

# Paula Smith takes helm of new MBCB department

*By Tony Martin*  
*Associate Editor*

Paula Smith has been settling into her job as the first director of the newest department at the Mississippi Baptist Convention Board (MBCB) – the Multicultural Ministries Department.

As the name implies, the department will work cross-culturally throughout Mississippi to touch lives with the Gospel message. “My thoughts for this department are to strengthen the churches that we have now – African-American churches, Hispanic churches, Chinese, Korean, Choctaw churches,” Smith said, “and start new churches hand-in hand-with the [MBCB] Church Planting Department.”

One of her immediate goals is to plant a church for the deaf. Another goal is to utilize the department to help the predominantly “Anglo” churches of the Mississippi Baptist Convention minister to other ethnic groups.

“How do we reach out and welcome internationals? What is an effective multicultural ministry? We will focus on raising up multicultural leaders,” she said. “Looking at five-year periods of time, we’d like to have these measured goals.”

Such work is not new to Smith, who formerly served as a career missionary to Uruguay with Southern Baptists’ International Mission Board. “What I’m doing now, I had actually been doing out of my house,” she said. “I was working with what was called the Intercultural Fellowship, which was started by a man from Iran.

“I started having meetings in my house on Friday nights. There

was a little network of people in their 20's and 30's who just got together to pray. We'd invite people in our ESL [English as a Second Language] classes, college students, just whoever. That's what God was calling me to do," she said.

In April 2022, Smith was invited to serve as a ministry assistant in the new Multicultural Ministries Department. She had worked previously at the convention board in the Miss. Woman's Missionary Union and the graphic arts department.

The multicultural ministries directorship seemed like a natural fit to Smith when MBCB executive director-treasurer Shawn Parker approached her about the position. "I'd be doing this if it wasn't my job," she said.

Smith has been assembling a team of strategists that thus far includes:

- Ray Duplessie, who will focus on Choctaw ministry and can be contacted at [rayhd77@gmail.com](mailto:rayhd77@gmail.com).
- Vickie Stuart, who will focus on ministry to the deaf and can be contacted at [missvic70@yahoo.com](mailto:missvic70@yahoo.com).
- Rocky Tzib, who will focus on Hispanic ministry and can be contacted at [rockytzib@bellsouth.net](mailto:rockytzib@bellsouth.net).
- Lowell Walker, who will focus on African-American ministry and can be contacted at [lwalker638@students.sbts.edu](mailto:lwalker638@students.sbts.edu).
- Janet McIlwain, who is serving as department ministry assistant and can be contacted at [jmcilwain@mbcb.org](mailto:jmcilwain@mbcb.org).

The department will be providing resources and strategists to assist churches in those ministry areas as well as for special needs adults and Chinese and Korean churches.

Smith is a graduate of Baptist-affiliated William Carey University (B.A. '78) in Hattiesburg and Clarke College (A.A. '76) in Newton, as well as Southwestern Seminary (M.R.E. '81)

in Ft. Worth.

She served as minister of education at First Church, Greenwood; First Church, Water Valley; minister of education/youth at Flowood Church, Flowood; and minister of youth at North Carrollton Church, North Carrollton.

She also participated in summer missions to Israel, Massachusetts, Texas, and at Garaywa Camp and Conference Center in Clinton and Ridgecrest Conference Center in North Carolina.

“God called me as a missionary when I was 12,” Smith said. “It’s a delight for me to serve in this role. It gives me pure joy.”

The MBCB Multicultural Ministries Department is supported by gifts to the Mississippi Cooperative Program. For more information, Smith can be contacted at [psmith@mbcb.org](mailto:psmith@mbcb.org).



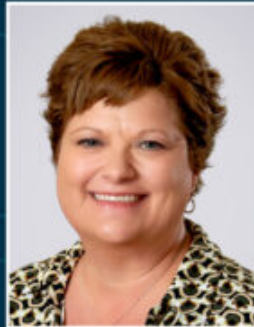
# MULTICULTURAL MINISTRIES

The Multicultural Ministries Department of the Mississippi Baptist Convention works cross-culturally throughout Mississippi to touch lives with the Gospel message.

*"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is no male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus."*  
– Galatians 3:28



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*"The Gospel of Jesus Christ transcends culture."*  
– Kendall Moore