



Fall Workshop

In September VBWIM convened a workshop on the theme “Survival Skills for the Long Haul.” Financial advisor Barbara Dittmyer spoke on money management, stressing the importance of a savings plan started early in one’s career, the need to understand and control one’s own finances, and to be involved in investment decisions.

Ann Charles-Craft, chaplain and instructor in patient counseling at VCU Health System, led a discussion on self-care. Self-care, she pointed out, is a personal response to the demands of life, and is manifested in physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual pursuits, such as attention to diet, lifetime learning, family and church involvement, and activities that give personal satisfactions, such as hobbies. She pointed out that a hazard of the profession of ministry is “compassion fatigue,” that is, giving more than you have within yourself. She offered some correctives, such as an understanding of healthy boundaries, the use of humor, delegation, personal quiet times, concentration on hobbies, and “best friend” relationships.

Rhonda Vandyke Colby discussed “Balancing Nurture with Authority” in the context of women’s leadership. Personal characteristics commonly thought of as feminine or masculine were listed and individuals asked where they fit. Some dichotomies were noted: collaborative or solo, touchy-feely or insensitive, gentle or harsh, motherly or bossy, and so forth. She pointed out that generally we are not either/or but somewhere on a continuum, and that there are unhealthy extremes. For instance, in the matter of decisiveness, an unhealthy extreme would be rigidity and willfulness. In the matter of nurturing, it would be co-dependency.

After lunch, Amy Holtz and Wendy Crowe led in closing worship. All sessions were held at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, with about thirty persons present.

Dinner at BGAV

VBWIM hosted a dinner meeting in Virginia Beach on November 8, held in conjunction with the Baptist General Association of Virginia. About 40 persons shared in the program titled “Ethics in Ministry: Practical Strategies for Women,” in which individuals responded to scenarios assigned to a table. The scenarios were built around topics representative of issues and problems women ministers might face. These included relationships with staff, challenges to leadership, inappropriate sexual advances, achieving a balance of church or office demands with personal or family concerns. The group at each table discussed their assignment and a spokesperson reported back to the whole group for additional discussion. There was healthy give and take and innovative responses to the scenarios.

Other VBWIM News

Virginia WIM is moving forward with plans to organize a conference for college women considering a career in ministry and who may be moving toward seminary study. The conference is planned for February 13–14, 2004, to be held at the Omni Hotel in Charlottesville. The conference is funded by a grant from the Samuel Project of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Additional information will be given as plans develop.

Check out the Virginia WIM website, www.baptistwomeninministry.org. It is a work in progress with much yet to be done to make it useful and informative. Plans include links to *Synergy* articles, sites of women’s groups, book reviews, bibliographies, and VBWIM news.

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Ex Cathedra

God's Presence and Purposes

by Judith B. Bailey

I love "new beginnings." A friend of mine suggested that I view change as growth. That may be. I know that I thrive on a certain amount of change and the opportunity to do something different, or to do the same thing in a different way. I don't think I could survive an assembly line of endless repetition.

So, here we are at the beginning of a new year. We don't know what the year will bring, but at least for now, we can be hopeful, knowing that this year will bring its share of disappointments and sadness. That is the way life is. But I digress. My main point is that I am constantly amazed at the surprises of life, at the things we do that we never even thought or dreamed about. In ways that we do not always discern, God is working with us for goodness and wholeness in the lives of those who love and follow God.

For example, 2002 was a year of tremendous personal sadness for me as I experienced the deaths of my bother and my mother. Along with grief there was tension surrounding the division of my mother's estate. And yet, as my sisters and I went through the letters, cards, valentines, report cards and other treasures my parents had saved over the years, we realized anew how much they loved each of us. The competitiveness eased, allowing us to focus upon loving and sharing in a way that honored them. Later, as I reflected upon what had happened, I had an epiphany, an acute awareness that just as "a river runs through it," God's purposes are being worked out in our lives.

On another occasion this past year I glimpsed the purpose and grace of God in an almost overwhelming way. I attended the funeral of our great pioneer, Anne Plunkett Rosser, and suddenly became aware of one of the great blessings of my life: I have lived long enough to see a tradition of female ecclesiastical leadership

develop. Betty Pugh, pastor of Grace Baptist Church, was conducting the funeral. Betty was one of my students at the University of Richmond, a leader in the Baptist Student Union. Anne Rosser was one of the first women I knew who was pastor of a church. In fact, I knew her before she became a pastor, meeting her when she and Florence Langford invited me to a meeting of pastors' wives in Richmond over twenty years ago. And here am I, somewhere in the middle generation, benefiting from the work of those who went before me, working to sustain the tradition with those who follow.

During that service I knew that ordained women who are pastors, ministers of music, education, youth, children, college students—you name it, are here to stay. Not because of our efforts, though they are significant, but because God continues to call and empower women.

It is a special gift for me to see the tradition established, partly because of the work I have done on the history of female leadership in the church, particularly in 18th- and 19th-century America. Nineteenth-century women didn't know about the women religious leaders of the eighteenth century. But they knew the importance of legacy, tradition and role models. Many of them wrote their memoirs and wrote extensively in religious journals to establish their presence and their ministry. Unfortunately, most have been left out of our history until recently. Many lived and died without knowing about each other.

But we are in a new day of research and information, of determined congregations and courageous women who follow God's leading, in spite of fundamentalist attacks. We will not go back. We will continue to work together as an association of women and men participating in the purposes of God in our lives and in the world.

The Rev. Judith B. Bailey is co-pastor of Taylorsville Church, and chair of VBWIM

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Grandmother God

by Barbara Sadtler

Why would God ever call a middle-aged woman to be a chaplain in a men's prison? The warden at the medium-security men's facility seemed to think my employer (Chaplains Service of the Churches of Virginia) had lost its collective mind. The counselor and psychologist for Death Row actually laughed when I was introduced to them. The officers at the end-of-the-road male juvenile prison snickered.

Didn't God know that tough men need a macho chaplain? They'll relate to a male, preferably young, good at street slang, maybe with a guitar slung over his shoulder. Certainly able to discuss basketball and football.

From time to time I asked the same question, but the work kept me too busy to ask often. The task then and now is to be a sign that God exists, to help each person discover the love God has for them in Jesus Christ and then to recognize how returning God's love will lead to becoming cross-bearing disciples.

As I listened to the stories of these men and boys, whose crimes ranged from stealing cars to multiple murder, I heard about lives which had known little or no love. Their fathers were frequently unknown. When fathers were present, they were usually abusive to both mothers and children. Mothers often had been strung out on crack cocaine, allowing a series of boyfriends to live in the house. These crackhead boyfriends frequently were physically or sexually abusive to the children. Where love was expressed, it was in the conditional. "If you love me, then you'll ... "drive the getaway car, get me drugs, get out of my hair." "I'll love you if ... "you get me some money, don't tell your mother, prove you're a man.

How do we explain the concept of love to those who have never known love? To the men I have met in these various prisons, love means lust, power, negotiation, or manipulation. Really caring about another person is weakness, something shameful. If we cannot hang the concept of love on a hook in the memory, how do we ever move beyond love to the idea of God's unconditional love?

In an effort to find that memory hook, I began asking, "Is there somebody in your life who really loved you, who made you feel loved?" Time and again, from young and old, black and white, rural and urban, minor and major offenders, the answer was "Grandma." Then I knew why God had brought me, the particularity of me, into prison as a sign that God is present. These men and boys have taught me a great deal about grandmothers.

Grandmothers bake cookies and pies and fill the house with comforting tastes and aromas, or they have cupboards full of sugar-sweetened cereals and Oreos and other goodies that good mothers refuse to buy. If there is a land of milk and honey, it is probably Grandma's kitchen.

Grandmothers sing "Amazing Grace" and other hymns while doing their chores. They teach kids to pray and they take kids to church. At church, kids see a room full of grandmothers, women to whom faith is the rock of their lives.

Grandmothers know everything that is happening. They may look sweet and kind, but they are nobody's fool. They are quick to encourage and just as fast at calling people to account. "I knew you could do it, child" "Mind your manners, young man!" "I am so proud of you." "You were raised better than that!" "The Lord is watching you, son, and so am I."

When everybody else fails us, grandmothers will still be there. When father is long gone and mother is unable to function, grandmother takes a hurting child into her home, providing the food, shelter, clothing, the love and security which human beings need in order to survive and grow. At their trial, the searing memory for many is the look of shame on grandma's face, the tears brimming out of her eyes.

Matthew turned himself in because of his grandmother. He was an accessory to murder and faced a stiff sentence if he was apprehended. He successfully escaped to another state. He did not dare call his grandma to let her know he was safe because the telephone would be monitored. As weeks went by, he thought about her, about the shame he had caused her, the worry he had provoked. He thought about all she had done for him. He worried that the stress could lead to her death. In the end he cared more for her than for his freedom. Matthew came back to Virginia, went to the police station, made his first call to his grandmother rather than his lawyer. He knew Grandma loved him, even in his sinfulness; he discovered within himself the ability to love in response.

Matthew and I used his story to help him understand the love of God, the offering of Christ, the call to discipleship. I was honored to baptize him several years ago. He is now one of our Christian leaders and a source of inspiration to many of the young men in the prison.

I know that my ministry is built on the foundation laid by grandmothers. In this world "father" is not a useful image for the God we proclaim. "Father" means absent, abusive, manipulative,

GRANDMOTHER GOD

unreliable, unloving. "Grandmother," on the other hand, signifies love, comfort, wisdom, high standards, and always being there when she is needed. Grandma is the neon sign that God exists.

Perhaps prison is not the only place where that is true. If grandmothers are a window revealing something about the nature of God, then women in ministry have more than our excellent biblical and theological arguments to undergird our work. We serve people who have hooks on their soul walls, hooks created by memories of love and faithfulness. We can hang the gospel on those hooks. It is an extra bonus that growing older, with its extra padding and craggy wrinkles, only makes us better signs that God exists.

*The Rev. Barbara Sadtler is chaplain,
James River Correctional Center, Goochland County, Virginia*

Becoming The Woman You Were Meant To Be

by Barbara Jackson

Being a woman in Christian ministry is to be a player in a significant cultural movement of today's world. The status of women is a matter of scrutiny in every avenue of existence—from education and career achievement to political participation and economic influence, to homemaking and motherhood. The very fact that the role of women in home and church is one of the dividing issues in fundamentalist circles tells that we—woman *cum* woman—have some cards to play. We matter. How we play those cards may well set the stage for the outcome of the gender war.

Women ministers have a vocation. They feel they have been called to minister in the setting of the church. The specific working out of that call, however, is the unknown factor. The combination of gifts, interests, skills and education determine in part the avenue of ministry and its effectiveness. Church staff leadership, age group specialization, direct ministry with persons through the avenues of counseling, teaching, community outreach, missions, or organizational leadership through program planning and administration, curriculum writing, or communications through writing or various media—all are valid avenues of the expression of one's calling. Surely, there are other avenues as well.

A theology of calling tells us that every Christian is a minister but that some have been given the assignment of "equipping" and preaching, *i.e.*, educating, ministering, and building up the body of Christ (*Ephesians 4:12*). The young person in high school or college or the seminarian who feels God's call to minister may wonder just what she or he will do, where or when or how. Often we cannot know where the path will lead or what doors will be open or closed.

One story in this issue of Synergy is entitled "Grandmother God," a fascinating look at an avenue of ministry few of us would dream of. The insights into the nature of God are astounding.

Another article is a tribute to Anne Rosser, who died recently. She was truly a pioneer for the women ministers who followed. She brought to the fore a public understanding of the women's issues in the context of church. She spoke out fearlessly to Baptists and made the case for women following their calling, whatever their age. And she was the epitome of our title: "becoming the woman you were meant to be." She entered ministry in her middle years, after child-rearing, after her pastor's wife persona, secured advanced

degrees and set about making it easier for women of today's generation to gain acceptance and welcome in ministry roles. A true pioneer.

Look at the observations in the "Ex Cathedra" column, the musings of the chair of our organization. In her work with college students, she has seen the fruits of her ministry, as students have gone on to become ministers themselves and are in position to train up a new generation, and as students have carried their understandings of lay ministry into home and career and church.

In my own case, I never dreamed I would be doing what I do now. I married right out of seminary, became a pastor's wife with all that entails and was never on a church staff. Later I was a correspondent for the mission board, advising young people on their career plans and education and what they should do to become a missionary—and during that time was a volunteer in my church and mother and homemaker. Later, I took up computers and learned how to do newsletters and other communications pieces, undertook this newsletter for VBWIM and several for some other organizations, including CBF of Virginia. Now I design books and booklets for the Virginia Baptist Historical Society through my home-based editorial business.

I have jokingly said that when in seminary I never dreamed I would be doing this. I thought I might be a campus minister (BSU worker as it was called then). But when I look back to elementary school and my innate interest then in writing and words, I see I am doing exactly what I dreamed of many years ago. I pray for that sense of satisfaction for everyone.

The word for young women in ministry is that your first job may not be where you'll end up. God is working with you to mold you. Prepare yourself with the tools of scholarship, the understandings of theology, and a vision of the world's needs—and God will help you find the next step.

A word of warning, however. Be intentional in all you do. Don't sit back and rely on some supernatural, magical, genie-kind of god to unfold a plan. Being in God's will is important. For that to happen it is imperative to be true to yourself, to cultivate your best self and uphold your own integrity. And to pray for self-understanding.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of SYNERGY, loves to sing in the choir and grub in the garden, and is writer for several publications.

'SAINTS' AND HEROES'

A Steel Magnolia of a Minister

With Thanksgiving and in Memory of Anne P. Rosser

by Betty Pugh

I don't know about you, but there is something unique about southern women, who can knock down walls of injustice and exclusivity, while at the same time, with grace and propriety pour you a cold glass of lemonade. This was the kind of woman that I knew in Anne Plunkett Rosser. She was deliberate, strong, and yet, lived with the daily graces of the best of southern hospitality. In her, these were not mutually exclusive characteristics.

When I think about the challenges, subtle and not so subtle that women face seeking places of ministry today, I can't even begin to imagine the kinds of barriers that separated Anne from what she felt called to be and to do. And yet she persevered. And for those who followed her, we were truly thankful.

I had the privilege of serving as her pastor for 5 years after she moved to Richmond following the death of her beloved husband, Aubrey. These were tough years for Anne. Dealing with the death of the love of her life, adjusting to retirement and trying to find a place in a new community, were daily challenges that she faced. But she faced them with thoughtfulness, good humor, and a great deal of hope. It was an honor to walk beside her and a tremendous loss to see her succumb to the struggles of the flesh. Even when her words could not flow as they once did, even when her mind could not recall a face that was once familiar, the grace-filled, beautiful spirit of Anne Rosser was still present.

If you knew Anne, you knew her to be a thinker. There was nothing she wasn't willing to consider, to ponder, to confront. Her Phi Beta Kappa mind continued to engage the world following her graduation from Westhampton College in 1951. For in 1977, she earned a Doctor of Ministry Degree from Union Theological Seminary (now Union-PSCE) in Richmond, Virginia. At that point, she became the first woman with a doctorate degree ordained to pastoral ministry by a Southern Baptist church.

She was outspoken, and at times, a spiritual agitator and catalyst for many of the conversations concerning the "Women in Ministry" issue within Baptist circles. As many women ministers discover, just being active in ministry is like being a living, breathing object lesson for the world. And she was. But she was also an advocate in other ways, seeking justice for all people, seeking righteousness especially from the Body of Christ. My guess is that she probably

made some folks angry. My guess is that some of the change and openness to the pastoral leadership of women can be traced back to some of her earlier challenges to the exclusion of women.

I have a lovely office here at Grace and upon my shelves are many books. Through the graciousness and generosity of her sons, a large part of her library was given to me. And so, though she is no longer in my congregation, her treasured friends through many years of ministry keep me company daily. And I only hope that my mind and my spirit will be as open and engaging as was hers throughout my ministry.

Anne was a beautiful woman in so many ways, and I will grieve her absence from my congregation's life as well as my own. I will miss her keen mind and her desire to get to the real heart of an issue. I will miss her bold and unabashed southern pushiness that made some folks angry and made others love her for saying what they were thinking. I am thankful for the many gifts, the person and the presence that was Anne Rosser. As I said as I concluded her eulogy this past November, "We were all so very lucky to have known her."

The Rev. Dr. Elizabeth Pugh is pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Richmond.

NEWS BRIEFS

Synergy readers are invited to the HOOVER LECTURES at BTSR on February 25-26. The speaker is Karen Smith, professor and pastor of a Baptist church in Wales. She will be speaking on Baptists and Community. Watch for details.

BREAKFAST AT THE CBF OF VIRGINIA annual General Assembly will be hosted by VBWIM, as has been done for the past several years. The meeting will be at Churchland Church in Chesapeake on March 14-15. Watch for information in the *Religious Herald* on program and hotels. This year, the 10th anniversary celebration of CBF of Virginia will be marked by a special anniversary banquet at 5:30 on Friday, March 14. Reservations are required. Cost is \$10.

BOOK REVIEW

Stand With Christ: Why Missionaries Can't Sign the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message,

Robert O'Brien, editor. Foreword by Walter B. Shurden and Afterword by R. Keith Parks.

SMYTH & HELWYS, MACON, GEORGIA.

reviewed by Martha Skelton

Alice of wonderland fame would be most at home in today's Southern Baptist landscape. Is up really down? Big really little? Can Baptists be confessional and creedal? Can the stain of heresy be wiped off by one signed piece of paper?

If you are looking for a quick, non-fundamentalist analysis of the recent controversy over the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement and its imposition on Southern Baptist overseas missionaries, this book was compiled with you in mind.

If you are wondering what all the rhetoric has to do with women, and specifically, with women in ministry, the book is a "must read."

Essentially a series of essays relating to the wording and meaning of the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statement, the chapters are structured to begin with the broader view and follow with a closer look at certain applications. Historic perspectives by Walter Shurden, Charles W. Deweese, and Russell Dilday give the reader essential facts. Walter Shurden is professor at Mercer University and founding executive director of the Center for Baptist Studies. Charles W. Deweese is executive director-treasurer of the Baptist History and Heritage Society. Russell Dilday is retired professor of Homiletics at George W. Truett Theological Seminary and former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Dilday traces the events that led up to BFM changes and gives a well-outlined chapter on the differences between the 1963 and 2000 Baptist Faith and Message statements.

James M. Dunn and David R. Currie analyze the 2000 BFM's measure against the traditional Baptist views of freedom of conscience and priesthood of the believer. James M. Dunn is retired executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee and David R. Currie is executive director of Texas Baptists Committed. Robert O'Brien, the book's editor and former writer/editor for Baptist Press and the International Mission Board and John D. Pierce, editor of *Baptists Today* show the events and their impact on Baptist life viewed through a communicator's perspective.

The effects of this issue on Baptist life and ministry at the state and congregational levels is explored by Charles Wade, executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and Kenneth Massey, pastor of First Baptist Church of Greensboro, North Carolina. A helpful exploration of the confusion over using the term "Word of God" to refer to Christ and to the Bible is provided by Bruce Prescott, executive director of Mainstream Oklahoma Baptists.

The book then narrows its focus to a specific application of the 2000 BFM—the directive requiring all International Mission Board missionaries to sign the document and to conduct their work in accordance with its provisions. The chapters written by those whose lives have for many years been given to the missions ministries of Southern Baptists were especially moving. These writers, Catherine B. Allen, Earl Martin and R. Keith Parks, express a personal sense of betrayal, alienation and loss. They cite the betrayal of deeply held missiological ideals, alienation among former and current colleagues divided between "signers" and "non-signers," and the loss of focus and momentum on taking the gospel of Christ to a lost world.

Let me cite one example dealt with in the book. One of the arguments given for asking the missionaries to sign 2000 BFM is, in the words of the letter sent by IMB president Jerry Rankin to field missionaries, "Signing this affirmation protects you from charges of heresy behind your back while you are overseas and cannot defend yourself." It hits missionaries living abroad at their vulnerable spots—distance and isolation, difficulty of direct communication, the struggle to know and assess what is going on in their home churches and denomination. And it in effect says that unnamed accusers citing nonspecific charges of heresy against maybe "you" need to be placated. Rather than the mission board administrators seeking specificity about such serious charges and thereby giving protection to all innocent field personnel, the approach seems to be to doubt the missionaries first. The burden of proof falls on them rather than on the nameless, faceless, blanket accusers.

At the same time the mere signing of a piece of paper seems enough to erase all doubt of heresy. A true heretic would have no problem signing such a document because it would have no meaning to him or her. Heresy is a deadly serious business. To use such terminology for such a goal—getting missionaries to sign the 2000 BFM—raises the possibility that heresy is not the real reason for the request.

One cannot escape the irony of denominational leaders, who for two decades have used the tactics of misinformation, innuendo, and inaccuracies to achieve their ascension to power, offering now the signing the 2000 BFM as antidote.

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The Bookshelf

Following The Life Of Faith

Resources for Spiritual Discernment

by Alana Woolley

Winner, Lauren F. *Girl Meets God*. Chapel Hill: Algonquin Books, 2002. If you are looking for what I would call a “traditional spiritual memoir,” then this isn’t it. In reviewing this book in its forecast column back in September, *Publishers Weekly* stated that “there is something here to offend every reader.” All this is to say that you may not find here exactly what you might expect. But there is a lot to reflect upon.

Lauren Winner was born to an Orthodox Jewish father and a lapsed Southern Baptist mother. Her early family life was spent in Asheville, North Carolina. During this time, she was primarily raised in the Jewish faith. After her parents divorced and as her sister started college, Lauren and her mother moved to Charlottesville, Virginia. Even though her mother was the Baptist of the family, her mother enrolled Lauren in Sunday school at Congregation Beth Israel.

An overall underlying theme in the book is the interplay of the life of faith with our everyday experiences. So often

books reflect upon faith, prayer, reflection in ways that seem to separate them from what might be called the ordinary events of everyday life. Winner’s reflections show very clearly the interplay of her life experience with the life of faith. Even though Winner’s childhood faith journey was solely a Jewish one, she was not considered an orthodox Jew. Her experiences with Ben, an orthodox Jew, and other orthodox families during high school summers strengthened her need to convert formally. So she took the journey of a formal Jewish conversion. Throughout the book, Winner discusses how everyday events impacted her life of faith. Her life experiences inform her faith just as her faith informs her life experience.

A second theme reflected in the book is the journey of faith as a lifelong experience. Even though a converted Jew, Winner doesn’t feel complete. She continued to search. Ultimately she converted to Christianity. She completed the process in a formal way during a study time in Cambridge, England. Having returned to the United States, Lauren Winner is currently a doctoral candidate in history at Columbia University. She is also the co-author of *Protestantism in America* published by Columbia University Press.

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(Skelton ... from page 6)

It is not in *Whom* one believes but “with whom one goes along” that establishes Baptist orthodoxy.

As Baptist women, we are concerned and aware of the issues raised in this and other analyses of Southern Baptist life. Several of the chapters in the book touch on the 1997 and 2000 BFM statements regarding wives graciously submitting to husbands, and to the absolute refusal to acknowledge women as pastors. Two of Dilday’s twelve “troubling factors” about the newest BFM version relate specifically to women—the narrow interpretation of the role of women in marriage and in the church. And Catherine Allen outlines the terrible consequences of policies that limit women as co-partners in the missions enterprise. She points out that the field realities of these policies will give a specific, discouraging witness to women in male-dominated societies.

This book was produced with obvious speed to provide its viewpoint while the issue was still in debate among at least some Southern Baptists. Each chapter has the point of view and the “voice” of a different person, giving it a rich texture if not a smooth consistency in reading. In such a book, some repetition of points, and

even quotes, are inevitable. I am a bit bemused by the self-limiting sub-title: *Why missionaries can’t sign the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message*. The issues addressed in the book, while applicable in the current controversy involving the Southern Baptist overseas missionaries, are important and worthy of discussion beyond this particular situation.

Whatever the historic, biblical, theological, or missiological points each author makes, their main message is that Southern Baptists are making much more than leadership, administrative or seminary curriculum changes. They are redefining history, de-emphasizing *Who* we believe for *what* we believe and doing so through tactics more identified with secular business and political life.

Why does it all matter in the upside-down denominational Wonderland? Writer David Currie draws our eyes back to Christ. We must resist fundamentalism and its manifestations such as the 2000 BFM “because America and the world needs a Baptist witness focused on Jesus, not on power; focused on grace, not a narrow interpretation of the law; and focused on compassion, not judgment.”

Martha Skelton is former senior editor of THE COMMISSION magazine and former director of the European Baptist Press Service, now a freelance writer living in Richmond.

THE LAST WORD

Women as Agents of God

by Barbara Jackson

Revelation

In this issue of Synergy we look at some women who have used the circumstances of their lives and careers to convey something of what God is like. These heroes of the faith have been instruments of God's revelation.

Revelation is one of those esoteric theological words that packs a lot of meaning. One can look at the laws of nature and science and see order and thus infer a grand design. Such evidence thus proves the reality of the designer. However, revelation does not refer to humankind's search for God but to God's desire to reveal to humankind, a self-revelation, as it were.

In theological terms, God is revealed through the ordering of creation and the powers of reason given to humankind. We thus don't prove the existence of God. We start with the premise God is and that God takes the initiative in revealing God's self and God's purposes. We move then to the idea that God reveals through history, through choices and election, through acts of redemption, and through acts of love, primarily as seen through Jesus. And God is revealed through scripture, the written record of the drama of redemption. By inference, God is revealed to humankind today through individual acts of love, by the biblical record of the chosen people and by Jesus' example, and by the long look at history.

Let's look at the word revelation. The word is akin to the English veil, which is from the Latin *vela* or *uella*, the plural of *uelum*, a sail or drapery or awning. The word derives from the Indo-European (IE) *weg-* to weave. With the prefix, *revelare* (L) means to pull back the drapery, to disclose, to reveal. The Book of Revelation is called an apocalyptic work, that is to say, a genre of writing full of symbolism and arcane references to an imminent cosmic catastrophe. Apocalypse is the Greek word for uncovering.

Pioneer

Another word used to describe one of God's servants is pioneer. We think of the Pilgrims, of Daniel Boone and covered wagons and even of those brave heroes who undertake space travel. The astronauts who perished in the failure of the space ship *Columbia* were among today's pioneers. By extension, a pioneer is one who paves the way or who helps originate a new line of thought or activity or method.

The word pioneer is from the French *peon*, foot soldier, one who goes forth into a new uncivilized land. It is derived from *pedo* (L), foot. The pawn in chess is a related word. Foot is one of those important words upon which many other words are based. We have foot as a unit of measure, a fetter, a fetlock. In its *ped-* form, examples abound. Pedal, pedestal, pedestrian, impede, expedient, repudiate, pedigree, piedmont, biped and quadruped are just a few.

The sense of pioneer as one who paves the way is appropriate in thinking of women ministers. The early feminists who brought to public view the case for women as capable persons, who had a basic human right to make decisions, to own property, to vote, to wear clothes of their own choosing, helped to pave the way for the feminists of our generation to pursue education and careers.

A pioneer is also a person who originates something new. In other words, she or he has a creative spark—call it genius—that enables her to think outside the box, to dream new thoughts and conceive of new ideas, to make new applications of accepted ideas. Let's look at a third concept.

“A pioneer is also a person who originates something new.... She or he has a creative spark—call it genius—that enables her to think outside the box, to dream new thoughts and conceive of new ideas,”

Creative

To be creative is to be gifted with vision and courage. Creative is a word often used to describe an effective minister. She or he takes nothing for granted, does not rest on old laurels, does not ascribe trite platitudes to the real situation of the one being ministered to. On the contrary, the effective minister looks beyond the obvious to the germ of the matter, assesses needs and draws up a plan.

Creative and create come from the Latin *creare*, to cause to grow. Related words are creation, creator, creature, procreate, recreate, recreation, to name a few. Also, crescendo, concrete, recruits (troops), increase and decrease. Also, the Roman goddess Ceres, who presided over crops, and cereal. All words ultimately derive from *ker-* (IE) to grow.

A servant of God is one who grows—in understandings, in scope of loving deeds, in acts of servanthood.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of SYNERGY, loves to sing in the choir and grub in the garden, and is writer for several publications.

NEWS BRIEFS

Woolley ... from page 7

Additional Reading for Spiritual Reflection

Winner's spiritual journey challenges us to our own reflections. While she structured the sections of the book around the seasons of the Christian liturgical calendar, other spiritual guides follow different formats. Whether beginning the liturgical year or a new calendar year, we may want some structure and assistance in reflecting on our life of faith. The following resources may be helpful in your daily journey.

Nouwen, Henri J. M. *Bread for the Journey: A Day of Wisdom and Faith*. San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1997.

The book of meditations by Henri Nouwen provides a different reflection for each day of the year. Similar books by other authors are often compiled by using excerpts from their previous writings. In this case, Nouwen wrote each meditation one by one specifically for the book. In a brief introduction, Nouwen describes the experience of writing each reflection. The writings were some of his last prior to his death in 1996.

Buechner, Frederick. *Listening to Your Life*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1992.

Listening to Your Life is a compilation of daily meditations taken from the many writings of Frederick Buechner. Frederick Buechner, an ordained Presbyterian minister wrote about the life of faith both in fiction as well as non-fiction. His writings include novels, memoirs, essays and books of sermons.

L'Engle, Madeleine and Carole F. Chase. *Glimpses of Grace: Daily Thoughts and Reflections*. HarperSanFrancisco, 1996.

The many writings of Madeleine L'Engle provide the basis for the daily reflections in *Glimpses of Grace*, edited by Carole Chase. Madeleine L'Engle's writings include adult fiction, children's literature, religious non-fiction, and memoirs. The book provides spiritual insights for each day of the year.

Bodo, Murray. *Through the Year with Francis of Assisi: Daily Meditations from His Words and Life*. New York: Image Books, 1987.

Murray Bodo translated and edited daily meditations from the writings and sayings of Saint Francis and includes some stories about the saint. The volume allows you to spend each day of the year with the wisdom of Saint Francis.

Merton, Thomas and Thomas P McDonnell. *Through the Year With Thomas Merton: Daily Meditations from His Writings*. New York: Doubleday, 2001.

In this reprint in 2001, Thomas McDonnell edited the writings of Thomas Merton to give us a meditation for each day of the year. The many writings of Thomas Merton on

prayer, spiritual life, and the desert fathers provide the basis for these daily reflections.

Tickle, Phyllis. *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Summertime*. Doubleday, 2000. *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Autumn and Wintertime*. Doubleday, 2000. *The Divine Hours: Prayers for Springtime*. New York: Doubleday, 2001.

The three books are a trilogy of prayer manuals by Phyllis Tickle, the contributing editor in religion for *Publishers Weekly* and are based upon the concept of "fixed hour prayer," a discipline of saying prayers at set times of the day. A brief history of the practice is contained in the introduction of each volume. The introduction also includes notes for the use of the manual. The trilogy as a whole provides readings for each day of the year. A daily section contains an outline and readings for the morning office, the midday office, and the vespers office. At the end of the month is a monthly section containing that month's readings for the night office to be used before retiring for the night. Regular use of the books can provide the basis for a more disciplined life of prayer and reflection.

Watch for the Light: Readings for Advent and Christmas (2001). *Bread and Wine: Readings for Lent and Easter*. Farmington: Plough Publishing House, 2002.

The two books by Plough Publishing provide special readings for significant seasons of the liturgical calendar. *Watch for the Light* gives a daily reading for November 24 through January 7 to cover the seasons of Advent and Christmas in any given year. The readings are from the works of a variety of authors ranging from Saint Thomas Aquinas to Annie Dillard and Gail Godwin. *Bread and Wine* provides readings to cover the days from Ash Wednesday through Holy Saturday. After the readings for the season of Lent, there are two sections of readings on the themes of resurrection and new life. The writers include Thomas à Kempis and Leo Tolstoy as well as Kathleen Norris and John Updike.

Alana Woolley is a telecommunications consultant in Richmond.

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

New Positions and Changes

Karen Heil Borchert is associate pastor at North Riverside Church, Newport News.

Melissa Jones-Smith is director of youth at Little Elam Church, Charles City.

Josephine Sweet is minister to children at First Church, Winchester.

Wendy Belton is youth minister at Broadus Memorial Church, Richmond.

Holly Irvin is associate minister of music and youth at Monument Heights Church, Richmond.

Morgan Day is minister of worship and Music at New Bridge Church, Richmond.

Mary Langley is associate minister of education and missions at Central Church, Richmond.

Stephanie Delgado is minister of children at Cambridge Church, Richmond.

Peggy Campbell is director of children and music ministries at Salem Church, Salem.

Brooke Pulling is director of children's and youth ministries at Epiphany Church, Matoaca.

Diane L. Schwartz is director of youth ministries at Westwood Church, Springfield.

Elizabeth Wright is pastor of Adams Grove Church, Emporia.

Janet Moore is music director at Bowling Green Church, Bowling Green.

Gina Evans is music director at Haran Church, Roanoke.

Nancy Elliott is choir director at Taylorsville Church, Doswell.

Susan McBride was named team leader for emerging leaders in the new staff reorganization of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board. She has been a missions resource consultant for the board's northern region since 1997, was formerly campus minister at Mary Washington College in Fredericksburg.

Jennie Neal is minister of music at Connelly Memorial Church, Roanoke.

Jennifer Eastwood is music director at Mount Tabor Church, Keeling.

Leslie Straw is a coordinator in the Emerging Leader Team of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board's staff reorganization.

Teresa Compton is associate pastor of children at First Church, Alexandria.

Tricia Sanford is minister of preschool and children at Mount Hermon Church, Danville.

BGAV Mission board staff: **Susan McBride** as team leader and **Leslie Straw** as coach coordinator in the Emerging Leaders group. Also in that group are the emerging leader strategists (formerly campus ministers). Full-time women are **Daphne Almarode**, **Michelle Myers**, **Susan Blanchard**, and **Cherie Cruze**. Part-time women are **Miriam Dakin**, **Patty King**, and **Natalie Kline**. In the Glocal Missions and Evangelism team, the list of professional positions include **Valerie Carter** and **Diane Smith** (both full time) and **Dorryce Rudd** (part time). In the Business Services, **Joyce Journey** is public relations coordinator and **Lisa Brown** is controller. The full list of staff include many women as administrative assistants, accountants and financial management assistants, data management, public relations and communications assistants, and hostesses. We salute them all.

Ordinations

Nadja Croft was ordained on June 23 by First Church, Orangeburg, S.C. She serves as assistant minister of community missions at First Church, Richmond.

Debbie Warren was ordained to the gospel ministry on July 28 by Coastal Community Church, Virginia Beach, where she is minister of life development.

Susan Price was ordained to the gospel ministry on August 4 by Huguenot Road Church, Richmond, where she is associate pastor of youth and children.

Natalie Kline was ordained to the gospel ministry on September 8 by Melrose Church, Roanoke. She is emerging leader strategist (campus minister) in the Roanoke area.

Linda Gilliam was ordained to the gospel ministry on November 3 by Huguenot Road Church, Richmond.

Mary Richerson Mann was ordained to the gospel ministry on November 8 by Westover Church, Richmond.

Sheila Allen was ordained to the gospel ministry on December 29 by Mount Pleasant Church, Herndon, where she is minister of visitation.

Honors and Accolades

Beth Cumbie Fogg was elected president of the Baptist General Association at its annual meeting November 8-9 in Virginia Beach. She is a lay member at Second Baptist in Richmond. She was featured in the Nov. 21 *Religious Herald* column by Fred Anderson. Her president's address to the BGAV was printed in the Dec. 12 issue.

Melissa Scott and **Linda Kiser** were elected officers of the Virginia Baptist Youth Ministers Association at its annual meeting November 7 in Virginia Beach. Scott was named secretary/treasurer and Kiser editor of the association's communications.

Graduations

New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary: **Sara Askins Baughman** of Stafford, MA in Marriage and Family Counseling.

NEWS BRIEFS

Alma Hunt Leaves Virginia Church

By Robert O'Brien

When First Baptist Church of Roanoke, Va., voted to join the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia (SBCV), 93-year-old Alma Hunt voted to leave it. "I didn't leave my church; it left me," said the legendary Southern Baptist missions leader.

The church voted on January 8 to leave the Baptist General Association of Virginia and join the SBCV, which split from the BGAV in 1996 as part of the Southern Baptist denominational controversy. Hunt joined Rosalind Hills Baptist Church in Roanoke, which is affiliated with the General Association and with CBF and allows its members to choose a giving plan for their contributions.

Hunt's long affiliation with the BGAV and its goals and purposes was a deciding factor in her decision. The BGAV's state missions offering is named for her. "I do not believe that the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia reflect traditional Baptist heritage and principles," said Hunt, who served as executive secretary of the SBC Woman's Missionary Union, 1948-74. "I feel sorry for the people of the First Baptist Church who don't realize the changes that have taken place in Southern Baptist life," she said. (ADAPTED)

Center for Baptist Heritage & Studies Publishes New Resources

Three books were published in 2002. The first, *Freedom for the Journey*, by Phyllis Rodgerson Pleasants, is a resource book designed for study groups and looks at basic Baptist principles: the freedom to assemble, the freedom to study scripture, the freedom to follow, and the freedom of religion.

Also new in 2002 is *Seeds of Hope, the Story of Baptists in Liberia*, compiled by Bill Duke. The book tells of the historical connection, Baptist work today, and the partnership between Virginia Baptists and Liberian Baptists. Proceeds from the sale of the book go to the Liberian Cattle Project.

The third book is *The Districts: Examining the Past and Possible Futures of Local Associations*, compiled by Thelma Hall Miller. The Districts is a record of a symposium of local association leaders, historians, and Baptist strategists in which participants functioned as a think tank to solve problems and imagine possibilities for the future.

For information on pricing and orders, call Virginia Baptist Historical Society at 804-289-8434.

MEMBERSHIP for 2003 virginia baptist women in ministry

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CALENDAR

February

- 7 Richmond area coffee, Saturday, 10:30 a.m. Parlor, B TSR, 3400 Brook Rd., Richmond. Followed by Steering Committee at noon.
- 25-26 Hoover Lectures at B TSR. Speaker is Karen Smith, professor and pastor in Wales, on Baptist Identity and Community. Call 804-204-1241.

March

- 14-15 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Virginia annual General Assembly, Churchland Baptist Church, Chesapeake. Friday banquet, 5:30, \$10 by reservation. Sat. breakfast hosted by Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry. Speakers include Donna Hopkins Britt and Sarah Jackson Shelton. Call 804-213-0412

April-May

- 20 Easter
- 24-26 Alliance of Baptists Convocation, Vienna, Va. National Women in Ministry will hold a 20th year birthday celebration. Virginia volunteers requested. Call Baptist Women in Ministry, 913-321-6864.
- 28-1 Preaching & Worship Conference, B TSR. Speakers are Thomas G. Long and Milburn Price. Call 804-204-1241.

June

- 26-28 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly, Charlotte, N.C. The national Baptist Women in Ministry will meet in conjunction and will hold a 20th-year anniversary celebration.

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