

Gospel light in Newtown

PASTOR, SBTS STUDENT PREACHES HOPE IN THE GOSPEL

| By Craig Sanders |

Before news of the Newtown, Conn., shooting reached media airwaves, Dec. 14, 2012, Joey Newton received a phone call informing him of the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School.

On his way to the scene, Newton, pastor



of Newtown Bible Church, learned from a police officer that more than a dozen children had been shot, and that the families were gathered at a nearby fire station.

“That’s when the gravity of the situation hit me,” Newton said, who initially understood the victims to be two adults.

Newton, who is also pursuing a doctorate at Southern Seminary, arrived at the fire station, which became a symbol of grief and reunion in the aftermath of the shooting, and comforted the families who were awaiting confirmation of their children’s welfare.

Along with other members of the clergy, Newton talked and prayed with families waiting to hear word about their children. Nearly four hours passed before police informed parents that all unaccounted children were among the victims.

Newtown Bible Church had no members of its church family involved in the shoot-

ing, but the congregation quickly stepped in to serve at community events and prayer vigils.

Newton decided to wait until the media attention dissipated from the town before approaching the victims’ families. When that time came, the church sent letters and resources to each family. And Newton set himself to engage the dark despair surrounding his community with the hope of the gospel.

“We call people to a God who is sovereign over the evil acts of men, and who is gracious and willing to forgive sinners,” he said. “The fruit of this outreach is not going to be immediate,” Newton said, noting that the community has been more open to asking questions and seeking truth.

“But we’re not going anywhere, and we know the fruit will come in time. That’s our long-term perspective.”

A Florida native, Newton lived his early life apart from and skeptical of the gos-

pel. But he experienced God’s grace while living in Southern California, and he later became a member of Grace Community Church in Sun Valley, Calif., the church pastored by influential speaker and author, John MacArthur. After sensing a calling to ministry, Newton finished his bachelor’s degree at the Master’s College and completed a master of divinity degree at the Master’s Seminary.

Newtown Bible Church called Newton as its pastor in 2008. When Newton, his wife and three daughters arrived at the church, their family of five added a significant boost to the 15 regular attendees. Since his move to Newtown, church attendance has reached nearly one hundred.

In light of the Newtown tragedy, Newton sees an illustration of sin and death, which “the gospel answers in Jesus Christ.”

“We see this as our opportunity to shine brightly the light of the gospel of Christ.”

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