

Honoring Our Heritage

Celebrating 75 Years of Free Will Baptists

75th Annual Convention | July 17-20, 2011 |
Charlotte, NC

Global finances may be in a tailspin, but when more than 6,000 Free Will Baptists met in the second-largest banking city in the nation July 17-20, it was clear to everyone that the Great Commission has not been rescinded by a struggling economy!

Delegates to the 75th Free Will Baptist national convention in Charlotte, North Carolina, heard directors from each national agency sound the same note—belt-tightening fiscal responsibility, essential staff cuts, lower budgets, and hold-the-line adjustments—whatever it takes to win souls, build churches, educate tomorrow’s leaders, and keep the gospel light shining into the dark places of the world.



Executive Secretary **Keith Burden** captured the spirit of the convention when he told delegates: “All of us are painfully aware of the obstacles we face due to a bad economy. In spite of the remarkable faithfulness of our supporters, dwindling resources force us to make difficult decisions. Nevertheless, we remain resolute in our commitment.” And when the 75th session closed Wednesday evening, attendees left with a deep sense of mission, holy purpose, and a “we can do this” attitude.



The meeting marked the sixth time the National Association of Free Will Baptists has convened in the Tar Heel State to conduct denominational business. The convention first met in North Carolina in 1945 as World War II drew to a close. They did not meet in a plush, modern convention center but in the Free Will Baptist Orphanage at Middlesex. More recently, the city of Charlotte has welcomed the National Association three times (1979, 1995, and 2011).

Celebrate

Free Will Baptists gathered in Charlotte for more than business. They came together to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the National Association of Free Will Baptists. Two important commemorative items published by the Executive Office helped mark this important milestone. Honoring Our Heritage, a video documentary, treated viewers to a 400-year tour through Free Will Baptist history, from Eng-

lish General Baptist roots in the 1600s to highlights and challenges of the 20th Century. A segment of the documentary played before each evening service, drawing wide praise.

Convention Sermons, a hardbound volume of more than a thousand pages, compiles 75 years of convention messages. Executive Secretary **Keith Burden** presented the first copy to Sunday evening speaker, Dr. **Robert E. Picirilli**, honoring him for preaching at the national convention for the sixth time—more than anyone except **L.C. Johnson**, long-time president of Free Will Baptist Bible College.

Each day, The Convention News published a commemorative edition styled after a historical Free Will Baptist publication. Each paper included a short vignette about Free Will Baptist thought and history.

Worship

In light of the historic nature of this meeting, the Executive Committee selected the theme “Honoring Our Heritage” and challenged convention speakers to explore historic doctrines that set Free Will Baptists apart from other groups.

Music Coordinator **Chris Truett** created an exciting slate of worship services that included a North Carolina choir drawn from Bethel and Unity FWB Churches, a 100-voice convention choir, an orchestral ensemble, and a vocal accompaniment E congregational singing and unforgettable music characterized each service.

Rodney Holloman, North Carolina pastor and chair of the Bible department at Southeastern FWB College, taught Sunday School from 2 Peter 3:9, explaining the importance of “joining God where He is working.” He warned listeners not to permit snares such as nationalism and racism to interfere with God’s mission of evangelizing all nations.

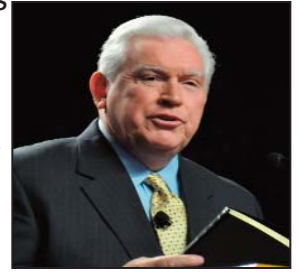
Greenwood, Arkansas, pastor **Jim Walker** delivered the Sunday morning message. His theme: Honoring Our Heritage. Walker focused on the importance of preserving God’s laws for future generations and emphasized the importance of finding and being spiritual heroes.

Sunday evening belonged to **Robert E. Picirilli** (TN), author, theologian, and retired FWBBC staffer, who spoke on Free Will, defining it as one of the key elements of Free Will Baptist doctrine but warning listeners that “independence from God is our destruction.”

A heartfelt moment occurred Monday evening when Chaplain (Major) **Brad Hanna**, son of speaker **Billy Hanna**, introduced his dad via video feed from Afghanistan. Major Hanna deployed with the 45th Infantry Brigade of the Oklahoma Army National Guard in June. After a few emotional moments, Hanna (GA) delivered a powerful discourse on Free Grace. Stating that we can only appreciate grace



when we understand the “mess we are in,” Hanna reminded listeners that man is helpless, yet through God’s grace, he is never hopeless.



On Tuesday, North Carolina pastor **Jeff Jones** tackled the subject Free Salvation using the parable of the great supper (Luke 14:15-24). He reminded listeners that all Christians, as God’s servants, should encourage reluctant sinners to come, and God Himself extends salvation’s invitation to everyone—regardless of station in life, race, income, or education.

Executive Secretary **Keith Burden** wrapped up the week by prompting Free Will Baptists to return to strong biblical and theological teaching and preaching. He asserted, “God does not change; He does not lower His standards to meet our lifestyles.” Burden challenged the denomination to reaffirm its commitment to the inspiration and authority of Scripture; to “live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world” (Titus 2:12), and to witness to all men, everywhere.

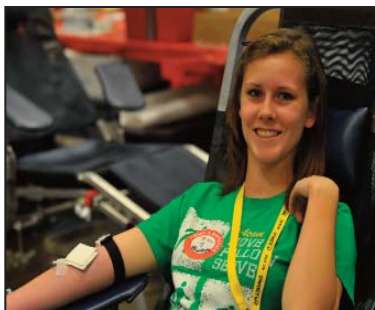
Serve

At 9:00 a.m., Saturday, July 16, 258 participants from 10 states and 19 churches arrived in Charlotte a day early and took to the streets distributing information about local churches. They visited 330 homes and contacted 280 individuals. Their efforts marked the sixth annual one-day evangelism and service campaign called Impact.



Nearly 2,000 volunteers have participated since the event began. “We look forward to Impact all year,” said **Marcia McCarty**. Her family has participated every year, and according to Marcia, they can no longer imagine a national convention without it. “We drove all night to get here and slept in the parking lot. But we didn’t miss it!”

Volunteers went to work. At Bessemer FWB Church, a team painted a fellowship building and landscaped the exterior. Others finished out drywall at Joshua Youth Camp in Abermerle. Still others visited Springwood FWB Church in Belmont to help the church host a neighborhood block party.



Visitors enjoyed a cookout, live southern gospel music, dunking booth, inflatable bounce games, a water slide, groceries, and a rummage sale—all free for neighbors of the church.

Monday to Wednesday, 489 Reach That Guy participants from 47 churches donated 1,953 hours to 23 worthy organizations such as Second Harvest Food Bank, Samaritan’s Feet, and Crisis Assistance Ministries. On Wednesday, 92 people lined up to donate 93 units of blood

during the annual American Red Cross Blood Drive. Eighty-five were first-time donors.

Reach That Guy, a Free Will Baptist outreach program fueled largely by students, continues to grow. The program began in Fort Worth, Texas, in 1996.

Serious Business

When General Board members arrived in Room 207 of the Charlotte Convention Center on Monday, July 18, they found a 196-page Digest of Reports filled with data, proposals, and budgets waiting for them. Four hours and 20 minutes later, Moderator **Tim York** requested a motion to adjourn.

What did the General Board do in less than five hours? They heard every national director explain what his agency had accomplished the previous year, voted to recommend a 2012 denominational budget of just under \$25 million, and recommended that the July 21-24, 2019, national convention meet in Cincinnati, Ohio.



They also recommended changes in the Free Will Baptist Foundation charter and heard Clerk Randy Bryant read the names of members appointed to four national committees: Nominating Committee (7), Credentials Committee (5), Obituary Committee (5) and Resolution Committee (5).

In other business, delegates...

Elected 36 board and commission members including general officers (4), Executive Committee (3), General Board (11), Home Missions Board (3), Board of Retirement (3), Master's Men Board (3), FWB Foundation Board (3) International Missions Board (1), Commission for Theological Integrity (1), Historical Commission (1), Media Commission (2), and Music Commission (1).

Approved a \$24.7 million denominational budget for 2012. (See Convention at a Glance for more details.)

Discussed the proposed FWBBC name change 25 minutes Tuesday afternoon before sending it back to the Board of Trustees for an official vote in 2012.

Voted to take the July 21- 24, 2019, convention to Cincinnati, Ohio.

Learned that effective 2012, the Obituary Committee report will include both the names and pictures of deceased ministers and board members.

Gave a Thumbs-Up to Randall House Publications for winning three prestigious awards during the 2011 Evangelical Press Association including Best Design, Best Youth Magazine, and Best Devotional Magazine. Randall House competed with 300 other Christian publishers for the awards.

Voted to disburse funds from The Together Way Plan to national agencies according to the following formula: underwrite the Executive Office administrative budget above designated gifts, not to exceed 45% of cooperative gifts. Disburse the balance of cooperative gifts—**FWBBC (23%), International Missions (23%), Home Missions (18%), Retirement & Insurance (14%), Master's Men (14%), FWB Foundation (6%), Commission for Theological Integrity (0.5%), Historical Commission (0.5%), Music Commission (0.5%),** and **Media Commission (0.5%)**.

Thanked the North Carolina State Association for hosting the 2011 national convention.

Honored **J.L. Gore** for 27 years of service on the General Board representing Mississippi, 17 of those years on the Executive Committee.

Heard Home Missions Director **Larry Powell** announce that Hispanic churches are winning 100 people to Christ every month and that Free Will Baptists are planting their first church in a deaf community, the only denomination to launch such a program.



Agreed that two decisions by the Board of Retirement would provide long-term benefits for program participants—authorizing Critical Illness Insurance and establishing the Labor of Love Endowment Fund to help ministers prepare for retirement.

Smiled when the FWB Foundation announced a \$2.2 million increase in assets, now topping \$40 million, and listed six benefits of planned giving.

Praised the Media Commission for providing live streaming for 2011 convention worship services. Responses from around the world expressed appreciation for harnessing technology to include Free Will Baptists globally in the annual gathering.



Welcomed the first report from rookie WNAC Executive Director **Elizabeth Hodges** who informed attendees that WNAC joined other national agencies in ONE Magazine in 2011. WNAC and Master's Men now share office space and staff in the National Office Building, a decision that cuts expenses for both organizations.

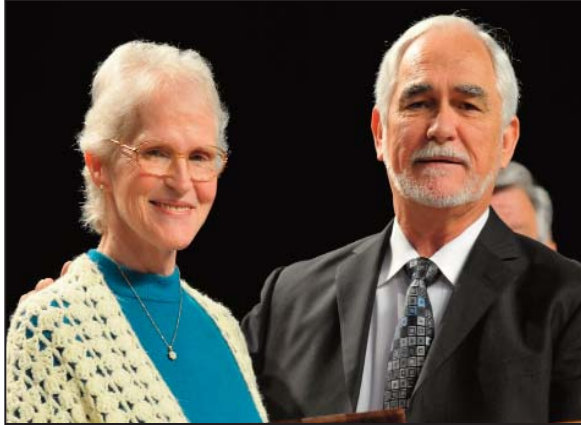
Pushed proposed charter and by-law changes from the FWB Foundation to the 2012 convention.

Congratulated Master's Men for launching a new ministry, CMI (Count Me In) Conferences, an effort designed to focus on men's issues and mentoring men. Master's Men led multiple disaster relief efforts to Haiti, as well as other stateside disaster relief projects in Alabama, Tennessee, Missouri, and Arkansas.

Enjoyed shorter reports by national agencies—30 minutes from boards and 15 minutes from commissions.

Registered 6,064 attendees for three concurrent conventions (including 632 ordained ministers). Stood to honor retiring board members: **Ron Barber** (22 years, Board of Retirement), **Milburn Wilson** (12 years, Board of Retirement), **Mike Mounts** (12 years, Master's Men).

Saluted **James Forlines**, former general director of International Missions for 13 years of visionary leadership.



Stood Again to honor **Alice Smith** who retired after 36 years as a missionary to Ivory Coast, West Africa.



Questioned International Missions Interim General Director **Clint Morgan** about zeroing out missionary accounts at the end of the calendar year.

Adjourned at 2:10 p.m. to meet in Memphis, Tennessee, for the 2012 convention.

Convention at a Glance

Registration

National Association - 3,836
National Youth Conference - 4,026
WNAC - 830

Total* - 6,064

**Actual count. Some attendees register for more than one convention.*

Speakers

Sunday School - Rodney Holloman (NC)
Sunday Morning - Jim Walker (AR)
Sunday Evening - Robert E. Picirilli (TN)
Monday Evening - Billy Hanna (GA)
Tuesday Evening - Jeff Jones (NC)
Wednesday Evening - Keith Burden (TN)

2012 Budget

Executive Office - \$724,450
FWBBC - \$5,676,323
FWB Foundation - \$488,957
Home Missions - \$5,000,000
International Missions - \$7,250,000
Master's Men - \$140,511
Retirement and Insurance - \$474,000
Randall House - \$4,936,000
Theological Commission - \$8,050
Historical Commission - \$3,270
Media Commission - \$3,000

Music Commission - \$4,125
Total - \$24,708,686

Elections

Executive Committee (2014)

Chris Clay (IN)
Gary Fry (MO)
Venny VanHoose (KY)

General Board (2014)

Indiana: Chris Clay
Iowa District: Jim Martin
Kansas: Zane Brooks
Kentucky: Venny VanHoose
Mexico Association District: Bud Bivens
Michigan: Gene Norris
Mid-Atlantic District: Wayne Hale
Mississippi: Larry Reynolds
Missouri: Gary Fry
New Jersey District: William Brown
New Mexico District: Mark Shores

Home Missions Board (2017)

Bob Lewis (TN)
Robert Thebeau (MO)
Randy Wright (AL)

Board of Retirement (2017)

James Beasley (SC)
Tim Hall (KY)
Danny Baer (NC)

Master's Men Board (2017)

Clay Burgett (OH)
Tom Harmon (IL)
Cliff Donoho (TN)

FWB Foundation Board (2017)

Waymon Fields (AL)
Bobby Edwards (TN)
Melvin Worthington (NC)

International Mission Board (2012)

Mark Price (OH)

Theological Commission (2016)

Paul Harrison (TN)

Historical Commission (2016)

Jeff Cockrell (SC)

Media Commission

Monte McKenzie (GA) – 2013

Adam Carnes (NC) – 2016

Music Commission (2016)

Donnie Burke (CO)

General Officers

Moderator: Tim York (TN)

Assist. Moderator: William Smith (GA)

Clerk: Randy Bryant (FL)

Assistant Clerk: Ernie Lewis (IL)