

FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH OF OZARK

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“Discovering Church Membership”

Membership Manual

Rev. Gary Mitchener, Pastor

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SECTION ONE:

THE LOCAL CHURCH:

**FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST
CHURCH OF OZARK**

Welcome to The First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark Membership/Orientation Class

Purpose:

The purpose of this class is to assist prospective members in becoming more acquainted with First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark and more deeply committed to Christ and our Church family. Being a loving, caring Church family, it is important that we protect that love and unity by providing instruction and training to prospective members. Shared foundational doctrine is essential to the continued health of the Church.

This class is designed to provide an in-depth look at the basic foundational beliefs of *Free Will Baptists* and the *Constitution and Bylaws* of First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark.

Program:

- A. First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark Orientation
- B. Free Will Baptist Beliefs
- C. The Membership Process
- D. Membership Promise

Orientation *for* Membership

Our Mission Statement

First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark exists:

1. To Exalt the Savior
2. To Equip the Saints
3. To Evangelize the Sinner

Our Staff

Gary Mitchener.....Senior Pastor
Greg Smith..... Assoc. Pastor of Worship & Music
Chuck MeppelinkAdministration Pastor
Kim SmithSecretary
Layton Smith.....Children's Ministries

The History of First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark

From the very beginning of its humble start, God's hand has been upon First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark in a special way. State Missionary Gary Mitchener, along with his wife Brenda and their three children, Christi, David and Rebecca, moved to Ozark in May of 1993. The church was born out of the vision of Pastor Gary to establish a thriving Free Will Baptist Church (FWB) in one of the fastest growing areas in Southern Missouri.

Forty-eight people gathered together on July 11, 1993 at 1300 S. Third Street. On this special day, after much prayer, hard work, and direction from the Lord, the new church began. The Missouri State FWB Mission Board provided guidance and financial support; along with other churches, women's auxiliaries, and individuals. The Lord has blessed the church by sending faithful, dedicated people who have been with the Church from the start, and others who have joined later. Many precious souls have been saved, needs met, and prayers answered confirming that this was all in His plan.

As the church and ministries grew, the need arose for more space. On April 3, 1994, the church relocated at 201 E. Church Street. By this time, the congregation had grown to 100 in attendance. This location provided a sanctuary that seated approximately 275 with a two-story education building and gymnasium. The church reached self-supporting status on April 11, 1999.

Greg and Kim Smith were hired in July 2000 as Associate Pastor of Music and Worship. Several areas of music ministry have been developed since then including adult and children's choirs. The Smiths have 3 sons, Layton, Daylen, and Caysen.

In January 2009, the church purchased the former 84 Lumber Company on 6 acres of property (at 2106 W. Evangel Street, Ozark) at the intersection of 65 and 14 highway. The building was remodeled and services began on March 22, 2015. The church continues to grow with a vision to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the community and around the world. Presently (2018), the church averages about 350 in attendance with plans for continued growth!

Chuck Meppelink joined our staff in September 2015 as Administrative Director. Chuck has been a great asset in directing the church with much experience and organizational skills. His wife Kay is also a blessing.

Layton Smith joined the staff assuming directorship of the church's expanding Children's Ministries in July of 2018. Layton grew up in the Ozark FWB Church and later graduated from Welch College in Gallatin, Tennessee. While there he majored in Youth and Family Ministry to which he felt a divine call. Layton's wife, Stephanie, is a registered nurse having graduated from Southwest Baptist University and the Mercy College of Nursing and Health Science. This couple is a wonderful addition to the church.

OUR MINISTRIES AND ACTIVITIES

Adult Sunday Classes

(Adult Life Groups)

An Adult Life Group is a class for people who are committed to studying and applying the Word of God together in a caring fellowship, with organization to bring about pastoral care, discipleship, social relationships, and outreach within the Church.

A variety of Adult Life Group classes meet each Sunday.

Some people wonder how ALG's differ from regular Sunday School Classes. For one thing, ALG's have a leadership team, with a teacher and multiple care leaders who help develop the caring system, pastoral care, and relationships within the group. Also, ALG's seek to **CARE** for everyone as seen in the following acronym:

Contact regularly

Account for everyone

Respond to needs

Encourage fellowship

As an adult, you are encouraged to join an Adult Life Group today!

(See an Education Brochure for the various classes and times.)

MEN'S MINISTRY

The *CHISeled Men's Ministry* is a time when the men can come together for prayer, study, fellowship, and fun. There are various get-togethers, along with an annual *Pinewood Derby* in March which has become a highlight for the ministry.

Our goal is to help our men develop their Christian walk with integrity and leadership. The men's fellowship is also involved in strengthening the Church through service projects.

WOMEN'S MINISTRY

The *Cherished Women's Ministry* meets at various times of the year to encourage and strengthen the ladies of the Church in the Lord. Special Bible studies, retreats, and conferences are some of the highlights of this ministry of special ladies.

SENIOR MINISTRY

Adults age 50 and older (sometimes younger!) enjoy various times of fellowship. The time consists of great food, good entertainment, speakers, and an opportunity to fellowship and get to know one another better.

CHI RHO STUDENT MINISTRY

Chi Rho Students is the name of the high school ministry that meets on Sunday and Wednesday for times of study of God's Word, prayer, singing, worship, and fellowship. Various activities, mission trips, service projects, and youth camp are all a part of student ministries.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

The Young Adult ministry meets at various times for learning God's Word, building relationships, enjoying food and growing in the faith. Mission trips, special activities, and opportunities to serve are a great part of this ministry.

CHAOS CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

CHAOS, unlike what it sounds like, stands for *Children Honoring and Adoring Our Savior*. We believe that children not only have the important job of learning about Christ, but also serving and being used in their own unique way according to God's calling, as in our theme verse, 1 Timothy 4:12. CHAOS Ministries encompasses all ministries from Pre-K (4 years) through 6th grade and is divided into two groups.

CHAOS KIDS is the name of the Children's Program for the Pre-K through 3rd Grade that is held every Sunday morning. The children are involved in a graded class that is age-appropriate. They learn Bible stories, scripture, and application. The children are also involved in CHAOS Worship Service at the same time as the second adult worship service.

CHAOS #456 is the church service for the 4th-6th graders held the 4th Sunday of every month during the second worship service. Our CHAOS 456 Youth Church sponsors many activities and Mission projects throughout the year. There is also classroom instruction for these grades during the traditional Sunday School time.

On Sunday morning, we have a full ministry in progress.

CHAOS KIDS PRESCHOOL

In **Chaos Kids Preschool**, we have Sunday School, Wednesday classes, and activity times. The children are taught through video, story, snacks, interest centers, activities, puppets, music, singing, etc. This group includes ages 2 1/2 to 5.

CHAOS KIDS NURSERY

Here our babies and toddlers are loved and taken care of by trained caregivers. Children are taught God's Word through music, songs, interest centers, toys, snacks, and smiles. (Ages B - 2)

Music Ministries

Adult Rejoice Choir

The Rejoice Choir is a special blessing to the church. Choir members help our Worship Leader, Greg Smith, lead the congregation in music that exalts the Savior. Through the choir's ministry, the church is brought to a place where worship of the Lord can be experienced. In addition to "Choir Specials" in the services, the choir presents special musicals, during the year.

Vocal Soloists, Duets, Trios, Quartets, Ensembles

The Music Director schedules all special music that comes before the church. This ministry has an important place in preparing the church for the preaching of God's Word.

Children's Choir

Our children are given the opportunity to practice and belong to a special children's choir. The children are encouraged to sing before the church as part of their training for future work of the church. Children also take part in singing solos, duets, and groups.

Worship Music Volunteers

Volunteers are needed weekly to prepare music for the choir.

Media Ministries

We have opportunity for qualified trained volunteers to assist in the sound booth for the audio/media enhancement of the Sunday Worship.

DISCIPLESHIP MINISTRIES

Membership and Orientation Class

This class is designed to acquaint you with the Pastor, staff, board members, building layout and ministries of the First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark. It will also address the areas of fellowship, doctrine, church history, and our future plans.

Adult Follow-up Class

This is a 13-week course which benefits all who attend, specifically focusing on disciplining the newly saved and those who have rededicated their lives to Christ. Participants receive valuable training in building the solid foundation needed to live a victorious Christian life.

Discovery Class

The Discovery Class is a study to help reveal one's spiritual gifts.

Life Track

Life Track is a 4-week course that involves 1) basic Bible doctrine, 2) Church membership, 3) Gift study, and 4) Ministry and mission involvement.

OUTREACH MINISTRIES

The mission statement of First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark is: **to exalt the Savior, equip the saints, and evangelize the sinner.**

As our church grows, we desire to include several areas of outreach to our community. We also are involved in state, national, and world missions through “Cooperative Giving” (10% of our General Offering), the “Show-Me” program (International Missions giving), and designated giving. We are also pleased to have incorporated the following into our church ministry:

*G.R.O.W. (God Rewards Our Work) – outreach ministry.

**Men’s Encounter* and *Ashes to Beauty* Ministry.

Heritage Campus:

In May 2018, Ozark FWB adopted a subsidiary mission ministry called Heritage Campus church. Heritage Campus is located on Springfield's west side at 3430 W. Bennet, FR 146, Springfield, MO 65807. Services are held each Sunday and Wednesday with Ozark church staff in an effort to reach people who need Christ. It is our desire to provide them a church home where they can grow their Christian life into maturity. This campus also provides opportunities for outreach missions ministry.

BENEVOLENCE MINISTRY

The Deacons of the church are involved in helping provide general assistance to various individuals and families who find themselves in extreme financial need. Also, counsel is offered to those who find themselves in need of help with such things as budgeting and debt-reduction.

HOSPITALITY MINISTRY

Within the scope of Hospitality Ministries are our ushers, greeters, and hospitality assistants. These assist in worship service and help direct people to various functions or locations within the church. They also provide information and security to visitors, etc.

SAFETY / SECURITY MINISTRY

This team provides needed safety and security for our Church and visitors.

The First Free Will Baptist Church

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

Having received Christ as my Lord and Savior, having been baptized, and being in agreement with First Free Will Baptist Church's statements, strategy, and structure, I now feel led by the Holy Spirit to unite with the First Free Will Baptist Church family. In doing so, I commit myself to God and to the other members to do the following:

1. I WILL PROTECT THE UNITY OF MY CHURCH

- ...By acting in love toward other members
- ...By refusing to gossip
- ...By following the leaders

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." **Rom. 14:19**

"Now the God of patience and consolation grant you to be likeminded one toward another according to Christ Jesus." **Rom. 15:5**

"Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another with a pure heart fervently." **1 Peter 1:22**

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace unto the hearers." **Eph. 4:29**

"Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you." **Heb. 13:17**

2. I WILL SHARE THE RESPONSIBILITY OF MY CHURCH

- ...By praying for its growth
- ...By inviting the unchurched to attend
- ...By warmly welcoming those who visit

"We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayer."
1 Thess. 1:2

"And the Lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled." **Luke 14:23**

"Wherefore receive ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God."
Rom. 15:7

3. I WILL SERVE THE MINISTRY OF MY CHURCH

- ...By discovering my gifts and talents
- ...By being equipped to serve by my Pastors
- ...By developing a servant's heart

“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God.” 1 Peter 4:10

“And he (God) gave some...Pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, and for the edifying of the body of Christ.” Eph. 4:11-12

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others...But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant...”

Phil. 2:3-4, 7

4. I WILL SUPPORT THE TESTIMONY OF MY CHURCH

...By attending faithfully

...By living a godly life

...By giving regularly

“Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together...but exhorting one another.”

Heb. 10:25

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Phil. 1:27

“Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.” 1 Cor. 16:2

“And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s: it is holy unto the Lord.” Lev. 27:30

My Commitment to God!

“The ones who have most fully illustrated Christ in their character, and have most powerfully affected the world for Him, have been those who spend so much time with God as to make it a notable feature in their lives...to be little with God is to be little for God.” E. M. Bounds

I. Why should I commit to God?

1. Because God deserves my commitment.
 - Because God has bought me.
 - Because God lives in me.
 - Because God reveals His will to me.
2. Because He blesses me when I commit.
 - I have a hope of eternal life
 - I sense His presence in my life.
 - I have true joy.
 - He gives me the desires of my heart.

II. How can I have fellowship with God?

1. Confess my sin.
2. Pray
3. Read God's Word
 - Pick a time
 - Pick a place
 - Pick a plan
4. Serve Christ
5. Worship Christ

III. How should I pray to God?

- P** -- Praise: Spend time praising God for who He is
- R** -- Repentance: Repent of sins, seek His cleansing
- A** -- Ask: make requests of personal needs and intercession
- Y** -- Yield: submit your life to God's will; commit to obey regardless of His answer.
- E** -- Evangelism: spend time praying for lost family and friends and missionaries.
- R** -- Rejoice: end your prayer time with a song or time of rejoicing

My Stewardship to God
The Biblical Basis for Tithing
Tithing is a matter of the heart, not the wallet.

Matthew 6:21

What is a tithe? A tithe as mentioned in the Bible denotes ten percent of one's earnings.

What is an Offering? An offering is anything above and beyond one's tithe.

Ten Benefits from Tithing

1. God is pleased by my obedience. (Malachi 3:8-10) *"Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, in what way have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings."*
2. I am eligible for a blessing. (Malachi 3:10) *"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, and try Me now in this, says the Lord of hosts. If I will not open for you the window of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it."*
3. God is honored by my faithfulness. (Proverbs 3:9-10) *"Honor the Lord with your possessions, and with the first fruits of all your increase; so, your barns will be filled with plenty..."*
4. It helps keep my priorities straight. (Matthew 6:21) *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."*
5. It guards me from selfishness. (Acts 20:35)
"I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
6. God loves a cheerful giver. (II Corinthians 9:6-7)
"But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver."
7. Ensures my needs will be met. (Matthew 6:33)
"But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you."
8. It will help meet the needs of others. (I Corinthians 16:1-2)
(verse2) "On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside..."
9. I am reminded that God is the true owner and giver of all that I have. (I Timothy 6:17-18)
"Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all thing to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share."

10. I will help to advance the Gospel around the world. (Romans 10:14-15)
(verse 15) *“And how shall they preach unless they are sent.”*

The Bible devotes 500 verses on prayer; less than 500 verses on faith; but over 2,000 verses on money and possessions.

YOUR PLACE AT FIRST FREE WILL BAPTIST CHURCH OF OZARK

1. Everyone has a place here.
2. Everyone is spiritually gifted to serve here.

What is a spiritual gift?

A spiritual gift is a significant talent or ability given to a believer by Christ through the Holy Spirit, who equips and moves members of the church to serve the Body of Christ and His Kingdom.

Basic Concepts

- A. Christ gives gifts to believers through the Holy Spirit (Eph. 1:8; 1 Cor. 12:8-9,11).
- B. Spiritual gifts are given to each believer without exception (1 Cor. 12:7; 1 Peter 4:10).
- C. Spiritual gifts are gifts of God’s grace (Eph. 4:7; Romans 12:6; 1 Peter 4:10).
- D. The Spirit gives many different gifts, providing for a rich diversity in the church (1 Cor. 12:8-12, 28; Ro.12:6).
- E. Spiritual gifts are meant to be employed for the benefit of others (1 Cor. 12:7, 25; Ro. 12:6; Eph. 4:11-12).
- F. The gifted members of the church are parts of the Body of Christ and therefore individual members of one another (1 Cor. 12:13-14, 27).
- G. Gifts must always be used in love (1 Cor. 13).

How do I discover my spiritual gift(s)?

- A. Understand the gifts.
- B. Accept that you are gifted.
- C. Seek confirmation from other Christians.
- D. Take a spiritual gift test (we will provide this opportunity).

- E. Use your gift(s).

Where can I serve at First Free Will Baptist Church?

- A. An Opportunity for Service Brochure.
- B. Pray over the Opportunity for Service Brochure.
- C. Fill out the Opportunity for Service registration form.
- D. Turn the form in to the Pastor at the close of the class.

You are now ready to take your place at First Free Will Baptist Church! May God bless you as you serve Him along side the rest of the First Free Will Baptist Church family!

SECTION TWO:

THE GREATER SPRINGFIELD ASSOC.

OF

FREE WILL BAPTISTS

The Greater Springfield District Association of Free Will Baptist

By now you are beginning to see the structure of our denomination. The local church is a part of the District Association. The district associations are part of the state association. Each district has their own constitution and by-laws from which to operate. Although each district has flexibility in their constitution and by-laws, they must meet certain stipulations regarding their faith and practices of FWB as communicated in our Treatise.

This association meets 3 times a year for encouragement and fellowship and conducts business at each meeting held.

There are 11 churches in the Greater Springfield district.

This district also hosts an annual Missions Conference in the spring.

During each district meeting, there is a preaching service to encourage and uplift those in attendance. Sometimes guest ministers at the state and national level will attend and give reports concerning their ministries.

The main purpose of this association is to provide time for fellowship, encouragement and planning for our FWB ministries.

SECTION THREE:

**THE MISSOURI
STATE
ASSOCIATION OF
FREE WILL BAPTIST**

The Programs and Ministry of the State Association of Free Will Baptists

I. **The Location**

The location of our state office is in Lebanon, MO. Our State Executive Director's office is located here as well as our State Mission Director's Office. Our State Executive Director has the responsibility of representing our state at the national level and at our district association meetings, attending to the state office and bookstore, promoting and publicizing our state programs. The Gem is our state promotional paper that is published each month. There are 155 FWB churches in the state of Missouri.

II. **Membership**

Each church who is a member of the State Association of FWB have the privilege of voting on the business of this association but also to financial support it's programs. One of the ways in which the state office functions is through the gifts given by each church who is a member of the state association. First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark is a member of this state association and regularly supports this work. We financially help support this association by tithing our income as a church. The plan is called Cooperative Giving.

III. **Boards and Activities**

There are several boards and committees that correlate with our national agencies (i.e. Woman Active for Christ, etc.)

The state Missions Board is constantly looking for new cities to start a new FWB church and assist those already started but not self-supporting.

In addition to those we have a Youth Camp Board. This board gives guidance and direction to our youth camp program. Our camp is located in a small community called Niangua, MO., just 40 miles east of Springfield. Our pre-teens and teens are encouraged to attend one week of camp during the summer. First Free Will Baptist Church of Ozark provides transportation and sponsors for this activity.

The state also has a Youth Board. This board organizes and plans our annual state youth retreat at Windermere. This camp is located on the Lake of the Ozarks, and is a highlight of the fall for our teens. It is usually in November. This board is also responsible for planning and organizing our annual competitive activities for our youth. Youth compete in Bible memorization, sword drill, music (instrumental and vocal), drama, and arts.

Our Christian Education Board offers a variety of helps throughout the year. They provide a ministry of helps called "Lending Library." This "library" is located at the state office and contains several recent periodicals for churches to use in their educational pursuits.

In addition to these boards and activities, the state promotes a Senior Adult Retreat held annually in Springfield, MO. This retreat is always a special time of relaxation and fellowship for our seniors. The retreat contains preaching services and special music and of course, a lot of shopping. The retreat is for 3 days and 2 nights.

The Missouri State Association of Free Will Baptists meets annually in June each year. This is a great time for worship, fellowship, seminars, reports of ministries, and to conduct the business of the state.

SECTION FOUR:

**THE HISTORY OF THE FREE
WILL BAPTIST
DENOMINATION**

The Free Will Baptist History

Our beginnings date back to the early 1700's when two movements sprang up in two different areas. The southern line or Palmer movement traces its beginnings to the year 1727 when Paul Palmer organized a Free Will Baptist Church in Chowan, North Carolina.

The northern line, or Randall movement had its beginning with a congregation organized in 1780 by Benjamin Randall in New Durham, New Hampshire.

Both of these movements taught the doctrines of *free grace, free salvation, and free will*. However, there was no organizational connection between them.

The northern line grew very rapidly and eventually merged with the Northern Baptist denomination in the early 1900's. Unfortunately, the Free Will Baptists lost 1,100 churches and many colleges. The remnant of Free Will Baptist churches organized into the Cooperative General Association of Free Will Baptist.

The southern line of Free Will Baptists continued to grow and in 1921 they formed the General Conference of Free Will Baptists. It soon became inevitable that these two conferences would merge. In Nashville, Tennessee, on November 5, 1935, representatives of these two groups met and organized the National Association of Free Will Baptists.

Presently the Free Will Baptist Denomination has approximately 250,000 members and 2,500 churches in 42 states and 14 foreign countries.

Read more about Free Will Baptist by reviewing our website: www.nafwb.org

THE ORGANIZATION AND MINISTRY OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF FREE WILL BAPTISTS

The national headquarters for FWBs is located in Nashville, Tennessee. Our national agencies provide many ministries to our denomination. The following is a list of agencies, along with ministry descriptions.

(1) The Executive Office: This office contains our national representative for denominational and U.S. Governmental affairs.

(2) The Free Will Baptist International Missions Office: This office has the responsibility of overseeing and directing our foreign mission plans, pursuits, personnel, and purposes. We have missionaries in the following countries: Panama; Brazil; Ivory Coast; West Africa; India; Spain; France; Uruguay; Russia; Japan; Korea; Cuba.

(3) Welch College: This agency pilots our national college toward its primary goal of equipping men and women through Bible-based education to serve Christ and His Church.

(4) North American Ministry's Office: The National Home Missions office exists to exalt Jesus Christ and fulfill the Great Commission by using the efforts of Missionaries and chaplains to communicate the Gospel, make disciples, and plant new churches within the United States, Canada, Mexico, and the U.S. territories such as the Virgin Islands and Puerto Rico.

(5) The Board of Retirement: This agency has the responsibility to maintain a qualified pension plan that provides a retirement.

(6) Master's Men: This organization recruits and mobilizes laymen for Christian service and leadership.

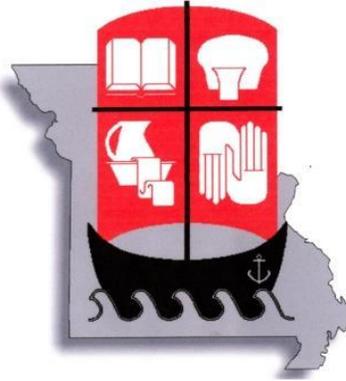
(7) Women Nationally Active for Christ: This organization leads FWB women in church, community, and world evangelism and outreach. They set a high standard for giving to missions, Christian education, and children's ministries.

(8) Sunday School and Church Training Department: This agency leads in the development and production of literature, teaching and training programs for the local church. It is also responsible for Randall House Publication, which is the FWB publication house. Furthermore, this department assumes the responsibility for organizing and developing our National Youth Conference and Convention.

(9) One Magazine: The national magazine, is produced and distributed by the Executive Department.

Although the National Association of FWB is our largest organization, it does not reflect the highest level of authority. The highest level of authority in our denomination is the local church. The National Association of FWB gives us the organization and structure that we need to perform ministry on a broad and global basis. If the local church is a member of the national association then delegates from the local church have voting privileges and a voice on the national level.

THE FREE WILL BAPTIST LOGO



This emblem incorporates both historic and contemporary Christian designs to convey doctrines and practices of our thriving evangelical faith.

First, the entire symbol incorporates 4 visual symbols used by the earliest communities in Christendom: The ship, the fish, the anchor, and the cross. These four symbols have been discovered frequently in the catacombs and other early Christian ruins.

The ship has always been recognized as a symbol of the church representing all the members pulling in one direction, guided and empowered by Christ and the Holy Spirit.

The fish, represented in the symbol by the space between the bottom of the sail and the top of the ship's body, is one of the most popular symbols for Jesus Christ. It is widely believed to have been a secret symbol used for identification by Christians during periods of persecution. The word "fish" in first century Greek (ichthus) is an acrostic for Jesus Christ, Son of God, and Savior. In modern times the fishhook has also come to symbolize witnessing and evangelism.

The anchor on the bow of the ship was an early symbol for the Christian hope of salvation, "the sure and steadfast anchor for the soul." Of course, the mast of the ship in the symbol forms the most familiar symbol in the history of the word, the cross - an instrument of execution and death turned into a worldwide emblem of hope and love by the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Because of their similarity, the anchor and the cross were often combined in early Christian art.

In the four corners of the ship's sail, the symbols of earliest Christianity are enhanced by modern emblems of a vital, living faith - the Holy Bible, the loaf and cup, the basin and towel, and the clasped hands - the symbols of Free Will Baptists.

The Holy Bible has always been at the very heart of our life as Free Will Baptists, and no symbol for us could be without some representation of the centrality of Scripture. The cup and the loaf represent the Lord's Supper and the importance of this ordinance to our faith. The basin with the towel is a historic symbol of the service and outreach of the church, but for us it has the added significance of representing our practice of feet washing. Finally, the clasped hands have many meanings for us. They stand for fellowship, brotherhood and the warmth of our faith. But most important they stand for our zeal for evangelism, our commitment to reach out to persons around the world with the saving message of God's action in Jesus Christ.