

Coastal churches, NOBTS have fun in the snow while continuing ministry

GULFPORT, Miss. (BP) – Two weeks ago, Pastor Jimmy Stewart of First Church, Gulfport, preached a sermon titled “Ask. Seek. Knock,” based on Matthew 7:7. Afterwards Matthew and Kaley Dean talked to their young children over identifying one specific, measurable thing to ask of God.

They decided to pray for the rarest-of-the-rare snow day.

Pastors in the Gulf Coast Baptist Association know the importance of staying in touch with each other and Executive Director Brian Rushing over an upcoming weather event. But recent circumstances are much different.

“It’s usually about a hurricane,” said Rushing, “but this has been a lot more fun.”

The rare snow event that left as much as 9 inches brought celebration for kids and adults, not to mention the opportunity for a nice Christmas card photo. Along with that, though, came the responsibility of checking on those unaccustomed to preparing for such weather.

Stewart said many members were staying off the roads and taking their own family photos. At the time the only pictures he had of the church were from security cameras.

“The roads were dangerous, so we haven’t had anyone over there yet to get a picture,” he told Baptist Press this morning. Church member Gavin Wiscaver eventually did make his way there for the photo, though.

“We canceled services for tonight but expect to be able to have our Man Church conference tomorrow night,” said Stewart.

“It’ll be our fifth annual one. Last year we ran a little thin on the pulled pork and have 200 expected to attend, so we’re barbecuing two pigs this time instead of one.”

In Saraland, Ala., Shiloh Baptist Church pastor David Roach’s kids have done their duty to make the most of the snow.

“My family just played in it again,” said Roach, adding that with 7.5 inches measured and temperatures expected to only get up to 38 degrees today (Jan. 22), it’s doubtful much of the snow will melt. Even what does, local officials are warning of it refreezing overnight.

“Deacons are checking in on widows. Water has been turned off to the various buildings of our church facility to make sure pipes don’t burst. All Wednesday activities have been canceled,” he said.

Calvary Baptist in Columbus, Ga., also checked on people. In addition, though, Pastor Ricky Smith and leaders navigated announcements related to its school as well as care for approximately 90 residents of an assisted living facility and 100 in a retirement community located on the church’s campus.

“Many of our church staff stayed overnight so we would know those people were well taken care of,” Smith said.

As much as 6 inches fell at his house, with smaller amounts in the area. Calvary asked members to share their pictures on its Facebook page.

With reports of snow drifts up to a foot deep in the area, New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary witnessed a Baptist battle, but the fun kind with snowballs.

The seminary did not disappoint in capturing the scenes on Instagram.

All seminary offices and classes were closed on Tuesday, Jan. 21, in anticipation of the weather. They will remain closed on

Thursday, the seminary announced today, with primarily online courses proceeding as normal.

“Exercise extreme caution when traveling on the roadways,” the announcement read. “If you do not have to leave campus, then stay on campus.”