

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, Emmett (1913-2000) was born in Hardee County, Florida. He served as pastor of churches in Limestone, Lily, Myakka City, New Zion, Venus and Dry Prairie Baptist Church, Bowling Green, 1959-1973. Simmons and his wife, Cleo B. Simmons had three children.

HISTORY
OF
DRY PRAIRIE BAPTIST CHURCH

Dry Prairie Baptist Church was started by a small group of people who felt a need for a place to worship. On June 16, 1888 a building of rough unpainted lumber was erected. There were 25 charter members. Rev. J.M. Hendry was the first pastor and served from June 16, 1888 until October 16, 1897. The church moved into its second building on November 2, 1912. The first record of Sunday School dates back to 1894.

Rev. S.F. Durrance pastored Dry Prairie twice. The first time he served from October 28, 1923 until August 9, 1925. He served again from October 8, 1933 until March 1951. On August 22, 1948 Mr. D.C. Turner, Sr. donated 3 acres of land to the church and it was moved from the site back in the pines to its present location which is a distance of about 3 miles. The church moving was completed in May 1949. In May of 1951 under the leadership of Elmer Albritton the church started a weekly prayer meeting. Rev. Albritton served from March 25, 1951 until January 11, 1953. On September 7, 1952 the cornerstone was laid for a new auditorium. The auditorium was completed and dedicated in March 1954. Rev. Alex Hendry was the pastor at the time of the dedication. Rev. Emmett Simmons served as pastor of Dry Prairie from January 7, 1959 until June 10, 1973.

On July 20, 1971 Mr. and Mrs. Bill Peterson donated 6 acres of land on the west side of the church property to the church. This includes the site where the parsonage now sits. On April 16, 1972 Rev. Mac Durrance was ordained to the gospel ministry under the leadership of Rev. Emmett Simmons. Construction of our educational building was begun in February 1973. On August 8, 1976 the new educational building and fellowship hall was dedicated. Rev. R.J. Stewart was the pastor at the time serving from May 5, 1976 until June 22, 1979. On November 7, 1976 Bro. James Peterson was ordained into the gospel ministry.

In February 1983, under the direction of Rev. Mac Durrance, a wheelchair ramp was added at the west door of the auditorium. Rev. Durrance left July 24th of the same year. A church library was started on December 7, 1983. On September 4, 1985, Mr. and Mrs. Sammy Louis Rawls donated a 3 bedroom home to be used as the parsonage. The church moved the house to the back lot of the church property. On February 9, 1986, Rev. Davis Ramsey was called as pastor and moved into the parsonage in May of 1986. On November 2, 1986 a dedication service was held for the parsonage. Within the next few months we will dedicate a new fellowship hall and the present one will be turned into added Sunday School rooms and a Pastor's study. We celebrated our 100th anniversary in November 1988.

Manatee Southern 1989

Emmett Simmons

The **Rev. Emmett Simmons**, 87, Sarasota and formerly of Arcadia, died May 19, 2000.

He was born Feb. 4, 1913, in Hardee County and came to Sarasota two years ago from Arcadia. A Baptist minister in Florida cities for 50 years, he was known as "Brother **Emmett**" and held pastorates in Limestone, Lily, Dry Prairie, Myakka City, Bowling Green, New Zion and Venus. He was a member of Limestone Baptist Church.

Survivors include his wife of 64 years, Cleo B.; a daughter, Anna J. Evers of Sarasota; two sons, Arthur W. of Orlando and Jimmy E. of Palm Beach Gardens; a sister, Vivian Davis of Okeechobee; six grandchildren; and four great-grandchildren.

Visitation will be from 6 to 8 p.m. today at Ponger-Kays-Grady Funeral Home in Arcadia. The service will be at 11 a.m. Tuesday at Limestone Baptist Church. Burial will be in Lily Cemetery in Lily.

Memorial donations may be made to the Alzheimer's Unit of the Pines, 1501 N. Orange Ave., Sarasota, FL 34236.