



The Connection

A Ministry of the Office of Church Relations at Union University



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The Olford Center: An Education and Resource Center

By Renae Matz



The Welcome House of the Stephen Olford Center in Memphis, Tennessee

Approximately 80 miles west of Union University's Jackson campus lies Union's Stephen Olford Center.

Since its founding in 1988, the goal of the SOC has remained unchanged: "To encourage and equip those in ministry to rightly divide the Word of God in the power of the Holy Spirit, and to strengthen and educate those in ministry through various classes and programs designed to train persons for Kingdom work throughout society."

In 2007, the SOC became part of Union University, offering three major tracks of study: an Academic Track, a Non-Academic Track, and the Pastor's Plus Program.

The Academic Track includes the A.Div. program, the Master of Christian Studies, and the new Doctor of Ministry in Expository Preaching. The A.Div. program helps adult learners re-enter the education world with an

emphasis in biblical studies, as well as core-curriculum classes. The MCS program is a graduate degree that focuses on biblical studies to enhance ministry. The D.Min. helps pastors hone their skills and prepare for more effective leadership.

The Non-Academic Institute Program typically involves four-day seminars focused on some aspect of expository preaching. Institute programs include: Essentials of Expository Preaching, Strengthening Expository Preaching, Evangelistic Preaching and Teaching, Preaching and Teaching for Spiritual Growth, and others. Preaching Workshops help participants sharpen their skills by preaching in front of other students and faculty for an evaluation. Those who complete a series of six institutes, with some additional work, receive a Certificate in Expository Preaching from Union.

The Pastor's Plus Program provides a sermon outline each

week for a yearly subscription. The sermons are from the late Dr. Stephen Olford's pulpit and radio ministry, and include sermon outlines the pastor can adapt with personal comments and illustrations. The subscription also includes online archives and audios of the original messages by Dr. Olford.

The Olford Center also serves as a mega-resource for pastors throughout the West Tennessee region and beyond.

The SOC maintains an online bookstore, which features books, CDs, and videos by Stephen Olford and others such as Ken Easley, David Olford, George Guthrie, David S. Dockery, John Phillips, and J. Oswald Sanders, to name a few. There is also an on-site bookstore open to the general public and students. An on-site library contains more than 35,000 books and resources, including collections of sermons.

The Olford Conference and Retreat Center is on an 18-acre wooded property, and it includes more than 40 hotel-style rooms, a swimming pool, chapel, and technology-equipped classrooms. It hosts special events such as retreats, staff meetings, receptions, and dinners. To find out how SOC can help you and your church, contact socinfo@uu.edu.

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ESTABLISH THE WORK OF OUR HANDS

The Psalmist prayed, “Let the favor of the Lord our God be on us; establish for us the work of our hands—establish the work of our hands!” (Psalm 90:17).

Surely the Lord has answered that prayer for Union University. We began the new academic year with 4,186 students, the thirteenth straight year of enrollment increase.

The record enrollment is in addition to numerous national recognitions for excellence in scholarship, teaching, character-building, and service.

Late last spring, we dedicated three new facilities: the Bowld Student Commons, the

Message from Dr. Richard Wells, Vice President of Church Relations

Smith Soccer Complex, and the new Center for Continuing Studies in Jackson.

This fall we dedicated two more buildings, not only as evidence of growth, but also as expressions of our gratitude to God for His provision after the devastating tornado of February 5, 2008.

The “Hope” Quad residential complex and “Providence” Hall (which houses our Center for Excellence in Health Care Practice and School of Pharmacy) stand as symbols of our faith in a great God who does great things. Indeed the Lord has established the work of our hands—even as He gives us more Kingdom work to do.

This edition of *The Connection* marks the beginning of my new work in Church Relations at Union University, and with all my heart, I long to see the Psalmist’s prayer answered in all of our lives and ministries.

There is so much in this vale of tears to break our

hearts, break our spirits, and break our will to lead faithfully, but—thanks be to God—ultimate success does not depend on us. Ours is to work, but God and God alone gives success: “A man’s heart plans his way, but the LORD determines his steps” (Proverbs 16:9).

Perhaps as never before in history we must plan, prepare, and work to confront the powers of darkness and speak the message of hope into the culture of death. And yet, when we have done all, we humbly and joyfully pray, “Lord, establish the work of our hands.”

This is my prayer for you, and for all of us who are called to serve the people of God.

At the same time, I prayerfully hope that Union University can help you and your church do the work of the Kingdom ever more effectively.

The Pastors’ Page in this issue of *The Connection* is a small beginning—including some interesting facts and

quotes, and an abbreviated exegetical summary of a text for sermon ideas. Hope you find it helpful.

Our mission statement reads: “Union University provides Christ-centered education that promotes excellence and character development in service to Church and society.”

For me, I count it a joy and privilege to have some small part to play in that mission to “the Church,” and specifically to the churches, where the work of eternity is going on every day.

For that very reason, I look forward to getting to know you in the days ahead, and to serving you and serving with you for the sake of Christ and the Gospel.

You are loved and prayed for . . . that God will “establish the work of our hands.”

All for His glory,

“Dollar for a Drink” Builds Wells in Sudan

By Renae Matz

While most high school seniors worry about which college they will attend, Joshua Guthrie, dually-enrolled at Union, spends his time providing wells for Sudan.

Guthrie, son of Union University professor, George Guthrie, read *Do Hard Things* by Alex and Brett Harris in the summer of 2008.

In response to his reading, Joshua founded a nonprofit organization called “Dollar for a Drink.”

The ultimate goal of the organization is to spread the Gospel to the people of Darfur. Joshua says that they “provide two kinds of water – physical and spiritual. The first

step is physical water, which creates an outlet into communities.”

To date, Dollar for a Drink has raised enough money to dig four wells, each well costing about \$10,000.

At the end of May 2010, Joshua was able to go to Sudan for 14 days to experience the area for himself. He visited the third-largest refugee camp which is home to about 83,000 people. The nicest areas of the village would be considered slums in the U.S.

His trip has furthered the goal for Dollar for a Drink. The goal for the next year is to raise \$50,000, which would build four wells. He also hopes

to branch into other African nations and provide 450 filtration systems. In these areas, people are receptive to the Gospel.

One purpose of Dollar for a Drink is to include fellow students in his endeavor.

Joshua encourages youth and college groups around the country to visit his website and email him if they want to partner in the journey of building wells.

Joshua also asks for prayer support so that whatever the Lord wills for Dollar for a Drink, can happen. The spring is his promotional period in which he specifically approaches churches for sup-



Joshua poses with a villager who received a well.

port. Dollar for a Drink is completely dependent on God’s people deciding to take up the mission of helping those in need.

To learn more about Joshua and his ministry, visit his website at www.dollarforadink.org.

Student Spotlight: Paul Christensen Spends Summer Serving the Lost in Australia

For some students, summer break means going home, reuniting with old friends, and possibly having a summer job. For Paul Christensen, Union University sophomore, it meant serving as a missionary in Australia.

Paul is receiving the Church and Convention Ministry Scholarship with plans to serve in the ministry upon graduation. He said his time in Australia taught him the importance of being obedient to the Gospel.

"Australia is almost spiritually dead," Paul said. "I would love to share stories with you about how 100 students

accepted salvation or how people were healed of their diseases, but I experienced none of that. After sharing the Gospel for two months, I did not see one person come to Christ, but God showed me that he wants me to be obedient in sharing the Gospel."

Paul said he was reminded that his role remains the same in preaching the Gospel and letting the Holy Spirit handle the rest. He also said that God drastically changed his attitude toward missions.

"When we walk by faith rather than by sight, it radically transforms how we do missions," Paul said. "It means

that we do not go, live, and preach to bring souls into the Kingdom, but rather for God's glory."

This year Paul will be serving as a Resident Assistant for 21 freshmen men. He is starting a Bible study with the students called "Back to the Basics."

"We intend to get back to the heart of our responsibilities as Christians," Paul said. "We are learning foundational disciplines such as, 'What is the Gospel,' 'How to study the Bible,' 'How to pray,' 'How to share the Gospel,' and others."

Paul said that as a CCMS student, he is praying for an



Paul plays with a little boy while ministering in Australia.

opportunity to disciple the group of freshmen students this semester so that he may pour into them and carry out Christ's mandate to make disciples of all nations.

Lady Bulldogs Basketball Team Minister to Orphans in Uganda

By Allison Hill

During the last few weeks of summer, seven teammates and the coaching staff of the Lady Bulldogs basketball team traveled to Africa with professors from Union and people in the Jackson community to spend 10 days serving in the villages of Uganda.

David Carothers, assistant director of student mobilization, joined the group as they visited several orphanages, schools, and churches in Uganda. He said the trip was a tremendous blessing.

"It was neat to see God work in my heart and the hearts of everyone on the team," Carothers said. "It was also a very special time just to be able to love on the children."

The team decided to organize the trip after they were inspired by the Visiting Orphans organization, a Christian nonprofit group that helps orphans in distress. Its mission is to help raise awareness with hopes of each orphan experiencing the blessing of family

through reunification, transitional services, and adoption.

Carothers and his wife, Nekayah, have recently been accepted into the Ethiopia program at America World Adoption Association with hopes of adopting. When the group visited a children's

home that houses newborns and children up to six-years-old, he said it was a difficult experience.

"It was hard for me not to look at some of the children and wonder if they looked like the one we would welcome into our home," Carothers said. "I was reminded that, were it not for God's grace, I could have been in the same situation as the children."

The next day, the group took a three-hour bus ride to the village of Palissa, a very impoverished area of Uganda

that is home to many abandoned and neglected children. He said their time was spent interacting and sharing the love of Jesus with children that live close to one of the churches in the area. The group traveled to some of Palissa's surrounding villages and

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-David Carothers

saw firsthand the poverty of Uganda.

"We seemed to be in a very desolate area, but word spread quickly that we had arrived, and before we knew it we had about 400 children (around us)," Carothers said. "We were able to share some Bible stories and play with them."

One of the days of the trip, the group visited Amazima Ministries in Jinja. A 24-year-old woman named Katie Davis, who has custody of 14 children and runs a feeding ministry for nearly 400

children, runs Amazima.

Carothers said it was amazing to see how God has blessed her obedience and has proven himself faithful to her time and again.

On the Sunday of the trip, Carothers was given the opportunity to preach at one of the churches. He said it was an interesting experience to preach with a translator, but he was extremely thankful for the chance to share the Word of God.

After visiting orphanages in the villages of Jinja, Palissa, Entebbe, and the capital, Kampala, Carothers said he was grateful for the opportunity to be a part of the team.

"It was awesome to see God work in the hearts of many of the girls on the basketball team; many of whom had never been out of the country, much less on a mission trip."

He said he is humbled and grateful to serve a God that does not ignore the needs of "the least of these."



Keeping pastors linked together in Christ, the Word, and Kingdom Ministry

Union Events:

Oct. 28-Nov. 2: Theater:
As it is in Heaven

Nov. 1-6: Homecoming

Nov. 2: Campus and
Community Day: A Day
of Remembrance and
Service

Nov. 2: West Tennessee
Pastors Conference—
Randy Davis (Luther
Hall)

Nov. 7: Lady Bulldogs vs.
Tennessee (Away)

Nov. 9: Lady Bulldogs vs.
Vanderbilt (Away)

Dec. 7: A Union
Christmas

Feb. 8: West Tennessee
Ministers & Wives
Valentine Banquet
featuring Marty Goetz,
Messianic Singer and
Songwriter

HOMINEUTICS

EXEGETICAL SEEDS FOR BIBLICAL PREACHING

Rebuilding the House of God

Haggai 1:1-8

Context: The Temple is the visible symbol of the presence of the invisible God, so rebuilding the Temple after the Exile is an act of faith and a sign of renewed devotion. In New Testament terms, we might say with Paul, that God desires to build us “into a holy temple in the Lord.” (Eph. 2:21; see Eph. 2:17-22)

Theme: “What you *do* is what you believe, everything else is religious talk” (vv 2, 4, 8).

Hominotes

1. Building the Temple matters because *God matters* more than *anything* else (vv 2-4).
2. Life is full of “reasonable” alternatives to full obedience (vv 2-4).
3. God takes obedience and disobedience seriously (vv 5-7).
4. God is glorified by obedience (v 8).
5. Obedience *does* something, it doesn't just talk or make excuses (v 8).

CRW

QUOTABLES & FACTOIDS

- “Your state is not at all to be measured by the opposition that sin makes to you, but by the opposition you make to it.” (John Owen)
- “Live as though Christ died yesterday, rose from the grave today, and is coming back tomorrow.” (Theodore Epp)
- “Christianity, if false, is of no importance, and if true, of infinite importance. The only thing it cannot be is moderately important.” (C.S. Lewis)
- “The person who prays more in public than in private reveals that he is less interested in God's approval than in human praise. Not piety but a reputation for piety is his concern.” (D.A. Carson)
- The population of Tennessee has grown from 3.5 million in 1960 to 6.3 million today. The number of TBC-contributing churches has grown only 9 percent in the last 50 years. (tnbaptist.org)
- Since its organization in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention has grown to more than 16 million members in more than 42,000 churches in the United States. (sbc.org)
- In a recent Baylor Religion Survey, 18 percent of those responding said that Bigfoot and the Loch Ness monster will be discovered one day.
- In Britain, “Jack” has been the most popular baby boy name for 14 years, but it was replaced with “Mohammed” in 2009.
- According to a 2007 Barna Group Survey, the unchurched population nears 100 million in the U.S.
- According to Lifeway Research, Protestant pastors work an average of 50 hours a week. That includes part-time and bi-vocational pastors. 42 percent of full-time pastors work 60 or more hours a week.