

Stories of Interfaith Goodwill

Positive models of cooperation between Baptists and Jews are increasingly evident in society today. While Temple Emanu-el in Birmingham, AL, was under renovation in 2001-2002, leaders of the nearby Southside Baptist Church opened their sanctuary each week to members of the synagogue for Sabbath worship services. Rabbi Jonathan Miller and Pastor Steve Jones continue to serve as examples of interfaith good will and mutual respect to their community.

Each spring, Immanuel Baptist Church and Congregation Ohabai Sholom in Nashville, TN, help to sponsor a community run through their residential neighborhood. Members from both congregations work hand-in-hand with each other to make the event a success, and proceeds from the race go to benefit homeless persons throughout the metropolitan area.

In Murfreesboro, TN, Pastor Mike Smith of First Baptist Church and Rabbi Rami Shapiro of the one River Foundation have developed a personal friendship which, in turn, has led to shared writing projects enlarging the understanding of both Christians and Jews. In 2005, they published *Let Us Break Bread Together: A Haggadah for Christians*, and they are presently co-writing a book examining the Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount.

Congregation Mickve Israel and First Baptist Church, both in Savannah, GA, continue to build upon their 208 years of shared history in that community. For the past sixty years, they have participated in pulpit exchanges, shared with each other in Jewish and Christian holy day observances, and helped to plan the annual Thanksgiving Eve interfaith worship service among the downtown historic houses of worship. In February, 2008, Rabbi Arnold Mark Belzer and Pastor John Finley led thirty-four members from the two congregations on a joint mission trip to Cuba in support of Jewish synagogues and Baptist churches there.

All such examples of interfaith cooperation serve to inspire other goodwill efforts between Baptist and Jews. For additional information on several of these stories, as well as other examples, see the excellent resource from Baptist Center for Ethics entitled *Good Will for the Common Good: Nurturing Baptists' Relationships with Jews*.

--Submitted by John Finley

Pastor

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