

A Tangible Expression of Reconciliation

On September 26th, representatives from the National Baptist Convention and CBF-LA met with members of Baton Rouge's Greater Mount Olive Missionary Baptist Church to discuss plans to help Mount Olive lead efforts in rebuilding not only their church but its surrounding neighborhood. The meeting was an example of the kind of community that can be created when sisters and brothers come together to give themselves to something greater than themselves. Rev. Ron Fairley of the CBF

Disaster Relief Team moderated the meeting's extensive dialogue and discussion. He described disaster relief work as having three distinct phases. The first phase is the "rescue" phase, and it usually lasts a month or so and involves basic efforts to get homes cleaned and people to safety. This phase has been accomplished with outstanding leadership from Rev. Bobby



Greater Mount Olive MBC

Rayburn of Broadmoor Baptist and Dr. Rick Wright of University Baptist in Baton Rouge, who collaborated to direct various work teams that came to offer initial assistance. This work concentrated on three areas -- homes of CBF church members, needs of people and organizations related to Broadmoor and University, and then the greater community. This last area is moving the work into the second phase, described by disaster relief leaders as the "response" phase. This phase lasts much longer, up to three or five years, and is dedicated to helping people and churches rebuild. The third and final phase is called "recovery," and it builds on the previous work to help people and community groups transition into the new normal of their lives.

Dr. Mike Massar, CBF-LA Coordinator, described being encouraged by the spirit of the meeting. "This storm has been such a silent and deadly one. Because of the Olympics, the Presidential campaigns, and the fact that this storm didn't have high winds creating visible



Interior at Mt. Olive

chaos, it has been largely ignored by the media. In its quiet but devastating way this flood destroyed so many communities and peoples' lives." Rev. Shelton Dixon, the Pastor of the Mount Olive Church said, "So many people in our community have lost hope." It was to address that lostness that the meeting took place. Plans are now taking form to repair and

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How Dialogue Can Transform
 Christian Conflicts Into Growth

Stagg-Tolbert Biblical Forum

October 29

University Baptist - Baton Rouge



Featuring Joe Phelps

As a Pastor, Dr. Phelps has been working with the redemptive possibilities of conflict for over two decades. In the preface to his book he shares an experience that started him on this quest. He had written a guest editorial on an issue which he knew would be an unpopular position in churches and to many in his area.

"At the end of the editorial, I invited the community to join me in substantive dialogue; there was still much to learn about the subject, and it desperately needed our collective wisdom.

The editorial received considerable public attention, but no one accepted the invitation to dialogue. Some offered to debate me in a public forum. Others offered to punch my lights out. Still others chose stealth communications: anonymous letters and angry phone calls. But not one person responded who was willing to join me in dialogue."

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Forum Schedule Saturday October 29

- 9:45 - Sign-in, Coffee & Fellowship
- 10:00 - Lecture One - Dr. Phelps
- 11:00 - Ministry Updates & the Work of CBF-LA
- 12:00 Noon - Lunch \$5
- 1:00 - Lecture Two - Dr. Phelps

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Mt Olive cont'd

rebuild the Mount Olive Church. Massar said, "We think it is important that sisters and brothers come together to assist Rev. Dixon in empowering the church to reclaim its place as the beacon of hope in that part of Baton Rouge." Massar went on to say that this could be a great example to that community that the Church of Jesus Christ cares. Reverend Mallery Callahan, President of the National Baptist Convention of Louisiana, added, "It will be a tangible expression of how Christians can come together to overcome racial discord."

Fairley said that the work would take time, money and resources -- "We will need many teams to come and help with the effort." Massar asked that churches consider sending or even re-sending teams to assist with the efforts to get this community back on its feet. "Our intent is to recruit skilled and unskilled volunteers. In addition, this project will require an enormous amount of financial assistance. But I am encouraged. CBF folk from all over the country are offering teams, supplies and money to help." Dixon said that the meeting was a God-send for him, that up to that point he felt like he "was going to a forest fire with a cup of water."

People and churches wanting to help are asked to get in touch with Bobby Rayborn at Broadmoor Baptist Church who will coordinate jobs and teams. He can be reached at bobby@broadmoorbaptist.com or 225-573-2928. Financial gifts can be made to CBF LA Flood Disaster Relief and sent to CBF LA; c/o Sabra Hicks; 520 Olive St.; Shreveport, LA 71104, or given on-line at cbfla.org.

Massar summed up the meeting by saying, "This has been a terrible ordeal, but we now have an opportunity to do something wonderful for the cause of Christ." Dixon chimed in, "We can do more for this community at this time than ever before." It is a moment when the Kingdom is seeking to break through. Please pray toward that great hope.

More Light cont'd

Rather than giving up in despair, Phelps has passionately pursued this subject and by writing and example has distilled the lessons and nuggets of understanding from this journey. His work has garnered the attention of folks like Bill Leonard who stated, "In an era of intense political and religious polarization, this work offers grounds for and guidance toward honest, open conversation." Jim Wallis likewise offered, "As controversial issues continue to painfully divide the church, Joe Phelps has done a real service...I highly recommend it to all who are searching for ways to transform conflict into growth."

Greetings from Lake Providence!

by Marc Boswell, CBF-LA Together for Hope Director



Marc Boswell

I'm happy to write that things have been going well since beginning my new call on September 1. Shortly after arriving in Lake Providence, the annual gathering of Together for Hope practitioners occurred in Decatur, GA. It was a wonderful gift to begin my time by meeting others who are doing work with TFH in other locations and to meet other staff members at CBF Global.

After returning to Lake Providence, I was greeted by a few local community leaders who graciously helped me get plugged into some of the work currently being done in town. A few people across vocational backgrounds were gathering to discuss ways to increase access to mental health care for residents. Some of the challenges that the town faces include transportation, home visits, and bed space in the local clinic. There was good energy in the meeting as the group identified a few short-time and long-term goals.

At a recent city council meeting, we learned that a local person will be opening another restaurant in the space that used to be Jehovah Java. Breakfast, lunch, and dinner will be served, leaving community members excited that there will once again be available a "coffee shop" type of space. On a similar note, the community has greatly celebrated the re-opening (after a fire) of The Dream Eatery (formerly "My Dream Eatery"). The food is absolutely delicious and the new space looks wonderful. Sadly, in other news, the local lumber yard/hardware store is closing after one hundred years of service to East Carroll Parish. Please be in prayer for the individuals who are looking for work as a result.

Also, I was invited to join a tutoring program at Southside Elementary School, which works with 3rd graders on their reading skills. This is a great way for Together for Hope to continue its relationship with this school, and others, in addition to the annual Bags of Hope project.

Please know that I am available to speak to your church, a missions committee, or to preach. Our work in Lake Providence is a result of your generosity and continued support. God's Spirit certainly continues to be on the move in this town, and it's a privilege to join in the good work that is being done.

A CBF Welcome to New Pastor at Broadmoor - Baton Rouge



Dr. Ezell

CBF-LA shares in the joy with Broadmoor Baptist at the calling of their new Pastor, Dr. Leonard Ezell. A native of Arkansas and a graduate of McAfee and Columbia Seminary, he most recently served as Pastor of Northwest Baptist Church in Ardmore, Oklahoma. He will begin his ministry at Broadmoor November 1. Learn more about Dr. Ezell at broadmoorbaptist.com.



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