

## **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.

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**Simmons, Elijah** served as pastor of Norwood Community Church (formerly Mount Horeb), Jacksonville.

### **Mount Horeb BC Becomes Norwood Community Church**

By FBC\_Admin Last updated Jan 10, 2019

One Florida Baptist church that has been a bastion of faith in its community for almost 95 years will continue its journey under a new name.

Mount Horeb Baptist Church in Jacksonville recently became Norwood Community Church.

Pastor Elijah Simmons said the name change is a direct reflection of the heart of its congregation to connect with and be a Gospel presence in the Norwood community. Simmons said the church had been burdened with how best to make disciples in the community they're in.

"We want to be the church of the community," he said. "The community had no attachment to the Mount Horeb name."

Simmons said the congregation readily agreed with the name change and they have seen a positive response in the community as well. They host free cook-outs for the community once a month where they meet their neighbors, share the Gospel and invite people to church. As a result, Simmons said they see new faces every Sunday.

Simmons said church leadership began to consider the name change after attending the ReFocus Conference hosted by the Florida Baptist Convention. As part of the conference, leaders were encouraged to consider all aspects of their church and how they can best make sure that making disciples is their top priority.

"We were looking at everything and centering it around our desire to make disciples in our community," Simmons said.

Norwood Community Church has a long and storied history. The building itself was originally located at Camp Blanding, 50 miles to the south of Jacksonville, and was floated up the St. Johns River to its current location, functioning as Norwood Baptist Church. As Norwood Baptist, the church helped build the Jacksonville Baptist Association building and planted many churches around Northeast Florida. As the community transitioned, the congregation aged and attendance dwindled the church considered closing its doors for good. However, through the JBA, Norwood Baptist connected with Mount Horeb, a church without a facility in the Orange Park area. The congregation decided to gift their church building to Mount Horeb in 2016 because they felt it was important for the community to have its own church.

By Nicole Kalil, Florida Baptist Convention, January 9, 2019