

VISIONS



Feb '06 / Mar '06

Workshops & Networking

GENERAL ASSEMBLY is right around the corner, and we are hard at work planning what we hope is a wonderful time of fellowship, inspiration, and education. FBC Athens is our host church. The last time we met at FBC Athens in March 1998 was my very first CBF of Georgia meeting to attend! I traveled as a student from Atlanta to Athens to “check out” this group of Baptists that supported my seminary. Little did I know where it would all lead!



Frank Granger, Minister of Education at FBC Athens, recently reminded me that it was at that 1998 meeting that CBF of Georgia began offering workshops on Friday in addition to those already offered on Saturday morning. I think the question “how did it go over?” has been answered by the increased attendance over the past eight years. This past year we also expanded the Saturday morning workshop time to include ministry network gatherings. These have been a big hit too!

About three months ago, Renée Bennett, Moderator-Elect and General Assembly program chair, Frank Granger, Frank Broome, and I sat around the table at an Athens restaurant and began brainstorming this year’s workshops. After several pages of ideas, Renée responded, “This is fun!” I hope you will respond with the same level of enthusiasm as Renée and General Assembly participants of the past. And who knows where it all may lead!

Now for the unveiling (of course, we reserve the right to modify this list!). See page 11 for our 2006 CBF/GA’s General Assembly workshop and networking sessions!

Devita Parnell

Associate Coordinator for Congregational Life, CBF/GA
dparnell@cbfga.org

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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia 2006 General Assembly

featuring

Jim Dant

Pastor, Highland Hills Baptist Church, Macon, Georgia.
 Author of *Background Music: Notes to my Daughter*,
 and *1&2 Samuel: Surviving the Tensions of Life*

assembly theme

“All Cracked Up”

“Promised Land – Not All It’s Cracked Up to Be”
 “Grace – More Than It’s Cracked Up to Be”

March 3-4

Beginning 12:00 noon, March 3
 Concluding 12:00 noon, March 4

First Baptist Church of Athens

355 Pulaski St. · Athens, GA 30601-2860

Child care provided

Housing

Holiday Inn Express, 513 W. Broad Street, Athens, GA 30603,
 (706) 546-8122/(800) 465-4329
 CBF/GA room rate: \$79.00*

Holiday Inn, 197 E. Broad Street, Athens, GA 30603,
 (706) 549-4433/(800) 465-4329
 CBF/GA room rate: \$89.00*

* Mention CBF/GA to receive special rates. Deadline for reservations:
 Feb. 22

Information:

CBF of Georgia Office
 (478) 742-1191, ext. 21
 Toll-free (877) 336-6426
fbroome@cbfga.org

ALL CRACKED UP
 all cracked up





Featured in this issue: Vocational Search

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia

P.O. Box 4343, Macon, GA 31208-4343
phone 478-742-1191 fax 478-742-6150
toll free phone 1-877-336-6426
toll free fax 1-877-336-6425
website www.cbfga.org

CBF of Georgia Staff

Coordinator

E. Frank Broome • fbroomecbfga.org

Missions Coordinator

Jimmy B. Lewis • jlewis@cbfga.org

Associate Coordinator for Congregational Life

Devita B. Parnell • dparnell@cbfga.org

Senior Assistant for Finance and Administration

Suzanne Powell • spowell@cbfga.org

Assistant for Communication and Resources

Nancy A. Copeland • ncopeland@cbfga.org

Assistant to the Coordinator
for Reference and Referral

Alan Mitchell • amitchell@cbfga.org

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All questions and comments may be directed
to Nancy Copeland,
478-742-1191 ext 27 or ncopeland@cbfga.org.



Learning the Process

MY FIRST CONTACT with a church search committee came in the summer of 1968. I was nineteen years old. My resume had been sent to the church via Robert Otto, dean of chapel at Mercer University, and Jack Harwell, editor of the *Christian Index*. This was the first time Sparta Baptist Church was to have a full-time summer youth director. During the interview it did not take me long to realize the committee, which was made up of wonderful people from a cross section of the church, had little or no experience in what it was doing. I had spent considerable time thinking about what a summer program should be like. I had even begun to develop a "philosophy of youth ministry," even though inadequate. The church, on the other hand, had just wanted me to keep the kids busy for the summer with a mixture of recreation and Bible study. It also wanted me to do some recruiting. If one could get the popular kids to come, then the others would follow. Not long after the interview I was asked to be the summer youth director. I accepted. For ten dollars a week I rented a room in the home of a widow lady. We worked out a schedule for the kitchen and bath. She was a devout Methodist who lived less than a mile from the church. Since I did not have a car I walked to work. Occasionally I borrowed the preacher's car to do visitation. For the next four summers I would repeat this process in churches like FBC Perry, Unity Baptist in Newnan, and FBC Chickamauga. Each time I learned a little more about search committees and church expectations.

In early 1975 I was about to graduate from seminary when my resume was sent to a small mission church in Newport, Kentucky. We are talking about thirty people in an economically depressed area of town. I was asked to be interviewed and preach a trial sermon. I did. A couple weeks went by and I had

not heard from the church. I needed to know something, so I called a friend at the convention office who called the committee chair. The church had "passed me by." Of course I wanted to know the reason. To my surprise it was because I had used the RSV (Revised Standard Version) when I read my text. This church only used the KJV (King James Version). That is when it hit me. This search committee stuff is more complex and difficult than I imagined.

For the last thirty years I have found myself in a position to help ministers and churches find each other. At last count I have trained over 200 search committees and have had a part in helping several hundred ministers find places of service. I still consider the process to be full of mystery. It is more art than science. Two things remain at the center. One should never underestimate the need for the committee and the candidate to do their homework. This is not child's play. It requires serious thought. Neither should one underestimate the movement of the Spirit in the process. In the midst of the discussions about job expectations, preaching ability, pastoral skills, leadership style, church demographics, school systems, and – let's not forget – salary, God is at work. When the committee's best effort and openness to the movement of God come together, good things can happen.

Several major developments have occurred since that first interview at Sparta Baptist Church in 1968. First, more and more women are being called into ministry. They are bringing their gifts of preaching, pastoral care, and leadership style into our fellowship. That is a good thing. Second, the fundamentalist-moderate controversy is radically altering the dynamics of search committees. It is the 800-pound gorilla in the room. Maybe it should not be, but it is. If the candidate believes in a certain kind of pastoral authority and the church believes in shared leadership then there will be a problem. If the church has significant female leadership and the pastor will only "tolerate women leaders," then there is going to

(continues to page 5)



Search Tips & Info

THE CBF/GA OFFICE of Reference and Referral assists churches in finding ministers and other staff, as well as assists ministers and staff members in locating places of service. CBF/GA does not make recommendations. (We'll gladly take the credit if a church selects a good candidate, but we try to eschew blame if they don't!) No, seriously, we let the church's fine committee do its work to call the best candidate according to their own criteria. CBF/GA also does NOT send out a list of churches which are currently without a staff member or minister (unless we are specifically asked to do so by the church). Not that a candidate would, but committees simply prefer one NOT show up on Sunday with a suitcase in one hand and Bible in the other, ready to go to work. They're funny that way. Our procedure is to send resumes to search committees which seem to be looking for individuals with the criteria expressed on the Minister Information Forms.

On the right are some tips and information to "help us help you."

Feel free at any time to call on the CBF/GA Office of Reference and Referral or any CBF/GA staff person about your search. You can reach the R&R office at 478-453-2380 (Community Baptist Church) or the CBF/GA office at 478-742-1191 or 1-877-336-6426, toll free. You may FAX us at 478-742-6150 or 1-877-336-6425.

Our highly trained, and well-educated, CBF/GA staff members are here to help you in any way we can. The only problem is we ARE human. (Pause for you to register shock!) Yes, we try not to make mistakes, but even "spell check" doesn't work all the time. The best way to avoid mistakes, delays, and misunderstandings is to keep the lines of communication open so the "oops!" times are few and far between.

May all your searches end as happily as the person in Jesus' parable of the lost coin, "Rejoice with us, we have found the One!"

Alan Mitchell

CBF/GA Office of Reference & Referral

For the Church Seeking a Minister / Staff Member

1 Visit the CBF/GA website, www.cbfga.org, scroll down the left side of the home page and click on "Reference and Referral." (EDITOR'S NOTE: our website is operational; however, we are currently updating and will soon have a new design. This update changes "Reference and Referral" on the home page to "Vocation.")

2 Next, click on "Church Seeking Minister." Fill out the "Church Information Form." Follow the instructions on the screen for submission. We will endeavor to get the best "match" possible. We may be as good as or better than *eHarmony.com*, but we need this information! It's crucial.

3 It is always helpful, and faster, if we can email resumes. We can, however, send them by regular mail — whichever is best for your church and your committee. Please indicate who is to receive the resumes first: the chair of the search committee, the church secretary, the pastor, or another. This way we can route these resumes to the proper person in your search system.

4 If, after looking at the first "batch" of resumes we send, you want to look further or need more resumes, let us know when you are ready for them.

5 It would be mutually helpful, also, if you would let us know when the position is filled. This way we stop sending you resumes that fill up your inbox, and we can use the time and energy to help another church.

For the Minister Seeking a New Place of Service

1 Visit the CBF/GA website, www.cbfga.org, scroll down the left side of the home page and click on "Reference and Referral." (Editor's note: our website is operational; however, we are currently updating and will soon have a new design. This update changes "Reference and Referral" on the home page to "Vocations.")

2 Next, click on "Minister Seeking Church" and fill out the "Minister Information Form." Follow the instructions on the screen for submission.

3 You may then send your resume by email to amitchell@cbfga.org. We can begin the process at that time. We also need at least five (5) hard copies sent to Alan Mitchell, Reference and Referral, CBF/GA, PO Box 4343, Macon, GA 31208-4343.

4 Resume tips: Include your references with your resume. I know that some secular resume mills tell you to indicate "References available on request," but church committees are different. They usually go for the references like I go for the frosting on a birthday cake. Without those references, your resume might wind up on the bottom of the stack or even in the dreaded "File 13."

5 A picture of you, or you and your family, usually gets your resume noticed. This is also helpful to the search committee. It's true, "a picture is worth a thousand words" ... and it takes up less space as well!

6 A cover letter is also helpful, hopefully LESS than "a thousand words." It lets the committee get to know you, how your calling into ministry came about, your philosophy of ministry, hopes, dreams, and, perhaps, if you prefer golf or deer hunting.

7 Please let us know by email, phone, or carrier pigeon when you land that plum of a job, so we can pause to have a little celebration with you and the church, and then move on to the next candidate.



Church Planter?

AS PEOPLE SEARCH out a vocation, many will turn to existing job opportunities. What if your perspective is from the church planting perspective rather than going to an established church? A new church can establish its own worship style, mission, traditions, values, and methods of reaching people. Church planting is not an easy task, but it is rewarding and challenging. There are several counties in Georgia where the population growth is some of the largest in the nation. These growth areas can provide opportunities for church planting. Some of these counties include Henry County, Paulding County, and Forsyth County.

The best reason for a person to start a church is he or she has a strong

sense of God’s leadership to start a new church. If married, that calling must include the spouse; and there must be an agreement between them that this is what God is calling them, together, to do. CBF/GA offers a variety of helps including demographic studies, coaching, training, and publicity. Our funds do not allow us to provide for salaries. The mission committee stresses to church planters, whether individual or family units, at the very least, to have insurance and a plan of support for at least two years. With a couple, this can be achieved by one spouse working and the other person involved in starting the new church. When the church planters have children, additional considerations are necessary to ensure the success of not only the new church, but of the family unit.

If we are to grow, we need our church planters to be well-trained church planters. There are various tests that can be administered to determine if an individual has the skills and gifts to

start a new church. CBF/National now has a new church starter’s “boot camp” in the spring to help individuals or couples determine their abilities and give them the resources to start a new church.

Everyone can help with church planting. If you feel that God is calling you to start a new church, contact Jimmy Lewis or a member of the mission committee. He/she will suggest ways that you may pursue that dream. If this is not where God is calling you, you can offer prayer support for those who serve in this capacity, and you can pray for God to call forth others who have the desire and the skill to plant a church in Georgia. “The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; therefore, ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest.” Matthew 9:37-38

Jimmy Lewis
Missions Coordinator, CBF/GA
jlewis@cbfga.org

Highs & Lows of Committee Work

AS CHAIR OF OUR PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE, allow me to share some important issues that we have encountered and are continuing to face in our search. As with any committee in a Baptist church, it is imperative that there be a healthy balance of church members in the mix. For example, our church’s Constitution and By-Laws indicate how many members there are to be on the committee and how they are to be elected. In our case there are five members, two women and three men — the youngest member is in his mid-twenties, while the senior member is over seventy. Our Nominating Committee had the responsibility of recommending to the church five representative church members to serve in this capacity. We were duly elected to serve in church conference. Another vital piece of this whole process is locating and calling the right Interim Pastor to serve during the entire search. The Lord led us to Dr. Johnny Pierce, editor of *BAPTISTS TODAY*, who is still serving faithfully.



In our case none of the five had ever served on a previous pastor search committee; therefore, initially we felt it incumbent upon ourselves first and foremost to seek God’s complete will and direction for us; then we sought the

advice and opinions of highly respected Baptist leaders to help us work through the maze, commonly known as searching for a senior pastor. In our first two meetings we invited two such leaders to share with us from their hearts about the process and about some of the pitfalls to avoid. Additionally another member of the committee and I visited twice in the home of one of the most respected minds in Baptists circles today for his input and advice. We found these men’s counsel to be genuine and most helpful.

When we announced that our church was receiving resumes for Senior Pastor, the committee established a deadline for their arrival. As resumes came in, we decided not to react to any of them until after that date had passed. Then we spent several weeks studying and analyzing them. Each committee member was then asked to rank the candidates into one of three groups: (1) those that seemed to be a good fit for our church (2) those that seemed O.K. but were not as good as the first group (3) those that obviously would not be effective future pastors in our setting.

In our next very lengthy meeting we went through each resume and determined how each member had ranked that particular candidate. If there was a discrepancy in how we ranked one of the candidates we discussed that person’s strengths and weaknesses and then together determined into which group we would place that resume. We focused our attention on the group that seemed to contain candi-

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CBF / National Search Resource

THE SCOPE OF THE REFERENCE AND REFERRAL process in the national CBF Resource Center is ever-widening as more churches and more ministerial candidates become aware of a service offered by the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. The mission of the Fellowship is “serving Christians and churches as they discover and fulfill their God-given mission.” Certainly, these efforts fall within that stated mission.

Each week there are new requests from CBF-related churches for our assistance as a resource for resumes of candidates who are qualified to fill the position of senior pastor, as well as other staff ministry positions. And each week, there are requests from additional candidates who wish to find a place of service in a CBF-related church. We serve both clergy who are already in active ministry and students graduating from our partner schools who are seeking what is perhaps (though not always) their first full-time ministry position.

Our goal is to help these churches and these candidates connect with each other in such a way that church ministry staff vacancies are filled with qualified ministers, and capable clergy find suitable and fulfilling places of service. This happens through a careful matching of the parameters and criteria of both the candidates and the churches, thus providing a pool of qualified candidates for a church search committee to have at their disposal.

What we do is NOT placement – but reference and referral. CBF does not “place” ministers. With a great deal of prayer and hard work on the part of a church search committee and candidates, each seeks God’s will in the process. It is the goal of CBF to facilitate that process. We are a connecting point.

The Fellowship can also provide links to a variety of resources to help search committees do their jobs well. Pastor search committees often have no one on the committee who has ever served in such a position. (Without drawing conclusions, we note that often those who serve on one pastor search committee decline to do so the next time around!) This means that some education is in order for the committee. There are good helps for that area to which committees can be referred.

The old proverb that “haste makes waste” can be especially true if the church or committee is in too big a hurry to fill the vacant position. After the departure of a long-tenured pastor or if the previous pastor left under less-than-pleasant circumstances, the wise church takes a big step back to take a look at themselves — who they are as a church and where they want to go. Sometimes the service of an intentional interim minister who is specially trained to guide a church during this time is called for. Loren Mead refers to the time when there is a change of pastors as a “critical moment of ministry.” It is also an opportunity for a church to do self-study and reassess its ministry.

CBF is a resource to help both churches and clergy. Call us when you need us! Or, visit us online at www.thefellowship.info/ld.

Clarissa Strickland
Associate Coordinator, CBF/National
cstrickland@thefellowship.org

Learning the Process

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be a problem. If the church allows members to designate their missions money through the church to CBF and the pastor tries to stop that there is going to be a problem. Third, the worship wars centered on different tastes in style, be it praise, contemporary, or traditional, is taking its toll. This is a local church matter and it has no simple answer. Perhaps in the future we can learn to celebrate in a variety of ways. The good news is that the fourth development offers some hope in navigating these waters. We now have many more tools for search committees to use.

An example of one such tool is *Ten Commandments For Pastor Search Committees*, a document developed by Walter B. Shurden, Executive Director, and Bruce T. Gourley, Associate Director of The Center for Baptist Studies of Mercer University. See our *Resource Wise* section for the web link for this document. Numerous other tools will be highlighted in this issue of *Visions*. If used wisely, these tools can help a church better determine whom God would have them call.

The search committee has great power. That power should be used wisely. We are, after all, a group of Baptists who not only affirm the lordship of Christ as head of the church

but also the responsibility of the entire congregation to discern the will of God. At times it can be a messy process, but to be honest I would not change it for any other system the church has devised. By the way I still use the RSV. However, I pay more attention than ever to the version in the pew.

Frank Broome
Coordinator, CBF/GA
fbroome@cbfga.org



No Place to Go

"I AM SUBMITTING my resignation effective immediately." I could hear the words coming out of my mouth, as I stood dignifiedly before the congregation I had served for nine and a half years, but I could not believe what I was saying. Nine and a half years earlier I received a call from God and a unanimous affirmation from this church to serve as their pastor. I had now reached my twenty-fifth year in the ministry and could hardly believe that I now had "no place to go."

Just a few days prior to this Communion Sunday it had become clear that my work was finished. The past six months had been difficult after a fairly successful ministry in that location. The church had been slowly declining long before I became the pastor and experienced limited growth during my tenure. First Baptist Churches in small county seat towns were finding it difficult to grow and even maintain. We did, however, accomplish a world impact through our mission activities locally, in the state, and even nationally by our volunteer emphasis, and a strong giving base. The past nine and a half years had

been good and productive, but it was now time to look to the future—but the future was not very clear.

My wife, family, and I began the process of assessing what had happened. After several days of hurt and uncertainty we finally came to the conclusion that we felt a strong confirmation that this was from God. We had felt a desire to leave the church for some time but just could not bring ourselves to the point of moving our girls right in the middle of their high school career. Not only that, we were comfortable, right where we were, and had not been sensitive to God's leadership to move. Up to this point, I had always moved from church to church. I had never left a church with "no place to go."

Monday morning came with thirty days of pay required by the constitution of the church, four weeks vacation, and nine weeks of a love offering from the church to make my transition. In short, I had about 4 months of time to sell my house, make necessary adjustments in my life, and search out God's will for the next phase of my life. This, of course, led to a lot of prayer, Bible study, and meditation. The rest of this article is a reflection of what I have learned with "no place to go."

Respond When God Speaks— Genesis 12:1-3

First, it is important to respond when God speaks. In Genesis 12:1-3, we see God providing instruction to Abram to leave and go where He would send him. Abram was promised a blessing and protection, but he was not provided a street address or the name of a new church or business. It is always an issue of hearing God's voice and holding fast to Him and not hardening our hearts.

Churches often have many voices telling the pastor and his family what they need to do and when they need to do it. Many times these are loving individuals crying out from their need and hurt. However, many times these

are hateful individuals with hidden agendas and destructive attitudes. It is often difficult to hear God's voice in the midst of the church babble.

When God says you are finished with an assignment, you are finished! It is most important to know God's voice and to respond when He speaks. There are consequences to any new move. I found it helpful to listen as God confirmed and spoke through His word, our times together in prayer, and most of all through the passing of time.

Reflect During God's Silence— Psalm 46:1

The Holman Christian Standard Bible says it this way, "God is our refuge and strength, a helper who is always found in times of trouble" (Psalm 46:1). After twenty-five years of using this verse to comfort others, especially during the time of death, it had now come home to speak directly to me. God had just provided me with a sabbatical that I didn't know I needed after twenty-five years as an active pastor. My sabbatical was a wonderful time of research and much needed rest. For several months I enjoyed traveling, preparing some summer mission projects, reading, researching, interviewing, pulpit supplying, and not being in the middle of anything or in charge of anything.

My much-needed sabbatical became a time, where in my silence, I once again affirmed that God is our refuge and strength and a helper who is always found in times of trouble. It seemed as if God had a person for each day of my sabbatical to send a card, make a phone call, or stop by for a short visit. On days when it seemed like my whole world was falling apart, someone was there in the name of God to encourage, support, and comfort. At times when I thought God was silent, He was not silent at all. He was speaking through those faithful servants.

It also became clear that God did not work according to my time schedule. He works in His own time and in His own way. I found it important to be still

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and know that He is God. God was providing. I just needed to be still for a while and recognize that His provisions were more than adequate for my needs. His greatest provision for me during this time of no place to go was my family. My wife was my number one cheerleader and my children continued to build my esteem by telling me how much they missed my preaching. During this time we worshipped together in several different settings. There is no doubt in my mind that God speaks to us often through our own families, if we would just be still and listen.

**Rejoice in Your Suffering—
Philippians 3:10**

Life is a painful experience filled with suffering. However, I have always been amazed at the pain I have suffered while serving churches and the respect I have found from the world. Friends and fellow Christians who found it difficult to practice the biblical standard of grace and forgiveness have inflicted some of my most painful experiences in life. Ministers are very seldom forgiven by the handful of negative people who are found in every congregation. It has taken me years to learn that those pains, as great as they were, would be for my good.

The fellowship of His suffering, as Paul says it, involves suffering indignation, embarrassment, and pain with dignity and a Christ-like spirit. Painful experiences can give us insights into the One we serve and love, and thus, the rejoicing. No one is perfect. I had to come to the place where I recognized my responsibility and placed it in the proper perspective. I also had to come to the realization that those who sought to hurt me were not perfect either. There is never too much water under the bridge for God's recovery powers, but it is important to remember that some do not want reconciliation.

I rejoice today, with "no place to go," because I have experienced God's forgiveness, witnessed His grace to a wonderful degree, and have come to

the conclusion that He is still actively involved in leading my life.

**Remember God's Selection—
Genesis 22:9**

Being with no place to go was a devastating blow to my self-esteem. I began to doubt my calling, my preaching skills, my spirituality, and my self-worth. Not preaching on Easter Sunday for the first time in 25 years pushed me right to the edge. I came to the conclusion that my ministry was over and that I should find a secular job to support my family.

When God directed Abraham to take his son, whom he loved, to the region of Moriah and sacrifice him, I feel certain that Abraham thought his world had come to an end. Is it possible that he spent sleepless nights wondering if God had really forgotten the promise He had made to him? God has always called His people to walk by faith. God wants to know if we fear Him and will walk in obedience even if we do not know about the ram caught in the thicket. God had not forgotten that He had selected Abraham, and God had not forgotten that He had selected me at age fourteen to preach. I was the one having difficulty remembering.

It was only a month before my Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, and Wednesday nights began to fill up with opportunities to preach and teach. Confirmation letters, resumes being sent, and conversations with pastor search committees began to boost my self-esteem. My daughter finished her third year of college, my two younger girls finished their year of high school, my wife brought closure to her job, and our house sold all in God's time. It was as if God had a plan all along. He was not through with me yet.

**Recognize God's Steering—
Proverbs 3:5-6**

Trust in the Lord...and He will make your paths straight (Proverbs 3:5-6). It is really difficult to trust in the Lord when you have no place to go. When the road is uncertain it is hard to trust in the Lord. However, it is during times of uncertainty that God's leadership

and steering of our lives become more profound. Recognizing God's steering is one of the greatest blessings when you have no place to go.

As I am getting older, I am becoming more and more aware of the need to redefine myself. I am in the process of being all that God wants me to be, and that gives me permission to change when He directs. Having no place to go has helped me realize that maybe God is in the process of redefining, steering if you will, the next phase of my life and ministry. Like any good team, I have assessed the first half, made necessary adjustments so I can win, and am now ready to face the second half.

Recognizing God's steering has helped me to define my worth. My worth is not in being a pastor of a church, large or small. My worth is found in the fact that I am a selected servant of the King. Like any other child of God, my assignments are His responsibility. I am not to lean on my own understanding. I have nothing to prove, but rather somebody to please. I best please Him when I trust Him, lean not unto my own understanding, and acknowledge Him. It is good to know that when you have no place to go, you have a God who is actively steering your life.

No Place to Go

The land of "No Place to Go" is a scary place. It is a place where you are tempted daily to help God find the next provision for your service. It is a place where He constantly reminds you that servant-leaders serve wherever they are placed. Maybe you are in the land of No Place to Go or maybe you are contemplating a journey there. I hope your journey there will be as rewarding as mine has been. Let God direct the process of His redefining of yourself in your passage through this phase of your life.



W. Steven Brown,
Pastor

EDITOR'S NOTE: Steven Brown was recently called to pastor North River Baptist Church in Roswell, Georgia.



Ministers have a pattern of behavior that is traceable. These ministers are often very winsome and attractive and search committees become enamored with them without looking at the DNA of the minister.

Third, check the references and find some that are not listed on the resume. Ask the references if there is anything that they need to know about the candidate that may be an embarrassment. What are the ministers' strengths and weaknesses? One of the questions that might be asked of the person used as a reference is, "If you were in my place, would you recommend this person?" Even the names that are listed on the references will tell you a lot about the candidate. Most of the time these are people that they have identified with or may be role models, or names that will help the candidates' chances of advancement or consideration. Do your homework. Ask tough questions. It is a lot easier to know up front than later to address a bad decision.

One last word of caution — beware of calls from well-known ministers who tell you that God has led them to you because their candidate is God's man (and it's always man) for your church. It will not be for your consideration, but it has been already decided in the counsel and wisdom of God! It sounds mysterious and pious and some search committees have fallen for it hook, line, and sinker.

Jim C. Bruner
Vice President and Sr. Assistant to the President, Mercer University

The Rest of the Story

RECENTLY A FINE BAPTIST layman from one of Georgia's prominent churches was sharing with me that the search committee of his church felt like they had an excellent candidate to consider to be their pastor. Among the things he shared with me, was that the candidate was not aligned politically with any group. When his name was mentioned to me, one would have been hard pressed to find a person who was not more politically aligned. Why such a disconnect? It was apparent that the search committee needed to know "the rest of the story." It is unfortunate that search committees

are often misled because they take at face value what is told to them. Often they don't ask the right questions. The following are some brief remarks to help search committees dig a little deeper.

First, look at where the candidate went to school and what kind of degrees he/she holds. Unfortunately, a degree listed on a resume can be very misleading. Many theological degrees today aren't worth the paper they're written on. Degrees that are obtained by non-accredited institutions are often obtained by simply mailing in a check

or doing very little work, and sometimes are even granted by some churches. Recently an article I read in a journal of higher education told of a degree mill in Tennessee (they often change states when the authorities close in on them) where one could buy a medical degree from Harvard University. One person sent in for a degree just to investigate and was sent instead a law degree from Harvard, stating that they were out of medical degrees, but thought the law degree would suffice! The minister may have "doctor" before his name, but the minister may not have a high

school diploma. It used to be a seminary degree from one of the SBC seminaries would tell you a whole lot about the person, but that's not true anymore.

Second, know the pattern and behavior of the person. Most ministers have a track record if they have been in the

ministry very long. For example, if they move every one or two years, find out why. Some fine ministers get caught in dysfunctional churches and must move, but what really needs to be investigated is why. I have noticed that ministers who fail frequently have a pattern of behavior that is repeated.

First, look at where the candidate went to school and what kind of degrees he/she holds.

Second, know the pattern and behavior of the person.

Third, check the references and find some that are not listed on the resume.

It Is a Job!

ABOUT A YEAR AGO, I began my job search. I soon discovered that job hunting is a job! As I tried to balance job hunting with completing my final semester at McAfee School of Theology and working part-time, I found CBF/National and CBF/GA to be very helpful. I wanted to network with several different resources to find churches in need of a children's minister, so in addition to the help of Dr. Truett Gannon at McAfee, I turned to the reference and referral services of CBF/National and CBF/GA. I consulted with Clarissa Strickland through CBF/National and with Devita Parnell, Alan Mitchell, and

Frank Broome of CBF/GA. They gave me frequent updates on where my resume was sent and informed me of churches that had positions that might match my gifts and calling.

The reference and referral departments of CBF/National, CBF/GA, and CBF offices from other states hosted a gathering at McAfee for students who were looking for places to serve. At that meeting, Devita Parnell asked if I would be interested in a children's ministry resident position at First Baptist Church of Dalton. Soon afterwards at the annual spring CBF/GA meeting, I had the chance

(continues to page 9)

Resource Wise

FELLOWSHIP CHURCHES AROUND THE COUNTRY now have an experienced ally for making better personnel decisions through a partnership with a ministry organization called MinistryConnect. Working with CBF entities in Arkansas, Kentucky, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Tennessee, MinistryConnect provides matching and coaching services to churches and search committees as they seek to fill vacant ministerial and staff positions. The partnership may grow to include other state CBF groups, such as Georgia, as ministers and churches continue to learn about MinistryConnect.

“Leadership is the key to the health of churches,” says MinistryConnect co-founder Dr. Roger Hatfield. “When you have the right leaders in the right place at the right time, church health can and does occur.” Based on the premise that effective ministry matching occurs when there is comprehensive information and analysis, MinistryConnect provides a uniquely professional system for pastoral calling.

The MinistryConnect team is well-trained with a wide range of experience in assisting churches. Hatfield and Dr. Verlyn Bergen, also a co-founder of the organization, have over 70 years combined experience in ministry to hundreds of churches. Their expertise provides search committees with the help needed to be exceptionally successful.

What MinistryConnect does not provide is names and resumes. Instead, churches and search committees should turn to Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, seminaries, and other groups for referrals, just as they have in the past. “Trust is a major issue; churches should continue to get names and resumes from sources they trust,” observes Bergen. “Our role is to help sort out the information once the church receives it.”

Harold Phillips, CBF of Missouri coordinator, used MinistryConnect’s services when the organization was seeking a new associate coordinator. Phillips says the organization’s real strength is helping groups find the best possible fit. “We had no trouble gathering names and resumes for our associate coordinator position,” says Phillips. “What Roger and Verlyn really helped us with was narrowing down the candidates to the one or two whose strengths and style matched the needs of our organization.”

For more information about the assessments, tools, and options offered by MinistryConnect, visit www.ministryconnect.net.

Jeff Langford

Associate Coordinator, CBF of Missouri

(continues from page 8)

to meet the children’s minister from FBC of Dalton. Our paths crossed unexpectedly at the children’s ministry group meeting, and we began a conversation that eventually led to my joining the staff at FBC.

I now know there was a lot of behind-the-scenes work from CBF/GA that helped me connect with a wonderful church. They used their network of people and churches to help me find a place of ministry. I have attended CBF/GA gatherings for several years now and enjoy the opportunity to meet and fellowship with friends from

across the state. I did not realize what a wonderful network I was creating and how helpful it would be in my job search. I would encourage others to take advantage of the job search resources provided through CBF/GA and CBF/National. In addition to the reference and referral departments, you can also benefit from attending regional, state, and national gatherings and participating in ministry group meetings. The fellowship of the Fellowship is a rich resource you will not want to overlook!

Kim Heath

*Ministry Resident to Children and Families
First Baptist Church of Dalton*



Additional Resources

Ten Commandments For Pastor Search Committees — A document produced by Walter B. Shurden, Executive Director and Bruce T. Gourley, Associate Director of The Center for Baptist Studies of Mercer University.

Visit www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/localchurch/pastorsearch.doc to view complete document.

Finding the Right Pastor for Your Church: Ideas for Search Committees

— This brochure will guide your search committee every step of the way from assessment of your church to leadership styles of prospective pastors to evaluation of candidates. By Bill Bruster, CBF Networking Coordinator.

Visit www.thefellowship.info/TheCBFStore/cbfstore.icm for additional information.

Resource List for Pastor Search Committees

— A list of resources that can assist search committees with their tasks.

Visit www.thefellowship.info/TheCBFStore/cbfstore.icm for additional information.

Suggestions for the Pastor Search Committee by Dr. Paul L. Camp.

Email Dr. Camp at pplcfc@aol.com for additional information.

A Local Church Seeks A Pastor —

A manual produced by the United Church of Christ.

Call 1-800-537-3394 or 1-800-325-7061.

Opportunities / Updates / Reports

The University Campus: Tomorrow's Moderate Baptists

First Baptist Church, Decatur, GA
May 4-5, 2006

For complete conference details visit:
[www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/
conferences/index.htm](http://www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/conferences/index.htm)

Sara Owen Etheridge Scholarship Award

Each year Georgia Baptist Women in Ministry awards \$500 to a Baptist woman who is currently studying at the Master's or Doctoral level. To receive the scholarship the student must be a current or past resident of Georgia and have completed at least 30 hours in a theological studies program. Applicants may attend a Baptist or non-Baptist institution. The deadline for applications is March 15, 2006. The scholarship will be awarded at the Georgia Baptist Women in Ministry Spring Meeting on Saturday, April 22. For more information or to receive an application, please contact Carrie Veal at 770-534-7354 or carrieveal@fbcgainesville.org

All Church Challenge 2006

July 22- August 4, 2006
Helena, West Helena, AR

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in conjunction with "Together in Hope," the Fellowship's nationwide rural poverty initiative, announces their annual summer mission activity. For details visit www.cbfga.org and look under "Events" then "Missions."

"Spiritual Formation in Congregational Life": A Theological Discussion

Presented by The Initiative for
Ministerial Excellence

Monday, April 24, 2:00 pm through
12:00 noon, April 25

Registration fee \$25.00/person
(includes Monday evening meal)

Macon, GA (location to be announced)

Spiritual Formation is a critical concern for many people of faith in the 21st

century. One of the challenges is to understand the theological and practical implications of congregation's working intentionally to be agents of spiritual formation. Such practices impact every aspect of the congregation's life from worship to governance. The minister's experience of authority and integrity is also impacted. CBF's Leadership Development Department invites you to be a part of a theological discussion and reflection time on this important subject and its implications.

The format for the event will include large group presentations and small group discussion times with peers and the discussion leaders. The resource persons for the event are Dr. Molly Marshall and Dr. Craig McMahan. Molly Marshall is a theologian who has written on spiritual life and has reflected on the theological implications of these issues. She is the President of the Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City. Craig McMahan is a long-time pastor who has recently become the University Minister at Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. As a pastor, he brings a practical perspective to congregational life and theological reflection.

For information or to register email Dawn Hall at dmhall@wfubmc.edu or call 336-716-9722.

CBF / GA Scholarships

CBF of Georgia is accepting applications for:

- Seminary Scholarships (students enrolled in any Master's level degree program).
- Undergraduate Scholarships (rising seniors in college).

Completed applications must include a form, three references, and an essay.

To receive an application form, contact Devita Parnell at 478-742-1191, ext. 28, or dparnell@cbfga.org or visit www.cbfga.org. Application deadline for 2006-07: April 1, 2006. (NOTE: there

will be only ONE application deadline annually).

Vocational Opportunities

Youth Ministry Intern
First Baptist Church of Griffin, GA

This is a 12-month position: school year months will be part-time and summer months will be full-time. For more information email Hambric Brooks at hambricbrooks@bellsouth.net or call 770-227-5517.

Financial Picture

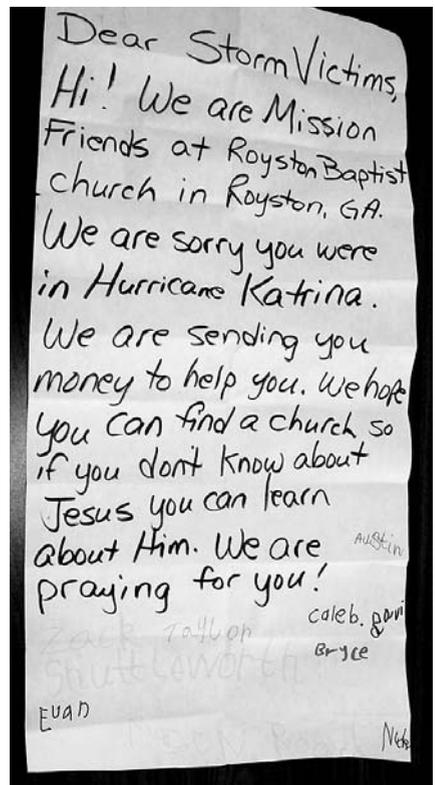
2005-2006 Year-to-Date

June 1, 2005 – December 31, 2005

Budget Requirement \$376,250.00
Undesignated Receipts \$354,638.18
Over/<Under> \$<21,611.82>
Designated Receipts \$ 78,963.45

People and Places

CBF/GA thanks everyone who responded to the recent disasters. The letter below from the Mission Friends of Royston Baptist Church speaks for all of CBF/GA as we continue our relief efforts.



Highs & Lows

(continues from page 4)

dates that looked on paper as if they would be effective future pastors of our church. Our next assignment was to go home, pray for the Lord's directions, study afresh the resumes of the top group, and then rank the top five. At our next committee meeting, we concentrated on choosing from this group one consensus list of our top five.

Our next assignment was for each committee member to check all references of one of these five candidates and find out all that we could about that person. As we talked to a reference, we would ask that man or woman for someone else who knew the candidate from a different perspective and then would call that individual. After a week we met again with all that we had discovered and shared from the heart our impressions.

After all checking was done, we determined the order we would visit with these candidates and their spouses to become better acquainted. Our travels have taken us to Florida, Alabama, and several cities in Georgia so far. Generally we set up our meeting time around either the midday or evening meal. The average time for the sessions with the pastors, not counting the meal, has been two to three hours. With two of the candidates we had a second meeting to delve deeper into matters of concern on both sides.

After our committee determined that we desired to go on further with particular candidates, we made arrangements to go and hear those pastors preach in their pulpits. We have done that with three candidates so far. Also we have requested from these three tapes or videos of some of their services, so we would have more than just one opportunity to hear them preach.

As certain doors have been closed along the way, the Lord has always opened others that we had never even dreamed about. Especially in times like these, we are reminded that when the whole process is turned over to Him, He will supply our needs sometimes in totally unexpected ways.

There have been a few times in this process when we realize that our committee has entered a into a cul de sac with a certain candidate. In such cases we realize that it was the Lord's way of letting us know that this person was not the one He had in mind to become our new senior pastor. Along the way there have been a couple of major disappointments, but our prayer from the beginning has been that the Lord's will be done, not ours. We know that in God's time that we will be led to the right candidate to be Mt. Zion's new senior pastor.

David Walton

*Chair, Pastor Search Committee
Mt. Zion Baptist Church, Macon*

CBF/GA General Assembly

Workshops & Networking

Workshop Sessions

- Lessons Learned From Katrina
- Ministry to the Homeless: Together We Can Do It
 - Ten Dumb Things Churches Do
 - It's Time: The Missional Church
- Dealing with Multiple Generations in the Church
 - Building Interfaith Relationships: The Athens Abraham Alliance
 - The Morning News Meets the Good News
 - How to Research, Write, and Publish Your Church's History
- Women Deacons: History and Current Issues
- New Hymnal for Baptists?: A Listening Session with Smyth & Helwys
- Cultivating Spiritual Vitality among Lay Leadership: Moving Beyond the Corporate Model for "Doing Church"
 - The What and Why of Church Library Ministry
 - Missions in the Local Church
- Bookaholics Anonymous: 10 Titles to Feed Your Habit
 - God-Bearing Teens in A Stressed-Out World
 - Postmodern Youth Culture: It Takes a Village
 - The Grace of God: Lifeless or Life-Giving?
 - Understanding First Generation Hispanics
 - Strategies for Ministry Among Hispanics
 - Baptists and Hitler at the Berlin BWA, 1934
- Caleb's Café: A New Tool for Growing Small Groups
 - Ministers on the Move/Churches on the Prowl

Ministry Networks

- Children's Ministry Network
- Student Ministry Network
- Music and Worship Network
- Education Ministry Network
 - Pastors' Network
 - Chaplaincy Network

2005 Convocation Photos

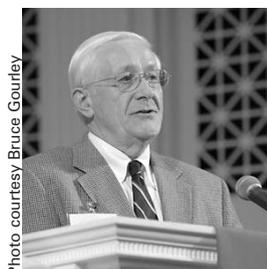


Photo courtesy Bruce Gourley

Photo courtesy Bruce Gourley

Coming Up!

February 8-9

"Christianity in Africa Today: Presentations by Dr. Henry Mugabe" Macon and Atlanta, GA

Sponsored by CBF/GA, The Christianity Department (Mercer), The Office of the Minister to the University (Mercer), The Center for Baptist Studies (Mercer), Vineville Baptist Church (Macon), and First Baptist Church of Christ of Macon. Dr. Mugabe is the president of the Baptist Theological Seminary in Zimbabwe. For additional information: www.centerforbaptiststudies.org/conferences/mugabe2006.htm

February 8-11

Current Retreat, First Baptist Church of Decatur

Current is a group of young Baptist ministers, leaders, and divinity students who seek to connect through the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. For more information on the web visit www.thefellowship.info/current/2006retreat.icm.

March 3-4

CBF/GA General Assembly (See front cover for details.) First Baptist Church of Athens

Guest preacher: Jim Dant

March 6-8

True Survivor VI, Daniel Island (Charleston), SC

A training event for all Christian Educators and age group ministers. Featuring: Ivy Beckwith, *Postmodern Children's Ministry*, and Dave Odom, Center for Congregational Health. Cost is \$50 per person. Contact Toni Draper at tdraper@thefellowship.info or 770-220-1654.

March 8-9

Children's Ministries Network Retreat

Providence Baptist Church, Daniel Island (Charleston), SC

Cost is \$25 per participant. For more info contact Cathy Anderson at canderson@fbca.net or Tricia Hays at thays@wilshirebc.org.

March 15 DEADLINES

Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia

Distinguished Churchwoman of the Year Award

Visit www.cbfga.org click on Events then Opportunities for details.

Sara Owen Etheridge Scholarship Award

Scholarship will be awarded at the Georgia BWIM Spring Meeting on Saturday, April 22. For more information or to receive an application please email Carrie Veal at carrieveal@fbcgainesville.org or call 770-534-7354.

March 17-19, FBC Warm Springs

March 24-26, FBC Morrow

March Mission Madness 10th Anniversary

Contact: Scott Ford at robertscottford@mac.com or visit the new

MMM website at www.marchmissionmadness.org or call 770-860-0473 for more information.

April 22

Baptist Women in Ministry Spring Meeting

New Heights Baptist Church, Macon, GA

10:30 a.m. worship

Luncheon, business meeting, and awards presentation after worship.

Email Karen Pennings at kap1003@yahoo.com or call 478-714-0380 or 478-633-1527 for additional information.

April 24

Spiritual Formation in Congregational Life

(See page 10 for details.)

May 4-5

The University Campus: Tomorrow's Moderate Baptists

First Baptist Church of Decatur

1:30 p.m. (May 4) – 12 noon (May 5)

Co-sponsored by the Center for Baptist Studies, CBF National, and CBF/GA. This conference seeks to act as a catalyst for collegiate ministry among moderate Baptists and to encourage concrete actions at the local church level in the area of college missions. Email Devita Parnell at dparnell@cbfga.org or Bruce T. Gourley at Gourley_BT@Mercer.edu for more information.

June 11-16

June 18-23

Touching Taliaferro with Love (TTWL) Day Camp

For additional information email Jimmy Lewis at jlewis@cbfga.org.

June 22-23

CBF-National General Assembly

Georgia World Congress Center, Atlanta, GA

Visit www.thefellowship.info for information.

June 25-28

Summer Retreat for Vocational Formation "Tapestry"

Visit www.healthychurch.org look under "Programs."

June 26-29

TTWL Baseball Camp

For additional information email Jimmy Lewis at jlewis@cbfga.org.

June 28-July 01

PASSPORTkids!

Wesleyan College, Macon, GA

Visit passport-kids.org for information.

Sept. 24-26

2006 Mercer Preaching Consultation

King & Prince Resort, St. Simons Island, GA

Visit theology.mercer.edu/calendar/special_events.html for details as they are finalized.

CBF of Georgia...enabling the people of God who are committed to historic Baptist principles to carry out the Great Commission under the Lordship of Jesus Christ in a fellowship where every Christian has the freedom and the responsibility to exercise God's gift and calling.

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