

**Minutes of the Annual  
Bethel Conference  
of North Carolina**



**1831**



**Transcribed for the  
Free Will Baptist  
Historical Collection  
By Robert E. Picirilli**



## Minutes of the Bethel Conference, 1831

Editorial Note: The following material is copied from *History of the Free Will Baptists of North Carolina* by Harrison and Barfield, with the exception of one sentence from *The Morning Star* (noted in italics) that indicates the number of churches, preachers, and ministers. The paper indicated it had received the minutes but gave only a brief summary and no information beyond what appears in Harrison and Barfield, except the sentence described.

The Bethel Annual Conference in 1831 was held at Probability church, Duplin county, N.C., on the 10th, 11th, 12th and 13th, of November. Eld. Jesse Heath introduced the services, and delivered the Introductory Sermon, from Judges 19:30. After which the Conference organized by the appointment of Eld. James Moore, Moderator, and Thomas Hood, Clerk.

On motion, Emanuel Jarmon:and John H. Dixon were appointed a committee of finance, to receive contributions, settle with the Treasurer and report to Conference.

On motion, the letters from the several churches were handed in and read, from which we learn that union prevails, and that some of the churches have been favored with good revivals, for which we bless God.

Elders Hays and Utley, messengers from the Christian Conference, held at Pleasant Spnng church, Wake county, N. C., attended this Conference, were received with great joy, and invited to seats with us.

On motion, by Eld. Redding Moore, the Free Will Baptist churches in South Carolina, in connection with himself, were dismissed, and authorized to organize an Annual Conference in their own section of country.

Agreed, that Elders J. Heath and R. Bond be appointed messengers to the Annual Conference in S. C.

Agreed, that Elders James Moore and E. Cobb be appointed messengers to the Shiloh Conference, to be held at Little Swift Creek church, Craven county, to commence on Thursday before the second Sunday in Oct. next.

On motion, Eld. Hays nominated Eld. J. Vause, N. Lockhart, and R. Reaves, messengers to attend the Christian Conference at New Bethel church, Chatam county, N. C., to commence on Friday before the first Sunday in October next.

Agreed, that the stated times for holding the Yearly and Quarterly Meetings in the different churches composing the Bethel Conference be inserted in these minutes, for the intelligence of the ministry.

Resolved, that the 10th and 11th Articles of Confession of Faith be discontinued.

Agreed that Mark Andrews, a Free-Will Baptist minister, be no longer a member, and that his name be discontinued in our minutes.

Voted, that 1,000 copies of these minutes be printed and distributed, two hundred in Shiloh Conference, and 800 in the Bethel Conference.

Agreed, that Eld. H. Hearn prepare a Circular on a subject of his own choice, to be attached to these minutes. Elds. L. Hartsfield, R. Bond, and J. Hays, were appointed to preach tomorrow.

Elds. J. Heath and L. Utley were appointed to preach on Sunday.

Voted, that the next Bethel Conference be held at Louson Swamp church, Lenoir county.

On motion, Conference adjourn.

*It appears from these minutes that there are 24 churches, containing 1,654 members and 22 preachers, belonging to this Conference.*

The following circular was addressed to Conference by Eld. Howell Hearn, father of the late R. K. Hearn:<sup>1</sup>

Dear Brethren—

By the request of the late Annual Conference I have undertaken to address you, the designs of which will be for the glory of God, and the good of you. Brethren, we have abundance of thankfulness to our Heavenly Father, that in our Yearly Conference Jesus has again been with us in our deliberations on the affairs of the connection. We trust much of the influence of that Spirit has been felt which the world cannot give nor take away, and that much of that love and union was manifested, that hearts only can experience which have been :filled with redeeming grace. This discussion of subjects that were referred to our consideration, on which there was a difference of opinion, was conducted with much good feeling, and interest to the connection. I would, brethren, admonish all to remember the covenant made in Baptism, and study to understand the word of God; as it is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, rather than to be influenced by the traditions of men; for there is one Lord, one faith, one Baptism, one God and Father of all.

Brethren, I fervently desire that our preaching brethren may always remember the counsel of our Divine Teacher, and not aspire to greatness in the world, only, but to righteousness; and be willing to be servants of all; and, as saith the Apostle, commending themselves to every man's conscience, being gentle, apt to teach, patient in spirit, instructing those that oppose themselves, and especially when they feel constrained to declare the whole counsel of God, against all ungodliness, and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness, and that they exercise that charity, so highly recommended by the Apostle to the Corinthian church.

Brethren, all the different denominations, so far as I am acquainted, claim some principles as the foundation of their

---

<sup>1</sup> This sentence was probably inserted by Harrison and Barfield rather than being in the original minutes.

system, and out of faith and practice have grown much division, party spirit, and prejudice; but let us have no contention about any faith, only that, which was once delivered to the saints, which was not obtained, as many others have been, by national arms, stakes, faggots, flames, prisons, etc., but by believing in him who hath said, “Ye believe in God, believe also in Me”; for this is the only faith that will profit us in a coming day. As faith is one of the leading graces that constitute the child of God, let us examine ourselves whether we be in the faith or not. Christ taught to believe the Gospel; “because my word is spirit, and it is life,” this Gospel finds all men under sin, that he may have mercy upon all; and this grace of God that bringeth salvation, hath appeared unto all men, promising eternal life to the believer—and this proves to me that the same capacity that is in a state of unbelief, might be in faith; and grace teaches us that, by denying ungodliness, and worldly lusts, we shall live Godly and righteously in this present world, looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God, and our Savior Jesus Christ—who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. Brethren, without these good works, which are taught by the grace of God, our faith is dead, being alone; and by them faith is made perfect, as was Abraham’s, who was the father of all believers in Jesus Christ.

Brethren, remember the Jews sought after a sign, but there was no sign given but that of the prophet Jonah, and there will be no sign given to us, but the Gospel; then let us hold fast our profession, and continue in brotherly love, bearing one another’s burdens, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Brethren, in conclusion, I will call your attention to the subject from which the Conference was addressed. Consider it; take advice, and speak your minds. Consider the goodness of God, in giving his Son, that the world, by faith in him, might

be saved, and consider the destruction of the wicked, the awful consequences of sin, and how it happened with Israel, when they departed from the living God. Consider the glorious promises held out to the faithful. Take advice—while Israel clave together as one man, and was obedient, one could chase a thousand, and ten could put ten thousand to flight; but when they were divided by sin, war ensued, and Benjamin was almost destroyed. O, Brethren, division is to be dreaded more than any one thing in the world, because of its awful consequences.

Remember, brethren, united we shall stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free, but divided, we shall fall. Speak your minds—is it not better to live in peace and love in this world, and enjoy the sweets of religion of Jesus, than to be made miserable by division and prejudice, in time and eternity? O! that God would enable us to keep the unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace.

Together let us sweetly live,  
Together let us die:  
And each a starry crown receive,  
And reign above the sky. Farewell.

Howel Hearn.







©2022 National Association  
of Free Will Baptists, Inc.

**Note:** copyright for transcription, formatting, and arrangement only;  
contents are Public Domain



**[www.FWBHistory.com](http://www.FWBHistory.com)**

