



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,

Many of us as Florida Baptists remember June 11-13, 1985, in Dallas. My wife and I and our two children attended the Southern Baptist Convention that year and as many of you remember history was made. It was an unusual convention and 30 years ago Floridians were right in the middle of it. 1984-1985 were busy years as Florida Baptists prayed, planned, traveled, fellowshiped, worshipped and voted in the largest Southern Baptist Convention meeting ever.

I. Florida Plans

Florida Baptists had their own ideas and strategies as what could be done to make the 1985 Dallas convention a successful one.

Subsidize the messengers. Charles Horton, pastor of College Park Baptist Church in Orlando, led his church to "emphasize the importance" of convention by putting a line item in their 1985 budget listed as "Southern Baptist Convention Laity Messengers." Seven of their ten church messengers were lay people and this money was to help defray their convention expenses.

Evangelist E. J. Daniels of Orlando stated that churches "should borrow money if necessary" to pay the expenses of every messenger to which they are entitled.



Jim Henry

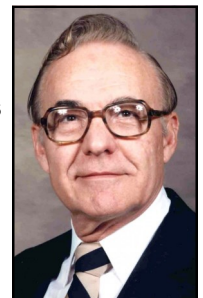
Serve on convention committees. Bill Hickem was president of the Florida Baptist Convention and played an important role in establishing the peace committee. Out of the 22 member committee three of them were Florida Baptists and included Doyle Carlton, Jim Henry and Jerry Vines. Adrian Rogers was a former Floridian on the committee and John Sullivan was a future Floridian who served.

Lois Wenger was secretary of the SBC Executive Committee and Elvin Hall and Jerry Passmore served on the Executive Committee. Charles Stanley, a former Floridian was elected convention president and Lee Porter a future Floridian served as registration secretary. Mrs. James Ponder, Jim Henry, Bryan Judge and Lewis Miller served on the Foreign Mission Board. Emit Ray, Thomas Draper, O. S. Hawkins and William F. Tanner, served on the Home Mission Board. James Fortinberry, Joe Courson, Robert Rowell and Bill Anderson served on the Sunday School Board. Charlie Webb and Woodrow Pinson served on the Annuity Board.

Southern Baptist Convention Seminary trustees included Alton Butler, W. T. Harrison and James L. Monroe serving on the Southern board. Stanley Hand served on the Southwestern board and Joe Dubose served on the New Orleans trustee board. Charles Horton served on the Southeastern board, Philip Lykes on the Midwestern board and Sandra Casteel on the Golden Gate board. Many other Floridians served on special boards and commissions with an attitude of cooperation and service.

II. Florida Messengers

Dan Stringer said 887 messenger cards were requested in 1984. When the next convention arrived Florida Baptists had requested 2,760 messenger cards for the 1985 Dallas Convention.



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Dan Stringer

An unusual move came about when the decision was reached by the SBC order of Business Committee to only seat messengers on the floor of the Dallas Convention Center on the first day. Provision was made for 300 preschool children but that number was quickly filled and exceeded. Many hotels began offering baby sitters out of necessity.

In 1984, Florida had 651 registered messengers at Kanas City. That was 3.81% of the 17,101 messengers present. In 1984, Florida ranked third in Cooperative Program giving and Texas was first and Georgia second.

III. Florida Outcomes

Historians and theologians will always be writing about the theological and ecclesiastical outcomes of 1985, but as Florida Baptists lets look at the statistical outcome.

Pastor's Conference. O. S. Hawkins was pastor of First Baptist Church, Fort Lauderdale in 1985 and he was also president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastor's Conference.



O. S. Hawkins

Over 20,000 people attended the 1985 SBC Pastor's Conference at the Dallas Convention Center. It was the largest attendance in the 50 year history of that organization. Two other well known Floridians were also on the program. Jack Graham, pastor of First Baptist Church, West Palm Beach and James Kennedy, pastor of Coral Ridge Presbyterian Church in Fort Lauderdale. Kennedy was well known for "Evangelism Explosion" and the fact that he was saved, called to preach and called as pastor all on the same day. Former Floridian Adrian Rogers got standing applause when he preached on seven principles that gave David victory over Goliath.

1985 Southern Baptist Convention. A total of 45,431 messengers attended the 1985 convention. The previous record attendance was 22,872 at Atlanta in 1978. Food, parking, housing and logistics were stretched. There were 1,885 registered messengers from Florida and that represented 4.4% of the total convention messengers.

Texas turned out big time and had 12,634 messengers or 27.76% of the total. Vermont had 8 messengers, Delaware had nine and Maine had one. There were 45,431 messengers and 44,248 cast a ballot in the SBC presidential election.

Florida Baptists will be talking, writing and evaluating the 1985 SBC convention for a long time. However, there is one good thing to remember. In 1985, Florida Baptists were willing to give, cooperate and serve the master.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

Jerry M. Windsor
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Matthew 6:33
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