

MARCH 1, 2019

The Vine

NEW & STORIES FROM COOPERATIVE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP OF VIRGINIA



CBFVA MOVES TO HOME OFFICES

CBFVA offices were housed at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond for the past couple of years. We have certainly enjoyed this partnership and corresponding collegial relationships. With the seminary closing at the end of January, our staff had to secure new office space. The Advisory Council approved a plan for our staff of three to primarily work from home offices with designated space at Central Baptist Church for face-to-face collaborative work. Please take note of our new mailing address:

CBFVA
P.O. Box 425
Midlothian, VA 23113

This new arrangement has worked well thus far. We are grateful to Central Baptist Church for providing storage and meeting space!

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The Power of a Clear and Compelling Vision!

The physical ability to see well is my poorest sense. In fact, I'm extremely near sighted. Without corrective lenses, I am handicapped. I started wearing glasses in the 5th grade and wore contacts for 30 years until I also became far sighted. Thank God I have close to 20/20 vision with corrective lenses!

If we are honest, most of us admit to being unaware of our senses and taking them for granted. The fact I must reach for my glasses first thing when I wake up in the morning is a daily reminder of the power of good vision—or lack thereof!

At CBFVA's Coordinating Council Retreat on February 18-19, participants spent time talking about the importance of a compelling vision. A few hours after the retreat ended, I needed to do something physical and tangible, so I decided to begin installing can lights in my new home office area. Everything was going well until I was wiring one of the cans, i.e. pushing wires into the fitting. After I threaded the common wire, I reached for the hot wire. In a split second the common wire jumped forcefully out of its fitting, flew under my glasses, and penetrated the corner of my left eye. Upon seeing "stuff" oozing out of my eyeball, Joan and I headed to a hospital emergency room. After a comprehensive eye exam, including a cat scan, we were relieved to hear, "You were very lucky!" The next day the ophthalmologist confirmed how fortunate I was. Realizing how close I came to losing an eye makes me even more grateful for clear vision from two eyes!

I am fully aware of how different my life would be if I did not have clear vision. Similarly, we know congregations and ministries like CBF Virginia are crippled without clear vision. Every year I must go and get my vision checked because eyes change over time. Congregational vision also is not static—it must remain flexible over time. God's mission to renew and redeem the world doesn't change, but a congregation's understanding of how to live into that mission evolves over time. God is always doing something new, and Spirit gives fresh insights. Faithfulness is defined by moving "by faith" where vision points.

To lose your vision is risky business. "Without vision the people perish." Remember the story from several years ago about two experienced mountain climbers who perished while leading groups up Mt. Everest? Why did these climbers die? The fact is that they didn't have to die. They died because the leaders lost sight of their vision. The leaders ignored signs of bad weather because they were myopically focused on getting their teams to the summit. Vision must include remaining aware of everything going on around us.

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If our vision is poor, we might expend too much unfocused, imprecise energy or we might be tempted to concentrate primarily on ourselves because we can't "see" forward. The clearer the vision, the more efficient and focused we can be to accomplish what we sense Spirit leading us to be and do. We are compelled and propelled by vision. This is true for individuals, congregations, and CBFVA.

Vision is about our capacity to dream and visualize and eventually, to take risks. This allows us to create something new—to see beyond old boundaries and culturally imposed jigs or patterns. Vision is the capacity to see beyond the box of existing understanding and to devise a path to reach new heights.

Three years into my role as coordinator, I believe CBFVA's vision is getting clearer. A high-priority goal for me from the beginning of my assignment has been to help CBF Virginia discover and be captured by a clear and compelling vision. My objective is to create a context in which the Coordinating Council grapples with who we are, what we uniquely offer the kingdom here in Virginia, where we are going together, how we connect in symbiotic ways to CBF Global, and how we prioritize the use of financial resources entrusted to our care. Discerning God's direction for CBF Virginia is spiritual work.

As I mentioned earlier, your Coordinating Council spent time thinking about CBFVA's identity, mission, and vision. We discussed four imperatives of a compelling vision: paint a picture (use metaphors and imagery to help folks see a better future), solve a problem (how is tomorrow going to be better because of the problem we help solve), stir the heart (envision a better world in which people want to live), and God-size it (a bold vision can't be accomplished in our human strength—it is utterly dependent upon God). We spent time in small groups "painting pictures" of what CBFVA can become in the future—based on needs within the congregations we serve — more about this later. For now, know CBFVA's vision is laser focused on:

- Forming and nurturing life-changing faith in Jesus Christ
- Creating a vibrant, Christ-centered community of churches and individuals who partner with one another
- Cultivating healthy clergy and congregations
- Providing life transforming mission engagement
- Offering faith shaping events for students and adults

We invite you and your congregation to journey with us. Help us discover and live into God's vision for CBFVA!

by Terry Maples, CBFVA Coordinator



Reflections on 2019 CBFVA Pastors' School

On behalf of the congregation at Huguenot Road Baptist Church, we express our appreciation for the ministry partnership that we enjoy with CBFVA. We have greatly benefited through Mission Madness, thematic Bible study materials such as "Beloved Community" and "Seeking Transformation," and CBF Field Personnel, Sue and Greg Smith. Our staff and I also enjoyed attending CBFVA Pastors' Schools. This year was no exception! The above are just some of the ways that CBFVA has come alongside us in ministry.

When we heard that CBFVA might need an alternate venue for this year's Pastors' School, we immediately volunteered to host the conference. It was great to connect with fellow clergy from the region and to listen and learn from others that day.

Dr. Meredith Stone, Director of Ministry Guidance and Instructor of Christian Ministry and Scripture at Logsdon School of Theology, was the plenary speaker. Her theme was "How does preaching ministry discern the faithful voices of the Bible and allow them to enliven, enlighten, and empower our congregations?" Dr. Stone helped us to listen to listen to the voices in scripture that we may not normally hear. Dr. Mark Biddle, Russell T. Cherry Professor of Old Testament at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, joined Dr. Stone for the afternoon session. We were challenged and inspired through their words and in dialogue with fellow clergy.

One specific takeaway has changed the way that we approach chapel that precedes our staff meetings each Tuesday morning. Prior to the Pastors' School, each staff person brought their own devotional in chapel. Now, we are using the upcoming week's sermon passage and at least one of the other Sunday readings from the Revised Common Lectionary. We read and listen. We seek to hear the voices within the text. This helps us begin the week with worship at the center.

Thank you for providing such a meaningful and helpful resource such as the Pastors' School to clergy. We are better for it and I believe that our churches are better because of it as well.

Shalom,

Bob Lee
Senior Pastor, Huguenot Road Baptist Church



CBF Governing Board Elects New Executive Coordinator

CBF Global's Governing Board voted unanimously on January 15 to elect a pastor of "theologically profound leadership," Paul Baxley, as the fourth executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. He has been "on the job" even before starting officially this month. We are excited about Paul's commitment to the Fellowship and about his commitment to global missions and congregational health.

Baxley, who has served since 2010 as senior minister of First Baptist Church, Athens, Georgia, was selected based upon the unanimous recommendation of the 11-members Executive Coordinator Search Committee formed in July 2018.

Baxley is no stranger to Virginia. He received his D.Min. degree from B TSR and served on the staff of B TSR working on the Samuel Project.

Read more about Baxley at <https://cbf.net/baxley>.

Paul Baxley on Tour in Virginia

We are pleased to announce Paul Baxley will tour Virginia with the CBFVA staff and Rob Fox on May 29-31. This is an excellent opportunity for clergy across the Commonwealth to get to know our new Executive Coordinator. Stay tuned for dates, times, and locations.



CBFVA Staff Resources Congregations

In this year of focus on Seeking Transformation, there is much discussion about what needs to be transformed in congregations. Change is happening all around. What needs to be re-formed? In what ways does our understanding of faith and how it is lived out in the world need to be transformed? Transformation is not a minor correction; it is moving across a threshold. Once you go across that threshold, you can't go back and see things the old way again. A metamorphosis has occurred.

CBFVA's staff knows a simple formula for the transformation needed in your congregation doesn't exist. However, Mark Snipes (msnipes@cbfva.org) can engage your leaders in much-needed conversation about the changing nature of mission engagement. Instead of providing answers, Mark will offer good questions to guide your reflection. Likewise, Terry Maples (tmaples@cbfva.org) is available to help your staff and educational leaders reflect on the nature of the faith we seek to form. Faith is much more than simply believing; authentic faith calls us to participate in making justice flow down like a river.

Check Out CBFVA's Thematic Bible Studies

Our theme for 2018-2019 is Seeking Transformation. Members of CBFVA's Coordinating Council wrote six Bible studies to resource congregations across the Commonwealth. The season of Lent would be an excellent time to study these lessons and ponder ways to repent from "distortions to our faith." Here are the lesson titles and authors:

- From Belief to Holistic Faith - Terry Maples
- From Institution to Movement - John Carroll
- From Attractional to Being Good Neighbors - Jenny Hodge
- From Passive to Transformative Worship - David Haun
- From Talking to Listening . . . to God and Each Other - Michael Cheuk
- From Scarcity to Abundance - Melissa Fallen

To access the Bible studies go to: <https://cbfva.org/latest-news/bible-studies/>.



CLERGY SEXUAL MISCONDUCT RESOURCE AVAILABLE

In light of the heightened awareness of clergy sexual misconduct in the news, CBF Virginia wants you to know about resources developed recently by CBF and Baptist Women in Ministry that address training, needs, and concerns of local churches in their efforts to be safe places. For more information, go to <https://cbf.net/safechurches>.



Plan to Participate in Upcoming General Assemblies



CBF General Assembly - Registration is now open for the CBF General Assembly on June 17-21 in Birmingham, AL. Main events begin on Wednesday at 2:00 p.m. and conclude with a celebration for Paul Baxley on Friday evening. The General Assembly includes The Angela Project on Wednesday afternoon, a dinner honoring Suzii Paynter on Thursday evening, reception for Paul Baxley on Friday evening, organizational meetings like New Baptist Covenant Luncheon and Religious Liberty Luncheon, inspiring worship, and lots of breakout covering a broad range of topics. The Virginia state meeting takes place at 3:00 on Thursday afternoon. See you in Birmingham!

CBFVA General Assembly - Our General Assembly is a one-day meeting on Tuesday, September 17, at Bethel Baptist Church in Midlothian, VA. Our theme is "Faithful Voices" and Paul Baxley is our keynote speaker. Mark your calendar now and plan to join us!



CALL TO PRAYER

REGISTER NOW!

Mission Madness

Site One:
Walnuts Hills Baptist Church
Willaimsburg, VA
March 22-24

Site Two:
Bybee's Road Baptist Church
Zion Crossroads, VA
April 5-7

cbf Virginia

PLEASE PRAY FOR THE 29 CHURCHES AND OVER 400 PARTICIPANTS ATTENDING MISSION MADNESS 2019. MAY WE ALL COME TO A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO SEEK TRANSFORMATION.

Save the date!

CBFVA is hosting!

