

The **TEXAS** CHALLENGE

Published by the Texas State Association of Free Will Baptists

100th State Meeting A Success



It was a memorable time as Texas Free Will Baptists and guests from across the country gathered for the historic 100th State Convention in Bryan, Texas, June 11-13. Fellowship FWB was our gracious host for three days of fellowship, edification, and worship.

The Etc. Conference served as our

pre-show Wednesday afternoon. David Gibbs of the National Center for Life and Liberty spoke about the legal questions churches are facing in today's culture.

Rejoice from Welch College led our evening worship times, followed by inspiring preaching from David Crowe of Free Will Baptist Home

Missions. Thursday morning, Dr. Kevin Hester (Welch College) gave a seminar on FWB history, while the ladies were encouraged at their TWAC conference by veteran leaders and missionaries.

Between these events and the guest reports from our National boards, it was successful meeting.

BREWER'S BEAT



Marcus Brewer
State Office Coordinator

I'm writing this in late June, between the State Meeting and the National Convention, in the "eye of the storm", so to speak. By a number of accounts, we had a successful State Meeting, and we thank all those who attended, spoke, sang, reported, or otherwise participated in this 100th Annual Session. We had a number of out-of-state guests, including some from non-denominational ministries, and we appreciate their efforts to minister for the Kingdom of God. Some exciting things are on the horizon for our state, and we will look for your help in making some of those

plans come to reality in the coming months and years.

The "elephant in the room" now is the final preparations for the National Convention; so much work has been done by our Steering Committee and others to make preparations for a variety of convention events including the worship services, seminars, WNAC activities, youth competition and service activities, and behind-the-scenes tasks that keep everything running smoothly. By now you should have been made aware of the "40 Days of Prayer" initiative for the convention, but if you have not obtained your copy of the prayer calendar, you can download it at nafwb.org/2014convention. Each day has a separate emphasis for prayer; take a couple of minutes each day to remember the person or persons in prayer as we make the final push toward the convention, and keep an eye on your e-mail and Facebook for additional volunteer opportunities as the final pieces are put into place.

Finally, by the time the next issue of the Challenge is published, a variety of youth camps, VBS programs, and other summer activities will have been completed. I trust that each of these will be successful in promoting God's Word and honoring Him. Be sure and send in reports from your events to the Challenge so that we can share in your exciting news!

See you in Ft. Worth!

Convention Services to Be Streamed Live

Thanks to a gift from the Free Will Baptist Foundation, 2014 convention services will stream live on www.nafwb.org from Ft. Worth, Texas, according to Media Commission Chairman, Travis Penn. The gift was offered after a previous news release indicated that prohibitive costs would prevent streaming this year.

In addition to live streaming of worship services, the Media Commission has created an online archive of previous convention services dating to 2011. The files are available for download at www.nafwb.org/media. The free archive replaces onsite CD and DVD sales at the convention.

The number of online convention viewers has grown steadily since 2010, when 1,703 watched services in Oklahoma City. By 2013, when the convention met in Tampa, Florida, the number had increased to 6,479. Ryan Lewis, convention manager, expects the growth to continue. "Streaming has become an important part of our convention because it allows Free Will Baptists across the world to take part, even when distance and calendar conflicts don't allow them to attend in person. I am thankful to the Foundation and the Media Commission for making live streaming a reality again this year."

Upcoming Revival

Bright Light is having Revival on Oct. 2-4 at 6:30 p.m. Our Homecoming will be held on Oct. 5 at 10:30 a.m. with lunch provided afterwards.

2014
TWAC
Retreat
FAITHFUL
it's required
1 Corinthians 4:2
*Moreover it is required in stewards
that one be found faithful.*
Sept 26-27
Forest Glen
Huntsville, TX

The Texas Challenge is published online quarterly by the Texas State Association of Free Will Baptists. It can be viewed at:

www.texasfwb.org/challenge
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The editor reserves the right to accept, reject, and edit any articles submitted for publication. All articles represent the personal views of the authors and do not necessarily represent the policy or positions of the Texas State Association of Free Will Baptists.

Clearview Excited About Building

by Randall Wright

Where do we begin? Let me first say, "thank you". Over the last few months we have been asking everyone to consider purchasing a "square foot" for Clearview. Many of you have responded and I know that many others are planning to help out through the year. We are excited about our building. As I write, the concrete has been poured and the framing is going up!

Over the past few months as we have started this building process, I have had to devote quite a bit of time and energy to the planning and details of building a new church. I must admit, that even though I have been in ministry long enough to know; that just building a building will not cause people to "come". I am praying that this will be instrumental in our growth. I have also given a lot of thought to what this building will mean for us. Let me share.

When we complete this building...

- ...we won't have to unload, set-up, breakdown, and reload our trailer every Sunday!
- ...we will have a place to meet more than once a week.
- ...we will have a new and larger community to reach out too.
- ...we won't have to unload, set-up, break down, and reload the trailer in the rain.
- ...we won't have to rent a facility for almost \$2000.00 a month.
- ...we will be able to have signage.
- ...some people will believe that we are "real" church.
- ...we won't have to unload, setup, break down, and reload the trailer in the cold.
- ...will be able to start some new ministries.
- ...our children can meet in rooms instead of school hallways.
- ...we will have a place to have church socials, banquets, and other activities.
- ...we won't have to unload, set up, breakdown, and reload the trailer in the heat.
- ...I believe we will be able to attract more people.
- ...it won't solve all of our problems, but it will solve some!
- ...I think we will be one step closer to being self-supporting.
- ...we will still need your support!

I want to continue to encourage families, classes, churches, and men's, ladies, and youth groups to consider purchasing a square foot for our building, \$150.00. We are still trying to raise the \$45,000.00 matching grant that we have been challenged with. Will you consider a donation? If you are thinking about giving but would like more information, I would welcome the opportunity to come and share with your churches more information about the work here in McKinney. All gifts will be a tremendous help and they are tax deductible. There are three ways to give. You can send your gifts to

1. Free Will Baptists Home Missions. P.O. Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011 (Please indicate Wright Building Fund)
2. Clearview Free Will Baptist Church. 2112 Catherine Lane, McKinney TX 75071. (Please indicate Building Fund)
3. You can give online at clearviewfwb.com. Online giving is quick, simple, and secure. You also have the option of setting up recurring donations.

Once again, thank you for your support. If you have questions or would like to get in touch with us, you can email me at crandallwright@gmail.com or you can call me at 469-400-7565.

Pulpit Supply

FWB Ministers available to preach where needed:

Brandon Snowder

936-577-0551

bsnowder@gmail.com

Pastors Wanted

Texas FWB Churches currently seeking pastors:

EASLEY CHAPEL

Comanche

Contact:

11601 Hwy 16 N

Comanche, TX 76442

FIRST CHURCH

Kermit

Contact:

Kenneth Edwards

432-586-5286

PINE PRAIRIE

Huntsville

Contact:

Sam Duke (936-662-7469)

or

Edward Duke (936-291-9229)

UNION ARBOR

Beckville

Contact:

Charles Cammack

903-754-3067

Are You Helping Your Pastor?

by *Anonymous*

I'm not a pastor; I'm not even a pastor's wife. I'm just a church member who listens to my pastor's heart. What I hear when he talks to me is a man who is tired, frustrated, disappointed, and human. He is also dedicated, and wholly committed to his work. I'm not talking about just one specific church or one specific pastor. I'm talking about pretty much every pastor you might ever meet. I'm talking about the pastors at the Mega-churches with attendance in the thousands, or even ten thousands, every Sunday; and I'm talking about the pastors of small Country churches with 50 people on Easter Sunday.

I currently attend a mid-sized church with a rapidly expanding children's program. We have wonderful music during the worship service. We get visitors almost every Sunday, and the pastor presents the Word in a very clear and relatable way, which leads to several Salvations each year. To a visitor it might appear that our Pastor can't possibly ask for better. But there is a yearning I have seen in him, and in all of the other pastors I've ever known. Your Pastor wishes he had more people to help him.

I've heard it said, in a sad and disappointed voice, so many times "90% of the work is always done by 10% of the people." This isn't just said in the Mega-churches, and it isn't just said in the very small churches. It applies across the board. A work day is announced and people immediately pull out their calendars, not to write down the date to come and help, but to see what their excuse, for not helping, might be. It's mentioned that there is a need for a new Sunday School teacher; suddenly all the ladies need to go the restroom. Somebody needs to mow the church lawn; no one has a trailer to bring the equipment. Someone needs to teach crafts at Vacation Bible School; no one is very crafty. The list goes on. There are always people willing to help if someone will take the lead, but there never seems to be anyone willing to be committed to taking the lead.

This is so hurtful to pastors. They're human too, and after a busy week they may not want to be up to go to a church workday early on a Saturday morning, but they are there anyway. Many times when no one else will step in to fill a roll, the pastor himself feels in some way obligated to meet the need. This isn't right. Our pastors work hard all week long. Whether he is labeled and paid as a full time pastor or a bi-vocational pastor, there is no such thing as a part time pastor! These men take frantic calls when a church member needs them in the middle of the night. They often feel guilty for taking a vacation with their family if it might take them away from the pulpit on Sunday morning. They study the Bible and pray fervently all week to bring the words God would have us to hear. They choke back tears to preach funerals for very dear friends, or even family members. And all the while we, as church members, want to just sit back in our comfort zones and let someone else take the lead when things need to be done.

It is far too easy for us to think "it isn't my job..." How often do we think "that is my job?" Even if it's just showing up to a Bible study your Pastor has worked hard to prepare, it is your job to be there, doing something for God. The next time your pastor announces a church workday, I encourage you to pull out your calendar, this time to write down the date and be there to help. The next time a Sunday School teaching position opens, I urge you to pray about and consider taking on that role. The next time help is needed for Vacation Bible School won't you please lay aside your busy personal schedule and go help your busy pastor? It's your job, and it's my job, to work for God by being there to help and support our pastors.

North Houston Mission Church Growing

by *Heath Ferguson*

The first few months of 2014 have been such an encouragement from the Lord to our church by way of growth. We have had record breaking Sundays including 69 people on our first ever Easter Sunday service. Woodforest Church has seen an average of 45 people come through the doors every week and the Lord continues to send new faces weekly. Easter Sunday alone brought 14 first time guests to our services. Because of our recent growth we have secured another space in our building and have dedicated it to children's ministry. Deconstruction began the week before Easter and the construction of the space is an ongoing project.

God has been so good to us in providing for us another space to add to our meeting space. With the help of summer mission teams this space will be transformed into children's themed area designed to reach out specifically to kids. Follow our progress more consistently on Facebook.

Thank you for helping us by way of prayer and giving. Our prayer is that we can continue to give positive reports of what God is doing in His ministry here in Houston. May God bless you for your assistance and please remember us in your prayers.





What do ice and a penny have in common? Perseverance, as demonstrated by those who've blazed the path before us in a panel interview with Bettie Ferguson, Charlene Denman, Kathy Halbrook, and Ruth Richards. With all these veterans cheering us on, the Texas Women Active for Christ 65th session 'got on with it'. Carra Greer, The Rejoice Ministry Team from Welch College, and Greg Yacobian blessed us in song. We were challenged by those in missions-Hollie Hubbard (International Students, Inc.), Ana Yacobian (McAllen), Sonya Bailey and Jill Lightsey (San Antonio), & Clint Morgan (Director FWBIM). Faithful Texas Free Will Baptist Pioneers and congregations were shared in videos developed by Ana



Yacobian and Thurman Murphy, available via www.texasfwb.org. And Bro. Don Bailey encouraged us to look unto Jesus, see God's faithfulness, & never quit; 'faithfulness is love hanging on'.



Looking forward, TWAC approved these recommendations: 1) TWAC State Project for 2015 is \$5,000, evenly divided between WNAC Project and Bro. Don Bailey, Home Missionary to San Antonio; 2) Send \$100.00 to each Texas FWB Home Missionary; 3) Support the WNAC proposal that WNAC be accepted as a fully participating National Department in the Together Way plan of support; 4) Since meeting \$15,000 goal for national expenses,



unmarked funds will be General Funds. What's next? To welcome our guests to Texas at the 2014 WNAC Convention in Ft. Worth! Be part of this welcome! Tuesday, July 29th, hundreds of women will gather for the Missionary Service as Ruth McDonald, with daughters Katie and Amy, share God's faithfulness through their years on the field. The business session will include historic decisions considering the possibility of WNAC

joining the National Association as a department. More information about this historic vote is available at www.wnac.org.

Register now for the TWAC sponsored Ladies Retreat, Forest Glen, Huntsville, TX. Jamie Ferguson will be our guest speaker. She and her husband Heath are Home Missionaries in Montgomery, TX, at the Woodforest FWB Church. Retreat registration deadline is September 15, 2014. A retreat brochure can be sent to you by contacting Mitzi Burks, 903-646-1667, mburks@eastex.net, or any TWAC state officer.

TWAC is excited to welcome 10



new members from Primera Iglesia Bautista Libre in Weslaco, TX! We look forward to laboring together in Christ! If you are interested in TWAC/WNAC membership, please feel free to contact Mitzi Burks. Texas Women Active for Christ seeks to bring the women of Texas together for fellowship, sharing, encouraging one another in the work of the Lord, and furthering the purpose of WNAC. THANK YOU Texas Ladies for your prayers, presence, and faithfulness!



Barn Storming Days in East Texas!

by Sandy Pierson (First, Tomball)

“Friends are friends forever if the Lord’s the Lord of them”, what a great song and how very true it is! I have been blessed by my friendship with Judy Smith for more than 25 years and I know that many of you have been friends with her even longer. God continues to use her to be a blessing to others.

Early Saturday morning, March 1, nine ladies from First Church (Tomball) piled into two vehicles and drove three hours to visit with Judy and see the Barn/Cottage Ministry Center that God is building. After a few group pictures on her beautiful huge porch Judy gave us the grand tour sharing with us her plans for each room. We explored every nook and cranny! The highlight of the tour was me tipping over her beautiful clawfoot tub. Thankfully there was no water in it! After our tour the ladies all added a scripture blessings to her walls. My scripture, Proverbs 3:5-6, is on the wall in the bathroom, right where my head went through the middle of two 2x4’s when the tub tipped over. I have never seen those ladies laugh so hard!! In case you are wondering the tub was not hurt and neither was I. We then gathered in the “big room” and had a time of singing and praying. After our time of worship we went to a local Mexican food restaurant and enjoyed lunch together before we headed back home. It was a wonderful day! We had a great time of fellowship with Judy and on the way there and back. We are looking forward to going back again.



Pass the Brush and Rollers

Ladies from First Church (Henderson) had a different kind of make-over party as they loaded up their brushes and rollers with paint to beautify Sister Judy’s barn!



Moving Elephants

by the Provows

Near where we live in southeast Missouri, there is a beautiful state park called Elephant Rocks. It's a retired granite quarry that boasts ginormous "elephant" rocks. The biggest of these rocks tips the scale at more than 1.3 million pounds! Our family loves going there and hiking down its various trails. Our girls love pretending to be mountain goats, jumping from rock to rock. Well, not Zoe. She's really more of a "both feet on the ground" type of girl.



Isn't it astounding that our God crafted those rocks? He is not only powerful enough to do so with the snap of His fingers, but He is caring enough to arrange His Creation in such a way that we have enjoyed its beauty throughout history. This morning, just for kicks and grins, Josh tried to push one of these boulders. This may shock you, but it didn't even budge!

On the road to Bulgaria, there are two main mountains that have stood in our way. One of them is getting all of the necessary documents to obtain our long-term visas. And the second is, you guessed it, raising our monthly financial support. Becoming fully funded seems about as difficult as pushing one of those gigantic elephant rocks. It is difficult. It is daunting. And some days, it is downright terrifying.

While we can never move this "mountain" on our own, we are so thankful that we serve the God who makes moving mountains a part of His daily routine!

For about eight months now we have had the privilege of meeting some of the finest people in the country. We have met moms and dads who are praying for their children to enter the mission field. We have met great grandmas that want to leave a legacy that stretches into eternity. We have met children that give sacrificially out of their allowance. We have met churches whose top priority is doing whatever it takes to get the gospel to the uttermost parts of the earth.

Friends, our great God is using you to move our mountain!

For months, many of you have been praying that our funds would be in good enough shape to be enrolled for the fall classes at the Center for Intercultural Training. You must be good prayer warriors, because on July 14th, the directors of the mission prayerfully looked at our monthly support and gave us the green light to go to CIT!

So what does this mean? First off, it doesn't mean that we are fully funded. It simply means that we are ready to take this crucial next step! Second, it means that from September 14th through October 31st, our entire family will be training in different aspects of missionary life at this training camp in North Carolina. Third, it means that we may very well be in Bulgaria sooner than we had ever hoped just a few short months ago!

We are so thankful that our God has used so many of you to move this mountain. You have blessed our family, and we are humbled that you consider us one of your missionaries.

If you have already pledged your support but have been waiting to begin giving, would you prayerfully consider beginning your gifts now to help us come closer to meeting our fundraising goals? If God is calling you to partner with us and you are near a computer, the quickest way to give is by using FWBIM's secure online giving page, located at www.fwbgo.com/give.

We are closer than ever to landing in Bulgaria, and so much of that is because you are allowing God to use you. Thank you for going on this adventure with us!

Work Continues on Texas FWB History Book

Although still several months away from publication, the research on a new book about Texas Free Will Baptists hasn't slowed down one bit.

"Too much good stuff just keeps turning up as I pour over old minutes and old records," said Thurmon Murphy of his tentatively titled *From the Red to the Rio Grande, a History of the Free Will Baptist Work in Texas*.

Brother Thurmon urges people to send him copies of old minutes, both district and state, the older the better. He also made a personal appeal to those from whom he requested specific information to reply quickly in order for it to be included in the book.

Murphy explains the book will cover the beginning of the Free Will Baptist work in Texas in 1876 and go into the development of each district association. It will describe the effects of the merger with the Northern Baptists in 1910-11 and the organization of the Texas State Association in 1915 at Bradley, Texas.

You will also read about the part Texas played in the formation of the National Association of Free Will Baptists in 1935. Also included in the history of the various Free Will Baptist ministries in Texas, such as Home Missions, Christian Education, Foreign Missions, and Woman's Auxiliary.

Preorder information will be available soon. Meanwhile, if you can help Brother Thurmon (tmurphy2@sw.rr.com) with his research, contact him today.

Eagleton To Lead Ivory Coast Trip



Thank you for standing with us through your prayer and support. In our last newsletter we asked you to participate in the World Missions Offering (WMO). I hope you did. Thank you! If not, you can still do so. It is still too early for results from this year's WMO.

Toward the end of February I travelled to Cuba as the International Missions representative to attend their annual National Convention. It was a

blessing to see so many churches represented there and get to know our Cuban brothers and sisters. I met with the associational leaders on two different occasions to understand the work they are doing, their challenges, and discuss how we can partner with them. It was a joy to get to visit several of our churches and witness a baptism. For more information and pictures, visit the links in this paragraph.

Classes at the Bible Institute resumed. Unfortunately, as we are completing our tenth year of operation, we are also experiencing our weakest semester as far as student enrollment. Please pray with us that the Lord of the harvest will call forth more workers to prepare for the harvest. Many of our former students are actively engaged in ministry in their local churches and five of them are serving as pastors and preachers.

In April a workshop on Biblical Counseling was held for church leaders. We had good participation from representatives of eight churches and two church-plants. Four sessions were held dealing with general principles of counseling, marriage counseling, counseling youth, and counseling pastors. During our time together the leaders decided to organize an Alliance of Free Will Baptist Churches to facilitate our cooperation on a national level. Pastor Walter has taken on the responsibility for organizing more workshops on various themes that will be helpful to leaders.

This summer we will be receiving an Overseas Apprentice (missions intern) who will be with us for 3 months as well as two E-TEAMs, one to be hosted by pastor Walter in Limeira and Araras and the other one to be hosted by pastor Jeancarlo in Jaboticabal. Please be in prayer for the ministry of these young people.

In October I will be leading a Hanna Project team in a trip to Côte d'Ivoire (Ivory Coast), back to the hospital in Doropo where we ministered from 1985-1999. The purpose of the trip is to help the hospital recuperate from the toll of a decade of civil war. Part of the team will be of medical personnel who will be doing training and upgrading the skills of the hospital staff. The other part of the team will concentrate on doing needed maintenance that has been neglected for over a decade. On my visit last year I was able to see first-hand the huge challenges that our FWB brothers and sisters face in keeping the medical facilities functional for a population that has doubled within the past decade.

This trip is not covered by our regular yearly budget. I want to ask you to help me raise the funds necessary for the trip. You may do so by going online and donating or by sending your check to FWBIM designated to "Eagleton THP trip". Please do not take from your regular missions giving to do so, but go over and above what you normally give.



Bivens Ask For Prayer During Mexico Travels

by Ruth Bivens

We send you greetings from Pharr, TX. Bud and I hugged all the kiddos at the Casa Hogar "Goodbye" then dropped by the Bivens' house in Piedras Negras, for another round of "Goodbyes" before we headed down the Texas side of the border toward home on July 16th.

Of course, after being gone for a while, there is a lot of catching up for me to do here at the house and, then get ready to leave again. Bud has been worried about me lately, since my energy level is so low, and I tend to sleep so late. So my daughter-in-law Diana called and made me appointments of with all of my care givers, starting on the 18th.

Brother Mark Riggs will be flying in on the 24th, then we three will fly to Tampico together on the 25th to get ready for our Mexican Youth Camp and National Association that will take place July 27-31, and August 1-3, on the Bible Institute campus in Altamira. Brother Mark will be speaking during the camp. Then the director of the Cuban National Association, Brother Ramon Sanchez and another Cuban pastor will speak during the National Association.

With the violence continuing and terrible shootouts in the Tampico and Altamira area, we sincerely ask you to keep us and those meetings in your prayers. There will be pastors and families traveling in from all over the country, if they dare do as they have in past years. Those traveling are taking a risk, just getting out on the road. So please keep us in your prayers. Thank you for lifting us up on a regular basis. We are so encouraged by your support.

State CTS Competition Memories

Held Saturday, May 17, at Fellowship FFWB in Bryan

Photos by Warner Collier



Stones of Remembrance Part 1: Scripture



At our State Meeting in June, Dr. Kevin Hester, Chairman of Theological Studies at Welch College, presented a history of Free Will Baptists in America and

Texas titled "Heritage From the Past, Horizons For the Future."

Referencing Joshua 4, where the Israelites erect a monument of twelve stones from the Jordan after a miraculous river crossing before the Canaanite conquest, Dr. Hester reminded us, "Our identity is bound up in a story that connects us to the past and the future. So history not only looks backward it also looks forward."

Over the next several issues, Dr. Hester's presentation will be reprinted here, so you can how he has drawn "stones out of the Jordan River of Free Will Baptist history and to erect them before you as monuments of the past that look forward to our future. I hope that the stories I tell will serve to show the world that 'the hand of the Lord is mighty' and that they might encourage you as they have encouraged me, 'so that you may fear the Lord your God forever.'"

The first stone I would like to highlight is the bedrock stone of scripture. The renewal of biblical study during the renaissance brought with it a spirit that was willing to critically evaluate the church of its day according to clear biblical principles. These students of the Bible came quickly to see that there was much that was part of their church tradition that either was not taught in scripture or was at times counter to it. Thus, the protestant reformation was born. Men like Martin Luther, Ulrich Zwingli, and John Calvin set off in a new direction convinced that they were to be guided by scripture and scripture alone. They argued that scripture was sufficient and the only infallible guide to establish church doctrine. Once they were

convinced of this truth other teachings of the medieval church were brought into question as well. Based on the principle that scripture alone was the norma normans (or only guiding principle) for the church the Protestant reformers came to teach that salvation was by grace alone (sola gratia), through faith alone (sola fide) and that each believer was endowed with a priesthood that comes from Christ. This meant that Christ himself was the only mediator and that each believer, united to him in faith, could boldly approach the throne of grace without a priest or any other human mediator.

It is here that Free Will Baptist history begins and it begins with John Smyth (1570-1612). John Smyth was an Englishman. He was educated at Oxford and ordained in the Anglican church in 1594 pastoring in Lincoln. The Anglican church had been initiated by Henry VIII in 1538 and given its shape under Queen Elizabeth I (1570) as a via media or middle way between the Roman Catholic Church and the Protestant Churches of the time. Early in his ministry and owing to his study of scripture Smyth came to side with the growing Puritan tradition in England. This tradition believed that the Anglican church had not yet been fully reformed and they worked within the Anglican church to apply the Protestant principles of sola scriptura, sola gratia, and sola fide more broadly. But the reform was going slowly and Smyth's theology continued to evolve based on his further study. He would eventually become convinced that the Anglican church could not be reformed and separated himself from their communion. He had become convinced based on his reading of Scripture that baptism was only appropriate for believers thus rejecting infant baptism. He was also convinced that the episcopal ecclesiology of the Anglican church was contrary to scripture and that instead each congregation should have the right and responsibility of self-governance. This however, put him and his followers in a very difficult position inasmuch as England was not a hospitable place for

such separatists. He and the members of his congregation fled persecution and established themselves in Holland.

1608 marks a watershed year in the history of Free Will Baptists. While in exile in Holland, Smyth became convinced that his infant baptism and that of his followers was illegitimate. He therefore rebaptized himself and then the members of his congregation teaching that believer's baptism was the only appropriate mode of baptism and that all other forms were illegitimate. In 1609 he published a book entitled "The Character of the Beast" in which he taught the principle of believer's baptism as based on Scripture. This small congregation of approximately 100 believers would continue in Holland for the next several years but a schism began to develop. Smyth was concerned about his self-baptism and began to entertain members of the Dutch Waterlander Mennonite tradition, an Anabaptist group. A layman in the church by the name of Thomas Helwys was not pleased with the conversations. His reading of scripture caused him to be suspicious of some aspects of aberrant Christology in the group and their rejection of the doctrine of original sin. Following Smyth's death in 1612 some members of the congregation made the decision to join together with the Mennonite group. Helwys took leadership of the remainder of the congregation and returned to England. This story serves to demonstrate that though there may be some theological overlap between Free Will Baptists and the Anabaptists that they are distinct and come from separate traditions. When the opportunity for fellowship arose early Free Will Baptists chose scripture over a new home with the Anabaptists.





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Subscribe to the Texas Challenge Print Edition

I have been enjoying editing The Texas Challenge, and I hope you have enjoyed reading it. While transitioning to an online only format was a necessary economical choice, I have been hearing from many how they miss seeing the only

magazine for Texas Free Will Baptists in print. That's why I want to see The Challenge back in print starting in 2015. To do this, we need your help. To cover the cost of printing, we will have to charge a small annual subscription fee of \$10. This will get you four issues delivered per year. To subscribe, send a check along with your name, address, and home church & address to:

FWB State Treasurer
P.O. Box 25:
Thomaston, TX 77989

I am committed to producing a publication Texas Free Will Baptists can be proud of, one that will inform, challenge, encourage, and instruct. As always, I welcome your feedback.



SUBMISSION DEADLINES

In order to put the newsletter out in a timely and consistent manner, please observe the following submission deadlines for future issues.

Spring Issue

March 25

Summer Issue

July 1

Fall Issue

October 1

Winter Issue

January 7