

a voice for women in baptist life

Vocare

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VOICES OF COURAGE

“Courage is what it takes to stand up and speak; courage is also what it takes to sit down and listen.”—WINSTON CHURCHILL

VOICES OF COURAGE ARE ALL AROUND US . . . if we take the time to listen for them. This past June, those present at the Baptist Women in Ministry worship and workshop took time to hear some of those voices. We heard some amazing stories, stories too good to not be retold, and thus, in this issue, you will find the three stories shared during the worship time. But you will also find other stories—one written by a young seminarian who faced unimaginable roadblocks and one written by a military chaplain who serves among hurting and lonely soldiers. We are grateful to Gwen, Kristy, Meredith, Sharyl, and Rachel for having shared these painful yet inspiring stories with us.

Baptist Women in Ministry has been profoundly blessed for the past three years to have had Robin Bolen Anderson and Julie O’Teter Sadler on our Leadership Team. They rotated off this summer, and we are grateful for their hard work, their commitment to this organization, their vision for its future, but especially for their friendship! They are amazingly gifted women.

We are pleased to announce that we have three new team members: Gwen Brown, pastor of Cornerstone Church in Grayson, Georgia, Kristen Muse, minister with children and missions coordinator at Hayes Barton Baptist Church, Raleigh, North Carolina, and Meredith Stone, coordinator of recruiting services at Logsdon Seminary, Abilene, Texas. We welcome them—their energy, gifts, and leadership.

OUR VISION

Baptist Women in Ministry will be a catalyst in Baptist life, drawing together women and men, in partnership with God, to illuminate, advocate, and nurture the gifts and graces of women.



GWEN BROWN is pastor of Cornerstone Church, Grayson, Georgia



MEREDITH STONE is coordinator of recruiting services at Logsdon Seminary, Abilene, Texas.



KRISTY EGGERT is a third-year student at McAfee School of Theology, Atlanta, Georgia.

COURAGE IN THE MIDST OF MY FEARS

BY GWEN BROWN

As a child growing up in the South, I can remember hearing Mama using the phrase “the Good Book.” Whatever did she mean? Could there also be “the Bad Book”? I found out later that “the Good Book” was her way of referencing the Bible.

At the age of ten, Mama told me that God called my daddy home to heaven. She went on to say that God liked good people. I remember that day as if it was yesterday. I was walking home from an after-school activity with my big brother and my friends. As we were laughing and acting silly, suddenly a long, black hearse rushed by, and I remember looking up and saying to my friends, “I hope that it is not going to my house.” But to my dismay, it was, and when I arrived home, a crowd of people had gathered in front of our house. As I made my way inside, I found Mama sitting in Daddy’s favorite chair. She appeared sad, and her eyes looked glassy as if she had been weeping. Then our eyes met, and with outstretched arms she invited me into the space she was sharing with Daddy, that space in and around Daddy’s favorite chair.

As I made my way to her, her trembling hands reached out and pulled me into her lap, and she said, “Your Daddy has gone home to be with the Lord.” Then she reached for the Good Book and turned to Dad’s favorite psalm and began to read Psalm 23. Then she looked into my eyes, which were filled with tears. As she wiped my tears away, Mama held me so close and so tight. I thought my small-framed body might collapse. I could feel the tightness of her hug as she finished reading from the Good Book, and I realized that it was a hug filled with love—her love—Daddy’s love—God’s love. Although I could still taste the tears that flowed from my eyes, there was a great peace that

filled the room. I found courage from the Good Book. Even though Daddy had gone home to be with the Lord, the Good Book offered comfort, peace, and direction in a time of dismay.

Today I introduce myself as a woman who found courage to go on after arriving home to find that the long, black, hearse had taken Daddy away; a woman who found courage after listening to Mama read from the Good Book, a woman who found courage to push her way through the crowd to listen to the voice of God and to answer God’s call decades later to start a church, even when there were no role models who looked like me. But because I found the courage to step into the doors of McAfee School of Theology, I also discovered so many “outstretched arms,” like Mama’s, which pulled me into their lives, and gave me hugs of love and support. Those who stretched out their arms taught me how to dream and how to pursue dreams, and there were many who, like Mama, stretched out their arms so that I could do the work God set before me. I could make a way for others. I found courage in the midst of my fears.

I found courage when I heard the voice of God ringing from the pages of the Good Book as Mama read them to me, and even now when I find myself with a dampened spirit, I find courage when I ask God to grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change; courage to change the things I can; and wisdom to know the difference. How beautiful it is to find courage—courage to tell the whole truth and to be set free; courage to endure even in the midst of deep pain and sorrow; courage even in the midst of knowing that Daddy is gone home to be with the Lord.

THE COURAGE TO WAIT

BY MEREDITH STONE

In 2006, after waiting ten years to find a church that would affirm my calling, acknowledge the gifts of ministry God had placed in my life, and empower me to serve as a minister of God's grace to them, I thought I had found the church that I would serve in for the rest of my life. I finally had the opportunity to serve and lead, to teach and preach, and in doing those things I had a sense that I was finally becoming the person God had created me to be. The sense of peace that comes with knowing that we are being faithful to the call God has placed on our lives is one that should never be devalued, but always treasured.

Now I am not going to pretend that my ministry at the church was all daisies and roses; there were ups and downs, days when I thought everyone hated me, feelings I am

sure all ministers have. But when we have waited for a place to serve, we even value those down days.

But then several months ago things in my life began to change. My youngest daughter has always been a little sickly, but a little sickly began to escalate, and we soon found ourselves having her tested for diseases and disorders and conditions that we had never even dreamed about. I began spending a lot more time at doctor's offices, clinics, hospitals, and at home, than I did at church or anywhere else. At the culmination of this whole ordeal and at the encouragement of several of her doctors, we realized that we had to make some changes to our family life for the sake of her health. And all of the details that go into making these kinds of decisions

aside, we determined that I needed to resign my ministry position at the church.

And in that moment I needed courage. But rather than the courage that we normally define as having the persistence to move forward toward something, the courage I needed was the courage to walk away. I am not going to pretend that having that kind of courage was easy; walking away from the peace and sense of fulfillment in my calling that I had waited so long for was very hard. But my calling to my family kind of works like a trump card. I don't regret the decision that we made, but that still doesn't always take away the pain. So in these last several months I have been finding the courage to know that God is still faithful to the calling on my life, and I am finding the courage I need to wait again.

THE COURAGE TO MOVE FORWARD

BY KRISTY EGGERT

It was getting close to Christmas my senior year of college. Like every other senior, I had spent the previous semester trying to let it sink in that with each passing day came not just the end of exams and homework, but the end of an era. The "real" world was looming on the horizon, growing ever closer, and it was time to find out what we were supposed to do. I had, of course, been planning my future for a long time—I was going to teach. Or so I thought.

Having majored in music and French, the perfect solution seemed to be to head to France as a Fulbright scholar and spend a year teaching English. Then I would have the pedigree to teach French just about anywhere. But at the same time, I had begun to fall in love with something I never would have guessed . . . youth ministry. I had been volunteering

with my church's youth group for a while and had even gotten to teach. They offered me a position as youth intern for the year after I graduated. Suddenly there were more options than I had bargained on.

But I was fortunate because in my corner I had a mentor. Her name was Stephanie, and over the course of four years of meeting together and sharing our joys, struggles, pain, and successes, she became like my older sister. She had been to seminary and had been encouraging me for a while to keep exploring my growing love of youth ministry and teaching the Bible. I had never considered seminary, but the more Steph and I talked about it, the more excited I became. I stopped the

Fulbright application process and had my first dose of criticism. I was told that I was wasting my intelligence. Steph helped me through all of that process and the hurtful criticism.

By Christmas time I had decided that I would take the youth internship and really see how youth ministry works. I could keep the idea of seminary in mind while seeing if God really was calling me to ministry. I headed home to Chicago for Christmas after hugging Steph goodbye and promising to see her in Nashville soon, completely unaware that life was about to change forever. On December 23, 2005, Stephanie was killed in a car accident while driving home to Baton Rouge. In the

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Sharyl West Loeng, Emily Davis, Rath Loeng



SHARYL WEST LOEUNG is a third-year student at George W. Truett Theological Seminary, Waco, Texas.

THE COURAGE TO GO TO SEMINARY

BY SHARYL WEST LOEUNG

After college graduation I had no idea what I was going to do with my life. I was living in Dallas. I was newly married. I had a job, but I had no interest in it. In college, I had made plans, but now I began to sense that my pursuits, my ambitions, were just that. Mine. I really had not sought what God wanted with my life. So with a new degree in hand that appeared useless, I worked my seemingly meaningless job and asked God if there was something more.

Part of my hesitation in pursuing my previously anticipated career path was that it conflicted with my ability to serve with the local Cambodian congregation. Truly, the only certainty in my life was that I knew I was supposed to be part of that congregation. And it was there, with my church family, that God began to stir something in me. I realized that ministry was the calling being placed on my life, and I knew the next step for me would be seminary.

I needed a church certification for my application to George W. Truett Theological Seminary in Waco, Texas. I thought carefully about who to ask and decided on the pastor at my home church, the mother church of the Cambodian mission. The pastor asked me to come down to his office to talk about my calling. I brought my form. The rest of the conversation is somewhat a blur. I remember sitting stunned and silent as I was lectured on how God designed the church to be run by men to protect women. I really did not understand. I had not mentioned leadership, or even church work. I had only told him that I felt lead to go

to seminary, with no other specifics attached. I walked down the hall of the church, defeated and hopeless. As I left the building, I heard footsteps behind me. The pastor's secretary had followed me out. She had heard everything, and she told me of her calling many years ago and about her fear of challenging the norm and how that kept her from pursuing seminary and vocational ministry. She looked me in the eyes and said, "You go. We'll find a way. Go and be a pioneer. You don't want to look back thirty years later with regrets." In the days to come, I would encounter several other women whose stories I carry with me.

Renewed by her words, I asked the Cambodian pastor to sign my form, realizing that I belonged to his congregation more than any other. He excitedly signed without hesitation. My plan was to stay in Dallas, commute to Waco two days a week, and continue to work the other three days. At the time, I was employed in the mailroom at a large church, and I knew five guys, youth and college interns at the church, who also planned to commute to seminary so I did not foresee any problems.

Unfortunately, my plan was not greeted with the best of wishes. My boss, the church administrator, told me I could not attend seminary because he needed me to work forty hours a week, which was surprising given that I was required to work only thirty hours. The day he shared this new information, well, I had not intended to give my two-week notice that day, but somehow I was jobless at the end of the day. In the following week as I concluded that job, whenever my boss or one

of the other staff members saw me they would say things like “Where’s your book bag, school girl?” “Are you going to wear pigtails?” “So you want to be a priestess do you? You know what they do to priestess, right?”

I knew I had to leave the job, but I did not know where to go. My husband did not have a job either, and we were down to one car, which when it was not in the shop, it was on the side of the road. How was I supposed to commute to Waco, pay tuition, and survive? I knew God was supposed to provide, but this was cutting it pretty close.

The next week my husband and I drove down to Waco for Truett’s new student orientation. By that evening, I knew what needed to happen. I could not commit to a seminary experience and do it half way. I need to lean in with everything. We drove back home the

next day, and as we were talking about this crazy idea of moving to Waco, we received a phone call. On the phone was a man that I kind of knew, you know, I thought I might recognize him if I saw him kind of “knowing.” He is a retired Navy sailor, one who barks orders instead of talking, so when he said that we needed to come over for lunch the next day, we said, “Yes, sir.”

The next day the man and his wife sat and listened to our story. When we were finished, he asked, “What do you need to make that happen?” We laughed and said, “Well, we are in a lease on our apartment until October. I have not paid tuition. I have not bought any books. We don’t have jobs. School starts Monday.” I think my point was to overwhelm the man into understanding just how impossible the task was. Clearly, I

was not going to seminary, but the man did not bat an eye. He handed us a phone and told us to find out how much it would cost to get out of the lease. He asked how much rent in Waco would cost. He sat me down at his computer and told me to find out what my exact tuition bill would be. He looked at our clunker parked in front of his house. By the end of the day, we had a brand new car, money waiting for us in a bank, and more blessings than we knew what to do with. We packed that afternoon and moved to Waco, and the seminary journey began.

Sometimes courage comes to us through the quiet voice of a woman who has regrets about missed opportunities to follow God, and sometimes courage comes to us through the louder and more insistent voice of a man who is willing to push a little and give a lot.

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blink of an eye, I lost one of my best friends, a sister, a mentor, and a source of strength.

I had to re-orient my world. I had to keep going in life without one of my best sounding boards. I had to determine my calling without Stephanie. The next year was difficult. I began to encounter the criticism that came with my growing passion to be a youth minister and attend seminary. People told me that youth ministry wasn’t related to my college degrees. I would have to have more education. And then, there were a number of people who thought I couldn’t follow what I was beginning to sense was my calling because of my gender. Through it all, I was missing one of my best friends who had been there and done that, and who I would have given anything to sit down with and ask for advice.

There are still days that I wish I could ask Stephanie how she would handle things, or

what she thinks. I wish I could say thank you for all the ways she inspired me and supported me. I wish she could see me now. I will never stop missing my mentor and friend. But she helped me to find courage to follow my calling and to find my voice, to step forward and say, “Here I am, Lord, send me.” She helped me to see how much it matters that we share our lives and our stories with one another. She is one of the reasons I’m so passionate about sharing my life and my story with the next generation of young people.

You see to me, courage is moving forward in the hard times. Courage is fighting to put one foot in front of the other, even if it feels like trudging through knee-deep mud. Courage is clinging desperately to the hand of God, even when it feels like you are clutching at

thin air. Courage is pressing on, even when others tell you that you can’t. Courage is pouring out the pieces of your broken heart, trusting that in some way and some time, God will put them back together again. And courage is learning to share the scars on your mended heart because somehow, there is beauty in the brokenness and the openness that resonates with all of us who are laboring and struggling through the journey of life and faith. Calling is messy, and following takes courage. Finding your voice and sharing your struggles take courage. But in sharing our stories, we find strength, encouragement and the reassurance that we are not alone. In sharing our stories and ourselves, we learn to reach out our hands to touch the robe of Jesus.



RACHEL COGGINS is a chaplain in the United States Army and serves with Deployment/Redeployment Operations.



WHAT I'M FIGHTING FOR

BY RACHEL COGGINS

A basket sits at the front of our office with a pen and slips of paper close by to so that soldiers can write out prayer requests. It is used often. I check the basket as I return from a briefing and find a prayer request that fills both sides of the small paper. I take it out and go to my desk to read it and pray.

The note is neatly printed in small block letters. A private from an infantry company stationed in Baghdad has asked for prayer for his fellow soldiers who were killed during the surge. Twelve names are listed, both first and last names. I am intrigued with the note. I turn to the computer and log onto a webpage on MilitaryCity.com, named "Honor the Fallen." This website lists every military service person who has been killed in action or died while in the war zones of Iraq, Afghanistan, and Kuwait.

Typing in the names of the soldiers on the prayer request, I find information on all of them. Most have a picture, a brief bio, and a newspaper article about the incident. I paste together the stories and the pictures and print them out in order to commemorate the twelve fallen soldiers.

They are group of handsome young men, of varied ethnicity, most between the ages of eighteen and twenty-three; the oldest in the group was thirty-one. I wonder about the young man who has written the prayer request. I assume he knew them well, because the names are lovingly written and spelled correctly, even though some names

were very difficult to spell. Soldiers can become very close to each other. Most of the young soldiers, it seems, do not have political or worldview idealisms; they fight for each other.

I sit and contemplate the tragedy of losing twelve close friends, and a wave of sadness flows over me. I pray a silent prayer that only a grieving spirit can pray, and I know my Father hears me.

"Ma'am," the chaplain assistant says, "someone here to talk with you."

"Come on in," I say, "Just give me a second to finish this." The soldier comes in and takes a seat. My office has no door or ceiling, but it is partitioned off in such a way that the person talking to me is completely blocked off from view.

I save the document I am working on and roll my chair over to be close to him. I sit close enough to hear him so he won't have to talk in a loud voice. He doesn't have to say much to let me know what is going on. I know he is returning from R&R, and I know that too often these trips home are disappointing, even tragic.

One look at him tells me we will need the tissue box that is on the two-drawer filing cabinet beside him. I place it within reach, and snap off two tissues. One I give to him: one I hold for myself. He takes the tissue and immediately begins to weep into it. Experience, intuition, and the ring on his finger tell me the problem is most likely

with his wife.

"She told me she wants a divorce," he says, beginning to get a grip on his emotions. "I'm losing the very thing I'm fighting for." His words have a powerful effect on me. This patriot believes in what he is doing, believes he is protecting America from further attacks, and believes he is creating a safer place for his wife and children. He is fighting for his family. Now the long separations are breaking apart the very thing for which he is fighting.

I will not have time to do marriage counseling. My primary concern is to help him survive the moment, and survive the deployment. I know how dangerous this is. The number one reason for suicide is the loss of a relationship. Here is a man losing his most important relationship, and we are sending him back to Iraq with a loaded weapon in his hand.

I speak gently and calmly and coax the story from him. We talk for over an hour, and he unravels the story that is knotted up in his mind, blinding him and hindering logical thinking. When it is laid out on the table, though, the problem is much more manageable.

After our talk and a long, heartfelt prayer, he leaves looking much better than when he came in. I, however, am exhausted. As the watch on my arm beeps 11 p.m., I sit back in my chair and close my eyes.



Gwen Brown and Karen Hatcher

Congratulations to the Addie Davis Nominees:

ADDIE DAVIS OUTSTANDING PASTORAL LEADERSHIP

KAREN DOUCETTE

Gardner Webb University Divinity School

JUDY KING

Central Baptist Theological Seminary

AMANDA LEONARD POHL

Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond

KATRINA MOORE

Candler School of Theology

ADDIE DAVIS EXCELLENCE IN PREACHING

CINDY BOLDEN

Campbell University Divinity School

MELISSA BRYSON

Central Baptist Theological Seminary

KATIE LAY-ANDERSON

Baptist Seminary of Kentucky

AILEEN LAWRIMORE

Gardner Webb University Divinity School

JAN THOMPSON

McAfee School of Theology

ADDIE DAVIS AWARDS, 2010

Each year Baptist Women in Ministry presents two Addie Davis awards: one for Outstanding Leadership in Pastoral Ministry and one for Excellence in Preaching. Nominations for the awards are collected from seminaries and divinity schools, and this year two separate committees worked independently to select the top nominee in each category.

The intention of Addie Davis Awards is to give public recognition to gifted women who are preparing for ministry, and because of BWIM's commitment to support and affirm women seminarians, the award now has a substantial financial component. Each award winner receives \$1,000, and each woman nominated receives \$100.

The 2010 winner of the Addie Davis Award for Outstanding Pastoral Ministry is Gwen Brown, a May graduate of McAfee School of Theology in Atlanta. Gwen serves as pastor at Cornerstone Church, a Cooperative Baptist Fellowship church in Grayson, Georgia. Gwen and her husband founded this church in 2005, and Gwen has led the church to establish partnership in ministry with other Baptist churches in feeding the hungry and caring for the homeless; in collecting water and food for earthquake survivors in Haiti; and in tutoring and mentoring children at neighborhood schools. Gwen is making a difference in Grayson, Georgia.

In nominating her, Carrie Veal, who is the past president of BWIM of GA, wrote of Gwen: "Her leadership has created a space for new Christians and those who had become disengaged with the church for one reason or another. Gwen is not someone who will settle for the status quo but who strives to make everything she does the best it can be."

Gwen's professor at McAfee, Dr. Denise Massey, wrote: "Gwen is a strong, consistent leader. She is optimistic, faithful and creative. . . . Gwen has led her congregation with grace, courage, and steadfastness.

She leads with a gentle but powerful presence. While she has a very nurturing approach to ministry, she can challenge and confront when needed. Her church members know that she is on their side and are therefore able to receive challenges from her. She has a strong spirituality that permeates her ministry, preaching and leadership. She is the kind of person I would choose to be my pastor."

The 2010 winner of the Addie Davis Award for Excellence in Preaching is Karen Hatcher, who is known to her friends as Kam. Kam is a student at Baptist Theological Seminary in Richmond and will graduate next May. Her winning sermon was titled "A Match Made in Heaven"—based on the story of Jacob's wrestling match in Genesis 22.

In nominating Kam for this award, her professor, Tracy Hartman, wrote: "Kam is a second career student who brings a wealth of life experience and maturity to seminary and to this new stage of her life journey. She is a dedicated student who exhibits outstanding gifts in the area of preaching. She has been committed to learning to exegete both the text and her context, and to learning both the art and the craft of preaching."

Dr. Scott Spencer wrote of Kam: "She demonstrates a special talent for biblical research and analysis. Kam stands out as a mature and sensitive thinker, wrestling effectively with the challenge that New Testament exegesis poses to our complex world and to concrete congregational settings. Kam's wonderful blend of careful biblical research, critical thinking, articulate expression, and pastoral sensitivity make her a superb preacher."

MARTHA STEARNS MARSHALL WOMEN'S PREACHING MONTH FEBRUARY 2011

Baptist Women in Ministry invites all Baptist churches to make plans now to have a woman preach on any Sunday in February 2011. The number of participating churches in the Martha Stearns Marshall Women's Preaching Month has grown since 2007, when 54 churches participated. In February 2010, 104 churches celebrated God's gifting of women.

Here's how your church can be a part:

- 1) SAVE THE DATE!! Reserve ANY Sunday in February.
- 2) Invite a woman to preach—ask a member of your church, contact a nearby seminary or Baptist university and inquire about the availability of a student or professor, or ask someone in your community. If you need help in finding the right person, contact Pam Durso at pamdurso@bwim.info for some ideas.
- 3) Visit the BWIM website for information about Martha Stearns

Marshall, suggested litanies, a bulletin insert, and a hymn all created especially for the day: <http://www.bwim.info/martha-stearns-marshall-month/>

- 4) Download the certificate from <http://www.bwim.info/martha-stearns-marshall-month/>, print it out, and present it to the preacher on your church's Martha Stearns Marshall Day of Preaching.
- 5) Order a "This Is What a Preacher Looks Like" T-shirt or the book of sermons with that title to give to your preacher. Visit <http://www.bwim.info/what-a-preacher-looks-like/>
- 6) Please send your church name, city, state, pastor, the name of your guest preacher, and contact information to Pam Durso at pamdurso@bwim.info. All participating churches and preachers will be listed in the Spring Issue of *Vocare*, the BWIM newsletter.

The following churches and Martha Stearns Marshall Preachers were inadvertently left off the list in the Spring 2010 Vocare list. Our apologies!

STATE	CITY	CHURCH	PASTOR	PREACHER
NC	Elkin	First Baptist Church	Bill Johnson	Kathy Naish
VA	Annandale	The United Baptist Church	J. Wayne Yawn and Gerald L. Young	Twyla Turner
VA	Bruington	Bruington Baptist Church	Michelle Kimlick and Brent Kimlick	Michelle Kimlick
VA	Gum Springs	Oakland Baptist Church	Judith Bledsoe Bailey, interim	Judith Bledsoe Bailey
VA	Ivor	Ivor Baptist Church	Chad McGinnis	Melissa McGinnis
VA	Martinsville	Starling Baptist Church	David Adkins	Susan Spangenberg
VA	Portsmouth	Park View Baptist Church	Aaron Brittain	Suzanne Stovall Vinson
VA	Portsmouth	Westhaven Baptist Church	Bruce and Traci Powers	Traci Powers
VA	Reston	Washington Plaza Baptist Church	Elizabeth Evans Hagan	Abby Thorton
VA	Richmond	River Road Baptist Church	Mike Clingenpeel	Barbara Massey, Rachel Hoffman
VA	Scottsburg	Bethel Baptist Church		Jonci Womack
Cuba	Sancti Spiritus	Genesareth Baptist Church		Lauren Colwell



Left: Alex at Passport, Right: Pam Durso, Suzanah Raffield, Rachel Tan, Hannah Gaskins, Asha Sanchu

THE LONG, HOT, BUT DEFINITELY NOT LAZY, SUMMER

BY PAM DURSO

Summer 2010 was the hottest summer I can remember, well, it was the hottest one I can remember since my childhood in Texas, and usually high temperatures such as the ones we experienced would have resulted in lazy days sipping ice tea by the pool or even lazier days lounging in my air-conditioned house. But the summer for me was a whirlwind of new experiences, exciting travel, and conversations with “old” friends as well as some amazing new friends.

One highlight for me were the Baptist Women in Ministry events that took place in late June, during the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship’s General Assembly in Charlotte, North Carolina. I stood in the back of the room during our worship time on Thursday with tears in my eyes, feeling such a strong sense of the Spirit of God moving among us. Our book signing on Thursday night was a huge success. Our workshop time on Friday was so inspiring. The breakfast on Saturday morning with Lauren Winner gave me insight into ways we can work together as women and better encourage one another. I left Charlotte feeling very blessed indeed.

The next week . . . well, I have to confess that I did have a few lazy days. July began with a family vacation at Jekyll Island, a beautiful and uncrowded island on the coast of Georgia.

If you like walking on the beach all alone early in the morning, this is the island for you!

The remaining days of July were spent in Wingate, North Carolina, and in Hawaii. My daughter, Alex, and I attended Passport Camp on the Wingate University campus. I hadn’t been to youth camp in almost thirty years. (I find the previous sentence really hard to believe, but I did the math!) I had an amazing time and meet impressive teenagers, hard-working and enthusiastic camp leaders, and a gifted camp pastor (whose call story you will find on pages 4-5). I learned so much at camp, but mostly I came to understand that we have a bright future as Baptists. Being with this group of teenagers gave me great assurance—they are bright, committed, and faithful. They don’t take themselves too seriously. They ask thoughtful questions. They show amazing hospitality to one another, and they have absolutely no qualms with having a woman serve as camp pastor.

And now you are wondering about Hawaii, aren’t you? The Baptist World Alliance held its World Congress in Hawaii, and I was fortunate enough to attend. Hawaii has not ever been on my top-ten list of places to visit—but it is now at the very top of my list

of places to which I must return. The photos do not even do justice to the beauty of the beaches, the mountains, and the flowers. Save your money—go to Hawaii!

But even more important save your money and attend the next Baptist World Alliance World Congress—to be held in 2015 in South Africa. I plan to be there! I have never in all my years as a Baptist (which is the entirety of my life) and in all my work as a Baptist historian ever felt a greater sense of unity. . . . there in one of the most beautiful places created by God, I felt a strong and powerful connection to our Baptist sisters and brothers around the world. And as I sat on a bench one afternoon and watched hundreds of Baptists walk by, I realized that we all share a common commitment to Christ, a common commitment to historic Baptist principles, and a common commitment to serve.

I wish I could tell you about all the Baptist women I met in Hawaii. I wish I could tell you all the stories I heard. I wish I could introduce you to just a few of the amazing Baptist women ministers who are serving all over the globe. They are making a difference in our world. So save your money—and meet me in South Africa in 2015!



BOOK SIGNING TURNS INTO EVENT

BY BOB ALLEN

First it was a T-shirt. Then it was a book. At the recent Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in Charlotte, N.C., “This is What a Preacher Looks Like” became an event.

Twenty women preachers—some wearing the trademark aqua-colored T-shirt that debuted two years ago on the 25th anniversary of Baptist women in Ministry—signed copies of *This Is What a Preacher Looks Like*, a collection of 38 sermons by Baptist women published by Smyth & Helyws.

“It was really a moment in history,” said Pam Durso, executive director of Baptist Women in Ministry and the book’s editor, “20 women preachers, all together.” Then, Durso added, “A party broke out!”

As the scheduled time for the event came to an end, she said: “The convention folks turned out the lights on us -- and we kept signing until everyone had their book signed.”

Lex Horton, publisher and executive vice president of Smyth & Helwys, an alternative publishing company born in 1990 out of the moderate/conservative controversy of the Southern Baptist Convention, said he could tell from watching people wait with smiles and hugs in a slow-moving line to get multiple copies autographed it was going to be a night to remember.

“As I stood there I realized that before us was a slice of the past, present and future of ministry leadership for churches,” Horton said in an e-mail

to Durso. “For me, it felt like a culmination of 20 years of focus in CBF life on the important role of women in ministry.”

In an introduction to the book, Durso, who has led Baptist Women in Ministry for a year, said the original suggestion for the “This is What a Preacher Looks Like” T-shirt came from Suzannah Raffield, a graduate of Samford University’s Beeson Divinity School who advocates for global maternal health. She is one of the 36 women whose sermons appear in the book.

Durso quipped that the volume could have contained sermons by 836 women, if the publishers had wanted 5,000 pages instead of a 272-page paperback.

“The number of Baptist women preachers is probably larger than what most people would ever imagine,” she said. “There are many Baptist women preachers.”

FROM SLOGAN TO TITLE

The idea that the slogan would be a good title for a book came to Keith Gammons, vice president for production at Smyth & Helwys, one afternoon while he waited in a drive-through line at a Chick-fil-A restaurant.

Watching the signing, Gammons said, reminded him of why he felt called to come to Smyth & Helwys nine years ago—“to create products that make a difference in ministry.”





“This project and that gathering of women the other night are a powerful reminder to me that what we do is important,” Gammons told Durso.

Durso said that for some of the women the book signing “was a powerful affirmation of their callings.” Three traveled to Charlotte only for the signing, from as far away as Memphis and Houston.

Durso recalled that the T-shirt, produced and distributed during Baptist Women in Ministry’s 25th anniversary celebration in 2008, was a big hit.

“Baptist women bought them and proudly wore them,” she wrote. “Mothers purchased them for their daughters. Seminarians were seen wearing them in class. Husbands ordered them as gifts for their wives. Church leaders gave them to women who preached in their churches. And several fathers inquired as to whether the T-shirts came in toddler sizes.”

Pondering the popularity, Durso concluded that perhaps something as simple as a T-shirt gave many Baptists a way to say that Baptist preachers are a diverse lot.

“The aqua T-shirts reminded us and allowed us to celebrate the truth that Baptist preachers have looked like and do look like women,” Durso said.

A LONG HISTORY OF FEMALE PREACHERS

While the great majority of Baptist preachers through 400 years of history have been men, women preachers were active among Baptists in England as early as the 1630s, said Durso, who has a Ph.D. in church history from Baylor University. Durso worked previously as associate executive director-treasurer of the Baptist History and Heritage Society and before that as an assistant professor at Campbell University Divinity School.

Beyond the truth that women “can be and are Baptist preachers,” Durso said, is the diversity of women in Baptist pulpits. They are young and old, with a myriad of preaching styles. Preachers featured in the book come from various Baptist faith traditions and hold theological views across the spectrum from fundamentalist to liberal. They are African American, Asian, Latina and Caucasian.

Some were controversial. Sue Fitzgerald, an active minister at 78, submitted a sermon that was written but never preached after her election as alternate preacher at the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina annual meeting in 1996.

The youngest, 26-year-old Kristy Eggert, graduates in December from Mercer University’s McAfee School of Theology and will begin in February 2011 as associate pastor for youth and education at Milledge Avenue Baptist Church, Athens, Georgia.

For Durso, a veteran copy editor, the project became more than an assignment. Proofreading several sermons while flying to a meeting and penciling corrections into the margins, she related a particular “movement of the spirit,” when she put down her pencil and continued to read.

“Through the words of Baptist women preachers, I heard and felt and experienced the presence of God,” she wrote. “I felt God’s Spirit breathing renewal and hope into my dispirited and weary soul. Isn’t that what good preaching is?”

“The women whose sermons I read during that flight strengthened my faith and gave me assurance and hope,” she wrote. “In the days since, I have been inspired and challenged and at times moved to tears while reading the sermons included in this collection. These thirty-six women are for me what a preacher looks like.”

Bob Allen is senior writer for Associated Baptist Press.

BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

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