

# Kim Williams:

Mentor  
with Mojo  
to Midlands  
Athletes

**K**im Williams retired 11 years ago from the University of South Carolina as the winningest volleyball coach in the school's history. If you ask Williams what she'd like to be known for today, however, she'll give you an answer that has nothing to do with volleyball scores and everything to do with serving God, especially linking faith and athletics.

Williams, the new area director for Midlands Fellowship of Christian Athletes, believes that participation in sports creates a connection to spiritual experience. Athletes are equipped to be on a team that's focused on a mission. Sports teaches you principles—how to understand authority, how to play a position, how to grow and take more responsibility, how to look at “the heart behind the jersey,” and most importantly, how to be a part of something bigger than yourself and sacrifice for that. All these find close parallels in our faith walk with Jesus.

FCA leverages all these principles to build relational connections with players, coaches, and even parents of athletes across every sport imaginable. Williams pours her life into a small group of young women introduced to her by coaches and athletes. Across the Midlands around 90 of these FCA “huddle” groups meet regularly for mentoring.

FCA also sponsors camps—Sports Camp, Coaches Camp, and others—where students and teachers can sharpen their athletic skills and come to grips with the love of Jesus with no distractions.

Even before transitioning into her new position in February, Williams caught a vision for what the Lord wants to do in and through her ministry. “I’m sensing God telling me my dreams are too small,” she said. “He wants me to think bigger, envision more for 2017. Pray bigger prayers. Expect more answers.”

As a high school volleyball ace, Williams was awarded a scholarship to The University of Texas at Arlington, where she went on to become team captain and MVP. She didn’t aspire to be a coach, but her first teaching job required it, and she soon discovered, “I loved coaching and it didn’t matter what the sport... I just loved working with female athletes.”

Williams went on to coach at the University level. Before coming to USC she won a national championship at West Texas A & M. Her singular goal during her coaching career was to challenge her players to be “all in.” Totally committed—to training, learning, practicing, winning, and each other.

Over the years, however, especially during her coaching time, Williams began to realize that while she professed



to be a Christian, she was not living a life that honored God. She was not “all in” with him.

A season of personal brokenness and disappointment followed her retirement from USC. In 2008 she recalls that, “only by his grace God took me to the wilderness.”

As a coach and an athlete Williams always sought out mentors. Julie Armstrong, director of women’s ministry at Christ Church, came alongside and helped Williams realize a complete heart change. Williams describes it this way: “God has taught me how to be all in. I said I was in, but I didn’t walk that out.”

Looking at Williams’s life now, Armstrong says, “Kim’s love for Jesus Christ is all-consuming and contagious. From the time he first captured her heart, she has had an undivided focus—to serve the one her soul loves and to share him with others.



### By Lael Arrington

*Lael Arrington is the author of four books, most recently Faith and Culture (Zondervan). A former talk radio host in Houston and Dallas, she now lives in Columbia where she speaks and blogs on faith and culture at LaelArrington.com.*



Williams looks back on her wilderness season and gives thanks. “He’s taken my past and used it in a ministry. Society pushes us to be one thing; God intends us to be another. I encourage young women to be the best they can be while honoring God to avoid the pitfalls life brings.

“I also encourage them to educate themselves on the realities of having a career and having a family. I wanted children, but I waited too late.” She uses her personal trials to better serve them.

“The girls and women I get to disciple are intelligent, talented, and seek wisdom. They have many options in life, and I can tell them what not to do, and then point them to what God says. He already knows the future, so the challenge for them is to be patient and listen.

“They face so many challenges. Our culture is losing its standards. Anything goes. The Internet exposes kids to the world of adults long before they’re ready. There is so much peer pressure to be liked and followed, especially as an athlete. Many are overwhelmed by the demands of popularity.”

Williams and the FCA staff constantly strategize how to maximize spiritual impact in the face of inadequate resources and their own personal inadequacies. But the harvest is real.

Williams’ biggest joys are watching God transform lives and being used in the process. She has seen him soften hearts that had become hardened

towards parents and coaches. She is seeing women released from the power and bondage of same-sex attraction and other sexual sins so they can lead a God-honoring life and experience the joy and peace that comes with that. She sees young women becoming disciples of Jesus and going out and making disciples of others.

Ansley is one of Williams’ mentees. “I was a sophomore in college struggling to find my way and really didn’t know how I was going to make it. But like Paul tells us in 1 Corinthians 10:13, God promises to not let us be tempted more than we can bear and promises to provide a way out. Williams’s ministry was my way out of one of the darkest moments in my life. Even the way we met displays how God is always with us and at work in our lives. Williams’s ministry has helped me grow in my relationship with Christ and has truly shown me what it means to walk with the Lord and have a personal relationship with Him. It’s helped me become the person I am today.”

South Carolina Senator Tim Scott recently spoke at an FCA banquet. Spotting how FCA has impacted his life long after his athlete days were over, he described how an FCA coach came alongside and mentored him, despite his humble beginnings. His coach helped him go deep with a Savior that would walk with him all the way to a US Senate seat.

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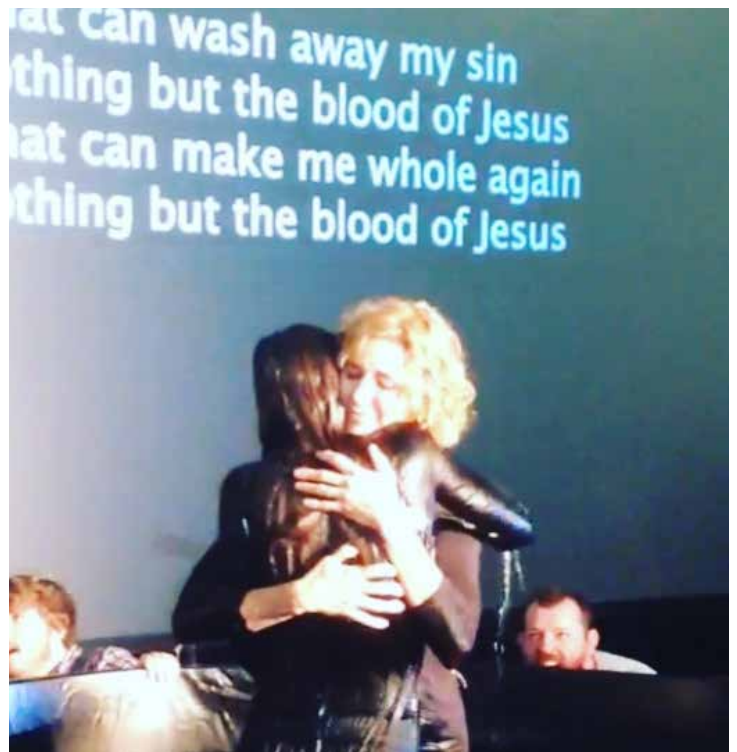
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God intends us to be another.

As Williams settles into her new leadership role, she continues to dream big, pray big prayers, and expect God to answer. She hopes God will bring more exposure to FCA through people like Sen. Scott. "I expect God to continue to grow our numbers, both in attendance and in athletes choosing to follow Christ. I expect God to

increasingly multiply our impact. For God to empower us to be strong and courageous and fulfill his promise to be with us wherever we go."

To find out more about Williams and FCA in their outreach to Midlands coaches and athletes, visit [www.midlandsfca.org](http://www.midlandsfca.org). ROC



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