

Ministry assistants find support, training at statewide event_61404

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| <p>Lora Thomas (left) of Denton Baptist Association and Cindy Webb of Cisco Baptist Association enjoy a time of fellowship at the Texas Baptist Ministry Assistants statewide conference.</p> | <p>“Sister Act”-sometimes known as Valerie Dacus (left) and Donna McClendon of First Baptist Church in Denton, provide entertainment at the conference.</p> |
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Ministry assistants find support, training at statewide event

By George Henson

Staff Writer

“Other duties as assigned” is the part of the job description many church secretaries know best. They perform a myriad of duties, some of which they

may not have been trained to do.

Add to that the compounded complexities that arise when a church's only staff member is the pastor and he moves away, leaving the church secretary with even more to do and-sometimes-more decisions to make.

All those things can make the position stressful and create a feeling of being alone.

Texas Baptist Ministry Assistants is the organization to give church secretaries the training and support network they need. The organization also finds members in associational, convention and Baptist agency offices.

"We're there to help all of those people," even if their church still titles them "secretaries" and not "ministry assistants," President Sharon Dill said.



Becky Biser of Tarrant Baptist Association leads a seminar for other associational support staff on "how to stay connected with your church" as part of the Texas Baptist Ministry Assistants statewide conference.

Nearly 300 of the statewide organization's 500 members gathered for the group's meeting in Dallas recently.

The conference included seminars in a variety of areas, such as basic grammar and English skills; help with computer software such as Microsoft Publisher, PowerPoint and membership management tools, financial practices and procedures; and making better use of the Internet.

Other classes offered help in topics such as how to keep people who are emotional due to weddings, anniversaries, funerals or other events calm enough to have as pleasant an experience as possible; how to stay fresh in a job that can sometimes start to feel like the same thing day after day; and how to handle transitions that come up in the life of a church, such as the pastor leaving.

“We realize the importance of the job these women do, and we're trying to give them the tools to do the very best job possible,” said Dill, who is the pastor's assistant and financial secretary at First Baptist Church in Gainesville.

“Our goal is for these ladies to have a network. When they don't have anyone to turn to, they can turn to us. And if they have a question we don't have an answer for, we will hunt it.”

While the biannual meetings offer a great deal of training opportunities, Dill said just as important is the fellowship and spiritual encouragement they women receive. This year's meeting also featured a style show and luau.

Not all of the organization's members are able to attend each meeting—“some just can't get away”—but Dill hopes that becomes less of a problem as the benefits become more obvious.

“My pastor believes everyone needs some kind of refreshment and training each year; that is the premise we work under,” she explained.

For more information, see www.tbma.net.

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