



Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Louisiana

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**In This Issue:**

1. Looking Up and Around - Kyle Kelley, Interim Coordinator
2. Good Neighbors - Jenny Hodge, Missionary / Community Practitioner
3. God's Arithmetic - Steven Porter
4. Poverty Point, Near East Carroll, Now UN World Heritage Site



## Looking Up and Around

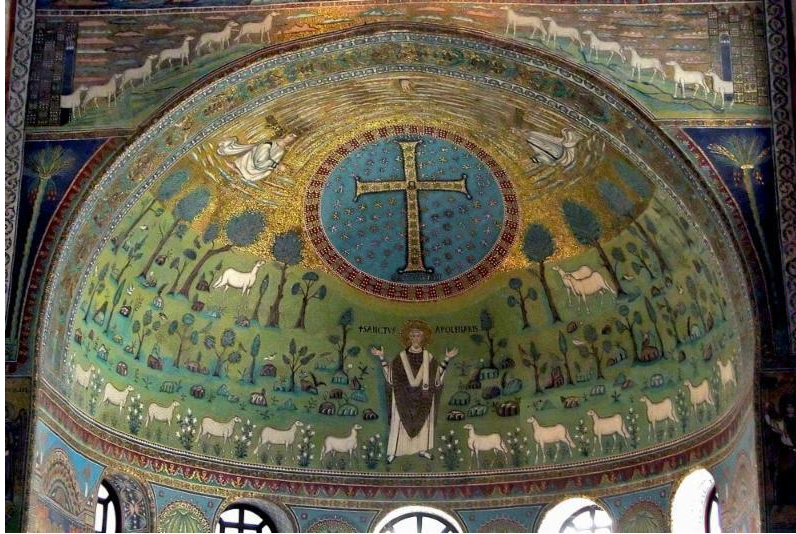
by Kyle Kelley, CBF-LA Interim Coordinator

That great cloud of witnesses the Hebrews writer talked about was very real to the early Christians. They went to church with the expectation their departed loved ones, who had a full taste of the other side of Jordan, would be there with them.

Paradise was the dominant image of early Christian sanctuaries note church historians and theologians Brock and Parker in their fine book *Saving Paradise*.

Bursting with Resurrection were images of "a lush visual environment: a cosmos of stars in midnight skies, golden sunlight, sparkling waters teeming with fish, exuberant fauna, and verdant meadows filled with flowers and fruit trees. Punctuating such

scenes were images of the great cloud of witnesses, many dressed in purple robes of nobility. Others wore white robes of baptism as brides of Christ. They wore or carried wreaths of victory. Many apse images included exactly four rivers flowing from a lamb, globe or golden cross."



Paradise - Early Church Art - Ravenna, Italy.

Paradise extended down from heaven into this world "permeated and blessed by the Spirit of God." Persecution, oppression, even martyrdom could not sever the connection between the living and the dead. Paradise had begun in this world in the life and worship of the church and included all God's children on both sides of heaven. In fact early church father Origen found the departed more prompt church attenders, "Souls come more rapidly than living persons to the places of worship."

I have no special knowledge of the mysteries of the life to come, but I have glimpsed Paradise in the lives of some modern CBF saints, whose memory and influence live on. Life is about change and as we enter a transition time for CBF-LA, I find myself thankful for some folks like John Goodwin, Frank Stagg, Al and Elizabeth Kessler, Milton and Grace Johnson, Robert Wilson, Bryan and Dorothy Bazer, Bay Tull and Sue Tweedy. There are others. Who else should be remembered in this cloud of those who have gone before but left us a foundation and grounded us for the work ahead?

My thanksgiving extends to the many still around us who continue to inspire me and have caught a vision of Kingdom work much larger than any individual agenda. They've seen what's on the other side of the hill. Our Coordinating Council meets this week to pray and discern, plan and re-vision for the great work ahead, blessed by many who stand beside us.

I am heartened by the many friends within our Fellowship and without, within our state and beyond who join us in prayer for wisdom and strength "to run with perseverance the race marked out for us." (Heb.12). Please join them in prayer.

So look up at that great cloud of witnesses and be inspired. Then look around at your co-laborers, put your hand to the plow and join us in following the One who brings "a kingdom that cannot be shaken."



## **Relying on Good Neighbors**

by Jenny Hodge

*Together for Hope Missionary / Community Practitioner*

The Saturday morning air was warm but a growing crisp breeze signaled that fall had arrived in time for this year's "Make A Difference Day". Mrs. Lynn Thom, a local teacher and community volunteer, is the main organizer for an annual day of volunteering, or making a difference, in the Lake Providence community. Because of her efforts to get volunteers and donations, windows in the downtown were washed, flowerbeds weeded, signs repainted, and fresh flowers planted to great visitors. Together for Hope - Louisiana (TFH-LA) was happy to support and partner with Mrs. Lynn in making the day a success!

As part of being a "good neighbor", TFH-LA often seeks to be a partner or supporter in the work of ministry in East Carroll Parish. When we humble ourselves to allow others to lead and receive the credit, it helps us build relationships and credibility with local community members. Thus, when TFH-LA is taking the lead on an initiative or program, we've built a solid reputation and network of partners we can rely on.



Jenny Hodge speaks to mission committees of University and Broadmoor churches.

As TFH-LA continues to look forward to its future and make changes necessary for our development, we hope you will continue to pray for us in this time. We rely on not only local partners, but our non-local partners for continued success in addressing rural poverty in Northeast Louisiana. As a ministry, we are processing how we do programs and structure ourselves to best address both the strengths and needs of the community. That may mean some changes but also reaffirmation of what we already do well in the local community! If you have any questions please feel free to contact Jenny Hodge, [tflouisiana@gmail.com](mailto:tflouisiana@gmail.com) or (318) 418-5133 if you would like to know

more.

## Steven Porter at Broadmoor- Baton Rouge



Steve Porter, Global Missions Coordinator for CBF visited Baton Rouge recently to talk missions. Finding ourselves in a new cultural and church landscape in which the world is now coming to us, Porter challenges us to a deep scriptural imagination. Thy Kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven is our prayer and our lens on how to view our work in this world.

We are called to a place and a purpose, not to the fanciest or most winsome program. The church is not a mission stated Porter, but rather God's mission has a church. Porter encourages us to "exegete" our community, to plant ourselves deeply in the place God has placed us. Jesus constantly multiplies small gifts and together, as imperfect people, we invite the world to participate in God's reconciliation of all things

through Jesus Christ.

Dr. Porter, as he was known to Jenny Hodge when she was his student at Truett seminary, cited her work as an example of missions in bold humility. Our work in Lake Providence is not simply about what we take to that community, but what we also learn from that encounter and take back to our own communities.

## Poverty Point Named UN World Heritage Site

Right near the edge of East Carroll Parish, just over the Bayou Macon lies a remarkable historical treasure now on the World Heritage site list with the likes of the Pyramids of Egypt, Stonehenge and the Grand Canyon. Poverty Point tells the story of native people who inhabited this land centuries ago.

This designation marked in an unveiling of the marker ceremony last month promises to bring more economic development to an area very close to our Together for Hope work. Now you have another reason to come visit our work in Lake Providence. Just give Jenny a call before you come!



Poverty Point UN World Heritage Site.  
The World Heritage List highlights the world's most important natural wonders and cultural sites.

What is special about the Poverty Point site?

- The earthworks are massive: six mounds and six C-shaped ridges surround a huge plaza. One of the mounds was built about 2,000 years after the rest.
- The geometric design is unique in the world and is a masterpiece of engineering.
- The site is 3,400 years old.
- At the time the earthworks were constructed, they were the largest in North America.
- The site was the major political, trading and ceremonial center of its day in North America.
- The people who built and lived at the site did not raise crops but instead lived by hunting, fishing and gathering wild food, making their accomplishments even more astounding.



At the unveiling of the site marker last month were  
National Park Service Director Jon Jarvis,  
US Senator Mary Landrieu and  
Louisiana Lt. Gov. Jay Dardenne

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