March 14, 6 p.m. A love offering will be received for this family group. Pastor: Jim Wolfe.
- **Toledo Bend Baptist Resort Ministry 2020 Spring work day**, March 14, 8 a.m. Lunch will be provided. Please bring tools/supplies according to what activity you would like to participate in ... raking/yard care, sorting, cleaning, etc. For more information call Mary or Danny at 318.645.6601.
- **Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City:** Annual Associational Music Celebration, March 15, 6 p.m. Each participating church is allowed two musical selections by a soloist, group, or choir to be presented during the event. Following the service, there will be a time of food & fellowship in the church Family Life Center. Visiting churches are asked to bring 4 desserts per church. Pastor: Steven Kelly.
- **Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles:** **Fresh Grounded Faith with Jennifer Rothschild and Friends**, March 20-21. This area-wide women's event is cospon-

sored by First Baptist Church DeRidder.

- **Woodlawn Baptist Church, Baton Rouge:** **Baton Rouge Discipleship Training**, March 20-21. April 24-25, May 15-16; each sessions Friday 5 p.m. and Saturday, 9 a.m. The training is hosted by the Association of Certified Biblical Counselors. The conference will provide fundamental discipleship training. Go to itickets, <https://biblicalcounseling.com/baton-rouge-cdt/?fbclid=IwAR30szH29LCHslQC9TfQ3B9QwwjSvUzPTGlznCFB-WJ60it3un1peBgWfc>. Pastor: Lewis Richerson.
- **First Baptist Church, Blanchard:** **Worship 3:16**, March 21, 11 a.m. – 6 p.m. Worship: **Matt Papa**. Registration at 10 a.m. Cost: \$50 (for lunch, breakouts, preferred concert seating) \$10.00 (for concert, general admission.) Tickets available on eventbrite.com (search "worship316 conference") For more information, call 318.834.7198. Pastor: Clay Fuqua.
- **Trinity Baptist Church, Hammond:** **Concert**, March 22, 5:30 p.m. Worship: **Greg Sullivan & Answered Prayer**. Pastor: Avery Dixon.
- **Oak Hill Baptist Church, Bastrop:** **Mike Howard will be the guest speaker** during the morning service, March 22, 11 a.m. That afternoon a deacon ordination will take place for Eugene Mann and Hugh Herrington, 2 p.m. All are invited. Pastor: Andy Myrick.
- **First Baptist Church, Covington:** **RE-VIVE! Christ and His Church**, March 24, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. **Blackaby Ministries International (BMI), in partnership with the North American Mission Board, will bring "REVIVE: Christ and His Church" to the Louisiana Northshore!** Speakers: **Richard Blackaby and Mark Clifton**. Cost is \$10 and includes lunch and the two featured books. Register/

RSVP at 225.567.5086 or office@northshorebaptists.net. Pastor: Waylon Bailey.

- **First Baptist Church, Jonesboro:** **Healthy Churches Conference**; March 27-29. Evangelist: **Ed Lacy from Mobile, Alabama**. Ed travels all over the world teaching and preaching the Word of God with specific focus on "Christ-Centered Evangelism." Learn more about him at edlacyminis-tries.org. Pastor: Brian McAllister.
- **First Baptist Church, Mandeville:** Men's Charge Conference, March 27-28. Speaker: **Jamie Dew, president New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary**. Conference will feature dynamic worship, breakout sessions, food and fellowship. Pastor: Corey Fontan.
- **Trinity Baptist Church, Turkey Creek:** **7th Annual Ladies Conference – "Love that Matters,"** March 28, 9 a.m.-noon. Cost: \$12 per person. Lunch included following event. Speaker: **Pat Domangue, published Christian author**. Praise/Worship: **Ann Fenn**. To register send name, church represented and payment to: Trinity Baptist Church, Attention: Ladies Conference, P.O. Box 26, Turkey Creek, La. 70585. Contact: Jodie Nugent/jarnugent2010@gmail.com. Pastor: Eddie Douglas.

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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.

ZPW GYCMDW HD H DLQ LAUC YMD LJQ YLPDU; JYLDU

YLPDU HCU JU, MN JU YLSO NHDW WYU GLQNMUQGU HQO

WYU CUXLMGMQT LN WYU YLVU NMCE PQWL WYU UQO.

YUZCUJD WYCUU:DMB

Clues:
Y = H; M = I

Answer to February 27 Scripture Crypto:
Numbers thirty-one: twenty-four

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Mark Lowry

Robertson from page 6

ana Baptists missions and ministry team director, called Robertson a trusted leader, both as a pastor and denominational servant.

"He and his wife, Linda, were great friends of ours," Hebert said. "Bill was always positive and upbeat about ministry and about life. He cared about souls as much as any pastor friend I have ever had. He is going to be greatly missed in our work and among our churches."

Keith Manuel, director of evangelism and church growth for Louisiana Baptists, said Robertson had a passion for sharing Christ with others and wanted others to have a relationship with the Lord.

"His face would light up and his grin would get bigger as he talked about the Holy Spirit working in someone's life," Manuel said. "He would absolutely beam as he described a man or a woman surrendering to Jesus as Lord and Savior. I think I'll miss those conversations with him the most."

Stacy Morgan, an associate with the Louisiana Baptists' communications team, worked with Robertson for 10 years on the pastoral leadership team. He said Robertson believed serving as

pastor of a local church was the highest calling.

"He loved God and absolutely adored his family," Morgan said. "He loved pastors and churches, too. Bill understood that associations and conventions existed to serve local churches."

Former Louisiana Baptist Executive Director David Hankins said Robertson was a friend for more than 30 years.

"I have never met anyone more committed to the truth of the Bible, more passionate about preaching the Gospel or more confident of the joy of Heaven," Hankins said. "We will miss him."

SERVANT OF BAPTISTS

As a pastor, Robertson, a graduate of Winnsboro High School, Louisiana College and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, was honored as the Louisiana Baptist Convention preacher of the year in 1997 and 2007. He was serving as pastor of Temple Baptist Church in Winnsboro when he was elected as president of Louisiana Baptists in 2005 and then again in 2006.

During his ministry, Robertson also served as president of the state Pastors' Conference and on the LBC Committee on Committees, Committee on Convention Arrangements, Louisiana College Board and LBC Executive Board. Additionally, he served as a trustee for Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and as evangelism director for the Deer Creek Baptist Association.

Louisiana College had planned to award Robertson with its Distinguished Service Award during commencement ceremonies May 9. LC President Rick Brewer said he recently spoke with Robertson, who was overcome with joy upon hearing the news.

"He was speechless, which for Bill was quite rare," Brewer said. "I love that man dearly. The award was well-earned and well-deserved. Sadly, we will now bestow it posthumously."

Robertson's funeral was held Feb. 28 at Fellowship Baptist. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Jennifer Robinson Memorial Scholarship Fund at LC.



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Cultural from page 9

Jesus Christ with this fallen world," Mitchell offered. "To the degree that you share the Gospel with others and they come to Christ, and they strive for justice and righteousness, we will have a more righteous society. Not perfect. But don't think you can do it through politics, don't think you can do it through economics."

After his presentation, students asked questions, including a number about the controversial Resolution 9 passed by messengers at the 2019 Southern Baptist Convention Annual Meeting and the presence of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality on SBC seminary campuses.

Responding to the description in the resolution calling Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality "useful analytical tools," Mitchell

said this is true only "if you're a Marxist." He added that "There's nobody I know at Southwestern who's actually teaching Critical Race Theory and nobody who's actually teaching Intersectionality."

He likewise vouched for New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

"I know a bunch of people at New Orleans, and I don't know of anyone who's actually teaching that," Mitchell said. "I've known Jamie [Dew, NOBTS president] for years. I don't think Jamie would go for that. But then I never imagined that Danny Akin [SEBTS president] or Al Mohler [SBTS president] would support this type of thing."

Mitchell explained that these Marxist ideas are being cultivated on the campuses of SEBTS and SBTS.

"Walter Strickland teaches

critical race theory, and you look at black theology and some of the things he has said. Frankly, I am surprised he is still on the [Southeastern] faculty," Mitchell remarked.

"From Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Kentucky, you have Curtis Woods and you have Jarvis Williams. Jarvis Williams is a New Testament professor. From all accounts Jarvis in his courses doesn't really teach New Testament, he just teaches Critical Race Theory."

"You have Kevin Smith," he added. "Kevin is also at Southern."

"When I was still teaching at Criswell College, Kevin ended up being editor of this book called 'Removing the stain of racism in the SBC,' he explained. 'I got an article they asked me to write on ethics about the state of racism in the SBC. What I did not realize was that some of the writers would have some of the views that they had.'

"Southern and Southeastern -- those are places where it's most problematic."

Closing out the question and answer time, Mitchell

told the students, faculty and visitors that the only thing Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality produce is change in society toward a Marxist direction.

"In Resolution 9 they said that Critical Race Theory is a 'useful analytical tool,'" he said. "It is not a useful tool to get people saved -- I can tell you that."

Messengers at the 2019 Tennessee Baptist Conven-

tion Annual Meeting passed a resolution against Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as a response to the SBC resolution. Additionally, pastors in Georgia and Louisiana have indicated they are going to push during the 2020 SBC Annual Meeting in Orlando, Florida, June 9-10, for a retraction of Resolution 9 or to pass a replacement resolution that condemns the two controversial Marxist theories.

Salvations from page 8

an evangelism effort by the Evangeline Baptist Association of churches, reigniting his men's and women's ministries with weekly fellowships and Bible studies.

Additionally, members sell coffee with the proceeds supporting the local Crisis Pregnancy Center.

The new emphases have led to a young adult group

starting, too.

Moak said he is optimistic about his church and its future impact on Broussard and beyond.

"Our focus is evangelism and discipleship," Moak said. "We cried out God we need you, we can't do this without you. It's a little hard work and elbow grease but also a lot of praying and desperation."

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Flexibility from page 2

The vision must be the guide. If you know the vision, and stay focused on it, you can adapt in order to achieve the ultimate objective.

In war the relationship between sergeants and officers (decision makers) is so important. Sergeants know the situation on the ground and officers make decisions about resource allocations and strategy to fight the battle, which the sergeants can then carry out. This relationship is so important that it is said that sergeants run the army.

Leaders must be connected to the fulfillment of the objective in the same way. They must be close enough to the activities to either observe or otherwise be informed about the actual circumstances encountered in order to adapt the strategy for the best effect.

In most cases, success largely depends on being flexible and adaptable. That is why so much emphasis is placed on these two traits.

During the cold war the United States and the Soviet Union were

the world's only super powers. They constantly prepared for combat against each other. For both, "war doctrine" was the key.

Each country had extensive plans for conducting war in air, land and sea. The Soviets were taught to stick to the plan conceived by their leaders or pay a personal price if they deviated.

U. S. Commanders were taught differently. Doctrine was important, but situational analysis would allow for adapting the plan to actual developments during battle. U. S. doctrine actually encouraged ongoing analysis

and adjustments.

We later learned the Soviets feared most that America's war fighters were taught to be flexible and how to adapt battle plans as needed. They feared our adaptability. They knew what our plans were, but they didn't know what to expect.

pect.

Being flexible and adaptable is a winning skill. Make plans for ministry activities, for people gathering, for evangelism, and every other aspect of ministry, but also be ready to make the necessary adjustments needed to win the victory.

Foundation from page 4

New gifts and additions to existing funds in 2019 total \$2,510,784 as reported by Jerry Love, planned giving director. This total represents 36 separate gifts including completed bequests, endowments and stock donations to various Baptist ministries. In addition, two estates are in process of being executed that will produce approximately \$500,000 in the near future for the ministries selected by the respective donors.

Following these reports, the Board went into executive session for the remainder of meeting to hear an update from the Executive Director

Search Committee regarding interviews with candidates for Taylor's successor.

The Louisiana Baptist Foundation Board of Trustees is scheduled to meet April 28, 2020.

The Louisiana Baptist Foundation assists individuals with gifts that benefit Louisiana Baptist churches and ministries, and to assist Baptist churches and entities with financial management. To learn more about the work and ministry of the Foundation, to review investment returns for its managed funds, or to see a list of current trustees, go to www.LBFinfo.org.

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Ralph Abraham will not run for reelection

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

WASHINGTON, D.C. (LBM) – Ralph Abraham, a member of Alto Baptist Church who has represented Louisiana's 5th Congressional District since 2014, has announced his intentions not to run for reelection.

"One of the greatest honors has been serving my district and state the last six years," Abraham, who made his decision public Feb. 26, told the *Baptist Message*. "You have to have the heart of service to do things the right way here in D.C. and serving is what Christians are commanded to do. As servants of Christ, we give back to others."

A native of Richland Parish, Abraham graduated from Mangham High School and Louisiana State University. From there, he served in multiple professional spheres, including: as a physician and a veterinarian, business owner, farmer, volunteer pilot with Pilots for Patients and as a first lieutenant in the U.S. Army National Guard, a fixed wing and helicopter pilot with the Coast Guard Auxiliary and a mission pilot for the Air Force's

Civil Air Patrol Green Flag Program.

Abraham was first elected to serve the 24-parish district in the north-eastern, central and south-eastern parts of the state in 2014. During his time in office, Abraham frequently championed pro-family causes.

He has been a consistent pro-life advocate, voting against funding for abortion providers like Planned Parenthood. A member of the pro-life caucus, Abraham has spoken at various events around the state, such as the 2016 CENLA Pro-Life Prayer Breakfast at Louisiana College in Pineville and the 2018 Louisiana Life March CENLA in Alexandria-Pineville.

Most recently, Abraham ran, unsuccessfully, for governor and in August released a campaign ad titled, "The Truth," in which he rejected Gov. John Bel Edwards's efforts to establish special rights for people who claim a transgender or a gender fluid sexual identity.

Edwards's executive order mandated state government contractors must accommodate employees who identify as something other than their actual bio-

logical sex. Transgenderism and gender fluidity are not recognized by federal law as protected classes, and Louisiana Attorney General Jeff Landry filed a lawsuit to prevent enforcement of Edwards's edict.

Ultimately, the state Supreme Court ruled Edwards's mandate as unconstitutional.

Abraham said when he announced his candidacy for the seat in 2014, he was concerned about the

direction the country was leaning. During his three terms, Abraham said the economy and military are stronger than they have been in decades, and con-

See ABRAHAM, page 16

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Please send résumé to Susan Nolan at P.O. Box 4196,
Monroe, LA 71211 or snolan@lbch.org

Abraham from page 15

sumer confidence is rising. Abraham also noted he, as member of the House Agriculture Committee, was proud to have helped draft the 2018 Farm Bill that, among other parts of the legislation, allocates billions of dollars in subsidies to American farmers.

"I've been concerned about the problems in the family unit and was worried we strayed from the founders' intent for this nation," Abraham said. "Since I got here I've tried to be a part of the solution that has

helped steer this ship in the right direction. Seeing the gains we've made on several fronts has been rewarding."

While Abraham is busy representing his constituents in Washington D.C., he still makes time to volunteer with Pilots for Patients, an organization that flies Louisiana cancer patients for treatments at hospitals. He has flown on countless missions with the organization for nearly eight years.

Abraham also attends Alto Baptist when he is in the area. He has been

a member at the church for more than 50 years.

"I could not be prouder of my church and the Baptist community," Abraham said. "They have stood firm on issues that we must fight for as Christians."

Abraham said the people in his district and throughout the state have made his time in office fulfilling.

Moreover, he credited his congregation, and his wife, Dianne, with helping him stay spiritually



Ralph Abraham

grounded.

"Dianne has been my strongest supporter," he said. "She had my back when I needed someone to prop me up and has been by my side many days here in Washington. I could not have done my job without

her."

PAYING TRIBUTE TO ABRAHAM

Alan Miller, pastor of Alto Baptist, said he and his congregation are proud of Abraham's service.

"I want him to continue to serve as our congressman but as a man of his word, he promised to serve only three terms," Miller said. "He is an influential statesman in Washington DC representing his district with honesty, consistency, and hard work."

"Doc knows how to get things done," he continued. "He and Dianne live out their Christian faith in everything they do, and are difference-makers in Washington D.C., the state of Louisiana and their community and church in Alto, Louisiana. It has been a distinct privilege for me to serve as the congressman's pastor."

Abraham's colleagues from Louisiana also expressed appreciation for his service in Congress.

"On behalf of all Louisianans, I want to thank Rep. Ralph Abraham for his hard work and sacrifice these last six years," said Congressman Mike Johnson, a member of First Baptist Church in Bossier City. "He has been a model public servant and a tireless advocate for our state, especially our men and women in uniform. Ralph has been an incredible colleague and friend, and it has been an honor to serve the people of Louisiana alongside him. I wish him and Dianne the best as they begin this next chapter in their lives."

U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy called Abraham a great asset to this country.

"He is a wonderful doctor who went on to serve the people of Louisiana's 5th District well as a member of Congress," Cassidy said. "He will be missed in our delegation."

U.S. Sen. John Kennedy said Abraham was a friend who was a good man "through and through. He's a solid Christian whose commitment to protecting life reveals the heart of northeast Louisiana, and I'm just one of many people who are thankful for his service to our state."

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