

NEW ORLEANS BAPTIST THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY

VISION

HOLIDAY 2005



joy hope peace

A *Christmas*
LIKE NO OTHER



Al Jackson, pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Auburn, Ala., wipes mold from a wooden nativity scene rescued from the home of Jeff and Laura Riley Oct. 5. Riley, a New Orleans Seminary faculty member, is a former member of Lakeview Baptist Church. Photo by Gary D. Myers

A Christmas Like No Other and a *Vision* Like No Other

IMPORTANT EDITOR'S NOTE

Due to the unique circumstances surrounding Hurricane Katrina, we are sending out a unique *Vision*. The main text of this *Vision* is a first-person letter from Dr. Chuck Kelley with important updates from the campus.

The *Vision* staff is hard at work on a "Hurricane Katrina Special Edition" that will be mailed this Spring. The photo-filled Katrina Edition will provide a history of the storm and its damage, as well as the seminary's response and recovery efforts. In the meantime, we hope you will enjoy this update from our President.

TRACK OUR PROGRESS: Weekly online updates and news stories available at www.nobts.edu

On the Cover

Beauty Among the Ruins

A nativity scene is arranged on an air conditioning unit of a States Apartment. The student family placed the nativity there as they tried to salvage their belongs during the campus move-out Oct. 8.

Photo by
Jeff Audirsch



A Christmas LIKE NO OTHER

By Dr. Chuck Kelley

The signs of Christmas are now popping up all around us in preparation for the celebration of Christ's birth. Some things we see and hear this Christmas season are new aspects of this happy holiday. Some are old traditions that just have to be a part of our annual celebration so that it truly does feel like Christmas. For those of us who were living in New Orleans on August 29, 2005, this is a Christmas unlike any other.

August 29 was the day Hurricane Katrina came to town, and once the levees broke, it was day when New Orleans and our seminary changed forever.

Although our primary buildings in the front block were spared significant damage, our living spaces took a terrible hit. One hundred percent of all faculty homes flooded. Forty-five percent of all student housing flooded. Many, many of our families lost all or nearly all that they had. Three months have passed now, and nothing is back to normal. Most of us are still displaced, and we are working hard to put the pieces back together.

In spite of all the grief and loss we have experienced, however, we are finding so many reasons to rejoice and celebrate this Christmas as one of the best we have ever had! Are you ready for some good news? Read on!

We rejoice over amazing progress in the full restoration of the campus. I know you are eager to hear how things are going. Some of our question marks are getting resolved. I spent several days on campus in recent weeks and am now ready to give you a substantive update.

Spring Classes Offered in New Orleans

The simple answer is that the restoration is going amazingly well. I am now confident that we will offer

classes on campus in January five days a week, and that we will open at least some offices in January.

The classes are designed for commuters who will drive in and out each day and not need a place to live. The schedule is much fuller than I anticipated. The offices to be opened in January will also be announced in the near future.

It looks like at least some student housing will be ready for families to move in as early as April. The issues of power and potable (drinkable) water are well in hand. Our water and sewage services are relatively normal. We have power in the front block and feel reasonably confident we can have it hooked up building by building as we are ready for it in the rest of the campus.

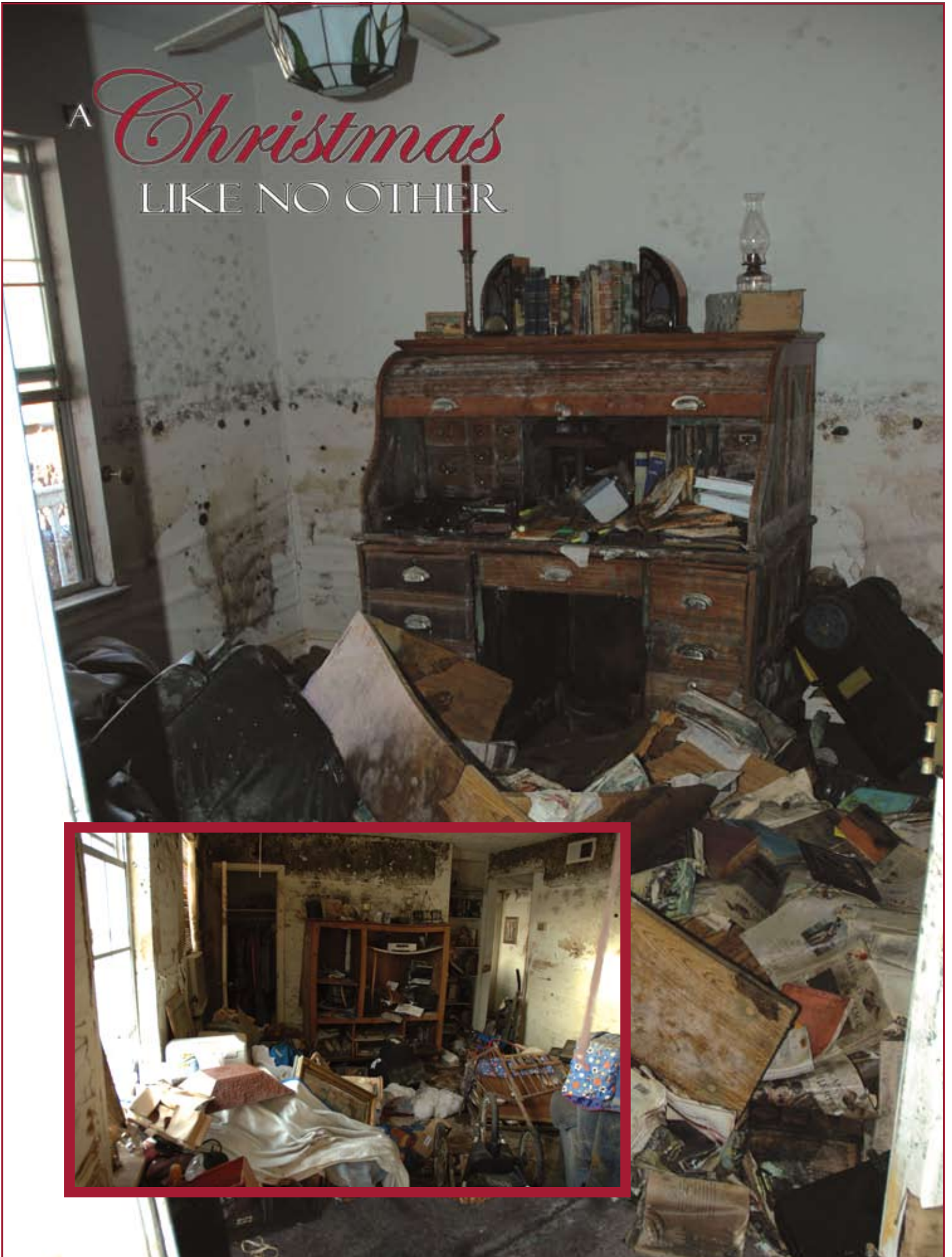
Restoration of phone service from BellSouth, which affects internet access, CIV classes in multiple cities, and other issues in addition to basic phone service remains as our biggest utilities question. Much of the city is still without phone service, meaning BellSouth is under pressure from bigger fish than us.

Even if phone services are not up by mid-January, we can still offer classes. The major impact is on which offices can open, relative to dependence on internet access. Pray with us for the restoration of this critical service.



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Amazing Progress on Campus

Mr. Mike Moskau, our contractor, is making amazing progress. All faculty homes and much of our student housing have been gutted and the mold remediation process is well under way. Every roof on campus will be completely replaced, and a number of them are already finished.

More rubbish than you can imagine has been hauled away (189 tons and climbing). Nearly all of the tree work is done, and a landscape plan is being prepared. The damage to our trees, bushes, and grass was so great we have to start over in order to make our campus beautiful again. This will be a cost of more than a half million dollars that we know will not be covered by insurance.

To give you an idea of the scale of the restoration work in progress, we are feeding about 400 people lunch every day. Most of them are working on our campus. So much is happening on our campus, and so little is happening in the rest of New Orleans, city officials are noticing. They are saying that we get things done regardless of the circumstances.

In addition to the progress of work on our campus, another reason for this perception is the work of our SBC disaster relief teams all over the area. The yellow shirts worn by Southern Baptist teams have made a dramatic impression. If it is basic needs like food or shelter, service needs like tree cutting crews or mudout work in homes, Southern Baptists are the ones getting it done. Our image is changing forever in this city.

Several of our pastors are reporting people they have never seen before showing up in church, many of them Catholic. One local pastor showed up at the

association's weekly pastor's meeting and announced his congregation wanted to become Southern Baptists because of all that they had seen us do around the city. I believe this is one way God is going to redeem this unspeakable tragedy. Years of planning, training, experience, and systematic Cooperative Program support are paying off in a larger way than anything else Southern Baptists have done in New Orleans, and we are still very early in the story.

States Apartments To Be Demolished

The biggest new development in the restoration process is a major change regarding the state apartment buildings (quadplexes of two bedroom apartments).

After further assessment, Mr. Moskau now recommends tearing all of them down for two reasons. Number one is that although they can be repaired, the cost could never be recovered due to the age and condition of the buildings. Number two is that we have an offer to tear them down at reduced or no cost for the demolition and removal of rubble. This offer would be a savings of about half a million dollars. The fact that they received the deepest flooding and were under water the longest period of time was a further concern to me. I have concurred with the contractor's

recommendation, and we will demolish those 92 units. It appears we have little choice. This creates a great need for additional two bedroom apartments. Please pray for us as we seek a solution for this. We need to replace at least half of those units as soon as possible.

Financial Challenges Remain

Negotiations are continuing with our insurers. We are finally receiving some funds, but not nearly enough. Our biggest frustration is that they have not yet given us even an estimate of the total settlement on our losses. This makes our planning a bit of a challenge. However,

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LEFT: Interior walls of faculty homes indicate an approximate water level of three feet, the "weep" line indicates water absorbed by the sheet rock. Airborne mold continued to grow above the water levels. **LEFT INSET:** First floor states building apartments flooded to the ceiling. **ABOVE:** Each gutted home is taken through an extensive drying process.

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in consultation with our contractor and Trustees we decided to push on with the repairs in order to have the campus ready for our students as soon as possible. Based on negotiations thus far we anticipate at least five million dollars in repairs that insurance will not cover. This does not include replacing the two-bedroom apartments we have just decided to demolish. Please pray for us about this specific issue. You would be interested to know how blessed we are to not have greater challenges to face in this area. Tulane University is attempting to raise 100 million dollars for damages not covered by insurance, and they are in the part of town spared from most of the flooding. Dillard University, located just a few blocks away from us, is estimating they have 400 million in damages not covered by insurance. We will have costs not covered by insurance, but compared to other New Orleans institutions we are in excellent shape. Thank God for leading us to increase our insurance coverage significantly several months before the storm hit!

Board is going to provide a planning retreat for our administrative team, which will be one of the most important strategy planning retreats in the history of the school. WMU and their New Hope publishing arm have provided some very precious assistance for our faculty wives. LifeWay recently gave us five hundred thousand dollars for helping faculty re-establish their homes when they move back. In addition to that gift, we have received further cash and pledges of three hundred fifty thousand more dollars for this project of moving the seminary family back home.

These funds have made an enormous impact in softening the blow of this disaster on our seminary family and in keeping us from a fiscal crisis. We won't have anything left, and in fact we need several million dollars more to do all that needs to be done, but God is providing manna for the needs of the day. We are celebrating every day the faithfulness of His grace in meeting our needs. Your support has been a critical part of that manna. I can never say thank you enough for the sacrificial ways in which you have responded to our needs. It is still difficult for me to

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-Dr. Chuck Kelley

Rejoicing Over Southern Baptist Support

Another great reason for Christmas joy is that Southern Baptists continue to be very supportive of us in this time of great need. We have now received more than two million dollars from Southern Baptist individuals, churches, conventions and entities for our hurricane relief fund. We have also received more than six million dollars in a special allocation from the Cooperative Program, and more than one million dollars from the International Mission Board. The other five seminaries have each made direct contributions of both money and other forms of help to assist us in these days. Dr. Danny Akin, president of Southeastern Seminary, is coming with a large number of Southeastern students to work on the campus. Guidestone's help with our benefit program immediately after the storm made an enormous impact. The North American Mission

comprehend the scale of what has happened. Your actions and your prayers are helping me live with it.

Trustees Endorse Return To New Orleans

This Christmas is also a time to rejoice over the enthusiastic support of our Trustees during this time of crisis. The full board voted unanimously to keep our seminary in New Orleans. We will be the backbone of Southern Baptist work in the city, and our students and faculty will play major roles in replanting our SBC churches. In addition we have an enormous opportunity to be a formative influence in the formation of the “new” New Orleans. Our Trustee officers came to the campus recently for a close inspection of the restoration work. We did an in-depth tour of the campus and walked them through the whole process of mold remediation. We know

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RIGHT: The steeple of Leavell Chapel was the first light visible in eastern New Orleans, providing a message of hope in a sea of darkness. Photo by Christopher Matthews. **INSET:** This house illustrates the devastation in the city. The seminary will continue offering the hope of Jesus Christ to the city's hurting residents.

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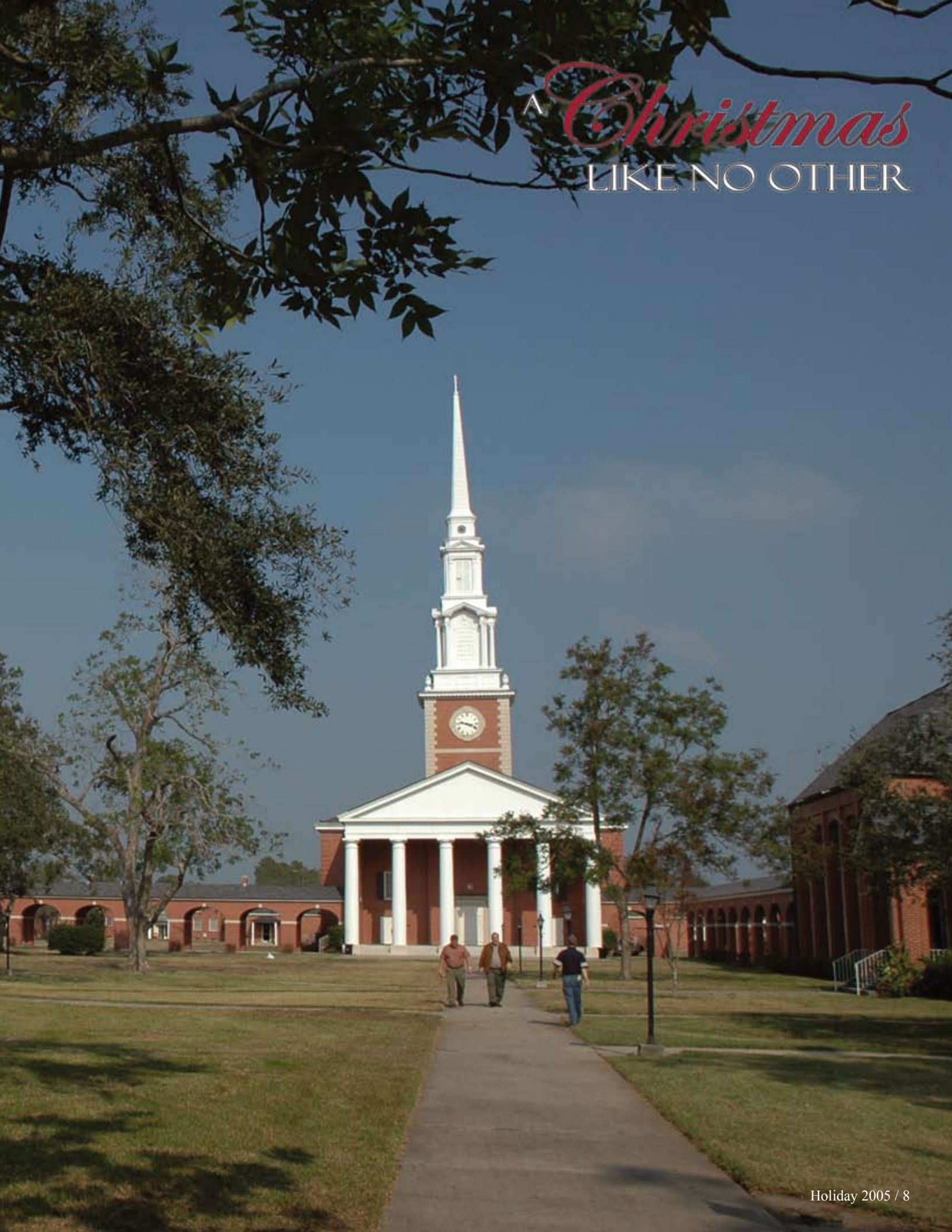




AMAZING PROGRESS

Dr. Chuck Kelley gives NOBTS Trustee William Hanberry a tour of campus restoration work in this recent photograph.

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this is a particular concern for our seminary families and are addressing it very carefully. Several steps are involved. The last step is certification from an independent testing group to verify the air quality of each seminary housing unit after the remediation process is complete. The December meeting of our Trustee Executive Committee will be held in Atlanta due to the condition of the city and campus, but our April meeting of the full board will be in New Orleans! We are looking forward to the day when all can come again to the campus of this School of Providence and Prayer. If you are interested we are beginning to post weekly campus updates on the website on Fridays with pictures for you and others to watch progress in the restoration process.

I continue to have no words to describe what has happened to our city and campus. The neighborhoods around us are like the set of a science fiction movie. Our campus is an island of life in a dead zone. We are off the map of experience and having to create the script as we go. You can be very proud of the heroic performance of this faculty. You can be very grateful for the attitude and discipline of our students. So far more than seventy percent of them have continued their ministry studies with us. The performance of our staff and administrative team under these conditions has been the stuff of legend. Everyone knows we are in difficult circumstances, and all are doing their best to make things work.

Celebrating Graduation in Birmingham

We especially rejoice this Christmas because life is going on in spite of the worst disaster in U.S. history. More than one hundred students have applied for graduation in December at a service to be held in Birmingham, Ala. at The Church at Brook Hills. Students are already registering for the spring

semester. We are continuing to stay focused and keep heading for the objective of raising up the next generation of SBC leaders. I think the Katrina class will be doing great things for God's Kingdom in their future service.

Jesus Gives Hope After the Storm

My favorite Christmas song is O Holy Night. It speaks of the birth of Jesus suddenly changing everything about the darkness and difficulty of life in this old sinful world. Truly it did. Because our Redeemer came we need never fear even life at its worse. Jesus demonstrated His power of life over death, illustrating his power over all our most difficult circumstances. We who lost so much in the storm have found out just

how amazing God's grace is. We learned what it is like to be homeless, but we are not hopeless. We are more convinced than ever that opportunity grows in ground plowed by disaster and difficulty. We are confident that times such as these will result in the greatest days ever for NOBTS!

Prayer and Financial Support Still Needed

Continue your prayers for us. God is answering them in powerful ways.

Please let us know if you have any specific questions about where we are and where we are going. If you want to do volunteer work on our campus or in our city, contact Bob Jackson, director of Mission Lab at bob@missionlab.com. Your help with any of our campus restoration projects or with the fund to bring the seminary family back home would be a most welcome Christmas present for NOBTS this year. As a seminary family we have come through the crisis of the storm. As a seminary family we will move into the opportunities waiting for us on the other side.

May this be your best Christmas ever!



Dr. Chuck Kelley preaches at First Baptist Church of Dallas on the subject of sacrifice shortly after Hurricane Katrina damaged the NOBTS campus. Photo by Matt Miller.



Do YOU? WANT TO HELP?



CAMPUS RECOVERY FUND

Your gifts to this fund will help offset the cost of repairs and restoration that exceed our insurance coverage.

BRING THE FAMILY HOME FUND

Your gifts to this fund will help our students, faculty, and staff replace their personal losses and facilitate their return to campus.

YOU MAY MAKE YOUR CONTRIBUTION IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING WAYS:

Gifts of Cash

Mail your check or money-order to:

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary
PO Box 1608
Decatur, GA 30031

ONLINE GIFTS

From the web-site www.nobtsfoundation.com click "Donate Now."

GIFTS OF COMMON STOCK, SECURITIES, OR PERSONAL PROPERTY

For information about transferring common stock, securities, or personal property to

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, contact Jim Lee, Director of Planned

Giving by phone: 504.452.4029, or email: jlee@nobts.edu.

IMPORTANT TAX INFORMATION

Congress has temporarily suspended the limitations on charitable gifts from now until the end of 2005, therefore, the Katrina Emergency Tax Relief Act (KETRA) allows unlimited gifts to charities up to the donor's total income completed on or before December 31, 2005. Charitable gifts need not be for Katrina relief, only to a qualified charity such as New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Special rules regarding IRA withdrawals for charitable gifts completed during 2005 are also included in KETRA. For additional information or question concerning year end gifts please call or email Jim Lee, 504.452.4029, jlee@nobts.edu.

Thanks for Your Gifts

**Your gifts are helping our students,
faculty, staff and their families
recover from Hurricane Katrina.**

**We Praise God for Your
Sacrificial Support.**



VOLUNTEERS NEEDED FOR CAMPUS CLEAN-UP

Volunteers are working daily on our New Orleans campus to repair the damage and prepare for students. Individuals or groups may volunteer to come for a week to assist in the recovery effort.

CONTACT BOB JACKSON FOR DETAILS

(404) 226-9367 bob@missionlab.com

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