

Brothers, Joining Hand to Hand

John Allen Warner (1851–1928)

Brothers, joining hand to hand,
In one bond united,
Pressing onward to that land
Where all wrongs are righted:
Let your words and actions be
Worthy your vocation;
Chosen of the Lord, and free,
Heirs of Christ's salvation.

Christ, the Way, the Truth, the Life,
Who hath gone before you
Through the turmoil and the strife,
Holds His banner o'er you;
All who see the sacred sign
Press towards Heav'n's portal,
Fired by hope that is divine,
Love that is immortal.

They who follow fear no foe,
Care not who assail them;
Where the Master leads, they go,
He will never fail them;
Courage, brothers! we are one,
In the love that sought us;
Soon the warfare shall be done,
Through the grace He brought us.



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In the Nick of Time

The Foundations Baptist Fellowship International

Kevin T. Bauder

One of the perks of my job is that I occasionally get to represent Central Seminary at conferences, conventions, and other meetings. Thus it was that Mrs. Bauder and I found ourselves earlier this week on the campus of Faith Baptist Bible College and Seminary. There we attended the annual fellowship meeting of the Foundations Baptist Fellowship International.

The FBFI has its origins in the 1920 pre-convention conference called by J. C. Massee before the Northern Baptist Convention meeting at Buffalo, New York. That pre-convention conference eventually resulted in an organization known as the Fundamentalist Fellowship of the Northern Baptist Convention, which came to be led by Earl V. Pierce. It was essentially a protest movement within a convention that was increasingly dominated by liberal theology.

When the time came to take steps toward separation, the Fundamentalist Fellowship renamed itself the Conservative Baptist Fellowship and chose Chester E. Tulga as its leader. It became the fountainhead of the entire Conservative Baptist Movement, organizing the Conservative Baptist Foreign Mission Society, the Conservative Baptist Association with its three regional fellowships, the Conservative Baptist Home Mission Society, and the Conservative Baptist Theological Seminary (now the Denver Seminary). The CBF remained a fellowship of individuals within this network of missions, church fellowships, and schools.

By the early 1960s it became clear that much of the Conservative Baptist Movement had capitulated to neoevangelicalism. The CBF once again renamed itself, becoming the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship. It organized the World Conservative Baptist Mission (now Baptist World Mission) and the New Testament Association of Independent Baptist Churches. Unlike the older Conservative Baptist Movement, these newer bodies maintained no direct connection with each other, and people tended to choose between the FBF and the NTA depending upon whether they prioritized individual fellowship or church association. People like B. Myron Cedarholm and the Weniger brothers, especially Arno and Archer, gravitated toward the FBF, while Minnesota Baptists preferred the NTA. To this day the NTA is stronger within Minnesota, though there is no hostility in either direction.

Further name changes occurred with the addition of the word *International* to the organization's title, followed by a shift in the published name from *Fundamental Baptist Fellowship* to *Foundations Baptist Fellowship*. I believe that the legal name is still the Fundamental Baptist Fellowship International.

The current president of the FBFI is Kevin Schaal, pastor of Northwest Valley Baptist Church near Phoenix, Arizona. Schaal was deeply influenced by the ministry of James Singleton, one of the most responsible and thoughtful leaders within the FBFI. The result is that Schaal combines long standing in the organization with a definite vision to see it play a role as a responsible voice within the evangelical and fundamentalist world of the twenty-first century.

There are no business meetings at the FBFI fellowships. Since it is a board-governed organization, the membership attends purely for purposes of mutual encouragement. This year's meeting in Ankeny, Iowa focused mainly on promoting evangelism. The speakers were men who had demonstrated the ability to foster an evangelistic mindset within their churches while maintaining theological integrity.

Several mission agencies were visible at the meeting. Two were particularly conspicuous by the presence of their chief executives. One was Baptist World Mission, represented by its new executive director, Ben Sinclair. The other was Baptist Mid-Missions, represented by its president, Pat Odle. While Mid-Missions is sometimes viewed as primarily a Regular Baptist agency, its constituency is much larger than the GARBC, and the pastors of the FBFI make a natural fit.

Multiple institutions of higher learning were also represented. Of course, the meeting was on the campus of Faith Baptist Bible College and Seminary. Other schools included International Baptist College and Seminary, Maranatha Baptist University (its new president, David Anderson, was present for the meeting), and Bob Jones University. I know that I spoke with someone from Appalachian Bible College, but I don't recall whether that school had an exhibit.

The FBFI has traditionally maintained strong ties with Bob Jones University, and that long-standing bond was evident. The university's chancellor was present. One of the best-known BJU professors, Jim Berg, spoke during a plenary session. One of the three members of the interim management team was also visible at the meeting.

In addition to its role as a fellowship, the FBFI also functions as an endorsing "denomination" for the Department of Defense. It stands behind scores of chaplains in every branch of the military, plus chaplains who work with prisons, hospitals, and police and fire departments. The FBFI annual meetings also include training sessions for these chaplains, who are highly visible throughout the event.

In terms of its public ministries, the FBFI publishes *Frontline Magazine* six times annually. It also sponsors a blog, *Proclaim and Defend*, and has recently begun a podcast. Anyone who wants to understand the spirit and ethos of the FBFI should look to these sources for first-hand information.

I did not grow up in FBFI circles. Through the years, however, I have found myself gravitating more and more to this organization. This week's conference exemplifies my reasons. I can't think of a single unpleasant thing about it. The hosts were gracious and accommodating. The preaching was challenging. The renewal of friendships was refreshing. Overall, this conference was a significant encouragement in the things of the Lord.



This essay is by Kevin T. Bauder, Research Professor of Historical and Systematic Theology at Central Baptist Theological Seminary. Not every one of the professors, students, or alumni of Central Seminary necessarily agrees with every opinion that it expresses.
