

Women's ordination in Baptist churches: Report describes increased numbers and new roles

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Approximately 1,600 women in U.S. moderate-to-progressive Baptist groups have been ordained to the ministry, according to a new report released by Baptist Women in Ministry.

Authors Eileen Campbell-Reed and Pamela Durso released the study at the organization's annual meeting June 21 in conjunction with the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship's meeting in Atlanta. Sixty women were ordained last year, they said.

Fewer than 10 percent of the 1,600 women are in pastoral posts—102 serve as pastors, co-pastors or church-starters in churches affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists, the Baptist General Association of Virginia, the Baptist General Convention of Texas or the CBF, the groups most closely aligned with Baptist Women in Ministry.

“While the pastorate continues, for the most part, to be only marginally open to women, and growth there is incremental, a larger number of women now serve as associate pastors and in specialized ministry roles on church staffs,” the report states. “Many women have found places of ministry as chaplains in hospitals, prisons, the military and other organizations and agencies, although women make up only 29 percent of all chaplains endorsed by the American Baptist Churches USA, Alliance, CBF and SBC.”

In the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, 5.5 percent of pastors are women. About 28 percent of the chaplains and counselors in the CBF and ABC-USA in 2005 are women, while the Alliance of Baptists recorded that 52 percent of its chaplains are women. Southern Baptists indicated that 8 percent of their ordained chaplains and counselors are women, according to the report. *—Associated Baptist Press*