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Civil Rights Tour Teaches Life Lessons

CEDARVILLE, OHIO – With the hope of gaining a better understanding of the civil unrest of the 1950s and 1960s, 14 Cedarville University students traveled with faculty to historical sites in Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina.

Led by Greg Dyson, director of intercultural leadership, and Murray Murdoch, Ph.D., senior professor of history, the tour was designed to bridge the gap between past and present. The goal was to give each participant the historical context for many of the social issues that are still prevalent today.

“It was incredible to participate in a hands-on learning experience with a professor who was involved with the movement (Murdoch) and an incredibly godly staff member who has a passion for diversity (Dyson),” said Laurel Ward, a senior chemistry major from Fallon, Nevada.

The tour, which ran from September 26-30, made stops at the National Center for Civil Rights, Mother Emanuel Church, the Martin Luther King Jr. National Historic Site, Brown African Methodist Episcopal Church and Edmund Pettus Bridge. Each site was home to important events during the civil rights movement.

Students heard from pastors and other civil rights leaders during their travels, including the leadership at Mother Emmanuel Church, the site of the shooting in Charleston, South Carolina, on June 17.

Prior to the trip, Murdoch emphasized the importance of understanding the history of racism and discrimination in America, along with the proper Christian response. It was a lesson that was not lost on the students, who were profoundly changed by the trip.

“For me, the civil rights tour brought to life the devastating truth of our nation's history and the harsh reality of today,” said Jenna Parker, a senior social work major from Williamson, New York.

“This trip has generated a desire to see my generation fight passionately for reconciliation, founded on a Gospel message that transcends all racial and cultural boundaries.”

“I learned that reading about history is much different than experiencing it,” said Cody Clark, senior technical and professional communication major from Beavercreek, Ohio. “Similarly, history is relative; what some consider the past is still a continual struggle for others today,”

Located in southwest Ohio, Cedarville University is an accredited, Christ-centered, Baptist institution with an enrollment of 3,711 undergraduate, graduate, and online students in more than 100 areas of study. Founded in 1887, Cedarville is recognized nationally for its authentic Christian community, rigorous academic programs, strong graduation and retention rates, accredited professional and health science offerings, and leading student satisfaction ratings.