"And" the Focus of Third Fresh Expressions US National Gathering

Over 300 folks from several denominations across the nation gathered last weekend at First Baptist Church, Alexandria, for the third Fresh Expressions US National Gathering.

Gannon Sims, Director of Ministry Formation and Communications, welcomed attendees, explaining how Fresh Expressions US was born out of a vision of Virginia Baptists several years ago, and Methodists, Anglicans, and other denominations soon joined in as key partners. He introduced Bishop Graham Cray, one of the pioneers of Fresh Expressions in the United Kingdom, and shared how Virginia Baptists traveled to London to learn from him. Cray later related, “We were not marketing Fresh Expressions; they came to us!”

Bishop Cray presented the origin of Fresh Expressions, stating that the movement began in the Church of England by asking the question, “Who are the churches not serving?”

He explained that Fresh Expressions is designed to equip churches to reach those whom they are not currently reaching. He challenged the crowd that, while discerning what God would have their respective churches and ministries do, to “always, always, always do what the Holy Spirit says.”
Jo Saxton, co-pastor of Mission Point Church in Minnesota and director of 3D Movements, stated, “We need to look at both our posture and our practices,” and explained that Paul entered Athens and studied the artifacts and practices and then preached into that culture. “We need to actually see where God has placed us,” she said.

John Upton brought greetings from the BGAV and spoke to the “And” theme. He said, “We live in a world of praise and fellowship – and a world of pain and despair. We have to live in both. Anguish and praise have to hold hands. Loss and hope have to hold hands. We live in the reality of ‘And.’”

Several dozen BGAV pastors, along with Upticks from Spence Network, joined together for a meal and an intimate Q&A session with Bishop Cray. “As we looked at the future of denominational life, we needed space to move into,” Upton reflected. Upton thanked Bishop Cray for “helping us find that space.”

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