

cbf Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Forming Together
Louisiana

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Christ is risen, Christ lives. Christ is the Lord of the living and the dead. He is the Lord of history. Christ is the Lord of a history that moves. He not only holds the beginning and end in his hands, but he is in history with us, walking ahead of us to where we are going. - **Thomas Merton**

Sunrise over the levee in Lake Providence - photo Marc Boswell

From Spain to Lake Providence to Your Backyard: Practicing Resurrection

by Kyle Kelley, CBF-LA Communications

There is a counter narrative to all that is broken in this world. In his Lenten devotional at the Lake Providence luncheon, Marc Boswell observed the Saturday disillusionment of the disciples. All was not justice. There was pain, raw grief and the heavy weight of oppression. In the Lake Providence crowd, there were nods of recognition born of poverty, displacement, and heavy burdens.

Mary van Rheenen, in her latest prayer letter (found at cbfla.org) notes that falling on the calendar during Holy Week this year is International Romani Day. No group has faced more sorrow and marginalization than the Romani people or "Gypsies." Keith and Mary have labored for decades in a pioneering work that now bears fruit even if the people themselves remain vulnerable.

We the care givers, the proclaimers of hope, also see discouragement. While in Spain recording Scripture for a Basque Gypsy dialect, Keith was struck with an abdominal malady from which he has still not fully recovered. For Romani, many of whom are illiterate, hearing Scripture in their mother tongue has been so powerful. To have to abandon that project due to illness left Keith and Mary in tears.

In CBF, we are drawn to those who hurt, even when we find ourselves wounded healers. Whether it be seeking to help those

still reeling from flood damage, from violence, from loneliness or dark inner struggles, God has placed a passion within us. A saying from a source unknown goes, "I looked around and wondered why somebody didn't do something. Then I realized, I am somebody."

It is that impulse I believe that God has placed in us. It is ok to pause, acknowledge and even mourn the pain and injustice. But that holy nudge to be about the mending of the universe is a call to God's Kingdom now. We do it knowing, as Merton tells us, Christ is in history with us now, going before us.

We also do it together, in fellowship, in prayer, in hands on work and in gathering together for discernment and encouragement. Our big family gathering happens this year in June in Atlanta. Folks like Brian McLaren will help us focus our collective thoughts and passions in renewal.

For now, Mary asks, "As you move through the commemoration of Jesus' triumphant entry as King to the dark times of His last Passover, his betrayal, his death, say a prayer for your Romany brothers and sisters. They, too, are waiting for Christ's resurrection."

We must look at this world with eyes wide open with a steeliness and humility. We can do it because we are a people of hope --- that Sunday has come. We see just over that levee a light. Now practice Resurrection!

Holmes-van Rheenen in Louisiana April and May



April 30 - Shreveport :Church for the Highlands, morning; Haynes Avenue Baptist Church, evening;
May 1 - Shreveport: First Baptist Women's Mission meeting
May 3 - Baton Rouge: Broadmoor Baptist Church
May 7 - Baton Rouge: University Baptist Church

CBF General Assembly Atlanta, Georgia June 28-30 McLaren Speaks June 29



Brian McLaren, popular speaker and theologian, and noted author of *The Great Migration*, *A New Kind of Christianity*,

and *A Generous Orthodoxy* will keynote 3 days of networking, learning, fellowship and faith. Over 60 workshops and opportunities to connect and be energized.

Details at cbf.net.



Greetings

from Lake Providence

by Marc Boswell, CBF-LA Together for Hope Director

Marc speaks at Lake Providence multi-denominational Lenten Lunch.



March has been a busy month for Together for Hope. Through the HiSET/GED program, seven different students have begun the actual testing process to receive their high school equivalency diplomas. As of April 4th, our first student has completed all five sub-tests and is now a high school graduate. Additional students have passed up to three parts of the test and have their sights set on finishing by the end of the spring.

Additionally, a few students recently completed an application process for a jobs program with Workforce Louisiana. Through the partnership of TFH and Louisiana Delta Community College, these two students will now have access to work experience, resume building, income, job training, and scholarship funds to take college courses and certificate programs upon the successful completion of their HiSET. One student was beaming as she described her excitement over having her first job. She's proud to be a role model for her daughter both with her educational attainments and her new career pathway.

Also, as of early April, I've worked with the steering committee of the Louisiana Development Ready Communities task force to complete the Economic Development Strategic Plan for Lake Providence. The plan, hopefully, will be reviewed and adopted by the town council in late April. In the plan, there are several goals that Together for Hope can help support, such as building a leadership development program, revitalizing the downtown, assisting with new business support/retention, and

supporting the town's efforts to establish a farmers' market. Partnerships with the local schools continue to go well, both with tutoring and the Art Club. Principal Jones of Southside Elementary recently invited me to serve on the School Improvement Committee. These discussions have created space to talk with administrators and teachers about the role Together for Hope plays in supporting public education in Lake Providence. We'll continue to support teachers and students with school supplies, though all parties are interested in increasing our efficiency and methods for distributing the supplies. An additional, exciting idea will be to partner congregations with classrooms/grade levels at Southside, allowing greater chances for churches to get to know teachers and students throughout the year and direct their support in a more focused and helpful manner.

Finally, I send my appreciation to Woodland Baptist Church for sending financial support and resources for the HiSET program, and also to Church for the Highlands and their youth group's service learning trip to Lake Providence in early March. The youth worked on two parks and were able to form relationships with local leaders and Lake Providence youth. Thanks for all of your help!



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