

ONE LORD ONE VOICE ONE VISION

ONE magazine

AUGUST-SEPTEMBER • 2022

Give Me That **MOUNTAIN**

Partnering With the Nations

*Funding Missions
Dreams*

February 24, 2022

***Reaching the
World Where?***

**Responding
to Dobbs**

In the Crosshairs

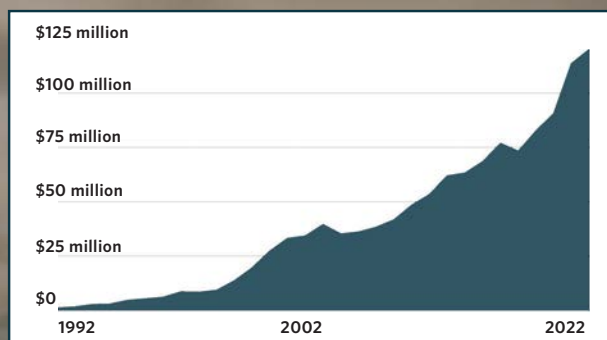
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*To communicate to Free Will Baptists a unifying vision
of our role in the extension of God's Kingdom*

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Standing for *All* of Life

BY ERIC K. THOMSEN

Swish!

The bottle whizzed past my ear and shattered on the telephone pole behind me, showering me with shards of dripping glass. Instinctively, I ducked, as though another perfectly thrown missile would bounce off my noggin instead.

Though I had endured the occasional verbal abuse during pro-life marches and rallies, that moment more than three decades ago marked the first physical threat. Later that night, wide awake in my dorm room bunkbed, I pondered the reality that standing for life might carry serious consequences. I also decided it was worth it.

It still is.

However, as I near the mid-century mark, my understanding of what it means to be “pro-life” has changed. Don’t misunderstand. My defense of unborn children has not changed. I believe every child, no matter the circumstances, is a gift from God (Psalm 139:15-16; Psalm 51:5), a human being from the moment of conception, and precious in God’s eyes. I stand for life.



But my pro-life stance has expanded. I have come to understand life continues *beyond* the womb. People don’t stop being precious to God when they leave the maternity ward. Or when they endure horrible childhood circumstances. Or when they make

mistakes that lead to prison or back to a maternity ward. Or when they throw bottles. Even the lives of those who perform abortions—as hard as it is for me to understand—are precious to God.

So, what does it mean to stand for life in 2022?

Start with Scripture. Dive into what the Bible says about life, where it starts, and how much God cares about every life. As a Christian, let His Word dictate your convictions

rather than pop culture, political voices (left or right), or your own, sometimes difficult, circumstances. God’s Word is our guide.

Fight for unborn children. How?

- **Pray.** For leaders and decision makers. For moms in desperate situations.
- **Vote...including local and state elections.** The legal battles over abortion are in the hands of the state courts. No election is unimportant, and, at this crucial moment, your vote literally may be a matter of life or death.
- **Support parents.** The decision *not* to abort is always right, but that does not mean it is always easy. For some mothers, abortion may seem the only option. Give them a better way. Partner with crisis pregnancy centers, adoption centers, and organizations working with incarcerated moms. Put fostering and adoption in the church budget. Get involved in community programs to help struggling families. The concerned response of the church should demonstrate we stand *for* life, not *against* those who have abortions.

Stand for life *beyond* the womb. Embrace the biblical mandate to help the poor and marginalized. Mentor young people from every walk of life. Be concerned about your own health because your life is also a gift to be treasured. Prisoners, elders, addicts, the homeless—the list is endless.

It is a broken world where life seems cheap. But we serve a God who sees every life as precious—so much that He gave His own life to save them. How can we do less?

I stand for life. I hope you will stand with me. **ONE**



About the Columnist: Eric K. Thomsen is managing editor of *ONE Magazine*. Email: eric@nafwb.org.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

As a healthcare chaplain I really enjoyed the June-July article "Chaplain With Clarity." I grew up an Air Force dependent. I often wondered why my dad would get us into a local church wherever we went instead of the base chapel. After I became a Christian (saved in a Free Will Baptist church in Waipahu, Hawaii) under the ministry of Pastor Luther Sanders, whose wife Helen led me to the Lord, and was grounded in the Word, I began to understand my father's wisdom in avoiding military chapels. While stationed in Minot, North Dakota, we attended chapel services. Protestant services were led by one of seven chaplains, most of whom were liberal and denied the truth of God's Word. Fortunately, I was disciplined by a conservative Baptist chaplain who steered me right and ultimately placed in my heart a passion for chaplaincy. Thanks for your ministry and the great magazine you produce.

Soli Deo Gloria,

—Dean McFadden,
Interim Pastor, Green Rock FWBC, Colona, IL
Chaplain, Genesis Health System, Silvis, IL

A note from the editor: Sandy Atwood, whose article on evangelism was published in "The Conversation Continues" in the June-July issue, passed from this life (June 8) the same week the magazine began arriving in mailboxes. I am grateful for Sandy's friendship through the years, her upbeat attitude, delightful sense of humor, and her excellent articles. While I was deeply saddened by her passing, I smiled to think her final article in *ONE*—her legacy in print—expressed her ongoing dedication to sharing the gospel with others. I can't think of a better tribute.

Have something to say? Say it! Your feedback, comments, and suggestions are appreciated.

Email editor@nafwb.org or send correspondence to: **ONE Magazine, Letters to the Editor, PO Box 5002, Antioch, TN 37011-5002**

ONE Magazine reserves the right to edit published letters for length and content.

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- Sep. 4** Living for Christ (Philippians 1:1-30)
- Sep. 11** The Example of Christ (Philippians 2)
- Sep. 18** Thinking Like Christ (Philippians 2:5-8; 4:8; Romans 12:1-2)
- Sep. 25** Knowing Christ (Philippians 3)
- Oct. 2** Rejoicing in Christ (Philippians 4)
- Oct. 9** Genuine Faith (1 Timothy 1:1—2:6)
- Oct. 16** Demonstrating Your Faith (1 Timothy 4:1-16)
- Oct. 23** Fighting for the Faith (1 Timothy 6:3-21)
- Oct. 30** Faithfully Following God (2 Kings 2:1-15)
- Nov. 6** Humbly Obeying God (2 Kings 5:1-27)
- Nov. 13** Boldly Honoring God's Word (2 Kings 22:1-20)
- Nov. 20** The Promise of Hope (Jeremiah 31:1-40)
- Nov. 27** The Results of Disobedience (2 Kings 25:1-21)



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Give Me That MOUNTAIN!

BY DON MATCHETT

In the book of Joshua, Caleb reminded the people of Judah about his promised inheritance. He told them, “I am 85 years old, and as strong today as when Moses sent me to spy out the land. I am capable of war and everyday living. So, give me that mountain!” (Paraphrased from Joshua 14:10-12).

As someone from the Ozark Mountains of Arkansas, I completely connect with Caleb. Please, give me the hill country. However, let’s remember who occupied the hill country of Canaan. According to Numbers, the biggest and strongest men—literal giants—lived there. So, in context, Caleb said, “I’m able and capable at 85. Give me the hill country where the giants live.”

I hope I am simply strong enough to live in the hill country when I am 85, much less deal with giants.

Anthropological researchers have noted a considerable change in society. People are living longer and seem happier. Over the past two decades, researchers conducted dozens of studies to find out why. A recent study asked senior citizens, “In what time of your life did you feel most accomplished and successful?”

Many responded, “Now!”

Those aged 55-85 felt accomplished and thriving in their senior years. This is the exact opposite of what western culture leads us to believe. Our culture often measures worth and success by age and youthful appearance.

We see it on billboards, in commercials, and throughout Hollywood.

The battle against aging has become a trillion-dollar industry. Yet, those with youth, money, and beauty often seem the least happy.

Our western cultural formula lacks an essential ingredient. It’s like eating a coconut pie without coconut or a hamburger with no meat. Something significant is missing. What is the crucial ingredient to feeling accomplished in your senior years? Or any age, for that matter? A sense of *purpose*. Seniors with a clearly defined sense of purpose are less likely to develop Alzheimer’s, cognitive impairment, disabilities, heart attacks, or strokes. They are more likely to live longer than those with little motivation. I would argue, in our context, the key ingredient is *Kingdom* purpose.

Sadly, we’ve all witnessed what happens when someone loses motivation for life. How often have we heard about a person who retires and dies within a year? Or a husband who passes away shortly after his spouse? They lost their purpose for living.

However, I know many examples of those with a strong Kingdom purpose living long, meaningful, and productive lives.

- **Sam and Jane Johnson** are well into their 80s. They wake up each morning with a Kingdom purpose: pray for every missionary and mission field in detail.
- **Steve Lytle** may be one of the happiest people I know. (He certainly is one of the kindest.) Retired from IM, Steve serves in a Spanish ministry at Cofer's Chapel in Nashville. His Kingdom purpose is sharing the love of Christ with Spanish-speaking people.
- **Dennis Teague** recently turned 75 years young. After spending a few days with Dennis, IM Director of Field Ministry Personnel Curt Holland reports Dennis is more fit than many men half his age. (They walked more than six miles a day.) I've witnessed Dennis fight back tears as he talked about his Kingdom purpose—sharing the gospel with France's agnostic, atheist population.
- **Jerry and Barb Gibbs**, in their 70s, returned to the States after 40 years of service in France to start Go Global, an educational program of IM, Inc. Their Kingdom purpose is to see Free Will Baptists engaged and active in the mission of God.
- **Clint Morgan** served as a missionary in the Ivory Coast and France for 33 years before becoming the general director of IM. Now in his 70s, he remains one of the best leaders with whom I've worked.

At one time, a person “of a certain age” dared not think of changing careers. Even IM, Inc. once held the idea one shouldn't pursue a career in missions after the age of 35. Times have changed. Nowadays, people make late, dramatic career changes. Of course, changing careers to follow one's Kingdom purpose is not the same as a secular job; it features a higher calling.

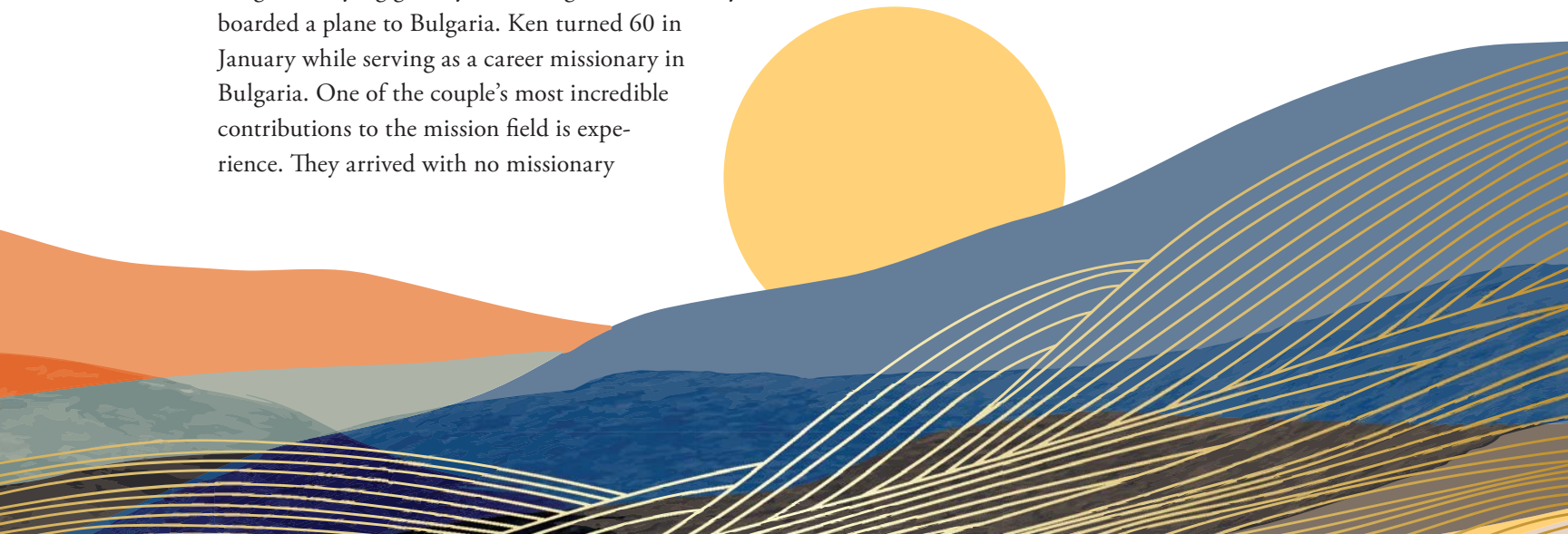
In 2019, **Ken and Jane Cash** made a drastic career change at age 58. Saying goodbye to their grandbabies, they boarded a plane to Bulgaria. Ken turned 60 in January while serving as a career missionary in Bulgaria. One of the couple's most incredible contributions to the mission field is experience. They arrived with no missionary

experience. But they brought to the table more than a half century of practical life and ministry experience, something no college or seminary can teach.

While changing careers isn't without risks, it has benefits, especially if Caleb's principles are employed. Remember, he was 85 when he tackled his brand-new venture. He had a history of ignoring naysayers. He was one of the two spies who believed God would give Israel the Promised Land. He was deeply committed to walking with and trusting the Lord. As it turns out, career change offers a few practical benefits as well. Those who change careers late in life often do so to follow a lifelong dream or passion. Also, career changes later in life make us think differently, exercising our brains and preserving mental capacity.

At times we may be ready, but God isn't. Caleb was patient and waited on God. It took 45 years for his dream to become a reality. Sometimes we are capable, have the experience, and are ready to take the next step. But someone else fills the position, a door closes, or worse—the decision makers think you're too old. Have you ever wondered why Joshua and not Caleb? Caleb would have been a great leader. He walked closely with God. He seemingly had more faith than anyone else in Israel, but God chose Joshua to lead. Sometimes doors open, and sometimes they close. And sometimes, dreams are delayed. The best advice I ever received came many years ago from my Uncle Frank. I was Timothy to his Paul. I felt God moving me to full-time ministry, but every door seemed to close. His advice was simple yet profound: “Be patient. God is faithful. The best timing is His timing. Serve faithfully and compassionately where you are until God opens the door.”

Back then, those words felt anecdotal. Today, I treasure the wisdom he shared.



You don't have to leave a secular job and take a ministry position to find your Kingdom purpose. Many accountants, bankers, teachers, welders, and mechanics clearly see their Kingdom purpose and live full, happy lives. A good friend has been a CPA for over 30 years. He ministers to someone almost daily. Still, it doesn't mean a ministry or missionary career is out of the question either. As it turns out, age is no longer an excuse. More and more seniors are pursuing a second (or third) career in ministry.

I think we all want the same things. We want to live long, healthy lives. We want to look back and see we have accomplished something. Longevity and better, healthier, happier lives come to those who find His Kingdom purpose. We have no promises for tomorrow, but the research says having a clear purpose increases the rate of success and lifespan.

The Christian community should be the happiest, most fulfilled community on the planet. If you already know your Kingdom purpose and live it with passion, this article may not be for you. If you don't, consider these questions:

Are you satisfied with your current situation?

If not, why?

What is your Kingdom purpose?

Are you living out that purpose?

If not, is it time for a change?

It's never too late. Age is just a number, not an excuse. Is it time to follow your passion, purpose, and calling, or time to be patient, trust God's timing, and wait until He opens a door?

The phrase "spend your life" means giving the currency of our lives to something every hour of every day. We literally spend our life's currency. A little less is left each day until nothing remains to spend. I pray you finish well and spend your life wisely for the glory of God and His purpose. **ONE**

About the Author: Arkansas native Don Matchett has served as director of church relations and advancement for IM, Inc. since 2017. Learn more about how you can get involved in missions at any age: iminc.org/go

Pioneer Legacy

Fred Hersey, a self-described "unlikely missionary" was born July 20, 1930, in Chicago, Illinois. After accepting the call to missions while in college, Hersey and his wife Evelyn applied to go to India but were rejected by the government. God soon put the nation of Japan on their hearts, and April 23, 1956, the Herseys set sail for the island nation where they spent three decades pioneering Free Will Baptist missions efforts.

In 1988, Evelyn's cancer diagnosis—eventually terminal—brought the couple home from the field. But Fred wasn't finished in Japan. In 1995, he married June Wilkinson, who worked in the Foreign Missions office. Two days later, the pair moved to Japan, ministering in four churches each month.

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IM Student Missions

First OA students, **Kenneth Eagleton Sr.** and **Dave Franks** (both former missionaries to Brazil), spent the summer in Cuba with **Pop Willey** in 1956.

ETEAM, IM's high school short-term program inaugurated in 1992 through the forward vision of **Ken and Marvis Eagleton**, began with **one team** of high school students traveling to Brazil. Now, 30 years later, approximately **2,300 FWB teenagers** have circled the globe. God used their experiences to mold world-shaped hearts and call many to full-time missionary service. Every year, CMP sends college students on similar journeys. Their young adult hearts and minds are radically changed for the advancement of the Kingdom. For some, the whole trajectory of their lives is altered as they experience the needs of the world.

Curt Holland, IM's director of field ministry personnel, says more than

57% of our **current missionary force** are products of short-term mission programs.



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PARTNERING *With the* NATIONS

BY DR. KENNETH EAGLETON

Last year, one of our partners in **South Asia** told me vast areas of his country held people groups with no churches or known Christians. The area is dominated by religious extremism. However, they identified ten experienced Christian workers willing to risk their lives and the lives of their families to take the gospel to those who desperately need it. They prayed four years for a partnership willing to help them fulfill this mission. The Lord led us to cooperate in this project, and two families have since moved to these unreached areas.

IM is committed to getting the gospel to the least reached areas of our planet. Our partners play a key role.

In **Panama**, we cooperate with Free Will Baptist churches expanding beyond our outpost church in Tolé, Chiriquí Province. These distant villages, inhabited by indigenous peoples, are responding to the gospel.

In **Brazil**, Clóvis and Cristina felt compelled by the Lord to move 1,400 miles from their home to a remote area of the state of Alagoas to plant a church in the settlement of Boa Esperança, where there were no churches. A partnership between the Brazilian churches and IM made this possible. The family ministers to poor people

plagued by constant drought and lack of opportunities and hope. Families are accepting Jesus as Savior.

In **Tajikistan**, we partner with local churches and Bible Mission to send workers high into the Pamir mountains, the second highest range in the world, to reach a people group who previously had not heard the gospel. We are seeing the first fruits of this outreach as they help these communities in areas of difficult access.

Ivorian Free Will Baptists, in a joint project with IM, sponsor church-planting in several areas of **Côte d'Ivoire** where we previously had no churches. Their efforts also extended into the neighboring countries of **Burkina Faso** and **Ghana**.



Many of the church-planters and believers in our **South Asian** partnerships face discrimination and open persecution because of their faith. In an incident last year, a house church service was interrupted by a mob of religious radicals who pulled the leaders outside and beat them, breaking the pastor's hand. They ordered all believers to flee the village or be killed. Christians set up temporary shelter in the forest. When asked if he would like to file a police report, the church planter refused. Ten days later, the leader of the mob, previously in good health, died suddenly.

The risk of persecution does not deter our partners from preaching the gospel. More villages that had never heard the gospel are being reached and have a gathering of believers. Despite the danger of being attacked or accused

of forced conversion (illegal in many areas of South Asia), men and women are choosing to profess their faith publicly through baptism.

Although it is difficult to get complete statistics from these places, **our partners reported a combined total of 488 places of worship and more than 27,000 believers.**

They also rejoiced in at least 1,400 new followers of Jesus baptized last year.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING. When new churches are started and new believers added to the flock, it becomes imperative to prepare leaders. This is the area where partners most often request help. When discussing a partnership with Free Will Baptist churches in **Pakistan** at the beginning of this year, their primary request was for help in setting up a Bible school program to train leaders. Though the work in Pakistan is only 15 years old, the region now has 50 established places of wor-

ship. We are working with them to develop this training program and invest in future leaders.

IM is helping equip men and women for local church ministry opportunities in 12 countries. We serve overseas Free Will Baptist national associations and assist partnerships to set up and run programs to develop people who will serve effectively as Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, evangelists, preachers, church-planters, pastors, and more.

Our cooperative Bible institute in **Russia** has 11 students this year. Students Viktor and Alexandra have an interesting testimony. Several years ago, Viktor, a Ukrainian, was committed to a rehabilitation center to recover from drug addiction. He met Alexandra, a believer from Russia working at the center. Viktor also became a believer. They married and moved to Russia, where they began their own Christian rehabilitation program. They enrolled in the Bible institute to prepare themselves better for ministry. The school, along with local churches, is collecting clothes, food, and other necessities, to send to the needy in Ukraine.

Our partnership with the Free Will Baptist Bible College in **Brazil** made it possible for them to hire the first full-time director and teacher. This school year began with 42 students from three Brazilian states.

Cuba reopened their seminary this year, after a two-year closure due to COVID restrictions. Our partnership allowed them to maintain their faculty and staff during this difficult time of illness and economic crisis.

In **South Asia**, our newest partners in Bible translation have two projects underway for people groups without a Bible in their own language. The work is supervised by linguists from a specialized mission. However, this mission's work does not include printing and distributing the Bibles. We hope to assist, so people can hold and read Bibles in their heart language for the first time.

COMPASSION MINISTRIES. Christ called us to care for the needs of those around us by giving them a cup of water, food, clothing, shelter, or whatever else they need. Free Will Baptists do just that.

When the U.S. withdrew from **Afghanistan** last year, a government hostile to Christians came to power, causing millions to flee the country. The majority crossed into **Pakistan**. Our Pakistani FWB churches actively receive and



These partnerships are eligible to receive funds through the

WORLD MISSIONS OFFERING (WMO):

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- Cuba
- Bulgaria
- Spain
- France
- Côte d'Ivoire (also reaching Burkina Faso & Ghana)
- India (FWBs + 2 other partnerships)
- Pakistan
- Bangladesh
- Russia
- Central Asia (Kazakhstan & Tajikistan)

Continued on page 19



When You Don't Give

BY JAIMIE LANCASTER

Have you ever thought about what happens when you don't give to missions?

In my short time working with IM global partnerships, I have heard truly remarkable things. Reports of church planters released from prison who immediately went out and baptized ten people. Stories of people beaten and threatened with death for sharing the gospel, yet who returned again and again until their persecutors joined a Bible study. Accounts of Cuban pastors faithfully proclaiming the gospel in dire economic conditions. In Central Asia and Pakistan, evangelists and pastors work in extremely volatile conditions to share the good news. Ivory Coast experienced a flurry of baptisms recently, while Panama and Brazil are training tomorrow's leaders today.

So, what happens when you don't give? The typical answer is “*nothing* happens.”

I won't be presumptuous. You see, the gospel of Christ *will* continue. From Satan's fall until today, all attempts to stop the good news from being proclaimed have failed. Jesus said even the gates of Hell wouldn't stop the advance of the Church. When you don't give, it doesn't stop the

gospel; it just makes a difficult task that much harder. People continue to preach and suffer for the gospel and, as Paul and Silas, consider themselves worthy to suffer. That won't change.

The change comes when we partner with these courageous ambassadors of the gospel. With our participation, more church planters go. More souls respond to Christ. More leaders are trained. More brothers and sisters are added to the Kingdom.

This August, when you give to the World Missions Offering, you can be assured your gift will provide the funds, training, materials, and resources needed to advance the Kingdom.

All of us working together make an impact. **ONE**

When you don't give, it doesn't stop the gospel; it just makes a difficult task that much harder.

About the Author: Jaimie Lancaster and his wife Tammy served in Uruguay for almost 22 years, most recently planting a church in the Carrasco neighborhood of Montevideo. Currently, they are serving on a stateside assignment.

Funding MISSIONS DREAMS

BY JOHN BRUMMITT

Have you ever wanted to go on a mission trip? Did you go, or did something stop you from fulfilling that call in your life? Did circumstances prevent you? Or was it the need to raise finances? Often, financial limitations keep both short-term and career missionaries from serving. What if you and your church could prepare to fund those who are called—even before they know they are called?

God calls all believers to help take the gospel to the ends of the earth. Of course, not everyone is called to be a career missionary on a foreign field, but everyone is a missionary in the local community. It takes believers everywhere being the hands and feet of Jesus to share the gospel effectively.

Should a church feel it necessary to make it financially possible for members of their congregation to participate in short-term missions? Research shows individuals interested in career missions often confirm their calling during a short-term missions experience. And whether or not they pursue a career, short-term trips make them more effective in local church ministry and in the communities where they live.

This is not to say a church should fully fund anyone and everyone without vetting them through a process. But what impact would it have on your local congregation if the church could reduce half of the costs for short-term missions? How many more

trips could be taken? How many more would discover the calling to career missions? How many young people might be led to full-time missions or ministry after experiencing ETEAM or CMP (College Missions Program)?

Smart investing is an incredible tool to help churches and organizations increase their resources to share the gospel, both at home and around the world. The Institutional Investing Program through the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement was established to facilitate ministry through assets management—allowing investments to help advance the gospel. Churches can invest funds and let the earnings from those investments help underwrite ETEAM participants, sponsor a group with The Hanna Project, or help a college student serve in a summer mission opportunity.

Leaving the country doesn't have to be the goal. If your church doesn't have individuals called to a foreign field, help a North American Ministries church plant. Send a group to a church plant to help them get established. They could be an encouragement to the church planters and show their community another church cared enough to travel and serve alongside them, letting people know about the hope found in Jesus Christ.

We all want to share the gospel with those who need it, but the reality is finances help make it happen. At the Board of Retirement, we want to make this possible on a regular basis. Through institutional investing, reduce or remove the financial barrier for those who feel the call to missions outreach. You will not only do your part to share the gospel, but you will discover it brings growth and depth in your own congregation. **ONE**

About the Author: John Brummitt became director of the Board of Retirement in January 2016. He graduated in 2011 with an MBA from Tennessee Tech University. A 2004 graduate of Welch College, he has been with the Board of Retirement since spring 2006. Learn more about institutional investing for your church or ministry: BoardofRetirement.com.



Annual Board Meeting Produces New Workers, New Projects

Antioch, TN—The IM, Inc. board met April 25, 2022, at the National Office Building in Antioch, Tennessee. Board members attending in person included Jeff Nichols (TN), Rodney Yerby (AL), Darren Walker (NC), Will Harmon (AR), Cameron Lane (AR), and Mark Price (OH). Present via Zoom were Janice Banks (TX), Casey Cariker (OK), and Rick Cason (GA). Directors Clint Morgan, Rob Conley, Neil Gilliland, Curt Holland, and Danny Gasperson also attended in person, while Directors Don Matchett and Kenneth Eagleton participated via Zoom.

The board enthusiastically approved three two-year interns. **Jacob and Hailee Voltz** will serve in Bulgaria and **Tyler Justice** will serve in France.

The board reluctantly accepted the resignation and notice of retirement of **Dr. Neil Gilliland**, effective December 31, 2022. Board members expressed their appreciation for Gilliland's many years of faithful service. General Director Clint Morgan recognized Neil's accomplishments, both in our denomination and in the greater Kingdom, saying, "Neil's dedication and service in Africa as a missionary, his time on staff in the home office, his work with student ministries, and his multifaceted speaking opportunities have endeared him to thousands of Free Will Baptists. IM has been greatly honored to have Neil on our team. We will always count him as a member of the IM family."

Neil reported **Hanna Mott**, who has served as ETEAM coordinator for ten years, tendered her resignation, also effective December 31, 2022. Morgan stated, "I have been impressed by Hanna's ability to make every ETEAM member feel special. We have been privileged to have her on our IM staff and pray God's richest blessings on her future."

CFO Rob Conley presented a clean audit to the board and described the financial condition of IM, Inc. as "very good," indicating a record income of \$8.7 million in 2021. The board approved the 2023 framework budget of \$8.85 million.

The board welcomed David Brown, director of the Free Will Baptist Foundation. Brown informed them the Foundation awarded IM, Inc. ministries \$346,500 in grants for

2022: Hope Alive Church (Japan)—\$150,000 for building project; Bangladesh—\$100,000; Village of Hope, an IM, Inc. partnership—\$10,500; and The Pop Willey Scholarship—\$50,000. The Pop Willey Scholarship Fund, benefiting FWB international students, will award grants to international students pursuing ministry-related studies in North American institutions. The board expressed their gratitude with hearty applause.

The board approved a one-year assignment for **Josh Provow** to Shumen, Bulgaria, concluding June 2023. This extended his time in Bulgaria after he concluded his six-month term in Svishtov in June.

The board adjourned due to illness and reconvened on May 19, 2022. All board members appeared via Zoom. IM directors also participated via Zoom.

Dr. Kenneth Eagleton and missionary Jaimie Lancaster delivered stirring reports of God working among IM Global Partners (Bangladesh, Brazil, Central Asia, Cuba, India, Ivory Coast, Pakistan, Panama, Russia). According to Dr. Eagleton, Ivory Coast continues to lead in the number of baptisms, contributing to a total of 229 baptisms (as of May 19) this year among partnership countries. Bangladesh records 37 Free Will Baptist churches and continues to train leaders as well as translate and publish portions of the Bible. Pakistan, numbering 50 works in three provinces, recently sent two families to work in areas of the country without any Christian presence.

The IM board approved two new Impact projects: Impact Bangladesh Conference Center and Impact Pakistan Ministry Van. Learn more at iminic.org/impact-projects **ONE**



David Brown presents Foundation awards to IM ministries at annual IM board meeting

Interns Approved

Antioch, TN—During its annual meeting in April 2022, the IM Board approved three young adults for two-year internships: Jacob and Hailee Voltz and Tyler Justice.



Jacob & Hailee Voltz



Tyler Justice

Jacob (TX) and Hailee (TN) received appointment for a two-year stint in Bulgaria. Jacob's heart for the world expanded during participation in both ETEAM and CMP (student ministries sponsored by IM). As a result, he enrolled at Welch College as a business major with a minor in intercultural studies. Hailee enrolled at Welch as a biology major with the intent to pursue a medical career. Her involvement in CMP led her to focus on international ministry. Hailee and Jacob met at Welch and married in 2018.

Tyler (NC), approved for a two-year internship in France, graduated from Welch College in 2021 with a degree in international business. He served in France on ETEAM 2017 and CMP 2021, which solidified his interest in helping the French hear the gospel message. His focus will center on strengthening live-streaming of

services; recording, editing, and posting YouTube content; and supporting Dennis Teague's basketball camp ministry.

Interested in hearing from these or other interns and career missionaries? Contact IM at 877-767-7736 to schedule a stateside missionary for your church, camp, or group. **ONE**

New IMpact Projects Designated

Antioch, TN—During its annual meeting the IM Board approved two new IMpact projects, one each for the newest partnership countries.

Bangladesh Word of Life churches, now affiliated with Free Will Baptists, plan to build a six-story conference center. *IMpact Bangladesh Conference Center* allots \$165,000 to assist these churches in acquiring land and constructing the ground floor of the building during their first phase of the project. The long-term goal is for the center to sleep 200 people, providing shelter for persecuted Christians. The center will also provide a base for Bible translation into local languages; a recording studio for newly translated Scripture; ongoing training of church planters; and a retreat/conference center for women, youth, and men's events.

Pakistani Free Will Baptists' ministry, headquartered in Lahore, extends across more than 1,200 miles. The funds for *IMpact Pakistan Ministry Van* (\$29,500) will allow ministry to the 50 churches and house churches scattered throughout three provinces, delivering Bibles and Christian literature, as well as transporting training and evangelistic teams. The van will also be used to deliver supplies to Afghan refugees receiving help from FWB churches.

Funds are only disbursed once the project goal is met. IMpact projects receive designated funds via the GIVE tab on iminc.org or mail. **ONE**

France—FWB churches in France gathered at the St. Nazaire church the Monday after Easter for a joint service. Steve Riggs spoke and baptized Fanch, a lady from the Chateaubriant congregation. Almost 100 people attended and enjoyed a meal and fellowship following the service.



Bulgaria—On April 25, 2022, Tim and Lydia Awtrey left Svishtov with three tons of food for war-torn Ukraine. Accompanied by a Ukrainian refugee, they spent three days distributing food and medical supplies to seven villages and a hospital in the region of Mykolaiv.

Kenya—On Easter Sunday, April 17, 2022, Samburu congregations throughout Sesia gathered for a joint celebration. The group celebrated the Lord's Supper and Eddy Simmons ordained Francis Lekarkaraule, the first Samburu pastor in Sesia.





February 24, 2022

BY CRISTINA PRICE

I will forever see February 24, 2022, as the turning point for our church. The day Russia invaded Ukraine had a galvanizing effect on our people, who sprang into action without hesitation. The Free Will Baptist church of St. Nazaire, known locally as “the little wooden church,” has been a gathering place for Ukrainian believers for the past few years. These men left their homes in Ukraine to work in the shipyards of St. Nazaire, building some of the largest cruise ships in the world. They came alone, leaving wives and children behind. Though they sent their families money regularly, they rarely saw them in person.

As Russian tanks rolled and bombs fell, our Ukrainian brothers expressed their anguish for their families and their homeland. We felt driven to do something, anything, for these families torn apart by war. Some wives fled Ukraine with their children to rejoin their husbands. Lilya and her two kids arrived in France to rejoin her husband Sergey following a harrowing drive across war-torn Ukraine and Western Europe. Though safe, they left everything behind except what fit into their small car. The city of Nantes provided their first week’s lodging, but they had nowhere to live afterward.

Within days, a woman in our church found a house for Sergey’s family. Church members donated furniture, appliances, pots and pans, beds, toys, clothing, cleaning supplies, and food. We cleaned the house top-to-bottom and set it up. As my husband Matt showed the family around the house, Sergey and Lilya repeated over and over, “This is so good! Thank you!”

Their four-year-old son found a backpack filled with toys. Running out of his room, he exclaimed he had been praying for a backpack just like it. It has been such a blessing

for us to help this family, and we expect more families to arrive in the coming weeks. The plight of the thousands of refugees fleeing Ukraine weighs heavy on our hearts, because we cannot help them all. We are thankful God has allowed us to help in a small way in our corner of the world.

A Look Back

Why is February 24 such a turning-point for our church? As I look back to where this church was four years ago, I can hardly believe it is the same one. Before our arrival in St. Nazaire, the church experienced the betrayal of a pastor. Many people left, resulting in low income and empty pews. The church was within months of closing its doors. Thankfully, Dennis and Carol Teague stepped into the fray and helped the wounds begin to heal. Matt and I followed a few months later, after our stateside assignment.

It wasn’t the ministry we envisioned starting in St. Nazaire (working with international students). We became ICU doctors reviving a church on life support. During that first year, we worked to rebuild fractured relationships, regain trust, and re-instill a vision for the church’s future. About



the time the church was ready to leave ICU for a regular room, COVID arrived, and the world came to a screeching halt. The French government closed all public buildings, including churches.

Forced to get creative, Matt took a crash course in audiovisual technology, and we began broadcasting services on the church's Facebook page. The first Sunday, about 40 people watched the broadcast. As the weeks of confinement dragged on, we noticed a surprising trend: the number of viewers each week rose steadily until we reached nearly a thousand viewers from 15 countries. Our little church, with its amateur broadcasts, was reaching the nations.

Just before the pandemic, Matt began working with a web developer to create a new website for the church. It was mostly finished when the world shut down. According to Google statistics, over the past two years, our website has averaged 3,000 hits each month. People actively searching for an evangelical Protestant church in St. Nazaire found our website.

Pandemic Growth

Unlike many churches whose budgets and attendance declined alarmingly during the pandemic, our financial giving increased dramatically. Weekly attendance tripled, from a low of 30 Sunday morning attendees to an average of 90 to 100 in early 2022.

We ran into a happy predicament: we needed more seating in the sanctuary! In June 2021, we replaced the old wooden pews with chairs. Seating capacity increased from 65 people to a comfortable 105. More big changes are on the horizon as we reconfigure our parking lot for handicapped spaces, upgrade electrical and heating systems, build and expand Sunday School classrooms, and spruce up the landscaping and exterior signage.

I wish I could tell you the secret to growing a church during a pandemic, but the truth is, we had nothing to do with it. God is bringing people to us in a way we have never seen before, sometimes more than we can keep up with. He is using Facebook Live, YouTube,

the church website, word of mouth, the testimony of friends and family, a casual glimpse of the church sign by drivers, and many other means. In humanist, secular

France, it is extremely rare for non-believers to walk into a church on their own, yet we have seen this happen time and time again.

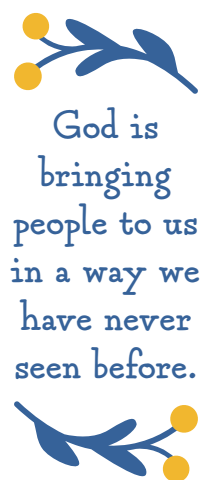
Valentin, the 16-year-old son of two avowed atheists, came to church with his mother after stumbling across an evangelical preacher from eastern France on YouTube. Valentin messaged the preacher, who put him in contact with us, since Valentin lives in our region. He showed up one Sunday morning full of enthusiasm and questions. Recently, he brought his girlfriend to church and confidently informed us they would be the "Matt and Cristina" of a church one day. We earnestly hope he is right.

Fortunately, only a small number of our church members caught COVID-19. Only Cindy ended up hospitalized. Her unsaved boyfriend, Jean, rattled by the possibility of losing Cindy, asked to speak with Matt about death and eternity. After just one conversation, Jean gave his heart to God. He told Matt, "I had never seen a church rally around someone like that. You prayed for Cindy to be healed, and she was—miraculously! I want to know a God who can do that!"

Aymeric showed up one Sunday in January 2021 with his two children and his fiancée, Valérie. While Valérie had been a believer her whole life, Aymeric was skeptical and had never really concerned himself with religion before meeting her. For four years, she prayed and witnessed. Gradually, his heart softened, and his curiosity grew. By the time we met him, he was convinced Jesus had the answers he sought. He just couldn't bring himself to make that crucial, final decision. We didn't give up on him, and August 29, 2021, Aymeric gave his heart to the Lord. We all blubbered like babies. Seeing someone become a new creature before your eyes just never gets old!

During 17 years of ministry in France, Matt and I have often remarked we are standing on the shoulders of giants—pioneer missionaries who, 60 years ago, prepared this hard soil for the harvest we are beginning to see today. What a privilege to see the results of their diligence! **ONE**

About the Author: Christina Price and her husband Matt live and minister in St. Nazaire, France, after spending 12 years in Nantes, France. Learn more: iminc.org.



PRAYING *for the* NATIONS

BY VANYA TRIFONOVA

Christians are called to pray for the country we call home. Pray in our quiet times. Pray in our church services. Pray in our storms and trials. Pray in times of war and times of peace.

Esther prayed and fasted before entering the king's chambers, so her people would be saved. Moses prayed for his people during the exodus from Egypt. Nehemiah asked God to forgive the iniquities of his people and help him restore the walls of Jerusalem.

Do we pray like that? Do we seek God's glory and the good of the people around us? Can we pray as Abraham and trust God until we hear His answer, His answer for His people, not just for us?

Will we pray as Nathan and speak about spiritual matters to the leaders of our nation?

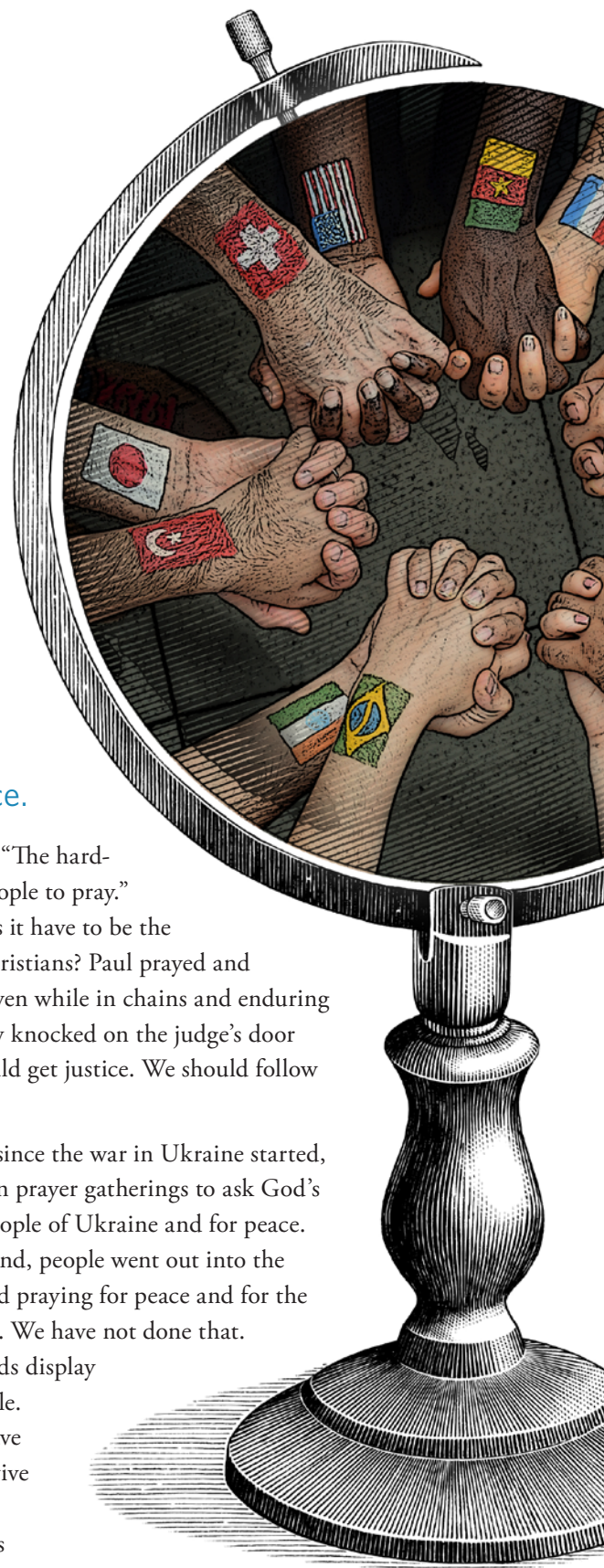
Are we ready to lift up the people of our country and wage war by praying for them? To ask for their salvation and pray for specific needs? Do we do that? Do we make this kind of prayer a priority?

Bulgarian Christians have an interdenominational prayer movement called "Brotherly Love." Annually, people gather to worship God and intercede for our people and society. Pastors lead congregations to pray for the youth, the rulers, current political problems, against corruption, for the judicial system, the health system, and much more. The meetings are livestreamed, so every Christian can join in prayer.

One pastor told me, "The hardest thing is to get people to pray." Why is this so? Does it have to be the hardest thing for Christians? Paul prayed and encouraged others even while in chains and enduring hardship. The widow knocked on the judge's door until he saw she would get justice. We should follow their examples.

During the months since the war in Ukraine started, we have taken part in prayer gatherings to ask God's protection for the people of Ukraine and for peace. In Ukraine and Poland, people went out into the squares, kneeling and praying for peace and for the salvation of Ukraine. We have not done that.

In Ukraine, billboards display prayers from the Bible. Bulgaria does not have those. Should we revive our prayer lives only during times of trials and death? As Christians, we pray for the church to be salt and light. We pray God would transform us so we can transform the world around us.





PRAY

Maybe we hear these things and are challenged or convicted, but how can we practice them?

Start with ourselves. Commit a portion of your daily quiet time to earnestly pray for your nation and rulers. Join prayer groups and diligently lift up prayer requests. Organize prayer gatherings for the churches in your city, town, or community and pray together for specific needs.

Pray for our people. Let us remind ourselves the place God called us to live and serve Him is also the place we are called to pray. Ask for blessings for our nation, cry for the salvation of the souls of our neighbors, and witness for the faith, so we might see fruit from our prayers for our people.

God lifts up and pulls down nations. He reigns over history. He is the Almighty. And He answers prayer! **ONE**

About the Author: Vanya Trifonova and her Husband Trif have served as church planters with IM, inc. since 2013 in Varna, Bulgaria, planting New Life Church. Former atheists, the couple came to the faith after democratic changes in the country in 1989. Learn more about IM's work in Bulgaria: iminc.org/our-impact

In addition to praying for our nation, we should pray for the nations.

The IM Bulgaria team is seeking prayer warriors who will commit to an hour-long time slot each week to pray specifically for church-planting efforts in Bulgaria. Watch for more information in coming months to learn how you can partner with us in this exciting way.

Continued from page 11

assist the refugees in partnership with The Hanna Project (THP).

THP, along with our works in Europe, have helped the Ukrainian refugees in countries like **France, Bulgaria, and Spain.**

Partnering with THP, we have helped partners in **India and Pakistan** drill wells equipped with hand pumps to provide communities with safe drinking water.

HOW CAN YOU HELP?

The Lord is doing exciting things around the world to bring glory and honor to Himself. However, He wants each of us involved in making His name known. You can be a part of these exciting projects.

Pray. Our partners in difficult places depend upon our prayers. Your prayers encourage them and truly make a difference.

Give. Sponsoring church-planting projects, leadership training programs, and mercy ministries requires ongoing financial support. You can give specifically to one of these partnerships, give to the World Missions Offering (WMO), or donate to our partner The Hanna Project.

Go. Perhaps you can teach in leadership training programs. Or maybe you can participate in the many short-term trips offered by The Hanna Project. Find out how you can get involved: iminc.org/go **ONE**

About the Author: Dr. Kenneth Eagleton, long-term missionary serving in Brazil and Ivory Coast, is director of field partnerships for IM, Inc. Learn more: IMInc.org.



Reaching *the* World *Where*?

BY KATHY BROWN

Genesis 12:1 says, “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee.”

This verse is true for most NAM church planters, as they leave home and family and move to the place God has called them to plant a church. North American Ministries has chosen “Reaching the World at Home” for our 2022 theme. Many nationalities are moving to North America and its territories. God is bringing the nations to us. How are church planters reaching out to those in their community?

Chris Davenport, Fredericksburg, Virginia, is teaching his people to be disciples wherever they are.

Joel Franks, Athens, Alabama, opens his home and encourages church families to do the same. They recently hosted a fish fry at their house with 70 guests. Some were new faces, and they hope to build relationships and eventually lead these individuals to Christ.

Daryl Grimes, Erie, Pennsylvania, seeks to make everyone feel welcome, no matter their ethnicity. The church has future plans to start a Hispanic ministry and develop a college ministry for international students.

Dan Houghton, Burlington, Vermont, is working with the city to meet needs of children in foster care. The new church has become a point of contact for donations.

Travis McKenzie, Ashland, Ohio, is a city police chaplain and also serves on the board of local ministries. These connections have given him inroads with community leaders, and his congregation gets involved. They set up a booth at local soccer games to distribute water and Gatorade, and the church also has sponsored a team.

Terry Miller, Fort Collins, Colorado, began giving away things on Craigslist during the pandemic. This became a

great way to meet people in need and witness to them.

David Osborne, Wytheville, Virginia, reaches others via website and social media. They have small groups for Bible study and focus on the youth on Sunday nights.

Steve Schmidt, Albuquerque, New Mexico, hosts discipleship groups around Pete Scazzero’s Emotionally Healthy Spirituality. This has proven to be a great way to help people learn a Christian approach to mental health and spiritual growth.

Frank Webster, Summerfield, Florida, has a unique opportunity to witness to those transitioning into retirement. He has hosted a game night, had a street party outside their home, and he and his wife attend many of the hobby groups available to their retirement community. The couple recently started a beginners level Bible study. Their efforts have paid off in numerous ways: one lady is no longer Catholic; another purchased her first Bible at age 64; still another who struggles with anxiety and rarely leaves her home attends the Bible study.

Kris Willis, Anchorage, Alaska, invites people into his home for food and Bible study. They also go target shooting with new friends and work in their backyard with others.

These are only a few examples of what church planters are doing to reach others wherever they are. We encourage you to reach the world at **YOUR** home, wherever your home may be. **ONE**

About the Author: Kathy Brown is the accounting administrator for the Church Extension Loan Fund. She has worked at North American Ministries 30-plus years. Learn more: fwnam.com.

Of Dresses and Evangelism

BY PAUL V. HARRISON

“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37).

The claims of Christ strike the human will head-on, impacting every nook and cranny. Those whose faith does not change their lives may not properly be called Christian.

Mary Bosanquet learned this early. Born to affluence in Essex, England, in 1739, she soaked up the catechism her father taught her on Sunday evenings. “When I was five years old,” she wrote in her diary, “I began to have much concern about my eternal welfare, and frequently inquired of those about me, whether such and such things were sins.”

A Methodist maid added fuel to this fire, witnessing to Mary’s sister. She, in turn, shared the gospel with Mary, now six. Mary later recalled, “the words she spake...sunk so deeply into my heart that they were never afterward erased.” Yet, the little girl struggled with sin. One day she overheard her mother say, “That girl is the most perverse creature that ever lived.”

During her teen years, Mary recognized the ways of the world conflicted with the way of Christ. God convicted her specifically of extravagant dress, customary for women of her status.

Through the centuries, Christians have given scrutiny to what they should wear. This is no surprise, for Paul instructed women to dress modestly and to avoid fancy hairdos, gold, pearls, and expensive clothing (1 Timothy 2:9).

In the third century, Tertullian humorously—at least to us—told men not to wear wigs, wondering who would receive the blessing if someone laid hands on them in prayer. He instructed women: “Clothe yourselves with the silk of uprightness, the fine linen of holiness, the purple of modesty. Thus painted, you will have God as your Lover!” Martin Luther warned against a “passion for fashion,” and John Calvin told men and women not to dress like peacocks.

Mary’s move to “plainness of dress” fueled already existing tension with her family. When she was 21, her parents worried she might influence her brothers. Her father told her: “There is a particular promise which I require of you, that is, that you will never, on any occasion, either now, or hereafter, attempt to make your brothers what you call a Christian.”

She loved her father but answered: “I think, Sir, I dare not consent to that.”

He responded: “Then you force me to put you out of my house.”

Considering herself obligated to witness, she refused to comply with her father’s wishes.

The young lady secured a two-room, unfurnished apartment. Thus began a long life of sacrificial dedicated service to Christ. She was known to say, “Gold is no more to me than dust.” Eventually she founded an orphanage and at 42 married the great Methodist minister, John Fletcher. Throughout her life, Mary gave Christ first place. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Paul V. Harrison has pastored Madison FWB Church in Madison, Alabama since 2015. Previously, he pastored Cross Timbers FWB church in Nashville, Tennessee, for 22 years. He was an adjunct professor at Welch College for 17 years, teaching church history and Greek. Paul is the creator of Classic Sermon Index, a subscription-based online index of over 66,000 sermons, with clients including Harvard, Baylor, and Vanderbilt, among others: classicsermonindex.com.



Hosting Foreign Exchange Students

ONE FAMILY'S EXPERIENCE

BY BRAD RANSOM



*Anthony at
Cambridge
University
graduation
(2022)*

Over a dozen-year span, my wife and I (along with our three school-aged sons) hosted four foreign exchange students from various countries. Three of these young men lived with our family for ten months each. One was a temporary placement who lived with us after his first placement didn't work out. He stayed with us for a few months before being placed in a permanent home.

Our exchange journey began in 1995 when we received a call from our local high school librarian who also served as a placement coordinator for a foreign exchange student organization. Six boys had been brought to our small town (Sulphur, Oklahoma) and promised homes for the entire school year. After these young men arrived, six of the original promises for placement didn't work out.

She told us that if homes weren't found for the six boys within a few days, they would have to return to their home countries in disappointment. A pastor at the time, I put out a plea to our congregation to become host families. After talking things over with my wife, we decided to host one of the students, who came from Sweden.

Eventually, all six students ended up with families from our church who brought their new "sons" to Sunday School, church, and youth group activities. This created a unique and exciting dynamic in our teen ministry. Every family (with one exception) had a positive experience hosting, and hosting exchange students soon became a tool used by the church to minister to international students

who came to America to study, improve English skills, or simply experience a new culture.

Before our family agreed to host, we made it clear I was a pastor, and we were deeply involved in a local, evangelical, Christian church. Our student, his family (and all the other students hosted by our church families) agreed they would attend church and count it as part of their cultural experience. Although we never forced them to convert or adopt our "religion," most students gladly and regularly attended church and youth group activities. Many of the families that hosted students that first year remained in contact long after the students returned to their home countries. This was true for us, and it led us to host again and again.

Several years later, the same representative reached out to us again and asked if we would be interested in hosting another student. After considering it as a family and looking over several poorly copied biography sheets (the students looked like black squares with no features) we decided on a German student named Anthony.

Anthony was born in Germany, but his family was from Sri Lanka. When Anthony's mother was pregnant with him, their family fled their country due to civil unrest and moved to Germany, where they knew no one and did not speak the language. Anthony was raised in German schools and spoke both German and Tamil (Sri Lanka's language) fluently. While in school in Germany he also



Anthony in high school (2003)



Our “four” boys a couple of years ago at Thanksgiving

learned English and French. He had a loving, committed family that wanted him to experience American life with a good family.

Honestly, we could not have chosen anyone who fit our family any better. Anthony became like a fourth son. After finishing his senior year in high school with us, he returned to Germany for the summer but then returned to Oklahoma to attend his first year of college at Murray State College in Tishomingo, only 35 miles from our home. After experiencing dorm life for a couple of weeks (with a not-so-great roommate), Anthony asked if he could live with us and commute to school, so he lived with us for a second school year.

We were delighted to have Anthony back in the family. After his first year of college, he returned to Germany before moving to London, England, to attend university, and he remains in London today. Eventually, he earned several degrees including a bachelor's in business studies from City University of London, an MBA from University of Warwick, and a master's degree in real estate finance from Cambridge.

Over the subsequent three decades, we have enjoyed the privilege of being together for several occasions including Thanksgiving and other holidays. My wife and I traveled to London for Anthony's wedding. Our relationship has continued throughout these years, and the impact on each

other's lives has been profound. I believe our church and family had a positive and lasting influence on Anthony's life—spiritual and otherwise. We remain close to this day.

Over the years we also hosted students from South Korea and Norway. Again, these students proved a blessing to our family and had a mutual impact on our personal and spiritual lives. Without exception, each of these students left our homes different than when they came.

Student exchange programs are still a great way families can reach the world at home. Hosting a foreign exchange student can impact a life for eternity. Most hosting agencies require students to participate in family activities, even going to church. While they do not promote “pushing religion” on a student, you can be sure God's Word never returns void.

If you are interested in hosting a foreign exchange student, contact your local high school to see if they participate in exchange programs and volunteer your family to host. You will be blessed! Our family built lifelong relationships, and more than two decades later, we still remain in touch with these young men we now consider part of our family, especially Anthony. **ONE**

About the Author: Dr. Brad Ransom is director of church planting and chief training officer for North American Ministries. Contact Brad: brad@nafwb.org.

Messengers Who Match Their Message

BY BARRY RAPER

1 THESSALONIANS 2:1-12

Over the past two years of the COVID-19 pandemic, people from every walk of life identified *inconsistency* as one of the most frustrating things they experienced. Leaders at every level—local, state, national, even international—touted strict health policies they failed to follow personally. Their public message was one thing while private behavior communicated the opposite. The overwhelmingly negative response makes it clear: no one likes inconsistency between a message and the messenger.

This holds true in all walks of life. Financial advisors should have their financial houses in order. Want to coach diet and fitness? Get in shape and live a healthy lifestyle. And, of course, when it comes to the faith, messengers of the gospel should match their life-changing message.

Six times in 12 short verses, Paul reminded the Thessalonian Christians of how he and his companions lived out their faith before them. The Thessalonians accepted the gospel message, but they also had a chance to get to know the messengers. They heard and received the message of the gospel *and* the messengers who delivered the message with boldness, clarity, love, and holiness.

Share the Word of God Boldly (verse 2).

When Paul penned this letter, times were tough for the Christians at Thessalonica. Not only had they been beaten and imprisoned, they also had been publicly shamed. Some versions translate Paul's words "treated outrageously." If this happened to us, we might become more hesitant to share the gospel. Yet, according to Paul, in the face of this abuse, the Thessalonians declared the gospel with boldness and courage.

It is important to note Paul identified the source of their boldness as God. It was not simply human courage or temerity. Many people in the world exhibit courage about all types of things, but the Thessalonians' boldness came from the Holy Spirit. This type of boldness and courage doesn't seem as crucial when everyone is fine with your

message, but when the gospel confronts deeply held beliefs or sinful lifestyles widely accepted by culture, opposition will come. In these moments, boldness and courage are needed.

One note of caution: *boldly* and *courageously* doesn't mean louder, "shouting down" opposing voices or pushing back hard. It means we have the moral fiber to stand and share what the Word of God says without apology, while loving those who reject or abuse us.

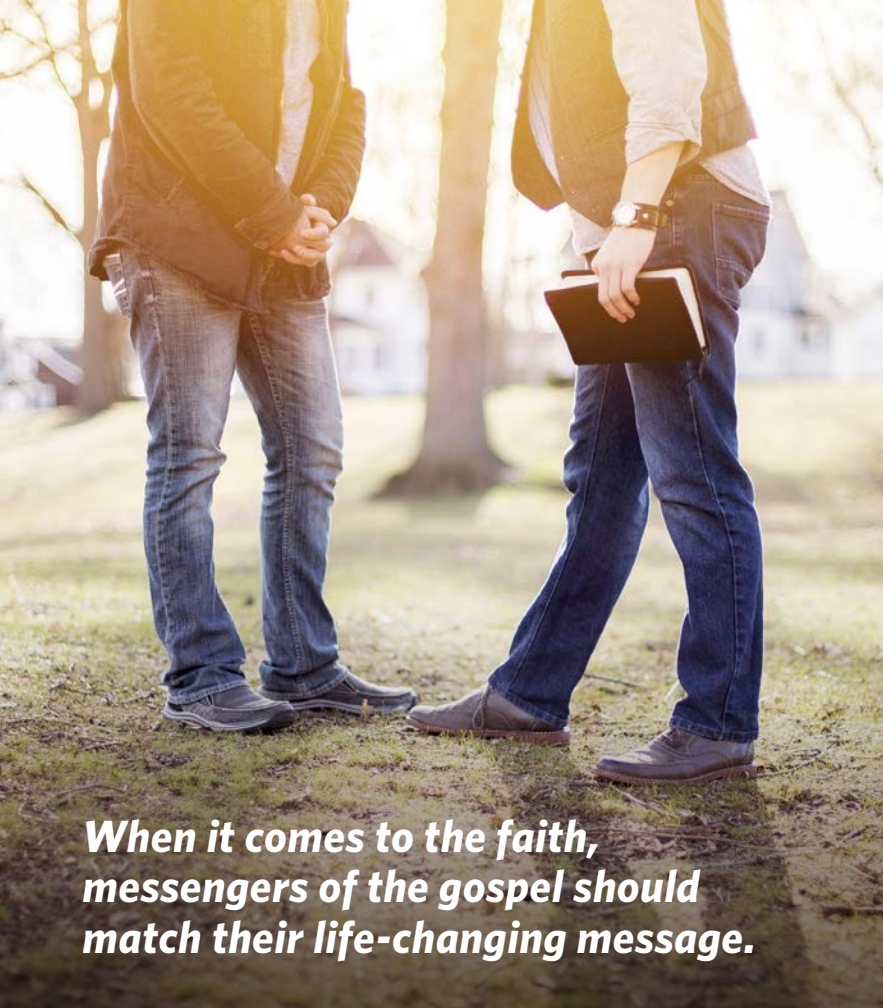
Share the Word of God Responsibly (verses 3-6).

Which audience do you hope to please? That's the real question. Either we please people, or we make it our ambition to please God. In verse 4, Paul said the Thessalonians had been approved by God to be trusted with the gospel. Though he didn't use the word, Paul clearly was stressing stewardship. The gospel comes to us from God, and we must use it—share it—responsibly.

As responsible stewards of the gospel, our motives are pure, and we make no attempt to deceive people into decisions. We don't use flattery. We don't speak from greed or use a "bait and switch" tactic. Perhaps you have attended a church service where the preacher's invitation was nothing short of manipulation, with statements such as, "If you are under conviction, you have 15 seconds to come to the altar" followed by a melodramatic countdown.

When a preacher (or any Christians, for that matter) uses psychological or emotional tricks to coerce or manipulate people into decisions about Christ, many of those decisions will not last, or will leave the "convert" disillusioned about the faith. Paul says, instead, our aim is to speak in a way pleasing to God, not men.

We have been trusted with the gospel. We dare not alter it. It doesn't originate with us, and our task is to cling to it tenaciously, share it openly, and live it faithfully. Our lives should be marked by an awareness we are stewards of all of life—managers of the time, talents, and treasure



**When it comes to the faith,
messengers of the gospel should
match their life-changing message.**

God has given us—and responsible for the gospel entrusted to us.

Share the Word of God Lovingly (Verses 7-12).

Paul used family relationships to describe his previous time with the Thessalonians. First, Paul and his companions acted as *nursing mothers* to the Thessalonians who were *babies* or *infants* in the faith (verses 7-8). As *brothers* in the faith (verses 9-10), Paul and company lived blameless lives consistent with the gospel they shared. Finally, like *fathers* (verses 11-12), they “exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father doth his children that ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory.”

They understood a careful balance: when sharing the gospel, we must speak the truth in love. If we do not speak God’s truth, we are not really loving others, even when it would be easier to avoid difficult topics. Truth is often hard to hear, but God’s truth is what we all need. The challenge is to make sure we speak the truth in a spirit of love—like family members who genuinely care enough to intervene, correct, and discipline through all stages of life. Our listeners may hotly disagree with us, they may ridicule

us and remain unchanged, but they will know we cared enough to tell them the truth.

Share the Word of God Cleanly (verse 10).

Both the Thessalonians and God, Paul wrote, were “on the witness stand” regarding the way he lived before these Christians. He and his companions demonstrated holiness before them and before God, living in a way no one could claim their lives were inconsistent with their message. Their conduct was blameless. In a word, they lived with *integrity*.

Scripture tells us Paul often funded missionary journeys through his vocation of tent-making. We don’t know for certain that’s what he did in Thessalonica, but he does say they worked night and day to avoid being a financial burden to the young church. Assuming he was making tents, imagine his business dealings were not above board, that people witnessed him mistreat customers. Such behavior would change how the message of the gospel was received. But, by the grace of God, Paul was able to say they saw “how holy and justly and unblameably we behaved among you.”

- **Share the Word of God boldly.**
- **Share the Word of God responsibly.**
- **Share the Word of God lovingly.**
- **Share the Word of God cleanly.**

Perhaps you feel insufficient or incapable of doing this. Maybe you think, “I am not that bold” or “My life isn’t as clean as it should be.” Remember, Paul openly confessed his boldness came from “our God.” The only way any believer can share the gospel effectively is through the power and strength of God.

Do you need to share the gospel with someone today? Is a particular individual on your mind? That person needs *you*—not someone else—to share God’s saving message. Faithfully deliver the Word of eternal life and let your life reflect the power of your words. Be a messenger who matches the message. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Dr. Barry Raper is associate dean of Welch Divinity School and pastor of Bethel FWB Church near Ashland City, Tennessee.

Co-Vocational Pastoring for Missional Vibrancy and Financial Viability

A GUEST COLUMN
BY DR. JAY MOON

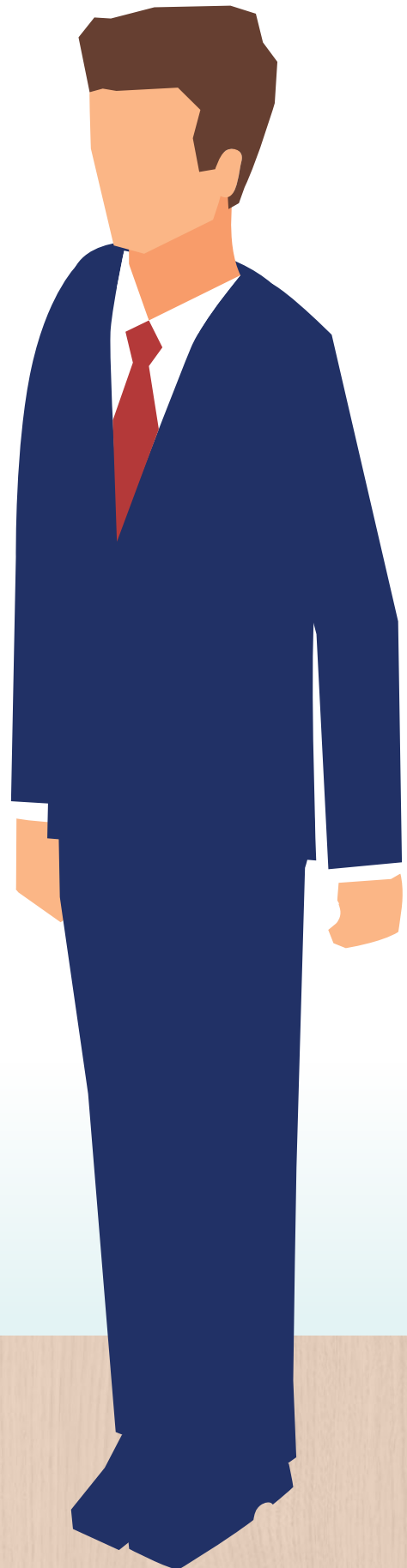
How does a pastor or church planter fulfill his God-given calling when tithes and offerings are simply not sufficient to keep the church doors open? Consider *co-vocational* pastoring. Previously, the term *bi-vocational* was used to describe a pastor who worked a secular job outside the church. The term implied this second job was not by preference but a temporary solution until the church could afford a full-time salary. As soon as possible, the pastor left the secular job to enter “full-time” ministry for the church.

CO-VO versus BI-VO

The term co-vocational challenges several assumptions:

- 1. Secular?** Rather than regarding work outside the church as “secular,” remember your work has sacred value. Martin Luther raised the question, “How does God answer the prayer to ‘Give us this day our daily bread?’” He observed God answers this prayer through the milkmaid who milked the cow and the farmer who grew the wheat and the baker who baked the bread and the merchant who sold it. In short, God distributes His good gifts to the earth through people doing daily jobs in the marketplace. Your work becomes a sacred calling as you provide value to others, no matter the role.
- 2. Second Best?** Some consider a secular job less than ideal or even a necessary evil. In God’s overall design, what if your work is not second best but His way to engage you in the lives of the unchurched? Could these “marketplace” interactions be God’s way to help you fulfill the Great Commandment to love your neighbor as yourself and produce redemptive relationships where you carry out the Great Commission?
- 3. Short-term?** Due to missional and financial benefits, co-vocational pastors view their roles as long-term, not simply short-term. Co-vocational pastors choose to continue working outside the church, even when the church can afford a full salary. In addition, co-vocational pastoring allows the church to be more generous to those around them.

If the church budget is consumed with personnel expenses, little is left to minister to the community. It is also no secret pastors often experience financial stress that





contributes to burnout. A co-vocation can ease these tensions, particularly if the job provides benefits like health care, vacation, sick leave, etc. These financial benefits provide financial capability to continue your ministry long term.

My Experience

I am a co-vocational missionary. I serve as both a professor and as a teaching pastor for a local church plant. In addition, I have several small businesses I run based upon my experience in engineering and hospitality. I have noticed clients view me differently when I start the conversation as an engineer or AirBNB host and not as a pastor or seminary professor.

As a professor and pastor, “marketplace” ministry takes me beyond the “church bubble” each week. I am convinced I am a better professor and pastor due to my engagement in the public arena.

Consider the following questions with your pastoral staff or church-planting team regarding co-vocational pastoring:

1. What are the missional and financial benefits that could result from co-vocational pastoring? What will it take for the church to move beyond regarding co-vocational pastoring as simply secular, second-best, and short term?
2. What gifts, talents, and abilities do the pastor/church planter have that can be leveraged into work outside the church? This includes starting a business or working for someone else. Of course, the business owner has more flexibility than those who work for others. Service-related roles are ideally suited to co-vocational pastoring.
3. Can the pastor/church planter do the job with excellence? Can he demonstrate a faith commitment through honesty, compassion, generosity, and encouragement? (These interpersonal traits stand out in many business settings, and people take notice.)
4. Can the co-vocational pastor work alongside a leadership team? A team can share the load of preaching, visiting, counseling, etc., so the co-vocational pastor does not get burned out by multiple vocations. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Jay Moon served 13 years as a missionary with SIM, largely in Ghana, West Africa, among the Builsa people focusing on church planting and water development, along with his wife and four children. He is professor of evangelism and church planting and director of the Office of Faith, Work, and Economics at Asbury Theological Seminary. He has authored seven books and is a frequent speaker on church planting, evangelism, and marketplace mission. Jay holds a professional engineer’s license and his MBA focused on social entrepreneurship. He is president of the Great Commission Research Network. His hobbies include tree houses, axe throwing, and small business incubation.

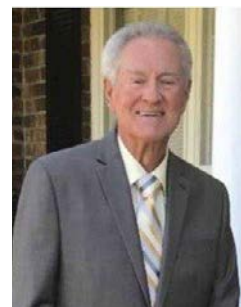
Retired Chaplain Larry Langford With the Lord

Retired Free Will Baptist chaplain Larry Langford went to be with his Lord Monday, March 7, at age 82. Langford faithfully served four Free Will Baptist churches and as a Free Will Baptist army chaplain for 17 years, including a combat tour during Desert Storm. Brother Larry loved serving the church and his country. Along with his ministry in our churches, he served four years in the U.S. Air Force as an enlisted airman and 20 years as an interim pastor after retirement from the chaplaincy.

Chaplain Langford's first assignment was to Fort Campbell, Kentucky, where he participated in training with his soldiers and graduated from the 101st Air Assault School. His service also included assignments as the hospital chaplain at Fort Benning, Georgia, and as a training brigade chaplain, where he preached to hundreds of trainees

every week. He also served two overseas assignments in Turkey and Germany. He finished his military service as a lieutenant colonel and retired after finishing an assignment to Fort Benjamin Harrison, Indiana.

Chaplain Larry's love for life, laughter, and his wife Gelaine impacted their friends and family, their community, our denomination, and our country for Christ. His ministry spanned decades, and his impact is immeasurable. A graveside service was held March 12, 2022, at Parkhill Cemetery in Columbus, Georgia, with Hospice Chaplain Allison Owen and Chaplain (COL-R) Kerry Steedley officiating. **ONE**



Larry Langford

Planting Churches From East to West

Spring is a favorite season for many. Cold, dark days reluctantly give way to warmer temperatures, longer days, and new life budding everywhere. Spring 2022 also marked a new season of life for two North American Ministries churches, one in the East, the other in the West.

Burlington, Vermont

Connect FWB Church in Burlington, Vermont, launched March 27, 2022, with 76 people at the grand opening service. Lead planter Dan Houghton, his wife Kami, and associates Brooks and Jennifer Phillips had dreamed of this day for almost three years. Excitement ran high as people gathered. "This day was three years in the making" Dan reflected. "Three years ago, Kami and I surrendered to church planting. We didn't know we

would return to our home state of Vermont, but our next step was going somewhere to plant a church; it turned out to be in Vermont."



Houghton cast a big vision to those attending the first service. He told them he is praying they will be part of a church planting movement, with ten new churches planted in Vermont in ten years. He is praying three men at the launch service eventually will become church planters. "Only God could do that," he told listeners.

The NAM team is excited to see what God does through Connect Church. To learn more about the Houghton or Phillips families or Connect Church, visit fwbname.com/houghton.

San Diego, California

A week later, April 3, 2022, City Lights FWB Church near San Diego, California, held a grand opening service. Amos and Melissa Dillard lead this plant, along with a team recruited from Grace City Church in Irvine, California (which Dillard helped start) and Peace Church in



Wilson, North Carolina. Two families from Grace City committed to help with the church launch, driving two hours from Irvine each time the group met.

Fifteen people from Peace Church moved to Chula Vista to help start the church and serve in important leadership roles. This type of commitment and devotion helped the new church experience a strong first service,

with 133 in attendance. The most exciting part of the grand opening was three people accepted Christ as Savior and began follow up the next week.

Emotions ran high during the opening service as Amos recognized all who helped City Lights begin its ministry. To learn more about the Dillard family or City Lights Church visit fwbnam.com/dillard.

Where to next?

For 84 years North American Ministries has planted Free Will Baptist churches across North America. Our rich history and the ability to continue ministry are possible only by the goodness of God and the faithfulness of Free Will Baptist individuals and churches.

To continue fulfilling the Great Commission, church planting must be a priority like never before. Church leaders and church growth experts have warned for years that four of five churches in the United States are either plateaued or declining. According to Win Arn, between

80-85% of the churches in America are on the downside of the growth cycle, and of the 15% growing, 14% are growing from transfers rather than conversions.

- In the average year, half of all existing churches will not add one new member through conversion growth. —*Ron Sylvia*
- One American denomination recently found 80 percent of its converts came to Christ in churches less than two years old. —*Ralph Moore*
- On a per capita basis, new churches win more people to Christ than established churches. —*Ed Stetzer*
- Churches over 15 years of age win an average of only three people to Christ per year for every 100 church members. Churches three years to 15 years old win an average of five people to Christ per year for every 100 church members, but churches under three years of age win an average of ten people to Christ per year for every 100 church members. —*Brian McNichol*
- The single most effective evangelistic methodology under Heaven is planting new churches.” —*Peter Wagner*

Some may ask, “Why plant new churches when older ones are plateaued and declining?” The answer to this complex question begins with the statistics above. Older churches plateau and decline for many different reasons. For some, it’s because their focus shifts inward. Many older churches are unwilling to change. Some congregations are older, tired, and unable to do the work required to turn a declining church around. Many are without pastors to lead them, and others have lost vision, or are just “holding on.”

Often, it is more difficult and expensive to revitalize a church than to plant new ones. Although NAM is committed to helping revitalize established churches, we must never lose sight of the truth that the most effective strategy is still planting new churches.

NAM has set a goal to have 55 church planter families by 2025. We currently have 48. If you are interested in church planting, the need is great, and we would love to connect with you. Visit www.fwbnam.com/path to learn more. **ONE**



IN THE CROSSHAIRS

BY PAUL HARRISON

As followers of Christ, we are both witnesses to and combatants in a great war. A massive, dark army is surging across the world, leaving devastation in its wake. Ruthless and malignant, the battle presses forward, seeking to bend all to the evil will of its master. Every follower of Jesus is in the crosshairs, and many are falling. Individual believers, churches—even entire denominations—are succumbing to this mighty force.

In earlier days, the soldiers in this army sought to advance through subterfuge and subtlety. One needed a discerning eye to ascertain their point of attack. That day is past. Today, they boldly press the fight, demanding nothing short of complete submission. They would have us embrace their ideology, forsake our commitment to God's Word, and undermine the moral code the Almighty wrote with His own finger. Be not deceived! They would have us deny the very Lord whose blood bought us.

Some, squeamish of battles and blood, wish an exemption from warfare and seek fields of service where none slay nor are slain. No such fields remain. The battle pursues us. It will find us and reveal our fight or lack thereof. Thomas Hardy wrote of "the vast middle space of Laodicean neutrality." Perhaps you recall Laodicea, the church "neither cold nor hot," but *tepid* as the Latin Vulgate described it. They sought a neutral, non-extreme, middle position. How tragic that Hardy's experience led him to employ the adjective "vast" to describe this neutral space. But know this: to be neutral is to capitulate to the enemy. Our Master and Commander calls us to be hot in His service. Otherwise, to use John's words, He will spew us from His mouth in disgust.

In that context, we are not observers but soldiers, men and women who take up swords and shields in this great conflict. We must be clear, however, as to *how* we fight. Paul explained the weapons of our warfare are not flesh, not physical, but spiritual. Thought, argument, and spirit translated into life—these are the weapons we employ. With godly minds and holy lives, we march into battle. The prophet Micah masterfully summarized our orders: "He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?" (6:8)

In our warfare we must act justly. Living right, performing justice, maintaining honesty and integrity—these are powerful weapons in the hands of God. With these, He defeats and shames the enemy. Evil ones, even against their will, see our good works and glorify our Father in Heaven. How difficult it is to live out our faith in righteousness, for none other than self and Satan and society oppose us.

In *Les Misérables*, perhaps the greatest of all novels, lead character Jean Valjean steals a loaf of bread to feed his starving family and, as a result, lands in prison. After unreasonable years in jail, he escapes and encounters a

holy priest who leads him to faith. He changes his name and carves out a new life for himself, one surrounded with affluence and prestige as a mayor. He exemplifies integrity and stands for goodness. Yet, his past pursues him. He learns one day an old convict friend of his has been mistaken for him.

Ah, here's the test. To do nothing would save *himself* but leave his friend to face injustice. To identify himself would cost everything. On the battlefield of life, integrity often comes at a high price, even the price of life itself. Rest assured, the benefits of a clear conscience far exceed the expenditure, no matter the cost. Conversely, sin and compromise—no matter the bargain they promise—ultimately will prove a most unwise purchase. Knowing this, Jean Valjean turned himself in. In our fight, we must act justly.

Micah reminds us **we are required to love mercy**. Followers of Jesus must emulate His example. Our Lord saw the destitute and loved them. He encountered the fallen and reached out His blessed helping hand. He embraced the guilty and offered forgiveness. God loves acts of mercy and expects them from His children. All will know we are Christians by our love.

In our battle, we employ God's weapons, however strange they seem.

In a discussion of warfare, the idea of employing mercy as an armament seems most strange. But let me tell you, kindness is a powerful weapon. It pierces hearts like no other. Remember, there's power in the Cross, and the Cross dripped with mercy.

At my father's funeral three years ago, I told listeners Dad grew up in poverty. He and his ten siblings often went to bed hungry. They did without and that included adequate clothing. For years, Dad wore threadbare shirts and pants. In his early teen years, when the soles of his shoes would break

loose from the uppers, he would trim a section from an old bicycle inner tube, stretch it around the shoe, and tie the sole and upper together again. Once when walking home, his makeshift repair snapped, causing the sole to flap loosely and noisily on the sidewalk with every step.

Dad's Sunday School teacher was Mr. McFall, an employee at the nearby glass plant. He was sitting on his front

porch that day when dad's shoes broke and started making a racket. "Here, Harrold," he said. "What's all that noise?" After my father explained, McFall said, "You go down to the store on Main Street, tell them to give you a pair of shoes, and put it on my bill."

Dad did as he was told and soon sported new footwear. Every quiet step in those shoes announced loudly to my father the overwhelming power of kindness.

Not long after that day, Mr. McFall died. From one perspective, it was just another death in that small Oklahoma town. To my dad, it was a day of great sorrow. He recalled: "I thought God had died."

Mercy possesses great power.

In our battle, we employ God's weapons, however strange they seem. We act justly, we show mercy, and we **walk humbly with our God**. It's interesting Micah didn't say we walk humbly before others. Surely, we do that, but that's not what the prophet said. We walk humbly with our God. Perhaps it's so worded because the appropriateness of humility shows up most clearly when we are compared with God. He is righteous. We are sinful. He is almighty. We are weak. He is the Creator. We are the created.

Again, surprisingly, humility carries great force. We foolishly swell up and want to display diplomas and resumes, thinking if others only know who we are and what we have accomplished, they will really be impressed. Sharing the lowly truth about ourselves, that we are merely redeemed sinners, merely recipients of grace, merely people who need forgiveness—such humble acknowledgements will impact them much more. Jesus said, "Come to me," and they came because He was meek and lowly.

Harvard graduate Samuel Sewall began keeping a diary in 1673. Over the years, it described his publishing business, his election as judge, and his rise to chief justice of the Massachusetts Supreme Court. He regularly dined with governors and other influential people. Unfortunately, in our day, he is most known for being one of the judges during the Salem Witch Trials.

Though apparently uneasy about the trials, nonetheless Sewall was involved in the court's decisions. In the aftermath of those horrible days, his Christian conscience

chastened him. He became convinced he had been an instrument of gross injustice. Perhaps all the judges felt such remorse, but for Sewall, remorse was not enough.

What does a dignitary do when convinced of a serious misstep? We all know they usually vacillate, equivocate, blame others—anything but own up to wrongdoing. How many times does pride sit on the throne of our hearts and dictate the terms of our response! This would not do for Sewall. On January 14, 1697, at church he handed a note to his pastor and asked him to read it to the congregation. With Judge Sewall standing, the preacher read the following: “Samuel Sewall, sensible of the reiterated strokes of God upon himself and family; and being sensible, that as to the Guilt contracted...at Salem...Desires to take the Blame and Shame of it, Asking pardon of Men, And especially desiring prayers that God, who has an Unlimited Authority, would pardon that Sin and all other his Sins; personal and Relative: And . . . Not Visit the Sin of him, or of any other, upon himself or any of his, nor upon the Land.”

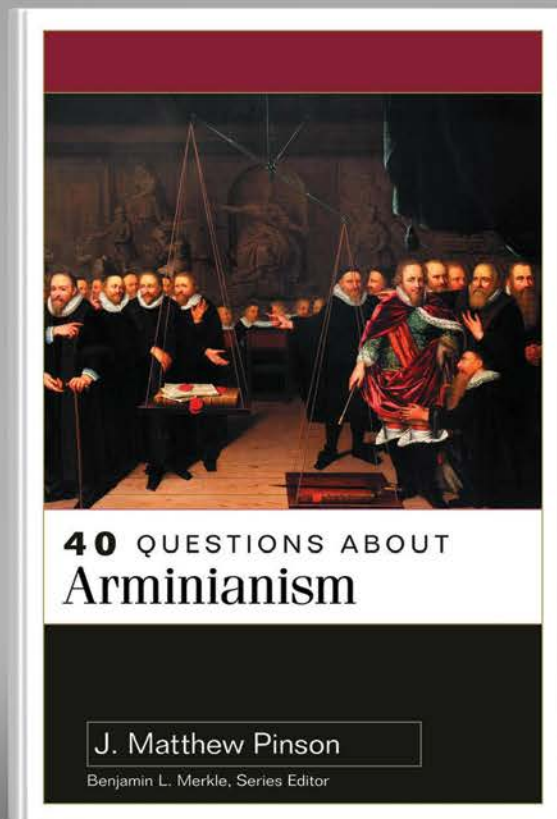
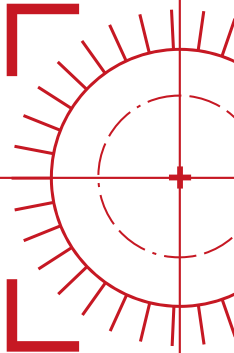
Now, that is Christian humility. That is walking humbly with our God.

In this battle for God’s Kingdom, while others surrender, the Lord calls us to stand and fight—to take up the unusual yet powerful arms of justice, mercy, and humility and to wield these healing weapons until all bow at Christ’s feet.

So, fellow soldiers, charge into the fray. Fight in the classrooms. Fight in offices. Fight in pulpits. Fight in the halls of justice. Fight in America and fight overseas. Wherever God Almighty places you, take up His arms and empowered by His Spirit, fight! **ONE**

**Adapted from a commencement address delivered at Welch College*

About the Author: Paul V. Harrison has pastored Madison FWB Church in Madison, Alabama since 2015. An adjunct church history and Greek professor at Welch College for 17 years, Paul is the creator of Classic Sermon Index, a subscription-based online index of over 66,000 sermons, with clients including Harvard, Baylor, and Vanderbilt, among others: classicsermonindex.com.



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RESPONDING *to* DOBBS

BY MATTHEW STEVEN BRACEY, J.D.

In early May 2022, *Politico* published a leaked draft of the Supreme Court's majority opinion for *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. A leak of this magnitude is unprecedented in the Court's history. Many commentators are justifiably troubled about the impropriety of the leak. Indeed, all people who value justice, order, and process should be concerned.

How did it occur? Who is responsible? What are the repercussions? Hopefully, investigations in coming weeks and months will unveil answers to such questions. Regardless, it has happened, and we are left to ask: *What does it all mean?* and *What do we do now?* In this article, I will review some crucial issues regarding *Dobbs* before addressing the role churches and Christians can play in this unfolding drama.

WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

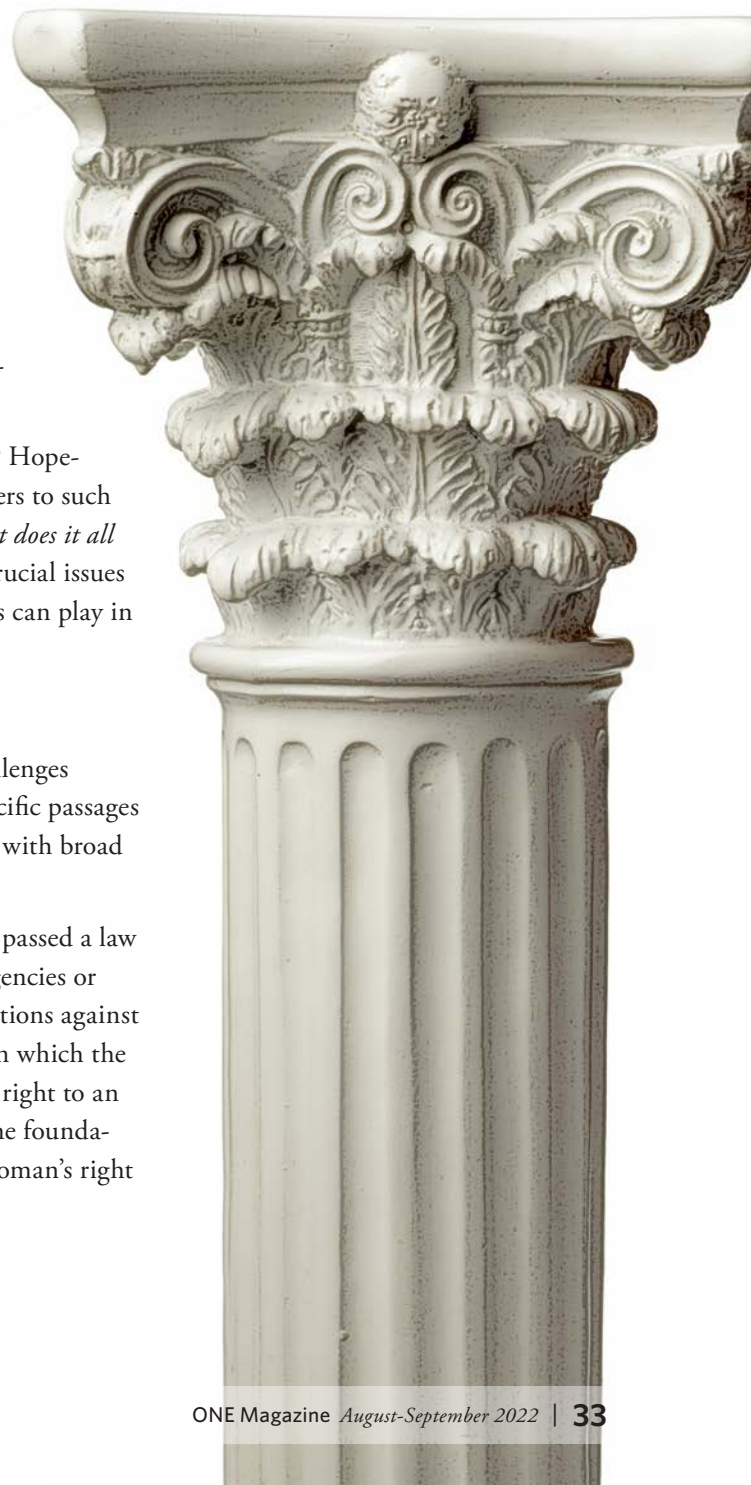
The prospect of analyzing an unfinalized draft opinion creates challenges because it could change. Consequently, I will not interact with specific passages in the majority, concurring, and dissenting opinions but will paint with broad brush strokes according to what we currently know.

Dobbs originated in Mississippi. In 2018, Mississippi's government passed a law banning abortions after 15 weeks, except in cases of medical emergencies or severe fetal abnormalities.¹ District and circuit courts issued injunctions against the law under the legal precedent of *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, in which the majority ruled a state cannot place an undue burden on a woman's right to an abortion prior to fetus's viability at 23–24 weeks.² *Casey* built on the foundation of *Roe v. Wade*, which held the U.S. Constitution protects a woman's right to abortion prior to viability.³

1 Miss. Code Ann. § 41-41-191(4) (2018).

2 *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*, 505, U.S. 833, 860 (1992).

3 *Roe v. Wade*, 410 U.S. 113 (1973).



Upon further appeal, the Supreme Court took up *Dobbs* to answer a single question: *are all laws prohibiting abortions prior to viability unconstitutional?*⁴ This narrow focus means the journalists decrying *Dobbs* because of its apparent ramifications for other moral issues—LGBT rights, marriage, and euthanasia—have missed the mark. The Court could address these matters in subsequent cases, but they are beyond the scope of *Dobbs*.

Justice Samuel Alito wrote the draft majority opinion likely joined by Justices Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, and Amy Coney Barrett. Presumably, *Dobbs* will overturn *Roe* and *Casey* and return the issue of abortion to the states.⁵

This ruling would not mean that abortion is illegal throughout the United States. It would mean individual states could enact laws regarding abortion reflecting the beliefs of the people who lead and live in those states. If this prospect occurs, it will serve as a reminder that elections have enduring consequences, since presidents nominate justices “with the advice and consent of the Senate.”⁶

Abortion advocates often appeal to the so-called constitutional right of abortion. However, strictly speaking, the Constitution identifies no such right. Nearly 50 years ago, *Roe* established this right as an extension to the apparent right of privacy under the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, which reads, “Nor shall any State deprive any person of life, liberty, or property, without due process of law.”⁷

However, this amendment was ratified against the backdrop of a civil war and reconstruction rather than the sexual revolution. It mentions neither a right to an abortion nor the right to privacy. Instead, *Roe* read these concepts into the word *liberty* more than a hundred years after the amendment was adopted. (Interestingly, abortion advocates do not employ a similar hermeneutic toward the word *life* and apply it to unborn persons.) The majority in *Dobbs* rejects this fanciful reading of *liberty* and, instead, interprets it not to include the right to an abortion, there-

by returning the issue to the states.

The Tenth Amendment reads: “The powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively, or to the people.”⁸ Notwithstanding the presumption of *Roe* and *Casey*, the Constitution has not delegated the issue of abortion to the federal government. Consequently, it leaves the question for the leaders and citizens of individual states to address.

Reactions to the prospect of *Dobbs* have run the gamut. While some are helpful, many amount to sensationalism and fearmongering. One author argues the ruling would enslave women, while another equates it to a terrorist attack analogous to 9/11.

Still others adopt a more measured approach, arguing from polling data that this decision will be unpopular and undesired. While we should remember such data is complex and subject to interpretation, this point regarding popularity is inconsequential. The Court is not a legislative body but rather a judicial body that adjudicates the *law that is* rather than the *law it desires*. Amid the barrage of extreme and often-irrelevant rhetoric, how ought the Church respond?

WHAT DO WE DO NOW?

States could do any of the following: 1) ban all abortions; 2) ban most abortions, except in cases of rape, incest, and/or the health of the mother; 3) restrict abortions after a certain period, and/or some combination of options 2–3; or 4) protect all abortions.

The *Dobbs* decision does not make abortion a non-issue. The battlegrounds may shift, but the war rages on. Abortion supporters will not cease fighting for their positions. Hence, whatever our local circumstances, we as Christians must resolve to stand on truth in what we say and how we live.

After all, we serve a Commander who identified Himself as the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). Others may fight with weapons of hate, deception, and falsehood. But the Christian’s arsenal consists in the fruit of the Spirit of Christ and the full armor of God (Galatians 5:22–23;

*We serve Christ,
His Church,
and His world.
Whatever our
circumstances,
we must stand on
truth in how we
live and in how we
preach, teach, and
lead our families
and churches.*

4 Ed Whelan, “Supreme Court Grants Review in Mississippi Abortion Case,” *National Review*, May 17, 2021, <https://www.nationalreview.com/bench-memos/supreme-court-grants-review-in-mississippi-abortion-case/>.

5 *Casey* previously overturned parts of *Roe*.

6 U. S. Constitution, art. II, §2, cl. 2.

7 U. S. Constitution, amend. XIV, sec. 1. *Roe* built on the foundation established for the right to privacy by *Griswold v. Connecticut*, 381 U.S. 479 (1965).

8 U. S. Constitution, amend. X.



Ephesians 5:8–9; 6:10–17). Therefore, we are peaceful and prayerful, and winsome and wise, full of grace and truth (John 1:14).

In our families, churches, communities, and jobs, we demonstrate convictional kindness. Perhaps we teach about these issues in family devotions or in our churches. Perhaps we donate money to local crisis pregnancy centers (CPCs), or even volunteer at them. Perhaps we train up our kids to enter the professions of medicine, finance, and counseling to serve these kinds of organizations. Through the decades these centers have saved countless lives and done untold good.

States restricting abortions will need more of these kinds of organizations to provide resources for women who find themselves in difficult positions. Pro-abortion advocates have understandably cited concerns about the wellbeing of women who seek an abortion but cannot travel to states that permit it because of poverty or general inability. Such circumstances afford the church an opportunity to demonstrate a pro-life ethic that extends not only to unborn babies but also to the mother. These women need help, love, and support, and crisis centers can aid in that goal.

States allowing abortions will also need more CPCs and similar organizations. These states will become a hub for those seeking to abort unborn persons. Non-resident women with the means and opportunity will travel to such states to get abortions—at times desperate, hopeless, and scared. The work of CPCs to save unborn lives and minister to pregnant women will become even more vital and taxing. Again, these organizations need the help of local churches and committed Christians who assist through prayer, finances, and service.


We must also give our attention to the political leadership in local communities and states. Whether a given state bans, restricts, or permits abortions, we should support

parties and candidates who promote the pro-life position. We should support those who support funding, incentives, and/or subsidies for organizations working to promote life, such as CPCs and adoption and foster care agencies. For many people, voting is understandably complicated. Candidates are often mixed bags (to varying extents, they always have been). Our decision to vote or not will contribute, directly or indirectly, to a given outcome with real-world consequences for women and unborn people.

In addition, even though abortion ceases to be a federal issue, that does not mean it could not become one again. People championing abortion rights will continue to push the conversation in that direction. Theoretically, this prospect could occur if Congress passed a bill a president signed into law. It could also take place if a Court's majority once again interprets the Constitution to protect abortion rights. Such scenarios remind us the federal elections of House representatives, senators, and presidents, are—like state elections—exceedingly important.

In sum, the *Dobbs* leak is a major breach of trust that regrettably characterizes the spirit of the age. Bombastic and specious rhetoric notwithstanding, the legal issues are straightforward, and *Dobbs* corrects a serious misreading of the Constitution. We can rejoice over victories, giving God the praise for it while understanding the struggle is not concluded.

We serve Christ, His Church, and His world. Whatever our circumstances, we must stand on truth in how we live and in how we preach, teach, and lead our families and churches. The work of the church and its members is neither concluded in states that restrict abortions nor defeated in states that permit them. We must love our communities and the people in them amid their helplessness and brokenness, even when situations become difficult and messy.

We do not know the challenges tomorrow will bring, but we serve the One who does, and His grace is sufficient (2 Corinthians 12:9). Let us serve the Lord of Life with trust, honor, and fidelity. 

About the Author: Matthew Steven Bracey serves as vice provost for academic administration and assistant professor for theology and culture at Welch College, teaching courses in law and ethics. He holds degrees from Cumberland School of Law (J.D.), Beeson Divinity School (M.T.S.), and Welch College (B.A.) and is ABD for a Ph.D. in Christian Ethics Public Policy from The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary.

Watch for the Cairns

BY BRENDA EVANS

After the last yellow arrow, keep left and once you crest the headwall, follow the cairns to the top of the mountain. Pay attention. There may be whiteouts with no clear path. Watch for the cairns. It's easy to take a wrong turn.

I know about wrong turns. I've taken a few, though not in Tuckerman Ravine on Mount Washington in northern New Hampshire.

Keep left once you crest the headwall. I wonder what a headwall is, so I google it: a steep cliff at the uppermost part of a cirque. A *cirque*? Google that, too: a bowl-shaped area like an amphitheater sculpted out of mountain terrain by glacial erosion. So many things to watch for!


So, if you are like I am, stay off Tuckerman Ravine's 7.4-mile trail with its cirque and headwall and cairns and take the cog railroad to the Mt. Washington summit. Sure, you'll choke half to death on the gritty black soot from the coal-fired steam locomotive, but you'll live and arrive at the summit with no worry about headwalls, cirques, and wrong turns. (Plus, you'll get there hours before your feet would have taken you through the ravine.)

You could take the "drive-yourself" auto road that climbs to the summit at a gradient of 11.6 percent. That's dicey, too—mostly one lane, part asphalt, part gravel. I stick with the cog railroad. At the top, take

off your hat, or it will blow away while you gaze north to Canada and west to Vermont.

Mt. Washington, the premier peak of the Presidential Range in the White Mountains of New Hampshire, rises to 6,288 feet, highest in the Northeastern U.S. Thirteen prominent mountains rise in the range, five named after the first five U.S. presidents: Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Madison, Monroe.

Mt. Washington is the most prominent and the most notorious, especially for wind. In April 1934, meteorologists recorded a surface wind speed of 231 mph, still the world record for winds not associated with tornados and cyclones. Any summer day, wind speeds range between 25 mph and 125 mph—or more. Hold on to your hat! Better yet, poke it into your backpack. Washington is also famous for fog, clouds, and heavy snow at an average of 280 inches per year and a record 566 inches the winter of 1968-69. Mt. Washington takes lives and instills fear but rouses joy, too.



Say you are hardier than I am and decide to hike the “Tucks” as climbers call Tuckerman Ravine Trail. Be prepared, pay attention, and follow the cairns. And, by all means, get a Tucks weather forecast, slip micro-spikes over your hiking boots for traction on packed ice, and use a trekking pole with a disk-shaped “snow basket” to keep your pole from sinking in soft snow—if any is soft. Above all, follow the cairns—your trustworthy markers up the mountain.

A cairn is a man-made stack of stones and comes from a Scottish Gaelic word meaning *heap of stones*. Cairns are ancient structures, both Christian and pagan. They mark boundaries, burial sites, navigational points, ceremonial grounds, and places of worship. Some are *inukshuks* shaped like human figures.

It also pays to watch for cairns in our walk of life with its hills and valleys “under the sun,” as Solomon described it. The Christian life is a trek. Sometimes easy, straight, and enjoyable. Sometimes slippery and treacherous—a fight with elements in unknown territories. Who knows what’s ahead on the psalmist’s way everlasting (139:24), or Jeremiah’s ancient path “where the good way is” (6:16).

When the winds howl and are hostile, when the “wicked prow” on every side (Psalm 12:8), we watch for cairns marking the way. Old Testament stories teem with towers of rocks that mark God’s help and might, His guidance and salvation, even His judgment.

Joshua built cairns. At the Jordan, he told 12 men, one from each tribe, to hoist a stone from the middle of the river and bring it into Canaan. At Gilgal,

they dropped the 12 stones into a heap. A cairn, 12 stones of remembrance, gratitude, and praise.

Joshua explained: “When your children ask what the stones mean in the coming years, tell them Israel passed over Jordan on dry ground, that the hand of the Lord is mighty” (Joshua 4). Watch for cairns that remind you of the Lord’s might, His hand that dries up rivers, holds back floods, leads you down a good path on the way everlasting. Voice your gratitude. Say aloud what the cairn means and has always meant on your trek. Tell your children and grandchildren, friends, and fellow believers. Declare what those “stacks of stones” in your life mean about God’s faithfulness.

Before long, Joshua and the people raised another—and this time awful—cairn. The Lord brought trouble on Israel and on Achan for his greed and thievery at Jericho. Israel lost the battle for Ai. Joshua questioned Achan and, at God’s command, Israel stoned him for his theft. They also stoned and burned his family, his animals, the items he stole—everything he had. By the time they finished, they had created “a great heap of stones” in the Valley of Achor, or *valley of trouble* (Joshua 7).

Watch for cairns marking times and places of sin and consequential punishment. These cairns remind us sin is not an insignificant pebble tossed into a placid pond, but a boulder that splashes into our lives creating waves of turbulence that damage and defile us and hinder others.

Samuel raised just one cairn, as far as we know. He named it Ebenezer after Israel defeated the Philistines. “Till now the Lord has helped us,” he said. Ebenezer, the stone of help. Watch for it.

Other cairns mark squabbles, disagreements, and quarrels similar to Laban and Jacob’s pile of rocks in Genesis 31. Laban told Jacob those stones would serve as a witness

Cairns like these call God's people to bury the past, rise above animosities, shed contempt and accusations, forgive, and pour oil on troubled waters.

between them—a marker of an uneasy truce (31:48). Twenty years of bad blood had blackened their relationship, with distrust, accusations, deceptions, and quarrels on both sides. No heroes here. Both were contentious, deceptive, and divisive. Both made excuses and mouthed denials.

As for the stones between them, the cairn hardly meant all was well. It merely created a boundary marker symbolizing their pledge to stay out of each other's hair, not to

cross over and do harm. Laban described it as “a witness” with God guarding the boundary, the judge of the one who stepped over the line. Hardly a blessing!

Laban called on his pagan household gods. Jacob pointed to “the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the fear of Isaac.”

Perhaps this boundary cairn became a sign of reconciliation and peace between the two, because Laban is never mentioned again in Genesis. In any case, cairns like these call God's people to bury the past, rise above animosities, shed contempt and accusations, forgive, and pour oil on troubled waters. To throw no more stones into a tranquil pond, creating angry waves that spread damage and hurt.

So, as we go, watch for the cairns on the ancient path “where the good way is.” And, may we also gather stones of remembrance and build cairns of gratitude, praise, and encouragement to point our children and their children toward the Way Everlasting. **ONE**

About the Author: Brenda Evans lives and writes in Ashland, Kentucky. You may contact her at beejayevans@windstream.net.

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Slow-Motion Miracle

BY DAVID BROWN, CPA

A study of the miracles Jesus performed reveals something interesting. In several cases, someone had to do something for the miracle to occur. The water turned to wine in John 2 required servants to fill the jars with water for the miracle to happen. In John 9, the blind man had to wash away the mud Jesus put on his eyes in the pool of Siloam before he could see. In Mark 8, the blind man required a “double dose” of miraculous healing before he could see clearly.

All four Gospels record the intriguing story of the feeding of the 5,000. Perhaps most interesting about this miracle is the size of the crowd. It would have been impossible for those at the back to see exactly what was happening, and they may not have even known a miracle was in progress. All they knew was they were receiving food.

Another interesting aspect of this miracle was the amount of time required. No one knows precisely how the miracle was performed, but most people assume it happened as they passed out the food. Every time they shared the last of the fish and bread, they reached into the basket to find more fish and bread. It takes a while to feed 5,000 people, so this miracle happened gradually, perhaps taking an hour or more. If a miracle can take an hour to unfold, is it possible a miracle could occur over 30 years?

What has happened over the last 30 years at Free Will Baptist Foundation can only be described as a miracle. Consider the facts: in 1992, the Foundation’s total assets were \$937,000. In 2022, total assets are close to \$120 million. The Foundation impacts the annual income of denominational ministries directly through grants and endowment income and indirectly through the earnings ministries receive from trusts invested on their behalf. In 1992, the income generated annually to ministries was \$71,000; today, the annual impact surpasses \$3 million.

We are also impacting the *future* of our ministries. Individual trusts require a 20% Free Will Baptist ministry designation. We manage planned gifts from which individuals receive income during their lifetime, but when they die, the remaining principal goes to ministries. Recently, we developed an estate planning program. Many families



have committed to leaving a portion of their estate to ministry. Thirty years ago, we only had ministry designation from individual trusts and a few planned gifts, and our total impact on future FWB ministry was \$66,000. Today future gifts still include ministry designation and planned giving proceeds, but the estate planning program has supersized future gifts to over \$53 million.

It would be difficult to describe this growth as anything other than a slow-motion miracle occurring over 30 years. Remember, the folks in the back had no idea Jesus’ miracle of feeding the crowd was taking place. In a similar way, perhaps many Free Will Baptists have been unaware of the slow-motion miracle taking place since 1992 at the Foundation. **ONE**

About the Columnist: David Brown is director of Free Will Baptist Foundation. To learn more about the grants program, visit www.fwbgifts.org.



As with any other commodity, the way we use time makes all the difference.

BY CHRIS COMPTON

It is hard to believe I am turning 47 this month. In only a few years, Lord willing, I will pass the big 5-0. Yikes! Where did the time go? The older we get, the more it seems time passes at a faster pace. I have often wondered why time seems that way. One conclusion I have reached is our lives are busier today than ever before. Work, chores, kids, activities, homework, ministry, sports, extended family—the list goes on and on. All these things—these good things—require one common ingredient: time.

Scarcity determines value. Diamonds would be worthless if you could pick them up like gravel on the side of the road. Gold would have no value if it sold in large blocks at Home Depot. These items are valuable because they are

scarce. And time is the most valuable, precious commodity of all. Our time on earth is scarce and limited. James said life is like a vapor that appears for a moment and then is gone. Time would not be as precious if we never died. Because we are never more than a breath away from eternity, the way we use our time has important and eternal significance.

As with any other commodity, the way we use time makes all the difference. We can use our time well and be intentional about our actions and the things into which we pour our lives. Or we can squander time away. Too often we allow the latter. We waste this most precious commodity on pursuits and pleasures that pass while neglecting the

things that last forever. Time can be wasted a thousand ways, but it also can be used wisely and for the glory of God.

Ephesians 5:15-16 issues this challenge: “See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” To use time wisely, we must *redeem* it. Redeeming time is a metaphorical way to describe using time well. We do not own our time; God does. He gives it to us in a trust. We simply steward the time we are given, managing it wisely and making the most of every opportunity. What a precious gift has been entrusted to us! The question: How will we spend it? What are *worthy* pursuits for our valuable time?

- **Enjoy every moment with family and care for them.** Family is important. Love your kids while you can, and don’t forget about your parents as you (and they) age. Talk to them daily. Treasure time together. Too soon, it will be gone.
- **Manage money well and make good financial decisions.** Much pain and financial ruin could be avoided

if we simply took time to pray and think through important financial decisions.

- **Grow in the Lord.** The discipline of reading the Bible and praying is so often relegated to the “back burner” in our lives. We should never neglect our walk with God and our growth into His likeness.
- **Carry the good news of the gospel.** Nothing is more worthy of our time than showing and sharing the love of Jesus.

God has given you a precious gift of time. Some get more than others, and we never know when our time will run out. So, whatever time God gives us us, let’s redeem every second! **ONE**

About the Author: Chris Compton is accounting administrator for the Board of Retirement. He graduated in 2007 with a M.A. in Bible exposition from Columbia International University. A 1998 graduate of East Tennessee State University, he has over 18 years of administrative/financial experience in varied fields, and seven years in pastoral ministry.

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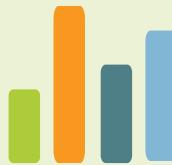


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Intervention



Since 2005, the reality television show *Intervention* has followed the desperate efforts of friends, family members, and professionals seeking to intervene in the lives of individuals with serious addictions. Sometimes, their efforts are successful. In other instances, tragic decisions lead to further addictive, even deadly behaviors. The show provides a grim reminder. Sometimes, humans need intervention.

In 2022, *Treasure* Bible studies have highlighted intervention of a different type—God’s intervention in the lives of women. Rahab, a woman of ill repute (Joshua 2), would be considered a failure by many. Yet, she feared God, spared the lives of the Israelite spies, and by God’s grace, became the wife of Salmon, and mother of Boaz.

The Pharisees made a spectacle of a woman caught in adultery (John 8) bring her to Jesus. After asking where her accusers were, Jesus told her to go and sin no more. Mary Magdalene (John 20), from whom Jesus cast seven demons, became His early follower. She was present at His crucifixion when most other followers fled. Mary was also the first to see Jesus after His resurrection.

Shuphrah and Puah, Hebrew midwives (Exodus 1), feared God and disobeyed Pharaoh’s edict to kill Hebrew baby boys. God blessed them and gave them families. The woman with the issue of blood (Mark 5) was terminal. After hemorrhaging for 12 years, she had spent everything

on doctors to no avail. By merely touching the hem of Jesus’ garment, she was healed. When confronted, she told Jesus her story, and He commended her for her faith.

The Samaritan woman was considered unworthy by her fellow townspeople. Yet Jesus went out of His way to minister to her (John 4:4). His conversation with this lone woman at noon resulted in many Samaritans coming to faith. They even asked Jesus to linger with them, which He did for two days.

These are but a few of the many examples recorded in Scripture. Are we aware of similar interventions by God in our daily lives? Or are we oblivious to His work around us? Are we willing to be His hands and feet, intervening in the lives of those He has placed in our sphere of influence? Are we attuned to the Spirit’s nudging when opportunities arise? Do we see our family, neighbors, and coworkers through His eyes? Or have we become self-focused and oblivious?

By keeping in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:25), we will recognize opportunities when God can use us to intervene in someone's life. Spending time in the Word and prayer will prepare our hearts. To answer questions that arise, we must hide His Word in our hearts. Recognizing what a gift we have been given in salvation will yield a grateful, humble spirit. We did not choose our ethnicity, country of origin, social status, etc. God chose for us to be born in this country at this time for His purpose.

Think about Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts 8. Philip left Jerusalem because of the persecution and headed to Samaria. What did he do? According to verse 5 "he preached Christ unto them," and a revival broke out. Then the angel of the Lord told him to go to the desert. He obeyed and encountered one man. From a human standard, he left the many for only one. But God saw a bigger picture. The one was influential and took the gospel with him to an unreached area. Oh, for eyes to see as God sees!

For years, we have sent missionaries and church planters to areas with little or no gospel witness. And we still must. Currently, God is bringing the nations to America—to

my community and yours. **We are the missionaries they will encounter.** Are we, like Philip, willing to go to the one?

We must build relationships to speak into another's life. Are we patient and willing to invest the time and energy? Do we seek to be hospitable and give internationals a glimpse into our personal lives?

Matthew 28:18-20 reminds us to go into all the world, not only our comfort zones. Acts 1:8 clearly indicates our work begins in our Jerusalem, then our Judea and Samaria, and then to the uttermost parts of the earth. Are we living and working as if this command will be completed in our lifetimes?

Could the person with whom we share the gospel today be the "one" who will hasten the Lord's return? Do we live with Jim Elliott's motto? "Only one life 'twill soon be past. Only what's done for Christ will last." **ONE**

About the Author: Phyllis York is the interim director of WNAC and lives in Smyrna, Tennessee, with her husband Tim. She has been a leader in Free Will Baptist Women's Ministries since 1992.



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REACHING THE WORLD AT HOME

BEST SEAT IN THE HOUSE

BY DAVID WILLIFORD

The most sought-after seats at sporting events or concerts are those with the best view. An unobstructed view makes you feel more participant than spectator. For the past 20 years, I've had a ringside seat to the happenings at Welch College.

In early 2002, Matt Pinson asked me to consider coming to Welch as vice president for institutional advancement. After much prayer and discussions with people I trusted, I accepted the position and moved to Nashville that June.

The next 20 years were like a roller coaster ride at the state fair—tremendous highs and devastating lows, unexpected twists and turns, and moments I wondered if we'd survive the journey. Yet, as I near the end of my time at the college, I've had a chance to contemplate all I've seen.

Under the capable leadership of Dr. Pinson, I saw the college change names, relocate, and enjoy unparalleled academic success. We enjoyed the highest enrollment numbers since the shake-up of 1982, and the Welch Fund broke records on at least four occasions. We received the largest gifts in college history through donors who partnered with the relocation campaign.

I've watched the leadership team wrestle with issues we never dreamed we'd face. During those moments and intense discussions, forced to face our own inadequacies, we found ourselves joined in prayer, asking the God of all wisdom for direction.

We endured times of financial crisis, particularly during the Great Recession of 2008-2010. Gifts dropped, enrollment plummeted, and red ink flowed freely. Budgets were cut, individuals laid off, and the college pension plan terminated. To describe those years as difficult would be like saying Noah experienced a light shower. Through it all, God was there. He never failed us, and with His help we came through the adversity.

In 2009, President Pinson asked if I thought the denomination would be open to changing the name. After some thought, I told him I believed it would, but if we failed, the issue would be dead for at least a generation. Believing a name change was the best for our students and for the Great Commission, we developed a strategy to introduce the idea to the denomination.

Meetings were held across the country with state and local leaders, pastors, involved laymen, and alumni. We sent surveys to Free Will Baptists everywhere, because we wanted to know the feelings of the people to whom we were accountable. While we felt a name change was the right decision, we knew the support and approval of our supporters was essential.

I answered two recurring questions during frequent meetings with the leadership team: "What's the feeling of our people?" and "If the vote were today, what would the results be?" From early discussions, I felt the denomination was ready for the change, and I repeatedly indicated the vote would probably be between 75 and 80% in favor of the change.

In July 2012, when the vote was taken at the National Convention, I learned I had been wrong. More than 95% of delegates voted to change Free Will Baptist Bible College to Welch College, named in honor of John L. and Mary Welch, leading proponents of Christian higher education in our movement.

Not long after this momentous decision, the board voted to relaunch the relocation effort that started in the late 1990s but later was put on hold by the board. Believing the time was right, the board instructed college leadership to ramp up efforts to relocate the college. After more than a year of work by Mark Johnson, relocation consultant, he and the leadership team recommended to the board we purchase 66-plus acres of property in Gallatin, Ten-

nessee, to be the next home for the college. The land was purchased, the West End campus went on the market, and President Pinson and I hit the road to meet with donors.

As a fundraiser for the college, I have a deep love and appreciation for all our donors, but the ones who welcomed Dr. Pinson and me into their homes during those days of seeking donor partners are closest to my heart. Basically, we told potential donors, “We bought land and put the campus up for sale. We can’t promise when the campus will sell or when we will break ground on the new campus, but for this move to happen, we need folks like you. We need donors who believe in us, and who see what cannot be seen. We need you to support us, provide momentum for the campaign, and share our vision of what will be.”

Those donors, God bless them, bought into a dream. They believed in Welch, and they believed God was directing the move. When many said, “Come see me when you break ground,” they went all in. Those initial donors who gave us support and impetus for the move were game changers. The young people who walk across campus in Gallatin today have no idea of the debt of gratitude we owe them.

My responsibilities have always been fundraising and public relations, but I also had a front row seat to amazing academic progress. I watched Welch go from unranked to number eight in the *U.S. News and World Report’s* Best Colleges and Universities in America. The number of Welch professors with terminal degrees in their fields has reached 71%.

Under the leadership of Matt Pinson and Provosts Milton Fields, Greg Kettelman, and Matt McAfee, academic programs have multiplied, offering more than 50 degrees in the undergraduate program. The college added the first regionally accredited M.A. in Theology and Ministry, and



the M.A. in Education, with three different areas of concentration. We also added Welch Divinity School, offering a fully accredited M.Div. The college makes it possible to earn both the B.A. and the M.Div. in five years. Most recently, Welch announced yet another graduate level degree, the M.A. in Humanities.

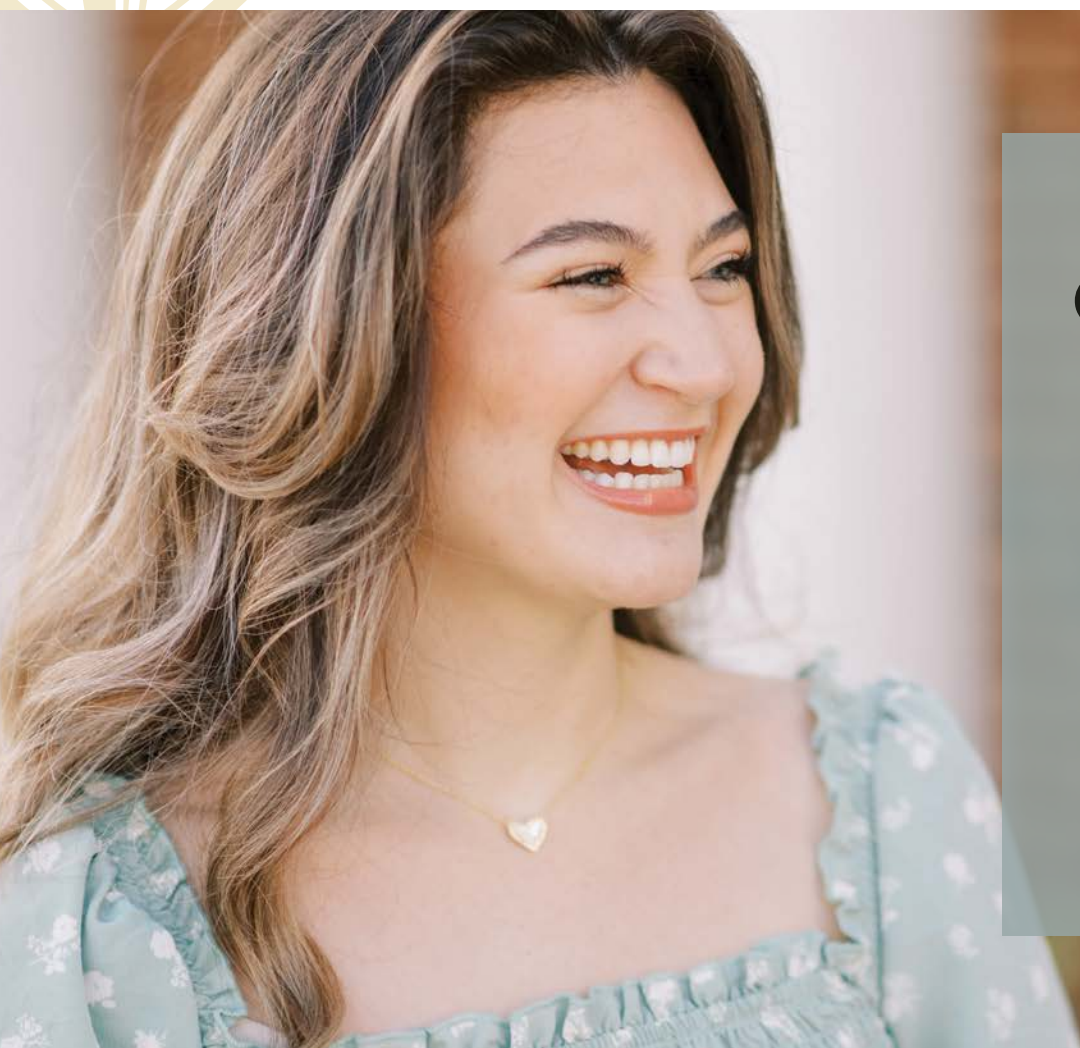
Yes, it has been exciting to see everything happening over the past 20 years. And the good news is, the best years for Welch are ahead. Welch will always have my support and my prayers, and I hope it has yours as well.

I must say thanks to all the churches and pastors who let me share in your services and talk about Welch College. Thanks to all the donors who allowed me to visit your homes, knowing I was there to ask for a gift. Thanks

to all the state moderators who gave Welch time at your meetings. I'm thankful for President Matt Pinson, who hired a pastor who had to learn to be a fundraiser. He was patient with me as I grew into the job. I'm thankful to my wife Donna, who saw me leave home countless times to fulfill my ministry. I'm thankful for the men with whom I worked who laughed with me, worked with me, and made me a better person and fundraiser. Most of all, I'm thankful to the Lord who called me to this ministry and who gave me the physical and mental strength I needed.

Thank you, Free Will Baptists, for being my friend. You allowed me to have the best seat in the house at Welch College. You have become part of my family, and I love you. **ONE**

About the Author: David Williford served as vice-president for institutional advancement from 2002 to 2022. A 1979 graduate of Welch, he also earned a master's degree in pastoral studies from Welch in 1984. He pursued further graduate studies at New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Prior to joining the Welch staff, he pastored 27 years in Alabama, Florida, Tennessee, and Arkansas. Learn more about Welch College: welch.edu.



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Williford Retires From Institutional Advancement



David Williford

David Williford recently retired from his long-standing role as vice president for institutional advancement at Welch College.

“David Williford has been one of the longest-standing leaders in the history of Welch College, and it’s hard to see him go,” Pinson said, commenting on Williford’s two-decade tenure. “Not only has Mr. Williford been a top advocate for

Welch, but he’s also built bridges for the college across its alumni, denominational, and donor constituencies and served as a pace-setter in fundraising and denominational relations.”

Williford was Pinson’s first major hire in early 2002 after being named Welch’s president-elect in late 2001. “I heard David preach at First FWB Church in Chipley, Florida, my last Sunday before moving to Nashville. He had been serving as part-time promotional director for the Florida State Association. I knew right then he had to be at Welch.”

A native of Slocomb, Alabama, Williford married Donna in 1973, and they came to Welch for David to enroll

as a student in 1976. The Willifords have two children, Michael and Stephanie, both Welch alumni. Williford established himself as an effective pastor of Free Will Baptist churches in Alabama, Tennessee, Arkansas, and Florida before being named promotional director for Florida Free Will Baptists in 2000. He served two terms as a member of the Free Will Baptist International Missions Board.

In addition to representing Welch across diverse constituencies, Williford oversaw the most productive era of fundraising in Welch’s history, with more than \$12 million raised thus far toward the ongoing *Building on the Legacy* campaign for Welch’s recently constructed campus in Gallatin, Tennessee.

“David Williford has been not only a loyal and effective chief advancement officer for the college but also a trusted friend and advisor to me,” Pinson said. “Our plans are to keep him part-time as fundraiser and Welch ambassador as he moves into retirement from his vice president role.”

Williford completed his full-time work in June, having served 20 years in the position. **ONE**


Welch College Graduates 41 in 2022 Commencement Exercises

Welch College conferred degrees on 41 students, according to Provost Matthew McAfee. Commencement exercises were held in the Student Activities Center. The gymnasium space was converted into a 700-plus seating auditorium for the baccalaureate service Thursday evening, May 5, and the commencement ceremony on Friday morning, May 6.

Dr. Paul Harrison, pastor of Madison FWB Church in Madison, Alabama, delivered the commencement address, urging graduates to wage war with the weapons of God—seeking justice, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God. Rev. Steve Lindsay, pastor of Red Bay FWB Church in Red Bay, Alabama, delivered the baccalaureate sermon, providing a character study on the life of John the Baptist and urging

graduates to follow in his example of living lives that make an impact for Christ.

President Matt Pinson recognized retiree David Williford for 20 years of faithful service as vice president of institutional advancement. He worked to establish relationships with churches and individual donors and was vital in funding the *Building on the Legacy* campaign. Dr. Jeff Crabtree, chairman of the college’s Board of Trustees, recognized President Pinson and his wife Melinda for 20 years of service in the role of college president. Dr. Sarah Bracey, program coordinator of psychology and campus counselor, was named Academic Advisor of the Year.

The college congratulates the 2022 graduating class and commends them to the service of Christ's Kingdom. 

Associate of Science Degrees

Macey Elyse Bowman
Tullahoma, Tennessee
Biology

Charles Buford Elam, Jr.
La Vergne, Tennessee
Ministry

Adam Anthony McKinnis†
Birchwood, Tennessee
Ministry

Joshua Bennett Simpson
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Biology

Samesha Chantel Thomas
Gallatin, Tennessee
Ministry

Associate of Arts Degree

Tiffany Renee Smith
Bethpage, Tennessee

Bachelor of Science Degrees

Emelia Grace Barnett***
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Lauren Elizabeth Batey**
Cross Plains, Tennessee
Business Administration

Abby Grace Bragg***
Senoia, Georgia
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Sara Jean Carman***
Hartsville, Tennessee
English, Licensure 6-12

Luke Robert Charlton
Nashville, Tennessee
Business Administration

Hannah Eve Dyson
Greenville, North Carolina
Business Administration

Bryson Andrew Foulks***†
Chuckey, Tennessee
Exercise Science

Alexandrea Katherine Foust**
Gallatin, Tennessee
General Christian Ministry

Michael Joseph Fulcher**
Ormonsville, North Carolina
Mathematics Education, Licensure 6-12

Jorden Brice Hoffman
Ashland City, Tennessee
Youth and Family Ministry

Cheyenne Meagan Johnson*
Cedar Hill, Tennessee
Child Development and Learning
Licensure K-5

Krista Janae Lindsay**
Red Bay, Alabama
Business Administration

Jonathan Peter Lisbona
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Exercise Science

Meredith Anne Locklear***
Gastonia, North Carolina
Mathematics Education, Licensure 6-12
Music Education, Licensure K-12

Victoria Rose Masters**
Ahoskie, North Carolina
Business Administration

James Ben Miller III
New Boston, Michigan
Pastoral Ministry

Jonathan Garrett Pelleaux*
Smyrna, Tennessee
Business Administration

Abigail Renee Scott**
Raleigh, North Carolina
Biology Education
Licensure 6-12

Devan Luke Sexton**†
Owasso, Oklahoma
General Christian Ministry

Spencer Ryan Smith†
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Business Administration

Sydney Shae Walker**
Washington, North Carolina
Business Administration

Zealtiel Zuñiga Anaya***
Springdale, Arkansas
Music Performance

Bachelor of Arts Degrees

Benjamin Andrew Barcroft***
Jacksonville, Illinois
Intercultural Studies

Sarah Elizabeth Benton*
Trenton, North Carolina
History

Micah Quentin Borck***
Lebanon, Tennessee
History

Karah Nicole Delgado*
Cottontown, Tennessee
Intercultural Studies
Psychology

Alexander Ray Johnson***
Alpedrete, Spain
Intercultural Studies
Worship Ministry

Ryan Thomas Payne***
Ina, Illinois
Biblical Studies

Anna Elizabeth Pinson***
Gallatin, Tennessee
English

Brooklyn Paige Strickland
Jacksonville, North Carolina
Humanities and Arts

Ashten Leigh Winter
Decatur, Illinois
Intercultural Studies

Master of Arts Degree

Gregory Allen Eaton†
Waynesboro, Tennessee
Theology and Ministry
Thesis: *History of the Tennessee River Free Will Baptist Association*

Master of Arts in Teaching Degrees

John William Lancaster†
Nashville, Tennessee
Teaching
Thesis: *Effectiveness of WIDA English Language Development Standards in Moving English Learners Toward Proficiency*

Andrea Michelle Mefford
Kinston, North Carolina
Special Education
Authentic Learning Experience Compendium: *Special Education Services within the Christian School Environment*

Morgan Blake Riffey
Hendersonville, Tennessee
Teaching
Thesis: *A Proposal for Restorative Justice Implementation in High School Education*

*** Summa Cum Laude - 3.75

** Magna Cum Laude - 3.50

* Cum Laude - 3.25

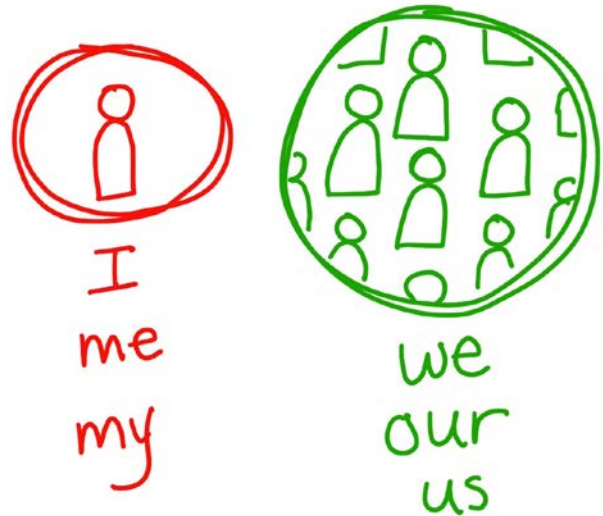
† Not Present

Leaders and First-Person Pronouns

BY RON HUNTER JR., PH.D.

Yawn—yes, pronouns—hang in here as this column discusses leadership, not English 101. For leaders, using **first-person possessive pronouns** does unintentional damage. Growing up, did you know a mom who made a cuss jar for her kids (or maybe her husband)? You know, the kind where you put in a dollar every time you said a bad word. I have threatened to create a pronoun jar for each time leaders uses first person pronouns to describe a team effort.

It may feel normal to say *my* church, *my* team, or *my* board, but what do people really hear? While sliding off the tongue easily, these little words sound possessive and a little arrogant. Most uses of possessive pronouns never intend ownership, but conversations sound better in our heads than they do to other people.



BIBLE VERSES

James 4:6

Jeremiah 9:23

1 Peter 5:2-3

John 13:12-15

Philippians 2:3-7

LEADERSHIP QUOTE

"The goal of many leaders is to get people to think more highly of the leader. The goal of a great leader is to help people to think more highly of themselves."

—J. Carla Nortcutt

Our vocabulary reveals the culture we embrace. You can quickly distinguish a Christ-follower's word choice from the colorful adjectives and adverbs used by a sailor (although, I'm not sure why sailors got this reputation as the quintessential cursers).

I belong to a church where our pastor says, "I get be one of the pastors here" which sounds so much healthier than, "I am the senior pastor." Even though both use the first-person pronoun, the first embodies team and the second—well, you get the idea. Other staff members follow his example because he models a team culture, one people find approachable.

Team cultures leave little room for possessive pronouns that spotlight only the leader. In contrast, I heard another pastor admonish a church member, "You are upset because *your* ideas do not align with *my* vision for the church." Do you think the church would prefer to pursue his vision or a collective vision adopted together?

While leaders need to portray confidence, overused first-person possessive pronouns border on arrogance.

On a recent Bonhoeffer Project Podcast, the hosts' introduction gave me the following type of compliments, "Ron, you are leading the way in areas of family ministry with conferences and your curriculum is recognized as a leading discipleship tool."

The "you," could mean either "you, the organization" or "you, Ron Hunter." However, our response determines how people in the organization feel their role is viewed. Nothing I do as their leader can be done without them. Therefore, accomplishments belong to "us" and not "me."

When a team hears its leader say "I" or "me" or "my," both the team and the organization get lost in the shadows of the leader's spotlight. It may feel endearing to say, "my board" or "my team." But "my" also sounds possessive rather than serving. Let's shift and use "our" team!

In the Christian and non-profit world, leaders are stewards, not owners. **ONE**

About the Columnist: Ron Hunter Jr. has a Ph.D. in leadership and is CEO of Randall House & D6 Family Ministry. You may contact him at ron.hunter@randallhouse.com.

3



REASONS

STUDENTS **DON'T** ATTEND

BY DANIEL WEBSTER

I have been privileged to help high school students get to Welch College since 2017. During this time, I've heard three primary reasons a Welch College education is not possible: *too expensive, too far, and you don't have my major*. I'd like to share my response to these objections.

WELCH IS TOO EXPENSIVE

If you visit welch.edu/FinAid and view the “sticker price,” it can be scary! But I have good news. Welch's tuition is half that of the national average, and for the 2021 academic year, 100% of traditional, undergraduate students received financial aid. Most students, after financial aid, pay only a fraction of the sticker price.

Also, it is important to note Welch does not have an in-state and out-of-state tuition pricing structure; students from Hawaii pay the same rate as students from Tennessee. Students at Welch take advantage of all types of scholarships, grants, and loans. Funding remains available, and the enrollment team at Welch will gladly help your family “look under the couch cushions” for the aid available to you.

If your family is concerned about finances, start with these four steps:

1. Complete the application at welch.edu/GoToWelch. Welch charges no application fee, and it only takes a half hour or so to complete.
2. Complete the free application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at fafsa.gov. Make sure you use the Welch College school code: 030018.

3. Request a financial worksheet from your admissions counselor so you have the exact dollar amount to make the decision.
4. If, after you have taken these steps, you still cannot afford Welch College, write an appeal letter for more institutional funding.

WELCH DOES NOT HAVE MY MAJOR

This is the greatest admissions misnomer among Free Will Baptist students. Welch has 50 programs of study leading to the completion of associate's, bachelor's, and master's degrees. While we do not have *every* degree, we have a degree for *every* career or ministry path because we offer an assortment of associate's degrees. For instance, if you are interested in completing a bachelor's degree in computer science, Welch does not offer a bachelor's degree in this area.

However, if you commit to two years in one of Welch's associate degree programs, you can transfer credits to the four-year school of your choice, since Welch is both nationally and regionally accredited. Keep in mind Welch College has the same SACSCOC accreditation as well-known schools like Vanderbilt University, University of Alabama, and University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

If your family is concerned about credit transfer, take these two steps:



WELCH

—COLLEGE—



1. Complete the application at welch.edu/GoToWelch. Welch charges no application fee, and it only takes a half hour or so to complete.
2. After you are accepted, request from your admissions counselor to speak to a faculty member about your career or ministry plans. A faculty member from your area of study will review the course plan for the four-year degree you are seeking, and determine the appropriate associate's degree for you.

If you choose this path, keep in mind that Welch offers more than just a degree; you will build friendships that last a lifetime and receive a biblical foundation that will support your future. It is also important to remember a third of undergraduate students change majors before completing a bachelor's degree. For students unsure about their future, what better place to gain more direction than Welch College?

WELCH IS TOO FAR FROM HOME

Honestly, I don't have a great answer for this objection. If a student wants to stay next door to his or her parents, and Welch is 500 miles away, I cannot change that. However, at Welch you gain a second family—your Welch College family. Welch has a high freshman retention rate, which means first-time college students love Welch and return the following year. At Welch, you will be surrounded by peers and teachers who love you and want the best for you. And, as you go into the world to pursue career and

ministry to the glory of God, you can lean on the network of friends you met in college who will continue to sharpen you for the rest of your life.

And it is true your life back home is very important! So much so that the mission of Welch is *to educate leaders to serve Christ, His church, and His world through biblical thought and life*. It is our goal to send you back home as a leader in Christ's service. Imagine the good you will accomplish for your friends and relatives when you receive a Welch education that instills in you a biblical worldview and return home to impact the beloved community where you grew up.

Choosing a college is a big decision! Paying for college can be overwhelming; deciding on a major that will impact your future can be intimidating; leaving family and friends can be frightening. The Welch Enrollment Services team is here to guide you through these challenges. If you have questions, reach out by email (gotowelch@welch.edu) or take the first step by applying at welch.edu/GoToWelch.

ONE

About the Author: Daniel Webster is director of enrollment services and adjunct instructor of music and Bible at Welch College. He is pursuing a Ph.D. in church music, and he directs the music at Immanuel FWB Church in Gallatin, Tennessee, where he lives with his wife Kimberly and their three children. Read more from him: AThingWorthDoing.com.

86TH

NAFWB



When Free Will Baptists returned to Birmingham after 17 years,

they found a city vastly different from the one they visited previously. Sure, the residents were still friendly, the late July humidity sweltering, and the barbecue savory. But new apartments and high-rises had replaced previously vacant and run-down buildings. New interstate flyovers crisscrossed the city skyline near the convention complex, and beautiful parks and public areas marked a new day in Birmingham.

Birmingham wasn't alone in its changes. Free Will Baptists are a different denomination than the one that visited the city in 2006. A new generation holds many leadership positions, and the denomination faces new challenges within and beyond the church. Churches and congregations have endured a Great Recession, natural disasters, social and racial division, a global pandemic, pastoral shortages, and shrinking membership. Yet, Free Will Baptists face these challenges (and others) with hope, clear direction and vision, and determination to work together to overcome whatever the future holds with God's help.

GO THE extra mile



This spirit of determination was reflected in the 2022 convention theme, which challenged attendees to “Go the Extra Mile.” Sunday morning, **Rett Floyd (SC)** taught Sunday School from Psalm 119 before **Chris Todd (SC)** urged convention-goers to go the extra mile in practicing forgiveness (Luke 15:11-32). Sunday evening, after observing the Lord's Supper together, **Tim Baumgarten (AL)** challenged listeners to go the extra mile in Christian unity (Romans 14), reminding

them we “are not called to uniformity but to unity.” Monday evening, **Jim McComas (TN)** admonished those listening not to wait for the *extra* mile to help hurting people (Luke 8:40-46) but to make it a “first-mile priority.” Tuesday, **Kent Barwick (GA)** reminded the crowd that Jesus Himself went the extra mile to reach the woman at the well (John 4), and we should do the same to introduce others to the Living Water. In the concluding Wednesday evening missions service, **Fernando Bustamante (SC)**, speaking in Spanish with interpretation by Steve Lytle, shared a final challenge to leave our comfort zones and go the extra mile to take the gospel to all the earth (Acts 10).

Music and Scripture reemphasized the convention theme. From rousing congregational singing to musical offerings from soloists, groups, praise teams, choirs, and orchestra, the music in every service was moving and memorable. Hearts were stirred and altars filled throughout the week, as Free Will Baptists embraced this challenge to go the extra mile. Thanks to the Media Commission, all services were



CONVENTION

JULY 24-27, 2022 • BIRMINGHAM, ALABAMA

live-streamed, and listeners watched from across the country and around the world.

Sunday afternoon, attendees observed feet washing for a second year. From well-known hymns to a short devotion presented by **Dr. Kevin Hester (TN)**, listeners were reminded we wash feet because Jesus humbly washed the disciples' feet and urged us to follow His lead. The service provided a wonderful time of fellowship and worship and set a powerful tone of humility for the meeting that followed.

BACK TO WHERE THE IMPACT STARTED

Seventeen years ago, Free Will Baptists made history when volunteers from eight states braved hot temperatures and sweltering humidity for the first IMPACT outreach event. Since then, thousands of Free Will Baptists have volunteered for the annual outreach program, participating in everything from door-to-door evangelism and street fairs to painting, remodeling, and landscaping churches.

This year, IMPACT took place at the Salvation Army just north of Birmingham. Eighty-seven volunteers went the extra mile to prepare care kits to distribute to the homeless community. Director Ken Akers expressed excitement about the event: "We had a *great* turnout! Volunteers from ten states worked with donated items from 11 states."

After completing 600 care kits, four teams in six vehicles traveled to shelters and locations throughout Birmingham, giving away 450 bags in two hours. They left approximately 150 bags at the Salvation Army. Other volunteers picked up trash and cleaned the Salvation Army grounds while the bags were distributed.

Akers encourages other Free Will Baptists to get involved: "Seventeen years later, we *continue* to be excited about the potential of the IMPACT program. I hope everyone will join us next year when we work together to make a difference for the people of Raleigh."

BUSINESS IN BIRMINGHAM

The **General Board** began its annual meeting Monday, July 25, with a brief message from Moderator Tim York (TN). The board heard reports from eight national agencies and four commissions during a one-hour, 55-minute meeting. The board approved a broad slate of recommendations from the Executive Committee, including a recommendation to approve the 2023 denominational budget of \$31.4 million and a recommendation to amend Article 2 of the Constitution to allow international churches and associations to affiliate directly with the National Association. These recommendations from the General Board were later approved by delegates during the convention business session.

Convention Business Session. Moderator Tim York opened the two-day meeting with a message on "Ministry Methods" from Acts 2 before opening the podium for departmental reports.

EXECUTIVE OFFICE. Comparing today's American church to a physically unhealthy community, Executive Secretary Eddie Moody acknowledged the challenges facing Free Will Baptists, noting, "Last year, we lost 41 churches, and we currently have 212 churches without pastors." However, Moody chose to focus on *solutions* rather than problems, asking "What can we do to change this?"

He encouraged pastors and churches to embrace the Three for Thirty denominational campaign, reaching their communities, training their congregations, and giving faithfully to the Lord's work. With the aid of a Three for Thirty Task Force established in 2021, the Executive Office continues to develop and offer Reach, Train, and Give Resources.

Know Your Community, offered in cooperation with Church Answers, helps churches know and understand their communities better, equipping them to reach neighbors more effectively. The Hope Initiative, another collaboration with Church Answers, seeks to change the culture in struggling churches. Churches interested in participating should contact questions@nafwb.org.

2022

CONVENTION AT A GLANCE

REGISTRATION

NAFWB Attendees - **3,452**

Vertical Three - **2,894**

Total Attendees - **4,038***

**Note: Many attendees register for both conventions.*

SPEAKERS

Sunday School, July 24

Rett Floyd (SC)

Sunday Morning, July 24

Chris Todd (SC)

Sunday Evening, July 24

Tim Baumgarten (AL)

Monday Evening, July 25

Jim McComas (TN)

Tuesday Evening, July 26

Kent Barwick (GA)

Wednesday Evening, July 27

Fernando Bustamante (SC)

Contributors: Eric Thomsen,
Tori Matlock, Sarah Sargent

Vertical Three: Derek Altom

Photographers: Rodney Yerby,
Sydney Walker, Michael E. Rogers

Download Photos:

nafwb.yerbyphoto.com

Moody additionally introduced the new Growing Together initiative that will harness the power of Zoom technology to bring together affinity groups for training, collaboration, fellowship, and encouragement. In cooperation with North American Ministries, Growing Together offers professional counseling from Tom Jones, a church planter and counselor with Keystone Christian Counseling. Carolyn Dwyer will also begin providing support for pastors' wives in the fall.

Moody pointed to other valuable resources developed and guided by the office: multi-lingual resources, the ever-expanding Rekindle program, pastoral search materials, Gideon's Army prayer team, and more. He encouraged churches and individuals to support The Together Way offerings and The Together Way Trust, a perpetual endowment established to help underwrite denominational agencies and departments.

"You matter, and what you do matters," Moody concluded. "The problems we are facing today can only be solved by the gospel. Let us each call upon God and ask Him what role He wants us to play in being His hands and feet."

Following the report, Moody honored David Shores (IL) for many years of service on the Executive Committee for the state of Illinois.

FWB FOUNDATION. "A slow-motion miracle" was how Director David Brown described the phenomenal growth the Foundation has experienced over the past 30 years. [Read more in *Brown on Green*, page 39.]

The miracle continues as the department enjoyed its largest one-year increase in assets in 2021 (\$23 million-plus), doubling the previous record set in 2019. Money management investments grew by \$12.5 million, and gift annuities increased by more than \$370,000. Unitrusts increased by more than \$120,000, and the endowment pool increased by more than \$2.8 million. The department also enjoyed dividend gains of 25.6%, the highest percentage growth since 2004. "Frankly, I have no explanation for this phenomenal growth," Brown admitted. "But I view this as a good thing, because it means I had nothing to do with it other than planting and watering. God gave the increase."

The Foundation's growth made it possible to award a record \$750,000 in grants to 23 ministries in 2022, bringing total grants awarded to \$3.4 million since 2017. Additionally, the Foundation gifted \$1.1 million to The Together Way Endowment, Vertical Three, and WNAC, bringing the giving total to \$2 million in 2022. Looking back on these historic numbers, Brown reflected emotionally, "I never dreamed 30 years ago we would someday give away \$2 million in a single year. After all, that is twice as much as we held in assets at the time."

He noted the estate planning program, slowed by the pandemic, has bounced back, with 152 new families participating last year and participation returning to pre-pandemic levels thus far in 2022. Estate planning accounts for \$900,000 already given to Free Will Baptist ministries.

NORTH AMERICAN MINISTRIES (NAM). Director David Crowe celebrated three successive years of financial gains, finishing \$900,000 in the black in 2019, \$425,000 in 2020, and just under \$200,000 in 2021. He noted the Church Extension Loan Fund now holds \$1.14 million in assets, which helps investors, churches, and the department's general fund.

Crowe pointed to numerous exciting "firsts" for NAM: first churches in Vermont and North Dakota; first non-ordained workers on a church-planting team; first church in a retirement community (The Villages, Florida); first partnership with district associations and local congregations to plant churches; first Hispanic Power Conference in the States; first English/Hispanic





ELECTED IN 2022

Welch - 2028

Brad Ryan (IL)
Wayne Miracle (GA)
Rusty Campbell (TN)

IM, Inc. - 2028

Will Harmon (AR)
Cameron Lane (AR)
Rodney Yerby (AL)

Randall House - 2028

Jay Baines (VA)
Timothy York (NY)
Darren Gibbs (NC)

WNAC - 2028

Jonda Patton (KY)
Lee Ann Wilfong (MO)
Sharon Dickey (TX)

Theological Commission - 2027

Kevin Hester (TN)

Historical Commission - 2027

Willie Martin (GA)

Music Commission - 2027

Doug Little (TN)

Media Commission - 2027

Devon Dundee (AR)

Executive Committee - 2025

David Taylor (AR)
Danny Williams (AL)
Mike Kilcrease (CA)

Nominating Committee - 2022-23

*appointed by moderator

Ben Crabtree (OH), chairman
Tim Eaton (OK)
Isaiah Hatfield (WV)
Terry Hinds (IN)
David Taylor (AR)
Elizabeth Hodges (TN)

church plant in Athens, Alabama; first onsite assessments at the recently established assessment center; first pastor's boot camp; first African-American and Hispanic NAM board members; first heavy equipment added to the Disaster Response Team; first historical church property deeded to NAM (the Ridge Church in New Hampshire).

He defined a clear direction for NAM: planting English and Hispanic churches in North America; relocating and emphasizing the Hispanic Bible Institute; expanding and supporting Free Will Baptist chaplaincy; continuing and expanding Master's Men Disaster Response; church revitalization; growing and maintaining the Church Extension Loan Fund; and forming partnerships with local churches, associations, and departments for the sake of the gospel.

Crowe concluded: "On behalf of our family—65 church planter families, chaplains, board members, staff, part time staff, volunteers, and one very tired CEO—we say thank you so much for what you do to help us."

In conjunction with the NAM report, Board Chairman Jeff Jones honored church planters Brian and Emily Williams (Buffalo, New York), Marc and Casie Neppel and Kevin and Beth Bass (Portsmouth, Virginia) for taking their churches to self-supporting status.

BOARD OF RETIREMENT. Director John Brummitt pointed to 2021 as a difficult year for the office, as things slowly emerged from the "fog" of the pandemic. His office experienced staffing changes and challenges as employees were hired, trained, and began new roles. Despite the upheaval, Brummitt noted the organization is headed in the right direction. Contributions rose significantly in 2020, up more than \$4 million. After good market returns for the last two years, assets have increased to \$114 million, although 2022 has not experienced the same success. Contributions were \$1.4 million, with an annual net gain of \$14 million. Institutional Investing has increased \$9.6 million as more churches and ministries use the plan for strategic savings.

While the number of new participants is down because of the pandemic, the department is focused on finding new members this year. With that in mind, Brummitt introduced new options available to participants, giving them more control over their retirement accounts.

He encouraged Free Will Baptists to take advantage of Bible-based, financial, educational resources available by newsletter, social media, through the Re:invest Podcast, and at boardofretirement.com. "Our hope is for these resources to be uniquely beneficial to our denomination, not only for pastors, but for individual church members as well."

In closing, Brummitt urged Free Will Baptist employees to make plans for retirement *now*: "Free Will Baptists have an excellent vehicle to help your retirement grow, but you have to make a start and make the contributions!"

RANDALL HOUSE. Director Ron Hunter shared "notable quotables" throughout his report to guide his explanation of the exciting things happening at Randall House. He described the process of discipleship: *gather*, *train*, and *disciple*. This process happens at home, church, and work—throughout the daily routine and not only one day a week. Psalm 78:5-6 commands each new generation to teach statutes and commandments to the next.

Hunter rejoiced over the global expansion of D6, now hosted in six countries beyond the U.S. While Randall House is not a missions agency, Hunter emphasized D6 philosophy supports the work of missions at every level.

He thanked the Discipleship Task Force established in 2021 for its work to help Randall House prepare for the fall 2023 release of the next line of D6 curriculum and celebrated increases

within the Randall House Book Division, where sales rose 30% in 2021, followed by the highest quarterly sales ever in early 2022.

Hunter acknowledged a 14% drop in curriculum sales in 2021, as churches continued to recover from the pandemic, accompanied a 33% drop in Vertical Three attendance, and an operational loss of 18% for the D6 Conference. Despite these discouraging figures, Hunter expressed gratitude that Randall House finished 2021 in the black, thanks to unexpected influxes of cash from since-forgiven PPE loans, the sale of an adjacent lot, the sale of a press, and more. He thanked the Foundation for two grants that helped the department through COVID-related financial challenges and also made it possible to buy an in-house binder and complete the purchase of a new and much-needed press.

Numerous churches and individuals have begun supporting Randall House financially since the department introduced a development department in 2020. Terry Hill, long-time auditor, encouraged all Free Will Baptist churches to support Randall House through budgeted giving, individual financial support, and buying curriculum faithfully.

Following his report, Hunter introduced a potential name change from Randall House to D6 Family Ministries, noting, “We are not a publisher who does ministry but a ministry who publishes...D6 Family Ministries is the best expression of who we are.” If the name change is approved, book publishing would continue under the Randall House, Randall House Academic, and D6 Publishing imprints. The name change will be revisited in 2023.

In conjunction with the report, Randall House Board Chairman Mike Trimble (MI) honored Hunter for 20 years of ministry.

IM, INC. “Sometimes at IM, it feels as though we are stacking rocks,” observed Director Clint Morgan, as he noted the department’s pursuit of organizational balance. He pointed to two ingredients that must be present for this balance to take place: *equilibrium* and *symmetry*. He introduced five “musts” for IM to achieve this balance: 1) obey the Scriptures; 2) adhere to Free Will Baptist structure; 3) focus on mission; 4) steward resources; and 5) contextualize.

Morgan reminded listeners the World Missions Offering has shifted from April to August, although churches can schedule the offering throughout the year in the timeframe that works best for their congregation. The offering helps underwrite the IM general fund and partners. This support for partners is crucial, Morgan explained, because a significant paradigm shift has removed IM from the “hub” of Free Will Baptist missions work. Today, IM works in cooperation with partners around the world to accomplish the Great Commission. IM currently has 27 partner agencies, and others are being vetted. Considering this philosophical shift, Morgan reassured listeners, “You can be sure we *cannot* and *will not* compromise the Scriptures, nor have we lost sight of our primary mission.”

Morgan updated listeners on several staffing changes. Neil Gilliland, director of member care and mobilization, will retire at year’s end. Leslie Nichols, current CMP coordinator, will become the new director of mobilization, starting January 1, 2023. Hanna Mott (MI) will step down after a decade as ETEAM coordinator, and Lauren Herren (TN) will follow her in the position.

Significant field transitions are also taking place. Uruguayan Free Will Baptists have assumed leadership in their country, becoming strategic partners with IM. As a result, Jaimie Lancaster has become associate director of field partnerships, and Steve Torrison works with the Center for Intercultural Training. After 38 years, Donnie and Ruth McDonald are returning home



2023 BUDGETS

Executive Office - \$929,343

Foundation - \$2,490,000

NAM (includes Master's
Men) - \$5,000,000

IM, Inc. - \$8,850,000

Retirement - \$855,850

Randall House - \$4,641,500

Welch College - \$8,363,889

WNAC - \$249,669

Theological Commission - \$6,800

Historical Commission - \$5,680

Media Commission - \$9,425

Music Commission - \$9,320

Total - \$31,408,476

2022 VERTICAL THREE CONFERENCE

Registration - **2,894**

Truth & Peace - **164 participants**

Competitive Entries: **747**

Competitors: **1,412**

Buck-A-Week Offering: **\$5,029.56***

* Initial count may be adjusted





from Japan. Donnie will work with the IM development team, and Ruth will become director of WNAC. Missionaries to Spain Tim and Kristi Johnson have resumed ministry in the U.S. Tim will lead the missions department at Welch College starting fall 2022, and Kristi was introduced as development communications manager.

Following the report, IM recognized several individuals. Jerry and Barbara Gibbs were honored for 50 years of missions work, receiving a standing ovation from delegates. Morgan recognized Neil Gilliland, outgoing director of member care, mobilization, and candidate shepherd for decades of service as both missionary to Ivory Coast and on staff with the mission.

WNAC. Phyllis York, interim director of WNAC, acknowledged 2021 as a year of transition. After former director Elizabeth Hodges retired in August 2021, Phyllis began serving as interim director until Ruth McDonald returns from Japan to begin her new role.

Income for the department is down, a result of recent changes to membership structure and fees. Considering this, York encouraged individuals, groups, churches, and associations to support WNAC through The Giving Tree, a campaign of monthly organizational support.

Free Will Baptist women gave \$425,000 in 2021 to missions and ministry causes. Over the last year, more than \$21,000 in home goods and gift cards were donated to the Provision Closet. Scholarships were awarded to Daniel Delgado (Miley Scholarship); Word of Life School, Bangladesh (Pursell Scholarship); Leslie Arrendondo, Heather Thomas, and Michelle Sharp (Wisehart Scholarship).

York celebrated the first in-person event since the pandemic, when 115 attendees from ten states gathered in West Virginia for the Flourish Conference hosted by ladies from Kentucky, Ohio, and West Virginia. She pointed listeners to new Web and social media resources, including online *Treasure* Bible studies, e-blasts, and resources for young women at shinefbw.com.

At the conclusion of her report, York honored Pam Hackett for many years of board service, thanked women for the opportunity to serve as interim director, and gave Ruth McDonald an opportunity to greet delegates.

Ruth expressed thanks to Phyllis for her interim work, thanked the WNAC Board for the honor of serving as the new director, and expressed excitement about “changing hats” as she steps into the new position. However, she also explained the missions of IM and WNAC overlap and complement one another in fulfilling the Great Commission and making disciples. “This new role is not a departure from my calling,” Ruth concluded. “It is an extension of my calling.” McDonald thanked Free Will Baptist women for their faithfulness and staunch support of missions and expressed her desire to give back, coming alongside Free Will Baptist women everywhere to disciple the next generation of young women.

WELCH COLLEGE. After the pandemic depressed college enrollment in 2020, President Matt Pinson celebrated enrollment increases during 2021-2022, and announced the 2022 freshman class is tracking at pre-pandemic numbers. The school did not experience anticipated financial losses of \$900,000 in 2021 but ended the year with a deficit of only \$90,000 instead. Pinson encouraged listeners to identify and enlist donors to join the *Building on the Legacy—The Next Step* campaign to erase construction debt on the new campus and make further development possible.

Pinson celebrated Welch’s steady rise in college rankings, now listed among the top ten in *U.S. News & World Report’s* Best Colleges, improving in every measurable educational metric. He

thanked God that, despite the pandemic, the college was able to begin Welch Divinity School, offering a Master of Divinity degree to join the college's other master's degree programs. Twelve students enrolled in the first class.

A new B.A. to M.Div. program dovetails with a recently initiated \$10,000 scholarship to assist young men in pastoral and youth ministry programs. This is especially important, Pinson noted, "in a time when fewer high school students are answering the call to ministry."

Pinson thanked God for students who "are growing up here...becoming more spiritually mature. They are becoming leaders—ministry leaders for churches and missions around the world and lay leaders who bear witness to Christ across the professions."

Following the report, President Pinson honored outgoing board member Mike Armstrong (OH) for his service.

COMMISSIONS

Music Commission. Chairman Doug Little reported the growth of an onsite worship workshop program. A dozen churches applied in 2021, and several workshops were presented in early 2022. The program will continue, and Little noted the commission "will continue to work with churches in a coaching role." The commission continues active involvement in National Convention worship, working with the Media Commission and Executive Office staff to help convention services flow smoothly and efficiently.

Media Commission. Josh Owens celebrated the 40th anniversary of the Media Commission, which started as the Radio and Television Commission, using radio broadcasts to promote the gospel. Today, the work of the commission continues via new technology. As the grandson of an original member, Owens expressed, "What a blessing it is to be able to continue the vision of my grandfather and the other members of that original commission." He thanked the Foundation for a grant to purchase live-streaming equipment with ASL translation capabilities. The commission is available to consult with churches regarding communication, technology, and design.

Commission for Theological Integrity. Chairman Matt Pinson updated listeners on a successful and engaging Theological Symposium in 2021, with papers on a wide range of important topics. He indicated the release of another edition of *The Journal for Theological Integrity* later in 2022 and invited delegates to attend the next Symposium October



3-4, 2022, at Welch College. He pointed to the continuing mission to alert Free Will Baptists to dangerous theological trends, to prepare materials to help preserve the denomination's theological integrity, and to provide education on subjects relevant to this purpose. He invited Free Will Baptists to visit fwbtheology.com for news, updates, and dialogue.

Historical Commission. After unveiling a new logo, Secretary Eric Thomsen thanked delegates for a sharp increase in current minutes submitted by associational clerks. "It is easy to forget minutes produced today are history tomorrow," he warned. He thanked individual and organizational contributors to the Historical Collection and updated progress on scanning and posting denominational minutes to FWBHistory.com. He noted representatives from the commission were delighted to join the Ridge Church celebration in New Hampshire, marking 200 years since the historic building was constructed. Finally, Thomsen announced a forthcoming book from Randall House to guide churches and associations through planning, funding, and producing their history.

In other business, delegates considered a broad slate of resolutions. After lengthy discussion and debate, they passed three of five resolutions, tabling two others (regarding standards of ordination) to be considered by the Executive Committee and the Commission for Theological Integrity. Adopted resolutions include:

- A resolution thanking God for the recent Supreme Court decision regarding abortion, requesting the Executive Office send a letter of thanks to the U.S. Supreme Court to express appreciation for its decision, and urging Free Will Baptists to redouble efforts to see each state's abortion laws reflect the value of unborn life.
- A resolution denoting corporate repentance as Free Will Baptists, acknowledging our sin before God; begging His forgiveness both individually and as a body, fasting, praying, and pleading for Him to hear our prayer; and setting aside the first Tuesday in November as a day of fasting and prayer as evidence of our resolve and repentance.

- A resolution expressing a rising vote of thanks to the Alabama State Association for hosting the 2022 national convention.


Read the full text of these resolutions at nafwb.org/convention.

Delegates also adopted an addition to the *Treatise* (presented by the Commission for Theological Integrity for consideration in 2021) further defining Free Will Baptist doctrine regarding gender, marriage, and sexuality. They passed a motion requiring the Resolution Committee to prepare and present their report to convention delegates by the Monday evening service. And, after many years, delegates also raised

the honorarium for the convention clerk and moderator from \$500 to \$1,000 to offset rising travel expenses.

Business ended with pastors and leaders from across the nation praying together. They cried out to God in repentance, begging His grace and direction.

LOOKING AHEAD

Executive Secretary Eddie Moody invited Free Will Baptists to join the National Convention July 16-19, 2023, when the denomination gathers in Raleigh, North Carolina, for the 87th convention with the theme “As for You.” 



VIII CONFERENCE *Review* JULY 24-27, 2022 BIRMINGHAM, AL



One of the greatest things Free Will Baptists do is gather each summer for the National Convention and Vertical Three Conference. The interaction with friends from across the denomination gives the meeting a “family reunion” feel. You cannot attend a convention without getting a brief earthly glimpse of what Heaven will be like someday.

CTS MINISTRY EXPO

One of the ways Free Will Baptists connect is through the CTS Ministry Expo. This year, **1,412 students** competed in **747 categories** of Bible and fine arts. However, the emphasis of CTS is not competition but students using their talents to glorify the Lord in music, art, writing, digital media, and Bible. The future of the Free Will Baptist family is bright. It is my prayer the students in our movement will continue to hide God’s Word in their hearts and use their talents for His Kingdom and glory.

TRUTH & PEACE STUDENT LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE

The 2022 Truth & Peace Student Leadership Conference was the largest conference in its history, gathering 164 students from across the denomination. They were trained on the campus of Welch College for ten days prior to the Vertical Three Conference. The journey from the college to Birmingham proved quite an adventure. One of three charter buses broke down on I-65 in North Alabama. Thanks to many kind members of the Free Will





Baptist family and the experienced conference staffers, the crew arrived safely in Birmingham, only a few hours behind schedule.

Starting on Sunday, Truth & Peace put their recent training into practice when they became the workforce needed to execute the CTS Ministry Expo and various other components of the Vertical Three Conference.

The 2022 Truth & Peace Conference marked the 25th year for Allen Pointer as conference director. The Bible is clear: honor should be given to those to whom honor is due. The Free Will Baptist denomination owes Allen a huge debt for shaping the lives of young people for over two decades.

YOUTH EVANGELISTIC TEAM

One of the highlights of the Vertical Three Conference is the Youth Evangelistic Team leading other students in worship. Thirteen students assembled at Welch College in late June for a week of training and rehearsal before heading out on a two-week tour through Georgia, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Alabama. After a short break, the team reunited in Birmingham to lead the Vertical Three Conference worship services and present their full program following the Monday evening service.

SERVE THE CITY

The 2022 Vertical Three Conference saw the return of Serve the City. Jane Parker led this ministry. Families from across the denomination gathered to distribute care bags to the homeless population of Birmingham and to provide items for a children's and women's shelter. Seeing moms and dads serve alongside their children is truly heartwarming.

WORSHIP SERVICES

Though all of the ministries are important, I see the highlight of the Vertical Three Conference as the various worship services. Preschool worship, as in the previous 20 years, was led by Katie Greenwood (TN). Johnny Miller (AR) led children's worship. Like Katie, Johnny has led children's worship for over two decades. Steve Greenwood (TN), leader of 456 worship, led preteen students in high energy songs and relevant Bible lessons helping shape their biblical worldview at this crucial age.

Along with YET leading in worship, middle school and high school students heard sermons centered on John 14:6 and Jesus being "the way, the truth, and the life." The Lord used pastors Tommy Franks (AL), Caleb Milling (OK), Chris Edwards (SC), former missionary to Spain Kristi Johnson (TN), and youth evangelist Jeffrey Dean Smith (TN) to challenge Vertical Three attendees. The conference was capped off by a night of fun and laughter with comedian Byron Trimble (MI).

JUST LIKE FAMILY

The convention is a place where college friends reconnect, Truth & Peace alumni gather over coffee and share stories of bygone conferences, and new friendships are formed to last for decades to come. Just like a family reunion? Absolutely! **ONE**



Robby Gallaty to Speak at 2022 Leadership Conference



Robby Gallaty

Nashville, TN—Pastors and ministry leaders from across the nation will gather at Sonesta Nashville Airport, December 5-6, for the 2022 Leadership Conference. The conference, which includes two days of training, inspiration, fellowship, and business, will feature bestselling author and pastor Robby Gallaty, who will explore the theme, “Discipleshift.”

“We look forward to hearing from Robby Gallaty at this year’s conference,” said Executive Secretary Eddie Moody. “His personal testimony is powerful, and his passion for discipleship is contagious. I think attendees will benefit from what they hear.”

Today, Gallaty pastors Long Hollow Baptist Church in Hendersonville, Tennessee. However, his life story is a vivid testimony to God’s grace. Drug addiction ravaged his life for three years. After living without gas, electricity, and water for months, losing eight friends to drug-related deaths, watching six friends arrested, and completing two rehab treatments, Robby was saved in November 2002. He was later mentored by David Platt, who encouraged Robby to return to school to pursue theological education. Robby completed an M.Div. in Expository Preaching

in 2007 and a Ph.D. in Preaching in 2011 from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Today, he is passionate about making “disciples who make disciples.” He is founder of Replicate Ministries and has authored several books, including *Growing Up*, *Firmly Planted*, and *Rediscovering Discipleship*. He and his wife Kandi have two sons, Rig and Ryder.

Between keynote sessions, attendees will enjoy banquet styled meals, a broad variety of seminars, panel discussions, and workshops on Tuesday, and free time to enjoy fellowship or sightseeing in Nashville. In addition, several national boards and commissions will hold meetings in conjunction with the conference.

“The 2021 Leadership Conference was the largest in decades,” noted Ryan Lewis. “Not only did we have a great attendance, but the program expanded to include several key seminar tracks, panel discussions, and seminars for Spanish speakers. We are excited to build upon last year’s event, and once again, we anticipate a great turnout. Robby Gallaty and our slate of seminar speakers will stretch the way we view discipleship and equip us with tools to go and make more.”

For updates on the conference, visit www.nafwb.org/leadershipconference. **ONE**



Love Your Neighbor

BY EDDIE MOODY

We know a great deal about the people we love—their likes and dislikes and what motivates them. We study and observe them, taking careful mental notes. However, Jesus also told us to love our *neighbors* (Mark 12:31). To love our neighbors as ourselves, we must study them and get to know them. For some, this can be difficult.

The average American moves 11 times during a lifetime. This constant shifting makes it difficult to get to know your neighbor. It also makes it difficult for a church to know and reach the changing neighborhood around it.¹ But we *must* know our neighbors to love them and reach them with the gospel effectively.

Who is our neighbor? Jesus answered this question in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Anyone we encounter, no matter how different from us, is our neighbor, and we are expected to identify and meet their needs (Luke 10:37).

What do we need to know about our neighbors? Consider age (young people have different struggles than seniors), family status (single, divorced, married, widowed), financial status, and even health. Throughout the Gospels, Jesus addressed the needs of people to reach them, and these needs varied greatly. Nicodemus needed questions answered like the modern skeptic struggling to trust the Bible. The Woman at the Well needed a listening ear, like those entangled in sexual sin or bad relationships. Tax collectors needed to belong just like those today who are marginalized, isolated, and lonely. By knowing more about our neighbors, we prepare to meet their needs, and sometimes, meeting a physical or emotional need is the gateway to meeting a spiritual need.

What are our neighbors like, and what do they like?


Look at race, gender, vocation, and leisure time. Jesus knew He would run into a Samaritan at Sychar, find fishermen at the seashore, and tax collectors hard at work in the office. Knowing our neighbors creates opportunities



to encounter them in places they are comfortable, get to know them, and, by God's grace, reach them.

Communities are all unique and ever-changing. For more in-depth knowledge of your own church community, the Executive Office provides a Know Your Community report for areas within a five, ten, 15, or 20-minute drive of your location. We provide this vital information through Church Answers for \$100. We can also meet with your church via Zoom to discuss results of the report, along with strategies for reaching your neighbors.

Each church receives information about other participating Free Will Baptist churches, creating opportunities to work together and learn more about reaching communities similar to your own, though geographically distant.

As we work together, we are becoming more effective at knowing, loving, and reaching our neighbors. Interested? Email questions@nafwb.org. 



Eddie Moody

Executive Secretary,
National Association of
Free Will Baptists

¹ A. Chandler. October 21, 2016. Why Do Americans Move So Much More Than Europeans? *The Atlantic*. Accessed at <https://www.theatlantic.com/business/archive/2016/10/us-geographic-mobility/504968/>

Want to be remembered forever?

Since 2013, **Free Will Baptist Foundation** and **Cornerstone Estate Planning** have helped more than **2,300 families** create estate plans for nearly **\$1 billion** in assets, of which **\$53 million** has been left to ministry causes. You can trust these reliable ministries to help you prepare your estate to benefit your family and the ministries you love after you are gone, without the pain and frustration of probate court. Settle your plans before difficult days come and **create a legacy that will keep your memory alive until the Lord returns.**



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It's STORM Season!

Since 2006, **Master's Men** has guided Free Will Baptist disaster response, helping the denomination work together to provide relief on a much larger scale. Coordinating with state teams and local volunteers, **Master's Men** prepares for disasters before they happen. You can help the DRT in a number of ways:

-  Become a DRT volunteer.
-  Provide financial assistance.
-  Donate equipment and supplies.
-  Pray.

Learn more about the DRT:
FWBMastersMen.org

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