

The Florida Baptist Historical Society seeks to **preserve the legacy** of Florida Baptist pastoral leaders and laity, the past and present functioning Baptist churches, the State Convention's cooperating ministries and milestone events that were historically significant to Florida Baptists. The Society's mission is accomplished through a variety of ministry services provided to Florida Baptists. To underscore this emphasis the Society's monthly newsletter, LEGACY, seeks to highlight the legacy endowed by the people, churches and events in Florida Baptist history. During the next several months this newsletter will feature those persons whose legacy in Florida Baptist life was achieved in part, by their service as president of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

As noted in previous issues of LEGACY, since 1854 (excluding the seven years at various times the State Convention did not meet), the persons elected as president have included 78 pastors and 16 laypersons. The first two issues of LEGACY featured brief profiles on those 16 laypersons. Continuing this month, we provide brief profiles on selected pastors who served as State Convention president.

Edwin L. Mason, President 1980

Edwin Mason (b. 1916; d. 2016) was one of 16 laypersons – whose Convention service was **featured in the February, 2019, issue of *Legacy*** – served as Convention President in 1980. He was a member of First Baptist Church, Tallahassee.

Alton Butler, President 1981

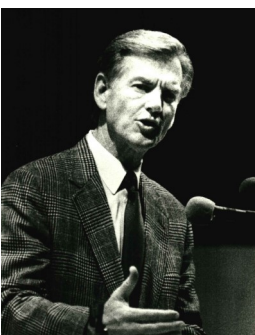
Alton Butler (b. 1926; d. 2016) was pastor of the Myrtle Grove Baptist Church, Pensacola, at the time he served as Convention President in 1981.

Messengers considered nearly a dozen recommendations including a proposal they approved to purchase 25 acres of land in Jackson County to establish the proposed Blue Springs Assembly. A motion by messenger B. Eddie Holmes of Madison sought to direct the State Board of Missions to **rescind a policy that churches and missions receiving financial aid from the Convention be required to commit to contributing ten percent annually through the Cooperative Program** an increase from the prior five percent requirement. The matter was referred back to the State Board of Missions for further study. (See 1982 State Convention meeting for State Board of Missions report).

William E. Anderson, President 1982

William E. Anderson (b. 1935; to present) was serving as pastor (1975 – 2001) of the Calvary Baptist Church, Clearwater, at the time of his service as Convention President in 1982.

The State Board of Missions, as a follow-up to a request made by the State Convention the prior year reported on their revised policy on financial assistance to churches and missions. **The Board chairman reported the newly revised policy required churches and missions receiving financial assistance from the Convention to contribute through the Cooperative Program “at a percentage rate equal to the percentage rate” of the average Florida Baptist church.** The Board chairman stated that the current average of giving through the Cooperative Program is between seven and eight percent. There was no further challenge to the reported Board policy.



Bill E. Anderson

Babb H. Adams, President 1983

Babb H. Adams (b. 1928; d. 2013) was serving as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Inverness, at the time of his service as Convention President in 1983.

The messengers approved a recommendation by the State Board of Missions to **purchase 400 acres of land near LaBelle (Lake Okeechobee area) as the proposed site of a future South Florida Satellite Assembly**. The Board also recommended and messengers approved a request by the Trustees of the Baptist Bible Institute that the school be permitted to increase its then-current enrolment ceiling by 25 students per year for the five-year period 1984 – 1988.

Jerry A. Passmore, President, 1984

Jerry A. Passmore (b. 1934; to present), pastor of the Olive Baptist Church, Pensacola, served as Convention President in 1984. Following his pastoral service at Olive (1972 – 1989) he was employed as the Evangelism Division director of the Florida Baptist Convention.

The State Board of Missions presented the **1985 Cooperative Program budget which divided income on a 50/50 distribution basis** between the state convention's ministry programs and the Southern Baptist Convention. The messengers' enthusiastic approval signaled a return to an equal distribution of Cooperative Program gifts which had been suspended in 1964. **The 50/50 split had been promoted and developed by Florida Baptist Convention Secretary-Treasurer John Maguire in his 1948-49 budget proposals and continued in subsequent Convention budgets until 1964.**



Jerry Passmore

Bill G. Hickem, President 1985

Bill G. Hickem, (b. 1928; to present), had previously served on the administrative staff of the Florida Baptist Convention (1980 – 1983), before being called as pastor of the Riverside Baptist Church, Jacksonville. The following year he was elected as Convention President to serve in 1985.

Messengers endorsed a proposed **1986 Cooperative Program budget which increased slightly – to 50.1 percent from 50 percent – the amount to be shared with the Southern Baptist Convention**. The messengers approved several recommendations to revise the governing document of the Baptist Bible Institute, which among other things increased the number of trustees for the school. Also approved was a study committee – with representatives from the State Board of Missions and the Institute's trustees – to consider the future development of the Institute and “meeting changes in educational needs [with] in the Florida Baptist Convention.”



Max E. Cadenhead

Max E. Cadenhead, President, 1986

Max E. Cadenhead (b. 1929; d. 1991) was the pastor of the First Baptist Church, Naples, since 1982, when he was elected to serve as Convention President in 1986. Prior to his service at Naples, Cadenhead served (1975 – 1982) as an evangelism associate and later as evangelism director of the Florida Baptist Convention.

The chairman of the State Board of Missions reported that due to a lower than anticipated increase in Cooperative Program gifts from churches, **the proposed 1987 Cooperative Program budget would have a reduction in the percentage allocation – to 50 percent from 50.1 percent – earmarked for the Southern Baptist Convention**. He noted the necessary inclusion of the Convention's debt retirement funding into the basic budget had resulted in a reduction in Convention program ministry allocations and no increased funding for agencies and institutions. A

protracted discussion by messengers ensued over two sessions, complete with proposed amendments to the State Board's budget recommendation. Finally the messengers adopted the Board's proposed budget.

Bill W. Coffman, President, 1987

Bill W. Coffman (b. 1935; to present) was serving as pastor (1984 – 1990) of the Arlington Baptist Church, Jacksonville, at the time of his service of Convention President in 1987. Subsequently in 1990, Coffman was employed as the Language Missions Director and later as the Cooperative Program Promotion director of the Florida Baptist Convention. [1987 report continued on next page.]

For the third consecutive year the proposed Cooperative Program budget was the focus of messengers' attention. This time it was the five-year budget plan which was entering its second cycle, but featured a reduction in the percentage allocation to the State Convention's agencies and institutions during the ensuing five years. Although a few messengers expressed concern for certain institutions, the proposal was approved. **With the change in percentage allocations to agencies and institutions approved, messengers next approved the 1988 Cooperative Program budget. That recommendation held the line on the 50/50 distribution of income between the Florida Baptist causes and the Southern Baptist Convention.** Messengers also approved a series of resolutions which condemned alcohol and social drinking, pornography and planned Congressional action to permit increased casino gambling in states such as Florida which prohibit casinos.

Bobby H. Welch, President, 1988

Bobby H. Welch (b. 1943; to present), who at age 31 in 1974 was called to serve as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Daytona Beach, and served 32 years until 2006. While at Daytona Beach, Welch was elected to serve in 1988 as Convention President. Welch also holds the distinction of being one of eight current or former Florida Baptist pastors who served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention, which for Welch included two terms, 2005 and 2006.



Bobby H. Welch

One of the highlights of the State Convention meeting was the retirement recognition of Executive Director-Treasurer Dan Stringer who had served since 1979. Among the several recognition gifts was a 1989 Jeep Cherokee. In other action, **the State Board of Missions proposed a 1989 Cooperative Program budget which reduced the percentage allocation to the Southern Baptist Convention – to 47.65 percent from 50 percent – and increased the Florida Baptist causes allocation to 52.35 percent.** The Board chairman cited reduced income from church gifts and the increase in fixed operating costs. After extended pros and cons comments by several messengers, the proposed budget was approved.

The messengers approved eight proposed revisions to the State Convention's Constitution and Bylaws, as well as revisions to the governing documents of the Florida Baptist Children's Homes and the Baptist Bible Institute. Also the messengers approved a proposal to transfer to the Children's Homes the responsibility for operating the Florida Baptist Retirement Center from oversight by the Convention's Business Services office.

Bill F. Billingsley, President, 1989

Bill F. Billingsley (b. 1934; d. 1998) was the founding pastor in 1963, of the Sheridan Hills Baptist Church, Hollywood, at the time of his election as Convention President to serve in 1989. Billingsley holds the distinction of having presided over two sessions of the State Convention held in the same year – 1989.

This was a rare called special session (other session held in 1967) of the State Convention which was held in September to address the issue of sanctity of human life, energizing efforts to stop legalized abortions, and encourage Florida Baptists to offer alternatives to abortion. A single "Recommendation on the Sanctity of Human Life" was presented, discussed and approved by an overwhelming majority of the 1,708 messengers in attendance. Program speakers included Florida Governor Bob Martinez, Evangelist David Ring and John Sullivan, recently elected executive director-treasurer, Florida Baptist Convention.

During the regular November State Convention messengers approved without discussion the **proposed 1990 Cooperative Program budget which reflected an adjusted distribution of Cooperative Program income to a 49.25 percent to the Southern Baptist Convention and 50.75 percent to Florida Baptist causes.** The messengers also approved 13 revisions to the State Convention's Constitution and Bylaws and six revisions to the Bylaws of the State Board of Missions.

The sequential order of State Convention Presidents between 1980 and 1989:

Edwin L. Mason, 1980	Bill G. Hickem, 1985
Alton Butler, 1981	Max E. Cadenhead, 1986
William E. Anderson, 1982	Bill W. Coffman., 1987
Babb H. Adams, 1983	Bobby H. Welch, 1988
Jerry A. Passmore, 1984	Bill F. Billingsley, 1989

[Series to continue next month]