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John 3:16

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ECON 2021 slated for Summer Grove in Shreveport



By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

Following a challenging year dominated by COVID-19, hurricanes and political turmoil, Louisiana Baptists will refocus their efforts to the goal of “winning

another person for Christ” at the upcoming state Evangelism Conference, Jan. 25-26, at Summer Grove Baptist Church in Shreveport.

“Pastors and laypeople are tired,” Keith Manuel, evangelism and church growth director for Louisiana Baptists, told the *Baptist*

Message. “Decisions pastors make are scrutinized; and, decisions made by other church leaders don’t make some people happy.

“People are dealing with disease, death and hopelessness,” he

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Nearly 300 respond to Christ amid 2020 DR response

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

LAKE CHARLES (LBM) – Soon after Trinity Baptist Church in Lake Charles set up a site for ministry to Hurricane Laura survivors Aug. 29, truck driver Len Miller arrived to deliver clean water tanks for Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers to use.

Instead of returning home immediately to Wauchula, Florida, Miller felt compelled to remain at the church and assist with relief efforts for the next four weeks. Throughout the course of his time there, Miller developed a relationship with disaster relief volunteers and, having accepted Christ 10 years ago, he was finally convicted of his need to be obedient in publicly sharing his faith through believer’s baptism.

On Sept. 25, Gibbie McMillan, Louisiana Baptist state disaster relief coordinator, baptized Miller in a cattle trough that relief volunteers used to wash equipment. After the baptism, Miller was presented with a Bible, signed by disaster relief volunteers, so he could grow deeper in his faith.

“I was thankful Trinity Pastor Steve James gave me the authority to baptize Len, whom we struck up a great friendship with over time,” McMillan told the *Baptist Message*. “He accepted Christ years before but when he saw the witness of Christ being

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Submitted photo

Louisiana Baptist State Disaster Relief Coordinator Gibbie McMillan baptizes truck driver Len Miller Sept. 25 on the parking lot of Trinity Baptist Church, Lake Charles. McMillan and other Southern Baptist Disaster Relief volunteers had developed a relationship with Miller while he was at the church for a month after Hurricane Laura.

Angola Prison pastor is set free indeed!

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

ANGOLA, La. (LBM) – Paul Will, former pastor of what is believed to be the first fully recognized Southern Baptist church inside the walls of a prison (Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola), has been granted parole and a second chance at life outside the prison.

According to his then-fiancée, Amy Kossover, a parole board voted 3-0 to grant Will’s release Thursday, Dec. 10, and he was out on Friday, Dec. 11.

He and Kossover were married Dec. 24 at Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge.

ALIVE AGAIN

“I feel alive again, in a new way,” Will told the *Baptist Message*. “I have an opportunity to speak about Christ’s victories that truly evidence His life-changing power at Angola. I look forward to preaching about Christ’s victories wrought through the many circumstances of my life.”

He turned to Christ on Aug. 22, 2000, after a Hispanic pastor shared

See FREE, page 2

Children’s Home seeks applicants for ministry opening

By Brian Blackwell
Message Staff Writer

MONROE (LBM) – The Louisiana Baptist Children’s Home and Family Ministries has an urgent need for a

husband and wife to accept the call to serve as cottage parents.

The couple will have the opportunity to make a lasting impact on children in their care on the ministry’s cam-

pus in Monroe, according to LBCH President and CEO Perry Hancock.

“The greatest staff need we have at the present time is loving, compassionate

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that God had a special plan for Will's life. At the time, Will was awaiting transport from Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, county jail to Angola — after having been convicted of aggravated kidnapping.

"I finally heard the Gospel and realized God is my Dad and that He offered all that I had been looking for in life -- love and fatherly affection. But I had rejected Him before then," he said. "He turned my life around."

Despite serving a life sentence at Angola, Will was devoted to deepening his spiritual walk inside the prison and eventually earned a bachelor's and a master's degree with the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary Extension located on the prison grounds.

He was ordained by Hillcrest Baptist Church,

Franklinton, and became pastor of Grace Baptist Church he helped to found in the Angola prison. It was during his leadership of the congregation that the Washington Baptist Association unanimously voted to accept the prison church into its fellowship in October 2015. Will resigned as pastor a year ago to allow the orderly succession to a new pastor, but he remained a member of the congregation.

NEW BEGINNINGS

[The former] Kossover, who met Will years ago while interviewing inmates as part of a video project at Angola, said she was moved to tears when the board announced their decision.

"I am overjoyed for Paul," she told the *Baptist Message*.



Submitted photo

Paul Will was all smiles moments after his release from the Louisiana State Penitentiary at Angola on Dec. 11, 2020. Will is the founding pastor of Grace Baptist Church, which is believed to be the first fully recognized Southern Baptist church inside the walls of a prison.

"It was pretty spectacular as I got to share the story of how Paul is a changed man of God. We now will look forward to all the things God will do in his life."

"It's been really neat to see how the Lord has redeemed his life and used him," said Stan Statham, director of missions for Washington Baptist Association. "Our association has really rallied around him and the church. The Lord has done a great work at Angola and he is one of many who have come to faith in Christ at Angola."

For the past three years, Scott Breland, pastor of Plainview Baptist Church in Bogalusa, has led a team of men and women from Washington Baptist Association to work alongside Grace

Baptist.

Breland said Will has been an important part of the evangelical movement in Angola. A 2019 Baptist Message article reported that as many as 4,000 of the 6,000 inmates now profess Christ as Lord. Additionally, 338 inmates have graduated from the seminary's extension program, with some having transferred to other prisons as missionaries -- at the request of those facilities.

"God has done a great work through Paul," Breland said. "His story is a story of

See FREE, page 5

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Number 1

WILL YOU PRAY FOR THIS?

WHAT BIG THINGS HAVE YOU PRAYED FOR DURING YOUR LIFETIME?

They change from year to year, don't they? Think for a moment about your requests through the years:

- A new bike • A date (!) • Admission to your college of choice
- Help that special person to say "I do." • Give us a child • Help me understand that child!
- A raise or a new opportunity.

And finally... • Help me keep my teeth!

Notice that these universal prayers center often around me, mine, and ours. It's easy to spend most of our knee time focusing on ourselves. Even during a pandemic our prayers can take an inward turn. I read a social media meme featuring a small child saying grace before dinner. The caption read, "Lord, please don't let brussel sprouts be part of the cure for COVID-19!" In the church realm, some pray for their church to grow so they can enjoy new buildings or programs.

On the flip side, what is the most insignificant thing you've prayed for? A parking place? For the traffic light to stay green? Eating all the sweets you desire without gaining a pound or an inch?

When is the last time you prayed for a seed?

Sounds crazy, I know. Such a little thing and yet, such an important thing. Think about it - we all benefit from seeds. Without seeds the world would grind to a halt. Without seeds, mankind would starve.

After all, according to one source, the average seed weighs only .24 grams. If I were to drop a single seed, more than likely you wouldn't see it or hear it. If I threw it at you, you wouldn't feel it. Such a little thing and at the same time, such an important thing.

Yet, according to the parable of the sower in Mark 4, if this seed finds good soil, it can

produce a harvest 30, 60 or even 100 times greater than what was sown.

All of us are beneficiaries of seeds.

Sometimes the seed was sown by our parents or grandparents. In my case, they were sown by friends who invited me to church. A seed can come from a billboard, a social media post, a commercial or countless other ways.

Why are seeds so important? Why are these small, seemingly insignificant seeds worthy of your prayers? Because the harvest we long for will not happen until the seed is scattered. The seed in the package has no impact. Talking about the seed is insufficient. The seed in our hand stops short. It's not until the seed is intentionally and consistently scattered that it has the potential to find good soil. Nothing happens until the seeds are scattered.

The seed is the beginning that leads to an end - if it's scattered.

So, do we trust the seed? Do we believe the seed of God's word has the power to change people? To heal marriages? To save families? Redeem a culture?

Here's the good news, if we'll scatter the seed, it knows what to do. God has designed the seed in such a way that when it finds good soil, it knows what to do. We may not know what to do, or how it works but by

design, the seed knows what to do.

If we long to see a harvest of souls, the question becomes, will we throw the seed? Will we intentionally and consistently scatter the seed of God's truth and let the seed do what it knows to do?

Make no mistake, we still have to gather the harvest. The farmer in Mark 4 put out a request for assistance to bring in the harvest, but it all begins with a seed.

Do you remember the children's story of Jack and the Beanstalk? Jack's mother was furious when he traded their cow for a handful of worthless beans so she threw them out the window - but that is where the adventure began.

Nothing happened until the seeds were scattered.

Since 2019, Louisiana Baptists have scattered the seeds of God's truth in approximately 95% of TV households across the state through *Here for You*, our multi-media evangelism strategy. These seeds are reaching an average of 250,000 people each month via social media and streaming services. Over 1,100 people have indicated a decision for Christ through our partnership with the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association since January of 2020.

Visit LouisianaBaptists.org/hereforyou, enter: **luke1423** and see how you can connect yourself and your church with this effort.

The seeds are doing their thing - beginning the process of drawing people to Jesus. Will you pray for these seeds? Pray they find good soil. Pray God will protect and nourish the seeds and pray God will harvest the hearts of those who are ready.

Remember, when the seeds are scattered, the adventure begins!

HereforYou.org
LOUISIANA BAPTISTS

Pastor baptizes seven in Dry Creek

By Norm Miller
Message special
assignments reporter

DRY CREEK, La. (LBM) -- On the lawn of Cherry Grove Baptist Church in Dry Creek, Pastor Josh Eubanks stood in knee-deep water in a small, round, plastic stock tank, in which he baptized six people, that Sunday morning.

"Never take for granted what's about to happen because there are tens of thousands of churches across this country that may never get to experience what you guys are about to experience in a few moments," Eubanks said prior to the baptisms.

"We don't decide when people are baptized, God does," Eubanks noted. "We prayed specifically for God to save some people so we could baptize them. And today is the culmination of

our prayers."

LOOKING BACK

The church baptized seven new believers total in 2020.

But Eubanks is excited about how the harvest of souls in 2020 has set up Cherry Grove for an even greater soul-winning experience in 2021.

Already, the church has witnessed attendance grow in Sunday morning services, from 60 in early March to 100 in December.

LOOKING AHEAD

Josh Boswell, a 40-something husband, a father to five girls, and a former alcoholic who started drinking at age 16, is among those baptized by Cherry Grove in 2020.

Before baptizing Josh,

Oct. 4, Eubanks recounted that Josh said he was "tired of the life he was living and wanted to give his life to the Lord."

"I feel re-born, I really do," Josh told the *Baptist Message*. "I feel more humbled — more caring, you know?" He said he's not had a "single craving for alcohol" since committing his life to Christ.

Looking ahead at life, Josh said, "I feel like there's no limit to just keep growing and growing and growing. I'm going to live for that. I am. I'm going to study and learn."

Josh's older brother Brandon Boswell said that he was baptized "as a very young kid. I thought that was it — you got baptized, you did the best that you could and God understood. It didn't really matter what you did. You were okay."

Saying he'd lived a rebellious life, Brandon shared that he was "always ready to be a big tough fellow, and I



Norm Miller photo

Pastor Josh Eubanks baptizes one of six people two months after Hurricane Laura caused damage to Cherry Grove Baptist Church, Dry Creek.

always was.

"But that never changed anything, and someday you're going to die," he explained. "I don't care how tough you are or how mean you are or how bad you are."

Brandon — whose grandfather was a preacher — recalled a life of alcohol abuse that led to a serious infection. That was when he became serious about being a Christian and he turned his life over to Christ.

"I told God, 'Okay, this is it, I'm going to quit drink-

ing.' And with His help I did."

His transformation began after he started reading his Bible and praying.

"The answers started coming and I finally surrendered," Brandon said, adding that he was trying to live a good life on his own. "That's not the way we're supposed to live. For one thing, it's not peaceful. It's chaotic, hopeless. You feel alone no matter if you've got family or not."

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redemption and service. He has been redeemed and now he serves Jesus. Paul Will's release will be a loss for the Christian movement inside Angola but I believe God has some great opportunities for Paul outside the walls of Angola."

MOVING FORWARD

The couple plans to move to Georgia, where she is a video producer.

But he has taken time to share his testimony with some Washington Baptist Association churches, first

(Plainview Baptist Church, Bogalusa, Dec. 27; Memorial Baptist Church, Bogalusa, Jan. 3) and will continue to do so into the early new year (Main Street Baptist Church, Bogalusa, Jan. 10; Enon Baptist Church, Franklinton, Jan. 17; and Hillcrest Baptist Church, Franklinton, Jan. 24).

"Many people have been asking me, 'What is the one thing that mattered most on

your journey to freedom?' Will said in a written statement to the Baptist Message. "I believe there are many narratives to identify with in prison, but I chose not to believe the ones that would keep me there."

"God can do more than we can think, ask or imagine," Amy (Kosover) Will said. "I watched a miracle happen. It is rare for anyone to get out of Angola and for the governor to sign his clemency. And then I can't even image what God is going to do. We are open to following the Lord and

wherever he leads.

"This has been a long journey and there have been so many ups and downs," she continued. "It has not been an easy road for him to get out of there. I have so much gratitude and am so humbled and grateful.

"I have been reminded of the goodness of God," she added. "His mercies are new every morning and He never leaves our side.

Congregations wanting to schedule Paul Will to share his testimony with them should contact him directly, JustPaul431@gmail.com.

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cottage parents," Hancock told the *Baptist Message*. "They are at the center of everything we are trying to accomplish in a child's life. Cottage parents provide the support, encouragement, and guidance that our children so desperately need. They have the opportunity not only to prepare a child for life but also for life eternal.

"It is the positive Christian witness of our Cottage Parents that often leads a child to accept Jesus as Savior," he continued. "If any Baptist couple felt that serving in this role might be God's call for their lives, we would love to talk with them and pray with them about this great ministry opportunity."

Susan Nolan, executive director of child and family services for the LBCH, said the parents have the opportunity to be the hands and feet of Christ to children, who many times may never have experienced the love of Jesus in other settings.

The couple would join a team that includes three other cottage parents who lead their children to participate in many day-to-day activities that other Louisiana Baptist families enjoy, including eating meals together, sending the kids to school, taking the children to church and on vacation and supporting them in extra-curricular activities. What separates the cottages from a normal home, Nolan said, are the on-campus opportunities, such as social workers and a nurse available and recreational activities.

"They can positively influence these children. A loving, caring and nurturing parent can challenge them the rest of their lives," Nolan told the *Baptist Message*. "They don't have to wonder where their next meal is coming from or if they will be safe in the home.

"Many of the children want to grow spiritually and emotionally and cottage parents get to live out their faith

with them," Nolan shared. "I think about Christ with the children on his lap and the love and compassion He showed to them. That's what our foster parents do. They provide stability and faith.

"You can take children to church every time the doors are open and if the environment where they are cared for is the opposite of what they experience at church, they won't see Christ. Children don't learn what you tell them to do. They watch you and learn by example," she offered.

For more information on how to apply, email snolan@lbch.org.

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Temple Baptist helps relieve \$3.2 million of medical debt

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

RUSTON (LBM) – Temple Baptist Church in Ruston helped to clear \$3.2 million in medical bills for more than 1,400 residents in a five-parish region during 2020.

The church worked with RIP Medical Debt, a nonprofit organization that works with debt collectors to resolve medical debt that sits in collections, for people in Bienville, Claiborne, Jackson, Lincoln and Union parishes. Members gave \$40,000 and RIP Medical Debt used the collected money to work with creditors to resolve the outstanding amounts.

Founded in 2014 by two former debt collection executives, RIP Medical Debt began as a response to the overwhelming impact of debt on the lives of poor Americans. According to

ripmedicaldebt.org, since 2014, the group has helped more than 1.8 million individuals and families eradicate more than \$2.7 billion in medical liabilities. The company contends that for every \$1 raised, it can abolish \$100 in medical debt, on average.

Minister of Education and Administration Jason Walsworth said this was an opportunity for Temple Baptist to bless others who otherwise might struggle to pay these obligations.

“We believe we have been blessed, even during these challenging times, to be a blessing to others -- and that starts in our community,” Walsworth told the *Baptist Message*. “We wanted to do this project to extend God’s grace and blessing to those who are the most in need of help; and, we thought this was a perfect opportunity to demonstrate that. The

response we have received has been positive and affirming that the Lord is using this for His glory, and that’s what is most important to us.”

The retirement of medical debt is part of a larger effort by Temple Baptist to give \$1 million to benevolence and missions. Despite a challenging year, Walsworth said the church has remained faithful and is on track to meet the goal that will support mission efforts around the state and globe. The church also baptized 44 new converts in 2020, and in October averaged 725 in Sunday morning worship services, about 65 percent of its pre-COVID-19 level.

“Even in the midst of this difficult year we have still tried to be generous as we can be,” he said. “Most of the contributions are not big gifts, but people continue to be faithful in giving, allowing us to help others.”

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ERLC shifts stance on federal embryonic stem cell lines

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA (LBM) – The Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission of the Southern Baptist Convention has shifted its position on a decades-old policy opposing the use of federal embryonic stem cell lines in medical research.

The SBC's public policy arm has published or promoted multiple position statements in recent weeks, all offering a similar view that it is not morally wrong to take a COVID-19 vaccine developed or tested using established government embryonic stem cell lines.

However, Southern Baptists voiced strong opposition against the use of human embryos to advance medical knowledge when in 2001 President George W. Bush allowed federal funds for research on 60 existing stem cell lines that had been produced from human embryos. These no longer contain any of the original tissue taken from the aborted babies that were used to start each respective stem cell line. Instead, generations of new tissue have been grown in laboratories from the original human cells.

Then-ERLC President Richard Land said the decision to fund even limited embryonic stem cell research crossed a fundamental moral line.

"We must always remember that these existing stem cell lines are fundamentally different than parts of a human being, such as a kidney or a heart," he told the Baptist Press. "These stem cells are the essential, foundational building blocks of an entire human being whose life was lost before his or her stem cells were harvested."

In that same article, C. Ben Mitchell, a medical ethicist speaking on behalf of the ERLC, said, "Since human embryos were killed to obtain the stem cell lines, those cells are morally tainted."

But on his webpage, "Moore to the Point," now-ERLC President Russell Moore leaned heavily in his support of the vaccines on

pointing out the difference between a vaccine containing actual cells from an aborted unborn child and those that were developed using cells derived from tissue of an aborted baby.

"Should we oppose authorizing or funding research rooted in the taking of innocent human life? Yes. That's both because of a reverence for the body and because such would incentivize further degradations on human life. Research should be done ethically and whenever we are in a place of responsibility to make such decisions, we should do everything in our power to see that it is.

"That does not mean, though, that we should shun medical treatments that can save lives because they were discovered through means of which we would not necessarily approve," Moore continued. "Some medical developments – including vaccines – are here because of research that started with fetal cells, but none of the COVID-19 vaccines we know about contain fetal tissue or cells at this point."

At least one pro-life group has declared it opposes COVID-19 vaccines "whose development exploited the intentional death of a pre-born child."

Georgia Right to Life issued a statement Dec. 10 urging that there are "alternative, ethical ways to conduct such tests, as well as to produce a vaccine," and encouraged pro-life supporters "to demand that government support the development of vaccines that don't rely on the brutal act of abortion."

According to the National Review, Dec. 20:

-- The COVID-19 vaccines developed by Pfizer and Moderna use new technology that avoids the use of embryonic stem cell lines in the production of the vaccine; however, both use the embryonic stem cell lines to test the potency of each respective vaccine.

-- At least four other vaccines are being developed using the embryonic stem cell lines to produce the drugs, creating a direct line from these vaccines to the aborted babies from which

CULTURALNEWS

the original tissues were taken.

-- Only one vaccine in the pipeline is known to be free of any ties whatsoever to embryonic stem cells. CureVac, a German biotech firm, has just begun Phase 3 clinical trials on a COVID-19 drug. However, at this time the company is focused only on the European market.

Seminary presidents' statement against CRT draws criticism from African American pastors, others

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) – The presidents of the six seminaries of the Southern Baptist Convention signed a statement, Nov. 30, declaring Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, theories about racism that arose largely

from social activists at Harvard University and the University of California at Los Angeles, as "incompatible with the Baptist Faith & Message."

Their statement was released, they said, in recognition of the 20th anniversary of the SBC's adoption of the Baptist Faith & Message 2000.

In a statement to *Baptist Press*, Daniel Akin, president of Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in Wake Forest, North Carolina, and chairman of the SBC Council of Seminary Presidents, said the seminary leaders were prompted by widespread complaints raised by Southern Baptists.

"We felt that because our brothers and sisters in various state conventions have concern about this issue, they would also want to know what their seminaries actually think, and what we are teaching and not teaching," Akin said.

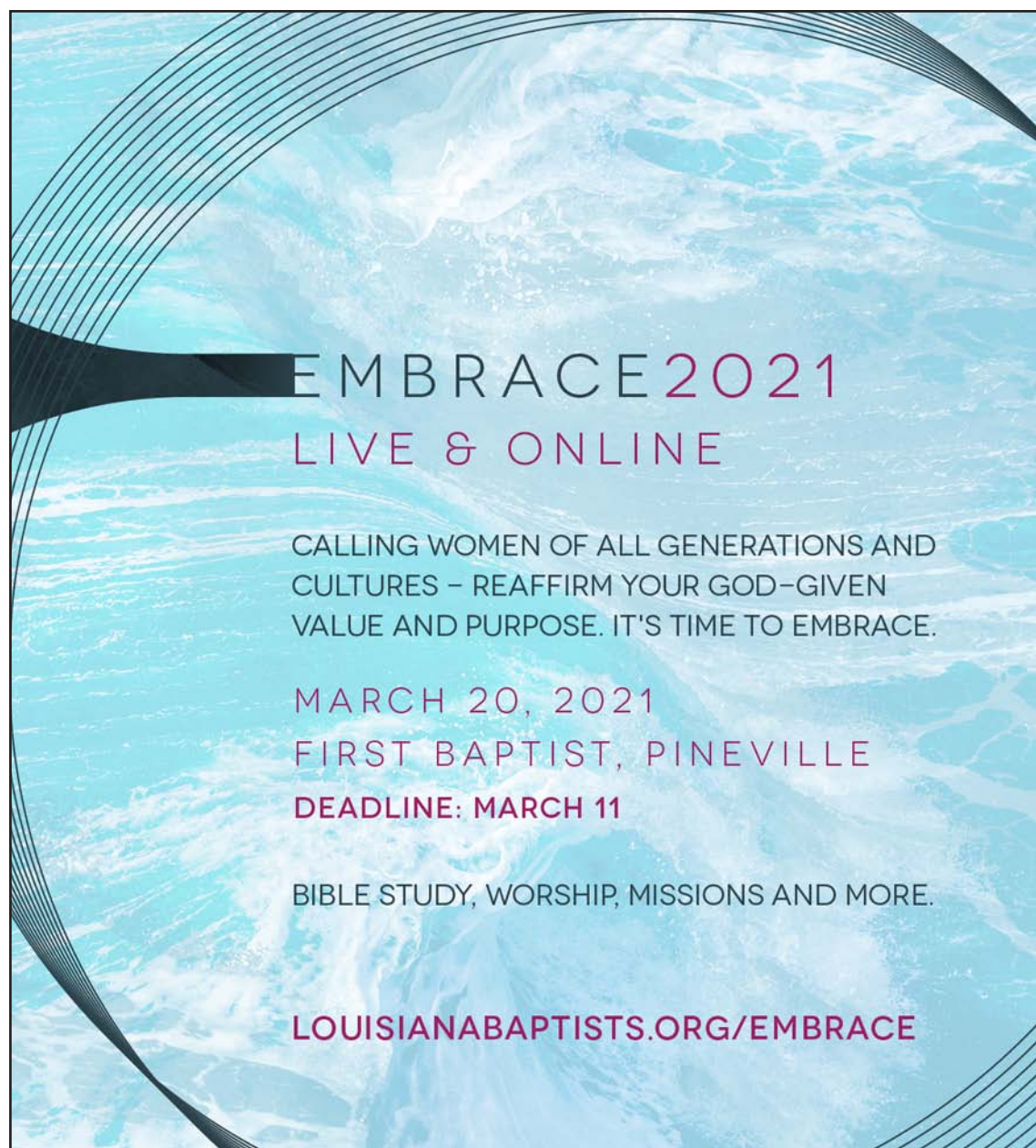
Tennessee Baptists (2019) and Georgia Baptists (2020)

adopted resolutions rejecting the controversial "Resolution 9" that was adopted by SBC messengers at the 2019 Annual Meeting. That resolution supported the use of Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality as "analytical tools subordinate to Scripture" to "aid in evaluating a variety of human experiences."

Meanwhile, Louisiana Baptist leaders assured messengers to the 2020 LBC Annual Meeting that they would address the issue next year if Southern Baptist messengers did not take corrective action at the 2021 SBC Annual Meeting.

Generally, the literature about Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality describe both as presenting the idea that there are only two categories of people, the oppressor race and the oppressed race (instead of the biblical understanding that there are the saved and the lost). According to most

See **STATEMENT**, page 8



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papers on the subjects, both concepts also are rooted in Marxism.

Since the release of the seminary presidents' statement against Critical Race Theory and Intersectionality, the National African American Fellowship of the SBC issued a statement, Dec. 11, that cautioned about how the seminary presidents' words "affect all ethnic groups in the SBC"

Released by Marshal Ausberry, pastor of Antioch Baptist Church in Fairfax Station, Va., and signed by him as NAAF president as well as first vice president of the SBC, the statement urged that "We of all people should be able to dialogue and resolve all of our concerns."

The statement affirmed "the supremacy of Scripture" as well as "the Baptist Faith and Message Guide as part of our being Southern Baptists," but also allowed that

"there are ideologies from a sociological and anthropological perspective when used appropriately, help us to better understand the inner workings of living in a fallen and sinful world."

In an interview with Baptist Press, Ausberry shared that he thought the seminary presidents "had good intent" but that "the optics of six Anglo brothers meeting to discuss racism and other related issues without having ethnic representation in the room in 2020, at worst it looks like paternalism, as best insensitivity."

The controversy has widened beyond this public interchange involving the seminary presidents and the NAAF.

On Dec. 18 – to coincide with the 155th anniversary of the 13th Amendment, abolishing slavery and involuntary servitude – individuals released the statement,

"Justice, Repentance and the SBC," saying, they stood "with our brothers and sisters of the National African-American Fellowship of the Southern Baptist Convention" and agreed with the NAAF's position about systemic racism.

"Further, we stand firmly in opposition to any movement in the SBC that seeks to distract from racial reconciliation through the [G]ospel and that denies the reality of systemic injustice. To deny systemic injustice would be to ignore the effects that sin has on both individuals, societies, and institutions," the statement added.

Published on justiceandrepentance.org, the statement said the "SBC was founded, in large part, so that white southern slave-holding Christians could appoint and support missionaries while continuing to hold their slaves in chains," and claimed there is a current movement "to downplay this historical

reality." Other passages accused the SBC of being "more concerned about political maneuvering" -- with "recent events" leaving "many brothers and sisters of color feeling betrayed and wondering if the SBC is committed to racial reconciliation."

Nearly 300 individuals have signed the electronic document to date (names and affiliations can be viewed on the website).

In an apparent attempt at peace making, Ronnie Floyd, president and CEO of the SBC Executive Committee in Nashville, Tennessee, has called for a meeting with the seminary presidents and NAAF during the first week in January.

According to Baptist Press, Floyd said Southern Baptists have clearly stated their opposition to racism and that it was "time for us to focus on our actions, specifically in how we relate to each other."

LSU prof sounds alarm on Critical Race Theory

BATON ROUGE (LBM) – Randy Trahan, a tenured 24-year professor with the Paul M. Hebert Law School at Louisiana State University, has publicly denounced Critical Race Theory as a threat to society at large and warned of the risk it poses to evangelicals.

Trahan, a member of Woodlawn Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, described himself as an active advocate for Black civil rights, especially as a member of the admissions committee for the LSU law school, and, a former supporter of Critical Theory (the foundation for Critical Race Theory).

Trahan decried Critical Race Theory for what he said was its assault on the "sufficiency of Scripture" -- a critical doctrine that says "Scripture itself is supposed to be the sole and final authority to which nothing needs to be added nor may be added" in understanding the human condition and God's desire for moral behavior. He also dismissed criticisms that

this doctrine is "too narrow" -- that it does not allow for general revelation (learning that can be achieved though nature, specifically by observing human nature). He said that these criticisms simply are strawmen arguments to justify what adherents purport are observations about human society. Trahan argued that in this regard, Critical Race Theory is no different than Marxism and liberation theology, both of which make moral judgments apart from the guidance of Scripture about humanity.

Trahan published his remarks in a six-part video series produced by Travis McNeely, student and college pastor with Woodlawn. The topics cover a general introduction of Trahan and the crisis, the basics of Critical Race Theory, nine problems with Critical Race Theory, where Critical Race Theory is appearing in evangelical circles, Critical Race Theory as a new analytical tool in the Southern Baptist Convention, and, a call for Christians to stand on the doctrine of sufficiency of Scripture.

McNeely said he pursued the project because "in recent years Critical Race Theory has been syncretized, or mixed into evangelicalism" and that he wanted to warn pastors and laypeople about the dangers of this concept that many might not know exists. He said that evangelicals seeking to understand the controversy would benefit from the personal knowledge of Trahan who had been deeply immersed in this ideology.

McNeely told the *Baptist Message* the videos have garnered 8,500 views since they were posted on YouTube in November. The next phase of the project he plans to pursue is the development of a discussion guide to accompany the videos.

Readers interested in learning more about Critical Race Theory can access the videos via www.youtube.com/TravisMcNeely.

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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

■ **Chad (wife Cole) Gilbert** is the new pastor at First Baptist Church, New Orleans.

■ **Greg Oden** is the new worship leader at New Chapel Hill, West Monroe.

■ **Jay George** is the new associate pastor at First Baptist Church, Swartz.

■ **Bodie Spicer** has resigned as pastor of Clark Springs Baptist Church, Eros.

■ **Cody (wife Francie) Tabor** is the new family pastor at First Baptist Church, Blanchard.

■ **Eric Zimmer** is the interim pastor at Ida Baptist Church, Ida.

■ **Lance Rolland** resigns as pastor of Westwood Baptist Church, Keithville and **David Venable** is the interim pastor.

REVIVAL

■ Temple Baptist Church, DeQuincy: **Harvest Day**, January 10. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Pastor: Bruce Austin.

■ Koran Baptist Church, Haughton: **Revival**, January 10-13. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor Mike Reichard.

■ First Baptist Church, Homer: **Revival**, January 17-20. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**.

Pastor: Brian Thurman.

■ Emmanuel Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Harvest Day**, January 24. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Pastor: Chad Harbarger

■ First Baptist Church, Keithville: **Harvest Sunday**, January 24. Evangelist: **Bill Britt**. Pastor: Mike Stowell.

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■ Calvary Baptist Church, Shreveport: **Friends Forever – Night of Praise 2021**, January 8, 6:30 p.m. Special guests are the **Allen Family, Ben Waites and Starla Harbin**. Pastor: John Lary.

■ Temple Baptist Church, DeQuincy: **Men's Wild Game Supper**, January 9. Evangelist: **Sam Moore**. Pastor: Bruce Austin.

■ The Gulf Coast Baptist Association, Morgan City: **16th Annual Wild Game Supper**, January 16, 5 p.m. at Bayou Vista Baptist Church Family Life Center. Speaker: **LBC Executive Director Steve Horn**. Tickets: \$10. All men and boys are invited to attend. Door prizes will be distributed at the end of the night. Pastor: Steven Kelly.

■ **Man Up Men's Conference**, January 29, Farmerville Rec Center. Speaker: **John Stroup**.

■ Northwest Louisiana Baptist Association, Shreveport: **Call to Prayer VI**, January 31, 6 p.m. at Airline Baptist Church. Lane Moore, Director of Missions.

ECON 2021 from page one

said. "And they need a place to find hope. Jesus is the only answer to find peace. When everything else is changing, Jesus doesn't."

Manuel said organizers will ensure proper social distancing guidelines are followed. For those unable to attend, the conference sessions will be livestreamed on louisianabaptists.org.

PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The first session of ECON will begin at 6 p.m. and will feature messages by Richard Ross, professor of youth ministry at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and Richard Taylor, interim evangelism director and director of personal evangelism and fellowships for the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention. The praise and worship lineup for ECON over the two-day period includes the Jason Lovins Band and the Foto Sisters.

The final day of ECON will begin at 9:30 a.m. and feature Gary Bowlin, president of the Louisiana Conference

of Southern Baptist Evangelists, Roc Collins, director of evangelism for the Tennessee Baptist Convention Board, Sammy Gilbreath, director of evangelism for the Alabama State Board of Missions, and Dennis Swanberg, a Christian comedian and former pastor of First Baptist Church, West Monroe.

There will be a senior adult luncheon that commences at 11:30 a.m. on Tuesday. Following the meal, senior adults will move into the worship center for inspiring messages by Gilbreath and Swanberg, as well as music by the Foto Sisters. The deadline to register for the event is Jan. 18, and the cost is \$10 for the meal.

"I want to encourage

senior adults from across the state to attend the Evangelism Conference," said Jeff Ingram, adult ministry strategist for Louisiana Baptists. "We plan to follow protocols and take caution for the health and safety of all who come. The emphasis for senior adults begins with lunch, followed by the beautiful music of the violin and cello by the Foto Sisters, Sammy Gilbreath's testimony will be one like you've never heard, and then, Swanberg. What else can be said? Please join us at Summer Grove Baptist Church, Shreveport, for ECON."

For more information about ECON, visit LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON.

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Baptized from page 4

Having been in some bad situations, Brandon said, "Now I know what peace is like. I've seen the difference."

"There is a God and there is an eternity," Brandon said as he wondered aloud about how to spend his time on Earth. "I want to spend it in service to the Lord and try to do the best I can to bring people to Him the best I know how," he concluded. "That's the way I look at it."

He and his wife Cindy surrendered their hearts and lives to Christ and were baptized together, Oct. 4.

Eubanks baptized a young girl named Lyssa that day, too.

After she answered Eubanks's questions about her conversion to Christ, she said, "Can I ask a question? How

many cow tongues have been in here?"

Lyssa's question added levity to a relaxed and joyful occasion, Eubanks said, and he reassured her that, although the stock tank once had held some catfish, too, it had been "cleaned a little bit" before the baptisms.

LOOKING FORWARD

Eubanks said the congregation already is looking forward to the upcoming year. He said there are three more new believers in discipleship training who are on the baptism list.

"The way God has moved through our church has been really fun to watch," Eubanks said. "We are praying that 2021 brings us even closer to the Lord in ways we never imagined."

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.

YU ESRL VR SPFR ZXJKRBRLN CU ESYLKN TRDEPYLYLK EC

ESYN WYUR, NRE ESRB EC ZXJKR OSC PDR WRPNE RNERRBRJ Y LF

ESR QSDXQS.

UYDNE QCDYLESYPLN NYG:UCXD

Clues:
K = G; R = E

Answer to December 17 Scripture Crypto:
Obadiah twenty-one



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Response from page one

lived out before him each day he finally was brought under conviction that this is what he needed to do for that next step in his faith."

Miller was among 1,428 people who disaster relief chaplains shared the Gospel with from late August until September 27 in areas of Louisiana impacted by Laura. Of those who heard the Good News, 297 turned to Christ. Disaster relief volunteers also distributed 1,955 Bibles.

McMillan said in the midst of all the work, which included 413,846 meals prepared at three sites in the Lake Charles area, 1,485 chainsaw jobs, 185 temporary roofing jobs, 137 debris removal jobs and 10,640 showers offered, disaster relief volunteers planted the spiritual fruit that led to the decisions.

"It's always nice when we can offer hope to people and they accept it," McMillan said. "When they do, it comes at a time when they

are hurting and open to hearing the Gospel. To see their faces light up with excitement when they hear the Good News and even accept Christ is really good."

James said his congregation was humbled to play a part in so many coming to Christ and others receiving much needed encouragement.

"To be on the front line was such a blessing," James said. "People come up to me and say, 'Thank you for what your church and the disaster relief volunteers did during Laura.' They could see the hands and feet of Jesus, literally."

Randy Garrett, state disaster relief director for the Arkansas Baptist State Convention, said he was overjoyed that a relationship between his state's chaplains and Miller produced spiritual fruit.

"The baptism happened because of a relationship built with the man over time," Garrett said. "Ev-

ery time our chaplains and others interacted with him, we would always share the Gospel. Two weeks after that first encounter, he told us he wanted to get baptized. It is such a rewarding thing to see Arkansas Baptist people step up and help their fellow man after a terrible disaster. I am so humbled God would use us in that way to further the Kingdom."

McMillan said others can join in future disaster relief efforts by signing up online at louisianabaptists.org/dr or attending one of five training events scheduled for 2021: New Orleans Baptist Association office (Jan. 29-30), First Baptist Church, Covington (Feb.

5-6), First Baptist Church, Jennings (Feb. 19-20), Philadelphia Baptist Church, Deville (March 5-6), and Temple Baptist Church, Ruston (March 12-13).

"We cannot continue to respond with this magnitude without more volunteers from our Louisiana Baptist churches stepping

up to be trained and ready to respond when needed," McMillan said. "We praise the Lord for this response and we will gladly assist in the formation of other groups who feel led to respond. Thanks for being a part of this great work of bringing help, hope and healing to hurting people."

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FEATURING



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Roc Collins



Gary Bowlin



Richard Ross



Jason Lovins Band

SCHEDULE

SESSION 1

Monday Evening (6:00 PM)

MUSIC: Jason Lovins Band

SPEAKERS: Richard Taylor, Richard Ross

SESSION 2

Tuesday Morning (9:30 AM)

MUSIC: Jason Lovins Band

SPEAKERS: Gary Bowlin, Roc Collins

SENIOR ADULT LUNCHEON

11:30 AM

SESSION 3

Tuesday Aternoon (1:15 PM)

MUSIC: Jason Lovins Band, Foto Sisters

SPEAKERS: Sammy Gilbreath,
Dennis Swanberg

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