



Here & Now

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An update for Florida Baptist Historical Society Board of Directors and Friends

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Dear Board Members and Friends of the Florida Baptist Historical Society,

If history does anything it gives perspective. We can look back and learn. I decided to experiment with a "70 year" perspective as we close out this year. The reason I chose 70 years ago is because that is the oldest bound issue we have of the *Florida Baptist Witness*. The year 1944 was a year of war, shortages and frustration. But as I look at the December 28, 1944, *Florida Baptist Witness* there are some areas where I can draw important lessons for today.

In 1944, Southern Baptists used the media of radio to reach people all across America. "The Baptist Hour: in December, 1944, presented radio sermons by Wallace Bassett, M. E. Dodd, W. A. Criswell, Louie Newton, C. Roy Angell, Theron Rankin and Duke McCall. Here is a challenge: With all the great Bible teachers and preachers that Southern Baptists have today why can't we have a weekly television program featuring one of our great preachers? Why not call it "The Baptist Hour"?

Seventy years ago Baptists were getting ready to celebrate "Baptist World Alliance" Sunday. The World Baptist organization stated that the emphasis would be our "stand for the gospel" and "religious freedom." I propose a challenge: Is it not time for Southern Baptists to get back involved with the Baptist World Alliance? Do we not want to stand with fellow Baptists around the world on the gospel and religious liberty?

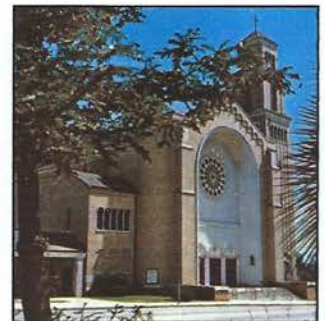


Another 70 year lesson I learned from the December 28, 1944, *Florida Baptist Witness* was the emphasis on Sunday School Attendance. Five of the top ten Sunday School attendance churches were Central, Miami (1,075), Main Street, Jacksonville (966), First, Pensacola (648), and First, Daytona Beach (592). Here is the challenge: Why not run the Sunday School Attendance numbers for participating churches in a Sunday School column in the *Florida Baptist Witness*? It could be an encouragement to all Florida Baptists to see the thousands of people who attend Sunday School each week.

70 years ago our Florida Baptist churches were also having a tithing campaign. First Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale signed up deacons, Sunday School teachers and committee members and announced they had 140 tithers. A challenge: Why can't we have a stewardship campaign and ask people to commit to tithe in the new year? Start with the church staff and then go to the deacons and Sunday School workers. 70 years ago they signed up people who would commit to tithe. If we are not careful a fear of legalism, privacy, political correctness and controversy can cause us to lose the joy of church wide stewardship commitment.



C. Roy Angell



First Baptist Church,
Pensacola

5400 College Drive ~ Graceville, Florida 32440

Telephone: 850-263-3261, Ext. 480 ~ E-mail: fbhspt1@baptistcollege.edu ~ web: floridabaptisthistory.org



Baptism, Sirmans Baptist Church, Greenville, Florida

How about a baptismal goal for the new year? 70 years ago Florida Baptist churches would often set baptismal goals for the local fellowship. First Baptist Church, Jacksonville set a baptismal goal of 400 for the year 1945. A challenge: We are prayed up. Why not set a local baptismal goal for a statewide evangelistic emphasis? Encourage each church to set a baptismal goal and then pray, plan, work and agonize toward the goal.

In 1944, we were at war as a nation. One emphasis they had in the heat of battle was a special call to prayer for the wives of those serving in the military. Chaplains sent out an urgent call for a Godly home front that included Christian wives praying for their own marriages and the safe return of their warrior husbands. Another challenge: In our local churches do we pray for our military families as we should? Could this be a 70 year perspective challenge for our local churches?



Jack Dalton,
Air Force Chaplain

Seventy years ago there was also a challenge and game plan for increasing the subscriptions to the *Florida Baptist Witness*. In 1944, an example was given of how each Florida Baptist church could raise up a subscription leader to have people in the church receive the state paper. How about a 70 year challenge here: Could we find an individual in 1,000 of our churches that would challenge the local fellowship to subscribe to the *Florida Baptist Witness*? Our people would be more informed and our churches would benefit.

For some 70 years can be a lifetime. For all of us 70 years can give a historical perspective from which we as Florida Baptists can learn.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33