

# Louisiana Fellowship People

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*"Rescue the Perishing:  
A Theology of Disaster Relief"*

**Molly Marshall**

President of  
Central Baptist Theological Seminary

October 6, 2012

The 9th Annual CBF-LA

**Stagg-Tolbert Forum  
for Biblical Studies**

Broadmoor Baptist - Baton Rouge

*Registration and coffee fellowship begins  
9:30AM. Program begins at 10AM with  
moderately priced lunch at 11:30AM.  
Afternoon session begins at 12:30PM  
and ends at 2:00PM.*

*Brain food and soul food  
for the disciple*

**Forum on-line registraion.**

## If Not Now ...

by Molly T. Marshall

*The following lines were written by Dr. Marshall after the General Assembly this summer and speak to us all in this time of transition and change.*

Discerning the season in which we live is a key spiritual practice. Often we live with a complacent trust in "tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow," the unlimited stretch of time Shakespeare's MacBeth thought he had. Neglectful of urgency and with little cognizance of the swift passage of time, we presume we will get around to what matters most--eventually.

I have just returned from the General Assembly of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship held in Ft. Worth, Texas. It was a joyful and poignant occasion; joyful because of the remarkable ministry occurring and poignant because Daniel Vestal has concluded his tenure as the leader of this Baptist movement. It is a liminal time as this Baptist movement discerns its "future story."

On Wednesday evening CBF hosted a concert to honor the Vestals, which featured Carrie Newcomer, a fine poet-songwriter-singer of the Quaker tradition. I was particularly struck by her concluding song, "If Not Now." It is a call for a change of heart to mend what's wrong in the world; it is an urgent plea for people of faith to address the inequities many endure with fresh attention. At this large gathering of Baptists, we sensed that infinitely more is possible, working together, undergirded by God's grace.

If not now, tell me when  
If not now, tell me when  
We may never see this moment  
Or place in time again  
If not now, if not now, tell me when.



The epistle reading this week echoes this perspective on fleeting opportunity. Paul writes: "See, now is the acceptable time; see, now is the day of salvation!" (2 Corinthians 6:2b). His willingness to endure "afflictions, hardships, calamities, beatings, imprisonments, riots, labors, sleepless nights, hunger" (v.4), and his capacity to rejoice in the face of it all speaks of his keen discernment of his apostolic season and his confidence in Christ.

One of the most encouraging aspects of generative mission in our day (both CBF and ABC) is the willingness to make a long-term commitment. Poverty, educational initiatives, earthquake or hurricane devastation, and disease all require more than "missional tourism" that swoops in, works a little, and checks that situation off the list. Better to undertake an extended engagement as partners in mission where suffering is most acute than diffusing effort by spreading resources too thinly.

Thankfully, missional organizations are growing leaner, and there is less bureaucracy to impede nimble action. Churches are recognizing the joy of hands-on projects that build relationships of mutuality and trust. Whether it be reconstructing infrastructure in Haiti, working with resettled families from Myanmar (Burma), or helping reshape the horizons of impoverished children in Helena, AR, a sense of urgency spurs these efforts. If not now, there may be no future opportunity to live and tell the Gospel within contexts where the extremities of suffering go unabated. [More about Molly on-line here.](#)



It's 5:00am and, as I compose these words, wind-driven rain is slapping against the window behind me. My mind drifts to those people who are trying to normalize their lives following the disaster known as Hurricane Isaac.

People in LaPlace (not to be confused with Lacombe), Louisiana, are especially struggling to get their lives back together after flood waters caught everyone by surprise. These people really need our help.

On September 22, Broadmoor Baptist is sending a team, led by their Pastor, Terry Ellis. Steve Graves, Pastor of Mulberry Baptist, Houma, called to offer assistance. Our former CBFLA Coordinator, John Daugherty, is assembling a team from First Baptist, Fort Meyer, FL. Bob Guffey, pastor of First Baptist, Conway, SC, and a "Louisiana boy at heart," is doing the same. Pete Moncrief, lay leader at First Baptist, Shreveport, has offered his expertise in construction and is talking with Ronnie Joe Webb about bringing a team. Roger Hensley, from North Carolina, will lead a team on October 22, to work four days. First Baptist, Columbus, GA, is sending cash and planning on bringing two teams in the spring of 2013. Our prayer is that others will see the LaPlace mission as an opportunity to put faith into action.

Dr. Molly Marshall, our October 6th Stagg-Tolbert lecturer called to say she has decided to deliver two lectures titled: "A Theology of Disaster Relief." This was entirely Dr. Marshall's idea and by her initiative, and let me tell you why she is so on target.



We church people are fairly skilled at telling people what we do in our ministries, but not nearly as skilled when it comes to explaining why we do it.

Walter Brueggemann writes: "Biblical faith is never in favor of pious silence. It is rather for direct, assertive, insistent demand that

refuses to sit silently while the waters rise."

As far as I know, CBF disaster responders neither hand out Gospel tracts, nor proselytize those whom we

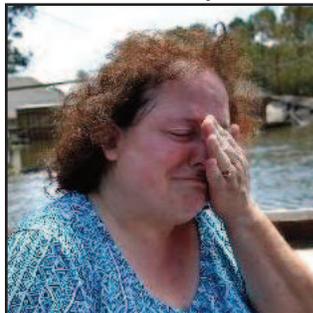
help, nor even stop to ask about one's religious heritage before helping. Our action does, however, represent an insistent refusal to sit piously and silently as the waters rise or recede. In a direct, assertive manner, our being there for hurting people articulates one simple theological truth: "We are here because God loves you."

Such simple assurance can be comforting to folks who have lost so much, and feel so alone. Our society has developed passages, symbols, and rituals for death such as death certificates, wakes, funerals and scattering of ashes. No such rituals exist to validate disaster survivors' losses and to invite social support. Their healing can be a lonely journey, and clinging to a vague hope that "life will return to the way it used to be" can become especially exhausting. Even good friends may quietly withdraw. If the disaster survivor cannot make sense of what is happening, how can others?

Many of the people we will help have minds filled with questions: "What is really happening here? Who is going to help me? When is it going to end? How will my family ever be able to live here? How will we ever leave? What about my job? Who is going to pay? Will it ever be safe here again? What do I do when we run out of money?" and on and on.

Their multiple crises will not be quickly "over." The "all clear" will not be felt in a definitive and unambiguous way. Long-term ramifications of their catastrophe might continue to resurface for years.

Some survivors will be thinking: "There's nothing good about life around here. Life will not get any better. The future looks totally bleak." Cynicism can be disheartening



and corrosive, and CBF Louisiana now has a window of opportunity to touch lives with God's unconditional love and to restore faith in humanity.

You don't have to say much to disaster survivors. The Bible sees value in silent sorrow. When Job's friends first realized what had

happened, "no one spoke a word to him, because they saw that his suffering was very great (Job 2:12-13)."

Your gentle, caring presence can "detoxify" the trauma of their disaster. Human connection and listening to one another's stories can be a healing thing, even if you do not possess many physical skills. There is something about mucking out a flooded house and carting debris to the street that articulates our Gospel theology with elegance and grace.

You are needed as a disaster responder right now in LaPlace, Louisiana. What are you waiting on? Is it fear? In The Magician's Nephew, C. S. Lewis wrote:

*Make your choice, adventuresome stranger,  
 Strike the bell and bide the danger.  
 Or wonder 'til it drives you mad,  
 What would have followed if you had.*

To get involved in LaPlace relief, contact me at (985) 778-6049 or [reid.cbflouisiana@gmail.com](mailto:reid.cbflouisiana@gmail.com).



In his love, *Reid*



Preparing for the onslaught are volunteers from Broadmoor-Baton Rouge, Church for the Highlands and Haynes Ave Baptist Church.

In August, CBF-LA churches combined with local Lake Providence churches, individuals and businesses in providing book bags and supplies to nearly every public student in East Carroll for a total of 1020 bags. Over 200 bags went to Tensas parish. Students at right sign thank you card with assistance from Nadyia Jefferson, volunteer from Church for the Highlands.



Missionary Stephanie Vance hoists a young scholar despite her bad knees. September 10-12 she hosted the national Together for Hope Council who took the pepper plant tour among other things. Farmer and owner "Bubber" Brown guides the group and at right instructs from the factory floor Charlene Kelley, Jim Smith, acting Global Mission director and Ben Newell, Together for Hope missionary from San Antonio. Yes, we still sell Together for Hope hot sauce. Call Stephanie.



## Church for the Highlands turns

by Kyle Kelley



We are toddlers now, getting our sea legs, exploring the surroundings in which God has placed us and forming our identity. We are full of optimism and energy.

So Sunday September 16, Church for the Highlands had its second birthday party. Pastor John Henson told us Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. That metaphor from Jesus is our theme moving forward.

In true preacherly fashion, Henson gave us an alliteration of course: the "B's."

Cont'd back page



# The Fellowship

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Pastor John Henson at Church for the Highlands Anniversary

### Birthday cont'd

They are: belonging, becoming and bearing. In our worship and in our work, and often at the same time, we are being the presence of Christ. We belong to God and to one another. Together we are becoming the hands and feet of Jesus. Because we partner with each other and a host of other people of faith and good will, incredible fruit, far beyond our imagination is happening.

God is teaching us to overcome the artificial barriers that would prevent some from having a seat at his banquet table, and it is a delicious diversity, just like heaven will be. Come see us, and thanks for your prayers.

Visit us on line and hear the anniversary sermon at [churchforhighlands.org](http://churchforhighlands.org).



Church for the Highlands: Doing Love Diversely

### Louisiana Fellowship People

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Chris Thacker, Past Moderator; Shannon Rutherford, National CBF Rep.

CBF-LA Receipts	July-August	Fiscal Year 7-1-12 to 6-30-13
Undesignated	\$10,212.16	\$10,212.16
Together for Hope	\$8,228.13	\$8,228.13
Missionary Fund	\$750.00	\$750.00
Other	\$20.00	\$20.00
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$19,210.29</b>	<b>\$19,210.29</b>



Picture God's Love  
Give to CBF-LA



### I want to be part of something new God is doing through CBF-LA:

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

Your name (please print) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_

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Make checks payable to CBF of Louisiana, 2220 South Vienna Street, Ruston, LA 71270  
You may also give on-line at [cbfla.org](http://cbfla.org).