

Florida Fellowship News

October - December 2009

A Publication of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida

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God's Work in Sichuan

By Carla Wynn Davis
CBF Communications

The Gospel is spreading; the Church is growing and CBF field personnel are living out their passion as God is changing hearts and lives in China.

SICHUAN PROVINCE, CHINA – At first glance, there isn't much to this particular hillside high in the mountains of central China. A thin layer of trash is pasted into the muddy terrain, and a handful of local squatters have grown patches of crops on the parts of the slope that aren't so steep. There's nothing to indicate this plot of land is special – until Elder Zhang arrives.

As the leader of the city church in Bazhong, China, Elder Zhang is a busy man. With a cell phone to his ear, he speaks with wisdom and authority, like he'd been there, done that. And at 71, he probably had. But when he reaches the bottom of this unassuming hillside, he brings the phone from his ear, drops his hands into his jacket pockets and just looks at the land. He stands taller and raises his gaze higher, suggesting there's something more to this hill.

For years this land has been prayed for and dreamed of by a congregation thousands strong and growing every day. And one day, despite the poverty of this region, this hillside will be home to a new building for Bazhong Church, a thriving congregation that just 20 years ago was only a handful of believers. Now, there are more than 20,000 throughout the region, plus 16 registered churches and even more "meeting points" that will eventually become official churches.

Beginning again

Christianity had been in China for centuries, but in the 1960s, China's Cultural Revolution began and, like many colleges and universities, churches were ordered closed by the Communist Party. Religious life was essentially banned. An underground, secret church movement continued as Chinese Christians faced persecution, discrimination or

even imprisonment. After the Cultural Revolution was repudiated by Communist Party Leader Deng Xiaoping in 1977, the government gradually began to allow churches to resume meeting as long as they were registered with the government.

Elder Zhang re-opened Bazhong Church in 1988. Too old to go to seminary, he began calling out young people from the congregation to study to become pastors. Today, three of those pastors serve at Bazhong Church. The work is hard, and the pastors sometimes feel ill-equipped to meet the needs of a growing number of people. That's where Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel Bill and Michelle Cayard help.



Elder Zhang surveys the plot of land that he and the church in Bazhong, China have been praying will become the site of a new church building for the church. (Carla Wynn Davis photo)

For the more than 200,000 believers and more than 700 churches in Sichuan province, there are only 200 seminary-trained leaders. "The church is growing much faster than leaders are being produced to staff these churches," Bill said.

Shaken but standing firm

Churches in Sichuan province faced their biggest challenge yet on May 12, 2008. Like many others living in central China, Richard Cai, who directs *Hua Mei*, remembers that day well. In just a few short minutes, life changed for millions as a 7.9 magnitude earthquake shook Sichuan province, eventually killing more than 85,000 people.

Read more on Page 3

CBF Offering for
GLOBAL MISSIONS 

A Debt of Gratitude

By Carolyn Anderson

The Florida Fellowship is what it is today by the grace of God and the countless contributions made by individuals from the very beginning. I think that is one of the ways that the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida is set apart as a unique organization. From time to time, I have shared about some of those individuals and how their contributions have helped shape the Fellowship. To these and many not yet named we owe a debt of gratitude.

Lucy Smith was an active member of First Baptist Church, Clermont, when Pat and I first met her. Pat

served as the interim pastor and we were welcomed by Lucy's contagious spirit. Her life was not a bed of roses, and like all of us she faced challenges with her own health, her children, her church . . . but she refused to let anything pull her down and always lived with a grateful heart.

During the formative years of the Florida Fellowship, one of the ways she helped us was by driving to Lakeland each month to prepare the newsletters for mailing by

folding, labeling, and sorting them by zip code. She usually brought Dot and Bill Miller to help.

Lucy, knowing that God was with her, faced unexpected changes with confidence. In order to be present during her daughter's cancer treatments, she traveled back and forth to Washington state. The day came when she felt the need to find a new church home due to changes occurring in the SBC which affected her beloved church. A few years later she lost her only son in a car accident. Her own cancer returned with a vengeance, but she looked death straight on and prepared for the process of dying. Along the way, she never stopped being the presence of God to those in her world.

At Lucy's memorial service last year, Dot Miller shared that when Lucy initially asked her to speak at the memorial, she had told Lucy that she did not speak in public to which Lucy replied, in a way that did not allow for a "no," that, oh yes, she could speak in public, that God would provide for her and she was counting on her to do this.

CBF Florida received a large gift from Lucy's estate to be invested to provide income for those ministries that pertain to youth and education. The gift, which is to become a part of Cooperative Baptist Foundation of Florida will help preserve our ministry of "investing in young Bap-

tists." This ministry includes scholarships for theological students from Florida, our state youth missions weekend and scholarships for the youth at *Open House* and *Touching Miami with Love* to attend *Passport* youth camp.

Ray Johnson, Coordinator, said, "I thank God for Lucy's vision and generosity, which transcended her own life and helps to make possible the transformation of others in generations to come. I pray that her generosity and her vision for young Baptists will bear fruit for many, many years to come."

Barbara Van Hoose is another gracious woman who contributed immeasurably to my life personally and to the work of the Fellowship. Pat and I stayed in her home every time we made a trip to the Sarasota area; her hospitality was a gift to us as she went the extra mile to make us feel at home and pampered. She, Jim (her husband and a former state moderator), Pat and I would sit for hours talking about family (they have 5 children), the Fellowship present and future, the church, the Sarasota community, the last trip they had been on or the one coming up.

In her professional life, Barbara was a travel agent, one of the best. Pat and I had the privilege of attending the

European Baptist Federation in 1995 in Norway. She arranged for us to stay with their friends in Denmark and provided us with a daily itinerary with an hour by hour list of sights to see with details. She knew people everywhere!

In our last conversation, Barbara laughingly shared that "Jimmy" had recently said he planned to live to be 100 but she told him she did not plan to stay around that long. She died this past summer, but her legacy will live on through the lives she touched, including mine. And, the Florida Fellowship is a stronger, richer, more focused ministry because of the contributions of talents, skills and money, she and Jim have made through these last twenty years.

This upcoming year the Florida Fellowship will celebrate its 20th anniversary. We want to express our debt of gratitude to these two ladies for all that they have contributed to the founding of this organization and the financial resources they have provided to secure the future ministries. To God be the glory.



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Jim and Barbara Van Hoose

Thank you for your gifts to CBF of Florida!

- An anonymous gift to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, in memory of Barbara Van Hoose.
- An anonymous gift to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, in memory of Douglas Lee.
- Amelia Zeigler Paulk, a gift to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, in honor of Pat and Carolyn Anderson.
- Mae Holmes, a gift to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida, in memory of her husband, Harold.

God's Work in Sichuan
(Continued from page 1)

"At that moment during the shaking everybody was full of fear and didn't know what was happening," he said. "They asked a lot of question[s] about why this happened. After everything came back to normal, Christians realized we cannot just ask questions, we need to work – to start helping."

And so they did. Organizations like *Hua Mei* and the Fellowship provided critical relief supplies – food, blankets and other necessities. Churches like the one in Jianguo continued ministering even though most of their church building collapsed.

As a result, non-Christians understood for the first time that Christianity was a religion that cared about people – about their physical needs, their health, whether they were cold at night or without a place to sleep," Bill said.



Bill and Michelle Cayard (left and center) are able to serve in China because of gifts to CBF's Offering for Global Missions. (Carla Wynn Davis photo)

Embracing the world

These stories, ministries and relationships are all made possible through individuals and churches that give to CBF's Offering for Global Missions, which funds the Cayards' ministry and many others throughout the world.

"We recognize on a daily basis if it weren't for CBF and the partner churches that we could not be here doing what we do," Michelle said. "I want to take this opportunity to thank all the churches and individuals who give to the CBF Offering. It's because of the Offering that we're able to live here and do the work that we do and reach out to people with the gospel."

And that's important work – something that can change hearts and lives. There are a lot of people here

who don't even know the name Jesus," Bill said. "And so it's a wonderful opportunity that God has given at this time in history to help Chinese Christians share the Good News."

Never Give Up!

By Wanda Ashworth, Executive Director of Open House Ministries

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Galatians 6:9

Most people associated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Florida have heard about *Open House Ministries* (OHM). They know that God's people responded when Hurricane Andrew devastated Homestead in 1992. They know that loving relationships formed between the residents of Homestead and the hundreds of volunteers who came. What many people may not know, however, is the end result of all this care and nurturing.

A couple of years ago, a young man named Ruben started popping into OHM with some friends who lived next door in the Harvest Center. He was greeted with love and kindness. Wanda and Leah, staff members of OHM, always encouraged him to attend the Thursday night J.A.M. (*Jesus and Me*) for teenagers in our community. While he was a little curious, he was too shy to become part of that program. Finally, one Thursday night, Ruben was cornered. His friends ducked out before the program began, but Leah walked up to him at just the wrong time. He could not escape. (Maybe it was the right time!) Ruben began to feel more comfortable as each week passed, and, by the summer of 2007, he was a regular member of our teen program. He was turning away from his old gang life and starting a new life, a life transformed by the love of God.

Ruben was a talented soccer player and offered to coach the elementary children so they would stay off the streets. He wanted to spare the children of his neighborhood the heartache he experienced due to his involvement with gangs.

Now, Ruben is a faithful volunteer at OHM. He still coaches the elementary soccer team, *OHM Lightning*, but he also started a team for the middle school youth. During summer camp, Ruben and Julio, another college student, were the recreation directors. They coordinated games and activities everyday, but they also handled discipline in a slightly different manner. OHM still had the same 5 rules, but this time, instead of "time outs," infractions resulted in push-ups, laps, deep squats. Our recreation directors were passionate about training the body and the mind. As a result, not one camper was removed from the program this summer. The children accepted the discipline because they respected Ruben and Julio, his partner.

This summer, seven of the eight members of OHM's summer camp staff were home-grown leaders just like Ruben. As a result of the love and care showered on this community for the past 17 years, strong Christian leaders are emerging from among those who just a few years ago were children and youth in the after school program or J.A.M..



CBF Global Missions Responds to Global Disasters

By Carla Wynn Davis

ATLANTA – The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship has initiated a response to the major earthquakes in Indonesia and is continuing the response to severe flooding in areas of Georgia.

CBF field personnel are traveling to the disaster zone on the Indonesian island of Sumatra to deliver supplies and explore how the Fellowship and its partners can collaborate to provide relief assistance. Rescue personnel from BWAid, the disaster relief arm of CBF's partner Baptist World Alliance, are also on their way to the region.

The September 30 and October 1 quakes – registering 7.6 and 6.6 magnitude, respectively – have left more than 1,100 dead, according to Associated Press reports, with that number is expected to climb as rescuers continue their search for survivors amid the rubble.

In Georgia, many families continue recovering from late September flooding that damaged many houses in the Atlanta area. In Austell, Ga., the Fellowship has identified one neighborhood with significant damage where Fellowship Baptists could provide assistance insulating houses, hanging and finishing drywall, and painting.

"There are compelling reasons to step in and model the presence of Christ to people who have literally lost everything," said Charles Ray, the Fellowship's national coordinator for disaster response.

Randy Shepley, pastor of First Baptist Church in Tucker, Ga., is serving as the local disaster response coordinator. To find out more about service opportunities, contact Shepley at rshepley@fbctucker.org (770-938-1688), or Chris Boltin, the Fellowship's short-term assignments and partnerships manager, at cboltin@thefellowship.info (800-352-8741).

Financial contributions to relief and recovery efforts for the earthquake can be made online at www.thefellowship.info/Give/Donate.aspx?fund=17016 and gifts for the flood response can be made at www.thefellowship.info/give/donate.aspx?fund=17006. Gifts can also be sent by mail to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, P.O. Box 101699, Atlanta, GA 30392, indicating either fund No. 17006 "Atlanta Floods" or fund No. 17016 "Earthquake Response."



Debris is piled outside of homes devastated by the September floods in the Atlanta area. CBF is ministering in these areas through its disaster response teams.

Heart of Florida Dinner Fellowship a Success

By Tommy Deal

Monday evening, October 5, 2009, "fellowship folks" from Daytona Beach, Port Orange, DeLand, Deltona and Orlando gathered for the first regional fellowship dinner. The *Heart of Florida CBF Fellowship* group, which normally meets for lunch and fellowship the first Monday each month, was asked to be the first to try the evening meal in order to promote good fellowship among more churches.

First Baptist Church of DeLand graciously agreed to host the event, and they prepared a delicious meal. Fifty-eight persons, representing four churches, enjoyed the evening's dinner of baked ziti, salad, bread and dessert, and they laughed heartily at the comedy of Buddy Raines and Claire Laury from *The Laughter Society of DeLand*. Ray Johnson and Tommy Deal presented "Missions Sunshine-Style," a review of missional activities and opportunities in and through CBF of Florida,

Everyone who attended brought a school backpack as partial payment for the meal. These backpacks will be sent to New Hope Baptist Church in Mount Hope, Abaco, Bahamas. Since the price of school supplies is so high in Abaco, Rev. John McIntosh, who pastors New Hope, has



asked CBF of Florida to help provide school supplies and backpacks as a ministry to the people in his community.

With the dinner's success, we intend to take this model to other areas of the state once or twice each year. In fact, the next such event is to be held in the Tampa/St. Petersburg area. Beginning at 6:30 p.m. on **Thursday, November 12,**

2009, the event will be held at the **Church of the Beatitudes** in St. Petersburg. A program is being planned which will include music and entertainment as well as an encore presentation of "Missions Sunshine-Style." For reservations, simply call the CBF of Florida office in Lakeland.

In a state as expansive as Florida, regional gatherings provide great opportunities for like-hearted Cooperative Baptists to find fellowship, share information and receive a bit of inspiration. So, when you learn of plans for a luncheon, dinner, or other regional event in your area, plan to attend. For more information on holding such an event in your region, contact Tommy Deal at the Lakeland office.

Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico Selects New Executive Minister

by Tommy Deal

A little over two years ago, we began dialogues with brothers and sisters in Puerto Rico about the possibility of mutually beneficial missional partnerships. At that time, Dr. Cristino Montañez was leading the fellowship of Baptists known as *Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico* (*The Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico, ABC*). Ray Johnson, Pastor Rubén Ortiz and I attended their 2007 annual assembly in Caguas and were warmly embraced by Dr. Montañez and others. They welcomed, too, what God may lead us to do together for the Kingdom in Puerto Rico and Florida.

Dr. Montañez retired and one of his former associates, Dr. Roberto Dieppa, was chosen to be the next Executive Minister. CBF of Florida was invited to attend the special Installation service on August 30, 2009. This invitation came after Ray's trip to Egypt was finalized; so, I was asked to go and represent us. It was a pleasure for me to go to San Juan and to be greeted by my friend, Jesus Garcia, who pastors the CBF of Florida church, *Iglesia Bautista de Metrópolis* in Carolina, P.R. He and his lovely family welcomed me to their home for two nights which allowed me to worship with them on Sunday morning and attend the installation service that afternoon.

The installation service was a warm and lively celebration of God and his work in and through these wonderful people. I was privileged to be part of a group of visiting ministers and guests from many relating ministries and bodies. It was a high honor to bring greetings on your behalf to this man of God chosen to lead the *Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico, ABC*. Dr. Dieppa also afforded me the privilege of a meeting in his office on Monday morning before I departed for home. In this brief conversation, we re-affirmed our mutual desire to partner missionally, to invite and lead our respective churches to seek missional connections in our state and their province to help reach Puerto Ricans for Christ.

Upon my return, I sent a letter of thanks to Dr. Dieppa. In it I included two small desk flags — the state flag of Florida and the flag of Puerto Rico — for him to place on his desk to remind him to pray for us as we pray for them.. Already in the plans for the summer of 2010, College Park Baptist in Orlando and another church from Georgia are planning to take youth mission groups to work alongside of our friends in Puerto Rico in their communities and to work on their retreat center which will accommodate groups as they come.



Tommy Deal congratulates Dr. Roberto Dieppa in Puerto Rico

Parkview Baptist of Gainesville Gardens with Community

Parkview Baptist Church of Gainesville kicked off its community garden on Saturday, September 26. Ten raised-garden beds have been placed in the park for members of the church and the Stephen Foster Neighborhood Association to use. Members of the church and community gathered to recognize the groups who put the cooperative together and then began to plant their gardens.



Jean Paul Calixte and Connie Baker of Parkview represented the church's garden committee and Barbara Ruth and Sharon Sheets represented the neighborhood association. Wayne Harvey of the Santa Fe River Baptist Association spoke on behalf of the association of churches and Pastor Greg Magruder dedicated the effort and gardens with prayer. The Alachua County Extension Department, US Natural Resources Conservation Service, Stephen Foster Neighborhood Association, and Parkview Baptist Church worked together to make this community garden a success.

◀ *Members of Parkview Baptist Church team up with members of the Stephen Foster Neighborhood Association in Gainesville to construct ten raised-garden beds.*

Financial Summary

January - September 2009

Receipts	Actuals	Budget
Undesignated Gifts	\$309,410.65	\$183,687.48
Designated Gifts	\$463,471.32	Non-budget items
Total Receipts	\$772,881.32	
Expenses		
Budgeted Expenses	\$337,027.93	\$303,729.66
Designated Expenses	\$458,771.53	Non-budget items
Total expenditures	\$795,799.46	

The Good of the Global Missions Offering

by Ray Johnson

As I sat on the steps leading into the *Swiss Inn Hotel*, I looked beyond the crisscross of traffic to the skyline of Cairo on the east bank of the Nile. Cars sped by, maneuvering through the maze of pedestrians, who were crossing the busy street by fits and starts in an effort to avoid becoming hood ornaments. My nose picked up the occasional scent of *eau d'* goat herd from down the block. Every two or three minutes, a donkey-drawn cart laden with hay or scavenged treasures passed in front of the hotel.

I had come to Cairo, where the ancient and post-modern worlds collide in a sort of sprawling, urban particle accelerator, to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ in what CBF field personnel Chaouki Boulos billed as “Celebrate Jesus 2009.” I first met Chaouki (pronounced *SHOU-wee*, kind of like “shall we”) and his wife Maha in Beirut in March of 2007. At that time, he described to me these high-quality-production, open-air meetings (think old-fashioned tent revivals “colliding” with Sunday morning worship at an Arabic-speaking Willow Creek). These meetings, Jesus Celebrations, literally draw hundreds of Arabic-speaking people each evening to listen to the music, hear the gospel, and receive prayers for their healing, their salvation, their families, their work.

The Cairo 2009 Celebration was held over four evenings, August 28 – 31, in a neighborhood courtyard that rested in the shadow of the local mosque’s minaret. As the music filled the night air, a multitude began to assemble and worship. (You can see video of the event on Facebook® at CBF Florida’s fan page. Check it out!) In

fact, at the conclusion of each evening’s service, we offered to pray for any who wanted or needed prayer, and hundreds of people, many desperate, pushed to the front of the stage to be prayed over by one of several volunteers. Over three nights, I prayed for a woman clad in her *hijab* to have her arthritic knees healed. (I literally had to lay hands upon her knees; she was insistent!) I prayed for a young infant with a serious birth defect whose distraught father carried her forward. I prayed for families in trouble, for a young boy with cancer, for a man persecuted for his faith, for another man, dressed in his *thawb*, who had suffered a stroke.

Let me bring this home. Chaouki and Maha Boulos are doing an amazing work with Arabic-speaking people throughout a very troubled part of God’s world, the Middle

East. The good news of the love of Jesus is being openly proclaimed in ways that many of us would consider improbable, if not impossible. You are a part in this miracle. Your gifts to the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s *Offering for Global Missions* help support Maha, Chaouki and hundreds of other field personnel around the globe who are being the presence of Christ in some very difficult places. This year’s national goal is \$6.1 million. That’s an

investment in global transformation that is paying true dividends. Your prayers and support move God’s Spirit to open hearts and doors and minds. And, something amazing is happening. I know. I’ve seen it.



A portion of the crowd of worshipers on Saturday evening at the 2009 Cairo Celebration.

Associate Ministers Form New Network

by Tommy Deal

Recently, I was reminded of one thing that kept me going in local church ministry—connecting with colleagues for fellowship and professional development. So, one of my passions has been to try and facilitate this for those who are “in the trenches.” Since Ray is a former pastor, it is natural for him to think like and for pastors. And, since I am a former “associate pastor” it is natural for me to think like and for the rest of us pastor types.

I invited several “associate pastor-types” with varying titles at their respective CBF of Florida churches to meet in Gainesville one Monday in September. Four came from Tampa, Jacksonville, Daytona Beach and Gainesville and two others regretted having to miss due to unforeseen circumstances. One thing was clear during this wonderful time hosted by First Baptist Church of Gainesville: we all wanted, yes needed, this camaraderie we had been missing.

With the help of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s *Initiative for Ministerial Excellence*, we have formed a “peer-learning group” and we are calling ourselves the “Florida Associate Ministers’ Network.” Anyone who is interested in being a part of this group whose purpose is fellowship, professional development, accountability and idea sharing is welcomed to call me for more details. The group’s second meeting is scheduled for Thursday, November 5, 2009, 11 a.m. – 3 p.m., at FBC Gainesville. Among other items, we will discuss *Leaders Who Last: Sustaining Yourself and Your Ministry*, by Margaret Marcuson. Come join us if you’ll be in the area. We’d be glad for the fellowship.

Nominate members to CBF Florida's Representative Assembly. Email Tommy Deal at tdeal@floridacbf.org with suggestions.

Note for Church Educators and Young Leaders:

ChurchWorks Conference in Nashville, TN, February 22-25, 2010. Great speakers! Diana Butler Bass and Dave Odom.

Combines True Survivor and Current Retreat into one event. Check out www.thefellowship.info/churchworks for more info.

Call CBF Florida office for more details. (863) 682-6802.

antiphony

conversations about things that matter

Antiphony, a special conference for college and graduate students Dec. 29, 2009 - Jan. 2, 2010 at First Baptist Church in Decatur, Ga.

YOU'VE GOT THE TIME

A Journey of Biblical Faithfulness

A national initiative for all CBF churches to listen to the New Testament during Lent 2010. Call CBF Florida office for more details

Meet Courtney

Courtney Gibson is a second semester Master of Divinity student at McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta. She is one of CBF Florida's 2009-2010 scholarship recipients. A member of Hendricks Avenue Baptist Church in Jacksonville, Courtney has worked in Atlanta's inner city at the Andrew P. Stewart Center and she is serving the First Baptist Church of Roswell as an intern to the Children's Minister.



• What are your ministry plans for the summer of 2010 and when you graduate?

I currently do not have any summer plans. I was an intern at a local church in Atlanta this past summer, so I hope to do something like that again next summer. As for the future: when I graduate I hope to be involved with urban ministry, whether that means working for a nonprofit in the inner city or on staff at a local church.

• Your toughest course so far?

My toughest course so far has been church history. It is a very interesting class, but the tests are extremely difficult!

• What do you miss the most while you're away?

I miss my home church, Hendricks Avenue Baptist. I miss the people and their smiles and hugs every week. I have been blessed with such a loving and supportive home church.

• What's on your playlist right now?

Currently, on my playlist is Jack Johnson, but he is always on my playlist. Recently, I have been listening to his album, *In Between Dreams*.

• Who helped you discover and/or refine your calling to ministry?

There are a number of people who helped me discover my call to ministry. Through many talks with friends and mentors such as Brett Foster, Kyle Reese and Susan Rogers I decided to go to seminary. A summer internship in Atlanta at an inner city camp helped me become familiar with the city and McAfee School of Theology.

• Why the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship?

I appreciate the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship because of the way it strives to stick to the core values of being a Baptist. I enjoy the openness to new ideas and freedom to ask questions.

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