



Here & Now

Vol. 3

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,

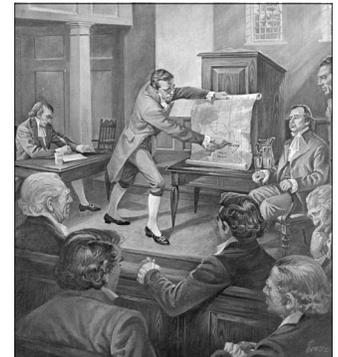
Historically there are certain entities and circumstances that have assisted Baptists in their search for gospel truth, teaching and thrust. Some of those circumstances include civil disobedience, freedom of the press, Bible distribution, freedom of speech and church planting.

Some of the entities that have made Baptist work successful have been local congregations, association with other Baptist churches, orphanages, colleges, seminaries, state conventions, retirement programs, national conventions and world wide Baptist organizations.

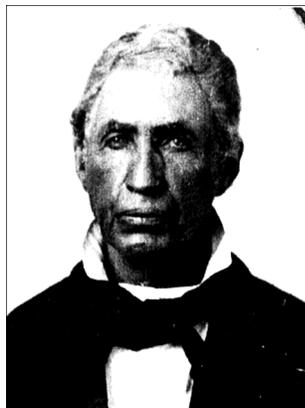
Yet there is one ministry that is not mentioned above that is sometimes overlooked as a Baptist instrument of truth, teaching and thrust. That is the ministry of the state Baptist paper. A state denominational paper sets the tone in ecclesiology and theology in many Baptist homes. There are clergy and lay people who read every issue of their state paper with anticipation and open mindedness to missions, education, evangelism, stewardship and theological trends. Educated lay people are busy and end up trusting denominational publications for facts, figures and perspective.

USA Baptist Paper

Luther Rice (1783-1836) was the publisher of *The Columbian Star* which was the first weekly Baptist family newspaper in the United States. Rice began the journal in 1822 but the publication was closely tied to Columbian College, Washington D. C. and failed because of debt and lack of support. If this sounds like failure remember Luther Rice is known as the man who "changed the scattered Baptist churches into a Baptist denomination."



Luther Rice at
Triennial Convention



James McDonald

Florida Baptist Papers

In 1848, *The Baptist Telegraph and Florida Emigrant* was published by James McDonald. This was a brave move for there were only four Baptist associations in the state. There was Suwannee (1835), Florida (1843), Alachua (1847) and West Florida (1847) associations but they had less than a total of 100 churches. The Florida Baptist Convention was not begun until 1854 so this publishing effort failed due to a lack of leadership, organization and finances.

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Florida Baptist

The Florida Baptist Convention saw the need for better communication and correspondence and in 1872, H. B. McCallum became editor of *The Florida Baptist*. He came to Florida in 1867, and died in 1883. He was well received in Florida and was a forceful speaker and gifted writer. Financial pressure was the primary cause of the failure of this publication effort.

The Florida Baptist Witness

Three men need to be recognized in the birth of the *Florida Baptist Witness* in 1884. W. N. Chaudoin, B. F. Moodie, and A. P. Ashurst. These men came early and Chaudoin stayed late. These three had the vision, and dreams can always find dollars. It was still a struggle and 23 editors served from 1884 to 1918. Times were difficult and four different men served as editor in 1888. Yet the paper survived because visionaries saw the value of Baptists being informed.



W. N. Chaudoin



E. D. Solomon

A State Paper

J. W. Mitchell worked with the *Witness* from 1918-1928. Edward Davis Solomon (1875-1957) served as editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* from 1931-1949. He was one of the most informed and involved Baptists to ever serve in our state convention. It was announced in 1945 that the *Florida Baptist Witness* "is the only paper published in Florida that covers the whole state."

W. G. Stracener served as editor from 1949-1970 and Edgar R. Cooper was editor from 1971-1983. Jack E. Brymer served from 1984-1994 and Michael Chute from 1995-2001. In January, 2001, James Smith became the editor of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and has led the *Witness* to be truth, teaching and thrust for every Florida Baptist subscriber. Through theological, educational, economic and social unrest we have learned we need our state Baptist paper for facts and perspectives. Our state Baptist paper is part of the glue in being Baptist. It is a great financial investment because we get eternal spiritual returns.

A. J. Holt (1847-1933) served as editor from 1914-1918. He once wrote: "Speed the *Witness* on its way: it is here and here to stay."



James Smith

Honoring those who honor Christ,



Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33