

## **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)

**Sexton, Charlie** was converted and called to preach in Orlando. He graduated from The Baptist College of Florida in 1983, and Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1985. Sexton served as pastor of New Home, Graceville, Florida; First Baptist Church Horseshoe Bend, Weatherford, Texas; Cypress Baptist Church, Cypress, Florida, and First Baptist Church of Big Pine Key. Sexton and his wife, Marsha Hughes have three children.

'Chainsaw Pastor' finds open doors through Florida Keys relief ministry  
by Barbara Denman, posted Friday, October 30, 1998 (22 years ago)  
Email To Friend

KEY WEST, Fla. (BP)--For the past five weeks, Bob Hetherington has carried a chainsaw to work.

"We've been calling him 'Chainsaw Pastor,' said wife Judy Hetherington. "But he says it's been absolutely the greatest visitation program we have ever had."

Since Hurricane Georges struck the middle and southern Florida Keys Sept. 25, Hetherington, pastor of the Fifth Street Baptist Church, has ministered to folks in his community by willingly cutting trees and branches off of hurricane-damaged homes, apartment buildings and trailers. His servant spirit, coupled with 21 years of ministering in the Keys, has earned him recognition and respect.

"Before, when he used to go visiting in the community, few people would invite him inside to talk," said Judy Hetherington, who serves as minister of education at the Key West church. "But after he has spent a few hours cutting trees on their property, they say, 'Come in and talk.' The doors are wide open."

The Hetheringtons have found many doors open in the aftermath of the hurricane since the church and Florida Baptists launched an all-out effort to feed those without food and help with the area's immediate recovery, Judy Hetherington said.

"Everywhere we go, like just yesterday, the bank teller told me, 'You have no idea how the town appreciates what you and Florida Baptists have done for us,'" she recalled. Others have told her, "You guys were the first ones to help."

And when Hurricane Mitch was bearing down in the Caribbean in late October, several people asked Hetherington if Florida Baptists would return to the Keys should the area be hit again. "I guaranteed them that the truck would be waiting in Florida City, just like before."

The Key West City Commission passed a resolution thanking all of the local churches for their assistance during the disaster, but expressed appreciation "first and foremost" to Fifth Street Baptist Church.

Immediately after the storm, the Florida Baptist Convention disaster relief van and mobile feeding kitchen was mobilized to Key West and parked at Fifth Street Baptist's front door for 17 days.

Two mobile kitchens from South Carolina and Georgia Baptists were stationed for eight days at First Baptist, Big Pine Key and Sugarloaf Baptist churches on Summerland Key. During the recovery effort 112,000 hot meals were served to the community.

Command centers were established to coordinate the work of volunteers, including 28 staff members from the Florida Baptist Convention and 98 volunteers from Florida Baptist churches. The volunteers assisted 151 families by cutting and removing trees from homes, cleaning out mud and performing other necessary tasks. Another 1,000 families were visited by trained counselors and, in some cases, received emergency financial assistance.

In the relief effort, the convention spent \$102,780 for: assistance to churches, \$65,200; ministerial salary supplements, \$9,843; emergency family assistant, \$16,000; and equipment replacement, \$11,737.

Charles Sexton, pastor of Big Pine Key Baptist Church, reported most people are back in their homes and the church building is being repaired. Many of the residents have turned their attention to the 'Fantasy Fest' gay weekend," he added. "So, unfortunately, some things have returned to normal."

During the next few months, Sexton said, many more homeless people will make their way to the Keys to spend the winter and will be added to the 1,000 homeless families who lost everything during the hurricane. The church is known in the community for its work with the homeless, providing needs for the indigent, showers and sometimes providing a place to stay.

"The Keys is a unique place to minister, unlike central Florida where I grew up or the Panhandle where I served as pastor," Sexton said.

Brenda Forlines, director of the convention's church and community ministries department, and Sharon Thompson, associate in the women's mission and ministries department, discovered a sense of hopelessness as the two visited homes and counseled residents in the aftermath of the storm.

More so than any hurricane since Hurricane Andrew struck Miami in 1992, "these images have haunted me," Forlines said. One widow and her dog stayed in a closet in her tiny trailer for 24 hours while the storm raged around her. Days later, the woman's entire body was still trembling, Forlines said.

A woman living in a small trailer "the size of my office" talked incessantly, Forlines recounted. "I kept thinking, she's talking because all day long she lives in this box and has no one else to talk to. I can't get that image of her in that little box out of my mind."

A man, surly at first and his body covered in sores, showed the two women the pills he takes to fight his bone cancer. He was so taken aback when the women offered him financial assistance, he let down his guard and told of horrific Vietnam experiences as a Baptist chaplain.

"They seemed bummed out, hiding from mistakes in their past or a less than tolerant society," said Thompson, a trained psychologist. "I saw more risk-taking behavior, extreme alcoholism, self-destructive addiction and experimentation with drugs. Many of them have come to the Keys to escape from life."

As a result of their work, Thompson said she "hoped we were there painting a picture of Baptists that we were more than a people of words, we are a people of action. I hope that through our efforts we undergirded the credibility that Hetheringtons have already earned in this community."

## Revival

First Baptist Church, Sneads, will have a revival on April 10, 11, and 12 with evangelist and the Rev. Charlie Sexton from Cypress.

Sexton was a former gang member, drug user, rider with the motorcycle gangs, The Hell's Angels and The Outlaws. Music will be provided by Shirley Neel of Sneads.

Time will be 7 p.m. on Friday and Saturday, and 11 a.m. and 7 p.m. on Sunday. Everyone, especially youth are invited.

1 of 9 matches

# Association has funtime banquet

The Chipola Baptist Association Woman's Missionary Union held an "Appreciation and Funtime" banquet for the Association's pastors and their wives at the Citizens Bank Lodge Sept. 22.

The Saturday night gala was a festive affair. Dress was western-style for a roundup, with Miriam Davis, associational WMU director (attired in a red and white cowgirl ensemble) presiding.

She gave a tribute to the pastors and their wives from the WMU, expressing love and appreciation for their leadership, prayers, caring, encouragement and for answering God's call in Jackson County as well as in foreign fields. Prayer was requested by all, that the thousands in the Panhandle who are not Christians may be led to Christ.

Each WMU church director participated by introducing her pastor and his wife. Everyone then became engaged in "get-acquainted" games. A skit, "A WMU Nominating Committee," was presented by Betty Avant and her Acteens: Robin Wright, Devana Stewart, Sarah Stewart and Nancy

Thompson from New Salem Baptist Church.

Also, "The Lone Stranger" was presented by Pastor Gary Richardson and his "puppets" from Circle Hill Baptist Church.

Last but not least, "Helps in Fun, A & B" was staged to help pastors and their wives solve two of their biggest problems: "Getting Along," with Rev. Charlie Sexton and his wife, Marsha, of Cypress Baptist Church in charge; and "Budgeting Time," presented by Rev. Ed Downs and his wife, Janice, of Bascom Baptist Church.

The Downs' and Rev. Jackie Register and his wife, Linda, of Rocky Creek Baptist Church participated in a speedy fun-dressing contest, with Rev. and Mrs. Downs winning the title of "Mr. and Mrs. Chipola Association" for being the funniest, fastest and best-dressed couple to leave their respective "dressing room."

The WMU served a turkey dinner with all the trimmings. Ninety-five persons were present.

Herman Davis rendered a closing prayer for a great year beginning Oct. 1.

## Profile of a Pastor

## Former outlaw makes dramatic change

By JOYCE JAMES  
Floridan Lifestyles Editor

CYPRESS — "The Lord is still using my background to reach other lost souls," said the Rev. Charles Howard (Charlie) Sexton, 39, pastor of Cypress Baptist Church for almost five years.

A native of Orlando, Rev. Sexton was raised in "a very ungodly home" and turned to crime and violence as a young man. He was president of the first street gang in Orlando and was also a member of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang of that city.

Asked how he got saved, he said he was dealing drugs with a friend, whose mother reminded him of his own grandmother, whom Charlie adored. "She kept inviting me to a revival, and finally I agreed to go, mostly to shock my fellow gang members," Charlie said. "I was stoned, but I went."

At the time, he was 25 years old, and although he'd been arrested in three counties, he'd "never had anyone come and tell me about Christ," he says.

The revival was the first time he'd heard the gospel, and to his surprise, he went back the

second night and received salvation "at the ripe old age of 25."

He added, "At the time, I was a functional illiterate who couldn't read or write. Now I'm 39 and a graduate of the biggest and toughest seminary in the world, so that shows that you can do all things through Christ, Who strengtheneth you."

The son of Mrs. Lillian Snyder of Orlando and the late Andy Sexton, he had two brothers, one of whom was killed in the Vietnam Conflict, and two sisters. Charlie said he got married at age 17 to a girl in his gang, and the marriage didn't last, although he is raising two sons from their union: Charlie Vincent, 19, and Sean Howard, 17.

He has now been married for 14 years to the former Marsha Hughes, "an Army brat from everywhere," and they have a daughter, Rachel, 12.

Charlie attended Boone High School in Orlando and later received his GED equivalency diploma. He graduated from the former Baptist Bible Institute in Graceville, receiving a Bachelor's degree in theology, and received his Master's degree in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Tex.

After he was saved, "my so-called friends drifted away." He became a member of University Baptist Church, where the revival had been held, and remained there for three years, teaching a Sunday School class. "I couldn't read the teacher's book but could read a little of the students' book, and that helped me a lot," he said. He also taught church training.

After three years, the Lord called him into the ministry, and he began attending BBI. "That's what brought me to Jackson County," he said. While in college, he pastored New Hope Baptist Church near Graceville and later the First Baptist Church of Horseshoe Bend near Ft. Worth while in seminary. Cypress Baptist is his first fulltime pastorate.

The church in Cypress is doing well, averaging about 50 in Sunday School and 75 at morning worship. The facility is only about 10 years old and has a part-time music director, Mark Carroll. Pianist is Jackie Carroll, and organist is Wen Carroll.

Charlie says, "I love Jackson County; I think it's the last frontier of Florida."

Rev. Sexton said it took a long time to ease his

doubts about salvation erasing all the mistakes from his past. "After a lot of wrestling, I realized the Lord takes all your sins and casts them into a sea of forgiveness, washing them completely away," he said. "The blood of Christ truly cleanses and makes man a new creation."

Now God is using his past to help him relate to sinners under conviction. "I had a friend phone me a month ago, and Christ is really dealing with him," he said. "Sometimes a gang member will call me up, and I get a chance to witness to him. The Lord is taking a bad situation and making good come out of it."

For hobbies, Rev. Sexton said he, his wife, sons and daughter are all certified scuba divers and "we all love to fish, so that's how we spend our spare time."

Although he's gotten a haircut and cleaned up both his appearance and his act since he rode with the Outlaws, Charlie still finds pleasure in cycling. "I guess I'll always ride a motorcycle, but this one has a windshield and is much more domesticated than the kind I used to ride," he laughed.

By JOYCE JAMES  
Floridan Lifestyles Editor

CYPRESS — "The Lord is still using my background to reach other lost souls," said the Rev. Charles Howard (Charlie) Sexton, 39, pastor of Cypress Baptist Church for almost five years.

A native of Orlando, Rev. Sexton was raised in "a very ungodly home" and turned to crime and violence as a young man. He was president of the first street gang in Orlando and was also a member of the Outlaw Motorcycle Gang of that city.

Asked how he got saved, he said he was dealing drugs with a friend, whose mother reminded him of his own grandmother, whom Charlie adored. "She kept inviting me to a revival, and finally I agreed to go, mostly to shock my fellow gang members," Charlie said. "I was stoned, but I went."

At the time, he was 25 years old, and although he'd been arrested in three counties, he'd "never had anyone come and tell me about Christ," he says.

The revival was the first time he'd heard the gospel, and to his surprise, he went back the

second night and received salvation "at the ripe old age of 25."

He added, "At the time, I was a functional illiterate who couldn't read or write. Now I'm 39 and a graduate of the biggest and toughest seminary in the world, so that shows that you can do all things through Christ, Who strengtheneth you."

The son of Mrs. Lillian Snyder of Orlando and the late Andy Sexton, he had two brothers, one of whom was killed in the Vietnam Conflict, and two sisters. Charlie said he got married at age 17 to a girl in his gang, and the marriage didn't last, although he is raising two sons from their union: Charlie Vincent, 19, and Sean Howard, 17.

He has now been married for 14 years to the former Marsha Hughes, "an Army brat from everywhere," and they have a daughter, Rachel, 12.

Charlie attended Boone High School in Orlando and later received his GED equivalency diploma. He graduated from the former Baptist Bible Institute in Graceville, receiving a Bachelor's degree in theology, and received his Master's degree in religious education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Ft. Worth, Tex.

After he was saved, "my so-called friends drifted away." He became a member of University Baptist Church, where the revival had been held, and remained there for three years, teaching a Sunday School class. "I couldn't read the teacher's book but could read a little of the students' book, and that helped me a lot," he said. He also taught church training.

After three years, the Lord called him into the ministry, and he began attending BBI. "That's what brought me to Jackson County," he said. While in college, he pastored New Hope Baptist Church near Graceville and later the First Baptist Church of Horseshoe Bend near Ft. Worth while in seminary. Cypress Baptist is his first fulltime pastorate.

The church in Cypress is doing well, averaging about 50 in Sunday School and 75 at morning worship. The facility is only about 10 years old and has a part-time music director, Mark Carroll. Pianist is Jackie Carroll, and organist is Wen Carroll.

Charlie says, "I love Jackson County; I think it's the last frontier of Florida."

Rev. Sexton said it took a long time to ease his

doubts about salvation erasing all the mistakes from his past. "After a lot of wrestling, I realized the Lord takes all your sins and casts them into a sea of forgiveness, washing them completely away," he said. "The blood of Christ truly cleanses and makes man a new creation."

Now God is using his past to help him relate to sinners under conviction. "I had a friend phone me a month ago, and Christ is really dealing with him," he said. "Sometimes a gang member will call me up, and I get a chance to witness to him. The Lord is taking a bad situation and making good come out of it."

For hobbies, Rev. Sexton said he, his wife, sons and daughter are all certified scuba divers and "we all love to fish, so that's how we spend our spare time."

Although he's gotten a haircut and cleaned up both his appearance and his act since he rode with the Outlaws, Charlie still finds pleasure in cycling. "I guess I'll always ride a motorcycle, but this one has a windshield and is much more domesticated than the kind I used to ride," he laughed.