

## **BFC Conference Proceedings – 2025**

### **Third meeting**

Tuesday, April 29, 2025, 8:45 A.M.

The Tuesday morning session of the 142<sup>nd</sup> BFC Conference was called to order by the Conference Moderator at 8:45 a.m. Daniel L. Williams declared it to be “Elder-Delegate Appreciation Tuesday,” highlighting the essential role that elders serve in our churches – and elder delegates fill at BFC Conference. “We commend you brothers and we love you in the Lord.” He read 1 Peter 5:1-5 as a supporting text. Swannie W. Griffin III, elder-delegate at Ebenezer BFC in Bethlehem, PA, opened the meeting with prayer.

David Pooler and accompanying musicians then led in the singing of “You’ve Already Won,” “Rock of Ages,” and “In Christ Alone.”

James D. MacArthur, Director of the BFC Board of Missions, wearing garb common to Indonesia, where he formerly served as a missionary alongside his wife Trudy, addressed Conference on “Unity in Fulfilling Our Mission(s) to Make Disciples.”

He pointed to the Great Commission in Matthew 28. “From Matthew we must realize that the directive didn’t stop with making individual disciples,” he said. The language is one of discipling ethnic groups of people. “So our directive from the King of kings is to make disciples of the nations, of all peoples,” MacArthur said.

Life change, he noted, must begin at the heart level and is produced by the Holy Spirit working through Scripture. “As Christians and as churches, we live under the authority of the Bible,” MacArthur said. “Destroy this book and our faith is nothing. We have nothing to trust...we help people grow by bringing them under the Word of God.”

His text was Ephesians 4, which describes how spiritual maturity is cultivated. “I believe this is at the heart of the discipleship process,” MacArthur said. Paul’s two years in Ephesus involved preaching salvation and loving those who came to saving faith in Christ.

As Paul had many coworkers who assisted him in his ministry of planting churches, we are to partner in ministry with others of like mind. “I believe from this text, we see the importance of teamwork in growing the church: brothers and sisters working together.”

Ephesians 4:1 urges us “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called.” What is that calling? First, it is to be “in Christ.” Second, we are to be holy and blameless. MacArthur turned to the text and its plea for humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with one another in love. These are consistent marks of what biblical unity looks like. “You put the Word of God out there,” MacArthur noted. “You give them truth, but then you have to give time to God, letting Him do the work in their lives.”

MacArthur gave reasons why we should be eager to pursue this ministry of discipleship. The fact that it is a work of God should propel us to action. Second, just as there is a unity that exists in the Trinity, we need to remind ourselves that we are one body. “There’s a one-ness that exists, and we are eager to maintain it.”

Ultimately, we should pursue unity because it's what Jesus wants for His people. "Don't you want to do what Jesus wants you to do?" MacArthur asked. "You don't have to overthink it – do it!"

Spiritual maturity is the end result, and there is a unity in discipling people to maturity. It's a doctrinal, theological maturity, but also one that works itself out in practical ways in the lives of people. "Here's my point," MacArthur said. "Understanding the riches of being in Christ, we are to work together as one, even with our diverse gifting, to build mature disciples of Christ."

This unity based on spiritual maturity, MacArthur said, is akin to words heard at the end of a wedding ceremony: "What God has joined together, let no man put asunder. Brothers, what God has joined together, let no one break apart!"

Dennis W. Spinney of the Prayer Committee led Conference in a time of concerted prayer as guided by Revelation 3:22 – "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." Conference was instructed to respond in prayer to however the Spirit has been speaking and ministering to its individual members.

After the morning break, Mark Hargrove, delegate at Whitehall (PA) BFC, prayed for God's guidance upon the next reports and discussions.

### **Report of the Executive Board: (see page)**

David T. Allen expressed his thanks to the Bible Fellowship Church for allowing him to continue to serve in his capacity as Executive Director of the Bible Fellowship Church.

**Resolved,** that the report be accepted.

The Executive Director stressed the importance of each church keeping accurate records and having them readily available. Each church's by-laws should include a volunteer/program participant agreement and a statement that reads, "We abhor child abuse, and if we receive information of abuse, we will report it, and/or, we waive the privilege of confidentiality."

Philip E. Morrison provided details on how important child protection policies are to each church and to the integrity and safety of the BFC. "Your policies will provide protection for you, for you are no longer a 'soft target,'" Morrison said, noting that he has a three-hour seminar that he is willing to present to any church that seeks his counsel in developing policies for churches.

Allen also drew Conference's attention back to the six BFCON 150 goals (see the Report of the Executive Board) that are helping to provide direction and denominational goals from now up to the 150<sup>th</sup> BFC Conference.

He also announced that David E. Gundrum will be officially retiring after 25 years as the Director of Church Extension Ministries at year's end (though he will continue to serve in a part-time capacity as "Director of Development and Expansion"). Allen said applications are currently being sought for the next Director of Church Extension Ministries.

Clifford B. Boone stepped forward to provide a short explanation of a concerted BFC vision to adopt the Sandawe, an unreached people group of about 40,000 people spread over 32 villages in north-central Tanzania. What began with the vision of a single church, Cedar Crest

BFC of Allentown, PA, expanded to the involvement of several BFC churches as Boone and several others worked among the Sandawe over the span of several years. Church-building among the Sandawe, he said, has taken on a life of its own as the Holy Spirit works among this people group.

Boone explained that the number of churches among the Sandawe is nearing 20. “Now the gospel is there, the Spirit of God is working, and they’re multiplying in ways that we don’t even know. We praise the Lord,” he said. “When we fellowship together in evangelism and in reaching the unreached – missions – a lot of our differences fade away because...we’re in this to reach people with the gospel.”

The sixth and final BFCON 150 focus point, “Expanded ministry opportunities for children and youth in evangelism in discipleship,” led Allen to speak of how Victory Valley Camp is filled to overflowing, so the Bible Fellowship Church is in negotiations with a nearby ministry, Milford Park Bible Camp, as a possible future site for BFC day-camp and other ministries. “We hope to consummate an agreement by this fall,” Allen said.

**Resolved**, that the 2025 revised BFC Executive Board budget be adopted by the 142<sup>nd</sup> BFC Conference.

**Resolved**, that an assessment rate of two (2.0) percent be adopted by the 142<sup>nd</sup> BFC Conference for 2026 (based on assessable receipts from 2024).

**Resolved**, that the 2026 proposed Executive Board budget be adopted by the 142<sup>nd</sup> BFC Conference.

The Executive Board recommended the following resolutions pertaining to the Ministers Retirement Fund (MRF):

**Whereas**, the MRF annuity rate for 2025 is \$221 per year of service, and

**Whereas**, cost-of-living adjustments no longer apply to MRF payments, therefore be it

**Resolved**, that the MRF annuity rate for calendar year 2026 be \$221 per year of service.

Resolution Relating to Rental/Housing Allowances for Retired or Disabled Ministers of this Conference for Calendar Year 2026:

**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 2026 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 Bible Fellowship Church Executive Board has recognized that credentialed BFC pastors who were not members of the MRF at the time when the MRF was closed, but still receive pension benefits that were paid by their church into a 403(b) Retirement Plan, should be able to receive the same recognition as those who receive pension benefits under the MRF.

**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 2026 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."

After lengthy discussion on a piece of proposed First Reading legislation – without a vote being taken – the Moderator opted to adjourn for lunch.

Byron D. Roth, an elder from Ebenezer BFC (Bethlehem, PA) who serves on the BFC Executive Board, prayed as Conference adjourned for lunch at 12:25 p.m.