Religion

Sampson Tech also offers religion courses

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Lifestyle Editor

Where 15 or more are gathered together, Sampson Technical College will provide a course in religion, with instructor.

The religion department at Sampson Tech, while not formally organized as such, functions as a code of course titles under academic extension. Any of the courses listed are activated on demand.

According to J.W. Simmons, academic extension director at STC, such courses as Bible, Comparative Religions, History of Religion, New Testament, Old Testament and World Religions are available if as many as 15 people sign up for one or more.

"We have various instructors on call for the courses," Simmons said, "when there is sufficient interest to schedule them. Also, if there are persons interested in teaching for us, we would like for them to contact us about it."

At present, only one course in religion is being taught through Sampson Tech. The Rev. George T. Packer is conducting a summer course in New Testament at Register Heights Senior Village near Clinton.

The three-hour weekly course meets from 9 a.m. to 12 noon on Wednesdays in the classroom at Register Heights. Twenty-two class members are registered. Because they are senior citizens over 65, they do not have to pay the regular $10 registration fee.

"They do not get tired during those three hours," says the Rev. Packer, "I do. After three hours of expounding, with them asking me questions all along, I am tired."

Packer is the minister at Piney Green Baptist Church, Route 1, Salemburg. However, he says, he does not teach the Bible from a Baptist viewpoint.

"We do not teach denominations. We teach directly from the Bible, a basic exposition of the Bible – the dates it was written, as we know them, and the historical contexts. We show films of the Holy Land, to help them associate what we're teaching with the place where it happened.

"But we leave the Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian off," Packer says. "We can't cater to denominations, and we do no proselytizing."

The code name of the course is Religion 2001: Bible, Teachings of the New Testament.

Packer, who received his biblical training at Fruitland Bible Baptist Institute, previously taught similar courses at Bladen Technical College in Elizabethtown. He was recommended to Sampson Tech as a Bible teacher by someone who had known of his work in Bladen.

His wife is Frances, and their children are Jeffrey, 14, and Michelle, 12.

"The questions class members ask me during the sessions at Register Heights are very real to the. They'll talk to me about things that have happened in their personal lives, and some will confide things to me."

The Rev. George T. Packer, pastor of Piney Green Baptist Church and a religion instructor in Sampson Tech's continuing education program, teaches a Bible course at the Register Heights Senior Village near Clinton.

The questions, Packer says, involve practical moral issues for today, such as divorce: is it right or wrong? And if it is wrong in general, can there not be specific circumstances that make it acceptable? Sampson Technical College is now registering for the fall semester, and will provide other religion courses if they are called for by the required number of students.