

1985

**DEDICATION****J. ELWOOD RAWLS**

Born — September 12, 1913 — Pensacola, Florida

Served as pastor of Miami Baptist Association churches — Flagami; Hothead, First; Associate Pastor of Riverside and Stanton-North Shore; Interim Pastor of New Life and Wayside; Chaplain, Veterans Administration Hospital. He served Miami Baptist Association as Director of Promotion and Education and Interim Director of Missions, Gulfstream Baptist Association; as President of the Pastor's Conference; Evangelism Committee Chairman and Nominations Committee, and Redlands Christian Migrant Association.

“FINISHED HIS COURSE . . . JUNE 12, 1985”

# Florida Features

**Ronald Rowe** is the new pastor of Ridgewood Church, Orange Park, effective July 28; covered dish luncheon; William Wilson, speaker; The Suncoast Quartet, special music; pastor, Harry J. Rhodes.

**Bethel Church, Lakeland;** homecoming, July 28; covered dish luncheon; William Wilson, speaker; The Suncoast Quartet, special music; pastor, Harry J. Rhodes.

**Dennis Pledger** has resigned as pastor of Gulf Beach Church, Panama City, to enter evangelism. He may be contacted at P.O. Box 878, Panama City, FL 32402, or (904) 234-8892.

**Dennis F. Bucher** is to be the new minister of music at Lakeside Church, Lakeland, effective August 1. He is a graduate of Loyola University and New Orleans Seminary. He comes from First Church, Charlotte, N.C.

**Paul Brooks**, pastor of First Church, Marianna, has resigned to accept the call as pastor of First Church, Raytown, Missouri, effective August 1. Brooks is vice chairman of the State Board of Missions.

**Arthur McMillan** will be the new director of missions for the Shiloh Association, effective August 1. He comes from Haverhill Church, West Palm Beach.

**Paul W. Murray** has retired from First Church, South Bay, effective June 30. His 43½-year career included a number of



Willard L. Mays



Bob Sharp

## Sharp Succeeds Mays As Palm Leaf Pastor

TAMPA—Bob Sharp, minister of education and outreach at Palm Leaf Baptist Church here, has been called to serve as pastor following the sudden death in July of Willard L. Mays who served as pastor for 16 years.

Mays died of an apparent heart attack while attending the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting in Dallas.

## Two Florida Ministers Dead

**J. Elwood Rawls**, for 42 years a minister in Florida, died of leukemia at the age of 70 on June 12 in Miami.

A native of Pensacola, Rawls served as pastor at Spencer Memorial and Baldwin Point Churches, Tampa; Delaney Street Church, Orlando; Flagami Church, Miami; and First Church, Homestead. He served also the Miami Baptist Association.

He is survived by his wife Virginia; two sons, James R. Rawls of Nashville, and Mark Rawls of Orlando; and one granddaughter.

**Hoke Shirley Sr.**, a minister from Wauchula, died July 5 at the age of 91. He is survived by his wife, Beth; daughter, Mrs. Robert Burris of Pompano Beach; son, Hoke Shirley, Jr.; seven grandchildren and three great-grandchildren.

Shirley was a graduate of Mercer University and served as pastor of several Central Florida churches including First Church of Wauchope, Plant City; Kirkwood Church, Atlanta; and Central Church, Americus. He served also as pastor of First Church, Ocala, and First Church, Ft. Lauderdale.



Ray E. Melton (left), pastor of San Jose Church, Jacksonville, receives a check for \$37,500 from Cliff Matthews of the Florida Baptist Convention toward the purchase of the new site for the Crown Point Mission. The mission is located on Old St. Augustine Road in one of the fastest-growing areas of Jacksonville. The check comes from the new church site fund made possible through the State Mission Offerings.



Calvary Church, Jasper, recently dedicated a fellowship building. Shown standing in front of the new building are, left to right: W.H. Kramer; Dennis Deese, pastor; and George Smith. Kramer and Smith are deacons.

pastorates in Florida. He is available for supply, interim and revivals. He may be reached at 404 NE First Street, Belle Glade, FL 33430 or (305) 996-5027.

**First Church, Plant City's high school choir, "First Foundation Singers,"** recently concluded a 12-day mission singing and ministering to ten maximum security prisons in North Carolina, Georgia and Florida. The group, directed by music minister George Collins, has ministered in prisons for the last four summers. This year 193 professions of faith were registered. Lonnie Shull, pastor.

**Lonnie and Hazel Shull** of First Church, Plant City, have just returned from Quito, Ecuador, where they were inspirational speakers for the 1985 mission meeting (July 2-10) upon invitation of the Foreign Mission Board. Among the missionaries serving in Ecuador is Florida's Mark Robbins.

### TEACHERS NEEDED

Elementary and middle grades; certification required. Contact: Cedar Hills Baptist School, Jacksonville, Fla. (904) 772-0812.

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7/25/85

# Baptist minister Elwood Rawls, 71

The Rev. J. Elwood Rawls, who led his Baptist church in unparalleled growth, died Wednesday of leukemia. He was 71.

The Rev. Rawls, who eventually became known as "Mr. Sunday School," was convinced the classrooms were the chief source of growth for any church. After getting the students in class, he then taught the teachers.

"He was a good teacher and a good motivator," said his wife Virginia.

The Rev. Rawls pastored Spencer Memorial Baptist Church in Tampa from 1943-51 and is credited with the growth of its membership from less than 300 to more than 1,200 members in a six-year period. He was a native of Pensacola who went to Tampa to live in his early 20s.

"Spencer had become a great church, thanks to him," said Clifford Hoolsema, chaplain at Calder Race Course who had known the Rev. Rawls since 1948 when he was assigned to Spencer after graduating from the seminary.

"He was the best church builder anywhere in the country — not the physical building, but the people," Hoolsema said. "He was a tough guy, a perfectionist, but what a blessing it was to work with him. He was a prized friend."

The Rev. Rawls remained in Tampa another six years at Ballast Point Baptist Church until 1957 when he moved to Orlando.

When he came to Miami in 1963, the Rev. Rawls took over the pastorate of Flagami Baptist Church. The next year he joined the Miami Baptist Association as director of promotion and education, working with churches throughout the state.

"We lost a great man in Southern Baptist circles in South Florida," Hoolsema said.

After that, The Rev. Rawls became pastor of the First Baptist Church of Homestead until his retirement in 1975. His retirement, though, was an active one, serving as interim or associate pastor at several area churches, including Riverside Baptist Church, Stanton Memorial North Shore, Hialeah First Baptist

Church, New Hope Baptist Church and Wayside Baptist Church. He also worked part-time as chaplain for the Veterans Administration.

He once said regarding Wayside's outreach program, "My forte is growth. A lot of churches don't have a handle on growth. You have to convince people that you have something they need."

The Rev. Rawls was graduated from Florida Southern College with his degree in education and received his Masters in Religion from Stetson University. He received his degree in theology from Southern Baptist Seminary in Louisville.

Survivors besides his wife, Virginia, include two sons, James R. Rawls of Nashville, and Neil Rawls, of Orlando; and one granddaughter.

Services will be 3 p.m. Sunday at Miami Shores Baptist Church. Graveside services will be in Tampa Tuesday. Cofer Miami Shores Chapel is in charge of arrangements.

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## Reception

A farewell reception for the Rev. J. Elwood Rawls will be at 9 p.m. Sunday at Flagami Baptist Church, 860 SW 76th Ct. He has resigned as pastor to become director of promotion and education for the Miami Baptist Association.

# Rev. Rawls Leaving Delaney

The Rev. J. Elwood Rawls, pastor of the Delaney St. **Baptist** Church for the past six years, resigned yesterday, effective March 1, to accept the rapidly - growing **Flagami Baptist** Church of Miami.

The **Flagami** Church is located in the southwest section of Miami.

In the six years that the Rev. Rawls was pastor at Delaney St., three building units were completed, which included a 1,000-seat auditorium. A new pastorium was built, and numerous parcels of property for parking and expansion were acquired. The Delaney St. Church grew from 600 enrolled in Sunday School to over 1,700.

**THERE HAVE** been 606 baptisms during his ministry here, along with 1,197

tended Southern **Baptist** Theological Seminary at Louisville, Ky.

**HE IS** married to the former Virginia Mathis, daughter of the Rev. S. S. Mathis, Tampa. They have two sons.

other additions by letter and statement, making a total of 1,803 since March, 1957. The church is presently sponsoring four mission churches in the Cayman Islands, south of Cuba.

Rawls came to Orlando from Tampa, where he served for 16 years at the Spencer Memorial **Baptist** Church and the Ballast Point **Baptist** Church. He is a native of Florida, born and raised in Pensacola. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in education from Florida Southern College and later obtained a master's degree in religion from Stetson University. He at-

Rawls is presently serving as chairman of the Christian Life Commission for the Florida **Baptist** Convention and is on the public affairs committee. He has served as moderator of the Tampa Bay Assn., president of the **Baptist** Pastors' Conference in Tampa and Orlando, chairman of the Evangelism Committee, co-

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