

Sunday School: Then and Now ***A Brief Historical Sketch***

Records indicate that Christian Education has always been an important interest of the Original Free Will Baptist denomination. In 1921, just eight years after the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptist was formed, discussion was conducted concerning the need for an organized effort to place emphasis on Christian Education in the Free Will Baptist churches. A "bureau of institutes" was established to begin this promotion through training Sunday School workers. For many years there was a great deal of discussion about a centralized effort to promote Sunday School, but it was not until 1940 that something was done. There were 'pockets' of churches meeting in Unions that had a Sunday School program, but nothing denomination wide.

Records indicate that during 1940, a group was selected with The Reverend Raymond Sasser serving as President to form the NC State Sunday School Convention. The growth and development of this organization was due to the work of a great many people. Another man who played a great role in the work of the of the Sunday School Convention was The Reverend L.E. Ballard, who served as Field Secretary for many years. He traveled wide spread to promote the cause of Sunday School among Free Will Baptist churches. Both these men gave a large part of their lives to see that the Sunday School Convention had strong roots and a firm foundation upon which to grow. The work of the Sunday School Convention continued on after the North Carolina State Convention of Free Will Baptist Churches left the National Assoc.of FWB in the early 1960's. The office of Field Secretary was reactivated in 1984 with the Reverend Bass Mitchell serving until late 1990. In 1989 the Sunday School

Convention was dissolved and the Original FWB Sunday School Board was established as part of the work of the Convention of OFWB as one of 10 ministries.

The OFWB Sunday School Board operated with officers from 1989 when Mrs. Mary Dudley was hired as director. Prior to 1999, the business of the SS program was conducted from the homes of the various leaders in the movement. In 1999, The OFWB SS Board, opened to the people of the OFWB headquarters in Ayden, NC to enhance it's services to the people of the OFWB Denomination. That location also houses our Resource Library which opened in 2008, just before the board hired an assistant for Mrs. Dudley. May 28, 2010 became the next historic day for the OFWB Sunday Board, because it was on the day the Board purchased a Motor Home to be used for the purpose of starting a mobile ministry in joint efforts with the OFWB Press. This was a great asset at the time of purchase. We were able to use the motorhome to help with VBS, and as a resource center to serve several churches. With the FWB Press extending their book stores and putting their inventory on line, the RV was becoming obsolete. It served us very well during it's use, and we thank God for providing it at a time when it was a needed ministry. The board recently made the decision to give the RV to Home Missions and Evangelism and Disaster Relief. They will be able to put the RV to good use as a command center along with several other uses.

On September 30, 2015, Ms. Mary Dudley retired as executive director. She served this ministry for over 25 years and was recognized for her service at the OFWB Convention in May of 2015. She will be greatly missed and the work that she did for this ministry will never be forgotten. In Nov. of 2016, Ms. Gail Heath was named as director of the ministry. One of Ms. Mary's desires was to see a change in the ministry's name. She

had believed for many years that the main focus of the ministry should remain on Sunday School but that we had expanded to a much more broad outreach in assisting our churches. Her desire was fulfilled in May of 2016 as our convention voted to change the name of the ministry to The OFWB Christian Education Ministry which also relocated in January of the same year.

We are now looking forward to the future and looking to God to see what He has planned for our ministry.