

THE NAFWB NEWS

2019 FREE WILL BAPTIST NATIONAL CONVENTION

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Integrity: Now More Than Ever

COMMISSION FOR THEOLOGICAL INTEGRITY MARKS 60 YEARS THIS WEEK

Sixty years ago this week, when the National Association convened in Asheville, North Carolina, turbulent times loomed on the horizon. Battles over the Bible, the mainstream loosening of sexual standards, and the growing racial divide were soon to face the Christian church in America. But in 1959, Free Will Baptist leaders and delegates determined to prepare our churches. Out of this context, the Commission on Theological Liberalism emerged.

Later renamed the Commission for Theological Integrity, the group's specific purpose was to "study the menaces of theological liberalism, secularism, worldliness," and similar challenges to our spiritual and ministry fidelity (*Contact* magazine, August 1959, page 6). Members were asked to alert their brethren to deceptive trends, and equip them to maintain integrity in a fallen world. Through articles, pamphlets, seminars, books, and later symposiums and a website, the commission has been doing just that.

Many Free Will Baptists can't help but associate the commission with Leroy Forlines, one of our most consequential theologians. Not surprising, since his service spans nearly the length of the commission's existence! Yet, the first members of the commission included the likes of Eugene Waddell, N.R. Smith, Ronald Creech, Paul Ketteman, and Bobby Jackson. Other notables such as Wade Jernigan, J.D. O'Donnell, and Steve Ashby also have served. These men and others have dug deeply into our Free Will Baptist heritage, explored various areas of theological scholarship, and analyzed American society to be in the best possible position to help prepare our churches.

As a long-standing institution in our movement, the commission has maintained a respectable reputation for addressing tough questions. It has played a role in adding clarity to nearly every doctrinal debate we've had, as well as confronting every major theological crisis in American Christianity. The list is long: the New Age Movement,

ecumenism, the doctrine of Hell, Calvinism, the social gospel, evolution, transgenderism, and much more.

In one sense, the commission's work is reactive: to discern the times and equip our churches and leaders to respond faithfully. However, its work is also proactive. Many questions the commission has addressed seem cyclical in nature. As Mark Twain quipped, "History doesn't repeat itself, but it rhymes." Many of the complex theological questions and cultural crises our movement faced in the 1950s, 60s, and 70s have simply resurfaced in fresh garb in the new century. Therefore, having built a foundation of doctrinal understanding around many major issues, the commission has in fact provided our people with the tools to prepare for issues that arise in the future.

Since I began serving on the Commission in 2013, I have been intrigued to review our materials and records and discover the level the engagement many of my predecessors had with the problems of the times. Yet, I have also been reminded of our charge to help each new generation of church leaders and laymen view these problems with fresh eyes.

Theological integrity has been needed since Jesus commissioned His first disciples, and it *certainly* is needed in the Internet age. The advent of search engines like Google has made it possible to learn everything and nothing at the same time. Finding a reliable source for biblical information can be challenging. Therefore, the Commission for Theological Integrity invites pastors, teachers, and laymen to get to know our work. We exist to serve you, your church, and our movement. Visit www.fwbtheology.com.

About the Writer: W. Jackson Watts is pastor of Grace FWB Church near St. Louis, where he has served since 2011. He also serves Free Will Baptists as a member of the Commission for Theological Integrity. He is author or editor of two books, and is deeply interested in ecclesiology, pastoral theology, cultural studies, politics, philosophy of religion, and technological ethics.

FLORIDA MARSH QUESTIONS FOR VERTICAL THREE COORDINATOR STEVEN MARSH

When asked about his favorite part of the National Convention, Steven Marsh, Vertical Three's newest associate director of events shared, "I love to be there and see everything unfold. The view from backstage, as the lights dim and people begin to worship, is a thing of beauty." I had the privilege of chatting with Steven about his job at Vertical Three, and he shared a little about himself and his various responsibilities.



Can you describe your role and tasks at the National Convention for those who might not be familiar?

My job with the Vertical Three Conference is orientated around two things: CTS and the V3 Conference. I select judges, choose rooms for competitions, set the schedule, and work with the YET team for worship each night.

Tell us a little about your background. How did God lead you here?

Before coming to Randall House, I graduated from Welch College with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. Before that, I worked as a programmer for a company back home in Tampa, Florida. Before that, even, I received a degree in Culinary Arts. My story is definitely all over the place, but the feeling of knowing you've landed where God wants you to be can't be understated!

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50 Years of Retirement

PREPARING FREE WILL BAPTISTS FOR FUTURE MINISTRY SINCE 1969

The Board of Superannuation, the predecessor of Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement was established at the 1935 meeting when the National Association was formed. The purpose of the Superannuation Board was three-fold: to provide for a minister's family in the event of his death, to furnish regular income in case a minister should become permanently disabled, and to insure income for the minister during retirement years.

Participation grew slowly but steadily the following decade. In 1955, the board hired K.V. Shutes as the first full-time director. Shutes served only two years, but his wife Lora served as chief administrator of the board for an additional 14 years.

In 1969, convention delegates approved a new pension plan formulated and implemented by Herman Hersey, a North Carolina pastor. Hersey was elected general director of the new national department: the Board of Retirement and Insurance.

The Free Will Baptist Retirement Plan caught on and grew quickly. By 1973, the department had outgrown part-time operations. Hersey moved to Nashville and opened an office at the National Office Building. At the move, the plan had 17 retirement accounts and assets totaling \$3,600. A year later, the number of participants had grown to 120, and a decade later, assets topped \$2 million.

In 1980, Hersey led the Board of Retirement to establish the Free Will Baptist Foundation. The organization works with churches, organizations, and individuals to create perpetual funding for Free Will Baptist ministries through planned giving and money management options. The department also offers help with estate planning.

When Hersey retired in 1993, Bill Evans was appointed general director, and under his leadership, assets grew to nearly \$30 million. In 2005, convention delegates separated the Board of Retirement from the Foundation, creating a new agency. Bill Evans remained director of the Foundation

Meet the Speaker

Daniel Edwards pastors Faith Free Will Baptist Church in Chandler, Indiana. He received a bachelor's degree in Pastoral Ministry and Education from Gateway Christian College in 2005. He serves on the NAFWB Media Commission and is a member of the Executive Committee. Daniel and his wife Nicole have two children: Haven and Lincoln.

while accounting administrator Ray Lewis succeeded him as director of the Board of Retirement.

Lewis led the retirement plan through major revisions to reach full compliance with IRS regulations. After his retirement in December 2015, the department hired accounting administrator John Brummitt as director. Brummitt and his team quickly revamped the website, boardofretirement.com, improved reporting procedures, prioritized financial education, and diversified retirement investing options. The board also introduced an institutional investing program in 2016 to allow church and organizations to maximize funds.

During 2016-17, the board celebrated record enrollment, with 124 new participants in 2016 and 125 in 2017, resulting in the largest one-year net increase in the department's history. This week, on its 50th anniversary, the Board of Retirement is nearing another important milestone—\$70 million in total assets!

As the Board of Retirement celebrates 50 years of serving the denomination, the department has renewed its goal to be the first choice for Free Will Baptist retirement planning, institutional investing, and financial education. Consider partnering with them so they can help prepare you for your future ministry.

About the Writer: Chris Compton is communications director for the Free Will Baptist Board of Retirement.

(Florida Marsh, continued from page 1)

What has God been teaching you lately?

To be entirely honest—patience. Definitely patience. That it is okay to fail. Nobody plans a perfect event, and no matter how many years you have under your belt, you will still make mistakes. And so will others, so be patient.

If you could choose one thing for someone new to learn about you, what would it be?

I am a HUGE Florida Gators fan. Go Gators!

Truth & Peace Application Deadline Change

High School students are encouraged to participate in Truth & Peace Leadership Conference.

Submit applications by October 15.

Apply at: bit.ly/tnp20app.

News, Updates & Announcements

Picture This. Pictures from the convention are available online each day. Download your favorites: www.nafwb.yerbyphotography.com. Thanks to Rodney and Elizabeth Yerby, Abby Fawbush, Sydney Walker for their hard work.

Registration and Exhibits. Registration is open daily from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., in the Elm Street Concourse of the DECC. The Exhibit Hall opens daily, 10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., in Hall B of the DECC.

Download the App. Search for NAFWB in the iTunes Store to get the latest convention information on your iPhone.

Outcast BMX. Catch the excitement as BMX stunt riders share personal testimonies and perform amazing jumps and tricks. Tuesday, 9:00 p.m., Hall C.

Discipleship Talks. Visit the D6 Booth in the Exhibit Hall to connect with Engage Seminar presenters.

National Committees Appointed Monday

Nominating Committee: Ron Helms (MI), Chairman; Danny Williams (AL); Ashley Kidd (KY); Mike Wade (OK); Mac Atkinson (SC); Rick Cason (GA)

Resolution Committee: Mark Price (OH), Chairman; Josh Baer (NC); Ken Simpson (MO); David Shores (IL); Bruce Barnes (VA)

Credentials Committee: David Taylor (AR), Chairman; Rickie Holstein (WV); Glenn Poston (TN); Daniel Edwards (IN); Larry Reynolds (MS)