

Three churches work together in bayou ministry

The Pointe Aux Chene is a small group of Native Americans in deep southern Louisiana. Their church, Live Oak Baptist, has 40-60 people.

It would be hard for them to do a summer outreach like Vacation Bible School on their own. That's why First Baptist Church in Elkhville, Illinois, sends a team of volunteers to help.

Two years ago, Elkhville was looking for mission trip opportunities to serve Native Americans. IBSA's Rex Alexander connected them to the Pointe Aux Chene near Montegut, La. At least, that's the closest city you can find on the map, said Elkhville pastor Scott Slone.

"It's very small town USA," said Slone, who will lead the church's third Louisiana trip this summer. Last year, they took along another Illinois congregation—Crossroads Baptist in Island City. This summer, Anna Heights Baptist will also join in. The church's senior pastor, Darryl Williams, was pastoring the Elkhville church when they started the missions partnership in Louisiana.

"It really started out with his passion of wanting to minister to Native American tribes," Slone said of Williams. "He led the first [trip], and even though God



We serve in ... North America
Volunteers from an Illinois mission team work on a construction project at a church in Louisiana.

led him to another church, even now, he's continuing what he has started, and partnering with us to continue to meet the needs there."

The team—about 30 people in all—will work with Live Oak to host VBS, and they'll also partner with two other bayou churches. All three congregations are connected to Native American tribes, but there's also a French Cajun influence. The tribes, Slone said, tend to take on the identity of the parish they're in.

"They're on the bayou, so they're shrimpers," he said. "Their livelihood is not industry [or] factory work. It's shrimp, crabbing, oysters, alligators."

All three Native American pastors are bivocational, so the extra help with VBS and some construction projects is extremely beneficial. In the future, Slone said, his church wants to provide education classes

and leadership development.

Last year, he challenged Live Oak to consider a North American mission trip. So this year, the Louisiana church is sending a team to work with Native Americans in Oklahoma.

"Our goal is to not just go and do VBS for them," Slone said. "Our goal is to partner with them to fulfill the Great Commission."

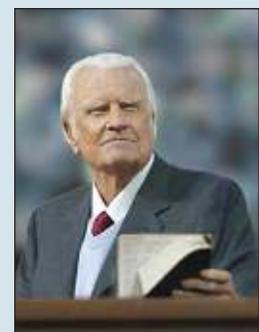
— Meredith Flynn

WHO'S IN CHARGE HERE?

Billy Graham often preached "the Bible says," and people in his day leaned forward to listen. A generation ago, even unbelievers saw Scripture as holy and trustworthy. But today, fewer people accept what Scripture has to say about itself, even when the verses come with great promise. (See 2 Tim. 3:16-17.)

In conversations with skeptics, the 21st century Christian apologetic often has to begin with the reliability of Scripture. We must tell strugglers and doubters that the Bible is true, the text has not been corrupted through centuries of transmission, and that there are more matching copies of biblical manuscripts dated closer to the time they were written than there are of most any other ancient literary works, including Shakespeare (which was written only four centuries ago).

There are hundreds of portions of the 66 books of the Bible handed down over centuries with 99.5% agreement in the copies. When it comes to the Bible, to believe or not to believe: that is the question.



— BillyGraham.org

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT... PEACE AND WAR

Read Article 16 of *The Baptist Faith & Message (2000)*, “Peace & War,” at IBSA.org/B101.

A world without war sounds utopian. A simple look at the news reminds us daily that all nations do not long for worldwide peace.

Since 9/11, war rhetoric has been a major part of political discourses. Some Christians appeal to the Old Testament genocide narratives to justify warfare as a God-ordained mandate against potential enemies. Others claim like Aristotle: “We make war that we may live in peace.” In other words, war is a necessary evil.

Others espouse the logic found in the old Latin saying: “When catapults are outlawed, only outlaws will have catapults.” In this view, war becomes a tool to deter others from any desire to attack.

A minority of Christians advocates peace at all costs asking citizens even to object to the existence of an army.

One thing is certain: God’s Word must guide believers in their daily decisions. So, what does the Bible say about war and peace?

The Baptist Faith and Message (2000) emphasizes the New Testament understanding on the subject. “It is the duty of Christians to try to find peace with all men. In keeping with the character and teachings of Christ, Christians should do everything they can to put an end to war. The true solution for war is the gospel of our Lord.”

Why such an emphasis on New Testament interpretation? In the

Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5-7), Jesus professed that His teaching superseded the common interpretation of the Mosaic Law. He did not change the Law but unraveled its full meaning, decreeing that His followers not resist an evil person; turn the other cheek to whomever strikes the first one; love their enemies; and pray for their persecutors (Mt. 5:38-48). This was not an interim imperative, but an enduring vocation for all believers.

The apostle Paul, Pharisee of the Pharisees, guardian of the Mosaic Law, understood that Jesus had radically challenged the common thinking of his day. More than any other first-century Christian, Paul understood his new vocation; the persecutor became the persecuted.

He also taught: “If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,’ says the Lord” (Rom. 12:18-19, NASB).

Hebrews echoes this: “Pursue peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14, NASB). Other New Testament writers confirmed this principle.

Peace is more difficult than war. It goes against human nature. Retaliation and revenge are impulsive human responses to adversity and challenges. James explained: “What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust

and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel” (James 4:1-2, NASB).

Indeed, the source of the war problem is the human heart. It requires a supernatural power to solve it. God’s redemptive work is precisely to restore peace between himself and humankind.

Although the Bible makes it clear that not all people will embrace God’s free gift of grace through his Son by the power of the Holy Spirit, born-again believers are called to be his ambassadors (2 Cor. 5:20). Peacemaking is one calling that comes with a blessing (Mt. 5:9).

Isaiah proclaimed that, in the end times, God’s dominion will be one of peace and harmony (Isa. 2:4). Instead of humankind bringing temporal cease-fires and ephemeral reconciliation into the world, God himself will judge nations and bring everlasting peace.

His instrument will not be armament but the truth proclaimed and incarnated permanently in His Son, Jesus Christ.

The Christians’ main concern should be to seek God’s righteousness first (Mt. 6:33). This does not preclude anyone being involved in social, economic, or political activities, but the main objective in the believer’s life should be to seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with God (Micah 6:8).

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CONSIDER THIS For personal study or group discussion



- 1 How do you seek peace in a time of war?
- 2 What are practical ways God has empowered you to overcome your desire to retaliate?
- 3 Jesus said, “Blessed are the peace makers.” How do you reconcile that with times when the country is compelled to go to war?

Our denomination’s statement of faith is called “The Baptist Faith & Message.” It was updated in 2000 and adopted by elected messengers who attended the SBC’s annual meeting that year. Adopting the BF&M is the voluntary choice of each local church.

Bibles

We've got 'em,
but do we
believe 'em?



88% of American households have a Bible, and an average of 4.7 Bibles each.

Millennials are leading the shift toward skepticism.



19% of U.S. adults are engaged with the Bible. They read it at least 4 times per week and say it is the inspired Word of God.

Also **19%** of U.S. adults are skeptical about the Bible. They say it is "just another book...written by men." That's twice as many people as only 3 years ago.

Here's the breakdown on the skeptics:

28% are Millennials

36% are Gen-X

68% are male

32% are female



87% did not attend church last week

63% did not pray last week

76% say they have not made a commitment to Jesus that is important today.

— American Bible Society survey 2014, reported by Barna.org

WHAT MAKES US DIFFERENT

WE'RE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

For Southern Baptists, the Bible is the authority on how people can come to faith in Christ, how we live as Christians, and what happens after we die. And everything in between. It's all rooted in Scripture, and has been from the beginnings of the earliest Baptist denominations. We're "people of the Book."

Some denominations rely on creeds to articulate their beliefs, but Baptists confess the Bible's authority in all church matters. But our commitment to Scripture isn't just a denominational identity; it's personal too. Individual Bible study is integral in how a Christian comes to understand Jesus and grows deeper in devotion to Him.



A generation ago, Southern Baptists were concerned about theological drift in the denomination, especially in its seminaries and agency boards. The defining issue was whether professors and leaders were teaching that the Bible is inerrant and infallible, a fully reliable revelation of God and his intent for his creation.

Beginning at the 1979 Southern Baptist Convention in Houston, Baptists who believed in inerrancy were platformed and elected to key leadership positions. Memphis pastor Adrian Rogers was elected SBC president that year; over the next two decades, Baptists who espoused conservative theology, particularly on the Bible, were appointed to lead the Convention's agencies and seminaries. This is called "the Conservative Resurgence."

In 2000, a revised version of *The Baptist Faith & Message* adopted by messengers to the convention further solid-

ified Southern Baptists' stance on Scripture. "The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man," reads Article I. "It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy."

In retrospect, some have wondered if the debate over inerrancy, and the upheaval that came with it, was really necessary. Given the sea change in our culture over the ensuing 30 years, holding to the truth of Scripture and its central role in our churches and lives

appears more important than ever. "Southern Baptists cannot give up the affirmation of a totally true and trustworthy Bible because this foundational commitment serves all other essential affirmations of the Christian faith," Baptist scholar David Dockery has said.

"A commitment to a completely truthful and fully authoritative Bible is the first step toward [awakening from] today's theological and ethical trance that threatens the very heart of the Christian faith."

— With information from Baptist Press

Think about it:

1. Define inerrancy in your own words. Now, look it up in a theological dictionary. Are there any major differences between the two definitions?

2. Look up 2 Timothy 3:15-17. Make a list of the things Scripture does. Look up these words. Now beside each, list specific ways Scripture has done these things in your life.

3. Memorize Hebrews 4:12.

ILLINOIS IN SIGHT

Summer School's in session

IBSA's annual, week-long discipleship experience for students is a study in contrasts. One minute, they're seated in a chapel surrounded by stained glass, lifting their hands in worship.

An hour later, they might be rushing the recreation field dressed head to toe in the color of their "school" for the week.

Watch out, or you'll get run over by that teenager in the banana costume. Or the orange octopus.

At Super Summer for students who have completed grades 6-12, everything is full throttle. Bible study, worship, recreation, even meals—there's not much time to slow down during the week in June when Illinois students flood Greenville College.

Divided by age into color-coded school groups, the students get several hours of teaching on a specific topic from their "dean," an Illinois pastor or church leader.

"Teens are wondering, 'How does God's Word relate to my life?'" said Josh Monda, a Super Summer instructor and pastor of First Baptist Church in Washington. "...So we're taking these topics, like stewardship, like our emotions, like missions and evangelism, relationships, dating...how does God's Word address those issues?"

One school studies discipleship for the week, while another talks about sharing their faith at school.

The gray school, for recently graduated seniors, may focus on how to take your faith with you to college. (One fun note: The gray school also has designed their own special entrance onto the rec field. While the other schools run and yell, gray schoolers, as the oldest Super Summer participants, walk as slowly as possible.)



The "orange school" prepares for recreation at IBSA's Super Summer, held every year at Greenville College.

Students also divide into smaller "family groups" for the week. Visit Super Summer in the evening, and you're likely to find circles of students praying together on the quad.

Here in Greenville, even the quiet moments are intentional.

Super Summer 2015 is June 23-27 at Greenville College, and the theme is Meet Needs, Share Christ. Online registration opens March 16; go to www.IBSA.org/students.

Clip and Share B-101 with

- Pastors
- Church staff
- Discipleship leaders
- Missions leaders
- New members

ABOUT B-101

This is a 20-part study on the basic beliefs and missions of our denomination. It is designed for new believers, new Baptists, and those who want a refresher. Clip it out of the newspaper, fold into a four-page leaflet, and share with the people who would benefit from the information. You might even lead a study. B-101 can be used for:

- **New members classes**
- **Study on missions in Illinois and around the world**
- **Exploration of doctrines in *The Baptist Faith & Message***

Make as many photocopies as you need for study groups, church members, and worship attenders. Or download the PDFs at www.IBSA.org/B101.

Produced by the editors of the *Illinois Baptist*: Eric Reed, Meredith Flynn, Lisa Sargent. Designed by Kris Kell.

Look for B-101 in every issue!



mission illinois

Pray for a new church

Location: Yorkville, Kendall County

Focus: Young families

Characteristics: This area is growing fast, with a population increase of 191% since 2000.

Prayer needs: Planters to lead a new work in this area, and partnering churches to work alongside them.



— From the IBSA Church Planting Team

What are you doing on Wednesday nights?

This is the 18th in our 20-part series. That means almost all the essays on *The Baptist Faith & Message* are ready for use in a new members class, small group, or doctrine study. Look online and download the set. We've bundled them for easy printing and distribution.

By the way: If you need copies of *The BF&M (2000)*, they can be downloaded too, or IBSA will provide them for your new study group.

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