

# CBF general assembly opens with commissioning service

June 19, 2015

DALLAS—A commissioning service for field personnel, church starters, chaplains and pastoral counselors kicked off the 2015 Cooperative Baptist Fellowship general assembly in Dallas.



Singer-songwriter Ken Medema performed during the commissioning service. The Fellowship commissioned six ministers to its growing group of 650 chaplains and pastoral counselors. They serve in diverse settings, from hospitals to jails and prisons to every branch of the U.S. military. Over the past year, CBF has endorsed 35 chaplains and pastoral counselors.

“Chaplains and pastoral counselors are partners in renewing God’s world as they embody the presence of Christ in these specialized settings,” said Gerry Hutchinson, CBF’s endorser for chaplains and pastoral counselors.

“Tonight, I say to Eric Whitfield, Larry Johnson, Jeff Walton, Lee Ann Rathbun, Bisser Ovcharov and Cassandra Wilson: Your work is uniquely

your calling. God has equipped you for such a time and for such a work as this. Live out your calling so that God calls out others through you.”

CBF also commissioned three church starters—Michael Mills, pastor of Inland Church in Spokane, Wash., and Josh James and Doug McKinney, pastors of The Restoration Project in Salisbury, Md.



Steven Porter, CBF’s coordinator of global missions. “As we commission you, you go being the incarnational presence of Christ as a partner in renewing God’s world,” Andy Hale, CBF church starts leader, told the new church starters. “Go with the hope and power of the Holy Spirit, being fully formed even as we continue to form together.”

CBF also commissioned two field personnel for missions. David and Lauren Bass will work alongside the Cambodia Baptist Union as CBF field personnel in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, helping new churches in the urban center of a predominantly rural country become sustainable.

“What we do here tonight is holy work—setting apart you, David and

Lauren, for a sacred purpose,” said Steven Porter, CBF’s coordinator of global missions. “Your commissioning challenges us to remember the commission implicit in our own baptisms, to ponder anew what it means to follow Jesus not only as Savior but as Lord.”

At the close of the worship service, CBF Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter led the commissioning prayer and litany and offered a reminder of the need to be in community as a fellowship.



CBF Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter led the commissioning prayer and litany. “These candidates are here because we co-mission together,” Paynter said. “They each manifest an individual call. They have come from their local congregation of faith, but after discernment and training, after investment and prayer, they are here among us as a community of churches—with friends and strangers—seeking the hand of blessing and sending.

“Pay attention to this moment. It is speaking the message of strength through humility, that we alone are not sufficient, but together, we encourage these expressions of ministry to join with others. Pay attention to this moment when you bless this stranger into ministry. It is an act of faithful body-life—Christ in them, Christ in their congregation, Christ in

you, Christ in all of us for the sake of the world.”