

# **CBF board affirms executive coordinator in process of divorce**

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ATLANTA—Cooperative Baptist Fellowship leaders issued statements affirming Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter in light of her pending divorce from her husband of 44 years, Roger Paynter, former pastor of First Baptist Church in Austin.

“While divorce is regrettable, unexpected and painful, the Bible does identify circumstances under which such a step is permissible,” a statement from the CBF governing board said.

When the organization’s officers learned about the divorce proceedings, they talked to her in detail and determined “she has met the highest standard of biblical conduct in response to it,” according to the board statement.

They concluded “she has done nothing that would adversely affect her ability to fulfill her responsibilities as executive coordinator, among which is to ‘provide spiritual leadership in keeping CBF focused to its purpose’ and expressing ‘exemplary Christian character,’” the statement continued.

The officers recommended to the governing board she be affirmed, and the board “joined with them in unanimously pledging their full endorsement of Suzii and her handling of this painful personal matter, and unequivocally supports her in her continued role as leader of the daily operations and mission of CBF,” the board statement said.

The board also asked for “prayer for Suzii and her family.” It asked “those

affiliated with the Fellowship to support and encourage Suzii in her work on the Fellowship's behalf."

Doug Dortch, CBF moderator and senior minister of Mountain Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala., also pledged his personal support for her.

"While I hurt for Suzii and her family in this most difficult season in their lives, I am absolutely confident in her ability to lead our organization into the good future God has for us all," Dortch said. "In fact, seeing how she has already had to balance the hard and painful aspects of this matter with the pressing demands of her position only has strengthened my appreciation for her leadership."

The leaders of 18 state and regional CBF organizations also released a statement affirming Paynter and expressing confidence in her leadership.

Paynter assumed the CBF executive coordinator's post in 2013. Previously, she was director of the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission.

*Based on reporting by Jeff Huett, associate communications coordinator for CBF.*