



Elizabeth Barnes speaker for VBWIM dinner

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry met for dinner at the Roanoke Civic Center on November 11 at 5 p.m., following the afternoon session of the Baptist General Association of Virginia.

Dr. Elizabeth Barnes, professor of theology and ethics at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, spoke. Elizabeth Barnes is a long-time supporter of women in ministry and is a friend and mentor to many women across the state as well as in North Carolina, where she taught for a number of years.

Barnes is a graduate of Meredith College and Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, and received her Ph.D. from Duke University. She has written several books, her newest one to be released later this year. Her topic for the dinner meeting was drawn from her book, *The Story of Discipleship: Christ, Humanity, and Church in Narrative Perspective*, published in 1995.

Members of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry as well as friends and supporters met for dinner to celebrate our shared pilgrimage, to renew friendships, and to have our minds and commitments challenged by our eminent



Elizabeth Barnes

speaker. Guests enjoyed the fellowship around the table.

While there was not time for extended business, Ellen Gwathmey, convener of the VBWIM steering committee, gave information about the upcoming spring VBWIM workshop and announced plans for regional networking groups for women in ministry around the state.

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Ex Cathedra

Celebrate Your Walk with God

A few months ago, I attended my twenty-fifth college reunion. It was a gala weekend, complete with receptions, luncheons, teas, dinner, dances, concerts, and plenty of time for "remember when." We celebrated our four years together as undergraduates; we celebrated our journeys since then; we celebrated the lives of those lost to us on this earth, even as we mourned their passing. We got reacquainted with each other, got to know the people we had become and were becoming. It was a great and wonderful time, full of fun and laughter and renewal.

That weekend got me thinking about celebrations in general. In my family we celebrate birthdays and anniversaries, graduations and promotions. We have house warmings or apartment warmings, whichever is appropriate. We also have family reunions where we reminisce and laugh over funny incidents, cry over misfortunes and celebrate important milestones in each others' lives. Most importantly, we tell stories of who we were and who we are.

I was reminded of how we celebrate the milestones of our church life. Even though each day we must choose to continue to be followers of Christ and though we can never quite recapture the wonder and solemnness of our initial decision, shouldn't we celebrate the joy we experience as Christians? To some extent we do so each Sunday we gather to worship and especially, perhaps, when we take communion.

I think, however, it would be nice to set aside a specific time to gather together for the sole purpose of celebrating our faith journeys—a grand reunion every three or five years—a time not connected with church homecomings or stewardship or faculty appreciation, but simply a time to recall our own professions of faith and baptisms and our pilgrimages since then.

This would be the time and place to tell the stories of who we were and who we are and how we've grown, stories that we share with one another and stories that our children and our children's children should hear.

In this life we too often forget to celebrate or we push such observances into the background while we get on with the "more important business of living life." I have no particular proposals to make about how we might go about this sort of observance. You think about it.

It could take the form of a family or church or even an ecumenical community celebration. Perhaps some churches already do something along these lines.

Whatever form it takes—a meal or reception, an informal fellowship or formal ritual, such a celebration of our call to Christianity should be a great and wonderful time, full of love, renewal, and the awesomeness of God.

*The Rev. Ellen T. Gwathmey is minister of visitation and outreach,
River Road Church, Richmond.*

VBWIM Spring Workshop is scheduled for March 7. The program will focus on the Myers-Briggs personality types and specifically on how an understanding of types can help in ministry. We plan to have advance registration so that individuals can take the test and have it scored before the workshop. Please place this event on your calendar. Publicity will go out in January with registration information.

An added feature of the workshop is its location at the University of Richmond. The first program for Virginia women in ministry was in 1988 at the university. For this tenth anniversary, it is fitting to return to that location for a special celebration and an examination of the ways women minister.

VBWIM continues to refine its organization with the development of regional networks. Dawn Mayes, who is campus minister at Longwood College, has taken the lead in developing the concept and enlisting people who are willing to get involved. Volunteers are welcome! You will be hearing more about the plans as they are implemented.

Besides the personal benefit to individuals in developing a sense of community and professional identity, we hope a side effect will help the organization better keep up with staff changes, newcomers, new graduates, and changing addresses, as well as keep us posted about significant events in people's lives.

On another front, VBWIM is moving right along in the process of establishing non-profit status in the eyes of the IRS. A very significant step, such recognition will make possible grant applications and all that a fresh infusion of financial support can make possible.

Synergy publication schedule is erratic due to the whims and other responsibilities of the editor. We ask your indulgence. Another one this year? Maybe, maybe not!

SYNERGY, the newsletter of Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry, is published in Richmond, Va. Membership is \$20 per year (\$10, students). Memberships and manuscript submissions should be mailed to River Road Church, Baptist, 8000 River Road, Richmond, VA 23229. Editorial Board: Ellen Gwathmey, chair; Holly J. Irvin, treasurer; Barbara Jackson, newsletter editor; Dawn Mayes, networking; Anne Rosser, memberships; B.J. Seymour; Alana Woolley. ©1997

Systems—Systems—Systems

by Betty Pugh

Whether or not we realize it, each one of us is a part of a family, group, or organization which has an ethos, a way of functioning that makes each distinct and particular. On March 1, 1997, a group of twenty-five women and men gathered to explore this perspective. We considered how a look at the emotional relationship dynamics within churches, families, and organizational systems might deepen and enhance one's ability to experience an effective and rewarding ministry.

As I reflect upon that day, I was amazed at how many people had already begun to ask "system" questions about their churches, their families of origin, as well as their nuclear families. One of the best questions asked me was, "How is this going to help me in my ministry?"

When an individual becomes committed to the process of self-differentiation within the family of origin and exploring the relationships and personal dynamics that have developed over years, if not generations, the process becomes an opportunity to learn more about self and the value of regulating self in highly anxious systems. To be in the process of self-differentiation means working at being a self while in relationship to others. It means being connected to other people in meaningful relationships while at the same time being a genuine self. Doing this and regulating one's own anxiety is challenging.

Anxiety, a major concept of Systems Theory, is always present to more or lesser degrees. Anxiety is reflected in systems over many generations as patterns of relating and interacting form. All systems are anxious.

Most churches today are highly anxious. They are concerned about surviving in a very hostile and changing environment. Forced pastoral transitions are on the rise. Restructuring and downsizing are everywhere. There is upheaval in religious organizational life as priorities, initiative, and goals become clarified.

Working on being a "non-anxious presence" is hard but rewarding. Within anxious systems, a non-anxious presence can do a great deal to help that system move through transition with calm, thoughtfulness, and vision. If the anxiety is too high, and a minister contributes to that anxiety level, the ability of the system to make good choices and decisions decreases. Other sorts of acting out and reactive behavior may occur.

Systems Theory is not a quick fix. It is a non-linear way of describing human emotional processes that occur in relationship systems over time. The theory is one of many ways to look at people within a system and to describe what is going on within that system—a family, a church, a business, a country, any unit of persons with patterns and ways of acting in relationship to one another. A systems approach looks at the whole system and evaluates how the parts relate to one another.

As I consider the benefits of adopting a family systems perspective on my ministry site and historical relationships, I can suggest a number of personal learning and professional advantages:

1. I developed some greater ability and skill at being able to regulate my own anxiety and to remain less anxious in some highly anxious transitions. I did this by determining what was my responsibility and what was not my responsibility.

2. I valued the access I had to the multigenerational family units in my congregation. I began to understand the families better and was able to understand the individuals in those families more fully and with greater insight. Three- and four-generation family units account for 65% of our active church body.

3. I was able to understand the larger dynamics of organizational dysfunction and health because the family systems approach allowed me to see the big picture and to see how all the pieces connected. Sometimes we tend to solve problems by looking at one piece or one variable. Oftentimes, however, we have very limited ability to make change in systems unless we see the whole organization.

4. I learned a great deal about my role within the system, being careful about how the system perceived me as "hero" or "goat." Both are very dangerous positions to be in as leader. To watch out for hero worship as well as extreme hostility helped me to be aware of my own fears and anxiety.

5. As our congregation transitions through the departure of one pastor and the coming of another, I saw the importance of due process and procedure borne out. Our experience affirmed that churches and other organizations can weather conflict quite well when there is a well thought out and well publicized plan of action. Slowing the process down when a system is highly anxious and inviting it to be more objective will always produce better decision-making as well as wiser choices in the end.

6. I also discovered how a systems perspective blesses my own understanding of Baptist polity. When Baptist polity works, it is a thing of beauty. It is a way of describing persons who are being themselves within community, connected to one another in a free

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and responsible way yet being responsible for self and self-differentiation. Being a Baptist may not be easy, but it is possible.

How can systems theory help your ministry? Mostly, it can help your ministry by helping you deal with some relational and personhood issues in your own life. Unresolved grief in families makes its way into the church. Chronic anxiety in one system of a nuclear family can find its way into the functioning anxiety of a local congregation. Doing your own personal growth work by integrating a family systems perspective will allow you to begin to reflect on the role you play in various systems, whether your family or origin, your nuclear family, or the church as family.

To learn more about Family Systems Theory, I recommend the following books for study: *Extraordinary Relationships* by Roberta (please turn to page 4)

(Price...from page 3)

Gilbert; *Creating a Healthier Church: Family Systems Theory, Leadership and Congregational Life* by R. W. Richardson. See also the Family Systems bibliography published in the last issue of *Synergy*.

For more in-depth study, I recommend the Leadership in Ministry Workshops presented by Larry Matthews. Beginner and advanced seminars will examine Family Systems Theory, case studies, and personal genograms. For information, write Larry Matthews, 541 Marshall Rd SW, Vienna Va 22180 (703) 560-8314.

What is Family Systems Theory?

A systems perspective is a way of describing human emotional processes in relationships. It is a way to look at people and describe how the different units within a system relate. A system can be a family, a church, a business, a community, a country—any unit of persons or members of a group with patterns and ways of interacting. The focus is on the relationship between persons and their positioning to one another.

A systems approach looks at the whole system and discerns how the parts or members relate to one another, and seeks to detect patterns and behaviors which seem to be repeated. The focus is on the process of organizational life rather than the linear “cause and effect” principle, highlighting position, structure, and patterns of functioning in relationship.

Why should ministers care about systems?

Because we are connected to three primary systems: our families of origin, our chosen nuclear families, and the church as family. Understanding how each of these systems interact and impinge upon one another is a helpful way of developing as a person and becoming more effective in life relationships and ministry.

Systems theory is a way of looking at life and relationships that invites healthy self-differentiation while remaining connected to groups. Systems theory can allow you to survive and even thrive in environments that are less than healthy by working on your own differentiation issues. Generally speaking, harmful gender bias is

not an issue in systems theory, and therefore provides a path for women to nurture their own self-development and relationships.

Glossary of Key Concepts

Anxiety. An experience basic to humanity reflecting fear about self, life, and death. It is the human capacity to feel threat and fear. It can be chronic (pervasive) or acute (crises related).

Differentiation of Self. One’s ability to be a self while at the same time being appropriately connected to others.

Emotional Field. The relational environment in a church or family system which reflects a myriad of interconnected relationships.

Emotional Triangle. Relationships are most stable when in functioning triangles. The triangle meets the need for closeness and separateness and functions to deal with anxiety. Triangles become problematic when they are rigid and anxiety repeatedly lands in one place.

Family Secrets. Communication blockers that are not so much a matter of content but of existence, which when untold divide and estrange families, heightening anxiety.

Fusion. The inability to emotionally separate from one’s parents or other powerful figures within a system. One may be physically separate but not be able to achieve emotional distinctiveness.

Genogram. A diagram of one’s family of origin which provides a perspective to examine the emotional system of a family; to identify roles, relationships, and responses; to understand existing dysfunctions and their sources; and to provide a context for self-differentiation.

Identified Patient. In a system or family, the focus of the anxiety, the one who has the obvious symptoms (dysfunctions such as alcoholism, abuse, sexual misconduct, burnout, etc.). The system has focused the stress in attempts to isolate it from the rest of the system.

Nonanxious Presence. The state of being a differentiate self where one has capacity to remain calm and undisturbed, being responsible only for one’s self in a highly conflicted situation.

Reactivity. Behavior which is highly anxious, reflecting decision processes associated with survival and self-preservation in the face of perceived threat.

The Rev. Dr. Betty Pugh is pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Richmond

A LITTLE HUMOR

Wrong Notes

Test answers compiled by music teachers:

Agnus Dei was a woman composer famous for her church music.

Refrain means don’t do it.

A virtuoso is a musician with real high morals.

Henry Purcell is a well known composer few people have ever heard of.

Music sung by two people at the same time is called a duel.

I know what a sextet is but I had rather not say.

My favorite piece of music is the Bronze Lullaby.

My favorite composer is Opus.

The most dangerous part about playing cymbals is near the nose.

Beethoven wrote music even though he was deaf. He was so deaf he wrote loud music.

Most authorities agree that music of antiquity was written long ago.

On Women in Ministry

by Dr. C. Anne Davis

[Address presented by Anne Davis on November 12, 1996 at the Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry dinner.]

I am honored that you have asked me to speak tonight because the roots of much of the women in ministry movement of the last thirty years have grown in Virginia soil. Your lives and mine give evidence of this. Tonight will allow me an opportunity to share some of what is currently guiding my thinking about women in ministry.

These years have been times of significant celebrations with women, as opportunities have come or times of great grief, as I have seen their dreams shattered by closed doors and expressed alienation. It is a roller-coaster out there, as you well know. So the question of where we are and where we are going must take priority among those of us who are women in ministry.

It seems to me that a place to start a thoughtful discussion of women in ministry, or any other significant inquiry, is to look at how we go about searching for truth. Since much of life evolves from our search for truth, I want to share several methods which have become major shapers of history and culture in the Western world. I will use these ways of knowing or ways of searching for truth as one way of thinking about women in ministry now and in the future. As John Claypool prefaced his theological thinking, "These are first words. These are not last words." Also the time limit here necessitates an over-simplification of these approaches. However, my hope is that it will add something to our understanding of what is happening to us.

Ways of searching for truth

1. Life experience. One way we search for truth is to generalize from our own life experiences. Therefore, if I stand in line at the grocery store and see two or three people purchase their groceries with food stamps and then see them drive off in "a good car," my life experience tells me that the truth is that the majority of people on food stamps are taking advantage of the taxpayers. If we generalize to the whole from our partial perspective, we run a great risk of creating a seedbed for prejudice.

This is not to say that experience cannot teach us truthful things. Rather it is to say that all truth cannot be discovered in this manner. It is to say that we should always keep some skepticism handy as we learn truth from our life experiences. Let me illustrate what I am trying to say with a family story.

I grew up on a farm in Southside Virginia in Mecklenburg County. It seemed that every afternoon after school that it was my task to chase the pigs and get them back in their pen. This activity was not an attractive one for me. One day, I declared to my father, "There must be something we can do to stop these pigs from rooting out of their pen." His response was that there was nothing we could do because the tendency to root was just a part of what pigs are. When I questioned this, he assured me that every pig his father and every one that his grandfather had ever raised rooted. In so many words, he was communicating to me that if every pig

known to three generations of the Davis family rooted, then it was safe to assume from experience that the truth was that all pigs rooted and that this behavior was a part of the very DNA of pigs!

Not long after this conversation with my father, the new assistant county agent came by and introduced himself as a recent graduate of what was then called Virginia Polytechnic Institute, or VPI. He asked if he could help us with any problems we might be having on the farm. My father, with a twinkle in his eye, responded that we could use some help keeping the pigs from rooting. Without a moment's hesitation, the young man went to his jeep and came back with a small bottle of pills. I watched, not knowing who was pulling whose leg. He said that if we would put these pills in the hog food that they would stay in the pen. We did it.

Each day I came home from school and ran to check on the pigs. There they were in their pen as content as could be with no evidence of rooting. My father was having an existential crisis. How could three generations of experience fail him in his search for truth! And yet there was the evidence before him, We could not wait until the assistant county agent returned. When he did, our first question was what was in the pills. He said that it was simple. The hogs needed minerals and if we gave them minerals in their food that they would not have to resort to rooting! All of a sudden we had to adjust our understanding of truth. What we thought was true about the nature of hogs was simply a behavior aimed at getting what they needed to survive.

One of the issues in women in ministry is that we are dealing with congregations whose life experiences have taught them certain things are truth as they relate to women ministry. We will come back to this point later.

2. Rational Decision Making. Another way to search for truth is to think things through using a given set of historically accepted rules of logic. If you faithfully follow the protocols, you will find truth. It is that logical way of thinking involving the "if, then" statements. Those of you who have taken courses in logic in college are well familiar with this way of thinking.

While this is a way of searching for truth in the Western world, I will only mention it here because it seems to me that rational thinking has played an insignificant role in the women in ministry movement of the last thirty years. Beyond that, I do not foresee its being given a major role in the movement's future.

3. Authority Figures. This method of searching for truth follows the assumption that if experts or authorities in a field support your conclusion then it must be true. This is illustrated by the proverbial term papers in college. If you did not have footnotes citing support from other authorities, professors were quick to tell you that the statement was only your unsupported opinion. Searches of literature are based on this method of searching for truth.

Again this method has strengths and weaknesses. Certainly we are to trust experts. If we did not, each generation would have to reinvent the wheel. However, the weakness in this method is that if the experts come to a faulty conclusion as to what is truth, then this faulty conclusion gets continuing reinforcement unless it is tested against other ways of knowing.

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4. Empirical Research. This method of searching for truth involves starting with an hypothesis. A research design is then established to gather data which can be quantified and tested by appropriate statistical analysis to determine if the hypothesis is true. The research protocols are very important and if not done according to the rules of good research can prejudice the outcomes.

Every day our lives are shaped by this kind of research. It dominates the field of medicine and most other sciences. In my Ph.D. program at the University of Louisville, I was taught that empirical research was the best way to search for truth.

Implications for Women in Ministry

Let us now shift to the implications of these ways of searching for truth for women in ministry. We live in a world which, at least in its religious dimensions, appears to have chosen primarily to use life experience and authorities as ways to search for truth while neglecting, if not attacking, the other two. Life experiences and authorities as ways of knowing or searching for truth both have strengths and weaknesses. There is not time here to discuss these in detail and so I will limit what I have to say to the issue of women in ministry.

It seems to me that one of the things that make us Baptists is our freedom to seek the truth using all ways of knowing. In more recent times, we have splintered into at least three subgroups. These subgroups are composed of those who rely predominantly on authority, those who rely predominantly on life experiences, and those who still try to maintain freedom to search for truth using all four of these historical methods.

The women in ministry movement has not, and will not, be well served by those who view their life experiences as the primary and predominant source as they search for truth. Since the vast majority of people in our tradition have not experienced women in roles of ministry such as pastor or evangelist, their life experiences will inevitably teach them that women are not supposed to fill these roles in ministry. This will be the case except for traditional roles such as missionary, teacher and child care workers. For the majority, life experiences tend to reinforce the status quo and thereby allow culture to contaminate religious beliefs.

People who rely on life experience as the primary source for truth generally change only when one of two things happens to them. Either their life experiences are broadened and this exposure brings them to a crisis in their search for truth or someone who they love colors outside the lines and is personally threatened or rejected by others in the community of faith. These two circumstances will not likely happen in sufficient numbers to be of much benefit to the women in ministry movement in our lifetime.

Before we leave this point, let me note that for those of us in this room, our life experiences have been different [from the norm] relative to women in ministry. We have seen them, touched them, talked to them, and we know it is true that women can be all kinds of ministers. In my home church, Ebenezer, in Concord Association, I was never exposed to the problem of [prejudice toward] women in ministry. In fact, little difference was seen in lay and clergy persons. Other than marrying and burying people, the lay people did most of church since we only had a part-time minister. When I was seventeen years old, I was asked to preach the Easter sermon at our church. Women were always director of vacation

Bible school. Women taught Sunday school classes. I was in Kentucky serving as a home missionary before I hit the wall in terms of women in ministry. We will come back to this point in a moment.

The other large splinter group are those who view authority as the basis for searching for truth. This group has grown by leaps and bounds in the last twenty years. I do not think it is an over-simplification to say that most of the division among Southern Baptists really boils down to the issue of control and authority as these impact our attempts to find truth. Many local congregations are being torn apart by “authority” people versus “life experience” people

Women in ministry as a movement does not and will not fare well in the camp of those who use authority figures as their predominant way to search for truth. We see many people in religious authority today tend more toward keeping women out of the role of pastor. While these religious authority figures acknowledge certain roles as being appropriate for women in ministry, they are being absolute in keeping certain roles out of bounds for us.

People who search for truth through authority figures often tend to get sidetracked by the need for a “yes or no” absolute answer. They are intolerable of gray areas.

If we want a brighter future for women in ministry, I would suggest that we try to teach young women and members of local congregations the skills of problem solving, community building, and the strengths and weakness of all the ways of searching for truth. I want people to be able to learn from their life experiences, to be able to critique them, and move on the truth. I want people to be able to think rationally, to use the protocols of thinking to critique the process, and move on new truths. I want people to learn to appreciate authority figures and what they can teach us; to learn to judge them and their proclamations against the truth from all other sources; and to use what is good and toss out what is warped. I want people to use scientific research to understand the truths of the world while looking to matters of faith to understand the “whys” of the world; and to use these scientific truths to help the human condition.

Let me say one more thing before we have a question and answer time. The thing that will sustain you in your ministry while we wait for all these changes to take place is your sense of call. Work on your sense of call, think through it, write it down and ask God to renew it within you every day. In the eighth chapter of John the following is recorded;

“If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth and the truth will set you free.” And they answered him, ‘We are Abraham’s descendants, and we have never been slaves of anyone. How can you say that we will be set free?’ And Jesus replied, ‘I tell you the truth—everyone who sins is a slave to sin. Now a slave has not permanent place in the family, but a child belongs to the family forever.’ [NRSV]

As we gather here tonight as women in ministry and friends, let me remind us all that Jesus has set us free! Jesus has told us the truth! And if Jesus has set us free, we are free indeed! Brave journey!

Anne Davis is former dean of the School of Social Work at Southern Baptist Seminary, and is now retired.

Who is a Rev.?

The Fall 1997 issue of *Folio*, the newsletter of Baptist Women in Ministry, included an article by Sarah Frances Anders, professor at Louisiana College, concerning the numbers of women ministers. Professor Anders has been keeping records since the early 1960s on women in religious leadership, ordinations, election to denominational committees and offices, and college and seminary professorships and administration, etc., as an ongoing research project. Sources for the information are not always accurate, but she reports that the numbers of Baptist clergywomen have grown from one (Addie Davis) in 1960 to 58 in 1979 and to 1225 today. Even that last figure is suspect and probably represents only a fraction. However, of the known data, the states with the best records are North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia in the top three. The largest percentage are chaplains and those in church staff positions. Anders knows of 85 who are pastors and more than 100 associates. The article ends with an appeal for names and addresses of So. Baptist clergywomen.

Virginia WIM plans to cooperate by making our mailing list available to her. However, even our database is not quite on target. For instance, we have people on our list who are active laity and not in paid positions. Also, we have a large group of people who are in paid staff positions who are not ordained. What we need is a clear demarkation of those women who are ordained and who serve in a church, denominational or academic setting.

How you can help. Please let us know your status. You may drop a line to the VBWIM address printed on this newsletter, or call Ellen Gwathmey (804-288-1131) or Barbara Jackson (804-270-1903). Please respond to this appeal in a timely manner so that data can be assembled for the research. Please do this whether or not you are a member of VBWIM. If you are already a member we probably have the information. If your address or role has changed, please let us know. If your mailing label has "Rev" before your name you will be counted as such. If your mailing label does not have "Rev" then we don't know if you are ordained or not. Please let us know so you can be counted. We think Virginia might be ahead of North Carolina or Texas! But without your response we may never know!

Frances Eugenia Hudgins 1921 – 1997

A few weeks ago Frances Hudgins' family gave me a book they found among her things. It was a copy of *A Diary of Private Prayer*. The inscription on the inside cover included my name along with the signatures of her friends and hallmates at Southeastern Seminary. We had given her that book to remember us by when she was ready to end her furlough and return to Thailand to continue her work as a missionary. What was interesting was that the book had library numerals on the outside and a checkout envelope on the inside. The cover was worn and torn. It was clear—our gift to her had become part of a nucleus library she used with her students at the Thailand Baptist Theological Seminary in Bangkok.

How delighted I was to see the book we had given her so many years ago. I will remember Frances in any case, but the book especially reminds me of the talks and words of friendship she shared with the women in Johnson Hall. The book is also a symbol for me of the dedicated life this woman minister and scholar lived.

Frances Hudgins died in July after a long bout with cancer. Her many friends in Virginia and around the world were saddened by her death in July. Yet even in the midst of her personal struggle her retirement years were spent in Christian ministry. After returning to Richmond for retirement she continued to serve.

She taught at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond as an adjunct professor. She was invited to return to Thailand in 1990 and 1992 to teach in the university there. She taught a Sunday school class at River Road Church in Richmond that was structured to teach Bible study and Christian ideas on an advanced academic level. She was not only a deacon but served a term as chair of deacons. And as if that wasn't enough she taught English as a second language to internationals in Richmond.

Education was important for Frances. She had unique gifts and early on sought to maximize her potential with education.

She graduated from Longwood College, Southern and Southeastern Theological seminaries, and received her doctorate from Union Theological Seminary in Richmond.

When I first met her those many years ago she was working on a master's degree at Southeastern during a furlough. She continued her furlough study and later went on to become one of the first Baptist women to achieve a doctor's degree at Union.

During her last years in Thailand she was professor of Old Testament at Payap University School of Theology. She had mastered two oriental languages and used them fluently in teaching and writing. Her contribution to theological education in Thailand was not only through teaching, however, but through the translation of books and other material into the Thai language.

While she was overseas she translated 17 books, and did even more during her retirement years. At her funeral, Julian Pentecost stated, "We would do her an injustice not to recognize the significance of this much needed work of translation. Thai pastors, teachers and denominational leaders were handicapped in that so few textbooks and other materials were available to them in their language. Frances had the knowledge, the skill and the motivation to help meet this need and the Thai people are deeply indebted to her for the excellence of this contribution. The last book she translated was a textbook on botany for Payap University." Botany, even!

I would be remiss if I failed to mention that her life of scholarship and academic excellence in Christian missions is an anomaly. Would that kind of ministry be possible in today's climate? Think about it.

That year when she and I were at Southeastern Seminary was seminal for me. She was mentor and example. She was classmate and friend. She was amazing! I look back on her life with gratitude. I am glad we could resume a friendship as members of the same church. She was saint. She was my hero.

by Barbara Jackson

Editorial

Religion and Power

By Barbara Jackson

Religion and power go hand in hand. Those of us who have been watching the events of the past two decades among Christians who are Baptist and Southern are made aware of this fact nearly every day.

How far doth the committed person fall when given a modicum of power! Suddenly it is not enough to be spiritually discerning and humble and prayerful—and all those other traits one normally associates with the person committed to ministry. The new description appropriate for the minister is politically astute, loyal to institution, clever in working the system, and apt in administering staff and programs.

The recent story and editorial in the *Religious Herald* (Oct. 9) about events at Southern Seminary are a case in point. Editor Clingenpeel cites a new book in which articles by E. Y. Mullins were compiled by Southern Seminary president Al Mohler. Mullins enunciated the concept of soul competency in 1908 as the historically significant doctrine of the Baptists, and in 1925 chaired the committee that produced the original Baptist Faith and Message statement.

Soul competency is “the idea that every human being is free and responsible before God ... that human beings, created in God’s likeness, have the capacity to choose or reject God, and we are responsible for our decision.” The other doctrines that define Baptists—priesthood of the believer, local church autonomy, separation of church and state, regenerate church membership, believer’s baptism—all derive from the idea of soul competency. Mohler attributes to Mullins the current impasse in Baptist life, stating that by elevating personal experience above revelation (i.e., Scripture), he “set the stage for doctrinal ambiguity and theological minimalism.” Clingenpeel makes the point that by winning the machinery of the SBC and gaining the power, conservative ideologues like Mohler are now able to reshape the theological and ecclesiastical identity of Southern Baptists.

The new bywords are doctrinal correctness, orthodoxy, assembly-line theological education, and legalism.

It goes without saying that women are the big losers in the current power play. There will be no room for women in the current SBC structure. Take a look for yourself. No women on boards, no women on seminary faculties, no women as pastors. Women may serve churches in children’s work, as musicians or teachers—traditional women’s occupations. But stay out of the board room and out of pulpits.

In thinking about the whole notion of power and religion I am reminded of the term that arose in the Middle Ages, *sinecure*, for a benefice (position in the church) that provided an income with little or no work. The word, from the Latin, means literally, “without cure of souls.” In other words, the person in a sinecure was an administrator who functioned with no pastoral expectations. The recipient of a sinecure sometimes was given such a position for political reasons, i.e., to seal alliances between factions or for some desired administrative skill he might have.

In the medieval familial system, the younger son who was not the heir was sometimes urged to enter the church for a career. He would be given a sinecure, a secure position to wield power and influence and be an important person in the churchly world, which is to say the only world. Devotion to God was not expected.

Sinecures exist even today. All the denominational restructuring current today provide sinecures as payback for political maneuvers. Such persons are not expected to have pastoral competencies or even have the personal qualities that usually accompany the ministerial role such as compassion or spiritual discernment. The chief expectations are loyalty, i.e., know where one’s bread is buttered, and a close eye on the bottom line.

Am I a cynic? You bet!

Barbara Jackson is editor of Synergy

Southern Baptist seminaries continue to exercise their power to root out persons who don’t embrace the approved line. A proposed faculty appointment at Southwestern Seminary was derailed when it was revealed that the candidate had said, in response to a question about his views on women in ministry, that he felt the question of hiring or ordaining a woman as a senior pastor should be left up to a local church. (adapted from ABP, March 1997)

A church in Arkansas closed down its day care center last Spring due to concerns over encouraging mothers to work outside the home. The day care board sent parents a statement by conservative Bill Gothard that called the practice of mothers working outside the home unbiblical. The resulting uproar among angry parents caused the church to move up the date of closing.

Publishers of the New International Version of the Bible have dropped plans to publish a gender-neutral translation that would have replaced specific pronouns to more accurately translate words that in biblical languages refer to both males and females. In shelving the project, the publishers bowed to criticism that they were motivated by a feminist agenda and were putting political correctness ahead of doctrinal fidelity. The Sunday School Board and Southern Baptist Seminary presidents uniformly hailed the move.

Daniel Vestal, new coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, spoke to the general assembly in June about his views for the organization. He affirmed his support for women in ministry and cited the movement as evidence of God’s spirit at work. He said, “The fellowship will attract an increasing number of Baptists because we believe in that movement of the spirit.”

THE LAST WORD

Water-ark-nave

by Barbara Jackson

Water

Do you remember the scene in the Helen Keller film where the young Helen felt the cool, flowing water splashing on her hands and face? The sound she uttered provided the link her teacher needed to demonstrate the connection between experience (reality) and expression (sound or sign language). It was a breakthrough of great significance—an “aha” moment which provided the basis for the opening of Helen Keller’s mind to education and the potential of her life.

Just as water became a key to experiencing and expressing life for Helen Keller, so water is useful as a metaphor for life experiences for all humankind. The symbolism attached to water transcends cultures and is a basic element in all mythologies. In ancient Egyptian and Mesopotamian thought, water was the cosmic element from which all life arose. So also in the Old Testament where “the deep” (Heb. *tehom*, Gen. 1) is the primeval ocean.

The creation story of Western culture postulates that “In the beginning, God ...” took the basic stuff of the physical world and separated the water and the land out of chaos and so created life.

Water is a recurrent element in the stories of the Bible—from the Creation to Noah and the flood, from the baby Moses floating in the marshes of the Nile to Moses leading the Hebrew people across the Reed Sea. Jesus used water to make wine and preached from a boat in the Sea of Galilee.

It is not surprising that water has so central a focus in the semiarid and desert climate. Water is a precious commodity. The land borders the sea; the people have access to its bounty of seafood and purple dye. Water provides a means of travel and livelihood. The land is watered by the Jordan River and springs and is accented with lakes where Jesus and his followers fished.

Throughout the Bible water imagery is used in various ways: to describe instability or loss of strength (“poured out” Psa. 22:14) or, conversely, to convey ideas of refreshment and power (Prov. 25:25). Jesus offers

“water of eternal life” (John 4:10-15). Salvation is experienced as being drawn up from the waters of death (Psa. 18:16). Baptism in water recalls the symbolism of salvation as well as the idea of cleansing. Those “born of water” (John 3:5) are likened to those whom God saved through the flood (I Peter 3:22).

Poets and hymn writers have expressed spiritual truths using water as metaphor. The hymn “All Creatures of Our God and King” comes to mind as a lofty tribute to the God of creation. The hymn “Canticle to the Sun” was written by Francis of Assisi in 1226 and was adapted in English by the Anglican William Draper in 1910. It has become one of Christendom’s favorite hymns. The text includes a listing of God’s gifts in creation: burning sun with golden beam, silver moon, rushing wind, clouds in heaven that sail along. The words here are from verse 3:

*Thou flowing water, pure and clear,
Make music for thy Lord to hear,
O Praise him, Alleluia!*

The word *water* is derived from the Indo-European (IE) *wed-*, which is also the source for the English wash, wet, winter, otter (water mammal), and the German *wasser*. From the Latin *unda*, English has wave, undulate, abundant (i.e., overflowing), abound, surround, and from the Greek *hydor*, hydrant, hydro-. an interesting connection to water is the word abundant, which Jesus used to describe the life of the Kingdom. The abundant life, which the Kingdom believer experiences, is one of overflowing bounty from a spring or fountain, riches beyond measure, piled up and running over with God’s goodness.

Ark

The ark is a vessel used to carry something, especially something valuable. The word ark comes from the Latin *arca*, a chest, (Greek *cista*). Ark is used in English to translate two Hebrew words, *tebah* and *aron*, both of which mean box or chest. In scripture, *tebah* is Noah’s ark and the ark of bulrushes in which Moses was placed, while *aron* designates a religious object in which sacred items are held. In the early Hebrew period, the Ark of the Covenant (*aron*) was considered a direct manifestation of God’s presence (Num. 10) and was carried in procession by the people in their travels. By the time of Solomon, the Ark was secluded in the Holy of Holies and

was thought to be a throne on which God sits. After the sack of Jerusalem, the Ark is seen primarily as a container for the tablets of the law.

Noah’s ark, the sailing vessel (*tebah*), is a rich image which has captured the imagination of children everywhere. How many children’s books and toys are based on Noah and all the animals which entered the boat two by two. Think about it! Even if you exclude water species, the ark would have had to hold 7,000 species of worms, 50,000 species of arachnids, 900,000 species of insects, 2,500 species of amphibians, 6,000 species of reptiles, 8,600 species of birds, and 3,500 species of mammals, Noah and his family, plus food for all. The realistic picture doesn’t wash!

The ark as metaphor is a more fruitful concept. Think of the ark of Noah as a metaphor for the church, the vessel in which all God’s people are carried along and through which ultimately salvation is available. We will explore that idea and examine the nautical imagery of the ark. Let’s take a closer look.

Boat

The English word boat is from the IE *bheid-*, to split. The idea here is of splitting a log and digging it out to form what we would call today a canoe. Other related words are bit, bite, beetle (little biter); in the computer age, the smallest morsel of information is a bit and eight bits are a byte. Related words through the Latin cognate *findere*, to split or cleave, are fission and fissure, useful terms for atomic science and geology.

Boats of various types are found throughout scripture and are used for peaceful travel, for making war, for commerce and trade, for hauling building materials (e.g., Solomon’s temple), and for fishing as an individual livelihood. Jesus used a fishing boat as a pulpit (Luke 5). And boats transported both Jonah and Paul in the course of their missionary activity.

We recall the Iron Age Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon, descendants of the Bronze Age Canaanites. They were the great seafarers of ancient times. Their travels helped to spread a common culture to their trading partners in the Mediterranean and beyond. King Hiram of Tyre provided Solomon with both materials and artisans for the temple construction. Most

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Word Study ... from page 9

significantly, probably through the use of invoices and manifests in the sea trade, the Phoenicians spread the alphabet to the Greeks, thus guaranteeing its use in the Western world up to the present.

Another group, the Philistines, were the so-called Sea Peoples who migrated from the Aegean to settle on Palestine's southern coast, a move which resulted in the violent culture clash with the land-bound Hebrews, both groups competing for the same territory. When we think of Philistines, we remember David and Goliath or Samson and Delilah. During the Middle Ages, the term "philistine" became a term of opprobrium for someone disdainful of intellectual or artistic values, i.e., the uncultured. Such an irony, because the Philistines as part of Sea People invasions on the Levant brought Greek culture, trade and artistic traditions to the inland nomads. The name Palestine is derived from Philistine, and became the term for the entire area, so called even today though Israel claims the area as its nation state.

Ship

The word ship is the Germanic word for boat: *scip* and *skif*. It survives in German as *Schiff*, and in Dutch as *schip*. The Dutch word has a derivative, *schipper*, which in English is skipper, a ship's captain. Another interesting cognate in French is *équiper*, to fit out (a ship or an individual). Hence, to equip, equipage, and equipment. We see the word in the English New Testament, "equipping of the saints" (Eph. 4), with the specific meaning of training Christ's followers for leadership.

The idiom "ship of state" likens a nation to a vessel on a course, with all inhabitants enduring the same conditions, i.e., "in the same boat." This particular usage can be dated back to ancient Greek poetry and remains in use. Lincoln spoke of saving the "old ship of the Union." Grover Cleveland warned that the Ship of Democracy, which has weathered all storms, may sink through the mutiny of those on board. And Franklin Roosevelt in 1941 quoted Longfellow's poem: "Thou, too sail on, O Ship of State!" The nave as church conveys a similar idea, a "ship of souls," which carries believers to salvation.

The hymn "Eternal Father, Strong to Save" reminds us of the protective role of

God the Father, the Savior who walked on the "foaming deep," and the Holy Spirit who quieted the angry tumult. The author was William Whiting, Londoner educated at Winchester who rose to become Master of the Winchester Choristers' School. The hymn, written 1860, is thought to be based on Psalm 107:23ff. It has since become the definitive hymn of the sea, used on British and American ships and at the U.S. Naval Academy as well. The first verse is:

*Eternal Father, strong to save,
Whose arm doth bind the restless wave,
Who bidd'st the mighty ocean deep
Its own appointed limits keep,
O Hear us when we cry to thee,
For those in peril on the sea.*

Nave

The Latin word for ship is *navis*, from which English derives nave, navy, naval, navigate, navigator. An even earlier source, the IE word is *nau-*, meaning boat. Through the Greek *naus*, we derive both nautical, nausea and noise. The suffix *-naut* yielded Argonaut, a sailor of Jason's ship the *Argos*. We use the suffix in the same manner today: astronaut, cosmonaut. The nautilus is snail-like marine creature that has a membrane thought to function like a sail.

Interestingly, nausea as seasickness brings to mind the image of those in distress hanging over the side moaning and groaning, hence, noise! Believe it or not, that is the true derivation of noise!

A side story: the navel as belly button (*oomphalos*, umbilicus) is not a precise derivation, but is a related word. The navel is the center of a body, of a world, of a wheel. The center of a wheel from which spokes radiate is the nave, while the hole in the center is for the axle on which the wheel rotates. The tool for piercing the wheel nave was *navegar*, which came to be spelled *nauger*, later separated to be an auger, the tool for boring holes. The *oomphalos* or navel of the world (or of anything) is the hub, the crux, the central point from which all is measured, the center of attention, the most important part. In that sense, the nave of a church may relate more exactly to the navel than to naval. However, the true etymology of the architectural nave is naval. Let's look closer.

In church architecture, the nave is the central part of the cruciform structure in which the congregation gathers. The nave is usually rectangular, and in the Middle Ages

was characterized by the high arches that held up the walls and roof. One school of thought is that the word nave was used because the vaulted ceiling looked like a ship's hull upside down.

The first Christian meeting rooms were the homes of believers. In early Rome where Christianity was illegal, the faithful fitted out rooms in a house to accommodate their small numbers and provide space for a shared meal (the *Eucharist*), a tub for baptism, and perhaps a raised dais for the leader (bishop). As time passed and Christians increased in number and gained legal status, they built houses specifically for worship. The earliest Christian structures devoted solely to worship were patterned after Roman government buildings, the basilica (king's throne room) or hall of justice. Just as the young faith subsumed pagan rituals and practices, it also took over its architectural forms.

By the time of the Middle Ages and the first cathedrals, sacred architecture had come to command a large portion of public treasure and was a major commitment of time and artistry. The first cathedral in Gothic style, St. Denis in Paris, was built in the 12th century, commissioned by the Abbot Suger. In contrast to the earlier Romanesque style, which was massive and overpowering, the introduction of flying buttresses and stained glass gave the Gothic cathedrals a lightness that became a metaphor for spiritual elevation and access to the divine.

In the language of symbolism, every element of the cathedral architecture aided the pilgrim in his journey from the secular to the sacred. The front door with stories carved into every niche was a threshold to God. The narthex and doors to the side aisles and central nave continued the path of pilgrimage. The choir and screens separated the priests from the laity and reflected the theology of the priestly role. The apse contained small chapels for private worship. The walls and decorative elements, including stained glass windows, were designed to tell the biblical stories to the faithful of the preliterate society. The nave, of course, was the largest space and was devoted to the assemblage of people.

Such structures had several uses: a fortress, a place of pilgrimage, a religious community, a setting for religious

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RESOURCES' CALENDAR

Word Study ... from page 10

celebrations. But the predominant experience made possible by the architecture was that of journey, the pilgrimage.

The worshiper, the pilgrim, was led to the cross by following the path, a journey from base human desires to the crossing, the crux, the point of decision for submission to God or not. And so the pilgrim joined the other travelers in the nave, the people who were all in the same boat, the ship of souls, a ferry to redemption.

There are several hymns that come to mind in the context of journey, the pilgrim guided by God's hand to safety. "He Leadeth Me: O Blessed Thought," verse 2:

"...By waters calm, o'er troubled sea,
Still tis his hand that leadeth me."

And, "Lead, Kindly Light" or "Jesus, Saviour, Pilot Me" or "If Thou But Suffer God to Guide Thee." A favorite of mine is "In Heavenly Love Abiding," by Anna L. Waring, written in 1850. She was a Quaker turned Anglican, active in philanthropic work particularly for discharged prisoners. She wrote 39 hymns before she was forty. Here is verse 1:

*The storm may roar without me,
My heart may low be laid,
But God is round about me,
And can I be dismayed?*

For the medieval person, the Gothic church spaces were metaphors for the journey of life, the goal of the journey being the state of grace.

And so for us today. Most of us do not worship in medieval cathedrals, but the physical room where worshipers gather is our ship of souls, the Noah's ark that protects us from the storm without and the abyss on which our vessel floats. Our ark took us on board to save us from perishing in the sea of life. Our ark holds a menagerie of all kinds of critters, the wild and the tame, the hurt and the wounded, the predators and the prey.

All in the same boat, hoping for a safe harbor, a refuge, a promised land.

A star to steer by. A wind to lift the sails. An olive leaf. A rainbow. The ark is the church gathered.

Sources: Achtemeier, ed., *Harper's Bible Dictionary*, 1985; Barrie, *Spiritual Path, Sacred Place*, 1996; Partridge, *Origins: A Short Etymological Dictionary*, 1958.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of Synergy.

The Bookshelf

The Story of Discipleship: Christ, Humanity, and Church in Narrative Perspective, by Elizabeth Barnes.

The Church's Portraits of Jesus, by Linda McKinnish Bridges.

Voices of Our Sisters, by Kathy Manis Findley.

A Costly Obedience: Sermons by Women of Steadfast Spirit, Elizabeth Smith Bellinger, ed. Sermons by So. Baptist women preachers, including Lynda Weaver-Williams, Molly Marshall and others.

Battle of the Minds, (videotape) A controversial PBS film about fundamentalism and women. Stephen Lipscomb, producer. An expose of the conservative takeover of the So. Baptist Theological Seminary.

[Editorial comment: *SBC Life*, the denominational organ, reprinted an article from the *Charlotte Observer*, in which the author "proved" that the diminishing numbers of mainline denominations can be traced to allowing women as pastors. He acknowledges that this is an argument from pragmatism, and that the real reason for dwindling numbers is that these denominations have rejected the Bible as authority, and by grandstanding on the issue of women pastors, the mainline churches have lost their ability to be salt and light. He suggests that churches which are on the fence should just do the math and look at the numbers.

Interesting, no? Better yet, view the video. It will make you sick. —B.J.]

November

November 11

VBWIM Dinner at Roanoke Convention Center. 5 p.m.

January 1998

January 17

VBWIM Steering Committee winter planning retreat., Ellen Gwathmey's home. 10-3 p.m. Call 804-288-1131 or 320-2915.

March

March 7

VBWIM Spring Workshop. "Personality Tests and Ministry Styles." University of Richmond, Wilton Center. 9-3 p.m. Call 804-288-1131 or 270-2903.

March 20-21

CBF of Virginia General Assembly, Columbia Baptist Church, Falls Church. CBFV office. 804-213-0412.

July

July 28-30

University of Richmond Minister's Conference. Chaplain's office, 804-289-8500.

A LITTLE HUMOR

Carole Ripley-Moffitt, an intentional interim ministering in the Washington D.C. area, was filling the pulpit at First Baptist of Washington D.C., the weekend when Promise Keepers came to town for the big rally. A number of visitors from the rally attended worship at First Baptist on that Sunday. Carole reported that one man, apparently from the Midwest, spoke to her after the service, introduced himself, and said he enjoyed the sermon. He then added, "I've never been under a woman before."

WOMEN IN THE NEWS

New Positions and Changes

Joyce Journey was promoted to director of communications at the Virginia Baptist Resource Center in March, 1997. She is responsible for public relations, print and media.

Rhonda Biller is minister of youth at Hatcher Memorial Church, Richmond.

Elizabeth Fowler is minister of youth and music at Second Church, Martinsburg, W. Va.

Anne Marlow is minister with children and preschoolers at Fredericksburg Church, Fredericksburg.

Sherry Guill is director of Christian education, youth and family ministries at Boones Mill Church, Boones Mill.

Betty Pugh was named pastor of Grace Church in Richmond in July, and was formally installed in a celebratory worship service in October. She has been associate there for the past seven years.

Lynn Hyder is youth minister at Louisa Church, Louisa.

Wendy Crowe is associate pastor at Ridge Church, Richmond.

Vicki Lumpkin is co-pastor at Ravensworth Church, Annandale.

Allison Troy is minister of youth at First Church, Front Royal.

Virginia White is associate pastor/music and worship at Westover Church, Arlington.

Tanya Leigh McLaurin is minister of family life at Virginia Heights Church, Roanoke.

Maria Amador is minister to children at Rivermont Avenue Church, Lynchburg.

Mary Elizabeth Toler is pastor for student and community ministries.

Sylvia Bradfield is minister of music at Webber Memorial Church, Richmond.

Susan Taylor is youth minister at Glen Allen Church, Glen Allen.

Lynn Litchfield is chaplain at the new women's prison in Central Virginia.

Beth Toler is pastor for students and community ministries at Westwood Church, Springfield.

Deborah Barr is chaplain at Virginia Intermont College in Bristol.

Ordinations

Pamela McAlister was ordained to the gospel ministry by First Church, West Point, October, 1996.

Elizabeth R. Wright was ordained to the gospel ministry on Aug 30 at First Church, Galax.

Honors and Accolades

Pam Smith, for her book, *Excel: Simple & Effective Missions Team Training*. She was on the staff of the Virginia Baptist Mission Board in the Mission Resource Group, recently resigned to accept a teaching position in North Carolina.

Elizabeth A. Pugh received the doctor of ministry degree in May from the School of Theology at Virginia Union University in Richmond. She is pastor of Grace Baptist Church in Richmond.

Rees Watkins is the author of the 1997 Virginia Baptist Heritage Week booklet, *Faith Stories: When Faith Prevailed*, produced by the Virginia Baptist Historical Society for its June 1997 study. Rees Watkins was also the subject of a biographical sketch by Fred Anderson featured in the *Religious Herald* (June 19, 1997).

Linda McKinnish Bridges is the author of a new book, *The Church's Portraits of Jesus*. She is professor at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

Graduations

BTSR. MDiv.: **Sara Anne Burgess, Wendy Crowe, Cindy Ruble, Kelly Sasser, and Susan Webb**, all of Richmond, and **Maria Clark** of Ashland, **Jill Jordan** of Colonial Heights, **Susan Morris** of New Kent, **Joanna Suyes** of Hopewell.

SEBTS. M.A. in counseling: **Sandra M. Blackburn** of Glasgow.

SBTS. MDiv.: **Hilary Claypool** of Virginia Beach; MA/CE: **Susan N. Price**; Dipl.: **Anne Mitchell**.

SWBTS. MDiv.: **Antoinette Anderson** of Fredericksburg; MA/RE: **Laura Hewett** of Clifton Forge and **Michelle H. Robertson** of Richmond.

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