

CBF General Assembly begins with historic commissioning service

June 19, 2008

A liturgical dancer performs during a commissioning service for 18 new Cooperative Baptist Fellowship field personnel June 18 at the First Baptist Church of Memphis, Tenn.

MEMPHIS, Tenn. (ABP) — The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship commissioned 18 people for global missions service June 18 in a history-making place — a local church.

Traditionally, CBF has commissioned new personnel at the same venue in which each annual meeting has been held. This year's service, held at First Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn., celebrates a turn toward recognizing the local church role in mission efforts.

"We held the commissioning service in a local church because we are focusing on the work churches do for global missions," Lance Wallace, CBF's communications director, explained.

"The concept in the past was that missionaries are sent out as paid agents. Now people are traveling globally. The church is on mission itself."

The commissioning service kicked off the CBF's annual General Assembly in Memphis.

The new personnel will serve in a variety of ministries — from teaching English in Asia to starting kindergartens in Africa.

“[Our mission] is about the lost, the poor, the hungry, the thirsty, the people who have no Christian presence in their midst. That is the path we are called to,” Nash said.

In a challenge to approximately 1,000 attendees, Nash said missions must change because the world is changing.

“It’s not enough until we join together and become engaged together in reaching the world with the gospel of Jesus Christ,” he said. “What excites me the most is the possibility as we join hands together in ministry and mission in the name of Jesus Christ.”

New CBF field personnel include Carita, Southeast Asia; Lindsay, Southeast Asia; Brittany Phillips, China; Matthew and Melanie Storie, Alabama; Elaine Childs, Croatia; Leah Crowley, Florida; Cynthia Levesque, China; Eric and Julie Maas, Belize; Gene Murdock, India; Karen and Kenny Sherin, Missouri; Dan and Jolene Tucker, Mexico; Dee Donalson, Ethiopia; Christopher and Jessica Rose, Peru.

For safety reasons, CBF does not release the names and specific locations of some of its missionaries.

CBF now has 163 field personnel.

At the commissioning, attendees contributed \$12,750 to CBF’s Offering for Global Missions to honor Jack Snell, former director of field ministries, who died of cancer last year.

“His greatest passion, besides his family, was missions. That was his main passion — he gave his life, his soul and his time for missions,” said Jim

Smith, who now directs field ministries.