

FELLOWSHIP NEWS

COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP OF SOUTH CAROLINA



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“Taking a church through change is a huge issue for CBF churches today. Many of us are putting our heads in the sand and we need to be more flexible in how we do worship.” —Jim Thomason, pastor of First Baptist Church in Anderson

Congregations look for multiple ways to make worship meaningful and sincere

When it comes to worship styles, one size does not fit all, and what works for one might not work for another.

First Baptist Church in Clinton, Sans Souci Baptist Church in Greenville, and First Baptist Church in Anderson have all moved toward offering alternatives — with differing degrees of success.

At FBC Clinton, the start of a second service with a contemporary format in May 1999 has led to at least 88 unchurched people in Laurens County joining the church, is far better attended than the traditional 11 a.m. service, and has improved overall church attendance.

Except for the same sermon topic, there are no similarities between the two services, said pastor Blake Harwell. The early service includes video clips and sermon points projected on a screen. (The church bought a laptop computer and projector for this very purpose.) A drummer, keyboardist and bass guitarist accompanies the contemporary Christian music that is the mainstay of the service.

“We believe God made us to worship,” Blake said. “When God shows up in a worship experience, we believe that people will be drawn in. Call it our evangelistic strategy if you

Read about First Baptist Church Anderson and its two styles of worship on the back page.

will. We lift up Jesus the Christ. He draws people to himself. We’re just trying to facilitate worship in any way we can.”

On the west side of Greenville, Sans Souci began its 8:30 a.m. contemporary service in 1993. “The changing demographics in our community led us to start something different as an outreach attempt — to open another door into the church,” said pastor Paul Moore. Atten-

dance at that service is about 20% of attendance at the 11 a.m. traditional service. Younger people who would prefer the contemporary style, Paul said, don’t like the early start.

“As an outreach tool for us, the early contemporary service has not worked,” Paul said.

The contemporary service meets in the fellowship hall with mostly praise and worship choruses and contemporary solos. The traditional service is in the sanctuary with hymns and anthems. Paul preaches basically the same sermon at both services.

Contemporary at Sans Souci means “anything that is different from what we do at 11:00 a.m.” Paul said.

“Our traditional worship service is truly traditional,” Paul said. “It is the worship style the church has used for at least 40 years. A few years back, I found some bulletins from the 1950’s. Except for the differences in hymn page numbers, the service looked remarkably like what we are doing now.”

“We discovered much too late that for outreach, we should be doing the contemporary later than 9:00 a.m. So a few months ago, we started another evening service, now meeting twice monthly. That service has a contemporary direction in style and we think has more potential for reaching new people.”

“We decided to do a contemporary worship service because we felt our traditional worship excluded some in our community, so instead of asking lost people to cross a barrier to get to us, we decided to remove the barrier. We meet

in the gym, we don’t have a dress code, we play contemporary music. We try to offer a real encounter with God. We try to get to the substance of God. What’s driving our attendance at this service is that people can meet God and it’s making a difference.” — Blake Harwell,

Pastor of First Baptist Church in Clinton



STRATEGY IS WORKING IN CLINTON

	2001	2000
Contemporary 9 a.m.	259	180
Traditional 11 a.m.	189	209
Total average attendance	447	389

Who? University and seminary students

What? Hands-on missions service working with CBF missionaries and ministry partners. Student.go allows students to experience other cultures and explore their missions calling while continuing their education. Student missionaries will be provided with a stipend, room and board while on the field. Student missionaries will come together for a weekend of preparation and orientation in early May 2002. Following their service, students will

participate in debriefing with CBF personnel.

When? Student.go offers 10-week assignments for summer 2002. Other opportunities exist for the spring and fall 2002 semesters.

Where? North America and Overseas—from next door to around the world.

How? Contact the CBF Resource Center in Raleigh. 118 South Person St., Raleigh, NC 27601. 919.754.8649 or toll-free 877.856.9288. E-mail student.go@cbfonline.org

Community Church of the Midlands Traditional worship followed by not-so-traditional forum

Nancy Zuckerman's role as associate pastor of Community Church of the Midlands is truly a labor of love.

Ordained late last summer by the Columbia church, Nancy serves without salary in a role that includes preaching every other Sunday. She also shares other pastoral duties with founding pastor John Whatley, who organized the church 2½ years ago

Born in Miami, the daughter of a Jewish father and Baptist mother, Nancy spent most of her life on Long Island. She moved to South Carolina in 1995 to attend the Lutheran Theological Seminary, where she earned a master of divinity degree in May 2000. Her last year of seminary was spent in clinical pastoral education at Richland Memorial Hospital.

Just after graduation, while working at Cokesbury Book Store, Nancy met John and learned about the new congregation getting underway. She visited, liked what she saw, and became a member. It wasn't long before the church called her as minister of outreach.

"Then I had to have some unexpected surgery on my knee and while I

Nancy Zuckerman, at her ordination in August.



While living in New York, Nancy Zuckerman was a freelance writer. She wrote a column on well-known personalities for Real People Magazine and small Long Island newspapers. Among the people she interviewed were singers K.D. Lang and Travis Tritt. She has recently developed a new hobby – collecting fountain pens – which she said underscores her love for writing.

was out recuperating, Nancy preached every Sunday for me," John said. "It was then that everybody realized her great potential."

John recognized the need for a new moderate Baptist church in Columbia after returning to his hometown to care for his aging parents. "At that time, CBF was not yet organized or able to provide funding for new churches," he said. "I read some books and talked with some people about how best to go about it. And I prayed a lot." Eventually, a dean at the University of South Carolina provided seed money to help begin the new

congregation.

Called the Community Church of the Midlands, the congregation is affiliated with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists. "We have grown slowly and steadily," John said. Now with about 50 members, the church meets in the Luther Lee Building in downtown Columbia, the same building in which the SC/CBF offices are located.

A traditional worship is held at 10 a.m. followed by a time of fellowship and a forum. "We gather in a circle and have a time of enrichment and discussion about the sermon," John said. "It is a way for members to be engaged in the topic of the day and give their viewpoints."

"Our emphasis," he said, "is that we are rich in diversity and strong in unity. We emphasize the process of 'spiritual becoming' rather than creeds."

John Whatley has been a pastor of churches in South Carolina and North Carolina. He is a graduate of the University of South Carolina and Southeastern Seminary. He earned a doctorate of sacred theology degree from Emory University in 1976. He has completed post-doctoral work at Duke and Vanderbilt.

You tell me. Let me describe two worship services I have attended within the past few weeks. One was with a partnering Cooperative Baptist Fellowship church and the other a Southern Baptist Convention congregation from which CBF has never received a penny and with whom we have never had any contact.

I hear occasional conversations (sometimes they are acrimonious accusations) about how different CBF and SBC are. Our critics would say that CBF is full of degenerates who love neither God nor God's word. We are demonized. So look closely at the following descriptions to see if you see evidence of demons. If you do, I wonder if you can tell which church they are in, the CBF or the SBC church?

While there are increasingly evident dissimilarities in the way the two organizations believe and function, I am constantly amazed at how little difference there currently is at the local church level.

The church buildings in which I worshipped were both traditional sanctuaries with white columns in front. One had a sign out front which said, "Spiritual Food Served Here Every Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m." The men in both churches wore coats and ties, and the women wore dresses. Though I was a stranger, people in both churches spoke to me and introduced themselves before the service began. (So far, does this sound like a "traditional" church or a "progressive" church? Which would make it Southern Baptist and which would make it Cooperative Baptist?)

Both congregations sang familiar hymns from the Baptist hymnal. The "special music," in the first instance, was upbeat with a taped accompaniment. In the other church, the children's

Hinson to speak at Hamrick Lectureship in Charleston, and in Columbia

E. Glen Hinson, Visiting Professor of Church History at Candler School of Theology of Emory University, will deliver the seventh annual John Hamrick Lectureships in Baptist History at First Baptist Church Charleston on January 20-21.

He will also be a part of a spirituality event called "At Eternity's Converging Point: Spirituality after 9/11/01" on Jan. 19 at St. Andrews Baptist Church in Columbia from 10 a.m. until 4 p.m.

"Prayer in Baptist History" is his topic for Jan. 20 lecture at 6:30 p.m. in Charleston. A memorial plaque honoring

the life and ministry of Hamrick will be dedicated at the same program. Hinson will sign copies of his books following the lecture at a reception in his honor.

At 9:30 a.m. Jan. 21, Boo Sheppard, story teller, television personality, and actress will dramatize the life of Hephzibah Jenkins Townsend. At 10a.m., Hinson will discuss, "Baptist Approaches to Spirituality Past and Present."

The public is invited to attend all sessions free of charge. The church parking lot entrance is at 48 Meeting Street. For further information call the

choir, with 17 participants, sang. All the ushers were male. (Is that a clue to a church's liberality? Maybe not—I've discovered that it is easier to get women elected as deacons than it is to break the gender barrier of the usher team!)

In each church, under 100 people were in the sanctuary and about 15 in the choir. One church was an older congregation with only two teenagers and four children present. The other congregation, though it was about the same size, had a large children's choir, had enlisted a teenager to read the scripture, and had a wide mix of ages joined together in worship. (Are SBC churches generally larger or smaller in size than CBF churches? More evangelical? Or, is there really any difference?)

Both pastors were mature men. The first preached a biblical sermon from the New Testament (Revelation 2: 1-7) on love. His sermon lasted 25 minutes, had three points and ended with a call to repentance. The other church had a mission sermon, also with three points. The preacher used an Old Testament text.

At one church, the invitation to follow Christ also included an opportunity for worshippers to come to the front of the sanctuary and kneel at the altar. At the other church, the invitation included a "March for Missions" during which people brought their mission offerings to the altar. (Are these clues to liberality—a relatively brief sermon on love, and a

kneeling altar, for example, or are they clues to fundamentalism—for example, the sermon from Revelation and the call to repentance?)

You tell me. Were the worship services in which I participated liberal, moderate, conservative, or fundamentalist?

Was the difference worth splitting our denomination over?



Coordinator's
Column

**Dissimilarities
are more
evident but
were the
differences
worth
splitting our
denomination
over?**

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

FBC Anderson

Contemporary service matches traditional — in attendance, not in style

Jim Thomason played in a dance band when he was in high school but when a long-range planning committee recommended the church start offering contemporary worship with contemporary music, Jim admits it was still a stretch for him.

Jim is pastor of First Baptist Church in Anderson, a congregation which had declined, prior to his arrival, from more than 1,000 in worship to as few as 400.

About two years ago, a "futuring committee" began evaluating the church's ministry and developed concerns and goals related to the future of the congregation. "One of the goals was to begin contemporary worship," Jim said. "We had seen young couples coming to church who had been Baptists all their lives but saying they were looking for a more contemporary style of worship. We had three couples visit close together, and each one ended up at a non-Baptist church that offered contemporary expression of worship. That opened my eyes to the need for a Baptist church to have a contemporary service "

So, in August 2000, the church added a second service, at 9 a.m. with a contemporary worship style. The dress is casual. The music is contemporary, includes praise choruses and hymns that are done in a more contemporary style. There's no choir. A praise group of three or four leads the service, along with two keyboardists, a drummer, and a bass guitarist.

It's a 50-minute format that allows people to get to their Sunday School classes by 10 o'clock. Jim preaches basically the same message he does at 11, shortened a bit, and occasionally with different illustrations. He doesn't wear his coat, and sometimes not his tie.

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"It was a stretch for me to begin this," he said. "I was a minister of music before I was a pastor and I studied classical/traditional music at Furman and Southeastern Seminary. Doing a different kind of music in church was hard for me to swallow. But I attended some conferences on contemporary worship and found that, once I got past some of my prejudices, I could worship using a contemporary format. The music we use is not so different than the music I grew up with. The difference is that through all these years, I kept secular music segmented from sacred music. But now there is a blending of that secular sound with sacred expressions. Though that's not the music of my heart when it comes to worship, I have discovered that I can experience worship in a contemporary format."

As can many others. The 9 a.m. contemporary service quickly found a following.. Today, roughly 300 worship in each of the church's two services. "That



Jim Thomason

was a surprise," Jim said. "I thought we would have 100-150 who would come to a 9 a.m. contemporary service, but within three months we were running about the same number in both. We immediately saw some new people coming to that service, and we continue to see more new people come to the 9 a.m. service than to 11."

"In part what we're seeing is a group of folks who sincerely desire the contemporary style of worship. Others come simply because of the early time. The new ones who come like the contemporary style. We've seen our youth, college age, and young families come to the 9 a.m. service. At the later service, we see more median and senior adults, although there is a good representation of younger families at 11."

Attracting new and younger members, said Jim, is important to FBC Anderson. With 1300 resident members, the church's Sunday School enrollment shows the church's age: The church has 440 people aged 65 and above in Sunday School, the exact same number as those aged 18-64. "And we have become younger in the past five years," Jim said. "If we were not doing some things to attract younger people, like adding the contemporary worship service, this situation would get worse a whole lot faster."