



# Louisiana

COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

## News & Views

May-June, 2005

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## CBF-LA Launches Website

*Uh-oh Cher, those Baptist Cajuns are on the internet!*  
That's right, log on for the latest. Find out what's happening with CBF in our state and around the world. Make a prayer request. Learn about missions, ministries, needs and dreams of your brothers and sisters. Follow links to partner groups to discover our extended reach gained by cooperating with others.

On the site you may also listen to messages from Dan Vestal and Bill Hoffman delivered at the Louisiana CBF Assembly, or Malcolm Tolbert's addresses at the Biblical Forum. As a special feature, we have also secured a vintage recording of the late Frank Stagg speaking to Louisiana CBF'ers in 1996 with a word as timely today as when it was first uttered.

This, and much, much more: [www.cbfla.org](http://www.cbfla.org). It's your website. Check it out and get connected!



### CBF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY BEGINS JUNE 30 AT GRAPEVINE, TEXAS

*Missionaries Holmes and Van Rheenens Will Address Louisiana Meeting*



*Holmes-Van Rheenens Family*

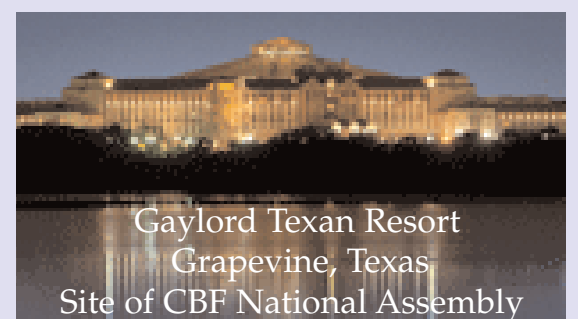
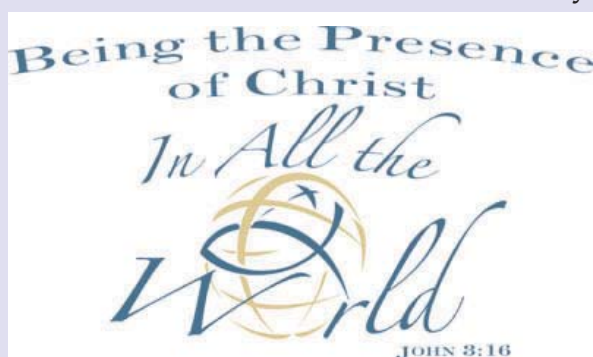
Have you made your plans to attend the CBF General Assembly yet? At Grapevine, Texas, right out of Dallas, people from all over the nation will come together for fellowship, inspirational music and speakers (including Dan Vestal.) You can also anticipate outstanding breakout sessions and time to rethink and refresh your mind and soul.

This year's site is close by and in a

great family oriented venue with lots of activities for children. Hotel, conference center, shopping and recreation are all under one roof. We urge you to go, and invite someone who needs encouragement. The date is June 30th and July 1st with auxiliary events before and after.

The Louisiana meeting will be Thursday, the 30th at 3:45-5:00. Keith Homes and Mary Van Rheenens, CBF Global Missionaries to the Romany

people will be our speakers. Louisiana CBF recently began a partnership in the "Adopt a People" program with Holmes and Van Rheenens's ministry to Gypsies in Europe. Come and catch some of their passion. Learn ways we can support and participate in this work and see something new God is doing!



Gaylord Texan Resort  
Grapevine, Texas  
Site of CBF National Assembly

#### REGISTER AT:

[www.thefellowship.info](http://www.thefellowship.info).  
CBF discount code will be given with link for hotel reservations.



**Lynn Hawkins**  
CBF-LA Coordinator

*Where Do We Go  
From Here?*

It all began in an inauspicious way. I received a phone call from Pat Anderson, then state CBF coordinator for Florida. He shared with me that he and Gary Baldrige, co-director of Global Missions for CBF were doing a tour of the Mississippi Delta looking at poverty needs. They would like to come over the River and see the poverty needs on the Louisiana side. I set the meeting up and invited two pastors of churches that were close to the delta.

You might say the rest is history. We soon started working on Partners in Hope in East Carroll and Tensas parishes. That one decision began a change in our approach and direction for our state CBF. We soon called a director, Bill Hoffman, to lead us in this ministry to the poor.

This year at our Spring Assembly we made other changes that broaden our ministry. We voted to start a new church in South Louisiana. Our new church start committee is working hard on plans and I see progress. We also made permanent at our spring meeting our partnership with the Baptist World Alliance and with Keith Holmes and Mary Van Rheenen CBF Global Missionaries to the Romany People.

This is rapid growth for our organization but we could ask ourselves "where do we go from here"? I see three areas where we can step out to do other ministries.

**Disaster Relief** -- CBF has asked each state to provide a person to direct their state in responding to disasters. You might recall that last year Florida had a number of hurricanes in the span of 44 days. CBF has a national disaster coordinator who will work with us. This disaster relief program will be suited to our needs and capabilities. It is unique in that it seeks to involve the whole church and not just a team from a church. It also will not be an immediate response but one that will come later to help until the need is over. We need to get involved to help others, but we also must remember that others will want to help Louisiana in case of disaster here. You may remember that one of the hurricanes last season was heading in the direction of New Orleans for a time.

**Chaplaincy** -- The chaplain ministry has been an extremely fast growing ministry in CBF as chaplains choose to be endorsed by CBF. Now we need to organize our state to minister to these men and women who give of themselves every day.

**Prayer** -- Our new website [www.cbfla.org](http://www.cbfla.org) has an interactive prayer ministry feature. This will give us the means to collect and disperse prayer requests all over the state. I can see people over our state praying for church revivals, women in ministry, VBS, and for pastors who need our support. We need a person to head this up for us and then to encourage cooperating churches to choose a person from their church to be a leader in this far reaching prayer ministry.

What do you see in your crystal ball for the future in Louisiana CBF? Write me and let me know. You know it could happen!



## SONS AND DAUGHTERS OF ABRAHAM: *Baptist / Jewish Dialogue in New Orleans*

by Kyle Kelley



In the multi-cultural gumbo that is New Orleans, Pastor **Steven Meriwether** of **St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church** and Rabbi **Edward Paul Cohn** of **Temple Sinai** are friends. This bridging of differences is not new for the city. Meriwether points to several previous comrades going back to the legendary pulpiteer **J.D. Grey** of **First Baptist** who hit it off well with Rabbi **Leo Berghman** of **Touro Synagogue** years ago.

With a chuckle, Meriwether notes that Grey (who had a fondness for cigars) found not only a partner, in Berghman, with whom to discuss theology, but a smoking buddy as well. He has written, "What made this alliance possible was another similarity...strong personality. J.D. didn't dare try to convert Rabbi Berghman and Berghman didn't budge J.D. either. Instead, in a time when Jewish-Christian relations were tenuous at best, a relationship of mutuality existed. There is not a variety of dark Burley strong enough that will sustain alliances of opposites. However, where serious effort is made at 'understanding the other', respect does emerge. And respect will afford distinct opposites the freedom to co-exist."

The lessons of diversity are not easy for Baptists, even within our own ranks much less other denominations or faith groups. Yet we live in a pluralistic and dangerous age in which there is no shortcut around Christian charity and respect for all. Our relationship and indebtedness to the Jewish people is unique. The late John Paul II gave a great deal of attention to this and called the

Jews "our elder brothers." Differences are very real and do not have to be denied to ease some of the estrangement between brothers.

Through the years Dr. Meriwether and Dr. Cohn have intentionally taken steps to nurture the relationship through monthly contacts, meals, phone calls, and on three occasions now co-officiating interfaith marriages. Two or three times a year Meriwether likes to turn to Cohn for consultation on the Hebrew in a particular Old Testament text in his sermon preparation. Their congregations have also participated in pulpit exchanges, interfaith services, and working together on three Habitat for Humanity houses. Because they have a pre-existing relationship, it is natural that the two groups have come together in times of national crisis. An interfaith service was quickly pulled together on the night of 9-11. Services were also held on the anniversary and at the beginning of the Iraq war.

War and violence presents a bitter history for all of us, but particularly the Jews. Most of us as Baptist Christians in the U.S. have no personal point of reference to the horrors of the Holocaust and the murder of millions of Jews in Nazi (and "Christian") Germany. This event is burned into the Jewish consciousness and for some has even led to Atheism.

Such a context can help us understand disparate reactions to a movie such as **The Passion of Christ**. Many Christians found it to be a powerful, moving experience. Some Jews experienced it as



Pastor Steven Meriwether



Rabbi Edward Paul Cohn

# The Inexorable Messianic Question

by Dr. Steven H. Meriwether

*What then? Israel failed to obtain what it sought. The elect obtained it, but the rest were hardened, as it is written, "God gave them a spirit of stupor, eyes that should not see and ears that should not hear, down to this very day." And David says, "Let their table become a snare and a trap, a pitfall and a retribution for them; let their eyes be darkened so that they cannot see, and bend their backs for ever." So I ask, have they stumbled so as to fall? By no means! But through their trespass salvation has come to the Gentiles, so as to make Israel jealous. Now if their trespass means riches for the world and if their failure means riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! -Romans 11:7-12*

When Christians and Jews dialogue, the inexorable messianic question is seldom mentioned. John the Baptist however didn't hesitate. He pointedly asked Jesus, "Are you he who is to come, or shall we look for another?" (Matt. 11:3)

Of course the Baptist didn't have an urbane bone in his body. He would find much of what we call religious dialogue to be too cuddly...a soft blanket more than a cloak of camel's hair.

Where civil Christians and Jews talk about their church or synagogue, the dialogue seldom dives beneath the surface. Our difference goes unstated. Although unspoken, it is there.

Rollo May, an observant voice regarding human behavior, said that the thing you are least likely to verbalize in a group is the thing you most likely share in common with the members of that group. When Christians and Jews talk, their shared interest, whether stated or not, is the messianic question: Is the Jewish "no" anti-Christian? Is the Christian "yes" anti-Jewish?

Any Christian Christology however that seeks to purge itself of anti-Semitism must ask it. Christians and Jews that desire to become one here and now must too ask it. (What I mean by being one is the desire to be the faith of Abraham.) But the noted reticence is not ungrounded.

Harold Bloom is among other things an authority on Shakespeare. He doubts that it's possible to perform the play *The Merchant of Venice* and represent Shylock as his creator intended. The merchant Shylock asserts his identity as a Jew, inheritor of the persecuted pride of fifteen centuries as he speaks of his nemesis Antonio:

*I hate him for he is a Christian,  
If I can catch him once upon the hip  
I will feed fat the ancient grudge I bear him.  
He hates our sacred nation, and he rails  
On me, my bargains, and my well-won thrift,  
Which he calls interest; cursed be my tribe  
If I forgive him! (Act I, Scene iii, p.171)*

The Christian (Antonio) and the Jew (Shylock) share an inventiveness for hatred. One seeks butchery (a pound of flesh) the other baptism (forced conversion). Bloom points out the ambivalence: either the barbarous mutilation of Antonio or the barbarous Christian revenge upon Shylock. A different form than Freud's love and hate toward the same person. *Shakespearean ambivalence, says Bloom, diverts self-hatred into hatred of the other, and associates the other with lost possibilities of the self...there can be no victories. (Shakespeare The Invention of the Human, p.190)* In the play it is Antonio who succeeds. For as a converted Christian, Shylock the Jew cannot continue to be a moneylender.

Shakespeare understood the human being. Latent self-hatred is expressed in hatred and persecution of others. Hatred, however always boomerangs...for you end up hating and annihilating yourself. History verifies this.

For the seeds of 1936-1939 Civil War in Spain were sown during the Spanish Inquisition of the 15th century. Elie Wiesel writes, "If the Spaniards massacred one another, if they set their country on fire and bled it, it is because in 1492, they burned or drove away their Jews." (*The Testament, p.224*) Closer to home one can link the all-out destructiveness of this nation's Civil War to the

unwillingness of the framers of the Constitution to make slavery unconstitutional. The inhumane treatment of African slaves eventually prepared the ground for the barbaric treatment of brother by brother in this nation's deadliest war.

One cannot connect every expression of anti-Semitism with self-hatred. The existence of hatred doesn't necessitate a cause. But it always requires an object. A human race immune to hatred has not yet evolved.

Thus, for many misguided reasons Christians throughout history have shied away from a deeper dialogue with Jews. Subsequently, the Church at times has been terribly silent while Jews were forced from home and country, and in the darkest moments, tortured and killed. There have not been enough Christian Dietrich Bonhoffers. (Bonhoffer was a German pastor who declined the offers of his American friends to stay in the US and returned to his native Germany during the rise of Hitler's madness. There he resisted the Nazis, was arrested, and two days before the fall of Berlin was executed.)

Yet hatred and revenge have not dominated the Church's history. They certainly do not mark all Christians. For some the reluctance to talk about the Christian "yes" and the Jewish "no" is fueled more by confusion (triggered by scripture such as Jesus' "I am the way" saying) and a public decorum (a politeness that doesn't risk the peace).

But Christians shall only put anti-Semitism behind them when and where they succeed theologically in making something positive out of the Jewish "no" to Christ

Jesus. (*The Way of Jesus Christ, Moltmann p.34*) The Church rests on its faith that Christ has come. Israel has rejected God's mercy in the person of Jesus of Nazareth. Where the Christian comes to a positive understanding of this "no", hatred loses its footing and a deeper communion unfurls.

So, just what is the Jewish "no"?

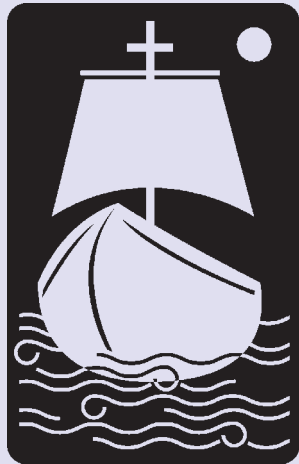
I am grateful to theologian Jurgen Moltmann for directing me to these words of Martin Buber's. In a discussion with New Testament scholar Karl-Ludwig Schmidt in January of 1933 at the Jewish school in Stuttgart, Buber plowed new ground. He spoke of the Jewish "no" in classic terms. When one considers the political climate of Europe in the 1930's, there is no good reason in 21st century America that would prevent deeper dialogue among Christians and Jews.

The Church confesses that Christ has come. In Jesus, God for a second time stepped onto the stage of human history. The first time was Mt. Sinai when God gave Moses the Law. In Jesus, God's redemption has been bestowed upon man/woman. Israel is not able to believe this. Does that have as its consequences that God in turn rejected Israel? The august apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Romans says, "By no means!"

Martin Buber's profound respect for Jesus, and even for Christianity was authentic. Yet his "no" to Christ as the Messiah was based upon a more profound experience. He said at Stuttgart, "We, Israel, are not able to believe that the Christ has come. It is not a question of unwillingness, or hard-hearted defiance. It is an 'inability to accept.'"

Since it isn't an obstreperous rejection, one must explain "inability." Buber did that in classic terms.





## *New Church Start*

**O**ne of the enduring symbols of the church has been the boat or ship. Not simply a refuge from the world, it signifies a community of believers on mission. Grady Nutt and Paul Duke penned the words below using imagery of a ship. They remind us of the mysterious nature of God's choosing the church to advance the Kingdom.

We, Oh God unite our voices raised in grateful praise to thee. Thou unchanging safe has brought us through the ever changing sea. Days of calm and days of conflict, nights of darkness prove thy grace. Hands beneath us, arms around us and above Your shining face.

Seeing then the task before us bind our hearts and hands as one. May our labor be in union, our resolve and thine be one. With one spirit let us labor toward the bright horizon far. In the midst of endless peril be thy cross our guiding star.

Not our choice the winds direction, unforeseen the calm or gale. Thy great ocean swells before us and our ship seems small and frail. Fierce and gleaming is thy mystery calling us to shores unknown. Plunge us on with hope and courage till thy harbor is our home.

***CBF-LA has committed to the starting of a new church in St. Tammany Parish, an area of great growth, great potential and great need. Much preparation has been done, much more is still needed. A ministerial candidate has been identified (to be announced at a later time), and a start date of 1/1/06.***

***What can you do? Obviously, you can pray. You can also begin to give to this effort. Even more importantly begin to enlist others who will pray and give with you. Now is the time to approach your church's mission committee or other leaders to allocate and pledge sustained financial support so that by faith, dreams are turned into deeds.***

***Contact Lynn Hawkins at 318-237-7325, PO Box 607, Ruston, LA 71273 or Pam Williams, Chair of the New Church Start Committee at 225-927-5454.***

## *Rural Poverty Initiative -- Lynn Hawkins*

The CBF-LA Coordinating Council asked me to continue this special ministry until we hire a new director. Bill Hoffman suggested that for the time being, we spend our major effort in East Carroll and I have done that. I have also made a couple of trips to Tensas Parish. One of these was to Davison School in St. Joe. Governor Blanco spoke to a full house of students, politicians and town's people. She came to give 50 computers to the 7th grade. This is a special emphasis of the Governor, and Davison was the first school in the state to receive these computers. The governor's message was that poverty is our number one problem in the state and we have to defeat it. We can't afford to lose she said.

In East Carroll I have tried to follow CBF's guideline to develop partners that will work with us in this fight against poverty. I met with Pat Robertson, a police jury member and the head of special education for the East Carroll Parish. Last year I worked with her and we provided school supplies for her special education students. We will plan to do this again in the Fall.

Through the police jury, Pat has secured a grant of \$50,000 to build a much needed walking track on the hospital grounds just in front of the picturesque Lake with its Cyprus trees. This walking path will become a community meeting place where blacks and whites can walk together. This project will be completed in mid-July. She has asked our help with the landscaping along the path. We will need a landscaping plan, plants and some people to plant the shrubs. I am really excited about partnering with Pat and the police jury on this project.

May 3, I spoke to the East Carroll School Board at their monthly meeting. Ms. Robertson asked me to meet with them and share who we are and how we have helped the special education students and our plans for helping the children of the Parish. Alice Nichol of the East Carroll School Board is developing a list of needy students so that we can help them with school supplies this fall. She said that almost two thirds of the students in the Parish fall into this category.

April 19, I met with Dee Henshaw who works with women prisoners in Lake Providence. Dee is a longtime friend of mine as she was one of my students at the Tech BSU and went on mission trips with us. Dee is now working in a government program called Even Start, helping thirty women work toward their GED while in prison. Below is a list of items that she needs in this work. Perhaps your church, Sunday School class or WMU could collect these items to help in this ministry.

For the last three years I have talked with Renee Whatley, the East Carroll Librarian. She seems to know everyone in Lake Providence and wants to help those in need. I recently told her of my concern that the black pastors of that area have access to commentaries to help them in sermon preparation. She showed me the 200 section of the library. There are some helpful religious books that people have given. However, there is just one set of commentaries, the Layman's Bible Commentary. She is open to us giving commentaries to the library and she said that when given, they would write up an article for the local newspaper so that pastors and others would know and could use them. Commentaries that would be most welcome are Broadman, Tyndale, Barclay, and Matthew Henry. Classic works on the Ten Commandments, parables, Psalms and the Sermon on The Mount would also be good additions. Do you have any of these books in your library that you would donate to the East Carroll Public Library or give money toward the purchase of some of these? Maybe you would like to make a donation in honor of someone.

Finally, I am working with Ben Newell, RPI director for Arkansas. Ben is planning a basketball tournament for Jr. high and Sr. high boys and girls. The tournament will be July 9-16 in Helena, Arkansas. The FCA will give devotions. In the late afternoon and evenings these boys and girls will do community work. This will give them a taste of helping others. We can help with T-shirts and gas to get the students and their counselors there. I will be going along with these teams. To help, call me at (318) 237-7325.

You can tell this has been a productive time. Continue to pray for our growing partnerships with the leadership from these two parishes.

## *From Bill Hoffman*

Dear Partners in Ministry, this is just a brief update on recent events that have occurred since I saw many of you at our State Assembly in Shreveport March 11-12. Thanks to some "mission-minded" ladies at FBC Shreveport I was able to share several Hispanic edition books from the *No Child Left Behind* series with the Tensas literacy center and some individual families.

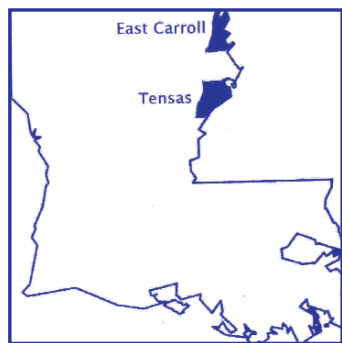
On another trip I delivered some Christian literature and more "lap robes" for residents of area detention centers and

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nursing homes donated by some caring friends in Shreveport. We had a good workday at a vacant church in St. Joseph, preparing food boxes and doing some general cleaning to help the owner who has graciously allowed us to use this facility.

I had the privilege of preaching at the Mission Center of FBC Newellton, during their monthly community worship/food distribution. There were about 40 people present and I was again very favorably impressed with the volunteer efforts of the FBC Newellton membership. I was glad to be able to share donated food boxes with the Mission Center to under gird their ministry.

Recent gifts from our Rural Poverty Partners allowed us to purchase much needed electric keyboards and a CD player to use for weekly worship services in Tensas Detention Centers! We have also received more backpacks from a Tensas parish business that we hope to share with local schools. We still need



Targeted Parishes

Hispanic paperback hymnals (available at Lifeway for about \$13. each) to use at the Waterproof Detention Center. We are also in need of 10 Portuguese Bibles.

Please pray for a Women's Bible Study for the guards at the Waterproof Detention Center. There is a great need for this Bible study. Recently, eight Chinese inmates and four Hispanic inmates were baptized in Waterproof! Several more inmates in Waterproof and Newellton have recently made professions of faith and are awaiting Baptism!

Thank you so much for the many expressions of affirmation to me and especially for the Partners in Hope ministry. I look forward to being an active part of this work as a volunteer in the days ahead.

### YOU CAN HELP

**Items Needed:** School Supplies: ink pins (not gel), markers (washable), pocket folders (no metal clasps), loose leaf paper, highlighters; Other Items: stationary, white ladies crew socks, lotion, toothbrushes, toothpaste, sanitary items (no plastic applicators), Christian magazines without mailing address, devotional books (must be new), journals, other books, photo albums (no metal rings) Food items - non-perishable; Supplies for landscaping walking path in Lake Providence T-shirts for Partners in Hope basketball tournament in Arkansas Portuguese Bibles, Spanish hymnals for Restorative Justice ministry Commentaries, Bible study books for East Carroll library

**Volunteers Needed:** Help in developing landscaping plan, Help with setting out plants, Assist with Partners In Hope basketball tournament in Arkansas July 9-16

**Pray For:** Women in the Even Start program in Lake Providence prison, their families and children; Continued funding for the Even Start program; All the many facets of the Restorative Justice Ministry Women's Bible study for guards at Waterproof Detention Center; Leadership of both targeted parishes and growing partnerships.

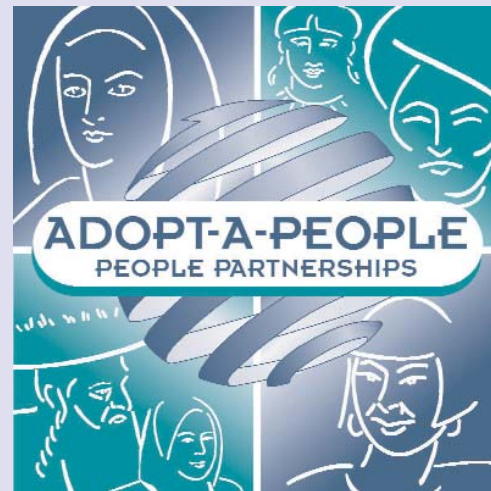
## Swatting Mosquitoes or Draining the Swamp?

by Kyle Kelley

All jokes aside about the mosquito being our state bird, there is nothing funny when those blood-suckers are swarming around your head. We can "Off" and "Deet" them all we want, but if we leave pools of stagnant water around the yard, they will breed faster than any quick-draw "bug-spray slinger" can zap'em.

What are the breeding grounds for the despair of poverty? We have spiritual hope to share with the poor, but God also expects us to be good stewards of other resources we bring to bear. My grandmother was a great believer in prayer, but she also liked to remind me that God expects us to "put feet to our prayers."

If we become really serious about helping the poor we will learn to effectively advocate for and with them. "Draining the swamp" will have to involve better public policy and effective use of public monies for the disadvantaged. CBF partners with two faith based non-partisan groups who actively speak up on behalf of the poor. They are Bread for the World (bread.org) and Call to Renewal (calltorenewal.org). We can educate ourselves on the issues and join others in being a prophetic voice and exercise Christian citizenship. Budgets are moral documents and reflect our values as a people and a nation. As Christians we must care about the whole person as Jesus did. He tells us we are to be "wise as serpents and harmless as doves" as we move about this world seeking to be his instruments of reconciliation.



## Romany Mission

**C**BF-LA, in its recent state assembly, voted to participate in the "Adopt-A-People" partnership as a way to get personally connected with the work of Louisiana native CBF missionaries Keith Holmes and Mary Van Rheenen with the Romany people (also known as Gypsies) in Europe. In doing so, we pledge our prayer and financial support and will encourage volunteer activities and other ways to meet identified needs.

Mary recently wrote, "one of the ways which you could partner with us is by supplying two volunteers to provide an MK camp/child care for the four children who will be at our annual Gypsy Cluster meeting, July 24-29, in Birmingham, England. We have this position posted on CBF's volunteer site." (thefellowship.info) It is one of two current postings listed below. Are you available? Do you know someone who is?

### Child Care Worker - MK Camp in Birmingham, England

An experienced child care worker is needed to oversee a day program, free time, and other activities for four missionary kids (MKs), ages 9-12 (three girls and one boy). The volunteer will be expected to provide some structure for this event, possibly a Bible club or camp format. This would be an appropriate opportunity for a family with children in this age range, especially a boy.

When: July 24-30, 2005

Length: Six days

Small Business Development Training - Moldova  
Teach as part of a workshop devoted to creating and running a small business. Market research, business planning, and micro-enterprise development experience are highly beneficial for this project. The volunteer will be working in a Romany (Gypsy) village with primitive conditions.

When: Flexible (volunteer will arrange specific dates with field personnel)

Length: Four to 14 days

Assignment Contact for each opening: volunteer@thefellowship.info; 800-782-2451

**Hear Keith and Mary** at the Louisiana meeting of the General Assembly in Grapevine, TX on June 30 as they tell of their mission and ways we can connect.

## Messianic, cont'd from page 3

Equally important in Christianity and Judaism is the theological concept of redemption. *Redemption* used in this context speaks of God's saving acts in earthly history. One's concept of *redemption* shades one's understanding of the Messiah.

In Jewish eyes *redemption* means redemption from all evil. Evil of body and soul, evil in creation and civilization. *"Judaism has always adhered to a concept of redemption which sees it as a process that takes place publicly, on the stage of history.* (Moltmann, p.29) The Hebrew word *tikkun* illustrates this active redemption. It means to *mend the world*. The Messiah is like a furniture maker who repairs the broken table, restoring it to perfection.

After Auschwitz anyone doubting the persistent imperfection of the world is clearly living with his/her head in the sand. In 1933 prior to the Holocaust Buber said, *"We know more deeply, more truly, that world history HAS NOT been turned upside down to its very foundations...that the world is NOT YET redeemed. The redemption of the world is for us indivisibly one with the perfecting of creation.* (Ibid. p.28) In short, the Messiah's presence coincides with a redeemed world living in union with God.

On the other hand...the Church understands redemption as a happening in the spiritual sphere, and in what is invisible. The Christian theologian Jurgen Moltmann points out, *"It takes place in the soul, in the world of every individual, and effects a mysterious transformation to which nothing external in the world necessarily corresponds."*

Permit me to try and illustrate this from my own realization of God's saving grace at work in my life. It just so happened that it coincided with President Johnson's program known as "The Great Society." The reconciliation God began in my life was a believed reconciliation. There was no external change in the external world that signaled this redemption had occurred. But the reconciliation of the poorest in this country would have been an experienced reconciliation. The poor man/woman would have witnessed changes in their external world signifying the betterment of their lives. Many living in poverty have demonstrated faith in Christ all the while noting little change in their external environment.

The Christian supports such redemption of the inner man according to the teachings of Jesus. Jesus expounded on the themes of the Old Testament prophets and applied them to the human heart. Jesus instructed that it is not what goes in that defiles the man, but what spews forth from his heart. The apostle Paul later said, *"A man is not justified by works of the law but through faith."* (Galatians 2.16) Yet, the Church answers the call to effect society, mend the world.

The Christian at best is left with a tension between believed and experienced reconciliation. Actively Jesus mended the world around him all the while calling men/women to live by faith...the conviction of things not yet seen. The Christian is called to live believing out of the brokenness of his culture.

These two distinctly differently concepts of redemption (believed and experienced) come to bear on the messianic question. Both camps must answer the critical challenge. The Jew asks the Christian: *Can the Redeemer himself have come into the world before the redemption of the world has become a real happening?* In turn the Christian asks the Jew: *Could God have a chosen people before the world has been redeemed? Can one already be a Jew in this Godless world?* (Summarized from Moltmann, p.30) Where people of faith attempt to answer these questions, a deeper dialogue occurs.

Do you have a feel for what Buber was getting at when in classic terms he referred to the Jewish *inability to believe*? An inability informed by the obvious fact...the world is not yet redeemed, evil persists. The Jewish "no" when thus understood permits us to proceed theologically toward something positive. In the time that remains let's see what that is.

The apostle Paul is our guide. He saw God's will in Israel's "no." For Israel's "no" is not the "no" of the unbeliever. The

unbeliever's rejection of God in turn hardens her heart. But Paul states that Israel says "no" because God hardened its heart that it cannot do anything but say "no." This hardness is not the same as that of the unbeliever and has nothing to do with final judgement. Instead, it is a provisional act on God's part...one that is not final. Remember in the Exodus God hardened the heart of Pharaoh repeatedly.

Many stumble on the idea that God would impose on the whole of Israel an inability to say the "yes" of faith to Jesus. Up front Paul declared God's purpose a mystery...which is in keeping with God's character. God imposing on Israel an inability to say "yes" is no more mysterious than God choosing Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, and the life and work of Jesus of Nazareth is. Yet, through each of these events God's redemption was revealed.

The Jewish inability to say "yes" opened the gospel to the Gentiles. This is a mystery and one that is good news for the Gentiles. Paul wrote, *"Blindness has come upon part of Israel, until the full number of the Gentiles come in."* (11:25) Because of the Jewish "no" the Christian community had a surprising experience. In the words of Moltmann, *"It discovered that the Spirit of God comes upon Gentiles so that they are seized by faith in Christ directly, without becoming Jews first of all."* (P.34)

But this is not ground for Christian boasting. Neither does it grant permission for a blatant disregard for Israel's election. Israel's promises remain Israel's promises. Paul said that if Israel's inability to say "yes" led to the enrichment of others, what do you suppose, Paul asks, Israel's subsequent enrichment will mean for others. (*Interpretation, Achtemeier p.181*) The church doesn't push Israel out of its place in divine history. God's promises made to Abraham are eternal...they were not limited warranties.

Which leads to the following positive conclusion. *"The only justifiable Gentile Christian mission to the Jews is the reminder to the Jews of their own gracious election, and its promise for humanity."* (Moltmann, p.36) A similar reminder to Christians is the only justifiable Jewish mission. But this raises a question: Is the Christian unfaithful to the great commission of Christ where she honors the Jewish election?

The apostle Paul thinks not. For it was Paul who said of Abraham, *"for he is the father of us all."* (Romans 4.16) In the name of Abraham's faith, Christians and Jews can become one here and now. For both faiths desire to be nothing other than the faith of Abraham.

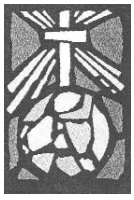
What would I do as a pastor if a Jewish man presented himself for Christian baptism? I would receive him as the Rabbi warmly receives the Christian who enters the Temple with a desire to convert to Judaism. I would explain that confession of Jesus as the Christ precedes believer's baptism. I would faithfully discharge my pastoral duties pertaining to the discipleship of a new believer.

At the same time I reject a method of evangelism that disregards God's prior election of the Jews. They misstep when they interpret the Jewish "no" to be the same as the "no" of the unbeliever. Besides, one has to believe that if God did decide to renege on a promise made to Abraham that God would choose to reveal this through some other source than a loosely-wired superficial Baptist evangelist!

When God chose to create a new people based on trust in Christ as the one whom human beings can find their relationship to God rectified, God remained true to God's mysterious nature. God's inclusion of the Gentiles did not come at the expense of the Jews...remember, Israel is the trunk, the Gentile Christian Church the branch.

Where Christian Christology makes something theologically positive out of the Jewish "no" anti-Semitism loses its largest source of fodder. More importantly, great strides can be made toward a deeper unity in the faith of our father Abraham here and now. AMEN.





### Partners in Prayer Calendar

*A resource to empower you, your family and members of your congregation to pray specifically for CBF Global Missions Field Personnel and their children on their birthdays. Some names are omitted due to sensitive nature and location of their work.*

#### MAY

- 15 \_\_\_\_\_, 2002, daughter, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_, daughter, unevangelized people group, North Africa
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_, 2001, son, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 17 Nell Green, work with internationals, Brussels, Belgium
- 19 Joshua Stocks, 1989, son, Ralph & Tammy Stocks, Hungary
- 21 Pat Tosan, work with Persian speakers, New Jersey
- 21 Ron Winstead, Emeritus
- 25 Rick Burnette, work with Palaung people, Thailand
- 26 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 28 Laurel Morrow, 1992, daughter, Frank & Karen Morrow, Germany
- 31 Ann Skipper, Envoy, Texas

#### JUNE

- 2 Emily Morrow, 1990, daughter, Frank & Karen Morrow, Germany
- 4 \_\_\_\_\_, mobilizer, unevangelized people groups, Southeast Asia
- 6 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 8 Janice Newell, work with Albanian/Balkan peoples, Greece
- 9 Michelle Cayard, representative to China
- 10 Kim Wyatt, work with internationals, Toronto, Canada
- 14 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, Middle East
- 15 \_\_\_\_\_, 1985, daughter, unevangelized group, Southeast Asia
- 16 \_\_\_\_\_, 1988, daughter, unevangelized group, Southeast Asia
- 17 Margie Thibodeaux, Urban Ministry Coordinator, Georgia
- 19 Ana D'Amico, UN Public Policy/Partnerships & Team Volunteer Liaison, Cary, NC
- 20 Lonnie Turner, HIV/AIDS/public policy coordinator, sub-Saharan Africa
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_, 2000, daughter, unevangelized people group, Asia
- 21 \_\_\_\_\_, Envoy, Middle East
- 22 Brenda Lisenby, representative to China
- 22 \_\_\_\_\_, scripture translation, Asia
- 22 Darrell Smith, work with Albanian/Balkan peoples, Macedonia
- 23 Helen McNeely, Emeritus
- 23 Martha Shaw, work with Albanian/Balkan peoples, Macedonia
- 23 \_\_\_\_\_, 1998, son, scripture translation, Asia
- 24 Hannah Myrick, 1989, daughter, Lori & Tim Myrick, Jordan
- 25 Brian McAtee, CBF Research Consultant, Center for Study of Global Christianity, Boston, MA
- 26 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, North Africa
- 26 Tim Myrick, work with Bedouin people, Jordan
- 29 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, North Africa

#### JULY

- 3 Jesse Burnette, 1990, son, Ellen & Rick Burnette, Thailand
- 4 Alex Smith, 1990, son, Darrell & Kathy Smith, Macedonia
- 5 Jeanette Lochner, Envoy, China
- 5 Bob Potts, Emeritus
- 6 Shelah Acker, urban work, West Africa
- 6 Sam Harrell, urban work, Nairobi, Kenya
- 6 Becky Shenton, Global Service Corps, New Jersey
- 8 Doug Shenton, Global Service Corps, New Jersey
- 10 Mark Butler, Envoy, Washington D.C.
- 10 \_\_\_\_\_, unevangelized people group, North Africa
- 11 Allie McNary, 1995, daughter, Dianne & Shane McNary, Slovakia
- 12 Elizabeth Houser, 1990, daughter, Ana Marie & Scott Houser, Southern Africa

#### Abraham, cont'd from page 2

*anti-Semitic, doubtless painfully mindful of persecution and pogroms following passion plays in Europe (still vivid in the memory of some alive today.)*

*Rabbi Cohn did not find it anti-Semitic though he does question the movie's (and the Gospel's) portrayal of the Sanhedrin and the Chief Priest's collaboration with the Romans. In Meriwether's view, the movie has good points and bad points, but he notes, "we kind of came out of it not getting what the controversy was about. Ed agrees that people were not going to come out of having seen the movie and go look for some Jews to harass."*

*A more poignant discussion came after seeing **Schindler's List** together. "We both came out of there pretty bowled over." Then, in the spirit of "never again," a pilgrimage of 30 folks drawn from each congregation traveled together to Washington D.C. to visit the Holocaust Museum. The weekend included worship at a temple, and at **Calvary Baptist Church**, and hearing two lectures, one from a Jewish historian and another from **James Dunn** with the **Baptist Joint Committee**. "Traveling together, eating together, worshipping together, that was just a very good, rich time," remembers Meriwether.*

*Does that mean all tension from these two different traditions has ceased? The goal is not to reconcile all differences as much as to understand, respect and even value the differences. We confess Christ. The Jewish people have rejected him as Messiah. It is an "inexorable" dilemma, which Meriwether tackles in this issue's "in-depth article." Whether you agree with his conclusion or not, the richness of two men and congregations engaged in a journey bridging two different but alive faith communities becomes apparent.*

*Meriwether recounts a story illustrating both tension and reconciliation. Place it in the category of "you can take the Baptist minister out of the church, but you can't take the Baptist out of the minister." "When I'm there, they know I'm the Goy. I'm the Gentile," related Meriwether. On one of his visits there was a controversy in the Temple (which is in the Reform tradition and not as strict in dietary requirements.) A reception was being planned, and they were having food catered. When the plans included serving shrimp (not a kosher seafood item), a debate began concerning the Orthodox Jews, who will not eat shrimp, but would be present at the event. Someone referred to their orthodox brothers and sisters as "those Jews." "In his sermon," as Meriwether recalled, the Rabbi "just went off, 'Since the Holocaust, we should not persecute those Jews,' and I remember saying "Amen," and it echoed through the Temple. Everybody turned around and looked at me." Well on that day when the Steve the Baptist thought for a moment he was John the Baptist, he wasn't removed from the Temple, but came back with an all too human story we must learn and re-learn in every tradition.*

*In the apostle Paul, we are taught it is through Jesus we have access to God without first becoming Jews. "But," states Meriwether, "this is not ground for Christian boasting. I've always thought that the image of the grafted branches onto the original trunk (Romans 11:17-24) is a singularly powerful illustration of this point...As Christians we must be patient. After Auschwitz, we are asking a great deal of the Jew to see something divine in the mission and spread of Christianity."*

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**CBF-LA  
 'BRIEFS'**



**Dr. Greg Hunt**, pastor of First Baptist Shreveport was honored with the **2004 J.D. Grey Preaching Award** by the Louisiana Moral and Civic Foundation for his sermon *Is God an American?* This message was the featured "in depth" article in the CBF-LA November newsletter. You can access the print or audio version of this sermon at our website [www.cbfla-org](http://www.cbfla-org).

**Dr. Sarah Frances Anders** will be the keynote speaker at the annual meeting of the Baptist History and Heritage Society June 2-4 at Samford University. "Women in Baptist History" will be the conference theme. Dr. Anders will address the topic of clergy-women from 1950-2000. Learn more at [baptisthistory.org](http://baptisthistory.org).

State Disaster Response **Lynn Hawkins** is recruiting volunteers from Louisiana who can be part of a national CBF network to aid victims of natural disasters. **David Harding** will lead the national effort that utilizes local churches to provide second stage, hands on, practical help. Contact Lynn at 318-237-7325.

Notable and Quotable: *Courage is not simply one of the virtues, but the form of every virtue at the testing point, which means, at the point of highest reality. A chastity or honesty or mercy which yields to danger will be chaste or honest or merciful only on conditions. Pilate was merciful till it became risky.* -- **C.S. Lewis**

Support the **Stagg-Tolbert Biblical Forum Endowment Fund** in helping us reach our goal of \$30,000 to ensure excellence in Biblical scholarship for the lay person.

CBF-LA Receipts	Mar -April	Fiscal Year
Undesignated	\$8,649.13	\$8,649.13
Partners in Hope	\$4,693.34	\$4,693.34
New Church Start	\$1,946.55	\$1,946.55
Misc. Designated Funds	\$500.00	\$500.00
Credits	\$1,598.17	\$1,598.17
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$17,518.39</b>	<b>\$17,518.39</b>

**CALENDAR**

June 30 - July 1 CBF General Assembly  
 Grapevine, Texas

July 27-31 Baptist World Alliance  
 Centennial Congress  
 Birmingham, England

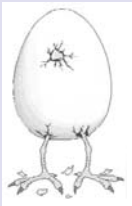
October 8 Stagg-Tolbert Biblical Forum  
 Broadmoor - Baton Rouge  
 Fisher Humphries - speaker



**IN MEMORIAM**

**Grace Evelyn Johnson**  
 Deceased May 9, 2005

*Grace Evelyn Johnson, known by many in CBF - LA as the wife of past treasurer Milton Johnson, died suddenly in Ruston on May 9. Ever supportive of CBF, Mrs. Johnson was also active in WMU at First Baptist Ruston, an avid reader, and a caring, humble servant of our Lord.*



**Be alert, be present. I'm about to do something brand-new. It's bursting out! Don't you see it?**

*Isaiah 43:19 The Message*

**Get involved! Be part of God's new surprises in CBF-LA!**

**Spiritual** Pray to undergird Partners in Hope, mission projects, new church start, congregational supports and our national and international work. Send us your ideas, your creativity -- the places the Spirit is moving in your life.

**Physical** Share your time and presence. Let us know of your interests and passions and we will find the place of ministry and mission that only you can fill.

**Monetary** Give joyfully. Give hilariously! Use the enclosed envelope. Support this ever expanding work. If you send offerings to the national office, be sure to designate at least 25% for work in Louisiana. Make a monthly pledge!



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