

Christ-likeness and excellence key, Paynter tells CBF board

June 29, 2017

ATLANTA—The Cooperative Baptist Fellowship is living into the same attributes its founders instilled more than 25 years ago, striving to be Christ-like, innovative, authentic, global, diverse and excellent, CBF Executive Coordinator Suzii Paynter told the organization's governing board.

"I want to bring our attention back to our Fellowship's attributes," Paynter said. "We desire to raise the bar on excellence in an organization that strives to be Christ-like, innovative, authentic and global.

"In those categories, one of the things that we are focused on right now is this quality of excellence. How are we Christ-like and is there a more excellent way for us? How are we innovative? What about our authentic faith?"

Global in nature

These attributes are clear expressions of how the leaders of the Fellowship function, pointing to the global nature of CBF's work within the last year, Paynter said.

"If there has ever been a year where I felt the pulse of being global, it was this one," she said. "This stewardship of our global commitment and partnership is so beautiful, and I think is called for from every congregation. If there is one gift that CBF has to give back to every congregation, it is to be a global partner, and it is to be cognizant that God has called us into all the world.

“This global nature is reflected in our striving for excellence, as is the Fellowship’s ongoing commitment to being diverse—implementing initiatives to intentionally increase diversity and create space for the Latino and African-American communities,” Paynter said.

The Fellowship ecosystem

With the foundation of these attributes, Paynter pointed to the cyclical nature of CBF as an ecosystem.

“We are in a living cycle as a Fellowship. Things grow, and things flourish, and things decline, and things change,” Paynter said, citing the initiatives, programs, changes and strategies that have been points of focus the past year.

“If there is one thing for sure, we understand what it means to lead an organization that is alive,” she said. “We are nothing more than the people gathered together in congregations, congregations gathered together in a Fellowship. It is the call that brings us together in this living organism.”

Successes and challenges

CBF Moderator Doug Dortch reflected on successes and challenges in the life of the Fellowship since the 2016 General Assembly in Greensboro, N.C.

“These times are complicated, and there are many challenges that we are confronted with and have been confronted with,” said Dortch, who serves as senior minister of Mountain Brook Baptist Church in Birmingham, Ala. “As we come to this last meeting of the (fiscal) year, I am pleased to say it’s been a very productive year. We have accomplished much, we’ve been loving in the process, and we have walked in humility.”

Citing the success of the 25th Anniversary Endowment Campaign, the launch of Fellowship Southwest and the completion of restructuring efforts,

Dortch emphasized CBF is positioned well for the future.

“The Fellowship is in a position where we can seize the future and look at it as a growth opportunity,” Dortch noted. “There are a host of partnerships that are coming online and other initiatives that will put us in a better place to fulfill the mission that God has for this community. This is a very exciting time, and I’m encouraged about the future of our Fellowship.”

Maria Monteiro, assistant professor of music at Baptist University of the Americas in San Antonio, was among the governing board nominees recognized at the board meeting. Other nominees, who were on June 30 during a business session of the CBF general assembly, were Carol McEntyre, senior minister at First Baptist Church in Columbia, Mo.; Stephen Cook, senior minister at Second Baptist Church in Memphis, Tenn.; and Bill Coates, senior pastor at First Baptist Church in Gainesville, Ga.

“Momentum is on our side,” Dortch told the new board members. “And it’s going to be a great journey for those of you who have the privilege to serve in this capacity.”

Other Business

The board adopted a motion to require covenant agreements with CBF’s 60-plus partners to be finalized by the 2019 general assembly.

The board also heard from Illumination Project committee chair Charlie Fuller, who reported the committee would provide an update on its ongoing work during the general assembly in Atlanta.

The board also heard reports on the work of the nominating committee, ministries council and missions council. Mark Wingfield, chair of the missions council’s sustainability committee, spoke to the board about ongoing efforts to promote and recruit advocates for the CBF Offering for

Global Missions.

The governing board meeting concluded with remarks from CBF Moderator-Elect Shauw Chin Capps, who transitioned to the role of CBF moderator at the conclusion of the 2017 General Assembly.

“I feel honored and humbled to be able to serve with all of you,” Capps said. “I am appreciative of the friendships we’ve developed and what I have learned, and know I will continue to learn from all of you.”