

DECEMBER 2005

FELLOWSHIP

COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTH CAROLINA



Ernie Banner, a former member of Kathwood Baptist Church in Columbia, was the foreman for the work crew on which Scott worked. Signs like this one are being placed all over Lacombe, LA, as CBF crews help the community clean up.

Broken— but still reflecting the image of God

By Scott McBroom

Providence Baptist Church, Charleston

The week of October 16, I worked with other CBF volunteers in the Lacombe, LA area. Having lived through Hurricane Hugo in 1989, I was prepared for devastation, but the damage to residents' psyches as well as property was far worse than I anticipated. While they are past the initial shock, they still have no concept of the long-term effect this will have upon their lives.

Lacombe is not a place you would hear about in the news. Its residents are largely Creole, most of whom live in trailers with incomes below the poverty level. Few have any insurance. The community is surrounded on three sides by bayou, and although they did not have the direct storm surge, most of their homes were flooded.

My reason for going to Louisiana was in response to an appeal for pastoral counselors to assist victims with the trauma of their disrupted lives. I was motivated to go because of two factors: the call of Christ to be instruments of his healing grace and a debt of gratitude for all that had been done for the Charleston community following Hugo.

As it turned out, the counseling I was able to do was impromptu conversations around how residents were coping with their disrupted lives, rather than structured meetings. I also sought informally to help volunteers deal with their own feelings of grief and frustration.

I experienced the best and worst of humanity while serving — proud people determined to hang on despite terrible losses



and those seeking to exploit those who have lost almost everything. I was particularly impressed by residents' desire to salvage and protect what little they had left, even though often both home and contents were beyond repair. One elderly woman at whose trailer we worked to remove soaked floors, walls and insulation was leaving to stay with a relative. All that remained inside were a few unbroken dishes. Yet, despite the fact that most of the windows were blown out by the storm, she carefully locked the door before leaving.

One experience left a special impression upon me. While working at a trailer owned by a single African American mother, I uncovered among the rubble a four inch high ornament-like statue of a black child angel. Despite being covered in mud and its wings broken, it still managed to look cherubic. I took it to the owner of the trailer, and could not help but share my observation that it seemed an apt metaphor for the people of that community — broken, but still reflecting the image of God.

People want to know if I came away from my three-month Sabbatical experience with any kind of newly discovered Profound Truth. Actually, I did. I was reminded that I have too many agendas and opinions about too many things. As Christians, after all, you and I pray to the Creator, “THY will be done,” not “MY will be done.”

Another way of saying this is that we need to be responsive to the Wild Winds of the Holy Spirit. Our lives are too predictable, too secure, too controlled.

For three months I had the great gift of having few pre-determined schedules. I literally lost a day in Belgium. I was tempted to argue with Butch Green about whether it was Tuesday or Wednesday, but since he lived there, I decided to acquiesce. Of course, he was right. On my bus and train excursions, I could walk out the door and turn left or right. It didn't matter. No one was expecting me in either direction. The three or four days when I did have a schedule almost always proved to be aggravating. Something would go wrong. It rained on my parade.

Every schedule you and I have to meet, every destination we have to reach is another opportunity for anxiety and failure. So, the Sabbatical lesson was to relax, to loosen my grip,

Sabbatical insights



By Marion
Aldridge
Coordinator

to give up some control, to have fewer opinions.

In America, we pay big bucks to Motivational Speakers to tell us just the opposite, “If you don't know where you are going, you will probably get there.” They are correct. However, Motivational Speakers do not necessarily speak for God. If we do not insist on going where we want to go and doing what we want to do, then maybe the Holy Spirit will have some wiggle room in which to work. Every agenda I have, every system and structure to which I have a commitment, every proposal I am determined to push, is one less opportunity for God to do something new and surprising.

My goal during this sabbatical was to listen to the world I am called to serve. It is hard to hear anything new when you always go to the same places and listen to the same words from the same people. You do not need to be on a Sabbatical to go to different places, to meet some neighbors you

have never met, to spend some time doing something out of the ordinary. Just do it.

I believe God is almost always calling Christians to get out of their comfort zones.

For over three decades in the ministry, I have watched good church people say they want to “reach out” to young adults, yet they want church to be just like it was when they were young adults! Young adults don't drive the same

cars you drove 50 years ago, they don't drink the same coffee you drank back then, they don't spend their evenings or weekends the same way you did. What makes you think they want to attend a church that looks and acts as churches looked and acted in 1955?*

Hold your opinions and agendas lightly. And keep praying, “Thy will be done.” Who knows, if enough Christians began to respond positively to the unpredictable whims of the Holy Spirit, God's Kingdom might actually come on earth as it is in Heaven.

* To see a list of contrasts between the church of the 20th century and the church of the 21st century, go to the CBF of SC website:
www.cbfofsc.org.

My Favorite Baptist

More details are available on the SC/CBF website.

It's time again for students across South Carolina to tell us who their favorite Baptists are. It's the annual “My Favorite Baptist” contest. Students in three age groups are invited to submit their essays for a chance to win tickets to Carowinds or a college scholarship.

Third through sixth graders write a 300-word essay about their favorite Baptist in their own church. Seventh through ninth graders write a 500-word essay about their favorite South Carolina Baptist. Tenth through twelfth graders write a 1,000-word essay about their favorite Baptist, past or present, in or out of South Carolina.

Deadline is Feb. 1. Winners will be announced March 1. The winners in the two younger age groups will win tickets to Carowinds. The 10th-12th grade winner will receive a \$1,000 college scholarship, and the second place winner will receive a \$500 scholarship.

FBC Greenwood celebrates 135th

First Baptist Church in Greenwood celebrated its 135th anniversary on Oct. 25. About 550 people attended the homecoming luncheon and the afternoon of fun and entertainment. Tony Hopkins is pastor.

Tony said the church particularly celebrated its strong missions heritage and its long-time commitment to the role of women in the church. Church member Martha Bishop was the first female Baptist deacon in South Carolina in the 1970's, Tony said.

HUNGARY

FBC Greenville group finds the family of God is wide and deep and colorful

By Clista Adkins

First Baptist Church, Greenville

It happened so quickly. One Sunday we were in Greenville attending the church picnic, and the next Sunday we were in Pecs, Hungary, taking communion on World Communion Sunday with Hungarian brothers and sisters in Christ.

Their congregation is as old as ours; they use the same communion plates; their lay-led service is very reverent; they even had one of their children's choirs singing "This Little Light of Mine."

We didn't understand one word of the worship service; yet each of us had a profound worship experience. We were hand-in-hand when the congregation began singing "Blest be the tie that binds . . ." in Hungarian to close the service.

The week that followed was life-changing for all of us. It was worth the Spartan living conditions — chilly showers, partially naked mattresses, moldy pillows, and 5-6 hour nights — to watch gypsy teens move from reserved suspicion of us to responsive and exuberant joy with us.

In groups of three, we spent the weekdays teaching English as a second language at the Ghandi Gymnasium (the only gypsy high school in Hungary). We went with our plans and we improvised on the spot; we played games, led cheers, made posters, talked about every teen subject we knew. Like all gypsies, the teens love music; so when our efforts to relate sometimes fell short, music brought us together.

Three evenings we sponsored activities for the entire student body of seventh-12th graders, all 250 of them. Two nights we hosted "celebrations," that included singing and sharing the

Gospel by young Hungarian and Gypsy men, followed by riotous games, food and prizes in the cafeteria. By the last celebration evening, even Linda was there—an abused 12th grader who had tried to commit suicide four times.



The Greenville team

Nine people from First Baptist Church in Greenville worked for a week with Gypsies in Hungary. Pictured on the front row are Laura Shelley, Becky Bouton, Clista Adkins, Connie Glass, missionary Penny Mann, Ethel Childress. Back row: Glen Adkins, John Long, Henry Watkins, Hungarian minister Nandi, missionary Ralph Stocks, and Jim Childress.

Our team will never forget the missionaries, Ralph and Tammy Stocks and Penny Mann, who have given their hearts and lives for these universally-unaccepted people, these teens and children and adults with beautiful dark eyes and souls for music.

We will never forget the ninth grade boy, E.T., who initiated Henry Watkins into his "Bad Boys Club." We won't forget Joshi, a cool and distant 10th grader who played Glen Adkins's guitar for the girls to sing gypsy music and who decided to play the jug/drum at the celebration evenings.

We will always remember that the same Linda finally spoke on the last day; she even smiled once or twice and ate a bite of cake.

In the words of our team leader, Jim Childress, "We went to teach English; but even more important, we went to tell these unloved teens that

God loves them. Jesus loves them." Our team left believing that some of them got the message.

We thought that we knew this truth — that the family of God is wide and deep and colorful and musical and alive and different and united in His love.

Now we have seen it in a vivid way that defies description. We saw in Hungary that differences — different educational levels, different philosophies, different words and languages, different musical styles and instruments, different ways of praising God and praying, different skin colors and races, different traditions and nationalities — are truly irrelevant in the family of God.

No one way is more right than the other; no one way is more important than the other. We are all loved children in the family of God, brothers and sisters, with Jesus as the Savior of us all.

Clista Adkins is former Singles Minister at FBC Greenville.

On a Sunday morning, we drove to two villages 20 miles from the Ukraine border to worship with small groups of gypsies. The Romany hosts offered us their only chairs, draped with towels or pieces of cloth, so that we sat while the other worshippers stood for the two-hour services.

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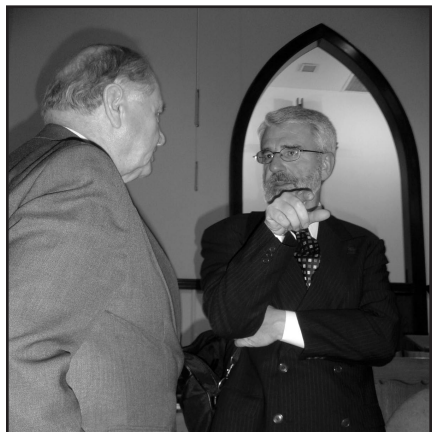
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SC/CBF urban minister Evelyn Oliveira from Charleston talks with Ephraim Rubinger, a Jewish Rabbi.



Michael Root of Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary, represented Christianity on the panel. He is talking with Beaufort pastor Bob Cuttino.

Tom Long, professor of preaching at Candler School of Theology, spoke in the evening session.



Andy Cooper from First Baptist Church in Aiken talks with Omar Shaheed, who represented Islam on the panel.



Fall Convocation 2005

More than 225 people attended the Fall Convocation Nov. 14 at Eau Claire Baptist Church in Columbia. The theme was "A world of diversity." Carl Evans from USC moderated an hour-long panel discussion among a Buddhist, Christian, Hindu, Muslim, and Jew

Loris Adams, Corwin Scriven, and Fletcher Tucker were among those in attendance at the Convocation. They are students at Lutheran Seminary, which is next door to Eau Claire Baptist Church in Columbia.

