



Jeffrey G. Audirsch/NOBTS



Gary D. Myers/NOBTS



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NOBTS plans for continuation of Fall Semester

By Gary D. Myers

ATLANTA – During the Sept. 1 planning meeting, Dr. Chuck Kelley set August 2006 as a target to resume normal campus operations in New Orleans. Even with all the campus damage, Kelley held out hope that some main campus activities could resume as early as January 2006.

“New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is here to stay and we are getting back to work,” Kelley said. “We will have a semester. We will have a December graduation.”

With the target date in sight the group members began working on ways to continue the Fall semester. Kelley said continuing the semester was very important in keeping students on track for graduation.

An educational task force was formed to develop a solution. After hours of discussion the team developed a plan to provide students with flexible educational options while the campus was cleaned and restored. The main option for students involved the continuation of reformatted fall classes. Other options included Internet courses, October workshops and open transfer to extension sites.

“All of us on campus have experienced a tremendous loss, however our students don’t have to lose this semester,” said Provost Steve Lemke “We are designing options so that every student can complete their scheduled load through this semester.”

The most extensive option was a 10-week term of reformatted courses utilizing “threaded” Internet discussions. Every course that was offered on campus in the fall was continued in this manner. The team set the restart date as Oct. 3. Sept. 13 was the target date to post new class listings on the seminary website.

Students enrolled in a main-campus course could join the same courses at an NOBTS Extension Center without additional costs. Students enrolled in Internet courses were able to continue their classes and October Workshops were moved to Atlanta.

ABOVE: Two task forces were formed to plan the seminary’s response to Hurricane Katrina. Here the Relief Task Force meets to discussion the immediate needs of students, professors and faculty members.

TOP LEFT: NOBTS President Chuck Kelley leads the Post-Katrina planning session at the North Georgia Campus Sept. 1. During the meeting, the team of administrators, professors and staff members developed a plan to continue Fall classes.

BOTTOM LEFT: NOBTS VP for Business Affairs Clay Corvin, left, and VP for Development Charles Harvey Jr., right, received a donation check from Claude Rhea of the North American Mission Board, SBC.

Seminary families receive ‘outpouring of support’

ATLANTA – Thanks to the quick and compassionate response by Southern Baptists, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary helped thousands of seminary family members begin their recovery from Hurricane Katrina. Baptists offered places to stay, places to study and much more.

included rent-free housing units, jobs, basic needs, clothing and other forms of assistance.

“Southern Baptists have responded magnificently with offers of free housing and other resources,” said Craig Price, NOBTS dean of students. “It is just unbelievable what God is doing. People have opened their hearts and their homes to us.”

“For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me...” – Matthew 25:35-36a

Aid given by Southern Baptists across the country was channeled through the seminary’s temporary administrative offices at the North Georgia Campus in Decatur, Ga. NOBTS then distributed the much needed aid to students, professor and staff members.

Several Baptist state conventions distributed Wal-Mart gift cards to help students get back on their feet. Others gave furniture and other household items.

Baptists rallied to the cause of those displaced from the seminary campus with a variety of resources. The offers

With temporary offices filling the North Georgia Campus, extension classes were struggling to find space to meet. First Baptist Church of Atlanta loaned educational space for extension classes and the October Workshops.



STUDENTSPOTLIGHT

EMMANUEL GEORGES

M.Div. Student

Starting over might discourage many seminary students, but Emmanuel Georges at age 40 sees new opportunities on the horizon.

Georges, his wife Guirlene and their five children evacuated from the NOBTS campus the morning before Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans. Many ministry opportunities resulted from the tragedy.

“This is not the time to have droopy eyes and to start dying over the things you lost,” Georges said. “You’ve got to imagine there are new beginnings.”

The family weathered the storm in Eunice, La. at the ABC Christian Camp. Georges and other believers there ministered to some of New Orleans poorest residents

“We told them, God is in control,” Georges said. “There was nothing we could do except to trust in God.”

Putting his faith to the test, Georges and his family packed their bags and left the shelter after a week. They headed to New York City where he lived most of his young adult life, but God intervened.

Georges and his family traveled through Georgia on the way to New York and stopped at the extension center in Decatur. When Georges reached Georgia, he decided to give an old college friend a call. Georges found that his friend lived less than an hour’s drive away in Douglasville. The friend offered to let the Georges family stay in his home.

After three weeks, Georges called the NOBTS seeking more permanent housing with a good school. Mount Vernon Baptist Church in Stockbridge, Ga. contacted Georges soon afterward.

The church furnished a parsonage, stocked the family with food and allowed the family’s children to attend their Christian school tuition free. Georges and his wife continue to minister to those in the community around them.

“The Lord managed to provide for us,” Georges said. “We were very fortunate that all of our needs were met.”

By Ronnie McLellan

NOBTS gets quick start on clean-up

Hurricane Katrina and the resulting flood left the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary campus scarred and broken. After the waters began to recede, the campus had sustained \$30-32 million in damage.

Flooding stretched from DeMent Street to the back fence of campus.

School officials wasted no time in starting restoration efforts on the flood-damaged campus. NOBTS President Chuck Kelley quickly secured the services Mike Moskau, a New Orleans-area contractor and long-time supporter of the seminary. Moskau would oversee the enormous restoration task.

The hurricane damaged the roofs of most campus buildings. Trees were downed throughout campus. But flooding that resulted from levee failures caused the most severe damage.

Sixty percent of campus housing received flood damage. All of the faculty homes on campus were flooded. Only a few first-floor student housing units escaped the water. Much of the housing was less than five years old.

By Sept. 12, while flood waters were still receding, Moskau and his crews began working to temporarily seal roof leaks throughout the campus.

Quick thinking by Moskau insured a steady supply of building materials for his crews while others throughout the city faced shortages. As soon as Kelley asked Moskau to lead the clean-up, he ordered large quantities of building supplies. These were stored outside the hurricane zone, ready for the workers as needed.

Help also came from the Oregon National Guard shortly after the storm. Guardsmen used the campus as an operation base following the storm. During their stay, the



Clay Corvin/NOBTS

ABOVE: Guardsman from the Oregon National Guard keep watch over the seminary campus shortly after the storm.



Clay Corvin/NOBTS

RIGHT: NOBTS President Chuck Kelley stands near a stack of roof material as workers begin patching the damaged Leavell Chapel roof.

Guardsmen secured the campus and cleared broken limbs and debris from campus streets.

While the seminary's housing and landscaping incurred significant damage, the front block of campus – including most of the core academic buildings – received only wind damage and water damage from roof leaks. Repair work on these buildings would

be relatively easy – except for Leavell Chapel.

Leavell Chapel received significant roof damage. Leaks throughout the chapel caused damage on the pews, walls and carpeting. The hurricane blew out the back window, exposing the chapel's pipe organ. Rain water, blowing through the broken window, severely damaged the organ.

Unanimous vote keeps seminary in New Orleans

By Gary D. Myers

ATLANTA – New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary trustees voted unanimously to keep the seminary in New Orleans during a Sept. 27 meeting at the seminary’s temporary administrative offices in the NOBTS North Georgia Campus.

The board of trustees also approved the administration’s plans to restore the main campus to normal operation by August 2006.

“I am very excited about the passionate commitment of trustees to the city of New Orleans,” NOBTS President Chuck Kelley said. “After talking through the [issue], there was absolutely no reservation, no hesitation, that New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary is and always will be *New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary*.”



“We know New Orleans carries some risks, but it has never been a seminary for the faint of heart. After all, this was the first and only storm of this magnitude in the city’s 300-year existence. We are comfortable with a future in the hands of God.”

– Dr. Chuck Kelley

“We know New Orleans carries some risks, but it has never been a seminary for the faint of heart,” Kelley said after the vote. “After all, this was the first and only storm of this magnitude in the city’s 300-year existence. We are comfortable with a future in the hands of God.”

The trustee board met Sept. 26-27 in a special called meeting to discuss the damage to the seminary campus and explore options for the future. From the beginning, the meeting took on a hopeful tone.

Trustees carefully weighed the question of returning to New Orleans before their vote. In the end, with awareness of the monumental task facing the seminary, the board expressed a firm commitment to return to the city.

“We are compelled to rebuild the seminary in New Orleans,” said L. Ray Moncrief, trustee chairman. “The seminary was founded there and it’s a great opportunity for this seminary to have an impact on the reconstruction of the city and for the cause of Christ.”

Moncrief said he hopes the seminary will play a prominent role in helping the people of New Orleans heal and recover

from Hurricane Katrina. The seminary also will be needed, he said, to help re-launch and re-establish the many churches in the region.

Others agreed with Moncrief. They said the seminary must not abandon its original mission in New Orleans – a mission established in 1917 by a Southern Baptist Convention vote. That mission as a “lighthouse” and a “schoolhouse” is needed more than ever in the city, trustees said.

“If Christians know anything, we ought to know how to respond in a time of crisis,” said Danny Crow, a trustee from Maryland. “I think we have got to say, ‘You don’t run out on the poor and hungry.’ You preach the Gospel to the poor and you don’t quit.”

Trustees were given detailed reports and presentations before they made their final decision. Kelley showed

photographs taken shortly after city levees failed, with board members watching intently as image after image revealed damage to the homes and apartments of faculty, staff and students.

After the difficult images of floodwaters on campus, Kelley showed more hopeful photographs. The recent photographs reveal a dry campus – completely unaffected by the city’s re-flooding during Hurricane Rita. Photos showed green grass poking through the dead grass and gray sludge left after floodwaters receded.

Despite the serious damage on campus trustees said the \$70 million in assets the seminary currently owns in New Orleans would be hard to replace in another location. Those assets include \$31 million in new construction – buildings that are less than five years old.

Trustees discussed the risk of future hurricanes that may affect the city, acknowledging and accepting the reality of such risks. They decided that staying true to the seminary’s historic focus on ministry in the city should inform their decision more than future risks.

Student Evacuations by State

Hope & Relief



Quick Facts

NOBTS classes resume Oct. 3

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary's fall classes restarted on Oct. 3. Faculty and staff members worked hard to adapt courses to an Internet-assisted format. This change allowed students, spread across the country, to continue their semester.

After classes started, the registrar's office conducted an initial enrollment tally. The news was encouraging. An overwhelming majority of main-campus students remained in school following Hurricane Katrina.

The seminary's preliminary fall enrollment of about 2,500 students was only about 250 students below the record fall enrollment of 2004.

Provost Steve Lemke noted, "Fortunately, most of our students have been able to continue their studies without interruption."

Lemke credited the faculty with much of the student retention. He also believes the initial contacts made by the office following Katrina also played a key role in student retention. Craig Price, dean of students at NOBTS, and his staff contacted approximately 1,000 students shortly after the storm.

Along with the contacts, the dean of students office directed financial assistance to student families in the wake of Katrina and helped families find temporary housing throughout the United States. Students were scattered from Maine to Hawaii following the storm.

2,500

Students enrolled following Katrina
250 below last year's fall enrollment

77%

Students who continued
coursework after Katrina

44

Students transferred
to other institutions

1,000+

Main campus students
contacted by Student Life Office

The Hardest

By Gary D. Myers

NEW ORLEANS – New Orleans Baptist Seminary President Chuck Kelley warned that the campus return and move-out days would be the five most difficult days in the history of the seminary. He was right.

The long road to healing had to go through New Orleans. On Oct. 5, professors, students and staff members began returning to campus to sift through their belongings and move out of their houses and apartments.

Kelley praised the strength of character he saw on campus during the five difficult days the campus was open. He said the attitude of those who lost everything was a testimony to deep faith in Jesus Christ.

“These days are a time of grieving and loss for us all,” Kelley said. “But you could see and feel the foundation of faith undergirding the sorrow.”

Light in the Darkness

In early October, just over a month after the storm, the steeple of Leavell Chapel was the only light visible for miles and miles. This lone point of light shining in a sea of darkness represented the hope many have for the seminary and city – a hope rooted in Jesus Christ.

The lighted steeple served as a sign of hope for the seminary family. It was the first thing to greet students, faculty and staff members as they returned to reclaim their possessions in the early morning hours Oct. 5-9 – a welcome sight among bleak surroundings.

Seminary President Chuck Kelley said that this one point of light represented the way God would use the seminary in the coming months – as a leader in the redevelopment of New Orleans and the re-establishment of area churches. The seminary’s recovery and clean-up efforts were well underway – months ahead of other flooded areas.

Photo by Christopher Matthews

Days

Seminary residents get first-hand look at the damage and endure long days of cleaning & moving

Those who returned faced long, hard days of sorting, cleaning and moving their possessions out of New Orleans to storage units scattered across the Southeast. Along the streets lined with moving vans, seminary residents sat in front of tubs with water and bleach solution dipping their dishes and glass items and laying them out to dry. Others tried to salvage furniture by hosing pieces off with power washers.

“It’s as bad as we feared, but we are saving a few mementos,” said Ken Taylor, professor of urban missions. “Through all of this God has been faithful. We’ve felt His presence and His hand of comfort.”

The disaster was especially hard for Taylor who ministers in some of the city’s poorest neighborhoods through his work as an urban missions professor. He also pastors Elysian Fields Baptist Church in the hard-hit Gentilly neighborhood.

The Taylors’ home, along with most first-floor dwellings on campus, was filled with black mold. The mold spread over the walls and to the ceilings in many apartments and homes. The smell was overwhelming – unbearable without a surgical mask.

For Justin and Melinda Langford the losses were especially hard. They had only moved into their apartment two short weeks before the hurricane.

Located in the hard-hit States Apartments, the Langford’s first-floor apartment was a total loss. Flooding and the subsequent mold destroyed everything the couple had collected in their 18 months of marriage.

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“It’s as bad as we feared, but we are saving a few mementos. Through all of this God has been faithful. We’ve felt His presence and His hand of comfort.”

– Ken Taylor, NOBTS Professor

Taylor has driven through the neighborhoods where he served looking for any of the people he has shared his life with. He still doesn’t know the status of his church members. Not knowing about the people he cares about is as hard as the losses.

“We know these are just things,” he said, pointing to a small pile of rescued items on the sidewalk. “There will be brighter days. God is going to do a great work here, but today is hard.”

As Taylor’s wife, Sheila, walked through their home, she saw many treasured items in ruins. One of those losses was a large, framed photograph of her father. Sheila’s father died before she was born. Losing the photograph was difficult.

But Sheila did find a few treasures. A John Wayne figurine purchased for a dear friend was high and dry. Also safe was her son’s “Most Christian Athlete Award” plaque from Mississippi College. However, most of their possessions were lost.

RIGHT: Shelia Taylor holds a damaged photograph of her father. It was the only photo that she had of her father who died before she was born.



Gary D. Myers/NOBTS



Sherri Brown/BP

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“It was worse than I thought it would be,” said Jennifer Tipper, an undergraduate student from Georgia. “There was mold all over the walls where it wasn’t even wet.”

During the worst of the flooding, Tipper’s first-floor dorm room in Carey Hall had about two feet of water. However, in the five weeks since the hurricane, mold flourished, climbing at least three feet above the water line. A sharp odor filled her small doom room.

The hardest loss for Tipper was a mission journal from her recent trip to a closed country. The journal, which she left on the floor by her bed, was soaked and moldy – ruined.

With all the sadness of the day, Tipper enjoyed reuniting with the other students. She said the hardest part of the disaster was being away from her friends. Such reunions were common throughout the campus.

Neighbors visited, encouraged each other, prayed and passed out hugs during rest breaks. At the Manor Apartments, second-floor residents showed love for their neighbors in a tangible way – they gave away some of their furniture and household items to those who had lost everything on the first floor. It was a scene repeated throughout campus.

As bad as the first floors of homes and apartments looked, the second floors stood in stark contrast. Many apartments on the upper floors looked the same as the day residents evacuated. However, these second-floor dwellings did have a strong odor

“I think I’m in shock. Right now I don’t feel that much. It’s just overwhelming.”

– Rick Morton, NOBTS Professor

as well. Other top-floor apartments received water damage – and mold – from roof damage caused by Katrina’s high winds.

Odd things happened during the flood. One child’s wagon floated over three blocks from his apartment. In some second-floor apartments, foul brown flood water backed up through the washing machine drains, leaving a surprise for those attempting to move their washers. Refrigerators and other heavy items floated around in flooded apartments and homes.

One of Audra Funderburk’s treasured items, a high school graduation scarf from her days as a missionary kid in Africa, was sealed in a ZipLock bag inside a plastic container. As the waters rose, the container floated and the scarf remained dry and mold-free.

For some residents, just getting to campus with a truck was a challenge. Rental trucks and trailers were hard to find. Many rental fleets were decimated by the storm.



Gary D. Myers/NOBTS



Gary D. Myers/NOBTS



Liz Stewart/NOBTS

Rick Morton, assistant professor of Christian education ministry, borrowed a truck and trailer from friends in Birmingham, Ala. Before he made it very far, a tire blew out on the trailer. Twice the trailer unhitched as he and his wife drove to New Orleans. As he worked to fix the hitch problem, Morton cut his finger so severely that he needed stitches. On campus, he arrived to a flood-damaged, moldy faculty home with little to salvage.

"I think I'm in shock," Morton said. "Right now I don't feel that much. It's just overwhelming."

After all he had been through, Morton was still able to smile, laugh and praise God. He joked that the trailer problems helped prepare him for the remainder of his trek's challenges.

Disaster relief volunteers from the North American Mission Board and troops with the South Dakota National Guard helped seminary families with packing and moving. They packed dishes in student apartments and carried boxes to waiting trucks. Disaster relief volunteers brought cold water, and encouraged campus residents throughout the long days.

Members of the seminary family who did not live on campus also came to help. Mitch Hamilton, an NOBTS graduate and trustee from Colorado, helped seminary families move out each day. Faculty members who lived off-campus came to help their colleagues and students with their difficult task. President Kelley walked around campus praying with the hurting families.

To help with the emotional needs of the seminary family,

volunteer counselors and chaplains also were on hand each day to encourage and pray with families who were hurting. Several volunteers from the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association Rapid Response Team were among the counselors.

"We are down here trying to be God's hands and feet and love on people," said Alex Aaron, a BGEA Rapid Response Team member from Oklahoma City. "We get blessed in the middle of it."

But the return was an important step on the road to recovery. Many students left on a hopeful note, expressing their desire to return to campus after the cleanup is complete.

"What helps Christians get through a time like this," Kelley said, "is the certain knowledge that whenever God involves His children in a funeral, they know an invitation to a resurrection is in the mail."

FACING PAGE – Seminary students Melinda and Justin Langford look over the remains of their first-floor States Apartment. **THIS PAGE** – TOP LEFT: NOBTS Dean of Students Craig Price comforts Maria Gowan, a graduate student, after she visited her damaged dorm room. BOTTOM LEFT: A soaked copy of the C.S. Lewis classic, "The Problem of Pain," rests among the debris on the floor of a student apartment in a States Apartment. ABOVE: "Stew" Stewart holds his daughter's moldy copy "My Utmost for His Highest" damaged in the storm.



Jeffrey G. Audirsch/NOBTS

Restoration efforts pick up speed after campus move-out

After the long, hard campus move-out week Oct. 5-9, contractors began the process of restoring the flood-damaged campus. Their goal – complete the campus restoration in time to resume full campus operation by August 2006. The contractors also worked hard to insure that some seminary offices and commuter classes could return to campus in January 2006.

The first step, clean and restore all the damaged campus housing units. All of the damp, moldy building material was removed to expose the framework of each damaged unit. After the damaged material was removed a detailed, time-consuming mold abatement process, explained in the graphic on the right-hand page, was performed on each unit. After the abatement process, tests were performed to insure the air quality in each unit.

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ABOVE: Roofers continue their work on the Leavell Chapel as dusk approaches.

RIGHT: A worker power washes the sidewalk of a faculty home early in the restoration process.

BELOW: Fans dry the exposed framework of a faculty home.



Clay Corvin/NOBTS



Mold Clean-up

The following steps were taken to eradicate mold from on-campus buildings.



1 Damaged building materials are removed.

2 Building is thoroughly cleaned and power washed. Exposed building material is treated with sanitizing chemicals.



3 Building is sealed. Hot air is circulated through building with large heaters.

4 Smaller heaters inside the building continue the drying process.



5 Dehumidifiers are used to remove moisture from the building.



6 Small fans are used to vent interior air of the building.



7 An independent company performs tests to insure that the building meets strict government air quality standards.



Jeffrey G. Audirsch/NOBTS

ABOVE: The Leavell Chapel Quad shows signs of improvement in this photograph taken in November.

LEFT: A sign in front of Martin Chapel advertises three worship services held there each Sunday during the restoration process. The services were open to members of the community, NOBTS staff and contract workers.



Gary D. Myers/NOBTS

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Roof repair and tree removal continued throughout the campus. Hundreds of tons of debris have been removed from campus since the recovery efforts began.

Third District Police

During the restoration time, officials from the New Orleans Police Department's third district utilized the seminary campus as a staging area. Officers from the district used the campus for daily meetings and shift changes while their patrol substation was being repaired.

Worship Services

NOBTS employees stationed on campus also began worship services for the contract workers, members of the community and the seminary staff. Three services were held each Sunday in Martin Chapel – two in English and one in Spanish.

Volunteers help with NOBTS campus clean-up

NEW ORLEANS – In wake of Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary faced the daunting task of cleaning up a huge mess. To help with the process, NOBTS launched a major volunteer cleanup initiative Oct. 31. The initiative gave Southern Baptists the opportunity to assist with the restoration and renewal of on-campus housing and they quickly responded to the call for help.

Groups will go back through each building cleaning and preparing the apartments for painting.

Bob and Linda Jackson, new directors of the seminary's MissionLab program, are coordinating this massive clean-up effort. The task includes scheduling up 50 volunteers per week and coordinating meals for volunteers and contract workers. For months they served up to 400 meals per day.

“God has put before us a task too big for us, but not too big for Him. Southern Baptists have an opportunity to come and bring the message of love to the city of New Orleans.”— Bob Jackson, MissionLab

From as far away as Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, and as close as Houma, La. volunteers have given their time and energy to help restore the seminary. Their efforts have saved money and time during the clean up.

The efforts of these volunteers have seminary officials convinced many of the campus housing units will be available as early as April. Volunteers have completed the initial clear-out on all but a few second- and third-floor housing units.

“God has put before us a task too big for us, but not too big for Him,” Bob Jackson said. “Southern Baptists have an opportunity to come bring the message of love to the city of New Orleans.”

Jay Adkins, pastor of the New Orleans-area First Baptist Church of Westwego who assisted with the cleanup initiative, noted, “One of the greatest blessings of being Southern Baptists is the cooperative spirit that has been planted and nurtured in each of our local congregations.”



ROCKY BISHOP

Saskatoon,
Saskatchewan

VOLUNTEERSPOTLIGHT

Rocky Bishop watched the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina unfold on television from his home in Canada. He had no connection with the city, but wanted to help.

He immediately began planning a trip to New Orleans. He knew God wanted him to go to volunteer but he did not know where to serve.

When Bishop's pastor at Emmanuel Baptist Church heard of his intentions, he put him in touch with Canadian Baptist Ministries (CBM). The group was planning a trip in October. Bishop signed up and continued to pray.

“I filled out all the documents and I prayed about it,” Bishop said. “I asked the Lord to lead me to the people who needed me the most.”

Just days before the trip, Bishop caught a cold. He was too sick to travel.

Bishop could not make a second trip because all the slots were filled. He was disappointed, but still determined to go. He searched the Internet and worked the phones, searching for a place to serve.

Finally, Bishop heard that First Baptist Church in Mandeville, La., would be happy to host him. He purchased a ticket and prepared to fly to New Orleans. Just three days before he left, Bishop received an e-mail about the clean-up efforts at NOBTS.

Bishop said the work at the seminary was hard – physically and emotionally. However, he enjoyed his labor of love. He hopes to return to the city to help others clean and restore their homes.

By **Gary D. Myers**

NOBTS holds first post-Katrina graduation in December

By Gary D. Myers

BIRMINGHAM, Ala.— New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary celebrated an historic graduation Dec. 17 – its first since Hurricane Katrina. In spite of the disruption caused by the storm at the start of the semester, 137 graduates completed their degrees.

The graduation, held at The Church at Brook Hills in Birmingham, Ala., marked another milestone in the seminary’s effort to recover from the worst natural disaster in U.S. history. The tone of the ceremony was triumphant

and grace – the essential qualities that will follow you the rest of your life in ministry.”

Pointing to Acts 20:24 and 32, Kelley said the Apostle Paul taught these qualities in his farewell address to the Ephesian elders. Paul showed his grit by following God’s call no matter what obstacles he faced. He considered God’s calling more important than his own life.

“If you’re going to make it in ministry, you have to have that kind of grit,” Kelley said. “No matter what the obstacles, you are going to finish the course that God puts out for you.”

Kelley noted that Paul was going to fulfill a ministry he did not choose himself, but one that God had assigned.

The fact that God has assigned a particular ministry is fundamental when ministers face difficult circumstances – like completing seminary training after losing everything in a hurricane, Kelley said.

“What you do, you do at God’s direction,” he said. “You do not do it because it is easy. You do not do it because it is rewarding. You do it because you simply must finish that which God has called you to do.”

Kelley said that Hurricane Katrina gave students vital experience in following God. He encouraged the “Katrina class” to apply the same passionate commitment they have exhibited after the storm throughout

their life in ministry. When people follow after God in difficult times, God receives the glory, Kelley said.

Kelley described “grit” as the determination to follow God no matter the cost or circumstance. God’s grace, he said, sees believers through when they make willful decision to be obedient to His calling.

Although the graduates faced circumstances like no other seminary class, Kelley said they also received more grace than any other seminary class, such as the efforts of Southern Baptists to provide free housing and financial assistance for the seminary family.

“The call of God is more than a direction of where to go; the call of God is a promise of God’s provision,” Kelley said. “What God calls us to do, God will enable us to do.

“You can’t quite understand grit – the determination to finish what God gives you to do no matter what – if you don’t also understand grace,” he continued.



Jeffrey G. Audirsch/NOBTS

Dr. Chuck Kelley presents a graduate with her NOBTS diploma.

and worshipful. The graduates understood the significance of the event.

“God proved Himself to be faithful and true,” M.Div. grad April Price said. “Through this hurricane, I had to learn to rejoice in Him always and regardless of the circumstances. It was amazing to see how faithful He was.”

Price said walking across the stage was “even sweeter” because of difficulties each graduate faced.

In his remarks to the graduating class, NOBTS President Chuck Kelley praised the work of the students and faculty following the hurricane, calling their efforts “the stuff of legend.”

“It’s taken two things in particular for these graduates to get where they are, and these faculty members to accomplish what they have accomplished,” Kelley said. “It has taken grit

Former challenger to Tiger Woods graduates in December

By **Michael McCormack**

BIRMINGHAM, Ala. — If a SportsCenter trivia question asked, “Which golfer finished high school ranked No. 2 behind Tiger Woods?” most people would scan the PGA Tour roster for possible answers. But they would be looking in the wrong place.

The answer, instead, was among the Dec. 17 graduates of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: Brad Zwetschke, who, if featured in a SportsCenter segment, would have plenty to tell about the way God led him to seminary and in the way God cared for him and his family following Hurricane Katrina.

Intense play at a young age allowed Zwetschke to grow up competing against many of the golfers presently on the PGA Tour, the most notable being Tiger Woods. In 1991, Zwetschke came within a shot of beating Woods at the U.S. Junior Amateur Championship.

In the midst of his first year as a professional golfer, Zwetschke began to see God at work in his life. He was surrounded by some Christian men who invited him to Bible studies and to church. God began leading Zwetschke away from golf and into ministry.

Almost immediately, Zwetschke began attending the NOBTS extension center in Jacksonville, Fla., and nearly three years ago, Zwetschke and his family moved to New Orleans to live and study on campus.

As of last August, Zwetschke had just one semester left before graduation and also did not know for sure where God would lead his family next. Zwetschke and Christina were expecting a child in September — their third.

Then came Hurricane Katrina.

As in countless other situations, God used the hurricane to plant the Zwetschke family exactly where He wanted them. When the storm drew near, Zwetschke took his family to Beatrice, Ala., along with several other seminary families. A church there was gracious to look after them for a couple weeks.

Foremost on his mind was finding a hospital for Christina to have the baby, so they called the doctor in Sarasota, Fla.,

who delivered their other two children. Shortly thereafter, Christian Thomas Zwetschke was born on Sept. 27.

From there things just fell into place.

Zwetschke went by Colonial Oaks Baptist Church in Sarasota to see if the church had a place where he could serve. They did. For about a year, the church had searched for an outreach and student minister. Almost at the very moment Zwetschke walked in the door, someone from the church was dialing the seminary’s number in hopes of offering it to a New Orleans Seminary student. Zwetschke was a perfect match.



Brad Zwetschke settled in Florida for ministry with his wife, Christina, and their daughters Grace, 4, and Mercy, 2, and new baby son Christian (not pictured).

When classes started up again in October, he enrolled in the three classes he needed before graduation. The Internet-based threaded discussion classes were challenging, but Zwetschke persevered. He said that his Dec. 17 graduation in Birmingham, Ala., was worth all the tough work.

“The ceremony at graduation was incredible,” Zwetschke said. “It was closure to us, because we didn’t go back to campus [during the post-Katrina, post-flood move-out days]. We knew we lost everything. To see everyone at graduation was just closure.”

Gift cards for NOBTS students illustrate Baptist compassion

By Art Toalston

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (BP) -- "Your \$200 gift to us is more like getting \$2,000," a seminary student with a wife and two daughters wrote to the Southern Baptist Convention.

In the flooding triggered by Hurricane Katrina, the floodwaters reached "about a foot from the ceiling" of their apartment on the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary campus, the seminarian wrote. "... [W]e lost almost everything we owned, except one vehicle, a computer and a few clothes."

"This letter is a feeble attempt to express our gratitude. It was the fact that you gave [the gift] that was greater than that of the gift itself.

"I love being a Christian," he wrote, "and I love being a Southern Baptist.... [God] has proven time and again that He is our provider."

The \$200 gift cards distributed through Baptist channels in Louisiana, Mississippi and Alabama reflected just a small part of nearly \$12.5 million in disaster relief funds sent to

the hurricane-ravaged region from Southern Baptists' gifts through the Cooperative Program.

The distribution took place from October through early December; the cards were coded so they could only be spent on merchandise rather than cashed at an ATM machine.

The \$12.5 million was made possible by gifts from churches across the country that surpassed the Southern Baptist Convention's fiscal year budget.

Another seminarian whose wife and five children also lived on the New Orleans campus said in his letter to the SBC, "Thank you and all of the Southern Baptist Convention for helping us buy presents for our children. May the blessing come back tenfold."

Morris H. Chapman, president of the SBC Executive Committee, recounted the distribution of the gift cards during a recent EC meeting in Nashville, Tenn.

Printed on the cards with the name of the Southern Baptist Convention were the words, "ministering through the Cooperative Program," the SBC's channel for missions and ministry outreach throughout the world.

THANK YOU SOUTHERN BAPTISTS

for Helping us Rebuild our Lives and Campus





**Welcome Back
NOBTS!**

Gary D. Myers/NOBTS

NOBTS classes return to New Orleans Jan. 23

By Gary D. Myers

NEW ORLEANS – Calling it a great day of triumph and victory, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary President Chuck Kelley welcomed students back to the main campus Jan. 23.

After five long months away, about 200 students participated in a “welcome back” lunch on the first day of classes. Also among those in attendance were 17 new NOBTS students.

The return of classes to New Orleans marked the most significant milestone to date in the seminary’s efforts to recover from Hurricane Katrina. The storm and subsequent levee failures inundated much of the campus with water in late August, forcing a complete evacuation.

“It’s good to have you back,” Kelley told the commuter students at a special red beans and rice lunch. “People literally all over the world know your challenges and they are praying for you.”

Kelley recounted the sadness of driving through the campus following the move-out and salvage days in October. The campus was empty and desolate. That emptiness has given way to life and activity, Kelley said with joy.

“We are thankful for your passion for Jesus that has kept you preparing for ministry in the midst of this incredible circumstance called Hurricane Katrina,” he said. “It is your passion for Jesus that has led you here and we want to do everything we can to feed that passion.”

Kelley called the seminary family a “living illustration” of what Jesus does with human lives and human history. No

matter what difficult circumstances believers face, he said Christians “overwhelmingly conquer” in Jesus Christ.

Most of the returning students continued their studies during the fall semester through Internet-assisted courses or workshops. Many of them, like master of divinity student Kimberly Moynahan, expressed joy in returning to the classroom setting.

“I’m very excited, beyond excited,” she said. “I’ve been waiting and taking classes online. I’m a big ‘classroom participation’ person, so coming back today was overwhelmingly exciting.”

In an interview following the lunch, Kelley said that the seminary can help make New Orleans a city of hope rather than a city of despair – hope that comes only from a relationship with Jesus Christ. Having students return is the first step in offering that hope, he noted.

The return to campus is an illustration of God’s grace and His redemptive power that provides confidence and security to face the future, Kelley said.

The first signs of normalcy returned to the main campus earlier in January when a number of seminary offices reopened. The president’s office, library, dean of students/campus life office and clinic were among the offices reopening Jan. 11 in New Orleans.

Normal campus operations and classes will resume on the main campus in August. However, seminary officials remain optimistic that student housing will be ready for the start of summer workshop classes in May.

MissionLab volunteers impact the seminary and the city

By Gary D. Myers

NEW ORLEANS – A simple act of service spoke volumes to Sid Allen.

“To me they represent what the church should be,” Allen said after volunteers cleaned out his flood-damaged home. “They came and gave of themselves and asked for nothing in return.”

The volunteers were Southern Baptists who came to New Orleans through the MissionLab program at NOBTS in late January. These volunteers are making a significant impact on the seminary campus and in the neighborhoods near the school as well.

The seminary launched MissionLab in 1999 to provide custom mission experiences for youth, college students and senior adults. Before the hurricane, MissionLab focused on urban ministry outside the seminary gates.

Hurricane Katrina presented a unique challenge for MissionLab. Flooding left the city virtually empty and NOBTS campus housing severely damaged. Meanwhile, many Baptists began calling to offer help with campus restoration.

The MissionLab staff adapted for new needs. They began scheduling volunteers to help clean and restore the campus. However, from the start, MissionLab directors Bob and Linda Jackson hoped that volunteers would also be able to help restore homes in the community. That goal was reached in January.

Since Oct. 31, when seminary clean-up began, volunteers have cleaned out and painted numerous campus apartments and buildings, trimmed trees, laid new sod and installed new fencing. The results are tangible -- Southern Baptist volunteers have saved the seminary as estimated \$1 million in labor costs.

Volunteers are still needed to help with the mammoth restoration effort on campus. However, when large groups of volunteers come to campus the Jacksons send some into the neighborhoods to help home owners like Sid Allen.

Allen fled to Kentucky after the storm and returned to his job in New Orleans at The Bridge House, a drug and alcohol recovery program, in Oct. Because of his work schedule, Allen couldn't find time gut his flooded home. His neighbor had received help from MissionLab, so Allen gave the Jacksons a call.

Volunteers from First Baptist Church in New Port Richey, Fla. and Central Baptist Church in Marlow, Okla. spent a day and a half gutting Allen's home. The job would have taken Allen weeks. Allen was overwhelmed by the act of kindness.

“They were really a blessing,” Allen said. The group even took Allen out for lunch after they finished his home.

To contact Bob and Linda Jackson at MissionLab, call at (404) 226-9367 or e-mail bob@missionlab.com.



Editor's Note: The following is an adaptation of a story by Shannon Baker. NOBTS President Chuck Kelley shared these lessons in an interview after the hurricane.

Out of the extremely personal loss of Hurricane Katrina, NOBTS President Chuck Kelley has discovered several powerful lessons.

1. Christians should not be afraid of sacrifice.

Historically, the church has always confronted sacrifice, Kelley said, pointing to other countries where sacrifice is a far more normal experience than what most Western churches experience. “We have the easiest, most prosperous life in the world,” he acknowledged. Yet, he has seen firsthand how those who have suffered losses go through grief and then slowly, step by step, to healing and hope. “Southern Baptists would be proud of this Seminary family,” he said.

Shannon Baker is the national correspondent for the BaptistLIFE. She is the former director of public relations at NOBTS.

KATRINA LESSONS

2. Suffering has a role in advancing the Gospel.

“If God ever lets his children get wounded in their obedience to Him, there is always a redemptive purpose... for the expansion of God's Kingdom,” Kelley said.

3. Hold our things loosely.

“We often think in our minds that we've given God everything, but when He takes away things, it's a real time of testing,” Kelley continued.

4. It doesn't matter how big the disaster is; God will see you through.

“We need to remember that there is a last chapter to this story. We can skip to the end and see that we live happily ever after,” Kelley said. “...nothing can separate us from the love of Christ; that we can overwhelmingly conquer in the name of Christ; ... that we can be persecuted, but not abandoned, struck down but not destroyed...” “It will be a great act of courage when our faculty, staff and students come back. There is no way to protect them completely. We know [another hurricane] can happen again. It takes courage.”

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
Development Office
3939 Gentilly Blvd.
New Orleans, LA 70126

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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.

Seminary students find healing in helping others

Editor's Note: Despite the hardships faced by NOBTS students, many are ministering to the communities devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Here are only a few of the countless stories of students who are helping the region recover from the worst natural disaster in U.S. history.

Brent and Ebby Isbill

For Brent and Ebby Isbill, the easiest thing to do following Katrina would have been to retrieve their undamaged belongings from their second-story campus apartment and go home to Atlanta to finish their degrees at the extension center.

Instead, the Isbills returned to LaPlace, La. where Brent had served as youth minister at First Baptist Church a mere four months before the hurricane. Their decision to stay and serve meant storing possessions, moving in with a church family and surviving on a single part-time salary between them.

Their decision also meant weeks of hard work as the Isbills joined their church family in assisting the Salvation Army and Southern Baptist Disaster Relief Teams, preparing thousands of meals daily and sharing personal and church resources with those in need.

The willingness of their church family to go beyond comfort levels by opening homes to others was a tangible demonstration to Brent and Ebby of what it means to be part of the body of Christ.

Grateful for God's provision and for the opportunity to be where a fresh openness to the Gospel exists, the Isbills have learned that His grace is sufficient in all circumstances.

"Creature comforts are nice, but the only thing that can sustain you is being obedient to God's will, being where He wants you to be."

By Marilyn Stewart

Kimberly Moynahan

Kimberly Moynahan returned to the New Orleans area shortly after Hurricane Katrina. She developed a deep love for the city and the people of New Orleans during her first semester at NOBTS. With so many people hurting, she just couldn't stay away.

Since returning in October, Moynahan has been busy ministering in the city. Through her work with Louisiana Baptist disaster relief. She is doing her part to offer the hope of Jesus to hurting people.

Moynahan said the disaster relief efforts of the Southern Baptist Convention and local SBC churches has been a great witness to the city. This love and kindness is making an impact on the way many New Orleanians view Baptists.

By Gary D. Myers



Tim McKeown/SBTC

Brent Isbill prepares food containers as part of extensive disaster relief efforts based at the New Orleans-area church.

Daniel Bramlett

Daniel Bramlett's first "practicum" for his masters of divinity in pastoral counseling degree was a course for which he hadn't registered. Just two weeks after arriving on campus as a new student, Bramlett became a Katrina evacuee, and days later, a disaster relief team member.

Bramlett evacuated to his home state of Arkansas and was soon serving at an evacuee shelter in Arkadelphia, as part of the mobilized efforts of local Southern Baptists. When the Arkansas Baptist Disaster Relief Team went into the Gonzales and New Orleans areas, Bramlett was with them.

"All I had was the shirt on my back," Bramlett said, "but that was all I needed."

The team's quick response put them with families still reeling from the disaster. Bramlett's confidence that God would bring good from the situation was sometimes met with skepticism, until the evacuees learned that he, too, had experienced great loss.

A few tools and his restored '67 Ford pickup, which Bramlett started and drove back to Arkansas, were all he recovered from campus.

"The experience, the loss, and seeing God's provision through His people have helped make me a better minister," Bramlett says.

While anxiously awaiting a return to campus, Bramlett serves as Family Minister at First Baptist Church, Hope, Arkansas. What better title or address for one schooled in the lessons of Hurricane Katrina?

By Marilyn Stewart

PURPOSE

AFTER THE STORM

“Because of the LORD’s faithful love we do not perish, for His mercies never end. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness! I say: The LORD is my portion, therefore I will put my hope in Him.” Lamentations 3:22-24

God has been faithful to the seminary family following Hurricane Katrina. Our losses were significant, but redemption and restoration continues on campus and in the lives of seminary families. The past seven months have been difficult, but God has been good in our time of need.

The once-broken campus is on the mend. Once-broken lives are being healed.

Soon we will be back in New Orleans ready to impact the city. We will return with a fresh understanding of God’s power and provision.

Our seminary has an important role to play in the “new” New Orleans. By sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ, we can make New Orleans a city of hope rather than a city of despair. It is our calling from God.

We are encouraged by Dr. Chuck Kelley’s charge to the December graduates.

“The call of God is more than a direction of where to go; the call of God is a promise of God’s provision. What God calls us to do, God will enable us to do. What you do, you do at God’s direction. You do not do it because it is easy. You do not do it because it is rewarding. You do it because you simply must finish that which God has called you to do.”



Celebrating

DR. KELLEY'S 10TH ANNIVERSARY



DR. CHUCK KELLEY

**President, New Orleans Baptist
Theological Seminary**

Dr. Charles S. (Chuck) Kelley, Jr. was unanimously elected president February 23, 1996 by NOBTS trustees. Kelley, who served as an evangelism professor at NOBTS since 1983, assumed the Office of President March 1, 1996.

Dr. Kelley and his wife, Rhonda, were married in 1974. Dr. Rhonda Kelley joined the Leavell College faculty in 2004 as Professor of Women's Ministry on the ministry-based faculty.

Highlights of Dr. Kelley's Presidency

1997

- The enrollment at NOBTS is 1,879.

1998

- Unanimous trustee vote keeps the seminary in the Gentilly neighborhood of New Orleans.

1999

- Dr. Kelley and the NOBTS faculty develop a new competency-based curriculum with new degrees and specializations.

2000

- NOBTS launches the New Horizons Capital Campaign. Phase One of the campaign, with a base goal of \$8 million, is designed to help transform the seminary with new housing and state-of-the-art technology.

2001

- Bunyan Classroom Building is totally remodeled and equipped with the latest technology. Building includes preaching lab and practice baptistry.



- Seminary Enrollment tops 3,000.

2002

2004

2006

AS SEMINARY PRESIDENT 2005

2002

- Seminary constructs the Nelson L. Price Center, a dormitory used by short-term mission groups working in the city.



- Construction is completed on 36 new student housing units called the Manors Apts.

2003

- Seminary renovates the 24 student housing units at the Farnsworth Apartment Building.

2004

- The Courtyard Apartments, 30 new suite-style apartments for single students, opens to residents.
- Hamm Hall, a new 59-room guest housing unit, is built to host conferences, mission groups and extension students.
- Two new endowed faculty chairs are established.
- Phase One of New Horizons completes with a remarkable total of \$15 million in gifts and pledges.

2005

- Three new playgrounds and Sunshine Park, a new family recreation park and playground, are completed.
- Construction is complete on 11 new staff apartments (Staff Village) and the William Carey Building. The WCC Building houses WCC's Nursing School and the seminary's Providence Learning Center (WBSN and MissionLab).
- Since 2001, roughly 3,500 students have received grants and scholarships to aid in their seminary training.
- Seminary enrollment nears 4,000

- Dr. Kelley provides leadership and wisdom following Hurricane Katrina. He launches complete restoration of the flood-damaged seminary campus.



2006

- Classes resume on the main campus January 23 after hurricane clean-up efforts.
- Seminary set to resume normal campus operations in August.

Thank You for 10 Years of Dynamic Leadership & Vision



THE HOLY LAND

November 15-25, 2006

THE BIBLICAL HISTORY OF THIS LITTLE LAND, ISRAEL, LIES BURIED FOUR MILLENNIA DEEP. AT SOME PLACES IT IS BUT A FEW INCHES BENEATH THE SURFACE OF THE SOIL; AT OTHERS, IT IS EMBEDDED BENEATH THE STRATA OF A DOZEN CIVILIZATIONS. JOIN NOBTS FOR A THRILLING TOUR TO THE LAND OF THE BIBLE. IT WILL BE A STEP BACK INTO SACRED HISTORY, AND A LEAP FORWARD IN YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY!

"The Holy Land" is an academic program hosted by the Biblical Studies Division of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary and Providence Educational Foundation. Space is limited so please submit your request early. There are a limited number of partial student scholarships available for full-time students at the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Qualified students may register for a six hour Biblical Studies course that will meet on the New Orleans campus several Saturdays in the fall, dates to be announced. Participation in the study tour as a student and to receive credit requires acceptance, payment of the tour deposit and timely registration for the fall 2006 semester. The application form may be downloaded at www.virtualtravels.com, filled out and submitted to Dr. Dennis Cole (rdcole@nobts.edu), Dr. Margie Williamson (mwilliamson@nobts.edu), Mrs. Linda Jackson (Linda@missionlab.com), Dr. Jimmy Dukes (jdukes@nobts.edu) or Mr. Clay Corvin (clay@lifesongs.com) or mailed to NOBTS attn:Clay Corvin, 3939 Gentilly Boulevard, N.O., LA 70126.

\$2,495 roundtrip from New Orleans
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