

ECHO

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The Ties that Bind Us [BETTER TOGETHER]

Pastor Chris Dotson | State Director, Tennessee Free Will Baptists
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It seems to me that many miss the value of associational work altogether – perhaps that includes you. Everywhere I go, I find some that forget the reasons that our forefathers organized themselves in district, state, and national bodies in the first place. In fact, for me, it is an uphill battle convincing our people that **the Association is more than just fellowship and fees.**

While Free Will Baptists first sprang up in the American colonies in 1727 under the leadership of Paul Palmer, it was not until 1812 that churches of our denomination began organizing in Middle Tennessee under the direction of Robert Heaton. Almost simultaneously, in 1850, the mother association in East Tennessee, named after the Toe River, was founded by three ministers: Moses Peterson, John Wheeler, and William B. Woolsey, each planting and pastoring two congregations. From these three pastors and six ‘small and poor’ churches grew numerous other bodies of believers in North Carolina, Virginia, and Tennessee.

In 1938 the Tennessee State Association organized in Greene County at the home of Paul Woolsey, under the eldership of George Dunbar, John L. Welch, William Henry Oliver, and G.W. Fambrough, representing both the Cumberland and Union district associations. Their purpose can be deduced from their action at that same meeting, by which they purchased property in nearby Camp Creek to begin what is now known as Free Will Baptist Family Ministries.

Today, our churches in Tennessee are diverse in preaching and worship styles, but there remains three essential things that unite us – three ties that bind our hearts together in Christian service.

THE TENNESSEE STATE ASSOCIATION

Chris Dotson, State Director

PO Box 1796

Gallatin, TN 37066

(423) 523-2887



WE ARE UNITED IN MESSAGE.

Free Will Baptists can trace our message – our unique doctrine – to Thomas Helwys, an Arminian theologian who ministered in England right before King James authorized the translation of the Bible into English. Helwys held to the teachings of Dutch reformer Jacobus Arminius, which include:

- The total depravity of humanity,
- Jesus’ vicarious death on the cross,
- The prevenient grace of God,
- The freedom of the will,
- The conditional security of the believer,
- The possibility of apostasy, and
- Christ’s general atonement for the sins of the world.

Today, **wherever a pastor stands under the Free Will Baptist banner, he teaches these same fundamentals of the faith** – these historical, theological distinctives that set our denomination apart from others. We are united in message.

WE ARE UNITED IN MISSION.

Our mission comes in two parts. **First, Jesus’ great commission:** ‘Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature’ (Mark 16:15). This was not a commission just for the original twelve or the early church alone.

It is the mandate for every believer! With 3.23 billion people yet to hear a clear presentation of the Gospel, we have our work cut out for us.

continued on page 6



CHURCH REVITALIZATION: LEARNING TO BE INTENTIONALLY GOSPEL FOCUSED

Pastor Seth Price | Lead Pastor, Cookeville Free Will Baptist Church
sethprice30@gmail.com

The first time I heard the term ‘church revitalization’ must have been more than five years ago. It was not until Pastor Chris Dotson, TNFWB’s State Director, began describing our denomination’s revitalization program, *Refresh*, that I knew it was something we needed at Cookeville Free Will Baptist Church.

The revitalization program is designed to refresh churches - to provide a fresh wind or a fresh start. For us, it came at a time when we were needing a kickstart after COVID. Although, at first glance, the program sounds like something for a “dying” church, **Refresh is excellent for any church that desires to get back to the basics of church health, spiritual growth, and intentional ministry.**

At the beginning of the program, an inventory was completed to determine the greatest needs of the church. This included a thorough facilities analysis and review of our key documents.

Throughout the six-month course, Pastor Chris addressed the greatest needs indicated from the inventory. For us, those were outreach, stewardship, and prayer. **Each month we read, discussed, and implemented strategies that moved us in the right direction.**

This was a great experience for our 12-person revitalization team! **The Lord provided us opportunities to minister to our community, facilitate unity among our church members, and tap into the power of prayer.**

As we addressed the need of community outreach and evangelism, **we learned to be intentionally gospel focused**, looking for open doors for ministry. One unexpected opportunity included hosting the Upper Cumberland Foster Closet families in our family life center. We also took time to individually craft our spiritual autobiographies and plan to make an evangelistic video to use as a ministry tool for others in the church and community.

One of the greatest experiences of the revitalization program occurred at month four. That night we shared our hearts, wept together, and lifted our voices in prayer. **This was a turning point for our church’s ministry, as the Holy Spirit reinvigorated our service to the Savior.**

I highly recommend the revitalization program for your church. It is tailored to meet your church’s specific needs and help your congregation grow in Christ and reach your community with the Gospel. I hope you will consider this awesome opportunity for your church in the near future!



Seth & Lacey Price have served the Cookeville Church since 2019. He enjoys playing acoustic-style music and she is a public school teacher. Seth also is a member of the Tennessee Media Commission. They make their home in Sparta with their two children.

THE GOD OF ALL *Comfort*

— 2 CORINTHIANS 1:3-4 —

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FROM RHETORIC TO RELEVANCE: KEYS TO MEANINGFUL MINISTRY

PART THREE OF A FOUR-PART SERIES

Jim McComas, Executive Director
Free Will Baptist Family Ministries | jmccomas@fwbfm.com

In this series of articles on the keys to having meaningful, relevant ministry, we started by looking at both the command of II Timothy 4, that we are to preach the Word of God boldly and without compromise, and the challenge in Jude 22, that we are to make a difference by showing compassion to those around us. We concluded not only that we can and should carry out both of those commands, but that **biblical commitment coupled with compassion is the ingredient to church growth, revitalization, survival, and revival.**

I am laying out three things we must do to move from “rhetoric to relevance” in ministry. The first one, which we discussed in our last article, was that **we must be consistent to the Scriptures, in our stand, and in our scope.**

The second key to relevant ministry is that we must be considerate. The definition of considerate is “showing careful thought.” Quite simply, before we preach, teach, post on social media or our church sign, we need to think!

We must first consider our audience. To whom are we trying to minister? We as Free Will Baptists do a lot of preaching to the choir, but often we don’t put a lot of thought into crafting our message to reach the lost and hurting in our communities. In our sermon preparation, in our lesson planning, as we prepare to post on social media or our church sign, we must always think about those we are trying to reach with the Gospel.

We must also consider our approach. I recently saw a meme which said, “For the logic impaired: Abortion is MURDER!” While we would all agree that abortion is indeed murder, how effective do you think that post, which infers anyone who is pro-abortion is stupid, will be? I believe absolutely nobody’s mind or heart is going to be changed by such a post, because the person posting didn’t stop and think about a proper approach to sharing the truth of God’s Word.

It is one thing to be persecuted for taking a biblical stance, but it is quite another to be taken to task for being purposely offensive and argumentative.

Let me just say it as clearly as I can: As Christians, God called us to be *faithful*; He did not call us to be *foolish*.

Let’s be biblically consistent, but let’s do it with tears in our eyes and compassion in our hearts. Let’s be considerate.



Jim McComas is the president and CEO of Free Will Baptist Family Ministries. He is also a singer, evangelist and church revitalization expert. He and his wife, Beth, make their home in the mountains of East Tennessee.





CHURCH REVITALIZATION

The Undeniable Need

Dr. Danny Dwyer, Administrator | ReKindle | cdwyer143@yahoo.com

THE UNDENIABLE NEED

Nationwide, 80-90% of churches are plateaued and/or declining. Half of those will close in the next five years unless there is a renewal. Past statistics conclude that 24 FWB churches will close this year unless something is done to prevent that. One is too many!

However, **the need is greater than our interest; our interest is greater than our commitment.** Shouldn't our commitment rise to the level of the need?

REVITALIZATION IN SCRIPTURE

One doesn't have to look far to find the principles of restoration in the biblical record. The Good Samaritan did more than just see the need. **He committed by adjusting his plans and extending a helping hand.** Christ is the ultimate Good Samaritan and commands us to "go and do thou likewise" (Luke 10:37). This applies to reaching out to discouraged pastors, their wives, and struggling churches as well as individuals who have been beaten up by spiritual thieves, robbed of their joy, and left in the "ditch."

Paul's practice was to establish the churches he began and set things in order (Acts 15:41; 16:5; Titus 1:5). He began new works then nursed them to spiritual health. He worked at it himself, but also used others to "coach" needy churches (Titus). **The spiritual health of a local church is essential if it is to be the "pillar and ground of the truth"** (1 Timothy 3:15) and present a powerful community witness (Acts 1:8).

Jesus walked among the Revelation churches, assessing their need and commanding them to repent and return to spiritual health (Revelation 1:11-3:22). **The powerful message of the return of Jesus Christ (Revelation 4-22) is best proclaimed in churches that are spiritually vibrant.** Ecclesiology precedes Eschatology. Ministry can be forfeited (Revelation 2:5) unless there is repentance and restoration.

THE COMMITMENT REQUIRED

Let me suggest three types of commitment for this essential ministry. First, **we need to develop ministry relationships especially with pastors and their wives who can use some encouragement.** Their leadership is priority. Be available to extend a helping hand. Invite them for lunch or supper. Pray for them and send a letter or card telling them so. Like the Good Samaritan, this may necessitate a change of plans, but the rewards are eternal.

Secondly, **we need to include church renewal in our ministry narratives and mission.** We certainly need to prayerfully begin new churches, but it just makes good stewardship sense to help churches that already have land and facilities.

Thirdly, **we need to include funding for intentional and focused revitalization according to the individual church need.** It would be a wise investment for our state budget to include a "Samaritan's Supplement" for the purpose of church renewal.



Danny Dwyer, Ph.D., is the senior pastor of Rock Springs Church in Charlotte. He taught Pastoral Theology and Biblical Studies at Southeastern Free Will Baptist College before returning to his family homeplace in Tennessee. He is currently administrator of ReKindle, the NAFWB's church revitalization ministry.

YOUR GIVING Makes A Difference!



This issue of Echo does not have a giving envelope included but you can support the ongoing ministries of TNFWB by giving safely through this QR Code.



What's Your Perspective?

Jerry Gibbs | Chair, Tennessee International Missions Board
jerry@gibbslive.com

As you look at the world around you, are you shaking your head in despair? Are you wondering, "I do not know where all this is heading, but it does not look good!" If so, it might be helpful to **get a fresh look at what God's global purpose is for this dark world.**

Barb and I were missionaries for forty years in France. During that time, our mission focus was on the city where God had placed us. In 2020, however, I attended a one-week intensive course called *Perspectives* on the World Christian Movement. The class completely rocked my world.

It reminded me that **God's purpose is truly global.** I saw once again how the Great Commission did not start in the Gospels, but that it is the main theme of both the Old and New Testaments. **God is redeeming people from every tribe, tongue, and nation and is calling His disciples to participate with Him.** God's relentless work from the dawn of history until this day is to bring the Gospel to all nations.

What is *Perspectives*? *Perspectives* is a discipleship course exploring God's intent to write His story throughout the ages and in all nations. He offers an invitation for each of us to write our name in His story. The material is presented in fifteen lessons, designed around four vantage points or "perspectives" — biblical, historical, cultural, and strategic. Each lesson highlights a different aspect of God's global purpose.

Who should attend a *Perspectives* class? Anyone who wants a closer walk with the Lord, who is serious about gaining a deeper understanding of His ultimate purpose. It's for anyone who wants to learn how to strategically invest their lives in seeing God glorified and gain direction that will help them to impact their generation. If this describes you, no matter what your age or position, *Perspectives* is for you!

Listen to what Elizabeth Hodges, the national director for Free Will Baptist Women's Ministries, says about *Perspectives*:

While completing her bachelor's degree in missions, our daughter urged Eddie and me to take the *Perspectives* on the World Christian Movement course. Five years later we were able to take the semester length class locally. The instructors were not only text driven but taught from their personal experiences. Classmates were believers from various church and ethnic backgrounds who encouraged, challenged, and motivated us.

I have been a Christian over six decades, grew up in a godly home, developed a heart for missions early in life, and graduated from a Christian college. But **now I read the Bible searching for references about "the nations" and have a greater sensitivity to God's work among us.**

I hope you will join us for the intensive version of this class being offered September 26 – October 2 in the Nashville region. For more information, please contact me at jerry@gibbslive.com or go to perspectives.org/nashvilleintensive. Your life will never be the same!

PERSPECTIVES
on the World Christian Movement

MADE FOR MORE
USE WHAT'S IN YOU TO BLESS
THE WORLD AROUND YOU

SEPT. 26 - OCT. 2, 2021
HILLMONT CHRISTIAN CAMP
975 Hillmont Camp Road, White Bluff TN 37187

continued from, The Ties that Bind Us [Better Together]

The second part is the Great Commandment, by which Jesus taught us to love God supremely and love others as self. By ministering to the weak, infirmed, poor, and dejected we express to those around us our love for the Almighty.

May I ask you a personal question? If the Great Commission and the Great Commandment comprise every believer's mission and purpose, how are you doing with that? Perhaps you, like me, feel an overwhelming responsibility in response. **How am I to take the Gospel globally? I am just one man.** For that matter, how is my church supposed to really make a difference. We are small and have few resources. It is for this reason that...

WE ARE UNITED IN MINISTRY.

What we cannot do alone, we can do together! **Your association exists because we need each other to carry out the mission.** You need me; and I need you. The mission is enormous and will remain largely untouched unless we minister together, each using his/her own particular gifts, callings, and resources.

From Tennessee, we are sending missionaries internationally to Bulgaria, Japan, Spain, France, etc. We are planting churches domestically in Missoula, Kodak, and Fredericksburg. We are operating Free Will Baptist's largest denominational ministry, FWB Family Ministries, with 200+ employees and an annual budget of over \$14 million. We are assisting struggling churches, pastoring pastors, conducting ministry to women, participating in disaster relief efforts, and hosting youth conferences. And still there is more to do, requiring TNFWB to partner with other states via our national association.

It's time we change our attitude toward association work. It's more than just fellowship and fees. **It's about cooperatively pooling our talents and treasures for Christ's kingdom-work.** May we never see our pastors, missionaries, and Christian workers as beggars with their hands stretched out for another gift. **Each individual, every church should be extending their hands joyously, knowing that with each gift, with each effort, they are fulfilling their part of the mission as much as they are able.**



It's Gonna Be Ok

Beth Roysden | Field Worker, TWAC
ixthus317@gmail.com

To say that 2020/21 has not gone as anyone planned is an understatement. It seems every time we turn a corner, there's something waiting that we never expected. This has been true for me in a very unexpected way. In November 2020, I was diagnosed with breast cancer.

Before my diagnosis, I expected this news, were I ever to hear it, would be devastating. **Three little words, "You have cancer," became my identity and unsettled my world.** Yet, as I heard the words from my doctor, I felt an immediate peace. I knew that God was in that moment. I felt His peace that passes understanding.

He immediately brought to my mind a friend that had been diagnosed the year before. I reached out to her often in the weeks that followed. Her message to me caught me off guard. She simply said, "It's gonna be okay." I mean, **I knew it was going to be okay, but this storm was so big!** There were so many unknowns, so many concerns, so many what-ifs and why-mes. When fear, doubt, and uncertainty would crowd my mind, she would remind me, "It's gonna be okay."

God spoke to me through that refrain. He reminded me that, **though the circumstances were out of my control, they were definitely not out of His.** He spoke through verses such as Isaiah 40:29 ("He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength") and Psalm 28:7 ("The Lord is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in Him, and I am helped"). He reminded me of the words of the Hebrew boys when facing Nebuchadnezzar and the fiery furnace: "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us... but if not."

It was this reminder that transformed my thinking. I didn't know the path that lay before me. I couldn't control what the doctors said or what the treatments held. But rather than being transfixed by fear, I could be transformed by grace. **I couldn't control a single second of what I was going through, but my God could.** I didn't know what was coming, but I could place my trust in the One who did. And the peace that flowed from that understanding really did pass understanding.

We will never know what tomorrow holds. We will never have all the answers. But **no matter what storm we're facing, we can know that it's going to be okay** because we serve the God who knows what's best for His children.

Beth is married to Brandon, and together they make their home in Ashland City with their two children, Ethan and Kate.

Tennessee State Association

MARCH 1, 2021 - MAY 31, 2021

APPALACHIAN ASSOCIATION	\$15,223.75
Appalachian Association of FWB.....	\$116.50
Doran Addition FWBC, Mt. Carmel	\$360.00
Fellowship FWBC, Kingsport	\$6,790.00
First FWBC, Elizabethton	\$900.00
First FWBC, Johnson City.....	\$2,575.00
Grace FWBC, Johnson City.....	\$1,000.00
Harmony FWBC, Hampton.....	\$507.25
Liberty Fellowship FWBC, Johnson City.....	\$600.00
Marbleton FWBC, Unicoi.....	\$2,250.00
Watauga Valley FWBC, Elizabethton.....	\$125.00

CUMBERLAND ASSOCIATION	\$187,738.67
180 FWBC, Clarksville.....	\$3,776.02
Ashland City FWB, Ashland City	\$3,150.00
Berean FWBC, Fairview.....	\$833.00
Bethel FWBC, Chapmansboro	\$16,112.03
Bethlehem FWBC, Ashland City	\$21,897.00
Brandon's Chapel FWBC, Bumpus Mills.....	\$1,741.00
Cane Ridge FWBC, Antioch.....	\$5,553.14
Carlisle FWBC, Dover.....	\$1,144.69
Cofer's Chapel FWB Church, Nashville.....	\$13,953.40
Cornerstone FWBC, Murfreesboro.....	\$515.00
Cross Roads FWBC, Lawrenceburg.....	\$200.00
Cross Timbers FWBC, Nashville.....	\$6,026.00
Cumberland Association of FWB.....	\$1,750.89
Dunbar Chapel FWBC, Indian Mound	\$75.00
Faith FWBC, Columbia	\$367.26
First FWBC, Dickson.....	\$5,894.00
First FWBC, Springfield.....	\$540.00
First FWBC, Waverly.....	\$600.00
Good Springs FWBC, Pleasant View.....	\$4,921.74
Head's FWBC, Cedar Hill.....	\$19,898.67

Hendersonville FWBC Ladies Auxiliary.....	\$450.00
Hurricane Chapel FWBC, McEwen.....	\$2,551.84
LaVergne FWBC, LaVergne	\$2,120.00
Loyal Chapel FWBC, Columbia.....	\$1,200.00
Miller's Chapel FWBC, Charlotte.....	\$812.00
New Hope FWBC, Joelton.....	\$18,109.99
Oak Grove FWBC, Charlotte.....	\$465.00
Oakwood FWBC, Woodlawn.....	\$1,320.00
Olivet FWBC, Clarksville.....	\$1,432.89
Pleasant Hill FWBC, Dover.....	\$1,458.20
Richland FWBC, Nashville	\$2,363.44
The Donelson Fellowship, Nashville.....	\$40,462.84
United FWBC, Dickson	\$5,225.10
Victory FWBC, Springfield	\$583.40
Western Quarterly	\$235.13

INDIVIDUALS **\$13,245.00**

LIBERTY ASSOCIATION **\$10,168.00**

Cookeville FWBC, Cookeville	\$1,200.00
Crossville First FWBC, Crossville	\$2,035.00
Smithville FWBC, Smithville.....	\$6,933.00

OTHER **\$14,004.00**

FWB Foundation.....	\$13,500.00
TN IM Board	\$504.00

OTHER CHURCHES..... **\$11,726.00**

Grace For The World Ministries, Dickson....	\$10,150.00
McMinnville First FWBC, McMinnville.....	\$1,576.00

SMOKY MOUNTAINS ASSOCIATION **\$4,584.09**

Fairview FWB Church, Heiskell.....	\$641.00
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Hardin Valley FWBC, Knoxville.....	\$75.00
Valley View FWBC, Loudon	\$3,083.59
Wooddale FWBC, Knoxville.....	\$784.50

TOE RIVER ASSOCIATION **\$450.00**

Morgan Chapel FWBC, Hampton	\$450.00
Union Association.....	\$41,391.01
Bridgeport FWBC, Morristown	\$300.00
Community Chapel FWBC, Jefferson City.....	\$200.00
Evergreen FWBC, Erwin.....	\$6,805.00
Fellowship FWBC, Limestone	\$100.00
First FWBC, Newport	\$100.00
Grove FWBC, Smyrna.....	\$2,100.00
Harris Memorial FWBC, Greeneville.....	\$1,408.00
Hendersonville FWBC, Hendersonville	\$16,026.81
Jackson Chapel FWBC, Mosheim.....	\$300.00
Kingsley Avenue FWBC, Chuckey	\$100.00
Limestone FWBC, Limestone.....	\$375.00
Peace FWBC, Morristown.....	\$10,755.00
Phipps Bend FWBC, Surgoinsville.....	\$500.00
Surgoinsville FWBC, Surgoinsville.....	\$870.00
Union Chapel FWBC, Chuckey	\$600.00

UNION FWB ASSOCIATION..... **\$500.00**

West Greene FWBC, Mosheim.....	\$351.20
West Tennessee Association	\$3,230.00
Victory FWBC, Jackson.....	\$3,230.00

TOTAL INCOME..... **\$301,760.52**

TOTAL EXPENSES **\$345,877.62**

Thank you for your gifts to support the State Association work. You may make your tax-deductible contribution to the ministry of TNFWB by using the QR code on page 4 or mail them to PO Box 1796, Gallatin, TN 37066.

The Unified Ministry Plan of Support

MARCH 1, 2021-MAY 31, 2021

INCOME:

180 FWBC, Clarksville.....	\$999.00
Appalachian Association of FWB.....	\$116.50
Berean FWBC, Fairview.....	\$7 58.00
Bethlehem FWBC, Ashland City.....	\$2,166.00
Brandon's Chapel FWBC, Bumpus Mills.....	\$474.00
Cane Ridge FWBC, Antioch.....	\$416.49
Carlisle FWBC, Dover.....	\$1,144.69
Cofer's Chapel FWB Church, Nashville.....	\$2,500.00
Community Chapel FWBC, Jefferson City.....	\$150.00
Cornerstone FWBC, Murfreesboro.....	\$225.00
Cross Roads FWBC, Lawrenceburg.....	\$200.00
Cross Timbers FWBC, Nashville.....	\$336.14
Fairview FWB Church, Heiskell.....	\$641.00
Faith FWBC, Columbia	\$367.26
Fellowship FWBC, Kingsport	\$100.00
First FWBC, Elizabethton	\$900.00
Good Springs FWBC, Pleasant View.....	\$2,551.02
Grove FWBC, Smyrna.....	\$1,750.00
Hardin Valley FWBC, Knoxville.....	\$75.00
Hendersonville FWBC, Hendersonville	\$440.00

Hurricane Chapel FWBC, McEwen.....	\$2,551.84
Jackson Chapel FWBC, Mosheim	\$300.00
Liberty Fellowship FWBC, Johnson City.....	\$600.00
Loyal Chapel FWBC, Columbia.....	\$1,200.00
New Hope FWBC, Joelton.....	\$2,175.00
Oak Grove FWBC, Charlotte.....	\$465.00
Oakwood FWBC, Woodlawn.....	\$100.00
Phipps Bend FWBC, Surgoinsville.....	\$250.00
Individuals.....	\$175.00
Richland FWBC, Nashville	\$1,368.32
Surgoinsville FWBC, Surgoinsville.....	\$150.00
The Donelson Fellowship, Nashville.....	\$4,531.28
Union Chapel FWBC, Chuckey	\$600.00
United FWBC, Dickson	\$4,765.10
Valley View FWBC, Loudon	\$248.59
Victory FWBC, Jackson.....	\$735.00
Watauga Valley FWBC, Elizabethton	\$125.00
West Greene FWBC, Mosheim.....	\$351.20
Wooddale FWBC, Knoxville.....	\$784.50
TOTAL INCOME.....	\$37,785.93

DISTRIBUTIONS:

TN State Office	\$13,980.78
Scholarship Fund	\$1,511.44
Retirement Fund	\$1,889.30
District Associations.....	\$1,133.58
TN Home Missions.....	\$2,833.94
TN International Missions.....	\$472.33
FWB Family Ministries.....	\$4,250.92
TN Christian Education Board	\$1,039.11
TWAC.....	\$377.86
TN Master's Men	\$377.86
TN Media Commission	\$377.86
TN Music Commission.....	\$188.93
NAFWB Together Way	\$8,690.76
International Fellowship	\$94.47
National Convention Fund.....	\$566.79
TOTAL DISTRIBUTIONS.....	\$37,785.93

Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists
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THE CROSS Still Stands

The Union Chapel FWB Church in Greene County, was destroyed by fire, Tuesday afternoon, May 25. Multiple fire crews responded to the scene but were unable to control the blaze, initially thought to be the result of an electrical issue. Though the church is a total loss, no injuries were reported.

In an interview, Lynn Neas, pastor of Union Chapel expressed his thankfulness that no one was injured, especially firefighters, including members of nearby Limestone Free Will Baptist Church, who emerged from the building shortly before the roof collapsed.

"I've never been through something like this," Pastor Neas said. "I watched her burn to the ground. But I also know the promises of God are true. The Bible says all things work together for the good of them that love the Lord. Our people are hurting today, but we'll bounce back...the Lord will see us through."

Though damaged by smoke, the parsonage and fellowship building can be restored. Only the single front wall of the sanctuary remains standing, where the cross is featured prominently.

Pastor Neas told State Director Chris Dotson on the day of the event that "the cross still stands." With tears in his eyes, he continued, "And as hard as it is, it's just the building. The church is the born again believers."

A fund has been established by TNFWB to help the church with rebuilding and restoration. Donations may be made online at <https://bit.ly/3hT53C7> or by mailing them to TNFWB, PO Box 1796, Gallatin, TN 37066. Many individuals and churches have already contributed to the fund.

Free Will Baptist Family Ministries also covered the cost for the church's youth to attend the Union Association Camp at the Oaks, according to Jim McComas, president and CEO of the ministry. Thirteen-year-old Emma Laws is one of eight church members who will attend the Bible camp for free. A place that's near and dear to her heart. "Four years ago, I went there and got saved," Laws said.