

There are a lot of good and a lot of bad ways to go about a job search in Baptist life. The number one question every pastor, staff member or church needs to answer honestly is, "Why am I in this search process?" Some churches may have had a wonderful experience with their former staff member, but sometimes, there is conflict and, inevitably, blame.

"Blame," says my friend and counselor Paul Carlson, "is wasted energy."

If a church's first instinct is to blame the former pastor or staff member, the congregation needs instead to ask some difficult questions of itself.

How did we fail to provide our minister the opportunity to succeed? What do we need to do to give this minister the tools to thrive? A pastor friend of mine says too many congregations view ministers as if they were pieces of plumbing, expendable commodities. Pull out the old pipe (or preacher) and put in a new one. Why can't we think of ministers as renewable resources? Instead of throwing away what we believe are damaged goods, can't we do a better job of fixing the system that causes damage, that chews up and spits out good men and good women way too frequently?

If a minister's first instinct is to blame his or her former church, then my first recommendation is that the pastor or staff person seek counsel from someone who will help them discern the truth. Certainly, if you are in pain, you need support, encouragement and compassion. But you also need a coach or mentor who will go beyond propping you up in your

distress. You need someone who loves you enough to sort through ways in which you were complicit in your church's (and your) problems. One of my favorite quotations about this process is that, "The grass that looks so green to you is the brown grass some other minister just left." Someone needs to bring perspective to the pastor who thinks he or she wants to move. The best church for them to serve may be the one they are now serving! I can assure you that unlovable members will be a part of the church that now looks so appealing.

We naively think a new church or a new pastor will fix all that ails us. Yet, the best predictor of the future is the past. We tend to repeat our mistakes.

Churches and individuals have Egos, and Ego gets in the way of good Christianity. Ego is when a church or a minister fails to ask for help when they need it.

During the search process, churches and ministers have the opportunity to work on some of what needs to be considered as they prepare for the future.

Generally, the more quickly (in this ecclesiastical environment) a church runs through a search committee process, the more problems they are likely to have with their new minister. Yet, too often, irreversible decisions are made by the time someone is invited to the church for congregational and search committee training. Acting too quickly is almost 100% of the time about someone or some group in the congregation making a power move. Slow down. It is in the Bible: Wait.

The same advice is good for ministers wanting to move. Desperation is never a good thing. So, slow down. And it is still in the Bible: Wait.

Reference & Referral

By Marion Aldridge, Coordinator



CBF NATIONAL: what we do is NOT placement

by Clarissa Strickland

The scope of the reference and referral process in the national CBF Resource Center is ever-widening as more churches and more ministerial candidates become aware of the services offered by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. Each week there are new requests from CBF-related churches for our assistance as a resource for resumes of candidates who are qualified to fill the position of senior pastor as

well as other staff ministry positions. And each week, there are requests from additional candidates who wish to find a place of service in a CBF-related church.

Our goal is to help these churches and these candidates connect with each other in such a way that church ministry staff vacancies are filled with qualified ministers, and capable clergy find suitable and fulfilling places of service. This happens through a careful matching of the param-

eters and criteria of both the candidates and the churches, thus providing a pool of qualified candidates for a church search committee to have at its disposal.

What we do is NOT placement – but reference and referral. With a great deal of prayer and hard work on the part of a church search committee and candidates, each seeks God's will in the process. It is the goal of CBF to facilitate that process. We are a connecting point.

LEADERCONNECT IS LIKE (MINISTER) MATCH.COM

LeaderConnect is a resume-matching service provided to churches and candidates at no charge, which greatly enhances CBF's efficiency and capability in assisting churches and ministers in the search process.

Unlike secular internet job matching sites, this one is tailored just for CBF use. The resumes on the site, as well as the information submitted by churches, come under CBF's scrutiny before they ever make it to the site.

The site also provides links to a variety of resources to help search committees do their jobs well. Pastor search committees often have no one on the committee who has ever served in such a position. This means that some education is in order for the committee. There are good helps for that area to which committees can be referred.



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Aiken's experience with LeaderConnect

AMY'S STORY

As I was searching for a new place of ministry, I built a relationship with Marion who helped connect me with First Baptist Church in Aiken. Marion is in our churches and knows our people. So as he comes into contact with individuals looking for ministry placement, he is able to make helpful and positive connections with these individuals and local churches. This is a vital ministry for the health and future of CBF of South Carolina and its churches. I have personally benefitted from this network, am excited to have the opportunity to serve at First Baptist Aiken and grateful for my connections with CBF of South Carolina that helped lead me here.



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High tech resource also has high touch

LeaderConnect is a vehicle to help people who are open to God's leadership find a place to do ministry, said Fred Andrea, the pastor at First Baptist Church in Aiken.

Aiken's first experience using LeaderConnect helped the church find two new staff members — Amy Stertz and Mary Carol Anderson — within the past two years.

"We were able to develop a profile about our church and the positions we needed to fill and anyone could access the information," Fred said. "We were able to provide demographics about our church and our community, our stylistic practice of worship and ministry, the type of candidates we were seeking and what the responsibilities were. That helped those candidates who were seeking positions to know if they were a fit for us."

But it wasn't just about data, Fred said. "Clarissa added a personal touch so that it was not a clinical online experience," he said. "She added a high touch to a high tech tool."

Read Clarissa's blog entry on *Another Baby Step for Women in Senior Pastor Roles* at <http://cbfportal.wordpress.com/>

KATHWOOD'S STORY: FIVE YEARS LATER

It's been five years since Clarissa Strickland at CBF national and SC/CBF together helped bring Kevin Roberts to Kathwood Baptist Church in Columbia. This is his story:

"Clarissa proved herself as more than a mover of paper and giver of phone numbers and emails. She listened, was engaged with my journey during my search, and has continued to affirm me in my ministry still. By that I mean she understands where we are in the current ecclesial stew. It helps too that Clarissa is a contemplative. She has participated in a contemplative and mostly silent prayer retreat offered by the Spiritual Formation Network, which in a phrase categorizes her as one who paddles out into the deep water. It only helps that she brings that into her job.

"CBF of SC helped me with contact and personal

exposure to the church I was in conversation with. At that time Marion and others were candid and relational, which is what every candidate yearns for, someone to listen and answer questions in an honest and forthright way. We all know this, but sometimes search committees only tell a candidate what they most want to hear, 'You are the one, you are just what we need, and we will support you from day one.' That street goes both ways...candidates can be less than forthcoming too.

"Hopefully ministerial candidates are getting wiser, and hopefully search committees are too, but good reference and referral networks that are relational and forthright, be they state or national, are a big plus in helping churches and ministers."

FERNWOOD'S STORY: new pastoral team found through SC/CBF R&R

The CBF Reference and Referral network is extremely valuable to a church's search team for several reasons.

1 The network provides basic information about what a good search process looks like. Marion came to our church to meet with our team to help us orient ourselves and brought material for us about the network. I believe it's very important for a search team to follow a good process together. Starting out with this focus helped us to commit to one another that we would function as a united front, and that as we deliberated, we would not make decisions unless all of us agreed. As we worked, we were comfortable in our trust of one another, a vital search team characteristic. Marion had good material for us, such as his *10 mistakes search committees make*, which helped us get started.

2 Our process began with a **congregational and staff survey**, which helped us determine what sort of person would be a good pastoral fit for our current members. SC/CBF suggested sources for survey examples.

3 Most congregations in an interim period normally experience the **boiling up of issues** which might have been invisible or ignored during the previous pastorate, or which are a direct result of a pastor's leaving. Marion's *Bridge to an Interim* series of sermons and weekly attention to our congregation during the first month after our pastor retired was a healing ministry for us. He helped to set Fernwood on the right path, which was to engage an intentional interim, Jim Langford, to help us discern our congregational identity and resolve leftover issues well. We did not form a search team until after the 18-month intentional interim process was complete. Though it was difficult to hold our horses, at the end of the process, we emerged much healthier, happier, and ready for the future.

4 Since Baptist churches are autonomous, an **institutional process for filling vacancies has never existed for us** in the same way it has for other protestant denominational groups. A search team feels as if we are out there on our own. We placed ads in the CBF newsletter and other Baptist publications and hoped the right

candidate for us would answer our ad. The CBF R&R network proved a great friend to our search team in providing candidate resumes and references. We could be sure that if a candidate was referred from CBF, there would be personal references from other CBF sources regarding that candidate.

Checking references is vital, even for candidates familiar to the team. This network is nationwide, so our search team had the benefit of exposing our vacancy to potential candidates much more broadly than we could have afforded to advertise. We received material from almost 100 potential candidates. We had the benefit of considering many excellent pastors who would have been a great fit for us. There are a lot of good ministers out there searching for the next place God will have them serve. The R&R network is a great connector.

5 Throughout our process, Marion encouraged us and helped us remember that **Fernwood is a valuable place for ministry and mission in the name of Christ.** He gave us his personal attention in a pastoral way while we were pastoral "orphans." This was important not just to our team but to our entire congregation. We appreciate deeply his care and his work on our behalf, and the way he and CBF have been agents of God to us.

6 Now we are expecting our new pastors, Lisa and Dean Allen, to begin work in mid-June. We are very excited that God has brought us together and our entire congregation is thrilled as we begin a new chapter in the life of Fernwood.

Lisa and Dean Allen ⇨

CBF SUPPORTED A NETWORK OF RELATIONSHIPS that helped us find our next place of ministry. We are excited about our call to Fernwood Baptist Church, in part, because it will allow us to connect with long-time friends and colleagues in ministry. In addition, Clarissa Strickland has been a wonderful encourager and resource. We consider ourselves fortunate to know Clarissa, and CBF is extremely fortunate to have her on staff." —Lisa and Dean Allen



BY KELLY BELCHER

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Kelly is a current member and former staff member of Fernwood Baptist Church in Spartanburg. She is also a past moderator of SC/CBF.

Fernwood's search team included three who had served previously on a search committee, three ordained ministers and one divinity school professor.



Too Soon Old, Too Late Smart
By Gordon Livingston
Marlow & Company, 2004, 204 pages
Reviewed by Marion Aldridge at
<http://cbfscbookbytes.wordpress.com/>

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

Pastor Search Process by Marion D. Aldridge
10 Mistakes Search Committees Make by Marion Aldridge.
10 Mistakes Clergy Looking for Jobs Make by Marion Aldridge.
A Bridge to an Interim: Four Weeks Devoted to becoming a Healthier Congregation

You can download most of these resources from our website, and find others there as well. [Click on resources | Ministry Placement.](#) CBF national also has an extensive list of resources to help church search committees. Go to www.thefellowship.org, [click on About Us | Services We Offer | Reference and Referral.](#)



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ORANGEBURG'S STORY:

**'they gave us information
but we made the decision'**

Marion Aldridge and I held our first meeting together in May 2007. I needed to get my directions and know my responsibilities as the chair. Marion was wonderful – easy to talk to, careful and thorough in answering all my questions. In two hours, he walked me through the whole process including:

- how to use the interim pastor during this period
- training for the committee
- how to place ads and in what places
- how to screen applications
- how to work with the church members – keep them informed and possibly consider a congregational survey (make them feel a part of the process)
- how to keep our present staff involved
- what to do when we get down to the final three to five candidates
- how to go through all the background checks, etc.
- putting me in touch with Clarissa Strickland at CBF in Atlanta

Later Marion met with our entire committee, then he came to FBC for three consecutive Wednesday nights to

begin to prepare our congregation for the days ahead. He discussed the changes that were taking place in churches in the 21st century. He was very positive about our church, but at the same time, very up-front in telling us that there would be, and perhaps needed to be, changes that we would have to address in this century.

Clarissa Strickland was also very helpful in referring applications to us. She put us in touch with LeaderConnect to help us develop a profile. She was most reassuring as to the confidentiality of all the information we provided her. I was particularly impressed with the manner in which we received the candidates' names and applications from Atlanta. It was a great help to have them screen the candidates and fit them according to the church profile we had sent. With nearly 100 applications to screen, this was a tremendous help.

At no time in the process did Marion or any other CBF person try to make the decision for us. They just gave us suggestions and we had to make our own decisions.

That decision was to call Cary Hilliard as our pastor. He preached his first sermon here a year ago and we called him unanimously as our pastor. I cannot tell you what an exciting journey this has been. Truly, God led us to each other.

BY ANN GLOVER
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Ann is a member of First Baptist Church in Orangeburg and a new member of the Nominating Committee for SC/CBF. She had served on two other pastor search committees but this was the first one she had chaired.