



Here & Now

Vol. 7

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

No. 11

November, 2015



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

War clouds are not new to Baptists. The Revolutionary War, the Civil War, Spanish American War, WWI, WWII, Korea, Vietnam and Mideast war experiences have affected American Baptists in very special ways.

It appears to be that facing a war on terrorism calls for a Baptist recollection of how we as Florida Baptists have responded to war in the past.

I want to take one snap shot of Florida Baptists and war, from the January 15, 1942, *Florida Baptist Witness*. I think there are some important wartime considerations from that one issue.

First. Florida Baptists seemed willing to face the facts. In the 1942 issue there were sermons, an editorial, appeals and reports of the war. The war was only five weeks old, but a reality check was called for by the paper.

Second. There was a sermonic response. "Remember Pearl Harbor" was a published topical sermon by pastor Fred D. Gant of Bethany Baptist Church in Plant City. The sermon calls for Florida Baptists to face the grimness of war with faith in God, faith in ourselves, faith in our fellowman, and stubborn determination.

Third. There was an emotional response. A. B. Cannady published an article entitled, "The Preacher and the War." Cannady suggests two actions to be taken by all Florida Baptist preachers. He stated that preachers should preach that every person may have peace in his soul through the gospel, even when war is raging. He also noted that we must "get on with the war." At this point Cannady slipped into dramatic charges and name calling. Cannady said, "For years we have been selling scrap iron to Japan and now she is shooting it back at us." He also referred to the "Japs" and "gangsters," that were our enemies. His patriotism turned into personal vendetta when he said, "We must get on with the war 'till every gangster is captured...":



Colin P. Kelly

Editor, E. D. Solomon gave a personal testimony of his military service in WWI. Solomon served as a chaplain in WWI, and observed that he had great difficulty reaching some of the hardened veterans in his tank division. This changed he said when he learned to "serve them" rather than criticize them.

Rev. William C. Kernan was heard from in an article entitled, "Sacrifice for Peace." Kernan made the appeal to peace as opposed to an attempt to gain prestige and power. There is an appeal to logic, common sense and accountability. Kernan reminded Florida Baptists that "communion with God" is the only valid source of peace and power.



E. D. Solomon

Gant in his Pearl Harbor sermon bordered on emotional manipulation when he recalled the heroism of Florida Baptist war hero Colin P. Kelly. Gant said, "I believe that ringing in the ears of that hero, that native son of Florida, Capt. Colin P. Kelly, as he threw his plane into that dive that carried him down! Within the very mouth of those belching anti-aircraft guns to release the bombs that were to send that Jap battleship to the bottom of the ocean, was those very words, REMEMBER PEARL HARBOR!"



J. L. Rosser

Pastor J. L. Rosser had a more measured response in that fateful 1942 issue. Rosser told the story of the warship *Heron* and its successful fight against fifteen Japanese planes. Rosser recalled that the commander of the *Heron* had been baptized by Rosser when the naval leader was a boy. Rosser concluded that each of us is at war with the world, flesh and the devil and we need to be true to Jesus Christ, our commander-in-chief.

In January, 1942, war brought out recollections, reflections, denunciation and challenges from various Florida Baptists. But there were also some wartime lessons that could serve us well today. Note some of them.

Jesus Christ is the Prince of Peace. There is no other way and no other hope. World missions, Lottie Moon offerings, the Co-operative Program are instruments with an aim. They are to introduce people to the Prince of Peace and the joy he brings.

There is no shame in Christian citizenship. Jesus said, "render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's."

The church has a voice that needs to be heard. In wartime people are hurt, confused, afraid and in doubt. A clear Biblical trumpet sound of hope in Jesus is light in darkness.

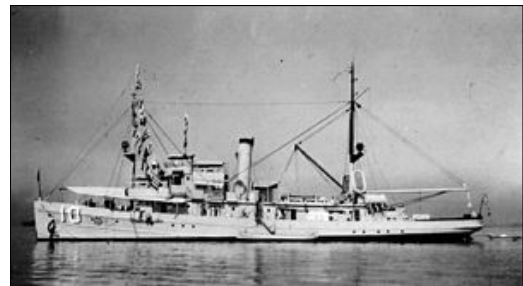
Name calling, denigration and hate has no place in a Christian heart. Rules of war may be valid or not, but Christian hearts never have place for hate and discrimination.

Terrorism is wrong in Pearl Harbor and Paris. Christian love and confidence has its place in all of history.

Honoring those who honor Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jerry M. Windsor".

Jerry M. Windsor
Secretary-Treasurer
Matthew 6:33
jmwindsor@baptistcollege.edu



USS Heron

Bee Ridge Baptist Church, Sarasota, will be celebrating it's 100th Anniversary on February 7, 2016. All are invited to attend.