

ONE LORD ONE VOICE ONE VISION

ONE

MAGAZINE

The Magazine for Free Will Baptists

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2008

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The Secret of
Church Growth
Cowboy Evangelism

TEAMWORK

The Power of Working Together

Confessions of a
Convention Brat





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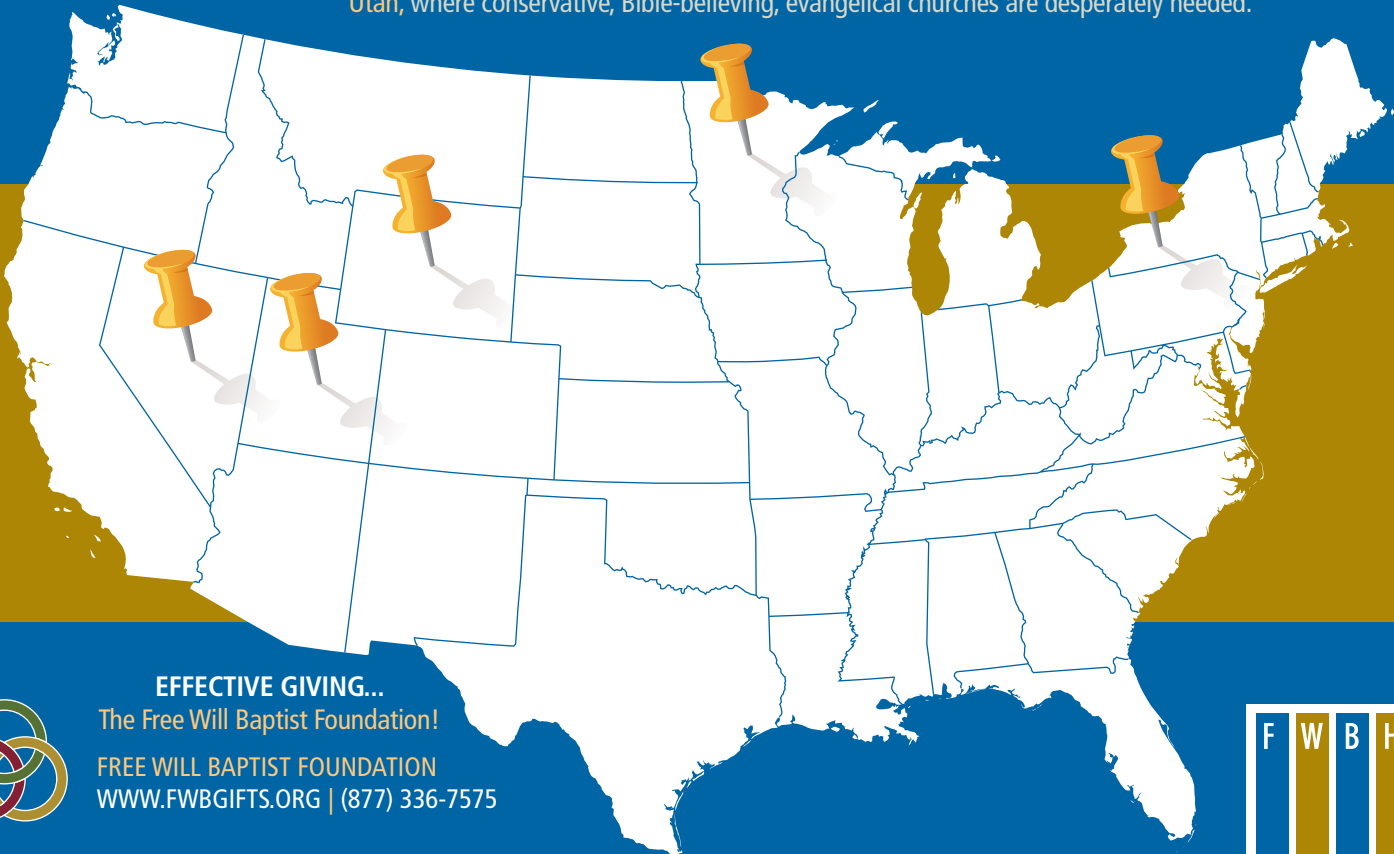


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ONE MAGAZINE

TO COMMUNICATE TO FREE WILL BAPTISTS
A UNIFYING VISION OF OUR ROLE IN THE EXTENSION OF GOD'S KINGDOM.

ONE MAGAZINE ISSN #1554-3323, Vol #4 Issue #6 is published bi-monthly by the National Association of Free Will Baptists, Inc, 5233 Mt. View Road, Antioch, TN 37013-2306. Non-profit periodical postage rate paid at Antioch, TN 37011 and additional offices. POSTMASTER, SEND ADDRESS CHANGES TO: *ONE Magazine*, PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002.



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While *ONE Magazine* is provided to the reader free of charge, tax-deductible donations are both accepted and appreciated. To make a donation, simply send check or money order to *ONE Magazine*, PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002.



ERIC THOMSEN
MANAGING EDITOR

FIRST GLIMPSE

A CHANGE OF PERSPECTIVE

Ching!

The infield pop fly caromed off the aluminum bat, lifting high into the beautiful June sky. Craning my neck to judge where the ball would land, I shouted, “Mine! Mine! I’ve got it!”

I had taken only one step toward the ball when something struck a heavy blow to the back of my right leg, and I heard a vicious snap. Falling forward, I landed face down in the damp clay. Rising on an elbow, I turned quickly to see whom I had collided with, concerned about his injury. No one lay on the ground beside me.

Suddenly it hit me...hard. It was *my* injury.

White-hot pain coursed through my lower leg, and I crumpled back to the ground, writhing in agony. Concerned teammates gathered around, eventually carrying me to the bench.

The X-rays told me what I already knew—the injury was severe. I had torn my Achilles tendon. Surgery and a long, painful recovery were inevitable.

Over the next few days (as anyone who has suffered a severe injury will understand), I underwent an abrupt change of perspective:

The day before the injury, I complained loudly that seven weeks was not enough time to finish preparations for the national convention. A day lat-

er, the same seven weeks stretched out eternally.

On Thursday, I was a young man in the prime of life, relishing athletic events, and proud my team was winning another game. On Friday, my doctor “officially” informed me that I was too old for high-impact sports.

Before my injury, my daughter was never ready on time. Now, she often smiles and waits patiently while I struggle to put on my socks, making my family late again.

Pre-injury, I was proud of my self-reliance and ability to get things done. Today, I am grateful for the arm my petite wife offers when she helps me into the car.

The deadlines, problems, and issues that once seemed insurmountable now pale in comparison to the monumental challenge of physical therapy.

Aren’t you glad that God is not subject to sports injuries, human events, and fluctuating emotions! He is not affected by political trends or the tides of human government. He doesn’t worry about the results of the November election, and the pressures faced by today’s family do not overwhelm Him. He doesn’t operate on our time schedule; His plans are eternal. In uncertain times, we cling to the certainty that God will never suffer a change of perspective! □

LETTERS

I just received the latest edition of *One Magazine*. As I skimmed the contents, I stopped and read the article by Paul Harrison on abortion. What strikes me most about the article is that it consistently addresses the rights of the fetus and the responsibility of the mother. Not once was there any reference to the father!

As a Christian, I am embarrassed and dismayed that the Christian community spends a significant amount of time reminding women of their responsibility for their actions in getting pregnant and the responsibility of protecting and caring for the fetus, but minimal comment on the responsibility of the men who also made conscious and voluntary decisions to risk the pregnancy of their partners. Where do we discuss the father?

If a man was willing to take responsibility of the pregnancy also, perhaps fewer women would feel that abortion is their only option. Write your readers an article on the **WHOLE** story. Abortion is not illegal, Harrison says, but immoral. Is not it just as immoral for the father to walk away? How many of those men said, “Have the baby. I will take it and care for it”?

Janet Phillips, RN
Dublin, VA

After seeing the April-May edition of *ONE magazine*, I decided to express my appreciation for a job well done. I look forward to receiving *ONE magazine* and can hardly wait for my siesta time so that I can read it from cover to cover.

Having served in Côte d’Ivoire for 31 years, I could especially relate to the cover picture of Carol Pinkerton and our beloved, little Lobi lady, Katherine. Katherine is now with the Lord because of the witness of Free Will Baptists in Côte d’Ivoire. I hope that all who pray and give so that missionaries can go will realize they played a part in Katherine’s hearing about the Lord Jesus.

Alice F. Smith, Missionary,
Cotê d’Ivoire, West Africa

ABOUT THE COVER: In recent years, the popular term *synergy* has been used to define what happens when people work together to accomplish results greater than they could achieve on their own. I like the old word for it...teamwork. And the pages of this issue of *ONE Magazine* are packed with it. As you read the articles and news, ask yourself, “What can I do?”

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THE SECRET TO CHURCH GROWTH

By Chad Kivette

NOT LONG AGO, SOMEONE ASKED ME THE SECRET TO having first-time visitors every week for 18 months. I wish I had been able to respond with a quick answer, but I stood there with a blank look on my face. I could not give a reasonable answer, and I began to think seriously about the question.

SHARING THE SECRET FORMULA...OR NOT

WHAT IS THE SECRET? I could not credit church-wide visitation, mass mailings, or Operation Saturation. So, why do visitors keep coming without a designated church-wide visitation program?

Our church in Grand Junction, Colorado, is unique when it comes to witnessing. The church has claimed the motto, "Where people with a past have a future." Our people have embraced this slogan, and they apply it to everyday life. Because of the radical change in their lives, others want to know the source of the change. Their personal transformation opens numerous doors to share what Christ has done for them.

From the moment they accept Christ, we teach them that Christians are witnesses to the life-changing power of the gospel. We witness because we love God. Our strategy is to be soul winners every hour, every minute, and every second of every day. Outreach is not limited to one night a week.

In the past, I believed new Christians needed to mature before they assume active leadership roles in the church. I have found, however, that it is absolutely essential to put new Christians to work immediately and direct their enthusiasm to the Lord's work.



A COACHING COMPARISON

Coaching basketball is much like pastoring a church. Both pastors and coaches need to prepare their teams for the big game in three areas. First, any team needs ample practice. A good coach hones the skills that create better players. Pastors do this at church by giving members opportunities to practice their skills. It is not necessary for church members to have all the answers, sing the perfect song, or speak with eloquence. New converts are learning, and they need opportunities to practice the new skills they have been taught.

Second, pastors and coaches are both motivators. Have you ever seen a mediocre team play above their ability because of an exciting pep talk by the coach? Pastors should do the same thing. They should build excitement within the congregation and motivate them to win others to Christ.

Third, both pastors and coaches need a game plan. A successful coach has a clear strategy to win the game. The same is true of a pastor. He has to develop and share a vision for the church. If people think a church is going nowhere, that is exactly where it will arrive.



Many people are afraid to deviate from tradition in order to reach people, and many churches are dying for the sake of those traditions.

CONSTRUCTIVE CREATIVITY

It is also helpful to give people a reason to want to be in church. Four times a year, we try to have a special-event Sunday. In February, we enjoy 50s Day. Everyone comes in poodle skirts and leather coats, and we serve hamburgers and milkshakes after the service.

In May, as the weather turns warm, we promote a Hawaiian luau. Everyone wears Hawaiian shirts; we play limbo and throw balls at the dunk tank. In August, we sponsor a Fiesta Sunday, complete with sombreros and Mexican food. In November, the cowhands turn out for Western Day. We try to “round up” as many prospects as we can.

Last year, the church promoted an outdoor revival, and the attendance doubled that of the previous indoor revival. Are the events themselves the secret? Absolutely not! They are simply a means to help new people connect with a congregation anxious to reach them with the gospel. It is a good reminder, however, that serving God does not have to be mundane, boring, or routine.

Consider your church. Do people in your community find your church appealing? Or have you fallen into

a rut, planning the same stuff year after year? Think about what the people in your area like to do, and plan a big day around that event or activity.

In Grand Junction, we throw a Super Bowl party. I know that many pastors feel Super Bowl parties compromise the Sunday evening service. But is it more important to reach the guy who comes to the Super Bowl party with his friends from church or to hold a regular service that reaches no one? Many people are afraid to deviate from tradition in order to reach people, and many churches are dying for the sake of those traditions.

The priority of Christianity is and always has been salvation by grace through faith in Christ. Perhaps it's time to bring some constructive creativity to your church! Shuffle your schedule of services, wear a sombrero, put on a poodle skirt (ladies), eat a goldfish, swallow an opossum—do whatever is necessary to reach that one person who needs Christ. Leading someone to the throne of grace will put pep in your step and a song in your heart! □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Home Missionary Chad Kivette pastors Westgate FWB Church in Grand Junction, CO. Learn more about his church at www.homemissions.net.



cowboy evangelism

By Jeff Cates

What makes a church unique? Is it the style of music or worship, or is it the type of outreach? Is it the building style or location? In reality, it is the *people* that make a church unique. The people are the church.

Canyon Country FWB Church is no more unique than any other church. It is simply a church made up of people from the Panhandle of Texas. The Texas Panhandle is the beef capital of America and home to the American

Quarter Horse Association. Some of the largest ranches in Texas are located here as well. It is impossible to live here and not be influenced in some part by the western ranch culture. The goal of church planting is to build a healthy,



Jeff Cates baptizing a believer at Canyon Country FWB Church.

growing, and active church that is indigenous to its culture. Therefore, the cultural influence of the area will be obvious.

Our church reflects the Texas Panhandle culture. Many members of our congregation wear hats and boots and ride horses. We present the gospel in a relevant way through western activities. Roping, riding, cookouts, and outdoor activities are part of everyday life, so tapping into them is only natural. Christ taught the kingdom of Heaven to an agricultural society by telling them about a sower who went out to sow.

Simplicity is the key. What we do, we do in a very simple way. The gospel is a simple message and should be delivered in a simple manner no matter where you live. Many of the people we are reaching have no church

It is impossible to live here and not be influenced in some part by the western ranch culture.

background and few preconceived ideas. They are seeking the simple truth about God and how He is relative to their lives.

At Canyon Country FWB Church, we strive to remove the fears and doubt about church and show people that God is relevant and church is something of value. It is one of the greatest blessings you can experience when you see the light of understanding come on and lives changed forever.

I hope that is what all churches strive to do. We may be called a cowboy church, but that just means we are planting a church that reflects the culture of the area. As Paul put it, "I am made all things to all men that I might by all means save some" (1 Corinthians 9:22b). That is a good thing, pardner!

May God bless the trails you ride. □



ABOUT THE WRITER: Jeff Cates is a missionary to the Panhandle of Texas. Learn more about the ministry of Canyon Country FWB Church at www.homemissions.net.



Fun at a church activity!



10 WAYS TO HELP HOME MISSIONARIES

by Sandy Atwood

Here are 10 ways to show appreciation to home missionaries who serve God and the denomination:

1. Pray for them.
2. I know we intend to do it, but email your home missionary and ask for specific requests. Go to www.homemissions.net and click on *missionaries* to find email addresses. Send them an email or card thanking them for starting a new church.
3. Send a card with \$5 in it to each of the missionary's children.
4. Send a care package or gift card to the whole family. Enlist a Sunday School class or small group to brainstorm for ideas.
5. Ask the missionary for a specific project (give a dollar amount you want to spend). Plan a special dinner to raise money for it.
6. Adopt a Sunday School class at a mission church. Make a video of your class and email it to theirs. Call them during Sunday School (prearrange this, taking into account different time zones). Pray for each other.
7. Send a gift card or care package to missionary children away at college.
8. Send a bouquet of flowers to the home missionary's wife.
9. Round up volunteers to spend a Saturday helping a nearby missions church (prayer walking, visiting, distributing flyers, sprucing up around the church, or helping out with a project).
10. Give to the **Mission: North America Offering** on November 23, to support the staff that helps, encourages, trains, and assists the missionaries in doing their job.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Sandy Atwood is a frequent speaker and writer. Her husband Richard is the director of missionary assistance for the Home Missions Department. To learn more about Free Will Baptist Home Missions, visit www.homemissions.net.

HOW TO PRAY FOR MISSIONARIES:

Pray for them...

1. To walk worthy of the calling, be fruitful in every good work, and increase in the knowledge of God (*Colossians 1:10*).
2. To be filled with the knowledge of His will and have wisdom and spiritual understanding (*Colossians 1:19*).
3. To know the exceeding greatness of His power (*Ephesians 1:19*).
4. To abound with love (*Philippians 1:9*).
5. To have open doors of opportunity to witness and power over adversaries (*1 Corinthians 16:9*).
6. To have laborers join them in the harvest (*Luke 10:2*).





counting the cost

My name is Micah Osborn. I am 18 years old and second oldest in a family of seven children. My father is a Free Will Baptist home missionary to West Tennessee. We moved from Davis, North Carolina, to Cordova, Tennessee, in 1998 to start a mission work. In the past year, we have begun another mission work just outside of Memphis in a small town called Oakland.

I remember when Dad said we might be moving to Tennessee. I was only six or seven years old at the time, and my first questions were, "Can we keep our cats? Will I be able to visit? Will I have to get rid of my toys?"

At first, I thought the idea of moving sounded cool. But eventually, the thought began to hit home, and I realized I would have to leave my school, my church, my neighborhood, my oceanside home, and my pets. Basically, I had to leave everyone I knew.

My only friends outside of school and church were the Aycocks, missionaries to Brazil, and I only saw them when they were home on furlough. I felt devastated and lonely. It made me sad to leave my friends and my kitties.

Through that experience, I learned that God never promised being a Christian would be easy. In fact, He taught me that sometimes God asks us to do things that seem incredibly hard. It reminds me of Christ's message to the crowd of people in Luke 14:25-33. He

told His listeners that to be disciples they had to hate their families and their lives and take up the cross to follow Him.

This doesn't mean we should loathe our friends and relatives. It means if we let our relationships keep us from following God's will, we would be better off to hate our friends and family.

I realized I had to follow God if He was leading my family to the mission field. If we stop following God midway in our walk, we are just like those we are trying to reach. If you start building a house and stop when the frame is finished, you are still as cold and homeless as you were when you first started. When it comes to running the spiritual race, we should "*run, that ye may obtain*" (1 Corinthians 9:24). We must be willing to do whatever God asks of us.

We recently returned to my hometown for a visit and found everything changed. My friends had grown up, moved away, or married. My old house is about seven feet taller and renovated, and I hardly recognized my neighborhood. The oceanside view hasn't changed, though. It is still as beautiful as it



was the day I left. Of course, that is God's creation. It will always be perfect.

My hometown was more beautiful than when I left, but not exactly the way I remembered it. This reminded me that we should always look forward and never look back to what we left behind. We should look ahead to the crown and the beautiful mansion on Gold Street that God has promised us in His Kingdom that will never change.

"...all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." -Romans 8:28

Even though we are sometimes asked to pay a high price in life, that doesn't mean God will let us go broke. I have often heard that whenever God closes a door, somewhere He opens a window.

Sometimes, when we look at our lives, we see a glob of black ink, but God sees a work of art in progress. All the trials and tribulations of our lives will eventually make us stronger and give us wisdom we can pass on to other believers.

We can comfort those who experience a similar situation or help others avoid mistakes that have hurt us in the past. As one old saying reminds us, "When a clay jar is full of cracks and cannot carry water, the light of God's mercy can still shine through." In the grand scheme of things, God will always make sure everything happens for the benefit of His Kingdom.

The missionary experience has taught me that counting the cost is like adding to a heavenly savings account. I know treasure is waiting for me in Heaven when I "retire" from my mission field.

Today, all is well in my world. I have new friends. I am closer to my relatives. I have a loving church family, and I have found a special friend named Andy. We study our Bibles together, and he has been a tremendous companion in my walk with Christ. Oh, and God even gave me a new kitty!

Looking back now, I thank God for Andy, my new friends, my new church family, and my newfound knowledge. Being a missionary has deeply impacted my walk with Him, and I know God was thinking of my well being every step of the way.

We won't be moving so far this time. I won't have to give up my new friends this time around. Now, I better understand what it means to count the cost. Now that I am older, I will have a bigger role in helping to develop this new Free Will Baptist church. I know that God has big plans for my family, the new church, and me. I can't wait to see them unfold. □

"For I know the thoughts that I think toward, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end" (Jeremiah 29:11).



Micah Osborn

History

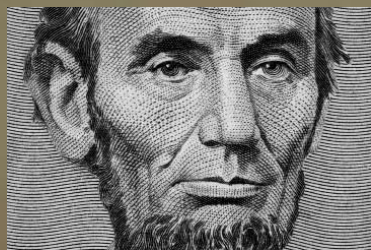
right before our eyes

James Forlines





The story is told of a conversation between two pioneer farmers in LaRue County, Kentucky, in February of 1809. One of them had just returned from Louisville. He said to the other, "Didja hear thar's a war agin over in the old



Sinkin' Spring Farm. Naw...nothin' much ever happens 'round these parts."

Neither of them realized the history of the world would be altered more by what happened in LaRue County in February 1809 than anything else that occurred that year. Thomas, father of the baby born on Sinking Spring Farm, was an uneducated carpenter and farmer. Mary, the mother, was illiterate. But that baby boy, named Abraham Lincoln, became one of the most influential presidents in American history. Most of the time, when history happens, it passes without anyone noticing.

When Free Will Baptist history is written, 2008 may very well go down as a banner year because of two separate occurrences within the same week. Though the events took place almost 1,000 miles apart, they both have the potential to incredibly impact the cause of world evangelism by Free Will Baptists.

On Tuesday afternoon, April 29, the International Missions Board met in Antioch, Tennessee, and voted to change the way the denomination funds global church-planting efforts through our International Missions agency. Later that week (May 1-3), the International Fellowship of Free Will Baptist Churches Missions Committee held its initial meeting in Miami, Florida. The significance of these events will not be fully realized for many years, perhaps not until eternity.

country? Yep, Austria jes' declared war on France. 'Bout you? anythin' happenin' in yor necka da woods?" The other farmer responded, "Nope, 'cept I heard Tom and Nancy had a boy child over at

Global Evangelism Fund Created

Since the early 1960s, Free Will Baptists have primarily supported foreign missions by giving to specific missionary accounts. Funds given to a missionary not only paid personal expenses, but also financed the field ministries and projects with which they were involved. Free Will Baptist Foreign Missions (as it was known until 2004) was primarily a missionary-sending agency.

Missionaries went where there was no evangelical church of any kind. The work was hard. Results were steady, but slow. Individuals coming to faith in Christ had no Christian background. The children they raised were the first in the area to be raised in a Christian home. Trained national leaders were few. Of necessity, missionaries performed the lion's share of ministry, outreach, and church planting. Therefore, funding missionary accounts was equivalent to funding the global effort.

In the past couple of decades, major transformations have influenced our work around the world. We live in the days our pioneer missionaries dreamed of and prayed to see. Almost six times as many national pastors and preachers (581) as missionaries are part of Free Will Baptist work. Additionally, 349 students in 12 Bible institutes and seminaries will soon join the ranks of ministry, winning souls and planting churches.

As the dynamics have changed, so has our operation as a Mission. We have grown from a missionary-sending agency into a Mission that facilitates church-planting movements around the world. The number of international churches and mission works has grown almost 300% with a 250% increase in attendance in the last 10 years.

As the Board monitored these developments, it became increasingly evident we needed to change the way we

fund international missions efforts. Our financial stewardship needed to become more strategic.

At the International Missions Board meeting on April 29, 2008, the board voted to create the Global Evangelism Fund. On July 23, 2008, delegates to the National Association of Free Will Baptists in Charleston, West Virginia, overwhelmingly endorsed the Board's decision. Beginning January 1, 2010, this will be the primary means of funding international missions efforts for Free Will Baptists.

The GEF will fund the personal costs of every Free Will Baptist missionary around the world. It will also continue to fund church-planting efforts and ministries in countries without a missionary presence. Strategically, FWBIM will be able to respond quickly to changing dynamics (political, financial, or security-related) to continue the forward advance around the world.

Our Board, staff, and missionary leadership will strategically use Free Will Baptist financial and personnel resources to maximize our impact and increase our effectiveness. For the past several years, we have looked at opportunities to work in North Africa and East Asia. These truly are exciting days. The Global Evangelism Fund will substantially help advance the Kingdom through our witness.

International Missions Agency

The December 2007/January 2008 issue of *ONE Magazine* reported on the International Fellowship meeting in Nantes, France. Free Will Baptist delegates from around the world gathered for the triennial meeting. Much of the discussion centered on how Free Will Baptists outside North America could serve as Free Will Baptist missionaries around the world.

A committee was formed, and a sense of excitement permeated the room as delegates gathered to lay hands

on and pray for those chosen. As I witnessed this historic occasion, I thought back to 1935 when Free Will Baptists sent Laura Belle Barnard to India. She was our only missionary. It was a small beginning. But look what great things the power of God has wrought in the years to follow. Could it be that what began in Nantes, France, will be just the beginning of a powerful global movement of Free Will Baptists expanding the Kingdom?

The International Fellowship Missions Committee met at the Ebenezer FWB Church in Miami, Florida. Ironi-

The passion for missions is rekindled.

cally, Cuban Free Will Baptists who fled Castro's regime initially formed this church.

God is working in powerful ways among Free Will Baptists around the world. Missionaries are emerging from countries to which we sent missionaries decades ago. The passion for missions is rekindled. In years to come, by God's grace, we will see Free Will Baptist international missionaries from Central America, South America, Europe, Africa, and Asia. In many ways, they are uniquely suited to carry the gospel to some of the most unreached areas of our world. The future is encouraging and bright.

So, when someone asks, "Anything happening in your neck of the woods?" you can respond, "This is the LORD'S doing and it is marvelous in our eyes." □

ABOUT THE WRITER: James Forlines has served as general director of International Missions since January 1999.



the GREAT COMMISSION

REQUIRES INTERDEPENDENCE

By Jeff Turnbough

WHEN I ATTENDED BIBLE COLLEGE IN THE EARLY 1970s, the independent movements within Christendom wielded a strong influence among Free Will Baptists and throughout North America. I thought, “Okay, but I’m part of a denomination.”

In the early ‘80s I came to Spain and Europe where evangelical Christians, a clear minority, continually criticized expatriate workers for bringing in denominations. From their perspective, denominations are at best creations of men, and at worst an invention of the enemy serving to divide the Church. Yet in my mind was the thought, “Okay, but I’m a part of a denomination.”

Frankly, the concept of total independence is foreign to the Scriptures. On the other hand, forming part of a truly God-honoring group of believers is not wrong, but both healthy and biblical. A member of the press asked the pastor of a United States mega-church if his congregation was still a part of a denomination because they no longer displayed the name in their literature. The pastor replied his church would always be a part of the larger group for one main reason: no church or individual Christian can fulfill the Great Commission alone.

“Having given ourselves to God, by faith in Christ, and adopted the Word of God as our rule of faith and practice, we now give ourselves to one another by the will of God in this solemn covenant” (Church Covenant, FWB *Treatise*). As Free Will Baptists, we are not independent. We have voluntarily given ourselves to one another for multiple reasons. One of the core values of our union is working together to fulfill Christ’s last command, which should be our highest priority: the Great Commission.

THE TASK IS HUGE

The world population is 6.6 billion and growing every second. In addition to a growing population, the changing nature of society, culture, new generations, global economics, politics, and diverse religions increase the difficulty of the task. No one believer, church, or Christian group can accomplish the entire task God left to His Church.

Yet every single believer, church, and Christian group must be about the busi-

NO CHURCH OR INDIVIDUAL CHRISTIAN CAN FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION ALONE.

ness of fulfilling this task. That leads us all to interdependence—a concept interwoven throughout the Scriptures.

In His prayer for the Church (John 17), Jesus revealed His desire to the Father that we all be one, specifically so the world will believe in Him. We are a part of the Church. Working together as a people or a denomination to fulfill the Great Commission is a foregone conclusion for me.

INTERDEPENDENCE IS NECESSARY

I recently accepted the role of deputy director of field operations for the Mission. The only reason Susan and I were willing to consider giving less at-


tention to our lifelong vocation as field workers has everything to do with our belief that Free Will Baptists can do more together to strategically impact the world. The operative words for my new position are interdependence, cohesiveness, creativity, and strategy. I won't elaborate much on the last three words, but they all flow from the concept of interdependence. We are dependent upon God and each other. Overseas workers cannot do what we do without your help. You cannot fulfill the Great Commission without our help. It is good stewardship for field workers to work together.

The enormity of the task, coupled with the relatively meager resources at our disposal, requires creativity. We can't afford to go about the most im-

portant job on the planet haphazardly. That calls for a Spirit-led strategy, one of my key result areas for this role. Interdependence begs for cohesiveness, from the gifts and prayers that local believers and churches contribute, to the expatriate and local workers collaborating around the globe.

I voluntarily, unashamedly, give myself to God and to you as a part of one group of His children, called Free Will Baptists, for the all-important task of fulfilling the Great Commission. Will you give yourself to God, to our movement, and to me in our common mission to impact the world for Christ? The Great Commission requires interdependence. □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Jeff and his wife Susan were appointed as overseas workers in Spain for FWBIM in 1981. Jeff received his doctorate in missiology from Biola University in 2004 and was approved as deputy director of field operations in April 2008. The Turnboughs will continue to live and minister in Spain as Jeff oversees Mission field personnel.



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What does your Jerusalem look like?

By Norma Jackson Goldman



I recently challenged my adult Bible study class to take a fresh look at a familiar passage of Scripture—Jesus’ marching orders for believers everywhere. “But ye shall receive power [ability, efficiency, and might] after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria and unto the uttermost part [the very bounds] of the earth” (Acts 1:8).

Retirement years provide unique opportunities for redefining priorities, including the one spelled out in the Acts passage. So, what does your “Jerusalem” look like? While on a recent missions

trip to South Africa, I confided to one of my teammates that many believers would prefer to go around the world to witness rather than go across the street to an unsaved neighbor!

My Jerusalem is a cul-de-sac with two gay couples, one lesbian couple, a family that claims Christ but does not participate in a local body of believers, and a Muslim family. My Jerusalem includes a local body of believers where I worship, give, serve, and invest my life in the Great Commission. Jerusalem for me is the city of Nashville and surrounding areas where thousands of people need Christ.

What does your Jerusalem look like,

and how are you living out His command to be His witness there?

While life in 2008 provides communication tools that would have completely astonished first-century believers, the methods they used remain effective. They told what God in Christ had done for them. They shared their stories as they met needs. They demonstrated the love of Christ as they took care of those in need and encouraged one another as they experienced rejection and contempt.

As they went, they ministered to the sick, interceded in prayer, took in the homeless, and provided for the poor. As they went, they exhibited the marks of

The believers who made up the early church were neither Bible scholars, nor theologians. They simply shared what Christ had done for them.



a changed life, the evidence of forgiveness and of servant leadership.

Your Jerusalem might require helping in Vacation Bible School or holding a backyard Bible club for neighborhood children. We might see you taking cookies to a new mother with a word of encouragement. Perhaps you will take a “prayer-walk” through your neighborhood, asking God for opportunities to share the gospel with specific individuals. You might be seen tutoring children in reading or math, or changing exterior light bulbs for an elderly neighbor.

The believers who made up the early church were neither Bible scholars nor theologians. They simply shared what

Christ had done for them. No one “dozes off” when another person is sharing how Christ changed his or her life. Every human loves to hear the personal experiences of another (that’s why word-of-mouth marketing is such a powerful tool in today’s business environment). And so it will be with you, in your Jerusalem.

The best news is that *everyone* can be a witness in his or her own Jerusalem—no one is excluded! Perhaps you are a retiree suffering from health problems and unable to get out much. You can still pray, send notes of encouragement, and minister to those who come to your door. Surprise your plumber or

electrician by asking how you can pray for them, and then give a word of testimony about how He is meeting your needs. Give a new believer the gift of daily prayer during the first six weeks of his new life in Christ. State specifically what you will pray for (time and a desire to read a few verses from the Bible every day, opportunities to share his new faith, and faithfulness in worship, praise, and service). So let me ask again: what does your Jerusalem look like? □

About the Writer: Former magazine editor Norma Goldman enjoys a freelance writing career in her retirement. She lives in Nashville, TN. If you have a retirement-related question for Norma, email editor@nafwb.org.

MISSION: NORTH AMERICA

F W B H M

Offering

By David Crowe



FREE WILL BAPTISTS HAVE ALWAYS UNDERSTOOD that in order to spread the gospel to the ends of the earth, we must develop a strong base of support in North America. Benjamin Randall understood this when he planted 51 Free Will Baptist churches in New England in 28 years of ministry (1780-1808). Paul Palmer and Joseph Parker understood this as they planted many Free Will Baptist churches in North Carolina, beginning in 1727.

The first official Free Will Baptist Home Missions Department was called the Freewill Baptist American Missionary Society. A meeting was held Thursday, July 31, 1834, at 10:00 a.m. for the purpose of organizing a Home Missionary Society. Many gathered in the meeting house in Dover, New Hampshire, and amid prayers and tears, the Home Missionary Society was organized. Their stated purpose was, "the dissemination of the Gospel in North America."

Free Will Baptist theologian John J. Butler wrote, "One of the greatest means of usefulness presented to the Christian world is the cause of Missions, both foreign and domestic. For thousands of years the earth has been lying in wickedness, and sin has held almost unlimited dominion over it. But Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, has provided a way whereby all may be saved, and commanded his servants to preach the Gospel to every creature.

We are too apt to despise small things, so because we cannot perform some great work, we do nothing."

Throughout most of the 1800s, Free Will Baptists promoted a National Home Missions Sunday, one Sunday each year devoted to Home Missions. The name eventually changed to the Home Missions Thanksgiving Offering. Later, the name changed to the Benjamin Randall Offering.

After many years, the offering has undergone another change. Starting in 2008, the offering will be called Mission: North America. We continue that great tradition and provide an opportunity one Sunday each year for Free Will Baptists across North America and around the world to give to help support the total program of Home Missions. On November 23, 2008, let's all do something. If we all do what we can, then great things can and will be accomplished. Let us not be found guilty of doing nothing.

Help us continue in the footsteps of many great men and women before us who understood the importance of planting churches and winning souls in North America. It was important 200 years ago, and it is still important today. Remember—MISSION: NORTH AMERICA OFFERING! □

ABOUT THE WRITER: David Crowe is director of development for the Home Missions Department. Learn more about the Mission: North America Offering at www.homemissions.net.

The CHALLENGE of the CHAPLAINCY

BY LARRY A. POWELL

YOU CAN BE A “MISSIONARY TO THE military” and a Free Will Baptist preacher while wearing the uniform of the Army, Navy, or Air Force. The chaplain is a missionary. He is a pastor, preacher, teacher, evangelist, counselor, administrator, and representative of his church and denomination. He is truly an extension of our churches in obscure and dangerous places around the world.

He touches the lives of people in prisons, hospitals, chapels, and Bible studies. Most important, he reaches them through personal evangelism. The Home Missions Department demonstrates concern for these brave men by prayer and family support. We are doing everything we can to encourage them and let them know we are proud of their vital ministry to the men and women in the Armed Forces.

REQUIREMENTS TO BECOME A CHAPLAIN

The Home Missions Department works in cooperation with the Chief of Staff of the Chaplaincy of the United States Armed Forces in Washington, D.C. In order to qualify to become a chaplain, each candidate must com-

plete 120 hours of undergraduate study in a college and earn a Bachelor of Arts or Science degree. We encourage men to attend one of our Free Will Baptist colleges.

The government also requires candidates to complete 72 semester hours of graduate work at an accredited seminary, earning a Master of Theology degree. The seminary must meet government approval, but it should also stand for the fundamentals of the faith. The candidate must be at least 21 years old and younger than 46 years of age.

PASTORAL EXPERIENCE

The chaplain candidate should be called to preach—a divine call of God. He must meet the standards of his local association regarding church membership and licensure, and be an ordained Free Will Baptist minister in good standing with the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

The prospective chaplain must have two years of pastoral experience in a Free Will Baptist church, serving as senior pastor or as associate pastor under the direct supervision of an experienced pastor. He must learn pastoral duties such as soul

winning, discipleship, and pulpit ministry. He must experience every phase of pastoral care to families in the church during his tenure.

The general director will make the final decision as to whether or not the candidate receives ecclesiastical endorsement. That responsibility falls under the umbrella of the ministries of the Home Missions Department.

ENLIST PRAYER

Pray for our chaplains. All of them carry a heavy load. They are hardworking men who serve in battle as well as in peacetime. They comfort in time of need, serve in every way possible, and work to spread the love of God to all with whom they come in contact. Let's hold their families up in our prayers.

Many of our chaplains serve in dangerous places like Iraq and Afghanistan. No matter the military situation for our country, in peace or in war, the chaplains are there. Let's not forget them. Let's pray that God will give them safety and success in this vital ministry to the men and women of the United States Armed Forces. □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Larry Powell is general director of the Home Missions Department. To learn more about the ministry of Home Missions, visit www.homemissions.net.



Easy Leaving

By Matt Crain

Reality Check

"Hey, everybody, I have a challenge for you! The first person who can tell me three points from my last sermon gets five bucks!"

Imagine the awkward silence as 25 teens and chaperones stare at me like a rapper at a quartet convention.

"Hey, okay, that was a little harsh" (a teen phrase that means I expected a little too much from them). "Let's make this a little easier and more interesting. I've got a \$10 bill right here for the first person who can tell me one point from a sermon I've preached this month."

Still no response—only stares! Are those crickets in the distance?

"Okay, guys, you sure are playing hardball." (Denial is an ugly thing.) "The first person, adults included, who can tell me one point from any sermon I've preached in the last three months will get this!"

I pull out a crisp \$20 from my pocket and wave it around a little too enthusiastically. "Who'll take me up on my challenge?" I'm smiling, but inside I'm dying. "Just one," I repeat hopefully.

I have to confess that I thought at least one person would shout, "Love God." No, they're all giving each other looks that clearly say, "Our pastor has finally lost his mind."

Finally an adult speaks up. "Pastor, I have trouble remembering what tools I need from the toolbox by the time I get there. My memory is just not that great."

To which I reply, "I appreciate that,

but these are life-changing truths of the gospel. I want us to remember them!"

After reassuring them that I was not scolding them or laying a guilt trip on them, I explained that I just wanted to know how effectively I was communicating biblical principles. That day I learned a hard lesson: don't ask how things are going unless you really want to know.

When we got back from the teen trip, I made the same challenge on Sunday morning from the pulpit. Same result. This was getting embarrassing.

Transformation

Office furniture tycoon Max DePree said it best. "The first responsibility of a leader is to define reality." You might say I have been slapped in the face by reality during the past year—a very tough year. A shake-up in our leadership team challenged me deeply, in ways only God knows for sure. I began to question everything about my ministry, which led to the challenge I described earlier.

In all of this—quietly, behind the scenes—God was working as only He could, and that was enough for me to wait and see what He would do next. He wanted to teach me many things; would I have the courage to learn them?

What kind of things, you ask? I've learned, for example, that our identity as leaders must be found only in our upward calling in Christ. Never, ever, for any reason, pin your self-identity

Adopt the attitude of Paul, who told the Corinthian believers their only goal should be to please God (2 Cor. 5:9).

to a person or group of people as a validation of your ministry.

Richard Blackaby once remarked in his book *Putting a Face on Grace*: “I am a recovering sinner, and my first instinct is often sinful.” My first instinct to the ice-cold dash of reality was to run for

“...leaving almost always looks attractive in the short run.”

greener pastures. But God made it clear that the changes were needed where He had planted me. I realize this isn't a very popular premise, but it was one I needed to learn. It seemed that walking away from the headaches was the quickest route to peace and stability. Nothing was further from the truth. I needed to stay and allow God to transform me.

We find this transforming process again and again in the Scriptures. Abraham learned faith when Isaac was born, then tested when God asked him to sacrifice his beloved child. Jacob's transformation took a lifetime. Favorite son and dreamer Joseph became the slave of Potiphar and a common jailbird before emerging from the dungeon as the second most powerful man in Egypt. Talk about a corporate-ladder-climbing roller coaster ride!

Moses, prince of Egypt, became Moses, God-follower, and leader of many thousands...of sheep. His promotion to leader of a nation came much later.

David, anointed king of Israel, dodged King Saul for years. But his training in the desert proved invaluable. After all, when a child of God finds himself cornered in a cave, it is natural to develop an intimate relationship with the Lord. David did exactly that.

Esther, Nehemiah, Elijah, Elisha, Ruth, Daniel. The New Testament picks up where the Old Testament leaves off: Peter, John, Paul, Apollos, Timothy—all led by the example of Jesus. For instance, the week before His death, Jesus remarked, “Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify

thy name...” (John 12:27, 28a).

These biblical characters all had one thing in common. They did not quit. Or, to put it in church leadership terms, they did not easily leave.

In his book *If You Want to Walk on Water, You Have to Get Out of the Boat*, author John Ortberg tells a great story about a desert monk who was asked what one must do to please God. His initial response was predictable. “Be aware of God's presence and obey God's Word.” However, it was a third part of his statement that caught the author by surprise. “Do not easily leave.”

Ortberg reminds his readers that relationships are hard, and leaving almost always looks attractive in the short run. But leaving often produces leaders who live in a cycle of giving up.

Do not easily leave. Hmm, words to live by.

A colleague once made a stand about this very matter of staying so God could transform him rather than leaving easily. He confessed that he had never lasted more than a few short years at any particular place. “But not this time,” he declared. “This time, I owe it to my family, as well as to myself, to stay and figure out what I need to change and work on as a leader. I will succeed in terms of longevity. I owe it to these fine people, too, to give them a leader who is effective. I'm finished with leaving before it's time.”

Amen.

Sometimes, the new direction God has in mind for a leader means that He desires to change his congregation as well. At First Church, this has meant redefining what terms such as grace, community impact, holiness, discipleship, and success look like. It has not been an easy process.

As we refocused our efforts on grace-filled programs that emphasize the life-changing power of the cross for anyone, we discovered how hard it is for a church to balance sanctified living with grace-filled freedom. In the last few months, I have baptized six new converts, ranging from young teens to seniors. Not one of them

came from a strong church tradition. In fact, two came out of the bar scene, two came out the drug scene, and two were students who have at least one parent who does not attend church with them.

This is a huge departure from our traditional approach to ministry, where we usually baptize people who grew up in church. To put it mildly, we're not used to this kind of intense discipleship. But praise God! I have begun to see what the cross of Jesus Christ can do because I did not easily leave. God has begun a transformation—not only in my life, but also in the lives of the congregation.

It's the Relationship

The entire issue comes down to a vibrant, relevant relationship with Christ. If I'm not striving for complete spiritual authenticity in my daily walk with Him, then I will be unable to hear Him speak through various conduits. In other words, an obstacle-free relationship with the Holy Spirit will make or break my ability to stick it out and see what God wants of me. I'm guessing it's the same with you.

Are you discouraged? Are you nearing the point of “easily leaving?” I ask you humbly. Has God truly released you from this assignment, whatever it is? Or have you simply given up? Whether we're talking about marriage, job, or ministry, the real question is about seeking God's voice in the matter and letting Him change you in the process? Adopt the attitude of Paul, who told the Corinthian believers their only goal should be to please God (2 Cor. 5:9).

Brother or sister, don't easily leave. Dare to face your own private battles, if you will. God promised that He would never leave you alone, operating under your own power. Hear His voice, follow His lead, and witness His power! □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Matt Crain pastors First Free Will Baptist Church in Johnston City, IL.



Photo: Sean Warren

A Deacon's Passion

Every three seconds
a child under the
age of five dies
somewhere in the
world from a disease
that could have
been prevented.

THREE SECONDS HARDLY SEEM WORTH MENTIONING. It goes by so fast. What can one really do in such a short amount of time? It has taken you longer than three seconds to read this sentence. Yet this short period of time is significant?

Every three seconds, a child under the age of five dies somewhere in the world from a preventable disease such as diarrhea, malaria, or measles. Right now, a little girl is taking her last breath because she didn't have access to clean water. And a little boy won't wake from sleep because he contracted an illness that could have been prevented by a one-dollar vaccination.

None of it has to happen! God called His Church to reach out to the poor and the needy—to take care of His children...all of them. In Proverbs, He asked us to "speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves." In James, we're called to "look after orphans and widows in their distress."

In all, more than 2,000 verses in the Bible address children and the poor. God is serious about their care. He has commanded us to get involved. The very least we can do is pray. Please take some time today to pray for the millions of children in the world who suffer from illnesses that could and should be prevented. Then find an organization on the frontlines of ministry and get involved. Every three seconds we hesitate may cost another life that could have been saved.

One such frontline ministry is Compassion International. Compassion ministers to more than 800,000 impoverished children around the world through personal and corporate sponsors. I became involved with Compassion about five years ago during a sponsorship drive hosted by a local radio station.

On this particular day, as I listened to the sponsorship drive during my 35-mile commute to work, a sobering thought hit me. "I spend more to buy snacks and soda during this commute each month than it would cost to support a child

About the Writer: Doug Stutts is a deacon at Flatwoods FWB Church in Lawrenceburg, TN.

HOW AN EXPERIENCE IN A LOCAL PHARMACY GAVE ONE DEACON A VISION FOR REACHING THE WORLD.

by Doug Stutts

who has nothing.”

Two days later, I signed up to sponsor a little one. Before long, I realized I was blessed far more than the child I sponsored through the letters we exchanged. I can hardly imagine that little girl praying for God to bless me when she has nothing, at least according to western standards.

Compassion began to send annual invitations to become an advocate for these children. I always dismissed the idea quickly. I couldn't imagine doing something so bold as to speak to others about the fate of children in developing countries.

That changed in the fall of 2007. When I received the annual invitation to become an advocate for Compassion, something felt different. Maybe God's still, small voice was speaking to me; I don't know. Although I prayed about the challenge, I thought it was something I really couldn't do.

I thought that if God did not answer my prayer, that would be the end of that. Boy, was I wrong!

Not long after I asked God for direction, He answered in an obvious way. You see, I have severe problems in both my upper and lower back. At the time, I was anticipating a highly technical and dangerous surgery to correct the condition. It was a frustrating and painful time in my life; yet God answered my prayer during a visit to the pharmacy.

When I arrived at the drug store, I

was in a great deal of pain. I'm the kind of person who doesn't want to talk to anyone when hurting; I just want to be left alone. I handed my prescription to the pharmacist and learned that I would have to wait about 15 minutes.

After glancing around the crowded waiting area, I thought to myself, "I think I'll just walk around the store." On one of the aisles, I discovered my favorite candies—jellybeans—and I grabbed four bags.

I made my way back to the waiting area to find that only one couple remained. Out of the corner of my eye, I saw they had two kids. I really didn't pay much attention. I just wanted to sit and suffer in peace.

A moment later, however, a blond toddler with hair that desperately needed brushing leaned against my knees and pointed to the jellies. As I looked into the small face that needed scrubbing, my first thought was "Go away! I don't feel like talking to you."

Yet before I could utter a word another mischievous, dirty face appeared, just like the first. Identical twins! I couldn't open the jellies because I had not paid for them, and I didn't know what their parents—who had jewelry in strange places and a substantial collection of tattoos—would say.

So, I began to play a game with the girls, pointing out colors and asking the toddlers to identify them. At first, I could not understand their whispered replies, and I couldn't help but wonder if they were afraid they would be punished for talking too loud.

Before long, the girls warmed up to the game and the attention. They

chirped out answers with childish excitement. They were so cute that I thought to myself, "I wish I could take them home to raise!"

When the parents got ready to leave, it was all I could do to keep from giving the girls a goodbye hug. When they left, the pharmacist called my name, and I realized I was the last person in the store. I had become so absorbed in talking to the girls that I did not notice how quickly time was passing.

I collected my medicine and headed for the door when it hit me. I was no longer in pain. My back no longer hurt. Something else hit me too... God's answer to my prayer.

Through my back pain, He had given me an encounter with two of the most precious children I had ever seen. He reminded me that little ones cannot speak for themselves.

Is God trying to speak to you? Does He want to remind you of the millions of children around the world who need someone to hear their cry and come to their aid? I pray that you will heed the words of Proverbs 21:13. "Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard." □

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Home Missions Welcomes New Missionaries



Tim and Madeline McDaniel are continuing the ministry at the Landmark Free Will Baptist Church in Monroe, Louisiana. The McDaniels come to Home Missions from a pastorate at the Pine Hill FWB Church in Star City, Arkansas. Both Tim and Madeline attended Free Will Baptist Bible College, and Madeline also attended the University of Arkansas at Monticello.

Monroe is the eighth largest city in Louisiana, proudly hosting the University of Louisiana and major telecommunications businesses. It is also in need of Christ-centered, evangelical churches. The McDaniels have two children, Noah and Jordan. Please pray for this young family as they minister in Monroe.



Stephen and Rejyna Beck are associate missionaries in St. Croix, Virgin Islands. Stephen is principal of the Christian school and will assist the pastor in the ministry. He attended Free Will Baptist Bible College, Lincoln Theological Seminary, University of Alabama (Huntsville), and obtained a Bachelor of Education degree from Vanderbilt University.

Rejyna was raised in the FWB Home Missionary family of John McClure and brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to this ministry. Both Stephen and Rejyna are a vital part of the St. Croix ministry team. The Becks have four children, Opal, Foster, Linton, and Fletcher. Pray for this family and the St. Croix team as they minister in the Virgin Islands.



The Danny Elliot Family will make their way to Quebec, French-speaking province in Canada, to begin a Free Will Baptist church. With pastoral experience in Texas and South Carolina, Pastor Elliot comes to Home Missions from Ruth's Chapel FWB Church in New Bern, NC. Danny and Dawn both attended Southeastern FWB Bible College where Danny earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in Bible and Missions. To prepare for ministry in Quebec, they will attend language school.

The Quebecois are the most unreached people group in North America. No Free Will Baptist churches exist in the province that has a population of 7.6 million. Only one percent claim to belong to a mainstream evangelical church. The spiritual darkness is overwhelming.

Please remember the Elliott family as they embark on this new frontier for Free Will Baptists. Danny and Dawn are parents of daughters Summer and Autumn and have one son named Joshua.



38 YEARS IN Mexico

By JERRY BARRON

When I graduated from Free Will Baptist Bible College in 1970, Julie and I were appointed by the Home Missions Board to start a new work in Guadalajara, the second largest city in Mexico.

We returned to our home state of California to begin raising support.

In August 1970, we arrived in Edinburg, Texas, with our boys Myron and Tony to start nine months of language school. The studies were intense, but by God's amazing grace, we graduated and returned to California to be commissioned at Sherwood Forest FWB Church. In June 1971, we left for Guadalajara, 1,200 miles south of the border.

When we arrived in Mexico, we rented a house and began to hold services. God blessed, people were saved, and a church was established. We purchased land and constructed a nice building. All this was done because Free Will Baptists prayed and supported us.

While in Guadalajara, Julie and I were blessed with two more children, our son Timothy and daughter Jerra.

I thank God for my wife! Mexico is not an easy place to live, and to give birth in a foreign country was quite an experience.

The church grew and flourished. As we look back, we thank God for the many Christian workers who came out of Guadalajara. Four young men answered the call to preach, and three young ladies became pastors' wives. Gonzalo, one of those four "preacher boys," has been pastoring his home church for 28 years!

In time, God made it possible for us to start churches in Guerrero, Oaxaca Oh, and currently San Luis, a large city in the state of Sonora. We followed the same simple plan. We rented a house and started having services. God has blessed the church, and precious souls have been saved. We bought property and built the First FWB Church of San Luis.

We give God the honor and glory for all that has been accomplished! It is His work and our great privilege to serve Him.

Again, we thank God for the young men from the San Luis church who have answered the call to preach. The first was Jose. He was saved when he was 19 years old. He went to seminary, married, and returned to San Luis to pastor his home church. However, a year into the pastorate, Jose became ill and was diagnosed with cancer. Six months later, he went to be with the Lord. That was a hard time for us because Jose was our son in the Lord.

Through the many years of church planting, we have been blessed with many wonderful friends. God is good. He saved another young man named Enrique. He attended seminary, married, and now serves as co-pastor of the San Luis church. Two other young men from the church are also attending seminary. Chindo is finish-

ing up his second year and has begun to preach. Eddie is a first-year student, and it is our hope that God will call him into the ministry as well.

Julie and I are so thankful that the Lord has given us more than 36 years of ministry here in Mexico. We give God the honor and glory for all that has been accomplished! It is His work and our great privilege to serve Him. We truly appreciate the part that Free Will Baptists have played by supporting us throughout our ministry. □

About the Writer: Jerry and Julie Barron have been home missionaries in Mexico for 36 years. To learn more about the ministry of Free Will Baptist Home Missions, visit www.homemissions.net.



RETIRE

Rich



BY D. RAY LEWIS

As director of the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement, the cover of the June Special edition of *FORTUNE* magazine caught my attention. There in big, bold letters was everybody's dream, "Retire Rich." The article listed "50 Great Stocks and Funds" to "help put you on the road to a secure future."

At the Board of Retirement we don't guarantee that participants in our program will "retire rich" by investing with us, but it is our goal to help put every Free Will Baptist minister and lay employee on the road to a secure future. People live longer today than ever before, and many live 20 years or more in retirement. Therefore, it is important to prepare ahead of time.

Two things need to be remembered when planning for retirement. First, you're never too old to start saving for retirement. Second, saving for retirement is a long-term process.

From time to time someone will tell me they are too old to start saving for retirement. My response



is, "You're never too old to start saving for the future." While you may not have time to build a huge account like a 25-year-old, you still have some good years left to set aside funds for the future. The amount available to you in retirement will be based upon what you—and your employer—put into your retirement account until you reach retirement age.

For example, assume that you and/or your employer were able to invest \$500 a month into your retirement account for the next 10 years. If you received an average return of 8.62% (Retirement and Insurance average) on your contributions, you would have \$94,582.79 available at retirement.

While that does not seem like a lot of money for retirement, it would provide you an income of \$747.95 a month for 15 years during retirement. That extra \$747.95 each month would be a wonderful blessing on top of your Social Security.

Again, as noted earlier, one is never too old to start saving for retirement. Anything is better than nothing.

Second, saving and investing for retirement is a long-term process. Some people view their retirement savings like their checking and savings account at the bank, rather than the long-term investment it is designed to be. Even the Internal Revenue Service has placed restrictions on tax-deferred retirement funds as a way to discourage people from invading funds set aside for retirement.

After the Labor Department announced the unemployment rate had jumped to 5.5% at the end of May (the biggest monthly increase since February 1986), along with the continued rise in oil prices and dismal home sale numbers, the bottom literally fell out of the stock

market, with the Dow dropping nearly 400 points in a single day in June.

Because of events like these, some investors are nervous, tempted to pull everything out of the market until things improve. Doing this means paying 20% in federal taxes immediately, a 10% penalty by the IRS if you are under age 59½. You also experience a realized loss on your investment. Those who withdraw funds prior to their retirement treat their retirement savings as a short-term investment rather than a long-term commitment.

It is important not to base investment decisions on one earnings period. The Board of Retirement has done very well for its participants throughout the years. The lifetime (39 years) average earnings rate is 8.62%. Our five-year average is 12.075%. According to the *FORTUNE* magazine article mentioned above, the S&P 500 average is 11% for the same five-year period.

There will always be ups and downs in the financial market, but my advice is to hang in there. Don't make any rash decisions that will cost you in the long run. Retirement will be here before you know it. In order to enjoy a comfortable retirement, you must plan for it. Let the Board of Retirement help you develop an action plan that will start you on the road to a secure future in retirement. Who knows, you might even be able to "Retire Rich." □

About the Writer: D. Ray Lewis is director of the Board of Retirement and Insurance for the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Learn more about your retirement options at www.board-ofretirement.com.





Leading the Way

BY ALLEN POINTER

IF YOU HAVE BEEN TO the National Youth Conference in the last 25 years, you have seen them stationed at the doors of competition events, working at children’s activities, and praying with teens who come forward during youth services. They are Truth & Peace.

Today, you can find them in pulpits around the country, on mission fields worldwide, and in your own neighborhood. They occupy board positions on a denominational level, and one is president of a Free Will Baptist college. They are Truth & Peace.

Someone who obviously did not understand the purpose and impact of Truth & Peace once said, “All they do is stand around.” So, in celebration of our 25th year, it is time to remind everyone what Truth & Peace is all about.

TRUTH & PEACE IS STUDENT LEADERSHIP

The summer of 1984 was a year of experimentation for Jim Lauthern, director of the Youth Department at Randall House. He left his role in publishing to create what would become the department of Student and Children’s Ministry. Jim had a vision for developing leadership training for students within the denomination. His simple plan had two parts, to start youth evangelistic teams around the country and to establish a leadership training conference called Truth & Peace.

TRUTH & PEACE STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

MARKS
25
YEARS

The conference participants were students seen as leaders in their youth groups, or those who had potential leadership. *Truth* referred to the guy's conference, centered on the verse Psalm 91:4, "His truth shall be my shield." The girl's conference was called *Peace*, based on Ephesians 2:14, "He Himself is our peace."

That summer, 50 high school students from all over the Free Will Baptist world came together for a week of training at Free Will Baptist Bible College and a week of training at Camp Cumberland (Happy Hill Acres at that time). They took a bus to the National Youth Conference in Little Rock, Arkansas. The goal was to see what would happen if high school students were given the challenge of running the National Youth Conference. The leadership skills they learned would then be put to use throughout the rest of their lives. With that in mind, the founders of the conference established the following mission:

The Truth & Peace Student Leadership Conference exists to train, motivate, and encourage high school students to impact their world through biblical leadership.

Their work at the National Youth Conference is simply a practical laboratory for the leadership principles taught during the first two weeks of the conference. During those weeks, students learn that God has uniquely gifted them for leadership in order to serve the denomination and the larger body of Christ.

Again this year, 84 students were challenged to find out how they can best impact their churches, friends, and families through a biblical servant leadership model. While teaching methods and materials may have changed, the purpose and mission remains the same. Truth & Peace is focused on student leadership.

TRUTH & PEACE IS MISSIONS

Each year, the conference places a high priority on missions. The first conference featured missionaries Robert and Judy Bryan. They taught students about the call and challenge of missions.

Truth & Peace participants continued to be motivated to global action when the first Peace director, Sarah Malone, left the states to teach English in China.

The challenge continued when Sam McVay, founding director of Truth, and his family moved to Spain to serve in Villalba.

Missionaries and mission fields have been directly affected as students learn the importance of global evangelism each year at Truth & Peace and respond by becoming career missionaries. A highlight of each year's conference is a concert of



prayer, led by International Missions staff member Neil Gilliland.

Neil remarks, "For a number of years I have been loosely connected with Truth & Peace, and I have watched firsthand the transformation that happens when students sit in quiet moments of solitude and hear the soft whisper of the Father saying, 'Will you go?'"

"And they have. Truth & Peace alumni now dot the missions map. Free Will Baptist International Missions is deeply grateful for the role Truth & Peace has made in developing the next generation of missionaries."

One participant impacted by Truth & Peace is Kristi Johnson, missionary to Spain. "Truth & Peace was the beginning of many firsts for me—my first time to be so far away from home, the first time I spent time on the FWB-BC campus, the first time I met Sam and June McVay. And it was the first time I saw the fellowship between Free Will Baptists across America.

"Before that time, my window to the world was what my hometown in South Carolina had to offer. But the summer of 1991 changed my life. I met friends who have become lifelong partners in our ministry in Spain."

This summer, several Truth & Peace members also participated in E-TEAM missions trips around the world. These students continue the missions challenge of Truth & Peace.

TRUTH & PEACE IS TRAINING

From their first moments of training, Truth & Peace students are taught to return to their world and lead in homes, youth groups, churches, and schools.

Whether students attend one year or all four, they are equipped to lead in whatever positions they encounter.

Lauren Taylor is a rising senior at the University of Arkansas, where she is a part of the percussion section in the band. "Although I have focused a lot on my own personal growth as a follower of Christ, Truth & Peace prepared me to be a leader at my school. Not only did I feel more equipped to be a leader but also as a servant for our Lord. My third year of Truth & Peace really drilled into me the



fact that in order to lead, a person must learn to serve.

“In my opinion, it is unnatural for a leader to have the mindset of a servant. At school, I have been given several leadership positions and

placed with people who are very difficult to serve. However, I have stuck with the idea of being a servant. At times, it is a daily battle to focus on being a servant to my peers whom I lead. However, I continually seek out the Lord’s guidance and spirit of perseverance, and it has made all of the difference in the world.

“If I had not received the training to work with people who are different than me with different values than mine, I do not believe I would have been able to survive the various leadership positions at my university.”

TRUTH & PEACE IS LED BY LEADERS

Truth & Peace staffers are leaders in their own ministries and occupations. They include the past and present directors of the Student and Children’s Ministry Division of Randall House: Jim Lauthern, Dean Jones, and Danny Conn.

Conference directors through the years include Sarah Malone, Sam McVay, Deanna Hollifield, and Allen Point-

er. Former staff members continue to lead in various roles across the denomination. These include Len Davenport, Steve and Katie Greenwood, Curt and Becky Gwartney, Mike Hollifield, Lisa McGee, Donald Myers, Pam Newsome, Mike and Renee Pointer, Brad and Marilyn Sneed, Jeff Stegall, and Eric Thomsen.

Several conference alumni have returned to serve, including Mitchell Cooper, Krista Lane, and Bryan Taylor, along with 2008 staffers Teri Deel, David Jones, Jerrod and Tyra Pilgrim, and Jill Warren. These staff members, together with Angie Deel, Jill Pointer, and Sean Warren, are continuing the legacy of leadership demonstrated to hundreds of students who are part of the fraternity of Truth & Peace.

The 2008 conference featured some of the strongest leaders from local youth groups in the history of the conference. They challenged to share their faith, given the tools to make it a priority in their lives, and during the convention their leadership skills were put to the test by serving the National Youth Conference with distinction.

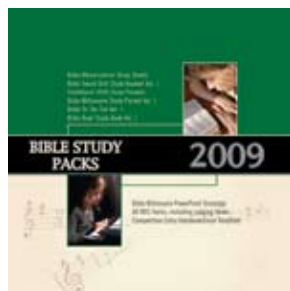
Truth & Peace Student Leadership Conference is now accepting applications for the 2009 conference. If you are a high school leader, or if you know of one in your church, visit www.fwbny.com to download an application and learn how you or your student can take part. It may impact the next quarter century for the Kingdom of God. □

About the Writer: Allen Pointer finished his 12th year as director of Truth & Peace with the 2008 conference. In “real life,” he is the youth pastor at First FWB Church in Russellville, AR.



In Review

FEATURES



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LEWIS INTRODUCED AS EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATOR



ANTIOCH, TN—On August 4, 2008, 25-year-old Ryan Lewis joined the Executive Office staff as executive administrator. Although young, Lewis brings substantial promotional and managerial experience to the position.

Executive Secretary Keith Burden said, "We are glad to welcome Ryan to our team.

He has all of the abilities and skills necessary

to make him an excellent meeting planner. We look forward to seeing what he will accomplish in the years to come."

Ryan graduated from FWBBC summa cum laude in 2005 with a B.S. degree in Exercise Science. He was voted Most Outstanding Student his senior year and was included in *Who's Who in American Colleges and Universities*. He traveled with the New Mercy and Rejoice ministry teams, and played baseball and basketball for the Flames.

Following graduation, Lewis joined the college staff as director of student recruitment. He held the position until October 2005, when he resigned to accept the associate pastor position at First FWB Church in Amory, MS. While serving at the church, he also worked with the music and youth and coached the boys' basketball team at Amory Christian Academy.

Ryan is the son of Ernie and Suzanne Lewis. Ernie pastors Blue Point FWB Church in Cisne, IL, and is the assistant clerk of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

Lewis will plan and manage the annual convention, represent the Executive Office at state meetings, assist in coordination of leadership training, organize disaster relief, and oversee fwbpastor.com, a website dedicated to providing practical resources for pastors.

TIM OWEN TO ASSIST FWBBC WITH SPECIAL EVENTS



NASHVILLE, TN—Reverend Tim Owen, 49-year-old pastor of Piney Grove Free Will Baptist Church in Chipley, Florida, has agreed to come on board as a part-time special events coordinator for Free Will Baptist Bible College, according to David Williford, vice president for institutional advancement. Owen began his new duties this fall. His immediate

responsibilities include arranging fundraising dinners and golf tournaments.

Mr. Williford said, "We are so pleased that Tim is willing to make this important commitment to FWBBC. He is a long-time supporter, an alumnus, and a pastor with far-reaching influence in the denomination. We need his mature leadership and help in this crucial area of event planning. Tim will continue pastoring and, as his schedule permits, arrange a number of special events for the college."

Reverend Owen and his wife, Karen, graduated from FWBBC in 1982 with B.S. degrees. He has pastored 21 years in Florida, the past eight years in Chipley. He served 10 years as moderator of the Florida State Association and is currently vice chairman of the Randall House Publications Board.

"I'm honored to be part of the FWBBC team," Owen said. "These are exciting and opportune days, and I'm eager to do my part."

Two of the Owens' four children (Jared and John) are students at FWBBC.

2009 Bible Conference

Free Will Baptist Bible College | March 8-12, 2009

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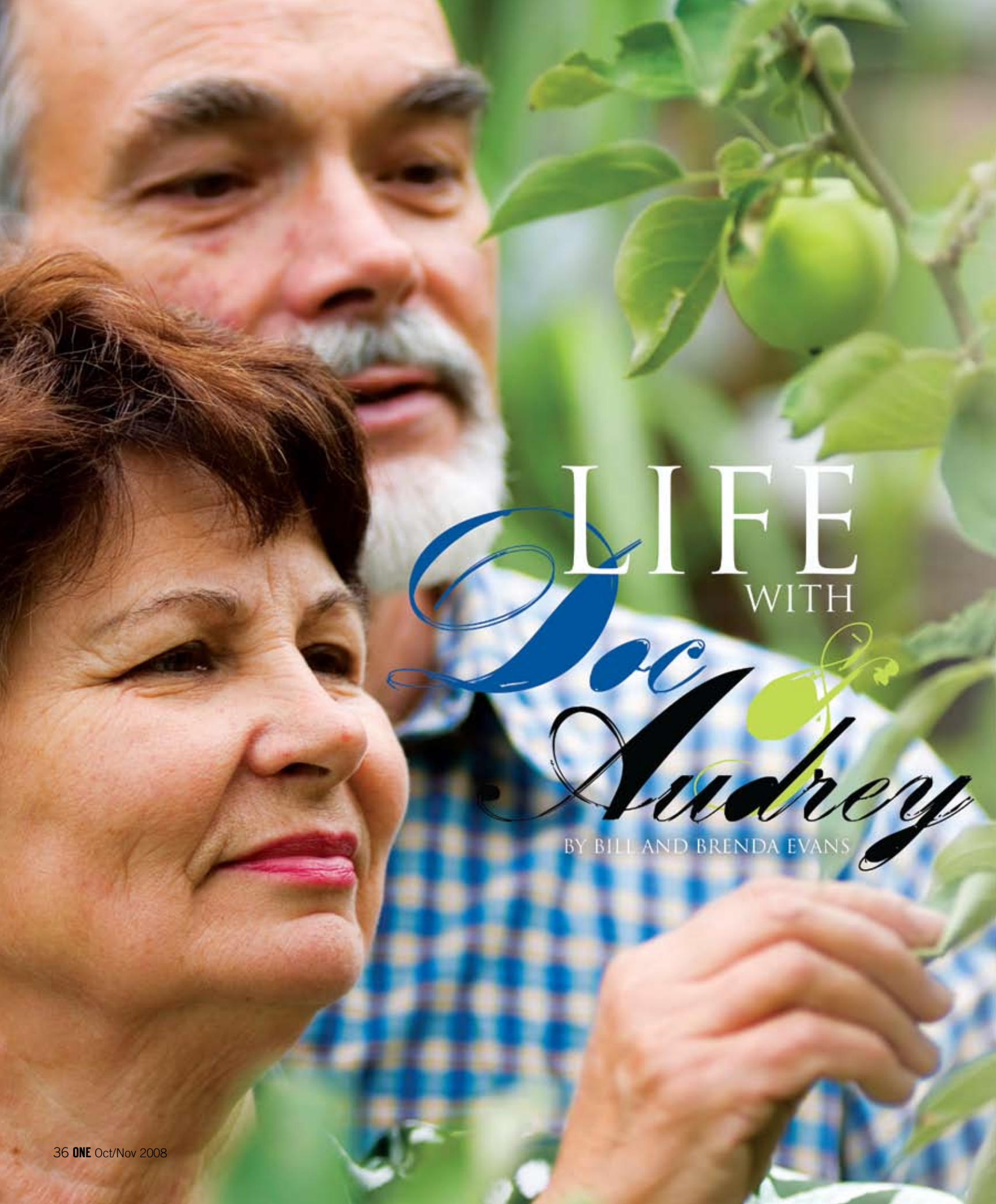
More details to come in the December-January 2009 issue of *ONE Magazine*



Free Will Baptist
Bible College

www.fwbcc.edu





LIFE
WITH
Doc
Audrey

BY BILL AND BRENDA EVANS

When Dr. Marvin McCoy Smith says, “I have a cleaving,” he refers to a kind of goodness that binds people together and opens hands and hearts—something he calls “the real thing.” Doc’s cleaving, for example, means hiring and mentoring a brilliant young black man whom no one else would give a chance.

“He’s the only genius I’ve ever known,” Doc says. “All he had to do was read a book or watch me once, and he could do anything.” Don Bennett worked with Doc for 20 years as an assistant animal surgeon, colleague, and friend. To Doc, that’s the real thing.

Marvin Smith is a weathered but rugged 88-year-old retired veterinarian with the grace of a Southern gentleman and the heart of his father. “The thing that has propelled me all my life has been the goodness of my father, and that goodness was shown by his giving. I caught it from him.

“My father’s family owned slaves in southern Alabama at a place called Five Points, and after the Civil War, three families stayed on with them. Later when my father moved up to Sand Mountain near Cullman, Alabama, he and Mother settled on 982 acres. It hit him hard about the sufferings of those three black families, and so he went back and invited them to live on his place. Two families accepted.

“By then he had a sawmill and had built 10 or 12 new tenant houses. The first year, the KKK burned a cross on one family’s yard. But my father told them he was going to try to keep them safe. The next year the KKK burned one of their houses. In fear, the two families fled back to Five Points. He mourned for them.

“Like my father, I’ve had a cleaving for people who have a disadvantage or suffer loss. I understand a little how it is to have a hardship. As a child and even into high school, I could not read. Finally an optometrist diagnosed my problem as severe astigmatism that kept my eyes from focusing right so that letters never lined up logically. I could read ‘the dog chases the cat up a tree,’ but not longer words.

“Three old maid aunts who were teachers lived with us and helped me. When I finished high school, I went on to Auburn University, was in the honor society and ROTC, and got a

degree in agriculture. But when WWII started, I was rejected for advanced ROTC or the military because on the firing range I missed the target by 25 feet. So I went on to veterinarian school instead. After graduation in 1945, I moved to Springfield, Tennessee, and began my practice. I finally retired and sold it in 1981.”

Veteran Veterinarian

What kind of person makes a good veterinarian? Mrs. Audrey, Doc’s wife, says, “You have to be willing to work hard day and night. Calves are rarely born in daylight hours.” That same kind of man makes a good husband it seems. Doc met and doggedly pursued Mrs. Audrey’s hand and heart because he had bovine wart vaccine and she had Angus cattle who needed injections. Now they joke about a bottle of wart vaccine bringing them to the marriage altar.

Doc says a veterinarian also needs to be generous and good. “If I was able with an intravenous injection to perform a miracle, I felt good. Sometimes a cow lying down ready to die with milk fever would stand up in minutes and get well in a day or two. But sometimes, it was too late. I remember one man had three dead cows when I got there. He needed those cows bad, but they were gone. Before I left, I wrote him a check for \$150 to help him with his loss.”

Giving Back

To Doc, goodness is demonstrated by giving, and vileness is manifested by greed. One of Doc’s relatives made a legitimate fortune during WWII but buried it in zinc-lidded fruit jars under his house to avoid taxes. Moisture eventually damaged the paper money, and the local bank, assuming it was illicit money, would not redeem it. Doc knows it does not pay to be greedy.

“Your goodness comes out through your money, or you go bad through money,” Doc states. “Christ went about doing good and that’s

“Christ went about doing good and that’s what I want to do. And in the Bible He talked more about money than almost anything else.”

what I want to do. And in the Bible He talked more about money than almost anything else.” Helping the down-and-out, whether people or animals, is his favorite method of doing good.

“I was out in the country on calls and went by to see a young couple who were Audrey’s relatives. They had bought an old house on 26 acres and were refinishing it. She was pregnant with their first child, and he had fallen seriously ill and couldn’t work. They were out of money and ready to close off the part of the house they couldn’t finish.

“I told them to order the lumber they needed and send me the bill. They were shocked and reluctant, but the carpenter kept working and I kept paying the bill. I told them it wasn’t a loan; they didn’t owe me anything. That young father has never forgotten that and still asks, ‘What do you need, Doc?’”

Often, the Smiths give kindness, not money. Mitzi, a stray dog that kept hanging around their yard, is an example. “One day I threw a small rock trying to run her off. It hit her on the paw. When I hurried to see about her, she licked her paw and then me. I said to her, ‘Come on, let’s go home.’ She’s taught me that a dog truly is man’s best friend. One day she broke off three canine teeth bending the latch on her dogtrot to alert us to a bad storm. She seemed to know we were napping and in danger.”

Today Doc and Audrey do not worry about money or about the future. “I’ve learned that God always rolls His money over. I didn’t make all my money treating animals. During the Carter administration when interest was 12-20 percent, a friend recommended I invest in in-

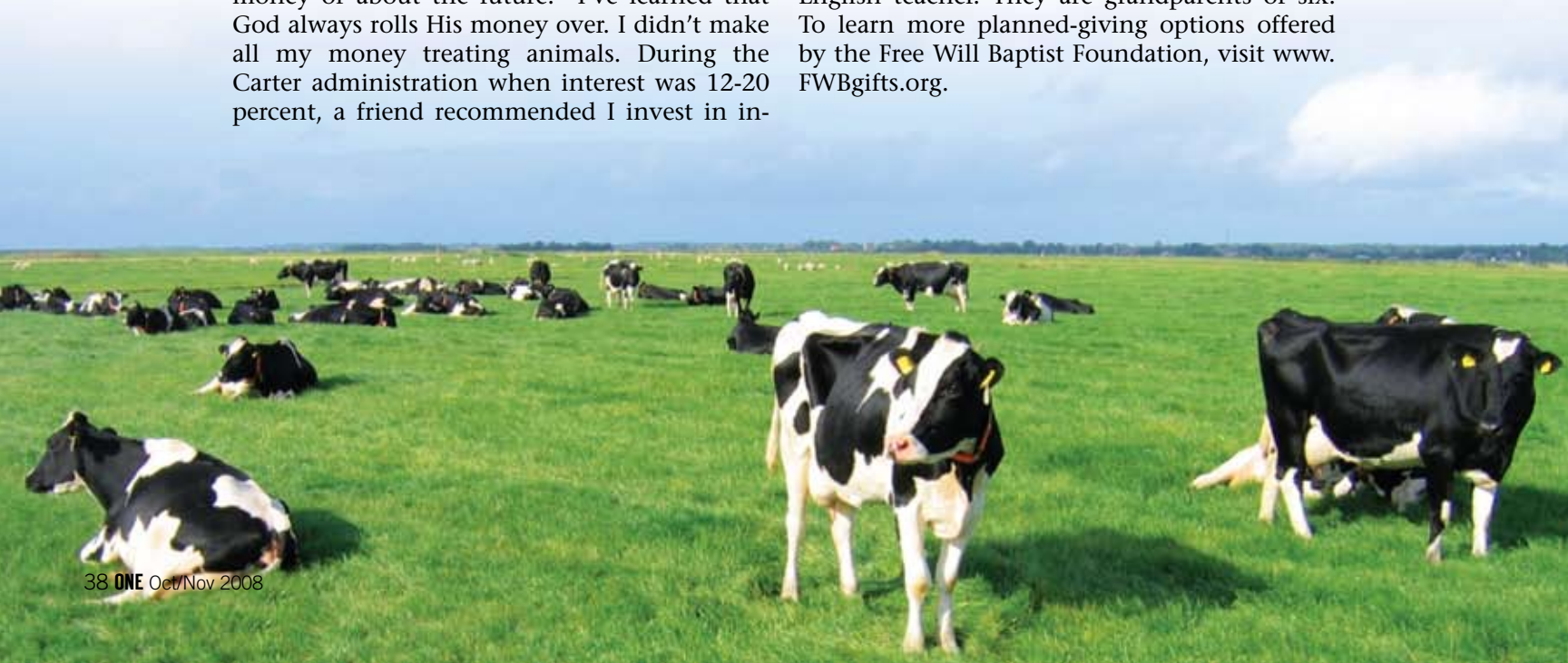
dustrial development bonds that were tax-free. During those days, my money doubled and doubled, and I had other investments as well. Now I have given it all away. That’s what my lawyer likes best of all—I’ve given it away, but am still taken care of. That is what gift annuities do.”

“Most of us start with just a little money, but it will go up and up if we do what is right,” Doc says. Doc has already provided an inheritance for his daughter and has also benefited many Christian and community charities, yet he and Mrs. Audrey live comfortably because of a combination of gift annuities and revocable trusts arranged through Free Will Baptist Foundation.

Doc’s advice is never bury your money. “Find a way to give it away and also meet your needs. I believe it is true that the love of money is the root of evil. I’ve seen it demonstrated. Loving money is a bad trick you play on yourself. I had parents who showed me how to do the real thing—to give.”

Marvin McCoy Smith goes by many names—The Real McCoy, Doctor Mac, just plain Doc, author, or humanitarian, to name a few. But what Doc and Mrs. Audrey really want to be known for is that they are good and generous givers. To them, that is the one and only real thing. □

About the Writers: Bill Evans, former director of the Free Will Baptist Foundation, lives in Catlettsburg, KY, with his wife Brenda, a retired English teacher. They are grandparents of six. To learn more planned-giving options offered by the Free Will Baptist Foundation, visit www.FWBgifts.org.





THE Free-Willers

By
DAVID
CROWE

I HAVE BEEN A FREE WILL BAPTIST all of my life. As a child, my parents took me to a Free Will Baptist church. As a teenager my parents dragged me to a Free Will Baptist church. I married a Free Will Baptist girl and later attended Free Will Baptist Bible College.

I ministered in Free Will Baptist churches in Alabama and Tennessee for 17 years, and for the past 13 years, I have ministered to Free Will Baptists across North America as a

staff member of the Free Will Baptist Home Missions Department.

I have never been ashamed to be called Free Will Baptist. I believe our denomination has a prominent place in church history and a vital role in God's Kingdom today. One of my core beliefs is that God has given every man, woman, boy, and girl a free will to embrace and accept His offer of salvation by grace through faith or to reject it. I believe this to be the doctrine of the

Bible as preached by John the Baptist, Jesus, and the apostles. They all preached a "whosoever will" gospel.

This was a core belief of the New Testament Church and the early Christians—the common belief until 300 A.D. when Augustine began to teach infant baptism and predestination. These doctrines soon became the core beliefs of the state church in Rome, and gradually they spread across Europe. During

By *HENRY ADIS*, a Baptized Believer, undergoing the Name of a Free-Willer; and also most ignominiously by the tongue of Infamy, called a *Fannatick*, or a *mad man*.

Copy of an original document printed in London, England, in 1661.

I have never been ashamed to be called Free Will Baptist. I believe our denomination has a prominent place in church history and a vital role in God's Kingdom today.

this period of history, the state church martyred many Christians for teaching baptism after salvation and for teaching the free will of man.

Twelve hundred years of history passed, and groups of Christians began to spring up all over Europe. They lived and worshipped God in hiding for hundreds of years. I had been led to believe that the terms free will, free-willers and freewill, were not commonly used to describe Baptists until 19th century America. I had also been taught that all European Baptists who came to North America believing the doctrine of free will were simply called General Baptists.

However, Dr. William Davidson, a prominent Free Will Baptist historian, found that Champlin Burage noted that a non-calvinistic congregation existed as "free-willers" in England as early as 1551. He also noted that in 1611, Thomas

Helwys used this term in the title of an article, "An advertisement or admonition, unto the congregation, which men called the New Frylers (Free-Willers), in the lowe Countries written in Dutche." Two documents printed in 1659 also used these terms. The first is titled, "A declaration of a small society of baptized believers, undergoing the name of Free-Willers, about the city of London." The second was written by an opponent of Free-Willers, named I. Beevan, and was entitled, "A Loving Salutation to all People Who Have Any Desires after the Living God: but especially to the Free-Will-Anabaptists."

It seems clear to me that there have been Free-Willers in the Kingdom of God since the beginning of God's plan of salvation for man. Those who believe predestination argue that to allow man free will lessens the sovereignty of God. It seems clear to me that God's creat-

ing man and giving him a free will does not lessen His sovereignty, but enhances it. His creation loves and accepts Him because he chooses to do so, not as a manipulated puppet.

A few months ago, I acquired two documents from Philadelphia Rare Books and Manuscripts. These original documents were printed in London, England, in 1661. The first is titled, *A Fannaticks Address Humbly Presented to the King and his Peers*. The second is, *A Fannaticks Testimony Against Swearing Being an Answer to Four Books*. Both documents were written by Henry Adis (sometimes spelled Addis), a Baptist who lived in England during the nation's Civil War. He spent a great deal of time in prison because he would not swear allegiance to the king because of his religious beliefs. These two documents explain his reasons for this belief. On the title page of each of these is stated, "By Henry Adis, a Baptized Believer, undergoing the Name of a Free-Willer."

Many have lived and died believing and preaching the free will of man. So, never be ashamed of being a "Free-Willer"! □

ABOUT THE WRITER: An avid historian, David Crowe is director of development for the Home Missions Department. Learn more about Free Will Baptist history through the Heritage Book Club. Visit www.homemissions.net.



Passion
ON
PURPOSE

By
Mark McPeak

IF YOU COULD USE ONLY ONE WORD TO DESCRIBE yourself, what would it be? How would you sum up your personality, habits, experiences, talents, quirks, and relationships—everything in one word? In a creative meeting a few years ago, I was asked to do just that.

Each of us received a stack of about 50 cards with a descriptive word on each. We were asked to narrow the cards down to the five that fit us best. With no opportunity to ask questions and very little time, I chose. First five, then three, and, finally, I committed to a single card as the best one-word summation of me.

I chose the word *passion*.

It wasn't careful analysis or logic. At that moment, I chose the word because it felt like the best description of me.

Ask me to describe International Missions in just one word, and I might choose passion. Maybe that's why it's been a good "fit" for me these past three years. From the board to the staff to the missionaries to the volunteers—there is a deep passion that runs through the Mission

family. Like any other organization, we have problems and challenges in our ranks, but ask anyone on the IM team why they are here and there is no wavering. We get up in the morning and go to work because a lost world desperately needs to hear about Jesus—and we're all passionate about that.

FOCUSED PURPOSE

Many workers cannot connect their day-to-day tasks with any larger meaning. At International Missions, we know everything we do must further our purpose: facilitate church planting movements among unreached people all over the world. Since we have a clear purpose, we can channel our passion to those strategies and tactics that help us fulfill it. This allows us to say no to good things that might distract us so we can focus on what really matters. We regularly set priorities by measuring potential opportunities against our ultimate purpose.

“...the passion that drives our team will continue to draw like-minded people to the cause of sharing Christ with lost and dying peoples.”

CAREFUL MANAGEMENT

Focus on our purpose establishes a foundation for our management disciplines. Being effective means furthering our purpose through what we do. Being efficient means accomplishing what we do with excellence. All our resources are gifts from God; we promise to be good stewards of them.

BOLD STRATEGY AND INNOVATION

While we seek to manage well, we want to be innovative and make needed changes to improve effectiveness. God never changes, but everything else does. With advances in travel, global communications, and advanced technologies, we must diligently use what we have to maximize our impact.

Expect International Missions to innovate the way we do our business. Already we've installed video conferencing capability that allows us to have face-to-face meetings with people around the world at a fraction of the time and travel cost of bringing them together physically. We have many bright minds on our team and among our supporters. We plan to use their insights and ideas to advance the cause of Christ.

ABOUT THE WRITER: Initially hired in 2005 as International Missions' director of communications, Mark McPeak became deputy director of stateside operations in April 2008.

A NEW GENERATION

I wish you could meet each of our newly appointed, young missionaries. If you did, you would be as excited as I am about the future. Not only are they bright, capable, and prepared, they are also passionate and committed. I believe our best years are yet to come as talented young people become increasingly involved, both on the field and on the home front. International Missions will continue to challenge our young people to involvement in proclaiming Christ to the world. Expect to see more communications, events, and opportunities aimed at young adults and students.

International Missions is blessed to employ very gifted and passionate people. Many of them are on our stateside team. It is our privilege to work with our missionaries, pastors, and laypeople to literally change the world.

Our future is bright. I believe the passion that drives our team will continue to draw like-minded people to the cause of sharing Christ with lost and dying peoples. In stateside operations, we will ask the Lord to help us focus our passion, remember our purpose, and continue to develop excellence in everything we do. □



A VOICE. . . A CALL

By Neil Gilliland, Ph.D.

The moist morning air warmed their weathered skin—skin as dark as the earth from days at sea. Work-worn hands tied age-old knots. The salty smell of fish hung in the air. Gulls chattered in the background, hovering and waiting for a breakfast of discarded scraps.

Two brothers sat on the deck of their boat as it bobbed to the rhythm of the waves. Soon they would need to work on the boat. But this morning attention had to be given to the nets. Their morning discussion was woven into the familiar tapestry of the daily life of fishermen. It was a morning not unlike any other morning until, through the soft mist drifted a voice, a simple call... “Follow Me.”

“And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him” (Matt. 4:22).

They joined two other fisherman and several rather ordinary people who responded to the same voice and the same call to simply follow Him. Their response changed the world. That same voice has echoed through the mist of history, and countless people have dropped their nets and followed Him.

For the past several issues of *ONE Magazine*, articles (Where Are They Now?) about some of our veteran missionaries who have retired from overseas service have appeared. A common thread runs through all their stories—a common thread, a common voice. The same voice James and John heard. The

same voice Laura Belle Barnard heard. The same voice Carlisle and Marie Hanna heard. They all sat on the deck of their boats mending nets, heard the voice, and abandoned self to His call.

When the disciples left their ship and said goodbye to their dad, it wasn't simply a call to abandon things and people. It was a matter of the will. Oswald Chambers remarked:

Have you ever had a crisis in which you deliberately and emphatically and recklessly abandoned everything? It is a crisis of will. You may come up to it many times externally, but it amounts to nothing. The real deep crisis of abandonment is reached internally, not externally. The giving up of external things may be an indication of being in total bondage.

Have you deliberately committed your will to Jesus Christ?

The disciples' crisis of the will came, and they responded. Our missionaries' crisis of the will came, and they responded. The same voice still echoes as it has throughout history. The question is, how will you respond? Will you be abandoned to the call? □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Neil Gilliland is director of member care for the International Missions Department. Learn more about Free Will Baptist International Missions at www.fwbgo.com.

NEWSBRIEFS

Tokyo, Japan—Mr. E began attending the Kamifukuoka Christ Church in February, was saved in April, and was baptized on Sunday, June 29. This man shared a moving testimony of his realization of the power of God's love and his strong desire to serve Him.



Creative Access—Dale and Allysa Harvey have participated in several different summer camps. During a camp at the beginning of July they traveled south with a group of 13 Americans where they were greeted by 54 energetic children. Communication was difficult at times since most of the children spoke their ethnic language instead of Russian. Although communicating mostly

through actions, the Lord moved and about 20 children accepted Christ as Savior.

Central Spain—The churches in Villalba, Alpedrete, Colmenar Viejo, and Alcalá gathered at a reservoir on June 29, for a time of fellowship, worship, and the baptism of four believers. Pastor-in-

training Jhon Fredy, Pastor Juan Carlos, and Pastor José Manuel baptized the converts from their congregations.

São José, Brazil—Fifteen people were baptized at a special Sunday evening service at the São José FWB Church on June 22. Those baptized included people from the São José church, Ouro Verde Mission, and Nova América Mission. Each church's pastor participated in the baptism ceremony.

Svishtov, Bulgaria—Several new families attended a children's party on June 1 hosted by the Good News FWB Church in Svishtov. This event gave opportunities for the Awtrey family to reach out to the community and make contacts for the church.

Bouaké, Côte d'Ivoire—After six-years, Pastor George has regained possession of the Bouaké church. The construction of the church in Bouaké was started before 2002, but was destroyed by rebels during the height of the civil war. Eleven people were present for the first church service in the building on Sunday, July 20.



DELEGATES VOTE TO ENDORSE MISSION FUNDING PLAN

Antioch, TN—"I move we receive the report, refer the budget, and endorse the funding plan." With these words, International Missions' Board Chairman Danny Williams asked the delegates to give their support to a historic change in denominational missions funding at the National Association of Free Will Baptists in Charleston, West Virginia. Delegates responded with an overwhelming endorsement of the International Missions Board's restructure plan for funding missions.

General Director James Forlines shared a timeline of events leading to this decision during his report to convention delegates. Forlines recounted the most important steps, including a pivotal strategic planning session with all mission leaders in December 2005, and the many regional meetings in 2008 to listen to state leaders and pastors. "As a result of over 10 years of work, tens of thousands of miles, and hundreds of meetings, the board was ready to vote on April 29, 2008. The vote was unanimous. The excitement was palpable," Forlines told hundreds of delegates.

Many people characterized the debate following the report as civil and representative of the way issues should be handled. In the end, the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of endorsing the new plan. Oklahoma's Director of Missions Brad Ransom declared, "I was delighted with the vote and especially appreciated the cooperative spirit in which the comments from the floor were made."

Senior missionary Bobby Poole rejoiced, "Geneva and I believe this is a major step in the right direction."

The target date for implementing the plan is January 2010. Mark McPeak, deputy director of stateside operations explains, "We will consistently communicate details and instructions to our churches and people in the 18-month transition period. Changing from a system that has been in place for a generation will present some challenges. But the early feedback has been excellent and most people seem eager to participate."

James Forlines' speech to the delegates and additional information on the new funding plan are available at www.fwbgo.com.



COUPLE APPROVED FOR SHORT-TERM SERVICE



Antioch, TN—The Board of Free Will Baptist International Missions met July 22, 2008, in Charleston, West Virginia, during the National Association of Free Will Baptists. They approved the candidate committee's recommendation that Jimmy and Kelly Hunter be appointed as professional servants for a two-year term in Bulgaria.

The couple will work with Tim and Lydia Awtrey, using their professional gifts and individual talents to build bridges between the community and the church in Svishtov, Bulgaria.

The Hunters are from Northport, AL, where they are active in their local Free Will Baptist church. A software engineer by profession, Jimmy has served as missions emphasis leader, assistant Sunday School teacher, choir member, and soloist. Kelly, a medical doctor, has worked in children's ministries, played piano, and sung in the choir. Both have participated in Evangelism Explosion and FAITH evangelistic programs over the last 12 years.

Jimmy graduated from the University of Alabama with a B.S. in electrical engineering technology in 1990. Kelly received her medical training at the University of Mississippi, graduating in 1992 with her M.D.

The couple has a 10-year-old son, Daniel.



E-TEAM 08

Nine E-TEAMS circled the globe this summer.

Following training on the campus of Free Will Baptist Bible College in Nashville, TN, 75 students deployed to nine ministry locations...

HIGHLIGHTS: TEAM BRAZIL Fifteen people were baptized at the São José Church. Each person received cheers as he emerged. The biggest influence in the new convert's life presented his baptismal certificate.

E-TEAM BRAZIL 2008—Valerie Conner, Madison Heights, MI; Brittany Echols, Northport, AL; Tracy Gilliland, Rose Bud, AR; Bryan Lamb, Owensboro, KY; Holly Petty, Beecher City, IL; Jason Provow, Fredericktown, MO; Jonathan Tolle, Homerville, GA; Chelsea Voltz, Magnolia, TX; Christian Wilson, Chapmansboro, TN. Team leaders: Tommy and Carol DuBose, Booneville, MS.



TEAM CHICAGO

Four kids accepted Christ as Savior at Veggie Tales Adventures.

E-TEAM CHICAGO 2008—Rebekah Gedeon, Southaven, MS; Kase Harris, Ada, OK; Nicholas Layton, Wellington, KS; Lindsey McDaniel, Sulligent, AL; Brittany Miller, Colquitt, GA; Aaron Ray, Van Buren, AR; Kristin Reed, Antioch, TN; Ariel Rowe, Axson, GA; Lindsey Smith, Washington, NC. Team leaders: Jonathan and Suzanne Owen, Nashville, TN.

TEAM FRANCE

Sharing Christ's love with five Muslim women and their children at the Children's Festival in Nantes, France.

E-TEAM FRANCE 2008—Crosby Brooks, Wellington, KS; Thomas Graeter, Pinehurst, TX; Adriana Marquina, Nashville, TN; Loyd Miller, Delaware, AR; Steven Reeder, Doerun, MO; Bethany Shope, Knoxville, TN; Kacy Stone, Morehead, KY; Emily Whitworth, Pleasant View, TN; Jesse Wolf, Ada, OK. Team leaders: Josh and Alicia Crowe, Hubert, NC.

TEAM CUBA

The night the lights went out, we saw our bus driver come to Christ.

E-TEAM CUBA 2008—Deana Barwick, Colquitt, GA; Chanel Bonds, Gastonia, NC; Haylee Hubbard, Hot Springs Village, AR; Shane Lester, Mt. Vernon, OH; Timothy Mott, New Boston, MI; Benjamin Os-

terkamp, Old Monroe, MO; Rebekah Wilson, Hamilton, AL. Team leaders: Sam and June McVay, Antioch, TN.

TEAM HOKKAIDO

Our ministry opportunities brought in many new contacts for the missionaries.

E-TEAM HOKKAIDO 2008—Courtney Barnes, Locust Grove, OK; Phillip Easley, Raytown, MO; Susan Griffin, Colquitt, GA; Crystal Hodges, Fresno, CA; Brooklin Holland, Nashville, TN; Sara Layton, Wellington, KS; Zachary Taylor, Owensboro, KY; Jared Wall, Knightdale, NC. Team leaders: Jonathan and Teresa Snow, Old Hickory, TN.

TEAM SPAIN

As a team, we learned the non-believers of this world need a friend who LIVES his life to the Christian standard EVERY DAY.

E-TEAM SPAIN 2008—Lauren Bradley, Owensboro, KY; Lori Coats, Ada, OK; Daniel Coker, Iuka, MS; Avery Ketchum, Broken Arrow, OK; Hanna McCuin, Wichita, KS; Sienna Morrow, Liberal, MO; Eric Pirtle, Fredericktown, MO; Ashley Rowe, Sterling Heights, MI. Team leaders: Pete and Jane Johnson, Hermitage, TN.

TEAM MEXICO

When Misael, our friend in Mexico, said "If I don't see you again, we will see you in heaven!"

E-TEAM MEXICO 2008—Ashley Duncan, Butler, GA; Katherine Fannin, Prescott Valley, AZ; Hannah Gillock, Cookeville, TN; Tyler Keeling, North Little Rock, AR; Gloria LaPere, Hazel Park, MI; Kevin Lundquist, Goldsboro, NC; Sarah Moore, Fredericktown, MO; Alana Walser, Antioch, TN. Team leaders: Billy and Sue Parson, Huntsville, OH.

TEAM ST. CROIX, USVI

We split into four groups and were given \$50 each to buy things for local pastors. We also visited two local pastors and sang and prayed with them.

E-TEAM ST. CROIX 2008—Dustin Allen, Statford, OK; Jamie Bolden, Arnold, MO; Emilee Carter, Springfield, MO; Hannah Collins, Harrisonburg, VA; Francine Feavel, Dewey, AZ; Autumn Fitzgerald, Braselton, GA; Dustin Long, Greeneville, TN; Dustin Moore, Foristell, MO. Team leaders: Travis and Wendy Penn, Salem, IL.

TEAM URUGUAY

Our team accomplished our team goal: to love, serve, and reach the Uruguayan people.

E-TEAM URUGUAY 2008—Adam Frazier, Jasper, AL; Bethany Hovis, Fredericktown, MO; Sierra Hubbard, Red Bay, AL; Thomas Judkins, Monticello, AR; Hunter Pardue, Greenville, NC; Margaret Paxton, Grabill, IN; Ben Reed, Arapaho, OK; Kailey Scott, Garner, NC; Hannah Ward, Van Buren, AR. Team leaders: Adam and Miriam James, Nashville, TN.



BORDER CROSSINGS: IMMIGRATION AND THE CHRISTIAN

Roberto, my seatmate on American Airlines flight 1885, fretted because his luggage had already arrived at his destination and he had not. As he calmed down, though, he told me his fascinating story.

Anxious Paratrooper's Tale

Roberto immigrated with his family to the United States from Mexico over 40 years ago, settling as migrant farmers in California's San Joaquin Valley. He enlisted in the army and served as a paratrooper in both the Vietnam and Gulf Wars. Though nominally Catholic, my worried fellow traveler made no claim of a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

His story made me rethink my own attitude toward the exploding immigrant population in this nation. One out of every three persons living here was born somewhere else. In two cities I recently visited, nearly half the people are Hispanic. At least two (and no doubt many other) Free Will Baptist strongholds are leading ethnic centers. Over 13,000 Hmong (pronounced "mongs," mostly Laotian and Vietnamese refugees) live in Fresno, California. Nashville, Tennessee, is known as "Little Kurdistan" because it is home to the largest Kurdish community in the United States.

The "Omni" God

Two vital questions scream at us: how should Christians respond to the influx of newcomers? Closer to home, how should Free Will Baptists respond?

Remembering that the Bible must control our thinking, a good place to start the conversation is the prophecy of Ezekiel. He was a messenger sent to immigrants—citizens of Judah exiled to Babylonia. This priest-turned-prophet performed a unique role: he brought a New Covenant perspective to God's people living outside their homeland in Old Covenant times.

Ezekiel's message pinpoints three truths about God relevant to a Christian viewpoint on immigration in the 21st century. First, the sovereign Lord is free to do whatever He pleases wherever He chooses.

He is a global God.

The prophet's magnificent vision in chapter one of the wheels within wheels moving simultaneously in four direc-

tions teaches us that God is not confined to a building, a city, or a country. Unlike Baal, Marduk, and the other ancient idols, the Lord of everything is present everywhere for a relationship with everyone who will trust Him.

Refuge for Refugees

Therein lies the second principle we need to note. God is ready for a relationship with people wherever they are. He is a personal God. In Ezekiel 11:16, the Lord reveals a stunning fact: He Himself is the "sanctuary" for His people. The Jerusalem temple, now in ruins, merely illustrates a far deeper reality. God is our dwelling place. We live in Him.

"Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations," Moses writes (Psalm 90:1). This great fact sets the stage for the New Testament teaching that the Christian is "in Christ" and Christ is in the Christian. Paul and Stephen know that the "Most High does not dwell in houses made by hands" (Acts 7:48-50; 17:24). God lives in His people, whoever and wherever they are, and they live in Him. Christ is the only refuge for refugees!

Immigrants All

Finally, Ezekiel reminds us that God offers a New Covenant through Israel with the intent that all nations respond to His grace and find salvation. He is a missional God. The Lord Himself will come as the Good Shepherd, according to Ezekiel 34, a preview of Christ's incarnation. Then the nations will see and know of God's great, loving Gospel when He offers cleansing, a new heart and Spirit, and transformed lives through the seed promised to Abraham (read Ezekiel 36:23-28).

While we should express concern over the illegal entry of many immigrants, we must express compassion—the love of Christ—to all for whom He died, regardless of where they are from, where they live, or how they have come into our lives. After all, Moses long ago commanded God's people to love the stranger who lives among us as we love ourselves, "for you were strangers in the land of Egypt" (Leviticus 19:34). On many levels, all of us are immigrants.

I hope Roberto found his luggage. I pray that He will find Christ as well. □

Dr. Garnett Reid is a member of the Bible faculty at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Tribute to Ralph and
Margaret Hampton

Beyond the Parting Tree

By Jack Williams



THE PARTING TREE STOOD just down the sidewalk from the student lounge at Free Will Baptist Bible College, a place where court- ing boys turned left and girls turned right—that's where it all started in 1955. Margaret doesn't remember that first accidental meeting with the quiet ministerial student from California, but Ralph does. He is quick to tell about the pretty Missouri lass standing with her Arkansas friend on the girls' side of the Parting Tree as he and a West Coast buddy headed back to the men's dormitory after the fall reception.

That was the last unplanned meet- ing between the two. The rest were intentional. He proposed (without a ring) at her home in Springfield, Missouri, one Christmas. But it was

three years be- fore Margaret Evans and Ralph Hamp- ton married.

There was not enough money to get married and pay tu- tion. After all, he was the son of a bi-vo- cational

Free Will Baptist preacher; she was the daughter of a Free Will Baptist deacon who was gone from home weeks at a time working his railroad job with the Frisco Line. So they pledged their love to one another, postponed marriage, went back to FWBBC, and strolled down the side- walk toward the Parting Tree.

Missouri/ California Merger

Ralph, oldest of the four Hamp- ton brothers, spent summers work- ing in California canneries to pay for college tuition. He missed Mar- garet, but it cost too much to talk by phone, so he dreamed about her and waited for the fall semester to see her again.

"Ralph was always so polite and neat," Margaret said. "That's one of the things I liked about him. Un- like most boys, his hands were al- ways clean. My mother was a practi- cal nurse. When she met him, she thought he had doctor's hands."

The couple married in 1958 af- ter Ralph completed his B.A. degree and was hired to teach at FWBBC. Margaret finished her B.A. degree in 1959.

Asked where they went on their honeymoon, Margaret responded, "We came to Nashville. We had no

car that first year; Ralph's salary was just \$1,800 annually, and we lived in campus housing."

By 1963, they scraped together a down payment on a three-bedroom house in Nashville where their three children (Laura, Clayton, and Ken- ny) grew up. Ralph and Margaret still live there 45 years later.

Three-Hat Husband

Ralph was 23 when he began his 50-year tenure at FWBBC. In time, he would earn three graduate de- grees to complete his formal studies, teach a wide variety of courses, chair the Biblical and Ministry Studies Department, and lead the Free Will Baptist denomination as moderator of the National Association.

But in the fall of 1958, the just- married Ralph Hampton was a fast- track rookie at the denomination's flagship college. He wore three hats that first year, in addition to hus- band and preacher. He taught 15 hours (which would now be consid- ered an overload), served as director of Christian Service, and was dormi- tory supervisor.

"Fortunately, we had no rou- tine faculty meetings and no com- mittees," Ralph said. "When some pressing matter arose, the Dean would call the faculty together to



consider whatever action needed to be taken. That all changed over time, of course, as the college pursued regional accreditation. Now we have committees functioning at all levels and faculty meetings almost weekly."

Ralph's brother Charles joined the FWBBC faculty in 1974 and served 25 years alongside him, 20 years as Registrar. Younger brother Larry came on board later as an adjunct faculty member.

Touched by Great Men

Ralph was surrounded by people who influenced his life. He credits medical doctor Ron Winkle with "getting me to FWBBC." However, pioneer Free Will Baptist preachers in Oklahoma and California were always part of his life. The energetic pastors and church planters gave him a sense of pride in the denomination, an urgency to prepare educationally, and the drive to make a difference. Men such as Reford Wilson, George McLain, E.E. Morris, Wade Jernigan, Clay and Jack Richey, and others who carried the Free Will Baptist flag branded him with denominational loyalty.

His half-century in FWBBC classrooms placed him a handshake away from men who changed the Free Will Baptist landscape and took the eager young teacher/preacher under their wing, preparing him for broader service.

"L.C. Johnson's philosophy of consistent Christian living came through every day in chapel when he spoke," comments Ralph. "Leroy Forlines forced me to think, helped me to think clearer, and opened the book of Romans to me as no one had ever done. Charles Thigpen's ability to get things done quickly and professionally, Robert Picirilli's ability with biblical languages, and men like them kept me challenged and encouraged."

Meteoric Rise to Leadership

While in his prime at FWBBC, Ralph blazed a 15-year trail across the denomination as a national Free Will Baptist leader. Beginning in 1981 at age 46, he was elected six times as assistant moderator of the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

At age 52, he began his signature nine-year run as moderator, culminating in one of the Association's most emotionally-charged and pivotal gatherings—the 1995 convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, when delegates instructed the annual Leadership Conference to grapple with two landmark resolutions that would alter the future of the movement.

"That was a crisis moment in our history," Ralph said. "Men had reached a point where they felt they couldn't be brethren and friends with those who disagreed with them. The 1995 convention and Leadership Conference called us back to our roots as Christian brothers and Free Will Baptists."

Life in the Stacks

While Ralph was teaching students, pursuing graduate degrees, and moderating national conventions, Margaret began her own historic service at Free Will Baptist Bible College. The family had struggled financially while Ralph was on a two-year sabbatical at Covenant Theological Seminary.

"I decided we had lived in poverty long enough," Margaret said. "It was easier to work than stay at home and worry how we were going to make it. The Business Office at the college needed help, and I worked there from time to time. Dr. Charles Thigpen wanted me to work in the library. He gave me the choice, and I chose the library. I had no idea it would last 37 years as library manager!"

She enjoyed exchanges with students as they came and went in the library stacks. Her most challenging work was a two-year project getting the card catalog online.

"I've worn out three typewriters since I've been here," Margaret said. "I will never forget cataloging a book of sermons for the Historical Collection that required typing over 100 cards in the card catalog for that one book alone!"

Mother's Prayers

Converted at age five near Gapman, Mississippi, under the preaching of M.L. Hollis, Margaret began teaching Sunday School when she was in the ninth grade. She learned to pray at the feet of the most influential person in her life, her mother.

"My mother was a prayer warrior," she said. "She spent time with me and my brother Bill, reading and praying and talking with us. She taught me to pray while a bad storm howled outside the door. I'm convinced that our son Clayton (home missionary in Clarksville, Tennessee) is preaching today because of Mother's prayers."

87 Years in Guitar Gulch

Looking back on their combined 87 years at FWBBC, Ralph and Margaret agree they wouldn't change much about their lives together.

"I'd make longer days," Margaret said. "There was so much to do. We didn't



know how to say No. Times got really hard when Ralph was teaching full-time in the day and two nights each week, and we had two babies at home. We needed money to pay the bills. Thank goodness for a small church that called Ralph as pastor, and we served there over three years."

Ralph, on the other hand, "would probably figure out a way to do fewer things, do some things better and specialize more instead of being so spread out in the jobs and duties."

"We had such a diversity of students in the 1950s and 1960s," he said, "with World War II and Korean War veterans sitting in classrooms alongside freshmen just out of high school. They seemed more serious about studying than some of today's students. Of course, they were older as well."

Ralph's favorite class to teach in his early years was Ancient History, a class that many of his students remind him of to this day. He brought humor and Bible together, along with historical insight and facts. His most difficult class was Isaiah—the book was too big for students to grasp in one semester.

'They Shaped FWBBC'

FWBBC president Matt Pinson said it best when addressing a May 15 retirement dinner honoring the Hamptons, "They shaped FWBBC. Ralph was a rock of stability on campus for five decades. We will miss his quiet strength. Margaret has been a model of hard work, virtue, and an encouraging friend and colleague. Thank God for the influence of these faithful servants of Jesus."

Their well-earned retirement in hand, the Hamptons can refocus their attention from decades of classroom preparation and card catalogs to gardening, some light reading, home repairs, and Margaret's favorite pastime—travel, if the price of gasoline cooperates, that is.

As Ralph and Margaret sat at a table in the History Room on the second floor of Welch Library at FWBBC, he turned to her with a twinkle in his eye and said softly, "They cut down the Parting Tree."

This time she blushed. □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Jack Williams is director of communications at Free Will Baptist Bible College.

The Ralph Hampton Record

EDUCATION

A.A., East Contra Costa Junior College, 1955
B.A., Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1958
M.A., Winona Lake School of Theology, 1961
M.Div., Covenant Theological Seminary, 1970
D.Min. (ABD), Trinity Evangelical Divinity School

DENOMINATIONAL SERVICE

Moderator, National Association of
Free Will Baptists, 1987-1996
Assistant Moderator, National Association of
Free Will Baptists, 1981-1987
Faculty, Free Will Baptist Bible College, 1958-2008
Curriculum Writer, Randall House Publications
Writer, *Contact*
Writer, *ONE Magazine*

PASTORATES

Oakwood FWB Church / Woodlawn, Tennessee
(1962-1965)
Rock Springs FWB Church / Charlotte, Tennessee
(1966-1968)
Twin City FWB Church / Festus, Missouri (1968-
1970)
Ashland City FWB Church / Ashland City,
Tennessee (1971-1972)
Cross Timbers FWB Church / Nashville, Tennessee
(1975-1979)
Bethlehem FWB Church / Ashland City, Tennessee
(Interim, seven months)

FWBBC HONORS

Professor Emeritus (2004)
Chairman, Biblical and Ministry Studies
Department, 2004-2008
Outstanding Student Award (1958)
Student Body President (1958)
Editor, *Lumen* (1957)
Editor, *Envoy* (1957)
Assistant Editor, *Envoy* (1956)

BIOGRAPHICAL

Born: December 13, 1934 (Blanchard, Oklahoma)
Conversion: 1946, First Oklahoma Association
Youth Camp
Licensed to Preach: 1960
Ordained: 1962
Married: Margaret Evans (August 22, 1958)
Children: Laura, Clayton, Kenny
Grandchildren: Eight

Tributes From Family and Friends



About Ralph

"Ralph has had a profound influence on my life. I came to FWBBC because of him. He was my teacher—one of the best I ever had. Free Will Baptist Bible College may have had more intelligent teachers than Ralph, but I'm not sure who it would be. There have been teachers with more education; make that degrees. I am convinced there has been no better man who has taught here. I once told a young lady I dated that I wished I was more like Ralph. She asked why, and I replied, 'Because he's more like Jesus than I am.' He still is."

—Larry Hampton, Ralph's Brother
Free Will Baptist Bible College

"Had he played baseball, Ralph would have been the consummate utility player, able to fill any position on the field with skill and aplomb—the unheralded, underrated team player often undervalued by all except his teammates who couldn't win games without him. Had he lived in Old Testament days, Ralph would have occupied the leading seat in the city gate as the *hakam*, the wise man dispensing skilled counsel in helping people live bountifully. Ralph leaves an indelible imprint on this school and on all of us he has taught, and that imprint bears a striking resemblance to the Savior whom he loves and whom he has taught us to love."

—Garnett Reid, Old Testament Professor
Free Will Baptist Bible College

"Ralph and Margaret Hampton have been precious jewels on our faculty and staff for essentially all of their adult lives. Ralph came to FWBBC as a student in the fall of 1955; he was an excellent student. I still remember Dr. Johnson's expression of high opinion about Ralph's potential as a teacher when we were discussing the possibility of bringing him back (to teach). Ralph has graced this campus with a lifetime of quiet, dependable service. We could always count on him to be there, to do what was needed, and to do it without making a fuss. He was dedicated to keeping the school true to its founding mission, and he never swerved in his thinking from that ideal. He gave sound and long-term leadership as chairman of the Department of Biblical and Ministry Studies."

—Robert Picirilli, Professor Emeritus, Retired
Free Will Baptist Bible College



About Margaret

"I've worked 23 years with Margaret. When I started at Welch Library as a student clerk, she was my supervisor. From her, I learned about faithfulness to my Lord, to my family, to my church, to my friends, and to my job. Margaret does the routine stuff and the hard stuff. She doesn't quit until her work is done. She has been the Energizer Bunny of Welch Library."

—Carol Reid, Librarian, Welch Library
Free Will Baptist Bible College

"As a Navy veteran, I remember the strategic importance of the anchor. Margaret is one of the anchors the Lord provided at FWBBC to keep the college on course and on mission. She is steady, dependable, and ready to grab hold of whatever the task. She has also been an exemplary wife and mother. It has been an honor to serve with her."

—Tom Sass, Vice President for Financial Affairs
Free Will Baptist Bible College

S—Service. Margaret did it all: cooking, cleaning, teaching, speaking, teaching. Back in the 1959 spring semester, she used to host Charlie (Ralph's brother Charles) and me for an after-church meal Sunday nights. Never anything fancy, but something to help fill the ravenous appetites of growing boys.

I—Intrepid. Through childhood, she was my defender and shield. I was never afraid when she took my hand.

S—Steady. She was direct and sure in movement. When she decided to attend FWBBC, she did so over the objections of our pastor, but with the approval of our parents.

T—True Blue. She was marked by unswerving loyalty.

E—Energetic. She never flagged in serving her family, parents, husband, children, and my family. When there was work to be done, she could always be counted on.

R—Reliable. I have been blessed by this fine lady all my life. I feel sorry for all of you who have not had her for a sister. I was never disappointed in her."

—William (Bill) Evans, Margaret's Brother
Retired Director, Free Will Baptist Foundation

Fall ^{is} Beautiful



unless it describes...



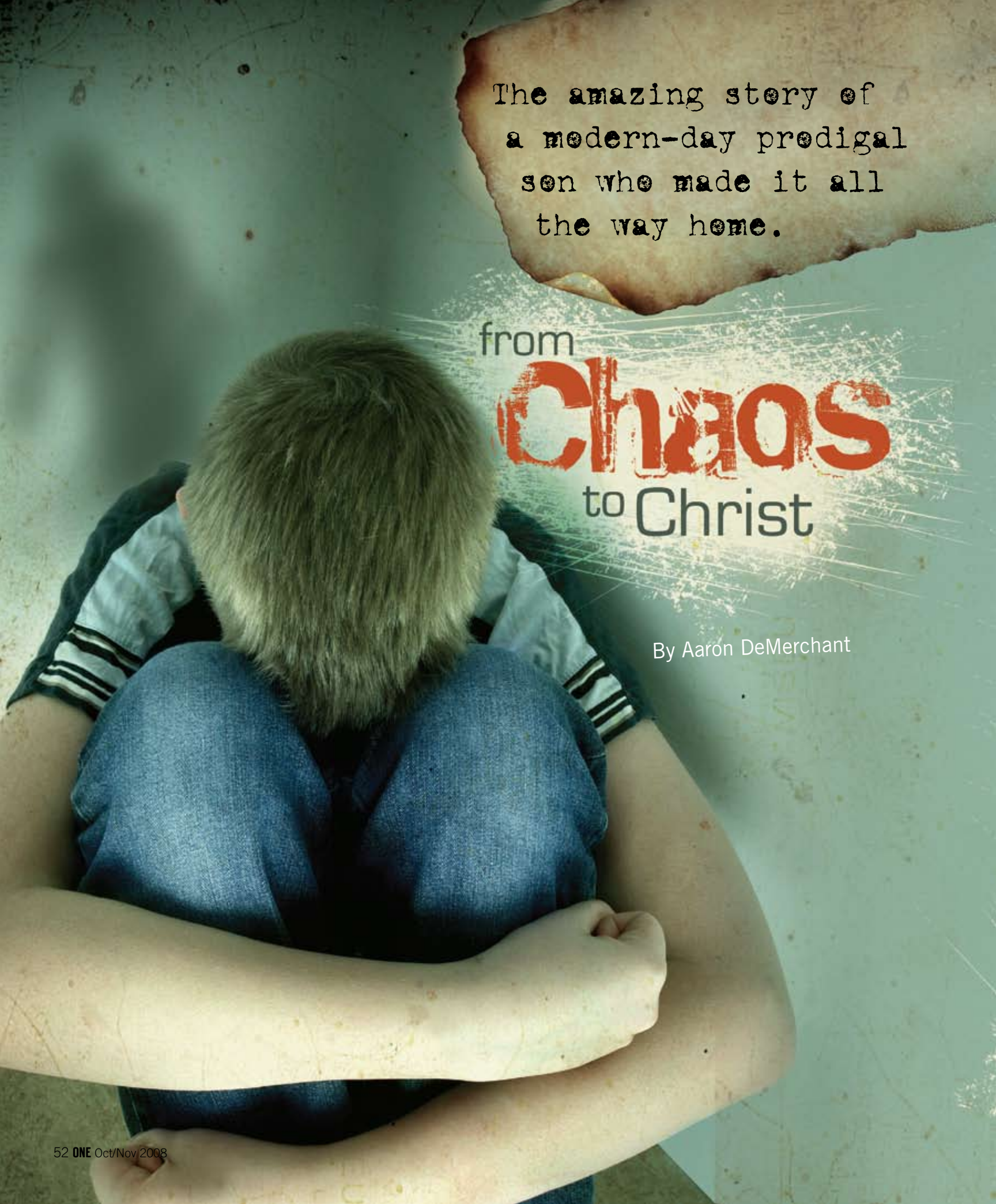
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The amazing story of
a modern-day prodigal
son who made it all
the way home.

from

Chaos

to Christ

By Aaron DeMerchant

YOUNG MEN IN THE DORMITORY AT FREE WILL

Baptist Bible College may be startled to learn that the resident director they know as Mr. DeMerchant, who lives in campus housing along with his wife and infant son, was better known five years ago as a 270-pound professional wrestler named The Canadian Crippler: Chaos A.D.

While I dread recalling some of my past and find it difficult to speak of because people get the wrong idea about my old life, I'm eager to tell how Jesus Christ turned my life around.

A Near Conversion

I grew up in a good Christian family with Dad, Mom, and two older brothers. My brothers and I were taken to church from the first Sunday our parents brought us home from the hospital.

I remember that 1982 Sunday afternoon service at a local church in New Brunswick, Canada. I was six years old. The pastor preached about the love of God from John 3:16. For the first time in my life, I believed God was speaking to me personally. Overwhelmed with conviction, I walked to the front of the church and knelt to talk things out with God.

"God, I believe if I want to go to Heaven, Jesus is the Way. But I don't think I can preach the Bible."

I don't remember all I said that day, but I did not believe God was telling the whole truth. I could not tell others about a God who says He is love when I did not believe it.

I left the altar like so many do, confused, un-surrendered, and consumed with unresolved personal matters. Everyone seemed so excited about my apparent conversion that I went along with the crowd—something I found myself doing often the next several years.

The unspoken reason I could not trust God was because of a dark secret that began when I was five years old. A teenage boy sexually molested me and threatened me if I told anyone. The abuse continued almost two years. The consequences of molestation followed me 17 twisted, nightmarish years, pushing me deeper into the black hole of sin.

Playing the Game

Not long after my near-conversion, I was baptized and became a member of the visible church. Mom and Dad were the same at church or at home, so I learned how to say prayers (because I heard so many), and I memorized scriptures so others would think I was spiritual.

But the older I got the more bitter I became toward the church and my parents (who knew nothing about the molestation). I became hateful toward God who did know about it. I figured my parents loved God more than they loved my brothers and me (they did), and that most everyone in church was a hypocrite like me (they weren't, of course).

Eventually, I left the church and my parents' home. That's when the real Aaron emerged—my new friends gave me the nickname Chaos.

Sold Out to Self

"Chaos" sums up my life the next five years. I was no longer a hypocrite. I became what I knew myself to be—a great sinner. I cast off my upbringing and was a law to myself. The only thing I wanted was to be happy, no matter what it took, no matter what it cost. I thought I knew how to achieve perfect happiness.

My drive to be the best at whatever I did made me difficult to be around. Drugs, alcohol, run-ins with the law, and more—I would rather fight than eat and rather party than sleep. People who lived like I did do not survive long; I never thought I would reach my current age of 32.

While I didn't set out to ruin my life, that's what happened. No matter what I did in order to be satisfied, I always wanted more. The harder I tried the emptier I became. One day in 1998, my wild life caught up with me, and I suffered a severe back and shoulder injury at the lumber mill where I worked. A heavy load I was handling shifted, muscles ripped and tore, and suddenly everything was gone.

The pain I now had was both internal and external. I was no longer the big, weight-lifting tough guy. To make matters worse, I could not do the one thing in life I enjoyed—play musical instruments. I had been classically trained on the guitar and was taught to play the piano. Somewhere in the 24 months it took for me to recover from the lumber mill injury, I realized something had to change.

I felt exhausted and burned out by bitterness and hatred, lonely, lost, and hopeless. I did not care if I lived or died, and three times I attempted suicide. I hated God, was angry at the world, and ended up hating what I had become—Chaos. I felt cursed. I wished I had never been born or could go back to non-existence.

Hearing From God

I remember waking up one morning and reaching for my drugs. Something happened that moment which changed my life forever: My eyes were opened to God's truth. God had let me go my way so I could learn that my way led to misery and death. I could not blame God for anything, because I had never followed God's ways. I could not blame God for the things others did to me, because they did not follow God's ways either.

I always thought I was good and knew what was best for me, until that morning when I understood that God alone is good; not me, not any one else, just God. And if God alone was good, then He was all I wanted.

I said, "God, I'm not asking you to save me. I just want to say I'm sorry for blaming everything wrong on You. I

God let me reach the end
of myself, and when I got
there I found no goodness,
no power, and no hope.

do not know You, but I need to. Keep all the Christians and religious people from me; I don't want to hear *about* You anymore. I want to hear *from* You."

Naturally, God did not keep Christians away from me, but as I began to read the Bible searching for Him, He did speak. On March 18, 2000, I bowed my knees to Jesus Christ in my parents' kitchen-dining room and confessed Him as Savior. Jesus did for me what no one else could do—He set me free.

New Man—New Mission

Shortly after my conversion, I enrolled at Free Will Baptist Bible College where I graduated five years later with a B.S. degree in Pastoral Ministry. God used those five years as His hammering process, and though they were challenging spiritually and difficult academically, His grace was always sufficient.

Now I witness to everyone. I assume that wherever I am is where God wants me to spread His message. While serving as an intern at a local church in New Brunswick, I conducted a Bible study at a drug dealer's house, praying that the police would not raid the place until I finished the Bible study.

Chaos A.D.

The Lord led me into professional wrestling at Mid-America Wrestling Federation (MAW) where I shared the gospel with my fellow wrestlers and fans. My wrestling name was Chaos A.D. I used the name as a springboard for witnessing to curious fans and wrestlers who asked what it meant. I threw airplane-shaped tracts to fans as I walked to the ring and autographed the tracts during intermission in order to witness.

I will never forget the night MAW was in Centerville, Tennessee, where I won the Royal Rumble and then the MAW Heavyweight Championship title against a wrestler known as War. Before the show began, I listened to conversations between wrestling fans. A middle-aged man was bragging how

he planned to party all night and sleep-in the next morning (Sunday morning), when the young teen in front of him turned and said, "You'd better not do that!"

"Why not?" the man said.

"Because Chaos A.D. is here tonight, and you need to be in church tomorrow," the teen said.

I talked with the boy and his friends that night and shared the gospel with them. They believed what I said and promised to be in church the next morning.

After a year, even though I won the heavyweight championship, I knew God wanted me out of wrestling. So I walked away from it and never looked back.

Today's Reality

My one ambition in life is to know Jesus Christ. I've laid my thoughts, my plans, and who I am at the foot of the cross, and can honestly say God has taken me, Chaos A.D., and given me His life. This is not a dream—this is reality.

God let me reach the end of myself, and when I got there I found no goodness, no power, and no hope. I realized it was not just forgiveness I needed. Aaron DeMerchant had to die—I needed to be changed; that's what Jesus did for me.

The man known as Chaos is no more. The dark years of molestation are gone. The angry six-year-old who could not trust God and became a modern-day prodigal son, found his way home—all the way home. □

ABOUT THE WRITER: Aaron DeMerchant is men's resident director at Free Will Baptist Bible College. The Canadian-born minister is a 2006 FWBBC Pastoral Ministry graduate. His wife Rachel is a member of the college's English faculty.



LADY FLAMES SET 2008-2009 BASKETBALL SCHEDULE

NASHVILLE, TN—The Lady Flames at Free Will Baptist Bible College will play more than 25 basketball games in 10 states during the 2008-2009 season, plus tournament action, according to Elizabeth Lemons, women’s basketball coach. The Lady Flames have scheduled 10 home games in the Picirilli Activity Center on the FWBBC campus.

2008-2009 Lady Flames Schedule

Nov. 1	Saturday	12:30	Bryan College J.V.	Dayton, TN	
Nov. 7	Friday	5:00	Warren Wilson	Asheville, NC	
Nov. 8	Saturday	2:00	Piedmont Baptist	Winston-Salem, NC	NCCAA2
Nov. 13	Thursday	6:00	Oakwood University	Huntsville, AL	
Nov. 15	Saturday	5:30	Pensacola Christian	Pensacola, FL	
Nov. 18	Tuesday	5:00	Atlanta Christian	HOME	NCCAA2
Dec. 5	Friday	6:00	Bryan College J.V.	HOME	
Dec. 12	Friday	7:00	Grace Bible College	Grand Rapids, MI	NCCAA2
Dec. 13	Saturday	TBD	TBD	Grand Rapids, MI	NCCAA2
Jan. 9	Friday	6:00	Kentucky Christian	HOME	NCCAA2
Jan. 10	Saturday	1:00	Ohio Christian	HOME	NCCAA2
Jan. 16	Friday	6:00	Johnson Bible	Knoxville, TN	NCCAA2
Jan. 22	Thursday	6:00	Oakwood University	HOME	
Jan. 24	Thursday	1:00	Toccoa Falls	HOME	NCCAA2
Jan. 30	Friday	5:00	Appalachian Bible	Bradley, WV	
Jan. 31	Saturday	1:00	Kentucky Christian	Grayson, KY	NCCAA2
Feb. 5	Thursday	6:00	Cincinnati Christian	Cincinnati, OH	NCCAA2
Feb. 6	Friday	6:00	Ohio Christian	Circleville, OH	NCCAA2
Feb. 13	Friday	6:00	Cincinnati Christian	HOME	NCCAA2
Feb. 14	Saturday	2:00	Pensacola Christian	HOME	
Feb. 20	Friday	6:00	Johnson Bible	HOME	NCCAA2
Feb. 21	Saturday	1:00	Appalachian Bible	HOME	
Feb. 26-28	Thurs.-Sat.	TBA	Mid-East Region Tour.	Grayson, KY	NCCAA2
Mar. 4-7	Wed.-Sat.	TBA	ACCA National Tour.	Ok. City, OK	ACCA



STEVENS LEADS LIFEWAY MUSIC WORKSHOPS

NASHVILLE, TN—Dr. James Stevens, chairman of the Music Department at Free Will Baptist Bible College, presented seven keyboard workshops June 2-5 during the LifeWay Worship Leadership Conference in Ridgecrest, North Carolina. More than 800 people registered for the four-day event that featured 49 faculty/staff members and a large number of participating musical groups.

“Ridgecrest offers a great opportunity for learning the latest in worship trends and music training,” Stevens said. “It’s a great place to make new friendships and renew old ones.”

Kathy Franz, music events strategist at LifeWay, said Dr. Stevens received “very high comments on the surveys turned in from last week’s workshops.”

Dr. Stevens has chaired the FWBBC Music Department since 2004. He continued his summer music in July as a presenter in Glorieta, New Mexico, at another LifeWay Worship Leadership Conference.

SOUTH CAROLINA FIRM REPLACES EMERGENCY EXIT FOR FWBBC

NASHVILLE, TN—Three men from South Carolina arrived on the Free Will Baptist Bible College campus May 29, bringing with them a 2,500-pound metal emergency stairway exit to replace the aging stairs on the Thigpen Building, according to Tom Sass, vice president for financial affairs.

“These men amazed me,” Sass said. “They drove eight hours one-way in a Ford F-250 pulling a trailer loaded with equipment and that big metal stair case. They worked 18 hours dismantling the old system and installing the new one. They provided the \$15,000 stairs, the work crew, and the equipment—all at no cost to the college.”

The project began some months earlier when A.C. Allen, a member of the FWBBC Board of Trustees, spoke with the Mac Atkinson, Sr., family about the college’s urgent need to replace the worn stairs.

Pastor Mac Atkinson, Jr. (Lebanon FWB Church, Effingham), point man for the work team, said, “My dad has always believed you can’t out-give God. He owns Commercial and Industrial Piping, Inc., in Effingham. When he learned of the need, he authorized his company to build the stairs at no cost to the college. It took about a week. We’re glad we can help.”

Pastor Atkinson was accompanied on the trip to FWBBC by Shane Atkinson and Jeff Crisp. Mr. Crisp works for another company and was on vacation when he volunteered to join the team.



PHOTO IDENTIFICATION: Watch that last step!
(L) Mac Atkinson, Jeff Crisp, and Shane Atkinson take a break before attaching the last section to the new emergency exit steps on FWBBC’s Thigpen Building.

KERI BARTLETT, FWBBC GRAD, NAMED LAW REVIEW EDITOR



NASHVILLE, TN—Keri Bartlett, a 2006 Free Will Baptist Bible College business administration graduate, has been named senior articles editor at *Trinity Law Review Journal*, a publication of Trinity International School of Law in Santa Ana, California. Keri graduated cum laude at FWBBC with a B.S. degree and was selected to be included in *Who’s Who Among Students in American Colleges and Universities*.

Her article dealing with bankruptcy, titled “Decoding the Code: Making the Means Test Meaningful,” was published in the 2008 edition of *Trinity Law Review Journal*.

“I went to law school because I wanted to help people,” Keri said. “I switched majors during my junior year at FWBBC from Teacher Education to Business Administration, and it was a great decision for me. While nothing could have prepared me totally for law school, all the writing and public speaking required in FWBBC courses helped, and the Bible courses gave me an understanding of our law and where it originates. FWBBC taught me how to think for myself.”

Keri entered Trinity International School of Law in May 2006. She commutes almost three hours round-trip twice a week. She expects to complete her J.D. degree in May 2009, and then enter private practice in bankruptcy law which she has found “very rewarding.”

In addition to responsibilities with *Trinity Law Review Journal*, Keri has participated in Moot Court proceedings and is president of the Federalist Society chapter at Trinity. The Federalist Society is a national organization of attorneys and students started at Yale Law School by young conservatives and

libertarians concerned with making sure the conservative voice is heard.

“FWBBC always had a big place in my heart,” Keri said, “and has made more of an impact on my life than anything else. When I was younger, music and drama groups from the college came to our church, and I wanted to be just like them. I thank God for the FWBBC faculty and staff, for their guidance, teaching, and support.”

Keri’s father, Reverend Keith Bartlett, pastors Sloan Canyon Free Will Baptist Church in Castaic, California.



FWBBC FINALIZES PURCHASE OF NEW CAMPUS SITE

NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist Bible College officials closed on a \$2.96 million contract August 15 to purchase 66 acres for a new campus site in Middle Tennessee’s Sumner County, according to President Matt Pinson. The action came nine months after the college initiated an agreement to secure the land, pending Gallatin city approvals and due diligence studies. The property is a 26-minute drive from the current campus on West End Avenue and is within the Greater Nashville area.

Pinson said, “This is an important and essential step toward our dream of relocating the college. We were delighted to complete the transaction to purchase this prime property. The site meets all the criteria the college set at the beginning of its land search—close to a limited access freeway (Vietnam Veterans Boulevard), near educational and medical resources and job opportunities for students, and adjacent to a rapid economic growth area with shops, malls, restaurants, and affordable housing.”

The Gallatin property is more than seven times the size of the current FWBBC campus, which means the college will not have to cap enrollment or curtail new academic programs. There is room to construct adequate buildings for instructional needs and to house students. The larger campus site permits building outdoor sports facilities for students, and provides adequate parking for students, staff, and guests.

Dr. Pinson confirmed that the college has two immediate relocation goals—(1) fund the land purchase and (2) continue marketing the current campus to potential buyers.

FWBBC gives special thanks to the faithfulness of God’s people in the 1990s who believed in the vision of a new campus for a new generation and bought land in Joelton. That asset more than

tripled in value by the time it was sold in 2006. The invested proceeds grew to be worth nearly one-third of the \$2.9 million purchase price when the Gallatin contract closed. Subsequently, \$865,000 is dedicated toward the purchase of the Gallatin property.



“We are in the process of contacting a number of FWBBC donors and friends, inviting them to partner with us in funding the new property purchase,” Pinson said. “This will give us momentum as we move forward with relocation plans.”

Colonel Mark Johnson, FWBBC’s relocation consultant who spearheaded the property search, said, “This is a great day for FWBBC. We looked at over 100 potential sites before settling on this beautiful land in Sumner County. Gallatin city officials, as well as business and educational leaders, welcomed us to the community while we worked with Mr. Dan Downs, the property owner, to satisfy contractual agreements. We’ve assembled an excellent relocation team that guided us through this long purchase process, and we’re now ready to take the next step.”

Although a start-up date to begin construction cannot be determined until arrangements for the sale of the existing campus have been finalized, the college has secured Hastings Associates, LLC, a Nashville firm, to design the new campus.

The FWBBC Board of Trustees committed to relocate the 66-year-old college in June 2006 following a six-month feasibility study.

U.S. NEWS & WORLD REPORT RANKS FWBBC AMONG AMERICA’S BEST COLLEGES

NASHVILLE, TN—Free Will Baptist Bible College received notification in mid-August that the institution is ranked among “Best Baccalaureate Colleges” (South Region, Third Tier) in *U.S. News & World Report’s 2009* edition of *America’s Best Colleges* guidebook, according to President Matt Pinson. Highlights of the college rankings were published in the September 1, 2008, issue of *U.S. News*.

President Pinson said, “We are so pleased to be ranked among America’s best colleges in this prestigious national study. This is another confirmation to our alumni and denominational constituency that their investment in FWBBC has produced exceptional dividends in the academic marketplace. I hope this report encourages more potential students and their parents to look at FWBBC first when considering a college.”

The “Best Baccalaureate Colleges” category where FWBBC is ranked includes 319 institutions that focus on undergraduate education and offer a range of degree programs in the liberal arts, and in professional fields such as business, nursing, and education. The colleges in this category are ranked within four geographic regions: North, South, Midwest, and West.

The *U.S. News* rankings offer the opportunity to judge the relative quality of institutions based on widely accepted indicators of excellence: peer assessment, graduation and retention rates, faculty resources, student selectivity, financial resources, alumni giving, and more.

FWBBC received particularly high marks in four strategic areas—percent of classes with under 20 students (84%), student/faculty ratio (9/1), freshman retention rate (69%), and graduation rate (41%).

Provost Greg Kettelman said, “Our inclusion in *U.S. News’* list of best baccalaureate colleges indicates that by several important measures, including our standing with peer institutions, FWBBC continues to provide high quality college education for our students and our denomination.”

This is the first time FWBBC has been ranked in the annual *America’s Best Colleges* guidebook. More information is available about the rankings and methodology at: <http://www.usnews.com/articles/education/best-colleges/2008/08/21/about-the-rankingsmethodology.html>.



Cincinnati 2009

Site of the 73rd Annual Convention City | July 19-22, 2009 | Cincinnati, OH

CINCY FAST FACTS:

Once known as Porkopolis because of the meatpacking industry

2007 Population: 331,300

Home to the Cincinnati Redstockings, first professional baseball team

Home to Paramount King's Island, voted best theme park for families in the Midwest

Home of the hot dog

NEXT STOP...THE BUCKEYE STATE

In a few short months, the 2009 Free Will Baptist National Convention will meet in Cincinnati, Ohio. As you look forward to another exciting convention, here are some facts to consider.

Since becoming a state in 1803, the state of Ohio has had its share of achievements. It has given us world leaders and great thinkers like William Henry Harrison, Harriet Beecher Stowe, Thomas Edison, John Glenn, and Neil Armstrong.

It is home to the first gasoline-powered car and conceived America's favorite sport by giving us the first professional baseball team, the Redstockings.

Cincinnati, originally (and unpopularly) known as Losantiville, was first settled in 1789 and grew slowly until Fort Washington was erected there at the end of that year. With the help of the fort and the city's convenient location along the banks of

the Ohio River, Cincinnati's population grew rapidly, and the city became the county seat.

Cincinnati was a center for farming and meat processing. It also grew into a huge trading market. During the Civil War, Cincinnati served as a recruiting and organizing center for the U.S. military, helping its businesses to thrive and the city to grow even larger. It soon became the largest city in Ohio and the most densely-populated city in the United States.

In 2008, Cincinnati is the third largest city in Ohio and continues to grow. It has been acknowledged for its many economic opportunities and its low crime rate.

As Free Will Baptists prepare for their trip to the Buckeye State next year, they can look forward to its many great sites and the beautiful riverside location it offers. □



What's a Buckeye, anyway?

The famed Ohio "buckeye" is a nickname for the fruit of the Horse Chestnut tree, common across the midwest. Tradition tells us the "buckeye" received its name from early European settlers, who thought the nut resembled the eye of a male deer. Perhaps most well-known as the symbol of Ohio State University, the popular and historic icon is highly toxic to humans and most animals. Squirrels, however, find them irresistible.



Confessions of a Convention Brat!

by Joy Nelson

I GUESS YOU COULD SAY I GREW UP at the national convention. One of my earliest memories is telling a friend at elementary school about “going to the national” over the summer. I was shocked to learn that she didn’t go, and—even worse—she didn’t even know what it was!

After I told her that I had visited another state for a week, stayed in a nice hotel, and ran around with a bunch of kids my age (without my parents), she was jealous.

The trip itself was just as fun...at least in my memory. My four sisters

I simply enjoyed being with all God’s people!

and I would pile into the family station wagon, and away we would go. I appreciated how nice it was of my mom to have a healthy stock of Dramamine to keep us from getting carsick. (Or maybe she just needed some peace and quiet along the way.)

I was blessed to be part of a church that not only encouraged its youth to participate in youth competition but also provided travel expenses in the yearly budget. I feel fortunate to have participated in Sword Drill, Bible Bowl, and various music competitions along the way.

As I look back, I think of people like Dr. Charles Hampton who was instrumental in forming our singing groups, but I realize he now enjoys the conference from a heavenly perspective.

I remember my nerves in the hours leading up to the competition. We would sit around in the hallways between Bible competitions trying to breathe normally. Our group would sit together through hours of solos, trios, and chorales—grading each entry and predicting the winners. On awards night, we would whoop and cheer when our predictions came true.

I loved being in the evening services, even as a teenager. And these were not the youth services of today. They didn’t exist back

then. I simply enjoyed being with all God’s people. I was blessed to hear solid Bible teaching from men who were putting me on their shoulders spiritually.

The Wednesday night missionary service was always my favorite. How I admired those individuals who, like Laura Belle Barnard before them, gave their lives for ministry. Who would have guessed that one day my own sister would choose that same path?

And the music! What an amazing thing it was—and still is—to join thousands of voices in unified praise. I could sing along as loud as I wanted. At this year’s conference, when the Georgia Boys Quartet was singing, somehow I could hear Bill Gardner singing along. Makes me long for Heaven.



Photo (left to right): Joy, Jane, Jean, June, and Jill

As strange as it sounds, I even loved the business sessions...really! My sister and I would strain to see who was speaking and who voted a certain way. We watched to see what our dad was doing, and whether he had anything to say. We learned *Robert’s Rules of Order* from the reprimands and reminders of the moderator.

These confessions of a convention brat are simple memories, but simply priceless! □

About the Writer: Middle school math teacher Joy Nelson lives in Old Hickory, TN, with her daughter Megan. She was the convention press officer for the 2008 convention.



MASTER'S MEN SPONSORS TOURNAMENTS

ANTIOCH, TN—Twenty-six teams representing nine states participated in the 2008 Master's Men National Softball Tournament, August 1-2. The growing tournament was played on fields in Mt. Juliet and Antioch, TN, in blistering conditions. When asked to describe the event in one word, participant Ryan Lewis (TN) responded emphatically, "Hot!" He went on to say with a smile, "It was an enjoyable event with tight competition. I was glad to see this many churches get involved to support Master's Men."



The tournament was a defensive battle, with low scoring throughout. The final score in the winners bracket was 4-2 as Community FWB Church (AR) edged out Kirby FWB Red (MI).

Championship Tournament:

First place Community FWBC, AR
2nd place Kirby Red, MI
3rd place Westgate FWBC, SC
4th place Northridge FWBC, OH

Consolation Bracket:

First place Calvary Fellowship from MO
Second place Zion Hill Green from GA

Across town, 72 golfers from nine states gathered at Pine Creek Golf Course for a 7:00 a.m. shotgun start as the 2008 Master's Men National Golf Tournament got off to a fast start. The tournament finished in record time, with the first group finishing their round at 11:00 a.m. Perhaps the golfers were anticipating the buffet lunch of Tennessee barbecue, cole-slaw, baked beans, and hot chocolate chip cookies.

When all the scores had been calculated, the team of Jerry Norris and Robert Maurer (MO) walked away with top honors, shooting a low round of 62. They were followed by the team of Junior Stamps and Johnny Loftis (TN) who shot a 65.



NOMINEES REQUESTED

MOUNTAIN GROVE, MO—The 2008-2009 Nominating Committee, which will serve through the national convention in Cincinnati, OH, is prepared to receive nominees for the 2009 convention election, according to Gary Fry, committee chairman.

The committee, which includes members Gary Fry (Chairman, MO); Randy Riggs (TN), Chris Sturgill (KY), Billy Hanna (GA), Mike Wade (OK), Sherwood Lee (SC), and David Shores (IL), will meet December 9, 2008, at the annual Leadership Conference in Nashville, TN, to consider any names they receive. The committee will then compile a report with one nomination for each position to be filled. This document will be presented to the general board and delegates at the convention in Cincinnati.

The following board and commission positions need to be filled: Home Missions Board (3), Board of Retirement (3), Master's Men Board (3), Free Will Baptist Foundation Board (3), Commission for Theological Integrity (1), Historical Commission (1), Media Commission (1), Music Commission (1), General Board (10), Executive Committee (3) and General Officers (4).

To make a recommendation to the committee, contact:

Chairman Gary Fry
P.O. Box 991, Lebanon, MO 65536
(417) 532-6537 gwfry@mofwb.org.

FWB CHAPLAIN HONORED

Washington, D.C.—Chaplain Lt. Col. Tim Sturgill (Air Force) recently received the Meritorious Service Medal for his work as the Deputy Command Chaplain of AFMC. Chaplain Sturgill will be relocating in late summer to Dover AFB, Delaware, where he will serve as Wing Chaplain. He will be responsible for all religious programming at the world's largest aerial port, and he will supervise the ministry at DOD Port Mortuary where all fallen soldiers from Iraq and Afghanistan are received.





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

A LIFE-ALTERING EVENT

IT WAS A DAY OR TWO AFTER Thanksgiving, November 1979. My wife, daughter, and I were returning home after celebrating the holiday with family. As we drove into our small community, we were stopped by the lone traffic light. Directly ahead, a tow-truck pulled the mangled remains of an International Harvester truck. I remember commenting, "That looks a lot like Junior's pickup."

Minutes later we pulled into a friend's driveway. I thought he might know what happened. He did. There *had* been a terrible accident. A family of four in our congregation *was* involved. The mom, dad, and daughter had been taken to a hospital in a neighboring community. The little boy didn't make it.

My friend accompanied me to the hospital. Our hearts grew heavy as we made the 20-minute drive. Family members greeted us as we entered the emergency room waiting area. Slowly they recounted the nightmarish details.

The driver of the other vehicle ran through a blind intersection, broad-siding the pickup, and was killed instantly. The father was receiving treatment for his injuries in the next room. The mother and daughter had more serious injuries and were transported to a medical center in a larger city.

A few days later I officiated at the memorial service of the eight-year-old. His father was in a wheelchair. His mother and sister were still hospitalized. Our little church building was filled beyond capacity. The sight of that undersized casket lingers in my memory to this day.

Was this a difficult assignment for a young pastor? Sure it was! But something had happened a few months earlier that brought consolation to an otherwise unbearable situation. During a Sunday morning worship service, I gave an invitation. Without fanfare, that little lad slipped out of his pew and came to the altar—his dad following close behind.

I stood on the side of the stage looking down on the scene. Light flooded in from a side window silhouetting the image of that father hovering over the little boy as he prayed the sinner's prayer. No one could have imagined that a short time later he would be in paradise, in the presence of his Heavenly Father.

A Thanksgiving seldom passes without this experience coming to mind. It serves as a timeless reminder to be thankful for family...especially our children. It also accentuates the importance of child evangelism. Leading boys and girls to faith in Christ should be top priority for all of us. A trip to the altar could alter the life of a child you know. □

Benjamin Randall began the northern movement of Free Will Baptists more than 200 years ago, and His work continues to bear fruit today.

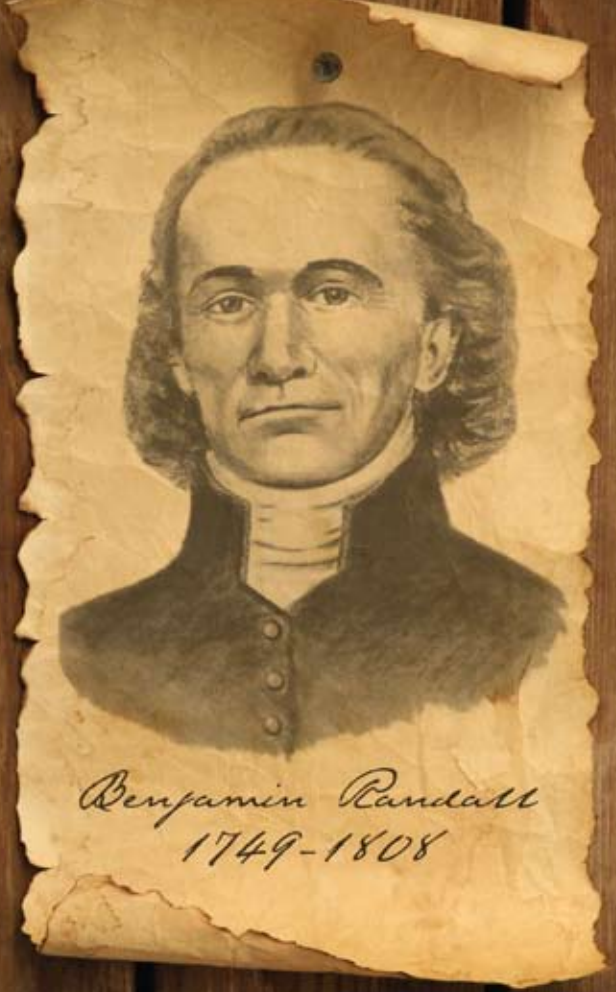
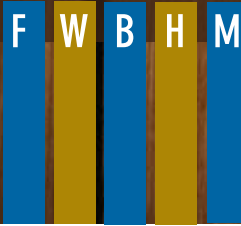
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