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LEGACY, as the monthly newsletter of the Florida Baptist Historical Society, has as its mission to highlight the legacy forged by the people and events in Florida Baptist history. During 2022, the LEGACY's monthly issues will feature Florida Baptists' missions' commitment as reflected in the people and events that inspired their fellow Baptists in the fulfilment of the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to faithfully, "go and make disciples of all nations."

Disaster Relief Provided New Missions' Role for Florida Baptists

In last month's issue of LEGACY, it was noted that, "By 1969 Florida Baptists' began to accept the challenge to become directly involved in missionary activities outside of Florida. First, there was a commitment by Florida Baptist churches to participate in the Crusades of Americas. Church sponsored teams traveled to conduct evangelistic training and outreach that assisted



local Southern Baptist churches in the cities of Cleveland, Ohio and Buffalo, New York. A few years later the State Board of Missions committed to a mission's partnership with the Baptists of Michigan. Florida Baptist churches again sent evangelistic teams to assist and strengthen local churches and their leaders in evangelistic outreach."

While those evangelistic events began to broaden Florida Baptists' involvement in and understanding of missionary activities, a catastrophic event occurred that brought Florida Baptists to a new understanding of missionary and ministry outreach.

On August 17, 1969, **Hurricane Camille** struck the Mississippi Gulf Coast. Hurricane Camille, as a category five storm, was **the second most intense tropical cyclone on record up to that time to strike the United States, according to the National Weather Service.** The rainfall, winds, and storm surge from Camille caused 256 deaths across several states – 143 were on the Gulf Coast, and another 113 were a direct result of hurricane-caused flooding in Virginia. In Florida only Escambia and Santa Rosa Counties were impacted by beach erosion and crop losses. Across the Southland, the reported losses included over 5,000 homes and 1,000 businesses being destroyed. The Florida Baptist State Board of Missions reported that the churches and parsonage losses, that were unrecoverable from insurance, totaled approximately \$1,300,000 (in 1969 dollars).

Interestingly, just a year earlier in 1968, Texas Baptists assisted victims of Beulah. That served as the beginning of a ministry effort championed by the SBC Brotherhood Commission, working with state Baptist Brotherhood leadership, to organize and coordinate Southern Baptists' response to disasters. By assignment, the Florida Brotherhood Department was responsible for disaster relief action, but had not yet organized and fully trained volunteers for that ministry.

Aiding Churches Affected by Hurricanes

As a result of Hurricane Camille, Florida Baptist Convention Executive Director **Harold C. Bennett** [who served from 1967 to 1979] led the State Board of Missions to earmark \$100,000 in undesignated funds for disaster relief efforts. These funds were used to aid affect Baptist churches in Florida's Panhandle and Alabama. Additionally, 120 Florida Baptist churches and 67 individuals contributed a total \$22,125 for Baptist relief efforts in the Mississippi Gulf Coast.

During the decade of the 1970s, Florida Baptists embraced the need to develop a ministry action plan to respond to disasters, primarily caused by hurricanes, that were presenting new challenges to Florida Baptist and Southern Baptist churches. Up until this time, state and Federal governments did not have a coordinated response to hurricane-created disasters. And the government-initiated response efforts that did occur, were focused on civilian needs. Churches and other not-for-profit organizations were dependent upon their own resources to help themselves.

Concerned with initiating a response effort to assist churches and pastoral leadership, in 1972 a Florida Baptist Disaster Relief committee was appointed to define the appropriate response to a hurricane-caused disaster. The multi-faceted action plan addressed organization, response efforts, financing and relationships with other disaster response organizations. At the heart of the planned effort was to emphasize providing financial and rebuilding assistance to churches, as well as a spiritual ministry to the needs of persons within disaster zones. Subsequently, four years later, the State Board of Missions adopted a revised and enhanced program statement for its Disaster Relief Ministry. The revised ministry plan replaced a statewide oversight committee with designated convention staff who were made responsible for a more timely organization and response to disasters, in keeping with the previously adopted emphasis upon the spiritual ministry role.

Up until this time, the Florida Brotherhood Department was involved in enlisting Baptist men and women in participating in construction projects assisting SBC foreign missionaries. Soon after assuming leadership of the Brotherhood program in 1978, **Charles F. Ragland (b. 1931)**, was assigned to organize, train and lead Baptist laity to be at the forefront of Florida Baptists' disaster relief ministry. The Brotherhood Department held its first disaster training event for Baptist men and women in 1978. Out of that emphasis Baptist Men evolved into the role of volunteers on mission and construction. Ragland, who previously served as a pastor to churches in Florida and Arkansas, had been employed by the convention in 1964 to serve as the associate director of the Church Training Department. In 1978 Ragland was promoted to lead the Brotherhood program ministry department until his retirement in 1991.



This series on Florida Baptists' Missions' Commitment continues next month

Year 2022 Heritage Award Presented

Carolyn L. Calhoun of St. Augustine, Florida, was recently presented the 2022 Baptist Heritage Award for “her diligent service and yeoman efforts to preserve, record and publish the history of the Ancient City Baptist Church, St. Augustine, Florida,” according to the Board of Directors, Florida Baptist Historical Society.



In considering potential candidates to be the 2022 Baptist Heritage Award recipient, the Society’s board noted there was one noteworthy individual who diligently committed herself to the preservation and promotion of her local church’s history. The award presentation was made during the morning worship service at the church on Sunday, June 12, 2022.

Carolyn L. (Mrs. Edward) Calhoun, is a lifelong member of the Ancient City Baptist Church, St. Augustine, having made a profession of faith at age 10. She has worked diligently since the last century to collect, organize and preserve the history of the church that was established in 1887.

Although there exists a published history of the church written by the church’s History Committee – titled *A Long Road with God . . . 1887 to 1987* – **Mrs. Calhoun has researched and identified numerous basic facts that are missing from the church’s history book.** As a result, Mrs. Calhoun developed a recently published chronological narrative of the church’s early history and added supplemental information bringing the church’s history narrative to a contemporary status.

Additionally, **to promote the church’s history to benefit current members**, Mrs. Calhoun enlisted other volunteers to establish a designated history room with a display of early information and memorabilia about the Ancient City Baptist Church. This task required the sorting and assessing of unorganized material stashed in dozens of boxes. [This achievement was the subject of a story that appeared in the *St. Augustine Record*.]

Mrs. Calhoun’s volunteer leadership was enhanced by over two decades of service on the church’s History Committee, whose members have worked to collect and preserve the history of the church.

Prior to her history-preservation volunteer service in the church, Mrs. Calhoun, age 78, served a variety of other volunteer positions in the church including as a Sunday School teacher of various age groups over the years, worked on several church committees and currently is a church greeter.

Mrs. Calhoun’s professional career for over twenty years was devoted as a reading specialist teacher for the St. Johns’ County School Board. She attended the then called St. Johns Junior College and subsequently graduated from the Flagler College with a degree in Education. She did additional study at the University of North Florida to secure credentials as a Reading Specialist to teach grade school children who lacked age-appropriate reading skills.

The **Baptist Heritage Award** seeks to recognize and honor those Florida Baptists who have exhibited rare and unusual dedication to the cause of Florida Southern Baptist history by having made a significant impact through such means as researching and writing Baptist history, teaching Baptist history, preserving Baptist history, and/or promoting the importance of Florida Southern Baptist history.

Twenty-five individuals, since 1997, have been conferred the Baptist Heritage Award by the Florida Baptist Historical Society. These persons represented a broad range of Florida Baptists including pastors, denominational workers, college and seminary professors, and laypersons, all of whom had an interest and commitment to preserving, researching and publishing about Florida Baptist history.