

*Sophomore Marci Coleman, education major, Birmingham, Ala., freshens a wall with new paint at Great Hope Community Ministries.*

# Day of Remembrance

Throughout Holy Scripture there are stories of great winds and mighty storms that challenged the faith of God's people. The sons and daughters of Job were feasting inside a dwelling place when it is recorded that a mighty wind swept up from the desert. All but a lone messenger perished. In Mark's accounting of the Gospel, a furious squall nearly swamped a boat filled with terrified disciples and a sleeping Jesus. Fearful for

their lives, the disciples woke Jesus who stood up and rebuked the wind and commanded the waves to be still.

Jesus asked his disciples why they were afraid. Mark records a second question Jesus asked, "Do you still have no faith?" Job, on the other hand, responded to his crisis in a very different way. The Scriptures report that Job got up and tore his robes and shaved his head.

Then he fell to the ground in worship. "The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away; may the name of the Lord be praised," Job said.

On Nov. 10, 2002 a great wind struck the campus of Union University. Lives were spared, but the damage to the campus was substantial - devastation was the word used by David S. Dockery, Union's president. The tower clock stood still at 12:05 a.m.

Yet, no one was seriously injured.

"We all knew that as bad as it was, it could have been so much worse," Dockery said.

"We had come within an eyelash of massive destruction to the Union cam-

pus. But we were spared by God's providential hand and by his faithfulness."

Damage to the campus totaled more than \$2 million. In the storm's wake, the city of Jackson embraced Union and her students. Insurance adjusters, construction workers, roof repair people, debris removal teams, and hundreds of volunteers offered to house, feed and minister to Unionites during the days

following the disaster.

Dockery recalled those special moments: "I remember students caring for one another even as some were moving to new places because their dorm rooms were so badly damaged," he said. "People called to help. Temporary housing arrangements were set up. People brought food, water, supplies, and they gave of themselves."

As the one year anniversary of the tornado approached, Dockery unveiled a plan to remember that day with a distinct Union twist. Union's Day of Remembrance would focus on helping others.


Dean of Students Kimberly Thornbury and her staff organized more than 50 community service projects, working with ministries and organizations throughout Jackson and Madison County. To encourage participation from the entire Union campus, classes were cancelled.

At 8:30 a.m. on Nov. 10, 2003, more than 800 students, faculty and staff piled into G.M. Savage Memorial Chapel for a special service of remembrance. Faculty members exchanged their academic regalia for blue jeans and work shirts as they joined students in worship.

A number of individuals were weeping

continued on pg. 14>





# Two Tornadoes... many opportunities for Service

UNION MINISTERS IN  
AFTERMATH OF MAY TORNADO

*Jonathan Blair, a junior from Clinton, Miss., helps salvage bricks from St. Luke's Episcopal Church in downtown Jackson. The church was one of several buildings in the downtown area which were almost completely destroyed.*

“One of the great truths of the Christian faith is that whether our hearts are aching or rejoicing, there is no incident or circumstance, no matter how great or small, how significant or trivial that is without meaning or purpose.” - *David S. Dockery, Nov. 10, 2003.*

Union University students huddled in bathrooms and closets as a deadly swarm of tornadoes swept across West Tennessee May 4, killing 14 people and injuring more than 65. The twisters missed the university campus and slammed into downtown and south Jackson, leaving the area in ruins. The campus, still recovering from the November tornado, sustained moderate damage - broken windows, flooding, and more than 130 automobiles hit by baseball-sized hail.

Upon hearing about the devastation in other parts of the community, Union students, faculty and staff rallied to the aid of the community.

The university was one of few places in the city to maintain electricity and that proved helpful to the city in the hours immediately following the storm.

The city's newspaper office, located in downtown Jackson, was in the middle of the damage zone. Without power, the paper couldn't print. Again, Union University came to the rescue.

the paper without Union's help,” said Jackson Sun Publisher Ed Graves. “We were very grateful.

“Some of our staff kept asking why they would do such a thing,” he added. “I said, ‘well, that’s Union.’”

Union graduate Julie Boyer spent May 6 coordinating the efforts of dozens of Union students with a desire to assist the residents of the East Jackson neighborhood hit hardest by Sunday night's tornado.

A member of Union's Class of 2001, Boyer is now the student outreach minister at Jackson's Evangelical Community Church, where she runs a tutoring program for urban youth. After the tornado, she contacted some of her students, then came downtown to help meet needs in their neighborhoods.

According to Boyer, several elderly East Jackson residents were without transportation and simply could not walk the mile or more from their homes to a shelter. Others were staying to protect what was left of their belongings, she said.

Students began packing sack lunches at Union's McAfee Commons. Hundreds of lunches and bottles of water were packed and taken to the East Jackson residents who were without power or clean water as a result of the tornado. Union's Campus Ministries shuttled volunteers on university vans throughout the day.

Walking through East Jackson, students encountered homes without roofs, downed trees and smashed vehicles.

“One day you have everything you need, and the next day it's all gone,” said freshman Shaundra Bloomberg after seeing the destruction.

Liddon Street resident Ronald Pettis was grateful for the food and water. “I sure appreciate it. This has been rough, and every little bit helps,” he said. “I just thank God we're living.”

A number of residents lost prescription medicines, blood sugar testing equipment and access to medical care.

Ten nursing students and four of their professors spent May 9 working to meet those needs for individuals at the Red Cross shelter operating at West Jackson Baptist Church.

According to Tharon Kirk, interim dean of the school of nursing, the students were able to check blood sugar levels, dress wounds, provide over the counter medications for minor ailments and diagnose and refer those who needed further treatment. They also made numerous calls to doctors' offices tracking down prescription information, she said.

“Their pharmacies were destroyed, so we have to get the doctors' records and find a way to get new prescriptions for them,” said Kirk.

For the Union students, it was simply an opportunity to give back to the community.

“People in the community came and helped all of us out when the tornado hit our campus last year,” Lokey said. “This is a way to help others and it's nice helping someone else.”

Union also came to the aid of the American Red Cross. Their entire regional office was relocated to the Fred Delay Gymnasium as a temporary disaster relief headquarters.

“Union bent over backwards to help,” said Eric LaMault, a public affairs officer from the Red Cross. “We are very grateful for all that the school did to help us and the community.”

The university also provided spiritual help in the tornado aftermath. President David Dockery led a citywide prayer service on at Jackson's First Baptist Church.

Community leaders and elected officials also participated in the service. The service was broadcast live in Jackson and in Memphis by ABC 24.

“Why did these things happen to us—to our city? I don't know,” Dockery told the crowd. “I do believe that somehow God can and will turn this moment into something good for us, for this city—as we cry together, work together, serve together and, yes, pray and worship together.”



“...our confidence is in his love for us, which is steadfast, faithful and preserving. Our hope is not so much in our hold on God, but in his eternal hold on us.”

continued from pg. 11

during Dr. Dockery's poignant retelling of the events of more than a year ago. "We offer thanks to this faithful God," Dockery told the gathering. "We celebrate with thankful hearts God's goodness and providential protection to Union University one year ago. And we offer thanks for God's instruments of grace, encouragement, and support - the good people from all over the Jackson community who helped so much one year ago today. And in response today we declare our gratitude."

From the chapel service, volunteers fanned out across the community and on campus for a day of hard work.

Melissa Gruver, a philosophy and Biblical studies major, said she enjoyed an academic day off to help others. "This kind of thing puts things into perspective," she said. "We live in Jackson for four years. Giving back is an essential part of being part of a community."

Even Union's athletic teams united in the effort. The Union volleyball and softball teams joined Union students at Parkview Montessori School to plant trees and landscape. The players and coaches met school children and took a tour of the facilities after their work.

"I think our players really enjoyed doing the work," said Coach Brian Dunn. "It was a fun day for everybody involved."

The women's basketball team spent the day repairing a building used by the Lincoln Courts Boy and Girls Club. April Pearson, a member of the Lady Bulldog's 1998 NAIA National Championship team, works at the club and was thrilled with the work done by the basketball team.

"I was so thankful that the girls chose to come and help," she said. "It was fun watching

the players interact with the kids."

Students also utilized their Union education to help charity organizations. Union's Student Advertising Federation designed logos and brochures for the West Tennessee Cerebral Palsy Association, and Union's Nursing Student Organization spent the day caring for patients at the Morningside Assisted Living Center in Jackson.

The sight of more than 800 Union volunteers was welcomed across Jackson's volunteer community. "There's a lot of work that I just don't have time to get to," said Nathan Young, director of the Care Center of Jackson. "If I get six kids working for six hours, it frees me up to do more work. This should be an annual thing. We sure would welcome it."

Dockery said it was important to remember God's faithfulness on Nov. 10, 2002.

"Life is hard to understand, especially when we are in the midst of a challenging situation - a crisis - when we feel overwhelmed by confusion, whether it's international conflict or personal matters that seem to come out of nowhere or devastation that comes from winds, rains and storms, over which we have no control."

"Our confidence is not in our love for God, which is frail, fickle, and faltering," Dockery said. "But our confidence is in his love for us, which is steadfast, faithful and preserving. Our hope is not so much in our hold on God, but in his eternal hold on us."

And while the winds have long since passed, Union's community answered the call of their president to remember the day as instruments of God's love and care - to show gratitude for God's great grace and his mercy. [www.union.edu](#)



Freshmen members of Lambda Chi Alpha, (left to right) Jordan Perry, Brody Ferrell, and John Kay, lend a helping hand and a paintbrush to Jackson's Habitat for Humanity on East Chester Street.