

## EQUIPPING CHURCHES

The Pentecostal Free Will Baptist Church (PFWB) is a network of hundreds of Spirit-filled congregations and ordained ministers, located throughout the Southeastern United States, with a missionary presence in 17 foreign countries. Their 150-acre campus, located near Dunn North Carolina, is home to their administrative offices, their Ministry Development Center, Retreat Center, and Activities Building. Also located on that property is Crusader Youth Camp, a fully functional, year-round camp facility.

The PFWB was founded by Dr. Herbert Carter in 1959. Dr. Carter served as the denomination's leader for the first 25 years. The organization today is led by Dr. Carter's son, Rev. Randy Carter. In 2016, under the leadership of General Superintendent Randy Carter, the PFWB launched a four-year plan called **2020 Vision**. Their goal was that they would strive to become a "life-giving organization," one that would breathe life into its ministers, their churches, and the communities they serve. Under Rev. Carter's leadership, they set forth four foci: Leadership Development, Increase in Numbers, Faith Walk, and Equipping the Churches.

*"The mission of the PFWB today is to come alongside our ministers and churches to train and equip them to fulfill God's purpose in their community."*

Randy Carter  
General Superintendent



**Realigning Season**—According to General Superintendent Randy Carter, the PFWB, like many denominations, is entering into a "Re" season, "a time in which we must review everything we are doing, rethink our reason for being, and realign around a few key purposes." His biggest concerns for the denomination, especially in this post-COVID era, is that "we preserve our standard of holiness and our Pentecostal distinctive, minimize the number of our churches, which are either plateaued or in decline, and maintain our cultural relevance in a post-Christian era." In his words, **"If we don't maintain our relevance, we will become a relic."**

Brother Carter believes, "If the Lord should tarry His return, the church will have to draw a line in the sand and take a bold, biblical stand in several key areas—namely in regard to the sanctity of human life, the importance of marriage and family, the biblical parameters for sexual expression, and the biblical guidelines for gender identity. These, and perhaps a few others, are issues many of us never thought we would have to take a stand over, but that's where we find ourselves today, and we must stand firm on God's word."

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**Leadership Development**—In 2017, the PFWB launched the *Healthy Church Intensives*. These were half-day conferences, offered twice a year in each of the districts that make up the denomination. In 2018, they held their first ever Latin American Leaders Conference in San Jose, Costa Rica, bringing together all their national directors from eight different Spanish-speaking countries for three days of leadership training.

In 2019, they hosted a seminar, called *The Turn Around Conference*, designed to help churches experience revitalization. This was presented Sunday after Sunday throughout the denomination. They revamped their ministerial credentialing process and introduced the *School of Ministry*, a three-year process for credentialing new ministers. In all of this, the goal was strengthening *Leadership Development*.

In 2017, the denomination began a partnership with *Right Now Media*, offering, at no cost to their ministers, excellent video materials from some of the nation's most well-known preachers and teachers. Annually, ministers are gifted a thumb drive with more than a year's worth of sermon material to aid them in their own sermon preparation. In 2018, they introduced the *Growth Track*—a PFWB, discipleship program, designed to train and equip their church members in their spiritual growth.

In 2019, the denomination initiated improvements in graphic design, social media, and web presence. This included a complete revamp of their website and development of a brand new PFWB Church App. They introduced the *Children's & Youth Leaders Hangouts*, online sessions via Zoom offered monthly to children's and youth ministries leaders.

One final thing to mention is the *PFWB Coaching Network* for pastors. Last year, amid the pandemic, the PFWB leadership realized that post-COVID, many churches would need help moving forward, so they have developed a coaching network. At no cost to their pastors, they have professional coaching available. These were just some of the initiatives launched these past four years as part of the PFWB's commitment toward *Equipping the Churches*.

When asked about the organization's mission moving forward, Rev. Carter simply says, *"We exist to help our pastors and churches! We assist when they are searching for a pastor, making sure they have qualified prospects to consider. We work closely with deacon and elder boards when conflicts arise in the church. We help churches when they are seeking to enhance their Sunday morning worship experience. We provide discipleship resources for every age group. We offer training in things like outreach and evangelism. We sponsor events designed to help build healthy churches. In other words, we help them fulfill God's purpose in their community. That's our mission. That is what we do . . . We help pastors and churches."*

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**Increase in Numbers**—From 2016-2020 the PFWB saw an unprecedented number of churches experience growth in one form or another. They saw an increased number of churches surpass the 300 mark in Sunday worship attendance, and others moved to multiple Sunday morning services. In some cases, churches launched multiple campuses. During this same period, approximately 90 new candidates entered the ministry, completed the *School of Ministry*, and received their ministerial credentials.

During this four-year period, they opened four new foreign mission fields: Honduras, El Salvador, Uganda, and Tanzania, and hosted their first ever *Church Planters Retreat* with ten couples in attendance. The denomination set a goal to plant four new PFWB churches by the year 2024, and they are on target to reach that goal with two families now planting new PFWB churches in Melbourne, Florida, and Richmond, Virginia. With this increase in numbers, they have initiated a new ministry called *District Care Pastors*. In each district they have appointed district pastors, who are available to help meet the pastoral needs of all their ministers, right in their district.



**Faith Walk**—The third focal point relates to measuring their spiritual development as individuals and as an organization—things like daily devotional life, commitment to prayer, passion in worship, and love for others. While not the most important measurement, it is worthy of mention that over the past four years, they've experienced consistent increases in their ministers' and local church tithes to the denomination!

Implementing "Serve Week," they assisted their churches in annually setting aside one week to focus on serving outside the walls of their local churches in their community. Every year, they report receiving heartwarming stories of how their churches have gone into their communities to serve. In 2020, the PFWB led their churches to participate in a GO 2020 global evangelism initiative, training and motivating their church members to share the gospel with others. The Table, a new Bible Reading program, was introduced and is being embraced by many. These are just some of the ways that the PFWB has seen people grow in their *Faith Walk*.

