



www.cbfla.org

In This Issue: March 1, 2015

1. Forming Together with Courage and Honesty
2. My People - Jenny Hodge
3. CBF-LA Calendar

Forming Together is more than our new tag line. It's a new way to share the CBF story. It's a deliberate decision to live in to the six attributes (below) that we have discovered about ourselves.

"Partnering in renewing God's world" is the vision that is bubbling up everywhere in CBF life. Turns out we in Louisiana picked a great time to be in transition. Jesus, in Mark 9 tells his disciples not to hinder the good work of others, just because they are not in your group, "whoever is not against us is for us."

So in churches, states and regions we repeatedly see evidence of shared endeavors whether in ecumenical efforts, with other non-profits or with advocacy groups like Interfaith to combat payday lending or in holding government officials accountable for poisoning our environment at [Camp Minden](#).

It takes courage and honesty to be in authentic relationships. Change can be scary and exhilarating. We are building community to sustain us for the days ahead. Jenny Hodge risks telling her story in this issue. We listen to her and we as staff, council and officers pledge to listen to you as we journey together through change.



[See brief video of our branding story](#)

SIX ATTRIBUTES OF OUR CBF WALK

CHRIST-LIKE *First and foremost, we witness God's work in the world, both as a witness to others for Christ and an observer of God's grace.*

INNOVATIVE *CBF is ever exploring ways to renew the church and the world--from how we start churches to our partnerships that bring clean water to impoverished areas.*

AUTHENTIC *We value and nurture genuine relationships that are built on respect, where we create opportunities for dialogue about issues facing the modern church and the modern Christian.*

GLOBAL *Our impact reaches every corner of the globe, with a CBF presence spanning from rural villages in Thailand to the United Nations office in Switzerland.*

EXCELLENCE *The Fellowship is raising the bar with inspiring partnerships, ministries and missions and insisting on integrity in our work and in our being.*

DIVERSE *Cooperative Baptists are strongly committed to hearing and respecting different perspectives, and to creating sacred space to hear God in multiple ways.*

[See the current Fellowship Magazine that tells more of our visioning and branding story.](#)

MY People



by Jenny Hodge

CBF-LA Together for Hope Missionary/Community Practitioner

(This piece originally appeared on the [Baptist Women in Ministry blog.](#))

Who are your people?" is a question I am often asked here, in the Deep South. It is a way of establishing a connection-you never know, we might be fifth cousins twice removed. This is also a very important question as a single woman in the South, because given the lack of a spouse or children, family connections give others a sense of my place

in the world. Unfortunately, in the past few years, "Who are your people" has become a difficult question for me to answer without feeling like I'm lying or creatively telling the truth. As a strong and independent woman, "my people" do not want me.

I am estranged from a majority of my family, both immediate and extended. The estrangement was caused by a generational cycle of abuse and domestic violence. As both a minister and social worker, I pushed back against the cycle. My sister and I were experiencing the damaging consequences of the family violence, and it needed to stop. We begged. We prayed. We tried to cultivate healthier relationships, but we were rejected and pushed from the family.

In her blog, E-Stranged, Fiona McColl writes that family estrangement is a disruption of familial attachments. In her experience, estrangement from one's family system occurs for a multitude of reasons but is often treated as a "dirty secret . . . we cannot speak openly for fear of judgment or misunderstanding." She contends that estrangement often produces feelings of shame that may further prevent an individual from believing they are free to share their lived experience with others.

There is truth to her words, especially for a young, single woman minister. Initially, I hesitated to share my story with others because of the shame I felt due to my lack of family. However, as I processed the grief with counseling and supportive friends, my sense of shame lessened. Yet, I still hesitate to share my story with those in my Baptist world.

Why? I have learned there is a double standard in how many Baptists process family abuse. Not that Baptists have the best track record in responding to abuse in general, but we do not know what to do if the abuser is an older parent or adult sibling. In the past few months, I have tried to share, appropriately and when asked, the reality of my life with a few Baptist colleagues and friends, and it has rarely gone well.

One colleague scoffed at the idea that I might never speak again with my parents. That person exclaimed, "Of course you'll speak to them again-they're your parents! You can't never speak with them again. You're too young for that." Another mentor, knowing that no change had occurred in my family culture, stated, "Life's too short not to have family connection. You should work things out with your parents and siblings." Then a friend said, "Don't worry. Family stuff like that always blows over. You're overreacting."

Baptist churches and leaders have helped shape me into the person and minister I am today, just as my biological family did. Feeling shamed by Baptist colleagues and friends stings because it feels like a second rejection. My hope and request is that my Baptist family would seek to understand and not criticize a young, single woman minister who does not have an expected answer to "who are your people?" Your affirmation

and support as "my people" are more important than you know.

CBF-LA Calendar

June 15-19 CBF General Assembly in Dallas
Register at cbf.net

**November 7 Rachel Held Evans to Speak
at Stagg Tolbert Forum in New Orleans**



[Read Evans bio](#)

Thanks to the generosity of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church and the Mabel Palmer Lectures in partnership with the Stagg-Tolbert Forum, nationally recognized Christian author Rachel Held Evans will be coming to Louisiana. She will be in New Orleans November 7-8 where she will speak at the Forum and preach in the Sunday morning service at St. Charles Church.

Evans first book, *Evolving in Monkey Town* (Zondervan, 2010), explores the relationship between faith and doubt and recounts the challenges of asking tough questions about Christianity in the context of the Bible Belt. Her second book, *A Year of Biblical Womanhood* (Thomas Nelson Oct, 2012), documents a year-long experiment in which she attempted to follow all of the Bible's instructions for women as literally as possible.

However most people know Evans for her thoughtful and engaging blog, which just keeps growing and growing, with over a quarter million visits each month.

For any unfamiliar with her writing, a good place to start is this blog post [Blessed are the Uncool](#). There is also a wealth of information about Evans and her writing at her [website](#).