



Overcome

MEMORABLE MEETING ON THE MISSISSIPPI

85TH *nafwb* CONVENTION * JULY 18-21, 2021 * MEMPHIS, TN

Alternating sun and showers caused steam to rise from the muddy banks of the Mississippi when Free Will Baptists returned to Memphis, Tennessee, July 18-21, for the denomination's 85th National Convention. Yet no one complained about the heat, humidity, and rain. After two years apart due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Free Will Baptists were simply happy to be back together.

The excitement and gratitude carried over into worship services marked by enthusiastic congregational singing, powerful preaching, and special music that spontaneously brought the congregation to its feet on multiple occasions. Keynote speakers Danny Conn (TN), Melvin Moon (MO), Christian Powell (NC), Keith Burden (OK), Eddie Moody (TN), and John Weaver (OK) explored the obviously relevant theme "Overcome" from various Scripture passages, reminding attendees during difficult times they should sow seed (Matthew 13:1-23), follow the Good Shepherd (Matthew 18:10-14), work together (Matthew 18:15-35), be good stewards (Matthew 25:14-30), and reach out to everyone (Luke 14:15-24).

In addition to worship services, convention attendees participated in communion and the washing of the saints' feet on Sunday (the first time that ordinance has been observed at the National Convention). Throughout the week, conven-

tion-goers also took advantage of more than 70 seminars, workshops, and panel discussions exploring important subjects related to families, churches, ministry, theology, and more. Children and teens enjoyed age-appropriate activities, crafts, and worship.

STARTING IMPACT

July 17, the Saturday preceding the convention, 91 volunteers took part in IMPACT, the annual one-day campaign of kindness and evangelism. Fifty-one workers assembled at Cross Creek FWB Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi, to host a free car wash and take a prayer walk through communities surrounding the church. They washed 34 cars and trucks, prayed over 621 houses, and prayed with 15 individuals during the event. Cross Creek pastor Paul Bryant said, "What a blessing to be part of IMPACT! Through a free car wash and neighborhood prayer walk, we connected with

our community and showed them a God who loves them and a church that cares for them. We are thankful for the many contacts we gained because of this ministry.”

On the other side of Memphis, in the Oakland community, a second team of 40 volunteers worked at Faith FWB Church with Pastor Jordan Osborn. Participating in “Operation Saturation,” they canvassed neighborhoods near the church. Volunteers distributed 2,000-plus cards, inviting community members to an “Open House” at the church in the coming weeks.

In 2022, IMPACT will return to Birmingham, the city where it started in 2006. Follow emerging details at fwbmastersmen.org.

HONORED IN MEMPHIS

Two outstanding individuals were honored for lifetime achievements during the Memphis convention: Carlisle Hanna and Elizabeth Hodges. During his report to delegates, IM Director Clint Morgan celebrated the 70-year ministry of Carlisle Hanna, missionary to India, noting, “After a great deal of research, we cannot find another missionary in history who has served any missions organization for a longer period of time.” He honored the trailblazer for “serving unfailingly through wars, pestilence, earthquakes, Bengal tigers, disease, severe spiritual attacks, and the loss of both a child and spouse.”

On Wednesday evening, during the annual missions service and following a video of Hanna’s amazing missions story, the congregation rose to their feet with thunderous applause, honoring the missionary’s lifetime of faithfulness. The 92-year-old lifted his hands in his familiar Hindi gesture of thanks, then encouraged Free Will Baptists to continue supporting the work in India, both financially and prayerfully.

Following her final report as director of WNAC, Elizabeth Hodges received a standing ovation when her board honored her faithful service. She was additionally honored during the annual Laughter and Latté reception and again during the Tuesday evening worship service when seven other departmental directors presented Hodges with flowers and a plaque. Phyllis York, assistant to Hodges, reflected on the director’s selfless work: “I have worked with Elizabeth for 11 years. She has worked tirelessly and sacrificed personally to build bridges enabling WNAC to be where it is today, and she is leaving the ministry poised for an exciting future.”

DOWN TO BUSINESS

General Board : The General Board began its meeting Monday, July 19, with a brief message from outgoing Executive Board member Mike Wade (OK). The board heard reports from eight national agencies and four commissions as Moderator Tim York led board members through a one-hour, 55-minute meeting. The board approved a broad slate of recommendations from the Executive Committee: approving a 2022 denominational budget of \$30.1 million; recommending limiting denominational officers to two consecutive, four-year terms and commission members to two consecutive, five-year terms; integrating the Manual for Board Members into each national board’s operating procedures; updating the nominating procedures in the *Treatise*; and, from the Commission for Theological Integrity, updating the *Treatise* statement regarding marriage (Appendix to Chapter IV, Section 1).

All recommendations from the General Board were later approved by delegates during the convention business session.

The denomination additionally voted to adopt three resolutions. The first further defines Free Will Baptist doctrine regarding gender, marriage, and sexuality, including the commitment to: “teach and model a biblical understanding of sexuality and gender in their families and churches, seeking to equip church members and leaders to help them remain faithful to this teaching.”

The second resolution reaffirms the denomination’s stance against racism, further resolving that the denomination not “root its proclamation, witness, and efforts toward racial equality in language, thought forms, and understandings of justice that emerge from secular philosophical and sociological theory, such as critical race theory and intersectionality.”

The final resolution thanked Tennessee for hosting the memorable convention.

Executive Office : Executive Secretary Eddie Moody announced a \$1.25 million drop in giving to all national departments during the last year, a disturbing trend. Moody did not attribute this downward motion to COVID alone but pointed to unhealthy churches and the loss of churches (46 in the last year). He encouraged the denomination to take advantage of Refresh coaching and resources, to pray fervently for God to call new pastors and deacons into ministry, and to work together to improve ordaining boards. “We must focus on church health,” he challenged. “We must focus on the important things and do them together.”

2021

CONVENTION

at a glance

REGISTRATION

NAFWB Attendees - **2,791**

Vertical Three - **2,237**

Total Attendees - **3,345***

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

SPEAKERS

Sunday School, July 18

Danny Conn (TN)

Sunday Morning, July 18

Melvin Moon (MO)

Sunday Evening, July 18

Christian Powell (NC)

Monday Evening, July 19

Keith Burden (OK)

Tuesday Evening, July 20

Eddie Moody (TN)

Wednesday Evening, July 21

John Weaver (OK)

LIVE STREAMING

Service Views - **44,000**

Total Views (including music, clips,
and other media) - **59,000**

Comments, shares, and reactions - **10,000+**

Contributors: Eric Thomsen,
Hannah Driggers, Elizabeth Hill,
Deborah St. Lawrence, Phyllis York

Vertical Three: Derek Altom

Photographers: Rodney Yerby,
Sydney Walker

Download Photos: nafwb.yerbyphoto.com

He announced upcoming fall initiatives based on 3 for 30, the decade long plan for growth adopted in 2020.

Moody also encouraged the denomination to take full advantage of a broad variety of available resources from the Executive Office: the bi-weekly NAFWB News email, the Online Church Directory, social media graphics and posts, the Better Together Podcast, printed and digital training resources, church growth initiatives, and church revitalization tools (Refresh). All of these can be accessed through nafwb.org.

Following his report, Moody honored outgoing Executive Board members Edwin Hayes, Glenn Poston, and Mike Wade for their work on the board.

Welch College : President Matt Pinson indicated the greatest challenge facing Welch College today is ministerial students who go to community college, intending to attend Welch as upperclassmen. “They never come back,” Pinson acknowledged with regret. To offset this trend, he urged Free Will Baptists to encourage potential pastoral students to start at Welch as freshmen.

On a brighter note, the president indicated that pastoral ministry enrollment has doubled over the past two years, largely due to new scholarships for ministerial degrees. Although the college struggled in both enrollment and finances in 2020 due to COVID-19, projected losses were not as significant as first thought, \$98,000 rather than the expected \$765,000. He encouraged the denomination to continue faithful financial support, in anticipation of another tough financial year in the wake of the pandemic.

Pinson shared exciting news for the college—the launch of the M.Div. program, the first of its kind for the denomination. The three-year divinity degree is a residential program, with students studying on campus. As a result, the M.A. in Theology and Ministry will become available entirely online.

WNAC : Despite the limitations and challenges created by COVID-19, in her final report as WNAC director, Elizabeth Hodges highlighted significant milestones for the department. Women gave \$412,000 to missions and ministry causes, in-person events were replaced by successful virtual events, many WNAC resources were translated into multiple languages, *Treasure* devotional guide moved online, and Young Women Active for Christ (YWAC) programs were reintroduced. Social media, blogs, and e-blasts expanded communication with participants. A new WNAC app opened communication and giving opportunities, and video devotions are now posted weekly to Facebook and YouTube.

Hodges announced the first in-person event in more than two years: the 2022 *Flourish* conference will be March 26, 2022, at Central FWB Church in Huntington, West Virginia. A *Shine!* Facebook Live event will be held October 2, 2021.

Director Hodges celebrated the completion of the Free Will Baptist Women’s Center in Côte d’Ivoire, Africa, made possible in part through the gifts of women, both in the U.S. and Côte d’Ivoire, and a grant from Free Will Baptist Foundation.

Hodges urged Free Will Baptist women to give faithfully to support the office so WNAC ministries can continue. “Over the years, Free Will Baptist ladies have

supported missions, projects, and many other things well through WNAC, but they have not always seen the need to support the WNAC office itself. While we have tackled the resulting financial challenges by streamlining the staff and operations, unless this mindset changes, the office is in trouble.”

Director Hodges concluded her report by honoring outgoing board members Diana Bryant and Janie Campbell for many years of service. She thanked her assistant Phyllis York and Free Will Baptist women: “It has been my privilege to serve you and to serve alongside you. I have been blessed. Together, we can accomplish more. We are truly better together.”

Randall House : Director and CEO Ron Hunter thanked the denomination for faithful support during the COVID-19 roller coaster. Although 75% of churches stopped meeting for a significant time, only 25% stopped ordering curriculum. “Churches continued ordering, knowing they would not use the material,” Hunter acknowledged. “We are grateful. Without you, we would have closed our doors.”

Despite the faithful ordering, careful spending, federal PPP loans, and a grant from FWB Foundation, the department still suffered a \$907,000 revenue loss, the result of fewer orders and events totaling \$1.7 million. With this in mind, Randall House must shift from a sales-alone model to reliance on both sales and gift income, emphasizing fundraising.

Hunter challenged Free Will Baptist churches and individuals to become “D6 Heroes” by continuing to order curriculum and by putting the department into their annual budget. Visit D6Hero.com for more information about supporting this important ministry. “This [funding change] is a paradigm shift for Randall House,” Hunter conceded, “but it is our greatest need moving forward.”

Hunter honored outgoing board members Randy Scott and Steve Lindsay for their work on the board.

IM, Inc. : Despite postponements, cancellations, and frustrations in 2020, or “the year that wasn’t” as missionary Kenneth Eagleton has described it, IM Director Clint Morgan rejoiced that the department continues to approve and send new missionaries to bring healing to this broken world. In spite of pandemic upheaval, Morgan reminded listeners “God did not step off of His throne; strong Christians did not succumb to the gloom and doom; the church did not cease to exist; His Word did not pass away; and the world has not come to an end.” He reaffirmed IM’s commitment to the Great Commission “because 6.7 billion of the earth’s 7.8 billion people are not yet followers of Christ.”

Morgan announced significant staffing changes for IM. Carlisle Hanna retired after 70 years in India; Financial Operations Manager Cheri Ham retired; two interns, Emily Petty and Abby Walker, were approved; and Tim and Kristi Johnson left Spain to serve as missionaries-in-residence at Welch College. Morgan thanked the Johnsons for 22 years of faithful service to the people of Spain.

Though COVID-19 hampered numerical reporting, Morgan reported overseas churches saw 1,076 conversions (126 more than 2019), 1,487 baptisms, and an average attendance of 34,870. He also shared highlights from various fields: the purchase of a church building in Bulgaria; great strides for Adam and Carol

ELECTED IN 2021

NAM

2027

Mike Cash (AZ)

Jose Rodriguez (TN)

Marshall Bonéy (VA)

2025 - Bob Brown (FL)

Board of Retirement - 2027

Joel Franks (AL)

Brent Nix (Northwest)

Clayton Hampton (MT)

FWB Foundation - 2027

Lee Allen (AR)

Gene Williams (NC)

Scott Coghill (NC)

Media Commission - 2026

Adrian Holland (OK)

Theological Commission

2026 - Jackson Watts (MO)

2024 - Cory Thompson (OK)

Historical Commission - 2026

Jim McComas (TN)

Music Commission - 2026

Joshua Riggs (OK)

Executive Committee - 2024

Chris Dotson (TN)

Chris Todd (SC)

Reuben Cason (NC)

General Board - 2024

Reuben Cason (NC)

Bill Reynolds (Northeast)

Brent Nix (Northwest)

Ben Crabtree (OH)

Dick Terry (OK)

Chris Todd (SC)

Chris Dotson (TN)

John Collier (TX)

Bruce Barnes (VA)

James Cox, Jr. (WV)

Officers

Moderator: Tim York (TN)

Assistant Moderator: William Smith (GA)

Clerk: Randy Bryant (FL)

Assistant Clerk: Ernie Lewis (IL)

2021-22 NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Johnny Miller (AR) – Chair

Ben Crabtree (OH)

Jonathan Locklear (MI)

Shirley Jackson (MO)

Todd Black (SC)

Curtis Smith (IL)

Kent Barwick (GA)

2022 BUDGETS

Executive Office - \$834,600

Foundation - \$2,314,000

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

IM, Inc. - \$8,450,000

Retirement - \$717,543

Randall House - \$4,566,890

Welch College - \$8,013,520

WNAC - \$229,700

Theological Commission - \$6,800

Historical Commission - \$5,830

Media Commission - \$5,308

Music Commission - \$8,820

Total - \$30,153,011

Wednesday Night Convention

Offering - \$14,980.32*

* Initial count may be adjusted

2021 VERTICAL THREE CONFERENCE

Registration - **2,237**

Truth & Peace - **141 participants**

Competitive Entries: **592**

Competitors: **1,085**

Buck-A-Week Offering: **\$5,513**



Duncan in Ecuador; and a new church in Chateaubriant, France, the first Protestant congregation in 500 years. Japan, the second largest unreached people group, now has 23 Free Will Baptist missionaries; the Simmons have resumed their work in Kenya; and in Spain, two new couples have nearly reached the funding necessary to join the team. IM is currently opening new fields in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

The financial picture in 2020 was better for the department than anticipated. CFO Robert Conley reported the agency finished in the black by \$648,105.

Morgan emphasized the importance of partner relationships that expand the agency's ministry exponentially. IM now has 21 partners representing a broad range of ministries. The department also partners with international Free Will Baptist church organizations and ministries across North America. "That is what we are about at IM," Morgan concluded, "laboring with the Body of Christ to fulfill the Great Commission."

North American Ministries (NAM) : Director David Crowe introduced a five-year strategic plan for NAM. These goals include: increase English-speaking church planters to 55; increase Spanish-speaking church planters to 100; launch an on-site church planter assessment center; translate ten Master's Men *Direction Bible Studies* into Spanish; create and launch a national Master's Men retreat; develop and launch a youth training program for teen boys through Master's Men; grow the Church Extension Loan fund to exceed \$100 million; increase the number of chaplains (active and in-process) to 20; double the number of churches giving to NAM; and increase the general fund contingency to \$1 million. Crowe expressed gratitude that several of these goals already have been surpassed or nearly reached.

After a record financial year in 2019, the department continued its positive financial trend, finishing 2020 in the black by \$420,000. The department changed its official name from Home Missions to Free Will Baptist North American Ministries.

Board of Retirement (BOR) : Although COVID-19 created a financial seesaw, Director John Brummitt expressed thankfulness the agency recovered nicely by year's end, with good returns on all account options. He noted the extension of federal PPP loans to churches and ministry organizations during COVID-19 were directly related to lobbying work the board completed through Church Alliance in the week preceding the important decision. Brummitt announced the department's intent to continue Re:Invest training, including the addition of the Re:Invest Podcast.

He announced a new investment option, Set Rate Strategy, giving investors more stability and the potential for bonuses. In addition, the expansion of institutional investing in 2020 helped more churches invest wisely. "That's what we are all about at Board of Retirement," Brummitt concluded, "preparing for future ministry."



More information about these new initiatives can be found at boardofretirement.com.

Free Will Baptist Foundation : Director David Brown compared the Foundation to the offensive line of a football team. Perhaps not the most visible group on the team, the offensive line is still crucial to the overall success of the team. Brown celebrated the Foundation “crossing the line” to reach \$100 million. He also announced the benefits of the estate planning program, which have increased exponentially. The resulting financial impact is \$2.1 million to the denomination annually, with future impact projections of more than \$40 million.

The department finished the year \$90,000 in the black, despite COVID-19 challenges. Brown announced the restructuring of the Money Management Trust program to meet new governmental guidelines. The program will be split into two: a charitable investment pool (ChIP) for ministries and a Demand Note (DN) program for individual investors. Both pools are closed to new investors temporarily, while restructuring takes place. However, the Foundation will continue to receive deposits from existing MMT accounts.

The grant program continues to help Free Will Baptist ministries. The program offered COVID-19 relief to three struggling departments in 2020, a half million to 26 ministries in 2021, and is on track to deliver \$750,000 in gifts in 2022.

Brown honored retiring staff member June McVay, and outgoing board members Elizabeth Hodges and Phil Whitaker for their work.

Commissions : Marc Neppl noted the **Media Commission** changed the way it does live-streaming in 2021, and the numbers of online viewers reflects the improvements: 44,000 people viewed services, with more than 10,000 shares, comments, and reactions. He encouraged Free Will Baptists to take full advantage of the resources and training offered by the commission. “We help churches succeed by educating, equipping, and encouraging tech and church leaders through difficult situations. We are dedicated to

helping the local church reach its community through social media, websites, and audio/video production.” Churches can learn more at fwbmedia.org.

The **Commission for Theological Integrity** said goodbye to long-time commission member, Dr. Thomas Marberry, noting his many theological contributions to the denomination and the work of the commission. Commission Chairman Matt Pinson challenged Free Will Baptists to attend the 2021 Theological Symposium, October 4-5, on the campus of Welch College. Pinson also encouraged the denomination to use the many theological articles, reviews, and resources on FWBTheology.com.

Doug Little, chairman of the **Music Commission**, acknowledged the pandemic forced the Music Commission to change the way things are done, and the changes have been good ones, with more regular meetings via Zoom and greater efficiency. Little celebrated the successful launch and growth of FWBWorship.com and a new program partnering Music and Media Commission members to coach local churches.

Historical Commission Secretary Eric Thomsen noted the passing of long-time commission member and chair Dr. Mary Ruth Wischart. He urged Free Will Baptists churches and associations to make record-keeping a high priority, noting, “The commission has worked with the Executive Office to make the submission of minutes a vital part of the district and state reporting process.” The commission continues development of The Minutes Project (collecting, scanning, and posting online national, state, and district or quarterly minutes). Access this collection at FWBHistory.com. To donate historical materials, contact curator Phillip Morgan: pmorgan@welch.edu.

LOOKING AHEAD

Executive Secretary Eddie Moody invited Free Will Baptists to “Go the Extra Mile” and join the National Convention July 24-27, 2022, when the denomination returns to Birmingham, Alabama, for its 86th convention. **ONE**



MOVING TOWARD NORMAL: THE 2021 VERTICAL THREE CONFERENCE

BY DEREK ALTOM

The 2,237 attendees of the Vertical Three Conference are a big reason Free Will Baptists are moving towards normal. One of the things I enjoyed most during my first convention as Vertical Three director was walking through the Renasant Center and simply watching people. I like to “people watch.”

Perhaps the most significant thing I observed was how normal everything seemed. In 2020, the global pandemic destroyed “normal.” The turn of the calendar to 2021 brought hope of returning to some sense of normalcy. From my perspective, the 2021 Vertical Three Conference was a significant step. To be clear, things are not back to where they were prior to COVID-19, but we are moving in the right direction. We are moving toward normal.

CTS Ministry Expo : A vital part of the Vertical Three Conference is the CTS Ministry Expo. Having to cancel the 2020 expo thwarted the hard work of students across the denomination. However, even though the 2021 CTS Ministry Expo saw a significant decrease from pre-pandemic levels, 1,085 participants competed throughout 592 entries. Things are moving toward normal.

Truth and Peace Student Leadership Conference : According to Truth and Peace Director Allen Pointer, it was 600 days from the selection of the students in the 2021 Truth and Peace Student Leadership Conference to the beginning of the conference. (Students selected in October of 2019 were automatically accepted for 2021 after the 2020 conference was canceled.) However, things began to look normal again as Truth and Peace students opened doors for competition, worked the Vertical Three store, and successfully completed many other tasks necessary for the success of the conference. All of this occurred after ten days of intense leadership training at Randall University. A huge thanks to the dedicated staff of Truth and Peace and to Allen Pointer, who just completed 24 years directing Truth and Peace.

Worship : Each year, the highlight of the Vertical Three

Conference is the nightly services. It was a joy to walk from room to room each night and see preschool students, elementary students, upper elementary students, middle school students, and high school students encountering Jesus in age-appropriate ways. I loved watching Katie Greenwood and her preschool team love children the way Jesus does. I loved seeing Johnny Miller and the whole team engage with students in first through third grade with fun activities and biblical truth that will help them encounter who God really is. I loved peeking in and observing Steve Greenwood and the 456 worship team impact students with the gospel in practical ways. The services all seemed very normal, and I could not help but smile.

Throughout the week, middle school and high school students were challenged by dynamic musical worship led by the National Youth Evangelistic Team. This group of talented students set the stage well for speakers David Mizelle, Quinn Norman, Trevor Holden, Victoria Paffile, and Jon Forrest. In each service, you could sense attendees were thrilled to be gathered once again, and things were getting back to normal. You could also sense students making decisions to be “Resolved” like Daniel, the theme of the 2021 conference.

The conference concluded with an evening of laughter as comedian Jonnie W. performed. He kept his audience on the edge of their seats wondering what hysterical thing he would say next.

Conclusion : As I stood in the back of the auditorium on Wednesday evening during the annual missionary service, my eyes filled with tears. It was not because I was sad. Instead, I was filled with joy. I was with family. I was with my Free Will Baptist brothers and sisters again. Things felt normal again.

If 2020 taught us nothing else, let it teach us we should never take things like gathering as a denomination for granted. We should thank the Lord we are moving toward “normal.” **ONE**