

Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection

This link provides the specific resource information which documents and undergirds the biographical resource information on a specific Florida Baptist pastors, church staff or significant laity leaders.

The link you have chosen connects to the specific individual's resource files that provide the basis for information which the Historical Society has used to develop the respective biographical profile. The sources attached may include copies of articles gleaned from back issues of the *Florida Baptist Witness* and other news publications. Other resources include books, historical journal articles and church histories that are cited as documentation for the biography.

Visit our website at FloridaBaptistHistory.org

Javier A. Sotolongo

Javier A. Sotolongo (1961) of Hialeah, Florida, has served as senior pastor of the Estrella De Belen (Star of Bethlehem) Baptist Church, Hialeah, since 1990. A native of Villa Clara, Cuba, Dr. Sotolongo (b. 1961) migrated to the United States at age 18. He served as a church planter in Buffalo, N.Y. under the auspices of The New York Baptist Convention. Then he re-located to Florida to begin service with the Estrella De Belen. Dr. Sotolongo has earned three degrees, including the Bachelor of Arts in Theology from the Western Cuba Baptist Seminary. Subsequently, he attended and graduated with a Master of Theological Studies (with advance coursework in Missions and Evangelism) and the PhD degrees from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. At various times, concurrent with his pastorate, Brother Sotolongo served as a professor at Miami Bible College, Baptist University of Florida and as an adjunct professor at both Midwestern Baptist Theological Seminary and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. In 2016 and 2017 he served as first vice president, Florida Baptist State Convention. He and his wife Barbara (m. 1985) have two adult daughters.



JAVIER SOTOLONGO

OBJECTIVE

Baptist Heritage Award Candidate

VITALS

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REFERENCES

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Dr. Jonh Massey

Professor at Baptist University of Florida

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Dr. David Lema

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Al Fernández. Florida Baptist Convention

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EDUCATION

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, PHD. WORLD CHRISTIAN STUDIES
(12/23) SWBTS

MASTER LEVELING CLASSES ON MISSION AND EVANGELISM.
SWBTS, FORTH TX.

MASTER OF THEOLOGICAL STUDIES, SWBTS, FORTH WORTH,
TEXAS 2019

B.A. ON THEOLOGY WESTERN CUBA BAPTIST SEMINARY 2013

EXPERIENCE

-ADJUSTOR PROFESSOR AT SOUTHWESTERN BAPTIST
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY 2023-2026

-ADJUSTOR PROFESSOR AT MIDWESTERN BAPTIST SEMINARY
2023-2025

- PROFESSOR AT BAPTIST UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA. 2023-26

- PROFESSOR AT MIAMI BIBLE COLLEGE. 1998-2026

- CHURCH PLANTER BUFFALO, NEW YORK 1985-1990. NEW
YORK BAPTIST CONVENTION

- FIRST VICE PRESIDENT FLORIDA BAPTIST CONVENTION. 2017-
2019

- SENIOR PASTOR AT ESTRELLA DE BELEN BAPTIST CHURCH,
HIALEAH, FL. 1990-TODAY

FAMILY

. FAMILY

MARRIED TO BARBARA SOTOLONGO FOR 41 YEARS; TWO
DAUGHTERS, RUTH MARTIN AND SARAH FERRET SOTOLONGO;
THREE GRANDCHILDREN: EMMA (8), ELIJAH (5), AND EMMETT
(3 MONTHS).

Election of Officers

Written By: Nicole Kalil
November 14, 2017

Election of Officers | President, First Vice President, Second Vice President

Stephen Rummage, pastor of [Bell Shoals Baptist Church](#) in Brandon and current president of the [Florida Baptist State Convention](#), was nominated by Bobby Lewis, pastor of [First Baptist Church of Middleburg](#), to serve a second term as president this morning during the second session of the 156th annual Florida Baptist State Convention meeting. No other nominations were presented, and Dr. Rummage was unanimously re-elected as president of the Florida Baptist State Convention.

Javier Sotolongo, pastor of [Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Bellen](#) in Hialeah Gardens, served as first vice president of the Florida Baptist State Convention this past year and this morning was unanimously elected to serve a second term.

Ralph Alderman, Jr. was nominated and then elected as second vice president of the 2018 Florida Baptist State Convention. Alderman, Jr. has been a faithful lay leader for more than 15 years at [Exciting Central Tampa Baptist Church](#). Rounding out the new slate of 2018 State Convention officers is Randy Huckabee, pastor of [First Baptist Church in Dade City](#). Huckabee was nominated and subsequently elected to his 11th year as recording secretary for the State Convention.

By Nicole Kalil, [Florida Baptist Convention](#), November 14, 2017

<https://flbaptist.org/election-of-officers/>

Sotolongo to serve as professor at Southwestern Seminary

Written By: Keila Diaz

February 20, 2023

<https://flbaptist.org/sotolongo-to-serve-as-professor-at-southwestern-seminary/>

MIAMI— Florida Baptist pastor Javier Sotolongo has recently been named adjunct professor of contemporary evangelism at [Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary](#) as part of the [Spanish language Master of Theological Studies](#).

Sotolongo will continue to pastor [Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Belen in Hialeah](#) as he serves in his role in the Hispanic programs of the seminary in Fort Worth, Texas. Sotolongo has been pastoring Estrella de Belen since 1990.

Pastor Javier Sotolongo



“I know Javier to be a faithful pastor, a fervent evangelist, and a scholar on topics related to Cuban Baptists and Cuban-American Baptists,” said John Massey, Sotolongo’s thesis advisor at SWBTS as well as dean of the Roy Fish School of Evangelism and Missions and associate professor of missions.

“Javier has a track record of training pastors through his own church. Now coupled with his doctoral training, it was easy for us to see that he would add value to our program and quality instruction to our students.”

Sotolongo will graduate at the end of 2023 with a doctoral degree from SWBTS in world Christian studies. Through Estrella de Belen, Sotolongo started [Miami Bible College](#) to make Bible education accessible to all.

“The vision I’ve gained through the Ph.D. program at SWBTS has helped me see the world through a new lens,” said Sotolongo. “By nature, I am a missionary and an evangelist, and that is a passion I bring to class.”

“Southwestern en Español is excited to have Pastor Javier Sotolongo as an adjunct faculty teaching contemporary evangelism,” said Mark McClellan, professor of missions and director of Hispanic programs at SWBTS.

“He has a strong commitment to evangelism and leads his church to evangelistic outreach. He is an experienced teacher and will offer outstanding quality instruction for our students. He is a leader who will continue to have an impact in Florida and beyond.”

In addition to pastoring Estrella de Belen, Sotolongo served as first vice president of the 2017 and 2018 [Florida Baptist State Convention](#).

Pastor Javier Sotolongo leads church in bold evangelistic growth

Written By: Keila Diaz
March 13, 2025

United in faith and purpose, Estrella de Belen members gather to pray for and with their neighbors—believing that the hope of the Gospel and compassion can transform their community. Photo courtesy of Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Belen.

HIALEAH— [Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Belén’s](#) commitment to setting clear goals for [evangelism](#) and baptism has led to remarkable growth and transformation in both the congregation and surrounding community. By intentionally focusing on outreach and discipleship, the church has seen an increase in baptisms and a renewed passion for sharing the gospel.

“When we set goals for baptisms, we saw a significant increase,” pastor Javier Sotolongo shared. “People were always there, but for some reason, they weren’t taking that next step. The moment we encouraged them and set a target, we saw more people stepping forward in faith.”

Sotolongo, also an adjunct professor of evangelism at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has implemented a multifaceted approach to outreach that includes intentional prayer, evangelism training, community engagement, and clear goal-setting. His church has embraced strategies such as street prayer events, neighborhood outreach, and discipleship initiatives to create a culture of evangelism.

Training and equipping for evangelism

Recognizing that fear often holds believers back from sharing their faith, Sotolongo has led the church to emphasize training through simple and effective tools like the [3 Circles](#) method, [Evangelism Explosion](#), and hands-on practice.

“We want to eliminate barriers. We provide simple training sessions, sometimes just two hours after Sunday services, with a meal included,” he explained. “The goal is to equip more people to confidently share the gospel.”

The church also has embraced a unique method of reporting gospel conversations. Instead of requiring detailed reports, the church has a system where members simply text a designated number, saying, “I shared Christ with someone today,” or “Someone accepted Christ today.” These weekly numbers are then displayed on a church board and shared with the congregation.

“When people see those numbers, it encourages them,” Sotolongo said. “It creates momentum, and people want to be part of it.”

“Church leadership intentionality will deliver kingdom-impacting results.”

Al Fernandez

Southeast regional catalyst, Florida Baptist Convention

“Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Belen, under the leadership of Pastor Javier Sotolongo, aimed at sharing the gospel with its immediate City of Hialeah community,” said Al Fernandez, Southeast regional catalyst of the Florida Baptist Convention. “The result was that of hitting their baptism goal. This is a testament that church leadership intentionality will deliver kingdom-impacting results.”

Community outreach and baptisms

“It is inspiring to see the intentionality of a church fulfilling the Great Commission through evangelistic efforts,” said Emanuel Roque, Florida Baptists’ Hispanic multicultural catalyst. “God has used Pastor Javier Sotolongo over the years to lead a healthy and effective church through this commitment to the centrality and real priority of the gospel in message and action.”

The church’s commitment to evangelism extends beyond the walls of the building. Members regularly take to the streets, offering prayer and invitations to church services. This outreach has led to encounters with the homeless, immigrants and people from diverse backgrounds, some of whom have begun attending services.

The impact of these efforts is evident in baptismal services. A recent service included a young man with autism who, after completing baptism classes, confidently professed his faith. Though initially hesitant about the water, he was ultimately baptized in a way that accommodated his comfort level.

“This showed us that the gospel is for everyone, and we need to be flexible in how we minister to people,” Sotolongo reflected.

The church also prioritizes celebrating baptisms publicly, often holding baptismal services outside, where passing cars can witness the joyful occasion.

A growing mission

“Our church has become a place where people expect God to move. And when you expect it, you start to see it happen.”

Javier Sotolongo

pastor, Iglesia Bautista Estrella de Belén, Hialeah

In 2024, the church set a goal of sharing the gospel with 1,000 people, surpassing that number by reaching 1,040 individuals, resulting in 272 professions of faith and 30 baptisms. For 2025, the goal is even greater—300 professions of faith and 50 baptisms.

Sotolongo encourages other churches to take steps toward a culture of evangelism, no matter how small.

“Start with prayer—less for arthritis and more for lost souls,” he said with a chuckle. “Train your people; go out into the community, and let them know your church is there to serve.”

For Sotolongo, evangelism is more than a program—it is the heartbeat of the church.

“Our church has become a place where people expect God to move,” he said. “And when you expect it, you start to see it happen.”

<https://flbaptist.org/pastor-javier-sotolongo-leads-church-in-bold-evangelistic-growth/>

Baptist College of Florida to launch new Miami campus in August

Written By: Keila Diaz

February 23, 2023

<https://flbaptist.org/baptist-college-of-florida-to-launch-new-miami-campus-in-august/>

MIAMI—Clayton Cloer, newly elected president of [The Baptist College of Florida](#), visited with 50 pastors in the Southeast region and shared his plans and vision to launch a BCF campus at the Florida Baptist Convention’s Southeast Regional Center in Hialeah.

The [South Florida](#) BCF campus will launch in August 2023 for the fall semester and will offer a Bachelor of Arts in Christian Studies with a choice of a pastoral ministry or mission ministry concentration.

Also, Cloer told pastors, if at least 10 students in a language group enroll, classes would be made available for them in that [language](#). Most of the pastors in attendance serve [Spanish](#) or [Creole-speaking](#) congregations.

Cloer’s vision for the next five years is to have BCF’s full program of study, currently offered at the main campus in Graceville, also offered at the South Florida campus. That includes offering music, worship, education and psychology degrees at the Hialeah campus.

“We want to make it so that any and every [Florida Baptist](#) who wants a higher education will have it available to them,” said Cloer. His plan to make this happen involves forming dual-enrollment partnerships with Christian education high schools, developing a program in which all classes are available online, and launching sites across the state.

“You want to have your children and grandchildren trained in higher Christian education, and we want to train them,” he said.

Cloer also is focused on making higher Christian education financially accessible.

“The Baptist College of Florida recognizes the great need of being able to offer quality education. With quality comes cost. As the cost of higher education continues to rise, The Baptist College of Florida is committed to offering quality and affordable education that will lift the financial burden and provide students with opportunities to fully commit to kingdom work, whether that is full-time or bi-vocational ministry, within the business marketplace, education or psychology,” he said.

The college is currently offering on-campus and online scholarships to meet the needs of students in addition to federal aid.

“This is a unique time. Higher education is moving into high school as most juniors and seniors are doing college work. There is an ongoing surge in Christian high school education. Across the state, we are seeing Christian education explode. I want to help you serve them. Let’s do it together.”

Reverse Missions Among Southern Baptist Cuban Americans:

**An Evaluation of the Transmission of the Gospel to Hispanics of Miami by First and
Second Generation Cuban American Southern Baptists (1959-1990)**

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary
in Candidacy for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

by

Javier A. Sotolongo

Ft. Worth, Texas

December 2023