

BFC Conference Proceedings – 2018

Fifth meeting

Wednesday, April 25, 2018, 8:45 A.M.

The Moderator called the meeting to order at 8:45 a.m. as Dennis W. Spinney prayed. Conference worshiped God through the singing of “Blessing and Honor and Glory and Power,” “Lion of Judah,” and “All I Have is Christ.”

The morning’s address, by Andrew W. Barnes Sr., was entitled “Rebuilding a Church” and related to the story of New Life BFC of Long Neck, DE’s recent history.

The first step to rebuilding New Life BFC was holding a Sunday School class for the small remnant that remained, teaching them the Doctrines of Grace and their adherence to what the Bible Fellowship Church professes to believe. Barnes cited many individuals who played important roles in re-establishing the Long Neck church. “We praise God for the many individuals along the way who came alongside this hurting church – to rebuild it,” said Barnes, who has served as New Life’s pastor since 2013.

Church planting isn’t easy, Barnes related. As a church planter, he has experienced challenges and discouragements. He told the story of a female visitor who, after a morning worship service, told him, “This is a dead church,” and then related her doubts that it was even a Christian church – at least partly because its music wasn’t to her liking.

Using Revelation 3:1-6 and the letter to the church in Sardis, Barnes cited to answer two questions pertaining to local churches, with the admission that there are, indeed, churches that are dead (although he disagreed with the woman’s assessment concerning New Life BFC). He sought to answer two questions. First, when it comes to local churches, what necessitates rebuilding? Second, how do we rebuild?

Jesus made this accusation concerning the Sardis church: “I know your works. You have the reputation of being alive, but you are dead.” Jesus had intimate knowledge of the church at Sardis, just as He has intimate knowledge of our churches. “Jesus knows *everything* about the church; He’s the Lord of the church!” Barnes said.

Sardis had a positive reputation, at least on the surface: that it was an “alive” church, with many programs and a good reputation in the surrounding culture. Our temptation today, Barnes said, is to downplay our distinctives and to be “all things to all people.” New Life, like many other churches, faces the pressure to survive, with many surrounding churches that seem to have clear advantages in terms of programs, music, etc. – “the goods,” as Barnes called them.

“All I had was the Word of God,” Barnes said. And it was that commitment to preach that saw him through and is the centerpiece of the rebuilding of New Life BFC of Long Neck. “All I know is I did my best to preach the Word of God, and God blessed it,” he explained.

What necessitates rebuilding, Barnes concluded, is when the church exchanges its commitment to Christ for a desperation to survive. So how does such a church rebuild? According to Jesus’ words in Revelation 3:2, the instruction is to “Wake up, and strengthen what remains.” Several commands follow in the letter to the church in Sardis.

A church has to continually be watchful. It must strengthen what was once a clear commitment to Christ and the gospel. The church must remember what it has received and heard

– the gospel – and how it received that gospel. Pastors need to ask themselves this question: “Do we still preach with passion, with urgency, with zeal, with conviction?” And, finally, the church must repent: from trying to please the culture and from marginalizing the gospel. “Wake up!” Jesus is telling our churches.

We must continually be watchful. More fundamental than numbers is a clear commitment to Jesus Christ and to God’s Word. Jesus’ warning to the Sardis church is stark and frightening, according to Revelation 3:3. “If you will not wake up, I will come like a thief [in judgment], and you will not know at what hour I will come against you.” The light of what little gospel witness such a church may have had will be extinguished, and that church will die. That’s the warning.

The encouragement of Revelation 3:1-6, though, is that there were some in Sardis who were still committed to the gospel. Jesus declares this as their reward: “They will walk with Me in white, for they are worthy.” We are called as pastors to strengthen those who are faithful. The faithful, Jesus declares in Revelation 3:5, will be clothed in His righteousness, will never have their names blotted from the book of life, and will be confessed by the Son before the Father and His angels.

Churches, he concluded, are rebuilt when we as pastors commit ourselves to the things that glorify the Lord Jesus Christ, and the things that He has declared the church is to be and to practice.

Richard B. Ravis led Conference in a season of prayer, using Psalm 116:1-7 to “lead and feed” pastors and delegates, guiding them into a time of calling upon the name of the Lord. Our prayer time included with the singing of “Holy Spirit.”

Following the morning break, election results were announced.

The following were elected:

BFC Executive Board:

William G. Schlonecker (3 years)

Ministerial Credentials Committee:

Ralph M. Soper (3 years)

Ministerial Candidate Committee:

Andrew T. Crossgrove (3 years)

David E. Gundrum (3 years)

Ministerial Relations Committee:

William G. Schlonecker (3 years)

Robert Vaughn (3 years)

Committee on Nominations:

Keith M. Long (3 years)

Beckie Merrick (3 years)

Committee on Church Health:

Steven J. DelDuco (3 years)
Richard T. Paashaus (3 years)

Conference Judiciary:

Dennis W. Spinney (3 years)
Dean A. Stortz (3 years)

Special Appellate Judiciary:

John C. Studenroth (3 years)

Officers of the 136th BFC Conference:

Moderator:

Timothy J. Schmoyer (1 year)

Vice-Moderator:

Steven J. DelDuco (1 year)

Report of the Executive Board: (see page)

Resolved, that the report be accepted.

Bible Fellowship Church Executive Director David T. Allen addressed Conference, noting that for three days each year, at BFC Conference, he gladly shares the responsibilities of ministry in the BFC with the pastors and delegates. He referred to the Conference theme, “Onward and Outward,” reminding all in attendance that evangelism is to be primary, as it was in the “old days.”

Allen pointed to 2018 as being a year of milestones: 70 years for Church Extension Ministries, just over 60 years for Victory Valley Camp, and 50 years for Pinebrook Bible Conference.

Resolved, that we supply the name of Robert A. Sloan, Jr. as President of the BFC for a three-year term at the 135th BFC Conference.

Robert A. Sloan, Jr. was elected to a three-year term as President of the Bible Fellowship Church.

Jay H. Fasnacht, BFC Executive Board Treasurer, normally presents budgets at BFC Conference but was unable to attend due to cancer issues. Ronald C. Mahurin prayed for Fasnacht, thanking God for his influence, at both the local church and denominational levels.

Allen presented the financial statements in Fasnacht’s absence, presenting both a revised budget for 2018 and a proposed budget for 2019.

Resolved, that the 2018 revised Executive Board budget be adopted by the 135th BFC Conference (see page).

Resolved, that an assessment rate of two (2.0) percent be adopted by the 135th BFC Conference for 2019 (based on assessable receipts for 2017).

Resolved, that the 2019 proposed Executive Board budget be adopted by the 135th BFC Conference (see page).

Allen also provided a point-by-point review of our current status as a denomination in conjunction to our 20/20 Vision. One area of encouragement was the full renovation of our rented denominational headquarters at 1011 Brookside Road, Allentown, PA. He also cited the naming of Rachel Marks and Dana E. Weller as denominational resources for our children and senior saints, respectively, as a positive response to two of our 20/20 Vision Points.

The Executive Director informed Conference of potential future partnerships in the management of Pinebrook Bible Conference.

The Executive Board recommended the following resolutions to the 135th BFC Conference:

Whereas, the MRF annuity rate for 2018 was \$221 per year of service, and
Whereas, cost-of-living adjustments no longer apply to MRF payments, be it
Resolved, that the MRF annuity rate for calendar year 2019 be \$221 per year of service.

Resolution Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled Ministers of this Conference for Calendar Year 2019:

Whereas, the religious denomination known as The Bible Fellowship Church has, and functions through, Ministers of the Gospel who are duly ordained or licensed, and

Whereas, the practice of The Bible Fellowship Church is to provide a parsonage or a rental allowance as part of the gross compensation for each of its active ordained or licensed ministers, and

Whereas, pensions paid to retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers of The Bible Fellowship Church are considered as deferred compensation and are paid to said retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers in consideration of previous, active service, and

Whereas, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized that The Bible Fellowship Church is the appropriate organization to designate a housing/rental allowance for retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers who are members of this Conference, therefore be it

Resolved,

1. An amount equal to 100% of the pension payments received during the year of 2018 be and is hereby designated as a rental/housing allowance for each retired and disabled ordained or licensed minister of The Bible Fellowship Church who is or was a member of the Bible Fellowship Church Minister's Retirement Fund.

2. This rental/housing allowance shall apply to each retired and disabled ordained or licensed minister who has been granted the retired relationship or placed on disability leave by the BFC Conference and whose name and relationship to the conference is recorded in the Yearbook of BFC Conference and in other appropriate records maintained by the conference.

3. The pension payment to which this rental/housing allowance applies shall be the pension payment resulting from all service of such retired or disabled ordained or licensed minister from all employment by any local church, BFC Conference or institution of The Bible Fellowship Church or of any former denomination that is now a part of The Bible Fellowship Church, or from any other employer who employed the minister to perform services related to the ministry and who elected to make contributions to the pension funds of The Bible Fellowship Church for such retired minister's pension.

Note: The rental/housing allowance which may be excluded from a minister's gross income is limited to the lesser of (1) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the minister's employer or other appropriate body, (2) the amount actually expended by the minister to provide his housing, or (3) the legally-determined fair rental value of the parsonage or other housing provided. As specified in Rev. Rul. 71-290 C.B. 92, "the only amount that will qualify for exclusion under section 107(2) of the Code as a 'rental allowance' is an amount equal to the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances such as a garage, plus the cost of utilities."

The Executive Board also brought the following legislation for approval at the 135th BFC Conference:

Whereas, the religious denomination known as The Bible Fellowship Church has, and functions through, Ministers of the Gospel who are duly ordained or licensed, and

Whereas, the practice of The Bible Fellowship Church is to provide a parsonage or a rental allowance as part of the gross compensation for each of its active ordained or licensed ministers, and

Whereas, contributions paid to an authorized 403(b) plan for the benefit of retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers of The Bible Fellowship Church are considered as deferred compensation and are paid to said retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers in consideration of previous, active service, and

Whereas, the Internal Revenue Service has recognized that The Bible Fellowship Church is the appropriate organization to designate a housing/rental allowance for retired and disabled ordained or licensed ministers who are members of this Conference, therefore, be it

Resolved,

1. An amount equal to 100% of the proceeds drawn from a 403(b) plan during the year of 2019 be and is hereby designated as a rental/housing allowance for each retired and disabled ordained or licensed minister of The Bible Fellowship Church who is or was a member of the Bible Fellowship Church.

2. This rental/housing allowance shall apply to each retired and disabled ordained or licensed minister who has been granted the retired relationship or placed on disability leave by the BFC Conference and whose name and relationship to the conference is recorded in the Yearbook of BFC Conference and in other appropriate records maintained by the conference.

3. The pension payment to which this rental/housing allowance applies shall be considered the pension payment resulting from all service of such retired or disabled ordained or licensed minister from all employment by any local church, BFC Conference or institution of The Bible Fellowship Church or of any former denomination that is now a part of The Bible Fellowship Church, or from any other employer who employed the minister to perform services related to the ministry and who elected to make contributions to the pension funds of The Bible Fellowship Church for such retired minister's pension.

Note: The rental/housing allowance which may be excluded from a minister's gross income is limited to the lesser of (1) the amount of the rental/housing allowance designated by the minister's employer or other appropriate body, (2) the amount actually expended by the minister to provide his housing, or (3) the legally-determined fair rental value of the parsonage or other housing provided. As specified in Rev. Rul. 71-290 C.B. 92, "the only amount that will qualify for exclusion under section 107(2) of the Code as a 'rental allowance' is an amount equal to the fair rental value of the home, including furnishings and appurtenances such as a garage, plus the cost of utilities."

A final Executive Board resolution was as follows:

Resolved, that Article 511-1.2 (2) be changed from "Nine voting members" to "Eight voting members."

Yes - 139; No - 5.

Donald E. Kuntzman provided an update on the work of the Communications Committee. Rachel Schmoyer informed Conference of our greatly-increased social media connections. The BFC now operates on four different social media platforms: Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn. David E. Brandt drew Conference's attention to the new BFC website, www.bfc.org.

Conference adjourned for lunch at 12:15 p.m. as Kevin W. Kirkpatrick prayed.