

# THE ECHO Uniting Volunteers for Christ

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## Thank God for Don and Billie Sexton!

Few couples have contributed more to the cause of foreign missions among Free Will Baptists than Don and Billie Sexton. They presently make their home in Elizabethton. Their health is rather fragile. They live alone but have a lady to come for a few hours each day.

Don and Billie were both born and reared in Eastern Kentucky. They were converted to Christ while they were teenagers: Don was 19, Billie was 16. Don answered the call to preach two weeks after conversion. These two were married in December 1950. Don preached for eight years before enrolling at Free Will Baptist Bible College. Even though he was a married student with family responsibilities, he graduated with a Bachelor's degree in three years. They have two children, a daughter, Donna, in Winston-Salem, NC, and a son, Kyle, at Gray, TN.

The Sextons served as Tennessee Home Missionaries, founded, and pastored First Free Will Baptist Church at Hixson, TN. While attending the National Association Convention at Fresno, CA, in 1970, they felt God's call to foreign missions service. They served in France from January 1972 to July 1979. Then they became



The above picture was taken on September 8, 1990, at T.A. Dugger Middle School, Elizabethton, at the annual Don and Billie Sexton Walk-a-Thon for Foreign Missions.

Front Row, L to R: Dexter Brummitt, Lester McKinnon, Billie and Don Sexton, Ray Stockton, Mark Street, Alfred Cusshall Standing, L to R: Elmer Carter, Jack Lloyd, Allen Whitehead, Melvin Worthington, Winford Floyd, W. M. Ellison, W. Justice, J. Revis, K. Winningham, D. Osborne, Jim Cox, Jeff McKinney

"Missionary Representatives" here in the States, from August 1979 until poor health forced their resignation in January 1993.

Approximately ten years ago they began promoting the statewide financial thrust for deficit accounts for Tennessee foreign missionaries. This has been an annual event since then, with almost a million dollars having been raised. The Tennessee State Association named this annual event "The Don and Billie Sexton Walk-a-Thon for Foreign Missions."

Only eternity will reveal all the results of the life and ministry of the Sextons. We have a better denomination because of them. And they are still involved in this ministry! They are "Encouragers

and Prayer Warriors" for all of us who labor for Christ and Free Will Baptists in Tennessee.

### Two Churches Unite

Randall Memorial Church in Memphis voted to unite with Cross Creek Free Will Baptist Church in Olive Branch, Mississippi. This was no hasty decision on the part of the membership of Randall Memorial. They have studied their situation and their needs for many months. The last Sunday for Randall Memorial Church was May 26, 1996. The first Sunday for the two churches meeting as one church was June 2, 1996. Pastor J. L. Gore of Cross Creek Church has become the Senior Pastor and Pastor Greg Hollifield of Randall Memorial Church is the new Associate Pastor of Cross Creek Church.

As a State Association, we will miss Randall Memorial Church. But we wish them well as they become part of Cross Creek Church. That church is in the Mississippi State Association of Free Will Baptist Churches.

Let us all pledge to pray for this union of two churches. We wish them "God's Speed" as they unitedly seek to follow the Lord's leading and work together for Him.

### Sexton Medical Fund

Sincere thanks to all of you who contribute to the "Sexton Medical Fund." This fund was begun a few years ago to cover the medical expenses of Don and Billie Sexton. As you know, Don has had Parkinson's disease for several years. This fund provides from \$1,500 to \$1,700 per month. Please continue your faithful support for this very worthy cause. Send all checks made out to Valley Forge Free Will Baptist Church and indicate on each check that it is for "Sexton Medical Fund." Send checks to: Rev. Jonas Revis, Rt. 10, Box 250, Elizabethton, TN 37643. The Sexton Medical Fund Committee consists of Brother Howard Munsey, 423/586-6088, Brother Gene Deaton, 423/928-6240 and Brother Jonas Revis, 423/474-3215. If you have any questions, call one of these men.

# Building For Their Future

In May of 1995, the Board of Directors authorized a campaign designed to raise \$1,000,000 for priority needs by the year 2000.

Funds raised by this campaign will provide for the growing demands of the P.A.T.H. Shelter (Protecting Adolescents and Teaching Hope) and allow Free Will Baptist Family Ministries, Inc. to continue providing for children and youth who are victims of domestic violence, abuse and/or neglect.

In 1939 the Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists established an orphanage on 320 acres in the mountains of East Tennessee. As the needs of children and youth have changed, this ministry has also changed to best serve the interests of children. In November of 1994, the Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists voted to amend our charter which created Free Will Baptist Family Ministries, Inc. Under this umbrella name, four separate divisions focus on their particular ministry, all of which promote the "Functional Family." Today, Free Will Baptist Family Ministries, Inc. is a non-profit organization owned by the Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists and governed by a 15 member Board of Directors.

The fundamental purpose of Free Will Baptist Family Ministries, Inc. is to provide a safe haven of stability and love for children and youth. In response to the overwhelming need for emergency care, a shelter was established in the spring of 1991.

Through the years we have increased our effort to meet the ever-increasing needs of children in crisis situations. Because of the escalating costs to provide emergency care and the growing number of children in need, expansion is now imperative. Current facilities are inadequate to handle the volume of requests for emergency placement. The demand is constantly increasing. The problem will become more acute unless decisive action is taken right now. Consider these statistics:

- In 1994, the P.A.T.H. Shelter served 222 children from 38 counties across the state. All of these children were taught the Christian principles upon which we were founded, and 35 made decisions to follow Christ. During the same year, 728 children in need of a Christian family atmosphere were turned away because of the lack of facilities.

- In 1995, more than 67 children gave their lives to Christ, but more than 500 children were turned away simply because our existing shelter was full.

## SERVICES

### P.A.T.H. SHELTER (PROTECTING ADOLESCENTS & TEACHING HOPE)

Operating the only emergency shelter in Greene County, we are very proud to offer this service to those in need. Accepting children 24 hours a day, the function of the P.A.T.H. Shelter is to provide temporary placement (usually up to 30 days) for children as they are waiting for a permanent home. Working with new-borns up to 18-year-olds, the P.A.T.H. Shelter not only provides housing but also offers counseling, role-modeling, and academic programs.

### TRULA CRONK HOME FOR CHILDREN

In 1939 Trula Cronk was the first child served by this organization and she went on to serve as a missionary to India with her husband, Rev. Dan Cronk, for more than 20 years. Named in her honor, Trula Cronk Home for Children identifies our six

residential group homes where we serve children who are in our care for a long-term basis. Primarily, these children are between the ages of 6-18 and have little chance of the reuniting of their families. In an effort to create a stable, family-like atmosphere, six to eight children live in a house with a husband and wife team who are committed to "parenting" these children. In keeping with the parenting philosophy, these homes function as a family where together they share their meals, attend church, maintain individual household budgets, and participate in school and community activities. Each house strives to provide an atmosphere of normality and stability for their children.

### THE STANLEY FOSTER CARE PROGRAM

For the first time in our history, we are able to utilize families within our churches to provide Christian homes for children. Being the only one of our four divisions where the children are not physically served on our campus, The Stanley Foster Care Program allows us to place individual children or sibling groups in the homes of our foster families. On July 25, 1995 we began serving six children through this program.

### THE OAKS—FAMILY CONFERENCE CENTER & CAMP

Through the ministry of The Oaks, we strive to help children and adults develop stronger relationships with Jesus Christ by using conferences, retreats and camp activities. The Oaks builds functional Christian families, provides faith and character building programs, and ministers to fellow Christian workers.

## CAMPAIGN PROJECT SUMMARY

### FEMALE SHELTER

To build a facility which will provide emergency services 24 hours a day for 10-12 females and their houseparents. To provide a nursery for infants. **\$200,000**

### MALE SHELTER

To build a facility which will provide emergency services 24 hours a day for 10-12 males and their houseparents. **\$200,000**

### RENOVATIONS

To renovate existing shelter into a group home; to upgrade existing buildings. **\$150,000**

### MAINTENANCE ENDOWMENT FUND

To provide for the ongoing maintenance of the buildings and grounds; to build future monies for the ongoing ministry. Only the interest would be used. **\$450,000**

**Grand total for project: \$1,000,000**



*Pictured is Mr. Scott Niswonger (right) and Executive Director Roger Hood, as Mr. Hood expresses his gratitude. Mr. Niswonger recently made an extremely generous matching challenge pledge of \$250,000 to the "Building for THEIR Future" Campaign! Mr. Niswonger is President and CEO of Landair Services, Inc. of Greeneville.*

## Startling Statistics About Present-Day Church Growth

Three church growth experts, Chuck Arn, Winn Arn, and Donald McGavaran, made a study of over 10,000 people. The question they asked was this: "What was responsible for your coming to Christ and to this church?"

### Here are their responses (in percentages):

<i>Special need</i>	2%
<i>Walk-in</i>	3%
<i>Pastor</i>	6%
<i>Visitation</i>	1%
<i>Sunday School</i>	5%
<i>Evangelistic crusades</i>	1/2 of 1%
<i>Programs</i>	3%
<i>Brought by friend or relative</i>	79%

### National Offices Building

Tennessee's Portion—\$78,557

Amount Given—\$58,498

Yet Needed—\$20,059

## Beware of Watch Dogs

by the late T. DeWitt Talmadge

There are in every community and every church, watch dogs, who feel called upon to keep their eyes on others and growl. They are always the first to hear of anything wrong. Vultures are always the first to smell carrion. They are self-appointed detectives. I lay this down as a rule without an exception, that those people who have the most faults themselves are the most merciless in their watching of others. From scalp of head to soles of feet, they are full of jealousies, of hypercriticism. They spend their life hunting for muskrats and mud turtles instead of hunting for rocky mountains and eagles, always for something mean instead of something grand. They look at their neighbors' imperfections through a telescope upside down.

## English Language Institute/China

P.O. Box 265, San Dimas, CA 91773

Christians are desperately needed to fill teaching positions in China, Mongolia and Vietnam. Contracts with these countries may go unfulfilled unless enough people are found, meaning 2,000 Asian students may never meet a dedicated Christian teacher. It's not necessary to know a foreign language or to be a teacher by profession. You just need to hold or be in pursuit of a bachelor's degree. Call today for more information: 1-800-366-3542.

## From My Heart

Charles A. Thigpen

Many times I have thanked God, both publicly and privately, for the sweet spirit of harmony, fellowship, and love that we have here in Tennessee—both among the preachers and among our lay people. Our people truly love each other. It can be seen in the many deeds of generosity and kindness shown. It can also be felt when Tennessee Free Will Baptists meet together, whether in small or large groups. My prayer is that we will never lose this heartfelt love and appreciation for each other.

As I travel over our beloved denomination I am very troubled at the lack of love that many of our people and our preachers have for one another. This is a serious matter. It should concern all of us. We should pray that this lack of love toward each other will speedily be confessed and forsaken.

The basic way to show that Christ is our Savior is to love one another. Whatever happened to the love, admiration, and respect that preachers, and all other Christians, used to have for one another? There was a time in Free Will Baptist circles that when God's men met together, one could sense the deep abiding love that they had for one another. That has been replaced by a coolness—sometimes even a coldness—toward each other. We want to know, "Which side of the denominational fence is he on? Is he on 'my' side, or is he on the 'other' side?"

This is nothing short of a strategy of the devil to divide and destroy. He is the one who plants doubts in people's minds about others. He is the one who "sows discord among the brethren." When pride and suspicion come in—love goes out.

Jesus said, "By this shall all men know that ye all my disciples, if ye have love one to another" (John 13:35). In the first four of the five chapter of 1 Peter, the Apostle Peter speaks about loving one another. He says in chapter 1, "...see that ye love one another, with a pure heart fervently" (1:22). This is to be love shown toward all believers. It is to be manifest from a "pure" heart, clean, undefiled, and not hypocritical. And it is to be shown to "one another"—in

a warm, glowing, and intense manner. This love for other believers should be the most natural thing in all the world. Our Heavenly Father is the same; the joy of having our sins forgiven and our names written in heaven is the same. The spirit of sonship should produce a spirit of brotherhood, trust, and love.

Peter further states in 2:17, "Love the brotherhood." While all men should be treated kindly and with respect, believers should possess a deep affection and high regard for all who are one with us in Christ. He reinforces this truth by saying in 3:8, "love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous." These last two statements could be translated, "tenderhearted, humbleminded." Some among Peter's readers had already suffered for Christ—for others, suffering was imminent. The best way to face any kind of adversity is to love God supremely and sincerely love others.

Perhaps the crowning verse that Peter writes about love is, "And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love shall cover the multitude of sins" (4:8). Here again, Peter uses the term "fervent" to describe the quality and intensity of our love for each other. This love is generous and forgiving, even to the point of covering "the multitude of sins." This means to overlook the wrongs, imperfections, even sins of others.

If among Free Will Baptist ministers there could be a genuine revival of love toward each other, God would once again work in us and through us as we reach a sin-sick world. Our outreach will be weak and ineffective until we sincerely reach out to all our fellow ministers, and to all believers, with "fervent" love.

This is the way Paul described proper Christian charity, or love: "Love suffereth long, and is kind; love envieth not; love vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things, Love never faileth..." (1 Corinthians 13:4-8a).

# 45 In Bible College Graduating Class of '96



Free Will Baptist Bible College graduated 45 students from 12 states in commencement exercises held on the Nashville campus Thursday, May 16. The college awarded 13 Bachelor of Arts degrees, 27 Bachelor of Science degrees, one Associate of Christian Ministries degree and four Associate of Science in Business degrees.

Rev. Archie Ratliff, pastor of Bethel Free Will Baptist Church, Kinston, NC, brought the challenge to the graduates. Testimonies were shared by four graduates: Kristi Johnson, Chris Moore, Jonathan Kell, and Jamie Thornsberry. The graduates were welcomed by Rev. Eddie Hodges, president of the Alumni Association, to the ranks of more than 5,000 FWBBC alumni.

President Tom Malone honored several members of the college family during the exercises. Three who retired this year were recognized: Jean Whitaker (food services, 29 years), Katy Chasteen Smith (secretary, 30 years); and Dr. LaVerne Miley (Bible and Science, 20 years). He also noted that Lowell Sturgill (Business), Clint Morgan (Missions), and Phil Nelson (Youth Ministries) will not be returning to the faculty next year. President Malone commended Rev. Sam Truett for completing two terms of service as a distinguished trustee.

The service was closed with the traditional singing of the Alma Mater, *Within These Halls*. We are confident the 45 graduates of the Class of '96 are leaving these halls better prepared to serve the Lord because of their time here.

## TENNESSEE STATE ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS TREASURER'S REPORT, MARCH-MAY 1996

### Income

<u>Appalachian Assn.</u>		<u>Liberty Assn.</u>	
Grace	\$183.00	Cookeville	150.00
Keensburg	75.00	Liberty Assn.	67.71
Johnson City	200.00		
Appalachian Assn.	45.20		
		<u>Northeast Assn.</u>	
		Union Street	150.00
		<u>Union Assn.</u>	
<u>Cumberland Assn.</u>		Bethany	30.00
Bethel	117.83	Church Hill	120.00
Bethlehem	120.00	Fellowship	150.00
Brandon's Chapel	513.10	Forest Grove	75.00
Cumberland Assn.	1,154.55	Limestone	25.00
Donelson	737.27	Loudon	25.00
Dunbar Chapel	75.00	New Bethel	60.00
East Nashville	75.00	Newport First	600.00
Friendship	45.00	Oak Ridge	166.33
Goodlettsville	100.00	Union Assn.	414.73
Good Springs	140.32	Valley View	71.64
Head's	292.02		
Horton Heights	100.00	<u>Toe River Assn.</u>	
Hendersonville	400.00	Berea	11.00
New Hope	100.00		
New Life	105.00	<u>Other Churches</u>	
Oakwood	50.00	Doran Addition	50.00
Pardue Memorial	50.00	Valley Forge	192.53
Richland	36.64	Free Will Baptist	
Trinity	99.09	Family Ministries	\$225.00
Waverly First	75.00	Individuals	\$255.00
Woodbine	200.00	Total Income	\$7,977.96
Victory	50.00	Expenditures	\$7,290.47

*Thank you for your gifts to support the State Association work. All checks should be made payable to Tennessee State Association of Free Will Baptists and sent to E. B. McDonald, P.O. Box 685, Ashland City, TN 37015.*

### DATES TO REMEMBER

July 21-25	National Association of Free Will Baptists, Fort Worth, TX (The following are annual sessions)
Aug. 15-17	Union Assn., West Green Church
Aug. 16-17	Toe River Assn., Pearce Chapel Church
Sept. 8	West Tennessee Assn., Liberty Church, Millington
Sept. 20-21	Liberty Assn., Cookeville First Church
Oct. 5	Northeast Assn., Macedonia Church
Oct. 11	Central Assn., First Church, Smithville
Oct. 12	Cumberland Assn., Harper Road Church
Nov. 11-13	Tennessee State Assn., Cofers Chapel

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