

# Perspectives

Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia | "Hello and Goodbye" | Winter 2014

## From the President



I remember that I was parking my car in the grocery store lot when Gwen first called me about serving as president of Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia. I had already learned that when Gwen Brown spoke, you needed to listen. Her words were always inspirational, encouraging, and wise, but she also spoke with authority.

Our conversation in the parking lot was no different. Gwen spoke with passion about why Baptist Women in Ministry

was still a much-needed organization in our state. She spoke with strength and clarity about her goals for the upcoming years as the rising leader of our organization, and then she asked me to prayerfully consider joining her on this path and serving alongside her in leadership. Not many people could say no to Gwen Brown.

A couple of days later, I called Gwen and told her that I would serve as president-elect. I wanted to be part of the many dreams she had for our organization. I wanted to work with her to build a more supportive network for Baptist women ministers in Georgia. For almost the entirety of her presidency, Gwen struggled with health challenges, and then on August 27, we lost her. Her death came far too soon for us—as her friends and for us as an organization. In my heart, I know that Gwen would want us to continue to be an organization that reaches out to support each other in our ministry efforts.

I still miss her, and I know that many of you do as well. As we enter into a new year, we move ahead knowing that Gwen would encourage us to continue developing our God-given gifts and to continue serving others. She would remind us to find ways to nurture and develop young ministers by giving them opportunities to serve alongside us. Most of all, she would celebrate with us God's work in our lives and in our communities. In this new year, will you join us in remembering and celebrating our much-loved

friend and sister, Gwen Brown, by continuing her dreams for Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia? - *LeAnn Gunter Johns*

### Remembering and Giving Thanks for Our Friend Gwen:

"I don't exactly remember when Gwen and I met. I feel as if she has always been part of my life. Her presence and her smile were magnetic. I miss her dearly and will always cherish her kind, gentle ways and words of encouragement. I will always remember how she always prayed

"in the strong name of Jesus." I remember how excited she was when I told her that I had been called to pastor Macedonia Baptist Church. We were talking on the phone, but I could hear her smile and sense the joy in her voice as we celebrated my good news. I am forever grateful that I had the opportunity to know Pastor Gwen Brown and to serve with her in BWIM of Georgia."—Billie Cox

"She was a friend who truly listened and offered words of hope to me a couple of times when I really needed to hear it. I always admired her style, gracious ways, and her kindness to me. She was a light!"  
—Erin Hall

"Pastor Gwen Brown was a great friend and mentor. She inspired me to develop my gift of preaching. She also gave me the first opportunity to preach the gospel from the pulpit. I love and miss my friend, and for that gift, I will be forever grateful."—Angela Fields



Our steering committee voted last fall to remember Gwen by giving a donation to BWIM of GA's own Sara Owen Etheridge Scholarship and the newly established Gwen Brown Memorial Scholarship at the McAfee School of Theology.

Sarah Withers, a longtime supporter and friend of Baptist Women in Ministry, passed away on Monday, November 18th, at the age of 82. We will all miss her presence at our annual gatherings but most of all her kind words of encouragement in ministry. We asked Dr. Michelle Brooks Garber, Assistant to the Dean at McAfee School of Theology to reflect on her relationship with Sarah Withers.



*For Sarah Withers...Lord, Hear Our Prayer*

Early in my studies at the McAfee School of Theology, I found myself without a church job—or a church home—but in need of a mentor for Dr. Truett Gannon’s Supervised Ministry course. In his infinite wisdom, Dr. Gannon connected me with Sarah Withers. From our first meeting, Sarah took me (and my family!) under her wing, offering encouragement and affirmation while embodying true service and love of neighbor. Sarah taught me a different model of leadership and introduced me to a legacy of loving and supportive women in ministry. Several years ago at one of the BWIM gatherings, we were asked to name and pray for three women who had affected our lives and helped shape us into the women we are today—Sarah was one of the women for whom I gave thanks.

For Sarah Withers and her encouraging, steady, loving, and indomitable spirit, we give thanks. Lord, Hear Our Prayer

## Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia Award Deadlines

Distinguished Church Woman of the Year Nominations and Sara Owen Etheridge Scholarship Applications are due March 1, 2014.

For more information visit <http://bwimga.org/>.



**Hello, Martha Kate Hall!**

*by Sarah Holik*

We celebrate Martha Kate Hall’s calling as Associate Coordinator for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia. Serving since late August, Martha Kate lives in Macon and is supported in ministry by her husband, Jason, and daughter, Melody. Take a few minutes and get to know Martha Kate and her vision for ministry.

*How did you find your way into ministry?*

As a child I was very involved in all aspects of church programming and possessed a true love for the church. During my senior year of high school I felt God calling me to serve in full-time ministry. While earning my music degree at Mercer University and serving in summer internships, I felt God pulling me towards children’s and music ministry. After earning my degree in Christian Education at Truett Seminary in Waco, I served as a children’s minister in Texas for four years. I then returned to my home of Augusta, Georgia, to serve as a mommy, which eventually led me back to music ministry and then to CBF.

*How do you hope to develop leadership in congregations, especially among women?*

I have come to realize both as a female minister and a mother the importance a simple presence can hold. Through CBF of Georgia events I hope to provide strong examples of a variety of leaders, as well as providing opportunities for young adults to lead events. I hope that those participating in our events will say what I was able to say as I felt God calling me into ministry: “I like what she is doing, maybe I can do that one day, too.”

*How has God surprised you so far as Associate Coordinator?*

The mere fact that I am serving as Associate Coordinator has been a wonderful surprise for me. Since my time in seminary I have felt a desire to work for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in some capacity. When my family returned to Georgia in 2011, God began opening doors for me to become more involved in CBF at the state and national levels. All of these doors have led me to this position, what that I would consider a “dream job.” I love the local church and have a passion for helping ministers and congregations serve with their very best. This job has already allowed me several opportunities to help ministers and churches to be the best they can be and that is why I love my job!

## **Hello and Goodbye in Uganda**

*by Missy Ward*

I left the US almost eleven months ago with a dream and vision that God had placed on my heart long ago – to minister to refugee women and girls who are in violent or vulnerable situations. Eleven months ago I said goodbye to close family and friends, and hello to a lot of unknowns. My task ahead was to start the very first temporary emergency shelter in Kampala for women and girls from the ground up. The task ahead presented a lot of challenges – establishing funding, shelter staff, structures of safety and security, and a network of referral organizations, to name a few.

The last eleven months have been an incredible journey filled with some of the biggest challenges I have ever faced, but also some of the greatest joys. I have worked with refugee women and girls experiencing complex situations and some of the most difficult traumas I have ever seen. Additionally, there have been enormous challenges and barriers to getting the shelter off the ground and running. All of my experiences have taught me that relying on God daily for renewed hope, joy, and strength is a vital necessity. As a result of these trials, my faith and reliance on God grew enormously during this time.

Recently the shelter opened and we were able to take in our very first resident – a fifteen-year-old Congolese girl who was orphaned at the age of seven and thrown out of the place where she was living after refusing to prostitute herself. She was homeless and without a place to go, vulnerable to the realities of poverty, trafficking, and exploitation.

My experiences have taught me to say goodbye to reservations, fears of failure, and perceived limits. Since we serve a God who is able to do infinitely more, I can now say hello to God's provision of a dream come true – a ministry house where women who come to receive shelter, education, vocational training, and counseling will learn of God's hope, love, and grace.

Thank you BWIM of GA for your support, love, and prayers over the last several months. I appreciate your partnership in ministry to serve women who are deeply hurting in our world.

For more information or ministry updates, please visit:  
[www.MissyinUganda.com](http://www.MissyinUganda.com).



# Save-the-date

April 5th, 2014

BWIM of GA

Spring Gathering/Annual Meeting

Park Ave. Baptist Church

Atlanta, GA

### **BWIM Georgia Regional Gatherings**

Interested in gathering with women in ministry in your region? Groups will gather at least twice in the coming year for dinner and conversation. Contact the Steering Committee representative closest to your home or place of ministry for further information!

#### **Northwest Georgia, Cartersville, Rome**

Tamara Tillman Smathers

[ttsmathers@fbcrome.org](mailto:ttsmathers@fbcrome.org)

(706) 266-7141 (c); (706) 291-6850 (w)

#### **Northeast Georgia, Athens**

Hannah Coe

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#### **Atlanta, McAfee, Candler**

Jennifer Lyon,

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(678) 234-5706 (c)

#### **North Atlanta, Roswell, Alpharetta, Marietta**

Jessica Asbell

[jessica@rfbc.org](mailto:jessica@rfbc.org)

(478) 718-7456 (c); (770) 587-6980 (w)

#### **Covington, Conyers, Social Circle**

Brenda Buckelew

[btbuckelew2@juno.com](mailto:btbuckelew2@juno.com)

(478) 957-0805 (c)

#### **Central Georgia, Macon**

Rachel Huston

[rachel.heaven0784@gmail.com](mailto:rachel.heaven0784@gmail.com)

(912) 441-6456 (c)

#### **South Georgia**

Sarah Holik

[sarah@fbcfitz.com](mailto:sarah@fbcfitz.com)

(229) 423-4367 (c)

**Helpful Links:**

**Cooperative Baptist Fellowship:**  
[www.thefellowship.info](http://www.thefellowship.info)

**Cooperative Baptist Fellowship of Georgia:**  
[www.cbfga.org](http://www.cbfga.org)

**National Baptist Women in Ministry:**  
[www.bwim.info](http://www.bwim.info)

**Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia:**  
[www.bwimga.org](http://www.bwimga.org)

**Upcoming Dates:**

**ChurchWorks Conference, February 24-26, 2014,**  
**First Baptist Church Huntsville, Alabama**  
<http://www.thefellowship.info/churchworks>.

**BWIM of GA Sara Owen Etheridge Scholarship Deadline**  
**March 1, 2014**  
<http://bwimga.org/scholarship-info.asp>.

**BWIM of GA Distinguished Church Woman of the Year**  
**Nomination Deadline, March 1, 2014**  
<http://bwimga.org/dcwoty-about.asp>.

**Baptist Women in Ministry of Georgia Spring Gathering**  
**April 5, 2014**



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