



THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

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John 3:16

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PEACE ON EARTH

By Will Hall

Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Today, a bloody civil war is being waged in Syria; Ukraine and Russia are exchanging long range missiles in competing “tactics of terror” against each other; and Israel and Hezbollah continue to launch retaliatory missile strikes for “violations” of a fragile cease-fire agreement reached Nov. 27.

Meanwhile, in Haiti, gangs rule the streets; a two-year war has just ended in Ethiopia (with an estimated death toll of more than 500,000); and the last two years in Myanmar have been marred by wholesale “cleansings” of some ethnic groups, and the displacement of as many as 2.5 million men, women and children.

Additionally, in Sudan, intense violence between competing governmental factions (fighting to capture the lion’s share of newly discovered gold fields) has driven nearly 11 million civilians from their homes in this war-torn region of Africa in 2024, alone.

Indeed, around the world there are 59 active major conflicts, and according to historians, this is the greatest number of simultaneous wars since the end of World War II, in 1945 (which was fought, ironically, a mere two decades after the end of World War I, the “war to end all wars,” in 1918).

The earth is in constant turmoil, wracked by ongoing “wars and rumors of wars,”

See PEACE, page 12

Louisiana Baptists bring gift of Jesus to Belarussians

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

MINSK, Belarus (LBM)
– Tommy Middleton
and two other Louisiana

Baptists recently traveled to Belarus to give the gift of Christ to those in the country.

Middelton, who has now gone on eight mission

trips to Belarus, enjoyed delivering an early Christmas present to the people of that country.

“We shared the Gospel and tried to get the Gospel in the hands and the hearts of as many people as we could,” Middleton told the Baptist Message.

GIVING

Andrew Ryzhkov, founder of the Byelorussian Mission in-country minis-

try, said that in 2023, 5,200 people turned to Jesus through the ministry’s daycare centers, summer camps, youth conferences and distribution of “Good and Evil Illustrated Bibles” (a graphic novel style of presenting the Word). He expects a similar number to profess Jesus this year.

He noted that financial gifts from Louisiana Baptists have helped purchase some of the more than 51,000 “Good and Evil

Illustrated Bibles” that have been distributed in the country from January through early November, compared to 49,000 Bibles that were handed out in 2023. His goal is to distribute one million copies of this “graphic novel” presentation of the Word by 2035.

Ryzhkov said that four out of 10 people who have received this special Bible (which uses “cartoon” art-

See BELARUSIANS, page 9

Drive-by prayer ministry a soul-winning mission

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By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

HAMMOND, La. (LBM) – Door-to-door evangelism has been a way of life for Pastor Les Fogleman for the last 40 years but in 2023 he felt led to use the parking lot of New Beulah Baptist Church in Hammond as a Gospel tool.

Since June 2023, Fogleman has placed signs on grassy areas near the parking lot to alert motor-

ists to the opportunity of sharing their prayer needs. Through this ministry that operates on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday afternoons, Fogleman has shared the Gospel with more than 350 people and seen 10 of them surrender their lives to Christ and follow through with baptism in a portable baptistry on the church parking lot.

“A lot of people will honk and wave at me as they see me on the parking lot,” Fogleman told the *Baptist Message*. “I never know what problems and difficulties people may share when they come and ask for prayer. I’m thankful the Lord has allowed me the opportunity and honor to be there to pray with someone in need.”

The idea to start the parking lot prayer ministry came to Fogleman while he was praying in front of the church. He noticed 15-45 cars at a time would pass

through a red light by the church and knew that the community could benefit from someone who would be a visible prayer warrior for them.

A few months after he opened the parking lot for prayer, Fogleman visited Abbie Lane Retreat Center, Coushatta, and was introduced to the book “100 Days at the Cross: One Man’s Journey to Understanding the Power of the Cross of Christ.”

After reading the book, Fogleman felt led to create and place a wooden cross on the parking lot in November for individuals to nail cards containing prayer requests. More than 140 people have placed cards on the cross, even when Fogleman is not at the church.

Fogleman said the prayer ministry has helped his own prayer life.

“I pray before I go out

See FOGLEMAN, page 7




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Masters to retire after 33 years of LSU ministry

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By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – For the past 33 years, Steve Masters has disciplined thousands of students on the Louisiana State University campus, led multiple Baptist Collegiate Ministry disaster relief trips and contributed to collegiate ministry on the national level as a consultant as well as a contributor on collegiate ministry committees.

Masters, who is set to retire May 31 from his role as LSU's BCM director, said he is grateful for the opportunity to build relationships with so many students and see them become faithful servants in their secular and ministry roles.

Since graduating from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in

1982, Masters has pursued God's call to minister to college students. Before coming to LSU, he served as a BCM intern with University of Arkansas, Little Rock, BCM director with Arkansas Tech University, and BCM director with Oklahoma State University.

"I thought I would be at Oklahoma State forever, but my name was given to (former Louisiana Baptist State BCM Director) John Moore by Lynn Hawkins, former BCM director at Louisiana Tech," he said. "I remember getting a phone call and being asked to consider going to LSU. I had to get out a map because I'd never even been to Baton Rouge.

"We came here 33 years ago, and it's been a real joy to work here," he continued. "I've had tremendous support from the Louisiana

Baptist Convention, Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, the William Wallace Baptist Association, churches in our area, along with the many alumni and parents who have just given incredible financial support, prayer support and other support to our BCM ministry. They also have taken care of my family for which I am grateful."

During his time at LSU, Masters has witnessed more than 500 students come to know Christ, taken nearly 3,000 students on more than 30 mission trips to Mexico, reached hundreds of international students through various ministry efforts by the BCM, and sent BCM-led disaster relief teams to help families in crises after natural disasters.

See **MASTERS**, page 6

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YEC 2024: 501 students made decisions for Christ

By **Brian Blackwell**
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Organizers of and participants in the 2024 Youth Evangelism Celebration praised God for the 501 students who made decisions for Christ, Nov. 24-25, in the Rapides Parish Coliseum, Alexandria. They also were grateful to Him for the 5,325 teens and adult sponsors who attended YEC (the largest annual gathering of Louisiana Baptists).

“This event had so many moving parts, from the exceptional work of our Evangelism and Church Growth team, to every department of Louisiana Baptists, even to each individual church as well as the adults who lead students,” Louisiana Baptist Youth Ministry Strategist Lee Myers told the *Baptist Message*. “It doesn’t happen without

them, including my ministry assistant Julie Mitcham and the others on the planning team.

“Hopefully it’s a start of a spiritual movement in our churches,” he continued. “The great thing is, it’s an example of what can happen when we all come together and when we pray for God to move in a mighty way.”

SHINE YOUR LIGHT

Zane Black, evangelist and tour pastor for Winter Jam 2024, told students God has a purpose for their lives.

Basing his message on Ephesians 2, Black encouraged students to trust in God’s love and embrace their respective purposes as God’s handiworks.

Black shared that he was headed down a road filled with alcohol and drug abuse until at age 21 he found Jesus, who gave



Students stepped forward during a time of decision, Nov. 24, at the 2024 Youth Evangelism Celebration.

him a hope. He told the students that they too may be in a place of darkness, but that Christ can turn their lives around.

“Until we realize the

wretchedness of our sin, we will never realize the sweetness of a Savior,” he said. “But when you begin to recognize the depth of your need and brokenness,

then it begins to magnify. It begins to build up, and we begin to see Jesus in a whole new light, because

See YEC, page 5



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YEC from page four

He is the healer. He's the one who comes to give hope, freedom, forgiveness."

Black said that Jesus has extended an invitation to follow Him. He explained that following Jesus transforms lives and involves leaving things behind, and he added that in following Jesus, all can find life.

"So maybe this morning God's calling you to say, 'Give up that other life,'" he said. "But immerse yourself fully in that relationship with Jesus that you might experience the fullness of life that He's come to offer."

Black challenged the students to be on mission for Christ, alluding to Jesus' example in Matthew 9:35-38: Christ lived with a heart of prayer for the lost, a great care for the lost and a passion to share the Good News.

Black then used G-O-S-P-E-L as an acrostic for

sharing the hope found in Jesus:

-- God created us to be with Him;

-- Our sin separated us from God;

-- Sins cannot be removed by good deeds;

-- Paying the price for sin, Jesus died and rose again;

-- Everyone who trusts in Him alone has eternal life; and

-- Life with Jesus starts now and lasts forever.

"Paul said, 'I am not ashamed of the Gospel, for it is the power of God unto salvation,'" he said. "So it's less about the one who delivers it, but it's more about the one in who it is all about. And so, it doesn't matter who's the one sharing. What matters is that it is within the power of the message itself. And so, I want to encourage us to be people who share the message of God."

VALUE IN CHRIST

Counselor Clint Davis of Shreveport (also the son of Mitcham) encouraged the students to seek value in Christ instead of things that the world values such as social media and outward appearances.

Referencing Genesis, Davis said in a digitally connected world it is very possible to be unconnected to others. He challenged the students to find a group of believers and remain connected to them. Additionally, he encouraged the students to seek truth in God's word and build trust with others.

Zane Black, evangelist and tour pastor for Winter Jam 2024, told students God has a purpose for their lives.

"So many of us feel isolated and alone in our lives," he said. "We can be in this room right now, surrounded by thousands of people and feel very alone. And so that was



Zane Black, evangelist and tour pastor for Winter Jam 2024, told students God has a purpose for their lives.

See YEC, page 7



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Masters from page 3

Moreover, he recently helped create and develop strategic training websites for youth and college students who have been called to ministry, www.called-toministry.org and studentmissionary.com. The student missionary evangelism strategy launched in August 2023 is a guided, school-year-long training program for students to learn how to be intentional about being an evangelist on campus.

Masters said he hopes many churches will partner with students and help foster a foundation of discipleship that will carry on beyond high school.

"I have a real passion and heart concern for youth ministry because I

believe 90 percent of the high school graduating seniors in our Southern Baptist Convention have checked out of their faith involvement by the time they graduate from high school," he said. "That's an important group that we're trying to reach out to because if we don't reach them during their college years, there's a chance we might never bring them back. As a result of that, I developed this ministry to help cut down on that statistic while helping students who feel God's call to ministry."

WORDS OF APPRECIATION

Louisiana BCM State Director Mark Robinson

described Masters as a key generational leader on the national collegiate ministry landscape for the last three decades.

"His energy and enthusiasm have been unmatched," Robinson said. "I could mention larger accomplishments, but the ones that stand out to me are phone calls that go like this: 'I was teaching five students today how to play the short game in golf, and I asked them about their relationship with Jesus. After explaining the Gospel to them, two guys prayed and committed their lives to Christ, and the others want to come back and talk about it again.'"

"That conversation has been repeated many times with the names and numbers of participants changing for the last 20 years," he continued. "Steve has

been a champion for sharing the good news of Jesus with college students."

Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn called Masters a "Louisiana Baptist Convention treasure."

"Only eternity will reveal the true impact of his ministry, but some impact is obvious now," he said. "First, our Louisiana Baptist churches are filled with LSU BSU/BCM alumni."

"Many students abandon the church during their college years. But through Steve's influence, many who attended LSU grew in their faith and in their love for the local church," Horn said.

"Second, scores of students were called to ministry during their times at LSU," he said. "Many participated in their first mission trip at Steve's

invitation and maybe even insistence.

"Third, Steve's ministry was marked by a tireless work ethic," Horn continued. "His system of connecting graduating high school students to the BCM is used across the nation. His outreach to international students is a model. For example, when COVID shut down cafeteria service at LSU, Steve rolled up his sleeves, went to work, and discovered ways to get groceries to these students. In meeting their physical need, he opened doors to share with them about their spiritual need for a relationship to Jesus."

"Steve Masters is a perfect example of the power of the Cooperative Program of Louisiana Baptists and Southern Baptists," he continued. "Louisiana Baptists provide the opportunity for Steve to minister. Students hear the Gospel and/or disciplined. These students go on mission. Some are called to go to the nations. Others fill our churches. The cycle repeats itself over and over again."

"For all who know Steve, we know that retirement is really redeployment. We will continue to rely on Steve's ideas, relationships, and experiences to reach that next generation of college students."

Tommy Middleton, associational mission strategist with the BAGBR, has enjoyed a close friendship with Masters and his family. Middleton's three children, now grown, all were involved with the LSU BCM during Masters' time there.

"Steve Masters has been an incredible servant of the Lord in his capacity as the BCM director for LSU," Middleton said. "His passion for missions and evangelism has fueled one of the most effective college ministries in the United States. Steve has a great heart for international students, and taken personal interest in them. He brought them into his home, taught many of them to play golf, and has taken them on hunting and fishing trips."

"I don't know how many conversations I've

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See MASTERS, page 8

YEC from page 5

not good. And the reality is that God wants you to have connection. He wants you to have friends. He wants you to have a body around you that can help you overcome these things.”

Davis acknowledged that many students suffer high levels of anxiety, but he also offered that God cares about their feelings and fears.

“A lot of times we think if we just pray more about it, if we get in the Word, all that will just go away,” he said. “Yet Scripture tells us it’s a battle, and Christ is fighting that battle on our behalf.”

Davis shared three lies that social media tells those in American society: you are not enough, your worth and value comes from other’s opinions and there is a fear of missing out.

He then challenged the students to be a light for Christ on social media.

“I challenge us in this day and age where social media and gossip and slander is what the status is,” he said. “I challenge you to be different, to be a Christian who

goes into social media and goes on platforms and is different.”

TRAINED TO SHARE

By the end of the two-day spiritual encounter, several hundred students had made decisions for Christ: with 108 students stepping forward to accept Christ; another 324 restoring fellowship with God and 69 pursuing a call to ministry.

The messages by Black and Davis were accompanied by high-energy music by Crescent City Worship, a worship band with New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, as well as entertainment by Jaron Myers, a comedian and podcaster. Students were given breaks for fellowship, and Rend Collective performed a concert to close out YEC on Monday evening. Brandon Allen, student pastor with Mt. Vernon Baptist Church, Columbus, Mississippi, and student ministry podcast producer, served as the host/emcee.

Fogleman from page 2

to the parking lot and will sing a couple of hymns to prepare myself,” Fogleman said. “Once I am through with that, I walk up and down the parking lot waving at people.

“I have no idea how many people are impacted by this prayer ministry,

but I do it because this is what the Lord wants,” he continued. “I’m 81 years old and will continue doing this as long as there are people to respond, and I am pastoring here. I don’t know the future, but I know for now this is what the Lord wants me to do.”

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(NIV)

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Masters from page 6

had with Steve over the years in which he shared with me about some students he had talked with, and they had given their heart to Christ," he continued. "He has always been my number one 'go-to guy' with disaster relief, organizing chainsaw teams, and whatever else is needed throughout these many years

at LSU. My own children went to LSU, loved being part of the BCM and were greatly impacted by Steve's ministry. We have been blessed to have one of God's most choice servants leading the BCM LSU. To God be the glory."

Michelle Gros, one of Masters' three daughters, said the LSU BCM was a second home

for their family.

"Through countless mission trips, worship services, events, banquets, Bible studies, free lunches, and leadership teams, my sisters and I grew up witnessing his unwavering dedication to Jesus and to the students he served," she said. "The BCM became the place where we discovered our callings, met our husbands, and saw what it truly means to live out faith in

action.

"Even now, his passion for sharing the love of Christ is unstoppable," she continued. "On our family text thread, we often get a photo of a college student he's taken to lunch after leading them to the Lord and asking us to join him in prayer for them. My dad is truly an evangelist superhero, relentlessly loving, serving, and pointing others to Jesus. As he steps into retirement, we celebrate not just his years of service but the legacy of faith and love he has built in the hearts of so many."

ministry for 16 years, including 11 years in college ministry through the local church and Louisiana Baptists. During his tenure at McNeese State, he oversaw reconstruction of the BCM building that was damaged during the 2020 hurricane season.

The McNeese BCM continues to thrive with numerous students coming to know Jesus for the first time, receiving mentorship in their calling to vocational ministry, and integrating into service and membership at the local church.

Grundy expressed appreciation for the opportunity to succeed long-time McNeese BCM Minister Keith Cating, and to serve at his alma mater the past eight years.

"To serve a BCM that poured into me as a student really means the world to me," he said. "And to see God transform lives here on campus by calling so many students to missions and moving the churches to work together for the purpose of reaching this campus for the Gospel is truly amazing.

"Leaving under such good circumstances here at McNeese does not make it easy, but ultimately whenever the Lord calls, you either walk in obedience or you walk in disobedience, you have to make the right choice to follow the Lord," he continued. "I relay that to my students all the time and let them know it is sometimes hard to walk in obedience."

FUTURE PLANS

Though he will retire as BCM director, Masters will serve from June 1, 2025, to June 1, 2026, as the Louisiana BCM state development director. He will help BCMs across the state with international ministry, develop alumni and parent databases, and help high school students transition to college. He also will assist the incoming LSU BCM Director Blake Grundy on campus a couple of days each week.

A retirement celebration will be held at the LSU BCM on April 27, 2025, beginning at 2 p.m. Former and current students are invited to attend.

FOLLOWING A LEGEND

Grundy, BCM director with McNeese State University, will become the next BCM director for LSU on June 1. He has served in Christian

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Belarusians from page one

work to tell Bible stories) have turned to Christ, and such evangelistic success only costs \$10 per copy.

“Getting the Word of God into the hands of people is so important,” Middleton added.

GOSPEL-CENTERED

Belarus ranks among the most receptive nations he has visited, Middleton said. He shared that many times he will visit a church in that country, and upon returning the next year, he will discover that they have expanded membership, added ministries and baptized new believers in Christ.

He referenced one church he visited recently that now has two worship areas, a coffee shop and soccer field.

“It’s full of young people, and it was exciting to see that in just about under six years they had transformed a dilapidated building to a restored, renovated facility,” he said. “Now worship is going on in two stories of that building,” he said, with two congregations co-residing in that one building.

GOING

Middleton said that Louisiana Baptists have been actively engaged in evangelizing Belarus since 2014. During the years and mission trips that have followed, the multi-year effort has helped to constitute local congregations,

complete construction projects and conduct training of pastors and lay people.

Middleton explained that the Belarusians’ passion for sharing Jesus keeps him eager to return each year.

Cullen McDaniel, minister of music with Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, and Preston Thompson, pastor of preaching and vision with Redeemer Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, went with Middleton to Belarus during September 2024. While there, they taught at a pastors’ leadership training conference attended by 350 ministers. Meanwhile, they shared the Gospel during classes they taught at state-run universities and in one-on-one intentional encounters at targeted coffee shops.

He said the Belarusian Christians continue to embrace discipleship and planting churches, which has helped strengthened them to be bold witnesses to the country.

At the start of the pastors conference, he said, each attendee was asked to stand and introduce himself.

“It was pretty exciting to realize that when everyone had been introduced that all the regions (of the country) were represented there and realizing that this is finally a national ministry with national implications.”

PRAYERS NEEDED

Middleton said Rzyhkov’s passion for the Gospel has impacted Belarus dramatically.

“Andrew loves this nation,” he said. “He has a great heart for the Gospel and is one of the most focused men on getting the Gospel out and getting the Word of God in the hands of people. He is so respected by the pastors of Baptist churches but also across denominational lines, because his focus is advancing the Gospel and reaching the nation with the Good News about the Person of Jesus Christ.

Rzyhkov asked for continued prayers as plans are being shaped for future ministry to Belarus.

“Praise the Lord,” Rzyhkov said. “We’re asking the Louisiana Baptist Convention to partner again next year.

“Because many refugees are coming through Belarus ... and hopefully the war will come to an



Tommy Middleton, associational mission strategist for the Baptist Association of Greater Baton Rouge, has taken numerous mission trips to Belarus and has seen God move mightily each time.

end ... we have the opportunity to show them the hope of Jesus,” he continued. “So, we invite people to come and join us on a trip.

“Louisiana Baptist churches, please send human resources, send Bibles and send your prayers. And let’s pray that 2025 will have more Christians to share

Christ in many parts of the world, especially Belarus.”

To contribute copies of the “Good and Evil Illustrated Bibles” or for more information about a mission trip in 2025, email Andrew@byelorussianmission.org or visit byelorussianmission.org.

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Louisiana Baptists urged to help fight against human trafficking related to Super Bowl LIX

By Will Hall
 Message executive editor

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Despite some of the strictest laws in the nation against human trafficking, Louisiana has experienced increasing numbers of victims since, surging from “206 confirmed and prospective victims” in 2015 (the first statewide legislatively mandated report) to “1,615 confirmed and suspected victims” in 2023, with a 57 percent increase in just the last year.

State experts rightly note that human trafficking is a problem in Louisiana 365 days of the year.

However, events like Super Bowl LIX, scheduled in New Orleans, Feb. 9, 2025, ramp up at least the visibility of trafficking because of sex slave traders’ exploitation

of the lusts of out-of-town crowds.

Consequently, faith-based and government groups are calling on Louisianians to help fight against sex trafficking and are using the NFL event as an opportunity to train and prepare congregations, specifically, about awareness and prevention issues, as well as to help rescue and restore victims of sex trafficking.

COUNCIL OF MANY

In November, prior to the 2024 Louisiana Baptist Convention, an informal meeting of state experts took place in Shreveport as an organizing effort to launch a campaign in January 2025 to engage Louisiana congregations in the anti-human trafficking initiative related to Super Bowl LIX.

Participants included rep-

resentatives of the

- Governor’s Office of Human Trafficking Prevention
- Greater New Orleans Human Trafficking Task Force
- Send Relief New Orleans
- New Orleans Baptist Ministries
- Baptist Friendship House (NOLA)
- The Hub: Urban Ministries / Purchased: Not For Sale
- Covenant House New Orleans
- Eden House New Orleans
- Louisiana Baptist Children’s Home & Family Ministries
- Louisiana Baptist Compassion Ministries
- Louisiana Baptist Committee on Moral & Social Concerns
- Louisiana Baptist Office of Public Policy

The group discussed the

challenges of such a large undertaking, but overwhelmingly agreed that making use of the NFL championship game would be a great launching point for responding to similar high-profile events in the state as well as to fortify long-term engagement of congregations to the day-to-day ministry effort to prevent sex slavery as well as to rescue and restore victims of the illegal trade.

Already, teams within the group are working to develop targeted messages that can be played before and after worship services. Likewise, training resources are under development to help congregations equip their members to respond to human trafficking locally, as well as around the state. Likewise, planning is underway to organize congregations to prepare “Go Bags” to provide rescued women

and children, who often must be whisked away with only minimal belongings.

During December, Louisiana Baptists are urged to begin talking about how they might join the effort in January to fight sex trafficking related to Super Bowl LIX in February. At a minimum, congregations are requested to make February 9, 2025, a special day of prayer for those women and children trapped in sex slavery.

Meanwhile, pastors and compassion ministry leaders are encouraged to reach out to the Louisiana Baptist Office of Public Policy, (318) 449-4348, or policy@louisianabaptistd.org, to register their congregations to be part of the first of its kind initiative in the state and to request training and organizing resources.

SIGNS OF A TRAFFICKING VICTIM

- ◆ Misses school on a regular basis or has many unexplained absences.
- ◆ Frequently runs away from home.
- ◆ Frequently travels to other cities.
- ◆ Bruises or other signs of physical trauma, withdrawn behavior, depression, anxiety or fear.
- ◆ Hungry, malnourished, or inappropriately dressed based on weather conditions or surroundings.
- ◆ Drug addiction.
- ◆ Rehearsed responses to questions.

OTHER SIGNS THAT INDICATE SEX TRAFFICKING

- ◆ Sudden change in attire, behavior, relationships or material possessions.
- ◆ Uncharacteristically promiscuous or makes references to sexual situations or terminology that are beyond age-specific norms.
- ◆ Has a ‘girlfriend’ or ‘boyfriend’ who is noticeably older.
- ◆ Attempts to conceal recent scars.
- ◆ Sudden change in personal hygiene.

IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU KNOW IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER, CALL 911

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1.800.373.7888 **CALL**

233733 **TEXT**

humantraffickinghotline.org/chat **EMAIL**

Haitian congregation reaching New Orleans for Jesus

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – Escalating gang violence in Haiti’s capital city had forced Louisiana Reach Haiti to refocus its ministry on several fronts in 2022, but in New Orleans God was opening a door for Dawest Louis to share Christ’s love with his fellow countrymen, including those forced to move to the U.S. due to the situation in the Caribbean nation.

Dawest, who graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary two years earlier, had longed to reach the more than 10,000 Haitians living in New Orleans with the Good News and began the process through the North American Mission Board

to plant a church. Without a church building to call home, Louis and 11 others gathered for prayer and sought the Lord for His direction. God answered in April 2022 when Connect Church, Algiers, offered a space in their facility and Eglise Connect International was born.

The church continued meeting and has grown to 65 who attend Sunday worship services. Of those, 12 have been baptized since its inception.

In addition to holding Sunday worship and Tuesday Bible study and prayer, the church brings water to and shares the Gospel with taxi drivers at Louis Armstrong International Airport. Through that, several have turned to Christ and been baptized.

The church also holds several block parties a year in nearby parks, and hosts English as a Second Language classes to the community where many attend who do not have a relationship with Christ.

Ryan Rice, pastor with Connect Church, said it has been a blessing to be the sending

church. “Pastor Dawest has a heart for the community, evangelism and discipleship,” Rice said. “Our church family is thankful to see what God has done through them in such a short time as a church plant. Connect International was the first plant to be sent from our church, leading us to desire to continue planting more churches.”

Darron Badon, president of Louisiana Reach Haiti (a partnership between Louisiana Baptist Convention, Haiti Baptist Convention, Louisiana Baptist churches and the Louisiana Baptist Children’s Home & Family Ministries), asked others to continue praying for the church to reach many more Haitians.

“What an incredible

opportunity we have to share the Gospel with Haitians without leaving Louisiana,” Badon said. “We are thankful for how Dawest and his church continue to minister to other Haitians right in our home state.”

FUTURE FORWARD

Louis is excited about the possibilities to grow the membership and introduce many more to Christ. “My wife and I have

four kids, so please be in prayer for my family as we seek to be obedient to God’s calling,” Louis said. “Be in prayer for the church family itself and that God raises leaders.

“We need people to help carry the load,” he continued. “And, pray that we find a place to be a little bit more permanent together so we can have a place to call our home as we share Jesus’ with even more Haitians and others in the community.”

Resilient New River Baptist marks 175th Anniversary

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

SAINT AMANT, La. (LBM) – New River Baptist Church, a southeast Louisiana church that has rebuilt its facilities following multiple natural disasters, recently celebrated its 175th birthday.

More than 250 current and former members and other guests overflowed the worship center, Oct. 19-20, for a special celebration that reflected on God’s faithfulness since the founding of the congregation.

Activities during the weekend included special music by the McNabb Family and the Quarantine Quartet, a devotion by former pastor Buddy Sheriff and entertainment by the Christian comedy duo Peanut Butter and Jelly.

“The anniversary weekend was just a testament

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See NEW RIVER, page 12

New River from page 11

of God's faithfulness to us," Pastor Craig Forque told the *Baptist Message*. "We were

able to stop and use that as an opportunity to say God has been faithful and we give Him

all the glory." NRBC was founded in 1849 after 22 people came together in Gonzalez, meeting in homes and other places for seven years. In 1856, land

was donated six miles east of Gonzalez and they built their first worship center.

Through the years, natural disasters destroyed several buildings: the Mississippi River overflowed (1890), a storm (1911), and another flood (2016). Still, the church came back strongly each time and rebuilt damaged facilities.

The church, which averages 120 for Sunday morning worship, continues to serve

the Lord through various ministries: GriefShare recovery groups, Gonzalez Seafarers Ministry, and outreach to senior adults and shut ins.

"Over the years New River has survived times of natural disaster, times of internal conflict, times of financial hardship and so many other obstacles," Forque said. "At the same time, we have seen times of revival and felt the grace of God."

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Peace from page one

and amid the oppression, aggression and hostilities, the world groans for peace.

Yet, peace on earth, at least in terms of "the absence of conflict," simply is not possible as long as there is the presence of sin on earth.

Indeed, peace was not restored in Heaven until a rebellious angel and his followers were cast out (Isaiah 14:12-14; Luke 10:18). Order was not possible in the Garden of Eden until the deceiving serpent was removed (Genesis 3:1-14; Ezekiel 28:12-18). More importantly, the perfection of the universe, the conquest over war and victory over violence will only be achieved with the overthrow of the ancient

dragon and the dispatch of him and his minions, forever, to the lake of fire.

Yet God announced through His angels that with the birth of His Son, Jesus, there was "Peace" on earth (Luke 2:14). In fact, what He was declaring was that all mankind, each of us, could experience personal peace through salvation in Christ.

In the end, there will be peace in the universe. However, until that time when all sin is destroyed, peace on earth is only possible through "peacemaking," or bringing others to know Jesus the Peacemaker (Matthew 5:9).

This Christmas, celebrate the birth of Jesus.

But also look for opportunities to declare "peace on earth" by introducing someone to the Person of Jesus, the Son of God!

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LOOKING FOR A PART-TIME YOUTH MINISTER

New River Baptist Church in St. Amant Louisiana is searching for a part-time Youth Minister. Applicants can send résumés to Youth Minister Search Committee; New River Baptist Church; 54270 Hwy 429; St. Amant, LA 70774.

Seeking a Full Time or Bi-Vocational PASTOR

UNITED BAPTIST CHURCH in Campti, La. is seeking a Full Time or Bi-Vocational Pastor. Send résumés to P. O. Box 8 Campti, La. 71411 or email to ubccampti@outlook.com



Westside Baptist Church seeks a PASTOR

Westside Baptist Church, Natchitoches, LA is seeking a pastor. Résumés can be mailed to Pastor Search Committee, Attn: Mike Newton, 6834 Hwy 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, La. 71457 or submitted to Mike Newton via email at westsidenatchitoches@gmail.com.



SEEKING A MUSIC MINISTER

Lee's Creek Baptist Church, Bogalusa La., is currently seeking a full-time or part-time minister of music. Please send your resumes to 1803 Lees Creek, Church Road Bogalusa, LA 70427 or e-mail Lcbcpastor1@gmail.com.

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FULL-TIME STUDENT MINISTER

First Baptist Church Pineville seeks a full-time student minister to lead our growing ministry to junior high, high school, and college students. With reach into fifteen local junior high and high schools attended by our students, two local college campuses, a nearby vo-tech campus, and college students who return weekly for worship, the potential is great for a thriving ministry.

Compensation includes salary, health insurance for the minister and his family paid by the church, a ministry reimbursement account, and retirement benefit.

Résumés may be submitted to Pastor Stewart Holloway at sholloway@fbcpineville.net or 901 Main Street, Pineville, LA 71360. We prefer that résumés include a cover letter from a reference and that further references are provided. www.fbcpineville.net.

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SEEKING A BI-VOCATIONAL PASTOR

College Drive Baptist Church in Pineville, LA is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. Please mail résumés to Richard Bullock, 515 Sandy Hill Lane, Pineville, LA 71360 or email gmbull50@yahoo.com.

SEEKING A PART-TIME YOUTH DIRECTOR

Emmanuel Baptist Church 5850 Buncombe Road, Shreveport, LA. Excellent opportunity to join a Christ-centered fellowship and build a vibrant youth program. Email résumé to: resume_ebc@mail.com

SEEKING A LEAD PASTOR

Crossgate Church in Hot Springs, Arkansas, is actively searching for a Lead Pastor to guide our congregation of 600 in making more and better disciples for Jesus Christ through the power of the Holy Spirit. We are an elder-led, SBC-affiliated church, dedicated to making an impact locally and globally, while investing in the next generation. Our beautiful facility supports a variety of dynamic ministries. We desire a leader with 10 years of ministry experience, including 5 as a teaching pastor. This Spirit-led man should focus on foundational Bible teaching, discipleship, prayer, spiritual growth, and authentic leadership. Apply: www.crossgatechurch.info.

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First Baptist Church, Harrison, Arkansas is seeking full-time associate pastor for Student and Recreational Ministries. A college degree is a minimum educational requirement. Send résumés and questions to Rob Davis at robd@fbcharrison.org. Check out additional job details at <https://fbcharrison.org/Job-Details>



Hillcrest Baptist Church in Jasper, Texas is seeking a FT Minister of Music/Worship to lead a blended style of music. Experience in audio/visual technology is needed. If interested, send résumés to debbiereed@hbcjasper.com, 409.384.3371. A full job description can be requested.

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SEEKING A PASTOR

First Baptist Church of Hatfield, Arkansas is prayerfully seeking a full time or bi-vocational Pastor who preaches the whole counsel of God. A parsonage is provided. Please send a résumé and include a link to three recent sermons to: FBC Hatfield, P.O. Box 108, Hatfield, AR 71945 or email to: fbchhatfield@gmail.com

SEEKING A PASTOR

Merryville First Baptist Church in Merryville, Louisiana is searching for a full time pastor. Please contact or send résumé to Greg Marchie at 337.401.0715 or g_marchie@hotmail.com



MINISTER OF STUDENTS

The First Baptist Church of Yukon, Oklahoma is seeking a Minister of Students. This full-time position has responsibility for middle and high school ministries. We are seeking an experienced candidate, with a college education, and passion for student ministry. The position includes a generous salary, benefits, and a parsonage. Send résumés to clark@fbcyukon.com or First Baptist Church, 15 S. 6th Street, Yukon, OK 73099.



Seeking a Bi-Vocational **PASTOR**

Friendship Baptist Church, located between Saline and Jonesboro Louisiana (16511 Hwy4, Bienville, LA 71008) is seeking a bi-vocational pastor. In addition to the salary, the parsonage is available as part of the compensation package. Please email résumés to salinebrown@yahoo.com.



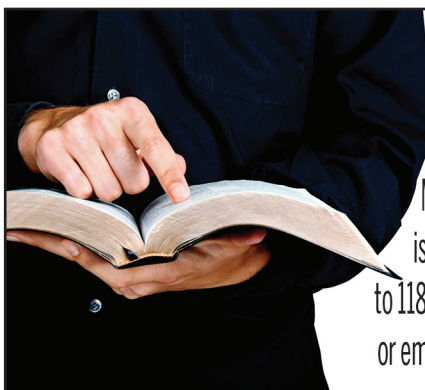
SEEKING A FULL-TIME PASTOR

Hodge Baptist Church in Hodge, LA is seeking a full-time pastor. Please mail résumés to the Pastor Search Committee in c/o Hodge Baptist Church, P O Box 340, Hodge, LA 71247 or email to: hodgebaptist@yahoo.com.



SEEKING A PASTOR

Mineral Springs Baptist Church is seeking a pastor. Send résumé to 118 Pea Ridge Road, Dubach, LA 71235 or email msbaptistlouisiana@gmail.com.



EDITOR'S NOTE: *The Baptist Message provides churches an opportunity to share with other Louisiana Baptists an upcoming revival, homecoming, new pastor, new staff member, a community outreach, or a concert in Louisiana Notables. To place your event in the paper, send your information (who, what, where, when, time) to philip@baptistmessage.com or call 318.449.4345. Please submit your information four weeks prior to the event to insure placement in the Message.*

ON THE MOVE

- Steve Masters is retiring from the BCM at Louisiana State University on May 31.
- Blake Grundy to become BCM Director at Louisiana State University after serving as McNeese State University BCM.
- Walt, wife Gayla, Brown is the new pastor at First Bastrop Baptist Church. He has been serving as interim pastor and also as music minister.
- Jim Alan Calvert is the new Pastor of Parkview Baptist Church, Metairie, LA. Calvert's first day in the pulpit was November 3, 2024.
- Charles Ebarb is the new music minister at South Bossier Baptist Church, Bossier City.
- Jim Fisher is the new pastor of Gambrell Baptist Church, Starks.

POSITION SOUGHT

- Palestine Baptist Church, Bogalusa: Part-time or bi-vocational minister of music needed for Palestine Baptist Church in rural Bogalusa, La. If interested, please send resume

to Palestine Baptist Church, 59369 Palestine Church Rd., Bogalusa, La, 70427, or call 985-732-7997, or email: Palestinechurch@bellsouth.net. Pastor: Frederick Brumfield.

REVIVAL

- Antioch Baptist Church, Farmerville: Sunday Night Revival, January 5, 6 p.m. nightly. Evangelist: Micah Carter, Calvary Baptist Church, Magnolia, Ar.; Worship: Jake & Rachel Chapman, First Baptist, Minden, La.; January 12 – Evangelist: Mick Flowers, Unity Baptist Church, Hope, Ark.; Worship: Captain Smead; January 19th- Evangelist: Josh Luellen, Promise Land MBC- Hamburg, Ark.; Worship: Tim Post Bethel Baptist Church-Bastrop, La.; January 26 – Evangelist: Nick Andrews, Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, Spearsville; Worship: Pilgrim Rest Praise Band. Pastor: Ruben Weaver.
- Pleasant Hill Baptist Church, Pollock: Revival, January 10-11, 7 p.m.; January 12 at 11 a.m. Evangelist: Steve Reed. Fellowship meal to follow the Sunday morning service. Pastor: Jack Powell.
- Bethany Baptist Church, Bethany: Revival, January 31-2025, 6:30 p.m.; February 1, 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; February 211 a.m. & 6:30 p.m. at Bethany Baptist Church, 10043 Hwy79 in Bethany, La. 71007. Pastor: Marvin Cooper.
- River of Life, Iota: Harvest Day, January 5, 2025. Pastor: Gary Dardar.
- North Shreve Baptist Church, Shreveport: Harvest Day, January 12, 2025, Pastor: Cecila Marr.
- Fort Necessity Baptist Church, Fort Necessity: Wild Game Supper. Janu-


- ary 18, Pastor: John Bradley.
- Fort Necessity Baptist Church, Fort Necessity: Revival, January 19-24. Pastor: John Bradley.
- Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Super Sunday, January 19, 2025, Pastor: Wilton Wall.
- New Zion Baptist Church, Covington: Harvest Day, January 26. Pastor: Clark Stewart.
- Searcy Baptist Church, Trout: La-Salle Parish Rally, February 1, 2 p.m. Pastor: Steve Jensen.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: Harvest Day, February 9, 2025. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.

LAGNIAPPE

- First Baptist Church, Slidell: Carols by Candlelight, December 14 & 15, December 14, 7 p.m., December 15, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Casey Stark.
- First Baptist Church, Livingston: Mary Did You Know Cantata sung by the church's choir, December 15, 6 p.m. The church's annual gumbo supper will follow. Pastor: Brian Gunter.
- First Baptist Church, Natchitoches: The Light of Christmas – The King Is Born, December 15, 6 p.m. located at 508nd St. Pastor: Thomas Rush.
- Lamar Baptist Church, Delhi: Christmas Caroling, December 15, 5 p.m. Pastor: Jessie Nielson.
- Little Pass Baptist Church, Charenton: Little Pass Church Choir presents 'He is King' Peace on Earth, December 15, 6 p.m. Free Admission, Free food and bring a friend. Pastor: Chris Holloway.

- First Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: First Baptist Baton Rouge invites the entire community to an enchanting evening of Carols and Keyboards on Sunday, December 15, at 6 PM. Pastor: Andrew Ogea.
- Pleasant Grove Baptist Church, Choudrant: Come Let Us Adore, Christmas Cantata; December 15, 6 p.m. Pastor: Kenneth Swanner.
- First Baptist Church, Lafayette: Choirs & Carols, December 15, 9:30 & 11 a.m. Pastor: James Pritchard.
- Rocky Springs Baptist Church, Lisbon: The Rocky Springs Baptist choir will present Glorious Light of Christmas, December 15, 11 a.m. Pastor: Chris Stephens.
- Red Oak Baptist Church, Livingston: Chronicle Gospel Group, December 15, 11 a.m. Pastor: Carl Varnado.
- Airline Baptist Church, Bossier City: Celebrate Christmas. December 15, 9 a.m. & 10:30 a.m. This is a multigenerational Musical Experience. Pastor: Terry Young.
- Red Oak Baptist, Livingston: Chronicles in concert, December 15, 11 a.m. Pastor: Carl Varnado.
- Family Of Faith Church, Baton Rouge: Overcoming Obstacles, December 21, 1 -4 p.m. A day full of America Ninja Warrior fun. Pastor: Mike Erickson.
- Faith Baptist Church, Livonia: Greg Sullivan Ministries with special guest Chris Golden, December 22, 10 a.m. Pastor: Freddie Rodrigue.
- Macedonia Baptist Church, Effie: Peace on Earth, December 22, 6 p.m. The event will be followed by Gum-

- bo, Christmas Carols around the fire with smores and ot chocolate. Pastor: Adam Thornton.
- Woodridge Baptist Church, Shreveport: Christmas Music Celebration, December 22, 9:45 a.m. Pastor: Paul Walker.
- Midway Baptist Church, Ponchartroula: Chronicles in concert, December 22, 10:30 a.m. Pastor: Jimmy Wall.
- East Ridge Baptist Church, Lake Charles: Join us on December 22 at 5:30 PM as our choir presents our Annual Christmas Cantata, "Peace on Earth" directed by Linda Monta. Pastor: Alan Weishampel
- New Life Baptist Church, Albany: Featuring Greg Sullivan with Ivan Parker in concert, January 19, 2025, 6 p.m. Pastor: None.
- Plainview Baptist Church, Hornbeck: New Year's Eve Concert, January 31, 7 p.m. Featuring the Southern Plainsmen Quartet and the Mattingly's, Special Guest: Mark Lanier. Pastor: Jody Mitchell.

FIND It Fast

In The Classifieds

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.

umd jgqhubnr gkn osmrv: qunt gkn gss

mzrlkgrq, qunt gkn gss vwbo vlzd, qunt hgrrlq

ogky; dsnnmrz, stmrz vljr, slemrz ql dswbonk.

mdgmgu imiqt-dmp:qnr

Clues:
M = I; Q = T

Answer to November 21, Scripture Crypto:
Isiah fifty-six: ten



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Summer Grove celebrates 175 years of ministry

By Brian Blackwell
Message staff writer

SHREVEPORT, La. (LBM) – Summer Grove Baptist Church will kick off the holiday season with a celebration of its 175th anniversary, Nov. 24.

The special day will begin with life groups at 9:15 am and a worship service and cupcakes at 10:30 a.m. Following the service, members and other guests will gather for a Thanksgiving meal.

“For God to use us here in Northwest Louisiana for 175 years is just exciting,” Pastor Heath Peloquin told the Baptist Message. “Our church is very loving and cares about reaching our community for Jesus. Serving Shreveport for Christ is part of our DNA.

“The incredible men

who have pastored Sumer Grove have been very faithful and that’s been an important part, too, of our church continuing for so long,” he continued. “God still uses this church, and I rejoice in that. This is the greatest church who love Jesus, love each other and love our community. We are looking forward to celebrating that on November 24.”

Reisa Johnson, who has been a member since she and her husband, Glenn, relocated to Shreveport from the Bahamas in 2017, said the church has become their family.

“When we attended Summer Grove, we felt the love and it was so genuine,” said Johnson, who coordinates the church’s Compassion 360 ministry. “Summer Grove has given us

aunts, uncles, and grandparents to my husband, myself and our four children. The church has been a Godsend and we have been able to join our church family to do local missions.”

Since Summer Grove was founded in 1849, the church has been led by 21 pastors and relocated to a vacant shopping mall in 2004. In 2023, the church paid off its \$12 million mortgage that freed up the church to tackle deferred maintenance, renovate existing parts of the campus, and increase its Kingdom impact through mission efforts that include sponsorships of five church plants and support for three missionary families. Summer Grove, which averages 1,585 for Sunday morning worship, also provides food

and clothing for needy families with children in Shreveport, Bossier and Stonewall schools, as well as counseling and emergency assistance for others through its Compassion 360 ministry.

In December, the church has a full slate of Christmas activities planned that will share the Gospel with their community:

-- Dec. 1, 5 p.m., tree lighting ceremony: several thousand are expected to gather on its campus for lighting of a Christmas tree, music by area high school choirs, train rides, snow, and food trucks;

-- Dec. 7, 9 a.m.-2 p.m., “Joy of Christmas”: the Compassion 360 ministry will host 75 families who will have the opportunity to shop for new Christmas presents

for their family and hear the Gospel presentation in the fellowship hall;

-- Dec. 8, 8:45 and 11 a.m., Lottie Moon Christmas Offering Emphasis: the children will place their Lottie Moon Christmas Offering gifts in a manger during both morning worship services;

-- Dec. 15, 10:30 a.m. and 5 p.m., Christmas choir program: the Summer Grove choir, orchestra and praise band will present a Christmas program; and

-- Dec. 24, 3 p.m.: Christmas Eve service.

“We’re really excited about continuing this 175th anniversary celebration into the new year and continue sharing the greatest new we’re ever known,” Peloquin said. “We’re going to continue celebrating Jesus.”

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