

changing face(s) of vocational ministry

by Seth Hix, CBFNC Church Engagement Coordinator

The Church is changing. Just look around. *Attendance patterns* have changed. The pews (assuming, of course, that your church has pews) are not as crowded as they once were. Financial-giving patterns are changing. The *church budget* is a moving target for many congregations. *Worship* has been in flux for decades — choir-led or band-led, liturgical or casual, contemporary or contemplative. As the ways in which people engage with each other change, so do the ways people engage with the Church and with God.

A minister recently commented, “Conversations about spirituality and questions of faith have left the church Fellowship Hall and entered the coffee shops ... if not cyber space!” In the midst of these seismic shifts facing the Church, we must also consider their effect on the role of vocational ministry. Does this new reality inform our understanding of God’s calling ministers to do Kingdom work? How do those called into vocational ministry engage with the Church and community?

Allow me to introduce you to Libby Johnson: business woman, mother, hairdresser, wife, Campbell Divinity School graduate, life coach, professional speaker, teacher, and minister called by God to full-time ministry. Libby’s journey to understand, acknowledge, and live into her God-given calling is indicative of the variety of ways in which God is working in our world today.

Libby Johnson’s call into full-time vocational ministry did not spring from a Disciple Now weekend or summer youth camp. No, her call was in the midst of a more than twenty-year career as a hairdresser. God led Libby to pursue a formal theological education later in life and to creatively engage her passionate care for people into her various vocational pursuits.

Libby’s journey has seen many twists and turns as she struggled with God’s call to serve in a ministry “behind the chair” or in front of a crowd. Libby does not feel a call to formal pastoral ministry within a local church. Rather, she seeks to re-define what the “life and work of a minister looks like” in her own calling. For now, she speaks at conferences, fills pulpits, and listens to clients — for some as a hairdresser and for others as a certified coach.

While Libby’s story is unique, it is not an aberration. Churches and ministers across our Fellowship are opening themselves up to new possibilities. In many ways, Libby exemplifies the ingenuity and entrepreneurial spirit that is gaining momentum among people called by God into vocational ministry. At the same time, local congregations are re-defining the roles of professional clergy, either out of financial necessity or as a result of new ministry trajectories. It is a privilege to witness how God is using both CBFNC ministers and CBFNC churches to change the face of vocational ministry before our very eyes.



prayers for congregations

In February 2018, CBFNC Coordinators began a strategic process to pray for each of our 300+ local partner congregations. The coordinators will collectively reach out to around a dozen congregations each month to ask about specific prayer concerns. Then, at our monthly meetings, we will voice those concerns to God and one another.

While this significant endeavor will take place over several years, please know that our prayers are not limited to each month’s prearranged congregations. We regularly lift up local congregational prayer concerns and will continue to do so. If you would like to share a concern with us, please contact Seth Hix, Church Engagement Coordinator at seth.hix@cbfnc.org.

Look for the list of congregations that we prayed for each month in our ENews. If you’d like to sign up for CBFNC’s ENews, visit www.cbfnc.org/news/enewsletter.