

**You Are Invited to the 2015 General Assembly of the National Cooperative Baptist Fellowship June 15-19, Dallas, Texas**



The national General Assembly is a great opportunity to visit and worship with the larger CBF family. For more information, go online to <http://www.cbf.net/general-assembly/>. Assembly events include a CBF West gathering.

**Reflections from the CBF West Meeting at First Baptist Church Glendale, California by Rick Sample**

Forty-five people representing eight states participated in the CBF West Annual Meeting hosted by First Baptist Church in Glendale, California, February 12-13, 2015. Rev. Matt Andrews, pastor, and Sara Hunt-Felke, minister to families and outreach, served as terrific hosts to the West regional meeting, a region that encompasses thirteen western states. Matt and Sara led in a very interesting history and impact presentation about the church, assisted by pastor emeritus, Charlie Updike, and several other church members. The church is one year older than the city of Glendale, itself home to the country's largest Armenian community, and is involved in local partnerships which facilitate ministries in Glendale and the broader Los Angeles region.

Rev. Glenn Jones, a masterful Los Angeles based musician and a friend of CBF pastor Dr. Mamie O. Oliver, blessed our group with a time of singing and worship.

There were three presentations from representatives from the CBF National office. Bo Prosser introduced CBF's new branding "Forming Together" and also explained the "Dawnings" program. Wanda Kidd encouraged churches to enlist interns through CBF's Collegiate Internship Program. Ryan Berlin provided information about the CBF Foundation. In addition, Exter Hardy described the upcoming CBF West mission trip to Macau scheduled for April.

Joy Yee moderated a short business session. Diann Whisnand was elected to serve as regional Moderator-elect for a two year term beginning July 2015 and Benny McCracken, pastor of First Baptist Church West Yellowstone, Montana, was elected to a three year term as a Member-at-Large.



**Mission Immersion Day by a Grateful Participant**

What does an Assembly of God pastor, a Jesuit priest and a Free Methodist pastor all have in common? Unconditional love and compassion for the hurting, forgotten youth of Los Angeles. Attending the CBF West Conference, we had our eyes opened to see gang members, people caught up in addictions, sex trafficking and domestic violence--persons growing up in poverty in the projects of LA--in a new light that will never be forgotten.

On Friday, Feb. 13, we first visited the *Dream Center*, founded in 1994, that ministers to the needs of over 80,000 individuals and families a month with the goal of restoring broken lives. The vision began with one Assembly of God pastor, Tommy Barnett, from Phoenix, AZ, who felt led to reach out to the hurting in LA. However, it was his son, Matthew, called to pastor Bethel Temple, who set up his office on the sidewalk and began asking people how he could help. From that small beginning, he was able to purchase the old vacant Queen of Angels hospital and the center was born. The center now houses a school, dormitory, cafeteria, educational center, medical and dental facilities, as well as trucks delivering food to the poor and homeless. One picture on the wall sums up the feelings of many in need with the words, *I Dream that I'll Never Be Left All Alone*.

From there we went to the *Homegirl Café* for a delicious lunch that is a part of the training businesses operated by Homeboy Industries to provide work opportunities for gang involved youth. A Jesuit priest by the name of Gregory Boyle, pastor of Delores Mission in LA, began a business in 1992 called Homeboy Bakery to help give training and experience to gang members for jobs as well as helping the youth learn to work side by side with rival gang members. This has now grown to not only the bakery and café, but also the Homeboy Silkscreen business and Homeboy/Homegirl and Homeboy/Homegirl Merchandise. Part of their services include *(continued)*

(Continued from previous page) tattoo removal of gang symbols on the bodies of the youth. Stories of the gang members lives can be read in the *New York Times* Bestselling book, *Tattoos on the Heart: the Power of Boundless Compassion*, by Gregory Boyle.

The afternoon ended at the Rose City Coffee in Pasadena, a coffee training program, begun in 2011 by the pastor of the Rose City Free Methodist Church, Dan Davidson, to help homeless, neighborhood youth learn the art of becoming coffee baristas. In the church is a coffee cart used to train the youth to make specialty coffees. Two other smaller carts are sent out to events 4-6 times a month at \$100 an hour, providing revenue to purchase coffee beans and supplies.

The impression made on our hearts and minds was the difference one person can make in the lives of others when God is in control. As one gang member said in his testimony at the Homegirl Café: "I didn't need to make a change; I needed a changed life!"

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### More Reflections from Glendale

I thoroughly enjoyed hanging out with CBF West. I enjoyed getting to meet you. Seeing and hearing about life-change from the ministries in LA was inspiring. Blessings! – *Butch*

It was a pleasure being with you all in Glendale and hope our paths will cross again. Blessings on your ministries. – *Charlie*

While we think of movie stars and swimming pools and celebrities in LA, the places I've been are far from that! We saw a ministry to at risk street youth, a ministry to gang members, and a local church ministry to street teens to keep them from being victims of human trafficking. There were more tattoos and strange hairdos and funky outfits than you can imagine. This was hardly the 'Red Carpeted' world of Hollywood. This was real life being lived in hard ways from people who by 12 or 13 have lived way beyond their years. One of our guides had been shot six times, just for being at the wrong place with the wrong color bandana! There is no easy way off Skid Row, no easy exit from human trafficking. Jesus calls us to be 'salt and light' in the midst of evil, no easy task! I'm grateful for the work of CBF West. You are a courageous band of pioneers helping us partner in renewing God's world. – *Bo Prosser, National CBF*

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### More Reflections (continued)

May the Lord provide ministry opportunities that impact our every particular CBF West area with resolute, life-changing power of the Gospel of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ! – *Pastor Greg, Selah Congregation, Flagstaff, AZ*

Being fairly new to the CBF West region, my experiences with my fellow sisters and brothers this annual meeting touched me quite deeply, not just because of our inspiring immersion experiences in LA, but probably even more so because of the supportive conversations shared along the way. – *Rev. Matt, First Baptist, Glendale*

Grace beyond measure. – *Diann*

Diverse mission sites doing work and serving as Jesus would! – *Sister Mamie*

I was inspired and convicted to not give up on those who seem to keep choosing 'failure' as opposed to redemption and the need to be there to receive them in love when they finally decide to accept help and God's redemption. – *Exter*

It was uplifting to see CBF folks in the LA area. When I mention CBF to people, most of them ask, 'What's that?' It is a novel experience for me to be able to say I am an endorsed CBF chaplain, and nobody says, 'What's that?' – *Bill*

Three words to describe our weekend together: Refreshing, Hopeful, Inspiring! – *Sara*

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### CBF West Officers:

**Coordinator:** Glen Foster (Tucson, AZ); **Moderator:** Bruce Gourley (Bozeman, MT); **Past Moderator:** Joy Yee (San Francisco, CA); **Moderator Elect:** Exter Hardy (Davis, CA); **Secretary:** Rick Sample (Fremont, California)

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