

Wright calls SBC to new missions heights

the joy and excitement of fulfilling the Great Commission," Wright said. "I also am praying that this fall, every church will start out on faith and cast

Rowe, Ron (1946-) served as pastor and Director of Missions in the Jacksonville area. He served four years as DOM of Black Creek Baptist Association and 17 years as DOM of Jacksonville Baptist Association. Rowe retired in 2010 as DOM of Jacksonville Baptist Association and he and his wife Ithenia have four children.

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In the video, which he addresses to "pastors, staff members and key leaders in our churches," Wright said: "There is an urgency like never before to see us take ... the Good News of Jesus Christ to unreached people groups, to areas of the world where so few have the opportunity to [hear] the Good News of Christ."
Wright notes that the praysbc.com website offers an opportunity to sign

"Changes in leadership and strategy will affect the mission of Southern Baptists as a whole," Wright said in the letter. "I ask you to pray fervently for our convention in these critical days of decision making so we align ourselves fully with the heart and mission of Jesus."
Wright also noted "three fundamental issues at the core of my service" as SBC president:

to fulfill the Great Commission. This begins with each individual believer seeking to fulfill his role through the local church," Wright said. "I pray that pastors and churches recognize the immense need for getting more and more Cooperative Program dollars to the unreached people groups of the world and into the under-reached areas of North America. If the status quo prevails in the areas of convention

look at global ministry differently. It is my hope that every church participate in sending its pastor and members on a mission trip annually so that each church will experience firsthand

stake," Wright concluded. "So join me in examining how all of us can be more fruitful and faithful Kingdom witnesses in order to fulfill the greatest mission on earth."

Jacksonville DOM Ron Rowe retires at 64

Goal is to establish 'missional model' in local churches

JACKSONVILLE (FBW)—Only days after Ron Rowe's retirement after 17 years as director of missions of the Jacksonville Baptist Association he told *Florida Baptist Witness* he was "just getting a feel of what it's like to be out of the Baptist leadership bubble."

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Not one for idleness, Rowe said he plans to study and perhaps join mission movements in the world "where God is at work uniquely."

Several years ago, Rowe set a goal to change Jacksonville churches' thinking about missions and church growth. Every time he got a chance, he preached about building a 21st century attitude about church.

"Churches here in Jacksonville may have grown weary of hearing about it. Every sermon and every meeting pointed to a missional model," he said.

Rowe was heavily influenced on the subject by two books, Reggie McNeal's *The Present Future: Six Tough Questions for the Church* and *The Shaping of Things to Come: Innovation and Mission for the Modern Church* by Michael Frost and Alan Hirsch. He often presented the books to pastors moving



RETIREE Ron Rowe, and his wife, Ithenia, plan to stay in the Jacksonville area after retirement.

to Jacksonville churches, hoping they would "get it" like other pastors in his association had, he said.

McNeal, whom Rowe terms "a prophetic voice for Baptists," will speak at the last meeting planned by the retiring DOM, the Sept. 11 Annual Meeting and Training Extravaganza at Deermeadows Baptist Church.

Rowe said he hopes McNeal's call for missional churches and leadership will influence the Jacksonville association to establish a new structure to

help facilitate the missional concept. Estimating the process could take 3-5 years, Rowe said the implementation will fall to a new director of missions.

Drawing from his 17-year tenure in Jacksonville and his four years as DOM in the nearby Black Creek Baptist Association, Rowe has learned the value of associational work, and also recognizes the need for change when "things we used to do don't work anymore."

"The future of this association, and all associations, is bright as long as we understand what year it is," Rowe said. "We're closest to the churches and can communicate rapidly, but if an association or DOM is only marking time, it will decline. This is no time for business as usual."

While change is in the future for Rowe and his wife, Ithenia, he hopes to continue to coach and mentor pastors. That his favorite part of his work as a DOM, and what he will miss the most, he said.

A member of Deermeadows Baptist Church, Rowe works with the outreach ministry of Paul Avenue Baptist Church in the inner city of Jacksonville, where he served as a young pastor in the mid-1970s. The ministry puts him "back where I started," he said.

He also plans to continue his commitment to Florida's "Imagine If ... Great Commission Task Force," which will report at the November annual meeting of the State Baptist Convention. Rowe values the "synergy" of the group's meetings, he said.

"It's been a good experience to get to know others there, and to think together. I think positive and specific recommendations will come out of this," Rowe said.

The Rowes plan to remain in their south Jacksonville home "unless the Lord changes our location," he said. Two of their children live in Jacksonville, and two, in North Carolina. Their six grandchildren are a big part of their future plans, and Rowe said he would like to "give a little more attention to grandparenting."

Rowe hopes to supply preach and serve as interim pastor in his return to the local church. Retiring at 64, he said, is an opportunity for him to implement a missional model in a local church. Meanwhile, he is setting aside time for personal study and prayer.

"I want to disengage from leadership responsibilities for a while and give extended time to my personal walk with God, to seek His will for us," Rowe said. "The truth is, I'm building this bridge while I'm still walking on it."

Ray Johnson marks 30 years in Titusville pastorate

TITUSVILLE (FBW)—In thirty years as pastor of First Baptist Church in Titusville, Ray Johnson has baptized the children and grandchildren of some he baptized in 1980, ministering to extended families he now considers his own family.

"After you are at a church 15 years, your people are like family; after 30 years, they are family," Johnson said.

Johnson also counts as family current and former members of the Titusville Police Department where he has served as chaplain almost as long as he has served First Baptist Church. He said several ministers in the city agreed years ago that the Police Department needed chaplains, but after the group found out how much preparation and time the position required, Johnson was the only pastor who volunteered his services.

He visits the department at least once a week, and often rides with the officers on duty. They call on him to notify families of deaths by accidents or crime, and he has had to officiate at the funerals of some members of the department.

"That is the hardest thing—to do a funeral for line of duty deaths. It's like doing a funeral for a member of your family," he said.

The number of funerals for members of his church family has multiplied as the congregation has aged, and the funerals become harder as the church family grows closer to his own, he said.

"This is a disadvantage of staying a long time at a church. If you love your people, and they love you, it is really hard when they die," he said.

As in any family's history, members of First Baptist Church can name

challenges it has faced through the years. Currently several in the congregation who are employed in the space industry are foreseeing layoffs in the coming months as the space shuttles are mothballed. The veteran pastor has seen space industry layoffs before, and said he recalls Titusville's school officials trying to decide in the early 1980s which of the two local high schools to close. Thirty years later, the city still has two high schools.

"The stress for our people is the unknown. The axis is in the air and they don't know where it will fall. I can tell them that God is big and He can bring about changes. This is not the end of the world, and God will get us through this," he said.

Assuring his congregation that God will yet bless the city and the church, Johnson said he reminds them that First Baptist Church is "the prettiest church in town." Its downtown location, once a drawback to growth, is now an advantage because of the growth of condominiums in the center of the city.

He told *Florida Baptist Witness* the church is a center of activity for several groups that meet there during the week. About 100 quilters meet at the church once a week, and more than 150 home schooled students meet there to study science every Tuesday. A homeowners' association uses the facilities monthly, and census workers were trained there earlier this year.

The congregation that numbers 85 in the summer, was recently honored by the Florida Department for Children and Families for a ministry to nursing home residents that has continued 50 years. Every week, a group of W.M.U. ladies becomes a traveling beauty salon for nursing home residents, setting hair and painting fingernails, Johnson said.

Usually aware of "everything going on around here," the 68-year-old pastor said he was completely surprised by the church's celebration of his 30-year anniversary. The April 25 morning service included recognitions by the Titusville Police Chief Tony Bollinger and Brevard Baptist Association Director of Missions Gary Gates. Roy Saint of the Florida Baptist Convention's Leadership and Life Development Division brought greetings from Convention Executive Director-treasurer John Sullivan who thanked Johnson for his long tenure at First Baptist and his participation on the State Board of Missions.

Roses for Johnson and his wife, Jeannie, were gifts from several organizations in the church. The couple has two daughters and three sons-in-law, a son and seven grandchildren in Titusville, Jacksonville and Louisville, Ky. A daughter, Becki Wilson, a secretary, children's worker and musician at First Baptist Church, died suddenly 16 months ago.

"This is what I have learned. In good times and bad times, be faithful and keep telling God's truth, and good times will return," he said.



HISTORY Ray Johnson (left), pastor of First Baptist Church in Titusville for 30 years, is honored with his wife, Jeannie.

Black Creek 1993

Committee be authorized to seek out and negotiate terms with an Interim Director of Missions and that this person be presented to the association in an Executive Committee for approval. Substitute motion seconded, and carried. Original motion killed by Substitute Motion.

20. Rev. Peter Jensen led congregational hymn "It Is Well With My Soul".
21. Rev. Peter Jensen sang special solo entitled "God Is God" dedicated to Rev. Ron Rowe (his last meeting with our association as Director of Missions).
22. Rev. Ed Lyon, Pastoral Ministries Director, said they had been concentrating on building up books and video tapes for the pastors usage and had sponsored a Ministers Appreciation Banquet for the past two years; this year's banquet planned for the first Friday in December. He encouraged churches to show appreciation for their staff by paying for them to attend this banquet. He called attention to the book "Experiencing God" by Henry Blackaby and encouraged pastors to use the workbook with their congregation. He mentioned that the association had ordered the video tapes that go along with the workbook.
23. Rev. Ron Rowe, Director of Missions, expressed appreciation to Rev. Jensen for the special solo and said this meeting was very close to his heart as he had submitted his resignation and it would be the last meeting he would be attending as Black Creek Association's Director of Missions. He said he was at a loss to express his appreciation and put into words what Black Creek Association had meant in his life over the eight years (4 1/2 yrs. as Director of Mission and prior as a pastor at Ridgewood Church). He reflected on his call to the ministry. He said when he answered the call he felt he would always be a pastor; but he felt the Lord's call to be Director of Missions and accepted the position of D.O.M. in Black Creek Association. He said they would be starting a new chapter in their lives in a few weeks as he answers the call to becoming Director of Missions of Jacksonville Association. Again, he expressed his profound love and gratitude for B.C.B.A. He thought of a scripture to base his closing thoughts on from Paul's writings "and finally brethren". He shared that his personal observations and feelings were that the association is at the crossroads. He said he felt the association has the brightest future we could imagine if it understands what it is, why it exists, and remains relevant for our times. He mentioned that that the primary purpose of the association was for fellowship, being in partnership, on mission together, and for unity.
24. Lee Griffin, member of the Nominating Committee, moved for adoption of the Nominating Committee Report as printed, there being no further nominations made. Motion seconded, and carried.