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Gamston speaks at Carey Lecture

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The trip from Moulton, England to Hattiesburg is a long one, but the Rev. David Gamston, pastor of Moulton's Carey Baptist Church, gladly traveled the distance to be the speaker at the Carey Lecture on Oct. 12 during the weekly chapel service.

"I bring with me greetings from that little church," said Gamston, who has been the pastor at the church, which was also pastored by the church's and the University's namesake William Carey, since 2000.

In his lecture to Carey students, faculty and staff, Gamston discussed the history of the tiny church and its relation to Carey. Carey served as its pastor from 1785 until 1789 while also serving as a master shoe craftsman in the adjoining cobbler shop.

The church existed for well over one hundred years before Carey served as pastor. According to Gamston, the

first record of the church's existence was a religious census conducted in 1626. At that time, being of the Baptist faith was illegal in England, he said.

"Your lands could be confiscated if you were caught practicing that faith, and you could even be taken to jail," he said.

In 1696, the Toleration Act was passed, which allowed the church to formally organize. Prior to Carey's pastorate, the church grew and also slowly died, with most of its members leaving the church and becoming Unitarians, said Gamston.

"Then, sturdy Orthodox men came along and a Calvinistic Baptist church was formed," he said.

In 1761, William Carey was born. His family originally had no plans for him to become a pastor; instead, he was expected to be a farmer. However, Carey developed a skin disease that ended his farming career and forced him to take up apprentice work to a master shoemaker, said Gamston.

This move would eventually cause the church's history books and Carey's legacy to intertwine, he said.



GAMSTON

Gamston discussed Carey's early Christian life, including his rebirth into the Christian faith and his baptism by immersion on Oct. 16, 1783. In 1785, Carey moved to Moulton with his wife, Dorothy, to serve as the village's shoemaker and schoolmaster, he said.

"The people there realized how gifted he was and asked him to be their pastor," said Gamston.

Carey spent the next four years of his life at the church before moving to Lester and eventually to India to serve as the first missionary of the Baptist Missionary Society, he said. Even though he left the church, his fingerprints have remained there, said Gamston.

"The church has changed dramatically, but we've still

got the house where Carey lived and worked," he said.

The shared namesake has allowed Carey Baptist and the University to become friends, said Gamston, and he always looks forward to contact with people representing the University.

"I always look forward to getting visitors from William Carey University in Mississippi," he said, "because they bring with them the presence of Jesus."

He said that the common faith shared by University representatives and church members is the same faith William Carey had.

"That is a great legacy," said Gamston.

In closing, the pastor shared William Carey's greatest quote – "Attempt great things for God; expect great things from God" – and urged the audience to continue working toward that legacy.

"If we do that, we'll continue to tread the footsteps of Carey himself," said Gamston.