

For Immediate Release

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FWBBC Students Minister in Illinois Churches

NASHVILLE, TN—A Preaching Team of 10 Free Will Baptist Bible College students filled pulpits in Southern Illinois churches on February 7, ministering to almost 1,100 worshipers, according to John Murray, Christian Service director and event organizer. The weekend trip was part of the college's ongoing effort to provide preaching experience for young ministers and encourage high school students to enroll at the four-year, regionally and nationally accredited institution.

Pastor Ivan Ryan (Arnold View Free Will Baptist Church, Creal Springs), said, "These trips are a win-win-win situation: The young men have the unique opportunity to be in a new area and witness the diversity of our denomination; the churches hear the gospel from a fresh perspective; FWBBC benefits by having an area saturated with information and positive public relations. Our church was blessed to have Brad Davis preach for us. We enjoyed him in our home and feel that we gained a friend."

Through the years, Illinois has been one of FWBBC's strongest supporters with students and finances. The college's first class in 1942 included three Illinois students—Paul Ketteman, Opal Hiltibidal, and George Waggoner. Illinois native Dr. Tom Malone served 12 years as FWBBC's fourth president (1990-2002) and three years as chancellor (2002-2005).

Pastor Harlen Johnson (First Free Will Baptist Church, Benton), gave the preaching weekend high marks: "I was impressed with the students who came to Illinois. They conducted themselves as men and pastors. I'm convinced that preaching trips like this are a great tool to help pastoral students solidify their call to the ministry."

Six students commented on the weekend preaching trip:

Steven Reeder (Junior): “What a blessing to preach God’s Word across the United States. The preaching trips show the love of Free Will Baptist people—they are so friendly and welcome us into their homes.”

Judson M. Phenicie (Sophomore): “This was my fifth preaching trip. They’re great learning experiences and help me to develop my sermons.”

Samuel Benninghoff (Junior): “One reason I enjoy the preaching trips is the new relationships I get to make. I enjoy meeting pastors and spending time with them.”

Zach Maloney (Sophomore): “I really enjoyed connecting with Pastor Harlen Johnson (First FWB Church, Benton). He’s from the same city, same high school, and same home church as me. We know a lot of the same people.”

Rob Wilkerson (Junior): “I try to take advantage of as many preaching trips as possible for their invaluable lessons. The experience gained is what I need most. Those one-on-one times with pastors give me an abundance of knowledge for now and for later in my ministry. I know I will never get these opportunities again.”

Ron Rossman (Sophomore): “The Illinois preaching trip was a wonderful time of student fellowship, ministry growth, and relationship building.”

The Illinois preaching trip ended Sunday evening in time for the vanload of excited preachers to get a good night’s sleep and prepare for Monday classes. The next Preaching Team weekend is scheduled February 20-21 in the Raleigh, North Carolina, area.