

Three generations of the Perkins family make a joyful noise to God

June 6, 2008

ATLANTA—The Perkins family claims six ordained music ministers, and one thing they have in common is that they sing not just from their diaphragms but from their hearts.

Ask sons—Dale Jr., Stacy or Clay—or grandsons—Aaron and Adam—and each will say they simply are following the model of family patriarch Dale Perkins Sr., who was minister of music at Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview more than 40 years.

“One of the things I’ve tried to always remember is that our confidence should be in our message and not in ourselves,” the veteran music minister said. “Why God chose me when there are so many who have more talent in their little finger than I possess in my whole body—it’s amazing how God chose to bless me by allowing me to be his servant.”

The Perkins family of East Texas includes six ordained music ministers spanning three generations—(left to right, back row) Dale Perkins Sr., who served more than 40 years at Mobberly Baptist Church in Longview; Clay Perkins, who recently resigned after more than 20 years as his father’s assistant at Mobberly Baptist Church; Stacy Perkins, music minister at Harmony Hill Baptist Church in Tyler; Dale Perkins Jr., minister of music at First Baptist Church in Atlanta; (front row) Aaron Perkins, minister of music at Woodland Hills Baptist Church in Longview; and Adam Perkins, music minister at Little Flock Baptist Church in Longview. (Photo/Randy Grissom/Sterling Image Photography)

When asked why his sons and their sons decided to enter the music ministry, Perkins said he remains convinced it first comes from God's calling.

"The most important thing is that God has placed his hand on their heads and his voice in their hearts and told them he wants them to serve him," he said.

But several factors may have helped them to hear the call to vocational Christian service, he added.

"The first thing is that my wife and I never discussed controversial issues at the table, in the car, or anywhere in their presence," he said. "They thought everyone loved us. And most of them did."

The church where his sons spent their childhood and teen years also positively shaped their view of ministry, he noted.

"They had the privilege of growing up in a church with a true shepherd in Laney Johnson. He was pastor there 32 years and a real man of God," Perkins said. "They probably thought they were going to have the same sort of pastors as he was, and for the most part, they have."

The church provided each of the Perkins boys opportunities to serve early in life to see what music ministry was all about. "Mobberly is a very supportive, gracious church," he said.

Dale Jr., minister of music at First Baptist Church in Atlanta, noted music ministry has been a part of his life as long as he can remember.

"We never knew any different," he said. "We thought everybody's house was like ours—and music was such a large part of our lives. My daddy would take us different places to sing with him, and music was always front

and center in our lives.”

While he enjoyed being a part of his father’s ministry as a boy, he wanted his calling to be his own, so he started his adult life by owning a business that sold and repaired electronic devices.

“The call on my daddy’s life was always so apparent, and I wanted my call to be just as clear. So, I took a side trip in life but wasn’t happy in it. I had a long talk with Daddy, who told me, ‘If you can find happiness doing anything else, do it.’ Well, I had already tried that and decided that didn’t work for me,” he said. “Music was such a large part of our lives, it was odd not to be a part of it.”

His brother, Stacy, knew music was to be his calling at an earlier age.

“As a child, I could sense that God had gifted our family in the area of music. I knew all along, from an early age, that I wanted to do something with music,” he said. While working as a high school choir director, he developed nodules on his vocal chords, and he couldn’t sing or speak.

“It was God telling me, ‘Be still and listen to me,’” he said.

God clarified his calling to vocational music ministry during that time. He now is music minister at Harmony Hill Baptist Church in Tyler.



Aaron and Adam Perkins sing together.

He points to his father's ministry as a key factor that drew him to music.

"I saw God use it effectively through my dad, and what impressed me most was the joy that it brought him," he said.

He also learned from his father that music ministry is not about performing but worshipping.

"We were taught that this is a ministry to people. The quality comes through their desire to worship. The voices of angels are added to our own when we sing to God in worship," he said.

Clay Perkins recently resigned after more than 20 years as his father's assistant at Mobberly Baptist Church. He was the minister in charge of the youth choir and the Academy of Performing Arts.

"My calling came out of a sheer desire to praise and honor the Lord," he said. "We've witnessed that in our family from generation to generation. I don't know how anyone could be part of a ministry whose focus isn't praise and worship."

Adam and Aaron Perkins, sons of Dale Jr., recently were ordained in a joint service at First Baptist Church in Atlanta. Adam is minister of music at Little Flock Baptist Church, and Aaron is music minister at Woodland Hills Baptist Church, both in Longview.

Adam's call to ministry was confirmed in a dream one night at college as he pursued a pre-med degree.

"I always felt called to music ministry, but I was afraid of music ministry because I was afraid of being in front of people," he said.

"One night in my dorm room, I told God I would surrender if he could take

away my fears. That night, all night long I was in front of these huge crowds of people, and I had such a peace. The next morning when I woke up, I knew I was going to be a music minister.

His first Sunday to lead music came on Easter.

“It was the most highly attended Sunday of the year, but God took care of me,” he recalled.

Aaron Perkins felt a call to music at a young age as well. He started by leading a girl’s ensemble at First Baptist Church in Atlanta when he was a freshman in high school.

“I just grew to love it. I knew that I loved music, but there wasn’t a definite calling on my life at that time,” he recalled.

Not long after, Antioch Baptist Church asked him to come and lead music there—even though he was only 15 years old.

“It was a wonderful experience,” he said. “The Lord has put me in situations where it was never anything but good.”

He later left to go to Arkansas on a track scholarship, but he injured his knee. Even before that, God had made his calling clear, he said. He then went to East Texas Baptist University to pursue a degree in music.

In what seems to be a constant refrain from the Perkins clan, Aaron said his grandfather had a tremendous impact on his life.

“More than anything, I just wanted to get in on this joy that I had seen comes with ministry,” he said.