

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTH CAROLINA

FEBRUARY 2004



Delegation visits Belgium, other CBF work

Turns out Sabrina's pastor, Randy Wright, went to Belgium right after she arrived. Not to keep tabs on her, but as part of a SC/CBF delegation visiting Baptist work in the country. That group, led by CBF Coordinator Marion Aldridge, left on Jan. 11 and returned on Jan. 22. The trip also included visits to CBF work with North Africans in the ghettos of Paris and Gypsy children at the Ruth School in Bucharest, Romania. Reports from that trip will appear in the March newsletter.

Clemson grad using French skills to work for CBF in Belgium

Sabrina Lewis might not use her mechanical engineering background but her French major sure will come in handy as she works with CBF missionaries in Belgium for the next six months.

A member of Fernwood Baptist Church in Spartanburg since 1988, Sabrina graduated in December from Clemson University with a degree in French. She left Jan. 7 for an assignment at the Oasis Center in Brussels, where she will teach English classes "and do whatever else they need me to."

The "they" she refers to are CBF missionaries Nell and Butch Green. Sabrina had met them in the summer of 2003 when they were in the States for a meeting. "This summer I was looking for any kind of job to go overseas to work on my language skills," she said. "In October one of our ministers mentioned to my mom that the job with the Greens was available."

From there the networking kicked in. CBF Coordinator Marion Aldridge helped connect Sabrina to the Greens. "I emailed them, and then I got a response back from Butch," she said. "My stomach was doing flip flops, I was so excited. I prayed about it all day. That night at a meeting of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, a girl gave her testimony about a missions trip to Cambodia, and that confirmed for me that I was supposed to go to Belgium."

Sabrina is sharing an apartment at the center with a young woman from Texas who is also working there.

Always active in her church, Sabrina said this is one more way for her to be involved in missions and ministry. "I always went to youth camp with four or five other youth groups," she said. "I went on a missions trip every summer called Mountain Top. After my freshman year in college, I was on the staff at Tennessee Outreach Project, the same place I had gone on other missions trips."

At Clemson, she was a member of the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, and earlier had been a part of a freshmen girls'



Bible study. Last year she was one of four that planned an FCA-sponsored mission trip to Washington, DC.

Sabrina's mom, Sue, and her brother Matt, two years younger, are both excited about her Belgium adventure. Her dad Mike died in 1994.

Before she left for her assignment, Sabrina said that she had been told Belgium is an open country and "they know why we're there." She said her goal will be to build relationships and share her witness as she gets to know people. "I don't want to bombard them," she said. "I'm not bold. I won't make a good evangelist. I grew in my faith the past four or five years by getting to know people. That's how I want to help those I meet in Belgium grow in their own spiritual journey."

Sabrina isn't sure what she wants to do for a life's profession. She was a mechanical engineering major at Clemson and spent three semesters working as an intern with Delta Airlines in Atlanta. "But nothing paid off for me, so I literally read the college catalog to see what other major most of my credits would transfer to. It turned out to be French."

Sabrina Lewis, of Spartanburg, now at work with CBF field personnel in Brussels through May 29. She may be emailed at Sabrina@alumni.clemson.edu

2004 General Assembly: April 23-24 Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson

Coordinator's Column

CROSS FERTILIZATION

Decades ago, I was told that the reason Bob Jones University was not accredited was because they hired too many of their own graduates as teachers. In other words, a true university is a place where different theories, from different schools of thought, even challenging or unusual ideas, are considered. Therefore, Bob Jones needed graduates from Iowa State, Stanford, Furman, etc. to be a true university.

The principle has always made sense to me. Organizations of all types need input from various disciplines and directions. As good as Harvard or MIT might be, no organization would hire all Harvard or MIT graduates. Cross-fertilization is a biological principle that carries over into other areas of life.

One of the strengths of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is that such cross-fertilization is happening these days. First, our "board" meetings do not consist of 50 white male middle-aged (or older) preachers. We are almost legalistic about making sure our elected officers are equally divided among clergy and laity, male and female. That immediately changes how we think and how we do business. Second, the places from which even our clergy come are getting more varied with each passing year. In addition to pastors from conventional Baptist schools, our Coordinating Council now has graduates from seminaries at Princeton, Duke, BTRS, Mercer and Gardner-Webb.

But that is not really the point. The local church is my concern. As I have "coordinated" this organization for almost 6 years, it is obvious that Baptists in the South have become way too inbred. It makes them unhealthy. Smaller churches and

Listening to other voices will make us a better church

smaller towns have been particularly vulnerable. Many, many churches in this state are in trouble. Where there was no influx of alternative ideas from new members, and the pastor was the only person ever bringing innovative approaches to old problems, the creative pastor never had a chance. He (and they were and are all male in these environments) would lose his job if he pushed too far or too fast. That still happens somewhere in SC every week. Fighting the traditions passed on by parents and by denominational headquarters is too daunting a task. Even the Holy Spirit could not break through in some instances.

However, the church of Jesus Christ is doing just fine, thank you, at least in some places. Parachurch organizations—from Habitat to Humanity to Leadership Network—are thriving. Some local congregations are doing well. Almost all of those that are doing well are changing in some significant ways. There is a lot of conversation among many pastors and denominational

executives and bishops about how different the church might look in 2050 compared to 1950. Unfortunately, not enough laity are having these conversations.

The church of the future will not look like the church of the past. It never has. How does the church you attend compare to the house churches of the first century? To the cathedrals of medieval Europe in the 16th century? The church of Jesus Christ looks different in every era.

We need to listen to some voices besides our own. We will be a better church when we do.

Change is hard, but that is what the word "repent" means.



By **Marion Aldridge**
Coordinator of SC/CBF

The sanctuary choir of the of New Beginnings Christian Fellowship Baptist Church in West Columbia is directed by Scheri Eichelberger, daughter of the pastor, Alfreda Crum.



Got any frequent flyer miles?

The SC/CBF Coordinating Council has approved a Covenant Partnership with the Belgium Baptist Union. Jack Council, a member of the Missions Committee, will represent us at the signing of the agreement in Belgium in mid-March.

If anyone has frequent flyer points that she or he would be willing to donate for Jack's flight, it would help significantly in this tight budget year. Call the SC/CBF office if you can help, 803.779.1888.

A representative from Belgium will be at our General Assembly April 23-24 to sign the agreement here.

Kathwood goes on mission to China – through television

Kathwood Baptist Church in Columbia has inadvertently found an unusual way to go on mission to millions of Chinese – by being selected to be featured on a television documentary.

Kathwood was chosen by Shichang Ma, a journalist and an associate professor from Hebei Normal University in the Republic of China who is participating in a visiting scholar's program at the University of South Carolina's School of Journalism and Mass Communications. Ma is producing a documentary on religious life that is part of a "This is America" series.

Ma has been in the United States about four months. In Beijing, he said he was told that he would have a "culture shock" as soon as he arrived in the U.S. "As many other journalists who often travel around the world, I am very familiar with every kind of culture," he said. "But, in fact, I have been somewhat shocked and amazed at American church culture."

He said he has been invited to numerous church-sponsored activities, including Sunday Schools, international students' classes, American culture lectures, and free home-cooked meals.

He has met so many American friends, he never feels lonely. "So I fell into a deep thinking: what on earth is the role church in American society plays?" he said. "What function does religion and faith play in Americans' daily lives?"

Someone invited him to Kathwood, where he has visited almost every Sunday. "Pastor Phillip Reynolds and all of the members welcomed my coming," he said. At Kathwood, he said, he found answers to his questions. "Faith to these people is just like the Sun to the Earth," he said. "Without light of the Sun how can we survive?"

So he decided to shoot a television documentary to introduce church culture to the Chinese. He said that while the world needs to know China, China even more needs to know the world. The work's title is "This is America." It includes four parts: the life of the American church, the faith of the common citizens, education in the U.S., and scenes from Columbia.

He interviewed Reynolds for one of the segments. "He asked



Shichang Ma, a professional journalist, freelancer, and associate professor from Hebei Normal University in the People's Republic of China selected Kathwood Baptist Church to be featured in his "This is America" documentary.

me about faith, about love, about the future of the human race," Reynolds said. "And he also asked me what I would say to the youth of China. My response was not to worry so much about wealth and fame but seek God and you can get to know God through Jesus Christ."

Ma won a Chinese broadcasting and television news top prize in 2000 as director of the documentary, Say No to Death. He expects his "This is America" series to be aired to millions all across China.

CALENDAR of upcoming events

Feb. 23-26: Youth Ministers Retreat for Rest and Renewal. Myrtle Beach. Sponsored by the CBF of NC. Call 1.888.822.1944 to register.

March 1-3: True Survivor IV. "Back to the Future: The Island of Self-Care," for Ministers of Education, age group ministers, and all education staff ministers. Providence Baptist Church, Charleston, SC. Contact Toni Draper at 1.800.352.8741 to register.

March 18-19: A Conference for Clergy Women in North and South Carolina. "In a Woman's Voice: Preaching and Teaching the Gospel," featuring Carolyn Gordon from Cen-

tral Baptist Theological Seminary. Contact: Michelle McClendon at 864.370.2424 or Christy McMillin-Goodwin at 803.328.3864.

March 21: "Walking Away from Faith" with author Ruth Tucker. Hampton County. Contact Jamie Norris, 803.625.2871, or David Deming, 803.632.3568.

March 26-28: Fifth Annual Festival by The Sea for Youth Choirs from any interested church. www.festivalbythesea.net to register.

April 23-24: SC/CBF General Assembly, Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson.

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For six months ending Dec. 31

Receipts
\$150,453

Expenses
\$223,027

Deficit
(\$72,574)

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Whiteness of Witness: Being *Other*

Some of my American friends in Asian countries say it's tough to realize they can never be anonymous, can never blend in with the crowd.

I remember going to market once in a remote provincial city of about one million people, most of whom had never seen a foreigner. "Wei guo ren--wei guo ren!" people in doorways and shop windows would mutter as we passed by: "Foreigner—foreigner!" I had never felt so conspicuous in my life, and it got old, quickly. I was tired of standing out in the crowd, of always being branded as *Other* because of my white face, even by well-meaning people who actually liked me.

As our churches in the south begin to desegregate, it makes one wonder sometimes what it's like for the first people to cross the color line. People who join a church where they are a racial minority usually say they joined because the fellowship or the worship or the teaching or the ministry opportunities far outweighed issues of race. This was the body of Christ that God was calling them to join, these people were their church family, and that was that.

But demographically we South Carolina CBFers

are still a fairly homogeneous group, and it must take a bit of courage for the first folks who step outside their comfort zones to dehomogenize us.

It's embarrassing to admit that I was in my 30s before I had ever participated in groups where everyone but me was African-American: a King

Day workshop, a friend's family barbecue, football practice at a de facto segregated school. Only then did I really understand what I once heard someone say about a Baptist gathering: "When I opened the door, I knew I was black."

This statement gets to the heart of why we know we must desegregate: because it hurts

our witness. When people open our doors, they need to be struck first by our witness, not by our whiteness. It may take some courage for the first people who help us with this great task. Perhaps by walking in their shoes, by looking for chances to experience what it's like to be *Other*, we anglo-Baptists can better understand their experience. And by doing so we follow the example of Christ, God almighty who crossed the dividing line between divine and mortal so that he could get to know us better.



General Assembly April 23-24

The SC/CBF General Assembly will be April 23-24 at Boulevard Baptist Church in Anderson.

CBF Coordinator Daniel Vestal will be the principal speaker, and Sara Reese will be guest musician.

More details about the meeting will be coming next month. But it's not too early to make your hotel reservations. The deadline to get the CBF rate at any of these three hotels is March 23.

Ramada Inn on North Main: \$49 a night. 864.226.6051

Holiday Inn Express, Highway 81 at I-85. \$64 a night. 864.231.0231.

Quality Inn on Clemson Boulevard: \$62 a night. 864.226.1000.