

# a time of transition

by Patrick Cardwell, Associate Pastor, Edenton, Edenton

Theology. Church history. Pastoral care. Preaching. Baptism. Christian ethics. Biblical studies. These are all topics that I was trained in and prepared for at Wake Forest University School of Divinity. But in the three years I spent there, I didn't take a single course on *waiting*. After I graduated, I wished that I had. Before I began as Associate Pastor at Edenton Baptist Church, I interviewed at a number of other churches in Dallas, Richmond, Kernersville, and Raleigh. For one reason or another, they all turned me down. I was discouraged, and I was afraid that I had gambled on the wrong horse. I was terrified that I had taken a step of faith in following my call, only to find that the ground gave out beneath me.

The eight months of searching, preparing, interviewing, and waiting were long, mentally exhausting, and spiritually draining. The roller coaster of hope-filled crests and heart-rending

drops is one I hope never to ride again. But thanks to CBFNC and CBF Global, I found support and encouragement in the networks I built and relationships I nourished over the past few years. These crucial stepping stones helped me find a place in ministry, from serving on the Divinity School Task Force with Ka'thy Gore Chappell to attending a résumé building workshop at CBF Global's General Assembly last June to the friendships with classmates and professors at Wake Divinity.

Actually, it was one of these friendships that opened the door to working at Edenton. In the midst of a long search process, Daniel Potter sent me an e-mail that described the job opening, "an associate pastor position with responsibilities in children's ministry, youth ministry, church education, and pastoral care." I quickly responded with my interest, and the senior pastor, David Brooks, contacted me in no time. Interviews and visits went well, and I began my work just three months later.

It's also important for me to mention just how much my internship experiences in CBF

churches helped prepare me for full-time ministry. My internships at First, Greensboro; Broadway, Fort Worth, TX; and Wilton, Wilton, CT, were essential to my ministerial formation and discernment of the kind of position I wanted. My work with each of those congregations illumined a different part of my sense of call, which became clearer in conversation with those pastors.

My position as Associate Pastor is one that encompasses broad responsibilities. That's probably what I enjoy most. I get to stretch my legs and walk alongside this congregation from the preschool to the nursing homes. As Lent began this past Ash Wednesday, I dressed like the Cat in the Hat and read to some four-year-olds in the morning. That same evening, I had the privilege of imposing ashes on the forehead of a 96-year-old member who had made her way to the service. That's a full day of ministry, and I left with my heart just as full.

The transition from divinity school to full-time ministry wasn't an easy one. But, thanks to my friends in divinity school and CBF, I found my way by listening to the assuring voice of a certain God in the midst of an uncertain time.

