

NEWSLETTER

Who Are Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry?

*By Judy Bailey, VBWIM chair, planning committee,
and campus minister, University of Richmond*

As I sit down to write this article, I am thinking, "Why am I doing this? I don't have time." It isn't a requirement for my life or my vocation. I have enough to do. So why? Why take the time for another organization, another group of people?

I do it because it is important to me! My involvement has strengthened and enriched me, and has provided a renewed sense of calling to ministry. The women I have come to know during the past three years are tremendously gifted, generous, capable people. They are also a lot of fun! I would not know them now without Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry.

Three years ago we formulated our statement of purpose:

*an association of persons, both lay
and professional, engaged in
Christian ministry.*

This statement is open and inclusive, because we want to involve all who in any way consider themselves ministers.

Our purposes as an organization are three-fold:

- to provide a network of support and community;
- to offer opportunities for growth in self-understanding, competencies and skills;
- to create awareness of the personal and institutional influences which have shaped us.

The first goal, to provide a network of support and community, is basic. We need to know each other. It is easy to allow others to define reality for us unless our own reality is reinforced by experience. As we organize we realize there are many competent women across the state

involved in various fields of ministry. The knowledge strengthens us and our own sense of identity.

Knowing each other allows us to make recommendations of persons who can lead programs or serve churches. The result is that we are all better known by more people and reinforces the reality that women are serving as ministers. We need this support from each other. We simply enjoy the friendships which develop.

The second goal, to offer opportunities for growth in self-understanding, competencies and skills, is one which is met through the conferences and meetings we organize. For the past three years we have chosen to address three themes in our conferences: Recovering our Biblical Heritage, Reclaiming our own Spirituality, and Articulating our Own Theology.

To create awareness of personal and institutional influences which have shaped us is our third goal. Knowledge is power, and we need to know and understand the structures and systems we work in. Understanding where we come from helps direct where we will go. There are times when we have been so separated from those who think like we do that we question our perceptions and attitudes, our sanity.

At the very least, though perhaps most important, our organization can provide basic affirmation and validation of our life experiences, helping us know that we are part of a community. We are not alone. Together we have the opportunity and responsibility to nurture our hope that the church will welcome and affirm the gifts of all who are called, regardless of gender.

VBWIM Will Meet

The Baptist General Association of Virginia is the occasion for the third annual dinner meeting of women in ministry in Virginia, a buffet dinner on Tuesday, Nov. 12, 6pm, at the Salem Civic Center. Total cost for meal and registration is \$12. The program will be a dialogue entitled "Sharing With Each Other."

VBWIM Makes New Plans

Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry met recently to formulate some changes in the organization. The most notable venture is this newsletter, an important means of communication for women and men committed to inclusive ministry. The yearly dues, to run from November to November, will be raised to \$20 to cover costs of both newsletter and programming.

New plans call for the statewide planning committee to comprise 8 members, with a 3- to 5-year limited term, the chair to rotate. The steering committee will continue to meet in Richmond for planning sessions, but participation is not limited to Richmond residents. Other plans call for regional groups to aid in networking and the development of community and support.

Feminism Is Examined

by Barbara Jackson

The battle of the sexes goes on—and on. What is the world to do with women? It can't live with us and it can't live without us. The whole country is wrestling with the woman question.

We have girls in little league, women dressing for success and claiming equal pay for equal work. We have women lawyers, bankers and stock brokers, women truck drivers and carpenters. The presence of women in the military gives rise to the question: should women fight to kill? It gives new meaning to "Be all you can be—in the Army!"

But women in the church? That's a different matter. While the rest of the world moves ahead confidently toward the 21st century, the church seems to be in a time warp. Those who would turn back the clock to some previous ideal world are living with blinders on. Such a world of latter-day Suzy Homemakers became a thing of the past several decades ago.

When I went to college (in the 50s), education for women was justified by the maxim "Educate a woman and you educate a family." I never heard about "Be all you can be." That only came later.

When I went to seminary (SEBTS) women were just getting a foot in the door for equal theological education and equal prospects. No second-class, watered-down, basket-weaving education at Southeastern. It was three full years of Greek and theology and preaching and the whole bit. Those years were a wonderful and joyful anticipation of fulfillment.

All that changed in 1984 when women suddenly became second-class citizens in the SBC version of God's kingdom. Women were "last in the creation" and "first in the Edenic fall." Read that: women were the source and instrument of sin. Women were too tainted to be leaders in church or preachers in the pulpit—and certainly not to be ordained. On that day I too joined the chorus of outraged protest. Now I was an outsider.

Those who destroyed the old SBC and who are now remaking it into a TV-evangelism lookalike made the role of women in the church an issue. I entered the fray because I have been attacked. My calling and my sense of who I am have been debased. A *Newsweek* feature (8-5-91) on women in the military quoted a 1980 West Point graduate, Capt. Carol Barkalow, about her life in the military. She said, "If we weren't feminists when we went in, we were when we came out."

I think that sums up the experience of many women in the church. To be a feminist is not to polarize the world by gender. We are not into male-bashing or bra-burning. I am married and I love my husband. He affirms me as I affirm him.

What we are about is affirming ourselves as real people with real abilities and a real calling to participate in the Kingdom. We want to be in the partnership. We praise the men of good will who insist on inclusiveness and do their part to make it happen. We praise the women who are pioneering new avenues. Women and men working together in ministry. Hallelujah for a new day to come.

Barbara Jackson is the editor of the newsletter.

Women Work Together

by Wanda Sauley Fennell, minister of music, Grace Church, Richmond

Since 1987 I have enjoyed a unique relationship with a WMU circle of First Baptist Church in Griffin, Ga. This group of women wanted to enter into a supportive relationship with a woman minister. They contacted Anne Neil, former missionary and past president of the Southern Baptist Alliance. Anne remembered that Griffin is my hometown and suggested me, a recent seminary graduate.

Such was the beginning of my friendship with the Catherine Walker Circle. As it turned out, I already knew some of the women. One had been my tenth grade algebra teacher! I have come to know the others through the mail as they take turns writing me. Initially, I wrote them a lengthy letter detailing my Christian pilgrimage and call to ministry. Now I continue to write every month or so with an update on my struggles and successes.

The faithfulness of these women toward me has been a blessing. No less important is the financial support they have provided. They have benefited from hearing a firsthand account of how it is for one woman minister.

Name the Newsletter

The newsletter of VBWIM needs a name. Readers are urged to submit suggestions. Nominations will be presented at the meeting in Salem. The winning name will receive a gift. Send to 9211 Whitemont Dr., Richmond, VA 23294.

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INTERVIEW

Corella Ricketson

associate director of cross-cultural training, Missionary Learning Center, Foreign Mission Board, SBC

by June Hardy Dorsey
minister of education, Ginter Park Church, Richmond



Corella Bounds Ricketson—teacher, administrator, innovator, pioneer—left an interesting career in Taiwan to come to Richmond to take up her new assignment with the Foreign Mission Board. She was to teach the children of new missionaries during orientation at the Missionary Learning Center. But instead of setting up an auxiliary school, she developed a unique combination of the three Rs with cross-cultural education.

“I saw the program not isolated from the adult program, but integrated into missionary orientation. I won’t say I was a pioneer but maybe I was a ‘pusher’ or ‘cage-rattler.’ I didn’t think you could have an effective children’s program without developing the coincidental parenting—family adjustment—cross-cultural living program that needed to be in place. I felt strongly that the children’s adjustment [to overseas living] was directly related to the parents’ perception about whether the children were being enriched or denied by this experience.”

Corella’s ministerial career has taken her from GA camp counselor in Oklahoma to the Philippines and Taiwan as teacher, student worker and MK school administrator before being called to the Missionary Learning Center,

She credits her remarkable journey as “being in the right place at the right time. When I was in seminary, though there were not many women, the ones who were there knew that they would be employed when they graduated. Women in ministry today do not have that guarantee. In a sense, they have

been betrayed by the very churches that once nurtured them.”

When asked about her ability to flourish as a woman in ministry, Corella claims an odd combination of naivete and competence.

“I have always been so driven to do things in my work that I have been unaware of needing approval. I have done things and may have offended those in authority. But mixed with that naivete has been competency. You really aren’t going to get shot down when you’re getting the job done.

“I also have not been concerned about titles and recognition. I was perfectly content on the mission field to let someone else be the director.

“For me, who I am as a person did not need recognition from others. I never felt the need to be liberated [as a woman], because I already am. So, whether it was naivete, hardheadedness, competency or the lack of need for recognition, I just plowed ahead.”

Corella brings to her position at MLC an expertise and cosmopolitan outlook whose roots can be traced back to childhood. Growing up in Oklahoma, this daughter of a Roman Catholic father and a Southern Baptist mother was exposed to a religious diversity which gave her an appreciation of other traditions. She learned to value much of the dignity, solemnity and piety of the Catholic church while the Southern Baptist church taught her about foreign missions. “I think this influenced who I became in that I was never a traditional Southern

Baptist.”

Contrary to family and cultural expectations, she attended college at a time when few women did. She was the first college student in her family. “My dad had a hard time with a woman going to college, period.

Determined not to marry a ministerial student because she “did not want to be an extension of someone,” Corella met and married Sam Ricketson, an MK from China. Neither had plans for a ministry career, but as camp counselors one summer each felt called to missions. After graduation from college, they went to Baguio, Philippines, to teach at an international school. They thought this experience would “get missions out of our system.” It didn’t.

“When we left the Philippines at the end of our two-year teaching contract, although we would not admit that we would go back as missionaries, we did make plans to attend seminary.” The time at Southwestern seminary led easily to missionary appointment. Appointed to Taiwan, Corella’s first assignment was at Morrison Academy where she taught missionary children—a role she had envisioned as a child. Three years later began a decade of Chinese student work, seminary teaching and MK school administration. Next, Corella and Sam spent three years working as administrators of the Chinese Baptist Bookstore and publishing house. Then came furlough in Richmond and the invitation from the newly developed Missionary Learning Center.

Corella describes her ministry as graced by “being marvelously happy in everything I have done.” She continues to develop and present cross-cultural learning programs at the MLC. Her knowledge, experience and world view give her students the tools to approach their new worlds with confidence and enthusiasm.

NAMES IN THE NEWS

Linda M. Bridges, Ph.D. graduate of SBTS, has been named assistant professor of New Testament at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond. Others on staff at BTSR are **Beth Harris McMahon**, director of communication and student services, and **Nell Summerlin**, director of administrative services.

Phyllis Rodgers Pleasants, Ph.D. graduate of SBTS and native of Richmond, has accepted a position as professor of church history and registrar at Northern Baptist Seminary in Chicago.

Lynda Weaver-Williams, Ph.D. graduate of SBTS, has accepted a position as instructor in religious studies at VCU in Richmond. She was preacher for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship at its May meeting in Atlanta.

Kristin Andreason has accepted a position with Crozet Church, Albemarle Assn., as associate minister for Christian Education.

Becky Anderson has joined the staff of New Bethesda Church, Dover Assn., as youth director.

Hilly Juchems Irvin, graduate of SBTS, has joined the staff of Tomahawk Church, Middle District Assn., as associate pastor of music/youth.

Dorryce Rudd has joined the staff of Virginia Baptist General Board as state coordinator for literacy missions.

Vicki Lumpkin has joined the staff of Haymarket Church, Potomac Assn., as minister of education.

Donna Dixon Fisher, graduate of SBTS, has joined the staff of Farmville Church, Southside Assn. as associate minister.

Ellen Gwathmey, graduate of SBTS, has joined the staff of River Road Church, Richmond Assn., as minister of outreach and visitation.

Paula Dempsey has resigned as pastor of Oak Chapel Church to become campus minister at Mars Hill College in N.C.

Beverly Pierce, former employee of FMB, has sued FMB for \$1 million, charging sex discrimination and breach of contract. Before her termination she was asst. director of missions ministries.

Barbara M. Filling, D.Min. graduate of Union Theological Seminary, Richmond, was writer for *Religious Herald* quarterly Sunday school lessons. She is pastor of Coan Church and currently vice-pres. of Virginia Pastor's Conference.

Judy Bailey, campus minister at UR, was elected vice-pres. of Assn. of Southern Baptist Campus Ministers at its annual meeting in June.

Edna Frances Dawkins, former FMB staff, and **Linda Bridges** were named to the Coordinating Council of Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. This is an executive body to carry on business between sessions.

Anne Davis, Virginia native and dean of Carver School of Social Work, SBTS, was honored. Recent social work graduates created the Anne C. Davis award, which will be given annually to an outstanding student.

Helen Falls, prof. emer., NOBTS, was a writer for the *Baptist History and Heritage*, published by the So. Bapt. Historical Commission.

Martha Lynn Davidson, graduate of SBTS, was ordained to the gospel ministry on June 2 by Mill Creek Church, Roanoke Valley Assn., where she is associate pastor.

Rebecca Proctor, graduate of SEBTS, as ordained to the gospel ministry on May 26 by Rosalind Hills Church, Roanoke Assn., where she is associate minister.

Recent seminary graduates from Virginia.

GGBTS: **Sarah Byrd Ballew** of Radford, MDiv;

SBTS: **Carol Ashworth** of Richmond, MDiv; **Teresa Carter** of Chesapeake, MSW; **Mary Cunningham** of Bristol, DEd; **Wendy Gill** of Richmond, MDiv/CE; **Vickie Perkins** of Bluefield, MDiv/CE; **Rosella Trotter-Long** of Richmond, MDiv;

SEBTS: **Sandra A. Cline** of Harrisonburg, MDiv; **Cynthia A. Cridge** of Reston, MDiv/CE; **Julia M. Stroop** of Harrisonburg, MDiv/CE; **Bonnie M. Melton** of Ashland, MA/RE; **Naomi W. Montiel** of Richmond, DMus; **Cynthia M. Phillips** of Richmond, MDiv;

SWBTS: **Laura L Cook** of Lynchburg, MA/Counseling.

Recent FMB appointments from Virginia. **Linda Hammett** (and husband John) of Charlottesville to Brazil; **Janice Lafferty** (and Todd) of Richmond to Pakistan; **Gwendolyn Page** (and David) of Virginia Beach to Morocco; **Revonda Deal** (and John) to Switzerland.

BOOKS AND RESOURCES

Women's Studies

For the first issue of the newsletter, we give you a list of "starter books," a basic library for the person who has not yet delved into the growing corpus of books dealing with the general area of women and religion.

Prepared by BJ. Seymour, professor of religious studies, Randolph-Macon College, Ashland.

Women and Religion by Clark & Richardson, eds. (Harper & Row, 1977). Primary source material showing attitudes toward women in the Western religious tradition. Contains brief introductions and excerpts from the Bible and the writings of Jerome, Augustine, Aquinas, Dame Julian, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others.

Religion and Sexism by Rosemary R. Ruether, ed. (Simon & Schuster, 1974). Useful as a companion piece to the above. Includes commentaries on chapters in that book. Out of print, but well worth a trip to the library.

Women, Men and the Bible by Virginia Mollenkott (Crossroad, rev. 1988). The author, an evangelical with a strong feminist commitment, probes the Biblical understanding of the nature of God, who "transcends the limitations of human sexuality", and of the relationships between women and men.

Sexism and God-Talk by Rosemary R. Ruether (Beacon, 1983). The critical principle of Ruether's feminist theology is "the promotion of the full humanity of women," which she applies to several traditional categories, including God, anthropology, Christology, evil, community and eschatology as a means of explicating the meaning of human wholeness.

Words and Women by Casey Miller & Kate Swift (Anchor, 1977). Explores the critical importance of language in shaping and perpetuating our perceptions of the ourselves and our world. Chapters on the significance of naming and names in relation

to power, the language of religion, and other concerns of women reflected in our English language.

God's Fierce Whimsy by Mud Flower Collective (Pilgrim, 1985). Feminist theologians examine alternatives in theological education. Confronting the classism, racism and sexism in theological education, they work toward developing theological structures committed justice and liberation.

In addition, you might want to read **The Feminine Mystique** by Betty Friedan (Dell, rev. 1984). This work was the first to address the concerns of American women and was precursor of the developing women's movement.

Friedan has also published **The Second Stage** (Summit, 1981) in which she emphasizes the need to move beyond the old structures to the place where we can transcend the polarities and restructure institutions on a basis of real equality for women and men.

VBWIM Compiles Statistics

You will notice on the registration form that we are asking for some personal information.

There is no central place where data on women in ministry in Virginia is kept. We have decided to be that place. We want to know who the women in ministry are, names and numbers—in other words, real statistics, not just guesses or hit or miss. We want to know, even if they are not members of VBWIM.

Send your form in and send us other names of people you know who should be counted.

MEMBERSHIP/REGISTRATION FORM

Name _____ Tel. _____

Address _____

Place of Ministry _____ Position _____

Paid _____ or Unpaid _____ Full-time _____ Part-time _____
Seminary graduate? _____ yes _____ or no _____ Where _____
Ordained? yes _____ or no _____ Name of degree _____

Enclosed you will find my check for:

Dinner and registration, Nov. 12, 1991, Salem Civic Center
Cost per dinner \$12. Number attending _____
Membership in Virginia Baptist Women in Ministry
at \$20 per year, November to November _____
Donation from friend and supporter (\$50, \$100 or more) _____
Total amount enclosed: _____

Sharon James, 208 N. High St., Franklin Va 23851 Tel. (804) 562-5135
Registration deadline for dinner Oct. 29

Christine M. Smith. *Weaving the Sermon: Preaching in the Feminist Perspective.*

Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989. \$12.95.

Review by Betty Pugh, minister of church family life, Grace Church, Richmond

Christine Smith offers to all women, but uniquely to women who are preaching, a special gift of discernment and affirmation. In these days when women are still striving to gain access in the pulpit, Smith comes to the scene with years of experience and reflection as a pastor, teacher and preacher.

She begins with the assumption that there is a qualitative distinctiveness about women's preaching and from that point moves to describe and reflect upon those differences.

With help from the disciplines of developmental psychology, feminist biblical hermeneutics and women's experiences, she gives the novice as well as the seasoned preacher a way of understanding the nature of her craft.

An excellent overview of many powerful voices within feminist circles continually integrate the theory with the experience.

The "weaving" metaphor is stretched to its limits but never inappropriately. This creative image upon which each chapter is built engages each woman in her faith-sharing moment so that all women, in any context, may be challenged to be bold creators of solidarity.

There is a constant sensitivity to those whose experience may be different from white middle-class

women. A special claim is issued for the unique gifts that all women bring to the preaching event.

Smith asks some difficult questions for women within the traditional Christian structures. The concerns she raises are on target and of major importance to women, dealing with everything from the structure of the church to Christology.

Such a powerful and engaging text creates a tension in the reader. How can we as women and men, identified with the power of the feminine, proceed with the task of reinterpreting, re-imaging, and reassessing the authority of the preaching moment? Christine Smith offers us ways of looking at the experience which may lead not only to better preaching but to a more spiritually balanced life as bearers of the good news.

Newsletter Needs Your Help

This newsletter is the first of many to come. We will need help in filling its space. We want to know your ideas, your stories, your dreams.

We invite women in ministry all over Virginia to submit articles, essays, poems, worship liturgies, book suggestions, resources you recommend, book reviews, and news items of events and accomplishments in your world.

Appropriate topics for articles or book reviews include biblical studies relating to women, inclusive language and liturgy, professional identity and experience as minister, women's spirituality, personal theological growth, news on new positions or changes, achievements and recognitions. Send to Newsletter, 9211 Whitmont Dr., Richmond, VA 23294

Spring Meeting Is Planned

"Articulating Our Own Theology" is the theme of the spring workshop, to be held May 2, 1992, 9am to 3:30pm, at Grace Church in Richmond.

The program will focus on the theological realities of women ministers in church, academic and agency settings, their changing and growing theologies as they confront biblical insights, ethical decision-making and realistic professional relationships.

This program celebrates the fifth year of programming for VBWIM. It continues in the tradition of hard-hitting approaches to difficult issues, just as was done in 1988 in the first program, which dealt with the topic of empowerment.

Further information and registration will be available in early spring. Watch for details. Place this on your calendar.

Randolph-Macon Meetings

Randolph-Macon College in Ashland will host two conferences of interest to women. Sarah Weddington will debate Phyllis Schlafly on Sept. 19 at 8 pm in Blackwell Auditorium. Sarah Weddington is the attorney who represented "Jane Roe" in the case that legalized abortion. Phyllis Schlafly was the major force behind the defeat of E.R.A. For further information contact the Office of Student Activities, RMC, 752-7318.

Marie Fortune will speak on issues of sexual abuse on Oct. 24 at 7:30 pm in Washington-Franklin Hall. Fortune is the director, Center for Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence in Seattle and an ordained minister in the United Church of Christ. For further information, contact Dr. B.J. Seymour, 752-7279.