



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

December 17, 2020
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John 3:16

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The gifts of the wise men

Out of their vast treasures of wealth and wonder, the wise men made deliberate choices in the gifts they brought to worship Jesus.

Gold was coveted as the most precious of metals. It was the standard by which wealth was measured, and so it was a fit tribute to royalty. Gold was meant to signify that this baby, born in a feeding trough to impoverished parents, was the King.

Frankincense is a fragrant milky sap that is harvested from trees that grow mainly in Oman and Yemen in the Middle East. In the

Old Testament the hardened sap was used as an incense burned

for thanksgiving and praise offerings, and was given to acknowledge Jesus as our High Priest.

Myrrh, a bitter herb, was a gift of bittersweet sadness. In the first century, it was a spice wrapped in the layers of linen placed on a dead body in order to externally embalm it. Myrrh was presented to confess the infant as our Savior, whose death and resurrection in a mere three decades would bring "salvation to the ends of the earth."

Adapted from David Jeremiah's "A Spirit of Giving."



Leap for joy at Christ's birth!

By Will Hall
Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – There are a number of firsts celebrated in Scripture.

Cornelius, the centurion who served as a commander in the Italian Regiment of the Roman mili-

tary, generally is acknowledged as the first Gentile convert to Christianity (Acts 10: 44-45) [although some argue the Ethiopian eunuch is deserving of that recognition] – fulfilling the promise of salvation to the whole world prophesied in Isaiah 49:6. He was a God-fearer and did good deeds. But when he

heard the Gospel from Peter, he believed in Jesus, not in religion or works, and was saved.

Lydia, the seller of purple cloth in Philippi (Acts 16:14-15) is considered the first convert in Europe. Paul found her being an obedient Jew, honoring the Sabbath at a place of prayer by the river. She, too, hearing the Good News "opened her heart" to Jesus; and, Paul, Luke, Timothy and Silas judged her to be a true believer!

The church at Antioch was the first group of disciples to be called Christians (Acts 11:26), and it was this congregation who commissioned Paul for his first missionary

2020 time of triumph during much tragedy

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

BENTON, La. (LBM) – When Pastor John Fream made a 2020 dare to members of the Cypress Baptist Church in Benton in January, urging them to embrace the "Who's Your One" evangelistic challenge to share the Gospel with someone close to them, little did he know that two months later a pandemic would test the church's commitment to the task.

But instead of backing down, members embraced the circumstances as an open door to present the Gospel to their neighbors, he said.

In the ensuing months, the congregation shared the Good News that can sustain during the uncertainty of a COVID-19 health emergency; and, by the end of November, 238 new converts had been baptized, up from 214 baptisms in 2019.

"Our folks have been intentional to reach people and offer the hope in Christ," Fream said. "We've been very aggressive about challenging them to do it. People need hope and we want to give them the Hope."

Even when the church was unable to meet, baptisms continued. Fream said during a six-week period, when the congregation was unable to meet in their facilities because of COVID-19 attendance restrictions, 20 people were baptized in pre-recorded videos that were broadcast during the livestream of services on Facebook Live, YouTube and the church website.

Fream said attendance has now reached 1,500, compared to the 2,000 who came in early March. Like previous years, members have continued with their evangelistic zeal that has not waned.



Submitted photo

Pastor John Fream baptizes one of the 238 new converts in 2020 at Cypress Baptist Church. Fream said the church's passion to share the Gospel has led to an ongoing spiritual harvest.

Patrick: Reflections about the loss of a missionary son

DERIDDER, La. (LBM)— Many of you know we lost our oldest son in October. David was an IMB (Southern Baptist) missionary. His death gives me an inside view that many of you do not possess. This year,

that view carries greater weight than ever.

I share this view with you so that (hopefully) you will consider your responsibility in supporting SBC mission causes. According to records, only about 50

percent of SBC churches give to the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering. That is tragic! If we worked together, think how much we could accomplish in reaching our world for Christ.

This year's Lottie Moon Christmas Offering goal is \$175 million. According to records there are 14,525,579 members in Southern Baptist churches. If only 25 percent of our members would give \$100, our income for the offering would be \$400 million.

When David died in October, I saw the caliber of missionaries we support. There were between

30 and 40 missionary units (families) who drove and flew from around the country to pay their respects and support David's family. These missionaries share a strong camaraderie in their passion to see the Gospel touch every corner of our globe. Seeing the caliber of our missionaries reminds me, Lottie Moon is a vital



TIM PATRICK
Director of Missions
Beauregard
Baptist Association

link to our world. Jesus instructed us to go into all the world (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

When David died in October, I saw the character of our International Mission Board, in at least three ways.

First, they care about the individual. IMB President Paul Chitwood was

quick to call and share his condolences. In addition, a representative from the board attended David's funeral. There are 3,585 IMB missionaries, as of June 30. They care about each one of our missionaries.

Second, I saw the board's character as they reached out to support our daughter-in-law and three grandchildren. They were generous in supporting our family's needs during this difficult season.

Third, I saw the board's character by the way they train and support our missionaries. Our missionaries are thoroughly trained and prepared for the ministry they perform. They go through an extensive training at the IMB's headquarters in Richmond, Virginia, before going overseas. Each

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Triumph from page one

"It starts with my staff and their commitment to reaching the world with the Gospel," Fream said.

"We've been hit with hurricanes, hailstorms and a pandemic, but our folks have committed to -- no matter what -- taking the Gospel out into the world," he continued. "The pandemic has been scary and tough, but at the end of the day we have challenged them to walk by faith and not by fear. Our folks have still not gotten over their desire to see others saved. They still applaud and cheer every time we baptize somebody. We constantly remind them this was a soul that was dead and is now alive. For me it's a reminder that the Gospel works. We just have to share it."

FIRST BAPTIST, COVINGTON

First Baptist Church, Covington, is another

congregation that has reported success from a "Who's Your One" emphasis, with 112 new believers baptized in 2020.

Pastor Waylon Bailey said a great spiritual harvest was anticipated when the church, which averages 2,300 for Sunday morning worship, launched the campaign in January. When COVID-19 infections soared, Bailey said he told members to trust in the Father and move forward in sharing the Gospel.

"I asked them to seriously consider such matters as God's response to this kind of time, asking God to use it in very specific ways in people's lives and desiring to be intentional to talk about the ultimate hope we have in Christ," Bailey said. "I think all of that has come together for good. Obviously, it feels like we were harmed by the pandemic; but, maybe

"Who's Your One" was such an emphasis that what Satan meant for evil, God used for good."

Four months after statewide COVID-19 restrictions were put in place, the church held its annual Vacation Bible School. Only one-third of the typical 1,000 person attendance level was reached, but 51 children made decisions to follow Christ and followed through with baptism.

"The great thing from this was when we followed up with two of the children, their families ended up accepting Christ and were baptized," Bailey said. "That has been really encouraging and exciting to see."

Additionally, several new converts accepted Christ as a result of a virtual discovery class for new members and prospects. After different sessions of online classes were held in April, May and June, his staff followed up with participants and were privileged

to lead some of them to a relationship with Christ, he said.

"What we have seen take place keeps us going," Bailey said. "We know that God is working; and, if God is at work, who are we not to be at work? It's encouraged all our pastors to move forward, not to be weary, and keep doing those things God wants us to do. He's ready to go before us in the work that need to be done."

COTEAU BAPTIST CHURCH

More than 50 came to the altar over the course of multi-day revival services at Coteau Baptist Church in October. On Nov. 29, eight of those followed up with baptisms, with an additional two awaiting baptism. Since January, the congregation, which averaged 65 worshipers on Sunday mornings prior to the pandemic, has witnessed 12 baptisms.

Pastor Wayne Hunt

said even COVID-19 could not stop a mighty move of the Holy Spirit during the revival.

Importantly, Hunt has connected mature believers with new believers to help them grow deeper in their spiritual walk with the Lord. He said discipleship has helped the church to surpass its pre-COVID-19 average worship attendance, reaching more than 80 recently.

Hunt said his members have modeled that hope can be found in Christ amid so much uncertainty.

"On Wednesdays, I discuss how you practice what you are learning," Hunt said. "Biblical knowledge without practical application doesn't mean anything. I believe if you don't teach people how to live out, how to practice it, you don't do any good."

Hunt said despite challenges presented by COVID-19, the church

See TRIUMPH, page 13

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Leap from page one

journey that helped expand the Church to the ends of the world.

But, think about the first person on earth to worship the Savior.

Who comes to mind?

Some might think of the Magi (Mt. 2:9-11), who, 600 years after Daniel first told their predecessors to look for a star to guide them to the Savior of the world, fell down and worshiped Jesus when they found Him in Bethlehem. Yet, despite the honor they enjoyed as the first foreign emissaries to bestow gifts for the King, they likely arrived in Bethlehem at least a year after Jesus' birth, long after he had been first worshiped.

Others might think of the shepherds standing watch over their flocks on an otherwise silent night (Lk. 2:8-20). While staring alternately at the stars and then their herds, their peace at that moment was interrupted by the herald of a heavenly choir, announcing the arrival of Christ. Although they made haste to be the first guests to arrive for the birthday celebration, and afterward were the first humans to spread the Good News of His coming to earth, they were about

eight and one-half months late to be the first to worship Him.

The honor to be the first to worship Jesus fell to one of the least of these – the unborn child of Elizabeth, wife of Zachariah the priest.

The Bible records that Mary left hearth and home in Nazareth after the Holy Spirit came upon her, blessing her with child (Lk. 1:39-40). She travelled [two weeks] to visit her 6-month pregnant cousin in Jerusalem; and, importantly, when she came into the room with Elizabeth, the baby John the Baptist (filled with the Holy Spirit, Lk. 1:15) leapt in the womb!

Too often, we think of John the Baptist as a social outcast, sporting unkempt hair and beard, clothed in camel's hair and existing on a diet of locusts and honey. He's portrayed as something of a wild man among the Jews.

But not only was he privileged as a prophet to be the first to declare, "Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29). He also was favored to be the first person on the earth to acknowledge Jesus as the Savior of mankind.

The staff at the Acadian Baptist Center in Eunice wishes everyone Merry Christmas

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5th US Circuit Court of Appeals rules against NAMB

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – The North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention has received another setback with regard to a lawsuit filed by Will McRaney, former executive director of the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, and the decision sends the case back to the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Mississippi for

consideration on three key points.

BACKDROP

Previously, a three-judge panel of the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals voted 3-0 against NAMB, ruling that McRaney’s lawsuit was wrongly dismissed by the lower federal court. NAMB subsequently asked the full federal appeals court to uphold the dismissal – now denied by the 9-8 vote.

Consequently, the district court will receive, again, McRaney’s case that alleges NAMB President Kevin Ezell played a role in McRaney’s termination from the state convention and in his being “uninvited” from speaking at a conference in Mississippi.

The ruling specifically instructs the lower federal court “to determine (1) whether NAMB intentionally and maliciously damaged McRaney’s business relationships by falsely claiming that he refused to meet with Ezell, ... (2) whether NAMB’s statements about McRaney were false, defamatory, and at least negligently made, ...; and (3) whether NAMB intentionally caused McRaney to suffer foreseeable and severe emotional distress by displaying his picture at its headquarters ...”

FULL COURT PRESS

The vote in McRaney’s favor by the federal appeals court was made despite an

extraordinary campaign on behalf of NAMB. Three state attorneys general (Texas, Mississippi, Louisiana) weighed in with a friend of the court brief in support of NAMB, as did the First Liberty Institute, a Texas-based religious liberty nonprofit. Of particular note, the Ethics & Religious Liberty Commission of the SBC, which is charged with communicating Southern Baptists’ policies

and positions to the public and public officials, joined with the Thomas More Society, a Chicago-based not-for-profit national interest law firm named after the patron saint of lawyers in the Catholic Church, to assert in a friend of the court brief that the SBC, NAMB and state conventions have a hierarchical relationship and that they actually govern Southern

See **RULES**, page 6

Message changes for 2021

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) -- Starting in January 2021, the *Baptist Message* will change its annual production run from 24 editions to 14 editions.

The new printing schedule is basically a monthly plan, except two editions will be printed in October and in January to meet the needs of covering Louisiana Baptist cooperative missions and ministries as well as key organizational events, including the fall annual meeting as well as winter evangelistic meetings.

Importantly, the yearly

subscription rates will remain the same: \$14 for an individual subscription and \$9.25 for a church group discount.

Moving from 24 to 14 printed editions each year will reduce costs an estimated 35-40 percent, which essentially makes up for the loss of buying power incurred during the 17 years the subscription rate has remained the same.”

The *Baptist Message* will use its website, BaptistMessage.com to focus on breaking news, and use the print edition to publish news and information of more enduring value as well as strong human interest stories.

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For unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given... *Isaiah 9:6*

Merry Christmas From Our Families To Yours!

LOUISIANA BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Rules from page 5

Baptist congregations.

These three excerpts from the ERLC document pertain:

— “Beginning in 2014, NAMB began ‘pushing’ on its members, including BCMD, a Strategic Partnership Agreement (‘the 2014 SPA’) that gave it more control over employment decisions over the state conventions governing Southern Baptist Churches.”

— “The primary, leading convention, or group, is the Southern Baptist Convention which is the umbrella Southern Baptist governing body over all of the various groups of churches.”

— “Like the plaintiffs in those cases, McRaney was ousted by his church because of a dispute over the governance issues reflected in the 2014 SPA.” [In this case, the ERLC is referring to the state convention, BCMD, as a “church.”]

Despite the ERLC’s legal

filing with the court, the SBC Constitution declares the national organization “does not claim and will never attempt to exercise any authority over any other Baptist body, whether church, auxiliary organizations, associations, or convention” (Article IV). Moreover, on a previously published web page, “A Closer Look,” the SBC Executive Committee explained that “Southern Baptists are not hierarchical, with a top-down denominational structure” but instead are linked through a “network” of churches.

These four excerpts are representative of the loosely connected relationship that is described by that electronic document:

— “By doctrine and polity, the SBC cannot and does not unite local congregations into a single ‘church’ or denominational body. Each cooperating Baptist body—

local church, association, state convention, and auxiliary—retains its sovereignty and is fully autonomous.”

— “Baptists have long held the principles of congregational self-governance and self-support. Local churches select their own staff, ordain their own ministers, adopt their own budgets, organize their own ministries, hold legal title to their own properties, develop their own governance policies and bylaws, and establish their own membership requirements.”

— “The Southern Baptist Convention ... is not a ‘church’ and it has no authority over the churches.”

— “The Convention does not ordain ministers, assign staff to churches, levy contributions, choose literature, adopt the church calendar, monitor or maintain church membership lists, or assign persons to churches according to place of residence. These are all local church prerogatives and responsibilities.”

NAMB is represented by

lawyers from Butler-Snow, a law firm with 337 attorneys in five offices across the United States and an office in Singapore, and Wilmer-Hale, which has 1,000 attorneys in 13 offices across the United States, Europe and Asia. McRaney’s legal advocate is W. Harvey Barton who has his own law practice in Pascagoula, Mississippi.

GO BACK TO GO AHEAD

In effect, the most recent ruling affirms the determination by the three-judge appeals court panel that the federal judge in Mississippi was premature in dismissing McRaney’s case when he reversed his earlier decision that let McRaney’s case to proceed. His change in position came without the parties deposing witnesses or presenting new evidence. The panel declared the result of this error was that “many of the relevant facts have yet to be developed.”

“At this early stage of the litigation, it is not clear that

any of these determinations will require the court to address purely ecclesiastical questions,” the panel stated. “McRaney is not challenging the termination of his employment ... and he is not asking the court to weigh in on issues of faith or doctrine. ... His complaint asks the court to apply neutral principles of tort law to a case that, on the face of the complaint, involves a civil rather than religious dispute.”

The affirmation by the full court means McRaney’s lawyer now will be able to depose witnesses, allowing him to question Ezell under oath, as well as past and present NAMB trustees and employees. However, if after hearing evidence the lower federal court finds the issue is one of “interpreting religious procedures or beliefs,” the panel said McRaney’s case could be dismissed on the principle of “ecclesiastical exception” – a legal precedent that bars courts from applying laws to religious institutions with regard to employment of “ministers.”

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Skills of a church planter – practicing financial integrity

ALEXANDRIA (LBM)-Adrian Rogers, deceased pastor of the historic Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis and a past president of the Southern Baptist Convention who helped lead a grassroots movement to return the denomination back to its conservative biblical roots, told a story about the importance of financial integrity that I still reference in sermons today.



JOHN HEBERT
Team Leader
Louisiana Baptist
Missions & Ministry

the owner of this company just happened to be behind this man in the cafeteria line. Unbeknownst to him, the CEO saw him take a pat of butter costing about 3 cents, then put a slice of bread over the butter so the cashier couldn't see it. The CEO went back to the board and told them they had the wrong man—he didn't have integrity. And for 3 cents, the man lost

a monumental promotion and multiple thousands of dollars!"

MORAL OF THE STORY

I don't accept that the man was simply a few pennies short of what he needed at check-out. Neither do I believe he had short-term memory loss, or visual limitations, or that he accidentally

dropped the slice of bread on the butter.

He had a dishonest heart -- a sin problem.

Greed is an unhealthy perspective and relationship with money; and, the owner of the company immediately recognized that this man's

greed would be evidenced at some point in a matter involving financial integrity (or rather, the lack of it).

PERSONAL, MINISTRY INTEGRITY

Financial integrity is not a complex concept -- but it has

many manifestations. A true commitment to financial integrity -- being faithful in stewardship responsibilities relating to finances -- simply requires a healthy biblical perspective

See **SKILLS**, page 10

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Skills from page 7

regarding money and material possessions.

Indeed, there are many stories in Scripture that teach us how dangerous it is to be greedy for things: Lot and the plain of Jordan (Genesis 13); Achan and the contraband (Joshua 7); the 10th Commandment (Exodus 20:17); and, Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21). Jesus taught about the trap of materialism in Luke 12; Paul warned Timothy in 1 Timothy 6; and, the writer of Hebrews summed it all up by writing, "Make sure

that your character is free from the love of money, being content with what you have, for He Himself has said 'I will never desert you, nor will I ever abandon you.'"

The message is clear: The danger of wanting -- lusting after -- things and money is real and has many very bad consequences.

There is another part of financial integrity that does not depend on values, but on skills -- the proper management of money.

We live in a world today where there is rampant failing in this area in businesses and nonprofits, including ministries.

Leaders must be careful stewards of the resources God gives, starting in your personal life with such things as paying bills on time and limiting debt. These do not require having a background in high finance, but merely a commitment to adhering to such biblical principles as pay your debts, plan before spending, and remembering that if you are not faithful in handling the elements of wealth, you will not be trusted with "true

riches" (Luke 16:11).

Understand, also, that "living within your means" does not mean that you can't move forward in faith when God is leading you to take a big step financially. But it does mean that you should not do so without clear direction from the Holy Spirit.

In your personal life and ministry spheres, develop budgets that reflect the reality of your financial situation. Know also that a budget is a plan that allows you to make adjustments in one or more areas in response to changes in other areas. But be orderly in making changes.

In effect, financial integrity -- in terms of both values and skills -- is a matter of self-discipline.

Self-discipline is essential to surviving financially on the small church pastor or church planter salary. One should never take on too much debt even though it's easy to do. Remember that res-

taurants will give more food than you could or should eat and banks will lend you more than you can pay back. But also remember that if you believe nobody cares whether you live or die, just miss a couple of payments on your debts!

As a minister myself, I know the hardships of small churches where pay can be minimal and time demands are crushing. I raised seven children on a small church salary and a teacher's salary. Believe me I know the demands and what it's like to struggle. Oftentimes I had to take on second jobs to have the income necessary for my large family needs.

Be reverent in your worship and fellowship with God and be reverent in financial dealings within the church -- handling money given for the work of the church is a sacred task because it belongs to Him. We are merely stewards of His resources.

Sam Moore, Evangelistic Ministries

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LBC church planting moves ahead despite pandemic

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – The novel coronavirus outbreak may have disrupted plans to plant 30 churches in the state this year, but in the midst of challenging circumstances Louisiana Baptists still managed to start 15 new congregations.

Next year, the Louisiana Baptist missions and ministry team has a goal to plant 29 churches, which would bring the total of new congregations started since 2010 to 300.

“I am glad that we serve an unusual God in these unusual times,” James Jenkins, director of church planting for Louisiana Baptists, told the Baptist Message. “Pandemic or no pandemic, people need the Gospel. Planting 29 churches in the coming year is a

God-sized goal that can be accomplished by God’s people working cooperatively to plant churches in every town, every city, every parish, to the very borders of Louisiana.”

Planting 300 churches by 2020 is one of 10 action steps identified in the President’s 2020 Commission Final Report, which was affirmed by messengers during the 2013 LBC An-



James Jenkins

nual Meeting.

The strategy for church planting has been to target the regions of the state where most Louisianans live, with an emphasis on cities and communities along the I-10 corridor and southward where 3 million residents call

home (out of the 4.65 million state population).

Jenkins said that 203, or about 75 percent, of the new church plants

are located in southern Louisiana. Moreover, he said the 271 church plants also reflect a goal to emphasize diversity — of the new congregations, 87 are African-American, 36 Hispanic, 12 Asian and 19 have another largely multi-ethnic makeup. Most importantly, he added, the 271 church plants represent a focus on soul winning: 13,977 professions of faith and 4,094 baptisms since 2010.

“This year has been the most difficult of my career at the LBC,” said John Hebert, missions and ministry team director for Louisiana Baptists. “Church planting is a person-to-person venture that has been grossly disrupted by the COVID pandemic. The system we’ve developed is somewhat responsible for achieving the 15 church

See CHURCH PLANTING, page 15

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Louisiana's Barrett key to SCOTUS ruling against shutdown of NY churches

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

WASHINGTON (LBM) – Amy Coney Barrett, a native of New Orleans, joined her fellow Trump-appointed U.S. Supreme Court associate justices, Neil Gorsuch and Brett Kavanaugh, to rule against New York's governor, Andrew Cuomo, who had set a 10- and 25-person cap on attendance at houses of worship in COVID-19 hotspots according to the severity of the public outbreak as indicated by a color-coded map developed by his office.

The case, brought by the

Roman Catholic Diocese of Brooklyn and the Orthodox Jewish group Agudath Israel of America, asserted that the governor's restrictions violated the Free Exercise Clause of the First Amendment and treated houses of worship more harshly than comparable secular facilities. The two religious organizations testified "without contradiction," according to the 5-4 decision, that they have complied with all public health guidance, have implemented additional precautionary measures, and have operated at 25% or 33% capacity for months without a single outbreak."

Agudath Israel also produced evidence that Cuomo had drawn the map intentionally to include the Orthodox Jewish communities in Brooklyn without cause.

The decision was announced the night before Thanksgiving.

This was the first case in which Barrett, who replaced the deceased Ruth Bader

CULTURALNEWS

Ginsburg, was a key player. Notably, when Ginsburg was still a member of the Court last summer, the justices had refused to hear similar cases. Importantly, Chief Justice John Roberts, a G.W. Bush appointee, sided with the three liberal associate justices in dissenting.

Gorsuch wrote a concurring opinion that took aim at both Cuomo and Roberts (who has abandoned conservative justices in the past to side with liberals in some key decisions), according to Court observers.

"It is time — past time — to make plain that, while the pandemic poses many grave challenges, there is no world in which the Constitution tolerates color-coded executive edicts that reopen liquor stores and bike shops but shutter churches, synagogues, and mosques," he concluded in agreeing with the majority.

6th US Circuit panel's ruling supports Louisiana's 'Jacob's Law'

CINCINNATI (LBM) – A three-judge panel of a federal appeals court has ruled, 2-1, that a "reason ban" that prohibits abortion based on a prenatal diagnosis of Down syndrome is valid while other pro-life provisions in the Tennessee law are awaiting a ruling.

The panel included 2 Republican-appointed judges (one nominated by President Trump), and a Democrat appointee.

The panel of the 6th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals also allowed a reason ban in the Volunteer state based on abortions sought because of the race or gender of the unborn child.

The ruling means Louisiana's 2016 "Jacob's law," named by its House sponsor after Jacob Hall (Philadelphia Baptist Church Horsehoe Drive in Alexandria), will not be challenged for the moment.

Officially registered as Act 563, the legislation was

championed by Rep. Rick Edmonds, retired pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Shreveport and former vice president of Louisiana Family Forum. As he was pushing the legislation through committee, Edmonds asked the then 19 year old and his father, Will Hall, director for the Office of Public Policy for Louisiana Baptists, to testify.

His legislation prohibited the abortion of an unborn baby after 20 weeks of gestation if sought "solely because the unborn child has been diagnosed with either a genetic abnormality" such as Down syndrome. Jacob's Law survived a 2017 legal attack in the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Louisiana in a case brought forward by an abortion provider in Shreveport, June Medical Services, LLC. Then Chief Judge Brian A. Jackson dismissed without prejudice the abortion facility's challenge to the abortion ban against genetic abnormalities.

The Tennessee law, meanwhile will receive scrutiny due to its limiting abortions of the preborn who are older than 6 weeks in development. The ruling on that element of the Tennessee legislation could affect laws passed in at least six other states, including Louisiana's "heartbeat" bill passed in 2019.

Tennessee Gov. Bill Lee (R) celebrated the court's ruling.

"Our law prohibits abortion based on the race, gender, or diagnosis of Down syndrome of the child and the court's decision will save lives," Lee said in a statement the Friday before Thanksgiving. "Protecting our most vulnerable Tennesseans is worth the fight."

According to the National Down Syndrome Society,

See CULTURAL, page 13

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Triumph from page 3

has maintained a desire to reach its community.

When Gov. Edwards's COVID-19 public gathering restrictions were implemented March 22, Hunt moved to exclusively Facebook Live

services, with 265-600 logging in to watch the services.

The men and women held separate conferences at Tall Timbers Baptist Conference Center in Woodworth and as many as 25 children and 45 adults have attended Wednesday night ac-

tivities, including several who do not attend the church on a regular basis.

Members also did not stop taking part in Second Harvest Food Bank distribution for community members.

Looking toward the future, Hunt believes members are positioned for continued spiritual growth as they further reach the community with the hope of the Gospel.

"Our church family grew enough that they will continue to invite people and we will continue to see growth," Hunt said. "The church is them. It's not a building or concept."

Cultural from page 12

one in every 700 babies in this country is born with the condition – about 6,000 Down syndrome births a year.

LBC's Horn 'thrilled' appeals court allows state to defund Planned Parenthood

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Steve Horn, executive director for Louisiana Baptists, said he was thrilled the 5th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals had ruled that Louisiana can cut off funds to Planned Parenthood.

"We are a staunch pro-life state and we do not believe our healthcare dollars should support abortion providers," he told the *Baptist Message*.

Horn made his statement after the federal appeals court in New Orleans voted 11-5, just days before Thanksgiving, that Louisiana and Texas could ban Planned Parenthood from receiving government money. The majority included five judges appointed by President Trump.

The full court overturned a three-judge panel that had ruled against Louisiana's ban, upheld by a 7-7 deadlock of the full court in 2017.

Planned Parenthood is the largest single provider of abortions in the United States, performing 40 percent of all abortions in the country, nearly 346,000, in 2018 (most recent available data). The organization received more than a third of its \$1.6 billion budget in Medicaid reimbursements and Title X grants, \$616 million (or 38 percent) in 2019, although that money could not be used directly for abortions.

The Louisiana law to defund Planned Parenthood was written in 2018 by now-retired Rep. Frank Hoffman, a member of First Baptist Church, West Monroe. Act 491 prohibits government funding to clinics financially tied to or physically co-located with an abortion facility. His legislation followed by three years a Louisiana Baptist Convention resolution calling for lawmakers to defund Planned Parenthood.

Meanwhile, the Texas attorney general had a strong reaction to the effect on Texas's pro-life legislation.

"Planned Parenthood is not a 'qualified' provider under the Medicaid Act," Ken Paxton said in a statement released by his office, "and it should not receive public funding through the Medicaid program."

Reflections from page 2

year hundreds of our missionaries are persecuted. This was true for our son and many of his colleagues, who attended his funeral. Many of these individuals received the board's support and protection in the months prior to David's funeral. The board teaches them skills for dealing with persecution and the difficulties of putting their lives on the line for Christ and fellow Southern Baptists. They represent you!

As a father, who lost an IMB missionary son on Oct. 14, I challenge you Southern Baptists. There are many who have not heard the name of Jesus. We have a worthy vehicle for sharing the Good News with a lost world. The Lotie Moon Christmas Offering is a vital offering!

Tim Patrick is director of missions for Beau-regard Baptist Association.

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Phillip Willis	(225) 313-6601	phillipkwillis@cox.net

Churches can contact these various LACOSBE evangelists for all their church needs!

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.

LFS DLNZYCV DQLGG KYPJ CW YF PYCFO MZYF OY HCSIJ

OQJ PYCFO YR JDLC; LFS OQJ XZFI SYP DQLGG TJ OQJ GYVS'D.

YTLSZLQ OBJFOA-YFJ

Clues:
R = K; T = E

Answer to November 19 Scripture Crypto:
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Church Planting from page 11

plants we have managed this year. Our staff has focused on our training program and especially internet-driven training. In many ways we will come out of this stronger because we've given attention to new ways of doing our work."

Carlos Schmidt, a church planting strategist for Louisiana Baptists, said he is excited about the six Hispanic church plants planned for 2021.

"Even though we have had a difficult year, God is still calling church planters to His harvest field. He is still providing sponsoring churches to support these new works,"



Carlos Schmidt

Schmidt said. "Babies are born in difficult times, churches are born in the midst of COVID, hurricanes and other challenges."

Lane Corley, a church planting strategist for Louisiana Baptists, said since 2010, 65 of the 271 churches planted have been replants of congregations that had previously closed. He said six churches that were started in 2020 were replants. Corley said as many as 75 churches may face closure in the next three years unless some type of radical revitalization takes place and he encouraged Louisiana Baptists to pray about getting involved in replanting congregations across the state.

"Replanting is a way to redeem unused property

and carry on the legacy of faithful Southern Baptists who started and faithfully served churches that have now experienced serious decline or closure," Corley said.



Lane Corley

Ronnie Mabile is among those who are replanting a church.

Mabile, who pastored a church located 40 miles from Patterson (St. Mary Parish) before moving to

Michigan in 2018, felt called back to Louisiana after passing by a vacant church building in the community during a visit to the state last summer. Gulf Coast Baptist Association Director of Missions Steven Kelly informed him the association had planned to sell the property that formerly housed Calumet Baptist Church. But, he

offered that leaders were open to Mabile planting a church there, instead.

"He said they didn't want to sell it and if God was working on my heart then they would pause until I gave them an answer," he said. "We prayed about it and three days later told him God was calling us to replant the church."

While COVID-19 changed the original planned start date of June, Mabile said they are on track to fulfilling God's call to launch Redeemed Life Fellowship. A core group held its first meeting inside Mabile's house, Dec. 3, and plans to start home-based Bible studies as well as stream a message on Facebook, Jan. 14.

They hope to hold services in the church building by Easter.

"We have to figure out how to be relational in person as well as relational digitally, and how to maintain that core group in the church," he said.

"We will continue to pray and move forward with the Gospel. We can't stop. We been delayed long enough. It's time to do the work God has called us to do."

Andrew Hanna, pastor of Harvest Church in Tremé, is another who recently accepted the call to plant a church in the state.

Hanna is organizing a core group to start the church on Sept. 12, 2021. The group will meet at Phillips Wheatley Community School in the community, where Hanna is a physical education teacher.

"The Lord has really been faithful and what I'm most excited about is planting a church where we all work and live," he said. "And it's where we have a lot of relationships from being here the last couple of years. We want to be a faithful presence for the long haul. We are hoping the Lord will honor that in the long run."

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