

March 2014

# LINK

News and Stories from TN Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



## Tennessee CBF General Assembly

**Friday Evening, April 11**

**Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova**

8899 Trinity Road, Cordova, TN 38018

**Saturday Morning, April 12**

**Second Baptist Church, Memphis**

4680 Walnut Grove Road, Memphis, TN 38117

*Theme: Be. Love. Serve.*

Please plan to participate in a unique General Assembly in Memphis. We kick-off this gathering on Friday evening with dinner and fellowship at Trinity Cordova. A celebration time includes presentation of awards and scholarships. Afterward we move to the sanctuary for worship and thematic presentations. The evening concludes with fellowship and a reception for Suzii Paynter.

On Saturday morning we gather at Second Baptist to act on our faith by serving others. We go into the city of Memphis to engage in a wide variety of mission projects. During lunch we share fellowship and reflect upon our mission experiences. The General Assembly concludes with worship and communion around the tables. Read more about the TCBF General Assembly in this edition of the *LINK*.

# 2014 General Assembly Schedule

## Friday, April 11 – Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova

5:30 PM – Dinner (by reservation)

7:00 PM – Time of Celebration

7:15 PM – Thematic Presentations:

BE – Ray Higgins, Coordinator, CBF of Arkansas

LOVE – Suzii Paynter, CBF Executive Coordinator

SERVE – Mollie Palmer, Co-Director, *Together for Hope* - Helena

8:30 PM – Reception for Suzii Paynter

## Saturday, April 12 – Second Baptist Church, Memphis

8:00 AM – Gathering & Fellowship

8:45 AM – Depart for Mission Projects

Noon – Return to Second Baptist Church

Noon – Lunch and Reflection upon Mission Engagement

1:00 PM – Closing Worship and Communion (around tables)

## GA Registration Information

Register now for the TCBF General Assembly. Registration is a two-step process: STEP 1 - Register on the TCBF website ([tncbf.org](http://tncbf.org)). The registration form allows you to sign up for the Friday evening dinner and childcare for preschoolers at Trinity Baptist. For those participating in the Day of Mission on Saturday morning, use the registration form to sign up for preschool childcare at Second Baptist, indicate t-shirt size, and report the number attending the luncheon. If you do not have computer access, call Brittany Jackson at 615-907-8525. STEP 2 - We're utilizing *VolunteerSpot* to register for the Day of Mission. Click on the *VolunteerSpot* icon to sign up for a mission project (see details below).

## Lodging Information

For information about lodging near our host churches, go to the TCBF website ([tncbf.org](http://tncbf.org)). This information will also be available in future TCBF e-newsletters.

## Day of Mission



We gather at Second Baptist Church on Saturday morning to “put feet” to our faith and to live into our General Assembly theme. Serving people in need is a natural by-product of a growing relationship with Jesus. Expressing love to neighbors helps us take seriously Jesus’ command to “love God; love neighbor.”

The planning team arranged a number of meaningful mission engagement projects. For those who prefer a mission project at the Second Baptist Church building, options include: prayer team, Helena Carnival Project, Sole Hope (cutting materials for shoes for children in Africa), and tire planters. Mission efforts around Memphis include: Habitat for Humanity build, Habitat ReStore, Binkley Heights Clothes Closet, Cordova Middle School yard work, Metropolitan Inter-Faith Association (MIFA) yard work,

MIFA wheelchair ramps, smart phone blight project, Urban Farms, Clean Memphis, Hope House, and Food Mission. Read detailed information about each project on our website ([tncbf.org](http://tncbf.org)). Our hope is to impact the city of Memphis by having 300 people serving on this Day of Mission. Please sign up for a project when you register for the General Assembly. Each option will indicate how many additional people the project can accommodate.

## Introducing Our General Assembly Speakers

We are excited to hear these three guest speakers on Friday evening of the General Assembly at Trinity Baptist Church, Cordova:



**Suzii Paynter** became the third executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship in 2013. Her work at the Fellowship's Atlanta office began March 1. Previously, Suzii served as director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission and director of the Advocacy Care Center of the Baptist General Convention of Texas (BGCT). She guided all public policy initiatives for state and federal issues and formed relationships with other religious bodies. Her experience and accomplishments reflect her commitment to missional and cooperative work of Baptists at all levels – local, state, national, regional, and international, as well as ecumenical and interfaith ministry. Over the past decade, Suzii gained a reputation for her advocacy on important ethical issues such as religious liberty, hunger and poverty, environmental justice, human trafficking and immigration reform. Suzii is

married to Roger, pastor of First Baptist Church in Austin, Texas. They have two children: Grayson Paynter and Mary Kathryn Paynter.

**Ray Higgins** has served as coordinator for CBFAR since 2005. He's married to Judy with whom he has two sons, Adam and Ryan. Ray grew up in El Dorado, AR, and is a 1977 graduate of University of Arkansas, where he earned a B.A. in Philosophy. Ray later earned an M. Div. from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary (1980) and a Ph.D in Religion/Christian Ethics from Baylor University (1990). Ray previously served in a variety of ministry roles: youth minister, special projects coordinator, seminary ethics professor, and pastor. He is active in race relations initiatives, a member of the medical ethics teaching team at UAMS in Little Rock, has taught ethics in Mexico City and Canada, Ouachita Baptist University, and Truett Seminary, has led mission trips to China & Slovakia, and is an avid Arkansas Razorbacks fan.



**Mollie Palmer** became Co-Director of Together for Hope Arkansas December 1, 2011. She previously served as assistant director. Mollie grew up in the Little Rock area and graduated from Arkansas State University with a degree in Journalism (2007). She also served as a Student.Go intern with Together For Hope, summer 2008, and worked for Girl Scouts - Diamonds of Arkansas, Oklahoma and Texas and the Arkansas Rice Depot in Little Rock before returning to Helena. Mollie loves cooking, entertaining, and taking the Delta Jewels out on the town.

# Destination Memphis!

by Terry Maples, Field Coordinator



I am extremely excited about the 22nd Tennessee CBF General Assembly coming to Memphis in April! We cannot overestimate the value of Baptists gathering from all corners of the state for fellowship and support. Here are a few reasons I am so “jazzed” about this year’s General Assembly.

We are blessed with an excellent planning team comprised of clergy and lay leaders from First Baptist-Memphis, Second Baptist-Memphis, and Trinity Baptist-Cordova. The energy, creativity, and collaboration among these folks is amazing. Thanks to each member of this team for investing in our General Assembly.

I love the theme of this year’s gathering: *BE. LOVE. SERVE*. You may have noticed, these words appear on the side of the TCBF mission trailer. Each word is powerful, and together, they paint a picture of holistic faith. Our guest leaders will unpack their meaning on Friday evening. Each speaker was intentionally chosen because of his/her giftedness related to the words. I’m convinced this theme will inspire all who gather in Memphis and help congregational leaders apply what they learn in their own contexts.

What a gift Suzii Paynter can join us in Memphis! The focus of this General Assembly supports her deep commitment to strengthening CBF’s Rural Poverty Initiative - CBF’s commitment to the 20 poorest counties in America. Because this is Suzii’s first time at one of our gatherings, we will host a reception on Friday evening to give you opportunity to meet and chat with her and our other guests. I know you’ll be impressed with Suzii, and I know she’ll be inspired by the strong and passionate CBF folks in Tennessee. Suzii joins us on mission Saturday morning. At 11:00 a.m. on Sunday morning, Suzii will preach as part of First Baptist Church’s 175th anniversary celebration.

Mission engagement is an important value for TCBF, and service opportunities abound as part of this year’s General Assembly. The planning team, with guidance from Daniel Johnson of Second Baptist, has arranged for meaningful mission projects on Saturday morning for folks from ages 5-95 (several projects are child friendly). Most mission projects happen in the community, but you can also choose a project at the church building. Please bring appropriate clothing for your project. This mission engagement component allows us to “put feet” to what we learn from our three Friday evening speakers. Around lunch tables, we will reflect upon our experiences in light of what we learned from Suzii, Ray, and Mollie.

Tennessee CBF seeks to partner with *Together for Hope* in our neighbor states. Because we meet in Memphis this year, the General Assembly highlights the work of the *Together for Hope* in Helena, Arkansas. Our churches in West Tennessee are already invested in the work in Helena, and we want to celebrate and strengthen this mutually beneficial relationship. On Friday evening Molly Palmer shares about ministries in Helena. You will learn about literacy work in Helena, and the “Stories on Wheels” bus will be available for tours during the General Assembly. The offering we collect on Friday night of the General Assembly enables you to invest in books for Helena’s library.

Make plans now to join us in Memphis! Wonderful fellowship and service experiences await you. Memphians can’t wait to welcome you! Come ready to be inspired!

## College Student Ministries

One of Tennessee CBF's priorities is supporting and encouraging college student ministries. We know the life-changing potential of engaging in CBF student summer opportunities. Our goal is to support students this summer through two excellent opportunities afforded by CBF:



**Student.GO** - Through this ministry, students serve alongside CBF field personnel for the summer. Students receive training in cross-cultural ministry. CBF pays a small stipend for the placement, and TCBF helps above this basic support from CBF. For an application for more information, go to [www.studentdotgo.com](http://www.studentdotgo.com). Application deadline is March 3, 2014.



**Collegiate Congregational Internship** - CCI interns serve a CBF-affiliated congregation during the summer. An intern is assigned an encourager and is supervised by a church staff member. This ministry is to help students learn about vocational calling to a local congregation. Both CBF and TCBF will provide support for CCI. For more information, go to [www.thefellowship.info/collegeinternship](http://www.thefellowship.info/collegeinternship). The deadline to apply is March 30, 2014.

Please consider investing in a college student this summer. Your church will enrich the life of a young adult (ideally a student from your church) and strengthen the ministry of your congregation.

NOTE: A CCI church may find its own intern or CBF can help place a CCI intern. Contact Terry Maples at [tmaples@tncbf.org](mailto:tmaples@tncbf.org) or Wanda Kidd at [wkidd@cbfnc.org](mailto:wkidd@cbfnc.org).

## Tennessee CBF Supports CBF Field Personnel

Tennessee CBF values the global mission enterprise of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. This year, the TCBF Coordinating Council has committed funds to help at least three field personnel in 2014:

- 1) TCBF will once again give \$5,000 to support the work of Missy Ward in Uganda.
- 2) After discussing the needs of Bill and Noy Peeler, field personnel in Cambodia, TCBF approved a recommendation to give \$2,500 per year for the next three years to support this start-up work.
- 3) The Coordinating Council will make decisions about how to invest an additional \$5,000 in CBF field personnel or mission projects at the February 22 meeting in Murfreesboro. Stay tuned for details.

## 2013-2014 State Missions Offering Update

Your gifts to the Tennessee CBF *Elizabeth Richards Missions Offering* make an incredible kingdom difference. When you give you invest in the work of Samaritan Ministry in Knoxville, Neverfail Community Church in Sparta, college student ministries, and congregational mission grants (read stories about the impact of two mission grants on pages 6 and 7).

We set a challenging goal of \$27,500 this year. To date, we have given \$17,549.61. TCBF continues to collect this offering through June 30.

## TCBF Financial Summary

Again, Tennessee CBF expresses appreciation to all individuals and congregations who partner with us and invest in our ministry. Undesignated Income for July 2013 - January 2014 is \$117,774.46, and budget expenses for the same period are \$82,228.25. This positive report enables the Coordinating Council to generously support additional mission and ministry opportunities.

## Mission Grant Story:

### Food Pantry Ministry in Rutledge, TN

by Chandler Vinson, Pastor & TCBF Moderator

I minister in Rutledge, Tennessee. Don't worry. There is no reason for you to know where that is. For our purposes, it is in Appalachia. Poverty comes with the territory. The problem worsened when the Douglas Cherokee Cooperative food pantry ceased operating in 2011. While others were distributing food in Grainger County, there was a great shortage of assistance in downtown Rutledge. You know, downtown where the traffic light is. Ryan Davenport, pastor of Rutledge United Methodist Church; Steve Pawelk, priest at Blessed John Paul II Catholic Mission; and I decided to attempt to fill this gap. It sounded like a bad joke: a Baptist, a Methodist and a Catholic decide to start a food pantry...



Not surprisingly, we three “wise men” have different doctrinal stances on numerous issues, but our commonality in Christ trumps denominational boundaries. Inspired by Matthew 25 (the part about the “least of these”), we founded the *Hands of Christ Emergency Food Pantry*. I realize the name is ridiculously long, but we had a lot to convey!

We struggled first to secure a location. The Methodist church grumbled about storing the food, and the Baptist church decided they might suddenly have need for a room that had not been in use since the Reagan administration. The Catholic mission had the only legitimate excuse to not host the mission: they simply did not have the space. The predicament was comical but at the time it was frustrating. We were certain God was at work but saw no sign of it.

Finally, Douglas Cherokee Cooperative allotted us a small building once used as the town doctor’s playhouse. This may not sound like much, but it amounted to a nice shed or in Jesus’ terms, a building the size of a mustard seed. We were convinced it would be enough.

With this space, we have been able to fill a much needed gap. We are an emergency food pantry designed to meet short-term needs. The pantry’s board members respond to requests from approved agencies and supply families enough food to get them through rough spots, which is a frequent occurrence in today’s economy. Often deserving families do not meet governmental requirements for assistance forcing the government agency to begrudgingly deny service. This is especially true of the countless immigrants who work our farms because Americans are no longer willing to perform these tasks. By the grace of God, we have been able to step in and meet short-term needs.

Thankfully, we qualified for a missional grant from TCBF. We fit the grant criteria. The project was going to be undertaken with or without TCBF help, but we surely benefitted from it. Christ can do an awful lot with \$1,000 in Appalachia. Think loaves and fish.

We were fortunate to have accrued other grant money, but TCBF’s came with no strings. TCBF trusted me enough to make decisions. While trusting me implicitly typically represents a lapse in judgment, this freedom allowed the pantry to make essential purchases simply not accessible with other grants. And for that we are truly grateful.

# Mission Grant Story: Trinity Baptist, Cordova, on Mission in Guatemala

by Josh Plant, Minister of Youth

I promised myself if I ever returned to Guatemala I would make sure the "Devil Rooster of Pacaya" never crowed again.

Two years ago, in my first summer as youth pastor at our church, we took our youth group to the village of Pacaya in Guatemala. The village lies in the mountains, about two hours away from Guatemala City, the nation's capital. Our friends and missionary partners at Clubhouse Guatemala have, with the help of our church and many others, built a compound there at the entrance of the village. The sounds from a steady stream of buses headed to the city is the only noise heard until nighttime. Then, it is really dark and quiet, except for a rooster that literally crows all night! El Diablo Gallo.

During that first trip I lost a lot of sleep because of that rooster, but it was a price worth paying. The kids in my youth group and the parents who chaperoned were forever changed that summer. They had an opportunity to see life outside of their privileged, American bubble. As you might expect, we went again this last summer and got back to work. This was not a designated youth trip, but out of the thirty-five church members who went, twelve of them were students. For those of us who had been before, it was as if we never left. The kids remembered us, and we remembered them. The caretaker of the compound, a local named Wilbur, and the rest of his family, ate with us every night. We built a house, laid the foundation to another house and a church, put on a block party for the village, held



Vacation Bible School at a few local schools, and built a few stoves. This may not sound astonishing yet, so let me back up a little.



A few years ago, this village did not want any foreigners in their area. In fact, when construction began on the missionary compound three years ago, the matriarch of Pacaya walked up to Mike, the director of Clubhouse Guatemala, and asked him and his organization to kindly leave and never come back. Most of the villagers did not trust anyone from Guatemala City, let alone foreigners from America. During our trip this last summer, this same woman walked up to Mike and told him how grateful she was he had stayed and that all of us were there.

That's the funny thing about mission trips like these. They change people, whether we like it or not. Students in my youth group will never look at the world the same way. They can never dismiss poverty again, because they have seen what abject poverty is and know they can do something about it. The adults who were with them now scheme all year to find ways to encourage more people to help in Guatemala. They come up with ways to help more villagers, most of whom they know by name. The hearts of old ladies who wanted us kicked out melt when they see their grandchildren eating snow cones at a block party we sponsor. Rough men from the village cry when we help build new houses for them.

And now I think of Guatemala every time I hear a rooster crow.

Thank you, TCBF, for the mission grant that helped people change.



# Tennessee

Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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The image shows a DVD cover for the 2014 CBF General Assembly. The cover is designed to look like a quilt, with various colored squares (green, blue, white) containing small photographs of people. The title "Woven Together" is written in a large, elegant script across the center. Above the title, it says "2014 CBF General Assembly June 23-27 · Atlanta, Georgia". Below the title, it says "THREADS OF FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP". At the bottom, there is a quote: "Join us in celebrating how our stories as Cooperative Baptists are *Woven Together* with each other and with God's mission". The cover also includes the CBF logo and some smaller text at the bottom right.