

Be colleagues, not competitors

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Be colleagues, not competitors

By Ken Camp

Managing Editor

WACO—Pastors need to realize that other ministers—whether lay or ordained, inside their congregations or in sister churches—are colleagues, not competitors, said Julie Pennington-Russell, pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco.

“Relationships are crucial. But if you feel like a failure in that area of your ministry, please know you’re not alone,” Pennington-Russell told a ministerial ethics conference at Baylor University’s Truett Seminary.

Julie Pennington- Russell

Many ministers have difficulty sharing their duties, recognizing church members as colleagues in ministry and moving from the role of ministry-doer to ministry-equipper, she noted.

“A whole lot of our identity is wrapped up in the notion of clergy, and it can be threatening to think of church members muscling in on our turf,” she said.

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“But when we let God lead us away from being in competition with our lay colleagues, the opportunities become limitless.”

Pastors multiply their effectiveness and contribute to church health when they call out and equip gifted church members for service, she noted.

Pastors who serve on a church staff with other ministers can create a positive climate by making sure members of the ministry team invest time in getting to know each other, Pennington-Russell added.

“Senior pastors need to be careful about the language they use in talking about their colleagues,” she said. “When a pastor talks about ‘my staff,’ it

reveals a level of insecurity—the need to put one’s brand on folks. I don’t own them.”

Pastors also benefit from collegial relationships with ministers in other churches—and not just like-minded ones, she noted.

“The Holy Spirit blows and does work in all kinds of congregations and through all kinds of ministers,” she observed. “We should honor our brothers and sisters who serve in other churches. And we should reach out, not just to the ones who are like us and who believe like us.”

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