

As the year 2019 draws to an end, your Society staff is providing a retrospective on the past year's activities to help you better understand the mission and ministry of the Society. The following are highlights of the 2019 Annual Report of the Florida Baptist Historical Society.

## 2019 Annual Report to Members

**The Society's Mission and Ministry:** The primary mission and ministry of the Society is the *researching, preserving and promoting the Legacy of Florida Baptists*. These tasks are accomplished through assisting churches and individuals seeking historical information on Florida Baptist churches, individuals and events. Additionally, the staff produces a monthly newsletter, LEGACY, and the annual *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, which are provided to Society members and interested Baptists.

**Who We Are:** The Historical Society is managed by a six-member Board of Directors appointed by the State Board of Missions, Florida Baptist State Convention. Of the six, three members are appointed by the State Board of Missions and there are three permanent members who serve by virtue of their administrative position: Executive Director-Treasurer, Florida Baptist Convention, Inc. (Dr. Thomas Green); the Secretary-Treasurer, Florida Baptist Historical Society (Donald Hepburn); and the Curator, Florida Baptist Archives, (Dr. Roger Richards), maintained by The Baptist College of Florida. **Those persons who have been appointed to serve on the Board (and their term of service) are: Dr. David Elder, St. Augustine (2018-2020); Dr. Joel Breidenbaugh, Apopka (2019-2022); and Ms. Arlene Vause, Sopchoppy (2019-2021).**



**David Elder**



**Joel Breidenbaugh**



**Arlene Vause**

The Historical Society receives a \$20,000 Cooperative Program allocation, from the Florida Baptist Convention, which is the only source of the Society's annual operating budget. Two staff persons serve the Society including Donald Hepburn, who as the non-compensated volunteer Secretary-Treasurer, has served since 2017; and the part-time employee, Administrative Ministry Assistant Penny Baumgardner, who has served since 2007.



**Society Observed Milestone – 125 Years of Ministry:** The year 2019 marked 125 years since the Florida Baptist State Convention embarked on an effort aimed at “compiling the history of our denomination in this state.” That 1894 action marked the earliest official commitment to Florida Baptist history-related document preservation. Today, the Florida Baptist Historical Society has as its **Mission: Researching, preserving and promoting the Legacy of Florida**

**Baptists.** Using the Society’s library of resources, it seeks to fulfill its mission by assisting persons and churches seeking historical information on their pastors and churches.

**Responding to inquiries** from individuals continued to be an on-going task of the administrative ministry assistant. Most of these requests were for information about church histories or information on a church’s prior pastors. To respond to these inquiries requires manually reviewing association annuals and back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness*. Since January we have assisted several persons that needed help with history or biographical information as follows:

**Historic people information researched** – George W. Hall; G.W.S. Ware; Ryan Frier; C. K. Sauls; H.A. Bryan; Truett Comer; James Enoch; Eliz Simmons; James Henry Hayman; and G. W. Bostick.

**Church history information researched or provided** – Central Baptist Church, Miami; First Baptist Church, Lake Alfred; Whitfield Memorial Baptist Church, Pensacola; Blake Memorial Baptist Church, Indian River Association; Indian Springs Baptist Church, Leon County; Oakland Baptist Church, Taylor County; Magnolia Baptist Church, Altha; Mt. Elon Baptist Church, Wakulla Association; First Baptist Church, Miami; Simmons Baptist Church, Citra; Sandy Creek Baptist Church, Holmes County; Aenon Baptist Church, Quincy; Providence Baptist Church, Quincy; Rio Baptist Church, Jensen Beach; Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church, Quincy; and the Remington (VA) Baptist Church.

**Miscellaneous inquiries that resulted in historic information provided** – Rocky Creek Baptist Association (1888 to 1925).

---

*The Journal of  
Florida Baptist  
Heritage*

Florida Baptist Historical Society



*Florida Baptist Legacy  
Leaders*

---

Volume 21



2019

**Journal 2019 Issue:** During 2019, the Society staff selected and prepared for publication 13 articles for inclusion in this year’s *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*. The earmarked articles, approved by the Society Board of Directors, focused on the Legacy Leadership of Florida Baptists, including featured profiles on those legacy leaders who have laid a foundation or set a new standard in ministry, upon which others have benefited and expanded the kingdom of God in Florida. Their individual ministry efforts were not motivated by either monetary reward or the praise of other people. Rather, their individual commitment was in response to the call and claim of Jesus Christ upon their life. These included: two itinerant pioneer preachers (James McDonald and Jeremiah M. Hayman); a bi-vocational pastor (Richard Johnson Mays); a full-time pastor (James B. Henry); two international missionaries (Lulu Sparkman Terry and Frank Fowler); a religious educator (Guinell Freeman); a director of missions (Albert D. Dawson); a Hispanic church starter (Ismael Negrin); an African American pastor and preacher (Joseph C. Coats); a denominational servant (John Sullivan); and a women’s missions and ministry advocate (Carolyn Weatherford Crumpler).

The **2019 Baptist Heritage Award**, as previously reported, was presented to Dr. Thomas Kinchen, who developed a Heritage Village on the campus of The Baptist College of Florida. The village features mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century wood frames structures which had been moved from their original South Georgia and Florida Panhandle locations to the campus site. The village consists of three churches, a WPA-constructed community center and five former residences. Since

1997 the Historical Society has conferred the Baptist Heritage Award upon 23 Florida Baptists, including four laymen, three women, six pastors, and ten Baptist college or seminary professors/administrators.

**Church Anniversaries:** The Society staff prepared and distributed a “Certificate of Recognition” to those 54 Florida Baptist churches that were to observe milestone anniversaries in 2019.

**Filling the gaps in Florida Baptist “history holes:”** This task was a major on-going project by the Society staff, particularly as it relates to the missing copies of Florida Baptist association annuals – missing at least in the files of the Society and the Florida Baptist Historical Collection. These annuals serve as the primary and critically important historical record of Florida’s Baptist association, as well as a primary source of the statistical record of the association’s cooperating churches down through the years. Without these records, a “history hole” or gap exists in the official history of Florida Baptists. During the year the Society staff worked to track down and retrieve the original or photocopies of the missing years of selected association annuals. This effort has required the person-to-person contact with association office secretaries or the respective director of missions.

To make the history of Florida Baptist associations accessible to interested Florida Baptists and researchers, we have begun an effort to post on the Society website PDF copies of association annuals for the following early associations (and the years available): Florida (1845-1909); Alachua/Nature Coast (1848-1964); West Florida (1849-1906); Santa Fee Missionary [Santa Fe River] (1862-1964); South Florida (1867-1909); and Middle Florida (1900-2009).

**Promoting the ministry of the Society** was accomplished by several means. The staff developed a Society promotional flyer that highlights the mission and ministry of the Society. Additionally, a display ad that was included in the 2019 Florida Baptist State Convention Guidebook (program booklet); and the Society participated in The Baptist College of Florida’s annual Fall Festival with a display at which we distributed promotional information to over 100 Graceville area residents.

**Updating the Biographical Collection** on the Society’s website has been a continuing task of the administrative ministry assistant. In addition to updating existing biographical information, we have made a concerted effort to scan and post information on recently received and nearly 1,200 newly researched biographical files. The Biographical Collection of Florida Baptist legacy leadership currently numbers over 4,500 individuals, including pastors, church staff and laity.

**Church Postcard Collection:** The Florida Baptist Church Postcard Collection is the only unique collection of its kind that is available on line. The collection contains over **6,300 cards**, representing **1,792 cities, 2,342 churches and 160 state Baptist convention agencies** and institutions. The original postcards are on “permanent loan” to the Society from a Florida Baptist church postcard collector, who provides scanned images for the Society’s website, as well as provides newly discovered historic postcards.

This unique collection of Southern Baptist church postcards is primarily drawn from 14 states south of the Mason-Dixon Line, plus one western state. These states include: Alabama, Arkansas, California, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia and West Virginia. **The historic significance of these postcards is that they provide, in many cases, the only historic and present-day visual image of the churches in the collection. The postcards also provide an architectural history of church buildings from the early 1900s to about 1970 when postcards fell into disuse.**

**Church History Collection:** The Florida Baptist State Convention has **over 3,100** cooperating congregations. Among these churches and some churches that were established but subsequently disbanded, the Florida Baptist Historical Society has secured and developed **897 histories** of active and deactivated congregations. The Church History Collection, which was initiated by the Society, runs the gamut of published works to file folders with information gleaned from a variety of sources. The Society staff continues to secure histories from those church not currently included in the collection, as well as add information to existing church files.

**Convention Press Collection:** The Society's unique collection of Convention Press books includes **1,495 individual titles**. The unique Convention Press group consists of **955 titles**. The Florida Baptist Historical Society is believed to be the only Southern Baptist entity with a Convention Press collection this large. The Society continues in its quest to add to this collection. During the year 36 additional new titles were retrieved from various sources.

The Southern Baptist Sunday School Board in 1955 started the production of religious education resource books under the moniker of Convention Press. However, as early as 1905, the Southern Baptist Convention had committed itself to devise a plan to train Baptist church members. In response, the Sunday School Board developed the Study Course program that sought to provide specialized religious education for every member of the local church. The program consisted of a graded study course series of books that provided general knowledge built around ten subjects: the Principles and Methods; the Christian life; Christian home-making; the church; the denomination; the social order; the Bible; Christian witnessing; stewardship; and missions. Through research using the WorldCat library catalog, Society staff found 1,990 Convention Press titles.

This concludes the 2019 Annual report.

As we enter this Christmas season, we are thankful for the many blessings of God that we personally, as well as the Society organization, experienced during 2019. But most importantly we are thankful for the gift of Jesus Christ which God provided to us one and all. We rejoice with the scripture, "And suddenly there was with the angel, a multitude of heavenly hosts praising God, and saying, Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, and good will toward men" and women. [Luke 2:13-14]