



# THE BAPTIST MESSAGE

January 16, 2025

Volume 140 • Issue No. 1

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John 3:16

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## ECON 2025: Create a culture of evangelism

COVINGTON, La. (LBM) – During the upcoming state Evangelism Conference, Jan. 27-28, hosted by First Baptist Church, Covington, speakers will urge Louisiana Baptists to reach their friends and family for Christ and to create a culture of evangelism within their congregations.

“When you come to ECON with a group of church members, you will be encouraged and equipped to return home



with a renewed sense of urgency to reach your friends and family for Christ,” Louisiana Baptist Evangelism and Church Growth Team Director Keith Manuel told the *Baptist Message*. “It is powerful when a group attends and then goes home with a

unified purpose.”

### PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

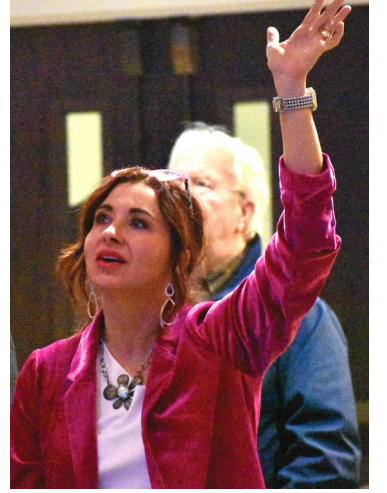
The first session will begin at 1:30 pm on Monday and will feature messages by Leroy Fountain, church health strategist with New Orleans Baptist Association and church planter consultant with Louisiana Baptists, and by Mike Courtney, itinerant evangelist in Texas, Louisiana, Mississippi and

the surrounding areas. Bill Blackmon, president and chaplain with Truckstop Ministries, will share a testimony about his ministry.

After a break for supper, the conference will continue at 6 p.m. with a message by Waylon Bailey, senior pastor with FBC Covington, and special music by the FBC Covington choir.

The second day of the program will begin at 9

See ECON, page 8



The 2025 Louisiana Baptist state Evangelism Conference will feature times of worship including the First Baptist Church, Covington, choir, Selah and weRcalled.

## Life Marches 2025: ‘Every life is worth living’



Brian Blackwell photo

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

BATON ROUGE, La. (LBM) – Anticipated thousands of Louisianians will stand together for life at five pro-life marches throughout the state in the coming weeks, according to the lead organizer.

The theme for the marches is “Every life is worth living.”

“We are thrilled in 2025 to proclaim that ‘every life is worth living’ in Louisiana from the unborn child in her mother’s womb to other vulnerable populations like the disabled and handicapped,” Louisiana Right to Life Executive Director Ben Clapper told the *Baptist Message*. “We know that we have been in uncharted territory since the reversal of Roe

See LIFE MARCHES, page 8

Individuals made the journey from the Louisiana Christian University campus to Sacred Heart Church in Pineville during the Louisiana Life March Central, Feb. 3, 2024. Five life marches are scheduled for January and February.

## 2025 Resolution: Win souls

By Will Hall  
Message executive editor

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Historians have traced the tradition of

New Year’s resolutions to about 4,000 years ago and the ancient Babylonians, who celebrated a 12-day festival of planting at the start of their new year

(March) by promising their gods to pay back debts and return borrowed items. Nearly 2,000 years later

See SOULS, page 5

# Hunt reveals \$610,000 salary; seeks millions in relief from CP

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Lori Ardoin & Shelly Cooper

**By Will Hall**  
Message executive editor

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (LBM) – Just prior to the Christmas holiday, religious news outlets reported that the jury trial in the lawsuit by Johnny Hunt against the Southern Baptist Convention, the SBC Executive Committee and Guidepost Solutions was

scheduled for June 17, 2025, in the U.S. District Court located in Nashville.

**RECAP**

Hunt was named in the controversial “Report of the Independent Investigation” about alleged sexual abuse and claims of mishandled cases in the SBC. Released in May 2022 by Guidepost Solutions for the SBC and SBC EC, the report accused him of having groomed a pastor’s wife, 20 years younger than him, (which included time while he served as SBC president, 2008-2010); and having sexually assaulted her in a Florida condo (July 2010) just weeks after his tenure as SBC president ended with the closing of the SBC annual meeting.

In an April 2024 deposition, Hunt said that he kissed and fondled the woman’s body for “a

couple of minutes” after she had lowered her top and that he pulled down the woman’s shorts before he was convicted to stop and leave. However, his lawsuit is based largely on his claim that he did not groom her, and that the encounter was consensual, not abuse, alleging that the woman had stalked him. Likewise, he claims that he should not have been included in the sexual abuse report because the incident occurred when he was no longer a member of the SBC EC and so the incident was “outside the letter of engagement” which set limits to the investigation that should have excluded him from the report.

At the time of the incident (July 2010), Hunt was pastor of Woodstock Baptist Church in Georgia. He did not inform the

See HUNT, page 17



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# LOUISIANA LIFE MARCH

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JAN. 22, 6 PM

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JAN. 26, 2 PM

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# Louisiana Baptists respond after New Orleans terrorist attack

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

NEW ORLEANS (LBM) – After a terrorist-driven truck killed 14 people and injured more than 35 others on Bourbon Street, Jan. 1, Louisiana Baptists joined others around the state and nation in prayer, and mobilized chaplains to offer counseling in the city.

## BACKGROUND

Shamsud-Din Jabbar, 42, drove a white Ford F-150 Lightning EV truck around a police blockade and slammed into revelers before being shot dead by police, Jan. 1.

The attack happened around 3:17 a.m. and nearly 16 hours before the kickoff of the Allstate Sugar Bowl, which was postponed to Jan. 2. During a news conference Jan. 2, the FBI said that Jabbar picked up

the rented vehicle on Dec. 30 and the following day drove to New Orleans on Dec. 31, posting multiple videos online that declared his support for ISIS.

He stated in the videos that he “originally planned to harm his family and friends but was concerned the news headlines would not focus on the war between the believers and disbelievers.” Additionally, he stated he joined ISIS before the summer.

## CHAPLAINS MOBILIZED

Larry Johnson is a lay leader with the Bridge Church, Madisonville, and vice president of chaplaincy services with Baptist Community Ministries, a ministry that was formed from the proceeds of the 1995 sale of Southern Baptist Hospital in New Orleans. Through the years the ministry has furthered

the Gospel through partnerships formed with 150 churches and 95 non-profit organizations in the city — investing in health, education and public safety.

He noted that chaplains from BCM arrived within 45-50 minutes of the incident, providing spiritual support to law enforcement officers, bystanders and telecommunicators. BCM has 10 full-time chaplains, with five working with the NOPD and another with the 911 call center. BCM has contributed \$75,000 to support affected families: \$50,000 to the New Orleans Tragedy Fund, and \$25,000 to New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary for counseling.

“In the time after, many of our chaplains offered prayers of comfort, encouragement and support,” Johnson told the *Baptist Message*. “I would ask that people continue to pray for



Page Brooks photo

Prayer walkers left yellow roses along the street in memory of the victims of the Jan. 1, 2025, New Orleans terrorist attack.

strength of the chaplains, pastors, law enforcement officers, medical personnel and others. The days

following the incident have been intense and with

See TERRORIST, page 6

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# Souls from page one

when emperor Julius Caesar established January 1 as the beginning of the annual calendar, the Romans adopted similar practices, offering sacrifices and promising to be good in the coming year.

Today, New Year's Eve and New Year's Day are celebrated worldwide, and research indicates that in the United States up to half of adults make some sort of resolution (typically regarding health, fitness or finances, but Bible study and prayer are popular commitments among Christians).

However, for 2025, I urge Louisiana Baptists to resolve to do something more meaningful than just "better oneself" – even spiritually. Instead, I call on Louisiana Baptists to make a specific commitment to win souls to Christ!

Soul winning is not something new to Loui-

siana Baptists. Indeed, it is believed that in 1799 Baptist preacher Joseph Willis swam the Mississippi River on the back of a mule into the Louisiana Territory specifically to win souls in places where the Gospel had not gone before (He was the first evangelical to preach west of the Mississippi River). Moreover, in 2022, Louisiana Baptists saw baptisms increase 18.8 percent above 2021, then surge another 31.1 percent in 2023 – translating into 6,690 souls won in 2022 and 8,770 in 2023!

Importantly, two developments suggest that the fields are yet "white unto harvest":

-- Despite the trend of more and more Americans identifying as religiously nonaffiliated, news outlets reported that Bible purchases in our country rose 22 percent in 2024. Meanwhile,



all other book sales were up just one percent, according to the Wall Street Journal.

-- Additionally, the American Bible Society reported survey findings that 44 percent of Gen Z adults are curious about Jesus and the Bible (and the Washington Times offered that young men especially have renewed interest in biblical faith).

Corporately, Louisiana Baptists have made multiple commitments to soul winning:

-- In 2023, we pledged to fortify a culture of evangelism among our churches and concomitantly launched Send Network Louisiana, an effort to baptize 28,875 new believers (an estimated one percent of the lost population in our state) through 231 new

church plants by 2033.

-- We host yearly YEC, CEC and ECON events as both training and outreach efforts.

-- On top of that, major area-wide local crusades are planned for 2025.

Just to name a few.

But more needs to be done by each of us.

There are many ways one could define what it means to be more like Jesus, and various religious websites offer an array of options such as "be a better moral person," "love your enemies" and "be humble." One simply listed the fruit of the Spirit found in Galatians 5:22-23 ("love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control").

However, none mentioned the key characteristic that Jesus used to describe Himself – soul winning (Luke 19:10 "for the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost"). It is true that this self-description has a specific applica-

tion: Jesus spoke it while declaring "salvation has come" to the house of Zacchaeus.

But He repeatedly announced that it was His purpose to preach the "Kingdom of God," meaning repentance, redemption and restoration, or more simply put, the offer of salvation through Himself (Luke 4:43; 8:1). Moreover, this was his priority during His forty-day ministry after being resurrected (Acts 1:3). Indeed, Christ's first intentional act upon being raised from the grave was to delay any other event so that He could lead two men to salvation who knew Him only as a prophet or a Nazarene, but not yet as "Lord" (Luke 24, esp. vv. 19, 34).

So, in 2025, don't set typical goals for self-improvement. Instead, follow Jesus' perfect example. Resolve to be more Christlike, a soul winner, and "seek and save that which is lost."

**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

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# Terrorist from page 4

that intensity any type of person who gives caregiving can become exhausted to the point where you experience burnout. Pray for strength, endurance and perseverance.

“And please pray that our chaplains and pastors see some type of evidence of God at work,” he continued. “Because when you’re tired and exhausted, seeing that evidence of God moving gives you the sense and the assurance that you’re not alone and your labor is not in vain.

“Additionally, for the city itself, please pray that this would be a time for people to lean on God,” he said. “New Orleans is a very festive and celebratory city, and it’s good to have celebration and festivals to enjoy. But sometimes in all the celebration, you can forget the one who blesses and the one who is the giver of those blessings. So, pray that this sparks a spiritual revival in the city that’s

already primed for one.”

NOBTS President Jamie Dew said in a statement that he is grateful for the partnership with BCM. The funds will offer free counseling services (at NOBTS’ Leeke Magee Christian Counseling Center on campus) to the terror attack survivors, victims’ families, first responders and others who were impacted.

“After the New Year’s Day terrorist attacks in New Orleans, it’s more important now than ever that our city and our nation see Christians standing in the darkness and showing Jesus to people that are hurting,” he said. “These funds from BCM will enable us to do this more effectively as we seek to serve our community.”

### PRAYER WALK

Many New Orleans pastors prayer walked Bourbon Street, Jan. 2,



Page Brooks photo

Pastors, New Orleans Diocese Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Police Chief Anne Kirkpatrick, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, and law enforcement leaders also participated in a prayer walk, Jan. 2, 2025, at the site of the deadly terrorist attack on Bourbon Street.

before it reopened to the public.

Louisiana Baptist pastors and lay leaders included: Page Brooks, senior pastor, Canal Street Church: A Mosaic Community, New Orleans; Larry Johnson, lay leader, Bridge Church, Madisonville; Ricky Murphy, associate pastor, Celebration Church, Metairie; Michael Raymond, pastor, Shiloh Christian Fellowship, New Orleans; and Dennis Weston, senior

pastor, Celebration Church, Metairie.

New Orleans Diocese Archbishop Gregory Aymond, Police Chief Anne Kirkpatrick, New Orleans Mayor LaToya Cantrell, other pastors and law enforcement leaders also participated in the prayer walk, which took place at the request of Cantrell. The group also left yellow roses along the street in memory of the victims.

A second line band followed the group and played hymns such as “I’ll fly away” and “Just a closer walk with thee.”

“It was surreal to see Bourbon Street so clean and without people, which is totally atypical of how it usually is,” Watson said. “We prayed for the family members of those who were killed in the tragedy and for healing and recovery for those who were injured as we prayer-walked down Bourbon Street. And we also prayed that the ungodly businesses and activities that are typically prevalent on that street would lose their power and influence over people’s lives. We sensed the Lord’s presence as we prayed, and at the end city leaders and pastors affirmed our faith in the fact that God can take the greatest of tragedies, turn them around, and use them for our good and for His glory.”

Johnson was encouraged to see pastors from various denominations, along with city officials, come together for prayer.

“I personally appreciated the mayors and civic leaders calling faith lead-

ers to come out and pray and do that event because it acknowledges the role of faith in prayer,” Johnson said. “New Orleans is a very spiritual place, a very religious city, and so acknowledging the role and power of prayer and faith and the role that it plays helps the city recover from this really tragic event. Also, it was powerful that we prayed in remembrance of those that have lost their lives and their families and those who have been injured.”

Brooks said the prayer walk showed the spirit of the people and city of New Orleans.

“On the one side we were lamenting those who had passed and the tragedy of the situation,” he said. “On the other side, the music brought people together for support and strength. That is what I have seen the community do; we lament together but we also come together for support and encouragement during the hardest of times.

“It is an opportunity to share Jesus,” he continued. “As people are thinking about life and death, it becomes an opportunity for us to let people know that none of this took God by surprise. At the same time, followers of Jesus must shine their light even more so that people can know there is hope that has overcome evil and tragedy in the world.”

### DAY OF PRAYER

On Jan. 5, Louisiana Baptist churches around

See **TERRORIST**, page 7



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MARCH 16, 2025

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# Terrorist from page 6

the state had an emphasis on prayer for those affected by the terrorist attacks. Louisiana Baptist Executive Director Steve Horn and Louisiana Baptist Convention President David Goza had called on all Louisiana Baptist churches to set aside time during their Sunday worship services to have dedicated prayer.

“I am thankful for all the churches who set aside some time to pray specifically for New Orleans,” Horn said. “As always, my hope in these designated times of prayer is that we might all become more “tuned in” to the larger body of Christ. In addition, I pray that this day of prayer is not the end of praying for New Orleans, but instead prompts frequent and fervent praying for the Gospel to advance in this city and region.”

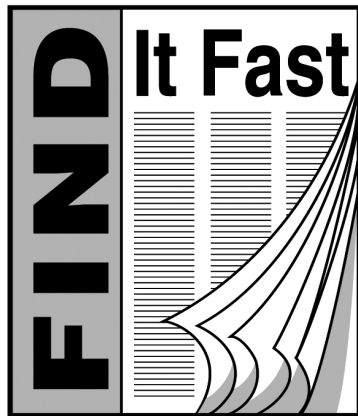
After Sunday services,

Goza, pastor of Jefferson Baptist Church, Baton Rouge, told the *Baptist Message* that “when God’s people speak with one voice, it is powerful, and God hears us. With the kind of evil we saw in New Orleans, we need God to hear us and the church needs to unite and seek God with one voice.”

Vieux Carre Baptist Church, located near the area that was locked down after the attack, hosted a prayer gathering, Jan. 5. Afterward, they were joined by other pastors and chaplains for a prayer walk through the path of the attack on Bourbon Street.

“We need others to sit with us in times of grief, to cry out to God with us,” Vieux Carre Baptist Pastor Alex Brian said. “Our culture doesn’t typically stop to grieve, but we as Christians should, because our faith teaches us what

this world is meant to be, and what it will be. We’re meant to walk into difficulty and darkness with confidence in God’s ability to redeem even this. Having other pastors there and chaplains who had been on the scene, together with members of the community, gave us all a moment to stop, admit brokenness, and ask God for healing, knowing his Kingdom will come here, too, as it is in Heaven.”



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## LCU Day of Prayer February 2, 2025

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## ECON from page one

a.m. with messages by Carl Bradford, dean with Texas Baptist College and assistant professor of evangelism with Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, and by Tim Dowdy, vice president of evangelism with the North American Mission Board. Martha Bailey, wife of Waylon Bailey and women's community outreach Bible study leader with FBC Covington, will share how God has used her ministry to impact others for Christ.

The conference's final session will begin at 1:30 p.m. with messages by John Sullivan, minister to mature adults with Broadmoor Baptist Church, Shreveport, and by Jeff Iorg, president and CEO with the Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee.

Also, weRecalled will

lead in musical worship throughout the two-day program, with Selah providing special music during the final session.

"This year, we are experimenting with some changes," Manuel said. "One change is the breakouts are attached to meals instead of in the afternoon session on Tuesday. That way, you don't have to fight traffic to get a good meal, and you'll go home with some ideas you can implement to create a culture of evangelism. The second change is we will conclude after the Tuesday afternoon session."

### ECON-RELATED EVENTS

ECON also will feature a senior adult fel-

See ECON, page 13

## Life Marches from page one

v. Wade with an uptick of propaganda in the press accusing pro-life groups, pregnancy centers, and pro-life people of harming women because of Louisiana's pro-life laws. The truth remains that the pro-life community loves both the unborn child and the mother. Our goal has always been to empower women to choose life in even the most difficult of situations. We, together with nearly 40 pregnancy centers across the state, continue to

stand strong, but we need you to show our elected officials and the community that we will never sway in our mission to save lives."

-- Jan. 22 (Lake Charles): The first Life March will kick off at 6 p.m. in Veterans Memorial Park.

-- Jan. 25 (Bossier/Shreveport): Participants will gather at 10 a.m. in the Boardwalk area of Bossier City, crossing over a bridge before ending in Shreveport's Festival Plaza.

-- Jan. 25 (Baton Rouge): The march will begin, 10 a.m., in the grassy area of the Capitol and end in Galvez Plaza on the site of the Old State Capitol building.

-- Jan. 26 (Monroe/West Monroe): Pro-life supporters will gather, 2 p.m., on the campus of First Baptist Church, West Monroe, and march to Anna Grey Noe Park of Monroe.

-- Feb. 1 (Pineville/Alexandria): The CENLA Life March is set for a 10 a.m. start on the campus of Louisiana Christian University in Pineville and will end in downtown Alexandria.

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# An 89-year-old's example: It is never too late

**By Brian Blackwell**  
Message staff writer

ALEXANDRIA, La. (LBM) – Solange Parker was beaming with excitement as she entered the baptistery at Calvary Baptist Church, Nov. 10.

With neighbor Justin Langford and personal primary care doctor David Guillot gathered beside her, the 89-year-old fulfilled a 50-year dream of stirring the baptistery waters.

“It was amazing, exciting and very important to my faith,” Parker told the Baptist Message. “I was filled with joy knowing I could get the order of my baptism right after all these years.”

Though Parker turned to Christ many years ago, she never followed through with a public declaration of her faith

through baptism.

But because of a long-term friendship built with Langford and Guillot, the exposure to ongoing baptisms at Calvary and a message on the importance of baptism by Pastor Todd Strain, Parker finally took that next step in her faith.

“I knew it was a long time coming from the conversations we have had,” said Langford, also a professor of Christian studies at Louisiana Christian University. “After the service, when Todd preached about baptism, she looked at me and said, ‘Let’s make this happen.’”

After several more months of delays because of health concerns, the big day finally arrived for Parker.

“She may not be able to walk as good as she



Submitted photo

David Guillot, Pastor Todd Strain and Justin Langford celebrated the baptism of Solange Parker, 89, during a service at Calvary Baptist Church, Alexandria.

used to, but Solange is a very determined person, and when she wants to do something, she will do it,”

Langford said. “It was a struggle, but she walked up those steps and as soon as she hit the water

she exclaimed, ‘Praise God.’ It’s a reminder to all of us that you’re never too old to get baptized.”

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LOUISIANA BAPTISTS

# LBC 'Retired Pastor of the Year' Dunlap answers Macedonia's call

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

HOLDEN, La. (LBM) – Ronnie Langlois had been pastor with Macedonia Baptist Church for about four months when he suddenly passed.

Dealing with the unexpected loss, the Holden congregation contacted their former pastor, Roger Dunlap, who returned in October to guide them through the tragedy and help to plan a new course for the future.

“I know they’ve been through a tough time, with losing their pastor,” Dunlap told the *Baptist Message*. “We have a special bond. Macedonia is a special place for me, and I am praying with them that God sends the right man for their next chapter.”

For his dedication to ministry, Dunlap was one of three men who were named a Louisiana Baptist Convention “Retired

Pastor of the Year” during a special luncheon, Nov. 12, that was part of the activities related to the LBC Annual Meeting.

A native of Walker, Dunlap was 16 years old when he surrendered his heart to Christ during a revival service at Judson Baptist Church, Walker.

After graduating from Southeastern Louisiana University in 1961, Dunlap began a 40-year-career in the auto salvage and used parts business. But early in his secular career, Dunlap felt the call to preach the Gospel. However, he dismissed that appeal from the Holy Spirit for the next 20 years until, at age 50, he believed God was giving him one more chance to surrender to preach the Gospel.

“I was kind of brought to my knees,” he said. “God told me you’re going to preach, do it now because this is your last chance. And so, I



Roger Dunlap has served as interim pastor of Macedonia Baptist Church, Holden, since October 2024. He previously served as pastor from 2003-2007.

answered the call, and I started preaching.”

He continued to work at his business, A & B Motors in Amite, but also began supply preaching at churches in Louisiana and Mississippi before landing his first pastorate with Macedonia Baptist Church (2003-2007).

Later he served as pastor with Eden Baptist Church, Denham Springs (2008-2009), before

returning to Macedonia (2009-2023).

When Macedonia recently asked Dunlap to return, again, he felt honored that they asked him to join them as they healed from their pastor’s death. He plans to serve on the pulpit committee as they search for God’s next man to be pastor.

“I told them that I felt like God wanted me to

come back to the church, to bring the people back together,” he said. “I’m there to help them get ready until God sends the right man there for that church and will pray with them to know God’s will.

## A HOPEFUL FUTURE

Though his third time at Macedonia is expected to be just temporary, he is thankful for the opportunity to serve them in this time of need.

“I am very thankful to be back home,” Dunlap said. “Macedonia feels like home. You would have to experience firsthand the warm fellowship to understand. God has spared the church through many hurricanes and forest fires and has kept it intact. My prayer is that God will continue to bless this old church founded in 1856 with many new converts.”

# PAUSE

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# FIRST PERSON: How to stay at one church for 32 years

**By Louis Husser**  
Special to the Message

ROBERT, La. (LBM) -- On a dreary Sunday morning in January 1992, my family and I drove from our home in Picayune, Mississippi, to the little town of Robert, Louisiana. I had been asked to preach in view of a call to be the senior pastor of what was then known as First Missionary Baptist Church of Robert (and later became Crossgate First Baptist Church).

I told my wife, "If the church does three specific things we will not be coming back." In all honesty I am not sure why I accepted the invitation to interview for this position. I was formerly a senior pastor and the experience, to say the least, had been tumultuous and not one that I wished to repeat. On our drive home, we laughed as we discussed the three "forbidden things," as the church did all three and that I had accepted their invitation to return the very next Sunday!

I wanted to build men. My heart burned to teach the word by example and to allow God to work through my human efforts to change the lives of families by building strong men to be the spiritual leaders of those families. The only way I knew to accomplish this was to be in a leadership role as the senior pastor.

My confirmation of this call occurred that day at that little church in Robert. A young father walked the aisle, dedicated his life to the Lord and expressed a desire to be the spiritual leader of his family. I knew at that moment that God had plans for us at the First Missionary Baptist Church of Robert.

Little did I know that 32 years later, I would write this article to express to other pastors and church leaders the importance of staying with their congregation.

There's great satisfaction in watching the fruits of one's labor manifested in seeing families as well

as individuals to grow in their spiritual journeys, and to watch their children to do the same. A pastor who chooses to leave his flock will never experience this phenomenon. Pastoral struggles are real. However, the joy that comes from seeing a mighty movement of God on a congregation, does not compare to the temporary relief of seeking an "easier" church to pastor.

Thirty-two years ago, I did not come to Robert with the intention of staying. I simply planned to stay until God would tell me to move on. Like most pastors, I assumed my work would only last a few years.

There were struggles to endure, battles to fight, and changes to be made as in any ministry. Yet, I only have words of encouragement to pastors about long-term ministry.

1. Make long-term decisions. Every change we make and every plan we implement affects many other people in the present and in the future. Whether we build new facilities or change curriculums, these decisions will have effects on future generations. It is easy to fix urgent prob-

lems, but we must consider the effects that will result further down the road.

-- Also, always remember that your motives are being examined and that

your choices have blessings or consequences.

-- Importantly, never be too prideful or confident to seek advice of a Christian mentor; someone who is

a prayer warrior and who will help you see your situation more clearly.

2. Guard your wife and

See HUSSER, page 19

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# LBC 'Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year' Riddle now craves His Word, not drugs

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

MARKSVILLE, La. (LBM) – John Riddle seemed like the least likely person to become a pastor he was in a battle with drug addiction that landed him in the Baton Rouge Salvation Army rehabilitation facility in March 2017.

But an encounter with God three months into the treatment program, shortly after his release from jail, set him on a path to redemption in Jesus and an eventual call from the Holy Spirit to serve as pastor with Life Point Community Church, Mansura.

“That night I told the Lord, ‘I want you to be glorified in my life after taking drugs for so many years,’” Riddle told the Baptist Message. “For God to get the glory and what He did in the life of

an individual who was so far out there and lost in the darkness speaks to the goodness He can bring on a person’s life.

“I love the Lord so much,” he continued. “I have this yearning inside of me to learn the word of God and to preach and teach, and I just want to glorify God and for people to see that God is a God of transformation.

“I remember dedicating the following six-and-a-half months in treatment to reading through the entire Bible,” he continued. “When I had completed this task, I took my Bible and placed it on a stool. I looked up to Heaven and asked God to turn my craving for drugs into a craving for His Word. He did just that.”

Riddle, who started as pastor of LPCC in 2020, was one of two pastors

recently named a Louisiana Baptist Convention “Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year” for dedication to both biblical ministry and secular work.

## WAYWARD PATH

Born in Alexandria, Riddle grew up at New Life Assembly of God, Marksville, and turned to Christ when he was in the sixth grade. He eventually enrolled at Louisiana Tech. However, while attending college he drifted into a life of alcoholism and partying.

Riddle’s life began to plummet when he discovered that he had become addicted to a prescription drug that is used to treat attention deficit hyperactivity disorder. He began to consume both prescription drugs and alcohol, an addiction that continued through most of his young adult life.



Brian Blackwell photo

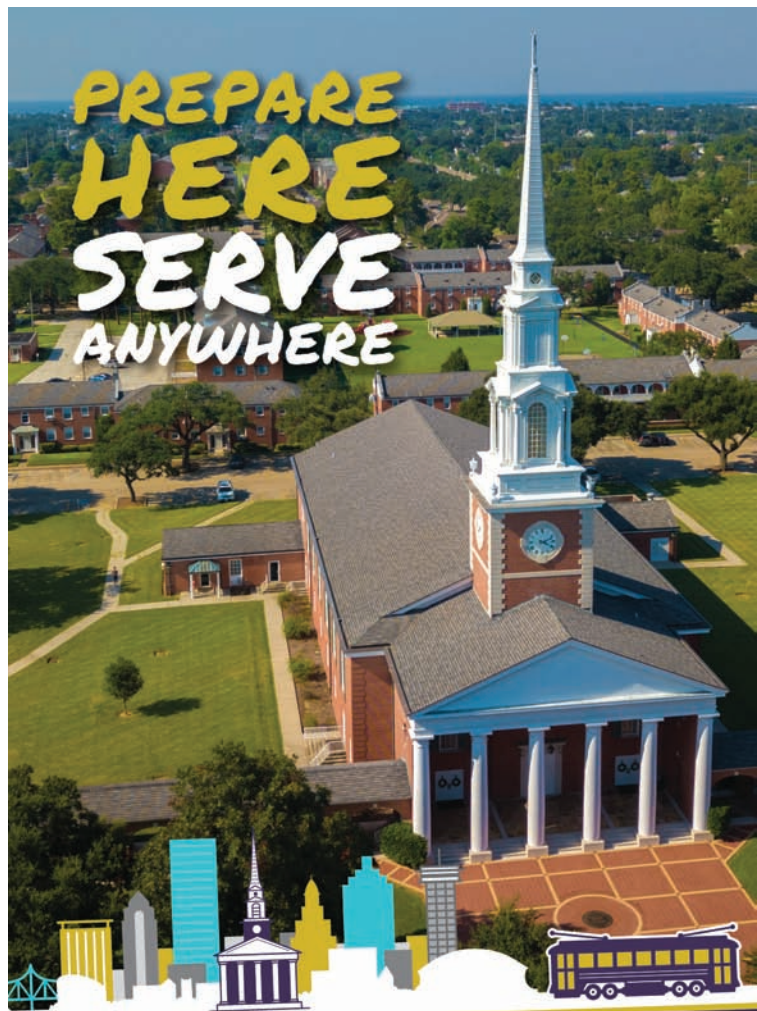
John Riddle, who started as pastor with Life Point Community Church, Mansura, in 2020, was recently named a Louisiana Baptist Convention “Bi-vocational Pastor of the Year” for dedication to both biblical ministry and secular work.

At age 34, after he experienced a broken heart because of a broken relationship, Riddle took an even more dangerous path of destruction when he turned to using crystal methamphetamine in 2014. “My world fell apart,” Riddle said. “I hit rock bottom, but this is where I met Jesus again and He picked me up.

“I didn’t have a home, and had been moving around to wherever the road would take me,” he continued. “My rock bottom with my arrest on charges of possession of drugs was on a concrete bed in a jail cell.”

The situation caused much embarrassment for

See RIDDLE, page 13



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**RIDDLE** from page 12

Riddle's dad, Charles, who was and still is the district attorney with Avoyelles Parish.

"Some preachers came into the Salvation Army facility after my release from jail and my life turned around," he said. "I stood up and confessed all of my sins in front of 40 men who were just like me. I felt the fire of God coming out of my mouth. When I went to bed that night, I prayed to God and asked Him that if it were possible I would like to get the same level of attention for His glory on the 'sheep side of the fence' as I had gotten on the 'goat side of the fence.'"

**NARROW WAY**

After completing a year of residence in the Salvation Army facility, Riddle moved to Marks-ville and joined Life Point Community Church in Mansura. During that time, Jacob Crawford, who was pastor at the time and later became a Send Network Louisiana church planting catalyst, began mentoring Riddle, who at a younger age felt

a call to ministry.

When Crawford left to start City Life NOLA ministry in New Orleans, Riddle succeeded him as pastor with LifePoint.

"I knew that God was extending his grace in my life because I'm one of those that feel very undeserving," he said. "But it's never been about deserving God's grace. God is giving me what I don't deserve in this temporary world. I'm forever grateful every morning and every night and I just hope that feeling never wears out."

LPCC, which averages 80 for Sunday morning worship, has frequent outreaches to the community: van transportation for children in the neighborhood, food box distribution to 600 people per month and operation of a clothes closet to help support needy families and produce church income.

"I'm very proud of our church," Riddle said. "We have a consistent 60 who attend with another 15-20 who come here in need of spiritual help. Once they get better, they will leave, and we have others who rotate in. We are constantly seeing new people from all over Avoyelles Parish who come into to LifePoint as it has and always will be a spiritual

hospital for the sick."

When he's not pastoring LPCC, Riddle drives a van for the Avoyelles Society for the Developmentally Disabled. While it can be challenging at times to balance the pastorate and a secular job, Riddle said his company has been accommodating and supportive.

"I've done plenty of hospital visits and funerals

and my work has been very lenient and graceful with me as to taking days off when I need to," he said. "When God calls us to ministry, He always provides for our needs and equips us with the tools necessary to get the job done. I will always do all that I can to be a Kingdom builder. Whenever the Lord calls, I will answer."

**ECON**

from page 8

lowship as well as breakout sessions that include meals.

**Monday:**

— Discipleship Collaborative breakout session, 4:30 p.m.

— Top 10 Evangelistic Practices for Today's Church breakout session, 4:30 p.m.

**Tuesday:**

—Free men's ministry breakfast, 6:30 a.m., courtesy of FBC Covington (no registration required)

— Senior Adult Luncheon, 11:45 a.m.

— Creating a Culture of Evangelism breakout session, 11:45 a.m.

ECON is free to attend. However, tickets are needed for the Adult Luncheon (\$15). Also, meals for the three breakout sessions are \$5 (reduced because of the generosity of sponsors). Register for each at LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON.

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Tioga FBC is prayerfully seeking a full-time pastor. Please send résumés to Searchteam@tiogafbc.com (The S is capitalized), or 1309 Singer Drive, Pineville, LA 71360.



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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 FULL-TIME  
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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.



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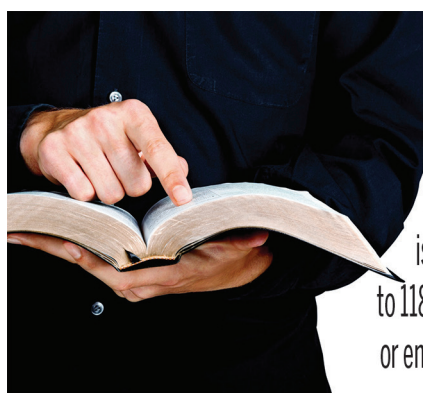
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Westside Baptist Church, Natchitoches, LA is seeking a pastor. Résumés can be mailed to Pastor Search Committee, Attn: Mike Newton, 6834 Hwy 1 Bypass, Natchitoches, La. 71457 or submitted to Mike Newton via email at westsidenatchitoches@gmail.com.



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**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**

- Chris Poirrier is the new minister to median adults at First Baptist Church, Lafayette.
- Emily Slay is the new communication specialist for the Cenla Pregnancy Center. She previously served with the Louisiana Baptist State Missions Services team. Slay will manage social media accounts, utilize Facebook, Instagram and other platforms to reach mothers in need of our services and support.
- Lewis King is the new pastor at Mystic Baptist Church, Fields.

**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, Ark.; Worship: Jake & Rachel Chapman, First Baptist Church, Minden; 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; January 26 – Evangelist: Nick Andrews, Pilgrims Rest Baptist Church, Spearsville: Worship: Pilgrim Rest Praise Band.
- Bethany Baptist Church, Bethany: Revival, January 31-2025, 6:30 p.m.; February 1, 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m.; February 2, 11 a.m. & 6:30 p.m. at Bethany Baptist Church, 10043 Hwy79 in Bethany, La. 71007. Pastor: Marvin Cooper.
- Fort Necessity Baptist Church, Fort Necessity: Revival, January 19-24, 2025. Evangelist Pastor: John Bradley.
- Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Super Sunday, January 19, 2025, Pastor: Wilton Wall.
- New Zion Baptist Church, Covington: Harvest Day, January 26, 2025. Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: Clark Stewart.
- First Baptist Church, Franklinton: Spring Revival, January 26, 2025, 8:15 and 10:45 a.m. and 6 p.m. Evangelist: Gary Bowlin. Pastor: Jake Roudkovski.
- Searcy Baptist Church, Trout: LaSalle Parish Rally, February 1, 2 p.m. Pastor:

- Steve Jensen.
- First Baptist Church, Haynesville: Spring revival, February 2-5, 2025, Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: Rob Burns.
- Bellevue Baptist Church, Jena: Spring Revival, February 2-5, Evangelist: Scotty McDowell. Pastor: Dustin Robertson.
- First Baptist Church, Haughton: Harvest Day, February 9, 2025. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.
- Philadelphia Baptist Church, Horseshoe Drive Campus, Alexandria: March 1-2, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Stuart Sasser.
- Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Spring Revival, March 5-7, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Wilton Wall.
- First Baptist Church, Gilbert: Spring Revival, March 9-12, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Bubba Ezell.
- West Ouachita Crusade, West Monroe: Spring Crusade, March 20-April 2, 2025. The Crusade will take place at West Ouachita High School. Evangelist: Bill Britt.
- First Baptist Church, Tullos: Spring Revival, February 16-19, 2025, 7 p.m. nightly. Worship: Mark Lanier. Pastor: Scott Smith.
- New Hope Baptist Church, Crowville: Harvest Sunday, February 23, 2025, 10:30 a.m. Worship: Mark Lanier. Pastor: Eddie Fuller.
- Epps Baptist Church, Epps: Mark Lanier, February 23, 2025, 6 p.m. Pastor: Eddie Fuller.
- Parkview Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: Mark Lanier in concert, March 1, 10 a.m. Pastor: Chris DeGeorge.
- New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Denham Springs: Spring Revival, March 23-26, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor Randal Gill.

**LAGNIAPPE**

- First Baptist Church, Robeline: weR-called acoustic Tour. January 15, 2025, 6:30 p.m. Pastor: Brian Ray.
- First Baptist Church, Vinton: Ivan Parker in concert, January 17, 2025, 7 p.m. Pastor: Ray Wells.
- New Life Baptist Church, Albany: Featuring Greg Sullivan with Ivan Parker in concert, January 19, 2025, 6 p.m. Pastor: Carlin Sanders.
- Bayou Vista Baptist Church, Morgan City: host 23rd Annual Brotherhood Wild Game Supper, January 18, 2025, 5:00 PM. Cost: \$10.00 at the door. Door prizes will be given out at the end of the night. Guest Speaker: Rubin Weaver, pastor with Antioch Baptist Church, Farmerville. Pastor: Ronnie Mabile.
- North Monroe Baptist Church, Monroe: 2025 SINGALONG Tour with Phil Wickham, January 18, 2025. Special Guests: Cody Carnes and Kristan Stanfill. Tickets and information at philwickham.com. Pastor: Bill Dye.
- Trees Baptist Church, Vivian: Harvest Sunday, January 19, 2025, Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Mark Crook.
- First Baptist Church, Haynesville: Wild Game Supper Event, February 1 Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor: Rob Burns.
- Eastwood Baptist Church, Haughton: David Phelps – The Speak of Love Tour, February 1, 2025, 7 p.m. Tickets are available at Eastwood Baptist Church and

www.davidphelps.Com/Tour. Pastor: Brad Kirby.

■ First Baptist Church, Mandeville: Everyman Conference 2025, February 22, 9:00 am - 4:00 pm. FBC Mandeville will host a one-day men's conference where you will be challenged, and encouraged, enjoy good fellowship, and sing with a room full of men. A number of notable main session speakers: Waylon Bailey (Senior Pastor of FBC Covington), Greg Wilton (New Orleans Saints' Chaplain & Dean of Leavell College), and Ronny Cooksey (Senior Pastor of FBC Mandeville) are among the guest speakers and will lead the general and break-out sessions. Other activities include good food, classic cars, giveaways (a gun, fishing gear, others). More information about the event, including registration details, can be found under the Events

tab on the webpage for FBC Mandeville, Louisiana at //fbcmadeville.org/event/ec25. Cost: \$35 until February 3, \$45 after February 3. There will also be a Man Lunch and snacks provided. Pastor: Ronny Cooksy.

■ Fort Necessity Baptist Church, Fort Necessity: Wild Game Supper, February 18, 2025. Evangelist: Sam Moore. Pastor John Bradley.

■ Lanier Baptist Church, Baton Rouge: Southern Plainsmen in concert, February 9, 6 p.m. Pastor: Michael Ferguson.

■ First Baptist Church, Haughton: Harvest Sunday, February 9, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Gevan Spinney.

■ Grace Baptist Church, Goldonna: Southern Plainsmen in concert. March 8, 2025, 6 p.m. Pastor: Myron Thompson.

■ Cypress Baptist Church, South Shreveport: Harvest Sunday, April 13, 2025.

Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Kevin Flattmann.

■ Philadelphia Baptist Church, Horseshoe Drive Campus, Alexandria: March 1-2, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Stuart Sasser.

■ Sweetwater Baptist Church, Quitman: Spring Revival, March 5-7, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Wilton Wall.

■ First Baptist Church, Gilbert: Spring Revival, March 9-12, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor: Bubba Ezell.

■ New Bethlehem Baptist Church, Denham Springs: Spring Revival, March 23-26, 2025. Evangelist: Bill Britt. Pastor Randal Gill.

■ West Ouachita Crusade, West Monroe: Spring Crusade, March 20-April 2, 2025. The Crusade will take place at West Ouachita High School. Evangelist: Bill Britt.

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## Scripture Crypto

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

upzjrpi, upzyprp wjv prpqk gnyqyv, ubv vqk

vep gnyqyvg mepvepq vepk hqp jx tji: uplhbgp

shwk xhzgp nqjnepvg hqp tjwp jbv ywvj vep mjqzi.

xyqgv ojew xjbq:jwp

**Clues:**  
J = O; N = P

**Answer to December 19, Scripture Crypto:**  
isaiah fifty-six:ten

# LBC 'Retired Pastor of the Year' Hartzell helps restart Sugartown

By Brian Blackwell  
Message staff writer

SUGARTOWN, La. (LBM) – Sugartown Baptist Church was dwindling to just a handful of members after the COVID-19 pandemic combined with Hurricanes Delta and Laura, when members approached their former pastor, Frederick Hartzell, about coming out of retirement.

The once-vibrant congregation had contracted to just four members, but they felt Hartzell could help reenergize the church

and ensure its health and growth for many years to come.

Hartzell, who returned to the church in September after previously serving as pastor from 1997-1999, said he is excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for a church and a community that have faced such challenging hurdles.

"Sugartown Baptist is not a dead church," Hartzell told the *Baptist Message*. "Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.'

And when churches get serious about doing God's work, they will experience an increase in some way because we love Jesus, love our community and are unified.

"We need to go back to the day when our churches were weeping for their communities, and I can tell you Sugartown Baptist is crying for our community," continued Hartzell, who was one of three men who were named a "Louisiana Baptist Retired Pastor of the Year" during a luncheon, Nov. 12, that

was part of the activities related to the LBC Annual Meeting. "When the church weeps for the community, God will honor those tears. And we will be blessed in great revival."

## HOPEFUL FUTURE

Hartzell, who has pastored Oaklin Springs Baptist Church (1992-1997), Sugartown Baptist (1997-1999), Mount Carmel Baptist Church (1999-2001), and Hilltop Baptist Church (2001-2021), is eager to explore next steps

for the church. On Nov. 10, the church hosted a meal after their morning worship service to connect with the community. They also are exploring additional ways to provide food for Sugartown, where 29 percent of the population lies at or below the poverty line.

"We're trying to find out what our niche is," he said. "Being just two months into this, I haven't quite determined that, but I do know we are here to serve our neighbors. God will show us how to reach our seniors and anyone else in need."

## OVERCOMER

Hartzell, who is supported in ministry by his wife, Mary, is no stranger to overcoming difficult situations.

Not only did he lose a son Frederick J. Hartzell II on Oct. 13, 2000, but on Aug. 21, 2022, Hartzell underwent an operation to receive a kidney and liver transplant. An Army veteran, chemicals he was exposed to while in the military had caused long-term damage to both organs.

Miraculously, he was out of the intensive care unit and at home in fewer than two weeks.

After the transplant, Hartzell learned he was an organ recipient from a 29-year-old man named Chase who died in Shreveport. While in the hospital, Hartzell felt led to write a letter to the man's mother and, months later he received a response.

"The letter said, 'My son was murdered in Shreveport, and I was praying to God that something good would come out of his death, and your letter was in the mail,'" he recalled. "Maybe I went through all of that so that she could get comfort."

"God says all things work together for the good for the Kingdom," he continued. "Maybe I went through all of that so his mom could get a letter and be comforted."

"Beyond that, I still



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Brian Blackwell photo

Frederick Hartzell recently returned to pastor Sugartown Baptist Church. He previously was pastor of the church from 1997-1999 and is excited about the possibilities that lie ahead for the church.

## Hunt from page 2

congregation at that time, but he wrote a letter of explanation to them after the report was published (May 2022). Regardless, the church removed his pastor emeritus status. Just prior to the release of the report, he resigned as senior vice president for evangelism and leadership with the SBC's North American Mission Board, a post he had held since August 2018.

Hunt said he was "seeking first and foremost truth from Guidepost." However, in Exhibit 9 submitted for him by his lawyers, Hunt, who is 71, listed compensatory damages for 11 years of lost salary and employment benefits, book sales, speaking engagements and other lost income totaling \$15.4 million. Additionally, he offered that his reputational harm was valued between \$30 million to \$45 million, and that the cost of his emotional distress amounted to another \$30 million to \$45 million. He also indicated he would seek "a punitive damage award in an amount to be determined by the jury" and "reasonable" attorneys' fees and costs.

Notably, he listed his lost salary and benefits as \$610,000 per year.

Moreover, when pressed about the possibility that Cooperative Program dollars would have to be used to compensate him for his alleged damages, Hunt said he was "absolutely" okay with that because "they have done a lot of damages."

Finally, Hunt appeared to reject the notion that his inappropriate behavior was the cause of his financial and reputational harm. When asked "What would it have cost you if it had come to light 12 years before when you committed the sin?" Hunt replied, "Probably some speaking engagements with the Southern Baptist Convention, but I really don't think it would have cost me my church. I think I could have led them through that." Conversely, at other times during

his testimony he repeatedly blamed the Guidepost Solutions "narrative" that framed his actions as "sexual abuse" as the reason for his downfall.

## Hartzell from page 16

have much more to do," he said. "God didn't save me to sit on a pew and do nothing."

### APPRECIATED

Tom Bruce, associational mission strategist with Beauregard Baptist Association, nominated Hartzell for the award. He commended Hartzell's concern for his church and community.

"Dr. Hartzell has made an amazing recovery following his liver transplant surgery," he said. "He has a determination and drive that is the driving force behind the revitalization efforts of a small church where he served as pastor many years ago. He is an encouragement and inspiration to me for work to be done in our association."

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Submitted photos

A fallen tree damaged the fellowship hall of Holly Ridge Baptist Church on Dec. 28, 2024. No one was inside the building at the time of the storm.

# Wisner church loses fellowship hall during severe storms

**By Staff**  
Louisiana Baptist Message

WISNER, La. (LBM) – High winds from a severe storm that passed through Wisner, Dec. 28, destroyed the fellowship hall of Holly Ridge Baptist Church.

One of several storms to strike communities in Louisiana that day, the damage occurred around 10:30 p.m. when 55 mph winds caused a tree to fall onto the roof of the facility, Pastor Dennis Fontenot told the Baptist Message.

Fontenot said he is grateful that the church (which averages 40-50 in Sunday morning worship) had insurance and that no one was inside the building at the time of the storm.

See HOLLY RIDGE, page 19



Submitted photos

Winds of 55 mph caused a tree to fall onto the roof of the Holly Ridge Baptist Church's fellowship hall and caused considerable damage. However, the church has insurance and no one was inside the building at the time of the incident. Until the church builds a new fellowship hall, the senior adult class that met there for Sunday school will be relocated to the worship center.



Thank you volunteers and everyone who has supported DR in Louisiana.

2025 DR Training Dates and Locations:

**Covington**

February 7-8  
First Baptist

**Lake Charles**

March 7-8  
Trinity Baptist

**Deville**

March 28-29  
Philadelphia Baptist

**Ruston**

April 11-12  
Temple Baptist

[LouisianaBaptists.org/drtraining](https://LouisianaBaptists.org/drtraining)

**Husser** from page 11

children from negative people and from church drama. They will be somewhat exposed, and they must be your first ministry responsibility. Remember, they do not have the power to change the situation. So, if they are not part of the problem or the solution, there's no need to burden them. Instead of discussing problems with them, find pleasant situations to share with them. Meanwhile, use mentors to help you navigate through diffi-

cult situations.

-- Turn off your cell phone and spend quality time with them. Be intentional about this.

-- Remind congregational members that your wife and children are off-limits for criticism.

[Spending quality time with family will allow you to leave church problems at church and give you a reprieve which can allow you to think more clearly about solutions to problems.]

3. Remember for

whom you work, and make sure you please the One who has given you the pastoral assignment. Your work should be "as unto the Lord" (Colossians 3:23-24), and you are to bring honor and glory to Him. During my ministry, I found out that I had distributed tons of disaster relief supplies to people who did not need them and had taken advantage of the situation. However, I followed Dr. Don Wilton's advice to me to remember, "who I worked for."

-- Remember, you are incapable of pleasing everyone.

4. Retire into something bigger than yourself. Find a purpose. Be

self-sacrificing. Your purpose should be of eternal significance. Your purpose should affect people worldwide. A global purpose is so enormous you cannot accomplish it without divine assistance.

5. People change. Cultures change. However, the message of the Gospel of Christ on the cross remains the same and should be delivered with clarity and consistency. People have become more isolated, more selfish, and more addicted to social media, their cell phones, and their computers. We must reach them where they are.

6. People are always watching you, so never use the word "quit" in

conversations about ministry. Instead, be intentional to use words such as perseverance, patience, endurance, confidence, hope, etc. The proverbial grass might look greener on the other side, but it's probably growing over a septic tank. In other words, another church might look more attractive; however, every church has problems.

7. The more broken the messenger has become, the more powerful is the message! God uses "limp" more than he uses a "strut!" Stay humble and remember where you came from!

Louis Husser recently retired as pastor of Crossgate First Baptist Church, Robert.

**HOLLY RIDGE** from page 18

Until the church builds a new fellowship hall, the senior adult class that met there for Sunday school will be relocated to the worship center.

"Even though it's a loss, we are blessed," Fontenot said. "By the grace of God, the incident occurred on a Saturday evening. If it had taken place a few hours later, some of our senior adults would have been injured or even killed because where the tree fell is the exact spot where they met for Sunday school."

Meanwhile, a Mississippi Baptist Convention congregation, O'Zion Baptist Church in Meadville, was destroyed when a tornado hit the facility around 3:30 p.m., Dec. 28. According to the Mississippi Baptist Record news journal, the church met the following day in the home of a church member.

The National Weather Service confirmed that at least 88 tornadoes touched down across the South, Dec. 26-29. At least four people died, and thousands were left without power.

Donations may be mailed to Holly Grove Baptist Church, c/o Gail McKee, 5100 Hwy. 562, Wisner, LA 71378.

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## NEW This Year: Meals served with Breakouts

All meals require pre-registration at [LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON25](http://LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON25). Seating is limited.

Through the generous contributions of the Baptist Message, Louisiana Foundation and SEND Network Louisiana, meals are only \$5!

### Monday, Jan. 27, 4:30pm

Top 10 Evangelistic Practices for Today's Church  
**Lane Corley ... Central Hall**

The Ongoing Challenge of Church Leadership  
**Discipleship Collaborative/Bruce Raley ... Fellowship Hall**

### Tuesday, Jan. 28, 12:00 noon

Creating a Culture of Evangelism  
**Tim Dowdy ... Fellowship Hall**

### Senior Adult Luncheon

**Jan. 28, 12:00pm**

Biblical Evangelism/Senior Adult Luncheon

**Jake Roudkovski ... Central Hall**

Hosted and supported by the

Louisiana Baptists

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**Cost: \$15**

For Schedule, visit [LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON25](http://LouisianaBaptists.org/ECON25)

