



Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Louisiana

God's Blessings to You at Christmas

May you know the coming of our Lord in a new way this season.

Reid Doster, Coordinator; Kyle Kelley, Associate Coordinator;

Jenny Hodge, Together for Hope Missionary

Advent, meaning "the coming," is a time when we wait expectantly. Christians began to celebrate it as a season during the fourth and fifth centuries. Like Mary, we celebrate the coming of the Christ child, what God has already done.

And we wait in expectation of the full coming of God's reign on earth and for the return of Christ, what God will yet do. But this waiting is not a passive waiting. It is an active waiting. As any expectant mother knows, this waiting also involves preparation, exercise, nutrition, care, prayer, work; and birth involves pain, blood, tears, joy, release, community. It is called labor for a reason. Likewise, we are in a world pregnant with hope, and we live in the expectation of the coming of God's kingdom on earth. As we wait, we also work, cry, pray, ache; we are the midwives of another world. -- *Common Prayer for Ordinary Radicals*

Advent 2013

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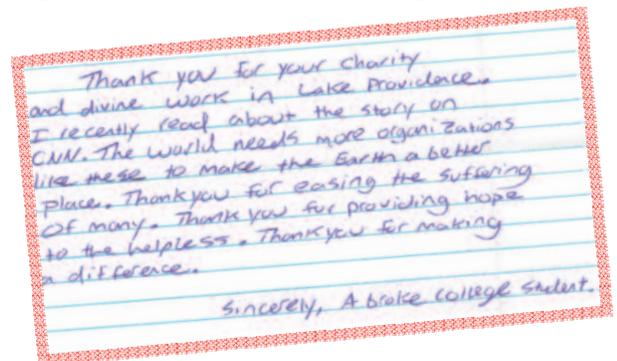
of Income Inequality, USA."

You can feel most encouraged in the traction starting to build in the Lake Providence work. Jenny has masterfully pulled together a local planning group of a cross section of the community who are building on a sound, asset-based approach to make positive change together. Her vision is to be a facilitator in the process of local leaders determining community priorities and finding ways to work together to make lasting change. As those plans advance, she will find appropriate ways for outside groups and churches to come along side and support local efforts. Read about the early steps of this process at her new smartly designed website tfn-la.org. (Funding for the new website was provided by Broadmoor Baptist in Baton Rouge. Thanks!)

Another key development is the launching of the Together for Hope Advisory Council, composed of members from CBF-LA churches around the state. Jenny has assembled a diverse and talented group who are already at work generating ways to enhance and further develop the work. You will be hearing more about that later. All of this is almost too much to say grace over, but we do, and praise God for these advancements.

John Sutter with CNN made 2 trips to Lake Providence, collecting material on income inequality and staying long enough to give a nuanced story. His research found that, yes, Lake Providence is the most unequal place economically in the United States. Yet, he also found hope and gives us plenty to think about as Christians committed to bringing God's wholeness to people and communities.

His videos and articles at CNN.com are well worth the time. This "news" requires our prayerful attention and continuing commitment to put feet to those prayers. You will be moved by the young African American woman in the lead video who feels deeply God has something in mind for Lake Providence. He also listed our missionary Jenny Hodge and her work there as among "10 heroes



Many were touched by the CNN story, including this young person from Florida who sent a small donation with a note signed "A Broke College Student." Read Jenny Hodge's reflections on this gift at her blog found at tfn-la.org.

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Stagg -Tolbert Biblical Forum 2013 Enlightens, Inspires



Sarah Shelton lectured on "Finding Our Story in the Biblical Story." She then led participants in acting out selected biblical stories and astutely guided us in finding the personal and often moving intersections of our own narratives wrapped inside the larger story of God's grace.

Celebrating a St. Charles connection, a number of folks made the trip up from New Orleans to meet Shelton who served

on staff with, and is mentor to, their new pastor Elizabeth Mangham Lott.

This year marked a special 10th anniversary of the Forum, an event designed to make excellence in biblical scholarship accessible to the lay person. The Forum is named in honor of two renowned Louisiana Baptist biblical scholars, the late Dr. Frank Stagg and Dr. Malcolm Tolbert.



Shelton shares moment with Forum namesake Malcolm Tolbert.



St. Charles members present.



Congratulations to Rev. Elizabeth Mangham Lott who has been called as Senior Pastor of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans. Rev. Lott, a native of Mobile, has served as Associate Pastor of Westover Baptist Church in Richmond, Va., since 2010. She earned her Master's of Divinity degree from Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in 2008. Rev. Lott also served in associate ministerial positions at Northminster Baptist Church in Richmond and Baptist Church of the Covenant in Birmingham. She earned her bachelor's degree in congregational studies at Samford University. Founded in 1898, St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church has been blessed with many excellent pastors known for strong preaching and innovative leadership. In a serendipitous twist, Rev. Lott has served on staff with Sarah Shelton, our Forum speaker.

Church for the Highlands Celebrates 3rd Birthday with Baptism while its "Original Dixieland Jazz Band" plays "Wade in the Water."

Church for the Highlands, a CBF church start entering its 4th year has been determined to own as little property as possible. Added now to the parade float, party wagon and van, is a spanking new portable baptistry.

Pastor John Henson gives the benediction below before the

lunch and anniversary cake. The church feels blessed to be guided into so many varied ministries from weekly feeding, after school programs, anti-predatory lending financial services, outreach to veterans, various clothing ministries and more. Partnerships with churches, non-profits, VOA and individuals are treasured. It has been a gift to experience and discover church in such diversity and to be supported by prayer and financial contributions from many beyond its doors.



CBF-LA Ministry Budget \$ _____ New Church Start \$ _____
 Together for Hope Rural Poverty \$ _____ Disaster Relief \$ _____
 Hope (Missionary) Fund \$ _____ Other: _____ \$ _____

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