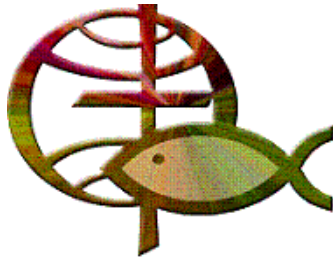
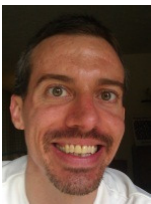


# Judson Journal



**Christmas 2011**

**University Baptist Foundation  
American Baptist Campus Ministry  
@Illinois State University  
Campus Religious Center  
210 W Mulberry, Normal, Illinois 61761  
R. Philip Grizzard, Ph.D., Director**



Judson is back! My name is Phil Grizzard, and I am just finishing up my first semester as the Director of Judson Baptist Fellowship at Illinois State University. My personal story is that I grew up in Normal and pursued a career in academia. I myself was a Judson student with Jan Hazekamp during my Master's program at ISU around the "turn of the century," and I had a great experience. Since then I have lived in Chicagoland, then Tucson, and now I'm back in my hometown.

I actually have a Ph.D. in mathematics, which I pursued for about 12 years. I realized in recent years that my main interest in academia was to be able to work with college students – and then that the impact a minister can make in the life of a student is much greater than that of a professor. I still tutor math and enjoy it, but ultimately my passion is ministering to and with college students. Jan retired two years ago, and eventually the board called me to return to Judson, this time as director. This is truly a wonderful opportunity for me, and I am humbled to be entrusted with this role.

## **What we've got going on**

As a Judson alum, I know what the potential is for this Fellowship. The ministry fell on hard times the past two years or so, and there wasn't much to go on when I came to campus in August. Fortunately, we had two students, Abbi and Gus, willing to be mustard seeds. They felt that since small groups and Bible studies are more common for students on campus, it would be best to start out with an actual worship service. We started our Sunday night services on September 25<sup>th</sup>, and (thanks to our mustard seeds), we've had between 6 and 10 attendees each week through the last week of classes.



The student leaders have participated in the planning, and we have explored many different styles of worship—contemplation, praise (fortunately we have musicians!), discussion, and meditation, among others. For many students, our service has been their "church" for most of this semester.

We've developed a fairly strong core group of around 6 students, and I am excited about the relationships that are developing among those in our core group. Based on student suggestions, we recently had our first movie night (which was the last Harry Potter movie the day it came out on video), and we went Christmas caroling at nursing homes just before finals week. Next semester we will also turn our focus outward a bit more, engaging the community in mission and outreach projects. We are signed up to participate in World Vision's 30 hour famine in February, and I hope to have a powerful "two-way ministry" project over spring break - impacting the spiritual lives of the community as well as that of our students.

## Student Perspective

*By Gus Johnson*

My name is Gustav Johnson, but most everybody calls me Gus. I'm a small town boy, raised in Chenoa IL, about 25 minutes north of Bloomington-Normal on I-55. I was in the class of 2010 at Prairie Central. When I set



foot on ISU's campus in August that year I had no idea how much my life would be turned upside down. I entered school declared as a music education major, hoping someday to use the degree to teach high school or junior high level band. Despite the immense workload that comes with the program, I have stuck with it, knowing without a doubt that this is where I am supposed to be and this is what I am supposed to be doing.

But how have I dealt with a workload that has forced some students to reconsider majors or even schools? One thing alone has the strength to carry me through all of this, and that is the Lord. For most of the first semester I was at ISU I hadn't found a church home. Sunday mornings turned into homework and practice time, but my diminishing relationship with God was beginning to show in my attitude and work ethic. I had grown up Baptist, but I'm not uncomfortable going to any denomination of church, yet somehow I couldn't seem to find a place where I felt comfortable. I missed my church family from home, and nothing could replace them. Or so I thought.

Towards the end of first semester I found a small group through a friend, and I fell in love with it. I had finally found it: my church family at ISU. This was a great moment for me, I finally got back on track with my growing relationship with God, but something was still missing. As much as I hated to admit it, the small group may have been a fantastic "gateway drug" back into the swing of church life, but it still didn't come with the fulfillment and challenge of a "Sunday service". I continued looking to find a place I could go to really push my Christian stamina, but nothing came up. Feeling slightly discouraged, I went home one weekend and mentioned it to my pastor (Christian Ricker) while chatting after church one weekend. He mentioned a church called Judson, saying that it currently didn't have a pastor but they were in the process of looking for one.

I'm not really sure how to describe what happened after that, the best way I can think of is that the idea of Judson kept gnawing at the back of my mind. The next time I went home, I told Christian that I wanted in. I wanted to help bring the church back. There wasn't a whole lot I could do since I was a crazy-busy student who wasn't on the committee to help pastor-search, but I tried to stay in the loop. The day finally came when Christian texted me and said we'd found one! I was so excited, we were doing it! It was happening! I got in contact with the new guy, and we started to figure things out: namely when and where and how this thing was going to happen. This new guy is now my pastor and friend Phil.



Here I am four months or so after our first service and I find it amazing every time I look back and think about all that's happened in such a short amount of time. We now have 10 regular attendees (small but mighty!), and a church that shares my views and ideas of God and Christianity. I had done something I never thought possible: I had found a group of people who I could be real with and alongside whom I could push myself to new limits. What's more, I got to see the creation, the work that started this group. Every day I am thankful for these people, their love for me, and their love for God. I pray often that God would use this ministry, small though it may be, to reach a campus that needs him, and I know that we are the people to do the job if He wants to use us.

## Student Spotlight: Abbi Cash

Abbi Cash is a junior and the only Judson member who was here during the Hazekamp administration. She has been “instrumental” in getting the ball rolling. Get it, get it—see the picture? OK, sorry.

**Career Goal:** To bring music to children who wouldn't otherwise have those opportunities.

**Denominational Background:** American Baptist



**Thoughts on Campus Ministry:** Provides a group of fellow Christians that understand the pressures of the college atmosphere.

**Why Judson?** It was the on-campus group I found 3 years ago and my has it changed!

**What I like about Judson:** I really enjoy the variety of ways we experience worship. I think it helps keep us away from the "we go to church every Sunday" syndrome and to keep us in-tune to why we are really there. God is doing great things here. He is bringing more people to the group and I believe we are just at the beginning of seeing where He wants to lead us.

## Streams in the Desert *a reflection on the season*

As I write this, students are in the midst of finals week. I remember those days well, as I had many of them myself. After the burden of the semester, the pressure to perform on all the exams makes it feel like life is on hold until they are done. But then they *are* done, and all of a sudden the realization of the season hits: there's all this time, vacation, and freedom to do things you've been missing since August. Plus it's Christmastime, so you can go home and be with family and friends and there are decorations, food, and presents. And there is plenty of time for authentic devotion to praise God for not only this life, but that he loves all of humanity enough that he became one of us. While I don't miss finals, I kind of miss the rush of that moment. I pray for our students, that they may succeed in their exams and then have a holiday blast.

Looking back, I realize that not everyone feels the same way as I did about the season. The intense emotions cut both ways. Some cannot be with family because of work or travel obligations. Some would rather not have to be with family, often for very good reasons. Some have been hoping all year for someone special and face this season once again feeling incomplete. And some have lost a family member since the last Christmas, so their traditions are forced to change and the loss is magnified.

My Dad passed away in June, so this will be my first Christmas without him. Already the traditions are different, and it won't be like it was, ever again.

That's hard, but not hopeless. In Isaiah 43:19, God tells the Israelites that he is "doing a new thing, making a



way in the wilderness, and streams in the desert." I resonate with that in particular, as I feel God found a way for me to return to Illinois from the literal desert where my career was wandering. It gives hope that my family will find a way in this wilderness without Dad. I pray that all families facing a tough Christmas will feel God's presence and see how God is developing new and wonderful things in their lives.



*The purpose of Judson Baptist Fellowship is to enhance and sustain the spiritual and emotional well-being of young adults near our campus during this vital time in their lives.*

## **How you can help**

Like many organizations, the vast majority of our funding comes from **contributions** from individuals and churches. If you have mission money to allocate, it would be great if you'd consider Judson. ☺

Besides funding, we can also use **dinner volunteers**. After every Sunday night service, we have had helpers prepare and serve food to the students. Having food is *critical* to attracting college students! We have access to a full kitchen that some cooks use, while others cook at home and bring it prepared. If you're in the greater "Blo-No" area and are interested in preparing a meal some Sunday, that would be wonderful! Just get in touch with me.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read this, and I wish you many blessings this holiday season and in the year to come.

## **Spring 2012 Dates**

Classes start: Jan 17<sup>th</sup>  
Sun. services resume: Jan 22<sup>nd</sup>

30 hour famine: Feb 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup>  
Spring break: Mar 10-18<sup>th</sup>

Easter: Apr 8<sup>th</sup>  
Finals week: May 7<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup>

## **Phil's Information**

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*Note: in case it wasn't clear from the context, this newsletter was written by Phil unless otherwise indicated.*



*Judsonites posing after our last service of 2011*