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Introduction

The relationship between a congregation and her pastor is critical to the ministry and the success of the local church. It is only by working effectively together that the church is able to meet its calling and carry out the teachings of the “Great Commission.”

It is the goal of this publication to foster good communication between the pastor and the congregation by providing a starting point for understanding and addressing important issues that often arise. It is our hope that this publication will be used by ministers and laypeople as they address the issues that routinely confront the local church. The value of this guide will be in providing the reader with a perspective on an issue that may help resolve a potential problem. This publication is intended to be a guide as churches develop their own individual policies and should not be viewed in any way as established OFWB policy, rules, or governance.

Since the church’s ministry and the pastor’s prospects are dependent on the decisions made at the local level, the future for both depends in large part on the relationship that exists between the pastor and the pew.

It is to our churches, pastors, and Original Free Will Baptists throughout the Convention that we dedicate this book and hope that it will prove valuable as we make our way through this spiritual journey to which God has called each of us.

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Forward

A unique relationship has existed between pastor and church membership since the beginning of the first century church, as can be seen by studying Paul's letters to the churches in the New Testament. Through the centuries, God has blessed this relationship and brought it to the present age.

As President of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists, it is my hope that this publication will be used as a tool in helping to maintain a cooperative and working relationship between churches and pastors. I believe that this is a needed tool for all pastors and churches.

I sincerely thank the Minister's Program for providing Original Free Will Baptists with this publication.

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Chapter One: Searching for a Pastor

*“For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord;
and ourselves your servants for Jesus' sake.” 2 Corinthians 4:5*

For many years, when an Original Free Will Baptist Church found itself in need of a minister, the members elected a committee to research, interview, and recommend to the church a new “preacher” with a primary role of filling the pulpit. Times have changed and OFWB churches expect the minister to do much more than preach two sermons on Sunday and conduct mid-week Bible study. The successful pastor today is a preacher, administrator, manager, counselor, program director, teacher, and community leader. While he may still be called “preacher,” the modern pastor wears many more hats than his predecessors; thus the term *pulpit committee* may be somewhat limited. This work will refer to the committee as a Pastor Search Committee (PSC) and will discuss the critical job the PSC performs in the life of the church.

A church beginning the search for a pastor needs to recognize both the spiritual importance and logistic complexity of the task. Because of this complexity, the discussion of the process is broken down into several sections in this chapter:

- Need: The church body finds itself in need of a pastor and establishes a PSC to facilitate the search for and selection of a pastor.
- Self-Assessment: Prior to beginning a search, the PSC should complete a self-assessment of the church’s current congregational strengths, weaknesses, and pastoral needs.
- Search: Based on the information from the self-assessment of the church, the PSC searches for qualified individuals.
- Interview: The PCS plans for, conducts, and follows up on an interview with a candidate.
- Selection: Based on information obtained from the candidate and references, the PCS selects an individual to present to the church.
- Acceptance: Based on the decision by the committee and/or the full church, the PCS negotiates an agreement with the candidate to accept the position as pastor of the church.

The PSC should always keep in mind that the discussion with a candidate may end at any point in the process, in which case the PSC starts over at the appropriate place in the process. Being aware from the beginning of the fact that they will go through some of these steps several times helps prevent committee members from becoming discouraged. From the onset, both church and committee have to acknowledge that the decision must be based on the spiritual leadership of God throughout the process, even when God’s timing doesn’t seem to coincide with the human desire to complete the task as quickly as possible.

Need

The work of the PSC begins only if the church is in need of a pastor. The present pastor has resigned, retired, or been dismissed, and the church has officially acknowledged that a vacancy exists in this position. The standing committee structure of some congregations provides for a committee whose duties include serving as a PSC if and when the need arises. This committee may have other responsibilities, or may essentially be an inactive committee until a vacancy occurs. In many OFWB churches, however, the PSC is a temporary committee. This committee is authorized only to fulfill a temporary purpose, unlike a standing committee (such as a finance committee), which is a permanent committee of the church. The church should either move to have the chair appoint a committee or have the congregation elect the temporary PSC committee specifically for the purpose of filling the vacancy. Once this type of PSC performs its task, the committee is automatically discharged.

In composing either type of committee, the church must first determine how many people should serve on the committee, clearly establish the rules for operation, and specifically define the authority given to the committee. (For example, will the PSC be authorized to negotiate salary and benefits?) The PSC should meet as soon as is practical to begin its task. Often the first person named on a committee is chairman of the committee, and the second person named is vice-chairman, but the committee members may choose to elect a chairman by majority vote, which is totally within their authority to do (unless previously prohibited by the church). The committee should also appoint or elect a secretary who will keep accurate records of all actions taken by the committee.

The PSC should review and clarify their understanding of the rules of operation provided by the church, which will direct their activity as they perform their task. One necessary rule is that no member has authority to act individually unless the committee instructs him/her to do so. If the members of the committee each work in a different direction, with some members not knowing what the other members are doing, the work of the committee quickly becomes disjointed, ineffective, and possibly divisive. The importance of meeting regularly and working together cannot be overstated. The committee should also determine voting options within the committee. Will all committee votes be vocal or will secret ballot be an option? Will decisions made by the committee require a unanimous vote of the total committee, a two-thirds majority, or a simple majority rule of members present? Determining such rules of operation at the onset can avoid future disagreements (for example, whether a critical vote can take place if several committee members are absent).

Above all, the committee must be patient in this process because the actions of this committee will affect the church for years to come. Because of the time-consuming nature of selecting a pastor, many churches choose to hire an interim pastor, helping to guard against the feeling that the committee has to hire the first pastor it can find. It is far easier to spend time and prayer selecting the right pastor rather than mistakenly hiring an individual simply because he was the first person available, and having to go through the process again after only a short time period.

Self-Assessment

After the committee has established its rules of operation, one of the first tasks for the PSC is to complete an assessment of the church and the community that presents an accurate picture of the history of the church, the community in which it is located, and the current condition of the church. It may also be helpful to determine what has been successful within past church-pastor relationships. Perhaps the best way to do this type of assessment is to prepare an information packet of materials about the church itself, such as the following:

- A brief history of the church.
- A record of attendance and annual itemized financial statement for the last five years.
- An analysis of attendance broken down by age groups (perhaps based on Sunday school records).
- A candid assessment of the church growth experience in the last five years: has the membership reached a plateau, or even begun to decline?
- A discussion of any strong established divisions of belief within the church.
- An overview of the positive aspects of the congregation.
- An assessment of the potential that exists and the possibilities that may be opened with the right leadership.
- A list of former pastors of the church.

Beyond information about the church itself, include other information that might be helpful to the candidate considering the church:

- A description of the community, including such aspects as the school system, population demographics, medical care, as well as the availability of cultural recreational activities.
- A discussion of the potential employment opportunities if the pastor's spouse chooses to pursue a career or has the need to provide additional family income.
- Information on housing options: does the church have a parsonage and if so, is the pastor required to live in the parsonage? If not, is the pastor required to live within a certain distance of the church? What is the availability and financial range of housing in the area including rental and purchase options?

Not only is this type of information valuable for a candidate, compiling this material also allows the PSC members to look at their church from another prospective and assists them in being more realistic in their expectations.

After developing the information packet, the PSC may choose to go back to the church with an informal questionnaire to determine what type of pastor the church believes would be best for the church. This questionnaire may address issues such as age, experience, and education. Also, members might be asked to arrange, in order of importance, the characteristics they would most like to see in a new pastor. List any characteristics that members might consider important and then ask church members to rate them. Beside the most important attributes, raters should place the numeral 1; beside the second most important attributes, a 2; and beside the third most important attributes, a 3. Characteristics might include:

- Preaching
- Administration
- Leadership
- Visitation
- Counseling
- Teaching

A church-wide survey will help the PSC focus in more closely on church expectations. If ninety percent of those completing the survey are looking for a forty-year-old, seminary-trained pastor with fifteen years of experience, the PSC may not wish to recommend a twenty-two-year-old recent college graduate who is seeking his first pastorate.

The Search

Once the committee is clear on its operating rules, has developed an information packet, and has determined the church's preferences, it is ready to begin its search. In the business community, search firms and employment agencies are given a description of what a company desires in a CEO. Based on this description, the agency then provides candidates for the company's consideration. This is not the case in the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists, nor should it be. The search for a pastor is not a business decision but rather a divine mission in which both parties should allow God to direct their steps through prayer and meditation, which results in the church issuing a call to the minister to be their pastor. While there may be similarities to the business community in some aspects of the process, the PSC and the minister should never lose sight that it is God's blessing they seek in this process, rather than human desires.

According to the *Articles of Faith*, churches have autonomy in calling a pastor within certain denominational requirements: “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” (68). Therefore before talking to any candidate, the PSC should consult their Conference Ordination Committee concerning the rules that define who is eligible to pastor in that Conference. These rules are important because they enable the church, the denomination, and the pastoral candidate to work together successfully. Each Conference sets specific standards for a minister to serve in churches within that Conference. Far from being an obstacle, these standards serve to protect the church from individuals who care little about the work of our Convention or the dedication of the past members whose hard work established the church. If there is someone outside the Conference that the PSC would like to interview, have the candidate first meet with the Ordaining Council before going any further. They will be able to determine the suitability of that candidate and determine what steps the individual will need to follow in order to be cleared to pastor in your Conference. Remember, the PSC should recommend a pastoral candidate for church consideration only after it has been clearly established that the candidate is an ordained minister in good standing with the local Conference of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists to which the church belongs.

Churches may be unsure how to find qualified, available individuals. The denomination does provide some specific ways to find possible candidates. Each month *The Free Will Baptist* offers available ministers the opportunity to have their names and contact information printed in the publication. Also, you may contact the Convention Headquarters and speak with the Director of Convention Services to see if the office is aware of any candidates that may be available. The next step is to contact leaders within the Conference, such as members of the Examining Board or Ordaining Council to see if they are aware of anyone who may be available. If no suitable candidates are identified using these sources, then the PSC should consider those pastors who are actively serving another congregation. The intent here is not to “hire away” a pastor from another church but rather to inform other pastors that an opportunity exists within your congregation. The Convention of Original Free Will Baptists is not a large organization, and it is important to be considerate and straightforward in dealings with sister churches. However, only the pastor knows where he is in his ministry and if he would consider a change. Even pastors who have not considered a change may be willing to pray for God’s guidance in response to a call. One of two things will then happen: (1) he will be encouraged by the interest and will respectfully decline, or (2) he will be encouraged by the interest and wish to pursue further conversation.

It is best to contact an active pastor by phone, and the PSC should appoint one member to make this contact. An initial contact with a candidate is advisable as opposed to the PSC showing up at Sunday morning service unannounced. The presence of a PSC in a worship service is usually very obvious and may leave the congregation thinking their pastor is planning to leave. If you have not yet determined that the pastor is a serious candidate, then you may put him in an awkward position with his present church.

The Interview

The PSC is not a secret organization, but it should conduct its affairs in confidence. Remember, the final charge that the church usually gives the PSC is to determine a suitable candidate and recommend him to the church. Until the committee is actually ready to recommend a specific candidate, its reports to the church should include its activities but not the names of the individuals that the PSC has spoken with. If the PSC is speaking with an active pastor, word may get back to his local congregation and create potential problems there. If the PSC has interviewed an openly available candidate and determined for whatever reason he did not meet the needs of the church and reported the same to the congregation, it may be wrongly assumed that this minister had some deficiencies that were uncovered by the PSC, and that was the reason he was not recommend. In most cases nothing is further from the truth, and it is best to simply advise the congregation of the progress you are making in carrying out your responsibilities.

Once the committee has identified a potential candidate, it is time to meet with that individual. The meeting place can be at church or off-site at a location where the group can have privacy and convenience. A small conference room is ideal because it enables everyone to sit around the table and provides a surface on which to take notes and spread out documents. Prior to this meeting, the PSC should provide the candidate with the history and self-assessment so he can be prepared to ask questions of the PSC as they ask questions of him. It is also a good idea for the PSC to prepare an application that asks for personal information, educational background, and the candidate's experience at other pastorates, including information such as the size of the churches and length of his ministry. Even if a candidate provides a resume, an application form designed around the information your committee wishes to know is helpful to both the candidate and the committee.

At this point the PSC needs to meet and compare notes to determine what questions they would like to ask the candidate, and who will ask them. They may want to ask him questions about his biblical interpretation on social issues such as abortion, divorce, gambling/lottery, alcohol and tobacco use, and other issues that may be important to your congregation. During the interview, the PSC may choose to ask him about his ministry style, including questions such as the following:

Ministry

- Describe your vision for carrying out the "Great Commission."
- How do you propose to involve the church in ministry?
- Describe your previous activities as they relate to outreach.

Worship

- Do you preach primarily from the New Testament or from the Old Testament?
- What type of worship service do you prefer? More formal or informal? Traditional or more contemporary?
- What resources do you use to prepare your sermons?
- How would you describe your sermons?
- What type of services would you propose for midweek?

The Denomination

- What support do you provide for the denomination or ministries?
- Do you support all OFWB denominational ministries?
- What concerns do you have about any of the denominational ministries?

Work Ethic

- Describe your general work schedule; describe a typical week's work.
- Describe your approach to visitation.
- Do you think personal community involvement is important?
- What is your practice concerning sermon preparation, reading, and study?
- What is your practice concerning personal devotion time?

Administration

- Do you participate in church committee meetings? At what level?
- How do you deal with disagreements within the church?
- How active are you in the budget process?
- Have you ever led a church in a building program, and what was your role?
- What new programs do you think are vital for any church going forward?

Personal

- Tell us about your call to the ministry.
- Where would you like to be in five years? ten years?
- What role does your wife play in your ministry?
- Name three pastors in our denominations that you admire and respect as role models.
- Discuss your view of the personal financial responsibility that ministers should maintain in the community that they serve.
- What do you consider to be your greatest strength?
- If you could change anything about yourself, what would that be?

In all fairness the PSC should make clear the expectations of the church. Are there problems such as a division in your church? The committee should be just as candid about the challenges as they are the positives. Be upfront regarding expectations in areas such as the following:

- Church programs.
- Participation in committee/deacon meetings.
- Visitation.
- Office hours.
- Days off.
- Tasks the pastor would be expected to perform (bulletins, newsletters, etc.).

Have a clear plan for ending the interview. The chair should ask if the candidate has questions, give him an opportunity to summarize his impressions of the meeting, and possibly restate his qualifications. At this point the interview process is over. The PSC and the candidate have just gone through an intense process, and the committee should thank him for his openness and candor; if there is no further discussion, he should be excused with thanks and appreciation. Let him know that the committee will take the next step and that he will hear from them by a certain date. Make certain that the committee honors that date regardless of whether it has made a decision or not. If possible, the chair should determine with the candidate a specific date, time, and method of contact (for example, the chair will call the candidate at his home number on Tuesday, August 12 at 8 pm).

Once the candidate has left, the PSC should continue its meeting and discuss the results of the interview while the questions and answers are fresh on everyone's mind. It is very possible that the candidate may have asked the committee questions that the PSC was unable to answer immediately and these need to be discussed. It may be that the committee

knows immediately that this candidate is not the one for the church, and if that is the decision of the PSC, he should be contacted the next day. He should be advised that the committee appreciates his time and the opportunity to meet with him, but the PSC will continue its work in seeking the candidate that is suited for the church.

The PSC may decide that the candidate should be considered further, but that other candidates should also be interviewed. While most PSCs interview more than one candidate, it is seldom a good idea to present more than one candidate to the church for consideration. If the church is asked to vote between two or more candidates, the vote may result in a very narrow difference. The new pastor is faced with the prospect of beginning his ministry knowing that 20, 30, or even 40% of the congregation voted for someone else. This is not a good place for him or the church to start. Choosing a pastor is not a popularity contest, and the church has selected the PSC to bring them a suitable candidate. If the committee does its job well, the candidate can begin his service knowing that he has the support of 100% of the congregation.

As stated earlier, the PCS may be talking with more than one candidate. After talking to the candidates, the committee needs to decide which one is the best candidate for the church. Once that vote is taken, the committee should move forward very quickly so that if the first choice declines, the committee can go with the second and sometimes third choice. However, once the church confirms a pastor, the PSC needs to contact the other candidates, let them know a decision has been reached, and thank them for their participation.

After a long and fruitful search, the PSC decides on a specific candidate to possibly recommend to the church. At this point, the PSC needs to meet with the candidate and confirm his willingness to move forward in the process, which will be a negotiation of compensation and expectations. If he agrees, then this is a good time to contact the references provided by the candidate. The committee may also determine additional contacts beyond those listed by the candidate; these should be individuals that know the candidate and can speak of his qualifications and characteristics. The references should be assigned to individual members. A list of questions should be prepared for each of the PSC members to ask the references so that when the group meets back together, they have a perspective on the same issues.

The PSC may wish to include questions such as the following for the references:

- What is your relationship to the candidate or how do you know him?
- How long have you known the candidate?
- What would you consider his best qualities?
- What qualities does the candidate need to work on?
- In their opinion, what would make this candidate an ideal pastor?
- Describe his work ethic.

- Was he involved in any community activities? What?
- Would you recommend him as a pastor?
- Does he enjoy a good reputation among his peers?
- Does he get along well with other people?
- Does his family support him in his ministry?
- What age group does he best relate to?
- Does he work well under pressure?
- Does his leadership style involve a consensus or is he a more dominant leader?

When speaking to references from past churches, committee members may want to include questions such as these:

- Did the church grow or decline under his leadership?
- What new programs did he start?
- What do you consider his major successes?
- What do you consider his possible failures?
- If you were on a pastor search committee, would you recommend him to your church?

Along with choosing items from such generic questions, each PSC should also develop questions that relate specifically to the needs and concerns of their church.

Some churches obtain background checks on pastoral candidates. This is especially true if the candidate is relatively unknown in your community. While it may seem somewhat extreme, daycare workers, nursing home staff, and many others are required to go through this screening process. The PSC must decide if this is warranted or necessary, and if the consensus is yes, then the committee will need to contact a service provider that can perform this task.

Once the committee members have completed the reference contacts, it is time to sit down and discuss the results of the reference interviews and any last minute concerns or questions. Once the discussion is complete, the PSC should vote. By this point the PSC should be somewhat in agreement, and the vote should be near unanimous. Keep in mind if a vote is split within the PSC, it will probably be a split vote with the church, and the process may well begin again. If the members of the PSC are in agreement, they are ready for the next step.

When the PSC is completely satisfied with their decision, it is time to negotiate the salary and benefits between the two parties. This process may involve the deacons or the

finance committee, but it is important to make sure that the decision-makers are involved in the process. The PSC has already asked the candidate in the initial interview for his salary requirements, so the committee knows if these requirements fit within the church's budget.

The OFWB Minister's Program publishes a small booklet each year that provides salary and benefit information which can be very useful in addressing this subject. Also, chapter two of this work offers additional guidance concerning minister's compensation. The compensation should be fair and sufficient to provide the candidate with the ability to provide for his family. The PSC must also consider whether the church can sustain the package over a period of time. The church should be willing to pay what it can afford, but should not go into the negotiation with the idea that the candidate will be able to increase the church's giving levels overnight. The new pastor should not find himself forced to preach about giving every Sunday.

Once the committee has made an offer, and the candidate has accepted the terms of that offer, the candidate often interacts with the church as a whole. Many churches request that the candidate actually make a presentation for the entire church before the church makes a final decision. Such presentations occur in a wide variety of formats, ranging from an informal "meet and greet" type social gathering during which the candidate makes a brief informal presentation, to a traditional formal sermon during a regularly scheduled worship service. The PSC should again establish a specific date and time that it will contact the candidate after his presentation to the church; the contact should be made whether the church has decided to extend a call to the candidate or not. If a call is extended, the candidate may accept immediately or may ask for some time before giving his decision. In this case, a specific time should be established for the PSC to call back for his final decision. The church should not consider a request for time as a negative; the candidate may be very eager to accept the pastorate but still feel that the final decision should be made only after he spends time in prayer on the matter.

At any point in these proceedings, either the church or the candidate may decide to end the process. At that point, the PSC begins again with the search step. As stated earlier, the successful pastoral search is a long process, and requires prayer and patience on the part of the PSC. The end of a dialog with a candidate does not mean the committee has been unsuccessful, only that the candidate was not the individual for the position and that this decision, no matter how difficult, was the right choice for the church and the candidate.

A checklist has been provided on the following page to help the Committee stay focused during this process. While it is not all inclusive, it does provide a starting point which you can modify for your purposes.

PASTOR SEARCH COMMITTEE CHECKLIST

- _____ Begin with prayer
- _____ Establish the needs of the church
- _____ Prepare a self-assessment
- _____ Determine the qualifications of a candidate
- _____ Begin search by assigning each PSC member a list of resources. (Resources include the Convention Office, Conference Ordaining Committees, Auxiliary, Sunday School and League contacts)
- _____ Discuss the candidates you wish to contact
- _____ Determine their eligibility
- _____ Make contact and determine interest
- _____ Visit the candidate (make appointment or visit a service)
- _____ Interview candidate to determine willingness and needs
- _____ Vote on recommendation
- _____ Arrange a presentation before the congregation
- _____ Prepare offer (see chapter two on compensation)
- _____ Present findings to church and vote
- _____ Extend call with a follow-up letter and starting date
- _____ Make sure parsonage (if available) is clean and in good repair
- _____ Prepare welcome package (assistance, moving expenses, stipend, food, and reception)

Chapter Two: Compensation and Performance Review

*“Anyone who receives instruction in the word must
share all good things with his instructor”
Galations 6:6*

Few topics generate more interest in the local church than minister's compensation, perhaps because the minister's salary is often the largest single line item in the church's budget. Every Christian and each church is called upon to practice responsible stewardship as it relates to the financial matters of the church. Regardless of the order of worship in a church or the special events that may be planned on Sunday, there is nothing more important that takes place than the reading, teaching, and preaching of God's Word. With that in mind, each church should consider carefully and compensate fairly the person it appoints to stand before the congregation each week to carry out this important task. Most ministers and churches would agree that pastors are called first by God rather than by the church, and that they are accountable to God for how they lead the church. At the same time, pastors and churches both have expectations from each other as to how they will work together under God's leadership. Because of these expectations, establishing a regular process for reviewing both compensation and performance are vital to a successful relationship between pastor and church.

Historical Perspective

Historically, minister's compensation was approached very differently than it is today. Studying OFWB history, it quickly becomes clear that Original Free Will Baptists are a church with a strong rural tradition. Today, many OFWB churches still serve rural areas; even in churches located in cities, towns, and suburban areas, the roots of rural tradition run deep, and the attitudes can be very similar. Through the early years of the denomination, local economies were often dependent on credit granted by local stores until yearly harvest time, rather than individuals dealing with cash currency throughout the year. Churches often depended financially on large "harvest day" or "homecoming day" offerings in the fall of the year, rather than regular weekly contributions. Preachers traveled through rural areas serving several churches each month, and were sometimes paid with commodities or the products that the farmers in the churches produced, such as canned vegetables or smoked meat, rather than cash. In most cases these ministers were bi-vocational, meaning that they often farmed or practiced a trade during the week and made the journey to their various churches over the weekend.

As churches grew, they began to expect more and more from their pastors, and churches began to pay them for their services. The local church leadership was often filled by men who farmed in the local community, and they applied the lessons they learned on the farm to how they managed the local church. Their management approach involved hiring a pastor the same way they would hire a worker for their farm, which meant hiring a low wage individual who could do the job in order to maximize profits. They perhaps reasoned that the church should use the same approach when hiring a pastor because they believed this approach was good stewardship of the church's financial resources.

Although many OFWB churches are still located in rural areas, they no longer depend primarily on an agrarian, bartering economy. Churches receive their support in cash rather than commodities and service, and receive their financial support throughout the year. While

no church would still expect to compensate their pastor with produce and livestock, many are still in transition concerning the fairest way to financially compensate those who perform services for the church, employees who now often include housekeepers, groundskeepers, musicians, and a secretary/treasurer, as well as a pastoral staff. As stated earlier, however, there is nothing more important than the reading, teaching, and preaching of God's Word, and the Bible speaks very clearly and distinctly on the subject of giving, tithing, and providing fairly for those who serve the local congregation. Because everyone has his/her own attitudes and ideas about money, it is important to focus financial discussions on biblical principles rather than any individual's personal attitudes. In 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Paul writes,

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture sayeth Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward."

Galatians 6:6-7 goes on to say,

"Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor. Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows."

First Corinthians 9-14, says that

". . . the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel."

Before a church develops a specific financial compensation package, it should consider these biblical guidelines as well as the meaning of stewardship. According to Miriam-Webster Online, stewardship is "the careful and responsible management of something entrusted to one's care." Thus, while churches certainly need to carefully and responsibly manage the financial resources that God provides, doing so does not mean adopting a "lowest bidder" view. A church should always seek to provide fair compensation for all goods and services. This chapter provides information that the church can use to develop a fair compensation plan for those who serve God and the church, and a clear process for reviewing the expectations the church has for those individuals.

What is Compensation?

Once a congregation has studied the scriptural basis for compensation, it needs to apply these principles to the practical aspects of the compensation package. Compensation can be divided into two broad categories. One is salary, which is the basic amount that the church pays a pastor for his time and talent, and for performing the work that is required for the local church. The salary is a fully taxable benefit that is usually paid to the minister on a weekly, bi-weekly, or monthly basis; it is what he uses to provide for himself and those dependent on him. Salary is direct income and is used by the pastor to buy groceries, provide housing and utilities, and pay his bills and his state, federal, and self-employment taxes.

The second category of a compensation package consists of benefits. Benefits are usually described as items paid on behalf of the pastor, from which he gets some present or future benefit. One of the most important benefits provided by the church or any other employer is medical insurance for the pastor and his family. The current national health care crisis makes it vitally important that the pastor and his family are protected from the rising cost of regular and catastrophic health care.

Churches are encouraged to pay all or a portion of their pastor's health insurance coverage. The cost to the pastor of providing health coverage can be so burdensome that he may choose to be uninsured. If he or a member of his family develops a catastrophic illness what will the church do? Will they turn away and force him to fend for himself or will they try to help? While most churches are willing to help it is far cheaper to have coverage in place than to hope that no sickness strikes.

Unfortunately the Minister's Program is unable to offer a group health insurance program for our ministers. In order to offer true group coverage, 75% of those eligible for coverage must participate in the program. Due to the high number of bi-vocational pastors and those who have coverage through their spouse's plan, we are unable to achieve participation at the level required. We encourage pastors to seek the guidance of a qualified health insurance specialist and select the program that is right for their particular situation.

The next most important benefit for the pastor is retirement. Since each pastor may serve several different churches during his ministry, the local church may feel that retirement is not its responsibility. In fact, each church is the beneficiary of his services, and the time he spends in that pastorate brings him closer to the day that he retires. While some pastors have served through their seventies and into their eighties, they are the exception more than the rule. While a pastor may choose to continue in the pastorate beyond what the secular workplace considers normal retirement age, such a decision needs to be based on choice, not economic necessity. For that reason every pastor should maintain a tax qualified retirement plan that is affordable and which can be transferred from church to church without administrative difficulties. Churches should be willing to contribute to this retirement program at a meaningful level so that when the pastor reaches retirement age, he can retire with a dignity that is fitting for a person who has answered God's highest calling.

The OFWB Minister's Program sponsors "The Minister's Retirement Program," a retirement program exclusively for Original Free Will Baptist ministers. This plan was designed to help ministers achieve their retirement goals and dreams. The plan has no hidden charges, and every dime invested goes toward retirement. The plan is also flexible and portable. Ministers can change their investment options and contributions by completing simple forms available through the Minister's Program. Contributions to the retirement account are excluded from taxable income. This means no state, federal, or self-employment taxes are due, as compared to an IRA which requires self-employment taxes to be paid on the contribution. These deposits grow tax-free until retirement. While there are a wide variety of retirement plans available, this program is the only plan designed specifically for ministers in

the Original Free Will Baptist Convention. The tax savings for the participating minister can be summarized as follows:

- Contributions made by the church to the minister's account are non-taxable, within legal limits.
- Contributions by the minister made through a salary reduction agreement are non-taxable, within legal limits.
- Contributions made to the plan are not subject to self-employment taxes.
- Contributions grow tax-free in the retirement account.
- Upon retirement the monthly benefits are non-taxable to the extent they are used to provide housing.

After health insurance and retirement, another very important benefit consideration for churches is the reimbursement of travel expenses for their pastors. Each church expects its pastor to visit sick and shut-ins as well as make regular calls to members and visitors. Travel can place a significant burden on the pastor in terms of maintaining the cost of an automobile for this purpose. Each year the IRS establishes the reimbursement rate for each mile driven for business purposes. Every church should consider establishing a travel policy that allows the church to reimburse the pastor the miles he travels in ministry to the local church.

Continuing education expense is also a benefit to be included in a compensation package. Pastors should and often are required to attend the annual convention and local conference meetings, and provisions should be made that will enable them to do so. Pastors also attend seminars and invest heavily in books, media, and other materials to assist them in their ministry. These experiences and materials enhance the pastor's ability to be successful in the local church ministry, and therefore the church should assume a portion of or all such costs.

The value of benefits to the pastor cannot be overstated, and in many cases the value of these benefits can be tax-free if they are provided through an accountable plan established by the local church. The tax treatment of these benefits are beyond the scope of this publication, and churches are urged to consult a CPA or local tax professional in developing a compensation plan in line with IRS regulations.

How Much to Pay the Pastor?

The previous discussion outlines a variety of options that need to be included in a compensation package; armed with this information, churches can then develop their own compensation package. As discussed earlier, in the past, churches may not have developed any type of compensation package for the pastor, leaning toward hiring pastors with the

minimum salary outlay possible and with no benefits. Such an approach was not a mean-spirited reaction of the church to the clergy but was a result of several factors including a perceived lack of financial resources within the church, a misguided understanding of stewardship, and a lack of knowledge concerning the Bible's teaching on compensation. The focus of determining what to pay the pastor must be centered on biblical principles and fair compensation.

The church's income should always be considered when establishing the parameters for a pastor's salary. However, the church should also ask itself why offerings are low. Are the reasons uncontrollable; for example, is the church located in an economically depressed area, or does it include a high percentage of elderly that live on a fixed income? On the other hand, are offerings low because members fail to give regularly and systematically to support the work of the local church? If the latter is true, the church should prayerfully consider how to improve the approach toward giving to God's work.

Effective churches realize that good stewardship is not measured by paying the pastor as little as possible in order to save the church money. Using such a faulty thought process, if the church developed a leaky roof, good stewardship would suggest that the church not repair or replace the roof, because that would cost money. The *immediately* cheaper option would be to continue to allow the roof to leak, thereby saving the church money. Of course this would be a foolish response because the leak is not only an inconvenience but will eventually compromise the structural integrity of the roof and the walls when the leak begins to rot the timbers. Part of stewardship is realizing that financial choices cannot be based only on the money a church immediately saves, but what a church accomplishes in the long run through using its financial resources to make a difference for the Kingdom of God.

Churches sometimes lack a clear understanding of stewardship and how it relates to their responsibilities to provide fairly for their pastor. Even when pastors have been taught a clear biblical understanding of God's plan to provide for His shepherds, they may be hesitant to present this information for fear that they appear mercenary or only concerned about what they earn for their ministry. Churches may contact the The Minister's Program for further information concerning how God's Word teaches the responsibility of the local church to provide adequate support and fair compensation for their pastor. Realizing the need for information to help churches determine adequate compensation levels for their pastor, the Minister's Program has taken steps, such as compiling this publication, to help the churches and ministers of our denomination as they plan together. The program also provides an annual brochure, *The Basic Compensation Package*, as a guide for ministers and churches as they make decisions that affect the minister's compensation. This brochure is a starting point for finance and pastoral search committees as they discuss salary and benefit needs with the pastor. It is our hope that it will be used to help churches make informed decisions regarding the compensation of their pastor.

What is Adequate Support?

The terms *fair* and *adequate* have been used throughout this chapter to describe compensation; however, these terms mean different things to different people. Since these terms have a prominent place in this discussion, the church and the pastor have to determine and agree upon what these terms mean. What, then, is adequate support of the pastor, and what is the magical formula that each church should use in preparing its budget? The bad news is that there is no formula that provides the correct answer for every church and pastor; the good news is that the solution is not difficult--it simply requires an open and honest dialog.

An open and frank discussion about the salary needs of the pastor should not be a difficult or uncomfortable experience for either party. The church has a responsibility to provide a fair and adequate salary for its pastor, and the pastor has a responsibility to serve the church faithfully. Paul speaks about this relationship in 1 Corinthians 9: 9-14:

“For it is written in the law of Moses, thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn. Doth God take care for oxen? Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ. Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.”

Establishing Adequate Compensation when Calling a New Pastor

While scriptural understanding and practical guidelines such as *The Basic Compensation Package* provide a framework, each church and candidate presents an individual situation as far as establishing compensation details. As discussed in chapter one, the first thing a Pastoral Search Committee must do is carefully consider what the church wants the committee to look for in a pastor. Details of this process were discussed in chapter one (“The Pastoral Search Committee”), but briefly stated, the church must consider its wants and needs as these relate to the new pastor. Concerns such as full-time or bi-vocational, seminary trained or college educated, young or experienced, and other issues must be considered prior to the Pastoral Search Committee beginning its work. The church must determine both what it is capable of paying and what it is willing to pay--these amounts may not be the same.

The following specific financial items must be addressed:

- Can the church realistically afford its definition of a pastor? What is the church’s general attitude toward the profession of ministry? Some people in the church think that the pastor is well paid for working one day a week. Sometimes it is difficult for

the members to understand just how many hours a week the pastor spends on the job. Realistically examine the standard of living within the congregation and ask if the pastor can reasonably expect to enjoy that same standard based on the compensation that church is willing to offer.

- Can the church sustain the salary that they are presenting in the call into the foreseeable future? Is the compensation that the church is offering sustainable based on an historical perspective of their level of giving? Or do they expect the new pastor to lead the church into a higher level of giving than they have ever experienced?
- Will the church consider providing moving expenses for the pastor that is relocating to a new community? The cost of moving, in time and money, can place a burden on a new pastor and the church should be willing to help defray those costs. Since moving is such a rare event, most people do not factor into their annual budget any type of moving expenses.
- In addition to moving expenses will the church consider a “new pastor stipend?” Oftentimes the transition from one church to another may result in the pastor losing two weeks or more of salary. Most families are ill equipped to deal with this kind of income loss, and the result may leave the new pastor and his family in a financial bind. The pastor may be hesitant to reveal a problem of this type so the church should be willing to assist during this transition phase.

It is unfair to both the congregation and the pastor to expend the amount of time and level of energy required to bring in an individual as pastor to the church, if there is not a realistic expectation of the pastor being able to live at the congregation’s living standard on the salary provided. Likewise, if the church cannot sustain the level of compensation over a period of years, it should not offer the package in the first place. In either case, the church will quickly lose the pastor or the congregation/pastor relationship will suffer greatly as a result of the church’s unrealistic and unmet commitments to the pastor.

Sustaining Adequate Compensation for a Continuing Pastor

Anyone who has ever served on a Pastoral Search Committee may recall sitting down with a pastor or candidate and discussing a broad range of issues. At that point, every subject seemed to be “on the table,” and everyone was willing to discuss issues like vision, expectations, plans, needs, and salary and benefits. Unfortunately, this time prior to the pastor’s call is often the only time an active committee and pastor meet to discuss these issues at this depth and level. While it is vitally important to discuss salary and benefits prior to the pastor’s call, it is equally important to review such issues with the pastor on an regular basis. The church should review both the pastor’s salary and performance expectations on an annual basis. At the very least a church should consider an annual cost-of-living and experience adjustment.

To insure an effective review experience, the church should develop a written annual review process. In such a process, the appropriate committee sits down with the pastor and goes over every component of the pastoral compensation package. Pastors often try to negotiate the highest possible salary during the call process because they believe this may be their only opportunity to establish a fair and equitable compensation program. However, if the pastor is aware that every year the church goes through a compensation review process, he may be more willing to accept a lower starting salary because he is confident that the church will regularly review his salary and make changes as needed. When a pastor accepts a call to a local church, it is a journey of faith for him; he literally places his financial future in the hands of the church and trusts that they will provide fairly for him and his family. A church should work hard to earn that trust, remembering that the Bible instructs in Romans 12:17:

“...Provide things honest in the sight of all men.”

A compensation review process is accomplished through a committee or group charged with that responsibility. It is difficult, if not impossible, to have a meaningful conversation on this sensitive issue with the entire congregation. Typically, finance committees and deacon boards are charged with this responsibility and present a less threatening and more effective forum than a meeting of the entire body. Some churches choose to appoint a single member of the committee who has a good relationship with the pastor to sit down with him and discuss these issues. This representative could then report back to the committee or board for discussion. Before being implemented, such a practice needs to be mutually agreeable to both the committee and the pastor, to protect both the church and the pastor from finding themselves in the position where one person has almost complete control over the issue of compensation.

No one is completely comfortable talking about money, and both the committee and the pastor need to be aware of this fact. Some pastors completely avoid discussions of salary even when there is a definite need for a financial review. Unfortunately, both parties suffer in this case. The pastor struggles to survive financially, and a pastor who is struggling financially seldom provides the ministry that the church expects and deserves. Another unfortunate situation develops when pastors leave spiritually thriving pastorates because they desperately need a salary that will keep up with rising costs to support their family, and they believe that the only way to increase their salary is to move to another church.

Can an annual review result in an increase in the pastor's salary every year? The answer to this question depends on several factors. For example, one year a church may provide a substantial increase in a salary with the expectation that the next year there would probably be little or no increase. The perception and expectations surrounding the review are important, and the church should be aware that every year the country experiences some level of inflation. If your church does not provide an increase in salary equal to that year's inflation rate, the church has actually decreased the pastor's salary. At the very least the church should consider using the well-known yearly "cost of living adjustment" developed for social security. This annual index can be accessed at <http://www.ssa.gov/>

OACT/COLA/colaseries.html>. The committee that has the responsibility of communicating their salary recommendation to the church body must be willing to defend their actions and present the rationale for their decision.

Although the pastor did not answer the call to the gospel ministry because it was a lucrative career financially, he does need to provide for his family and his future. Once a church makes a decision, regardless of what that decision is, it has communicated a message to the pastor. The church's attitude towards the pastor's salary speaks volume about its attitude towards the pastor. In the event no cost of living increase or raise is forthcoming, the church is saying, "Pastor, you didn't work as hard last year as you should have, or you didn't accomplish as much as we thought you should have." Perhaps other items in the budget are considered more important than a raise for the pastor, so the church balances the budget on the back of one person (the pastor) rather than making cuts in line items that would result in the total church sharing the sacrifice. It is disheartening for a pastor to see the church pass him over for a raise, yet spend \$12,000 for new carpet in the sanctuary.

Another consideration is that churches should be aware that entry-level salaries increase at a much faster rate than salaries in existing positions. Churches may lose a valued pastor because they felt they were unable to make regular salary adjustments, and then find themselves paying more for a new pastor with less experience than the one who just left. Often it makes more sense to keep the current pastor because of his knowledge of the local church, church families, and the history behind church programs that are ongoing. When a ten-year pastor leaves the congregation, he takes with him a wealth of institutional knowledge that cannot be replaced, regardless of how much experience or education the new pastor has. That is why it is not unusual for the former pastor to be invited back to officiate at wedding and funerals years after he has left the church. Annual compensation reviews not only exist for the pastor, but also help churches avoid losing a pastor because they simply failed to realize their compensation package needed adjustment.

Performance Review

While most of this chapter has discussed the process the church uses to establish and maintain fair and adequate compensation for its pastor, it has also pointed out that the church needs to present a clear view of what it expects from a pastor. The relationship between church and pastor is not a one-way street, and the pastor has obligations that he must fulfill to meet the expectations of the congregation. These expectations must be clearly defined by the church, and the pastor should go about his work in such a way to fulfill these obligations. It is unfortunate that sometimes the church knows what it wants the pastor to do but has not been clear about these expectations to him; the situation may also develop in which the church becomes divided on what it expects, leading to confusion for the pastor. If at any time there is dissatisfaction about how the pastor is fulfilling his role, there needs to be communication. This is usually best accomplished through the work of smaller committees or the church board as opposed to confrontation in a general session.

As noted, the pastor should have a clear understanding of what is expected by him, and the church should provide clear expectations. On the other hand, the pastor should also report to the church on what he is doing on a regular basis (perhaps monthly or quarterly). It is not enough for him to assume that the church knows he is doing the job because often the pastor's work is not seen by the congregation except during regular scheduled services. Pastoring a church is hard work, but much of the work is out of the limelight. A minister should communicate regularly about his activities and role in accomplishing the church's goal. If a regular system of the pastor reporting his activities to an appropriately designated group is established, then any minor differences between the church's expectations and the pastor's performance can be handled as they arise rather than building to a confrontation.

Along with the pastor presenting a short report on a regular basis, the review process should include an annual performance review. Negative situations can develop when either the pastor or the congregation feel that mutually agreed upon expectations are not being met. Too often, meetings to discuss such situations occur only when negative feelings have already developed over a period of time, leading to a tense situation for both parties. Having a planned annual review meeting allows both the pastor and the church a positive time to discuss the areas which both feel were strong in the previous year, and the areas which need attention, as well as make plans for the future. Establishing such a regular process of reporting combined with an annual review of the church's expectations and how well the pastor is fulfilling those expectations is a challenging but important part of developing a strong and successful relationship between the congregation and the pastor.

Pastors occupy a unique position in the workplace. They are called by a congregation to serve as the chief administrative officer, and they are given general superintendence of the church. They are given significant autonomy in the performance of their duties, and the question has often been asked, "Who does the pastor report to?" In the corporate world, one would often find an organizational chart that flows down from the board of directors to senior management and on to the front-line employee. Each person on the chart reports to the position directly above him or her. However, in the church world, there are usually two parties: the pastor and the congregation. If the definition of reporting refers to the power to hire and fire, then the pastor reports to the congregation. Can any person be expected to satisfactorily answer to 150 employers? Surprisingly, this situation works most of the time.

Most church members have an idea of what a pastor is supposed to do, and the Original Free Will Baptist Convention has established guidelines for the pastor. The *Articles of Faith* gives the following description of the pastor's role in the church:

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 opportunity; 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. (67)

However, because of differing opinions of what these statements mean, each person in a congregation has his or her own definition of adequate visitation, preaching, promotion, and so on. As described in chapter one, each church should first ask itself, "What are our expectations of the pastor?" It is important that the members of the congregation come to an agreement with these expectations. The church should define these expectations in easy-to-understand terms. The next question is, "Have we clearly communicated these to the pastor?" How can a pastor be expected to do a job unless that job is clearly defined?

It is beyond the scope of this publication to go into all of the details that surround this issue, but each party, the church and the pastor, has a right to know what is expected of the other. The best time to have this discussion is during the initial interview process. Once the call is made, these issues can be related in a call letter or job description acknowledged by both parties. It should describe what is expected and set out goals for programs, activities, projects, growth, and duties. It is important to remember that this is not a one-way street. The church must also make commitments regarding attendance, general support, and tithes and offerings.

Once an agreement exists between the parties, the basis for a review process has been established. A review process enables the church and pastor to sit down at regular intervals to discuss such issues as progress towards goals, pastoral activities, salary, and future plans. A general meeting of the congregation is not the best place for a discussion of this type. It is best to delegate this task to a committee or board. A church may designate the deacon board or the Pastor Search Committee to fill this role. Fewer participants allow for greater and more substantial discussion. If there are any compliments or concerns from the congregation, this process allows individuals to speak with a member of the committee so these issues can be addressed during a regularly scheduled review.

With an outline of duties and expectations, the review committee and pastor can speak openly about progress, challenges, and ideas that will help shape the vision of the church going forward. Additionally the review provides a venue for suggestions on how both the church and pastor can improve their performance. It cannot be overstated that without written objectives, it is impossible to evaluate performance. These objectives should be in the agreement and should be reasonable, attainable, and flexible.

The review should lead to a positive discussion between two parties whose principal goal is advancing the cause of Christ. The review should acknowledge success and provide for a fair and equitable resolution of any problems. Each party should come away with a clear understanding of the direction to take after the meeting.

Churches and pastors need to agree on this annual review process concerning compensation and performance during the original call to pastor the church. The performance and compensation reviews may take place separately if they are the responsibility of two separate committees, or the two reviews may be contained in one

process, depending upon which works best within the church's organizational structure. Once the review process is completed, a report should outline any changes in the goals and objectives, and specific recommendations for changes in compensation. This report should be presented to the church for discussion and approval. While this report should summarize the *results* of the review, and the justification for any changes, committee members should always realize that confidential matters may be discussed during such a meeting, and that any such discussions should remain confidential. When agreed-upon confidentiality is broken, neither the pastor nor the committee members will be as comfortable freely discussing sensitive or confidential issues in the future, and much of the value of the review process may be lost.

Dealing With the Needs of a Pastor in Financial Crisis

Even with a fair and adequate compensation package, sometimes the pastor may find himself with a financial crisis that is brought on by a catastrophic event or poor management on his part. In the event of some type of health or financial catastrophe, the pastor should meet with the compensation review committee to discuss the problem openly and frankly. Most churches are very understanding and are willing to help members of the community, and more than willing to help one of their own, especially their pastor. Sometimes the problems are self-made; pastors are just as susceptible as other individuals to poor financial decisions and mismanagements. While the church may be willing to help, the answer to the problem may not always be an increase in salary. A couple who make in excess of \$200,000 per year may live a lifestyle that leaves them one paycheck away from financial disaster, while a husband and wife and four children with a household income of \$50,000 are enjoying life together because they know how to manage their resources.

Financial decision-making is not a gift: it is something each person should learn, especially the pastor. A pastor that cannot manage his financial affairs damages his witness to the church and the community as a whole. There are many Christian organizations that provide quality assistance in this area, such as Crown Financial Ministries (www.crown.org) or Dave Ramsey (www.daveramsey.com).

Often, if the pastor is able to take advantage of such organizations and develop financial discipline, he can overcome most financial challenges that come his way. Providing the means for a pastor to take advantage of courses or workshops offered by such organizations may be more helpful to the pastor than simply "rescuing" him from the immediate financial crisis. One other resource available in cases of extreme financial hardship is a program entitled "Hardship Grants" administered by the Original Free Will Baptist Minister's Program. Many churches and pastors will never find themselves in a situation where the pastor faces a severe financial crisis, but if such a crisis does develop, clear communication to address the situation is beneficial to both parties.

A pastor and church who can work together in matters of compensation and performance review can work together at any level and can accomplish great things for the church and the community of which they are a part. Therefore establishing open

communication in this area can impact the entire ministry of the pastor and of the church. The eyes of both the church and unchurched are upon the pastor and his family as they live their life day-by-day, but the unchurched community also watches the church, and right or wrong, the church is often judged within the community by how well it treats its pastor. Developing and following a process for both compensation and performance review can help tremendously in nurturing and maintaining a positive, effective relationship between church and pastor.

Chapter Three: Parsonage and Housing

*“And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests;
but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.” Luke 9:58*

As discussed in chapter two, the history of the denomination is important to understanding trends in pastoral compensation packages; this same history also impacts the view of both church and ministers toward housing for pastors. The history of the Original Free Will Baptist denomination has its beginnings over fifty years before our country became the United States. Men like Paul Palmer traveled roads, paths, and trails to bring the Gospel message to the people of what is now eastern North Carolina. As churches were established, pastors were called from within the community, and it was not unusual for a pastor to serve several congregations. Most of these men had little or no training and were typically established in farming or some other form of trade. They often lived within a day's travel of the various churches they served, in homes that they had established prior to serving as pastors.

Following a week's work at their home, they would travel to the meeting houses, more often than not staying in the home of a family that was a member of the local church. This tradition continued well into the twentieth century. But along the way, men who were answering the call to the ministry began to receive training and preparation for the ministry. As their numbers increased, the number of different churches served simultaneously by one minister decreased, and the full-time minister emerged, a pastor serving just one congregation.

The Original Free Will Baptist denomination has its roots deep in rural eastern North Carolina. Until the early 1900s, rural tradition suggested that when one established a home, it was generally a home for life. It might be remodeled, added on to, or refurbished along the way, but relocation was seldom an option. This practice was because then, unlike today, a home in rural North Carolina was the center of a compound. It was located on a strategic site on the farm with access to roads and sometimes water transportation. When the home was established, packhouses were built along with barns, smokehouses, and storage buildings, and pastures were established. Relocating was seldom considered for the eastern North Carolina farmer. Ministers, on the other hand, would serve a church for a number of years and then would accept a call to another congregation in a different township. Quality rental housing was not readily available, so churches began to build parsonages for the pastor and his family. This practice reached its zenith during the 1950s and 1960s among Original Free Will Baptists, and churches took pride in the homes they provided. Housing patterns for eastern North Carolina have changed in the last half century; fewer people live in the same home for a lifetime, with moving being more likely due to work situations, and housing options being much more varied for people from all careers. Today, many churches no longer provide parsonages for their pastor. Instead they are using other means whereby they can assist the pastor in obtaining housing.

Advantages of a Church Parsonage

Understanding the current trends in ministerial housing requires an examination of both the advantages and disadvantages of the parsonage system. There are many advantages to a parsonage. The first and most obvious advantage is that when a new pastor accepts a call to a church, he has immediate housing available to him and can begin work in the church

without concern for locating suitable accommodations. Of course, this makes the moving much easier and quicker because he is not faced with the difficulties of finding suitable housing to either rent or purchase. Since the church is responsible for upkeep, the minister does not have to worry about a new heating system or roof. Another advantage is that the pastor is not anchored to a personally-owned home, which may make him reluctant to answer a call to preach beyond reasonable travel distances from his home. With a parsonage, when a minister moves from one pastorate to another, he does not face the challenge of selling real estate in what could possibly be a slow market. Finally, a minister does not have to pay federal income tax on the fair market annual rental value of the parsonage, even though the parsonage is provided as part of the minister's compensation.

Disadvantages of a Church Parsonage

With all of these advantages, why isn't every pastor living in a parsonage? For every advantage there is also a corresponding disadvantage. First and foremost, the biggest disadvantage to living in a parsonage is that the pastor cannot participate in the acquisition of the largest single asset that most people own. Historically, real estate increases in value and this creates financial equity, which represents one of the largest sources of wealth for the American family. A pastor who does not own real estate is unable to reap the rewards of over sixty percent of the population of the United States, who in fact do own real estate. Real estate as an investment cannot be overlooked. The pastor who does not own his own home is at a distinct disadvantage when it comes to preparing for retirement, paying for college tuition, and experiencing the security of owning a piece of the American Dream.

Along with the financial investment issue, there are other disadvantages to parsonage living such as the lack of privacy which may occur when the parsonage is located on property adjacent to the church itself. Everyone coming and going to the church gets a view of the pastor's backyard, and it is impossible not to feel like he and his family are living in a fishbowl. Also a home which may be perfect for the older pastor and his wife may not meet the needs of a young, growing family. While one bathroom is fine for a couple, it is seldom adequate for a family of five. The substantial expense needed for upgrades (such as an additional bathroom) is not one the church is always ready to assume. Changes cannot be made without the church's or the board's approval, so oftentimes the family is left living in a house that never truly feels like their home.

Another consideration is that if the pastor is asked to resign, he not only leaves his job, but he also finds himself with nowhere to live. Very few of us would move into a home with the idea that at anytime we could be told to vacate in ninety days. Another sad disadvantage of parsonage living is when the pastor dies during his pastorate. While the church may feel sympathy for his widow (and possibly children), it is important for the church's mission to move on, and at some point, the widow who has just recently lost her husband and the family income is now faced with the prospect of where to go. Lack of home ownership is a disadvantage cannot be overlooked, because after a lifetime of service and living in the parsonage, the day finally arrives when the pastor realizes that he has nowhere to go. There have been cases of ministers serving well past what their age and health allowed because

they were unable to provide for a home due in large part to the lack of an adequate salary during their ministry years.

A further issue is that sometimes the parsonage is located in a neighborhood that has transitioned over the last twenty or thirty years. Churches find themselves asking a man to move his family into a neighborhood where they themselves would not be willing to live. Churches should take a serious look at the neighborhood where they ask their pastor to live. Is it safe and well-maintained? The house built well about average standards in 1950 may be nearly impossible to heat and cool by 2000 standards, unless the church is willing to make major renovations. Unless the church also pays utility bills, the minister may face extremely high utility bills with no way to improve his situation, a situation which can well lead to conflict between the minister and the church.

Although no federal income tax is due on the parsonage, the IRS does require that the pastor pay self-employment tax on the fair rental value of the parsonage, often referred to as a "phantom tax." Fair rental value, or FRV, is the amount that a parsonage would rent for if it were placed on the market in the community where it is located. For example, in 2008, if the parsonage would rent for \$600 per month, the pastor would be required to pay an annual tax of \$1,102 on the fair rental value of the parsonage in addition to the tax and social security paid on his salary.

Alternative to a Church Parsonage: Housing Allowance

After considering the advantages and disadvantages, many churches and pastors in recent years have moved away from favoring the parsonage as a part of ministerial compensation. If a parsonage is not the answer, what can the church do to assist the minister with housing? Another option for the church and pastor is called Housing Allowance. Housing Allowance is a stipend designated in advance by the church to provide the pastor with funds that can be used to rent or buy real estate. One of the real advantages of the Housing Allowance is that, when properly designated and fully documented as completely used for its designated purposes, it is not subject to income tax. (However, it is subject to the self-employment tax or Social Security tax, which at date of this publication is 15.3%.) The Housing Allowance is a tremendous benefit for the pastor and can be used to pay for the pastor's utilities, mortgage, homeowner's insurance, and home improvements. One often asked question is, can a church have a parsonage and still designate a Housing Allowance for the pastor? The answer is yes, if the minister is required to pay his own utilities which include the phone, gas, electricity, and renter's insurance. It is not in the scope of this book to provide tax or legal advice, and it is recommended that churches and pastors both seek the council of qualified tax advisors when considering Housing Allowance. Churches and pastors may contact the OFWB Minister's Program for referrals to sources of further information on this far-reaching subject.

With the current trend moving away from parsonage living, what does a church do if the pastor prefers not to live in the parsonage provided by the church? Church representatives should first talk with the pastor and determine why he is hesitant to relocate

to the parsonage. If it is because the condition of the house has been allowed to deteriorate, maybe it is time for the church to refurbish the parsonage. If the property does not meet his housing needs or is located in an area that is undesirable, maybe it is time for the church to consider a Housing Allowance.

But then the question comes, "What do we do with the parsonage?" If it is located adjacent to the church, selling is certainly not an option. Once the property is sold, the church loses control over who lives there and what goes on before, during, and after church. Perhaps the parsonage can be used for classrooms or other activities or auxiliaries of the congregation. It could be provided rent-free to a needy family, thus expanding the ministry of the church, or used for office space that is often in short supply in churches. Because it was built as a residential property, it does not always lend itself to other purposes, but the church can be creative. Eventually, the church will no longer think of the building as a parsonage, but instead think of it as the youth center, Sunday School rooms, or office and meeting space.

If the property is not located adjacent to the church property, it can be sold with the sales price being used to fund some project in the church. Or it can be rented, with the thought that the next pastor may choose to live in the parsonage. The advantage here is that the income can be used for some program in the church or to help to fund the pastor's Housing Allowance. A disadvantage is that sometimes rental tenants do not always take care of a property, and there would be repairs and updates needed to keep it rented. A church that chooses to rent the property may wish to hire a professional rental agency, which will usually charge a percentage of the monthly rent to manage the property on behalf of the church. If the tenant fails to pay the rent in a timely fashion and must be evicted, it is always best that an agency perform those services rather than the church.

Parsonage or Housing Allowance--which is best varies depending on each individual situation. Keep in mind that with all the obstacles facing the church and its mission, the parsonage should not be a stumbling block. The church and the pastor need to work together in discovering a solution that benefits both.

Chapter Four: The Role of the Pastor and Member

*"Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit."
I Corinthians 12:4*

The first three chapters of this work have discussed the issues involved in the calling of a pastor to a church and establishing a compensation agreement between the pastor and the church. Such issues are only the beginning of a successful relationship between a church and its pastor. This chapter will address the responsibilities of both the members of a church and the pastor in developing a relationship that will lead to a spiritually thriving church.

Before it is possible to discuss the role of the pastor or member, it is important to understand the Original Free Will Baptist Church and its duties, responsibilities, and solemn obligations, which are outlined in the *Free Will Baptist Church Covenant*. The *Covenant* states that

...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 cooperate in the promotion of denominational institutions and ministries, the support of the work of the local church, and the evangelization of the world.

The above passage makes the overall mission of all OFWB churches clear. Unless the church and the pastor are agreed on the church's mission, little will ever be accomplished and failure can be the only outcome. The cooperative relationship of the pastor and the church is critical to the overall success of the church's mission. For a church to move forward, there must be harmony between the pulpit and the pew so that a sense of balance can develop and both the pastor and each parishioner can reach their full potential in ministry. This chapter will first consider the role of the pastor, and then the role of the parishioner, in this endeavor.

The Role of the Pastor

An Original Free Will Baptist minister is one who has been divinely called of God to the gospel ministry, been licensed by the OFWB church of which he is a member, and met the requirements and successfully passed the examination for ordination required by the Conference. No one should take upon himself the gospel ministry unless he has had a personal experience with Jesus Christ and has been born again. A person enters the gospel ministry with individual, God-given talents and abilities, but he must also be willing to further prepare through study, prayer, and dedication in order to equip himself to meet the needs of the people he will serve. A call to preach is a call to prepare. This call requires a lifetime journey of developing oneself to fulfill the calling that God has placed on one's life. The pastor must dedicate himself toward growing daily in his professional, prayer, and spiritual life. Spiritual growth in the local church is directly tied to a pastor's dedication to ongoing personal growth in his relationship with God.

Along with constant attention to professional and spiritual growth, the pastor has many other roles, duties, and responsibilities. According to the *Articles of Faith*, "the pastor shall have general superintendence of the church as the chief administrative officer" (67).

This does not mean the pastor is the ruler of the church; rather, the pastor follows the biblical example of the shepherd who loves, tends, and cares for the flock. There are instances of struggling pastors who, by all external appearances, should have been very successful. They were well-trained, educated, and polished speakers. On the other hand, there are pastors who, in spite of their lack of pulpit skills and formal training, have had very successful ministries. What was the difference? The church, like no other institution, exemplifies the adage “No one cares how much you know until they know how much you care.” As a pastor carries out the duty of overseeing the church as its chief administrative officer, he must remember the importance of caring about his parishioners. A pastor who can demonstrate love and compassion in a real and tangible way will exceed those who try to go on talent and skills alone.

Along with describing the pastor as the chief administrative officer, the *Articles of Faith* continue,

“It is the pastor’s duty to faithfully preach the Word” (67).

The pastor is a preacher, teacher, communicator, and trainer. Preaching is a vital part of the ministry of a pastor. Once pastors have demonstrated their love and compassion, they have the opportunity to make a difference in the lives of the congregation through preaching, more so than through any other avenue of their ministry. People need to hear the Word of the Lord. People need to be instructed in God’s Word and shown how God’s Word can make a difference in their everyday lives. The pastor should be diligent in his study and in his preparation to preach. In most cases, the majority of what the congregation and the community see in a pastor takes place on Sunday morning, and he should come to the pulpit prepared to bring messages that are biblically accurate, Holy Spirit-inspired, and directed toward the ultimate growth of the Kingdom of God. A minister may offer very little spiritual substance and still become very popular with the congregation as an entertaining speaker; such a situation may increase attendance, but seldom builds up the Kingdom of God.

Along with being the “preacher,” the pastor is a leader, which means, by the very definition of the word, that he should be forefront in promoting the programs of the church and the denomination, but most importantly, the cause of Christ. To successfully lead a congregation, one must first earn the confidence of that congregation. When a pastor is initially called to a church, he should understand that in most cases, the church has been in existence for many years and for the most part, it has been successful in carrying out the Lord’s work. Regardless of how long he stays, the pastor must realize that his position is temporary, and he must help the church and the members develop so that when he is gone, the church can continue its mission. It is important for the pastor to respect the congregation and its past when he first arrives. The pastor should consider what the current reality of the church is in terms of where it is as an organized body of believers and what it is trying to accomplish. Every new pastor has ideas and programs that he would like to implement, but the pastor should be patient in understanding the church’s historical structure and procedures before going forward with new ideas. With this approach, one can avoid the

stopping and starting effect that sometimes occurs with each change of pastors. The pastor should patiently find out what works and what does not work, and build on past success while new programs are added.

Having taken into account the church's history, it is the pastor's obligation to seek the Will of God for the church and to lead the congregation in the right direction. Proverbs 29:18 proclaims:

"where there is no vision the people perish;"

Thus the pastor needs to be a visionary. More often than not, the pastor and congregation agree on the mission of the church, but they may have different ideas on what a church fulfilling its mission actually looks like. A vision is created in the mind's eye, and it describes where individuals want to go and what they want to be. A leader is one who can convince a congregation why it needs to make the journey. An effective pastor must sometimes be willing to go against the grain of public opinion in order to lead the congregation to where it needs to go. People left to their own devices will go where they want to go, but a good leader will take them where they need to go.

The pastor is also a comforter. Visiting in hospitals, nursing facilities, and individual homes is a very important part of forming a relationship with a congregation. The greatest show of love is to be with the people that need someone, and visiting the congregation shows them how much the pastor cares.

The pastor is a healer. Conflicts and disputes will visit every congregation at one time or another, and a small ember left untended can burst into a full-fledged conflagration with enough force to disrupt the mission of the church. Since such small problems left unaddressed tend to grow into big problems, the pastor should make every attempt to be aware when these problems develop. The pastor should not "take sides" in congregational disputes unless there is a biblical principle or doctrinal issue at stake. The subject of conflicts is discussed more fully in chapter six, but the pastor should see it as his duty to reconcile members in dispute.

The pastor is a delegator and nurturer. When a need or a task comes up in the local church, it is not unusual for a member to say, "Isn't that what we pay the preacher for?" And more often than not, the pastor is willing to take on one more job in the church. Many Sunday morning services look like the "Reverend Pastor Show." The pastor calls the flock to worship, brings the announcements, leads the congregation in the hymns, prays the offertory prayer, directs the choir, delivers a youth sermon, leads the morning prayer, and of course, delivers the sermon. In some cases, the pastor leads the youth work, teaches Sunday School, drives the church van, cuts grass, paints, and repairs the building. The sad thing is this situation is oftentimes by choice, not necessity. Some pastors would rather do it themselves because it saves the trouble of getting a volunteer, communicating expectations, and fretting over whether the job will be done in a timely fashion. One of the goals for a pastor should be to develop leadership within the congregation. To do this, he must be willing to delegate

some of his responsibilities so that a member can take part in the ministry of the church. The congregation should be willing to claim ownership for the many jobs and duties that are involved in a church fulfilling its mission. By delegating and nurturing, the pastor helps develop individuals into the leaders of tomorrow. And by assuming the responsibilities, the congregation also accepts accountability, rather than placing total accountability for the church's mission on the pastor. In Matthew 23:11, Jesus says,

"But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant."

Our world is full of people in crisis who need help from others. Meeting the needs of people in the church and community is a vital part of the ministry of the church. The pastor needs to make certain that the church is doing all it can to meet needs and touch lives. It is the responsibility of the pastor to try to keep peace, unity, and harmony within the body. A church whose members love one another and fellowship together has the potential of accomplishing the work of the Kingdom more so than one that does not. The roles of the pastor and the members are intertwined; each uplifts and encourages the other, all to the glory of God.

The Role of the Church Member

While several pages in the *Articles of Faith* are dedicated to the ministry, its call, qualifications, and duties; that should in no way diminish the responsibilities and the role of the church member. The first duty for the members of the church is to be the Children of God. Within the *Articles of Faith* is a section entitled "Objects and Duties of the Local Congregation," including the following:

The object of the local congregation is to be the people of God. . . .It is the duty of each congregation to establish and sustain public worship of God on a regular basis. . . .It is the duty of each congregation to establish and sustain a program of Christian education. . . . 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. (73-4)

The *Articles of Faith* continues to list other duties which will be addressed in this discussion. The pastor cannot fulfill his responsibility alone, and the congregation can never reach its full potential without the leadership of the pastor. Only when they work together can they ever hope to be what God intended them to be. In seeking to work together and fulfill the mission for which the church was created, what role does the church member play?

Church membership is a commitment that should be taken seriously. Prior to seeking church membership, individuals must make a commitment to Jesus Christ by admitting that they are sinners, confessing their sin, repenting, and believing that Christ is Lord and Savior. Once individuals make a commitment to Christ, they should make a commitment to the

church by joining the congregation in Believer's Baptism and identifying themselves with God's people in a particular place. In OFWB churches this process includes requesting membership, being voted on by the congregation, and completing any other requirements of that church requires (such as accepting the *Church Covenant* as described in chapter six).

Being a part of a congregation assists individuals in spiritual growth as they meet together in common worship and service. There is an increased effectiveness as individuals gather together in a common effort, dedicating their abilities, gifts, and resources to the service of the Lord. Membership assists individuals in developing a godly walk due to the expectations placed upon them by the corporate body. Within the church, the Christian becomes a participant instead of a spectator and thereby shares in the responsibility for the success or failure of the mission of the church.

One role of the church member is to attend. This is an obvious yet often overlooked responsibility in the local church. Nothing discourages a pastor more than spending hours of preparation for worship only to find that half the congregation had other things to do and missed church that Sunday. It is easy to say, "Nobody will miss me because I'm just one person," but each individual's presence is important. In Matthew 18, Jesus shares the parable of the shepherd who left the ninety-nine to seek the one.

Members should be spiritual and material supporters. They should pray for the pastor and the mission of the church. They should give regularly and systematically to the support of the mission of the church. Each member should accept the responsibility to fairly compensate the pastor so that he may provide for his family. God has promised His pastors to meet their needs, and the local church is the means He has chosen for this purpose. A pastor laboring under the burden of financial hardship can never fully meet the expectations of the congregation. Over time, resentment may develop because the pastor simply feels that the congregation doesn't care about him. If all members would sacrifice in their giving at the same level they expect the pastor to sacrifice in his serving, there would never be a question regarding compensation. (Detailed information regarding minister's compensation is found in chapter two.)

The member should be an encourager and not a complainer. The ministry of encouragement is far-reaching. Not everyone is able to sing, play an instrument, or even teach a class, but everyone can be an instrument of encouragement. A kind word or deed goes a long way in showing a pastor that an individual cares. Exodus 17 recounts the story of Aaron and Hur as they supported Moses during the Israelites' battle with the Amalekites. As long as Moses held up his arms, the Israelites were winning, but when he put his arms down, the Amalekites started winning. So when Moses' arms grew tired, Aaron and Hur brought a stone for him to sit on while they stood beside him and held up his arms, holding them steady until the sun went down. When the pastor is tired and the battle is still to be fought, he depends on members to come to his aid with their support and encouragement.

The member should be a worker. In some OFWB churches, the pastor is the only paid staff member, and the temptation is to give every job that comes up to him. After all, “that’s what we pay the pastor for.” But in reality, he needs the help and support of the entire congregation if the work of the Kingdom is going to be accomplished. A willingness to work allows the member to claim ownership in the success of the church’s mission. Members will never grow spiritually unless they are willing to assume the responsibilities of fulfilling the church mission. Members have duties and responsibilities to follow the lead of their pastor, to support him by using what is in their hearts and their hands to produce fruit. They must be willing to accept that by working together the church can accomplish more than the pastor or the membership ever could alone.

The member must understand vision. As previously stated, vision is a picture of where the church wants to be. Unfortunately for the church, many members are satisfied where they are. Because vision requires a journey, it means that individuals have to leave a place that they have made comfortable, and many are reluctant to do so. The pastor cannot make anyone do anything, drive anyone anywhere, or dictate anything to anyone. As the pastor and leaders of the church set goals, it becomes the responsibility of the congregation to work together to accomplish these goals. What should call the congregation out of its comfort zone is the knowledge that when pastors and churches work together, souls will be saved, lives will be changed, and the church will grow.

The member should be a student. Regardless of one’s age, level of education, or experience, there is still much left to be learned. The hallmark of a people willing to grow is that these same people are willing to learn. As the pastor is responsible to faithfully preach the Gospel, the people must be willing to receive the Word. Through both corporate and individual Bible study, individual members become equipped for ministry and service. As the congregation’s knowledge increases, so does their ability to advance the church’s mission. The congregation is called to be a witness, but they can only witness to that which they have seen, experienced, or learned. All Christians should be lifetime learners.

The member should respect the pastor and the pulpit. As was previously stated, the ministry is a calling. It is not a vocation which one assumes upon oneself; it is divine in nature, and the candidate must be willing to be an instrument to help fill the needs of God’s people and those outside of Christ. It is not unusual at one time or another for the pastor to offend or in some way fall out of the good graces of one or more members. If this happens, the member should go to the pastor and not to other members or the community at large, if for no other reason than out of respect for the call. No pastor is going to satisfy everyone. But one must remember it is not the individual’s satisfaction that is of paramount importance. Instead one should ask, “Is the mission of the church being fulfilled?” This is far more important than one’s individual satisfaction. Pastors come and go. Members should seek the spiritual maturity that will allow them to work with the shortcomings of the pastor or others just as we ask others to forgive us when we falter. Every member and each pastor have some imperfections. Rather than going to another church searching for the “perfect” pastor, members should seek to overcome dissatisfaction and disappointment, and remember that

the church is made up of sinners, including themselves. When a conflict arises in the church, it should be kept there. Talking about it to the community at large can only diminish the church's ministry and an individual's own personal standing in the community. Those outside the church rejoice when the church is in conflict, and church members shouldn't give them a cause for celebration.

The member should be reasonable in expectations of the pastor. The pastor is responsible for knowing and following the job description that the members have given him. The job description lets the pastor know exactly what he is to do in ministry for the church. But the church should also not put their expectations so high they cannot be reached. Nor should the pastor expect more than is possible from the church family. The most important thing to be concerned about is what the Lord expects of everyone in the church. When the pastor is called to serve the church, the church is making him responsible for what is preached and taught, and he is ultimately responsible for the pulpit. A member should never invite someone to speak without first receiving the pastor's approval. When the church called him, it gave the pastor responsibility for what is taught in the church, and it is a responsibility that he should take very seriously. Speakers who are not grounded in the doctrine of Original Free Will Baptists, no matter how popular they are, can create confusion which can be devastating for the local congregation.

Each person, whether a pastor or a member, has a role to play and responsibilities to fulfill. Going forward, one must concentrate on fulfilling God's expectation in one's life. Romans 12:4-5 reminds Christians

"for as we have many members in one body and all members have not the same office, so we being many, are one body in Christ and everyone members one of another."

Chapter Five: The Quarterly Conference (Business Meeting)

“And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?” Luke 2:49

In the OFWB church, the “quarterly business meeting” is the only assembly the church is required to have four times a year. According to *The Articles of Faith*,

“the local congregation 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” (72).

Two helpful resources for planning and conducting effective quarterly conferences are *Church Administration Handbook* edited by Dr. Bruce Powers and *The Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government for Original Free Will Baptists (Of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. The latter is referred to throughout this chapter and uses the shortened title *Articles of Faith* to refer to the entire document.

OFWB Churches are divided into two distinct entities, incorporated and unincorporated. An attorney is the best source for an explanation of the advantages and disadvantages of these legal designations. Some churches, for a myriad of different reasons, choose to incorporate themselves, forming a legal structure under the laws of the state in which they are located. In North Carolina, assuming the mantle of incorporation requires that the church file articles of incorporation with the Secretary of State which state the purpose for which the corporation is being formed. Another step is adopting a constitution or bylaws which will govern the corporation or church. The constitution or bylaws define the church’s governance, and commentary on these aspects of incorporation is beyond the scope of this publication.

For the purposes of our discussion, most OFWB churches are unincorporated. When an OFWB church is originally established, it adopts the *Articles of Faith and Principles of Church Government of the Original Free Will Baptists (Of the English General Baptist Heritage)*. As long as the church is a member of a Conference associated with the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists, it agrees to follow these principles of governance. The *Articles of Faith* gives guidance for the actual conduct of meetings in section five of the “Rules of Church Government”: “All business sessions shall be governed by *Robert’s Rules of Order*, and such rules as set forth in this section” (102). While not stated in the *Articles of Faith*, it is assumed that the Convention intended that the current edition of *Robert’s Rules of Order* be used. The tenth edition, published in 2008, has a total of 704 pages. Does this mean that church members have to be familiar with all the contents of this book? No. Section five of the “Rules of Church Government” (from the *Articles of Faith*) addresses most situations that would arise in a routine quarterly conference, but does not include all rules governing unusual circumstances or issues. Churches should note that *Robert’s Rules of Order* is consulted only when the situation is not covered in the “Rules of Church Government” found in the *Articles of Faith*. When an issue is covered in the *Articles of Faith*, then *Robert’s Rules of Order* cannot be used to supersede or override that statement of policy or governance. It is only when the *Articles of Faith* does not address a specific issue that the moderator refers to *Robert’s Rules of Order*.

The *Articles of Faith* states that church members are to meet together for the purpose of holding a godly conference. The key words are *godly conference*. In order to conduct a godly conference, everything that takes place and every person in attendance should have the goal of glorifying God. Some meetings are conducted in such a manner that the thought of glorifying God appears to be the last thing on anyone's mind. When that happens, the whole purpose of a godly conference has become secondary, if not abandoned all together.

The importance of the required quarterly conference stems from the fact that Original Free Will Baptists observe a congregational form of church government. Simply stated, the church is ecclesiastically sovereign or autonomous, meaning it governs its own internal affairs. Unlike Episcopal or Presbyterian polity where bishops and conferences invoke authority, OFWB churches are free to call their own pastor, provide discretionary support to the Convention Ministries, and exercise responsibility over the church's property and finances. Under this form of government, each church member is allowed to vote on matters brought before the body in a business meeting.

The church elects officers to serve in various roles. Meetings are conducted by the moderator or chairman, a role granted the pastor. If the church is without a pastor, a temporary chairman may be elected to conduct the business meeting. In such a case the temporary chairman has authority to transact the business of the church with the exception of the excommunication of a member or the sale or transfer of church property. In such cases the church should contact the Executive Committee of the Conference of which it is a member, allowing the Conference to appoint an ordained minister for the purpose of chairing the meeting. If the church without a pastor is experiencing a conflict, it is advisable to ask the Executive Committee to appoint a moderator. The moderator appointed by the Conference will have both the advantage of previous experience in dealing with conflict within church business meetings, and the more impartial view of an individual not previously involved in the issues that have led to the disagreement.

Along with the pastor, the church elects other officers including the treasurer and the clerk, whose duties are described in the *Articles of Faith*. Additional roles are assigned to the board of deacons, board of finance, and trustees.

While churches call pastors, elect officers, and establish boards and committees, the membership or body does not abdicate its role as the final decision maker based on a vote of the membership. Understanding this principle is the starting point for conducting a godly conference. In the congregational form of church government, the final decision on any matter of business that comes to the floor of the church is decided by a vote of the membership. This does not, in any way, take away from the reports of boards and committees. It simply means that reports from these boards and committees (which have been created by the membership) have to be approved by the vote of those who are in attendance at the quarterly conference.

Some Original Free Will Baptist churches do not always abide by the idea of congregational government, instead providing rules, written or assumed, that do not allow anything to come before the church in a regular quarterly conference that has not been previously approved by the Board of Deacons and/or the pastor. Such rules may take away the member's right to offer motions or have input at the business meeting, and thus appear contrary to the *Articles of Faith* which states

“Then and there [the quarterly church conference] the business of the church shall be transacted” (71).

These rules diminish the role of the congregation and will sooner or later cause conflict in the local congregation. Original Free Will Baptists should never lose sight of the fact that boards and pastors serve at the will of the local church congregation.

The pastor is the moderator of the quarterly conference, and as such his responsibility is to insure that the meeting is conducted in a timely and godly manner. It is essential that a written agenda be prepared for the moderator and membership and that this agenda be adopted at the beginning of the meeting. Once adopted, the agenda limits the meeting to those items specifically included. As a result, everyone has the opportunity to be prepared and informed on the matters to be considered. A set agenda also helps to avoid “surprise” business being introduced in the middle of a conference, distracting the membership from the business at hand.

For this purpose it is helpful if the moderator announces an “agenda call” a couple of weeks prior to the conference, which allows the membership to add items of action or discussion to the agenda. It is also helpful for the moderator and membership to have a copy of each board or committee's report to review prior to the meeting.

The Role of the Moderator

During the conduct of the business meeting, the role of the moderator is to oversee the meeting and to assure that the meeting is conducted in an orderly, dignified, and godly manner.

- While there are clear rules that guide the meeting, the pastor should generally allow some latitude with the rules since most members are not authorities on *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- Should the meeting begin to take a disagreeable direction, there should be no hesitation in more strictly implementing the rules of debate and action from *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- The rules exist to allow an issue to be discussed thoroughly and respectfully, protecting the rights of both the minority and the majority.

- Reminding members to address the chair and to speak to the issue, not to individual members, will go a long way in preserving order and avoiding conflict.
- Regardless of how a pastor feels about an issue, he should not cloud the debate with his personal feelings or bias. Taking sides in a debate will serve only to alienate one side or the other, and the pastor's call is to minister to the whole body. Once the pastor takes sides on an issue, the vote could possibly become a referendum on his leadership, rather than a vote on the actual issue.
- The pastor should vote only in case of a tie, and there is real value in reopening the debate in an effort to avoid such a tie-breaker vote. Additional discussion may lead members to change their vote, rendering the pastor's vote unnecessary.

Committee Reports and Recommendations

Standing committees and boards should report at each quarterly conference. *Robert's Rules of Order* defines a committee as a body of one or more persons, elected or appointed by the membership to consider or take action on certain matters or subjects (471). Committees by definition are referred to as either standing or special. Standing committees are permanent in nature and have a continuing existence. Members elected or appointed to a standing committee usually serve a specified term, and provisions are made for how the members are selected and the term of their service. An example of a standing committee would be a church's finance board or deacon board.

Special committees are sometimes referred to as "ad hoc" or temporary committees and task forces. These committees are temporary in nature, serve a specified purpose, and then go out of existence when they have fulfilled their purpose. An example of a special committee would be a pastor search committee or building committee. In some instances when a contentious issue arises from the floor during a conference, and it appears that discussion and debate will exceed the time allotted for the meeting, the moderator may choose to appoint a special committee. Their purpose would be to review the issue and speak with the parties involved, and then return to the next general conference with specific recommendations.

Committees wield only such authority granted them by the membership or the *Articles of Faith*. For example, unless specifically granted authority, the finance committee or treasurer cannot disburse church funds without the express authorization by the membership. Sometimes a deacon board will assume the role of general board, making final decisions that, in fact, are reserved for the membership. The role of the deacon is described in the *Articles of Faith* (page 67), and the six duties contained therein are well defined, describing a board created to serve, not govern.

When committees and boards report to the membership, it is best to do so in a written format which has been distributed prior to the conference. Reports should be designed to inform and recommend action.

- Prior distribution of reports allows for an informed membership and smoother meetings.
- Unlike an individual motion, a report by a committee or board of the church does not require a motion to accept.
- If the committee report requires action, then the action should be expressed in the report.
- The report should not point out a problem or issue and then throw it out to the membership for debate. A well conceived response to any issue should be contained in the report. The membership then has the obligation to discuss and vote on the recommendation.
- Reports such as the treasurer's should be of sufficient detail as to give the membership a clear and accurate assessment of the financial condition of the church.

Member Responsibility and Action

While the moderator leads the conference and the committees report and recommend, the members have the ultimate responsibility in the quarterly conference. They are there to discuss, debate, and vote on the important business of the church. Members should always remember that the church's business is God's business, and how Christians conduct themselves in this meeting reveals much about their relationship to God. How each member speaks, responds, and acts in a quarterly conference will go a long way in determining the quality and productiveness of the conference. The quarterly conference is not and should not be a battlefield. It should be a time when the people of God assemble in the house of God to promote the Kingdom of God in their community. Paul puts it this way in I Corinthians 14:40:

"Let everything be done decently and in order."

One of the things that most often leads to confusion and dissention in the quarterly conference is a lack of knowledge by the moderator and/or congregation concerning parliamentary procedure. A member of the congregation may raise a question or make a statement only to be ruled out of order. Members should never take such a call personally; the chair is simply maintaining the rules, not saying the idea or statement itself is incorrect – the rules of order are there to protect each member's right to speak and to preserve the rights

of others as well. Members should take the time to review the *Articles of Faith* and familiarize themselves with the rules of order.

Even though every member is allowed to attend, speak, and vote; it is worthwhile for each member attending a quarterly conference to consider the following questions:

- Have I supported the church with my offerings and attendance during the preceding quarter?
- If I am going to support or oppose specific action, have I informed myself as to both sides of the issue?
- Am I willing to speak to issues and ideas rather than personalities?
- Am I at the quarterly conference to advance my own agenda or the Kingdom of God?

Although all members have the right to vote, this fact doesn't always mean they have earned the right (as revealed through the answers to the questions above). The goal of conscientious members should be to earn and deserve the right they have been given to participate in the quarterly conference. Unfortunately, stories abound of people who have rounded up inactive members to attend the conference to support their side of an issue in an effort to "stuff the ballot box." The issue may be financial, or it may be a vote on the pastor or other leadership within the church. Why would anyone want members who don't attend or support the church to play a role in determining the church's future? Such a "win at all costs" attitude has no place in the church.

Should issues scheduled for the conference be discussed prior to the meeting? The fact is that they are going to be discussed, but each member should be encouraged to keep an open mind and listen to all sides before making a decision.

All members who attend the quarterly conference would do well to consider avoiding the "surprise" subject. For example, a member has been thinking about something since the last quarterly conference. The issue has become a "burr under his saddle," but he doesn't discuss it with anyone else. During the new business section of the conference, he makes a statement or observation about what he perceives as a need, or an observation about the church's leadership or direction. He may not have intended it to be controversial, but that is the result. The individual actually feels better now that he has gotten the issue off his chest, but its unexpected introduction into the conference results in controversy; as a result, tempers flare and confusion reigns. The individual didn't intend for this to happen, but the result is the same, regardless. When a person is granted the floor in a conference, it should be for the purpose of making a motion or discussing a motion before the body. Unrelated offhand comments or observations without a solution or proposed solution in the form of a motion have no place in the quarterly conference.

Before unintentionally instigating the negative scenario described above, the member might instead discuss the issue with the pastor, leaders, or other members. Hopefully, the church has an appropriate board or committee where the concern can be shared and possibly resolved. Even if the matter is eventually brought to the conference floor, this prior discussion will provide a legitimate means for the subject to be placed on the church agenda. Other members will be prepared for the discussion, thus avoiding the possible negative effects of the subject being a surprise to everyone. The church profits greatly by dealing with substantive issues, and they will consider legitimate concerns. All members should remember that they are not there to attack or ridicule any individual but rather to help solve the issues that confront the church.

Because the church is so important to individuals, members sometimes get emotional and upset when certain issues are discussed or when things don't go their way. However, unbridled anger has no place in the quarterly conference nor should anyone use this setting to attack people. The quarterly conference is a forum to discuss ideas, act on motions, and deal with important issues in the church. Reducing it to a discussion about people and what they have or have not done or said is not advancing the calling of the church.

The quarterly conference is an opportunity for the congregation to hear from the elected leadership of the church on how the ministry and mission of the church is or is not being fulfilled. The congregation should be allowed to ask questions, receive answers, and to offer motions based on the answers received. When the quarterly conference is conducted in a godly manner, it can and will be beneficial to the growth of the church.

Chapter Six: Ethical Behavior in the Church

*“Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit,
after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world,
and not after Christ.” Colossians 2:8*

If there is any place where ethics should prevail, it should be the church. After all, the church is the great source of moral instruction and tradition in our society. While the Bible is not a rigid book of rules that sets forth specific solutions to each decision we face, its power is that it does teach the principles that God has given us to govern all our decisions.

Does the Bible provide us with a moral code so clearly defined that Christians are not required to think, only do? No, because God has granted each person free will and the opportunity to make individual choices and decisions. Along with His gift of free will comes the responsibility of accountability for each individual. Each day individuals face decisions in which the choices do not always seem to be black or white. Nevertheless, Christians have to find a way to make decisions in keeping with their ethics, which are derived from God's teachings. The purpose of this chapter is to help individuals use Christian ethics in developing solutions to issues within the life of the church and, by the same token, within their personal lives.

Avoiding Controversy

Most would agree that the pastor and congregation must faithfully discharge their responsibilities to one another in order for the church to advance the cause of Christ, as is its mission. For the pastor, these responsibilities are found in *The Ministerial Code of Ethics*, which a minister accepts and signs at the time of his ordination. The second section of this code is entitled "My Relationship to the Church(es) Which I Serve" and contains the fourteen points listed below:

1. In my preaching, I will exalt the Bible and will be true to my convictions, proclaiming the same in love.
2. I will maintain a Christian attitude toward my church officers and will not expect the unreasonable of them.
3. In my pastoral calling, I will have respect for every home I enter, for I am a representative of Christ and His Church.
4. I will strive with evangelistic zeal to build up my church, but will maintain a Christian attitude at all times toward members of other churches and their religious bodies.
5. I will under no circumstances violate confidences that come to me as a minister.
6. I will not break a contract which I have made with a church for pastoral or evangelistic services without first securing their expressed consent.
7. I will seek to make service primary and remuneration secondary.
8. When employed for full-time service by a church (or churches), I will not engage in

other lines of remunerative work without the knowledge and consent of the church and its official board.

9. I will not take sides with any faction in my church unless a doctrinal or moral issue is involved.

10. As a pastor, I rightfully control the use of my own pulpit, but I will not invite persons into it who are not generally acceptable to my people.

11. In my administrative and pastoral duties, I will remember that I am pastor of all my members, and I will seek to avoid any display of preferences and the cultivation of intimacies within the church or the community which may be construed as evidence of partiality. I will seek not to identify myself with any social set either in the church or community and I will endeavor not to allow personal feelings to interfere with the impartial nature of my ministrations.

12. When I can no longer command the respect and cooperation of a congregation, I will, in the interest of the church, quietly resign and will strive to strengthen the unity of the congregation regardless of the circumstances.

13. I will never speak disparagingly of my church or my profession.

14. I will not incur any sizable financial obligation for the church without first obtaining consent.

While church members are not required to sign a code of ethics, they are presented with the *Free Will Baptist Church Covenant* which they must accept when they join an OFWB church. It reads:

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 Savior 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 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 institutions and 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.

With *The Ministerial Code of Ethics* governing the ethics of the pastor and the *Free Will Baptist Church Covenant* governing the ethics of members, it would seem that disagreements could be resolved without strife and conflict. Unfortunately, Free Will Baptist history has all too many examples of disagreements that escalated into full-scale confrontations because those involved did not practice Christian principles and ethics in seeking a solution.

Applying Ethics to Controversial Situations

Regarding Christian ethics, the Rev. Harry Grubbs, in his book, *A Systematic Theology for the Twenty-First Century (From an Arminian Perspective)*, presents the biblical way of dealing with matters of controversy:

Christian ethics can be summed up in three passages of scripture: Mark 12:30--31; Matthew 7:12; and Galatians 5:22-23. When Jesus was asked what was the first or greatest commandment, He answered, *You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength. And the second is equal to the first, namely, you shall love your neighbor as yourself* (Mk. 12:30-31). What Jesus meant is simply if we love God with our whole being, we will be obedient to Him, and if we love our fellow human beings as ourselves, we will treat them with dignity and respect. In the sermon on the mount, Jesus said, *Whatever you want other people to do to or for you, do even so to them, for this is the law and the prophets* (Mt. 7:12). In other words, we should treat others the way we want to be treated. In Paul's letter to the Galatians, he said, *Walk in the Spirit* (5:16), and if we walk in the Spirit, the fruit of the Spirit grows within us to maturity. *The fruits of the Spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control* (5:22-23). If we have these characteristics, we will be moral in all our dealings with our fellow human beings. (177-8)

The successful relationship of a pastor and his congregation is largely dependent on strong ethical principles. Many of the negative aspects of controversy could be avoided by

pastors and church members resolving to treat each other as they themselves would like to be treated. In this way, when the time comes to make a pastoral change, both pastor and congregation can emerge with feelings of brotherhood and good will.

Despite the sincere desire of both pastors and members to avoid them, problems or disagreements may occasionally develop. In such situations, the following guidelines can direct participants to a path leading to a fair and harmonious solution:

- Define the problem: This requires getting to the root of the issue, not just addressing the symptoms.
- Determine the different courses of action that can be taken: Individuals should look at all the options that are available and then select the one that best suits the needs of all the parties involved.
- Implement the option: This is the first real step in changing the situation. Pretending that the problem does not exist or believing that it will somehow just go away are not solutions!

The important thing in this process is that the pastor and congregation must seek the leadership of the Holy Spirit in such matters and work to see that His will is done.

While occasionally a pastoral position is held by one individual until retirement, pastors often choose to follow God's calling to another pastorate, and sometimes a church desires a change in pastors. Often, a church-initiated change begins when members of the church, officers, or board members speak to other individuals in the congregation about their dissatisfaction, and their wish to seek a new pastor. If this is the case, Christian ethics mandate that the pastor be approached with compassion, fairness, and understanding. On the other hand, if a pastor chooses to leave a church, he should be guided by the same Christian principles and strive to leave the congregation with feelings of goodwill. For the protection of both the minister and the local church, the denomination has established that :

“A pastorate shall not be terminated by the church or pastor without a ninety-day previous notice, or unless agreed to by both parties” (*Articles 68*).

In order to insure an orderly and ethical process for the change of pastors, churches may include specific procedures for such in their individual church bylaws or in the original agreement when a minister is called. If written procedures have been established, it is vital that churches follow them specifically; failure to do so is not only unethical, but could also result in legal action against the church.

Another ethical situation challenging churches occurs when a pastor faces disciplinary action. When a pastor is the recipient of disciplinary action, arising from within the congregation or otherwise, the guidelines for dealing with such action are clearly set forth in the

Articles of Faith under “Section 2: The Ministry, Relationship to the Conference” (88-91).

Steps to resolve moral or legal matters should be based upon the teachings of the Bible, and be carried out in Christian love. In other words, the question on the heart of all those involved should be this: In the true light of God’s teachings, what is right? Using this principle, the solution will--in the full Christian sense--be fair and ethical.

The Bible establishes clear ethical principles for Christians, and the Original Free Will Baptist Convention has endorsed clear guidelines for ethical behavior of pastors in *The Ministerial Code of Ethics*, and for church members in the *Free Will Baptist Church Covenant*. Congregations and pastors should be familiar with these principles and seek to maintain high ethical standards in all their interactions, both within the church and within the community.

Chapter Seven: Dealing with Conflict in the Local Church

*"Can two walk together, except they be agreed?"
Amos 3:3*

Most church members feel the church should be a peaceful refuge where like-minded Christians gather and function in a spirit of cooperation and unity. Most agree that unity and cooperation are vital if the church is to carry out its missions of bringing the message of Christ to the lost in the community, the nation, and the world.

By and large, the church goes about its mission with few problems. It is a credit to the heavenly origin of the church that it functions as well as it does. The worship services are carried out in a way in which God is praised and worshiped, revival services call the lost to Christ, and special programs observe holy days and holidays. Carrying out these functions, the church body is more or less at peace. Unfortunately, the church is not always united and in agreement. The consequence is that conflict arises and can distract the congregation from its mission and vision.

On one hand, the church draws strength from its diversity because each individual is created by God with talents and gifts that can be used to serve Him. However, this same diversity fosters different – sometimes opposing – opinions and ideas about the day-to-day operation of the church. These differences can lead to conflict that, if left unresolved, will divide a church.

Conflict, by definition, can be a simple difference of opinion, or it can be used to describe outright war. While a difference of opinion is normal even among Christians, a “war” of stinging words, flaring emotions, and anger must be avoided. Most hostilities, be they quarrels or wars, began with a difference of opinion. Does this mean conflict has no place in the church? No, differences of opinion are the melting pot from which great ideas used to build God’s kingdom can emerge. In other words, conflict can be productive if it is not allowed to get out of hand. Chapter six introduced one important factor in handling conflict in the church, that of being fair and ethical in all relationships and interactions in the church. This chapter explores other important issues in handling the inevitable conflicts that occur within any group, even the church.

Finding the Source of Conflict

One of the first factors in dealing with conflict lies in determining the source of the conflict. Conflicts in the church often develop from within the church itself. However, many conflicts in the local church have nothing to do with ministry, doctrine, or religious issues. Conflict has as many sources as there are people in the congregation. It may be a disagreement between two people about how a program should be managed, or it may involve a group of people at odds over something as deeply “theological” as whether to paint a Sunday School room eggshell white or antique white. It can arise from support or opposition to a building program, the election of a deacon, hymns or songs played in the worship service, or the call of a pastor. All organizations must deal with change, and change often touches deep-seated emotions among church members. Even the change itself may not be the real problem; the issue is sometimes *how* the change was carried out.

Church conflict is nothing new. The book of Acts relates several instances of serious conflict in the early church. In 2 Corinthians 12:20, Paul says,

“For I fear, lest, when I come, I shall not find you such as I would, and that I shall be found unto you such as ye would not: lest there be debates, envyings, wraths, strifes, backbitings, whisperings, swellings, tumults.”

That conflict should arise within the church is normal, but if left unchecked it can cause long-term damage to relationships within the body, to the church’s witness in the community, and, most importantly, it can cause the church to lose focus of its mission.

While many conflicts, such as those mentioned above, arise from within the church, other conflicts may spill over into the church when there is a conflict within the town or community in which the church is located. Events in a community can have a profound effect on the church simply because members who are on different sides of an issue bring their feelings about external disputes into the body. Sometimes this external conflict escalates even more within the church when some individuals wish the church to take an official stand on a community or political issue, a situation which can become very divisive if different individuals in the church align themselves strongly on opposite sides of the issue. Such outside differences may have nothing to do with the church’s actual mission, but may lead to a great deal of conflict within the church if the church “takes a side.”

Resolving Conflict in the Church

The OFWB church has a format in place for bringing up concerns to the church body, the quarterly church conference (as discussed in chapter five). These meetings are essential in the life of the local church, but sometimes they result in confrontation and confusion. Perhaps it is because this is a forum in which every member has the right to be heard. If there is a problem in the church, this is most likely the forum in which it will be brought out. Many minor issues of conflict, however, can and should be settled without ever reaching the floor of a formal church conference.

At the beginning of this chapter, conflict was defined as sometimes being a simple difference of opinion between two people. The model for dealing with such conflicts can be found in the Bible. In Matthew 18:15, Jesus says,

“Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.”

Jesus seems to be saying here that a problem between two people should be solved by those two people. The goal here is for the two that are in disagreement to get the problem out in the open, discuss it rationally, and resolve it between each other. Too often, when the two parties discuss the issue with people who have nothing to do with it, these *outsiders* are drawn into the disagreement and a choosing of sides takes place. Now, the disagreement booms in dimension, and what was only a grain of sand at the onset is suddenly a boulder the size of a house. Without an acceptable solution, this conflict could ultimately polarize an entire church. This tragedy can be avoided if the two persons involved in the dispute resolve

the issue *between themselves* without involving others. However, if the problem remains unresolved, Matthew 18:16 goes on to say

“But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.”

In most cases the “one” to take along should be the pastor (who may see the need to include another church spiritual leader if the situation requires it). The pastor should strive to be neutral. Let him examine the problem from all angles and guide the two parties toward reconciliation. The key here is that the pastor is a mediator. He works with the parties and assists them in understanding each other and leading them to an agreeable solution.

The pastor cannot and should not function as a judge and decree that one party is right and the other one is wrong, unless there is a clear-cut moral or doctrinal issue involved. Even then, he should lead the parties into an understanding instead of declaring a verdict. Everyone involved in the conflict should be asked to agree to work, in Christian spirit, toward resolution. Once a solution is reached, both individuals must be held accountable to their agreement.

When a problem has escalated beyond the point of just the parties involved and the pastor, it becomes increasingly difficult to find a solution. This is because the more people that are involved, the more likely issues unrelated to the initial conflict will become a part of the problem. However, if the matter remains unresolved after the first two steps given in Matthew 18:15-16, verse 17 allows one further step for church members in conflict which cannot be resolved:

“And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church. . . .”

Bringing a conflict between church members before the church body is scripturally seen as the last resort in an otherwise irresolvable situation.

As mentioned earlier, sometimes church conflict originates from outside the church. When community issues are brought into the local church, the first reaction may be to say that they have no place there. Churches should consider carefully before taking a public stance on issues that have no moral or spiritual significance. But sometimes issues within the community are issues within the church. For example, a school bond issue in a community may well be an issue that the church membership is divided about, and the church really does not need to take a stand on either side. On the other hand, a liquor-by-the drink issue is related directly to the Church Covenant, and a church may wish to take a public group stand. In such cases, the church has a vested interest in helping to solve these issues. Before the church can help the community, it must be willing to reconcile the problem within itself. This is so that the church will present itself as a united body to the community. Whatever problems confront the church, their solution must be Bible-based and rooted in the principles of Scripture. Turning a blind eye to sin and moral decay may put off a conflict, but it never

solves one. Once the church is in agreement on an issue, it has a unique opportunity to minister to the community.

The discussions above concern church conflicts that originate as a result of unresolved conflict between individual church members, or conflict that comes into the church from the community. The third cause of conflict mentioned at the beginning of this section is simply change. Change leads to conflict because almost no one likes change. Most individuals like things just like they have always been. Even when people know that change is for the better, they may resist, preferring the old way. It is the pastor's duty to explore the concerns of his congregation regarding a change. Needless to say, some objections may appear to be silly or trite to others, but it is crucial to remember that these objections are important to those who voice them. It is important that the pastor understand their objections and help them see how the change is best for the congregation, even if it may not seem best for them individually.

This section began by discussing the method OFWB use for handling issues of change, the quarterly church conference, often referred to as the church business meeting. Business meetings can be a tightrope for the pastor. On one hand, he must manage debate so that it remains focused on the issue and not the personality; at the same time, he must give members a reasonable opportunity to voice their opinions.

As discussed in chapter five of this work, section five of the *Articles of Faith* is titled "Rules of Order" (114-120). These guidelines are specific to OFWB church conferences, and when used along with *Robert's Rules of Order*, they are invaluable for leading a business meeting. Oftentimes the "Rules of Order" appear to be stiff and formal, and in fact they are, but when problems break out, they help to maintain the discipline that is necessary to address controversial issues. Not only should the pastor be familiar with these rules, but every member who intends to take the floor at a business meeting should also be familiar with them--and seek to abide by them. *Roberts' Rules of Order* are like the centerlines on the highways; there would be chaos without them. A well-managed and properly orchestrated business meeting is a testimony to a church's commitment to its mission and vision and allows members to make the decisions that govern the direction of God's church with a minimum of conflict. More information on church business meetings can be found in chapter five.

When a Conflict Cannot Be Managed

A healthy church with the leadership of a dedicated pastor should be able to manage any problem or conflict that may arise. But sometimes individual members or factions are not *willing* to abide by decisions made by the church. If they feel that they are being mistreated by the majority or that the majority is acting contrary to biblical principles or the *Articles of Faith*, then their recourse is to the Executive Committee of their Conference. Individuals should remember that this is a drastic step, and it should not be taken lightly because the implications of this action can have reverberations that are felt for years.

The Executive Committee is made up of men and women of experience and knowledge who have been elected by the Conference. The Committee's makeup and role is

described in section three of the *Articles of Faith* (93-103). An appeal to the Committee is considered a last resort.

In modern America, many individuals are all too quick to say, "I will sue" or "You'll be hearing from my lawyer." The use of a lawyer in a church conflict is the "nuclear missile" option. While lawyers have a place in our society, their education is in civil law which has little to do with biblical principles that govern church matters. When lawyers become involved, the outcome is nearly always a heightening of the conflict, not an agreeable resolution which benefits both parties. Lawsuits may result in the dissolution of property and the church's ceasing to exist.

According to Matthew 5:9,

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God."

Remember, Christians serve the Savior who is also called the Prince of Peace. They should strive to resolve conflict – no matter how large or small – in a fair, rational, understanding, and *peaceful* manner.

Before seeking to resolve a conflict, church members should consider if their objections are valid ones, or if the issue is a matter of ego and turf defense. Often, individuals do not take the time to understand their own objections and do not really know why they object, other than, "I just don't like it."

Christians must teach themselves to see the points of view and the opinions of others as being valid. Different ideas and views should always be given the benefit of the doubt. Rather than being quick to take offense, Christians should try with an open heart and mind to understand how others feel.

Before church members meet with anyone to discuss a given situation, they should prepare themselves to focus on the matter in question, rather than allowing their emotional reaction to become the issue. Individuals who feel they cannot override their emotions and keep their tempers under control should consider excusing themselves from the discussion until they believe they can approach the issue as a peacemaker, not a combatant. If questioned about leaving a discussion, a church member should feel free to truthfully state, "At this time, I just don't feel I can go into this with an open mind and work toward a Christ-driven resolution. So, please let me be excused and allow me to serve the church in some other capacity."

Some degree of disagreement is inevitable, but allowing disagreement to flame into a hostile and acrimonious war of words, flaring emotions, and pointing fingers of blame is not. Christians must always remember that the goal is not to completely avoid conflict, nor to assign blame for conflict, but to resolve the conflict in a way that leads the congregation to a greater capacity to serve God in unity.

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This idea of assembling a guide that would be useful to both the church and the pastor has existed for some time. During a Minister's Program Board meeting on March 3, 2003 the idea became a formal motion. We requested and received the support of the Executive Committee of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists and then we began soliciting contributors.

Each Conference ordaining authority was provided with a description of the proposed guide and was asked to recommend individuals that they believed could provide valuable input to one or more of the topics included. Those who received a recommendation were contacted and asked to submit ideas, suggestions and information. The goal was to assemble information that came from hard gained lessons and real world experience that could be shared with the readers who may be facing similar challenges.

We are very grateful for the assistance provided by those who submitted written material to assist in the compilation of this guide. We have included their names and a brief biography of each below. There are many others whose names are not included here who took the time to speak with me and provide invaluable content for the completion of this guide, as well as much needed moral support. To both groups I would like to express my appreciation. Without their help this guide would never have been published.

**Donald Fader
Executive Director
Minister's Program**

Contributors

Barbara Arnold: Member, First Free Will Baptist Church, Central Conference, Greenville, NC.

A retired banking officer she currently works at East Carolina University and is a hospital volunteer. Her Christian service includes deaconess, shepherd, teacher and she has written numerous articles for "The Free Baptist".

Franklin L. Baggett: Pastor, Elm Grove Free Will Baptist Church, Central Conference, Ayden, NC.

A graduate of Mount Olive College and Southeastern Theological Seminary.

Fred P. Baker: Pastor, Robert's Grove Free Will Baptist Church, Cape Fear Conference, Dunn, NC.

Past President of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists and former Moderator of the Cape Fear Conference. He is a graduate of Mount Olive College, and Columbia Bible College. Served as a missionary to the Republic of the Philippines and as Philippine Field Director for the Board of Foreign Missions. Co-author of "Welcome to the Royal Family".

Phillip Boykin: Pastor, Black Jack Free Will Baptist church, Central Conference, Greenville, NC.

Ordained in 1981 Graduate of Mount Olive College and Campbell University with a BS in Religion. currently Moderator of Central Conf.

Stanley Buck: Pastor, Tarboro First Free Will Baptist, a member of the Central Conference. Past Chairman of the FWB Minister's Program. Past member of the Executive Committee of the Eastern and Central Conference. Graduate of Carolina Bible Institute in Theology and Southeastern FWB College, Wendell, NC with a bachelors degree in Biblical Studies.

Roney Bunn, A member of the Western Conference and chairman of the Minister's Program when this Guide was introduced. He retired from the pastorate in 2003 and currently serves as a Hospice Volunteer Chaplain for Wilson Medical Center.

Sherman Dilley: Pastor, Northeast Free Will Baptist Church, Eastern Conference, Mount Olive, NC.

Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Minister's program. A member of the Eastern Conference. Currently serving on the Board of Directors for the Free Will Baptist Children's Home. Graduate of Atlantic Christian College.

Donald E. Fader: Pastor, Friendship Free Will Baptist Church, Eastern Conference, Trenton, NC.

Executive Director of the FWB Minister's Program and the Church Finance Association. Assisted in the coordination of the contributors, editing and publishing of this guide.

Richard A. Glosson: Pastor, Union Grove Free Will Baptist church, A member of the Western Conference and currently serving as Pastor of Union Grove Free Will Baptist Church (Wayne County). Bachelor of Ministry from Carolina Bible Institute and Seminary. Master of Ministry in Pastoral Studies and Doctor of Ministry in Pastoral Studies from Covington Theological Seminary. Ph.D in Theology from Chelsea University. Currently serving on the Board of Directors of the Minister's Program.

David Hines: Chairman, Department of Religion, Mount Olive College, Mount Olive, NC. A member of the Examining Board of the Eastern Conference. A graduate of Mount Olive College, Barton College and Southeastern Theological Seminary.

C.H. Overman, A member of the Central Conference and currently serving as the Associate Pastor for Senior Ministry at Rose Hill Free Will Baptist Church, Winterville, NC. He serves on the board of directors of the Free Will Baptist Press and the Central Conference Board of Ordination. He is a graduate of Atlantic College and past General Secretary for the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists.

W. Walter Reynolds: Retired Pastor, Friendship Free Will Baptist Church, Central Conference, Farmville, NC. Currently serves as President of the Church Finance Association, past Executive Director of the Free Will Baptist Press and the Minister's Program. Former pastor of. A veteran of the Second World War and a graduate of the Free Will Baptist Bible College, Nashville, TN.

Chris Singleton, Chris Singleton, A member of the Eastern Conference currently serving Westside FWB Church in Kinston. Graduate of Mount Olive and Atlantic Christian College. Served as Moderator of the Eastern Conference for two terms and was a past chairman of the Minister's Program

Curtis Smith: CPA, Partner with the firm of Page and Smith, P.A., CPAs, Kinston, NC. A graduate of the University of North Carolina in Wilmington he is a Viet Nam Veteran, Purple Heart recipient and a member of Swansboro United Methodist Church.

Randall Smith: Member, First Free Will Baptist Church, Central Conference, Greenville, NC. Presently serving as a Deacon on the Church Board. Retired from E. I. du Pont de Nemours and Company. Presently serving on the Board of Directors of the Minister's Program. President of the Crusaders Sunday School Class.

Ricky J. Warren: Pastor, Lee's Chapel Free Will Baptist Church, Cape Fear Conference, Dunn, NC. Graduate of North Carolina State University (B.S. 1990, M.S. 1992). Currently persuing a M.Div. from Campbell University Divinity School. Member of the Minister's Program board.

Almond R. Warwick: Pastor, Micro Free Will Baptist Church, Western Conference, Micro, NC.

and a member of the Executive Committee of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists. The former Dean of Institutional Advancement of Johnston Community College in Smithfield and a graduate of Mount Olive College, Atlantic Christian College and East Carolina University.

Ray Wells: Pastor, Marsh Swamp Free Will Baptist Church, Western Conference, Sims, NC. Past President of the Convention of Original Free Will Baptists and former Moderator of the Western Conference he serves on the Board of Directors of Home Missions and Evangelism and the Western Conference Board of Ordination. A graduate of Mount Olive College, Atlantic Christian College and Southeastern Theological Seminary.

Sheryll Wood, Member of Little Creek OFWB Church, Central Conference, Ayden, NC. English Instructor at East Carolina University and freelance editor/proofreader. Former interim editor of the Free Will Baptist Press and writer of Adult Sunday School materials.