



# Louisiana

COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

*News & Views*

[www.cbfla.org](http://www.cbfla.org)

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## KATRINA & Being the Presence of Christ



We will never be the same. Martin Luther's hymn phrase has a new poignancy, "our helper He, amid the flood of mortal ills prevailing." In the sea of images, stories, and floods of feelings, what does it mean to be "grounded?" Friends speak of an ache, an eerie, unfamiliar homelessness. We cling to each other. Pastor Steven Meriwether on page 7 speaks of a sister church being "his ark" when his own congregation is scattered to the four corners.

Courage, the kind Eugene Peterson refers to as "a long obedience in the same direction" is what we need. National CBF Moderator Joy Yee is heartened by "the level of compassion and willingness to go, serve and help that is present." She gives us this perspective and guidance:

*Churches are gathering needed items, raising money and sending volunteers.*



*St. Tammany Parish which includes Slidell will be focus of CBF-LA initial work*

*Individuals are calling the Atlanta and Dallas offices daily to offer aid. Our people are taking seriously the call to be the presence of Christ in our world, and in this situation at this time. I thank God for that.*

*With the scope of the disaster and the large volume of response from CBF individuals and churches, come good challenges --*



## Responding to Katrina

*some of which include the assessment of needs, coordination of teams, and securing and handling of resources. The areas affected by the hurricane are devastated.*

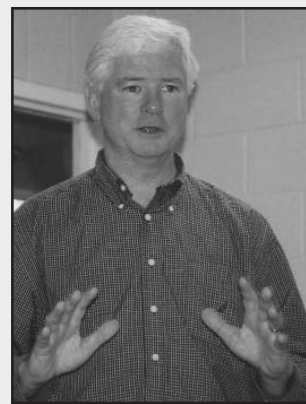
*The current local situation in affected areas changes daily. Because of issues like disease, mold, unstable building structures, and more, several things become important for volunteer teams: It is important for teams to be covered by insurance.[provided when you sign up with the Dallas office.] It is important that teams be composed of people whose skills and experience match the work that needs to be done. It is important that teams be aware of the lack of resources available to them (e.g. transportation, food, showers, housing) in the areas affected. It is important for teams who are willing to go, be willing to go when and where we can do the most good. Sometimes this means delaying a trip until an area is assessed and places are available to house volunteers as they do their hard work. In the effort to be diligent, wise stewards of our gifts and resources, we want to be sure that relief efforts are enacted in a responsible, coordinated manner.*

CBF-LA in partnership with the national office has brought on Rev. Reid Doster, a resident of St. Tammany Parish to coordinate our disaster response. He is spending 18 hour days, frequently with Lynn Hawkins by his

side, assessing needs and working methodically on setting priorities. Because of Reid's expertise in the mental health field, the Red Cross is utilizing his skills to provide counseling to caregivers. This also positions him to be in the know of critical needs and resources.

CBF national has sent a specialized team to help us coordinate and plan. They have an impressive array of skills and experiences including work during the Tsunami last year. Vital partnerships were already in place with the Red Cross, World Vision International, and other relief groups. Locally now in the St. Tammany area churches across denominational lines are working with us to pool efforts and resources.

Much of our initial focus is on the Creole community of Lacombe, about 15 minutes from Madisonville. A lot of that community was swept away. One plan being seriously considered is that of "adoption" of local families. Initial surveys point to this being the most logical place to put a lot of our efforts, though other areas are also getting attention and our work will expand over time.



*Reid Doster, Coordinator of CBF-LA Disaster Response gives update to Missions Committee of First Baptist Shreveport*

RESPONDING, cont'd page 6

## Stagg-Tolbert Biblical Forum To Go Forward As Planned Oct. 8



*Fisher Humphreys - Forum Speaker*

**U**ndeterred by the doubling of residents in their city and nearly non-stop ministries to those in dire need, our Baton Rouge brothers and sisters dauntlessly push forward in inviting the whole state Fellowship to their home for the Second Annual Stagg-Tolbert Forum for Biblical Studies. **(For registration and conference details see back cover.)**

Named for two beloved pastors and New Testament scholars, Dr. Malcolm Tolbert and the late Dr. Frank Stagg, the Forum

exists to provide excellence in Biblical scholarship that is accessible to the layperson. This gathering will also give occasion for an update on our disaster response and time to pray for the ongoing work.

Fisher Humphreys, Professor of Theology at the Beeson Divinity School at Samford will give our lectures. A graduate of Mississippi College, with Master degrees from Loyola and Oxford, he received his doctorate from New Orleans Seminary where he also

see FORUM, page 6

*As a prelude to his speaking at the Stagg-Tolbert Biblical Forum on October 8, Dr. Humphreys sends us this article to get us thinking about the mystery of the Trinity. For the truly curious theological minds we have listed his recommendations at the end for additional preparatory reading.*

### The Church's Sermon

Peter faced a momentous question on the Day of Pentecost: What message should he proclaim? Should he preach about Yahweh, the God of Israel? Or should he preach about Jesus, who only seven weeks before had died and then been raised? Or should he preach about the Spirit who, that very day, in fulfillment of ancient prophecies, had been given to the church?

Peter's solution was to do all three. First he spoke about the Spirit (Acts 2:14-21). Then he spoke about Jesus, especially of his death and resurrection (vv. 22-36). And throughout his sermon he spoke repeatedly about God, saying that God sent his Spirit, God worked miracles, God raised Jesus from the dead, and God made Jesus to be Lord and Christ (see vv. 17, 22, 23, 24, 30, 36). Peter referred to all Three Persons in a single sentence: "He (Jesus) has been raised to the right side of God, his Father, and has received from him the Holy Spirit" (vs. 33, TEV). Peter spoke about Jesus, and his Father, and the Spirit, because he had responded in faith to each of them.

### The Church's Common Life

Christians have always lived a Trinitarian life. That is, they have lived a life in which they speak about God (whom they call "the Father" because he is the Father of Jesus), and about Jesus, and about the Holy Spirit within them. There never has been a church which has not lived that Trinitarian

*"This Trinitarian understanding of God is unique to Christians...One of the ways in which Christians recognize each other is by overhearing our mutual affirmations about the Father, Son, and Spirit."*

life. We can identify some of the subjects which, when the first Christians spoke about them, they might make reference to Father and Son and Holy Spirit. As we have just seen, Peter did this when he preached the gospel; it was done when people were baptized (Matt. 28:19). It was done when benedictions were given (2 Cor. 13:14). It was done in connection with prayer (Eph. 1:17).

# FATHER & Holy Spirit SON



by Fisher Humphreys

What the first Christians did, we still do today. Think about your own church.

Do you believe that Moses was wrong about there being only one God? Do you think that there are really three gods? Of course you don't.

Do you and your fellow church members love, worship, and honor the God who created the world and who sent his Son Jesus into the world? Of course you do.

Do you also have faith in Jesus, and are you trying to be his disciples and to preach about him? Of course you are.

Do you realize that you can do these things only because the Spirit of God is helping you? Of course you do.

So you and your church live a Trinitarian life together. You know there is only one God, and you also respond religiously to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

### The Church's Scriptures

The Trinitarian understanding of God arose because of God's mighty acts of sending Jesus and then giving the Spirit. The church responded to Jesus and to the Spirit by living a Trinitarian religious life. Out of that life the writers of the New Testament then frequently alluded to the three Persons.

Matthew, for example, begins his gospel with a Trinitarian passage in which the Father sends his Spirit to Mary so that Jesus will be born. It continues with a vivid Trinitarian portrait of the baptism of Jesus: Jesus stands in the river, the Spirit descends on him in the form of a dove, and the Father addresses him from heaven. The gospel closes with perhaps the most famous of all Trinitarian passages: Jesus commands his disciples to baptize "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

Ephesians, with only six chapters, contains seven allusions to the Trinity; see 1:13, 16-17, 2:18, 3:5-6, 16-17, 4:4-6, 5:18-20. The first communicates in a wonderful way the Trinitarian life of the church: "You believed in Christ, and God put his stamp of ownership on you by giving you the Holy Spirit." That is our experience also: we believe in Christ, God owns us, and God has given us the Spirit.

### The Church's Trinitarian Heritage

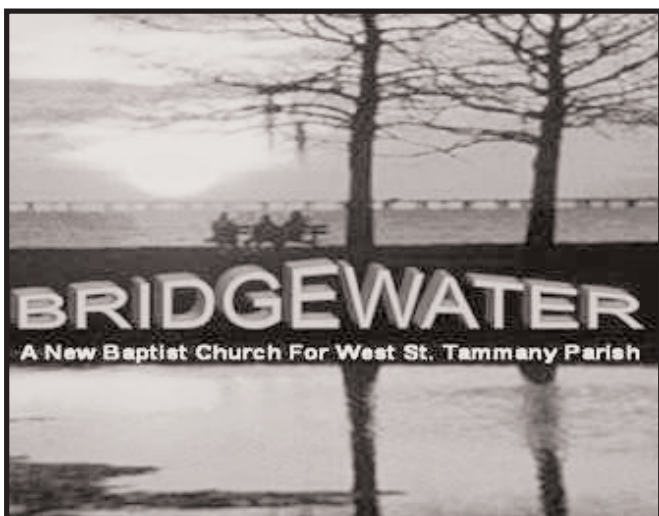
This Trinitarian understanding of God is unique to Christians; only Christians believe in the Father, the Son, and

## New Church Start

As the Delta was thrust to its knees, the focal parish for our new church start, St. Tammany, was also thrown into crisis. Since we were already mobilizing our efforts to begin this ministry, it was natural that our state disaster response should start in St. Tammany. Pray that out of tragedy God will use us and others to bring hope and new life.

CBF's Church Starts ministry initiative is focused on birthing congregations shaped by the culture of the location -- an approach known as the indigenous principle. This missions approach calls for proactive strategies that will become hallmarks for new church planting.

We are dedicated to reaching the last and the least for Christ's kingdom, whether they are defined by



poverty or gated communities. Spiritual pilings are being driven for a "bridge" to the unchurched, de-churched, and spiritually homeless who reside in the fastest growing area of our state and now face rebuilding their lives. Bridgewater Church, sponsored by CBF-LA, launches in January 2006.

Every Fellowship related congregation in Louisiana needs to become connected to this new creation. Several congregations have invited a representative to share the Bridgewater vision with their Missions Committee. Others will need to join to help us seize this Kairos moment.

The new church start representative will come to inform, but also to request prayer support and financial under-girding. If you want your church to be part of planting a new outpost of the Kingdom, give them the opportunity to do so through Bridgewater. Learn more at [bridgewaterbaptist.org](http://bridgewaterbaptist.org), then call 985-222-6900 to schedule an exciting presentation to your Missions Committee. It's a different kind of Global Missions, in an area where the world is literally coming to us.



## Partners in Hope

CBF's Rural Poverty Initiative



Lynn Hawkins states our partner parishes were overwhelmed and deeply grateful for the tremendous response given to the school supply drive. One principal stated that "you made literally hundreds of children happy" and without this effort, "necessities would be luxuries" few of the children could have obtained.

Many opportunities lie ahead with doors opening, relationships forged and a growing pool of Christian volunteers in our state and beyond ready to partner and walk along side in this ministry.

With the tragic events surrounding Hurricane Katrina, Lynn had to cancel his trip to the national team meeting for Partners In Hope in order to work on our state CBF disaster response. However our Coordinator Elect John Daugherty was able to attend and sent the report below.

### A Rose By Any Other Name

PARTNERS IN HOPE: No longer the name! Due to trademark protection the title "Partners In Hope" is not available for use in the Fellowship's Rural Poverty Initiative. In the national team meeting held in Harlingen, TX September 7 - 9, one of the primary tasks before the team was a new name for the initiative. With every round of attempts the names were compared to trademarked names across the nation and most had to be scrapped. For the time being, the group has decided to call the initiative, The Fellowship's Rural Poverty Initiative.

Each of the particular regions involved in the initiative will maintain its own identity, ie. "Sowing Seeds Of Hope" in Alabama and it will appear as such: Sowing Seeds of Hope: The Fellowship's Rural Poverty Initiative.

So, a task for CBF of Louisiana and the Missions Committee is to develop a unique moniker for our efforts in the initiative. Put your creative talents to work and think of how best to capture our region and our work in a simple way to communicate our unique efforts in the Initiative.

Two fronts or efforts in the initiative seem to be the key to effectively working toward the goal of lifting the burden of poverty, and they are literacy issues and community development. If people cannot read and have a basic mastery of the language they simply cannot move forward. If the economics of community development are not undertaken in creative ways to develop commerce and revenue, the cycle will remain hopeless.

We will be learning more and hearing more on these two fronts as we partner with our neighbors in East Carroll and Tensas Parishes.

# Romany Mission [romani-bible.org](http://romani-bible.org)

Missionary Partners: Keith Holmes & Mary van Rheenen



In true partnership fashion, Mary relays to us a message from a Serbian pastor concerned for Louisiana Christians.

Dear Friends,

We as Christians here in Serbia were shocked and saddened by the devastations that the hurricane Katrina made in the Gulf States of the USA!

We feel the need to join you in prayers at least, if we cannot do much else for the affected people of that region in your vast country. I suppose you minister to the needs of the people there. So, please convey to the Christians there our love, thoughts and prayers for them. God bless you and keep you.

Yours through Christ Jesus,  
Avram Dega, pastor

Mary also sends to us the stories of two Romany Christians gallantly seeking to overcome crushing poverty and bring wholeness to their families and community.

Many know of the work Keith and Mary do in translating scripture and Christian media and supporting efforts of evangelism and church planting among the Romany people. One half of our budgeted CBF-LA Romany partnership giving goes to the translation work. The second half of financial support goes to perhaps a lesser known ministry: micro-enterprise development.

Enter the stories of Raia and Eduardo. Like other Romany they have known grinding poverty and severe discrimination. To many Europeans, the fact that they are Romany makes them untrustworthy, lazy and worse. Some Romany do become involved in illegal activities often out of desperation to survive.

Bringing good news and transformation to Romany include helping empower them to find constructive avenues to escape the bondage of debilitating poverty. Such requires a plan and capital. Loans are practically impossible to obtain due to prejudice and/or perceived bad risk. Mary explains, "Micro-economic development involves little loans, smaller than banks would usually mess with, to

help people start or upgrade really little businesses--but businesses that are big enough to help them support themselves and their families with dignity. It is the 'trickle up' effect and is considered more effective than massive loans on the governmental level."

CBF missionaries partner with non-profit groups and volunteers to set up micro-enterprise programs to give not only loans but also technical support and mentoring.

For Raia Ibrian, her dream is to open a beauty salon/barber shop in Vulcanesti. With a loan of \$480 she can cover her tuition, travel and expenses at a "beauty college" for 6 months. Once she obtains her beautician's training, pays off her loan, and establishes herself, she hopes to return to her village of 1200 and open her own shop. She will be the only beautician/barber in the town.



Raia Ibrian, consulting about her business plan to become beautician/barber.

Eduardo Parnica's idea is to open a computer location where teenagers and others can play computer games. Gypsy teenagers, like any other teenagers, like to play computer games. If they go to Nisporeni to play those games (12 kilometers away), they get hassled because they are Gypsies, and they end up getting in trouble. He thinks there is a business opportunity here. He hopes to obtain a loan for \$1,370 with payments of \$90 per month for a period of eighteen months. Part of his technical assistance includes strategizing how to manage employees and ways to keep his products fresh. Teenagers are always looking for new games, and they will stop coming to his computer room if he keeps having the same old games.

Mary and Keith wish to thank CBF-LA for partnering with their gifts for this work of reconciliation and hope. They have a



Eduardo Parnica, in the middle with plaid shirt and guitar attends a meeting about micro-economic development.

prayer volunteer willing to pray for Raia during this project and are seeking one or more to pray for Eduardo. Keith and Mary can be reached at [kh@worldmail.org](mailto:kh@worldmail.org). Gifts designated for the microenterprise or translation ministry can be received through CBF-LA by indicating on the enclosed envelope.



## Partners in Prayer Missions Calendar

Some names are omitted due to sensitive nature and location of their work.

### SEPTEMBER

- 16 Christopher Harrell, 1993, son, Melody & Sam Harrell, Kenya
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 17 \_\_\_\_\_, daughter, unevangelized people group, M. East/N. Africa
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_, 2002, daughter, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 19 \_\_\_\_\_, daughter, unevangelized people group, North Africa
- 25 \_\_\_\_\_, Envoy, Middle East
- 25 Angel Pittman, urban work, Detroit, MI
- 27 James Shaw, 1985, son, Martha & Rick Shaw, Macedonia
- 28 \_\_\_\_\_, Envoy, Middle East
- 29 Ken Webb, Envoy, China
- 30 Rebecca Wyatt, 1992, daughter, Kim & Marc Wyatt, Canada

### OCTOBER

- 1 \_\_\_\_\_, International Coord., Asia
- 2 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, Middle East
- 2 Keith Holmes, work with Romany people, Europe
- 3 \_\_\_\_\_, International Coord., Asia
- 3 Matt Norman, Global Service Corps, Toronto, Canada
- 5 Jo Ann Hopper, Emeritus
- 10 Nomie Derani, work with internationals, Brooklyn, NY
- 11 Faith Shaw, 1988, daughter, Martha & Rick Shaw, Macedonia
- 12 Ben Newell, Rural Poverty Initiative, Arkansas
- 13 Fran Turner, HIV/AIDS/policy coordinator, sub-Saharan Africa
- 13 Bob Newell, work with Albanian/Balkan peoples, Greece
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_, son, unevangelized people group, Middle East
- 20 Daniel Houser, 1988, son, Ana Marie & Scott Houser, Southern Africa
- 25 Claire McAtee, CBF Research Consultant, Center for Study of Global Christianity, Boston, MA
- 25 \_\_\_\_\_, scripture translation, Asia
- 26 Dean Dickens, Assoc. Coord. for Mission Teams, Texas
- 28 Gordon Wood, Envoy, China
- 29 Mike Hutchinson, work with internationals, Paris, France
- 30 Virginia Hutchinson, 1991, daughter, Lynn & Mike Hutchinson, France

TRINITY, cont'd from page 3

the Spirit. And it is universal among Christians. One of the ways in which Christians recognize each other is by overhearing our mutual affirmations about the Father, Son, and Spirit.

We make these affirmations in many ways: by saying the Apostles' Creed, by singing the Doxology, by the baptismal formula, and by the most famous of the benedictions: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the communion of the Holy Ghost be with you all. Amen." (2 Cor.13:14).

And, of course, we sing hymns to the Father, Son, and Spirit. We conclude with the words of one of them:

*To thee, great One in Three,  
Eternal praises be,  
Hence evermore;  
Thy sovereign majesty  
May we in glory see,  
And to eternity  
Love and adore.*

FORUM, cont'd from page 2



taught for a number of years, endearing himself to many Louisiana Baptists. Born in Columbus, Mississippi, and later ordained there at First Baptist Church, he went on to serve as pastor of churches in Alabama, Illinois, Mississippi and Louisiana.

Specializing in the area of Systematic Theology with a research focus on the doctrine of the Trinity, Fisher is uniquely qualified to address the Forum topics: (1) **Father, Son and Holy Spirit: The Doctrine of the Trinity** and (2) **The Southern Baptist Theological Heritage**.

Two colleagues, Malcolm Tolbert and Philip Wise spoke fondly of Dr. Humphreys. Each noted that Fisher has the uncanny ability to make complex and deep subjects clear and easy to understand. Walter Shurden has written that Fisher possesses "one of the very best Baptist theological minds at work today...informed by shrewd historical awareness and tempered by a devout and magnanimous Christian spirit...[and] one of the deftest literary hands, marked by utter clarity." Tolbert and Wise echo the magnanimous thought when both state he is "one of the best Christians that I have known." Given that each have written books with Fisher, excellence in scholarship and communication would be appreciated. Yet knowing that co-authoring a project can test the best of friendships, the second quality of Christ-likeness is particularly telling.

In the first chapter of **Thinking About God**, Dr. Humphreys writes, "It is possible to think about God without being angry at others" referring to the "dogfights" that sometimes try to pass for theological discussion. Graciousness, fairness, civility and humility are characteristic of his religious dialogue. Thus he can state with sincerity that though he disagrees with much of Calvinism, he still has "the highest respect and regard" for it. He also means it when he says that grieved as he may be at the direction of the SBC, he is "still happy to continue to be a friend of the convention." Recognizing this spirit and mind, the WMU recently asked him to write their major book study, **I Have Called You Friends**.

Fisher is married to Caroline Toler Humphreys. They have two children and two granddaughters. We hear him with prayerful anticipation.

## Interested in Going Deeper?

Dr. Humphreys states, *concerning reading, in the first lecture I'm going to elaborate on what I wrote in my book THE WAY WE WERE. Another reading related to that lecture is Buddy Shurden's book NOT A SILENT PEOPLE.*

Readings for the Trinity might be **THE TRIPERSONAL GOD** by Gerald O'Collins and **THE TRINITY** by Roger Olson and Chris Hall.

## Rounding Out the Fisher Opus

Other works by Dr. Humphreys are given below. Many are still in print, others are available at online used book sources.

<i>The Almighty</i>	<i>The Heart of Prayer</i>
<i>The Christian Church</i>	<i>I Have Called You Friends</i>
<i>The Death of Christ</i>	<i>The Nature of God</i>
<i>A Dictionary of Doctrinal Terms (with Philip Wise)</i>	<i>Southern Baptist Heritage</i>
<i>Fundamentalism (with Philip Wise)</i>	<i>Speaking in Tongues (with Malcolm Tolbert)</i>
<i>God So Loved the World (with Paul Robertson)</i>	<i>Thinking about God</i>
	<i>Nineteenth Century Evangelical Theology (editor)</i>

RESPONDING, cont'd from page 2

Communication, transportation and logistics are still a tremendous challenge. Our folks discovered finding warehouse space was impossible, so as this is being written, two massive supply tents are being secured in a church parking lot which will enable us to stockpile and distribute in a more methodical way needed supplies. Joy Yee sets the challenge before us for what comes next.

What is most needed is for churches and individuals to place their sacrificial service, gifts and resources in times and places appropriate to the needs as they become known. Everybody's piece is needed and will continue to be needed in the months to come. To ensure that CBF remains a meaningful presence in this situation, we will need to be committed to the long haul. We will need some teams willing to go now, and some teams willing to go at later dates. We will need certain specific supplies now, and certain specific supplies later. Because of the complex nature of this ministry, and all the pieces that have to come together, there will be times when an offer for immediate help would be better utilized at a later time to do a greater good. The CBF center at Dallas has been positioned as a central place to keep track of these things and has been working long hours to help coordinate these efforts.

Believing that we can do far more together than we could do separately, I am asking for your help in communicating this information to the individuals and churches in your spheres. Most importantly, please keep the people affected by Katrina in your prayers. Pray also for all of us who make up CBF as we seek to be the presence of Christ together.

Please continue to give. You may send checks to our state office or use a credit card on line at the national web site: **www.thefellowship.info**. Updates will be posted on the national site and our state site **www.cbfla.org**. Follow both of these to learn of volunteer opportunities and prayer concerns. To communicate about donations and volunteer opportunities, you can contact Reid Doster at 985-222-6900.



John Daugherty

## Coordinator Elect John Daugherty Issues Greeting, Will Attend Biblical Forum

**G**reetings to our new faith family! Phyllis and I are humbled and encouraged by your confidence and invitation to join the ministry and mission efforts of this fine group of folks who make up the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Louisiana.

Transitions are always a multifaceted experience. On one hand we say good-bye to friends and family, the familiar and the ministry investments we have made while in our place of service. It has been a sad time of bidding farewell to folks who have become family to us. We have gone through not a few dark valleys with families in crisis; we have celebrated not a few times of joy; we have shared meals and laughter; we have shed tears. But more importantly we have forged bonds of love and fellowship that don't die or diminish simply based on distance.

On the other hand we anticipate new places, new experiences, new opportunities of journey and forging new relationships of love and ministry. Phyllis and I are anxiously awaiting our move and the time we begin our journey with the folks and churches that make up CBF-Louisiana.

How one views and responds to change determines what we really believe about the transforming power of Christ in our lives. So many folks dread and fight change in some aspects of their lives, while demanding it and embracing it in other parts of life. It is always interesting to me to hear some folks express how they hate change. Yet, our entire faith in Christ is about a lifetime of change, a life of transformation into the very likeness of our Lord and Savior. If it were not for change, for transformation, for re-birth, we would have no hope of salvation and no eternal promise of eternal

life in the Kingdom of Heaven.

With every new person who joins our churches or who comes in leadership there is change. The same is true for our Fellowship of free and faithful Baptists in Louisiana. The kinds of changes which come will be built upon the hard and dedicated work of people like Lynn Hawkins and Bill Hoffman and the members of the Coordinating Council and committee members. The kinds of changes which come will be for the purpose of improving and enhancing our ministry and mission efforts and bond of love among the folks who make up this wonderful Fellowship.

Pray with us now for God's protection and presence in this time of transition. Pray that He may give us a broad vision and a stout heart to meet the needs of that vision. Pray for wisdom for all of our leadership. And pray that together we may fulfill the Great Commission and bring honor to our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ as we are and grow ever more to be the presence of Christ.

### POST SCRIPT FOLLOWING KATRINA

Since writing our first article, things have changed significantly in our new home state of Louisiana. As I write, my heart is already with you in the relief efforts. I commend the hard work I know is already taking place in Baton Rouge and the New Orleans areas, as well across the state as churches and individuals are coming alongside one another to live out the very kind of love Jesus called us to have for our neighbor. I cannot adequately express my appreciation for Lynn as he provides able leadership in these efforts!

Our prayers are with you. We will be there October 2 ready to join you in tandem with the work already begun and as we continue to discover how we can best minister and serve the needs of Louisiana in the recovery efforts and building anew.

## CHURCH IN EXILE

By Carla Wynn

**S**unday, Aug. 28, was going to be a festive worship service for St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans. The congregation was going to sing its top 10 favorite hymns, which is quite the celebration because the members love to sing.

But instead, four people showed up for church. They were in their Sunday best - dresses or a suit and tie. Their pastor of 13 years, Steven Meriwether, wore jeans and a polo shirt, really not expecting people to attend church the day before Hurricane Katrina was set to slam into the Gulf Coast. Meriwether was there to brace the church building for the storm, securing different parts of the church and putting out sandbags.

But they had church. They sang a hymn. They read some Scripture. And they prayed in the calm of the storm.

The next day in a matter of six hours, Hurricane Katrina changed New Orleans and the church. Meriwether, who felt like he should be close to his church, rode out the storm in a concrete condo with one of his deacons and two of her elderly friends. The storm barreled through the city like a train dumping rain and unleashing high wind gusts. The condo held fast, and they survived.

The day after the storm, Meriwether rode in his truck to the church, dodging trees and debris trying to get to the building. Comparable to the destruction in other parts of the city, the church building fared well. The front door and some balcony windows were blown out, the roof lost tiles, but there was no flooding. The neighborhood, situated on the rim of the "bowl" New Orleans rests in, escaped flooding caused by breaks in the city's levee system.

The next day, Meriwether and the friends who rode out the storm left New Orleans, which was

without power and clean running water.

"It was getting more dangerous," he said.

All of the church's members are safe, even though one couple floated out of their house on a mattress before they were taken to higher ground in a boat.

The only church staff member not heard from is the custodian, who lived with her aging mother in the area where the levee broke, sending overflowing water from Lake Pontchartrain throughout the surrounding neighborhoods.

"I'm hoping, hoping her daughter came and got them out," he said.

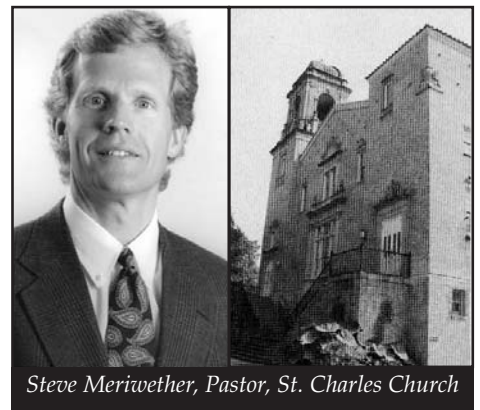
Meriwether has been in touch with about half the church's members, who are scattered from Connecticut to Colorado and many places in between. Communication has been maintained in part by an Internet blog site, where members have posted updates on their whereabouts. Two families from the church met by happenstance in a Houston, Texas, department store. Others have kept in touch by phone. Meriwether has urged them to attend churches wherever they are and to allow those churches to help in whatever way is needed.

Along with two volunteers from University Baptist Church in Baton Rouge, Meriwether returned to New Orleans on Sept. 13 to check on the church. Despite a blown out window and door, and some loose tiles, the building was not flooded and can be repaired. Some church members were not as fortunate.

"Some have lost homes, some lived in the high water areas," Meriwether said. "They're all experiencing a wide range of emotions. Most of them are grateful to be alive. Some have a real hard road ahead of them."

The uncertainty during New Orleans' recovery has led at least five families in the church to permanently relocate in another area of the country.

"We're going to be a smaller congregation. Many probably won't come back," Meriwether said.



Steve Meriwether, Pastor, St. Charles Church

Hurricane Katrina gave the church a new focus, unlike any prolonged and planned vision process could have. But these are uncertain times. The congregation will lose some people and gain others. The church might have to scale back its programs and activities. Some members will feel the financial backlash of Katrina, leaving the church at risk as well.

"We can only see the next month, but it's OK. We can make the journey this way," Meriwether said.

Residents of some of the lesser-affected areas in the city will begin to return soon, which means the church can return to some normalcy. As early as Sept. 25, Meriwether hopes to hold a service, where communion can be served and hymns can be sung.

"It won't be as much what I say, as them being together," he said.

While Meriwether has been displaced, University Baptist Church has provided him an office, where he can keep in touch with members by phone and computer.

"Their generosity has been large. It's been an island for me. It's been my ark," he said.

***The Forum WILL take place in Baton Rouge!***

Life is indeed more interesting in the Capitol city these days, but our hosts at Broadmoor still cherish your presence at this important time. **Hotel space is rare, accommodations in homes may be available, contact the church.**



**2nd Annual Stagg-Tolbert  
 Forum for Biblical Studies**  
 featuring *Fisher Humphreys*

Broadmoor Baptist - Baton Rouge  
 Saturday October 8



SESSION ONE: 10-11:30

*"The Southern Baptist Theological Heritage"*

LUNCH: 11:30 \$4 per person

SESSION TWO: 12:30-2:00 *"Father, Son and Holy Spirit: The Doctrine of the Trinity"*

Lunch reservations (\$4) requested by Sunday, October 2  
Child Care, reserve also by October 2  
 Contact: 225-927-5454 or [office@broadmoorbaptist.com](mailto:office@broadmoorbaptist.com)

Dr. Humphreys specializes in the area of systematic theology. He has authored over ten books including *The Way We Were*. His book, *Thinking About God*, is used widely as an introduction to Christian theology in seminary and college classes. Prior to coming to Beeson Divinity School at Samford in 1990, Humphreys was Professor of Theology at New Orleans Seminary where he served as editor of *The Theological Educator*. His main research interest is the doctrine of the Trinity. He is a frequent guest lecturer at colleges and seminaries and has served as pastor of churches in four states.

CBF-LA Receipts	July-August	Fiscal Year
Undesignated	\$9,198.14	\$28,650.72
Partners in Hope	\$7,900.93	\$15,955.11
New Church Start	\$50.00	\$1,996.55
Misc. Designated Funds	\$0	\$500.00
Credits	\$0	\$1,598.17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,502.07</b>	<b>\$49,234.93</b>



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*For updates on Katrina response visit your website.*

[www.cbfla.org](http://www.cbfla.org)