

Our Mission: Researching, preserving and promoting the Legacy of Florida Baptists

PO Box 95 ~ Graceville, Florida 32440

Telephone: 850-360-4179~ E-mail: society2@floridabaptisthistory.org ~ web: floridabaptisthistory.org

Volume 17

August, 2025

No. 8

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 2025, the LEGACY monthly issues will feature brief personal profiles of those men who have been elected by the State Board of Missions to lead the Florida Baptist Convention. Whether designated as the Corresponding Secretary or the Executive Director-Treasurer, each of these men have left a legacy upon the corporate mission enterprise of Florida Baptists.

Dan C. Stringer – A Common Man Who Did Uncommon Things for the Kingdom

When Dan C. Stringer died in 2007, the former executive director-treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention (serving 1979 – 1989), was characterized as a “God-blessed leader.” Stringer’s leadership was **“everything one would want in a leader. He was a man of godly character, a visionary leader, an effective change agent, an innovator, creative, courageous, a team leader and team player, wise, humble and caring about others.”**

Daniel Carmichael Stringer was born November 7, 1927, in Cordell, Oklahoma. He was born and reared in a Christian home by parents Dan and Avie Lola Stringer who also had three daughters. The senior Stringer was a career pastor of Baptist churches in Oklahoma and New Mexico, until in 1944 when he became the City Missionary in Albuquerque, New Mexico. The junior Dan was seven years old when he made a profession of faith in Jesus Christ and was baptized in the First Baptist Church, Albuquerque, N. M. where his father was serving as pastor. “His father’s work exposed Dan not only to the rigors of the pastorate, but also to the ebb and flow of denominational organization, politics, and activities,” observed writer R. C. Hammock in a 2004 article about Stringer.



Responding to God’s Call to Ministry Service

In 1944, at age 17 and before he had completed his high school degree, the young Stringer joined the U.S. Marine Corps. By the time he had completed boot camp, World War II had ended. In August 1946 Stringer was honorably discharged from the Corps. **Interestingly, despite the short-lived military service, it produced a handful of funny stories Stringer would tell in making applications to his ministry service.**

He subsequently enrolled in the University of New Mexico, but after a year transferred to Wayland College (Texas) where he only attended for three semesters. Meanwhile, in the year 1947, Stringer responded to

the call of God to commit his life to ministry service. He was licensed and ordained by the First Baptist Church, Albuquerque, N. M. It also was at the university that Stringer met his future spouse Harriett Elizabeth Rogers (b. 1927; d. 2008), a native of Lisbon, Florida. In November 1948, the couple was married. They had two children, a daughter Sheridan Kaye (b. 1951; d. 2002) and a son Stephen Kirk (b. 1953)

As a result of his spiritual calling Stringer decided to enroll in Baylor University for the beginning of his junior year. To Stringer's chagrin, he was required to take courses in Bible and theology, a task he had hoped to put off until he enrolled in the seminary. He finally graduated in 1952. He attended Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in nearby Fort Worth, and only accumulated 32 semester hours. In the summer of 1955, he transferred to The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, located in Louisville, Ky. He received the Bachelor (now designated as the Master) of Divinity degree in 1957. During all of these years Stringer held student pastorates in small town Baptist churches.

Ministry Service in the Southwest

Following his graduation from the Louisville seminary, and for the next 12 years, Stringer served as pastor of churches in Arizona, Nevada and New Mexico. **Providentially, while serving as pastor of the Baptist church in Buckeye, Arizona, Stringer invited a young T. G. "John" Sullivan to lead a youth revival. It was an encounter that evolved into a 50-year life-long friendship between the two men.** Ironically, in 1988 when Stringer retired from the leadership post of the Florida Baptist Convention, the State Board of Missions in their search for a new leader was God-led to the same John Sullivan, then serving the Broadmoor Church in Shreveport, La. The six-and-one-half years at Buckeye proved to be Stringer's most measurable success, having led over 600 people to make professions of faith and to be baptized.

A Career in Denominational Ministry

Stringer's foray into denominational ministry service began in 1966 when he was invited to serve as Associate Director of Missions for the Arizona Baptist Convention. In that role, **Stringer started numerous churches with little or no money, conducted extensive language missions, and managed several Christian social ministries programs.** During his five-year tenure with the convention Stringer also served as business manager without title, as well as stewardship director, assistant executive secretary, and associate executive secretary.

In 1971, Stringer was elected the executive director of the Northwest Baptist Convention, which consisted of 248 churches and 30,000 members. **During the ensuing eight years Stringer led the multi-state (Washington and Oregon) convention in tremendous growth.** The number of churches increased 24 percent; baptisms increased by 37 percent; and Sunday school enrollment by 28 percent. Annual Cooperative Program gifts rose from a beginning \$292,000 to \$950,000 when Stringer left in 1979. The growth of the churches extended to Canada, leading to the 1977 Southern Baptist Convention action making possible the formation of the Canadian Southern Baptist Convention. Stringer later recalled in an oral history interview, "I guess I learned to appreciate the role [Executive Director] . . . and to realize it was a base that God had given me . . ."

The Florida Baptist Challenge

Stringer was interviewed by a Florida Baptist State Board of Missions' search committee in Atlanta in August 1979. When he was offered the job, Dan Stringer asked for two weeks to make up his mind. In an oral history interview a decade later, Stringer declared his decision to accepting the Florida

assignment was multi-faceted: “Because it’s not really a traditional southern state, it’s more cosmopolitan, it’s growing, it’s front edge . . .” Going in, Stringer knew the age of both the professional and administrative staff would force replacement, reorganization, and additions to the Baptist Building work force. It also was obvious to Stringer that the churches, convention leadership, and Baptist Building staff needed to come to grips with the cultural diversity of the growing state and learn how to minister to the various ethnic groups.

Beginning work on November 1, 1979, Stringer’s introduction to Florida Baptists was at the state convention annual meeting. Interim Executive Director Woodrow Fuller, facilitated the meeting, and, in passing, introduced Stringer to the convention assembled. Sitting directly in front of the program platform, Stringer watched Florida Baptist messengers engage in debate over the division of Cooperative Program funds distribution and the matter of salary confidentiality. When he was introduced to the group, he committed himself to address the concerns discussed at that convention.

During his tenure leading Florida Baptists, **Stringer’s most significant contribution was leading Florida to become in 1985 the first state Baptist convention to earmark 50 percent of its undesignated receipts to the Southern Baptist Convention’s Cooperative Program.** After four years, pressing financial needs and a downturn in the economy required the State Convention to back away from the 50-50 percentage split.

Focus Upon Language Missions and Mission Partners

Recognizing Florida’s growing non-Anglo population, Stringer created a language missions department and expanded program resources to train ethnic church leaders. He recommended the creation of an evangelism division which elevated the visibility and role of the program service to local churches. Reflecting his passionate commitment to Southern Baptist pioneer mission areas, he led the Florida Convention to enter into state-to-state mission partnerships with the Baptist conventions in Pennsylvania-South Jersey, Montana and North and South Dakota.

In an effort to expand and enhance retreat facilities for use by convention programs and local churches, Stringer led in the expansion of the Convention’s assembly facilities. Those efforts included the purchase of land and the development of the Blue Springs Assembly near Marianna; the addition of facilities at the Lake Yale Assembly in central Florida; and the purchase of land for a planned South Florida Assembly.

After a decade of service, Stringer announced his retirement for December 31, 1988, (although it was delayed until the following year in March). At the time Stringer was elected to serve as the eighth executive director-treasurer in **November 1979, the State Convention had 772,252 adult members in 1,677 cooperating churches and missions. When he retired in March 1989, Florida Baptists numbered 950,000 members in 1,825 churches and missions.**

Retirement Led to Third State Convention

Following retirement from the Florida Convention, Stringer and his wife Harriett moved to Phoenix, Ariz., a state where they both had family roots. **Within a year he was invited to serve as executive director-treasurer of the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.** A Baptist Press report noted Stringer was assuming the Arizona leadership post at “a critical time for the state’s Baptists.”

The Arizona convention had been experiencing a decline in Cooperative Program receipts and had a \$3.6 million deficit in its Baptist Loan Fund. Stringer led the convention's executive board in developing a 10-year plan to erase the deficit, with the goal being reached ahead of schedule. After serving the Arizona convention for five years, Stringer retired in June 1995.

Stringer died October 2, 2007, having been diagnosed with terminal cancer two weeks earlier. He was age 80.

[RESOURCES: R. C. Hammock, "A Cowboy Untamed: Dan C. Stringer, 1979-1989," *Journal of Florida Baptist Heritage*, 2004; Donald S. Hepburn, oral history interview with Dan Stringer, Part 1 in 1989 and Part 2 in 2003; Elizabeth Young, "Dan C. Stringer, Three-time Baptist Exec Dies," Baptist Press, October 4, 2007; Don Hepburn, "State Exec Dan Stringer to Retire in December," *Florida Baptist Witness*, May 26, 1988; Don Hepburn, "Former Florida Executive Directors dies at 79," *Florida Baptist Witness*, October 11, 2007.]