

Young Ministers Series: Stella Perrin

This is the third in a series of articles written by young ministers in our Fellowship. They were asked to share hopes and fears about the Baptist church or to write about something they are currently passionate about.

“Is tomorrow a school day, Mom?” asked my seven-year-old daughter before bed recently. “No,” I replied, “Tomorrow is Sunday.” “YES!! Church day!” she exclaimed, “It’s going to be a great day!” What wonderful words for a mom and a minister to children to hear.

When I think about my hopes and fears for our churches, my daughter’s words come to mind. Will she always feel that way about church? Will church be a place where she knows she belongs? Will church help equip her to go into her world to make a difference in the name of Christ?

As a parent of three, and one who serves children and families at my church, I look around at our world and am deeply concerned. Now, more than ever, activities and opportunities compete with church life. Soccer or dance on Wednesdays or baseball on Sundays is the norm, and force families to make a choice between these activities and church.

Our kids are influenced constantly by peers with smart phones and Facebook. Families are struggling economically, and many wonder how they are going to make it. We are bombarded with destructive images and ideas from media that distract us from the abundant life God intends. So what is the answer to help our families thrive and draw others into the grace that we already know?

I don’t think the answer lies in what CBF churches *need to do*. Rather, I believe the answer is who we *need to be*. Recently in our kindergarten Sunday School class, one child noticed that another little girl had not been to church in several Sundays. She asked her teacher to help her write a note telling her how much she missed her and wanted her to come back to church. The teacher did and mailed the note. The following Sunday, the little girl came. When

the two children saw each other they ran and hugged each other and were inseparable all morning. Our churches need to be a place where all people feel wanted and loved.

In the past several months, our church has experienced several unexpected deaths among our members. We also have several who are currently facing life-threatening illnesses. Although it has been a painful time, I have seen our church pull together and pray for one another. People have willingly prepared meals, sent cards, and made hospital visits. It has been a real gift to see our

church become a source of healing and hope as we share one another’s burdens. We need to be that for one another in our churches and for those hurting around us in our communities.

I was excited that Passport mission camp’s theme this year was “Life Together.” My older two children attended camp in Danville, Virginia, with our church youth group. Our youth came home with a deeper sense of unity and a desire to reach out to our community. I am thankful for partners like Passport that help teach our children and youth how to be Christ-like and to serve.

I think once we know who we need to be as churches, we will figure out what to do. My hope is that we will look at the needs around us and intentionally offer small groups and ministry activities that embrace people, minister to those who are hurting in our congregations and beyond, and serve our communities. That is the kind of church that would make me say, “Yes!! It is Sunday. It is going to be a great day!”

Stella Lail Perrin has served as Minister of Spiritual Formation, Families and Children at First, North Wilkesboro, since April 2009. She is married to John, and they have three children, Luke, Abigail, and Tess. She is a graduate of the M. Christopher White School of Divinity at Gardner-Webb University.

