

# FELLOWSHIP



## Acknowledging those whom God has called

BY DEBORAH DANTZLER  
*Rivertown Community Church, Conway*

Why does the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship support women in ministry? At the risk of proving that I am the dumbest person in the room, my question is "Why wouldn't CBF support women in ministry?" God calls whom he chooses. How could any human being have veto power over God's calling?

Women in ministry is not really about fairness, women's rights, or power. It's not even a battle over interpretation of Scripture, though some try to make it that. Instead, it is simply acknowledging what God is doing in the lives of the women he calls. From the time of Christ's ministry on earth, women have taught, nurtured, proclaimed, and led in the advancement of God's Kingdom. They have usually done so in the context of their culture. Just because we have rarely experienced women in pastoral or other ministerial roles doesn't mean they are disqualified.

When my son was 5 years old, I suggested that he might be a lawyer when he grew up. He quickly ad-

continued on page 2



"I can highlight places of interest for travelers, but it is the travelers who engage the trip. It is their trip."—Lisa Allen, pastor of Fernwood Baptist Church in Spartanburg

## TRAVELING | together

BY LISA ALLEN  
*Fernwood Baptist Church, Spartanburg*

When I have a good tour guide, I am introduced to new places through informed, engaged experiences. The tour guide doesn't demand anything from me. This is *my* trip. She is passionate, points out aspects of the land, its history, and a few prominent spots that might make a difference to my understanding.

If I take another trip with that same guide, she might show me something different based upon her more recent experiences. Or I might choose to return on my own with a new sense of confidence.

I like this image as a way to share what preaching is like for me at Fernwood Baptist Church in Spartanburg. Since beginning my ministry as pastor three years ago, it has been a time of growth and learning. As a church community, we are taking a great journey of faith as we seek to know ourselves better through God's inspiring work in our lives.

I understand the preaching role to be one of companion and guide. I have the responsibility and delight of careful study of scripture in preparation for sermons. It is important to learn the context and

intent of particular passages of scripture and then to understand their place among the larger biblical story.

Prior to preaching, I seek to understand ways that the message applies to our journey as a people of faith. How does it affect our lives as individuals, as family members, as people in the community, and as citizens of the world? What does this scripture challenge us to do, to change, to become?

I bring that preparation to the worship service and invite the congregation to engage what I have discovered. Much like a tour guide, I have the opportunity to go before them and survey the destination. I can highlight places of interest for travelers, but it is then the travelers who engage the trip. It is *their* trip. We often find our way through biblical passages with questions, conversation and dialogue in the midst of the sermon. It has become an important piece of our relationship together.

The people of Fernwood are traveling together, and I am grateful to walk with them. May your journey of faith be one where you discover new places of growth for the sake of Christ in our world.

## At FBC Pendleton

# Gifts & calling—not gender—guide staff selection

BY CHERYL PATTERSON

First Baptist Church, Pendleton

Growing up in South Alabama, I knew of at least one church whose pastor was female so the idea was planted in my head that a female pastor was acceptable—at least in some churches.

One of my early encounters with female deacons came in 1978 when my family joined First Baptist Church, Pendleton. The church had ordained its first female deacon in 1975 and there were several women serving in that capacity by 1978. Not too many years after that, I was ordained as a deacon and later served as the first female chair of the deacons in that church. Over the years I have served multiple terms in both of those roles.

It has been a joy to serve in an atmosphere where women are not only respected, but able to serve as equals to males without facing a debate about whether it is appropriate.

In the early 1980s FBC Pendleton

ordained Debbie Warren to full time vocational ministry as our minister of youth. It was the natural thing to do. Currently, we are fortunate to have Jennifer McClung as associate pastor. Again, it was the natural thing to do. As I was chair of the search committee for that position, it was nice not to have to consider the gender of the applicants but to concentrate on their gifts, their calling and their apparent compatibility with our church and the other staff.



Cheryl Patterson

To further illustrate FBC Pendleton's openness to women in ministry, I should mention that five of our six part-time minister positions are held by females. Phyllis Boykin serves as minister of music and minister to senior adults. Contemporary worship leader Christie Williamson is also co-

minister to youth and Julia Day is our minister to children. Again, we were able to fill these positions by considering not gender but qualifications, experience, and compatibility.

According to the Mission Statement of CBFSC, "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." This Mission Statement is intended to help move us toward our vision of "growing as a community of grace on a shared spiritual journey which connects people to Christ and one another."

Moving past the issue of gender as we select lay leaders, pastors, and other ministers will surely help churches to achieve those same goals. That is, it will better allow us to do the work that God has called Christians to do.



Debbie Dantzer, an attorney, is immediate past moderator of CBFSC.

## Acknowledging God's call— (continued from page 1)

monished me, "Don't be silly, Mom. Only girls are lawyers!" That was his experience, but it was certainly only a small part of the real picture.

Following the example of Paul, many women have taken a less visible role so as to be all things to all people to win others to Christ. (I Cor. 9:19-23) Now, to win our world, we must bravely encourage women to discover and fulfill their God-given mission no matter what form it takes.

There is no more powerful teacher than example. As women live out their calling in CBF churches, the world sees that there is a place for all in God's family. Those in the church experience the blessing of ministry in a fresh way. Girls have role models so when God calls them, they don't have to wonder if they misunderstood the call. Lost and hurting people find Christians who can relate to and understand them in ways some of their predecessors could not, no matter how hard they tried.

But we can do better. While we profess allegiance to the principle of women in ministry, we often do not express it

in the people we call to roles that have traditionally been held by men, especially in our local congregations. We are the poorer for it, and the world is quick to notice the disconnect. I am not advocating for Affirmative Action for placing women in leadership roles. I am advocating for affirmative listening and obedience to God's instructions about who he wants in those roles, regardless of whether they are women or men.

Just like plants need both sunshine and rain to grow, so the world needs the grace of God as communicated through all his followers, not just one group. Cooperative Baptist Fellowship people know that the heart of God will not allow a lost and dying world to spend eternity apart from him unnecessarily—even if he has to use women to call them to relationship.

*In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness, and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned. Titus 2:7-8a*

## MENTORING A MAN INTO MINISTRY BY CHERYL ADAMSON



When our congregation began worshipping as a community on October 1, 2006, I had no idea that among my responsibilities over the next few years would be the mentoring of other clergy persons. I had my hands full with preparing sermons, printing the bulletins, playing the piano for worship, teaching Bible study, and, horror of horrors, keeping up with the checkbooks! I needed help and for a long time, there was none forthcoming.

By the end of the 2007, a young licensed female minister came along to assist me and in 2009, another woman in the church gave her initial sermon. Additionally, an ordained clergy woman who was working on her doctor of ministry degree needed a pastor to oversee her preaching for a semester. So in less than three years, I was mentoring three women in ministry.

In March 2009, I had lunch with Claudia and George Payton. Claudia had come to us as a volunteer a few months earlier and had expressed a concern for her husband's academic development as a minister. George had preached his initial sermon in January and had been frustrated in his efforts to gain information and guidance on pursuing further studies. In this initial conversation with them, I was able to direct him to Ginger Barfield and the Baptist House of Studies at the Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary and by August, George had enrolled in LTSS.

George and Claudia had retired from corporate careers with a wealth of transferrable knowledge and wisdom which could benefit them in ministry. As our needs at Palmetto grew, I certainly wanted our congregation to benefit from exposure to them as Christians and as experienced leaders. My husband James and I approached them about George coming to our church as the Executive Pastor and Minister to Men. They accepted.

This has, of course, proven to be a unique opportunity for me to serve as a role model and mentor to a man in ministry. I follow in the footsteps of Deborah and Pris-

cilla and many unnamed sisters in this vain. Of course, I had as much or more to learn from George as he had to learn from me, but I have been able to provide him with guidance on his education, exposure to various leadership opportunities, a regular preaching assignment, and the opportunity to teach the men and women of our church. Additionally, through our regular meetings, we have had theological discussions, spiritual direction, and strategic planning sessions which have enriched our lives and the life of the church. We have had disagreements and difficult conversations over leadership style, decision making, and personal opinions, but have weathered

them through prayer, openness, and the desire to be better Christians, better leaders and better friends. George will tell you that he has learned as much from seeing what not to do as he has by seeing me do the right thing!

Though we do not have a written policy on this (as we should), we have always been mindful of our responsibilities to guard our reputations and that of the church. Our meetings have been held with others present

in the church. Having our spouses actively engaged in the ministry with us has also served as a safeguard. Additionally, I made a point of directing George to another man in ministry with whom to develop a mentoring relationship.

On Sunday, April 15, George was ordained to the ministry by Palmetto Missionary Baptist Church under the auspices of CBFSC. George had been serving as a supply preacher for St. Elizabeth Baptist Church in Aynor for the past two months. On the sixth day, the next Saturday night after his ordination, that church voted unanimously to call George as its next pastor, effective immediately! Hopefully, our mentoring relationship is not over, but will take on a different dimension. Truly, I do thank God for entrusting George to my pastoral care for this season and I pray the best for him and for Claudia in their new assignment.



Cheryl Moore Adamson is the senior pastor at Palmetto Missionary Baptist Church in Conway. Through her mentoring, George Payton is now pastor of St. Elizabeth Baptist Church in Aynor.



Many who know Ellen Sechrest think of her as our ambassador to Romania since she has been the primary South Carolina advocate for the Ruth School in Bucharest for years and has made many trips there. But Ellen's ministry is much broader. Her primary responsibility at Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson is minister of children and youth. She's pictured here with a group of Boulevard students at Festival by the Sea, an event sponsored annually by CBFSC. This month, Ellen celebrates 20 years as part of the Boulevard family.

## Ellen Sechrest has been doing **Whatever is needed** (for 20 years)

### BY ELLEN SECHREST

Twenty years ago this month, I was hired as the minister of youth & children at Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson. That has remained my main focus and responsibility but through these many years, I have had the chance to do so much more.

By no means have I been a perfect minister. I haven't always said or done the right things. But the one thing I have tried to do right is to love all people. Not just children and youth but their parents, grandparents, friends, and anyone else that comes along the path.

God is here working amongst the

people and moving in a mighty way. Our motto is "Ministering at the corner of Boulevard and the World"

**How could I stay at one place for so long? —the people and God's calling.**

—Ellen Sechrest, 20 years at Boulevard

and we try to live that out every day. Some of my greatest joys have been watching "my kids" grow into adulthood, become leaders in their own churches, perform their baptisms and weddings, and hug their necks when they come to visit.

Being at one place for a long time teaches you a lot. Not just about ministry but about living and being part of a greater family. When you hold the hand of a dying child, weep with a grieving parent, listen to graduation speeches, go on family vacations with members, take youth out of the country or to be in the room as a former youth

gives birth, you know that God has blessed you beyond measure.

God has been good and gracious to me throughout life. I can't wait to see how I will be used in the next 20 years as I do whatever is needed.

**E**llen Sechrest is who she is and does what she does in part because Bill, a woman in her church, invested in Ellen's early life. Bill paid for Ellen to go on mission trips and other church related activities. When Ellen needed a boost, Bill was the go-to person and continually told Ellen how proud she was of her. Because of her influence, followed in her adult life by the influence of missionary friends, Ellen's ministry is infused with a missional focus.

—Beverly Greer

### KAREN SPEARS ZACHARIAS

writes about people and the issues that really matter to them. She kept the audience at the CBFSC General Assembly spellbound as she told how she found her ministry through writing. Karen teaches journalism at Central Washington University in Ellensburg, Wa., and blogs at Patheos.com. The General Assembly was held April 27-28 at Trinity Baptist Church in Seneca.



I have coined a new word: **CHURCHCRAFT**. *What I mean by Churchcraft is an individual's ability to say and do the things that will help to build the organized church.* My observation is that a lack of Churchcraft is the number one reason churches and pastors fail. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, I might have called it churchmanship. Some people think I am referring exclusively to the "soft skills" that pastors, staff and laity need for a church to succeed—the ability to negotiate, to compromise, to listen, to sell an idea, to understand limits, to provide leadership, to exhibit social graces—and I do mean those. God help the church whose pastor, staff or lay leadership are bulls in a china shop!

But Churchcraft is much more. It is also...

- The ability to conceive, develop, implement and evaluate an event,
- The ability to create a plan to overcome a budget deficit,
- Time management, showing up, being on time, finishing a task,
- Work ethic,
- Knowing when to speak prophetic and challenging words and when to say pastoral or encouraging words,
- Understanding congregational history, and the ability to recognize congregational land mines,
- The ability not to create congregational land mines!
- Making sure that buildings are maintained,
- Discovering and honoring appropriate congregational rituals,
- Knowing when new skill sets are needed and then learning them (or enlisting someone who has them),
- Understanding when you need to recruit volunteers and then delegating responsibility to them.

The two most common enemies of Churchcraft are probably 1) ego, which is a character issue, and 2) lack of intelligence, which is a capacity issue.

That ego is a problem is obvious. When a pastor, a deacon chair, or a Sunday School teacher thinks he or she is always right, there is no room for growth, change or compromise. Absolute certainty may be good for some things but it is rarely helpful in a Baptist congregation. We have all heard of or experienced ecclesiastical horror stories about people who were willing to split a church over the color of the carpet. One way of expressing this predicament is by asking, "Is this the hill I want to die on?" or "Is this the hill I want this church to die on?" (which helpfully reminds us that Jesus' death on the cross was for

the salvation of the world and not about the color of the carpet!).

The other enemy of good Churchcraft is ignorance. Some cannot hold complex thoughts in their minds. Their world is black and white, all or nothing, right and wrong, good and evil, and anyone who thinks differently than they do they believe to be demonic. Even when I am right, surely there is something I can learn from the "opposition." Some people, even in the church, do not have the gift of empathy. These people should not be elected as congregational leaders.

When the Deep South finally integrated, the NAACP adopted a policy of gradualism, of incremental change. The alternative to incremental change is revolution. Jesus, of course, was (and is) a radical, and not the best example of someone working within an institution. He preached utter and immediate transformation, and he was murdered. Christians, according to Reinhold Niebuhr, need to make a personal decision about whether they will be prophetic (and likely end up as martyrs) or, alternatively, work within the system.

Some people are called to hang in there with the spiritual skill of organizational leadership. Pastors and staff must have this gift and hopefully, every church will have laity who are able to take the long view. Gossips, saboteurs, blamers, second-guessers, the ignorant, the petty, the irresponsible and the fearful do not have either the capacity or the character to possess Churchcraft. Churchcraft involves building coalitions of very different people. Any pastor who doesn't pay attention to choirs and to the people who love music is foolish. A good church leader tries to make a place, even in the most conservative congregations, for the boundary-stretching rowdiness and challenges of the younger generation. Any pastor or deacon chair who does not know congregational members have different collegiate and political loyalties is naïve. Saints and Sinners! Maybe one of the best descriptions of a successful Christian congregation is that it is full of grace and radically inclusive!

**I never said CHURCHCRAFT was easy, just that it is necessary.**



COORDINATOR'S  
COLUMN

By Marion Aldridge

**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.



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# —Everyday **women** missionaries —

**BY BEVERLY GREER,**  
CBFSC Missions Coordinator

A minister wrote that what fascinates him about Matthew 25:31-40 is what it doesn't say. What Jesus leaves out in his charge to feed the hungry, clothe the naked, and minister to the sick is that he says nothing about what results are supposed to be achieved through these actions. He says simply **DO IT**.

**CAROLINE KRUEGER** learned that at home. She said, "I don't think I would have the feeling to help those in need if I had not learned it from my family, particularly my mother and grandmother. It was just a lifestyle. There was no big to-do. They just responded to those in need." Today one of Caroline's missions is to direct the Oakland Baptist Ministry Center, a ministry in Rock Hill to the homeless and others who live in poverty.

**DEBBIE DANTZLER** recalls a GA leader, Louise Cato, who believed in teaching by doing, calling it community missions. When she died an untimely death at 50, she left as her legacy a large number of "her GAs" whose lives she had influenced, three of whom are career missionaries. Debbie, a laywoman, is a strong advocate for missions in



Rivertown Community Church in Conway.

Fred Andrea, pastor of FBC Aiken, said, "In and through her church, **AMY STERTZ** is the key embodiment and catalyst for a missional lifestyle." Amy, associate minister in Christian Education, spent some of her teenage years in Central America and was shaped by relationships with families there and observing what missionaries do. It was a transformative time for her. Now she looks for ways to involve people in missions. She understands that everybody can do something.

**ETHEL CHILDRESS**, a laywoman at FBC Greenville, grew up seeing her mom minister in the community and service became a part of who she is, but she thought "missionaries" had a special kind of calling. Tammy Stocks was the first woman missionary she ever met. In getting to know Tammy she realized that people who are missionaries are everyday people. She was astounded by Tammy's joy in serving and her authenticity. It was an *aha* moment for her. It made her think differently about missions and what she can do as a laywoman. Ethel and Jim Childress were the catalysts at First Greenville for involvement in ministry to the Roma in Hungary.

Not all investments pay off like these, but Jesus said **JUST DO IT**.