

## 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](http://FloridaBaptistHistory.org)

**Self, Melborn Eugene** graduated from New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as pastor of Tamiami Baptist Church, Miami, Faith Baptist Church, Tallahassee, and Graham Baptist Church, Hialeah. Source: Florida Baptist Historical Society files.



Miami Herald January 12, 1984, p. 299

Partial article

There is no school, post office or police station in the town. There is a church — **Graham Baptist Church** — where Rev. Melbron Self delivers a sermon twice a week. Until recently, there was even a mayor.

"I was mayor, town marshal and councilman," said Kenneth Hammack, 49. His wife, Barbara, still listed as a councilwoman, now lives in Hialeah.

"One day a year I would shine up my badge and wear it," Hammack said. "Had to, to make it legal."

Miami Herald August 15, 1985, p. 438

**Religion**

## Pastor takes his church to the community

By ANA RIVAS—VAZQUEZ  
*Herald Staff Writer*

Melbron Self sits in his office, the walls crowded with maps, charts and books. The leader of the **Graham Baptist Church** in Pennsuco is a planner and a hard worker, but he worries about his dream of reaching the entire community and spreading the Word of God.

"I have the vision," said Self, 42. "But it's not going to be a real, viable program until the people sense ownership of the program."

Yet Self has been successful in reaching people both in his tiny community and in Hialeah Gardens, the city across the street from the trailers and small building that are his church.

When Self arrived at **Graham Baptist** in 1977, church membership totaled 35, and attendance was even lower, although the church had been established in Pennsuco since 1960.

Today, there are more than 200 members and more than 100 worshippers attend Sunday services.

With his maps of the area and population estimates, Self has launched an attack on the neighboring community. He has set up a Spanish-speaking department to cater to Spanish-speaking residents.

Every Wednesday, teams of two go door-to-door, distributing the Scriptures in both Spanish and English and passing out invitations to join the church. Self has maps that show the areas already canvassed.

"We build our church on relationships," Self said. "We're evangelical in the sense that we go out and share our faith.

"Every person who visits our church, we try and return a visit to their house."

Some of the material Self and his volunteers use is part of a nationwide Southern Baptist revival. Most of the Southern Baptists in Dade County will take a survey and distribute Bibles in September.

"We're just doing it a little bit quicker than everyone else," Self said. "Our needs couldn't wait until Sept. 7 and 8."

Self, who quit his job at Florida Power & Light in 1981 to become a full-time pastor, said his work is fulfilling because God is the important force in his life.

In addition to his work at **Graham Baptist**, Self works as a chaplain for the city of Miami Police Department. He often rides with policemen and leads weekly Bible study groups.

Self also is active in the government of Hialeah Gardens, where he lives.


Recently appointed by Mayor Daniel Riccio to the city's Water and Sewer Board, Self is also on the Personnel Review Board.

"He does serve the community well," Mayor Riccio said. "He's well-respected and listened to. I respect him for his views. We may have different thoughts, but I wouldn't want any other kind of person."

Back in his office, Self points to the maps on the wall and indicates the area he wants to cover: all of Hialeah Gardens and other areas in Northwest Dade.

His next project: a new building for the congregation.

"The community is growing up," he said. "The houses in the Estates area range from \$150,000 to \$1 million. So the church has to present an atmosphere conducive to that life style."



AL DIAZ / Miami Herald Staff

**Pastor Melbron Self stands in front of the only church in Pennsuco.**

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## Church has new pastor

The **Rev. Eugene Self** began his pastorate at Faith Baptist Church on Monday. He had served as pastor of Tamiami Baptist Church in Miami. He also served as chaplain for the Miami Police Department.



**Self**

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He moved here from Miami.

A graduate of New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, **Self** served in the U.S. Air Force and worked for Florida Power and Light for 16 years.

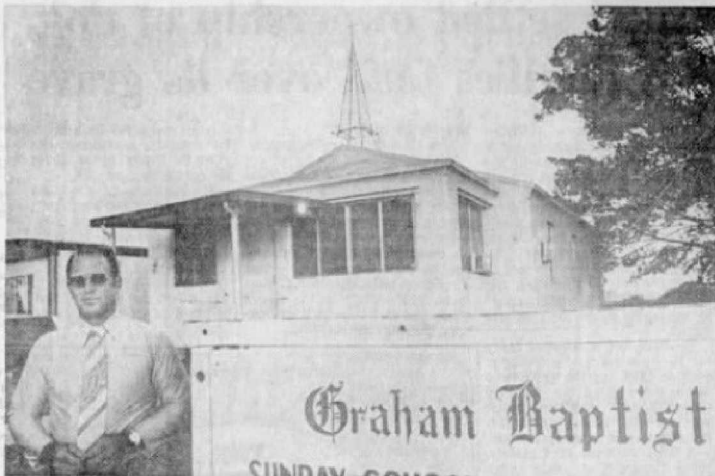
The church will welcome **Self** at its 11 a.m. service on Sunday at the church, 3333 Apalachee Parkway.

— Jane Parrish

## FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

Faith Baptist Church was started by a group of believers living southeast of Tallahassee in the area around the Apalachee Parkway. Seminole Baptist Church agreed to sponsor the mission, and in October 1964, about forty people interested in the endeavor joined Seminole Baptist. The search for suitable property began, and eventually a restaurant building near Capital Circle was rented. This was a very exciting time as the work progressed. The first service was on the first Sunday in April 1965, with Rev. Patrick Kennicott as the pastor.

Eleven acres of land at 3333 Apalachee Parkway was purchased with the help of the Florida Baptist Convention and local bank financing. On August 28, 1966, the first service was held in the new building. Faith Baptist experienced its greatest growth during the seventies, but it seems at the present time to be on the brink of great things. In 1985 Faith sponsored Woodrun Mission, which was soon constituted a church. In 1991 a building program was undertaken to add a new education wing and office space, and the Day Care wing was renovated by church members and Day Care parents. Rev. William Gammon has been the Minister of Education since February 1985, and Rev. Gene Self became the pastor on June 7, 1993. The church has a membership of about 500.



The Rev. Melbron Eugene Self ministers to Pennsuco's tiny congregation.

## Graham chapel in tiny Pennsuco becomes full-scale Baptist church

A chapel in the tiny township of Pennsuco, Fla., will gain its independence this weekend and bloom into a full-fledged church. Its independence has been 29 years in the making.

**Graham Baptist Chapel** becomes **Graham Baptist Church** Monday.

The chapel was a mission of the **First Baptist Church** of Hialeah. It was formed to meet the spiritual

The chapel was a mission of the **First Baptist Church** of Hialeah. It was formed to meet the spiritual needs of a large group of dairy workers and their families in Northwest Dade.

Pennsuco has grown out of the failed sugar crops of the Pennsylvania Sugar Company. Then engineer, **Ernest Graham**, father of Gov. Bob **Graham**, was sent to South Florida by the company during the early 1920s to look over the land. The crops were planted and all failed. **Ernest Graham** stayed and bought 640 acres from the company. What remains of the town is about 20 persons and a stretch of land along Okeechobee Road (US 27) between NW 107th and 117th streets. It is still owned by the **Graham** family.

**Graham** Dairy workers in Pennsuco, and their families, were separated from the rest of the world and conventional churches by distance as well as their work.

For six years, during the late 1940s, the workers met for prayer and services in bunkhouses. The houses were provided for the dairy workers on **Graham** property. They shared the gospel with snakes and cattle.

About 29 years ago, the **Graham** family donated a permanent site for the chapel. Just then, the dairy operation was gradually phased out in Pennsuco and was moved north.

### Religion

The already tiny Pennsuco lost population and land to developments like Miami Lakes, something that continues today.

In 1960, there were 150 to 200 chapel members. By the mid-1970s, that continues today.

In 1960, there were 150 to 200 chapel members. By the mid-1970s, membership fell so low that **First Baptist Church** of Hialeah was considering closing the mission. Attendance at the meetings was down to 15 or 20 persons, according to **Gay Self**, part-time church secretary and wife of the church's pastor, **Melbron Eugene Self**. **Ruth Hammack**, a Pennsuco "oldtimer" came to the chapel's aid. She went to the church and asked the leadership not to close the mission, they agreed, said **Self**.

In 1977 the chapel was turned over to **Self**. He moved in with his wife and their two boys, **Timothy**, now 19, and **Jeffrey**, now 15.

**Gay Self** calls **Hammack** the chapel's prayer warrior. **Hammack's** son, **Kenneth**, now serves as foreman for what remains of the **Graham** operation in Pennsuco and lives in the coral-block house built by **Ernest Graham**.

**Graham** operation in Pennsuco and lives in the coral-block house built by **Ernest Graham**.

Presently, there are 200 members on the chapel's rolls, said **Self**.

**Self**, known as **Brother Gene**, says that the new church's most immediate goal is developing a day-care center and school system.

"I don't see the smallness of Pennsuco affecting the church because of the growing areas around us," he said. "We draw people as far away as **Homestead**, **Davie** and **North Miami Beach**."

## WAYNE PARKS PENTECOSTAL CAMP MEETING '83

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