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ONE

MAGAZINE

A Free Will Baptist Magazine

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ACTS OF GRACE

When Dad Has
Mental Illness

THE SENIOR PASTOR COMPLEX

Seeing Through
the Tears

...

Relentless Parenting

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ALL IN THE FAMILY:
A Christian's Guide
to Voting

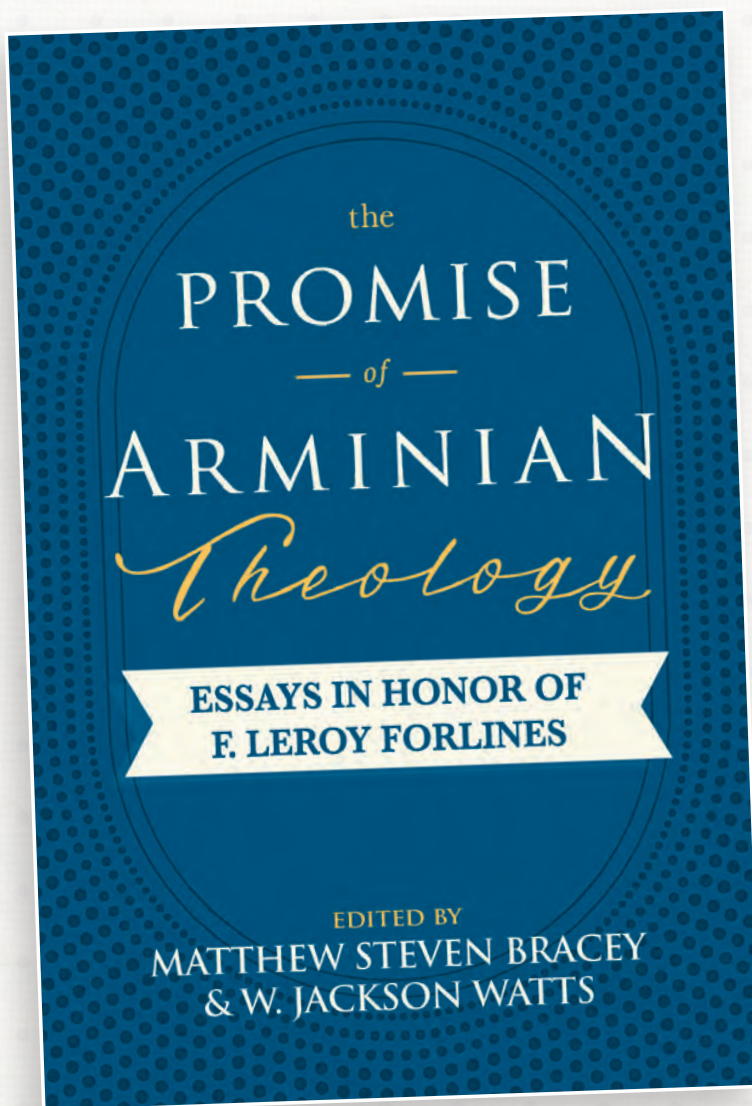


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First Glimpse >>

Rough Around the Edges

“That old man wasn’t kidding when he said the only way in and out of the gorge was ‘through the water,’” I muttered to myself as the stream rose past my ankles to my knees, then finally my waist.

My latest outdoor adventure was the result of a casual conversation with an elderly gentleman in a rustic coffee shop just outside of Portland, Oregon. When he learned I was in town for a couple of days, a broad smile spread across his weather beaten features. “Do you like the outdoors?” he asked. “The real outdoors?”

He went on to describe an unforgettable hike, a gorge accessible only by a steep climb and through a snow-fed stream. “You probably won’t see any other tourists, and you’re going to get really cold and wet,” he concluded, “but I promise the hike will be worth the effort.”

It was. When I splashed out of the deep water and rounded the first bend of the gorge, I gasped in amazement. Sheer, moss-covered walls rose hundreds of feet on either side of a canyon so narrow I could reach out and touch both sides. Enormous ferns and towering spruce trees cast eerie shadows through the dim, filtered light. I couldn’t help but feel as though I had been transported magically into a scene from *Jurassic Park*.

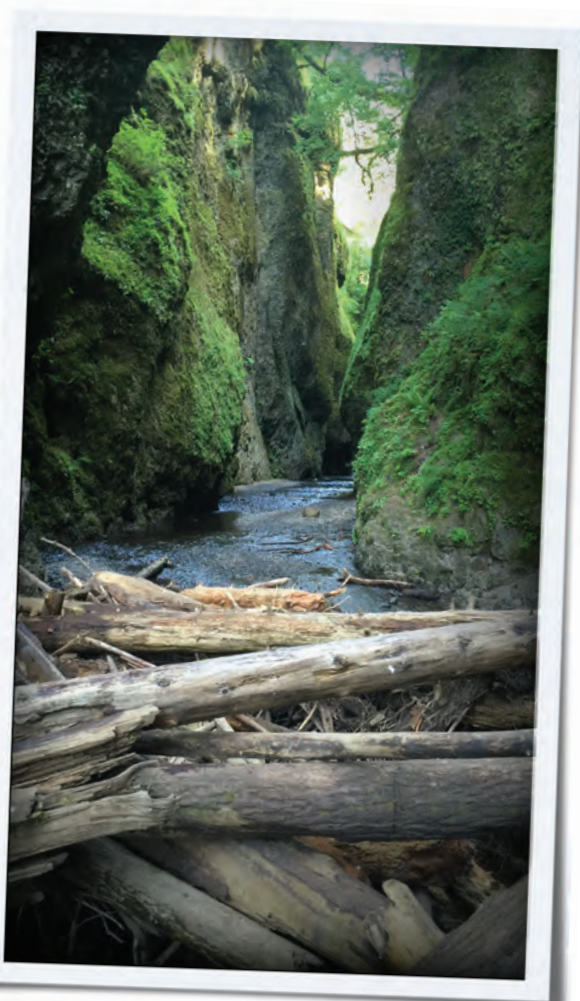
After a half hour of jaw-dropping scenery, I reached the end of the gorge and a final breathtaking sight. A waterfall,

visible only from the floor of the canyon, rushed over the emerald walls to plunge a hundred feet into a deep blue pool. Awestruck, I found a dry spot near the edge of the pool and pulled out a thermos of coffee.

As I savored my coffee and drank in the view, I couldn’t help but notice the rocks lining the base of the falls—black, round, and perfectly smooth. Years of falling water and tumbling against one another had worn away the rough edges leaving a ring of beautiful stones, naturally polished and shiny, the perfect frame for the unforgettable picture before me.

As I wound my way back down the gorge, my mind kept returning to those stones. What a wonderful analogy of the “process” of parenting! Day in and day out, year after year, parents faithfully pour themselves into their children—loving them, correcting them, guiding them, and correcting them again—a daily task that never seems to end. Relentless parenting!

Proverbs 22:6 describes this process as “training up” a child. This Hebrew word *hanak* literally means to dedicate. It implies channeling or narrowing a child’s conduct into the way of wisdom, starting him or her down the path of righteousness toward a lifetime of serving God.



It’s not an easy process, and sometimes parents wonder if they are making any progress at all.

Then, one day, they glance at their children and realize suddenly the rough edges have been worn away; their children have been shaped, molded, and polished into beautiful living stones that will become the foundations of their own households of faith.

The old man was right. The hike left me cold, wet, awestruck, and thankful for my daughter. It was great way to spend the afternoon. **ONE**

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letters:

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Special Note: Historic Free Will Baptist College Renamed Randall University



Moore, Oklahoma—
To eliminate admissions conflicts, Internet confusion, and legal concerns with Hillsdale College in Michigan, Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College

(Oklahoma) completed the legal steps to change its name to Randall University, effective July 1, 2016.

Since 1917, Free Will Baptists in the West have sought to perpetuate their distinctive beliefs through higher education institutions of many names: Tecumseh College (1917), Oklahoma Bible College (1959), Trinity College (1970), Hillsdale Free Will Baptist College (1971), and now Randall University.

Randall University continues the legacy of American Revolutionary War veteran and pioneer preacher Benjamin Randall (1749–1808). Throughout his lifetime, Randall was submitted

to the authority of the Bible, committed to building the Church, and convinced that the gospel of Christ includes “whosoever” (John 3:16). Randall University is focused on equipping students to take the gospel of Christ everywhere they go (Matthew 28:18-20) and to live the Great Commandment (Mark 12:28-31) in whatever they do.

According to President Timothy W. Eaton, the Randall University mission remains unchanged: a Christian institution of higher education committed to the intellectual, spiritual, social, moral, and physical development of its students. It seeks to prepare students to serve the Lord Jesus Christ, both in the church and in society-at-large.

The university is organized into three undergraduate schools (Arts & Sciences, Christian Ministry, and Education), plus the Randall School of Professional and Graduate Studies (online). The Oklahoma Department of Education accredits Randall University for elementary and secondary education degrees leading to teacher certification.

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An excerpt from *Relentless Parenting: The Crucial Pursuit of Your Teen's Heart*

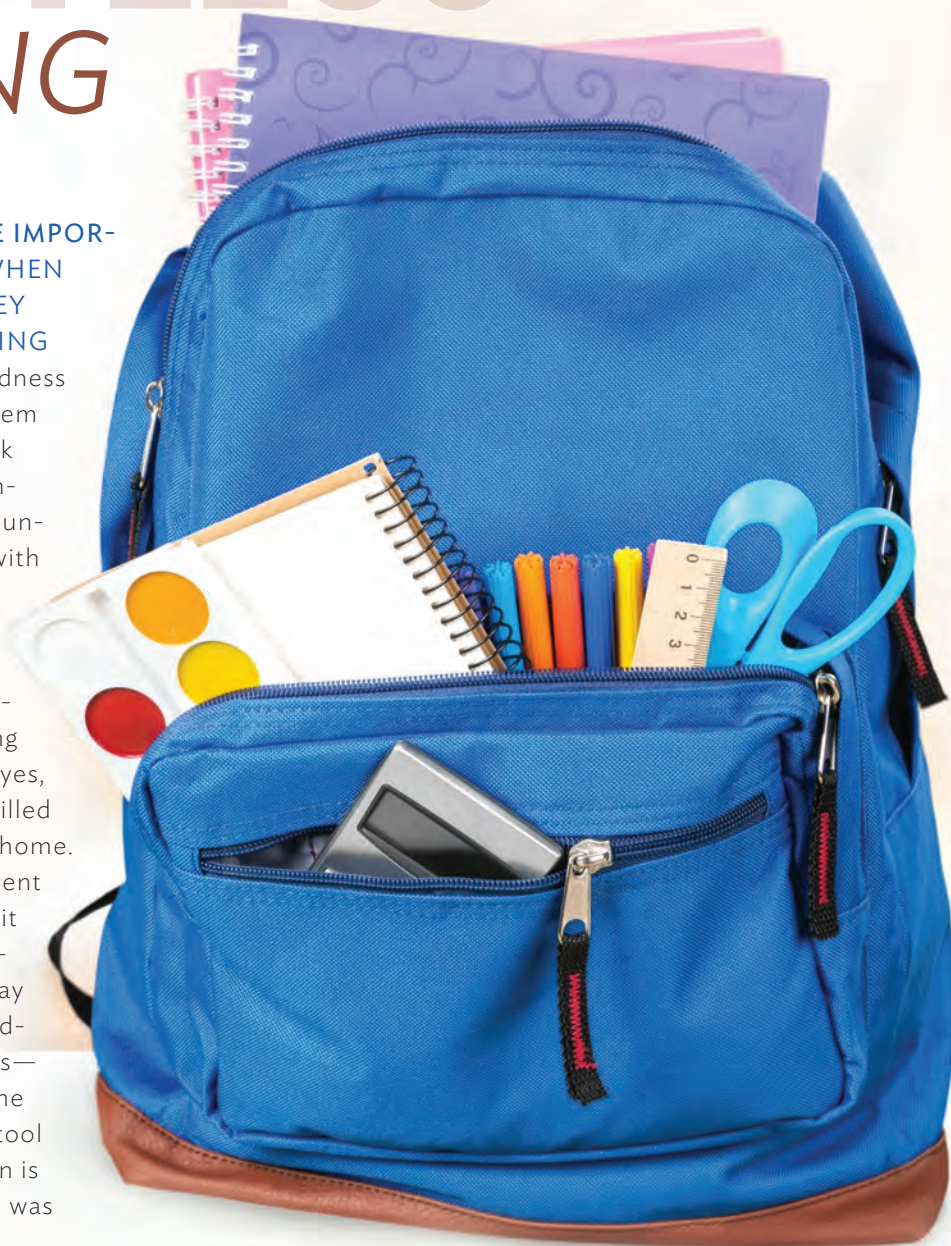
RELENTLESS

PARENTING

By Brian and Angela Haynes

AS PARENTS, WE HAVE LEARNED THE IMPORTANCE OF TIRELESS COMPASSION. WHEN OUR CHILDREN WERE YOUNGER, THEY WENT TO SCHOOL EVERY DAY WEARING A BACKPACK. No matter how much goodness we packed in that backpack as we sent them off to school in the morning, the backpack returned home with entirely different contents. Every teacher and coach they encountered during the day filled the backpack with assignments and expectations, adding a level of stress to their young lives that was not always healthy.

Other students sometimes added emotional “content” to the backpacks weighing our children down. A mean word, rolled eyes, or other discouraging experiences often filled the backpacks by the time they returned home. Some days we could see the discouragement written plainly on their faces. Other days it was not as clear, but over time their backpacks got heavier and heavier until one day they could not bear the weight. They needed someone to help them unload the bags—physically, emotionally, spiritually, or all the above. We found that compassion is the tool necessary to lighten the load. Compassion is a gift. Have you ever heard anyone say he was shown too much compassion as a child?



The idea of offering your child kindness may seem elementary and natural to you, but for many, it is not. Why would you as a parent work hard to offer tireless compassion? We are experiencing four strong reasons:

1 Compassion grants us influence and the right to be heard. Lack of compassion, especially in moments of need, builds invisible, emotional walls between parents and teenagers that will be instantly felt when your influence is most necessary. Things begin to change when a child becomes an adolescent. When our children are young we are able to lead them with our positional authority. Though it is not good or even healthy to lead them only by positional authority, it is possible until they start thinking for themselves. Clearly, children need compassion and heart connection for emotional health and spiritual growth, and it would be terrible to mistakenly undermine that truth here.

While it is right for our children to obey their parents, by the time they are teenagers, typically, positional authority is not enough to give a parent real influence in the life of a teen. Influence no longer comes just because you are “the mom” or “the dad.” Influence is earned in the life of a teenager. One way that influence is earned is through regular deposits of compassion. It is true in your life, too. Think

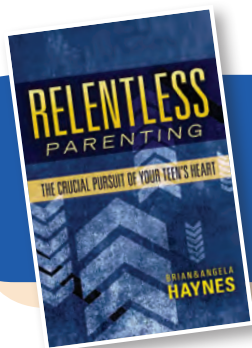
about it. Who are you most likely to bare your soul to or seek advice from? It is likely someone who has a track record of showing you understanding. Your teenager is the same way. If you want influence, offer compassion.

2 Compassion paints a proper picture of God’s love for our children. Psalm 103:13 explains that a father’s practice of showing compassion to his children is an example of the Lord’s compassion toward those who fear Him. Parents who demonstrate tireless compassion help teenagers develop a believable picture of their perfect Father’s sense of compassion for them. And when we lack compassion we skew the picture. We are glad He is a perfect Father.

3 Compassion connects hearts. We have been in family ministry long enough to observe a pattern in family life during the teenage years. Often, we see strained or shallow relationships between parents and teens. Angry feelings among teenagers and their

parents are prevalent—breeding contempt. We have heard parents, on so many occasions, heartbreakingly “hating” their teenagers aloud because of relational turmoil and the associated emotional inconvenience. A wise parent cultivates a loving relationship with their teenagers by using authentic and consistent compassion as the glue that connects hearts.

4 Compassionate parents disciple compassionate teenagers. When a child experiences compassion at home, he or she grows into a teenager that understands how to offer compassion in the world. We are not perfect parents at all, but one piece of constant feedback we get about every one of our children is that they are compassionate toward others. It is interesting, because they each have completely different personalities. One is a warrior. One is a peacemaker. One is the life of the party. How is it that they all exhibit recognizable compassion? We think it has a lot to do with the demonstration of tireless compassion at home. **ONE**

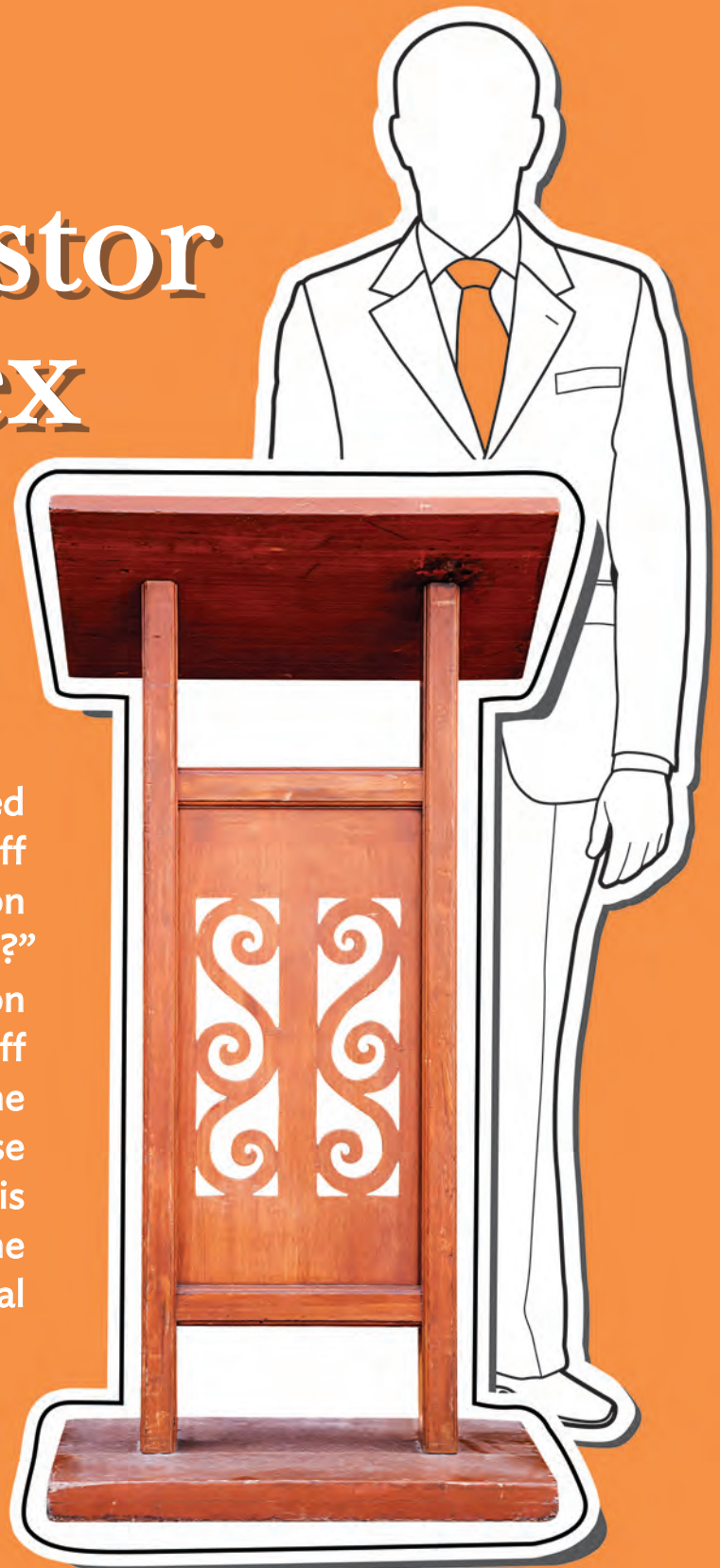


About the Writers: Brian and Angela Haynes have been married 20 years and live in Houston, Texas, with their three children. Order the new book, *Relentless Parenting*, at www.RandallHouse.com.

The Senior Pastor Complex

BY RON HUNTER JR.

Over the years of emphasizing family ministry, one of the most frequent questions I have received from church leaders and staff is: “How do we get our pastor on board with a family emphasis?” Several who asked this question had tears in their eyes. Staff members and teachers long for the pastor to lead the charge, because they understand the breadth of his pulpit influence. Everyone sees the value of developing generational gladiators, but too often, the “commander” is absent from training, leading, and fighting.



A Pastoral Problem

The truth is, numerous senior pastors wish they could lead the charge, but they feel disqualified because they watched a son or daughter grow up and walk away from God.

The departure may have happened when their kids questioned their faith, and professors added to their doubt. Perhaps a child made a mistake that took him or her down a drastically different path than expected. Maybe the “pastoral parents” made the issue worse by demonstrating embarrassment or failing to deal with the situation. None of this was intentional. All of it was painful. The emotional scars still throb.

Despite distraught feelings over perceived failures, pastors still want to warn and help others, but they fear hypocrisy. I conclude they have a hard time championing what they feel they have not lived or done well, fearing a lack of integrity. The “senior pastor complex” describes pastors who desperately want to be part of the conversation but avoid it for fear of being judged.

Most of these pastors have real integrity. They can be trusted with the most sensitive details from a counseling session and would never think of hurting anyone intentionally. The fact that they have dedicated their entire lives to helping people speaks for itself. Each staff member, regardless of past mistakes, can find grace and direction to help others. If you are a pastor in this situation, your desire to help other parents may, in fact, move you to address the hang-ups holding you back.

The greatest pain your congregation may experience is the depth of hurt in parents whose adult kids are not serving God. This is a painful topic, but it should not be ignored. Pastors, you are not alone! Numerous couples in your church grieve silently and do not know what to do other than pray. Some of the pain comes from feelings of failure.

Steps Toward Healing

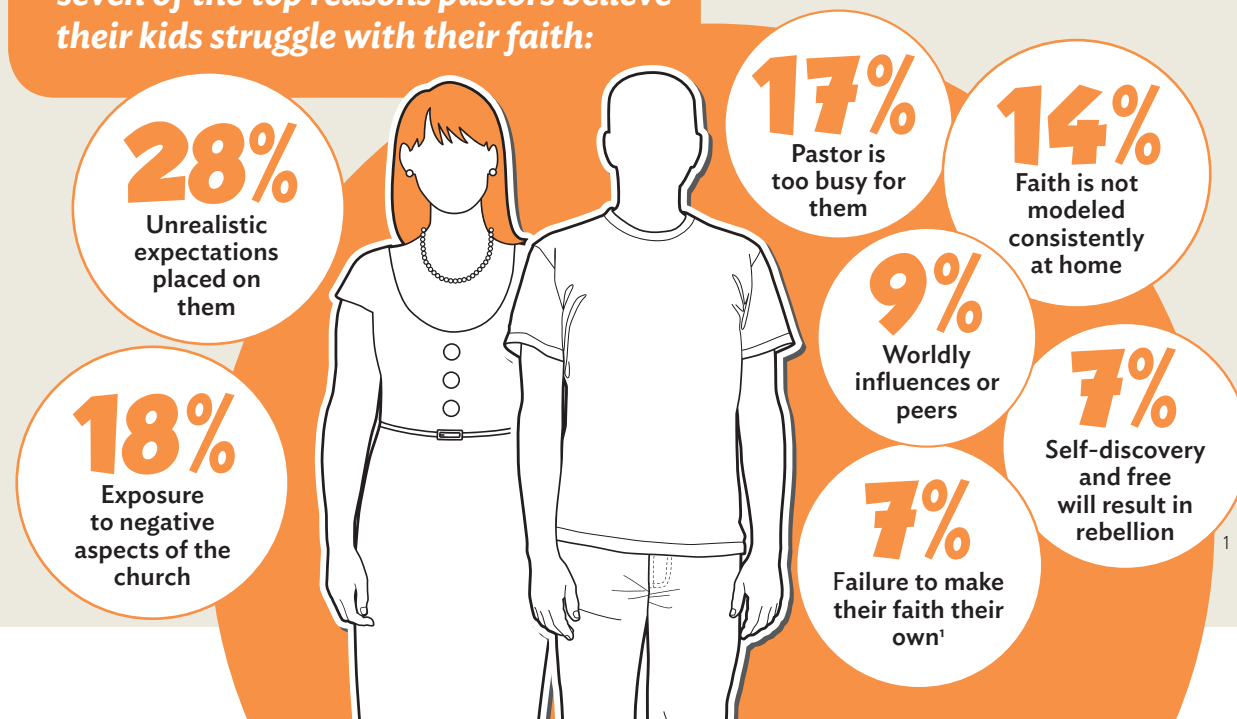
The first step to overcoming the senior pastor complex is to deal with guilt and stigma. Guilt imprisons and marginalizes what could be done. Satan’s best weapon is guilt. He uses it to strip away confidence and effectiveness, sidelining many people. Pastors, treat yourself the way you would treat others you may counsel within your congregation. You would tell them guilt has become the warden over their own imprisonment. You would remind them of God’s forgiveness and challenge them to return to serving God.

The second step requires you to “own” the past. People in your church probably know what has happened, either by first-hand knowledge or by the absence of your conversation about your kids. Authenticity from the pastor can be an encouraging and empowering trait that leads toward church health. Ask yourself if hiding or ignoring this issue is the way you would want your church members to deal with their problems. Your people know you make mistakes, and transparency leads to real learning opportunities. Admit the issues to your congregation, and then become a generational gladiator with other parents, fighting for your kids together.

Third, educate yourself regarding this issue. Become an expert on all things prodigal. The stakes are high, and the subject demands this attention. Read everything in Scripture and prominent sources on the topic. Be honest with yourself as you read and use the knowledge to help other couples in your church. Along the way, you may find yourself restoring the relationship with your own children.

Next, as you identify failures, ask for forgiveness. This may be necessary at multiple levels. First, ask God’s forgiveness if you have not dealt with an issue appropriately. Remember, God is your Father, and He understands parenting rebellious kids. He has been more patient with you than you have your own kids. Second, seek forgiveness from your child. You may wince

A recent Barna Group study reveals seven of the top reasons pastors believe their kids struggle with their faith:



¹ *Prodigal Pastor's Kids: Fact or Fiction?*
By Barna Group,
Nov. 2013.

at this thinking, “My child is the one who walked away.” Maybe you have been faithful to God, and it makes more sense for your child to seek forgiveness. But forgiveness is the bridge to restoration and healing. Consider writing or saying something like the following in your own words:

While I have not always shown it, I love you more than you know. Recently, I have been reading about how many ministers work hard, are successful in growing a church or ministry, and yet lose one of the most important relationships in the world—the one with their child. I am so very sorry. I put _____ before you. I spent more time _____ rather than having long conversations discussing what matters to you. I did not have answers for you about _____.

I know at times I made you feel our problems were all about you when I, too, contributed to this situation. I cannot change the past, but I am owning up to it. I would give anything to go back and do things differently. While I cannot go back in time, I can try to change what I do in the future. Will you forgive me? Will you let me try to start rebuilding our relationship without guilt, without one-sided expectations, without preaching to you, and just work hard on communicating, loving, and getting back to listening to you? If you are willing, I would like to earn back your trust and your confidence, I hope and pray we can just find each other all over again. I am sorry—can we try again, because you mean so much to me?

You may also need to ask forgiveness from your church. This probably scares you more than the other two because of the public nature and desire to look strong or perfect in front of the congregation. But confession can set the stage to help parents of prodigals by creating a more open and honest conversation around the topic. Before taking this churchwide, talk with your accountability partners and church leaders first. Get their advice.

The next step is important. After reading everything and building stronger relationships through forgiveness, do not pretend to be an expert. Talk with your staff or leaders and your

church about the goals and benefits of building a strong family ministry. The combination of a leader’s vulnerability in sharing scriptural truth, along with brokenness over past failures encourages others in a powerful way.

The final step is to cast a vision for your church to recapture a lost generation of kids and grandkids. Challenge them: “What you are willing to do to reach your kids and grandkids (the same for families within the church) with the gospel and make your church their church?” Then get serious about creating a church where kids want to worship.

Until an initiative is important to the pastor, it will likely remain unimportant to the congregation as a whole. Just as kids take cues from parents, parishioners take theirs from the pastor. Those who have earned the title *leader* will find people ready to accomplish what you deem significant. When you describe in visionary terms the critical nature of family ministry, parents will begin to learn, just as you have, how to reconnect with their kids.

Trust God to do His part while you work to stay connected with your child. We have the book of Ecclesiastes to assist us in keeping others from repeating Solomon’s mistakes, including the poor relationships he had with his family and others. Consider preaching a sermon or series from Ecclesiastes. Be vulnerable in the pulpit. Share your mistakes and challenge others not to make the same ones. This could be the most powerful preaching you will ever do.

Michael Jordan, five-time MVP of the NBA and arguably one of the greatest basketball players ever to live, said, “I’ve missed 9,000 shots in my career. I’ve lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times, I’ve been trusted to take the game-winning shot, and I have missed. I’ve failed over and over and over again in my life.” Then he added, “That’s why I succeed.”

Jordan was a great player because he worked hard at it. He disappointed plenty of people, and yet he used his misses to get better. Help parents who feel like failures find ways to strengthen the relationship with their kids. This may be one of the most important missions you

and your church accomplish together.

Pastors have helped many people battling guilt over their past. God forgives pastors just like anyone else. But, just as doctors make the worst patients, sometimes pastors are the worst counseling recipients. It is time to get past the senior pastor complex and start helping others avoid a similar outcome. Guilt should guide you to change, not imprison you in the past. Lead pastors simply cannot sit this one out. **ONE**

About the Writer: Ron Hunter Jr. has served as the director of Randall House for 14 years, and has led the organization into family ministry initiatives for the past 12 years.

LEADERSHIP WHITEBOARD

Leaders Stretch Others || BY RON HUNTER JR.

THE NEW COLUMN, "LEADERSHIP WHITEBOARD," PROVIDES A SHORT VISUAL LEADERSHIP COACHING MOMENT. IT EXPLAINS A NEW SKETCH IN EACH ISSUE, PROVIDING LEADERSHIP COACHING FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT, ALONG WITH A LEADERSHIP QUOTE AND A RECOMMENDED BOOK.

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LEADERSHIP QUOTE

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—PABLO PICASSO



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WHEN DAD HAS

Mental Illness

By Gene Kissinger

The Call

I received the call—the one you always dread—just after 3:00 a.m. on Christmas Day. “Dad just passed.” It was my sister-in-law Roberta, and her words left me stunned. I didn’t know what to say, so I told her I would call 911. Then I jumped in my car and raced across town to their home.

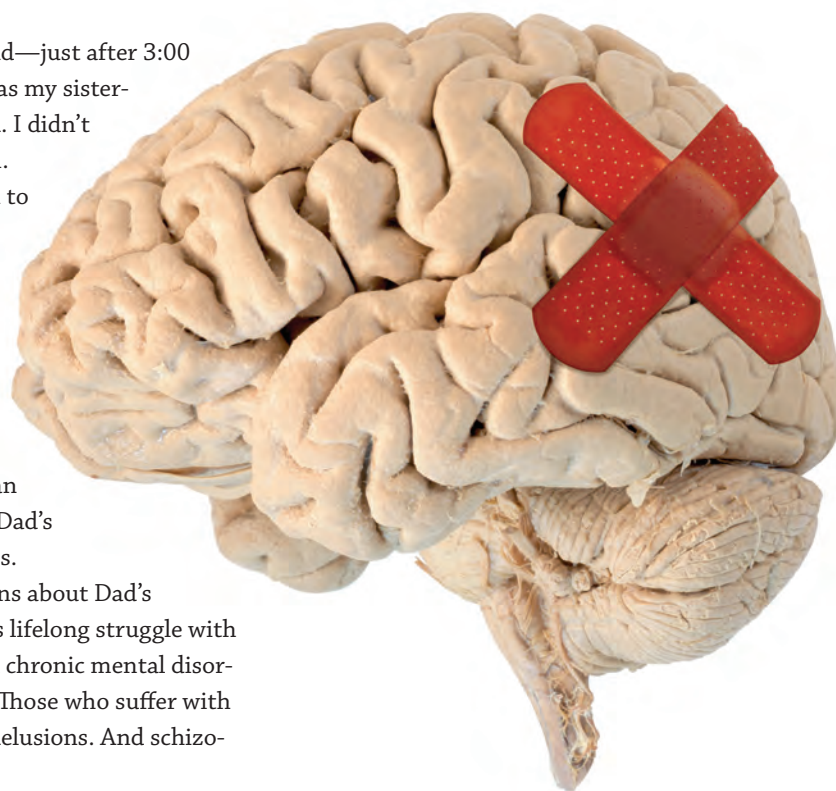
By the time I arrived, the police and coroner were already there, working the scene. Dad had been in bad health for some time. He had suffered a heart attack five years earlier, and he struggled with COPD for more than a decade. Earlier in the week, he had experienced stroke-like symptoms, but a CAT scan and MRI showed nothing amiss. But it wasn’t Dad’s physical state that caused his greatest struggles.

As I answered the coroner’s routine questions about Dad’s state of health, my mind kept going back to his lifelong struggle with a mental illness called *paranoid schizophrenia*, a chronic mental disorder in which a person loses touch with reality. Those who suffer with this disease often hear voices and experience delusions. And schizophrenia gradually took over my father’s life.

A little over 15 years ago, he and Mom moved from Lebanon, Missouri, to Jerome, Idaho—where I pastor—to make a fresh start. Dad had many “friends” in Lebanon who had short-circuited every attempt he made to stop drinking, another lifelong battle he faced. I can’t help but assume Dad was self-medicating to try to stop the voices in his head and to cope with the paranoia he experienced.

Not long after they arrived in Jerome, Dad yielded his heart and life to Christ and quit drinking for good. Sadly, his conversion didn’t improve his mental state. When he and Mom first arrived, I didn’t know how to handle the disease. My response to his mental illness was, “Just pray and get over it; you just need to exercise a little more faith.”

In other words, I operated on the misconception that mental illness was only a spiritual malady “dressed up” as a physical problem. I treated it much like you treat any other spiritual or emotional challenge—encouraging my dad to ingest more of the Word of God, to



I OPERATED ON THE MISCONCEPTION THAT MENTAL ILLNESS WAS ONLY A SPIRITUAL MALADY “DRESSED UP” AS A PHYSICAL PROBLEM.

pray harder, and to engage in the spiritual disciplines. The things I suggested were good things, but they really were not the only answer to my dad’s problem. Dad’s illness had a physical component I had never taken into account.

Broken

It is possible to have a broken brain. The human brain is the most complex computer ever created. It makes anything from Apple or Microsoft look pitiful by comparison. This amazing ultraportable computer weighs less than three pounds, yet it can do things no manmade computer ever could accomplish. As wonderful as the brain is, sometimes it gets “broken” by a series of biochemical breakdowns I don’t even pretend to understand.

One of the side effects of the fall is that sickness and disease were passed to mankind indiscriminately, and one of those sicknesses is mental illness. In some people, the brain simply stops producing necessary chemicals. The condition is just as real as any other chronic disability or disease from arthritis to back pain.

Life for somebody who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia is horrific. My dad lived in constant fear every moment of every day. It wasn’t uncommon for him to believe somebody on television was watching him, or that somebody on the radio was listening to him. His condition even made it hard for him to come to church or Sunday School. One time, he quit coming to Sunday School because he thought people were putting drugs into the spare tire of his car.

On more than one occasion, Dad turned himself in to the police for some imagined offense or crime. He often had me search Google to see if he had warrants for his arrest. He struggled regularly with suicidal thoughts, and I would drop what I was doing, go to his home, and “talk him down.” It didn’t take long for it to become apparent to me that my dad had a broken brain, and the answers for mental illness went beyond the spiritual answers I had turned to intuitively as a pastor. You might say my time with him inadvertently helped complete my ministerial training.

Help and Healing

How do we help those with mental illness, whether in our families or congregations? Consider four simple suggestions:

Have the right attitude. Be caring. Don’t act shocked when someone tells you they have a mental illness. (According to some studies, 25% of the population suffers from some form of mental illness.)

Be constant. When someone has mental illness, he or she will need a high level of care over the long haul. Be ready to go all-in. Be willing to provide help for as long as he or she needs it.

Be holistic in ministering to them. Encourage them to follow doctor’s orders by taking prescribed medications to alleviate the symptoms of the mental illness. Understand that medical treatment works hand-in-hand with spiritual treatment. The medicine repairs the “computer hardware” of the brain, and our Christian counsel is like the “software” that makes that hardware run correctly. Both need attention when it comes to mental illness. You do not compete with the doctor but partner with him to promote physical *and* spiritual healing.

Provide a safe community. It is vital for the mentally ill to feel safe and to know people care. Mental illness often isolates the individual and removes him from human contact. Comforting those who cannot help themselves is a calling from Scripture (Proverbs 31:8-9; Isaiah 1:17; Matthew 25:35-40; James 1:27; Hebrews 12:12-13), and we can’t comfort from a distance. The church has a wonderful opportunity to provide a safe haven for those struggling with addiction, depression, mental illness, and grief. Galatians 6:2 reminds us, as Christians, we must “bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.”

Remember love is the most powerful tool you possess as a Christian. Pastor Brian Brodersen advises:

Ministering to the mentally ill has its challenges, certainly. Sometimes there’s nothing you can say or do to bring them back into reality, out of despondency, or beyond their irrational fears. This is why much love, patience, and understanding is needed. I have spent countless hours over the last three decades listening to and counseling with people who, after the countless hours invested, were no better off than when we started. Such is the nature of mental illness. **Yet love endures all things, so you just keep loving them, listening to them, encouraging them, and praying for them.** I know from experience that even though many times you can’t totally help those with mental illness, God’s love through you brings enough comfort and peace to take the edge off some of the suffering.

Three years ago, early on Easter Sunday morning, my mom passed away. Last Christmas, my dad joined her in Heaven. I told my family that Dad’s Christmas present was to see my mom again, and Mom’s Christmas present was to see my father without mental illness. He experienced his first day of freedom from those oppressive fears, voices, and delusions when he drew his first breath of heavenly healing. **ONE**

About the Writer: Rev. Gene Kissinger pastors Jerome FWB Church in Jerome, Idaho. He and his wife Sandy are the parents of seven children (six adopted): Hannah, Charity, Tony, Celeste, Michael, Jordan, and Lucas.

mine!

BY
CLINT
MORGAN

PARENTS DO NOT HAVE TO TEACH A CHILD AT LEAST TWO WORDS.

The first is *no*. From the time a baby begins to crawl and pull up, parents use the word *no* so often it becomes locked in their brains through sheer repetition. It makes sense that children know this word.

The second word they know innately is a mystery to me. How does a child learn the word *mine*? As soon as they began to interact with others, this word swoops down out of nowhere and slides off their tongues with clarity and conviction. We have all heard it—two or three children are playing together, and one attempts to play with the toy or possession of another. “Mine!” The shriek pierces the air like a tornado siren. And it is often repeated, louder and more frequently: “Mine...Mine...MINE!”

The declaration of possession seldom brings finality to the dispute. In fact, both owner and offender use the word with the same vim and vigor. Often, parents come to the rescue, taking the disputed object and placing it safely out of reach. Kids are sent on their unhappy way to find another object on which to stake a claim.

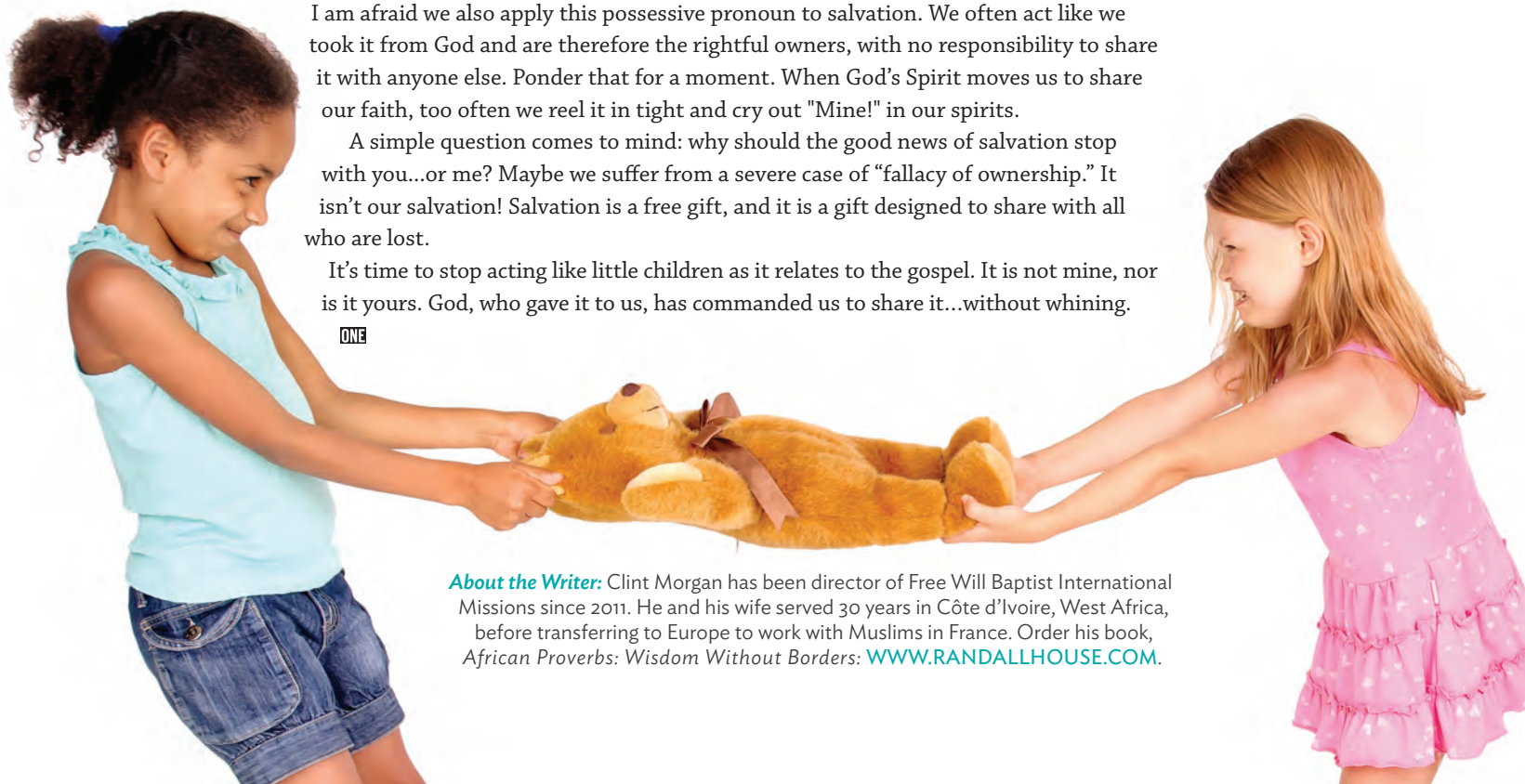
This attitude seems to stick with us through life. Adults may not be as quick to shout the possessive pronoun at ten decibels, but the attitude that accompanies the word comes through loud and clear.

I am afraid we also apply this possessive pronoun to salvation. We often act like we took it from God and are therefore the rightful owners, with no responsibility to share it with anyone else. Ponder that for a moment. When God’s Spirit moves us to share our faith, too often we reel it in tight and cry out “Mine!” in our spirits.

A simple question comes to mind: why should the good news of salvation stop with you...or me? Maybe we suffer from a severe case of “fallacy of ownership.” It isn’t our salvation! Salvation is a free gift, and it is a gift designed to share with all who are lost.

It’s time to stop acting like little children as it relates to the gospel. It is not mine, nor is it yours. God, who gave it to us, has commanded us to share it...without whining.

ONE



About the Writer: Clint Morgan has been director of Free Will Baptist International Missions since 2011. He and his wife served 30 years in Côte d’Ivoire, West Africa, before transferring to Europe to work with Muslims in France. Order his book, *African Proverbs: Wisdom Without Borders*: WWW.RANDALLHOUSE.COM.

A Tale of Two

FUNERALS

By Ruth McDonald

We lost two dear Japanese sisters in Christ during the past few months. Both were members of the Good News Chapel where we minister in the greater Tokyo area. We are certain both are enjoying the presence of Jesus in their eternal home, but their funerals could not have been more different.

A "Normal" Funeral

Mrs. Yuri Kanbara passed away first. Saved and baptized as an older adult, she grew in the Lord, attended church faithfully, and was a sweet part of our fellowship. She lived with her son and daughter-in-law, who were opposed to Christianity.

Four years ago, her health began to decline. Eventually, her children placed her in a nursing home. The family refused to tell the church where she lived and insisted that no one from the church be allowed to visit. We grieved the loss of her fellowship but continued to pray for her through the years.

Last fall, we received a call from her daughter-in-law informing us that Mrs. Kanbara was about to die. Several from the church visited, only to discover she was unable to respond.

When she passed away, her family welcomed us to the funeral. However, they insisted that, despite her Christian faith, she have a “normal” funeral. With over 95% of Japanese funerals being Buddhist, that is definitely the norm.

Her wake and funeral both featured a Buddhist priest chanting a sutra (a reading from Buddhist sacred texts). Incense filled the air, and offerings of rice and sake were placed on an altar to ease the spirit’s transition into the next life. The belief is that some people, having finished their earthly journey, will go to the other world, while others will be reincarnated into another life form. According to Buddhist teaching, humans really cannot know which will be his fate, or that of a loved one.

Each guest is expected to bring their hands together in prayer and bow to the dead, light incense to aid in the spirit’s journey, and then bow in respect to the family. Every attendee was expected to bring an offering of between \$30 and \$800, depending on the relationship, to help defray the cost of the funeral and cremation. Elaborate envelopes for these cash gifts abound in every store. The Buddhist priest requires a minimum fee of \$4,000 for his services, separate from the cost of the funeral. Many funerals include multiple priests taking part, although Mrs. Kanbara’s had only one.

We’ve attended many Buddhist funerals during our 30 years in Japan, and

they are always a depressing affair. Everyone is expected to wear black clothing, and ladies are not to wear any lipstick, nail color, or accessories. The air is thick with incense, the “smell of death,” and the chanting of the priest is eerie and mournful, with the intermittent ringing of bells.

What’s a Christian to Do?

Christians in Japan struggle with how to navigate traditional Buddhist and Shinto ceremonies. Where does respect end and idolatry begin? Even after many years in Japan, we rely heavily on spiritually mature Japanese brothers and sisters in this area. As foreigners, we will never fully understand the subtle nuances and motives behind each custom.

Several from the church decided to attend. We wore black and took a cash offering. However, our gift was placed in a “Christian” envelope with a cross on it. It was marked “for flowers” so the Buddhist priest and temple would not receive any of it. We bowed to the body and to the family to show respect, but we did not burn incense or pray to the dead. Our hands stayed at our sides. When offered cleansing food and drink at the end to keep the spirit of death from following us home, we declined. We are afraid of neither death nor evil spirits.

A Lasting Testimony

Because Mrs. Kanbara traveled to church by train, she left a large-print, hardcover Bible on the bookshelf at church. It sat there during her four-year absence. One of our ladies purchased a distinctive, black silk bag for the Bible and presented it to the daughter-in-law with a card from our church members. We prayed beforehand that she would receive it without argument, and she did. She even thanked us and said it was Mrs. Kanbara’s joy to attend church each



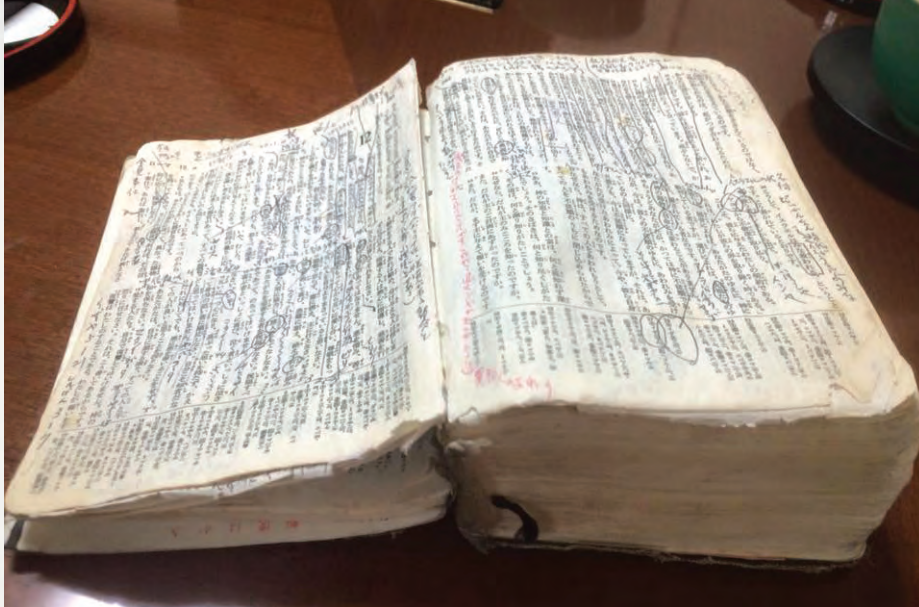
Sunday. We will continue to pray that Mrs. Kanbara’s faith will reach her family, that they will read her Bible and believe in her Savior.

Although we were sad her funeral wasn’t Christian, we know for certain her faith was in Christ alone. I smile when I remember her first name, Yuri, means “Lily.” Each time I see an Easter lily, I am reminded she believed in Jesus, the resurrection and the life.

A Different Funeral

One of those who visited sweet “Lily” on her deathbed was Mitsue (pronounced MEET-SUE-EH) Kazama. None of us had any idea she would be in Heaven herself within the month. She was the picture of health, a woman who had gone skiing with her grandchildren in February. She was getting ready for church when she died suddenly of a massive brain hemorrhage.





HIS BIBLE IS LITERALLY IN PIECES, THOUGH HE HAS PATCHED AND TAPED IT MANY TIMES. EVERY PAGE CONTAINS UNDERLINING AND EVERY MARGIN OVERFLOWS WITH NOTES.

Like Lily, she and her husband had been saved through the witness of missionaries. Their first contact with the gospel was through English conversation and cooking classes taught by Fred and Evelyn Hersey. They talked of how the Herseys' love and hospitality led them to be saved and baptized at ages 33 and 30.

They have been faithful servants of the Lord for over 40 years, an integral part of the church-planting ministry at Good News Chapel since it began in 2002. Their lifelong appreciation for missionaries was especially evident when they welcomed short-term groups to Japan, entertaining them in their home, and taking them on tours of Tokyo.

We've all heard the maxim: "A Bible that is falling apart is usually carried by a person who isn't." Mr. Kazama is the perfect example. His Bible is literally in pieces, though he has patched and taped it many times. Every page contains underlining and every margin overflows with notes. From the moment he discovered his wife's body, he began to call on His Lord for strength. By the morning after, he had begun a list of things for which to be thankful in Mitsue's passing. He showed us 17 items he had already listed.

The Kazamas decided beforehand their funerals would not be normal—no cash offerings, no priest, no incense, and no prayers to or for the dead. They wanted the theme of their funerals to be the last verse of *Amazing Grace*: "When we've been there 10,000 years, bright, shining as the sun, we've no less days to sing God's praise than when we'd first begun."

My husband Donnie was to preach at the evening wake and morning funeral, and I was asked to sing and play the piano. As it happened, both Donnie and I were sick that week with cold and fever. I lost my voice completely. Add that to the especially difficult, honorific Japanese language used at formal occasions, and we knew we needed the Holy Spirit in the worst kind of way.

Of the 480 funerals held in that particular funeral home, only one had been a Christian service. The director had done his research, though, and the front of the room was decorated with lilies and a beautiful cross. We had complete freedom to conduct the funeral as we chose and as Mr. Kazama wished.

God answered the prayers of many. It was one of those wonderful experiences when the messenger knows for certain that his words are the Lord's. As Donnie



shared the simple gospel, 150 guests listened intently, most hearing it for the first time. Even the funeral home staff listened with focused attention.

Afterwards, people said the service was "easy to understand, full of light, joy, and hope...so different from a normal funeral." Some expressed interest in learning more about Christianity. The Kazama's son-in-law, who has lost three family members within the past year, said, "It seems like Christians are the ones who actually have the answers to the questions I've been asking about life after death."

I asked Mr. Kazama if there was anything he wanted me to share in this article. Here are his words: "I want to thank Free Will Baptists for sending missionaries to Japan. Because of their work, my wife and I came to know Christ. Our lives were rescued from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light." **ONE**

About the Writer: Ruth McDonald has served with Free Will Baptist International Missions as a missionary to Japan for the past 30 years. She and her husband Donnie have four children and one grandchild. Read more: www.fwbgo.com.

Seeing Through the Tears

BY DAVID OUTLAW

A fetish priest carries a chicken to a crossroads in West Africa. He begins the funeral ritual for a recently deceased villager by killing the chicken and observing how it falls. From the chicken's death, the priest divines the will of the spirits and reports back to the family in the village.

In Kazakhstan, a group of men scramble to the local cemetery to dig a grave hastily. Once the grave is dug and the body wrapped in a white cloth, the Imam presides over their friend's funeral—all within 24 hours of his death. Later, they shave the mane and tail of the deceased's favorite horse. At a memorial service a year later, they will slaughter the horse.

In India, a family builds a pyre on which to burn the remains of their loved one. Before burning the body, the tear-streaked family carries the corpse to be dipped one last time into the "sacred" water of the Ganges River. Once the body is ready, the nearest male relative lights the fire. According to the Hindu belief system, his spirit will continue the cycle of reincarnation, returning in another form based on the merit of his life.

In a South American jungle, a dead body lies in a hammock, tied between two trees. Another soul has been set free and, as the birds take what they want, the body is recycled into the world in a symbiotic relationship between all living things.

In Europe, a secularist mindset has eclipsed the message of former traditions. Any remaining rituals are from a paid Roman Catholic priest who mutters empty words. Though living with passion

and fire, the years of pain seem to leave them in a state of emotional frigidity.

Wherever you travel, people die. While death is a constant throughout the world, funeral rituals are as unique as the cultures in which the people live. No time is more pregnant with symbolism than death. Death rites vary with regard to timing, viewing, conduct, and dress, but all these symbols reflect the worldview of the people who inhabit that culture. As the shadow of death darkens the lives of friends and family, the gospel can shine light into their lives. Our understanding of these rituals and the worldviews they reflect may provide openings for us to share the gospel.

Most cultures tend to explain life in the form of a story or narrative. They see creation, evil, ethics, and death through a grand story or "metanarrative." Funeral rites reflect a community's metanarrative in at least five areas.

Their view of the spirit world.

Some cultures see death as a result of spiritual conflict and take measures to appease the spirits so they will not take further action against family or community. In animistic cultures, many small details accompany their funerals that seem harmless at face value. Sometimes the corpse is dressed or posed to fool the spirits. Widows may be responsible for dressing or acting in a prescribed manner to fool or satisfy the spirits. If you ask friends to explain why such a thing is practiced, you will likely receive a shrug. Often, however, if you ask, "What would happen if these things were not done?"

you will see how deeply the people of that culture fear the spirits and how they seek to appease them.

The person's worth. Western cultures, where the individual is revered, often embalm the body, preserving the physical shell of the person as long as possible. Cultures that see the individual as blending into some greater community tend to cremate the body.

The afterlife. As an extreme example, in ancient Egypt the people sent the Pharaoh into the next life with food, wealth, and even servants. Cultures often see the next life merely as an extension of the present life. I once performed a funeral for a man who loved motorcycles and the biker friends who came with it. I preached my heart out regarding God's grace and love with little reaction from the crowd. Later in the service, a fellow biker played Lynyrd Skynyrd's "Simple Man," and there wasn't a dry eye in the house. They viewed the service as ushering their friend to the great motorcycle ride in the sky. Different versions of this play out all over the world.

The expression of grief over the deceased. Often, these expressions link to the way the community considers the afterlife and the person's role in it. Throughout history, some cultures have even hired mourners as a feature of the death ritual, providing a community announcement of the death as well as an expression of sadness at the loss of the departed.

The person's relation to other ancestors in the afterlife. Elaborate stories attempt to explain the continued activity of the ancestors throughout the generations. In Muslim areas, Christian missionaries have faced this aspect of worldview in ways that have taken westerners by surprise. Muslim background believers have expressed their desire to “die as a Muslim,” because only then would they be allowed burial in the same cemetery where other members of their family have been buried.

Other people may hear the gospel and believe its claims, but they face the fact that their ancestors did not turn to salvation. Realization of the exclusivity of the gospel may frighten them in terms of their ancestors. In other words, if this gospel is true, their ancestors are in eternal punishment. Missionaries from the highly individualistic west have difficulty understanding the significance of this barrier to those from cultures that highly value an intergenerational identity.

In death's grip, we discover the strengths and weaknesses of our view of life.

Understanding a non-Christian worldview in no way changes the truth of the gospel. A misunderstanding of reality because of an inaccurate “story” through which one sees life does not alter the fact this person will stand before God in judgment. This understanding does, however, give us some ideas about the barriers we encounter as we share the gospel with them. We have the opportunity to consider how to smooth the barriers as we build relationships with the people.

Death is not isolated to non-Christian people. One testimony for the gospel is the way God's people mourn the loss of those we love. As Christians see death intrude into our lives, we must share the story of the creation, fall, and redemption in authentic ways that engage deep sorrow but reach for the explosive hope of life found in Christ. Let us weep, but not like those who have no hope. Our eyes flow with tears while our hearts pound with the hope of eternal life, resurrection, and the second coming.

Death lays bare the human heart. In its grip, we discover the strengths and weaknesses of our view of life. Funeral rituals provide valuable insight into the stories that sustain people. As we understand those stories, we become better equipped to introduce people to the true story of God's redemption that provides strength in life and hope in death. **ONE**

About the Writer: David is husband of Angie and father of five children ranging from 11 to 20 years old. He holds a Ph.D. in theology from Mid-America Baptist Theological Seminary and works for IM, training pastors and church leaders in Kazakhstan, Tajikistan, Russia, Cuba, Panama, and South Korea.



Around the World >>

IM Board Meets in Annual Session



Antioch, TN—The Free Will Baptist International Missions Board met for its annual session April 25-26, 2016. The board received reports and acted

on proposals from the administrative staff during the two-day session. On Monday evening, the board and directors hosted the North American Mission Board and directors for dinner. The leadership teams of both agencies enjoyed fellowship over Italian cuisine.

The board approved David Reeves, Kentucky native and May 2016 graduate of Welch College, as a two-year short-term intern to France. David will serve with Dennis and Carol Teague and Joel and Lydie Teague in the city of Nantes. He will join the Teagues in working with J'Pense, an outreach to unevangelized French youth. "I pray I can display Christ's power and love through my life," said David. "God has given me a heart for evangelism. I pray I never lose a soft heart that desires to see people embrace the hope I have in Christ."

Joel and Lydie Teague received an appointment as career missionaries. The couple returned to the States in November following the completion of their two-year internship in France and will soon complete 22 hours of studies required for career missionaries.

An unmodified approval of the 2015 financial audit was received from Blankenship CPA Group. The board approved a \$6.9 million framework budget for 2017 to be presented at the July 2016 convention of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. The number remains unchanged from the \$6.9 million budget approved for 2016. The operational budget for 2017 will be approved at the December 2016 board meeting.

"The entire meeting was marked with a sense of gratitude as we reflected on what God has done, is doing, and is going to do in the days ahead," summarized Board Chairman Danny Williams. "There was a clear and certain presence of the Lord as we met. I believe we all left encouraged."

The board elected new officers: Jeff Manning, chairman; Jeff Nichols, vice-chairman; and Mark Price, secretary.

Board members Danny Williams (AL), Jeff Manning (NC), Mark Price (OH), Nelson Henderson (AR), Jeff Nichols (TN), Greg McAllister (CA), Tom McCullough (MI), Robert Posner (TX), and Janice Banks (OK) were in attendance. ■

Missionary Account Balances Posted Monthly

Antioch, TN—In December 2015, the Board of Free Will Baptist International Missions adopted a designated-giving funding system with individual accounts for missionaries. As a result of this change, missionaries are responsible to raise the funds to support their ministries.

Each month, IM will post a news item listing accounts that are deficit and underfunded. Many people will remember similar lists provided in *HeartBeat* magazine a little over a decade ago. This information will be posted in the News section of the IM website (www.fwbgo.com) each month as well as in *NewsBeat* (a newsletter sent to donors with their receipts).

"Please respond to these needs as the Lord leads you," said Clint Morgan, general director. "Each of these individuals is laboring with the Body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission. People in India, Uruguay, Spain, France, Japan, and other countries around the world may never hear the good news of salvation in Christ 'except they be sent.'" ■

Pastor Ordained in Uberlândia, Brazil

Brazil—The Jaraguá Church in Uberlândia, Minas Gerais, Brazil, requested the ordination of their pastor, Sérgio Lira. Sérgio began holding outreach services in the home of a Free Will Baptist who lives in the Jaraguá neighborhood eight years ago. The work grew gradually, and they rented a storefront on the main business street in that area. This group of believers organized into a Free Will Baptist church in October 2013.

Sérgio was examined and approved and the ordination service was set for April 23.

Six Free Will Baptist pastors were on hand, along with pastors from other denominations who are friends of Sérgio. Representatives from several Free Will Baptist churches attended the celebration, packing the church building with more than 180 people.

The church recently purchased two city lots and hopes to start building in the near future. In preparation for their building campaign, they moved services to the backyard of a church member who lives near the new property. First FWB Church in Araras, São Paulo, donated a tent where the congregation will meet until they complete the new building. ■

Snapshots Around the World



Brazil: The First FWB Church in Campinas, Brazil, celebrated its 58th anniversary April 24, 2016. A visiting quartet presented special music, and Pastor Lucas Lima brought the message. Manuel and Terezinha (pictured) were among the first converts of the church and have attended for 57 years.



Côte d'Ivoire: Pastor Edmond Kouadja, of the Nassian FWB Church in Côte d'Ivoire, Africa, baptized eight people Sunday, April 10. The congregation is also constructing a larger building due to the increase in attendance.



Uruguay: Pastor Julio Figueroa presented certificates to 12 people who recently finished the course “Conociendo a Dios” (Knowing God). Eighteen people participated in a class on discipleship May 7. The strategy for training in Uruguay is two-pronged: Steve Torrison oversees Bible institute training and Jaimie Lancaster oversees the discipleship program. This was the first class to complete a discipleship course.



Côte d'Ivoire: At Tchafrite, near Flakiedougou, in Côte d'Ivoire, Africa, Pastor Sié Roger Noufé baptized 20 believers on Easter Sunday 2016.

Bulgaria: Trif Trifonov shared the gospel with about 17 people in the folk music singers' group at the Macedonian culture house on May 19. He was invited to return and speak again.

Japan: Katie Speer launched an evangelistic outreach gospel choir on April 16 at the Good News Chapel in Tokyo, Japan. Although only two of the seven attendees were unchurched, both ladies demonstrated that message and melodies impacted them throughout the following week. The every-other-Saturday choir met again April 30, with 14 attending.

India: Carlisle Hanna made the two-day journey to South India to attend the annual convention on Saturday, April 30, and to speak at Calvary FWB Church in Mettupalayam Sunday, May 1.

Panama: Panamanian churches celebrated missions month in April. They held a missions conference April 22-23 at the Chame Seminary. Many churches participated in the World Missions Offering April 26.

Panama: Betania FWB Church in Panama City celebrated 31 years as a congregation in May. Former missionaries Steve and Judy Lytle were instrumental in the church's development.

Côte D'Ivoire Regional Conference

Bougou, Côte D'Ivoire—Free Will Baptist churches in the Kong/Bougou area of Côte d'Ivoire gathered April 14-17 for a regional conference. Pastor Alexis Hien, the only ordained pastor in the area, supervises 12 mission works that have sprung up over the last few years. With over 600 people attending each week, it is the fastest growing area in Ivory Coast for Free Will Baptists.



Pastor Edmond Koadja from Nassian addressed the conference theme “How to Mobilize the Church's Resources.”

The conference, held outdoors under shade trees, drew 410 attendees. Most of the Christians in the area are ethnic Lobi farmers who have moved into this predominately Muslim area looking for fertile land to cultivate. ■

UPCOUNTRY

in Côte d'Ivoire

BY ELIZABETH HODGES

*Camp for Women of the Good News,
Bingerville, Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa*

Leaving behind snow and cold in Paris, France, I arrived in Côte d'Ivoire, West Africa, about 8:00 p.m., to find it hot and humid. All seven of my suitcases were pulled aside by customs agents. They were filled with gifts for African women, but the officials had to be convinced. They couldn't believe we were giving so much away! After finally clearing customs, we were greeted by the leadership team of the Ivorian National Association of Free Will Baptist Churches. What a privilege to finally see those for whom I had prayed. Our first African meal was rice with chicken in peanut sauce—spicy but so delicious. My first glimpse into cultural protocol was the sharing of news from both countries.

A trip upcountry allowed me to visit many of our churches, interact with pastoral families, and experience the famous African road system. Having known most of the pioneer missionaries to Africa personally, it was humbling to stand in church buildings that now serve thriving congregations.

The roads were most difficult between Bouna and Doropo, the last leg of our journey, made under the cover of darkness. During the return trip to Abidjan, we experienced car trouble, and I rode

the “22 places” (van taxi) about an hour to get to Bondoukou for a ceremony. We arrived late and waited for a ride on to Tanda, where we would spend the night. The next day we had another bumpy, dusty, hot “22 places” ride into Abidjan to obtain repair parts for the car and to make final preparations for the retreat.

Every picture you have ever seen of African public transportation is reality—people crowded into limited spaces, animals and cargo tied to the top, luggage stuffed under seats, and open air rides. At every stop, vendors swarmed the vehicle trying to make sales to those riding inside.

Meeting two Cleo Pursell Scholarship recipients was a reminder that WNAC's original gift continues to train leadership for the Ivorian church. Both are Ivorian pastors and hold leadership positions in the Bible institute and seminary.

Our Ivorian sisters meet biannually for a national retreat. The women had always met in one of our churches, prepared their own meals with all the cleanup, sleeping on benches, on the floor, or outside under the trees. This year, WNAC raised funds to underwrite the rental of a meeting facility, reduce the cost of registration, and provide gifts



for attendees. More than 500 ladies traveled from all over the country to Bingerville, near Abidjan. The Catholic retreat center staff prepared meals and provided cleanup. Ladies slept in dormitory-styled rooms. They renewed friendships, shared laughter and tears, ate meals with friends, and enjoyed the break from their normal routines.

As a young child, I remember missionaries asking us to pray for believers, lead-

ers, and for tribal groups to worship and serve in unity. This retreat was planned and orchestrated by Ivorian women from various parts of the country. Each tribe had opportunities to lead the praise and worship sessions as ladies from all tribes, along with their children, worshiped together. I whispered to Lynette Morgan, "I am witnessing poignant answers to prayer."

The retreat theme, "The World Is Changing; How Should the Christian Woman Respond?" was explored through worship services, seminars, and discussion groups. The ladies participated in acts of evangelism on Sunday, visiting a maternity ward at the local hospital, and ministering to girls from a nearby orphanage. Television and radio reporters interviewed President Madame Solange Kambire along with me, and the report aired on the Monday evening following the retreat.

Our Ivorian sisters are building a Feminine Center in Bondoukou to provide a teaching/training ministry. Along with Madame Solange Kambire and Lynette Morgan, I participated in the cornerstone ceremony witnessed by the attendees. The cornerstone was moved to the construction site after the retreat.

For many, the highlight of the retreat was a trip to the beach. Many of the women are landlocked, and it was their first time to see the ocean. The retreat came at the end of dry season; it was a clear sunny day, and the whitecaps were gorgeous. What a display by Creator God. Several of the ladies mentioned "Moses and the Red Sea" as they visualized walls of water for the first time.

God's hand of protection was clearly seen on Sunday when Al-Qaeda attacked the nearby hotel in Grand Bassam. The hotel was very near the beach we had been on the day before with more than 500 women. We had been ministering to the orphan girls when their director received a call about the terrorist attack. The retreat center was 30 minutes away



About the Writer: Elizabeth Hodges is director of Women Nationally Active for Christ. Learn more: www.WNAC.org.

in Bingerville. Yet all three missions teams traveled safely back to the Abidjan guesthouse without complications. Families were contacted and reassured. Calm prevailed, and retreat attendees traveled safely home on Monday.

This experience was a childhood dream come true along with a taste of Heaven, when those from every tribe and nation will be represented. I will never be the same. **ONE**



A father and son grapple with the challenges of voting as a believer...

All in the Family:

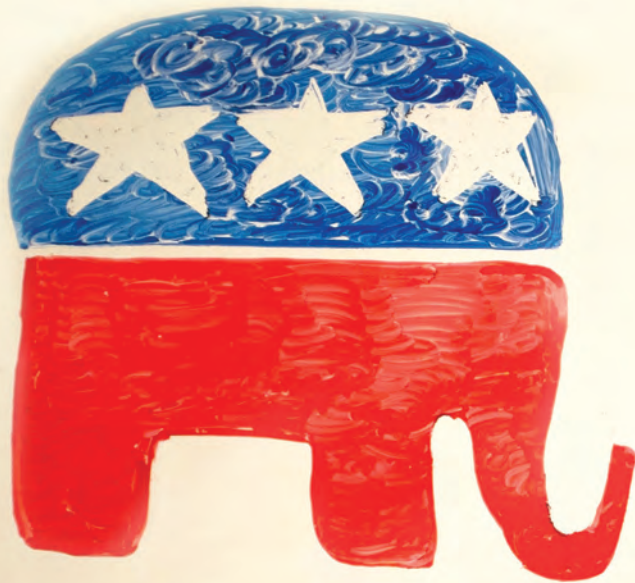
A Christian's Guide to Voting

By Adam Harrison and Paul Harrison

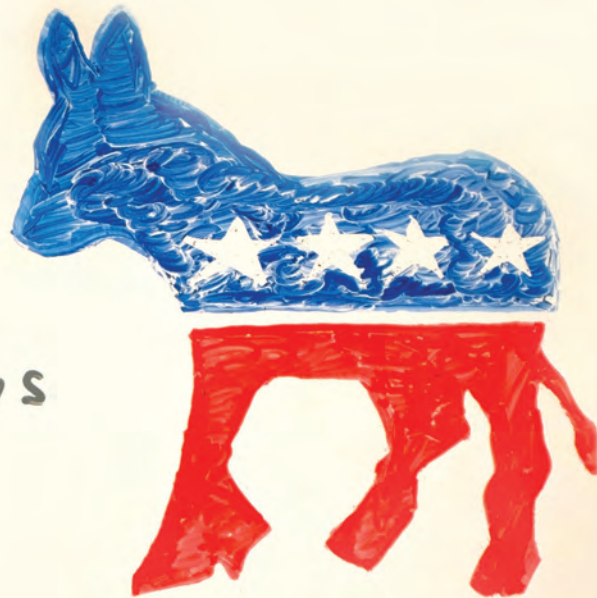
Electing leaders is a special privilege, and most have not enjoyed this right. The disciples, the Apostle Paul, and the vast majority of Christians from days gone by never had this opportunity. So, this rare privilege of being involved in the democratic process should not be taken for granted.

It is important for Christians because the Bible teaches we must submit to the powers that be (Romans 13:1). Early American revolutionaries may have said "Rebellion to tyrants is obedience to God," but such an assertion is absent from Scripture.

Recognizing the importance of voting, however, and picking a candidate are two different things. The truth is, sometimes the choice is difficult and complex. Recently, my son Adam and I discussed some basic considerations when choosing a candidate.



VS



Integrity/honesty:

PAUL: Though we did not order this list by importance, this trait must be near the top. I mean, if you don't have honesty, what do you have? Thomas Jefferson wrote to King George III: "The whole art of government consists in the art of being honest." Recent political history bears this out. The question "What does my personal life have to do with politics?" should have been put to bed a long time ago. Lack of integrity in our leaders impacts us all.

ADAM: I agree that honesty ranks right up there. Unfortunately, at this critical time in history, honesty and transparency are often missing in the political arena. A willingness to identify and address honestly the toughest issues we face is a necessary first step in attempting to fix them.

Christian experience:

PAUL: You might think "Christian" would be included under "integrity/honesty," but I separate it because some candidates who don't know the Lord at least hold to a solid moral standard. Still, I want to vote for a Christian. And I don't mean a nominal believer. I mean the real deal, someone who holds Scripture to be authoritative, who sincerely prays and goes to church, and who aims at all the things Bible-believing people do. Such a candidate is hard to find, however. London recently elected its first Muslim mayor, and, like it or not, the American melting pot has become so secular that our voting choices are limited.

ADAM: Christians want everyone to know Christ, their president included, of course. But if forced to choose, I would rather have an atheist who upholds constitutional rights than a Christian who wants a monarchy. In other words, as it relates to politics, upholding values

from the Constitution is more important than the candidate's personal standing with God.

Competence:

PAUL: I want leaders who know what they're doing. I want them to know about the economy and foreign policy, about education and poverty issues. I don't want some hack grappling with how to avoid nuclear war.

ADAM: Agreed. An appealing message and a willingness to confront issues are critical, but what good are they if the elected official can't fix what's wrong? I prefer a candidate with a track record of accomplishment, with particular savvy in their area(s) of expertise.

Temperament:

PAUL: Speaking of nuclear war, I want someone in the Oval Office whose emotions are under control. Who wants a hothead interacting with Kim Jong-un or Vladimir Putin? Scripture says, "A soft answer turns away wrath." After the President receives advice from many angles, it all comes down to his or her decision. I want a leader who will be measured and wise. A calm temperament might just save the world from nuclear catastrophe.

ADAM: You absolutely don't want a hothead with his finger on the button. Reckless behavior regarding nuclear war is an *immediate* disqualifier.

Experience:

PAUL: This is a tough one. It's common sense to want experience in a candidate. Who wants to be a surgeon's first patient? Yet, my attitude toward politicians, especially in relation to finances, has so soured over the years that I'm tempted to think a "newbie" is the way to go. I'm open to *leadership* experience not

necessarily *political* experience.

ADAM: Even a candidate new to the political scene needs experience from some meaningful position of responsibility. With that being said, fresh eyes help bring new ideas to the table.

Party affiliation and platform:

PAUL: I'm not going to say you should vote Republican . . . or Democrat. This nation has experienced Republicans of whom I was embarrassed and Democrats of whom I was proud and vice versa. At the end of the day, I focus on the individual candidate, not solely on party affiliation. Obviously, since the parties take positions on issues, and those stances are relatively stable, we should expect a trend in our voting and a party prejudice springing from that trend, but that doesn't mean party is the determining factor. I vote *position*, not necessarily party.

The platform issue naturally leads to a whole list of important political matters: social issues (abortion, gay marriage, gun control, care for the poor, education), economic issues, defense, and so forth. We'll consider these issues later.

ADAM: Voting based solely on party isn't a quick fix to the decision process. The truth is that party platforms and ideology change over time. A better approach, as you indicate, is to vote for principles, not party. Otherwise you risk promoting positions that go against Christian beliefs.

Leadership ability:

ADAM: If you can't captain the ship, you're not going to get much out of the crew, and the passengers will be none too pleased. A strong leader sets the tone, commands respect, and, therefore, gets the most out of people, inspiring and motivating them.

PAUL: Politicians must be able to lead. While hopefully they won't be cocky, they do need confidence in what they stand for and the ability to align others to their position.

A Major Complicating Factor

After considering these seven areas, we should do our best to elect someone who measures up across the board. Unfortunately, all candidates are still imperfect. If we wait until we find the perfect one, we will never vote. This has always been the case. During his work with the Continental Congress in 1774, surrounded by the likes of Thomas Jefferson, Benjamin Franklin, John Witherspoon, and other great leaders, John Adams wrote: "We have not men fit for the times; we are deficient in genius, in education, in travel, in fortune—in every thing; I feel unutterable anxiety—God grant us wisdom and fortitude!" If Adams felt that way in his day, how should we feel?

Of course, we voters have our own shortcomings, so we should cut our leaders some slack. John Winthrop, governor of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1645, after being accused and later vindicated, addressed this very issue: "I entreat you to consider, that when you choose magistrates, you take them from among your selves, men subject unto like passions with yourselves. If you see our infirmities, reflect on your own, and you will not be so severe censurers of ours."

Preachers, principals, plumbers, and, yes, politicians all have their faults. A good dose of humility will help us exercise patience with our leaders. It should also help us vote at times for those whose weaknesses are obvious. It is important to remember that voting for someone does not mean we approve of every facet of his or her beliefs and behavior.



Government always fails to some degree, and we have always had to overlook shortcomings in our leaders.

We should be involved in politics even though it's often a nasty business. When politicians fail, in disgust, some bail out on the political process. We must remember that government was established by God and is a good thing, even when misused. Martin Luther wrote: "The abuse of a thing does not make it bad, if it was good in itself. A golden chain is good, and it is not made worse by being worn around a whore's neck." Government always fails to some degree, and we have always had to overlook shortcomings in our leaders. Unfortunately, as culture declines, these faults become more glaring.

Making a Decision

After we accept that all candidates are flawed, what principles should we employ in making voting decisions, especially when we don't like what's offered? If we must choose between two candidates, and both have glaring inadequacies, how can we decide?

ADAM: When the voting choice is so unpalatable it makes us question the country's collective sanity we must first ask how the candidate(s) became contenders. A candidate's popularity can only be attributable to how people respond to the person or to that person's message.

We should consider, however, that a candidate's popularity is not necessarily rooted in his person but his policies. Does anything about the platform challenge the status quo? Are his or her policies fundamentally similar to the policies currently in place? What's new? If there's nothing new, then it isn't the candidate's platform turning heads. If the approach to issues is new, however, it indicates that policies are the focus, and a voter may be willing to swallow much that is negative about the candidate to "shake things up." How much one can tolerate may depend on how fed up the voter has become with the status quo.

This is not to insinuate that a different position is necessarily better. Change warrants scrutiny. And it especially deserves even-handed evaluation because of humanity's natural bias against change.

We must evaluate whether we can trust the person to keep his or her word, evaluate the particular political-social-cultural climate that led him or her to the ballot. We must recognize that voting is the best course of action, and then carefully evaluate the policies of the candidates between whom you are deciding.

PAUL: I think what you are saying, Adam, is that the best approach as a Christian voter is to look beyond the candidate's personality, at least to some extent, and to analyze the positions behind the persona. While I would prefer not to overlook personality, I agree that issues do hold greater importance.

Of course, this doesn't settle the matter. It merely pushes us to rate issues. Which are more important? Abortion or defense? Economics or leadership? Christian experience or competence? In rating issues, we should recognize that everyone will not arrive at the same conclusions. Differences exist even in the Christian community. I may say that abortion is the biggest issue, because we kill a million babies a year in the U.S. Someone else may think defense is more important, because if we can't adequately deal with our enemies, voting won't even

matter when the mushroom cloud clears. At root, these are subjective questions, not mathematical equations with demonstrably correct and incorrect answers.

I am settled, however, on the issue of how Christian experience fits into the equation. I think of this the same way I think about surgeons: I would rather have a competent pagan than an incompetent Christian. Yes, I would rather have a competent Christian, but if I have to choose between the two, I choose competence.

Conclusion

So we are left with hard choices and no easy way to dodge them. We are convinced it is right to vote, even when choosing between flawed candidates. We believe issues should take preeminence over personality and that a candidate's positions should be evaluated regarding

overall importance. We also accept the reality that good people will arrive at different answers.

One final but important point: as believers, our hope and confidence doesn't depend ultimately on elections. We know Christ sits upon the throne, no matter who wins the election in November. Our faith is Christian, not Democrat or Republican or even American for that matter. I love how the little book *The Martyrdom of Polycarp* ends. After describing how the great Christian minister was burned at the stake for his faith in A.D. 155, he states: "He was taken by Herod, Philip the Trallian being high priest, Statius Quadratus being proconsul, but Jesus Christ being King for ever, to whom be glory, honour, majesty, and an everlasting throne, from generation to generation. Amen."

Amen indeed! **ONE**

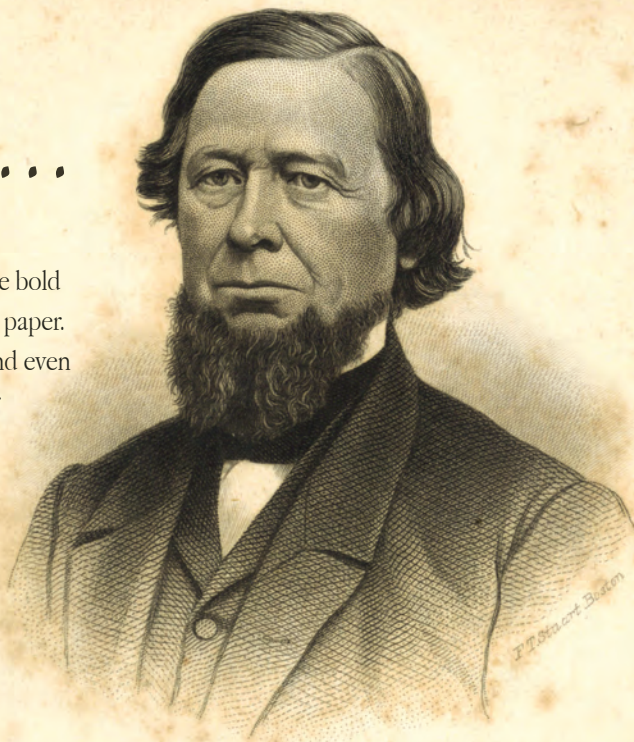
Legacy of Freedom...

In 1834, when William Burr, editor of the Freewill Baptist *Morning Star*, made the bold decision to promote the unpopular anti-slavery position, it almost destroyed the paper. Subscriptions plummeted, the state of New Hampshire refused incorporation, and even members of the denomination responded in anger. Despite the opposition, Burr stayed true to his course, promoting the cause of biblical truth and freedom without apology. When Abraham Lincoln visited the state in 1860, he asked Burr to join him on the platform, a nod to the editor's courage and tenacity. When Burr died November 5, 1866, the whole city turned out for his funeral, including the mayor and other city officials. Even the city stores closed as the town that once rejected Burr celebrated his life of courage.

Why not create your own legacy with an endowment to support the ongoing publishing work of Free Will Baptists?



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William Burr

THE CASE FOR DENOMINATIONS

By J. Matthew Pinson

A few years ago, friend and former student Jacob Riggs asked me to participate in a panel discussion regarding denominational identity. He sent me a list of possible questions, to which I formulated some “rough” answers (most of which I never introduced into the discussion). Below are his questions and my responses.

Some younger Christians have trouble understanding why local church membership is important, much less denominational involvement. Why is it important to be a part of a denomination?

Historically, Free Will Baptists have viewed conferences, associations, and general assemblies as God’s way of bringing churches together for the protection of sound doctrine, mutual accountability, the ordination of church officers, and the joint support of missions and Christian education. Even though such general assemblies on the state and national level do not ordain ministers, they are important for maintaining the other aims I just mentioned.

The bottom line is a concept I call *confessional community*. We confess what we believe to be biblical faith and practice—apostolic faith and practice—and we constitute churches and ordain ministers to confess apostolic faith and practice. What is the natural response if we think Scripture teaches churches to covenant together for the protection of sound

doctrine, mutual accountability, and the joint support of missions and Christian educational institutions that also confess apostolic faith and practice? It is to have confessional solidarity with those of apostolic faith and practice throughout our nation and the world.

One concern about denominations is that they can appear to be divisive among the universal Church. Is this true? Why or why not?

It’s helpful to keep in mind confessional or theological commitments rather than division. This is a positive designation rather than a negative one. Natural divisions occur when people disagree about significant matters. That doesn’t mean they have to be divisive or uncharitable in the negative sense.

I have some very good Calvinist and paedobaptist (those who practice infant baptism) friends. Let’s say I start a church, and a conservative Presbyterian friend joins the church. One Sunday, I preach a sermon from Hebrews 6:4-6, and his 11-year-old son gets confused,

saying the sermon contradicts what his father taught him clearly a few weeks earlier—that true believers can never lose their salvation. Several months later, my friend’s wife gives birth to their new baby daughter. They come to me and request baptism for the infant. I gently deny it, lovingly and respectfully saying, “The Bible teaches that only believers should be baptized.”

Now, if I really believe the Bible teaches the possibility of apostasy and believer’s baptism, and my friend really believes in eternal security and infant baptism, we have a real, practical problem on our hands. It’s not just a theoretical, pie-in-the-sky problem like making the timing of the Great Tribulation a test of fellowship.

We’re talking about actual, practical problems where we simply can’t go forward because my friend believes the Bible demands that he have his covenant child baptized and feels compelled by Holy Scripture to go forward with baptism, while I believe the Bible prohibits the baptism of infants. What are our op-

tions? We have to part ways amicably. This is all denominationalism really is.

It's ironic that most non-denominational people today don't sprinkle infants if it's requested either. Most take a clear position on whether or not one can lose his salvation. This is just to use two examples. Most non-denominational churches are really baptistic, once-saved-always-saved churches, and though many pretend to be "playing it cool" regarding these divisive issues, they really aren't.

What about the Willow Creek Association? Presumably, high church Episcopalians will not be comfortable in the Willow Creek Association. Does that mean the Willow Creek Association, non-denominational as it is, is divisive? Of course not! My point is that *every* group of believers, no matter how denominational or non-denominational they claim to be, have specific beliefs and practices that make it impossible for others to be a part of them and to raise their families in that church group.

In a sense, if being different from others is divisive, then everybody is divisive. Even so-called "interdenominational" churches, in the end, can't work. They have a shallow view of denominational differences. You can't have a church that is Catholic-Protestant-Orthodox, high church-low church, liturgical-non-liturgical, tongues-speaking-non-tongues speaking, baptistic-paedobaptistic, etc.

The only way to pull this off is arbitrarily to agree certain things are "off-limits" for discussion, things like whether or not you can lose your salvation, whether you should have your infant baptized, whether you should have archbishops, whether your worship should be liturgical, whether major decisions are made by an elder board or the congregation. These are all things the Bible doesn't cover—out of bounds for discussion, according to this approach.

If you can get enough people who all happen to believe that these sorts of things are not covered in the New Testament, then I guess denominations or confessional

EVERY GROUP OF BELIEVERS, NO MATTER HOW DENOMINATIONAL OR NON-DENOMINATIONAL THEY CLAIM TO BE, HAVE SPECIFIC BELIEFS AND PRACTICES THAT MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR OTHERS TO BE A PART OF THEM AND TO RAISE THEIR FAMILIES IN THAT CHURCH GROUP.

groups would not be necessary. But, in the end, I think serious, theologically grounded people of all persuasions are going to find non-denominationalism impossible.

Are there any potential dangers in being a part of a denomination? If so, what are they, and how can we avoid these?

There are no potential dangers to being part of a certain confessional community *per se*, of being a part of a church that confesses apostolic faith and practice *per se*. The potential danger is being human, contentious, and uncharitable—not recognizing that the universal Church is made up of people who may be in error on certain key points that don't compromise orthodoxy. But this isn't a danger inherent in being a part of a denomination.

I've known non-denominational church members just as contentious on questions of end-times eschatology, Bible translations, or elder rule who would never dream of becoming part of a denomination. Sometimes, they are much more contentious and uncharitable toward the wider Church than my denominational friends.

What would be a situation when you would see it as appropriate to leave our denomination?

It would be appropriate for an individual to leave our denomination if it began to deny an article of faith and practice historically considered biblically binding (Arminian theology, the ordinances, self-government of churches, interdependence of churches, Christian moral teaching, etc.).

For various reasons, some younger leaders leave our movement to minister with other groups. What can

our movement do to encourage those on the fringes to stay?

I think the best way to keep young people loyal to confessional commitments is to get them to fall in love with biblical exegesis, systematic theology, and the Christian tradition. There's no question that the young people in our movement most saturated in serious Bible exegesis, theology, and a love for the saints and martyrs of the Christian past have no desire to leave our denomination. And the very few of this type of young people who do end up leaving for other serious theological groups do so because of a genuine change in doctrinal convictions.

We have a great heritage, but we also have some examples of division. How can we recover from times of division and maintain unity and identity?

I once wrote an article on Free Will Baptist controversies for the *Encyclopedia of Religious Controversies in the United States*. It gave me an opportunity to give serious thought to this issue of controversies, splits, and divisions among Free Will Baptists. What I concluded after my research was that almost every split and controversy in Free Will Baptist history has come about when we were not satisfied to be Free Will Baptists but wanted to be someone else. We imported faith and practice from other denominational or non-denominational groups because we were embarrassed by our own commitments as Free Will Baptists. If we'd had the self-confidence and courage to stand by our principles and be confident in our scripturally grounded identity, without an inferiority complex about who we are, it is unlikely we would have experienced these divisions and splits. **ONE**

At Welch College >>

Relocation Update From President Pinson

God is doing great things in the ministry of Welch College as we move forward with campus construction and relocation. Allow me to give you a brief update on campus relocation and the *Building on the Legacy* capital campaign.

I want to thank you for your prayers for the *Building on the Legacy* campaign for campus relocation. The early stages of the campaign have been more successful than we had ever dreamed possible. We currently have about \$8 million in cash and commitments (about \$6.5 million of that in cash). We give thanks and praise to God for His bountiful blessing!

These early blessings will allow us to increase our campaign goal to \$14.4 million (our original goal was \$6.5 million). This will enable us to build a full auditorium/chapel, which had been omitted from the original first-phase plans for the campus. It will also allow us to be debt-free after the completion of the five-year campaign.

I encourage you to visit the website, BuildingontheLegacy.com, to read more about our campaign and see the latest videos of campus construction. We thank you, our alumni, friends, and supporters, for your prayers and support thus far, and we ask you to join us in this campaign for the relocation of Welch College, as we continue *Building on the Legacy*—J. Matthew Pinson, President, Welch College ■



College Obtains Federal Approval for Graduate Student Loans

The United States Department of Education (USDOE) has approved Welch College to offer federal student loans to its graduate students through the Direct Loan Program, according to Dr. Kevin Hester, dean of the School of Theology. The USDOE makes the loans available to eligible borrowers through colleges and universities participating in the program.

These loans hold numerous benefits. These unsubsidized loans offer a fixed interest rate and flexible payment terms. Financial need is not a requirement to qualify. No payments are required while enrolled in school. In order to receive these loans, a student must be enrolled at least half-time in a program that leads to a degree or certificate awarded by the school.

“Welch College understands that graduate school can be expensive,” said Hester. “For this reason, the college offers generous institutional scholarships to its graduate students. Students who are licensed or ordained Free Will Baptist ministers and who received good grades in their

undergraduate studies, can receive a reduction of up to \$145 per credit hour on their tuition. The addition of these DOE loans helps make the opportunity of a quality graduate degree more easily accessible.”

Last year Welch College became the first Free Will Baptist college to offer a regionally accredited credential on the graduate level. In December, 2015, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges and the Association for Biblical Higher Education approved its application to offer the Master of Arts (M.A.) degree in Theology and Ministry. This 33-hour program consists of hybrid courses, in which a portion of the coursework is done online and the other portion in one-week, on-campus intensive sessions.

For more information about the M.A. degree in Theology and Ministry, contact the program coordinator, Dr. Jeff Cockrell at jcockrell@welch.edu or visit welch.edu/masters.

For information about the DOE student loans and any other financial information, contact Angie Edgmon at finaid@welch.edu. ■

Forty-Nine Graduate During Welch Commencement Exercises

Welch College conferred degrees on 49 students from 15 states in commencement exercises at Memorial Auditorium on Friday, May 6, according to President Matt Pinson. Students completed degrees in multiple programs ranging from two-year associate's degrees to four-year bachelor's degrees. Forty-nine percent of the class graduated with honors.

Keith Burden, Executive Secretary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists, delivered the commencement address. He challenged graduates to be the best they can be, to take responsibility for their actions, and expect great things from God and attempt great things for God.

Jeff Nichols, executive pastor of The Donelson Fellowship in Nashville, Tennessee, presented Thursday evening's baccalaureate sermon. He relayed to graduates that they were made by God who knows their future and to look at their years of preparation with patience for the future.

Welch College Pastoral Ministry Coordinator Dr. Barry Raper was named Academic Advisor of the Year. President Matt Pinson also recognized Christian Service Director John Murray for 25 years of faithful service to Welch College.

The college commends to you and to the work of the Lord the members of the 2016 graduating class.



ASSOCIATE OF SCIENCE DEGREES

Adam Heath Giles
Ashland City, TN
Business

Kenneth Mark Murphy
Kannapolis, NC
Ministry

David Alan Robinson
Lexington, NC
Ministry

Keith Michael Stegall
Moline, IL
Ministry

Elisabeth Grace Webster
Norfolk, VA
Nursing

BACHELOR OF SCIENCE DEGREES

Erik Mark Armstrong
Red Bay, AL
Youth and Family Ministry

Nathaniel Bacon Brimer**
Norfolk, VA
General Christian Ministry

Rachel Ann Burns
Springfield, OH
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Sunni Coral Champion
Florence, AL
General Christian Ministry

Lim Nhial Chol
Nashville, TN
Exercise Science

Shelby Faith Cominskie*
Virginia Beach, VA
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Nathaniel Austin Deel**
Antioch, TN
History
Licensure 6-12 in History and English

Leah Carol Dell**
Ashland City, TN
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Hannah Renee Driggers**
Scranton, SC
English
Licensure 6-12

Joshua Daniel Dunbar*
Russellville, AR
Business Administration
Youth and Family Ministry

Hanna Alicia Dunham*
Wheelersburg, OH
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

George Hudson Shaw Dunlap
Nashville, TN
Exercise Science

Taylor Rebecca Greer
Manassas, VA
English
Licensure 6-12

Nathaniel Matthew Hagood
Whitesburg, TN
General Christian Ministry

Benjamin Corey Hobbs
Willow Spring, NC
General Christian Ministry

Carl M. Hooper**
Waverly, TN
General Christian Ministry

Michael Edward Hunt**
Wagoner, OK
General Christian Ministry

Gabriel Thomas Kear
Chula Vista, CA
Business Administration

Allison Ruth Lewis
Chicago, IL
Early Childhood

Emily Jane Lute
Warren, MI
Business Administration

Jessica Wey Melvin**
Mt. Juliet, TN
Exercise Science

Caroline Elizabeth Merkh
Nashville, TN
Business Administration

Caleb Luke Milling*
Ashland City, TN
General Christian Ministry

John Daniel Newland**
Joelton, TN
Music Performance

Leslie Blake Nichols*
Old Hickory, TN
Exercise Science

Melissa Taylor Owen
Canton, GA
Business Administration

Emily Jane Parrish***
Washington, NC
Psychology

Amy Michelle Pickett**
Pocahontas, AR
Early Childhood Education
Licensure PreK-3

Andrew Evan Pierce
Tupelo, MS
General Christian Ministry

David Andrew Reeves*
Owensboro, KY
Business Administration

Adison Kyler Showalter*
Butler, GA
General Christian Ministry

Caleb Ryan Smith
Mount Holly, NC
Youth and Family Ministry

Wayne Thomas Smith*
Fort Lawn, SC
General Christian Ministry

Paula Melinda Stonerock***
Columbus, OH
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Larissa Cheree Thomas***
Greenwood, AR
Psychology

Gregory Wayne Tucker
Huntsville, AL
Pastoral Ministry

Tracye Shawnette Tucker
Franklin, TN
General Christian Ministry

Zachary Adam Vickery*
Taylor, AL
General Christian Ministry

James Victor
Francis Creek, WI
Physical Education

BACHELOR OF ARTS DEGREES

Stephen Dempsey Bozeman**
Butler, GA
History

Nathaniel Austin Deel**
Antioch, TN
English

Cameron Michael Edwards
Cane Ridge, TN
English

Michael David Hollis***
Washington, NC
Pastoral Ministry

Brittany La Shae Walker*
Spruce Pine, AL
Missions

Dustin Michael Walters
Hamilton, AL
Pastoral Ministry

*** Summa Cum Laude
** Magna Cum Laude
* Cum Laude

Intersect >>

The Test of the Tongue

“If any man among you seem to be religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his own heart, this man’s religion is vain” (James 1:26).

In *The Courage to Be Protestant*, Dr. David Wells reports that as many as 78% of Americans consider themselves to be “spiritual.” But if a person considers himself spiritual, what is the basis for such a claim? Considering yourself a Christian is one thing; actually being one is an entirely different matter. While the Bible offers many tests of true spirituality, one test provided by James is the test of the tongue. In essence, James said that if your religion hasn’t touched your tongue, it is not real. It is vain or worthless.

Consider the word religious or religion. Many Americans consider themselves spiritual, but fewer want any association with the word religion. The number of those who claim no religious affiliation is rising rapidly. However, the term religious is not a negative term from the perspective of the New Testament.

The problem James poses in this verse is not religion *per se*, but a false representation of Christianity. James presents a scenario first: “If anyone among you thinks he is religious” (ESV), or “If any man among you seemeth to be religious” (KJV).

The Claim of Religion: Appearing Religious

The first phrase in verse 26 can be taken to mean a person thinks or considers himself to be religious. The truth of the matter is we all consider ourselves to be this or that, but our perception doesn’t necessarily correspond with reality. You may consider yourself to be a master chef, but that may or may not be true. You may rate yourself as an excellent marksman, but the shooting range reveals otherwise.

This wording might also refer to someone within a group—a man or woman who appears or seems to be religious to others in their group. We know from everyday life that appearances are not always what they seem. This is true of places advertised as vacation spots. It is true of jobs that appear better than the one we have already. Most often, however, this is true of people. What James had in mind, then, is someone who appears religious outwardly. Maybe he or she prays over meals, attends church regularly, wears religious symbols, or even talks about spiritual things on occasion. But his or her faith is only “skin deep.” We must remember that the appearance of religion is not the real test; the test is how we control our speech.

The Test of Religion: The Controlled Tongue

A religion that doesn’t control the tongue doesn’t pass the test. Faith that doesn’t impact day-to-day speech and ordinary conversation is not biblical faith. James introduces the illustration of a horse and bridle in these verses and expands it to include the bit in chapter 3. Just as the bit and bridle are used to restrain and control the horse, so the tongue ought to be kept in check by the Christian.

Of course, James is not introducing an entirely new concept. The Old Testament, specifically the book of Proverbs, has much to say about the exercise of self-control when it comes to talking. For instance, Proverbs 10:19 says, “When words are many, transgression is not lacking, but whoever restrains his lips is prudent.” The wisdom writer also stated, “Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding. Even a fool who keeps silent is considered wise; when he closes his lips, he is deemed intelligent” (Proverbs 17:27-28).



Two Outcomes:

#1: SELF-DECEPTION

This, perhaps, circles back to the idea that a person may consider himself to be spiritual or religious, when in reality, he is not religious at all. A few verses prior, James cautions, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.”

#2: A USELESS RELIGION

James comes back to the word *religion*. He characterizes a person who can’t control his tongue as having worthless religion. This word for *worthless* is used in some places in the New Testament to describe idol worship—vain or empty. It could also be translated profitless.

A common objection to Christianity is, “The church is full of hypocrites.” It is fair to say some people oppose Christianity simply because they have been exposed to bad examples of it. That’s where we come in as believers.

YOUR TONGUE

You have platforms where people hear you speak. What do they learn about Christ where you work? At sporting events? In the store? When visiting your home?

At times, it is important to speak—moments when silence is sin. For instance, when we keep silent about the gospel and don’t share it with others. The basic point from Proverbs and James, however, is that most of us need to practice more restraint.

The tendency to be loose and free with words is especially present online. Whatever you type and send is out there, and you can’t take it back. Sometimes emails, texts, and messages require immediate responses. Usually they don’t. We would be better off thinking carefully and praying through our responses before we hit send.

Are you passing the tongue test? If you discover you are failing this test and want to see change, there is hope. The place to start is your heart. At least that is what Jesus said: “The good person out of the good treasure of his heart produces good, and the evil person out of his evil treasure produces evil, for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks” (Luke 6:45). **ONE**

About the Writer: Dr. Barry Raper is program chairman for Pastoral Ministry at Welch College: www.Welch.edu.



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THE LATEST AT

North American Ministries...

UPDATE

By Brad Ransom

In 2014, nearly every leadership role changed at Free Will Baptist Home Missions. Dr. David Crowe became executive director after serving the department for 18 years. Dr. Brad Ransom was hired as director of church planting. Rev. Jim McComas began developing the new role of director of church revitalization. Master's Men, under the direction of Ken Akers, became part of North American Ministries in 2015. Rev. Rick Bowling continued his role as director of Hispanic Ministries and Col. (Retired) Kerry Steedley began serving as volunteer director of Chaplain Support. Most recently, after 25 years, Ida Lewis retired from her post as publications editor.

With the addition of Master's Men and a reemphasis on other vital ministries, Home Missions began doing business as Free Will Baptist North American Ministries. While not an official name change, we've shifted our terminology to begin using more applicable and missiologically correct terms. The most noticeable is the shift from the term *missionary* to *church planter*.

Along with a new name and new people, many roles have been restructured. Our primary purpose as a department

always has been (and always will be) planting churches. With the changes in leadership, we began working hard to evaluate and make necessary changes to our roles, systems, processes, training, and so on.

Our church planting process was improved to help us plant more churches and see them reach self-supporting status faster, while providing better training and resources to the entire team. This begins with our application and assessment process. We follow proven guidelines and strategies to send called and qualified church planters to plant churches in North America.

An important new area for North American Ministries is the development and launching of a church revitalization program. This multi-faceted program has already had a huge impact on established churches in our denomination. Dozens of churches have benefitted from various forms of the program during its two-year history. We are excited to see churches given hope, pastors encouraged, and people excited about their churches. We stand ready to help many more churches in the future.

Updates From the Field

Here are just a few highlights from among the many things happening at North American Ministries:

- Twenty-two new church planting families have been approved for service with more starting the process.
- Seven churches have reached self-supporting status.
- Several church plants are on target to reach self-supporting status by the end of the year.
- Currently, we have three legacy church projects (revitalization), all seeing great success.
- In the past six months (October 2015 through March 2016), approximately 200 salvation decisions have been reported (in English-speaking churches)
- On average 2,000 people attend a North American Ministries church plant each week.

Although these statistics are in bullet point form, each number represents a life-changing experience that will last for eternity!

Church planters recently reported the following exciting news:

- Plans to go self-supporting in the next year and beginning plans to plant a second church. **Nate Altom/Tommy Jones, Greensburg, Pennsylvania.**
- In the next few months they will have to add a third Sunday morning service. **Jeff Goodman/Josh Bennett, Marana, Arizona.**
- The Sunday after Easter, six people accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. **Chad Kivette/Brian Lewis, Clarksville, Tennessee.**
- Launched a new church the last Sunday in January 2016 with 264 people in attendance. In February, they reported 12 conversions. **Marc Neppel/ Kevin Bass, Portsmouth, Virginia.**
- Salvations reported every week. Nineteen conversions in February and the church is full. **Myron Scott/ Jason Huff, Gilbert, Arizona.**
- Buying land to build their first building. **Jason Weaver, Winchester, Virginia.**
- Twelve church planters and associates currently raising funds to start new works! **Marshall Boné, Virginia Beach, Virginia; Chris Davenport, Kaneohe, Hawaii; Adam Garrett, Wytheville, Virginia; Johnny Isenberg, Sherman, Texas; Jordan Ledbetter, Taylorsville, Utah (associate joining current work); Jamie Lee, Champaign, Illinois; Travis McKenzie, Ashland, Ohio; Terry Miller, Ft Collins, Colorado (legacy project); John Moran, Apex, North Carolina; David Osborne, Wytheville, Virginia; Carl Spruill, Kaneohe, Hawaii; Chris Willhite, McKinney, Texas.**

Chaplain Updates

Chaplain (COL) **Terry Austin** will move from Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where he has served as installation chaplain (senior chaplain on post), to Fort McNair, Washington, D.C. where he will serve as the Command Chaplain, Military District of Washington.

Chaplain (MAJ) **Tracy Kerr** is being transferred from Fort Bragg, North Carolina, to Ft. Stewart, Savannah, Georgia.

Chaplain (CPT) **Lee Frye** will attend the Army Chaplain Career Course at Fort Jackson, South Carolina, departing his assignment at Eglin Air Force Base, Florida.

Chaplain (CPT) **Roy Swisher** was expected to retire this summer but has received a one-year extension to continue serving as a reservist on active duty at Fort Lewis, Washington.

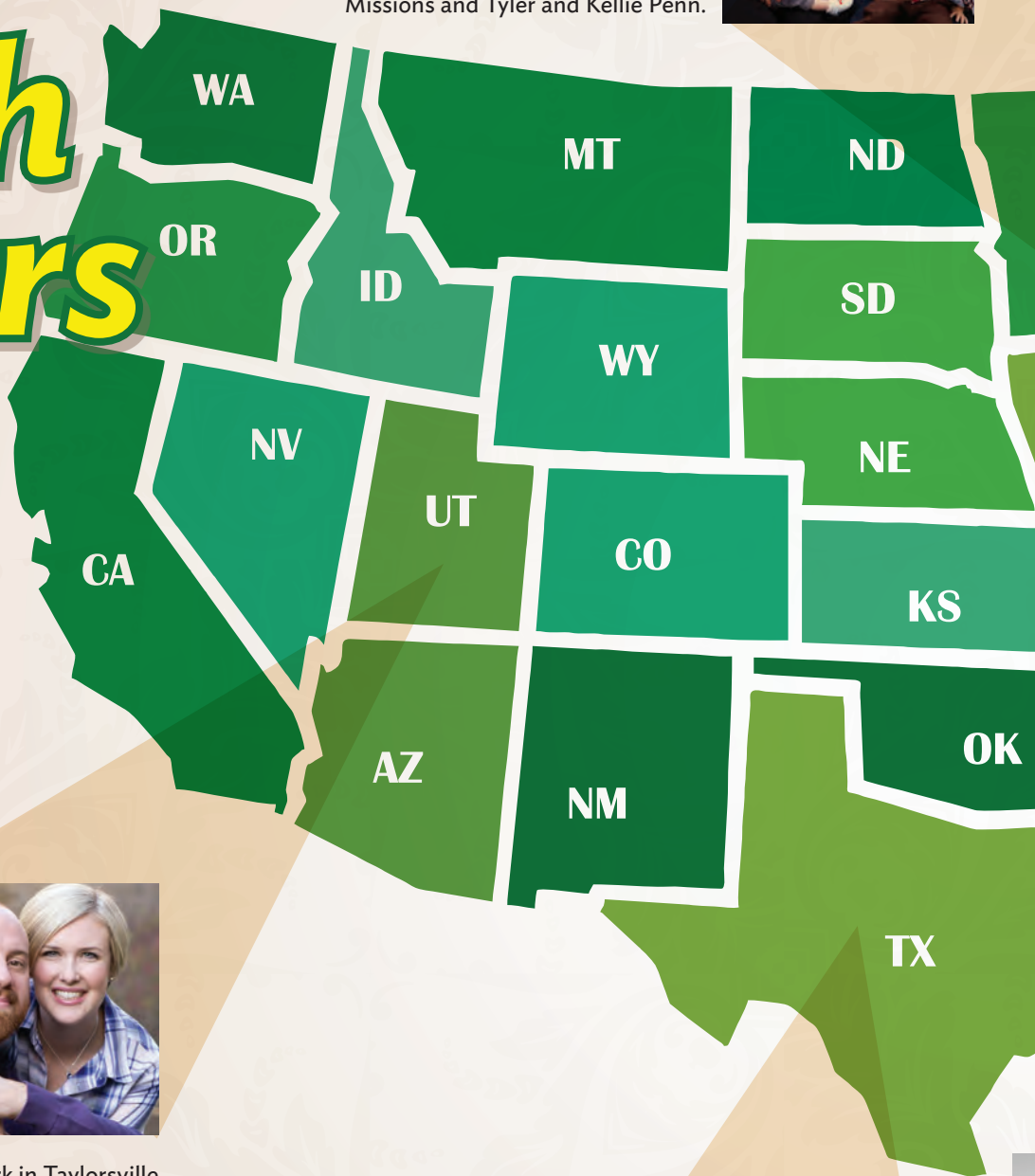
The following chaplains will remain on their current assignments:

Chaplain (MAJ) **John Carey** at Fort Campbell, Kentucky; Chaplain (MAJ) **Kevin Trimble** at Fort Bragg, North Carolina; Chaplain (MAJ) **Brad Hanna** with the Oklahoma National Guard; Chaplain (LT) **Mark McCraney** at the U.S. Navy Base in Rota, Spain. ☐

MEET YOUR NEW Church Planters

We would like to introduce several new church planters and associates with North American Ministries:

Jamie and Heather Lee are joining the North American Ministries team to plant the Bridge Free Will Baptist church in Champaign, Illinois. The family comes from a pastorate in Illinois and will partner with the Illinois State Mission Board. Jamie and Heather have three young children: Jaden, Caleb, and Peyton. This is a partnership with International Missions and Tyler and Kellie Penn.



Logan and Grayson Wolf:

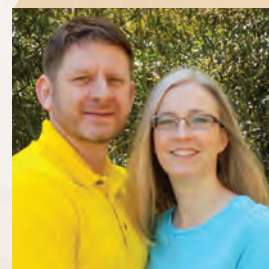
Logan and Grayson have been working through Faith Missions to plant a Free Will Baptist church in Provo, Utah. After the resignation of church planters in Taylorsville, Utah, the Wolfs entered into a partnership with Faith Missions and North



American Ministries to carry on the work in Taylorsville, working with associates Jordan and Emily Ledbetter. The Taylorsville/Provo team ministers each Sunday in both locations and is planting two churches simultaneously. The Wolfs are expecting their first child in the summer of 2016.

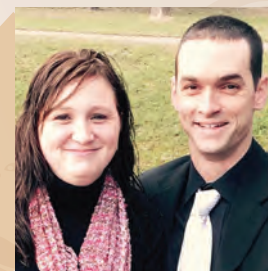
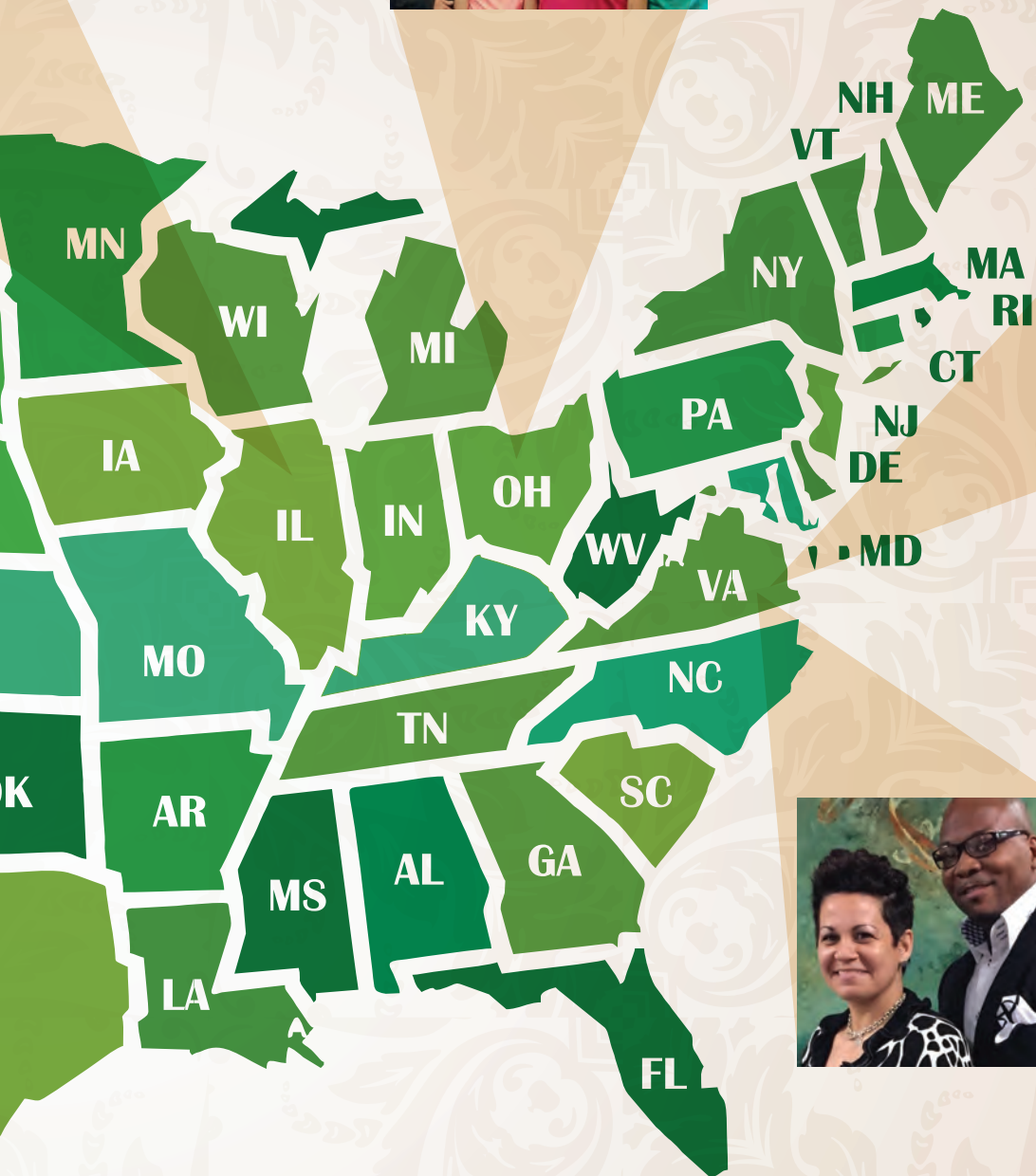
Chris and Beth Willhite:

Chris served as youth pastor of a church in Alabama before joining Randall and Collette Wright as associate church planters in McKinney, Texas. The Willhites currently are raising money to move to the McKinney area with their son Thomas.





Travis and Melissa McKenzie come to North American Ministries from Canaan FWB Church in Creston, Ohio, where Travis served as associate pastor. They will be starting a new church in Ashland, Ohio. Travis and Melissa have two children, Joel and Rachel.



Adam and Rebecca Garrett

are no strangers to church planting. For several years, the Garretts assisted church planter Cliff Donoho in Nashville,

Tennessee, and Tallahassee, Florida. Now, the Garretts will move to Wytheville, Virginia, to serve as associate planters (joint project with the Virginia State Mission Board), joining David and Ashley Osborne. The Garretts have one son, Elijah.



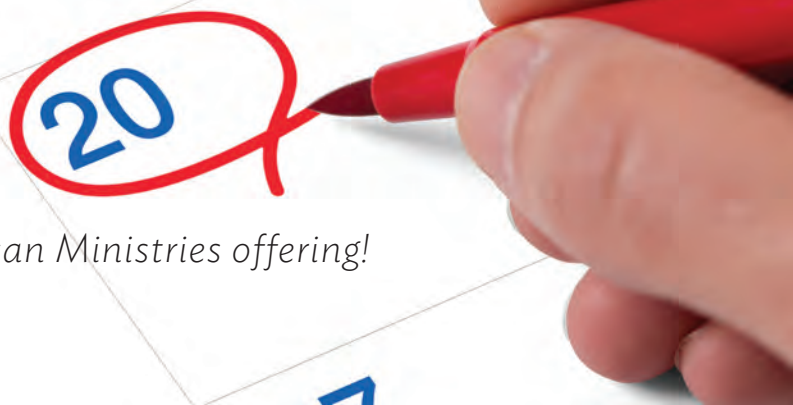
Marshall and Tiffany Bonéy come to North American Ministries as a joint project with the Virginia State Mission Board after a long ministry as associate pastor at Virginia Beach FWB Church in Virginia Beach, Virginia. Marshall and Tiffany, originally from Oklahoma, will plant a new church in the oceanfront area of Virginia Beach. The Bonéys have three daughters (one of whom is still living at home) and one son-in-law.

SAVE THE DATE!



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Retirement OR R&R?

BY DAVID TROGDON

After 33 years of military service, the Army determined that I was physically unfit to continue serving as a soldier. So, one day I was a soldier, chaplain, and Lieutenant Colonel; the next, I was retired. Retirement can be a difficult transition for someone accustomed to going 200 mph serving God, soldiers, and families. Retirement was difficult until I realized that my retirement from the Army didn't mean my service for God was done. Today, I am very happily retired and just as excited as ever about my current and future service for Christ. What caused such a radical change?



A New Mindset

Images of retirement often include sandy beaches, green golf courses, rocking chairs and enjoying old age because, after all, haven't we earned it? The concept of retirement as R&R (rest and relaxation) is problematic, because it is found nowhere in Scripture. Use any Bible translation you like, or even dive deep into the Hebrew and Greek; you won't find believers encouraged to spend the rest of their lives resting and relaxing.

All believers have been gifted by God and are called by God to serve Christ. All believers will be judged and rewarded by God Himself when Christ returns. Even in Heaven, we will joyfully continue our work and service for Christ. What could be accomplished for the Kingdom of God and the Church of Jesus Christ if all of us viewed ourselves as full-time servants of Christ—today and for all of eternity? God reminded me that while I may have retired from the Army, I will never ever retire from serving Him.

A New Ministry

As I transitioned out of the Army, I wondered "What now?" After a few weeks, I had so many opportunities that I began praying that God would make clear the one (or ones) He wanted me to pursue. God opened the door for me to serve soldiers in basic training as a part of Cru Military (formally Campus Crusade for Christ). As a retired chaplain, I was invited to preach to over 1,200 soldiers in chapel and saw many young soldiers make decisions for Christ. I have also been able to lead Bible studies for new soldiers, for wounded warriors, for injured soldiers, and for doctors and nurses.

My new ministry includes being an encourager, mentor, and counselor for younger chaplains, couples, and new believers as well as numerous opportunities to speak in Free Will Baptist churches. My favorite ministry, however, is being a full-time pastor to my family, especially after four years of separation through combat deployments.

I truly enjoy my ministry as Papa to my children and grandsons and being a Christian husband to a true hero and (also retired) army wife.

While I am no longer an army chaplain, I now serve as chaplain for The H.O.P.E. Project (Healing Our Patriots with Equines). The H.O.P.E. Project is a new ministry for wounded warriors, first responders, and combat veterans battling PTSD, or who have suffered a traumatic brain injury. We use therapy and rescue horses to build healing relationships with God, with families, and with other fellow vets. I am constantly amazed at God's grace, and how He allows me to do anything for Him. Through the years, I have continually discovered how God uses our past, our passion, our pain, and our potential in Christ to proclaim His grace and the gospel to the world. If God can use me, He can and will use anybody.

The Same Mission

While we may need a new mindset and need to serve God in a new ministry, our mission remains the same. We live to exalt Christ and to fulfill the Great Commission. Christians must do everything possible to help build the Kingdom of God as He uses us to make an eternal difference in the lives of men, women, boys, and girls. If we are convinced that a person who dies without Christ will spend eternity in hell, what are we doing about it? What are we willing to sacrifice for the cause of Christ? God didn't

call us to a life of comfort but to a life of combat. As Steve Camp once wrote, "Some people want to live within the sound of chapel bells, but I want to run a mission a yard from the gates of Hell. And with everyone you meet, I'll take the gospel and share it well. Look around you as you hesitate, for another soul just fell. Let's run to the battle."

Physically, I may no longer be able to do the things required to be a soldier in the army, but I will always seek to be a faithful soldier of Jesus Christ. When my fight is over, I hope to be able to say, with the Apostle Paul, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course. I have kept the faith." Until that day comes, we may retire from a job and as we grow older, our ministry may change, but we never retire from serving Christ.

We must give our all to "Be strong as a good soldier of Jesus Christ," and that doesn't include a retirement only of rest and relaxation. **ONE**

About the Author: David Trogdon recently retired from the U.S. Army after 33 years of service, including 25 years of active duty, 16 as chaplain. He deployed twice to Iraq, Afghanistan, Africa, and Kuwait. Trogdon was awarded three Bronze Stars and the Purple Heart. Currently, he serves with CRU military. He is a graduate of Welch College, Southeastern Theological Seminary, the Army Command and General Staff College, and numerous military training schools. David and his wife Connie have two children, Joshua and Rebekah, and four grandsons: Nate, Tony, Blake, and Jake.

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Single Table		Joint Table	
Age	Rate	Ages	Rate
65	4.7%	65/65	4.2%
70	5.1%	70/70	4.6%
75	5.8%	75/75	5.0%
80	6.8%	80/80	5.7%
85	7.8%	85/85	6.7%
90	9.0%	90/90	8.2%

Three steps every church needs to take...

THREE STEPS to CHURCH REVITALIZATION

BY JIM MCCOMAS

Last year, my wife Beth had partial replacement surgery on both knees. She had put the surgery off for quite some time, but we finally scheduled it when I would be off the road and able to take care of her during her extended rehabilitation and recovery. The weeks and months after the procedure were certainly anything but fun—pain, hours of rehab, and discouraging setbacks, all of which left my wife wondering, “Why in the world did I have this done?”

Six months after surgery, however, my wife has recovered wonderfully. The mobility and agility she now enjoys are far better than the pain she had endured before the surgery. Truly, at the end of the day, the pain was well worth the gain she received.

The process of church revitalization is much like my wife’s procedure. While it is not enjoyable by any means, it is necessary. The church cannot function like it ought unless painful and difficult changes are made. Please notice that I did not use the words “simple” or “easy” in the title of this article. While I believe these principles are sound and will lead to nothing but good things for our churches, they are by no means easy to implement. Just like corrective surgery, however, I believe that the results will be worth the effort. With that in mind, let’s consider the steps to revitalization every church needs to take:



We need to lift the Pastor UP. I am completely aware that our denomination has had its share of “bad apples” in some of our pulpits, pastors who have been unreasonable, illogical, and some even immoral. Yet, for every lazy, apathetic, and ineffective pastor, I can show you ten God-called, dedicated, hard-working, sincere, and sacrificial ones.

Furthermore, I believe some of the biggest problems we face in churches today—and certainly some of the biggest hindrances to growth—are church members who refuse to submit to the Spirit-guided leadership of the pastor. The sad truth is, many church members think their pastor is great...until he does something they don’t agree with or preaches something that “steps on their toes.”

How many churches have run their pastor off, only to discover that while they got what they wanted, they lost what they had. Let the pastor be the pastor. Rather than picking apart his family, his preaching, and his personality, let’s do more praying for, praising, and supporting him.



We need to get the trouble OUT. Recently in Switzerland, the Hadron Collider, a 17-mile superconducting machine designed to smash protons together at nearly the speed of light, had a mechanical failure that caused it to shut down temporarily. When the cause of the failure was investigated, it was found that a small rodent, probably a weasel, had gnawed through some electrical wires. Incredibly, the tiny mammal managed to shut down one of the world’s most powerful and expensive scientific instruments.

For too long, many of our churches have tolerated noisy troublemakers in their midst. Power hungry and rebellious, these men and women put their own agenda ahead of God’s plan for the church with an “It’s my way or the highway” attitude. Usually, it’s not a huge number, but even one or two left unchecked can



do immeasurable damage to the church and the cause of Christ.

Please don't misunderstand; I am not talking about godly, well-meaning church members who handle legitimate concerns biblically. I am talking about hateful and mean-spirited rabble-rousers who thrive on controversy and confrontation. Our churches will never be all God intended until such people are confronted and disciplined. And yes, sometimes a "back-door revival" is necessary. It's time we deal with the weasels in the church.



Finally, we need to bring the lost IN. This past Sunday, I walked into the sanctuary of the church where I was starting a revival and sat down on the front row. All of a sudden, folks headed towards me from every area of the auditorium with big smiles on their faces. Everyone in the choir turned in my direction, grinning from ear to ear.

Just when I thought to myself, "This has to be the friendliest church I have ever attended," all of those folks went right past me to a baby carrier in the next pew. You see, a family in the church had brought their newborn baby to church for the first time. Both sets of grandparents also attended the church, and it

was the first grandchild for all of them. Needless to say, excitement filled the air as folks lined up and down the aisles to take pictures, utter "oohs and ahs," and to give congratulations.

As I watched the crowd gathered around this family, I thought, "There's nothing like a new baby to bring excitement to the church house."

Once a God-called pastor is serving in his proper place in the church, and once the church members are all on board with the vision of the church, then the atmosphere is right to bring some lost folks to church and see them won to Christ. No plan can revitalize a church faster or more effectively than a soul-winning plan. Why? Because a new life brings excitement to the house of God!

I truly believe if we follow these three steps, we can see real revival come to our churches. Will it be easy? No. Will the process be painful? Yes, no doubt. But is it worth it? The answer is emphatically, Yes!

Just ask my wife. **ONE**

About the Writer: Jim McComas is director of church revitalization for North American Ministries. To learn more about church revitalization or the work of NAM, visit www.fwbnam.com.

It won't happen to me...



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ACTS OF GRACE

BY BRENDA EVANS

She was young, maybe 20, and in ragged jeans. Unlaced hiking boots flopped back above her ankles like enormous moth wings. She wore a drab-green jacket and backpack at a busy corner where I had to turn right. Her sign read: "Traveling. Out of money. Please help, even if it's a smile."

I braked slightly to read the words then accelerated. I didn't smile. Perhaps if I had, I would have stopped and fished out the only bill in my wallet, a \$10, as I recall, or a scattering of coins. But I would have been embarrassed to empty just a few pennies and dimes into this traveling woman's hand, if indeed she was traveling.

I'm provisional here because I *feel* provisional whenever I see a beggar. At some point in my life, I penciled an axiom into my brain: *Don't stop for beggars*. But living by that, and even admitting that it's written there, doesn't mean I'm comfortable with it.

What to do with people asking for money is a dilemma for me. As I see it, generally I have two choices: stop and give or move on. The 20-something girl with the winged hiking boots gave me a third: smile. Maybe I didn't smile because it would have been fake, even a mockery. Or maybe I wasn't swayed by her sign, didn't believe she was really out of money, didn't believe she was in need. Or maybe I assumed, in the two seconds I had to make a decision, that if I only gave her a smile, she would reply with an impolite finger gesture. The truth is, my heart and my brain always collide over what to do with people who ask for money on sidewalks and street corners.

I remember the first beggar I ever saw. He sat on a low rolling board and propelled himself with his hands along Church Street in downtown Nashville because he had no legs. He was whiskered and old, his eyes startlingly blue. My mother and I stopped. I still can hear the clink-clink of her coins falling into his tin cup.

We were headed to Harvey's department store. I was eight and excited about Harvey's escalators, their talking mynah bird, the carnival mirrors that made me into a roly-poly porker or a pencil-thin freak, and their restaurant where we ordered hot apple pie topped with fat slabs of sharp cheddar cheese.

"Where does he live?" I asked Mother. Mother didn't speak for several steps.

"He probably doesn't have a home, Brenda," she said at last. The beggar's blue eyes, his body with no legs, Mother's words, and the metallic ring of her coins against his cup brought me, for the first time, to some rudimentary understanding of the word *desperate*. And I've

never forgotten it.

I tell myself that if I could know when a person is genuinely desperate, as I believed the legless beggar was 65 years ago, I would erase that don't-stop-for-beggars axiom from my brain. I like clarity. That's one reason I like the Old Testament edicts to Israelite farmers and vineyard owners. Don't harvest the corner grain. Don't send grape gatherers over the vines twice. Leave some, God commanded, for the poor, the widow, the "illegal aliens" to gather. Those who can must work, and God's people must help those who can't. The New Testament teaches that same ethic. But there's the rub: is the man or woman on my street corner a "beggar indeed," that is, a beggar by necessity or a beggar by choice? I don't know.

Lily, who is my age, watches for people who need acts of grace, even strangers.

When my husband Bill was in pastoral ministry, we often lived in a parsonage next door to our church. I regularly made sandwiches and drinks for people who rang at our door. People living out of rust-bucket cars, whole families "just passing through." Some wanted food; others wanted money. I never knew whether they were truly desperate, but I always offered food. Usually, they took it. Food from my kitchen is never hard for me. It's clear that I should do it.

Once, for two weeks during a New Hampshire winter, we took a paroled convict into our apartment, fed him at our table, and gave him a bed over our garage. My husband and I thought we should do it, and I still think we should have, although one day while we were away for several hours, he left with Bill's small coin collection and a jar of change our Sunday School children had collected for missionaries. We never saw him

again, but for two weeks "the stranger at our gate" was warm and fed at our house.

When I know a woman is hungry, I will give her food and a cup of cold water. But on street corners and in medians, I can't quickly measure desperation or discern whether her begging is beyond her control or of her own making. It's too quick...an immediate thumbs up or thumbs down based on brief moments of visual data.

Beyond that, desperation is not something I have personal experience with. I remember a few times when I didn't have two proverbial nickels to rub together, but I've never experienced genuine hunger or desperation. My friend Lily has. She has been without meat, without bread, without anything at all to eat. She has felt abandonment in her bones. At

11, she was an orphan who lived with her older brothers in the house where her parents had died. Her brothers were high schoolers and provided what they could for Lily, but some nights they ate at the homes of friends while Lily was home alone, hungry, and desperate. Now Lily, who is my age, watches for people who need acts of grace, even strangers. Recently, she "got taken," she told me with a grin. "It's probably not the first time, and it may not be the last. I'll just do what I think I need to do. That's all."

I'm not as experienced with desperation as Lily is, nor as tender, nor do I want to be conned, so I look for guidelines from Jesus. I'm not sure He had "help a beggar today" on His to-do list. Still, as He went about His regular life, He rescued people. Near the temple, it was a blind beggar, and He used a poultice of saliva and clay and a bath in the Pool of Siloam. He touched unclean

lepers and freed demoniacs. He wrote a note in the sand for a prostitute about to be stoned to death. His acts of grace sprang from compassion and regular companionship with sinners and beggarly outcasts. For those He rescued, He accomplished two things: kindled or rekindled their faith and made them fit to rejoin their communities.

I am aware that my handful of coins or bills will not accomplish all that for a street corner beggar. So what can I do? Recently I searched through the longest biblical discourse on giving, 2 Corinthians 8-9, written by the Apostle Paul. In about 900 words, Paul reminded me that the four corners of giving are compassion, generosity, intentionality, and accountability. The north, south, east, and west of it.

Paul shares nothing specific there about beggars, although compassion and generosity certainly apply. The other two, intentionality and accountability, are stickier. What, in fact, is my intention when I give money to a woman with a sign on a street corner? Do I simply mean to provide her a meal or warm place for the night and otherwise be uninvolved? Do I intend to assuage my conscience as if to say, "I'm a good person who helps people like you, no questions asked. Here, take my \$5 or \$10"? Deliberate, intentional giving on a street corner on the spur of the moment is not easy for me to figure out.

Accountability, that fourth corner of giving, is even harder. I understand from Paul that I need to account for whose hands deliver the gift (which I can do because I'm the one who gives in this case), but also where the money lands, whose hands use it, and for what purpose. So accountability is a huge sticking point, and beggars do not make it easy. How can I give accountably to someone I don't know, whose desperation may be specious, and whom I probably will never see again? I don't have a rock-solid



answer for that question.

The truth is, I would like myself better if I climbed farther out on the giving limb, as Lily does, so I feel that pressure. But I can't say that feeling better about myself is what I think an act of grace is actually about. Yes, giving is partly about feeling compassionate and generous, but I say partly because I believe God-directed giving goes deeper than good feelings.

It's also not about never getting duped. Years ago, I gave \$20 to a woman at an interstate rest stop in Missouri who said she needed gas money to get to a funeral in Arkansas. It was the last \$20 in my wallet, as I remember. Maybe I got taken, maybe I didn't. At that moment, it didn't matter. Although I have done that more than once, I don't fully buy into the method that says: give if you feel you should and let the beggar be responsible to God for how he uses it. Many of my friends use that model. It's usually not that simple for me. Maybe it should be.

I don't have a hard and fast rule. Sometimes I pull accountability to the

front and pass on by a beggar like I did the young woman with the winged boots. At other times, I pull compassion into first place and give. I would like all four corners—the north, south, east, and west of giving—to guide me because that's what I see in Old Testament law, in Jesus, and in Paul's long passage. But on a street corner, those get complicated.

I'm glad for Church Street in Nashville 65 years ago when my mother stopped for an old man with startling blue eyes, no legs, and a tin cup. Mother's heart and head must have collided that summer day, as mine so often collide today. *Should I pass on by or stop and give?* With only a flash of reflection, my mother committed an act of grace. Sometimes I think I hear the metallic clink-clink of coins in a tin cup at a street corner in my town. Sometimes, I stop. Sometimes, I don't. **ONE**

About the Writer: Brenda Evans is a freelance writer who lives in Ashland, Kentucky. Learn more at finances and how you can get involved in planned giving: www.fwbgifts.org.

Brown on Green >>

Margins

People need margins. A friend taught me this many years ago. We all prefer driving on roads with wide lanes rather than narrow ones because we have a greater margin of safety if something happens. The same is true in life. No one can go full speed 24/7 without doing severe damage to himself.

We all should be busy working in the Kingdom, but need to realize **we can't do everything in the church.** Many times others will step in and share the load if we are wise enough to allow them an opportunity to serve. Creating margins in our Christian service is not an excuse to do nothing, but rather an acknowledgment that we all have limits. As Will Rogers once quipped, "Half our life is spent trying to find something to do with the time we have rushed through life trying to save."

Family life needs margins. First of all, family time should not be left in the margins—time when you are not doing anything else. We should also help guard our children's margins. Many children today have schedules busier than an adult. Every waking hour is filled with some type of activity. Everyone, including our kids, needs a time when he or she is doing nothing. Family vacations can sometimes be so meticulously planned that there is no down time.

You also need margins in the way you handle finances. If every dime is spent every month, you have no financial margins. When establishing a budget, you must save a portion of your income. If you are considering buying a car that will require payments, you must not allow your savings margin to be used to make the payment. Inevitably, some emergency will arise beyond your budget, and those bills must be paid. The washer breaks, a water pump goes out on your

car, or a child has a playground accident resulting in a medical bill.

If you don't have emergency savings, these expenses may end up on a credit card. That will cost you even more in interest. Every family needs to have a budget with a margin for unexpected expenses.

Proverbs 6 exhorts us to look to the ant for wisdom. He works diligently to make sure he has enough food for the winter. The passage does not specifically say so, but it is likely that even the ant gathers more than enough to provide a margin. And, as early 20th century actress Marie Dressler once joked, "Ants are such busy workers, but they always find time to go to all those picnics!"

Thanks, Tommy, for teaching me to create margins in my life. **ONE**

About the Writer: David Brown, CPA, became director of the Free Will Baptist Foundation in 2007. Send your questions to David at david@nafwb.org. To learn how the Foundation can help you become a more effective giver, call 877-336-7575.



MOTIVATING PEOPLE

for Their Own Good

BY JOHN BRUMMITT

“An apple a day keeps the doctor away.” Simple and proven—eating apples does have significant health benefits. Most of us, however, do not eat an apple a day. Some of us don’t even eat an apple a month. Rather than eating apples to be healthy, we choose cookies. The actions are the same; we are still eating. The difference is that one choice has benefits that pay off later while the other only provides immediate enjoyment.



Still, we continue to choose cookies over apples. Why? The answer can be as complicated as you would like to make it. You could make it a debate on advertising and marketing, fruit sugar versus refined sugar, discipline versus comfort. Basically, the choice boils down to which makes you the happiest right now. If you gain more happiness from the anticipation of future results, you will eat the apple, but if you focus on immediate satisfaction...bring on the cookies!

**LITTLE STEPS
NOW WILL
CARRY YOU A
LONG WAY IF
YOU GIVE IT
ENOUGH TIME.**



Food is not the only area where we run into this problem. Finances create the same type of decision. “Start saving early and be consistent.” Simple and proven—the earlier you start saving for retirement, the easier it is to have a secure future, as long as you stay fairly consistent with your contributions and avoid early withdrawals.

Most, however, wait until late in their careers before they start putting something back for the future. Why? I believe the answers are the same as the apple versus the cookie. We know the benefits of saving early and putting something back for the future. We know the earlier we start the easier it will be, but we don’t like to give up immediate happiness for results in the distant future.

How do we correct this? Just like choosing a healthier food option, we must think about the end results of our actions. Eating the cookie tastes good now, but in a little while I will experience a sugar crash, and if I eat enough cookies I will have to purchase larger pants. Not to mention diabetes and other major health concerns. When thinking long-term over the immediate, the cookie versus apple decision becomes a little easier because our happiness is based on a longer timeline.

The same is true for savings. If we focus only on what we have to give up right now in order to save—cable, new shoes, the latest technology, Starbucks—our happiness will always go to the here and now. We will say things like, “I would, but I just don’t have the funds to set aside.” Or, “I have plenty of time for that later.”

If we think a little further down the road, about financial struggles, covering an emergency, or making ends meet in retirement without money, our happiness scale will tip towards the future.

I am not telling you to give up all immediate happiness to provide for the future, but you shouldn’t give up all of your future happiness for immediate pleasure either. This isn’t an all or nothing sort of thing. If you start early, regularly setting aside something for your future, it could really end up being a 1:5 ratio. Giving up one out of every five immediate happiness choices can go a long way...as long as you start early and are consistent. The longer you wait, the more the ratio creeps up to 3:5 or even 4:5, which will not really allow you to be happy in either immediate or future situations.

When it comes to making a choice between your afternoon snack or your financial future, if you will stretch out your timeline and actually think deliberately about your choice, you will make better decisions that allow you to reach your future goals. Little steps now will carry you a long way if you give it enough time. **ONE**

About the Writer: John Brummitt became director of the Board of Retirement in January 2016. He graduated in 2011 with an MBA from Tennessee Tech University. A 2004 graduate of Welch College, he has been with the Board of Retirement since the spring of 2006.

Planning Ahead

BY DEXTER BRUMMITT



Ministers work a lifetime fulfilling the call God has placed on their lives. Some serve in full-time ministry positions and others in bi-vocational positions. But wherever God places us, we all go through different stages in life. When young we have strength and stamina that seems to renew readily. As we get older, we no longer “bounce back” like we once did. And, if we live, we all come to a time in life when we must slow our pace and adjust to the fact we’re getting older. That’s when we realize a retirement account has been a smart move. We must plan ahead so our retirement years can be comfortable and productive.

The Apostle Paul is a strong example of bi-vocational ministry. He was a tentmaker by trade (Acts 18:3-4) but also had a significant pulpit and church-planting ministry. When it came to his “retirement years,” however, the apostle ended up in Rome writing from prison under the watchful eye of his guards.

Although willing to work wherever the Lord places us, most of us probably wish for a different kind of retirement than Paul. We know that with the Lord, everything will be fine. But most of us probably like to think of retirement as a time to relax a little while still being useful in the Lord’s work. In order to accomplish that, we need a plan to allow us the flexibility to do those things without creating a financial burden.

When we think about retirement many things come to mind. Things we’d like to do and things we won’t have to do any more. The problem comes in what we’ll be able to do. Things are expensive, even when you’re retired. Traveling is expensive, even when it is not luxurious. Time on the road, eating out, sightseeing, and even visiting churches or other ministries can eat away at a retirement budget quickly.

Not everybody wants to retire from a full-time job or pastorate to become a Walmart greeter or grocery store bag boy. (Not that there is anything wrong with that.)

Social Security or even a pension plan may not afford us enough to have a relaxed retirement with ministry opportunities. That’s why I started a retirement account with Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement. Even with a pension, the loss of church income can be devastating to the family budget of a bi-vocational pastor. A full-time pastor may identify the need for a Board of Retirement account easier than a bi-vocational pastor, but the need may be the same.

Both bi-vocational pastors and full-time pastors may end up with greater needs than planned due to declining health, unexpected expenses, or a number of other things that can go wrong. Our “adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about seeking whom he may devour” (1 Peter 5:8). “The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly” (John 10:10).

God provides for us, both now and in our retirement years. And we ought never to stop ministering where God gives us opportunity. So, let’s not be stubborn. Let’s accept the help He has provided for a retirement that not only allows us to survive but also to be fruitful in ministry. Most folks regret it when they fail to plan ahead. **ONE**

About the Writer: Dexter Brummitt was a bi-vocational Free Will Baptist pastor for more than 30 years. He currently pastors West Greene Free Will Baptist Church in Mosheim, Tennessee. Visit www.BoardofRetirement.com for more information on retirement planning and other financial resources.

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Illinois Master's Men helps one family rebuild after a fire destroys their home.

Out of the **ASHES** BY TIM HAYES

The long-vacant Brown Shoe Company factory building in Salem, Illinois, burned September 22, 2015. According to local news outlets, the fire was so intense that when firefighters arrived on the scene, little could be done to save it. Ten surrounding fire departments were summoned to battle the out-of-control blaze as it began to spread to nearby structures. Before the fire could be contained, it severely damaged the nearby home of George and Crystal Shoat. The couple lost most of their possessions, and they had no insurance. That's when Free Will Baptists stepped in to help.

Michele Donoho recalls the Lord leading her to assist this family. His guidance was so strong, she was unable to rest, and she asked her friend Tina Stajduhar to pray with her about a solution. As they prayed together, God's leading became obvious to both of them: "Tear down the burned out shell, and build the Shoats a new home."

It was a tall order. Before long, however, funds began pouring in from churches, businesses, and the community, along with materials and offers of volunteer labor. By the end of November, with the help of Illinois Master's Men, a construction plan was in place. Tina's husband Chris, off from work after recent back surgery, would serve as general contractor.

Demolition began December 3, and was completed in three days. Rebuilding began December 7, and the entire project was finished in two months. It was nothing short of a miracle. Twenty-five volunteers provided the labor while lumberyards, supply houses, and contractors were unbelievably generous.

A number of churches and church organizations partnered with the group on this project: Calvary FWB Church, Pleasant View FWB Church, the Illinois FWB Disaster Response Team, First Christian Church, Grace Methodist, and the Nazarene Church of Salem.

About the Writer: Tim Hayes is Disaster Relief Coordinator for Illinois Master's Men. To learn how you can get involved in Free Will Baptist disaster response, visit www.FWBMastersMen.org.



Photo (left to right): Walter Curry, Bob Donoho, Michelle Donoho, Tina Stajduhar, and Chris Stajduhar.



The entire experience has been a good reminder: if the Lord tells you to do the impossible, just step out in faith, be ready for hard work, and trust God to provide. **ONE**

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SPECIAL TOPICS?

Even the title causes one to pause. Why special? And what does “special” mean? Some may think of that whiny pop-culture question, “Well, isn’t that special?” Not so much, when you say it that way. Webster, however, suggests that *special* has a particular, different, or distinguished purpose.

You may have noticed the new D6 2GEN curriculum features “Special Topics” in every teaching guide. Again, one should ask why. Have we not insisted on an exegetical approach to studying Scripture? Don’t we work methodically through a section or book exploring the depths and truths that God intends? Yes, yes, and yes again. Then why does Randall House interrupt those exegetical studies to address “special topics” through topical studies?

Let’s explore the rationale for the shift, and you decide if it is warranted. The world is changing rapidly, and we all agree that the Bible is our guide to faith and practice in this evolving landscape. Every generation faces problems never encountered by parents and grandparents. In order to build godly gladiators, we must equip our kids to know how to put on the whole armor of God.

To help each generation stand, we must equip, teach, and train every generation the principles of Scripture, not just blindly following rules, but by understanding the principles. If our kids cannot articulate why sin is bad, or an attitude is good, then they can easily be persuaded otherwise. Difficult topics arise every day in school, workplace, and society. Let’s learn what God says about these challenging issues *together* and talk about them at home and at church.

Kids need to understand that God’s Word provides principles to address such issues. It is wise to warn our children to stop and look before they cross the street. It is much more urgent and eternally important to prepare them to be on guard for hostile philosophies that seek to destroy their faith.



Randall House values systematic, expository teaching of God's Word and aligns the family themes so faith conversations occur between parents, kids, and grandparents (even those who live many miles away). Each quarter, D6 2GEN leads teachers and students through the exegesis of a New Testament study and Old Testament study. D6 2GEN tackles a Special Topic using the same principles of exegesis from multiple places in Scripture (because most topics cannot be taught solely from one passage of Scripture).

For example, D6 2GEN will walk teachers and students through a study about "Explaining the supernatural from the Bible, not the box office." The study will cover what the Scripture says about angels and the devil. Our kids adopt many beliefs from the media; we need to help them discern what is truth.

In an increasingly sinful world, purity is not an easy subject to teach but is desperately needed. Therefore, we will teach a series of lessons about God's design for sexuality, which will allow older students to deal with topics of modesty, purity, and biblical principles while younger students study the feeding of the five thousand. These topics are taught in an age-specific way. We will not overstep boundaries, but the teaching guides will not assume every dad and mom is dealing with these issues. Other special topics in the coming year include "Tearing Down Modern Day Idols" and the "Attitude of Privilege, Not Obligation, in Serving Christ."



There is value in addressing these special topics. Imagine the meaningful conversations around the dinner table when kids, parents, and grandparents are learning how to biblically address these challenging topics together. Let's build generational gladiators and equip every member of the family to put on the whole armor of God. **ONE**

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WORLDWIDE



THE PATH TO revival

Milestone Meeting in the Midwest

National Association of Free Will Baptists | July 17-20, 2016 | Kansas City, Missouri

When delegates gathered at the first Free Will Baptist “national convention” in 1935 they surely never imagined that 80 years later, the convention choir would be larger than the attendance at that first meeting... not to mention live-streamed services or online pre-registration.

Yet today’s Free Will Baptists have more in common with those early denominational pioneers than it might seem. Despite the dramatic changes the denomination (and the world) has seen in the past eight decades, Free Will Baptists remain true to their core values and theology, preach the Word faithfully, and continue to take the gospel to those who have never heard.

The faithful example set by those early Free Will Baptists has continued down through the generations. In spite of challenges and changes, the words of this year’s theme hymn echo the sentiment of Free Will Baptists through the intervening decades: “Our God will not be moved; our God will never change; our God will reign forevermore!”



Ready for Revival

This year's convention theme, "The Path to Revival," centered around 2 Chronicles 7:14: "If my people, which are called by my name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways; then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

Convention worship kicked off with Sunday School taught by Ben Evans, deacon and Bible study teacher at Calvary Fellowship FWB Church near St. Louis, Missouri.

Wayne Miracle, pastor of New Life Fellowship in Statesboro, Georgia, preached on "The Problem Reviewed" during the Sunday morning service, explaining the historical context of the passage and preparing congregants for the rest of the week's messages.

Cory Thompson, pastor of First FWB Church in Poteau, Oklahoma, followed on Sunday evening with "The People Responsible," examining the phrase, *my people, which are called by my name* from the convention's theme verse.

Monday evening, Brad Ryan, pastor of Ina FWB Church in Illinois, preached from the phrase, *humble themselves and pray*, "The Prerequisite Required."

On Tuesday evening, Richard Robinson, pastor of Thayer FWB Church in Thayer, Missouri, delivered "The Prescription Recommended," exhorting the congregation to seek the Lord's face and repent.

During the Wednesday evening missions service, Marc Nepl, church planter and pastor of Restore FWB Church in Portsmouth, Virginia, preached on "The Promise Revealed," inviting the congregation to embrace the healing God offers. He concluded the convention by challenging listeners to engage and disciple a rising generation of Free Will Baptist leaders.

Each service throughout the week built upon the ones before, with enthusiastic congregational singing led by the Convention Choir and Orchestra, under the guidance of Convention Music Coordinator Kevin Justice and Orchestra Director Joshua Riggs. Numerous talented individuals, families, and groups shared their voices and instruments as they joined the congregation in worship.

Meeting Moments

The 2016 convention was marked by many remarkable moments—firsts, milestones, and out-of-the-ordinary events that changed the complexion of the meeting.

Perhaps most notable was a prayer rally that replaced the annual preaching conference. In keeping with the revival theme, both laypeople and ministers led prayers for everything from evangelism and ministry to national concerns, denominational leadership, and current events. Men, women, and entire families huddled in groups, and the ballroom filled with voices interceding on

behalf of the denomination, pastors, missionaries, and the nation.

Impact (annual outreach emphasis) celebrated its tenth year with three exciting events on the Saturday before the convention. Eighteen volunteers from Mississippi, Illinois, Tennessee, and Oklahoma joined members of LifePoint FWB Church at the Harvesters warehouse to sort and pack nearly 12,000 pounds of food. At Victory FWB Church (Kansas City), 30 volunteers provided food and fun activities for 150 visitors, four of whom returned to visit the church the following morning.

Central FWB Church (Grandview) sponsored a community carnival with inflatables and games. Local departments provided police cars and fire trucks, and the church honored first responders. Approximately 200 enthusiastic residents attended the fair. "It's great that race has no boundaries in the love of Christ!" remarked Rob Stottlemire, chief of Grandview Fire Department, after watching the church interact with the community.

From practical ministry and apologetics to preparing for college and confronting cultural issues, 88 seminars and panel discussions provided something for every convention goer. North American Ministries, Welch College, WNAC, Engage Leadership Network, and the Media Commission provided the practical sessions.

In an especially poignant convention moment, North American Ministries acknowl-



edged a record number of military chaplains attending the convention. These chaplains joined Kerry Steedley, director of chaplain support, onstage to honor recently retired chaplain David Trogdon, who received the prestigious Legion of Merit Award presented by the White House for exceptional performance. Trogdon told delegates, “I thank God, my family, and Free Will Baptists for the opportunity to go into all the world to serve and pastor those who lay down their lives for freedom.” Steedley also honored David’s wife Connie for her years of support and service to military men and women.

The Commission for Theological Integrity honored the influence of Leroy Forlines with the release of *The Promise of Arminian Theology: Essays in Honor of F. Leroy Forlines*. Matt Bracey, one of the book’s authors and editors noted, “Leroy Forlines is a man who shaped the Free Will Baptist denomination and its theology. His contributions offer hope and promise for our future. We are indebted to him and grateful for him, and we honor him with this book.”

The Media Commission worked in tandem with the Executive Office to promote *Check-in for a Cause*. The campaign used Facebook check-ins to provide Bibles for Kazakhstan—one for every five check-ins. Nearly 6,000 people checked in throughout the week, with 3.3 million impressions (the number of times check-ins were viewed) on Facebook. A special thanks goes to both Free Will Baptist Foundation and International Missions for their partnership in this exciting campaign.

Down to Business

GENERAL BOARD

On Monday, July 18, the General Board heard reports from nine national agencies and four commissions as Moderator Tim York guided board members through a four-hour, 19-minute meeting. The board approved several recommendations including a 2017 denominational budget of nearly \$26 million, an Executive Committee recommendation that the 2021 convention be

held July 18-21, in Memphis, Tennessee, and a change to the By-Laws to bring the annual obituary report under the responsibility of the Executive Office.

Clerk Randy Bryant read the names of 19 appointments to 2017 national committees: Credentials (5), Nominating (7), Resolutions (5), and Obituary Committee (2).

During Tuesday and Wednesday business sessions, delegates heard, discussed (sometimes at great length), and approved the following reports from national departments:

EXECUTIVE OFFICE

Executive Secretary Keith Burden acknowledged 2015 was a year of significant change and challenges as the office continues to adjust to steadily declining, and in some cases, inadequate financial resources after a 24% drop in Together Way giving over the past decade. In addition, the evolving meeting planning industry has forced the office to rethink and retool the annual convention. Despite these financial concerns, Burden thanked faithful supporters for their generosity.

He pointed to achievements reached this year: the production of *ONE Magazine*, which continues to thrive, reaching 55,000 families nationwide; an update to the *Treatise*; the development and implementation of the *Rekindle* program for restoring church health; and the production of a training DVD to help churches prepare for and react to emergencies.

Burden reminded listeners, “In a world of constant change, we follow a changeless Savior and preach the eternal Word. The future of our churches and denomination rests squarely on these unalterable facts.” He urged them to pray for wisdom in leadership and for churches to develop a heart for giving. In closing, he honored Tim Campbell (AR) for serving three terms—12 years—on the Executive Committee.

FREE WILL BAPTIST FOUNDATION

Foundation Director David Brown noted a loss of more than \$150,000 in 2015 due to

late-year market transactions and expenses related to the estate-planning ministry (an expected loss to be corrected by operational adjustments). On the positive side, Brown pointed to an increase of \$1.4 million in assets and a \$6 million net positive in Money Management Trusts.

He cheerfully informed delegates the first half of 2016 “looks really good,” with total assets up almost \$8 million, nearing \$72 million. This increase is especially impressive considering a \$1.7 million withdrawal by Welch College to fund construction of the new campus. Based on current projections, the Foundation will not only enjoy record-setting increases in 2016, but will make grants available to Free Will Baptist ministries again next year.

The department hired Tim York in early 2016 as a part-time, estate planning field representative for Kentucky and West Virginia, with an additional representative to be hired in 2017. The Foundation set up 430 new estate plans in 2015, bringing the total to 991 through the end of the year, with 280 new estate plans already established in 2016. An estimated \$13.3 million has been promised to Free Will Baptist ministries as a result, and Brown projects \$75 million in bequests established in the next ten years.

BOARD OF RETIREMENT

During his report to convention delegates, first-year director John Brummitt noted this was a year of transition for the department. Following the change in leadership after director Ray Lewis retired in December 2015 (only the third director in the board’s 47-year history), the department hired two new staff members: Joshua Eidson, accounting administrator, and Chris Compton, communications officer. These new team members were instrumental in re-launching the website (boardofretirement.com), improving reporting procedures, and advancing financial education and resources.

Despite a downturn in the market during the last quarter of 2015 (resulting in a negative annual return), Brummitt reported normal growth for the board in 2015, with 57 new enrollees, \$2.6 million in contribu-

tions, and operational expenses well under budget. He urged listeners not to delay in saving for retirement, but to start immediately, because the long-term benefits outweigh the short-term sacrifices.

NORTH AMERICAN MINISTRIES

Director David Crowe told delegates, “North American Ministries has many exciting things to report.” Fifty-three families are planting churches in 25 states (not including 42 Hispanic church plants). Crowe honored five churches for reaching self-supporting status during the past year and announced four new church plants in 2016, with four planned in 2017. He celebrated the work in Portsmouth, Virginia, where 264 attended the launch service, with an average of 100 in attendance. Crowe rejoiced that three new churches—two in Arizona and one in Tennessee—are averaging more than 200 in worship weekly.

The church revitalization program continues to expand and thrive under the direction of Jim McComas while Master’s Men, under the leadership of Ken Akers, remains busy with disaster relief, outreach events, construction projects, and sports fellowship. Free Will Baptist chaplain ministry continues to be a vital outreach to military men and women.

Crowe also reported that the second Power Conference, held in Pigeon Forge, Tennessee, May 30-31, was well attended and well received. He announced the conference will return to Branson, Missouri, in

May 2017, to explore the theme, “Founded in the Past; Faithful to the Present; Focused on the Future.”

He noted significant setbacks in the department’s financial report, primarily related to doubtful and devaluated accounts in the Church Extension Loan Fund (CELF). He explained that significant steps have been taken in CELF operations to account for these losses, with good results. Crowe thanked Free Will Baptists for their continuing generous support of the department—\$4.3 million in 2015—and thanked his staff for their “servant spirit, commitment, and excellent work.”

INTERNATIONAL MISSIONS

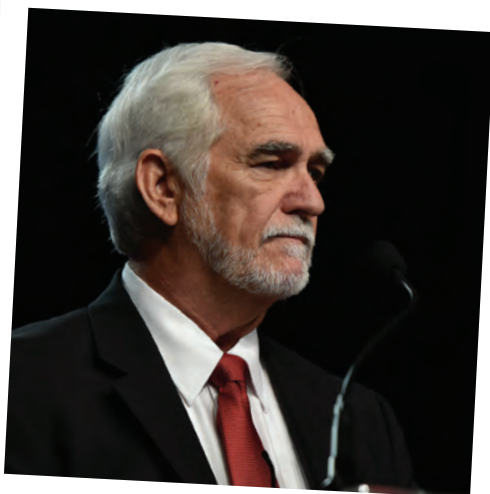
Clint Morgan, director of Free Will Baptist International Missions, pointed to several important decisions made by the IM Board this year: Joel and Lydie Teague (France), Chris and Tori Sargent (Spain), and Doug and Miriam Bishop (Japan) were approved as career missionaries. Daniel Reeves was appointed to a two-year internship in France, and the Mission formed strategic partnerships with Village of Hope Uganda and Jungle Kids for Christ (Ecuador).

Most notably, however, the board made the decision to return to a designated funding system. A general funding system was instituted in 2008 to get missionaries on the field more quickly, to prevent them from being recalled due to red accounts, to avoid them being held stateside to raise funds, and to fully fund partnerships with mature

fields. The decision to return to designated funding was made after analysis revealed that not only were these goals *not* achieved, IM also experienced a cumulative loss of approximately \$7.6 million in donations since 2008. As a result, in 2015, IM made the difficult decision to reduce personnel and reduce field budgets drastically.

Rather than continue a system that obviously was not working, the board voted to return to designated giving. Morgan urged pastors and leaders to open their churches to missionaries, teach their people the needs of the world, model obedient giving, and pour support into missionaries and ministries they are led to support. CFO Rob Conley echoed his plea, stating: “I want to be abundantly clear... the funding method is not the issue. Our singular financial objective is to maximize missionaries’ ability to share the gospel, win souls, disciple believers, and see vibrant churches growing. Free Will Baptist International Missions is not a funding system. We exist to labor with the body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission.”

Morgan thanked churches for participating in the World Missions Offering (WMO) and challenged every Free Will Baptist church to participate in 2017. Through the end of June, 2016 gifts totaled \$421,159, roughly \$60,000 lower than 2015. He noted that the changes to funding affect the allocation of WMO funds. The money will now go to strategic partners—mature fields such as India, Panama, Cuba, Cote d’Ivoire, and a few like-minded organizations with



2016 Convention Overview

Registration

Board members - 59
Local church delegates - 47
NAFWB attendees - 2,552
Ordained deacons - 89
Ordained ministers - 469
State delegates - 52
NYC - 3,186

Total Attendees* 4,155

*Note: Many attendees register for both conventions.

Live Streaming

National Association
Total Visitors - 6,328
Unique Visitors - 3,895

2017 Budgets

Executive Office - \$787,650
FWB Foundation - \$1,273,600
Home Missions - \$5,000,000
International Missions - \$6,900,000
Retirement - \$568,900
Randall House - \$4,797,500
Welch College - \$6,278,713
WNAC - \$266,000
Theological Commission - \$8,100
Historical Commission - \$5,045
Media Commission - \$5,200
Music Commission - \$4,775
Total - \$25,895,483

Speakers

Sunday Morning, July 19
Sunday School: Ben Evans (MO)

which IM has a strong theological affinity and ministry focus. Remaining funds will be directed to the general fund.

He praised God for milestones reached in 2015—1,031 new converts, 1,112 baptisms, and 26 new churches—and shared five goals to reach by 2020: 1) increase cash reserves to 20%; 2) increase donor churches from 1,116 to 1,339; 3) increase the number of missionaries from 74 to 89; 4) increase international believers from 27,371 to 32,845; and 5) increase new Free Will Baptist churches from 867 to 1,040.

Morgan presented plaques to board member Tom McCullough and outgoing board Chairman Danny Williams for their years of dedicated ministry. He honored missionary Mirial Gainer for 40 years of work in Japan and presented a plaque to Carlisle Hanna, longest-tenured IM missionary, for 65 years of service to God and India.

WOMEN NATIONALLY ACTIVE FOR CHRIST

Director Elizabeth Hodges noted that 2015 was a historical year for the organization, with two regional conferences for 12- to 18-year-old girls, their mothers, and their youth leaders. Both conferences ministered to 114 girls and 95 moms and youth leaders from 11 states and 36 churches. She announced the 2016 *Shine!* conference to be held November 12, 2016, at Heritage FWB Church, Columbus, Ohio. Visit wnac.org to register.

WNAC established the International Student Scholarship in 2015 to assist foreign students studying at a Free Will Baptist college in the United States. The first scholarship was awarded to Keren Delgado, a freshman at Welch College. The Pursell Foreign Student Scholarship was awarded to four pastoral students in southern India while Wisehart Scholarships were awarded to Allison Lewis (Welch); Courtney Anderson (Randall); and Tori Jefferis (Southeastern).

WNAC members also gave \$505,200 to missions and ministry causes in 2015, along with \$44,700 to the Steward Provision Closet. They raised \$17,000 to help underwrite the cost of a national retreat for Free Will Baptist women in Côte d'Ivoire,

West Africa, making it possible for Ivorian women to meet in a retreat center for the first time. Hodges noted that WNAC will help underwrite a Cuban national retreat in 2017, raising \$12,000 for 400 Cuban ladies. Representatives from WNAC will travel to Cuba to attend the retreat.

In closing, Hodges announced "Praising Him" as the WNAC theme for the coming year, as women turn to the Psalms for strength and encouragement.

WELCH COLLEGE

President Matt Pinson noted that Welch College celebrates 75 years of ministry in 2017. Yet the mission of the college remains unchanged: *to educate leaders to serve Christ, His Church, and His world through biblical thought and life.*

The college continues to receive high reviews for excellence from both outgoing students and accrediting and evaluating organizations. Pinson emphatically declared this reflects the truth "that an emphasis on community and spiritual formation need not be divorced from academic excellence." He noted that while the college continues to offer 40 programs of study, 65% of male students are ministers.

He described 2015-2016 as a "banner year" for the college, with the sale and transition of the campus, increased enrollment, and a healthy financial picture. The *Building on the Legacy* relocation campaign has already raised \$8 million dollars, with \$6.5 million in cash received. Pinson announced a new goal of \$14.4 million, which will allow the college to build a chapel and be debt free in five years.

He celebrated the start of a new master's degree program in 2016, the M.A. in Theology and Ministry, with students enrolled from across the country. He introduced a new book recently published by the college: *Sexuality, Gender, and the Church*. The volume is now available for purchase: order@welch.edu.

Pinson honored two outgoing Welch College board members—Billy Hanna (GA), who served from 2001 to 2016, and Chairman Terry Pierce (MS), who served from 2002 to 2016.

RANDALL HOUSE PUBLICATIONS

Director Ron Hunter acknowledged a significant financial shortfall—\$322,000 in 2014 and \$455,000 in 2015—for a total loss of \$777,000. According to CFO Michael Lytle, these losses result from the cost of producing a new line of curriculum, losses from Vertical Three events, depreciation, and ordering habits of some churches. The shortfall has been addressed by sharp budget adjustments (\$600,000 in 2016) and reduction in staff.

Citing a recent LifeWay study, Hunter described the losses as a reflection of the health of the church-at-large, with only 13% of churches reporting an increase in giving since the economic recession. He cited a trend in the reduction of denominational publishing (38% fewer employees since 2000). In comparison, Randall House has only dropped by one employee during that same time frame.

What is the answer to the funding dilemma? Hunter showed how 10-20% of the churches can affect a \$150,000 to \$300,000 dollar loss when one or a combination of the following occur: not ordering summer curriculum, ordering from multiple publishers, and not ordering at-home student pieces. He reminded delegates that Randall House has five major initiatives: 1) book publishing; 2) National Youth Conference (now Vertical Three Conference); 3) the D6 Conference; 4) training; and 5) all curricu-

lum. He warned listeners that while Randall House has taken steps to alleviate the financial strain, without the support of the denomination, the publisher faces difficult decisions. Hunter further challenged the denomination to identify one goal everyone could rally around while still valuing our diversity. He suggested that goal might be the health of Free Will Baptist churches. Nearly 50% of his report discussed the urgency needed for change denomination-wide and revealed a few consequences should it not occur. To read a copy of his transcript download it at RandallHouse.com/report2016.

He celebrated the ongoing expansion of D6, from growing numbers in the U.S. to Norway, France, India, Malaysia, and the Philippines. These international conferences require little investment on the part of Randall House but have expanded the ministry's impact globally. In closing, Hunter honored outgoing board members Tim Eaton (2004-2016) and current chairman Tim Owen (2002-2016).

COMMISSIONS

The *Music Commission* continues its ongoing partnership with the Executive Office to provide music for the national convention, according to Doug Little, commission chairman. During the past year, the group also explored the feasibility of a hymnbook project, offered workshops at the convention, and began work toward a website to be launched later this year. The commission

Sunday Morning, July 19
Wayne Miracle (GA)

Sunday Evening, July 19
Cory Thompson (OK)

Monday Evening, July 20
Brad Ryan (IL)

Tuesday Evening, July 21
Richard Robinson (MO)

Wednesday Evening, July 22
Marc Neppi (VA)

Elected in 2016

Welch College - 2022

Michael Armstrong (OH)
Brad Ryan (IL)
Wayne Miracle (GA)

International Missions - 2022

Cameron Lane (AR)
Will Harmon (AR)
Rodney Yerby (AL)

Randall House - 2022

Darin Gibbs (NC)
Timothy York (NY)
Jay Baines (VA)

WNAC - 2022

Pam Hackett (SC)
Jonda Patton (KY)
Lee Ann Wilfong (MO)

Theological Commission 2021

W. Jackson Watts (MO)

Historical Commission

2017 - Willie Martin (GA)
2021 - Jeff Cockrell (TN)

Music Commission 2021

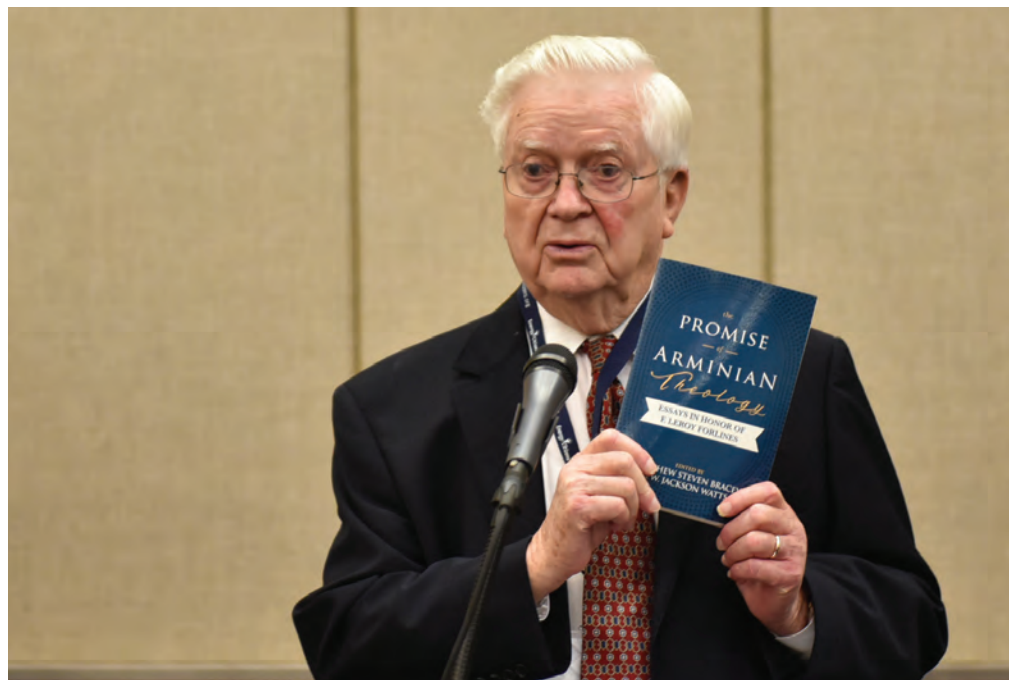
Donnie Burke (CO)

Media Commission 2021

Daniel Edwards (IN)

Executive Committee - 2019

David Taylor (AR)
Danny Williams (AL)
David Shores (IL)



General Officers

Moderator: Tim York (TN)

Assistant Moderator: William Smith (GA)

Clerk: Randy Bryant (FL)

Assistant Clerk: Ernie Lewis (IL)

The following boards did not elect members in 2016:
Home Missions, Board of Retirement,
and Free Will Baptist Foundation.

NYC Snapshot

Registration: 3,186

Truth & Peace: 130 participants from
21 states and 2 foreign countries.

Competitive Entries: 950

Reach That Guy

311 volunteers

1,366 hours

17 service projects

Buck-A-Week Offering: \$5,638.75

Conference Highlights

Responses every night

88 seminars/breakouts.

New Give360 Bible Study released

Over 300 attended Global Purpose Seekers (GPS)

2017 YET Team

Gabe Knight - AL

Mason McClintock - GA

Leah Williams - NY

Brynn Jones - OK

Anna Pinson - TN

Abby Myers - MI

Raygan Sellars - TN

Josh Hunt - MO

Layla England - KY

Nate Mattingley - KY

Meredith Baer - NC

Grace Rohroff - MI

Jacob Houske - TN

CONVENTION COVERAGE

General editor: Eric Thomsen; **Copy editor:** Emily Faison; **Worship:** Deborah St. Lawrence;

Exhibits: Sara Poston; **NYC:** Brandon Roysden;
WNAC: Phyllis York; **Photographer:** Rodney Yerby

Download photos: nafwb.yerbyphotography.com

is also working to identify rising musicians in churches and colleges across the denomination.

The *Media Commission* continues its focus of providing live streaming from the national convention, according to Travis Penn, chairman. That role expanded this year to include directors' reports from the business session. The commission is exploring the possibility of live streaming the services translated into Spanish next year. The commission has also placed a greater emphasis on outreach through social media and provided workshops at the national convention. The group also partnered with the Executive Office to promote *Check-ins for a Cause*, a Facebook funding program that will result in Bibles printed in the Kazakh language.

The *Historical Commission* noted the passing of Jack Williams, member of the commission for nearly 40 years. During his time on the board, Jack contributed to many important historical projects including *The 50-Year Record*, *History of the Free Will Baptist State Associations*, and the *Free Will Baptist Heritage Series* of pamphlets. In 2015–2016, the commission continued its push to develop a comprehensive Free

Will Baptist digital collection by processing, scanning, and posting state and district minutes. The collection may be accessed at FWBHistory.com or at WelchLibrary.wordpress.com. At its March 2016 meeting, the commission also renewed its decision to help furnish the new historical room at Welch College.

The *Commission for Theological Integrity* sponsored the nineteenth annual Theological Symposium, October 26–27, 2015, according to chairman Matt Pinson. The 2016 Symposium will meet October 24–25, at Welch College in Nashville, Tennessee, with the theme, "The Theological Legacy of F. Leroy Forlines." Papers are currently being accepted for consideration. The commission presented the latest issue of *Integrity: A Journal of Christian Thought*, available at FWBTheology.com. This website continues to expand, with regular theological articles and regular news about commission events and resources.

In other business, delegates passed resolutions affirming biblical gender identity, reaffirming the denomination's stand against alcohol and addictive substances, and thanking the Missouri State Association for hosting the convention.

Transformed in Kansas City

National Youth Conference | July 17–20 | Kansas City, Missouri

More than 3,000 students, parents, and leaders registered for the 2016 National Youth Conference (NYC) when it returned to Kansas City in 2016. Students spent the week exploring the transforming power of God's Word.

Ryan Akers, pastor to students and families at Calvary Fellowship Church (MO) spoke Sunday morning, challenging students to truly sacrifice their all and to give everything to Jesus. Sunday evening, Aaron Pontious, student pastor at The Donelson Fellowship (TN), challenged students to live out their faith and to filter everything through a biblical worldview. Youth culture specialists **Axis** motivated students on Monday night to "distinguish" their worldview. Finally, on Tuesday night, Allen Pointer, pastor of Cofer's Chapel (TN), ended the week by reminding students to present their bodies as living sacrifices, and to embrace their identity in Christ.

The 2016 conference wasn't only for teenagers. Katie Greenwood led 92 of

the youngest Free Will Baptists in crafts, games, and Bible lessons each night.

Johnny Miller helped 233 children in grades 1-3 move from “The Dark Side to the Right Side” and also coordinated the children’s choir that kicked off the awards program on Wednesday night. Down the hall at Highway 456, Steve Greenwood and Josh Wooten led an energetic worship time for 291 tweens (4-6 grade) each night.

NYC debuted Kids Corner this year with great success. The indoor playground and activity center gave children an opportunity to expend a little energy and allowed parents to take in many of the seminars available to attendees. Johnny Miller and his staff managed the fun activities for children on Monday and Tuesday.

Jane Parker organized the Reach That Guy outreach program, where 311 volunteers spent over 1,300 hours accomplishing 17 projects throughout Kansas City and sharing 21 units of blood during the Wednesday blood drive. Attendees were asked to give back by creating “care bags” designed to leave needed resources in the hands of the homeless population of Kansas City. Throughout the week, Reach That Guy distributed 70 bags to those who needed them.

Attendees also gave back through the Tuesday evening Buck-A-Week offering. In addition to money given throughout the year, students gave more than \$5,000 to benefit Free Will Baptist missionary efforts. Coin banks and online giving options are available at verticalthree.com for those who wish to support the Buck-A-Week initiative in the coming year.

During the GPS (Global Purpose Seekers) Experience, 300 people made their way through seven booths to meet and talk to missionaries about God’s call to take the gospel to unreached people. This experience gave students a global missions encounter where they learned about God’s desire for the nations and what Free Will Baptists are doing to spread that message.

The ENGAGE Leadership Network Seminar Series continues to be a vital addition to NYC. With more than 80 sessions covering topics from biblical church growth to cultural engagement, there was something for every participant. Students and parents alike took advantage of these sessions made possible by the partnership between Randall House and International Missions, North American Ministries, WNAC, and Welch College. On Monday night, ENGAGE hosted a panel discussion to address the topic “God and Country: The Christian and Politics.”

Truth & Peace 2016 was a year of firsts! The conference accepted its largest number, with 130 students attending from 20 states, Spain, and Canada. Twenty teams were named after a country where Free Will Baptists minister. During the conference, these students were given opportunities to practice servant leadership. It is no exaggeration to say the NYC is staffed—in large part—by the high school student leaders of Truth & Peace. Under the leadership of Allen Pointer, the conference culminated at the NYC and five intense days of setup, teardown, growth, and service. Any student in grades 9-12 may apply to Truth & Peace. Applications can be found online: VerticalThree.com

Another student-led group, the Youth Evangelistic Team (YET) did a phenomenal job leading NYC worship. The group traveled almost 2,000 miles during the summer, conducting eight services in five states, and completing four service projects. Jeremy and Beth Thomas did an outstanding job guiding the tour and assisting the group in leading worship for NYC. Plans were announced for the 2017 team to travel to the Southeast.

On Wednesday evening, Russell Thomas (Greenwood, AR) was awarded Youth Worker of the Year; Mineral Springs FWB Church Youth (Muldrow, OK) was named Group of the Year; and Avery Jones from Rejoice Church (Owasso, OK) received Youth of the Year. In addition, Allen Pointer received the Jim Lauthern Legacy Award for exemplary service and long-term dedication to Free Will Baptist students.

Brandon Roysden, director of events at Randall House, announced the re-naming of NYC (National Youth Conference) to Vertical Three Conference. The intent is to focus on equipping students to stand for their faith while providing an intentional student conference experience for all Free Will Baptist youth groups.

If you missed NYC 2016, make plans now to attend the 2017 Vertical Three Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, July 18-21. Next year’s meeting will challenge students to “Be Bold” from 2 Corinthians 3:12. Don’t miss it!

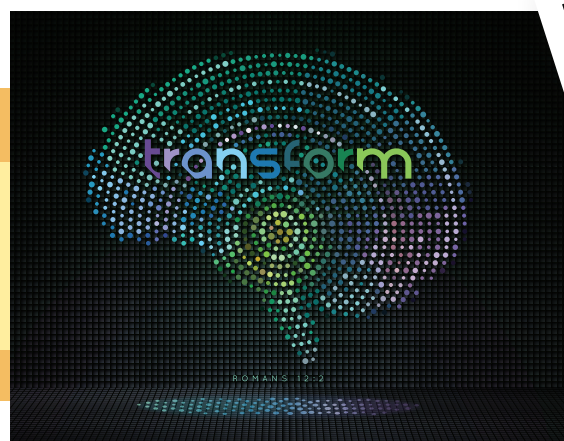


Photo: Mark Cowart



KEITH BURDEN, CMP
Executive Secretary
National Association
of Free Will Baptists

ONE to ONE >>

YOU JUST NEVER KNOW

We got acquainted through a mutual friend. She did not have a Christian background, but she did have a lot of questions about the Bible and Christianity. Her husband was a great guy, but neither of them was living for the Lord at the time. Gradually, in a variety of different settings, we had the opportunity to get to know one another.

As they attended services at our church, they had opportunity to see biblical faith lived out in the lives of our congregation. One couple in particular invested heavily in them. Apparently that whetted their appetite for spiritual things, and I had the chance to answer their questions and share the gospel with them.

The day finally came when I decided it was time to “draw the net.” It was apparent to me that the Lord was knocking at their heart’s door. I encouraged them to respond. She prayed and accepted Christ as her Savior. He rededicated his life. Shortly thereafter, they made public profession of their faith and joined the church. She was also baptized.

The very next year I had the honor of serving as the officiant when the couple dedicated their infant son to the Lord. Shortly thereafter, I accepted the pastorate of another church. Although we did not stay in close contact I was aware that they remained faithful to the Lord and were growing in their faith. They obviously had a big impact on their son. He accepted

Christ as Savior at a very early age.

Fast-forward 17 years. Last night my wife and I attended the closing ceremony at Welch College and celebrated the safe and successful return of the 2016 E-TEAMs. My heart was filled with joy and my eyes moistened with tears as I watched that young man walk on stage as a member of Team Brazil. Incredible!

Not every story has such a happy ending. Unfortunately, some who begin the journey with Christ do not see it through to completion. For various reasons they abandon their faith and, in the words of Scripture, “fall by the wayside.” Thankfully, this story had a different outcome.

I have great confidence in Christ’s power to transform lives and enable people to reach their spiritual potential. But the truth is, you just never know. You never know the far-reaching impact your words or deeds will have on the lives of others. Seventeen years earlier, I was simply trying to be faithful to my calling. Seventeen years later I marvel at how God uses our feeble efforts to produce such amazing results.

That young man has already visited the countries of Cuba and Brazil. Each trip had a profound impact on his life. He indicated he plans to apply for E-TEAM again next year. Will he be accepted? If so, which country will he visit? Where will these experiences lead him in the future? You just never know. **ONE**

Put it down!

2017 Deep South Golf Tournament
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SEXUALITY, GENDER, *and the* CHURCH

What do Free Will Baptists believe about sexuality, gender, and the definition of marriage...and why?

Should Christians actively engage public life and culture? If so, how?

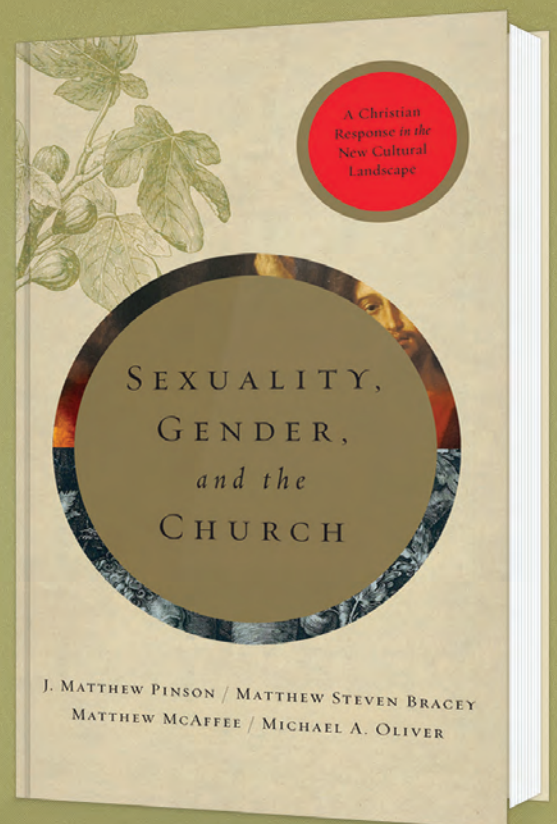
What do I need to know about the legal, political, and religious liberty implications of the Supreme Court decision legalizing same-sex marriage?

What steps can I take to offer hope and healing to a friend or family member struggling with same-sex attractions?

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