

a voice for women in baptist life

Vocare

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BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY

advocating • connecting • networking

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HOPE BECKONS

JOIN Baptist Women in Ministry for
WORSHIP AND LUNCH

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 20, 2012

BROADWAY BAPTIST CHURCH, FORT WORTH, TEXAS

WORSHIP at 10 a.m. • LUNCH at 11:15 a.m.

More details coming soon.

Watch the BWIM website (www.bwim.info) for lunch registration information.



MEREDITH STONE
Preacher



JANA HARWELL
Worship Leader

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.

**STATE WOMEN
IN MINISTRY**
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HOPE BECKONS

THE BWIM ANNUAL GATHERING ON JUNE 20, 2012

“God calls persons to participate in a redemptive plot that has been underway for some time, and in which yet-told episodes are beckoning.”—Richard Gardner

Richard Gardner’s eloquence is the inspiration for Baptist Women in Ministry’s annual gathering, which will be held at Broadway Baptist Church in Fort Worth, Texas, on Wednesday morning, June 20. Our worship will be centered on the theme “Hope Beckons,” and will be led by **Meredith Stone** and **Jana Harwell**. Worship begins at 10:00 a.m. and is followed by a lunch, also held at the church.

Meredith serves as Women in Ministry Specialist for Texas Baptists. In that role, she has opportunity to share in the journeys of women ministers across the state of Texas, to plan and lead an annual Women in Ministry Conference, and to be involved in some great conversations. Meredith is also currently working on a Ph.D. in biblical interpretation at Texas Christian University’s Brite Divinity School and is an occasional writer for Baptist Way Press.

Before beginning work with Texas Baptists, Meredith served as coordinator of recruitment at Logsdon Seminary and as teaching pastor at Crosspoint Fellowship in Abilene, Texas. Wife to James and mother to Hallie (8) and Kinsey (4), Meredith loves playing golf, the

guitar, and “Just Dance Kids” with Hallie.

Jana Harwell began playing the piano and singing at age three. She wrote her first song when she was fourteen and launched her public ministry at the age of twenty-five. Jana is currently a worship leader and songwriter for her home church, First Baptist Church of Arlington, Texas. She has written and recorded many of her own songs and has been leading worship for many years, including leadership of conferences, retreats, youth camps, and various church services and events.

Jana and her husband, Dale, have two children, Andrew and Haley. In her free time, Jana enjoys baking, decorating, painting, and exercising at her local fitness center.

This annual worship gathering will be a special time filled with good music, insightful preaching, and unforgettable fellowship. One of the highlights of our gathering will be the recognition of the annual Addie Davis Awards recipients. You don’t want to miss this year’s gathering, so start making plans to attend. Be watching the BWIM website and the BWIM Facebook page for details about registration.

MARTHA STEARNS MARSHALL

MONTH OF PREACHING, 2012



Pastor Gwen Brown (top photo—right) hosted Tanell Allen (right photo) on January 15, 2012 and Meggie Dant (top above—left) on January 22, 2012 for Martha Stearns Marshall Month at Cornerstone Church in Grayson, Georgia.



For six years now, Baptist Women in Ministry has sponsored Martha Stearns Marshall Month of Preaching, asking that Baptist churches participate in this special emphasis by having a woman preach during the month of February. This annual event has been a deeply significant source of joy and discovery for many women and churches.

Martha Stearns Marshall Month 2012 already has generated some amazing stories! At least three churches celebrated for a full month and had four Sundays with women guest preachers filling their pulpit. One of those churches, Cornerstone Church in Grayson, Georgia, was blessed in January by the preaching of four seminary students.

Be looking for stories from this year's emphasis in the Spring issue of *Vocare*, which will also include a list of participating churches and their preachers.



Ronny Lanier with McAfee School of Theology students, Jason Ranke and Arashal Lawson

A BAPTIST TREASURE

by Pam Durso

Last fall I had opportunity to meet a “Baptist treasure.” Ninety-two-year-old Veronica Lanier (known as Ronny to her friends), visited the American Baptist Historical Library and Archives in Atlanta, Georgia, and I had the chance to sit and listen to her stories. She truly has been and is a gift to Baptists.

Ronny is a native of Medford Massachusetts, attended Gordon College, and was commissioned at First Baptist Church, Denver, Colorado, by the American Baptist Home Mission Society (now National Ministries) as a missionary to service Denver Christian Center. Ordained in 1970, she served in the United Christian Center of Sacramento, California, and worked with the Woodlawn Baptist Church, Chicago, Illinois, before becoming the field director of Christian Education for the Massachusetts Baptist Convention.

I loved hearing Ronny tell of the long bus journeys she organized for young people. Those trips gave them opportunities to see and experience new places. I loved watching Ronny's face light up as she talked about her adventures in serving in international communities, and I love that she is still going strong at ninety-two—preaching, traveling, and officiating at weddings.

Jason Ranke, student at McAfee School of Theology who was also sat alongside Ronny that day, was impressed with her joyfulness. Ronny's favorite verse is “Be of good cheer,” and Jason marveled at how well she has lived out and continues to live out that verse. Her positive attitude and good spirit were contagious. Ronny Lanier is truly one of our great Baptist treasures!

WITH MUCH THANKS

TO BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY SUPPORTERS, 2012

CHURCHES

Broadway Baptist Church, Louisville, KY
Cornerstone Church, Grayson, GA
Cullowhee Baptist Church, Cullowhee, NC
First Baptist Church, Georgetown, KY
First Baptist Church, Asheville, NC
First Baptist Church, Austin, TX
First Baptist Church, Goldsboro, NC
First Baptist Church, Gretna, VA
First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC
First Baptist Church, Sylva, NC
First Baptist Church of Williams, Jacksonville, AL
Knollwood Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC
North Broad Baptist Church, Rome, GA
Northminster Baptist Church, Jackson, MS
Northside Baptist Church, Clinton, MS
Northside Drive Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA
Peachtree Baptist Church, Atlanta, GA
Pintlala Baptist Church, Pintlala, AL
Second Baptist Church, Liberty, MO
Wake Forest Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC
Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, NC
Woodland Forrest Baptist Church, Tuscaloosa, AL

FOUNDATIONS

The Baugh Foundation
Christian Missions Concern
Ministers and Missionaries Benefits Board

ORGANIZATIONS

Baptist General Convention of Texas
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of North Carolina
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma
Cooperative Baptist Fellowship
Kentucky Baptist Fellowship

SCHOOLS

Baptist University of the Americas
Campbell University Divinity School
Central Baptist Theological Seminary
Duke University Divinity School
Gardner-Webb University Divinity School
Hardin Simmons University
Howard Payne University
McAfee School of Theology
Truett Theological Seminary
University of Mary Hardin-Baylor
Wake Forest University School of Divinity

Baptist Women in Ministry is not a member-based organization but instead provides its newsletter and other resources to all who request them. BWIM's Leadership Team greatly appreciates these churches, organizations, and individuals that have supported our work!

If you or your church would like to honor and thank a minister on your staff in a public and tangible way, send a contribution to Baptist Women in Ministry and include the minister's name.

INDIVIDUALS

Allen and Conda Abbott	Paul and Amelia Debusman	Helen Landes	David Smith
Mary Yangsook Ahn	Deneise Dillon	Judy Landon	Carolyn Staley
Jann Aldredge-Clanton	Isabel Docampo	Day Lane	Dennis Staley
Courtney Allen	Wanda Driver	Linda Lewis	Meredith and James Stone
Loyd and Libby Allen	Amanda Ducksworth	Deborah Loftis	Clarissa Strickland
Nancy Ammerman	Tillie Duncan	Molly Marshall	Tambi Swiney
Patricia Ayers	Alex Durso	Gloria Martin	Virginia Taylor
Judith Bailey	Pam Durso	Tom and Susan Martin	Pattisue Thoman
Harold Bass	Sue Fitzgerald	Karen Massey	Bill and Leta Tillman
Kelly Belcher	Robert Gardner	Carolyn Mathis	Hugh Tobias
Libby Bellinger	Neita Geilker	Juanita Maxey	Kathy Vestal
Doris Blackwell	Carra Hughes Greer	Nancy Stanton McDaniel	Lucy Vick
Carolyn Blevins	Genie Hargrove	Kristen Muse	Tonya Vickery
Tammy Abee Blom	Ircel Harrison	Julie Pennington-Russell	Brent and Nancy Walker
Edward Bolen	Karen Hatcher	Dixie Lea Petrey	Carrie Walker
B. J. Brannan	John Haun	Bill and Ruth Pitts	Naomi Walker
Katrina Brooks	Diane Hill	LeDayne Polaski	Rhonda Walton
Kristina Woods Brown	Linda Hill	Morgan Ponder	Rhonda Welfare
Charles Bugg	Dan and Betty Hobbs	Martha Porter	Mark and Rebecca Wiggs
Gary Burton	Emily Holladay	Alicia Porterfield	Winnie Williams
Eileen Campbell-Reed	Sadie Jane Huffman	Bo Prosser	David and Ann Wilson
Melissa Cargile	Barbara Jackson	Marlene Rikard	Joyce Cope Wyatt
John Chowning	Susanne Jenkens	Mac and Lorita Robinson	Ouida Wyatt
Reba Cobb	LeAnn Gunter Johns	Royce Rose	Tyanna Yonkers
Virginia Connally	Richard Kahoe	Ro Turner Ruffin	Brett and Carol Younger
Gail Coulter	Wyona King	Paula Settle	
Carolyn Crumpler	Sue Kinzer	Carolyn Shapard	
Bruce Day	Joseph Laguardia	Amy Shorner-Johnson	

GIFTS MADE IN HONOR OF INDIVIDUALS

Libby and Loyd Allen
In honor of Pam Durso

Carra Hughes Greer
*In honor of the girls at Smoke Rise Baptist Church,
her sister Libby, and her daughter Lola*

Emily Holladay
In honor of Pam Durso

LeAnn Gunter Johns
In honor of Pam Durso



Top: Rusudan and Neville Callam, General Secretary of the Baptist World Alliance

Middle: Rusudan on the day of her ordination

Bottom: Rusudan Gotsiridze

LISTEN TO THE DAISIES

GEORGIAN BAPTIST BISHOP RUSUDAN GOTSIRIDZE

by Ken Sehested

Baptists and bishops have never played well together. With a few exceptions, neither has been friendly to clergywomen. So how to explain the anomaly of Rusudan Gotsiridze serving as a bishop within the Evangelical Baptist Church (EBC) of the Republic of Georgia?

Certainly one of Rusudan's influences was that of St. Nino, a fourth-century Cappadocian woman who first evangelized her homeland, the region then known as Caucasian Iberia, which was the second kingdom following neighboring Armenia, to officially convert to Christianity. Another influence on Rusudan was her grandfather, a Baptist pastor.

Even with such influences, Rusudan's call to ministry and her subsequent leadership roles came as a surprise: "When our Archbishop started a Bible school in our church, lots of young women came to study theology. Most of us thought we would use this experience teaching Sunday school, or being good mothers for our future children. We never imagined some of us would become ministers."

I first met Rusudan at the 2009 Global Baptist Peace Conference held in Rome, Italy, where she led compline prayers each evening. She also led noon prayers one day at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, a service hosted by the Benedictine monks who shepherd that congregation. What many conferees considered liturgical boundary-crossing was no stretch to a Georgian Baptist, whose worship is heavily influenced by the Orthodox tradition, complete with incense, icons, and colorful clerical garb.

In their own country, the EBC is known for human rights advocacy. Rusudan's mentor, Archbishop Malkhaz Songulashvili, was a key figure in the nonviolent Rose Revolution of 2003 that swept from office holdovers from the country's previous Soviet-aligned regime. He is known by many as a major voice in support of human rights and interfaith collaboration.

Rusudan herself played a pivotal role in her country's expanded protection of religious minorities. In July 2011, the Georgian Parliament passed an amendment to the nation's Civil Code, providing recognition for five non-Orthodox groups, including Baptists. Assigned to represent the EBC on a committee shaping that religious liberty legislation, Rusudan initiated a meeting with leaders of recognized religious bodies and convinced them to remove all limiting language, effectively extending legal status to all faith communities.

One of the first human rights initiatives taken by the EBC after the demise of the Soviet Union was opening a path to ordination for women. Although her graduate degree was in Western literature and language, Rusudan took theology courses. Her talents were noticed by EBC's leaders, who appointed her to a succession of church leadership.

On Pentecost Sunday 2008, the EBC ordained Rusudan as a bishop. In addition to her pastoral duties, she is a trainer on gender justice with the International Centre on Conflict and Negotiation, which she says "is just another form of my ministry." In reflecting on her journey, Rusudan wrote: "Perhaps the most difficult obstacle I faced [with church leadership roles] was my own self-perceptions. Being young, and being female, are two great disadvantages. It took some time before I could give myself the needed affirmation."

"I never would have imagined taking on the responsibility of a bishop. On the Sunday I was ordained—kneeling in front of the altar with a huge open Bible over my head—all I could see was a bucket of daisies. The little flowers were looking at me. And I knew God was there with me, saying *do not be afraid, my daughter. I will be with you.*"

Ken Sehested is co-pastor of Circle of Mercy Congregation, Asheville, North Carolina. For more photos and news of EBC life, visit <http://www.ebcgeorgia.org/>

HOPE AND POSSIBILITY ARE GROWING QUIETLY IN OUR MIDST

by *Eiko Kanamaru*

Like most Japanese, I was born and grew up in the non-Christian family. My first encounter with Christianity was when I was a student at the Baptist women's college in my hometown. Nurtured by wonderful Christian individuals and by the fellowship of a local church, I eventually felt led to accept Jesus Christ as my Lord.

The Japanese Christian population has remained less than 10 percent of the national population for decades, and the Japanese rarely attend churches and thus do not hear the Good News or make their own decision to accept Jesus as the Lord. In such an environment, being a Christian is tough, not because of threats or persecution but because of Christianity's minority status. I sometimes think, however, that being a minority in society is not so bad. The blessing of minority status is that we as Christians have to ask very serious questions about ourselves. In order to survive in that environment, we intentionally have to think about who we are and what we believe. Asking hard identity questions is the common practice of Japanese Christians.

I eventually enrolled in seminary, and I can still remember how uncertain and vague I felt about my future ministry. My four other female classmates also did not know about their future. We acknowledged our reality, which was that ministerial options for the female seminary graduates were quite limited. But all of us started and stayed in seminary anyway. What we had at that time was one single and very simple conviction: We wanted to work for the Lord, and God would help us! And that indeed happened for us.

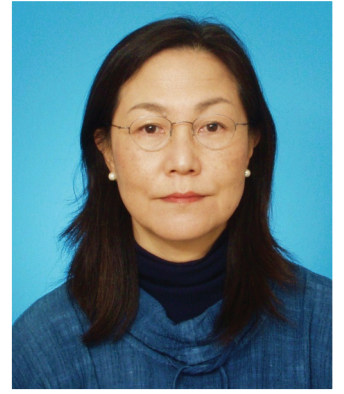
In the seminary where I currently teach, there are wonderful female students who have a strong passion for preaching, teaching, ministering, and administering in congregations. Some of women are spiritually and academically more mature than their male classmates. When given equal

opportunities as the male students, the female students do a beautiful job, and I am very proud of these of my future colleagues! In spite of their giftedness, these women find it very different to get church positions, especially full-time positions. Despite the hardships, the number of women in ministry in Japan has tripled compared to what it was thirty-three years ago when I was a seminary student. Some of the women choose to be bi-vocational ministers, and more and more are eager to study theology at the seminary with the aim of being a pastor.

The younger seminary generation, both the male and female students, does not seem to see gender as the most serious factor in a church calling its leaders. Part of the reason for this change in attitude is that they younger students are aware of female seminary graduates who have been doing an excellent job in their churches.

Let me introduce you to two of our female graduates. Both of them are working with disaster victims of Japan's 3.11 massive earthquakes. One of them was the only full-time Baptist woman pastor when the disaster attacked the city. Since then, she has been working hard as the caregiver and as a minister who consoles many souls in the most devastated areas. The other woman was appointed by our national convention to lead the relief work. She works with the hundreds of volunteers from the churches. We are very proud of their commitment and qualities as leaders.

In my country, women still run into walls when they search for church ministry positions, but hope and possibility are growing quietly in our midst. We see the incarnation of it in our graduates. We see their work and see that they are being pushed by the Living Lord as if no gender barrier exists. To me, they are living out the Kingdom of God as Jesus taught us.



EIKO KANAMARU teaches church history and Baptist history in the Department of Theology at Seinan Gakuin University, Fukuoka, Japan. She is an ordained Baptist minister and currently working as co-pastor with her spouse, Rev. Makoto Yano, of Fukuma Baptist Church in Fukuoka.



Students and ministers at Seinan Gakuin University, Department of Theology following a seminary chapel service



MIRIAM CHACON-PERALTA is a senior benefits consultant with Ministers and Missionary Benefits Board. She lives in Windermere, Florida. She offers much thanks to the Iglesias Bautistas de Puerto Rico (IBPR), Roberto Dieppa-Báez and his staff, and Ramón O. Martínez for their support and assistance in providing resources for this article.

CONTINUING THE LEGACY

by *Miriam Chacon-Peralta*

I have had the privilege of working with Baptists in Puerto Rico for over twenty years, and as a woman in ministry, I feel right at home. I am affirmed in my work and blessed by both men and women who understand my call and the call of my fellow sisters as coming from God.

Women in ministry have come a long way since the days of the first North American missionaries. From the introduction of Christianity in Puerto Rico until about 1920, women were relegated to a “certain” place, a lesser place different than their male colleagues who headed most ministries. Despite limitations, evangelistic passion was evident among the first American women who served as missionaries and worked in church-related ministries. Neither the poverty of the times nor hurricanes stopped women from reaching out to communities or from traveling to remote parts of the island to live out their calling.

In the decades following 1920, Puerto Rican women followed the work of their earlier foreign predecessors. Their labor was zealous yet sensitive. They were followers of the social norms but leaders in organizing women’s societies, recruiting children for Bible schools, directing Vacation Bible Schools, retreats, conferences, and workshops. They were also social workers, ministering among children, adolescents, the elderly and the poor. They served as nurses, music directors, teachers, colporteurs, and evangelists. Perhaps two of the most well-known were Petronila Nieves, “the dean of Baptist missionaries,” and Ruth Maldonado, “a groundbreaker.” While women surely had a strong presence in Puerto Rico, they were not considered preachers, nor did they have a place in church liturgy.

In the 1960s, Puerto Rico experienced civil struggles, and churches sought to find the meaning of the gospel within a Puerto Rican context. National leadership grew stronger in the country, and perhaps most importantly, a vital commitment to the priesthood of all believers developed. The late Angel L. Gutiérrez noted that there was “a new understanding of the Protestant concept of the priesthood of all believers, and the insistence that there was no

reason for maintaining women at an inferior level in denying the authenticity of their call to Christian ministry.” Puerto Rico was ready, and women now were given opportunities that they had previously not had. They received education, extended their extraordinary pastoral and missionary roles, and were afforded leadership positions within the larger context. It was time!

In 1960, Nefalí Alicea Ortiz was sent as a missionary to Peru, and in 1977, Rosa Crespo was sent to Thailand. In 1979, a historic resolution passed within Iglesias Bautistas Americanas de Puerto Rico (IBPR—the American Baptist Churches of Puerto Rico), giving equal recognition to men and women in ministry, and within four years, by the end of 1983, IBPR had twelve women pastors. In 1987, Ruth Maldonado, by then retired from ministry, was ordained. Marilú Dones de Reyes was offered and accepted the pastorate of a church. Julia Batista de Cortez and Paulita Matos de Garcia became associate executive denominational leaders, and in 1989 Yamina Apolinaris became the first executive director of IBPR, a position she held for eleven years. Many women enrolled in seminary; many became pastors; and many more were ordained.

Today, IBPR has 112 churches and eight new church plants. Women in ministry uphold the legacy and continue making history. The numbers speak for themselves: twenty-eight ordained women are serving as pastors of churches; thirty-four women are endorsed; six women are ordained missionaries; two are endorsed missionaries; one woman leads a new church plant; twenty-one are currently in process of a pastoral call, and five of those twenty-one are ordained; eight ordained women have retired; and two endorsed women are retired. What a blessing these women are! Thank you to Puerto Rican Baptists who have affirmed God’s call and opened ways for women to serve.

¹Angel L. Gutiérrez, *Mujer de Milagros* (San Juan, Puerto Rico: Editorial Chari, 1991), 37.

SOMEBODY'S DAUGHTER

By Derik Hamby

I was at my daughter's school in January 2012, and her teacher asked, "Did you see what your daughter wrote? All the teachers are coming down to read it." My daughter is seven years old and in the first grade. Anything she writes is a work of art, but this time I was very curious. I immediately walked out into the hallway outside her classroom. On the wall a sign read, "I have a dream." Children had created artwork describing their dreams. Here is what my daughter wrote:

"I have a dream that I will be a preacher and I will preach about God. And I will preach about Jesus. I will work at a church. I will preach on a stage. I hope my dream will come true."

I realize my daughter loves her daddy, and if I were a cowboy she would probably want to be a cowboy too. I realize her career ideas will change a million times. A few years ago she wanted to be a butterfly and then it was a mermaid. I know all this, but I still cried. I also know it is at this age that kids really are thinking about what they want and desire from life, and it is obvious to me that my kids are blessed to be in a loving church environment that is nurturing them to be the person God has made them to be!

Back in the mid 1990s I was a student at Southern Seminary when that school turned upside down. The president of that historic seminary declared that no professor who supported a woman as pastor would be allowed to teach anymore. We were told that if we supported women in ministry we needed to go elsewhere. I swore that I would never attend a school that would deny my daughter her calling to preach the gospel. I was single at the time with no prospects of marriage and no children in sight. Yet I made myself that promise. I also promised myself that I would not attend a church that would exclude women, so I headed to the recently new Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and found a home. Those were some of the best years of my life, and I give thanks to God for the shelter I found on Brook Road. I also found

churches that welcomed boys and girls to be who God called them to be.

Now I am much older. I have a son and a daughter, and while I have no idea what their futures will bring, I am glad that both are being nurtured among Baptists who will welcome them to follow God no matter the path.

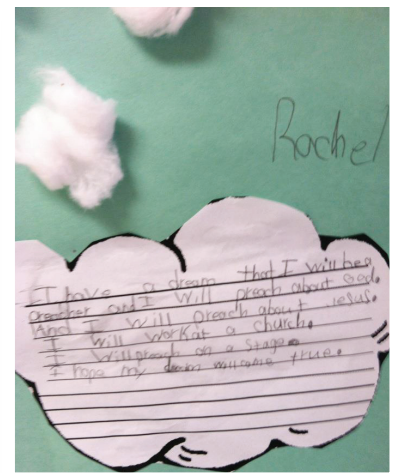
When I was at Southern, I remember women on campus being told by other students that their presence was an affront to God. They were told that if men did what they were supposed to do the women would not be needed. Those women were someone's daughters. As surely as my Rachel is my flesh and blood, those brave women were daughters to someone who loved them.

During February, Baptist Women in Ministry encourages churches to have a woman preach. Our church, Randolph Memorial Baptist Church in Madison, Heights, Virginia, will celebrate Martha Stearns Marshall Month of Preaching this year. One of our college students who is exploring her call from God will preach her first sermon. She is someone's daughter. I plan on having my seven-year-old daughter be there, sitting in a pew that day to listen to this brave young woman preach the good news. I want my daughter to know that if she is called to preach she is welcome. I want her to know that if she is called to heal the sick, fly to the moon, lead our nation, or wherever God leads she can go. She is my daughter. And apart from being a butterfly or mermaid, she is more than welcome to answer God's call.

I often wonder about the daughters of those who fear women who preach love and grace. What if their little girls grow up and feel God's call? What if they are invited to stand in a hallway and read a note sharing their little girl's dream to preach? I wonder what they will think as they read those words written by their daughter. But for me, my daughter can dream. And her dreams can soar higher than those butterflies! I hope your daughters dream big too!



DERIK HAMBY is pastor of Randolph Memorial Baptist, Madison Heights, Virginia. Derik blogs at www.dwhamby1.wordpress.com.



READY TO RESPOND

by Meredith Stone

On November 11-12, 2011, thirty-four women of various ages gathered at the Heart of Texas Baptist encampment near Brownwood, Texas, for the first Ready to Respond retreat for female students exploring God's call to ministry. Texas Baptists partnered with Baptist Women in Ministry, Howard Payne University, Hardin-Simmons University, and the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor to sponsor the retreat. Retreat leaders were Meredith Stone, Texas Baptist Women in Ministry Strategist, and Pam Durso, executive director of Baptist Women in Ministry. Small group leaders were Dorisanne Cooper, Carol Holcomb, and Brooke Hollaway.

Students from each of the three schools participated in large group sessions, small group discussion times, and personal reflection times—all focused on what it means to be a woman called to ministry.

The retreat offered the women encouragement, presented them with a chance to interact with women currently serving in ministry, and provided them opportunities for learning and discussion related to calling, call discernment, the relationship between Baptists, the Bible, and women in ministry, and practical advice for women ministers.

One of the participants is a non-traditional undergraduate student at the University of Mary Hardin-Baylor. Following the weekend, she wrote "The retreat was a defining moment in my life. It totally freed me in so many ways you will never know. I had been struggling with my call for months because my husband and I did not fit the normal mold. But this was as if the Lord arranged everything just for me."

During the twenty-four hours we were together, I heard some of the seminary students and women who currently serving in ministry comment that they wished such support would have been available when they were college students, fumbling along trying to understand what it meant to be a Baptist woman called to ministry.

This retreat will hopefully be the first of many held across the state of Texas for women of all ages who are seeking to discern a call from God.

Meredith Stone is Women in Ministry Specialist for Texas Baptists. She lives in Abilene, Texas. Reprinted with permission from the Texas Baptist Women in Ministry Newsletter, Fall 2011.



KENTUCKY BAPTIST WOMEN IN MINISTRY BEGINS AGAIN

by Bob Allen

Dormant for a decade, a Baptist Women in Ministry chapter in Kentucky was rebirthed November 8, 2011, at Baptist Women in Ministry Day at Georgetown College.

Pam Durso, head of the national Baptist Women in Ministry organization based in Atlanta, said when a group of women spearheaded by Becky Caswell-Speight, minister to children and families at Broadway Baptist Church in Louisville, began discussing the need to support and network with women ministers throughout Kentucky they envisioned creation of a new organization. They soon learned that a Kentucky BWIM chapter had been in existence since the mid-1980s but stopped meeting about 2001.

Members of the initial group shared stories and supported reinstitution of the organization. Twenty-seven women from across the state and both generations met two hours at Georgetown before moving to a chapel service where Durso was guest speaker.

Durso said many of the women who began preaching and teaching in Southern Baptist churches in the 1980s experienced exclusion from their association and attended seminary when women called to be pastors were a small minority of the campus population.

“Many of these women lived out their calling in hard places and in hard times, but their faithfulness in following opened the doors through which many of us in this room have walked,” Durso said. “We owe a spiritual debt to our mothers who traveled before us; those who paved the way. Today we stand on their shoulders.”

Challenging the new generation of women ministers—including students from the Baptist Seminary of Kentucky that recently relocated to the Georgetown campus—Durso said: “We are the shoulders for our daughters and for the next generation. We are the ones paving the way, the ones shaping our Baptist culture, our Christian culture, our world. Today we are here to dream of all the possibilities of the way God’s Spirit can work.”

Durso said that there is a “new openness” to female leadership in many Baptist churches, but too often she still hears “words of exclusion” from Baptists who tell her they don’t want women deacons and from search committees who say their church isn’t ready to consider a woman pastor.

She urged BWIM members to seek out girls in middle school and high school discerning a call to ministry and provide places for them to talk about and explore their gifts. She suggested encouraging older



girls to sing, preach and pray in public worship and connecting them with women seminarians and helping them with financial support.

“When they are ready we need to open doors for them,” Durso said. “We need to open the doors of our churches, the doors of our ministries and the doors of our hearts and welcome them in.”

During the dialogue session, participants voiced the need for networking and emotional support for isolated women in ministry, mentoring younger women and creating opportunities for them to preach and teach in churches to help build their resumes and connecting with other women ministers, including perhaps non-Baptists. They also mentioned a need to support and affirm women in all ministry positions, and not just to advocate for pastors. A steering committee will refine a list of ideas and report at a subsequent gathering.

The reincarnation of the BWIM chapter recalls a time when Kentucky was viewed as a Mecca for women encouraged to study for M.Div. degrees at Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in the 1970s and 1980s. Soon after Southern Baptist Women in Ministry formed in 1983, a Center for Baptist Women in Ministry opened at Louisville’s Crescent Hill Baptist Church and began publishing a newsletter called *Folio*.

With the coming of a new president in the 1990s, Southern Seminary turned back the clock, discouraging women’s ordination and relegating females to traditional roles like teaching children and other women and homemaking.

In 1996 Baptist Women in Ministry moved offices to Kansas City at the invitation of Central Baptist Theological Seminary. The organization struggled financially for several years, and then relocated to Atlanta and in 2009 hired Durso as full-time executive director.

Baptist Women in Ministry estimates about 2,200 women in formerly Southern Baptist congregations have been ordained to ministry, but most serve in roles other than pastor. In 2010 the group identified 135 Baptist women serving as pastor or co-pastor of a church aligned with the Alliance of Baptists, Baptist General Association of Virginia, Baptist General Convention of Texas or Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.

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