

**The
ARTICLES OF FAITH
AND
PRINCIPLES OF CHURCH
GOVERNMENT
FOR
ORIGINAL FREE WILL
BAPTISTS
(OF THE ENGLISH
GENERAL BAPTIST
HERITAGE)**

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GENERAL BAPTIST
HERITAGE)**

This is the 1976 revision of the *Statement of Faith
and Discipline for Original Free Will Baptists.*

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PREFACE

A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith set forth by many of us, who are (falsely) called ANA-BAPTIST, to inform all Men (in these days of scandal and reproach) of our innocent Belief and Practise; for which we are not only resolved to suffer Persecution, to the loss of our Goods, but also Life itself, rather than to decline the same.

Subscribed by certain Eldres, Deacons, and Brethren, met at "London," in the first Month (called "March," 1660) in the behalf of themselves, and many others unto whom they belong, in "London," and in several Counties of this Nation, who are of the same Faith with us.

"After the Way which men called Heresie, so worship we the God of our Fathers; Believing all things which are written in the Law, and in the Prophets," Acts 24.14.—London—Printed by G.D. for "F. Smith," at the "Elephant and Castle," near Temple-Barr, 1660.

NOTE: See Appendix A.

**AN ABSTRACT
of the
FORMER ARTICLES OF FAITH
Confessed by the Original
BAPTIST CHURCH,
Holding The
Doctrine of General Provision,
With a Proper
CODE OF DISCIPLINE
For the Future Government Of The
Church**

**Newbern
Printed by Salmon Hall
1813**

Authorized 1812
NOTE: See Appendix B

PREFACE

Our last general conference met at a meeting house called A. Jones, on little Contentney, Green County, on the 5th of November 1812. The Conference then took into consideration, the general interest of the Gospel, and especially the interest of

the Churches they were related unto, and did then represent, judging it expedient to examine and reprint the former confession of faith, put forth by the former Elders and Deacons: the Conference thought it proper likewise to annex a proper code of our discipline; and for the accomplishment of this design Elders James Roach and Jesse Heath were appointed; and they having recourse to all the former Articles of faith and rules of Discipline now extant. Some things stand without variation and some things with variation, and we therefore desire the reader may be pleased to take the pains to peruse the scripture, that the grounds of our faith and practice may be better understood, that this impartial account of our principles and practice, may be accompanied with the blessing of God, and be beneficial to men, is the hearty prayer of us, your well wishers and servants in the Lord.

James Roach
Jesse Heath

NOTE: See Appendix B

**AN ABSTRACT
of the
FORMER ARTICLES OF FAITH
Confessed by the Original
FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH
holding the
Doctrine of General Provision
with a proper
Code of Discipline
for the
Future Government of the Church
Preface 1835**

The General Conference met at a meeting house called A. Jones on Little Contentnea, Greene County, on the 5th of November, 1812. The Conference then took into consideration the general interest of the Gospel, and especially, the interest of the Baptist Churches, which they did then represent, judging it expedient to examine and reprint the former Confession of Faith, put forth by the former Elders and Deacons; the conference then thought it expedient likewise to annex a proper Code of Discipline, and for this purpose Elders James Roach and Jesse Heath were appointed a

committee, who accomplished the same.

The General Conference met at Wheat Swamp Meeting House, [sic] Lenoir County, on the 7th of November 1835. The Conference then judged it necessary to revise and amend the Discipline of the Baptist Churches, and for the accomplishment of this design, it was agreed that a committee of five persons be appointed, and that Brethren Windsor Dixon, John A. Fonville, Robert Bond, Reuben Barrow and Daniel Cox, compose said committee, and report to the next General Conference.

The General Conference held at Hookerton, Greene county, on the 5th of November, 1836, received the revised and amended Discipline, which was adopted; and that, with the Confession of Faith, ordered to be reprinted.

That our principle of practice may be accompanied with the blessing of God, and be beneficial to men, is the sincere prayer of your well wishers and brethren in the Lord.

*Windsor Dixon,
Reuben Barrow,
Robert Bond.*

(taken from the reprint of 1855)

**AN ABSTRACT
of the
FORMER ARTICLES OF FAITH
Confessed by the Original
FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH
holding the
Doctrine of General Provision
with a proper
Code of Discipline
for the
Future Government of the Church
Preface 1894**

The Western Conference of the Original Free Will Baptist [sic] of North Carolina, convened with the church at St. Mary, [sic] Wilson County, [sic] October 8th, 1894.

The Conference seeing it necessary to revise and correct the book of Discipline, appoint a committee of five to examine the book and revise and correct the errors that had been made during the past several years by reprinting. The committee appointed were as follows:

Elder Daniel Davis, Western Conference; Elder R. C. Jackson, Cape Fear Conference; Elders T. F.

and T. H. Harrison, and J. M. Barfield, Eastern Conference.

The Committee examined the book and made the necessary corrections, and made their report to the Conference. The report was received, and it was ordered to be presented to the Eastern Conference for adoption or rejection, it being the Original Conference.

The Eastern Conference convened with the church at Black Jack, Pitt Co., N.C., November 8th, 1894. The report of the committee was presented and it was unanimously adopted and ordered to be reprinted.

May the work be beneficial to the church and the blessings of God rest upon it, is the prayer of your committee.

Daniel Davis
R. C. Jackson
T. F. Harrison *Committee*
T. H. Harrison
J. M. Barfield

**AN ABSTRACT
of the
FORMER ARTICLES OF FAITH
Confessed by the Original
FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH
holding the
Doctrine of General Provision
with a proper
Code of Discipline
for the
Future Government of the Church
Preface 1916**

The General Conference met at a meeting house called A. Jones, [sic] on Little Contentnea, Greene County, on November 5, 1812, and considered the interest of the Gospel and the Baptist churches there represented. They decided to examine and reprint the Confession of Faith put forth by the former Elders and Deacons and annex a proper Code of Discipline and for this purpose Elders James Roach and Jesse Heath were appointed a committee who accomplished the same.

The General Conference at Wheat Swamp, in Lenoir county, November 7, 1835 adjudged it necessary to revise and amend the discipline of the Baptist churches. Windsor Dixon, John A. Fonville, Robert Bond, Reuben Barrow and Daniel Cox were appointed a committee to do the work and ordered to report to the next General Conference. The General Conference at Hookerton the following year received and adopted the revised and amended discipline and ordered it reprinted together with the Confession of Faith.

The Western Conference of the Original Free Will Baptist of North Carolina in session at St. Mary's [sic] Wilson County, [sic] October 8, 1894, deemed it necessary to revise and correct the book of Discipline and to accomplish the task, appointed a committee of five as follows: Elder Daniel Davis, Western Conference; Elder R. C. Jackson, Cape Fear Conference; Elders T. F. and T. H. Harrison and J. M. Barfield, Eastern Conference. The committee did the work assigned and reported to the conference. The report was received and ordered reported to the Eastern Conference for adoption or rejection, it being the Original Conference.

The Eastern Conference in session at Black Jack, Pitt County, November 8, 1894, adopted the work of the committee and ordered it reprinted.

In 1914 it became apparent that the book of Discipline needed to be revised and unified. This matter was discussed in the State Convention (at New Bern during that year), and at the State Convention of 1915 at Shady Grove in Sampson County, a committee of four was appointed to do the work. The committee was composed as follows: Elder R. F. Pittman, Western Conference; W. J. Braxton, Central Conference; W. A. Jackson, Cape Fear Conference; and Elder S. H. Styron, Eastern Conference. The committee met in Goldsboro in the spring of 1916 and did the work as directed. Their work was reported to the different conferences in session in the fall of 1916 and adopted by all of them. The work as revised and unified is hereby presented to the brotherhood for the proper discipline and government of our churches.

May the work be beneficial to the church and may the blessing of God rest upon it, is the prayer of your committee.

Eld. R. F. Pittman, *Ch'm*
W. J. Braxton,
W. A. Jackson,
Eld. S. H. Styron

**A TREATISE
of
FAITH AND GOVERNMENT
for the
ORIGINAL
FREE WILL BAPTIST [sic]
of
NORTH CAROLINA
Preface
(Authorized in 1948)**

It was at the 1948 annual session of the North Carolina State Convention, held in Hull Road Church, Greene County, that a committee was appointed to revise and amend the rules of Church Discipline. The committee was constituted of Revs. R. N. Hinnant, J. C. Griffin, J. W. Alford, D. W. Alexander, J. A. Evans and M. L. Johnson.

The committee held several meetings and worked diligently to arrange a Discipline that would be acceptable to the majority of our Conferences and Associations in the State, and at the same time, conform to the National Treatise.

We are praying that, as this Discipline goes before the people, it will prove a blessing to all

the churches and be a potent factor in uniting our denominational practices in North Carolina.

R. N. Hinnant, *Chairman*

**STATEMENT
of
FAITH and DISCIPLINE
for
Original
Free Will Baptists
of
North Carolina
Preface 1955
(Authorized in 1954)**

Throughout the ages it has been an accepted fact that, to govern people working under one great banner, there must be an established set of rules. Therefore, a committee appointed at the 1954 session of the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptists to revise the state governing document, *A Treatise of Faith and Government for the Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina* realized the importance of these rules, as did our state body.

The committee was constituted of two members from each conference and association holding membership in the state convention.

Much prayer and thought motivated every decision of the committee and, as this *Statement of Faith and Discipline* goes forth under the banner of North Carolina Free Will Baptists, we trust it will so unify our constituency that love and unity may prevail.

Rev. D. W. Alexander, *Chairman*
Rev. R. N. Hinnant, *Secretary*

COMMITTEE

WESTERN CONFERENCE: R. N. Hinnant,
M. L. Johnson

EASTERN CONFERENCE: J. W. Alford,
D. W. Hansley

CENTRAL CONFERENCE: D. W. Alexander,
C. J. Harris

CAPE FEAR CONFERENCE: L. R. Ennis,
J. R. Davidson

ALBEMARLE CONFERENCE: C. H. Overman

PIEDMONT ASSOCIATION: L. H. Clayton,
Roy Rikard

FRENCH BROAD ASSOCIATION: W. L.
Moretz

ROCK FISH CONFERENCE: Winford R. Floyd,
R. R. Shepherd

PREFACE

The State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina convened in Mount Olive, North Carolina, with Mount Olive College serving as host, September 15, 16, 1976.

The Convention in session recommended that a committee be formed to study for revision and clarification the *Statement of Faith and Discipline of Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina*. The Executive Committee of the State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina invited each Conference to send representatives to study the formation of a revision committee. This study committee agreed that each Conference appoint two representatives to the revision committee:

Those appointed were:

Eastern Conference: David W. Hansley, Bruce Dudley, Bill Futch (Alternate), J. B. Starnes (Alternate)

Central Conference: Gary M. Bailey, N. Bruce Barrow

Western Conference: De Wayne Eakes, Ray Wells

Pee Dee Association: William J. Godwin, Jack Penny, James B. Hardee

Cape Fear Conference: Curtis Jones, C. Felton Godwin

Albemarle Conference: Robert May, Francis Garner, Marvin Waters (Alternate)

Piedmont Conference: James L. Kivett, Fred Johnson, M. E. Cox

The Revision Committee held its first meeting on March 1, 1977, at Mount Olive College in the Free Will Baptist Historical Room of the Moyer Library. This meeting was devoted to a survey of the history of Original Free Will Baptists beginning in 1609 in England through 1976. Special emphasis was given to the many and various confessions of faith that have been used during the denomination's history. The Revision Committee adopted two of these confessions as the basis for the present revision, namely the Confessions of 1660 and 1812.

Using these two Confessions as the proper foundation, the Revision Committee worked to simplify and clarify the historical confessions of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination. The work was presented to the State Convention Study Committee February 15, 1979; the work was then presented to the State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina on September 16, 1981. The State Convention then

presented the work to the various Conferences and two-thirds of the Conferences adopted the work and reported their action to the State Convention at which time the revision was authorized and ordered printed.

“May the work be beneficial to the church and the blessing of God rest upon it...” (1894 Preface).

David W. Hansley, *Chairman*
Bill Futch, *Secretary*

FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH COVENANT

Having given ourselves to God, by faith in Christ, and adopted the word of God as our rule of faith and practice, we now give ourselves to one another by the will of God in this solemn covenant.

We promise by His grace to love and obey Him in all things, to avoid all appearance of evil, to abstain from all sinful amusements and unholy conformity to the world, from all sanction of the use and sale of intoxicating beverages, the abuse of drugs, and to “provide things honest in the sight of all men.”

We agree faithfully to discharge our obligations in reference to the study of the Scriptures, secret prayer, family devotions, and public worship and by self-denial, faith, and good works endeavor to “grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.”

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together for church conferences, public worship, and the observance of the ordinances of the Gospel; nor fail to give according to our ability for the support of the church and all its benevolent work.

We agree to accept Christian admonition and reproof with meekness, and to watch over one another in love, endeavoring to “keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” to be careful of one another’s happiness and reputation, and seek to strengthen the weak, encourage the afflicted, admonish the erring, and as far as we are able promote the success of the church and of the Gospel.

We will everywhere hold Christian principles and obligations supreme, esteem it our chief business to make Christ known to the world, and constantly pray and toil that the Kingdom of God may come, and His will be done on earth as it is in Heaven.

To this end we agree to co-operate in the promotion of denominational ministries, the support of the work of the local church, and the evangelization of the world.

May the God of peace sanctify us wholly, and preserve us blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Article 1. Doctrine of God

We believe that there is but one living, true, and eternal God, the Father; of whom are all things, from everlasting to everlasting, glorious and unchangeable in all His attributes.¹

We believe that God is the only proper object of worship.² The mode of His existence, however, is a subject far beyond the understanding of mankind.³ There is no thing in all creation that can adequately represent Him.⁴ He is the source of all existence,⁵ and the Scriptures teach that He is Spirit,⁶ present everywhere,⁷ all knowing,⁸ all powerful,⁹ independent,¹⁰ good,¹¹ wise,¹² holy,¹³ just,¹⁴ merciful,¹⁵ redeemer,¹⁶ Saviour,¹⁷ sanctifier,¹⁸ the judge of mankind¹⁹ and all other attributes ascribed to Him in the Scripture.

1. Exodus 3:14; Isaiah 40:28, 46:9; Jeremiah 10:6–10; Mark 12:29–32; 1 Corinthians 8:4–6; Galatians 3:20; Deuteronomy 6:4, “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD.”

2. Exodus 34:14; Deuteronomy 6:13; Joshua 24:14, 15; Matthew 4:10; Luke 10:27; Revelation 19:10; Exodus 20:3–5a, “Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under

the earth: Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them; for I the Lord thy God am a jealous God....”

3. Job 11:7, 26:14, 38—41; Romans 11:33—35; Isaiah 55:8—9, “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts.”

4. Exodus 20:1—5, 23; Psalm 89:5—37; Acts 17:29, “Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man’s device.”

5. Exodus 20:11; Psalm 33:6—9; John 1:1—4; Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.”

6. 2 Corinthians 3:17; John 4:24, “God is a Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.”

7. 1 Kings 8:27; Isaiah 57:15; Acts 17:24; Psalm 139:7—10, “Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell [Sheol], behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.”

8. 1 Chronicles 28:9, Psalm 94:9—11; Acts 15:18; Acts 1:24, “And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen.”

9. Job 42:2; Psalm 135:6; Matthew 19:26; Luke 18:27; Revelation 19:6; Mark 14:36, “And he said, Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee; take away this cup from me: nevertheless not what I will, but what thou wilt.”

10. Job 9:12; Daniel 4:35; Romans 11:33–36; Ephesians 4:6, “One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.”

11. Psalm 106:1, 119:68, 145:9; Matthew 19:17; Psalm 25:8, “Good and upright is the LORD; therefore will He teach sinners in the way.”

12. Daniel 2:20; Romans 16:27; 1 Timothy 1:17; Jude 25, “To the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

13. Leviticus 19:2; Job 6:10; Isaiah 6:3, “And one cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory.”

14. Psalm 92:15, 119:137; Zephaniah 3:5; Deuteronomy 32:4, “He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.”

15. Exodus 34:6; Nehemiah 9:17; Psalm 100:5; Ephesians 2:4, “But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us.”

16. Galatians 4:5; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 1:18; Revelation 5:9, 14:3, 4; Job 19:25; Psalm 19:14; Isaiah 41:14, 43:14, 44:6; Jeremiah 50:34; Luke 1:68, 24:2–11; Galatians 3:13, “Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree.”

17. Acts 13:23; Ephesians 5:23; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:3; 1 John 4:14; 2 Samuel 22:3; 2 Kings 13:5; Psalm 106:21; Isaiah 19:20, 43:3, 45:15; Hosea 13:4; Luke 1:47, 2:11; John 4:42, “And said unto the woman, Now we believe, not because of thy saying: for we have heard him ourselves, and know that this is indeed the Christ, the Saviour of the world.”

18. Exodus 31:13; 1 Thessalonians 5:23, "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ"; Jude 1.

19. Genesis 18:25; Psalm 50:6; 2 Timothy 4:8; Hebrews 12:23, "To the general assembly and the church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect."

Article 2. Doctrine of Christ

We believe that there is one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, who was truly God and truly man, whom God freely sent into this world, because of the great love wherewith He loved the world; and Christ as freely gave himself a ransom for all, tasting death for every man; who was buried and rose again the third day, and ascended into Heaven from whence we look for him the second time, in the clouds of Heaven, at the last day to judge both the living and the dead.¹

We believe that the Scriptures ascribe to Christ all the attributes of God.²

1. Acts 24:15; Philippians 2:6, 7; 1 Timothy 2:6, 7; 1 John 2:2; Revelation 1:7; Matthew 1:18–25; Luke 1:26–35; John 1:1–14, 3:16, “For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life.”

2. 1 John 5:20, “And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.” (See footnotes of Article 1.)

Article 3. Doctrine of the Holy Spirit

We believe that there is one Holy Spirit, the precious gift of the Father through his dear Son, who is the divine presence in our lives, who regenerates and sanctifies us, and whereby we are kept in perpetual remembrance of the truth of Christ, and in whom we find our strength and help.¹

We believe that the Scriptures ascribe to the Holy Spirit all the attributes of God.²

1. John 16:7-14; Acts 2:1-3; Ephesians 2:1, 4-6; John 14:16, 17, "And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him; but ye know him for he dwelleth with you and shall be in you."

2. (See footnotes of Article 1.)

Article 4. Doctrine of the Trinity

We believe that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are one God, without beginning or end, who is indivisible in His nature or being.¹

1. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 5:7, "For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word [Christ], and the Holy Ghost [Spirit]: and these three are one."

Article 5. Doctrine of Creation and Divine Government

We believe that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and all things therein, visible and invisible; and that God is continually working through His creation to sustain it and to nurture His creatures.¹

We believe that all things are foreseen in the wisdom of God, so that God knows whatsoever can or cannot come to pass upon all supposed conditions. All events are present with God from everlasting to everlasting; but His knowledge of them does not in any sense cause them, nor does He decree all events which He knows will occur.²

1. Genesis 1:1—2: 25; Psalm 104:13; Ephesians 1:11; Colossians 1:16; Genesis 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.” 2:7, “And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul.”

2. Isaiah 42:9; Matthew 6:8, “Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him.”

Article 6. Doctrine of Man

We believe that in the beginning God created man in His own image and placed him in a state of glory without the least mixture of misery, from which he voluntarily by transgression fell, and by that means, brought on himself a miserable and mortal state subject to death. Unbelief is the reason why men are condemned in the sight of the just and righteous God.¹

We believe that the human will is always active and may rebel or respond to the call of Christ in His redemptive offer, that through the grace of God mankind may be saved.²

1. Genesis 2:7, 3:1-7; John 3:17,18; Romans 5:12; Genesis 1:26-27, "And God said, let us make man in our image, after our likeness:...So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

2. John 3:17, 18; Ephesians 2:8; Revelation 3:20; Deuteronomy 30:19; Jeremiah 17:9, 10; John 1:12,13, "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name: Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God."

Article 7. Doctrine of the Church

We believe that the Church is the body of Christ, all Christians everywhere.

We believe that the local church is an organized body of believers in Christ who statedly assemble to worship God and who sustain the ordinances of the Gospel. The local church does not exist in isolation; rather, those churches who believe and practice the Original Free Will Baptist faith and order join together to form a denominational church. Neither the local church nor the denominational church exists independent of the other.¹

1. Acts 15:1ff; 1 Corinthians 1:1–2; 12:12–13; Ephesians 1:22–23; Colossians 1:18, 24; 1 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 2:19, “Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints and of the household of God.”

Article 8. Doctrine of the Holy Scriptures

We believe these are the Old and the New Testaments, that they were written by holy men, inspired by the Holy Spirit, and are God's revealed word to man. We believe that they are a sufficient and infallibly true rule and guide to salvation and all Christian worship and service.¹

1. John 5:39; Romans 15:4; Hebrews 1:1-2; 2 Peter 1:18-21; 2 Timothy 3:16. "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness."

Article 9. Doctrine of Salvation

We believe that salvation is the restoration of man to his right relationship with God.

General Provision: We believe in the doctrine of General provision made of God in Christ, for the benefit of all mankind who repents and believes the Gospel.¹

We believe that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved;² for which end Christ hath commanded the Gospel to be preached among all nations and to every creature.³

We believe that sinners are drawn to God the Father by the Holy Spirit through Christ His Son, and that the Holy Spirit offers His divine aid to all the human family so that they all might be saved, if they accept His divine teaching;⁴ and if any fail of eternal life, the fault is completely his own.⁵

Faith: We believe that faith is the response of an individual in total trust and commitment to God's provision in Christ.⁶ The power to believe is the gift of God, but believing is an act of the individual which is required as a condition of salvation.⁷ "Faith if it hath not works is dead,

being alone.”⁸

Repentance: We believe that the repentance which the Gospel requires includes a deep conviction, a penitential sorrow, an open confession, a decided hatred and an entire forsaking of all sin.⁹ This repentance God has enjoined on all men; and without it in this life the sinner will perish eternally.¹⁰

Regeneration: We believe that regeneration is an instantaneous renewal of the heart by the Holy Spirit, whereby the penitent sinner receives new life and becomes a child of God.¹¹ (This is called in Scripture being “born again,” “born of the Spirit,” being “quickenened,” passing “from death unto life,” and “partaking of the divine nature.”)

Justification: We believe that justification means that persons who accept by faith the atonement of Christ are pardoned and absolved from the guilt of sin and restored to divine favor where once they stood guilty before God.¹²

Sanctification: We believe that sanctification is the setting apart of the believer for continuing

growth in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, for service to God and man.¹³

General Provision. 1. John 3:16, "For God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son that whosoever believeth on him should not perish but have everlasting life"; Acts 10:34.

2. 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness;...not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance."

3. Matthew 28:19–20, "Go ye therefore...lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

4. John 1:9; 16:8; Acts 10:34; 1 Timothy 2:4; John 14:6, "Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

5. John 5:40; 2 Timothy 2:12; Mark 16:16, "He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

Faith. 6. John 3:18; Romans 10:9; Hebrews 11:6, "But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him."

7. Ephesians 2:8, "For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God."

8. James 2:17, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone."

Repentance. 9. Psalm 32:3–5; Ezekiel 18:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10, "For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of; but the sorrow of the world worketh death."

10. Acts 3:19; Luke 13:5, "I tell you, Nay, but, except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish."

Regeneration. 11. Ezekiel 36:26; John 1:12–13; 3:3; 5:24; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5–6; Ephesians 2:1. "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."

Justification. 12. Isaiah 53:11; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:16; Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Sanctification. 13. 1 Thessalonians 5:23; 2 Peter 3:18; Galatians 2:20, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me."

Article 10. Doctrine of the Perseverance of the Saints

We believe that those who abide in Christ have the assurance of salvation. The Christian, however, retains his freedom of choice. Therefore, he should watch and pray since it is possible for him to turn away from God and be eternally lost, which is called making shipwreck of faith.¹

1. 2 Chronicles 15:2; Ezekiel 33:18; John 15:6; 1 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Timothy 1:19; Hebrews 6:4–6; 2 Peter 1:10; 2 Peter 2:20; Mark 13:13, “And ye shall be hated of all men for my name’s sake; but he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.”

Article 11. Doctrine of Individual Accountability

We believe that all persons are accountable to God, except those incapable of responding to God's call.¹

1. Matthew 18:2-5; 19:14; Luke 12:48; Romans 14:12, "So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God."

Article 12. Doctrine of Christian Service

We believe that it is the Christian's duty to be tender and affectionate one to another, to study the happiness of the people of God in general, to do justly by all people, and to be singly engaged to promote the honor and glory of God.¹

1. Zechariah 7:9; Matthew 25:34–40; Acts 20:35; Galatians 6:1,2, 10; Colossians 3:13–14; 1 John 3:17–18; Ephesians 4:32, “And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.”

Article 13. Doctrine of the Lord's Day

We believe in the sanctity of the first day of the week, or Lord's day, and that it ought to be observed in the corporate and private worship of God, and that on it we should abstain from our worldly concerns except in cases of necessity or mercy.¹

1. Exodus 20:10–11; Leviticus 23:3; Matthew 28:1–7; Mark 16:1–6; 1 Corinthians 16:1,2; Revelation 1:10; Acts 20:7, “And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight.”

Article 14. Doctrine of Worship

We believe that worship is the adoration of God and is duly required of all His children through praise, prayer, and the reading and preaching of His Word. Every Christian may worship God privately; however, this should never replace the corporate worship of the church.

We believe that in addition to the ordinances of the Gospel, there are other rites of worship which are valid for use by the local church. Some of these rites are: laying on of hands, anointing the sick with oil, fasting, singing praise to God, corporate affirmation of faith, and corporate prayer.¹

1. Psalm 100; 103:1–4; Matthew 6:16–18; Mark 6:13; John 4:23,24; Acts 2:46,47; Ephesians 5:19; Philippians 3:3; 1 Timothy 4:14; James 5:14; 1 Peter 2:9; Psalm 95:6, “O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the LORD our maker.”

Article 15. Doctrine of Christian Stewardship

We believe that good works are the fruits of saving faith and include being good stewards of all God's blessings. Christians are to be responsible in the use of their time and talents. Furthermore, Christians are required to be faithful in the use of their finances for the expense of the program of Christ in the world.

The Old and New Testaments teach tithing as God's financial plan for the support of His work.¹

1. Ecclesiastes 3:1–8, 17; Malachi 3:8; Matthew 25:12–30; 1 Corinthians 4:1,2; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6–8; Ephesians 5:16; 1 Peter 4:10,11; Malachi 3:10, “Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.”

Article 16. Doctrine of the Ordinances of the Gospel

1. **Christian Baptism:** We believe that this is the immersion of believers in water, in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,¹ in which are represented the burial and resurrection of Christ, the death of Christians to the world, the washing of their souls from the pollution of sin, their rising to newness of life, their commitment to serve God, and their resurrection at the last day.²

2. **The Lord's Supper:** We believe that this is a commemoration of the death of Christ for our sins, in the use of **bread** which He made the emblem of His broken body, and the **cup**, the emblem of His shed blood; and by it the believer expresses his love for Christ, his faith and hope in Him, and pledges to Him perpetual fidelity.³

3. **Washing the Saints' Feet:** We believe that this is a sacred ordinance, which teaches humility, the necessity of the servanthood of every believer, and reminds the believer of the necessity of a daily cleansing from all sin. It was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ as an "example" on the night

of His Last Supper and betrayal.

It is the duty and happy prerogative of every believer to observe these sacred ordinances.⁴ We believe that no man has a right to forbid these tokens to the least of His disciples.

1. Mark 16:16; John 3:5; Acts 2:38; 10:48; 22:16; Matthew 28:19, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost."

2. Acts 2:41; 8:12, 38; 9:18; 16:15, 33; 18:8; 19:5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; 15:29; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:12; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 3:21; Romans 6:3,4, "Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

3. Matthew 26:20–29; Mark 14:18–25; Luke 22:14–20; 1 Corinthians 10:16, 21; 1 Corinthians 11:23–26, "For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered unto you, That the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you; this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also, he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as ye drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."

4. John 13:4–17; 1 Timothy 5:10; John 13:12–15, “So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said unto them, Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me Master and Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you.”

Article 17. The Doctrine of Death

We believe that Adam, while in the Garden of Eden in a state of innocence and in the image of God,¹ was commanded by God not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and if he did he would surely die. As a result, Adam was liable or subject to death,² but not under the result or penalty of it. However, when he disobeyed and rebelled against the command of God, he passed under the result and penalty of death; and as Adam represented all the human race, death passed upon all men.³

We believe that there is much mystery associated with the act or fact of dying; therefore, no living person can completely understand it. However, the Bible assures that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, changed death from the destroying scourge to the doorway to heaven to all who exercise saving faith in Him.⁴

1. Genesis 1:26,27, "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness: and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth. So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them."

2. Genesis 2:16,17; Proverbs 8:36; Romans 6:23; 8:6; James 1:15; 5:20; Revelation 21:8; Ezekiel 18:20, "The soul that sinneth, it shall die. The son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, neither shall the father bear the iniquity of the son; the righteousness of the righteous shall be upon him, and the wickedness of the wicked shall be upon him."

3. Psalm 49:10; 89:48; Ecclesiastes 8:8; 1 Corinthians 15:21,22; Romans 5:12, "Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned."

4. Psalm 116:15; Proverbs 14:32; Luke 16:22; 23:43; Romans 14:8; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 1:21; Hebrews 11:13; Revelation 6:9; 14:13; 2 Corinthians 5:6–9, "Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:) We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him."

Article 18. The Doctrine of Immortality

We believe that the soul does not die with the body, but immediately after death enters into a conscious state of happiness or misery, according to the individual's relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ.¹

1. Matthew 10:28; John 8:51; 11:26; Romans 2:7; 1 Corinthians 15:53,54; 2 Corinthians 5:1; Philippians 3:21; 1 Thessalonians 4:17; 2 Timothy 1:10; Revelation 20:4; Ecclesiastes 12:7, "Then shall the dust return to the earth as it was: and the spirit shall return unto God who gave it."

Article 19. The Doctrine of the Resurrection

We believe in the resurrection of the bodies of all people, each in its own order; the Christian to eternal life and the non-Christian to eternal damnation.¹

1. Daniel 12:2; Matthew 16:19; 28:1–6; Mark 9:9; 16:1–6; Luke 24:1–8; John 11:1–44; 20:1–10; Acts 24:15; 26:22,23; 1 Corinthians 15:1–58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13,14; John 5:28,29, “Marvel not at this: for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, And shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”

Article 20. Doctrine of Last Things

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into Heaven, and sits at the right hand of God the Father. He will come again to glorify His saints, to judge the world, and to consummate His Eternal Kingdom.¹

1. Matthew 24:26,27, 44; 25:31,32; 26:64; Mark 14:62; Luke 12:37–40; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 1:7; Philippians 4:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:16–5:6, 23; 1 Timothy 4:1; 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1; Hebrews 9:28; 10:37; James 5:8; Jude 14–15; Revelation 1:7; 3:11; 16:15; 22:20; Titus 2:13, “Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ.”

Article 21. Doctrine of Angels

We believe that angels are created spiritual beings (and are not spirits of the dead, nor are they glorified human beings). Angels are ministering spirits and messengers of God. Angels convey the instructions of God to men, announce special events; protect the faithful, both individually and collectively, and execute punishment on the adversaries of the work of God.¹

1. Nehemiah 9:6; Hebrews 1:14; Psalm 104:4; Hebrews 12:22, 24; Genesis 22:11,12; 31:11; Exodus 3:2; Genesis 16:11; Judges 13:3–5; Luke 1:5–24; 1:26–35; Matthew 1:20,21; Colossians 1:16, “For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him.”

Article 22. Doctrine of Satan

We believe that Satan is a created spirit being.¹ Names applied to Satan in the Bible are: Lucifer, Belial, Beelzebub, the Devil, the Evil one, the Accuser, the enemy, the tempter, the Prince of Demons, the prince of the power of the air and the Ruler of this world.²

In the New Testament Satan appears as a distinctive personality. He incites people to shut their ears to God's message.³ He maliciously hinders Christian endeavor⁴ and is essentially a power of darkness, the enemy of the Light and of God,⁵ though he sometimes disguises himself as an angel of light.⁶

Though Satan is all of the above, man is a free moral agent⁷ and is responsible for his own sins and is responsible for his acceptance or rejection of Christ,⁸ who gives victory over all evil.

1. Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:12–19; Luke 10:18, "And he said unto them, I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven."

2. Isaiah 14:12; 2 Corinthians 6:15; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15, 18–19; 1 Peter 5:8; Matthew 13:19; 1 John 5:18; Revelation 12:10; Matthew 13:39; Luke 10:19; Matthew 4:3; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Matthew 9:34; 12:24; Mark 3:22; John 12:31; John 16:11; Ephesians 2:2, "Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of

this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."

3. Revelation 2:9; 3:9; Mark 4:15, "And these are they by the way side, where the word is sown; but when they have heard, Satan cometh immediately, and taketh away the word that was sown in their hearts."

4. 1 Thessalonians 2:18; 1 Corinthians 7:5, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency."

5. Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

6. 2 Corinthians 11:14, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light."

7. Revelation 22:17, "...And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely."

8. Proverbs 8:4; Mark 16:15-16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned."

RULES OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Introduction

The rules for the government of the church are contained in the Holy Scriptures; however, some of them are understood and applied in general directions. It is therefore necessary that the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination adopt certain fixed rules of polity as understood from the Holy Scriptures, from tradition, from custom, from practice, and from necessity, that it may more perfectly perform its duties as a Christian organization.

The church government for the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination did not develop easily, but materialized as a result of hardship, need, desire, and experience. Therefore, it is necessary that the Denomination at the present time, and for the future, adopt the best rules of church government that it can possibly formulate for the protection, direction, management, function, harmony, understanding, and cooperation of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination as a whole.

Traditionally, church government is divided into three types: episcopal, presbyterial, and

congregational—each having its own distinctive polity. The Original Free Will Baptist Denomination has never adopted in totality any of the three. Nevertheless it has adopted rules of polity and practiced certain customs that are related in some respects to the three above mentioned types. This does not mean, however, that the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination copied or used any of the three as a pattern, but adopted rules of polity and practiced certain customs as the need arose. Its church government is thus a distinctive one and is best described as representative by delegation.

SECTION 1: THE LOCAL CONGREGATION

A local congregation of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination is one that adheres to and participates in *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. Therefore, each local congregation adheres to the same basic governmental principles and procedures in order to promote the success of the Gospel and of the denomination and to “keep the Unity of the Spirit in the bonds of peace.”

The Organization of a Local Congregation

The basic governmental principles, structures, and procedures of an established local congregation are as follows:

Officers: The officers of the local congregation shall consist of at least the following: Board of Trustees, Clerk, Treasurer, Board of Finance, Board of Deacons. All officers are elected by and serve at the will of the local congregation. In addition, all offices must be filled with active members of the local congregation who are qualified for the duty.

Board of Trustees: The board of trustees shall hold title to all property, maintain all legal rights to said property, convey said property at the discretion of a four-fifths majority of the members present at a regular quarterly conference (said anticipated sale or conveyance having been previously announced at the last regular quarterly conference of said church, and public notice of anticipated sale or conveyance having been made in the local paper, or posted as the law requires.)

Clerk: The clerk shall keep and maintain proper church records, including a membership roll and a record of church business meetings. The clerk shall sign all legal letters authorized by the

church. All such records are the property of the local congregation, and the clerk shall relinquish all church records to his successor.

Treasurer: The treasurer shall be entrusted with the funds of the church and keep an account of all money received. He shall pay all bills as authorized by the church and make a report of all receipts and disbursements annually, or as often as the church may require. All the records of the treasurer are the property of the local congregation. They are open to inspection by the members upon reasonable request, except in the case of the records of individual contributions which are to be kept in confidence by the treasurer. All records, at the direction of the church, are to be submitted for a financial audit. The treasurer shall relinquish his records and all funds to his successor.

Board of Finance: The board of finance shall have the responsibility of promoting Christian stewardship, planning the budget of the church, and aiding the treasurer in the maintenance of competent records. The members of this board shall assist with the audit of financial records when necessary.

Board of Deacons: The office of deacon is scripturally described. For their qualifications see 1 Timothy 3:8–13, and for their ordination see Acts 6. The duties of the deacons are as follows:

- (1) to serve at the Lord's table
- (2) to distribute of the bounty of the church among its needy members
- (3) to visit the sick
- (4) to assist the pastor in attending to and carrying out the worship and outreach program of the church in a Godly manner
- (5) to cooperate with the pastor in seeing that efficient Scriptural discipline and programs are maintained
- (6) to see that the worship and service programs are carried out in the absence of the pastor.

Should a deacon transfer his church membership, his office shall thereby terminate.

Pastor: The pastor shall have general superintendence of the church as the chief administrative officer. It is the pastor's duty to faithfully preach the Word, to be an example to the flock, to visit the members—especially the sick—as he has oppor-

tunity; to do all within his power to promote the spiritual interest of the church which he serves, to promote all denominational institutions, enterprises, and programs, and to advance the cause of Christ among men.

The church shall call its own pastor, from among the duly ordained Original Free Will Baptist ministers who are approved by the Conference of which the church is a member, upon such terms as may be mutually agreeable. A pastorate shall not be terminated by the church or pastor without a ninety-day previous notice, or unless agreed to by both parties.

Church Membership: As to the reception of members, any person who gives evidence of a change of heart, professes faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, has been baptized (immersed) by a duly ordained minister, and to whom the church covenant has been read and explained, and by whom accepted, shall be received into the church.

From other churches baptized (immersed) persons are received by letter or profession of faith. Individuals transferring from other denomi-

nations are expected to adhere to the doctrine and practices of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination. In addition, the church covenant is to be read and explained, and accepted by the candidate for membership. Persons excluded from other churches are not received unless it be made evident that they were excluded upon unjustifiable grounds. Excluded members are received when they give evidence of repentance.

No one against whom any valid objection is made is received into the church. When any member objects to the reception of an applicant, the matter is deferred until the church can ascertain the nature of the objection. If, in the opinion of the church, the objection is not a valid one, the applicant may be received. The hand of fellowship is extended to all who are received into the membership according to the regular methods of the church.

When a member in good standing desires to unite with another church, the clerk may be authorized to send a letter of transfer of membership to the church with which he is to unite. Such members receive letters of honorable dismissal

and commendation. A withdrawal without such letter of commendation is equivalent to excommunication.

Christian Discipline: Discipline includes both the principle by which we live and the procedures by which we are governed. Christian discipline demands that the principle and the procedures embody the truth of Jesus Christ as taught in Scripture. It is hoped that all members of an Original Free Will Baptist Church will observe and conduct themselves according to the Scripture and the Church Covenant; however, due to human nature we all are subject to error. It therefore becomes necessary that certain disciplinary procedures be invoked. All church discipline should be administered in the spirit of love and with the ultimate aim of reclamation of the erring one or ones. The Scriptural foundation for these procedures is Matthew 18:15–17 and Galatians 6:1.

It is hoped that individual problems may be settled by the individuals; however, if these must be brought to the church, they must follow the procedures outlined in this section.

When an allegation is to be brought to the church, the charges must be made in writing,

signed by two or more members in good standing and handled according to the procedures outlined below:

Either individual problems or charges must be presented first to the pastor and board of deacons. If after reasonable investigation a satisfactory solution can be reached, no further action will be taken. If a satisfactory solution cannot be reached, then the case should be presented to the church at a regular quarterly conference or, if necessary, at a special called conference, for which at least two weeks prior notice has been given.

Meetings of the Local Congregation: Each local congregation will meet regularly for the public worship of God. The times of worship and of the observances of the ordinances shall be arranged by the local congregation. The ordinances of the Gospel are administered only by ordained ministers. The ordinance of Baptism should take place as soon as practicable after conversion. The ordinances of the Lord's Supper and the Washing of the Saints' Feet should take place at stated times as arranged by the local congregation.

The pastor is the chairman of the business meeting of the local congregation. A local congregation which has no pastor or one whose pastor is voluntarily absent or providentially hindered from attending a business meeting may elect a temporary chairman and attend to necessary business. In the business of the excommunication of a member or the selling or transferring of church property, should the church be without a pastor, then the church should call the Executive Committee of the Conference of which it is a member to appoint an ordained minister to serve as moderator for said business. All business meetings are conducted according to the rules of order prescribed by *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. (See Section 5.)

The local church, being of the Original Free Will Baptist order, does covenant and agree to assemble four times a year (every three months) for the purpose of holding a godly conference. Then and there the business of the church shall be transacted.

However, in the case of necessity or emergency, the church may call a special session of conference, after giving notice to the pastor and members (notice being one week or one meeting of the church) and transact the business needed to be attended to, confining their business transactions to the items for which the conference was called. (See Section 1: Board of Trustees.)

Objects and Duties of the Local Congregation

The object of the local congregation is to be the people of God. This is accomplished by working together to practice Christian living and to carry out a Christian ministry in the community.

It is the duty of each congregation to establish and sustain public worship of God on a regular basis. This includes Sunday service and such mid-week services as are deemed necessary.

It is the duty of each congregation to establish and sustain a program of Christian education. This program shall involve as its subject both Scripture and the faith and history of the Free Will Baptist denomination, and shall use all methods and tools that will result in the effective educational ministry.

It is the duty of each congregation to establish and sustain such auxiliary programs as are deemed necessary.

It is the duty of each congregation to work for and maintain the highest possible standards of **justice, righteousness, and love** in community affairs. Further, it is the duty of each congregation to win people to the cause of Christ.

It is the duty of each congregation to pay into its treasury sufficient funds to support local church programs and the entire denominational program.

It is the duty of each congregation to be represented by delegation and to participate totally in the Conference to which it belongs, and to abide by the rules and regulations each conference adopts for its member churches. This duty includes the report by annual letter and contributions for their expenses and programs of the conference. It is the privilege of each local congregation to participate in the Union Meeting.

It is the duty of each congregation to represent by delegation and by annual letter to the Con-

vention of Original Free Will Baptist Churches. Further, that God's will may be done, each congregation shall make financial contributions to the denominational ministries, institutions, and benevolent work.

Organization and Establishment of a New Church from a Mission

Organization of a Mission: A Church begins as a mission and operates for at least one year under the supervision of the Executive Committee of the Conference, the Home Missions Board, and/or the Conference Mission Board, where one exists.

When a group of believers desires to be organized into an Original Free Will Baptist Mission, they shall make application to the Conference Executive Committee within whose bounds the proposed mission is to be located. The Executive Committee is to contact the Convention Mission Board and the Conference Mission Board, if one exists, to work together in the establishment and development of the mission.

When an application has been received, the

Committee and Board(s) shall make an investigation. The investigation shall include the following:

- (1) A sufficient number of responsible believers
- (2) Doctrine, practice, polity and purpose
- (3) Location
- (4) Potentiality of financial income
- (5) Willingness to accept direction
- (6) Potential for future growth and development.

In accordance with *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)* and any requirements of the Conference, the Executive Committee of the Conference and the Mission Board(s) shall set forth the procedures and requirements for recognition of an Original Free Will Baptist Mission. Minimum requirements for the establishment of a Mission are as follows:

- (1) The person in charge of a mission should be an ordained minister in good standing with the Conference to which he belongs and the Conference to which the mission belongs, if different Conferences are involved.
- (2) If the mission board finds it necessary or expedient to use a licensed minister at a mission point he is to be under the watch-care of the board.
- (3) If property is owned or to be purchased, a thorough inspection of the deed is to be made and the property is to be deeded jointly to the local conference or the Mission Board for a period of 10 years after which the mission or church shall become the sole owner upon the mission or church's request; provided all financial obligations to denominational enterprises are satisfied. Following the 10 year period, the trustees of the local church shall hold the title to said property in trust for those members who remain faithful to *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

This 10-year period of joint ownership shall begin with the organization of the mission.

- (4) The mission shall follow the manual published by the Mission Board(s).

- (5) In the mission no one person shall serve more than two of the basic offices at the same time.

The privileges and duties of a mission under the auspices of the Conference Executive Committee and/or Mission Board(s) are as follows:

- (1) Mission members are to be received under the same requirements as those of an established church.
- (2) The mission, subject to the direction of the Conference Executive Committee and/or Mission Board(s), can conduct its business and carry out its affairs as an established church.
- (3) As to the affairs of the mission requiring the work of an ordained minister, the Conference Executive Committee and/or Mission Board(s) shall provide or make arrangements for an ordained minister to be present, should the mission not have an official pastor.

Establishment of a New Church from a Mission: When an Original Free Will Baptist Mission desires to be established as an Original Free Will Baptist Church, it shall make application to the Conference Executive Committee within whose bounds the proposed church is to be located. The

Executive Committee is to contact the Convention Mission Board and the Conference Mission Board, if one exists, to work together in the establishment of the church.

When an application has been received, the Executive Committee shall make an investigation. The investigation shall include the following:

- (1) A sufficient number of responsible believers
- (2) Doctrine, practice, polity, and purpose
- (3) Location
- (4) Potentially of financial income
- (5) Potential for future growth and development.

The Conference Executive Committee shall carry out the procedures and requirements of the Conference and *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government* for recognition as an Original Free Will Baptist Church.

If the findings of the investigation are satisfactory, the organization is perfected as follows:

- (1) The officers are elected.
- (2) The Bible is presented as the Word of God.

- (3) *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government* are read and adopted.
- (4) The Church Covenant is explained and adopted.
- (5) A prayer of consecration is offered.
- (6) The hand of fellowship is given to the church by the Moderator and Executive Committee of the Conference.

When a mission is established as a new church and is accepted by the Conference, its properties (after all requirements set forth in No. 3 Page 76 have been met) are held in trust by the trustees of that church for those members that remain faithful to *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

Establishment and Organization of a Non-Mission Church

When a body of believers desires to be established as an Original Free Will Baptist Church of the Convention and does not deem it necessary to begin as a mission, they shall petition the Executive Committee of the Conference in whose bounds the proposed church is to be located. The moderator shall call the Executive Committee of said Conference immediately for an investigation.

If the investigation is satisfactory, the organization is perfected as follows:

- (1) The Bible is presented as the only rule of faith and practice.
- (2) *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)* is read.
- (3) The Church Covenant is explained and adopted.
- (4) The officers are elected.
- (5) A prayer of consecration is offered.
- (6) Upon their acceptance at the annual Conference the moderator shall extend the hand of fellowship.

Relationship of the Local Church to the Conference

Each local church is a distinct organization, with full authority to manage its own internal affairs, elect its officers, receive, dismiss, discipline, and exclude members in accordance with this book of discipline.

The annual Conference is a distinct organization made up of its member churches, represented by delegation, and its member ministers and its own elected officials. It has full authority to manage its own affairs and the responsibilities designated and delegated by its members.

Since neither the local congregation nor the annual Conference exists as an Original Free Will Baptist entity apart from the other, the annual Conference, being the highest tribunal, shall have final disciplinary authority over the local church.

SECTION 2: THE MINISTRY

The Call

Having recognized that God calls His people into His service, no member shall take unto himself the public Ministry of the Gospel unless he feels sure he is Divinely called to that Ministry. Each individual's Divine calling is unique and different. Such a calling must contain at least these three elements.

First, he must know the One who does the calling; i.e., he must be a Christian. No person can in truth say that he has been called into the Gospel Ministry unless he has a "saving" relationship with the Father.

Second, he must possess natural ability or abilities and be committed to improving the abilities he has and acquiring additional abilities that can be used in the services of the Ministry.

Third, he sees the needs of God's people and is willing to be an instrument to help fill those needs. Further, he is willing to minister to those outside of Christ.

Involvement in a call to the Gospel Ministry is a call to grow and prepare that the Ministry may serve God's purpose.

Hebrews 5:4, 1 Corinthians 9:16, Acts 13:2, Acts 20:28, 1 Timothy 4:13-16; and 2 Timothy 2:15.

Examination and Qualifications for License

Qualifications: A person who desires license into the Ministry of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination must have the following qualifications:

- (1) He must have the experience of a Divine call to the Gospel Ministry.
- (2) He must be a member in good standing of an Original Free Will Baptist Church for at least one year.
- (3) He must be willing to meet the required standard for licensing set forth by the Ordaining Council of the Conference in which his church is a member (see 1 Timothy 3:2-7, 2 Timothy 2:15, Titus 1:9, and 2 Timothy 1:7—2:2).

Procedures: A proper candidate for licensing into the Gospel Ministry must also adhere to the following procedures:

- (1) He must report to his local church his call to the Gospel Ministry.
- (2) The church in a business session must recommend the candidate to the Conference Ordaining Council for examination for license with a letter signed by the clerk and pastor.
- (3) The Ordaining Council shall give the applicant an examination embracing

- matters of faith, doctrine, polity, and purpose respecting the work of the Ministry. They shall also investigate the reputation and ability of the candidate and his present and prospective educational and professional qualifications.
- (4) The responsibility is on the candidate to demonstrate his qualifications and abilities. Having successfully passed the examination and investigation, the candidate is then recommended back to the church, who then shall issue to the applicant a license for one year.
 - (5) If during the period of license the licentiate walks disorderly, the church and/or the Conference has the power to recall the license at its own discretion.
 - (6) The license of the applicant must not be allowed to lapse during any time prior to ordination.

Examination and Qualifications for Ordination

Qualifications: A person who desires to be ordained into the Gospel Ministry of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination must have the following qualifications:

- (1) He must have been a licensed minister for at least one year and not more than five years.

- (2) He must have successfully completed the examination administered by the Ordaining Council of his Conference. The examination shall include an inquiry into his educational achievement and his knowledge of theology, homiletics, church history, Bible and church government, with special emphasis on the polity, doctrine and history of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination.
- (3) He must ascribe to the Ministerial code of ethics as adopted by the conference of which he is a member.

Procedures: A proper candidate for ordination into the Gospel Ministry must also adhere to the following procedures:

- (1) The church must request that the Ordaining Council of the Conference of which the church is a member give the licensed minister the examination for ordination. The request must be by letter signed by the clerk and pastor of the candidate's church.
- (2) The responsibility is on the candidate to demonstrate his qualifications and abilities for ordination.
- (3) Upon satisfactory completion of the examination and all other requirements of the Conference, the Council administers the rite of ordination, which shall include a charge to the candidate, presentation of a Bible,

the laying on of hands with a prayer of consecration, and the presentation of the Certificate of Ordination. (See 1 Timothy 4:14, 2 Timothy 1:6, Acts 13:3, Acts 6:6).

Examination and Procedures for Transfer from Another Denomination

An ordained minister coming from another denomination must first resign the ordination from the church he is leaving. He must unite with an Original Free Will Baptist Church, request approval and direction from the local church and local ordaining council, and show a willingness to abide by their decision and recommendations. Upon meeting the above requirements to the satisfaction of the Ordaining Council, the minister shall be questioned and shall meet the same requirements as would one of our own licensed ministers who is examined for ordination.

Relationship to the Conference

The Original Free Will Baptist minister derives his authority from the Conference and must abide by the decisions of the Conference.

- (1) The minister must be ordained by the Conference in which he was licensed and

- remains a member of said Conference until he is duly transferred.
- (2) The minister who desires to transfer his Conference membership to another Conference shall ask for a letter of recommendation from his Conference. He shall remain a member of his original Conference until that Conference is officially notified of his acceptance by the Conference to which he has transferred.
 - (3) Each Conference exercises authority over Original Free Will Baptist ministers in its membership or those serving within its bounds.
 - (4) In cases of discipline: ministers shall be entitled to a trial with the Ordaining Council serving as a trial board. The charges must be in writing, and the minister charged must have the opportunity to be heard in defense of himself. When confronted with accusations or charges a minister shall be entitled to the opportunity to clear his reputation. Trials must therefore be conducted with discretion. The procedures are as follows:

- (A) A charge against an ordained or licensed minister must be presented to the appropriate committee (Ordaining Council, Ministerial Character Board, Examining Board, etc.) in writing, signed by the accuser, together with the evidence to support the charge.
- (B) Charges must be examined by the appropriate committees (Ordaining Council, Ministerial Character Board, etc.) to determine if they are legitimate (pertaining to matters of doctrine, polity, ethics, or morality). Personal grievances disguised as charges are not legitimate; however, if they represent factionalism in the church where he is pastor, the matter should be turned over to the Executive Committee and the Ordaining Council.
- (C) If the charges are legitimate, the minister is to have a fair and impartial trial by the appropriate committee, (Ordaining Council, or Ministerial Character Board, etc.)
- (D) The minister is entitled to face his accuser(s) and present proper defence. The committee conducting the trial has an obligation to the minister to either find him guilty or to clear his name of all charges.

- (1) If a minister's name is cleared no public record is made except at the request of the accused.
- (2) If the minister is found guilty, the standing of the minister may be made known to the church of the Conference or Conferences involved.
- (3) The minutes of said trial should be recorded only in the minutes of the appropriate committee.
- (4) The results of said trial should be reported to the Conference.

(E) Appeal Procedure. The accused, if found guilty, may appeal the procedure of the trial committee as follows:

- (1) The minister may ask the conference to investigate the procedures of the trial committee.
- (2) The committee that is to investigate the trial is to deal only with the procedures followed by the trial committee.
- (3) If the committee finds that the trial committee followed proper procedure and that the rights of the accused have been respected, the decision of the trial committee is final.
- (4) If the committee finds that the trial committee did err in conducting the trial, the investigating committee may make such recommendations that insures that justice will be done.

- (F) A minister serving in the bounds of a Conference of which he is not a member shall be tried with the same procedures with the following exception: The Ordaining Council of the Conference where he holds membership shall be invited to sit on the trial board. The decision of this trial board is final.

The ordained minister must cooperate and promote the work of the denomination at all times and must attend the yearly meeting of the Conference or represent by letter.

Vocational Responsibilities of the Minister

By the very nature of his calling the minister is to faithfully preach the Word, to have general superintendence of the church, to be an example to the flock, to visit the members—especially the sick—as he has opportunity, to serve as counselor, to serve as teacher—especially in a program of Christian education, to administer the ordinances of the gospel, to do all within his power to promote the spiritual interest of the church which he serves, and to advance the cause of Christ among men.

The minister is expected to relate to his fellow ministers in a gracious and fair manner as reflected by the Code of Ethics adopted by the Ministerial Association of Original Free Will Baptists and is expected to conduct himself in a professional manner in all public relations involving persons or institutions.

SECTION 3:

THE ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Introduction

The Annual Conference is the highest ecclesiastical tribunal, deriving its power from its member churches, which shall have final disciplinary authority over its member churches and ministers. The description of this authority is *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

Organization

The basic governmental principle, structure, and procedures of an Annual Conference are as follows:

The officers and boards of the Annual Conference shall consist of at least a Moderator, an Assistant Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, Board of Trustees, Ordaining Council, Executive Committee. Each Conference may establish such additional offices and/or boards as it deems necessary.

All officers are elected by and serve at the will of the Annual Conference, under such terms

and length of tenure of office as is set forth by the Conference. In addition, all offices must be filled by active members of a church which is a member of the Annual Conference or by ministers who must be members in good standing of the Conference.

All standing and temporary boards and committees shall report all action and decisions to the Annual Conference.

Moderator

The Moderator is the chief executive officer of the Conference and it shall be his duty to preside over all business sessions of the Annual Conference and its Executive Committee. The Moderator shall have such privileges and responsibilities as prescribed by the rules of order and parliamentary procedures, and as set forth by the Annual Conference. He is an ex officio member of all boards and committees of the Annual Conference.

Assistant Moderator

The Assistant Moderator shall serve in the absence of the moderator. He is a member of the Executive Committee.

Treasurer

The Treasurer shall be entrusted with the funds of the Annual Conference and keep an account of all money received. He shall pay all bills as authorized by the Conference and make a report of all receipts and disbursements annually, or as often as the Conference may require. All the records of the Treasurer are the property of the Annual Conference. They are open to inspection by members upon reasonable request. All records, at the direction of the Conference, are to be submitted for a financial audit. The Treasurer shall relinquish the records and all funds to his successor. He is a member of the Executive Committee.

Clerk

The Clerk shall keep proper Conference records including a membership roll and a record of Conference and Executive Committee business meetings. The Clerk shall sign all legal letters authorized by the Conference. All the records of the Clerk are the property of the Annual Conference and he shall relinquish all Conference records to his successor. The Clerk is a member of the Executive Committee.

Board of Trustees

The Trustees shall hold title to all property, maintain all legal rights to said property on behalf of the Annual Conference and convey said property at the discretion of the Annual Conference (in session).

Ordaining Council

The Ordaining Council shall examine and certify each candidate for the ministry according to the procedures set forth in Section 2 of *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)* entitled "The Ministry" and the additional procedures adopted by the Annual Conference. The Ordaining Council shall ordain such candidates who satisfactorily meet the requirements. In addition, the Council shall examine each minister of another Conference who wishes to accept the "call" to a church in the Conference.

The Ordaining Council shall also serve as a trial board in such cases where charges are brought against a minister. The Ordaining Council shall have authority to make necessary investigation in such cases.

The Ordaining Council shall follow the procedures set forth in *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)* and the additional procedures adopted by the Annual Conference. At the discretion of the Annual Conference a part of the duties of the Ordaining Council may be assigned to another board or committee, such as a Ministerial Character Committee.

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee shall be composed of the Moderator, Assistant Moderator, Treasurer, Clerk, and such members at large as the Conference deems necessary. It shall be the duty of the Executive Committee to act with the same authority as the Conference during intervals between sessions on matters concerning ministers, churches, and other business, except conveying of property, that may require its attention.

The Executive Committee shall be empowered to make temporary or permanent appointments to fill vacancies on a board or committee until the next session of the Conference.

The Executive Committee shall meet as often as necessary to attend to Conference business and

shall be responsible for preparing a program for each session of the Conference.

The Executive Committee or such committee as the conference appoints to act on its behalf shall be responsible as a trial committee in cases of church disputes. The Scripture teaches us to refrain from going to civil courts and to form counsels to settle disputes and establish justice among brethren. (See Acts 15:1–32, Galatians 2:1ff, 1 Corinthians 6:1ff.)

- (A) Investigation: When a church or congregation is engaged in factional, doctrinal, and/or disciplinary disputes, the Executive Committee shall upon invitation from member(s) of said church shall assemble themselves upon the premises of their local church for the purpose of inquiry, examination or questioning that peace may be established in an orderly and godly manner.

In cases of extreme factionalism and disputes the Executive Committee shall be empowered to investigate said disputes at its own discretion. The purpose of this shall be only for investigation, to determine if there are sufficient grounds for charges to be filed or further action.

(B) Charges:

- (1) Charges must be filed with the Executive Committee in writing and signed by member(s) of the church together with evidence to support the charges.
- (2) Charges must be examined by the Executive Committee to determine if they are legitimate (pertaining to matters of doctrine, polity, ethics, or morality). Personal grievances disguised as charges are not legitimate.
- (3) Charges involving the minister should be turned over to the Ordaining Council or jointly with Ordaining Council and Executive Committee.
- (4) If the Executive Committee determines that the charges are legitimate, the accused is to have a fair and impartial hearing.
- (5) After the Executive Committee has met to investigate a church because of factional disputes or doctrinal and disciplinary infractions and given its decision and recommendation, the church or group within the church has the right to appeal to the Annual Conference to determine whether or not the investigation was carried out according to the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government*

for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage): to determine whether or not the decision(s) of the Executive Committee were just and proper. Otherwise, the committee's decision is final.

- (6) Member or members of a church who are called upon to assemble themselves for the purpose of the aforesaid investigation have a moral responsibility to be cooperative.
- (C) In cases whereby a church splits, the Executive Committee is assigned the responsibility of determining and identifying the group that is the true original church, loyal to *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*, and the intent and purpose of the organization of the church. In such cases, the group determined to be the true church is entitled to all rights, privileges, real property, assets and records of the church.

Membership and Representation

Each Annual Conference shall be composed of affiliated churches and missions within its bounds, all affiliated ordained ministers, all gen-

eral officers, and members of standing boards and committees of the Conference.

Churches are received into the membership of the Annual Conference under regulations set forth in the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. Only churches in good standing are honorably dismissed from the Conference and these for no other reason than to unite with some other Conference that has adopted the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. It is therefore contrary to the practices of Original Free Will Baptists for any church to disband or dissolve its connection with its Conference without the approval of that Conference, nor may any Conference receive into its membership a church that has been rejected or excommunicated by a sister Conference unless reconciliation is made with that Conference.

Ministers are received into membership of the Annual Conference in accordance to the regulations set forth in the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. Ministers are governed, disciplined, and/or dismissed

by the Conference in accordance to the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. Each Conference may adopt its own procedures so long as it does not conflict with the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

Each church holding membership in its Annual Conference shall represent by letter and is entitled to one delegate for each one hundred members or fraction thereof at each session of the Conference. Each delegate is entitled to voting privileges.

Voting in the Conference is the privilege and responsibility of delegates representing member churches of the Conference, ministers who are members of the Conference, general officers of the Conference, and members of standing boards and committees of the Conference.

Voting privileges of licensed ministers are left up to the discretion of the Conference.

Rules of Conference Government

Meetings: The Conference shall meet annually. Special sessions may be called at the discretion of the Executive Committee.

Rules of Order: The Conference sessions shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order and such rules as set forth by the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

Each minister, delegate, or other members of the Annual Conference shall be represented at each annual session as required by the Conference or be subject to disciplinary action.

Receiving Members: Church will be received according to the prescribed conditions set forth under the sections "The Establishment of a New Church from a Mission," or "Establishment of a Non-Mission Church" on Pages 80–81. The vote of the Conference in annual session confirms membership.

Objects and Duties of the Conference

The object of the Conference shall be to promote Christ's Kingdom among men by means of a larger fellowship, and to seek to more effectively coordinate and regulate the work of the local Conference and its member churches in accordance with the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

It is the duty of each Conference to work for and maintain the highest possible standards of justice, righteousness, and love among its members and to encourage the support of denominational ministries of the Original Free Will Baptists.

It is the duty of each Conference to recommend ministerial candidates for church license and to examine and ordain qualified persons as ministers within Conference bounds. In addition, it is the duty of the Conference to maintain Christian discipline among its member ministers.

SECTION 4: CONVENTION OF ORIGINAL FREE WILL BAPTISTS

Introduction

The State Convention of Original Free Will Baptists of North Carolina was organized in 1913 for the purpose of extending the denominational program. It is a coordinating body working for the cooperation of the churches, conferences, ministers, and institutions of the Original Free Will Baptists. (The name of the State Convention was changed in 1991 to the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists.)

The Convention is both an inclusive and an exclusive body. It is inclusive in that it is made up of all bodies and institutions of Original Free Will Baptists who accept the usage, customs, and practices reflected in the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

Objects and Duties

The object of the Convention is to initiate, advance, and promote the cause of Jesus Christ in the world. The Convention shall organize its work in such a manner as to be expedient, cooperative, and departmentalized.

It shall be the duty of the Convention to solicit the cooperation of its members in promoting the work of the Convention.

It shall be the duty of the Convention to clearly set forth such rules for the work that it deems necessary.

It shall be the duty of the Convention to establish conferences in those areas where there are no Conferences and where churches have adopted the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

It shall be the duty of the Convention to prepare and publish a Constitution and Bylaws for its government; the Constitution and By-laws shall at all times be consistent with and subject to the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

It shall be the duty of the Convention to promote love, justice, and righteousness among its members, as prescribed in Micah 6:8.

Organization

Officers: The officers of the Convention shall consist of at least the following: President, Vice

President, Recording Secretary, and Treasurer. The Convention may establish such additional offices it deems necessary. All officers are elected by and serve at the will of the Convention, under such terms and length of tenure of office as are set forth by the Convention.

President: The President is the chief executive officer of the Convention and shall preside over all business sessions of the Convention and its Executive Committee. The President shall have such privileges and responsibilities as prescribed by the rules of order and parliamentary procedures set forth by the Convention. He is an ex officio member of all boards and committees of the Convention.

Vice President: The Vice President shall serve in the absence of the president. He is a member of the Executive Committee.

Recording Secretary: The Recording Secretary shall keep proper Convention records, including a membership roll and a record of Convention and Executive Committee business meetings. The Recording Secretary shall sign all legal letters authorized by the Convention. All the records of the Recording Secretary are the property of the Convention and he shall relinquish all convention

records to his successor. The Recording Secretary is a member of the Executive Committee.

Assistant Recording Secretary: The Assistant Recording Secretary shall serve in the absence of the Recording Secretary. He is a member of the Executive Committee.

Treasurer: The Treasurer shall be entrusted with the funds of the Convention and keep an account of all money received. He shall pay all bills as authorized by the Convention, and make a report of all receipts and disbursements annually, or as often as the Convention may require. All the records of the Treasurer are the property of the Convention. They are open to inspection by the members upon reasonable request. All records, at the direction of the Convention, are to be submitted for a financial audit. The Treasurer shall relinquish the records and all funds to his successor. He is a member of the Executive Committee.

Boards and Committees: In addition to its Executive Committee, the Convention may establish such boards, committees, and commissions that it deems necessary to carry out its programs. The Executive Committee shall be composed of the standing officers of the Convention and such members at large as the Convention deems nec-

essary. The Executive Committee shall act with the same authority as the Convention during intervals between sessions. All of the Convention's standing and temporary boards, committees, and commissions are subject to the directions of the Executive Committee during intervals between sessions. Other duties may be assigned to the Executive Committee at the discretion of the Convention. All the standing and temporary boards, committees, and commissions are to report to the Convention for the Convention's final approval.

Institutions: All institutions, auxiliaries and ministries, born because of a recognized need by the denomination and authorized by the parent body are to adhere to the denominational principles and to be servants of the denomination.

Membership: Members of the Convention shall consist of the Conferences that have adopted the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. Ministers who are members in good standing with their Conference are members of the Convention with right to vote. Churches in good standing with their Conferences are members of the Convention with the right of representation of one delegate for each 100 members or fraction thereof. The Convention shall designate

member conferences in its yearly minutes.

Conference: When a sufficient number of churches wish to become a conference or when there is need for an investigation of a new conference the Executive Committee of the Convention shall make an investigation and, if the investigation is satisfactory, shall report to the Convention with a recommendation to receive into membership. Any church already a member of an existing Conference must be granted a letter of honorable dismissal from the Conference where it holds membership. The Executive Committee shall make its investigation as follows:

- (1) Have the churches of the new Conference adopted the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*?
- (2) Has the Conference adopted the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*?
- (3) Have the Conference and its individual members agreed to support the program,

institutions, agencies, and ministries of the Original Free Will Baptists?

In the event that the Executive Committee is not satisfied with the findings of the investigation, the Executive Committee shall work with the prospective Conference to bring it into compliance.

Foreign Missions

Since the work of the Original Free Will Baptists has become international in scope, we recognize that the native / national Free Will Baptist churches / conferences have their own unique and peculiar patterns of church work, ministry, and rules in compliance with the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*.

It shall be the purpose of the Free Will Baptist Church to place the leadership and control of its missionary work in the hands of its national constituency as soon as practicable. To this end all missionaries are directed constantly to cultivate among national Christians self-support, self-government, and responsibility for the propagation of the gospel in that field.

It is expressly understood that foreign churches shall function according to the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heri-*

tage). It is further understood that every foreign missionary is required to be a member in good standing of a Conference in good standing with the Convention until the native/national churches are sufficiently developed and organized to operate as a denominational church. The missionary, under the supervision of the Foreign Mission Board, may act on behalf of his Conference in the organizing of foreign churches and ordaining of foreign ministers.

The native/national Original Free Will Baptist churches shall operate under the *Articles of Faith and Principles for Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)*, as administered by the Foreign Mission Board and under the guidance of the field council of that field.

Home Missions

Since the work of Original Free Will Baptists has grown beyond the bounds of the State we recognize that there are peculiar circumstances that must be considered in the establishment of churches. It is expressly understood that missions and churches outside the state bounds shall function according to the *Articles of Faith and Principles*

of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage) and the guidelines of the Home Missions Board.

Purpose: It shall be the purpose of the Free Will Baptist Board of Home Missions and Evangelism to supervise all missionary and church extension work within the continental United States.

It is further understood that every missionary is required to be a member in good standing of a Conference that is in good standing with the Convention.

In the organizing of missions into churches, the Home Mission Board shall operate in principle according to the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)* calling upon a local Conference when necessary.

SECTION 5: RULES OF ORDER

These rules of order and parliamentary procedure are prescribed for all business meetings of the local church, union meetings, conferences, and conventions of Original Free Will Baptists.

The term *moderator* means the presiding officer of the local church, union, conference, or convention.

The term *member* means church member for the local churches, ministers, delegates, and voting members for unions, conferences, and conventions.

Rules of Order: All business sessions shall be governed by *Robert's Rules of Order*, and such rules as set forth in this section.

Visiting Brethren: The Conference may extend to visiting brethren a welcome and the opportunity to bring greetings from their body.

- (1) If any member, in the judgment of the Conference, shall show anger in his discussion on any subject, he shall forfeit his seat in that session.
- (2) No member of the Conference shall be at liberty to withdraw without leave of the Moderator.

- (3) The Conference shall adjourn by a majority vote.
- (4) Each officer and member of standing committees and boards shall be entitled to a seat and vote in the Conference.
- (5) The Conference shall open and close with suitable devotions to God.
- (6) The minutes of the Conference shall be signed by the Moderator and Clerk.
- (7) A motion must be made by one member, seconded by another, and afterwards stated by the Moderator, before it is debated. A motion shall be reduced to writing by the mover at the request of any one member.
- (8) All resolutions shall be submitted in writing.
- (9) A motion or resolution may be withdrawn at any time before a decision or amendment by the Conference.
- (10) Any motion or resolution containing more than one distinct proposition shall be divided, provided the call for division be sustained by a majority.
- (11) No motion to amend shall be in order beyond a motion to amend an amendment.
- (12) No amendment relating to a different subject shall be in order.

- (13) A motion lost shall not be recorded except so ordered at the time.
- (14) When a member speaks or offers a motion, he shall rise and respectfully address the Moderator, confine himself to the question under consideration, and avoid all personalities and unkind and disrespectful language.
- (15) When two or more members rise to speak at the same time, the Moderator shall decide who is entitled to the floor.
- (16) While a member is speaking, no one shall interrupt him except to call him to order, or ask leave to explain or make explanation. The one allowed to explain shall confine himself strictly to an actual misunderstanding of language which may need explanation.
- (17) If the speaker yields the floor to another he cannot claim it again.
- (18) No member shall speak more than twice, or longer than five minutes at each time, on any question without leave of the Conference, which leave shall be granted without debate.

- (19) All conversation, by whispering or otherwise, which is calculated to disturb the speaker or hinder the transaction of business, and passing between the speaker and the chair, shall be out of order.
- (20) Committees shall be nominated by the Conference (no member being allowed to nominate more than one to the same committee), and the nomination then confirmed by vote; or the committee may be named by the Moderator by request of the Conference.
- (21) The member first named to a Committee shall be its chairman to call the Committee together, but after it is convened, the Committee may elect its own chairman and secretary.
- (22) Any subject under debate or any matter or business may be referred to a Committee, with or without instructions.
- (23) All reports of Committees shall be in writing, signed by a majority of the Committee. When a majority report is followed by a minority report from the same Committee, the former, after being read, shall lie on the table until the latter is presented,

after which the majority report may be considered.

- (24) A report of a Committee may be recommitted, when necessary, for further investigation or for presentation in some more acceptable form.
- (25) All reports when read shall be considered properly before the body without a motion to accept.
- (26) Voting shall be done by "aye" and "nay," by standing when a vote is close, or when it becomes necessary to count the affirmative and negative, and in special cases by ballot.
- (27) The Moderator, in case of a tie, may cast the deciding vote.
- (28) All members should vote on one side or the other, unless excused.
- (29) No motion, discussion, or other business shall be admitted while the vote is being taken.
- (30) Immediate action upon any question may be deferred by laying on the table until a specific time or indefinitely. Laying on the table does not kill a motion. It is intended to lay aside a proposition for a short but

indefinite time. It may be taken from the table by a majority vote at any time when no question is pending during this or the next session. If not taken from the table, then it is killed.

- (31) When a motion or resolution is before the body, the only motions in order shall be: 1st, to adjourn; 2nd, previous question; 3rd, to lay on the table; 4th, to postpone indefinitely; 5th, to postpone to a definite time; 6th, to refer; 7th, to divide, if division is admissible; 8th, to amend—to take precedence as herein arranged.
- (32) Motions to adjourn, when to adjourn simple, to take previous question, and to lay on the table, must be decided without debate.
- (33) Names suggested for filling vacancies shall be voted on in order of their nomination; when different numbers and times are proposed, the greater number and longest time shall be voted on first.
- (34) A motion to reconsider a motion previously passed must be made by one who voted in the affirmative when the motion passed, and if a vote to reconsider is lost, it cannot be renewed during this session.

(35) **Revision.** A revision of the *Articles of Faith and Principles for Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (of the English General Baptist Heritage)* may be authorized by a two-thirds majority vote of the Convention in regular session.

(36) **Revision Committee.** The committee to revise the statement of Faith and Discipline shall consist of two representatives of each Conference in good standing with the Convention of Original Free Will Baptist churches.

It is suggested that these two representatives come from the Executive Committee and/or Ordaining Council.

(37) This revision shall become valid upon its adoption by two-thirds of the conferences and Associations that belong to the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists.

APPENDIX A
A BRIEF CONFESSION
OR
DECLARATION OF FAITH
PREFACE 1660

A Brief Confession or Declaration of Faith set forth by many of us, who are (falsely) called ANA-BAPTISTS, to inform all Men (in these days of scandal and reproach) of our innocent Belief and Practise; for which we are not only resolved to suffer Persecution, to the loss of our Goods, but also Life itself, rather than to decline the same.

Subscribed by certain Elders, Deacons, and Brethren, met at "London," in the first Month (called "March," 1660) in the behalf of themselves, and many others unto whom they belong, in "London," and in several Counties of this Nation, who are of the same Faith with us.

"After the Way which men called Heresie, so worship we the God of our Fathers; Believing all things which are written in the Law, and in the Prophets," Acts 24.12—London—Printed by G.D. for "F. Smith," at the "Elephant and Castle," near Temple-Barr, 1660.

A Brief/Confession/or/Declaration of Faith,/ Set out by many of Us, who are (falsely) called "Ana-baptists," to inform all men (in these days of scandal and reproach) of our innocent Belief, and Practice: for which we are not resolved to suffer persecution, to the loss of our Goods, but also life itself, rather than [sic] to decline the same.

We believe and are verily confident, that there is but one God the Father, of whom are all things, from everlasting to everlasting, glorious, and unwordable in all his Attributes, 1 Cor. 8.6. Iza. 40.28.

That God in the beginning made Man "Upright," and put him into a state and condition of Glory, without the least mixture of misery, from which he by "transgression" fell, and so came into a miserable and mortal estate, subject unto the first death, Gen. 1.31. Eccles. 7.29. Gen. 2.17, 18, 19.

That there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things, who is the only begotten Son of God, born of the Virgin "Mary"; yet as whom God freely "gave himself a ransome for all," 1 Tim. 2.5,6. "tasting death for every man," Heb. 2.9. "a propitiation for our sins; and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole World," 1 John 2.2.

That "God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance," 2 Pet. 3.9. "And the knowledge of the truth, that the Gospel (to wit, the glad tydings of remission of sins) should be preached to every creature, Mark 16.15. So that no man shall eternally suffer in Hell (that is, the second death) for want of a Christ that dyed for them, but as the Scripture saith, for "denying the Lord that bought them," 2 Pet. 2.1. or because they "believe not in the name of the only begotten Son of God," John 3:18. Unbelief therefore being the cause why the just and righteous God, will condemn the children of men; it follows against all contradiction that all men at one time or other, are put into such a capacity, as that (through the grace of God) they may be eternally saved, John 1.7. Acts 17.30. Mark 6.6. Heb. 3.10, 18, 19. 1 John 5.10. John 3.17.

That such who first orderly comes into, and are brought up in the School of Christs Church, and waiting there, comes to degrees of Christianity, rightly qualified, and considerably gifted by God's Spirit; ought to exercise their gifts not only in the Church but also (as occasion serves) to preach to the World (they being approved of by the Church so to do) Acts 11.22,23,24. Acts

11.19,20. and that among such some are to be chosen by the Church, and ordained by Fasting, Prayer, and Laying on of Hands, for the work of the Ministry, Acts 13.2,3. Acts 1.23. Such so ordained, (and abiding faithful in their work) we own as Ministers of the Gospel; but all such who come not first to repent of their sins, believe on the Lord Jesus, and so "Baptized" in his name for the remission of Sins, but are only brought up in the Schools of humane learning, to the attaining humane arts, and variety of languages, with many vain curiosities of speech, 1 Cor.1.19,21. 2. 1,4,5, seeking rather the gain of large revenues, than the gain of souls to God: such (we say) we utterly deny, being such as have need rather to be taught themselves, than fit to teach others, Rom. 2.21. That the way set forth by God for men to be justified in, is by faith in Christ, Rom. 5.1. That is to say, when men shall assent to the truth of the Gospel, believing with all their hearts, that there is remission of sins, and eternal life to be had in Christ.

And that Christ therefore is most worth their constant affections, and subjection to all his Commandments, and therefore resolve with purpose of heart so to subject unto him in all things, and no longer unto themselves, 2 Cor. 5.15.

And so shall (with godly sorrow for the sins past) commit themselves to his grace, confidently depending upon him for that which they believe is to be had in him: such so believing are justified from all their sins, their faith shall be accounted for righteousness, Rom. 4.22,23,24. Rom. 3.25,26.

That there is one holy Spirit, the precious gift of God, freely given to such as "obey him," Ephes. 4.4. Acts 5.32. that thereby they may be thoroughly [sic] sanctified, and made able (without which they are altogether unable) to abide stedfast in the faith, and to honour the Father, and his Son Christ, the Author and finisher of their faith; 1 Cor. 6.11. Therefore are three that bear record in Heaven, the Father, the Word, the holy Spirit, and these three are one; which Spirit of promise such have not yet received, (though they speak much of him) that are so far out of "Love, Peace, Long-suffering, Gentleness, Goodness, Meekness, and Temperance," (the fruits of the Spirit, Gal.5.22,23.) as that they breathe out much cruelty, and great envy against the Liberties, and peaceable living of such, as are not of their judgment, though holy as to their conversations.

That God hath even before "the foundation of the World chosen" (or elected) "to eternal life,

such as believe," and so are in Christ, the purpose of God according to election, was not in the least arising from foreseen faith in, or works of righteousness done by the creature, but only from the mercy, goodness, and compassion dwelling in God, and so "it is of him that calleth," Rom. 9.11. whose purity and unwordable holiness, cannot admit of any unclean person (or thing) to be in his presence, therefore his decree of mercy reaches only the godly man, whom (saith "David") God "hath set apart for himself," Psal. 4.3. That men not considered simply as men, but ungodly men "were of old ordained to condemnation, considered as such, who turn the grace of God into wantonness, and deny the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ, Jude 4. God indeed sends a strong delusion to men, that they might be damned; but we observe that they are such (as saith the Apostle) that "received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved," 2 Thes. 2.10,11,12. and so the indignation and wrath of God, is upon "every soul" of man that doth "evil," (living and dying therein,) "for there is no respect of persons with God." Rom. 2.9, 10, 11.

That all Children dying in Infancy, having not actually transgressed against the Law of God in

their own persons, are only subject to the first death, which comes upon them by the sin of the first "Adam," from whence they shall be all raised by the second "Adam"; and not that any one of them (dying in that estate) shall suffer for "Adams" sin, eternal punishment in Hell, (which is the second death) "for of such belongs the kingdome of Heaven," 1 Cor. 15.22. Mat. 19.14. not daring to conclude with that uncharitable opinion of others, who though they plead much for the bringing of children into the visible Church here on earth by "Baptisme," yet nevertheless by their Doctrine that Christ dyed but for some, shut a great part of them out of the Kingdome of Heaven for ever. That the right and only way of gathering Churches, (according to Christs appointment, Mat. 28.19, 20) is to first to teach, or preach the Gospel, Mark 16.16. to the Sons and Daughters of men; and then to Baptize (that is in English to Dip) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, or in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ; such only of them as profess "repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ," Acts 2.38. Acts 8.12. Acts 18.8. And as for all such who preach not this Doctrine, but instead thereof, that Scriptureless thing of Sprinkling of

Infants (“falsely called Baptisme”) whereby the pure “Word of God is made of no effect,” and the new Testament way of bringing in Members, into the Church be regeneration, cast out; when as the bondwoman and her son, that is to say, the old Testament-way of bringing Children to the Church be generation, is cast out, as saith the Scripture, Gal. 4.30,22,23,24. Mat. 3.8,9. all such we utterly deny, forasmuch as we are commanded to “have no fellowship with unfruitful works of darkness, but rather to reprove them” Ephes. 5.11.

That is the duty of all such who are believers “Baptized,” to draw nigh unto God in submission to that principle of Christs Doctrine, to wit, Prayer and Laying on of Hands, that they may receive the promise of the holy Spirit, Heb. 6.1.2. Acts 8.12, 15, 17, Acts 19.6. 2 Tim. 1.6, whereby they may “mortifie the deeds of the body,” Rom. 8.13, and live in all things answerable to their professed intentions, and desires, even to the honour of him,” “who hath called them out of darkness into his marvellous light.”

That is is the duty of such who are constituted as aforesaid, to “continue stedfastly in Christs and the Apostles Doctrine, and assembling together, in fellowship, in breaking of Bread, and Prayers,”

Acts 2.42.

That although we thus declare for the primitive way, and order of constituting Churches, yet we verily believe, and also declare, that unless men so professing, and practising the forme and order of Christs Doctrine, shall also beautifie the same with a holy and wise conversation, in all godliness and honesty; the profession of the visible form will be rendered to them of no effect; "for without holiness no man shall see the Lord," Heb. 12.14. Isa. 1.11, 12, 15, 16. That the Elders or Pastors which God hath appointed to oversee, and feed his Church (constituted as aforesaid) are such, who first being of the number of Disciples, shall in time appear to "be vigilant, sober, of good behaviour, given to hospitality, apt to teach," & c., "not greedy of filthy lucre: (as too many National Ministers are) "but patient; not a brawler, not covetous," & c. and as such chose, and ordained to office (according to the order of Scripture, Acts 14.23.) who in due season, and in much love to rule over them, with all care, seeking after such as go astray; but as for all such who labour to feed themselves with the fat, more than to feed the flock, Ezek. 34.2, 3. Seeking more than theirs, than them, expresly contrary to the practise of the

Ministers of old, who said, "we seek not yours, but you," 2 Cor. 12.14. All such we utterly deny, and hereby bear our continued Testimony against, Ezek. 34.

That the Ministers of Christ, that have freely received from God, ought freely to Minister to others, 1 Cor. 9.17, and that such who have spiritual things, freely Ministered unto them, ought freely to communicate necessary things to the Ministers, (upon the account of their charge) 1 Cor. 9.11. Gal. 6.6. And as for Tyths, or any forced Maintenance, we utterly deny to be the Maintenance of Gospel Ministers.

That the true Church of Christ, ought after the first and second admonition, to reject all Hereticks, Titus 3.12, 11. and in the name of the Lord to withdraw from all such, as profess the way of the Lord, but walks disorderly in their conversations, 2 Thes. 3.6. or any wayes causes divisions of offences, contrary to the Doctrine (of Christ) which they have learned, Rom. 16.17. That such who are true Believers, even Branches in Christ the Vine, (and that in his account, whom he exhorts to abide in him, John 15.1, 2,3,4,5.) or such who have charity out of a pure heart, and of a good conscience, and of Faith unfeigned, 1 Tim.

1.5. may nevertheless for want of watchfulness; swerve and turn aside from the same, vers. 6,7. and become as withered Branches, cast into the fire and burned, John 15.6. But such “who add unto their Faith Vertue, and unto Vertue Knowledge, and unto knowledge Temperance,” & c. 2 Pet. 1.5,6,7. such “shall never fall,” vers. 8,9,10, ’tis impossible for all the false Christs, and false Prophets, that are, and are to come, to deceive such, for they are “kept by the power of God through Faith unto Salvation,” 1 Pet. 1.5.

That the poor Saints belonging to the Church of Christ, are to be sufficiently provided for by the Churches, that they neither want food or rayment, and this by a free and voluntary contribution, (and not of necessity, or by the constraint or power of the Magistrate) 2 Cor. 9.7. 1 Cor. 8.11, 12. and this through the free and voluntary help of the Deacons, (called Overseers of the poor) being faithful men, chosen by the Church, and ordained by Prayer and Laying on of Hands, to that Work, Acts 6.1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6. So that there is no need in the Church of Christ, of a Magisterial compulsion in this case, as there is among others, who being constituted in a fleshly and generational way, are necessitated to make use of a carnal

sword, to compel even a small, mean, and short Maintenance for their poor; when as many other Members of their Churches can do part with great and large Sums of Money, to maintain their vain fashions, Gold, Pearls, and costly Array, which is expresly contrary to the Word of God, 1 Tim. 2.9, 10. 1 Pet. 3.3. Alas, "what will such do when he visiteth, what will they answer him?" Job. 31.14.

That there shall be (through Christ who was dead, but is alive again from the dead) a Resurrection of all men from the graves of the Earth, Isa. 26.19 both the just and the unjust, Acts 24.15. that is, the fleshly bodies of men, sown into the graves of the earth, corruptable, dishonourable, weak, natural, (which so considered cannot inherit the Kingdome of God) shall be raised again, incorruptable, in glory, in power, spiritual, and so considered, the bodies of the Saints, (united again to their spirits) which here suffer for Christ, shall inherit the "Kingdome, raining" together with Christ, 1 Cor. 15, 21,22, 42, 44, 49.

That there shall be after the Resurrection from the graves of the Earth, "An eternal Judgment," at the appearing of Christ, and his Kingdome, 2 Tim. 4.1 Heb. 9.27. at which time of judgement which is unalterable, and irrevocable, "every man shall

receive according to the thing done in the body," 2 Cor. 5.10. That the same Lord Jesus who shewed himself alive after his passion, by many infallible proofs, Acts 1.3. which was taken up from the Disciples, and carried up into Heaven," Luke 24.51 "Shall so come in like manner as he was seen go into Heaven," Acts 1.9, 10, 11. "And when Christ who is our life shall appear, we shall also appear with him in glory," Col. 3.4. For then shall he be King of Kings, and Lord of Lords, Rev. 19.16. for the Kingdome is his, and he is the Governour among the Nations, Psal. 22.28. and King over all the earth, Zech.14.9. "and we shall raign (with him) on the Earth," Rev. 5,10. the Kingdomes of this World, (which men so mightily strive after here to enjoy) shall become the Kingdomes of our Lord, and his Christ, Rev. 11.15. for, "all is yours," (O ye that overcome this world) "for ye are Christs, and Christ is Gods," 1 Cor. 3.22, 23. "For unto the Saints shall be given the Kingdome, and the greatness of the Kingdome, under" (mark that) "the whole Heaven," Dan. 7.27. Though (alas) how many men be scarce content that the Saints should have so much as a being among them; but when Christ shall appear then shall be their day, then shall be given unto them power

over the Nations, to rule them with a Rod of Iron, Rev. 2.26, 27. then shall they receive a Crown of life, which no man shall take from them, nor they by any means turned, or overturned from it, for the oppressor shall be broken in pieces, Psal. 72.4. and their vain rejoycings turned into mourning, and bitter Lamentations, as 'tis written, Job 20.5,6,7. "The triumphing of the wicked is short, and the joy of the Hypocrite but for a moment; though his excellency mount up to the Heavens and his head reach unto the clouds, yet shall he perish for ever, like his own dung; they which have seen him, shall say, where is he?" That the holy Scriptures is the rule where by Saints both in matters of Faith, and conversation are to be regulated, they being able to make men wise unto salvation, through Faith in Christ Jesus, profitable for Doctrine, for reproof, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works, 2 Tim. 3.15, 16, 17, John 20.31. Isa. 8.20.

That is the will, and mind of God (in these Gospel times) that all men should have the free liberty of their own CONSCIENCES in matters of Religion, or Worship, without the least oppression, or persecution, as simply upon that account;

and that for any in Authority otherwise to act, we confidently believe is expressly contrary to the mind of Christ, who requires that whatsoever men would that others should do unto them, they should even do unto others, Mat. 7.12. and that the Tares, and the wheat should grow together in the field (which is the world) untill the harvest (which is the end of the world,) Mat. 13.29, 30, 38, 39.

We believe that there ought to be civil Magistrates in all Nations, “for the punishment of evil doers, and for the praise of them that do well,” 1 Pet. 2.14. and that all wicked lewdness, and fleshly filthiness, contrary to just and wholesome (Civil) Laws, ought to be punished according to the nature of the offences; and this without respect of any Persons, Religion, or profession whatsoever; and that we and all men are obliged by Gospel rules, to be subject to the higher Powers, to obey Magistrates, Tit. 3.1. “and to submit to every Ordinance of man for the Lords sake,” as saith Peter 2.13 But in case the Civil Powers do, or shall at any time impose things about matters of Religion, which we through conscience to God cannot actually obey, then we with Peter also do say, that we ought (in such cases) to obey God rather than men; Acts 5.29. and accordingly do

hereby declare our whole, and holy intent and purpose, that (through the help of grace) we will not yield, nor (in such cases) in the least actually obey them; yet humbly purposing (in the Lords strength) patiently to suffer whatsoever shall be inflicted upon us, for our conscionable forbearance.

These things (O ye Son and Daughters of Men) we verily believe to be the Lords will and mind, and therefore cannot but speak, and if herein we differ from many, yea from multitudes, from the learned, the wise and prudent of this world, we (with Peter and John) do herein make our Solemne, and serious appeale, namely, "whether it be right in the sight of God, to hearken unto men" (of a contrary perswasion) "more than unto God"? Oh let the judicious, judge righteous judgment! Acts 4.19, 10.

And in the beleife and practise of these things, (it being the good old Apostolical way) our souls have found that rest, and soulpce, which the world knows not, and which they cannot take from us; of whom then should we be afraid? "God is become our strength, our light, our salvation; therefore," we are resolved (through grace) to seal the truth of these things in way of suffering

persecution, not only to the loss of our goods, freedoms, or liberties, but with our lives also (if called thereunto.)

Moreover we do utterly, and from our very hearts, in the Lords fear, declare against all those wicked, and divillish reports, and reproaches, falsely cast upon us, as though some of us (in & about the City of "London") had lately GOTTEN KNIVES, HOOKED KNIVES, & the like, & great store of Arms besides what was given forth by order of Parliament, intending to cut the throats of such as were contrary minded to us in matters of Religion, and that many such KNIVES, and Arms, for the carrying on some secret design, hath been found in some of our houses by search; we say, from truth of heart, in the Lords fear, that we do utterly abhor, and abominate the thought thereof, and much more the actions; and do hereby challenge both City, and Country (in our innocency herein) as being not able to prove the things whereof they accuse us; and do for evermore declare the Inventors of such reports, to be lyers, and wicked devisers of mischeife, and corrupt designs; God that is above all will justifie our innocency herein, who well knows our integrity, in what we here declare, the Lord lay it not to

their charge. In the time of building the decayed House of God," Sanballat and Tobiah, ("wicked Counsellors) hired" Shemaiah "to make good" Nehemiah "afraid"; and labored against him, that they might have "matter for an evil report," that they might reproach him, and hinder the building of the house of God, Neh. 6.12. "For I have heard (saith the Prophet) the defaming of many; report, say ney, and we will report it,: Jer. 20.10.

Subscribed by certain Elders, Deacons, and Brethren met at "London," in the first Month (called "March," 1660.) in the behalf of themselves, and many others unto whom they belong, in "London," and in several Countries of this Nation, who are of the same Faith with Us.

*Joseph Wright,
William Jeffery,
Thomas Monck,
John Hartnoll,
Benjamin Morley,
Francis Stanley,
George Hammon,
William Smart,
John Reeve,
Thomas Parrot,
John Wood,
Francis Smith,
Edward Jones,
Humprhey Jones,
Matthew Caffen,*

*Samuel Loveday,
John Parsons, Senior,
Thomas Stacy,
Edward Stanley,
Jonathan Gennings,
John Hammersly,
William Russel,
Joseph Keeich,
Nicholas Newberry,
Samuel Lover,
George Wright,
John Parsons, Junior,
John Claton,
Thomas Seele,
Michaiel Whiticar,
Giles Browne,
John Wells,
Stephen Torie,
Thomas Lathwel,
Wiliam Chadwel,
William Raph,
Henry Browne,
William Paine,
Richard Bowin,
Thomas Smith.*

APPENDIX B

THE 1812 FORMER ARTICLES

- I. We believe that there is but one living, true and eternal God: the Father of whom are all things from everlasting to everlasting, glorious and immutable in all his attributes, 1 Cor. viii, 6. Isa. xi, 28.

- II. We believe that there is one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things the only begotten son of God, born of the Virgin Mary, whom God freely sent into this world, because of the great love wherewith he loved the world, and Christ as freely gave himself a ransom for all, tasting death for every man; who was buried and rose again the third day and ascended into Heaven, from whence we look for him, the second time in the clouds of Heaven at the last day to judge both quick and dead. 1 Tim. ii, 5 and 8; Heb. ii, 9: 1 John ii, 2; Rev. i, 7; Acts xxiv, 15.

- III. We believe that there is one Holy Ghost the precious gift of the Father, through his dear Son unto the world, who quickeneth and draws sinners home to God. John xvi, 7 and 8; Acts ii, 4; Eph. iv, 4,5,6.

IV. We believe that in the beginning God made man up right and placed him in a state of glory without the least mixture of misery from which he voluntarily by transgression fell, and by that means brought on himself, a miserable and mortal state, subject to death. Gen. ii, 17, & iii, 17, 18, 19.

V. We believe that God is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance and the knowledge of the truth, that they might be saved; for which end Christ hath Comanded the Gospel to be preached among all nations, and to every creature. Mark xvi, 15; Luke xxiv, 47.

VI. We believe that no man shall suffer in hell, for want of a Christ that died for him, but as the scripture has said for denying the lord that bought them; because they believe not in the name of the only begotten son of God. Unbelief therefore being the cause why the just and righteous God of Heaven, will condemn the children of men, it follows against all contradiction, that all men at one time or another is found in such a capacity as that through the grace of God, they may be Eternally saved. II Peter ii, 1; I John i, 17; Acts xvii, 30; Mark vi, 6; Heb. iii, 10; I John v, 10.

VII. We believe the whole Scriptures are infallibly true, and that they are the only rule of faith and

practice.

VIII. We believe in the doctrine of general Provision made of God in Christ, for the benefit of all mankind, who repent and believe the Gospel. Luke xiv, 16, 17, 18, 19 and 20; Mat. xxviii, 18, 10.

IX. We believe that sinners are drawn to God the Father, by the Holy Ghost, through Christ, his son, and that the Holy Ghost offers his divine aid to all the human family, so as they all might be happy; would they give place to his divine teaching; whereas such who do not receive the divine impressions of the holy spirit, shall at a future day, own their condemnation just, and charge themselves with their own damnation, for wilfully rejecting the offers of sovereign grace. Mat. xi, 27; John vi, 44 and 66; Psalms L, 1; Titus ii, 11 and 12; Jer. xxii, 29.

X. We believe that the Saints shall persevere in grace, and never finally fall away. John x, 27, 28 and 29.

XI. We believe that God hath before the foundation of the world, chosen or elected unto Eternal life, such as believe in Christ; yet confident we are,

that the purpose of God according to election was not in the least arising from any foreseen faith or righteousness done by the creature, but only by the mercy, goodness, and compassion, dwelling in God towards the creature, and so it is of him that calleth, whose purity cannot admit of any unclean person or thing in his presence. Therefore his decree of mercy, reaches only the Godly man; whom saith David, the Lord hath set apart for himself. John iii, 16; Rom. ix; Psalms iv, 3.

- XII. We believe that men, not considered simply as men, but ungodly men were of old, ordained to condemnation, considered such who turn the grace of God into lasciviousness, denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ that bought them; and therefore shall bring upon themselves swift destruction: but we observe that they and such the Apostle saith, because they receive not the love of the truth, that they might be saved; therefore the indignation and wrath of God is upon every soul of man that doth evil, living and dying therein; for there is no respect of persons with God. Jude i, 4; II Peter ii, 1; II Thes. ii, 10, 11, 12; Romans ii, 9.

- XIII. We believe that all children, dying in infancy, having not actually transgressed against the law

of God in their own person, are only subject to the first death which was brought on them by the fall of the first Adam, and not that any one of them dying in that state, shall suffer punishment in Hell by guilt of Adam's sin, for of such is the kingdom of God. I Cor. xv, 22; Mat. xviii, 2,3,4 and 5; Mark ix, 36 and 37; Mat. xix. 14.

XIV. We believe that good works are the fruits of a saving faith, and that in the use of the means of grace, and not out of the use of those means, eternal life is promised to men. Rev. xxii, 14 and 15; Isa. i, 19 and 20; Mat. vii, 7 and 8; Jer. vi, 16; Luke xii, 34 and 35.

XV. We believe that no man has any warrant in the holy scriptures for justification before God through his own works, power or ability which he has in and of himself, only as he by Grace is made able to come to God, through Jesus Christ; believing the righteousness of Jesus Christ to be imputed to all believers for their eternal acceptance with God. Rom. iv, 24; Jer. xxii, 16.

XVI. We believe that all things are foreseen in the wisdom of God, so that God knoweth whatsoever can or cannot come to pass upon all sup-

posed conditions, yet not as having decreed any person to everlasting death or everlasting life, out of respect or mere choice rather than he hath appointed the Godly unto life, and the Ungodly, who die in sin unto death. Heb. iv, 13; Prov. iii, 22,23,24,25,26,27,28,29,30 and 31; Mat. xxv,31,32, 33,34,35,36,37,38,39,40,41,42,43,44,45,and 46.

XVII. We believe as touching Gospel ordinances in believers Baptism, laying on of hand, receiving the sacrament in bread and wine, washing the saints feet, anointing the sick with oil in the name of the Lord, fasting, prayer, singing praises to God and the public ministry of the work, with every institution of the Lord, we shall find in the new Testament. Luke xxii, 19 and 20; John xiii, 5th down to the 17th; James v, 14.

XVIII. We believe the Gospel mode of Baptism is by immersion, and that believers are the only subjects for Baptism. Mat. iii, 8 and 16; Mark i, 5 and 10; Acts viii, 38 and 39; Romans vi, 4; Heb. x, 22.

XIX. We believe in a general resurrection of the dead and final judgment at the last day. John v. 28 and 29; II Cor. v, 10.

XX. We believe the happiness of the righteous are
Eternal and the torment of the wicked are end-
less. Mat. xxv, 46.

APPENDIX C

HISTORICAL SKETCH

The English origins of the Original Free Will Baptist Denomination can be traced back to the Puritan/ Separatist period of the Anglican Church. During the reign of James I, John Smyth (?–1612), a clergyman of the established church, became the pastor of a gathered congregation at Gainsborough. Soon adherents were secured and a second congregation gathered in the home of William Brewster at Scrooby, of which William Bradford was a member. These two men will best be remembered in reference to the Puritans on the *Mayflower*.

John Smyth sought safety for their religious beliefs in Amsterdam as did the Scrooby congregation. The leadership of John Smyth ended in 1612? and a remnant of the congregation, under the leadership of Thomas Helwys and John Murton, returned to England in 1611? or 1612? becoming the first permanent Baptist congregation on English soil. Arminian in viewpoint, they were known therefore as "General Baptist."

History of the First Free Will Baptist Work in the United States

Our heritage as Free Will Baptists had its first roots in the English General Baptists. As the colonists moved to the new world, they brought with them their beliefs. (General Baptists got their name for their belief in general atonement, that God's grace is extended to all people.) There is no record of any organized church in our earliest history, but very likely those of General Baptist belief met together in homes. As early as 1700, there were General Baptist families in North Carolina. This is known through their correspondence to the Kent Association of General Baptists in England in 1702, asking for a minister or for books supporting their faith. The association was unable to send a minister but collected money for books.

One of the earliest General Baptist families was that of Benjamin Laker. Laker lived in Perquimans Precinct as early as 1685. He became a prominent landowner and political figure of the area. His will indicated a strong faith in Christ and a love for studying the Scriptures. Laker is further known by the fact that his wife's daughter later married Paul Palmer.

After their marriage, Paul and Johanna Palmer moved to Johanna's property. But Palmer soon be-

came an important landowner in his own right. His marriage and influence in the colony aided his success as a General Baptist evangelist. Palmer helped to organize the first General Baptist churches in North Carolina, but because of his evangelistic type of ministry he never pastored any of the churches. In fact, he spent several years traveling in the northern states, leaving the nurturing of the new churches to others.

There are three churches credited to Paul Palmer's efforts. The first General Baptist church in North Carolina was organized in 1727 in Chowan County near what is now Cisco. By 1729 it had 32 members and Joseph Parker was its pastor. The second church was established in 1729 by Palmer and seven others who filed for a license to worship in the home of William Burges, its pastor. It was located in Pasquotank Precinct. The third church is known only by its mention in the diary of a traveler to North Carolina, Morgan Edwards. None of these churches lasted long as General Baptist churches. The first church simply disbanded after Joseph Parker moved away, and the second church reorganized as a Particular Baptist church with Calvinist doctrine in 1757. (This is now Shiloh Southern Baptist Church.)

Joseph Parker is perhaps the most important figure in our early history. Parker helped organize

the first church in 1727 and was its first and only pastor. But by 1730 Parker and his wife had moved to Meherrin near what is now Murfreesboro. Soon a church was established that remained General Baptist for fifty-nine years, and was a kind of headquarters for Joseph Parker, William Parker, John Winfield, and other evangelists. An arm of the Meherrin church was established in Bertie and was later known as Sandy Run. Later, Parker purchased land in Edgecombe County and helped establish a church near Enfield in approximately 1748. From it came two additional churches. Parker is best remembered, however, for his work in the present Lenoir, Pitt, and Greene Counties. On December 25, 1756, Parker purchased land between Little and Great Contentnea Creek from Jacob Blount. (The deed has only recently been discovered.) Before 1761 Parker established a church on Little Contentnea Creek (now Little Creek Free Will Baptist Church). Arms from this church were extended at Wheat Swamp and Louson Swamp in Lenoir County, and at Gum Swamp in Pitt County. Having a ministry of over sixty-four years, Joseph Parker established a possible nine churches in five counties.

Another early preacher was William Parker, perhaps a cousin of Joseph. He co-founded Gum Swamp church and also established Grimsley

church in Greene County. The Parkers were especially important because they always remained true to General Baptist belief.

Several other men should be mentioned for their work: William Burges, who pastored the Pasquotank church established by Paul Palmer and helped establish another church. William Sojourner, who brought a number of the Burley General Baptist congregation in Virginia to North Carolina when an epidemic broke out. These people established a church on Kehukee Creek in Halifax County. It and the three churches that grew from it eventually became the core of the Kehukee Association of the Particular Baptists. Sojourner worked closely with Josiah Hart, who along with William Fulsher formed several other churches. One of these was Flat Swamp in Pitt County. It is thought that the name Free Will Baptist came into use in North Carolina when friction developed among the congregation at Flat Swamp, which had reorganized as Particular Baptists scornfully referred to the General Baptists as "Free-Willers."

In all, by 1755 there were approximately twenty churches. There had been much growth in less than thirty years. But this period of growth was marked by decline and almost total extinction with the influence of the Particular Baptists, who believed

in election rather than free will. By 1794 General Baptists had lost at least fifteen churches through either reorganization or simply lack of strength. Oddly enough, however, it was not the laymen who left their faith but their leaders. According to *Davidson's Early History of Free Will Baptists*. "No more than five percent of the General Baptist laymen had joined the movement." The churches at Meherrin, Little Creek, Pungo, and Bear Creek were the only ones named by Morgan Edwards in 1772 as being true to the General Baptist faith. Soon, however, Wheat Swamp, Gum Swamp, Louson Swamp and Grimsley became strongholds, again extensions of the work of the Parkers.

By 1803, before Joseph and William Parker died, the term Free Will Baptists was used to refer to what was left of the General Baptists in the state. During this period of transition James Roach and Jesse Heath were strong leaders. Roach succeeded Parker as minister at Wheat Swamp, Louson Swamp, Grimsley, and Gum Swamp. Heath was important for his correspondence on behalf of the Free Will Baptists in New England. In 1812 these two men were given the task of using the early documents of the General Baptists of England as a basis for the official confession of faith for Free Will Baptists.

The period of decline was now over and many

new churches were added—Free Will Baptist churches. By 1830 there were 31 churches with a membership of 1,892. The early 1800s were years of growth and organization. The first division into conferences was a matter of growth and problems of travel. The original annual conference was divided into Shiloh Conference to serve the eastern district and the Bethel Conference to serve the more inland churches. And the church continued to expand westward and southward. (All of the preceding information was based on *An Early History of Free Will Baptists (1727–1830)* by Dr. William F. Davidson, 1974, Randall House Publications.)

Before long, however, there was another problem called “the Campbellite Crisis.” Thomas Campbell of Pennsylvania and his son began a movement calling for unity of all Christians without need for a discipline. Free Will Baptists lost a number of churches to the Christian denomination at this time (1840s). But by 1847 the remnants had joined together.

The last half of the nineteenth century was again a period of growth and development. It was during this period that union meetings were developed, and the Cape Fear and Western Conferences were formed. This was also the period of the Civil War, however, and it had its influence. After slaves were freed, the previous arrangement of slaves’ being

nonvoting members did not set well. So in 1868 a motion was made to organize a separate Free Will Baptist General Conference for those who had been slaves. Despite these problems, however, there was a constant increase in membership and churches.

History of the Free Will Baptist Work Our Forefathers Knew

The turn of the century saw more growth and change. The General Conference divided to form the Eastern and Central Conferences (1895–1896). The Pee Dee Conference was established in 1869, and the Rock Fish Conference in 1908. Also conferences were beginning to meet together for fellowship and cooperation to form what was the forerunner of the State Convention. Also during this period, the Free Will Baptist Press was formed. Despite a number of efforts between 1873 and 1890 that failed, it was finally located in Ayden in 1895, where it has remained. In 1898 an educational institution (the old Ayden Seminary) was opened. It grew into Eureka College and served until the depression of 1929 and the destruction of the building by fire (1932). Again, by 1912 Free Will Baptists lost some more churches to the Pentecostal movement that swept our state. Nevertheless, our denomination continued to grow and in 1912 the State Convention was officially or-

ganized to help unify the people of the state.

The first half of the twentieth century brought perhaps the most productive growth from an organizational point of view. In addition to the interest in the Press and in education and in the organization of the State Convention, there were a number of other developments. Between 1913 and 1920, when the first children were admitted, an orphanage was begun. As early as 1913 missions work was a concern, and in 1918 a Reverend and Mrs. McAdams were endorsed as foreign missionaries by the State Convention. But until 1962 most of the mission efforts were in cooperation with the General Conference of Original Free Will Baptists of America, organized in Nashville, Tennessee, in 1921. Our State Convention joined this group in 1922, and its successor, the National Association in 1935. The State Woman's Auxiliary Convention and the State League Convention were formed in 1927. The early 1940s brought about the organization of the State Sunday School Convention, and the first real efforts for organized aid for ministers and their widows. At this time also need was expressed for a camp for young people, and in 1945 "Craigmont Sanatorium" was purchased. Two conferences, the Albemarle (1944) and the Piedmont (1944), were established during the decade of the 40s. And Mount

Olive College was chartered in 1951 as Mount Allen Junior College and has continued to grow since its relocation in Mount Olive.

History the Free Will Baptist Church Is Writing Today

Much of the growth of our denomination has taken place in the lifetime of many of our present members. So there is a strong connection between the history of the early part of the century and the present. Most of us well remember the “split” in our denomination in the early 1960s when our State Convention severed its relationship with the National Association. The problem arose over ownership and control of the Free Will Baptist Press, differences in philosophy of education, and differences in practices of church government. Since that time, we have picked up the pieces and begun again. This seems to have been the constant history of our denomination—growth and decline. Today we are again experiencing a period of growth. Most of our progress today is being made through our support of our local churches and denominational ministries. Since the early 1960s new buildings have been added to the Children’s Home and Cragmont; Mount Olive College has a new campus; the Press has added bookstores in Wilson, New Bern, and

Kinston; we have a number of missionaries in Mexico, the Philipines, India, and Bulgaria; we have new churches being organized through our Home Missions work; we have one campground at Vandemere. Improvements are being sought in our efforts of Christian education in Sunday School work. Endless opportunities for service continue to be found through our joint efforts in our auxiliary work, our leagues, our conferences, and our Convention. It appears that the opportunities for service and growth are limitless. Perhaps now that we are becoming more aware of our heritage and are beginning to have a more trained ministry, those faithful to the original belief in the general atonement for believers will be able to withstand. To work together but still allow individual freedom is the foundation of the Free Will Baptist future. (Whatever efforts we make must be done for God and for the aid of our fellow human beings, holding fast to our faith that it was for **all** people that Christ died. The information for the last half of this history was gathered from *An Introduction to Original Free Will Baptists* by Floyd B. Cherry, printed in 1974, by the Free Will Baptist Press Foundation.)

