

BGCT seeks to open doors for women's ministry

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By Whitney Farr

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It has happened to almost everyone. A hurried person tries to open a door clearly labeled "push" and slams into an entry that won't open.

Sometimes, women's ministry feels the same way, said Debra Hochgraber, women's ministry specialist with the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

Women's ministry leaders may have excellent goals and dreams for the women of their church, but they don't always know which doors to push. Hochgraber believes her role is to hold the door open for them.

Whether a ministry is blooming or booming, there are many open doors for women in the church to fit individual needs, according to Hochgraber.

"They may comfortably walk through the doors of leadership, missions or evangelism. Or they may need to walk through the doors of fellowship, friendship or even salvation," Hochgraber said. "Each door should lead them to the same place - knowing Christ better and serving as he leads."

Hochgraber's position as women's ministry coordinator was created by the

BGCT as a direct response to a survey in which churches expressed the desire to have a resource for their women's ministry.

The majority of the responders specifically requested an online speaker's bureau for women's events, leadership development and consultations.

The survey also inquired which types of responses from the BGCT would assist women's leadership most. The top three responses were downloadable resources, regional training events and group training for leadership held for an individual women's ministry.

Hochgraber offers many of the resources online through an e-letter, a speaker's registry, a question-and-answer forum and a place for women to share ideas with other women about what worked in their ministries.

There is also a place on the website being developed for Christian women who are gifted in speaking, singing, drama and leading worship who are wanting to minister through special women's ministry events at churches throughout the state.

"We really just want to be a resource," Hochgraber said. "When Beth Moore was doing simulcasts and no one knew where they could go see them, we got word of where they were and put it on the website. Hundreds of women were able to go because of that."

Hochgraber recognizes that sometimes e-mail and online communication is not enough.

"I will go and meet with a group of women who are birthing the women's ministry in their church, train a leadership team, or meet one-on-one with a person," Hochgraber said. "I also speak at events, retreats, banquets ...wherever the need is, I am there."

Hochgraber recently led a retreat for 25 women from First Baptist in

Navasota, assisting them in creating their women's ministry.

A few of the husbands said that their wives came home so excited from the retreat that they wanted to send them back, said Stacey Larrabee of First Baptist Church in Navasota.

"She helped us dream and showed us ways to put our dreams into action," Larrabee said. "We are now building for the future."

Hochgraber challenges women to think about what God would want their ministry to look like. She also helps them look at their current ministry and see what works and what doesn't.

However large or small the women's ministry is in a church, it should be an entry point to build relationships with other women, grow as leaders, discover and develop spiritual gifts and to become more like Christ, Hochgraber insisted.

"It's exciting to be a part of helping women's ministries ignite," she said.

For more information, contact Hochgraber at 888-244-9400 or visit www.bgct.org/women.