

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.

Heritage Award Announced



The Florida Baptist Historical Society is pleased to announce that the 2019 recipient of the Baptist Heritage Award is Dr. Thomas Kinchen. The award presentation is planned during the October meeting of the Board of Trustees, The Baptist College of Florida.

The Society's Board of Directors determined earlier this year, as they considered potential candidates to be the 2019 Award recipient, there was one individual whose contributions to the preservation of Florida Baptist history has been unique.

Dr. Thomas Kinchen, as president of The Baptist College of Florida, readily offered to accept stewardship of the Florida Baptist Historical Collection which had been surrendered by Stetson University in the late-1990s. The collection, which at the time, contained nearly 1000 volumes of unique publications on Florida Baptist church histories and other significant volumes related to Southern Baptist history, was added to the library collection of The Baptist College of Florida.

Additionally, Dr. Kinchen made provision on the college campus to accommodate at no cost the offices of the Florida Baptist Historical Society for nearly two decades between 1998 and 2017. In a rare effort to retain and restore historically significant Baptist church buildings, Dr. Kinchen conceived and led the college board of trustees to approve the establishment of the Heritage Village on the college campus. The Heritage Village is comprised of an eight-acre site on the northeast corner of the college property. The Village features mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century wood frame structures consisting of three churches, a school building, a WPA-constructed community center and five former residences. All the structures were removed from their original locations in the Florida Panhandle and South Georgia and transported to the Village. Once re-located the buildings were renovated to provide modern electrical and plumbing services and were restored to retain the integrity of the building's original architectural design and construction.

Dr. Kinchen has served as college president since 1990, when the school was still known as the Florida Baptist Theological College. He came to the Graceville school from the West Virginia Convention of Southern Baptists where he served as the Executive Secretary-Treasurer from 1986. He previously served as a pastor of churches in Georgia and Louisiana. Dr. Kinchen also served several academic-administrative positions on the staff of the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary prior to going to West Virginia.

The Thomasville, Georgia, native graduated from the Georgia Southern College with a B.A. degree, and the University of Georgia, with a Master of Education degree. He later attended the New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary earning a Master of Divinity degree and the Doctor of Education degree.

Since 1997 the Florida Baptist Historical Society has conferred the Baptist Heritage Award to 22 individuals. Award recipients must have exhibited rare and unusual dedication to the cause of Florida Southern Baptist history and shall have made a significant impact through such means as writing Baptist history, teaching Baptist history, and/or promoting the importance of Florida Southern Baptist history.

And Now Back to Our Continuing Series

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.

J. C. Mitchell, 1990

John Charles Mitchell (b. 1928 to present) was serving as pastor (from 1971), First Baptist Church, Winter Park, when he was elected to serve as State Convention president in 1990. After retiring from the Winter Park church, Dr. Mitchell served as the executive director of the Pembroke Foundation and later organized Senior Partners for Planting New Churches.

The 1990 annual meeting was characterized by an historically rare challenge made to the report from the Committee on Nominations, which was presenting a slate of nominees to fill vacancies on State Convention boards of agencies and institutions. Among the slate of ten nominees to serve three-year terms as a trustee of the Florida Baptist Theological College, was Patrick R. Anderson of Lakeland who was completing his first term (1988 – 1990) on the college board. Messenger John Clough of Oviedo objected to the inclusion of Anderson as a nominee, although the official proceedings minutes do not detail the reason for the challenge. Subsequent votes by show of hands and then a standing vote resulted in the presiding officer ruling the entire Committee report defeated. Several messengers questioned the vote and the resulting decision.

A motion to reconsider the Committee on Nominations' full report was made and approved. In the discussion that followed it was explained by the presiding officer that any change to the report of the Committee on Nominations would have to be first approved by the committee. As time for that business item expired due to a fixed item of scheduled business, the matter was temporarily postponed to a later time. **Later in that morning session**, during a designated "Miscellaneous Business" segment, a motion was made to substitute Michael T. Hailey of Lakeland for Anderson. The chair recognized Patrick Anderson on a request of personal privilege to speak. The official proceedings minutes do not record Anderson's comments. A lengthy pro and con discussion by messengers ensued. The chair finally ruled that the messengers could vote on the Committee of Nominations report as amended by leaving vacant the one trustee position being challenged, until the Committee could report its decision on the challenged nominee. The amended report was approved.

The following morning the Committee on Nominations' chairman reported the Committee was substituting the name of Robert E. Reccord of Brandon to replace Patrick Anderson whose name was listed in the previously distributed printed committee report. Discussion ensued with several messengers expressing supportive comments about Anderson and his prior service "with distinction" on the College board. A messenger moved to substitute the Committee recommended Robert Reccord's name with Patrick Anderson's name. The presiding officer ruled that messengers would vote to elect either Patrick Anderson or Robert Reccord. A standing vote proved inconclusive and the chair called for a vote by ballot. An hour or so later, the Tellers Committee reported that 507 ballots were cast with 211 votes (41.6 percent) for Anderson and 296 votes (58.4 percent) for Reccord. The presiding officer declared that the Committee on Nominations' report was amended to reflect Robert E. Reccord as the approved nominee to serve on the Board of Trustees of the Florida Baptist Theological College.

The historical significance: For the first time in the twentieth century, Convention messengers undertook a protracted process to replace a person who had effectively completed one of two possible three-year terms on a board of trustees. Additionally, Anderson was never accused of having committed any illegal or immoral action nor had he expressed any theological heresy during his board service. It should be noted that during other annual meetings, in a more mundane process, messengers either attempted or did replace nominees (see 1991 annual meeting), which is their inherent right. However, none of those actions was carried out in such a protracted and tortuous process, which makes the action against Patrick Anderson all the more noteworthy in Florida Baptist State Convention history.



J. C. Mitchell



Guy Sanders

Guy S. Sanders, 1991

Guy S. Sanders, III (b. 1948 to present), at the time of his election as State Convention president, was serving as pastor (1982 – 1994) of the First Baptist Church, Lake Wales. Between 1994 and 1998, Dr. Sanders served as co-pastor of the Immanuel Baptist Church, Wichita, Kansas, and later returned to Florida in 2000, to accept the pastorate of the First Baptist Church, New Port Richey.

As occurred in the prior year’s annual meeting, several messengers attempted to amend the report of the Committee on Nominations to replace as many as five nominees. Messenger Joyce Page of Daytona Beach, without citing specific rationale moved to delete five nominees from the Committee’s report. The presiding officer ruled the motion out of order. Almost immediately messenger Henry Green of Cocoa moved that, “the Committee on Nominations go back into session and consider re-

appointing” nominees that reflected diversity based upon gender and provide an equal representation between clergy and laity. The presiding officer ruled the motion out of order, which was challenged, but messengers voted to support the president’s ruling. A third messenger, Charles Horton of Orlando, made a motion that the Committee on Nominations replace three nominees (these were among the five previously identified by messenger Joyce Page’s motion). The presiding officer ruled the motion out of order. The same messenger challenged the presiding officer’s ruling by calling for a ballot vote. Through a show of hands, a majority of the 1202 messengers present upheld the ruling of the presiding officer. Finally, the messengers voted to approve the Committee’s report as presented, without any amendments.

In other actions, messenger approved 17 recommendations that defined various revisions to the State Convention’s Constitution and Bylaws. One specific recommendation clarified the State Convention’s “right to elect and remove any and all persons who are nominated to serve as members” of any State Convention committees, agency boards or institution trustee.

Edward D. Johnson, 1992

Edward D. Johnson (b. 1943 to present) was serving as pastor (1983 – 2006) of the First Baptist Church, Ocala, at the time of his election as State Convention president to serve in 1992. From Ocala, Dr. Johnson accepted a position as director of the Cooperative Program [promotion] Office, Florida Baptist Convention.

The affects and aftermath of the August 23-24, 1992, Hurricane Andrew was at the forefront of the attention of messengers attending the annual meeting held in Fort Myers. The once in 100-years catastrophic hurricane had destroyed or damaged 137,000 homes which resulted in 250,000 people being left homeless, in addition to the severe damage done to 35 Southern Baptist churches in Dade County.

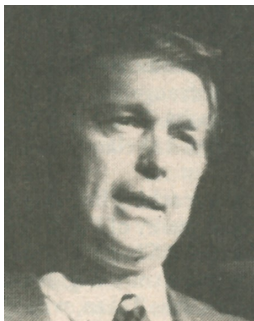
Messengers approved a resolution of appreciation to Cecil W. Seagle, then director of the Florida Baptist Convention’s Brotherhood Department, who led Florida Baptists volunteers in their herculean response by helping people and churches affected by the devastating hurricane. Messengers also saluted by resolution the nine state conventions which provided volunteers, feeding units and financial contributions in the Andrew relief effort targeted to South Florida. The State Convention messengers additionally authorized the State Board of Missions to earmark \$200,000 in Hurricane Andrew relief efforts.



Ed Johnson

O.G. “Tim” Locher, 1993

O.G. “Tim” Locher (b. 1939 to present) was one of 16 laypersons – whose Convention service was **featured in the February, 2019, issue of *Legacy*** – served as Convention President in 1993. He was a member of Sheridan Hills Baptist Church, Hollywood, before retiring and moving out of state.



O. G. “Tim” Locher

George Thomasson, 1994

George Anthony Thomasson (b. 1947 to present) at the time of his election as State Convention president to serve in 1994, was serving as pastor (1983 – 1996) of the Northwood Baptist Church, West Palm Beach. Following his ministry service at Northwood, Dr. Thomasson accepted the position of director, Church Planting Department of the Florida Baptist Convention.



George Thomasson

The State Board of Missions recommended **the proposed consolidation into two annual offerings the then current multiple mission-oriented offerings** which churches were being encouraged to support. The proposed two semi-annual offerings were to be in lieu of the Annie Armstrong Easter Offering for home missions, the Maguire State Mission Offering, the Lottie Moon Christmas Offering for international missions and the World Hunger Offering. However the annual Mothers' Day offering for the Florida Baptist Childrens' Homes was not included in the consolidation proposal.

When first presented and explained by Owen Bozeman of the State Board of Missions, there were no questions by messengers. The recommendation was approved by messengers. Immediately following the vote, N. B. Langford of Panama City made a **motion that the Semi-Annual Offering recommendation be re-considered**. Without comments, the messengers approved the motion to reconsider. Langford then expressed the opinion that under the proposed semi-annual offering both the "Home and Foreign Missions offerings, as well as the other offerings, would be sold short." Comments, respectively pro and con, were made by six messengers. State Board Chairman Dan Southerland of Fort Lauderdale defended the recommendation by noting the Board, "was trying to keep the churches from always having to take a special offering." He went on to cite other rationale used by the State Board of Missions. Additional messengers spoke for and against the recommendation. Finally, a motion was made to refer the matter back to the State Board of Missions for further study. The motion to refer was approved.

Another State Board of Missions **recommendation sought to change a State Convention Constitution provision which limited the composition of the State Convention** to those cooperating churches "*in the state of Florida*." The proposal was to eliminate the identified phrase. Executive Director John Sullivan explained the revised constitutional provision would permit Baptist churches in Haiti to affiliate with the state convention. He went on to state that currently several churches located in Georgia and Alabama, due to their proximity to Florida Baptist associations, already affiliate with the Florida Baptist State Convention. Several messengers sought clarification of the proposal and its implications. Finally the presiding officer called for a voice vote. Unable to determine a majority, the presiding officer asked for a vote by showing their ballots, which proved to be a majority for approval.

[Due to space limitation the 1990 – 1999 series to continue next month]

The sequential order of State Convention Presidents between 1990 and 1999:

John C. Mitchell, 1990

Guy S. Sanders, 1991

Edward D. Johnson, 1992

O.G. "Tim" Locher, 1993

George Thomasson, 1994

Kenneth C. Whitten, 1995

Ted H. Traylor, 1996

M. Keith Thomas, 1997

Jerry B. Garrard, 1998

Elroy Barber, 1999