One for the Books: Volunteer Paul Reeder

This summer, a dozen aspiring young authors came to ABHS to conduct research for their upcoming book about the history of Friendship Baptist Church in Atlanta. This is a particularly important time for this history as Friendship’s building is being torn down to make room for the Atlanta Falcon’s new stadium. While here, the students had a special treat – the opportunity to watch volunteer Paul Reeder repair the binding of some of the Society’s rare serials and journals.

Paul’s work is familiar to many American Baptists, who have watched him repair books at the Society’s booth at Biennial Conventions of the American Baptist Churches. His work highlights the Society’s responsibility to conserve rare and original historical Baptist materials.

Paul learned to repair books as a member of his high school’s library club and, later, as a student worker in the library and book bindery of Sioux Falls College. While in Seminary, he made some extra money repairing library and text books for local city schools. After graduation, Paul pastored churches and served at Friendship House (Montana), all the while keeping his hand in book repair work. For example, while pastor at Valier, Montana, he visit-

Continued on page 2
ed the Hutterite colony at Dupuyer, where they repaired books, and he began incorporating some of their techniques in his own work.

After a long career in the ministry, Paul retired in 1996 and began repairing books to benefit various Christian organizations, including the International Conference of Police Chaplains and the Neighbor Action Program/Christian Centers (Used Book Depository). Since 2007, Paul has offered his bindery and repair services to attendees at the Biennial Conventions to benefit the ABHS. For a nominal fee, which he donates to Society, Paul lovingly mends beloved old books and Bibles as visitors to the ABHS booth watch in rapt fascination. Plan now to bring a favorite old book to the 2015 Biennial in St. Louis, and watch Paul work his magic!

**Young Authors Group**

The young authors pictured in the Paul Reeder story are part of *Doc B Cares, Inc.*, a Success Coaching Center founded and operated by Dr. Viola Belinda Blackshear for Atlanta’s at-risk youth. Her vision is to produce scholars, entrepreneurs, and leaders who graduate from colleges and universities and make a better world. She brought her young authors group to research the Friendship Baptist Church (Atlanta, GA) archives, currently on deposit at ABHS. Their question: Which is more important to a church – its building or its members? Each young author researched and wrote about a particular facet of this question. The resulting book, *Our Heritage Counts*, was the centerpiece of an open house and book release reception at Friendship on July 27, 2014. To learn more, visit [www.docbcares.org](http://www.docbcares.org).
Christian Friendliness

For the past two years Dr. Lee B. Spitzer, ABCNJ Executive Minister and Senior Regional Pastor, has been searching American Baptist records from the late 1930s and early 1940s. He is studying how American Baptists viewed the rise of Nazi anti-Semitism in Germany and responded to the plight of persecuted Jews as they fled throughout Europe and to the United States. In the process he noticed the importance of the Christian Friendliness missionaries of the Woman’s American Baptist Home Mission Society (WABHMS).

The special focus of these missionaries was to welcome immigrant women and families, teaching tolerance among “native” Americans and for the immigrants, teaching American ways of child-rearing, evangelism, and citizenship. The Christian Friendliness missionaries noticed the Jewish immigrant population, especially when commenting on factory cities like Detroit, where missionary Frances Priest noticed in 1943 the presence of “Mexican migrants in village and country many months of the year. Negro communities. Jewish Communities.” She noted these, along with immigrants from the professional class, meant “The Churches of Michigan have opportunities to serve their neighbors.” (Feb. 2, 1942, Frances Priest file, Box 32, WABHMS).

Missionary Matilda Utecht from Rhode Island reported the story of a specific refugee she aided:

Paul, in his letter to the Colossians chooses these words, "Use wisdom in dealing with outsiders, making the most of your opportunities.” We’ve been tested at that point this summer. One of our refugee girls had her first vacation, two weeks with pay, but where could an eighteen year old Jewish girl, who had been in America only a short time, go. We did not know so packed our suit cases and went to Ocean Park. The weather was perfect but that was not the best part of it. Reverend Scalisi, a Baptist pastor born in Italy, was there and made so deep an impression at the Sunday service that she wanted to hear him again.

Utecht went on to report that “the Bible was a new and thrilling book” for this refugee, and that she went home with a new Bible “which she had picked out herself to learn not only her side of it but ours as well .... We are hoping it may mean much for her.”

Source: WABHMS Box 32, Matilda Utecht file, October 6, 1942.
Mitchell Draws Lessons from Slavery and the Holocaust

“Dignity and Defacement: Lessons from Slavery and the Holocaust” is the theme of Dr. Beverly Mitchell’s talk on Friday, September 19th at 7 p.m. Focusing on the topic of human dignity and defacement, she will address some of the important theological and political implications of slavery and the Holocaust.

Mitchell explains that she looks at these two historical events to “encourage us to reflect on what it means to be human and to ponder the question as to whether as victims or perpetrators we can ever lose our dignity as human beings created in the image of God.” She argues that “reflection upon these events can help us to see more clearly our interconnectedness to each other despite all the lines of division that we erect between us. It is through our capacity to recognize and honor our common humanity that we can embrace the commitment to safeguard the human dignity of others.”

Dr. Beverly E. Mitchell is Professor of Historical Theology at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, DC, where she teaches church history and theology. Her publications include Black Abolitionism, A Quest for Human Dignity and Plantations and Death Camps; Religion, Ideology, and Human Dignity. Her special interests include African American history, feminist theologies, poverty and human rights.

Currently Dr. Mitchell is serving on the Advisory Committee for Holocaust Studies for Programs on Ethics, Religion and the Holocaust for the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC.

As a member of the ABHS board, Dr. Mitchell serves as board vice-president and chair of the Research and Publications committee which oversees the American Baptist Quarterly.

Free and open to the public, this lecture is part of an annual series sponsored by the American Baptist Historical Society at its headquarters at 2930 Flowers Rd. South, on the Atlanta campus of Mercer University. Following the lecture, there will be a reception and book-signing with Dr. Mitchell. For directions or more information, call 678 547 6680 or email abhsoffice@abhsarchives.org.
Wish List

Reading Room Lamps: Four needed. $100 each

Café Chair: For researchers checking databases on the reading room computer. $150

Museum gallery protective posts and belts. $100

Reading Room Chairs: For conference table (8 chairs). $2500

Shelving: Units needed for processing. $500 - $3000

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See abhsarchives.org for more information