

# THE NAFWB NEWS

2017 FREE WILL BAPTIST NATIONAL CONVENTION

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## Richer One College, Poorer One Student

### A Look Back at the Convention Roots of Welch College

In July 1939, the hot Texas sun looked down on Free Will Baptists from across the nation converging on the Free Will Baptist Church of Bryan. They were excited about the upcoming meeting, but concern was also in the air.

Only four years earlier, in Nashville, Tennessee, the General Conference of Free Will Baptists joined with the Cooperative General Association of Free Will Baptists to form the National Association. That year, the Committee on Education recommended founding a denominational school in Nashville to begin classes in September 1936. The committee was approved to raise funds and purchase property for the institution. However, nearly four years later, the college was still only a dream.

The primary problem was funding. In the midst of the Great Depression, Free Will Baptists were slow to back their educational desires with the requisite finances. Though the Board of Education had diligently promoted the work, they had only \$1,000 in the bank and \$200 in pledges after three years of fundraising.

That first morning in the 1939 business session, J. R. Davidson's report as chairman of the Board of Christian Education was optimistic and encouraging, but the congregation must have been disappointed by the lack of progress. One young lady certainly was. After Davidson's report, Jean Welch, the 16-year-old daughter of John L and Mary Ann Welch, stood and asked for permission to address the body on behalf of her generation.

She emphasized her Free Will Baptist heritage, stating she was "rocked in a Free Will Baptist cradle" and "raised in a Free Will Baptist parsonage." She and her fellow students had talents to offer to the denomination, but they lacked training. "Where will they get this training," she asked. "Methodists, Presbyterians, [and] other Baptists are not responsible for educating Free Will Baptist youth. You, my dear people, are responsible."

Jean noted that a student's school deeply influences his or her

denominational loyalty. "Will [our young people] be educated in Methodist schools to become Methodists?" she pointedly asked. Jean closed her short speech by asking if she would have an opportunity to study and train in a Free Will Baptist college.

As Jean took her seat, the ministers and delegates began to realize the full weight of the Free Will Baptist educational need. Rev. George Dunbar stood and offered prayer for the denomination's educational work. After Dunbar closed the prayer, "a great educational rally such as many had never experienced before" broke out. The congregation took up an offering of \$284.35 for the educational work, and \$1,725 in pledges were given (equal to \$5,000 and \$30,000 respectively in today's inflated dollars). This offering nearly tripled the fundraising efforts of the previous four years combined!

Several men and women mentioned Jean's speech in fundraising efforts over the following months and years. Her words touched the collective conscience of Free Will Baptists and spurred the denomination to commit fully to educational work. Just over three years later, L. C. and Ruth Johnson turned onto Richland Avenue, stopping in front of a greystone building. Welch College's 75-year history was about to commence.

However, the story's ending is bittersweet. The young woman who ignited a passion for a Free Will Baptist college did not enjoy the fruit of her labor. Jean had to choose a college before 1942, Welch's inaugural year, and attended Asbury College—a Methodist institution. During her time there, she met a fine young man training to become a Methodist minister, and they were married. Jean Welch's speech left Free Will Baptists richer one college, but poorer one promising young person.

**About the Writer:** Phillip Morgan graduated from Welch College in 2008 with degrees in Biblical Studies and Piano/Organ Performance. He recently completed an M.A. in History at Middle Tennessee State University and teaches at Welch College.

## Surprising Women

WNAC WOMEN SHOCK  
DIRECTOR HODGES

Director Elizabeth Hodges is the driving force behind many of the Kingdom-furthering activities of WNAC. From funding scholarships and stocking the Provision Closet to hosting retreats and the department's newest venture, *Shine!* conferences, the office of WNAC is constantly on the move, supporting women, families, and missionaries across the country and around the globe.

But today, the women of WNAC gave back! As Elizabeth gave her report to attendees at today's celebration service, three women joined her onstage, carrying a giant check. In a move that stunned Elizabeth, the Arkansas, Oklahoma, and Missouri WAC presidents presented funds to underwrite the costs of purchasing a company car. "We are no longer the only national department without a vehicle," said WNAC board chairwoman Diana Bryant as Elizabeth hugged each woman, tears flowing freely. "These ladies saw a need and decided to solve the problem."

When Elizabeth began hunting for a good deal on a company car back in 2014, Lisa Bowden, president of Arkansas Women

Active for Christ, immediately jumped into action. Calling on Missouri state WAC president Lee Ann Wilfong and Oklahoma state WAC president Tracy Payne, they, along with women across three states, began raising funds through the "Tri-State Project" as they named it. Women in churches across these states pulled together enough cash to present a giant check to a grateful director.

WNAC has already purchased a vehicle for around \$17,000, and the \$19,500 check from the Tri-State Project will cover the costs of both the car and the interest incurred from the purchase.

"My heart is overflowing with thanksgiving for the generosity of the women from Arkansas, Missouri, and Oklahoma," said Elizabeth. "This will erase our debt in the first car owned by WNAC. I was shocked at the \$19,500 check. To God be the glory."

**About the writer:** Emily Faison graduated in 2016 from Florida State University with a M.A. in Literature. She is a member of the convention press team.

# Meet the Speaker

The fifth president of Welch College, **J. Matthew Pinson**, holds degrees in humanities, history, religion, and higher education leadership from the University of West Florida, Yale University, and Vanderbilt University. Dr. Pinson has authored or contributed to several books, including *Perspectives on Christian Worship*, *Four Views on Eternal Security*, and *A Free Will Baptist Handbook*. He and his wife Melinda have two children, Anna and Matthew.

## Seminar Changes

Veteran Free Will Baptist author and professor **F. Leroy Forlines** will share “Free Will Baptists and Upward Mobility” at 10:00 a.m. Wednesday, in the Wilson Room of the Galt House. **Dr. James Stevens** will present his 9:00 and 10:00 a.m. hymn arranging seminars in the Segell Room of the Galt House. **Please note these change to the convention program.**



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# Schedule Updates

## Global Purpose Seekers

Vertical Three invites you to join the Global Purpose Seekers Experience (GPS) on Wednesday, from 9:00 to 11:00 a.m., in the Jones Room of the Galt House. Attendees of all ages will be able to connect with missionaries from around the world who have dedicated their lives to spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If you have never attended GPS, you don't know what you're missing with this travel-themed experience. Attendees can pick up “boarding passes” (tickets) at the Vertical Three store, NAM Booth, or FWBIM Booth.

## See the Skit Guys

Tonight at 9:00 p.m. in The Kentucky Center's Whitney Hall, Vertical Three will welcome special guests Tommy Woodward and Eddie James. Better known as The Skit Guys, the duo brings a unique combination of side-splitting comedy and thought-provoking sketches. Tickets are available at the Vertical Three office in the Galt House.

## Art Expo & Auction

The Vertical Three Conference invites you to participate in the 2017 Buck-a-Week art auction. This year, students entered more than 200 pieces of art, and many have generously donated their projects to the auction. All proceeds will go toward the Buck-a-Week missions offering. Visit the art gallery across from the convention Exhibit Hall in the Galt House Hotel and make a bid to take your selection home. Exhibits will be open for bidding until Wednesday at noon. High bidders will be contacted by the Vertical Three office regarding their purchase.

## Mobile Giving

For the first time, Free Will Baptists have the opportunity to give online with their mobile devices during the 2017 National Convention. With a simple text message of **NAFWB to 444999**, individuals can donate to the convention, International Missions, or North American Ministries.

Offerings made from Saturday, July 15, to Tuesday, July 18, will offset convention expenses. Any donations made Wednesday, July 19, will be split between International Missions and North American Ministries.

The text message sent by a mobile device will prompt users to click a link and be directed to a secure registration site where payment information will be entered.

“People don't carry checks or cash much anymore,” said convention manager Ryan Lewis. “This feature will allow convention attendees and those watching the live stream to continue to support the ongoing ministries of Free Will Baptists here and around the world.”

David Crowe, director of North American Ministries, challenged both attendees and those watching from home to give generously: “Over the last several years, I have watched the amount of the Wednesday night missions offering decline. The economy has been up and down; it costs more to live than it once did; and it costs more to attend the National Association these days. In spite of all these things, I still believe God can move upon our hearts and provide the means to give as never before. I'm asking you as an individual, a family, an organization, or a church, to pray and ask God what He wants you to give. Then, simply follow His leading.”

# News, Updates & Announcements

**Registration will remain open Wednesday**, from 8:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m., second floor of the Galt House Suite Tower. Visit the Exhibit Hall from 10:00 a.m. to 9:30 p.m.

**Donate Blood at the annual Red Cross Blood Drive**, which is scheduled for Wednesday, July 19, 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., in the Nunn Room at the Galt House.

**Check in for a Cause.** Don't forget to use Facebook to check in to NAFWB to raise money for Louisville church revitalization.

**Missing Something?** The following are waiting to be reunited at Convention Registration: white, Spanish Bible (Rufio and Maria); pink NIV Bible (Sharon); KY Farmer's Care blue bag (Lenova laptop charger); Samsung phone charger; New Bethel FWB Church trucker's hat.