Our Church Identity

KNOWING

SHARING

GROWING

TRUSTING

Knowing Our History

Sharing Our Story

Growing in Christian Hospitality

Trusting the Holy Spirit

— A Resource for CBF Churches —

Our Church Identity

The Congregational Life Team of CBFSC was tasked with discovering perceived needs within our churches. Our goal was to provide a resource to help meet those needs. After gathering church leaders and analyzing discussion, we found several areas of common ground. In their own unique ways, churches described four needs:

- **Knowing Our History**
- **Sharing Our Story**
- **Growing in Christian Hospitality**
- **Trusting the Holy Spirit**

We are pleased to present a four-session video series focused on providing context and information designed to foster local church-specific conversations. In other words, this is not a cookie-cutter model. Churches will be guided to use this information to discern their next steps.

These videos are approximately 20–30 minutes, followed by discussion questions to prompt dialogue. CBFSC folks will recognize and value the video presenters.

A leader's guide is provided for the facilitator to use. Possible uses are:

- Mid-Week Gathering
- Sunday School Classes
- Mission Groups
- Small Groups
- Zoom Groups

A poster and bulletin inserts are provided for churches to promote this valuable resource. Rev. Amy Jennings crafted discussion questions and activities to be used in local church settings. Please use this resource in ways that will facilitate deep, honest conversation among your people.

Choose the questions most challenging or needed in your context. Give small groups different questions to consider, and then have them report their conversation to the larger group. Have focused conversation on one question, and then ask the group to reflect on another question or two and return the next week just for dialogue. (This would stretch the series to eight sessions.)

Leaders, you know your contexts well, so use this resource in a way that enhances your ability to Know and Share your unique story. May God use this resource to further the ministry and growth of each local church.

With gratitude and prayer for our CBFSC churches,
CBFSC Congregational Life Team

Meet Our Presenters

— SESSION 1: KNOWING OUR HISTORY —

PAUL BAXLEY

The Rev. Dr. Paul Baxley was unanimously elected as the fourth executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in January 2019. He frequently preaches and teaches across the 30-year-old Fellowship as he leads this diverse community that includes nearly 1,400 congregations, thousands of individuals, 19 state and regional organizations, 800-plus chaplains and pastoral counselors, dozens of theological education and ministry partners, and 60-plus field personnel serving in 20 countries.

Previously, Paul served as senior minister of First Baptist Church in Athens, Ga., since 2010. A native of Winston-Salem, NC, he has also held pastorates and ministry positions in North Carolina and Virginia and is a former member of the CBF Governing Board. During his two terms on the CBF Governing Board from 2013 to 2017, Paul chaired an ad hoc committee that worked for 18 months to develop a comprehensive plan for Global Missions committed to the long-term presence of CBF field personnel around the world.

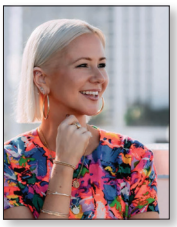
Paul is a graduate of Wake Forest University (Bachelor of Arts in religion, 1991), Duke Divinity School (Master of Theological Studies, 1996) and Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (Doctor of Ministry, 2003). He has held a variety of leadership roles on the boards of Mercer University's McAfee School of Theology, the Baptist House of Studies of Duke Divinity School and the Center for Congregational Health.

JAY KIEVE

Jay is the abuse prevention and response advocate & director of Ministerial Transitions for CBF. Jay leverages technology and the CBF network of churches and clergy to support congregations and ministers as they connect for vocational opportunities. He is also passionate about helping churches become places free from abuse where everyone can thrive. Jay is a safeguarding specialist for GRACE (Godly Response to Abuse in the Christian Environment) and also serves as a facilitator for Darkness to Light's "Stewards of Children." He routinely seeks trauma-related learning and is trained as a victim's advocate. Jay volunteers with local rape crisis/child advocacy centers and supports churches as they develop great policies and procedures for preventing abuse. He also leads the CBF behavioral threat assessment and management team that provides resources to employees, ministers and churches when they experience threats (such as threats of violence, harassing behavior and stalking). He also supports churches as they plan for safety or train security teams.

Prior to joining CBF in 2021, Jay led CBF South Carolina for nine years and served local churches in North and South Carolina and Alabama for 21 years. He holds a Doctor of Ministry degree from the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond (thesis focus: cultivating congregational stewardship), a Master of Theology (thesis focus: women's activism in the Baptist church) and a Master of Divinity degree from the Divinity School at Duke University, and Bachelor of Arts from Mercer University (honors thesis: theology of Frederick Beuchner). Jay is a member of the Association of Threat Assessment Professionals and the international security professionals society, ASIS. He parents two adult children with Melanie, his wife of 33 years.

— SESSION 2: SHARING OUR STORY —



CHRISTEN KINARD

Christen Kinard has spent more than 15 years as a professional in communications and marketing. She has helped businesses and organizations as diverse as high-end retail stores and independent schools develop and implement efficient and impactful communications strategies.

Through her company, Digital Congregations, she partners with churches and faith-based nonprofits to clarify their message, strengthen their digital presence, and communicate with consistency and confidence. Her work includes brand development, website design, content strategy and training that equips leaders and staff to carry communications forward in practical, sustainable ways. Digital Congregations reflects the intersection of her desire to do meaningful work, her belief in the importance of faith communities, and her talents and experience.

She holds an M.A. in peace and conflict resolution from Norwich University and a B.A. in international relations and French literature from the University of South Carolina.

— SESSION 3: GROWING IN CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY —

MARK TIDSWORTH

With a keen curiosity about life, Mark explores the intersection of faith, church and 21st century living. Mark has served as a pastor, new church developer, interim pastor, renewal pastor, therapist, nonprofit director, business owner, leadership coach, congregational consultant, leadership trainer and author. Ordained in the Baptist tradition, Mark is an ecumenical minister at this point along the way. Mark is a frequent presenter in lay leadership team retreats, clergy gatherings and denominational gatherings. Much of Mark's exposure to shifts in the 21st century church flows from his work as president of Pinnacle Leadership Associates, based in Columbia, South Carolina. Personally, Mark enjoys many outdoor activities, including mountain biking, hiking, camping and running. He frequently finds ways to integrate time outside into his work opportunities.

- Married to Melanie, with three young adult children and a first grandchild (April 2024!)
- Lives in Chapin, South Carolina
- Ordained minister, Baptist
- Author of seven books
- Former licensed professional counselor
- Former licensed marriage and family therapist
- Leadership coach and life coach
- Certified Peoplemap Communication System Trainer
- Trained congregational consultant
- Emotional intelligence trainer
- President of Pinnacle Leadership Associates, based in Chapin, South Carolina. Pinnacle is Mark, plus 34 associates

— SESSION 4: TRUSTING THE HOLY SPIRIT —

CHERYL MOORE ADAMSON

Reverend Cheryl Moore Adamson is the executive director of Palmetto Works Community Development Corporation and the founding pastor of Palmetto Missionary Baptist Church in Conway, South Carolina. A native of Hartsville and raised in Conway, she became the first African American commencement speaker at Conway High School. She holds degrees from the University of South Carolina, the University of Maryland and Duke Divinity School.

Reverend Adamson has served in leadership with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, the Baptist House of Studies at Duke Divinity School and the Whittemore Racepath Historical Society. Her ministry and advocacy for justice, education and community development have earned her numerous honors, including the McCall Racial Justice Trailblazer Award, the Ike Williams Award for Civic Leadership, and the Huntington Exemplary Service Award.

She has been married for 49 years to Dr. James W. Adamson. They are the proud parents of Mary and Jamaal and the grandparents of Cheryl Asua and Jordan Taylor.

ELIZABETH NANCE-COKER

Elizabeth Nance-Coker is the coordinator of CBFSC. She earned a B.A. in secondary music education, with minors in English, history, speech communication and elementary education from St. Mary's University; a Master of Music in vocal performance from the University of Texas at San Antonio; and a Doctor of Worship Studies, with a theological focus upon the Psalms of Lament, from The Robert E. Webber Institute.

Her initial call into ministry occurred after hearing the legendary Molly Marshall speak during Baptist Student Week at Glorieta Conference Center while Elizabeth was a freshman student at East Texas Baptist College. Having served for decades through music and discipleship ministries in a variety of locations and denominational traditions, Elizabeth returned to Baptist life when she discovered the free and faithful Baptists of CBFSC. Elizabeth is the former pastor of Lakeview Baptist Church in Camden.

As a former career military family, Elizabeth and her husband, Dennis, enjoyed living throughout the United States and overseas. Now making their home in Columbia, they are the proud parents of three grown children and two teenagers. Elizabeth enjoys reading, cross-stitching historic samplers, and long walks with their dogs, Rosie and Charlie.

Thank you to Rev. Amy Jennings for crafting the discussion questions that guide and promote spiritual formation. Thank you also to Parable Media for creating the videos; Amy C. Cook for designing the materials; CBF Content and Creative Strategies Officer Aaron Weaver for his discernment and guidance in the process; and CBF Coordinator of Congregational Ministries Brian Foreman.

Reflective Thoughts & Questions for Discussion

1 KNOWING OUR HISTORY

"Congratulations, You're Baptist!"

1. In the video, Jay describes what the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is and what CBF churches look like—quite a variety! How would you describe your church's identity? Are there similarities or differences in your church and the larger network of CBF? What are those differences that make your church unique?

2. Is your church associated with CBF on the Global and state levels? If so, why? Why has your church chosen to connect with CBF? What are the advantages? What are the disadvantages?

3. In the video, Jay gives a sweeping but thorough description of Baptist history. How familiar or unfamiliar are you with our Baptist history? Was there anything you learned about Baptist history that you either had forgotten or never knew? Were there any surprises? For example, were you surprised about why the Southern Baptist Convention began? Were you surprised about how CBF began?

4. One of the topics Jay emphasizes is the "Four Fragile Freedoms." Does your congregation embrace the Four Fragile Freedoms (Bible, Soul, Church and Religious Freedom)? If so, why? If not, why? Are some of these freedoms more important to your church, to your ministry staff, to your lay leadership, or to you than other freedoms/beliefs? Or asked another way, for example, "What does religious freedom (place any of the four freedoms in the space) mean for you, for your church? *Are these freedoms more important now than ever amid our cultural climate?*

5. Jay introduced the concept of bound set and centered set. Simply stated, "a bound set is defined by a clear boundary that distinguishes who is "in" and who is "out." It is based on specific criteria or rules." The set is shared among all members and is based on acceptable beliefs and practices by the set. It involves a more exclusionary framework as to who qualifies as a disciple of Jesus. The centered set is defined "not by who is inside or outside a boundary, but by the direction people are moving in relation to a central point." It views discipleship as a journey rather than a status and fosters inclusivity. Based on these terms, which set does your church function more as: a bounded set or a centered set? What are the advantages of a bounded set? What are its disadvantages? What are the advantages of a centered set? What are its disadvantages?

6. CBF thrives on incorporating a wide variety of different churches. No two are exactly alike. How do you feel about this kind of diversity? Does modeling a centered set rather than a bound set make you or your church feel uncomfortable?

2 SHARING OUR STORY

1. Christen Kinard speaks poignantly about some of the common pitfalls that churches face. In the past, what assumptions do you think you or your church has made? With what pitfalls does your congregation struggle? For example, Christen says we often make presence equal with participation, but the two may not be synonymous. Has your church fallen into the pitfall of promoting activity instead of its identity with the mindset: "If we build it, they will come"?

2. Christen invites viewers to seek clarity about their church's identity and values. In trying to clarify who and what your church is, discuss the following questions:
   - What makes our church distinct in our community?
   - What do we want people to know first about us?
   - How do we describe ourselves in plain everyday language?

3. Activity: Distribute index cards to each person in the discussion group. Have each person describe your church in one sentence. Do not put names on the cards. Then collect and shuffle the cards. Pass out the cards (hopefully no one will get their own card) and have each person take and read the sentence on the card. As you share, see if there is any overlap —if a word or phrase repeats itself. (For example: the words "friendly" or "welcoming" or "mission driven" keep coming up.) This may be a good indicator of the church's identity. After discussing each statement, see if the group can come up with a combined statement about the church's identity. Then share in the larger group and notice similarities. Offer all these statements (cards) to your senior pastor or church staff. Perhaps they will use these cards to help them in their planning process and communication.

4. Christen describes program-based churches and relational-based churches. Is your church program-based or relationship-based? Christen says, "People do not care about what you invite them to until they know you care about them." Do you agree or disagree with this statement? Does your church meet people where they are? Give examples of how your church welcomes others. Discuss how well your church consistently conveys care to the community and others.

5. Evaluate your church's forms of communication. How does your communication measure up? Does it convey why it is important and relevant for your congregation to show up? What digital invitations does your church offer? What personal invitations does your church offer? What personal invitations do you extend to others?

6. If someone in your community met you tomorrow—whether online, at an event, or face-to-face—would they walk away with a clear idea about who your church is? Would they feel loved and cared for in a relational way? Would they feel invited into something more?

3 GROWING IN CHRISTIAN HOSPITALITY

"What Does Our Welcome Look Like?"

1. Mark invites reflection on how your church welcomes guests and newcomers. He says, "If you want people to visit your church campus and to join you in worship, you must begin with the WHY. The why matters and influences almost everything. Every church is constantly extending invitations to those around it, consciously or not, intentionally or not." Is your church interested in welcoming people? If so, why do you want new people? What is your "why"?

2. Mark identifies both healthy and unhealthy reasons why churches welcome new people. On poster paper, list reasons why your church wants new people. Divide the list between healthy and unhealthy reasons. What are some toxic or unhealthy reasons you invite people to come? What are some healthy reasons? Why is your church interested in welcoming people?

3. How do you relate your "why" to guests? What is your church's plan for engaging new people? Mark shares that one way to engage others is by telling your story. What is your church's story?

4. Now flip the question around and ask, "What brings guests to your church? To your worship?" What might possibly be their "why"? What is their reason for coming to the table? How do we discover that?

5. What are some practical things we can do to welcome strangers or neighbors to our table? What are some areas we need to avoid in welcoming new people? What mindsets does your church need to cultivate to better welcome newcomers?

4 TRUSTING THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Being the Church God Calls Us to Be"

Activity: Lectio Divina

If possible, prior to watching the video, have your church divide into small groups of six or eight and read the selected scripture passage (four times) on which Rev. Cheryl Adamson preaches. Members are not forced to share their reflections, but they are invited to do so. Use the following method to reflect on Acts 2:41–47 (New Living Translation).

- **Relax**. Prior to reading the passage, have members sit in a comfortable position. Invite them to breathe deeply—inhaling and exhaling a few times to release tension and avoid distractions. It is amazing how two or three good, deep breaths can help you focus and become more present. Become aware of God's presence in the moment.
- **Read**. Have one member of the group read aloud the scripture passage. Focus on listening to the words as they are read. What does the text say?
- **Reflect**. As the passage is read again, listen for a word or phrase that attracts you. To what word or phrase are you drawn in this passage? What word "shimmers" for you? Let the word/phrase interact with your thoughts, feelings, memories and hopes. Then, silently reflect on what the word/phrase means to you. After several minutes (three to five minutes) start with the person to the left of the reader and go around the room by sharing your word or phrase with the group. For example, you might say, "devoted," "shared everything" or "enjoying good will." That is all. There is not to be any explanation or discussion with the group nor any commentary from the group. If someone does not want to share, that is fine, too.
- **Respond**. Read the passage a third time and reflect on God's message to you in your word or phrase. What do you want to say to God after reading and reflecting on this text? What acts of praise, petition, repentance or thanksgiving will you share with God? After several minutes of silence, allow participants to share a one sentence prayer or reflection with the group. For example: "Lord, help me to share my resources."
- **Rest**. Read the passage aloud one more time and allow yourself to rest in wordless silence. Sit quietly with all that you and God have shared as you rest in God's presence. Have someone share a closing prayer.
- **Resolve**. [optional] Have group members share how they hope to live out the Word of God which they have heard in their hearts. What action does this text invite you to take? How might God be inviting you to change? Some may want to journal about their experience.
- What was this experience like? Was it helpful in preparing to listen to the sermon?
- In her sermon, Cheryl introduces the term "communitas." She says, "'Communitas' is the Latin noun for the spirit of community... [a special kind of] community which creates a profound sense of equality and togetherness; the opposite of the feeling of alienation and isolation." She asks: "Is this what God is calling the church to be? If 'communitas' is all about creating a profound sense of equality and togetherness, how would that relate to your church?"

Continued on next page

4 TRUSTING THE HOLY SPIRIT, *cont'd.*

- Describe the "communitas" of the early church. What did the early church commit themselves to do? What did life together in the early church look like? How is your church similar to the early church? How is your church different than the early church?
- Another term Cheryl introduces is the African word "sankofa." This word from Ghana is translated as "Go back and fetch or it is not wrong to go back for that which you have forgotten." Cheryl goes on to say that "sankofa" teaches that, "In order to move forward into the future, one must first retrieve, understand and value the wisdom, experiences and lessons of the past." By looking at the early church, you are invited to remember the past so you can move forward toward the future. What role did awe play in the life of the early church? What was the focus of the early church? How did the Holy Spirit affect this? How was the early church counter-cultural? How does your church compare? Discuss if and how your church is communal and counter-cultural.
- Cheryl shared that according to Rev. Dr. Howard Thurman, the church is "the living fellowship of people who bear witness to God's presence in the world." Do you think this is a good definition of church? Do you agree or disagree? What key characteristics does Cheryl emphasize about a counter-cultural church? (Includes all persons regardless of gender, race, etc...; identifies with the poor, the oppressed and the voiceless; embodies love as its central ethic; serves as a fearless faith community; offers a source of moral courage by challenging injustice; and renounces violence.) Should the church be counter-cultural?
- How does your church create "communitas"? How does your church serve as a witness to a counter-cultural message to the world? Do you think your church needs to make changes? And if so, what changes do you think your church needs to make?
- What in this sermon has challenged your thinking? What has this sermon inspired you to do?