

FELLOWSHIP



PRAYER IS OUR connection

by Beverly CroweTipton

Beverly CroweTipton is a member at First Baptist Church Greenville, pastor of spiritual formation at Advent United Methodist Church in Simpsonville, and on staff at The Anchorage, a ministry of spiritual direction in Greenville. She will lead a breakout session on prayer at the General Assembly in Seneca.



Many would say that prayer is as natural as breathing. It seems that regardless of our time or space, ethnicity or culture, our religion or lack thereof, we can't help but pray. Perhaps because this tendency toward prayer is part of the very fabric of our being, we remain intrigued by the subject. However, many still secretly ponder why. Why pray?

In naked simplicity, prayer is connection—our connection with the source of all life and love, the one who created us. God first and forever extends the possibility; and as much as God longs for relationship with us, we long for relationship with God. While God may have the ability to relate in many ways, we connect through relationships. In that sense, prayer is our central means of relationship with God. It is also one way to help us passionately follow Jesus.

Our prayers are deeply personal for they can be true indicators of how we view God, so listen to yourself when you pray. In our best relationships, we are willing to hear one another, to trust, to speak the truth. Prayer is, should be, all of those things. The Psalmists show us exactly that—prayer is real and raw, speaks of passion and pain, and listens with gratitude and for grace.

Perhaps prayer is more than as natural as breathing; perhaps it is as essential as breathing. As Dietrich Bonhoeffer said, "We pray because we must."

passionately following Jesus

Children at Operation We Care Allendale painted bookcases that they could take home along with a bag full of books.

EVERYDAY missionaries

by Beverly Greer

"We do not strive for spectacular actions. What counts is the gift of yourself, the degree of love you put into each of your deeds." —Mother Teresa

Mother Teresa's quote is a good definition of an everyday missionary. More than 200 everyday missionaries from counties across South Carolina met in Allendale County on March 17 to join with residents to give hope to people who need a neighbor to help them do projects they cannot do for themselves.

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The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's constituents will passionately follow Jesus Christ.

What an easy sentence to say! What a difficult thing to do.

CBFSC has created two strategic plans since I have been your coordinator. On both occasions, I have asked the committees not to assume that every person in every CBF partner congregations take care of the basics. Passionately following Jesus Christ is the bottom line!

It is easy for any church, business, denomination or family to become reactive. I have watched congregations unhappy with the way the former pastor did something (or did not do something) decide to take off in a new direction—REACTIVITY. The former pastor was not evangelistic enough, so the pastor search committee hunts for a fired-up

evangelist this time (complete with white suit, white shoes and a white belt!). Or, vice versa. Romance sometimes works that way. A breakup occurs and there is a quick sprint in the direction of someone who is the polar opposite of the last partner—REBOUND.

Neither CBFSC nor our churches can thrive and move forward merely by reflexively responding to the deficiencies of our culture or of other Christians. Literally hundreds of issues matter in the life of a congregation, and some of them can erupt into full-blown disputes: music, denominations, finances, traditions, college and/or youth ministry, Sunday school literature, whether to worship on Saturday (the biblical Sabbath) or Sunday. The list is endless.

But at the core of our faith is our worship of and allegiance to Jesus Christ. You and I may disagree about a lot of things, but accepting Jesus as our Savior and attempting to follow Jesus as our Lord should overcome a boatload of differences between us.

There are a lot of topics about which we have the right (and responsibility) to disagree. If a discussion arises in a church group about something such as immigration, we ought to be able to have a civil conversation: "On the one hand... and on the other hand." I like to be able to think about and nuance complex issues. The Bible and our culture have many of those. Maybe I could be less obsessive or fervent about peripheral doctrines or traditions. That is where the concept of "moderate" works for me.

But I want to be PASSIONATE about my love for Jesus, the Christ, the Messiah, the Lord. That doesn't mean I have to yell and scream at people who do not love Jesus in the same way that I do. But I want my life and my church and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship to be very clear that our Number One Priority is neither liturgy nor creed, but to the best of our knowledge, ability and grace to follow Jesus.

COORDINATOR'S COLUMN

By Marion Aldridge



Much of the work in Allendale and at Metanoia in North Charleston happens because of your gifts to our Just Sharing Offering to support state mission projects. Churches may take the offering whenever it is most appropriate for them. If you need supplies to promote the offering, contact Debbie Haag in the CBFSC office. Below are three suggestions on how to enhance your church's contribution to the offering.

1 Invite the congregation to a soup and bread meal. Charge \$2 per person. Let children and their families prepare the food. Have children do the promoting, serving, cleaning up afterwards and anything else related to the event. One church raised \$700.



2 Keep a jar in your home for coins found around the house or while on a walk.

3 After a brief children's sermon explaining what "Pocket Change Sunday" is about, let children carry baskets throughout the sanctuary to collect pocket change that will be used as part of the CBFSC Just Sharing Missions Offering.

JUST SHARING in action

Lots of volunteers turned out on March 17 to paint, read books, and lead sports camps at Operation We Care Allendale. But the community development work goes on year-round and the money you give through the Just Sharing Offering helps fund some of those projects.



OUR MISSION: We are women and men participating in God's mission together. We nurture spiritual development, encourage congregations to thrive, and value collaborative and innovative ministry and missions.



Beverly Greer read *The Snowy Day* as children followed in their own books.

Our everyday missionaries—

(continued from the front page)

"You guys are angels. I can't believe my roof doesn't leak anymore. I didn't know how I was going to get that done." "For the first time, somebody is really going to help us. You are going to do what you say." "I am so happy about the ramp. It helps me get in and out of my house." "I never knew my yard would look so good again. I'm not able to do that kind of work anymore. Thank you so much."

That's just a sampling of comments from Allendale residents after Operation We Care Allendale.

One of the events was a Reading Fair for 3, 4 and 5 year-old children. They decorated bookcases built by volunteers from four churches, then listened as parents or volunteers read to each child alone and in groups. From hundreds of donated books, they selected as many as they could put into a large tote bag. The remaining books will

supplement classroom libraries and be given away at PTA meetings.

A 4th grade boy helped build the bookshelves and gave up going to an overnight birthday party to go to Allendale. He volunteered at the Sports & Games Fair and the Reading Fair and wants to go back next year.

"We absolutely LOVED this mission!" said the volunteer who organized the Sports and Games Fair for 1st through 5th graders. "We left some school supplies in the office and donated to the school the sporting equipment we used at the event. We're looking forward to the next time. Our young people, especially, kept saying how they needed to come back."

I am grateful to be part of a volunteer group that does not strive for spectacular actions but gives the gift of themselves and puts love in each deed they perform as they passionately follow

Five neighborhood associations led by Lottie and Frank Lewis met every week for more than a month to plan OWCA. After the volunteers were gone, Lottie and Frank went to every house on the list we did not get to on March 17 and promised that someone would help them with their project. Last year Frank did most of the unfinished work. This year neighborhood leaders will help with that. **If you or a team from your church will take on a project, let me know.** You can choose a specific project that fits your gifts or those of your church team and then select the time you can do it. —Beverly



2012 General Assembly

April 27-28

Trinity Baptist Church, Seneca

Register now at cbfosc.org. The only cost is for meals.

Registration begins and exhibits open for the General Assembly at 11 a.m. on Friday, April 27. The Spotlight Luncheon celebrating 10 years of Metanoia begins at 11:45. The afternoon sessions begin at 1:30. The dinner honoring Marion is at 5:15 followed by evening worship at 7. Saturday begins with pastries at 8 a.m., followed by breakouts at 9 and worship at 10:30 a.m.



Equipping the trailer

CBFSC recently acquired an enclosed utility trailer that will be available for churches to use in service projects such as disaster response and local construction / renovation.

The trailer is not yet equipped. We are asking those coming to the General Assembly in Seneca to bring gift cards from Lowe's or Home Depot that we can use to buy the needed equipment. Alternatively, you may bring suitable new or gently-used tools. The trailer will be on display outside of Trinity Baptist Church as inside we learn about building Christ's church.

Marion's retirement dinner

It is difficult to think about CBFSC without thinking also of Marion Aldridge. On Friday night of the General Assembly we will take some time to remember, laugh, and celebrate together Marion's ministry as coordinator of CBFSC since 1998.

Marion's official retirement will come in 2013, but this is a time for us at this annual CBF-family gathering to enjoy a great meal together, tell some stories, and celebrate with Marion during his last General Assembly as our coordinator. The evening will be hosted by Randy Wright, chaplain at a retirement center in Rock Hill and longtime-friend of Marion and Sally Aldridge.

Tickets to the retirement dinner are \$17 and must be purchased in advance at cbfosc.org.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS at General Assembly

DON'T WASTE YOUR CONFLICT led by Layne Smith, Center for Congregational Health. Saturday, 9 am. Conflict is inevitable in any community. It may be unacknowledged, hidden or denied, but it is present. So, what to do with it? Use it wisely! Don't let it fester and destroy community. It can be a springboard to a healthier faith community. We will explore addressing conflict in a constructive manner as we describe what a healthy church looks like.

THE WAY OF PRAYER, led by Beverly CroweTipton, pastor of spiritual formation at Advent United Methodist Church in Simpsonville. Friday, 3:30 pm. Why is prayer essential to the life of the church? This session invites you to learn as much about prayer as possible, to experience many different forms of prayer, to practice praying together and all alone, to pray out loud and in silence. It is an invitation to begin an exploratory journey toward what it might mean for you, for your church to follow the way of prayer.

BUILDING DISCIPLES, led By Rick Jordan, CBFNC Church Resources Coordinator. Friday, 3:30 pm; Saturday, 9 am. Nurturing Faith curriculum from *Baptists Today* offers a new approach, a new teaching method and a consistent writing team. Learn how this new curriculum can meet your church's needs.

BUILDING THE CHURCH IN RELATIONSHIP WITH THE POOR led by Hugh Hollowell of Love Wins Ministries. Friday, 3:30 pm and Saturday, 9 am. What does it mean to build relationships across cultural and societal barriers?

IMPROVISATIONAL LEADERSHIP, led by Bo Prosser, CBF Coordinator of Missional Congregations. Friday, 3:30; Saturday, 9 am. A time to explore the ways in which improvisational techniques can contribute to your work in ministry as well as in leading a peer learning group. Creative 'play' takes thought and energy. Improvisation is not simply 'flying by the seat of one's pants'! There are certain techniques that guide the 'improvisational leader' towards success and reward. We'll look at some of these and 'play' together to discover and integrate some of these techniques.

IS COMMUNITY RENEWAL THE SAME AS BUILDING CHRIST'S CHURCH? led by Bill Stanfield, CEO of Metanoia. Friday, 3:30 pm. We'll talk about Jesus' understanding of the Kingdom of God and how we come to participate in that Kingdom among the margins of society. Workshop attendees will also get an update on Metanoia's work in North Charleston. Is Community Renewal the same as Building Christ's Church? Come and engage in the discussion.

TREY AND JEN LYON, CBF field personnel who work in community development in Grant Park, located in south-eastern Atlanta. Saturday, 9 am.

passionately

following Jesus

by Blake Kendrick, First Baptist Church, Greenwood



As CBFSC commits to *passionately following Jesus*, as the new strategic plan states, it is my prayer that spiritual formation will become or remain an essential priority for all CBF churches. I am hopeful that more Baptists will be offered opportunities for spiritual renewal through sources such as the Academy for Spiritual Formation.

In keeping with its new strategic plan, CBFSC will co-sponsor a **five-day Academy for Spiritual Formation in Winnsboro in May 2013**. Look for information about this event closer to the date.

If you're interested in attending something earlier, CBF national is sponsoring the event listed below in October.

National CBF will co-sponsor with Upper Room Ministries a **five-day Academy for Spiritual Formation this October at Ignatius House in Atlanta, GA**. Faculty presenters will be Glenn Hinson and Jane Vennard.

Schedule for October Academy in Atlanta

Sunday, Oct. 14: Registration with dinner and orientation.

Monday, Oct. 15-Thursday, Oct. 18: Morning and evening prayers and communion are held every day. Faculty present each morning and afternoon, followed by silence for individual reflection and group response time. Evening Covenant groups offer time for sharing spiritual journeys. After night prayer, silence is observed until morning prayer. Ample free time for rest and recreation is provided.

Friday, Oct. 19: Academy concludes after lunch.

During the spring of 2008, I attended a five-day Academy for Spiritual Formation that was co-sponsored by national CBF and The Upper Room, a ministry of the General Board of Discipleship of the United Methodist Church. When I went, I was not sure what to expect, but I knew I was searching.

I was searching for a way of life and a model for pastoral ministry that was sustainable. My soul had become restless and parched as I wrestled with my calling to ministry. Little did I know the immense impact that this retreat would have on my life, setting me on a course toward wholeness and renewal.

The setting for the academy was Ignatius House, a Jesuit retreat center nestled on the banks of the Chattahoochee River 12 miles north of Atlanta.

It was here that I was introduced to a new way of life. The daily rhythm of the Academy is modeled after the monastic traditions. Each day begins and ends with prayer, and a daily celebration of Holy Communion provides the framework for intense spiritual exploration.

Bill Mallard and Jerry Webber served as our faculty presenters. Their presentations were followed by periods of communal silence which provided sacred space for reflection. As each evening

drew to a close, I gathered with my covenant group to process that day's encounters with God.

In this setting, my soul experienced a homecoming. I began to realize that, with God's grace, I could craft a life with God that could be sustained by contemplative prayer, communal worship, and the keeping of silence. At the Academy, I had been given a set of practices and a language that could nourish and articulate the deep longings of my soul.

During the weeks that followed the five-day Academy, I yearned to further this journey. I applied to the two-year Academy for Spiritual Formation at a retreat center near Gallant, Alabama.

The two-year Academy is composed of eight five-day sessions that follow the same daily rhythm as the five-day Academy that I had just completed.

Over the following months, the two-year Academy became one of the most formative experiences of my life. I can not quantify the impact that the five-day and two-year Academies have had on my vocational and spiritual journeys. Further, one of most rewarding by-products of these experiences has been inviting other Baptists to explore the nurturing practices of the Christian contemplative tradition.

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<http://www.thefellowship.info/academy>



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BY PAUL MOORE
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Moderator-Elect, CBFSC



ENCOUNTERING JESUS

through the words of the New Testament

I could hear the excitement in her voice ... as she said, I believe in Jesus now! She continued, I am learning more and more about the Bible and the more I learn about Jesus, the more I love Him! So reports CBF field representative Kamille Krahwinkel, who works with college students in China. (God has great plans for China in fellowship! April/May 2012, p. 14)

This student read the Bible and in so doing learned about Jesus. Some of what she may have learned, or will learn, about Jesus is that Jesus is welcoming and inviting to all. Rich or poor, pious or pagan, Jew or Gentile, or any other classification into which people are placed, Jesus opened himself to them all. Many of those he encountered soon found in him much more than a teacher or prophet. In faith they embraced him as Lord.

Learning about Jesus led this student to begin to love Jesus. The nature of

Jesus revealed in the pages of the New Testament leads readers to someone they feel compelled to engage.

Knowledge of someone like Jesus draws one into relationship. In that relationship love deepens. As happens in many loving relationships, there develops a desire on the part of all its members to love one another.

The first followers of Jesus found him in places like the commercial fishing docks on the shores of the Lake of Galilee. Today's followers encounter Jesus in no less real ways through the words of the New Testament, as well as the testimonies of Jesus' followers. The more we learn of Jesus, and his loving service toward us, the more likely our love is to grow. The more our love grows the more our desire to serve the one we love by passionately following Jesus.

