



The TEXAS CHALLENGE

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Let It Shine, Let It Shine, Let It Shine

by Cindy King

It's a scary world out there and sometimes parents don't know where to turn. Our children are bombarded with messages every day that are not only unbiblical, but completely sinful. Our daughters are told they must have the perfect looks, the perfect clothes, the perfect make-up and should be sexually uninhibited to fit in and be accepted. The "Shine" conference gave our girls a more Godly perspective and grounded them in the message of God's love and acceptance. Parents and youth leaders were also given tools and information for protecting our children and understanding the technology they are exposed to on a daily basis.

The girls were separated from the adults and were first taught that they are "fearfully and wonderfully made" in the image of God and that they are God's Girls first and foremost. They were shown how to honor their bodies as the temple of God and were given scripture to refer to whenever they have questions. The lessons showed the girls that they are deserving of respect and should expect no less from friends, boyfriends and even strangers. They decorated sunglasses to protect their eyes because their futures are so bright!



WNAC's Shine Conference helps teen girls understand how to be God's girl in today's culture. Many Texas FWBs joined the 160 who attended in Little Rock last November.

In the second half of the program, the sponsors got down to brass tacks and spoke very openly about physical changes, body image, sexual purity and peer pressure. The girls were given the information needed to arm themselves against the world's expectations.

Parents and youth leaders attended seminars on how to talk with our girls about what is going on in their lives. We learned about how technology is making so much information available to our children that is spiritually harmful. Hidden apps, pornographic spam, chat rooms that are open to sexual predators, and pressure to participate in sexual activities at a much younger age, are just a drop

in the bucket and we were given the tools to help our girls navigate this ever-changing information overload.

The adults and young ladies who attended all agreed that the conference was informative and fun!



Shine Conference speakers (l-r): Ana Batts, Rachel Bryant, Sarah Sargent, Beth Bryant.

BREWER'S BEAT



Marcus Brewer
State Office Coordinator

Welcome to 2016! I hope your new year is going well. As we look back on 2015, we see that it was a bit of an unusual year for Texas Free Will Baptists. We had a decreased level of activity in a number of our typical efforts during the year: State Meeting attendance; participation in youth competition entries in Bible, music, and arts; giving to World Missions Offering; and even content to this magazine. After all of the goings-on during 2014 with our 100th annual meeting and hosting the National Convention, I like to think that everyone decided to collectively pause and take a breath in 2015, which is an understandable reaction, but definitely noticeable when everyone does it at once. I don't exclude myself from this diagnosis, either; I had to divert some of my attention and efforts away from the State Office while devoting more time to my Ph.D. coursework at Texas A&M, and that had an unfortunate effect on my ability to stay in contact with everyone and continue promoting the people and events we need to be aware of. I apologize for that, and I hope to set a better pace this

year as we have finished "catching our breath" and get back into the race.

• As we turn the calendar to 2016, we have a brand new set of opportunities in front of us. I'm writing this as we have just completed this year's All Boards Meeting, where we make plans for this year with an eye on the years to come. Our Executive Board, Mission Board, Christian Education Board, and Women Active for Christ have all been considering where we as an association should be heading as we move toward the future, and we have some ideas and plans that we'll be sharing as time passes. For 2016, here are some dates and events you should take note of:

- April 22-24: Texas State Youth Retreat at Camp of the Hills near Marble Falls
- May 14: Texas Ministry Expo (aka Texas Youth Competition) at New Beginnings Church, Bryan
- June 8-10: 102nd Annual State Meeting at Eagle Heights Church, Richmond
- July 17-20: National Convention in Kansas City, MO
- September (dates to be confirmed): Texas State Women's Retreat
- October 20-22: Texas State Men's Retreat at Forest Glen Camp near Huntsville

Some additional changes are upcoming that you should be aware of. At last year's State Meeting, delegates approved a constitutional amendment to provide a great deal of flexibility in the date of future annual meetings, allowing the meeting to occur anytime between May and August. While this year's meeting will essentially follow the model that we have used for at least the last decade that I have been organizing the event, the 2017 meeting will

likely have a much different format. We are looking for your input, suggestions, and comments about what you would like to see in future State Meeting schedules. If you have wanted to attend previous meetings but something about the format or schedule has prevented it, let us know. If you have ideas on how to improve what we're doing and get the most out of our time together, let us know that as well. We are considering a web-based (and/or email-based) survey to ask some specific questions, but as we think about exactly when to schedule the meeting for 2017 and what should be on the program of events, we would like to get your input. We can't guarantee that everyone's suggestions will be included in the final program, but we will try to be responsive to the needs of our churches and members. In the meantime, we are finalizing the details for the program and lodging for this year's meeting, and we'll share those details with you just as soon as we have them ready. I look forward to seeing you all again this year as we "run with patience the race that is set before us."

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Busy Holiday Season at Fellowship

by **Doug Dickey**

This was Fellowship's (Bryan) second year to fill Christmas boxes for Samaritan's Purse. They started with their VBS in August, making crosses out of beads and turning wash cloths into birds. They were excited to fill 50 boxes this year! Their boxes are going to children in Democratic Republic of Congo, Madagascar, Peru and Mali. They had Missions reports on each of those countries with information about how Samaritan's Purse has worked to bring people to Jesus. Fellowship's goal for 2016 is 100 boxes.



Fellowship had two groups to go out and do Christmas Caroling in December. One to the seniors and shut-ins and one (mostly youth) to a retirement home.



For the Fellowship ladies, there is no better way to start the Christmas season! They have a catered meal, fellowship and devotion, along with a silent auction filled with great items to bid on. Proceeds for this year's auction went to Carl and Cynthia Spruill, Home Missionaries to Hawaii. The church was excited to raise over \$1,000 for the Spruill's.

Ladies Downtown Bryan Outing

Back-to-School Bash

Fellowship's Youth Back to School Bash was a great success with 33 youth hanging out for a few hours having great fellowship and good Christian fun. They are excited with the potential that these youth represent for their church - most of which attend the Wednesday Night services.



Bible Believers Memory Verses

The last Sunday of each month Fellowship's children are given the chance to say their memory verses for the whole church. They do a great job! The verses are assigned the first Sunday of the month and they work on them at home with their families and in their classes at church. Of course, they do get to pick a prize from the treasure chest even if they need a little help from Bro. Doug.



Fellowship's ladies we had at their 2nd annual Downtown Bryan outing on February 6! They didn't let the cold breeze slow them down as they enjoyed the Mardi Gras celebration with a few of the downtown merchants and their friends

This year the ladies started with lunch at Papa Perez Mexican restaurant. Twenty-one ladies of all ages met for lunch, and two more ladies and a sweet baby joined them after lunch.

Help Send Jacob Voltz to Brazil

Over the years you have given me so much support for E-TEAM and College Missions Program (CMP), and without your support I could not have done either so I cannot thank you enough. I have served in Chicago, Japan, Kazakhstan and South Korea.

This year I am serving through CMP, which is through the Free Will Baptist International Missions Department. I will be serving in Brazil in the month of May and I have to raise \$2950. We will be leaving May 17 and returning May 28. I am excited for what God has planned for our team during this short-term service.

I am calling on your help once again. I ask for your prayer support and for financial support. Please be in prayer for my team and for the work God has for us in Brazil. Also, please be in prayer for guidance on any financial support you can give.

If you can support me financially, please send any support, if by check or money order made payable to: FWBIM earmarking check: Jacob Voltz CMP Brazil 2016 and mail it to CMP, PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011. If through an online donation go to www.fwbgo.com/student-missions/student-details/id,748/jacob-voltz

You can see my CMP profile page at www.fwbgo.com/go/student-missions/CMP

Thank you in advance for your prayer support and financial support. Contact me if you have any questions; my email address is jacob.voltz@welch.edu and my cell phone number is (832) 492-2714.



After a time ministering out of state, an East Texas native has returned to pastor a church in the district in which he was raised. Bro. Wade Rector is new pastor at Buncombe Free Will Baptist (Carthage). Wade is from Nacogdoches, and he was saved at Mount Union FWB

(Garrison) in 1999 after hearing a message preached by Roy Anderson, Jr. Wade's call to the ministry is something he will never forget. "The Lord really does use those around you to get His message across," he says. "I had been feeling the call for about a month when He used the first person. They just came out and asked me if I ever thought about preaching. Then I was preaching for our youth night at Mount Union and when I was done, one of the deacons asked me when I was going to get my license. I kept asking God for a sign, and He kept giving them."

Bro. Rector, a life long Free Will Baptist, came to Buncombe to fill in after Bro. Clyde Tucker left due to health reasons. After a couple months, Wade was asked if he would accept the role as pastor, and he accepted. "There is a desire here at Buncombe to be all we can be for God. There is life out here in these woods, so don't count us out."

Wade's ministry philosophy is to be uncompromising when it comes to preaching the Truth. "Instead of looking at numbers I have found that looking at how your congregation is changing for God is proof of God working. Not how many are coming through the door, but how many are seeing God work in their life." His vision is for Buncombe to be a soul

winning station, where people will be submissive toward God and giving their lives completely to Him.

Wade has been married to Heather for five years, and they have two daughters Adalee (4) Abigail(2). He loves spending time with my family, doing anything outdoors, and of course preaching about his Savior.



Much to Celebrate at Light of Life

by Ana Yacobian



January was a month of celebration at Light of Life (McAllen). Pastor Greg Yacobian turned 70 years old! We also celebrated our 5th anniversary. We surprised him with a birthday party! We invited our friends to come and worship with us. We had a crowd of almost 90 people.

In February we took our kids to “Let our Light Shine” to the firefighters and the police department. We brought them homemade cookies. It is also a joy to hold hands and pray for and with them. We are planning on hosting an “Appreciation Banquet” for them very soon.



Our children’s ministry has reached its limit. Because of our limited classroom space we are not accepting any new kids. We have over 40 kids registered. Fortunately they do not come all at the same time. We average 25-30 kids on Wednesday nights. We also are in need of teachers/volunteers. Our ratio of student to teachers is too large. Please pray for us regarding this situation. We do not want to say no to kids who want to come, but on the other hand they need leaders and mentors.

As an outreach for our kids we have formed a soccer team: LANTERNS. Boy do they love to play! Sports allow us to deal with many character/behavior issues that God wants to mold and shape in our kids. This outreach is very successful, but expensive, and God has helped us meet all of our needs.



We are rejoicing in three new believers who have asked for baptism. Two are of them are children! We will be holding baptism as soon as the weather permits.

We also have a new service: simultaneous translation from English – Spanish. My sister Ines is doing a fabulous job. We hope to minister to our Hispanic population here in the valley.

We would love to receive some help during the summer with our VBS program. We are very flexible and will adjust to fit your schedule. If you are thinking on a mission trip, please consider Light of Life as a possibility!

Finally, we would love to receive some more permanent help during the year. We are praying for young couples, or young families, or even some middle age people to come and join us in the work of planting this church. Would you please faithfully bring our needs to the Lord in your prayers?



C.E. Board Events

State Men's Retreat October 21-22, 2016, at Forest Glen Camp, Huntsville. More information will be forthcoming.

State Youth Retreat April 22-24, 2016 at Camp of the Hills close to Austin, TX. Registration fee \$90.00. Team from Welch College will be helping lead the retreat. Make sure your teens attend!! Forms, rules and schedules will be sent out soon. Contact Baxter Horton. baxterhorton@collincreekchurch.org or any CE Board Member.

The Ministry Expo (formerly CTS) competition will be held on May 14, 2016. It will begin at 1:00 pm. The competition will be held at New Beginnings in Bryan, Texas. Please refer to the Ministry Expo Guidelines from Randall House for all rules. Email all entries to Teresa Voltz at mtvoltz@consolidated.net by May 1, 2016. Send any questions to Teresa Voltz or any CE Board Member.



Whispering Pines Youth Camp (Henderson) will host a teen retreat April 15-16. Cost is \$50 per camper. Check-in Friday 6:00pm, hamburger supper at 7:00 and worship & fun time at 8:00. Pancakes and worship Saturday morning ending at 11:00. The retreat is open to current 7th-12th graders. Visit our Facebook page or contact Cindy King at 903-658-5395. Deadline to register is April 1st.



Got a dream? Is it your dream or God's dream for your life? Jeremiah 29:11 from The Message says "I know what I'm doing. I have it all planned out-plans to give you the future you hope for." This was one of my recent devotions. And God really spoke to me. I need to follow His dream for my life even if it meant giving up mine and allowing him to give me His dreams. So, does God have a dream for your life.? Yes He does! God allowed us Texas Women Active for Christ to make some dreams come true. Last year, we were able to sponsor three Ivorian sisters to attend their national retreat. Awesome!

Speaking of plans for your life, make plans for June 9th to attend the state meeting in Sugarland, TX on June 9th. Our Guest speakers will be Joel & Lydie Teague missionaries to France. Lydie will speak for the ladies session and Joel for the joint session. Our theme will be Seek Listen and Obey Him-Matthew 6:33. Also, come and join us for our TWAC retreat on September 23rd & 24th at the Mt. Lebanon Baptist Camp in Cedar Hill, Tx. Bethany

Lopez from the Collin Creek FWB Church will continue our theme of Seek, Listen and Obey Him. We will participate in our speaker sessions along with other activities, snacks, and plenty of fellowship. You don't want to miss this special time! For more information or questions contact Sharon Dickey by email at sharondickey@bellsouth.net or follow us on Facebook by searching for Texas Women Active for Christ.

TEAMWORK

Central Texas Women Active for Christ



Special guest speaker Julie Aftab a young lady who was severely persecuted for her faith in Christ. Julie Aftab was 16 and working in an office in Pakistan when a man walked in and asked her if she was Christian, spotting a small cross she wore around her neck. She replied that indeed she was a Christian, and the man became abusive - shouting at her that she would go to hell for shunning Islam. After a while he left the office but returned 30 minutes later with a bottle of battery acid, which he poured over her head The incident left her with lasting scars both physically and emotionally. Julie now lives in Texas with her husband and child. She will share her testimony about how our Lord used this tragedy to show His power and love. Come hear Julie's story!!

HEBREWS 10:25

Not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but exhorting one another, and all the more as you see the day drawing near.

DATE: Saturday, March 12, 2016
TIME: 9:30 Registration
10:00 Business/Worship
LOCATION: FFWB Church Tomball



Teresa Voltz

Wisdom For Parents of Angry Teens

Have your teens ever gotten upset because they thought things should go a different way than what the Lord led you to take them? Let's remember the story of Naaman. While he suffered with Leprosy and certainly wanted to be healed, he wanted it to go the way he thought it should go, not the way God planned for it to go. When he arrived at Elisha's door, Elisha sent a messenger out to him to say, "Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored, and you shall be clean." 2 Kings 5:9-10. You would think Naaman would be ecstatic to get rid of the Leprosy and be healed. Maybe he was excited to get rid of the Leprosy, but unfortunately his pride got in the way. Here's the rest of the story...

But Naaman was angry and went away saying, "Behold, I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call upon the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place and cure the leper. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?" So he turned and went away in a rage. 2 Kings 5:11-12

How many times have your teens gotten angry and stomped away because they didn't get to do something their own way, the way they thought it should go? How many times have we done the same thing? Naaman would have missed out on being healed and even greater, he would have missed out on growing his faith. Remind your teens that God has the best plans for us, far better than we can ever imagine on our own.

The end of the story is that Naaman finally came to his senses and did as Elisha had told him and he was healed. God knows what is best for us and when we or our teens try to do it our way, we just get in more trouble and could miss out on such blessings and opportunities to see God at work in our lives.



Jonathan McNeese

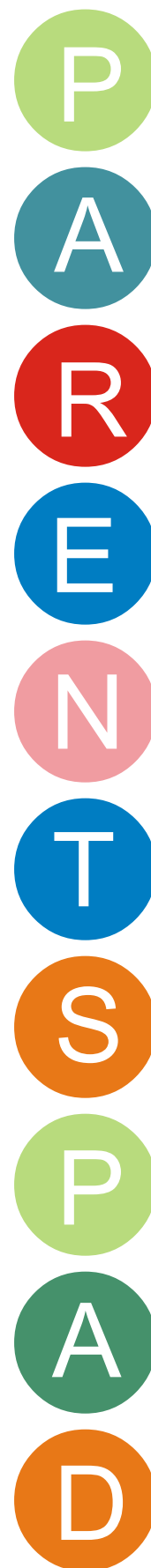
Whatever Happened to Worship?

The title of this article is not original with me. In fact, it is the title of a book written by A.W. Tozer many decades ago that has challenged my own heart about personal worship more than any other book that I have ever read. In it, Tozer gives rich and biblical teaching about the true nature of worship compared to the humanistic facade that we Americans call worship today.

As a child, I remember hearing the word worship used in a variety of ways. First, I remember equating worship with someone who sings and raises their hand in the air as the Lord leads them. This in my juvenile mind was true worship. Another thought that was introduced to me about worship was that worship was a bad thing that involved carnal music, big crowds, and bright lights. Obviously, this legalistic mindset could not be further from the truth.

In fact, the Bible teaches us that true worship has more to do with our relationship to God than any other person or thing in our lives. Psalm 45 gives a bird's-eye view of the worship that God expects from his people. In this chapter, we see that the ultimate goal of worship is the glory of God as verse 17 says: "I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever."

When we as Christians will learn this fact, our view of God and worship will finally be as God intended it to be. One final thought that I believe many misunderstand is the timeline of worship. Tozer said: "If you do not worship God seven days a week, then you do not worship him one day a week." May the goal of every believer's life be to bring glory and honor to God not only on Sunday but on every day of our lives.



Alpedrete Church Turns Ten Years Old



The first Sunday of February the “Roca Eterna” Church in Alpedrete, Spain celebrated ten years since the official launch of this church plant. FWBIM missionaries, Anthony and Lea Edgmon along with Tim and Kristi Johnson, began this work with 18 people on its first Sunday. This congregation ministers to a town of nearly 15,000 people that had never before in its history had a gospel-preaching church. The church has

seen consistent growth during this period of time and has developed contact with scores of people from its own community as well as surrounding towns. We ask you to praise God with us for this notable occasion in the history of this church. The church is pressing forward and reaching outward. We are trying to identify believers from the congregation who can work as a part of a leadership team to take on more of the responsibili-

ties as we try to wean the church of missionary involvement. We have been trying for some time to cast a vision among the congregation to plant additional churches in nearby communities where there are no evangelical works. Please help us in lifting up prayers with this in mind. We love Texas and pray for the work there as well. Thank you for your years of partnership in helping to fulfill the Great Commission.



A Day of Good News

by Richard Terry

On September 11, 2011 two hijacked airplanes flew into the twin towers of the World Trade Center in New York City. Another airliner flew into the Pentagon. One other plane crashed in a field outside of Shanksville, PA., when the passengers foiled the hijacker's plan to crash the plane into either the US Capitol building or the White House. The official death toll was set at 2,996, with another 6,000 injured. Now, many of the immediate responders are showing symptoms of serious medical issues relating to the attack. A depraved terrorist group called al-Qaeda perpetrated this sick, cowardly attack. This has now become a defining moment for our nation and the whole world. Since that awful day, our world has become more unstable and dangerous, to say nothing of confused. Our leaders seem to be unsure of who is trying to kill us and destroy our way of life. We are told they can't be referred to by ethnic origin even though you and I know who or what they are. We can't define them religiously even though we know they are not Lutherans, Baptists, Methodists or Presbyterians. They self identify as Muslims. They are not Jewish, Hindu, Buddhists or cultists. They claim to be Muslims. If they are not, or if they are misguided, the Muslim world needs to boldly and loudly say so. For some, the only defense against the almost daily shock of another example of human depravity is a attitude of Stoic fatalism. On December 7, 1941 the Japanese executed a surprise attack on much of our Pacific fleet while berthed in Pearl Harbor. The very next day, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, on December 8, before both houses of congress, announced the United States of America had been in a state of war with Japan since the previous day's attack. By comparison, the response to the current crises has been anemic at best, even though there have been thousands killed throughout the world.

Amidst an equally hopeless circumstance 2,700 years ago, four of the most unlikely characters imaginable declared their day to be a day of good news. The statement was made against the backdrop of a besieged, starving city that had resorted to cannibalism. There seemed to be no hope for the ancient capitol city of Samaria. To say their statement lacked perspicacity is an understatement. Just the day before the great prophet, Elisha, was ridiculed when he said that a wheat and barley would sell at rock bottom prices in the market (See 2 Kings 6:24-7:20). As it turned out, both the lepers and the prophet were right, it was a day of good news.

It is my sense that since 9/11 there has arisen in the world, what Gary Wolf, calls, "a new atheism." Traditional atheism is defined as the belief that there is no God. This new form of atheism is both an attack on the idea of an all-wise, benevolent, and powerful God to an attack on religion in general as well. In the view of this new atheism, religion in all its forms are roughly equivalent, and are therefore capable of fomenting such insane behavior as that of the Islamic terrorists. In the vanguard of this cynical approach to religion are Sam Harris, Richard Dawkins, and Daniel Dennett. These men and their quasi sophisticated followers are now targeting Christianity and Judaism with equal vigor, which in point of fact, betrays their distinct lack of sophistication and understanding of all the world's great religions.

I must admit that it is tempting, amid all the madness in our world, to say nothing of our own country, to forget that now as then, it is a day of good news. Perhaps, amidst the increasing darkness, we will discover the light of the good news of Jesus Christ can be all the brighter. We must like the lepers, share the good news.

Impossible Mountain

by J. Mark Vandivort

Parents of several different religious backgrounds have chosen to send their children to a 250-plus Christian school in the Virgin Islands. This was reported by Rev. Gene Wooten, Free Will Baptist pastor, on the island of St. Croix.

My mind traveled back 50-some-years. In my "mind's eye" the North American Ministries staff was gathered in Dr. Homer E. Willis' office. (Most people called him, "Bro. Willis"). One of Bro. Willis' burdens/visions was to see a FWB church planted in the Virgin Islands. Time and time again we joined him in prayer.

Jesus taught his disciples to have the faith to pray that a mountain be moved (Matthew 17:20). Jesus was teaching His disciples to pray for the "impossible". I believe that Bro. Willis had the faith to pray for the "impossible".

It happened on a Wednesday night during our 1965 annual National Association of FWB—missions night. During the invitation, a young pastor, Larry, and his wife, Wanda, came forward and dedicated their lives for church planting. They were interested in the Virgin Islands.

Bro. Willis sent me and Larry Powell to conduct a survey trip. We felt that Christiansted, St. Croix, Virgin Islands was the place to plant a FWB church. (A report of our trip was published, Vision for the Virgin Islands, 1966).

Are you facing an "impossible mountain"? Jesus said, "With God all things are possible" (Matthew 19:26).

From Dry Bones To Renewed Life

...of a valley, it was full of dry bones. He led me back and forth among them, and I saw a great many bones on the floor of the valley, bones that were very dry. He asked me, "Son of man, can these bones live?" I said, "O Sovereign LORD, you alone know."



by David Rudd

The vision of dry bones recorded in Ezekiel 37:1-14 has always been a curiosity to me. As a servant on the Texas Missions/Church Extension Board for the Texas Association of Free Will Baptists, I have witnessed first hand the incredible joy of seeing a vibrant church be brought to life. There is also a side of this ministry that is much less inspiring and very discouraging; the loss of Free Will Baptist congregations across our State. Sometimes it seems that we lose churches faster than we can produce them. It is very easy to give up, but know that God has called us to be a part of something that is exciting and scary all at the same time.

God, through an un-explainable turn of events, moved my family out of a successful pastorate that had lasted for almost 20 years. It was an extremely difficult time, but we kept trusting God that He still had a purpose and plan for us. Little did we know that His plan would include witnessing the restoration of life to the dry bones of a little church who was about to close its doors. We do not for a second believe that we are the reason for what is taking place at our church, and we fully acknowledge that God can do what He desires with or without us. God spoke clearly to me one Sunday morning in February of 2015 when we were preparing to go to Church, that we needed to attend this little church that morning. When we arrived for Sunday school we found ourselves in a business meeting to discuss the sale of the property and (as we found out later) the possibility of closing the ministry. There were only a handful of people left and they were tired of the struggle and did not think they could move on. We left hurting for a church that had once seen its buildings packed with families and that had baptized souls into the kingdom. A few days later we received a call from the deacon of the church asking if we would consider coming over to help rebuild the work. The Lord was calling to the dry bones and we were being called to witness their new life! After much prayer and family discussion, our whole family felt God tugging at our hearts to enter into this work. We thought ministry was over but God was simply reassigning us.

We have watched in the last year as our little church has re-tooled itself. Yes, we sold the property and now have funds set aside to put into a new facility when the time comes. We moved our services into the parsonage, a 1,500 sq ft double-wide mobile home. At first, it was just 8 people meeting in a mobile home that needed repairs but now we sometimes double that number. The repairs are nearing completion. The Holy Spirit sanctions our services with His presence. Members who had given up are slowly trickling back into fellowship. Our pastor, deacon and myself all felt the call of God to restart using the resources that we had, a mobile home. Now, we are meeting on the model of house church. It's more relaxed. Where else can you eat the last of the ice cream out of its tub while studying the Word?! It's wonderful to see the dry bones coming back to life! Are we where we want to be? No way, but we are headed in that direction by the grace of God.

The little church is in Tyler, Texas. We have one Free Will Baptist Church in a city of almost 100,000 people. Lifegate Free Will Baptist Church was founded as a mission. We almost lost it but God has called the dry bones together and He is doing a marvelous work before our eyes. Pray for us. Visit our website at www.lifegatefwb.org, listen to the podcasts of sermons by Pastor Phillip Dillon, or join us if you are without a church home. As we say, "Come over to our house."

Listen to me. If your church is about to close, try something new and step out of your comfort zone and let God lead you out of the valley of dry bones. He may still have a purpose for you. If it is clear that He is done with the ministry of your church, please consider gifting the assets back to Free Will Baptist so that we can continue the work in Texas. You just might get to witness new life in the valley of dry bones.

Stones of Remembrance Parts 5 & 6: Fraternity and Trust



The fourth stone of accountability cannot be erected without the corresponding stone of fraternity. The separate churches recognized their brothers from other states but lingering doubts and bad memories from the 1911 merger would haunt future efforts. Following the merger of the majority of the Randall movement with the Northern Baptists in 1911, remnant churches of the movement in the West and Midwest would organize what would become the Co-operative Association of Free Will Baptists. The first Triennial meeting of this group was held in December 1916 and included associations and churches from Nebraska, Kansas, Missouri and the Central Brazos Association of Texas. There was an abortive attempt at bringing the churches of the south and east into this group in 1918 but differences over the position of feet-washing as an ordinance prevented the union. In 1921 the southern and eastern churches formed their own national union of the General Conference of the Original Free Will Baptists of the United States.

Through the efforts of godly men from Tennessee and from Texas whom we will soon discuss, these two groups would begin limited communication and eventually unite together into the National Association of Free Will Baptists in 1935 at Cofer's Chapel in Nashville, Tennessee thus demonstrating their theological fraternity and their hope for greater engagement in the world.

Accountability and fraternity are impossible without trust. Trust is often difficult when deeply spirited people from slightly different traditions join together in common cause. The Free Will Baptist movement made its first step in trust when each movement the Cooperative General Association (West) and the General Conference (southeast) both willingly gave up older, historical statements of faith and instead adopted the Treatise of the Faith and Practices of Free Will Baptists which was similar to the New England Treatise revision of 1869. Many differences remained especially as it related to eschatology and the ordinances of the church but the fledgling denomination wisely chose to trust one another and its touchstone of freedom of conscience to work toward greater growth for the kingdom of God. Though some cultural differences remain, the denomination has worked under this banner of trust since 1935.

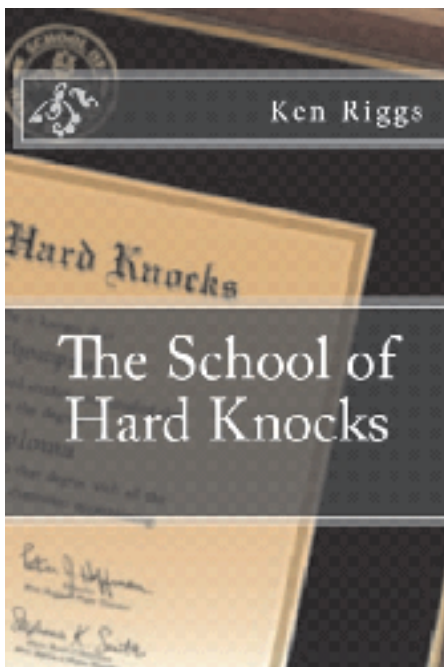
1968 would however prove to be an important test of the strength of this trust. A resolution from Oklahoma requested that the denomination clarify its position on backsliding and apostasy. A committee was formed to study the issue. Minutes from the state meeting of Texas in 1968 and 1969 indicate strong interest in this question as well as the provision of funds for two ministers to attend the committee discussion of the question in Nashville, Tennessee. 1969 would bring the report of the committee and the adoption of an appendix related to the question which can still be found in the Treatise today. This appendix brought together both sides of the position and while it did not specifically define the terms of apostasy and backsliding affirmed both irremedial apostasy as a possibility and the lost condition of one termed a "backslider" who could nevertheless still repent and find favor with God. This moderating position demonstrates the trust that continues to be at work in binding the separate strains of this denomination together.

This denomination was built upon the foundation stones of Scripture and freedom. The growth of the denomination has been marked by spirit-led men and women who have willingly made themselves accountable to one another. They have nurtured bonds of fraternity and been willing to trust one another even in the midst of difficult and trying situations. If our churches can continue to build themselves on this tradition and these principles I look forward to seeing what God will do with Free Will Baptists over the next 400 years.





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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