



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,

Southern Baptists did a days work when they brought James L. Sullivan (1910-2004) to the Southern Baptist Sunday School Board. Dr. Sullivan chose J. N. Barnette to head the Sunday School Department at the Sunday School Board in Nashville and good things happened. A "Million More in '54," was one of the Barnette promotional ideas that caught on with Southern Baptists. The SBC goal was to enroll one million new members in Sunday School in 1954. The goal was not met but there was a net increase of 597,361 in convention Sunday School enrollment and that set a record and a trend that has been vital in convention work. N. B. Langford (1930-1998) knew how to build Sunday Schools. N. B. told me "you better take care of Sunday School and finances or they will take care of you." N. B. served as President of the Florida Baptist Convention (1978 and 1979) and as pastor of First Baptist Church, Panama City until his death in 1998.



James L. Sullivan



N. B. Langford

1954 was a big year at the Sunday School Board in Nashville. Four items of special interest to any Sunday School student occurred in that year. Dr. W. A. Criswell (1909-2002) was elected chairman of the Board. The internal organization of the board was revised into four divisions: Education, Service, Merchandise and Business. New job descriptions, job evaluations and salary structures were instituted and the "Million More in '54," campaign was commenced. In light of Sunday School Board history all four actions were momentous. In light of Southern Baptist church response the enrollment campaign was earth moving.

On January 6, 1954, Bill Davis, a lost oil field worker was visited by California pastor LeRoy Hux. It was a door knocking visit for Sunday School enrollment. Hux found out that Davis and his wife were lost. He led both of them to Christ and baptized them. Davis was called to preach and had a son-in-law and three grandchildren to graduate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. Jay Raines, a grandson, served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Cameron, Missouri, and said that simple knock on the door "changed the history of our family." In 1954, Sunday School enrollment began soul winning and in 2006, Raines developed a website entitled "Million More" to celebrate the 1954 endeavor. The website is not active now but the concept of "one more door" hangs on. T. L. Holcomb called the 1954 effort the "greatest Sunday School campaign ever launched." Evangelist C. E. Matthews said "A Million More in '54" will mark the beginning of the greatest evangelistic effort in the history of Baptists." Both men were right and the state of Florida also committed to do their share.



W. A. Criswell

In Florida, C. F. Barry, the state Sunday School Secretary of the Florida Baptist Convention served as chairman of the "Million More" committee. The state was divided into four districts and Harold Sanders (Northwest), Homer Lindsey (Northeast), Elwood Rawls (Central) and John Halderman (South) were chairs of the different areas. Each association had an associational representative and Miss Harriett Buff, of Gulf Stream Association, was the only female chosen out of the 39 associations to be an enrollment leader. A statewide Sunday School Convention

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John Maguire

was held February 23-25, 1953, to prepare pastors, ministers of education and superintendents of Sunday School for the 1954 outreach effort. The meeting was held at First Baptist Church, Lakeland and John Maguire was the featured speaker. A highlight of the Sunday School meeting was the introduction of the new song, "A Million More in '54" written by Hines Simms, of the Music Department of the Sunday School Board.

The Southern Baptist Convention set out to enroll one million and Florida Baptists set some worthy goals also. C. F. Barry led Florida Baptists to set 50,000 as the net enrollment goal, with 900 Vacation Bible Schools conducted.

Southern Baptists enrolled 597,361 members in the Sunday School campaign and Florida Baptists enrolled 38,161 in the 1954 outreach campaign with 739 Vacation Bible Schools conducted. Although the enrollment and VBS goals were not met progress was achieved with grand results.

Sunday School Enrollment

	<u>1900</u>	<u>1930</u>	<u>1955</u>
SBC	670,569	2,839,183	5,024,553
FBC	10,127	84,843	319,533

The "Million More in '54" campaign proved five valuable lessons for Florida Baptists. One, Sunday School affects baptisms. Two, Sunday School affects finances, Three, Sunday School affects discipleship. Fourth, Sunday School influences worship practices. Fifth, all departments can work together in achieving maximum efforts in Kingdom service.

Some of you might remember "A Million More in '54." Some of you might have participated in the program. If so let us know that we might add your written experiences to our "Million More" testimonies.

Sixty years ago Florida Baptists learned lessons they can still use today.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33
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