

Paynter: CLC will continue to exemplify ‘doing the gospel’

February 15, 2013

AUSTIN—While sad at the prospect of Texas Baptist [Christian Life Commission](#) Director Suzii Paynter leaving the state for another denominational post, commission stalwarts expressed gratitude for all she has done and pride in all they believe she will do.

About 80 people gathered in Austin for a send-off for Paynter, who was elected executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship Feb. 21.

CLC leaders reflected on her 12 years with the commission.

“Some of us here, we’re glad for Atlanta, but we’re a little sad in Texas,” said Weston Ware, who served as the CLC’s public longtime public policy director.



Stephen Reeves, legislative counsel for the Texas Baptist Christian Life Commission, makes a presentation to CLC Director Suzii Paynter. She has been nominated as executive coordinator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship. (BGCT PHOTO)

CBF is “getting a buzzsaw to come over” to lead it, said former CLC Director Jimmy Allen. She is dynamic and faithful, with an amazing ability to bring people together, said Allen, chaplain emeritus at Big Canoe Chapel, Ga.

“I have never in my life met someone who could move so graciously and fiercely among people,” said Ken Huggins, pastor of Elkins Lake Baptist Church in Huntsville, who served on the committee that selected Paynter as CLC director. “You bring people together.”

CBF needs Paynter at this juncture in its history, said former CLC Director James Dunn, now resident professor of Christianity and public policy at Wake Forest Divinity School. The skills she brings to her new position matches the needs of organizations, he insisted.

“We are so proud you are making this move for all of us,” he said. “We need you in this.”

Live out the Gospel

Paynter recounted the ways God has used the CLC to help Texas Baptists live out the gospel during her tenure. Whether in public policy efforts, the Texas Baptist Hunger Offering, counseling services, ethics and justice issues or the Immigration Service and Aid Center, Texas Baptists through the CLC have sought to reflect how Christ would respond to contemporary issues, she said.

The various efforts have included Paynter's direct work on 221 pieces of legislation, expanding the hunger offering to include 217 projects with partners through the Baptist World Alliance, Baptist associations, local churches, state conventions and CBF.

Some of the CLC's ministry hasn't been easy, she noted, but Texas Baptists have continued to support it, believing Christ to be working there.

"When you're plowing new ground ... you stick with it until you find a way it works," she said.

Richly blessed

Serving Texas Baptists and the CLC has been a wonderful experience, she said. The many people she has met have richly blessed her, the CLC's ministry and Texas.

"I'm so grateful for the opportunity to have this little garden to nurture and cultivate," she said.

Paynter insisted she is excited about the future of the commission and its role within the Baptist General Convention of Texas.

"I don't leave with fear," she said. "I leave with joy. I know I'm leaving a position of strength for our organization."

As Paynter is poised to leave, her friends and supporters in Texas remain strong in their support of her, said Carolyn Strickland, a long-term CLC volunteer and widow of former CLC Director Phil Strickland.

"We are your home folk," she said. "We are here for you."

Editor's Note: This story was updated Feb 21 to reflect Suzii Paynter's election as CBF executive coordinator.