

## **Sandy Valley Conference of Free Will Baptists**

**December 3, 2011**

As a result of the request for assistance received from the Gulnare Free Will Baptist Church, we the member churches of the Sandy Valley Conference of Free Will Baptists, after careful study of our existing rules have concluded and advised the pastor of the Gulnare Free Will Baptist Church that the vote concerning interracial marriage was not carried out in accordance with Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised 11<sup>th</sup> Edition Rule #47. Furthermore, the original motion failed to pass by either a simple majority of the entire membership or a two-thirds majority under Rule #68.

We have advised Pastor Stepp of our findings in this matter and he has assured the conference that he will convey this message to his church as soon as possible and declare the motion Null and Void. Furthermore, Pastor Stepp has advised the conference that he and his church will hold a vote of solidarity for the purpose of welcoming believers into their fellowship regardless of race, creed or color. The Sandy Valley Conference will continue to work with the Gulnare Church to rebuild what has been damaged by this tragic error.

The Sandy Valley Conference of Free Will Baptists along with our state and national offices have a long and rich history of striving to promote Christian fellowship and further the Gospel for the glory of God, the unity of the Spirit and the cause of Christ. We will continue to work to rebuild the trust of our community and that of the world. We the churches of the Sandy Valley Conference strongly denounce prejudice, racism and all ungodly forms of conduct whether within the church or without.

Free Will Baptists as a denomination have offered the following statement through the office of Keith Burden, Executive Secretary:

December 1, 2011

### **Free Will Baptist Executive Office Statement Regarding Interracial Couples**

Antioch, TN—Recently, the action of a Free Will Baptist church in the state of Kentucky raised questions regarding the position of the National Association of Free Will Baptists on interracial couples. This statement is intended to bring clarity to the subject.

The National Association of Free Will Baptists does not have an official policy regarding interracial couples because it has not been an issue in the denomination.

The Free Will Baptist Treatise neither condemns nor disallows marriage between a man and woman of different races.

Free Will Baptists have historically championed the rights and dignity of all people, regardless of race. The denomination's leadership in the abolition movement is evidence of that fact. Free Will Baptists currently spend millions of dollars each year to take the good news of Jesus Christ to people of every race.

Many interracial couples are members of Free Will Baptist churches. They are loved, accepted, and respected by their congregations. It is unfair and inaccurate to characterize the denomination as racist.

It is our understanding that steps are being taken by the church in question to reverse its decision. We encourage the church to follow through with this action. Leaders from the local conference and state association in Kentucky are working with the church to resolve this matter.