

September 2014

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News and Stories from TN Cooperative Baptist Fellowship



## Tennessee CBF State Missions Offering 2014 - 2015

Mission support and engagement capture the heart and imagination of individuals and congregations across Tennessee. Why? We take seriously Jesus' words about caring for the poor and oppressed as recorded in Matthew 25:31-46, and we're motivated by the Great Commission, Matthew 28:19-20. Tennessee Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (TCBF) provides opportunities for congregations to collaborate and meet kingdom needs in Jesus' name. Being the presence of Christ in the world means we are intentional about serving "the least of these," that's why for more than a decade TCBF has promoted an annual state missions offering. We celebrate the lives that have been touched by generous donations to our state missions offering.

Last year, we highlighted and celebrated the significant ministry of Elizabeth Richards, retired CBF field personnel to Jordan, by naming our state missions offering for her. Elizabeth's life of sacrificial service inspires us to meet tangible needs here in our own state while also acknowledging the meaningful work being done around the world.

During 2013-2014, congregations and individuals gave \$25,997.30 to the *Elizabeth Richards Missions Offering*. The following congregations supported TCBF's State Missions Offering this past year: Central Baptist Bearden in Knoxville, Central Baptist Fountain City in Knoxville, Ekklesia Blount in Maryville, First Baptist in Chattanooga, First Baptist in Jefferson City, First Baptist in Murfreesboro, First Baptist in Oak Ridge, Providence in Cookeville, Signal Mountain in Signal Mountain, and Trinity in Cordova. We are grateful to each of these congregations for promoting and supporting the mission projects funded by the offering.

The goal for the Elizabeth Richards Missions Offering for 2014-2015 is \$27,500. Churches and individuals who give to this state missions offering support ministry partners in Tennessee, help college students engage in hands-on CBF mission/ministry projects, and provide twelve \$1,000 mission grants to encourage congregations to serve outside the walls of their church buildings (see page 2).

We encourage congregations to designate time on their church calendars to highlight the *Elizabeth Richards Missions Offering* and the needs it addresses. You may promote and gather this offering when it is convenient for your church between now and June 30, 2015. TCBF is here to assist you with materials, bulletin inserts, and speakers. Sample promotional materials were mailed to churches. For your convenience, these resources can be downloaded from our website at [tncbf.org](http://tncbf.org) (from the front page or under the missions tab). If you need additional free materials mailed to you, please contact Brittany Jackson at 615.907.8525 or [bjackson@tncbf.org](mailto:bjackson@tncbf.org).

Thank you for your partnership and generosity and for being the presence of Christ to our state!

## Annual Report

Tennessee CBF is pleased to share a strong, financial report for the past fiscal year, July 1, 2013 through June 30, 2014. Because of generous and faithful giving by individuals and congregations, we exceeded our budget goal and finished the year in the black. This will allow us to place additional funds in reserves (an essential part of our fiduciary responsibility).

Budget Goal	\$184,700.00
Unrestricted Income	\$198,399.52
Expenses	\$155,886.67
Carried Forward	\$42,512.85

These congregations gave unrestricted gifts to TCBF this past year: Ball Camp in Knoxville, Believers Fellowship in Hendersonville, Brook Hollow in Nashville, Cedar Grove in Maryville, Central Bearden in Knoxville, Central Fountain City in Knoxville, Crieviewood in Nashville, Cumberland in Knoxville, East Acres in Millington, Ekklesia Blount in Maryville, Emmanuel in Jefferson City, FBC in Fairview, FBC in Chattanooga, FBC in Clinton, FBC in Etowah, FBC in Gatlinburg, FBC in Jefferson City, FBC in Knoxville, FBC in Memphis, FBC in Murfreesboro, FBC in Nashville, FBC in Oak Ridge, Glendale in Nashville, Immanuel in Nashville, Kings Cross in Tullahoma, Monte Vista in Maryville, Mt. Carmel in Cross Plains, Providence in Cookeville, Second in Memphis, Trinity in Cordova, West Hills in Knoxville, and Woodmont in Nashville.

TCBF's budget goal for 2014-2015 is \$194,200. The goal was increased to allow our new regional work to flourish and to empower even more mission engagement. Thanks to all who support the mission and ministry of TCBF!

## Recipients of the Elizabeth Richards Missions Offering July 2014 - June 2015 GOAL \$27,500



Last year TCBF named its annual state missions offering in honor of Elizabeth Richards, retired CBF field personnel and member of Trinity Baptist Church in Cordova. Her sacrificial spirit inspires us, and the *Elizabeth Richards Missions Offering* funds significant mission

projects in Tennessee and beyond. Your investment in our state missions offering for 2014-2015 empowers the following ministries:

### **Congregational Mission Grants - \$12,000**

Tennessee CBF encourages congregations to be the "presence of Christ" to needy people in the world. Mission grants provide seed money that enables congregations to engage in meaningful mission projects in their communities or elsewhere. This year, we will award twelve \$1,000 grants.

### **Samaritan Ministry in Knoxville - \$5,000**

The mission of Samaritan Ministry is to be "a beacon of light and hope, by way of Christ, to anyone who suffers from or has family or friends who suffer from HIV/AIDS." Wayne Smith guides this ministry of Central Baptist Church of Bearden.

### **Neverfail Community Church in Sparta - \$5,000**

This congregation serves the Cumberland Plateau of Eastern Middle Tennessee. Many in this area live below the poverty line; over 40% of the residents are not in the workforce; 33% have no high school diploma or GED; many in the community are disabled. We support Neverfail's efforts to minister to *the least of these*.

### **College Student Ministries - \$5,500**

A high value for Tennessee CBF is supporting and encouraging the ministry of college students. This money will be used to help college students engage in hands-on ministry experience through CBF ministries like Student.GO and Collegiate Congregational Interns (CCI).

# TCBF Mission Grant Story

by Kim Mantooh, Monte Vista Baptist Church, Maryville, TN

It all started with five women and a book. Not just any book. *Half the Sky: Turning Oppression into Opportunity for Women Worldwide* by Nicholas D. Kristof and Sheryl WuDunn. The book focuses on issues facing women and girls in many parts of the developing world: sex trafficking, maternal mortality, sexual violence, micro-finance, and girls' education. *Half the Sky* is a passionate call to get involved, so we started praying about how God wanted to use us to make a difference. The answer that became clearer and clearer was the idea of a fair trade store.....*Tradewinds*. The first step was a visit to "Shop the World," a fair trade store in Englewood, TN. The owners, Bill and Joan Cochran, took us under their wings, mentoring us for many months, until *Tradewinds* opened on October 20, 2013.



Located in our church building, the shop is open on Sundays for church members and Wednesdays for the community. Those of us who have been involved since its beginning have experienced a deeper commitment and desire to be part of this ministry with each passing day. What started as a "tiny mustard seed" has mushroomed into a community-supported project. As a congregation we have been involved in educating our community about human trafficking and other justice issues for several years. We have looked for tangible ways to support women and children who want a better life – one that provides a way to earn a sustainable income with dignity. We believe God has given us a practical way to help these victims every day of the year by spending our dollars purposefully

buying items they create. However, the benefits are not limited to victims of human trafficking. Proceeds from the store also benefit people who live in poverty in Third World countries by giving them a chance to earn fair wages and work in fair conditions. As of the end of July, \$11,438.00 in products have been sold since opening last October. Thirty volunteers keep this ministry going and it crosses generations in its involvement appeal. From teenagers to senior adults, our volunteers bring a variety of gifts and abilities.

One of the store's surprises has been the opportunity to connect personally with people from around the world who work with the artisans who create the products we sell. One of those opportunities involved meeting a man from Kenya who wanted us to tell him what the artisans could create that would sell well in the American market. Another surprise has been the benefit store sales provided for some of our shoppers. One of our regular customers was an elderly woman who was, for the most part, homebound except for attending worship on Sunday morning. *Tradewinds* became a place where she could do her personal shopping and maintain a sense of independence. She shopped every Sunday she attended church and we've been told all of the presents under her Christmas tree were fair trade items purchased at *Tradewinds*!

What do we hope to accomplish? We want to be the link between people in our world who are trying to create a better life and those of us who have the financial means to make a difference. We want to be the hands and feet of Jesus in eradicating poverty, hunger and slavery in our world.

**NOTE:** Pictured above are Jerry Mantooh, pastor, and Suzii Paynter, CBF Executive Coordinator, inside *Tradewinds* at Monte Vista Baptist Church. While there, Suzii purchased the excellent and challenging book *Half the Sky* for Terry Maples. TCBF is pleased to partner with Monte Vista in its efforts to awaken consciousness about human trafficking and other social justice issues.

## From the TCBF Moderator

*Melissa Roysdon*

*As the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish, so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is my word that goes out from my mouth: It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire and achieve the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out in joy and be led forth in peace; the mountains and hills will burst into song before you, and all the trees of the field will clap their hands. Instead of the thornbush will grow the pine tree, and instead of briars the myrtle will grow. This will be for the Lord's renown, for an everlasting sign, which will not be destroyed.*

*Isaiah 55:10-13 (NIV)*

A few weeks ago I had a fence row conversation with a young theologian. "J" is the 5<sup>th</sup> grade grandson of my neighbor. He confided in me he was worried about the future because of all the bad people in the world. I divulged to him that I too find myself worrying about the future. I said, "It is easy to look at all the bad people and worry, but then I think of all the good people, and I realize that the good people outnumber the bad, and I don't feel so bad."

As he nodded his head and accepted that as a possibility, I wondered what the future would hold for him, for my grandchildren, for all of us. Maybe most importantly, I wondered if I really believed what I had just stated as fact.

Watching the news, hearing stories from CBF and others about human trafficking, reflecting on other social justice challenges, and knowing that my fence row theologian's father may likely return to prison soon made me question my declaration.

There are bad people in this world and sometimes it feels as if they are the majority. So, why do I have hope? Why do I entertain such positive thoughts?

It seems to me that this is the same quandary that many of the Israelites found themselves wrestling with as they lived in exile. In Isaiah 55 we have a prophet telling them to have hope; to know the everlasting promises of God are not for **some** time in the future but for today.

It is easy to worry about the future when we only see neighbors bombing neighbors, human beings bought and sold like livestock, and children suffering from neglect and abuse. It is easy to see the homeless on the street corners or the pain of street violence.

*I don't think the way you think. The way you work isn't the way I work.*

*Isaiah 55:8 (The Message)*

Our challenge is to see hope in those situations. God wanted the Israelites to realize they didn't know it all. All they could see was the here and now, but God sees beyond the limits of our faulty vision. God sees our future and doesn't just see it...God sees a future that we can be hopeful for. We as the children of God bring hope to each of those "hopeless" situations when we respond to our own callings.

NOTE: Melissa Roysdon is pastor of Providence Baptist Church in Cookeville, TN. A graduate of Tennessee Tech and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Melissa also teaches in the Dekalb County School System.



# Step up to the plate!

by Terry Maples, Field Coordinator



Several years ago, the orchestra from our church took a tour to several states. I went along as narrator. While in Kentucky, we visited the Louisville Slugger Museum. One of the neat displays at the museum features a major league pitcher throwing a 90 MPH fastball. You get to stand behind the plate (and safety netting) and experience what it feels like to be a major league hitter. It was funny watching some of our teens jump each time the ball hit the catcher's mitt. Stepping up to the plate knowing the ball was coming that fast is risky!

I played baseball as a child and youth, and my son Andrew did, too. It's easy to step up to the plate when the excitement of hitting the ball is greater than fear of being hit by a pitch, but once you have been hit by a stinging fastball, you tend to pull away from the plate a bit—making it much harder to hit a ball thrown to the outside. Because of this tendency you often hear Little League coaches yelling “step up to the plate!”

The idea of “stepping up to the plate” can be applied to most any area of life. For example, Christ-followers are called to “step up to the plate” in our efforts to become more like Jesus: loving people who are different, cultivating compassion for those who hurt, working for justice and peace, advocating for those who have no voice, etc. As you can see, striving to become like Jesus requires incredible courage. Without it we may find ourselves pulling away from the plate out of fear. What keeps us up to the plate is practicing a relationship with God who reminds us he'll always be with us.

Faith communities are called to “step up to the plate” and engage in the messiness of peoples' lives. How might God be calling your congregation to step up to the plate? Perhaps God is calling your church to join efforts to eradicate hunger in your neighborhood, address the underlying causes of poverty and homelessness, address injustice when you see it, advocate for and show compassion to those who have no voice, show grace when all around you choose to condemn and judge, collaborate with others and compromise to get things done in this divided and polarized world, etc. You can imagine how scary it is for the church leaves its “sanctuary” to step outside cultural expectations to become the presence of Jesus in the world.

I believe what happened at the 2014 TCBF General Assembly in Memphis is a holy illustration of congregations and leaders stepping up to the plate! First Baptist in Memphis, Second Baptist in Memphis, and Trinity Cordova stepped up in a big way to plan and implement an incredible learning and serving experience on April 11-12. These churches and their leaders did NOT pull away from hard work, from the energy necessary to collaborate with other leaders, or from partnering with community resources across Memphis. As a result, members of these churches saw first-hand the strength of three strands of rope. By stepping up to the plate, these churches discovered the joy of collaboration.



Congregations affiliated with Tennessee CBF now have opportunity to step up to the plate and collaborate in new and innovative ways through the TCBF regional councils. Structures are in place to facilitate greater conversation and cooperation among churches in each region. The councils exist to support and build up congregations. Discerning, planning, and working together, members of our churches will feel less isolated and can experience the joy of working alongside people from other like-minded churches. Let's discover afresh the joy and mutual benefit of living and serving together in community.

Without a doubt, we depend on each other to survive and thrive! In the words of Suzii Paynter, CBF Executive Coordinator, “We can be alone or we can be a Fellowship!” Helen Keller said: Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much.” Truly, we choose to be a Spirit-empowered Fellowship possessing the courage necessary to step up to the plate!

# Reflecting on My First CBF General Assembly

by Brittany Jackson, TCBF Office Manager

Do you know that feeling the moment you step out of a room that is wall-to-wall people, noise, lights and smells, where the simple act of breathing is a monumental task, then that next moment when you step into the open air and sunshine and take your first deep breath? For me, that moment was the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship General Assembly in Atlanta...I could just breathe!

The crazy thing about all of it is, my “stuffy room” was somewhat self-imposed. I come from an amazing family of faith that has done nothing but encourage me to explore my own convictions and theological ideals, where discussion on controversial topics was expected and conclusions were personal and that was just the way it was supposed to be! But because of the atmosphere of my home church and the larger family of faith in our community, I often allowed myself to be closed-in by the louder voices of general consensus and, for lack of a better term, more “conservative” ideals. The sheer volume of those voices and restrictive nature of some of those ideals could become overwhelming, and I often felt I was just one amongst many...I knew I was by no means the only one, but hearing other small voices in the sea of noise, could be difficult.



So, imagine my excitement when I walked into a family (because that is *exactly* what the Fellowship is) where boundaries are being torn down, labels are being thrown out, and the sound of one voice is valued! I was a “first-timer” at the General Assembly this year, and was lovingly introduced as such on many occasions. As a first-timer, I was amazed on so many levels. I have to say the sense of family had probably the biggest impact on me. As an employee of Tennessee CBF, I was not a stranger to the feeling of family within this group of believers, but honestly, I was prepared to go into the National Assembly and step into a much more formal family setting with patriarchs and matriarchs, and the couple of odd cousins on the fringes.

Instead I found a group of brothers and sisters. I found myself sitting next to and talking to the new missions’ coordinator, governing board members, seminary students, and field personnel. All were greeted with a smile and embraced for the unique voice they brought to the fellowship.

Voices were valued not only for the power in their unison, but for the beauty of their dissonance. I believe the sense of being able to breathe came mostly from the feeling I was free to voice my beliefs without fear of judgment. Not to say that I might not be questioned, but discussion that followed would be in the spirit of love, and ability to agree to disagree was on the table and the center of who we are in Christ. How we are alike was more important than the tangents of our belief and how we differ. From the many voices came a beautiful language I try desperately to hang on to and learn from, because how we speak of who we are as Baptists and as believers is a powerful thing indeed. The powerful language from the “Why I love my church...” speakers to the incredibly moving New Baptist Covenant Luncheon speaker on reconciliation to the leaders in the various workshops was language of a group of people learning from the past, dealing with the present, and striving towards a future focused on kingdom work. The language of embracing all of God’s children and accepting us for the crazy and wonderful family of God that we are. Powerful.

I could talk about the many meals and sessions and worship services I attended and from which I learned so much, or I could talk about the simple introductions and joy-filled conversations in the Gathering Place (see photo). I could spend time telling you about the resources and connections made at the Assembly that will prove so valuable in my faith walk...but honestly all I really want to tell you is *come!* Come and be part of a family that values the voice of one and the harmony of many. Come and experience a group of believers that encourage you to delve deeper into your faith by asking questions and engaging in meaningful discussions about them. Come and be part of great kingdom work with all of God’s children. Come into the open air and fellowship!

## Expression of Thanks!

Thank you so much for your generous financial support of my ministry in Tucson through the Young Adult Volunteer Program of the Presbyterian Church (USA). I am delighted TCBF is committed to ecumenical collaboration in its ministry. PCUSA and CBF have similar commitments in their desire to root the church in ministries of love and compassion.



Amy Beth (left) and her team in Tucson

I have been involved in many ministries of the church where I'm serving, Southside Presbyterian. I work with the church's program that feeds people in need twice a week, as well as with the humanitarian group Tucson Samaritans that sets out water in the desert for our sisters and brothers crossing through the desert. I also have been working with the pastor to engage in the neighborhood that surrounds the church. We have planned two neighborhood cleanups, gotten to know neighborhood families, gotten more involved in the local elementary school, and facilitated church member participation in neighborhood events. I also assist with Spanish translation support for detained community members and helped plan the Southside Worker Center benefit dinner.

My experience through YAV allowed me to get my feet wet in many areas of community work and experience the community building and organizing already happening among oppressed communities in the borderlands. One of the best parts has been the opportunity to share with my communities back home (including FBC Murfreesboro) the work I am doing. This year has given me much to reflect upon, including what these experiences mean for my vocational path as I seek to be a part of building God's kingdom.

Your support is invaluable and I thank you again for helping make my YAV journey possible. I will carry these experiences wherever I go in my life. May God continue to guide you as you support ministries like my work through the Tucson YAV Program.

In Faith,  
Amy Beth Willis

## Other TCBF Mission News!

As part of our commitment to local congregations and college students, the TCBF Coordinating Council set a goal to partner with CBF to support five collegiate congregational interns this summer. We surpassed our goal and helped provide interns at Central Baptist Fountain City in Knoxville (2), Ekklesia Blount in Maryville, First Baptist in Knoxville (2), First Baptist in Memphis, First Baptist in Nashville, and Glendale in Nashville. We encourage other congregations across Tennessee to call out college students to serve as interns next summer.

The Coordinating Council also approved funds to: 1) assist Kate Jenkins (Second Baptist in Memphis) on a mission project to South Africa, 2) purchase books for the Ruth School in Bucharest where Skyler and Ronella Daniel serve as two-year Student.GO missionaries, and 3) support Daniel Elliott (son of Stan Elliott, pastor at First Baptist in Clinton) who will serve alongside CBF field personnel in Bali this fall.

TCBF provided \$2,000 to help fund two summer interns for the *Together for Hope* ministry in Helena, Arkansas.

TCBF supported SelahVie, the end of summer reflection experience for college students by purchasing a copy of Let Your Life Speak by Parker Palmer for each student.

TCBF contributed \$2,000 to Kentucky Baptist Fellowship to support *Extreme Build* (building a home for a needy family in one week).

TCBF contributed \$2,500 to help purchase a truck for the ministry in South Africa (see the article by Terry Maples in the June/July 2014 edition of CBF *fellowship!* magazine and on the CBF blog).

TCBF invested \$5,000 in the ministry of Josh and Caroline Smith, CBF field personnel in South Africa. Earlier this year we gave \$5,000 to support the ministry of Missy Ward-Angalla in Uganda and \$2,500 to support Bill and Noy Peeler who leave for their mission work in Cambodia this October.

Please continue to pray for the members of the TCBF Coordinating Council as they discern how best to support mission work at home and around the world. As you can see from the litany above, these folks take their work seriously.



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Cooperative Baptist Fellowship

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## **Regional Winter Youth Summit**

**January 16-18, 2015**

**First Baptist Church - Huntsville, AL**

Don't miss this meaningful discipleship experience for students from Alabama, Mississippi and Tennessee. TCBF is a co-sponsor of this regional event. Roger Nishioka, professor at Columbia Theological Seminary, is the guest speaker. He connects wonderfully with students. *Digital Age* will provide music.

Here are the details. Deposit of \$200 per church due by September 30. You may pay online at [www.alabamacbf.org](http://www.alabamacbf.org) or by check (ALCBF, PO Box 919, Madison, AL, 35758). Final counts for number of participants due December 1 to Lucas Dorion ([lucas@alabamacbf.org](mailto:lucas@alabamacbf.org) or 205-718-9443). Remaining payment due by December 1. You may mail the remaining payment check of \$69 per person minus the \$200 deposit. Make your own hotel reservations: Embassy Suites, Huntsville. Rate: \$109 a night - Event Code: 61J - Phone: 1-800-362-2779.

Make plans now for your students to participate!