

## **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)

**Sledge, William H.** (1870-1966) graduated from Wake Forest College and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Miami; Miami Beach Baptist Church; and West Little River Baptist Church, Miami. He was married to Lillian Sledge.

## The History of Little River Baptist Church

Little River Baptist Church, a Southern Baptist Church, was planned in prayer, built on faith, paid for by sacrifice, and dedicated to the Glory of God and the service of man.

In 1923, a sub-division was begun near the Little River, on what was then known as Everglades Avenue. Today this is 79th Street. Baptists in this area realized the need of a place to worship. After a census was taken, under the leadership of H. P. Summers, it was determined that approximately sixty Baptists were interested in a gospel program. A tent was secured through the financial aid of F. M. Soar. Mr. Summer's son-in-law, Reverend C. R. Lee, was the evangelist for this meeting. As a result of the prayers and efforts of these and many other interested Christians, the Little River Baptist Church was organized.

The organizational meeting took place in a small portable schoolhouse located on N. W. 77th Street and 4th Court on the first Sunday in January, 1924. The meeting was conducted by Mr. Alex Tinsley. Other deacons that were instrumental in the organization were: Mr. J. Garwood and Mr. W. J. Roach of Stanton Memorial Baptist Church; Mr. S. H. Hennett and Mr. M. B. Plummer of Lemon City Baptist Church.

Records of the details of the organization were lost in the hurricane of 1926. Those believed to be the charter members are: Mr. and Mrs. M. B. Plummer; Mr. and Mrs. Stewart Naylor; Paul and Kathryn Naylor; Mr. James Garwood; Mr. S. H. Hennett; Mr. Alex Tinsley; Mr. J. J. Soar; Mr. Green Conger; Mr. and Mrs. P. A. Lee; Mr. and Mrs. G. Williams and Reverend C. R. Lee. The deacons were Mr. Garwood, Mr. Hennett, Mr. M. B. Plummer and Mr. Tinsley.

The first meetings were held in the home of Mr. and Mrs. Naylor. Sunday School began with twenty-seven members, and Mr. Tinsley was the first superintendent. Mr. Naylor was elected chorister and leader of B.Y.P.U., as the organization was then called. Mr. and Mrs. Plummer were also Junior B.Y.P.U. leaders and primary Sunday School teachers. Mr. L. C. Coe was made Sunday School teacher for the young people and Mrs. Plummer served as W.M.U. President.

During these early days the spirit of missions was active in the hearts of these people. As a result, two missions were started during 1925 and 1926 that later became churches. The First Baptist Church of North Miami was begun with Reverend Reginald Johnson as pastor and 79th Street Baptist Church with Reverend Harry Whipple as pastor.

Later an old building was secured where the 79th Street Hotel now stands, which accommodated the newly organized church for about six weeks. The first building of worship was located on the corner of N. W. 79th Street and 4th Court. Extra Sunday School rooms were added on each side of the sanctuary as the church was growing rapidly. An upstairs room was added for the Men's Bible Class. These rooms were not structurally sound, so when the hurricane of 1926 struck, the building was demolished.

A garage, owned by Mr. F. M. Soar located at 101 N. W. 79th Street, was donated for Sunday worship. Seats, made by the members, and stacked outside, were moved into the garage for services. Since there were not any classrooms, the congregation met in different locations. However, these inconveniences did not dampen the spirit and determination of the people to proceed with their plan for a church.

With the gift of \$1,000 from the Baptist State Board, matching gifts from members, and an acquisition of the land on the corner of N. W. 77th Street and 4th Court, construction of a new church was started. During this period, services continued in the Soar garage. Also at this time, Reverend Lee announced his resignation. Reverend O. A. Utley of Memphis, Tennessee, was then called as pastor, and under his ministry, two outstanding revival meetings were conducted. He was followed by Reverend **W. H. Sledge**. Then came Reverend J. G. Gunter, who served for over a year, followed by Dr. W. L. Head, whose pastorate of three months resulted in forty-eight new members. Dr. J. H. Puddington was then called as pastor. Reverend A. M. Butler served, followed by Reverend Granville Fisher, under whose leadership revival services were conducted by Reverend Tony Dorris, brother of Mr. G. C. Dorris, then the Sunday School superintendent.

In 1935, Reverend Carl A. Moberg came from the First Baptist Church of Dania as our pastor. At this time, the church's membership reached 235 with 100 enrolled in Sunday School and 50 in Training Union. Several evangelistic meetings were held under the direction of the following: Reverend Clifford Lewis of Cleveland; Reverend W. C. Stracener of Riverside Baptist Church; Dr. W. E. Nowlin, the former President of the State Convention; Dr. William McBernie of Ireland.

During the Business Meeting of October 25, 1935, the church voted unanimously to construct a Sunday School Annex, valued at \$20,000, with the understanding that upon completion, it should be debt free. It was dedicated May 28, 1939. During this same year, under the direction of Superintendent G. C. Dorris, we were recognized as a Standard Sunday School and led the Miami Association in study course awards. Our Vacation Bible School ranked first in the state as a single church school. Pinewood and Golden Glades missions were started and later, both became churches.

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
10 Apr 1948, Sat  
Page 20

for Christian Living.  
Beach Baptist's first pastor, the  
**Rev. W. H. Sledge**, will review the  
history of the church at 8 p. m.  
Sunday. The **Rev. Waldo Wood**  
will speak on "This Is My Church"  
at 11 a. m.  
Bring your own supper, will be

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
01 Oct 1927, Sat  
Page 5

Sermon subjects at Miami Beach  
Baptist Church tomorrow are: 11 a. m.,  
"The Call from Afar," and 7:30 p. m.,  
"Salvation," by **Rev. W. H. Sledge**,  
pastor. Sunday school will meet at  
9:30 a. m.

The Miami News (Miami, Florida)  
21 Nov 1931, Sat  
Page 2

the Community church. The subject  
will be "Thanksgiving and Hard  
Times." The **Rev. W. H. Sledge**, pas-  
tor of the Beach Baptist church, will  
assist in the service and Mrs. Iva  
Sproule Baker will have charge of the

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
26 Oct 1929, Sat  
Page 16

winter.  
**Rev. W. H. Sledge**, recently pastor of  
Miami Beach Baptist Church, and Mrs.  
**Sledge** have returned from a three-  
months' vacation in the North during  
which **Rev. Sledge** preached in Buffalo,  
N. Y., and in Canada. **Rev. Sledge** is  
supplying the pulpit at West Little  
River Baptist Church.  
**Rev. William Anderson** will introduce

## Rotary Club Hears Baptist Pastor's Talk

POMPANO BEACH.—The Rev. Fred Brown, Knoxville, Tenn., guest evangelist at the Baptist church here, spoke to members of the local Rotary club in Pompano Beach hotel Friday noon on the influence civic clubs have had and are having on the American way of life.

Introduced by the Rev. W. H. Sledge, pastor of the Baptist church here, Dr. Brown said civic clubs are carrying forth the ideals of our forefathers who came here in search of God, not wealth.

"There is no man of date

## Mashburn Named Pompano Pastor

POMPANO BEACH.—The Rev. J. T. Mashburn, Lake City, has accepted an invitation to serve as pastor of the local Baptist church, and will assume pastoral duties Sunday morning, Jan. 1, it was announced today.

O. L. Jones, church clerk, said the Rev. Mr. Mashburn served as pastor of the First Baptist church in Lake City until a year ago when he entered into evangelistic work.

The new minister will succeed the Rev. W. H. Sledge, who has served as interim pastor here seven times in the last 16 years. The Rev. Mr. Sledge will return to his home in Miami after conducting Christmas Day services here.

Jones said members of the congregation are exceedingly pleased with the announcement, but are extremely sorry to see the Rev. Mr. Sledge leave. The clerk described the retiring minister as "a splendid pastor."

The Rev. Mr. Mashburn will establish residence in the local parsonage Friday, Dec. 30, Jones said.

The Miami News (Miami, Florida)  
16 Nov 1930, Sun  
Page 9

The **Rev. W. H. Sledge**, pastor of the West Little River Baptist church, knows what he's talking about when he says that the Daily News' jobs for the jobless campaign is doing

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
16 Feb 1952, Sat  
Page 24

Stanton Memorial's pulpit will be supplied at 11 a.m. and 7:45 p.m. Sunday by the **Rev. W. H. Sledge**, former pastor of Miami Beach Baptist and now retired. Church-by-the-Sea will view

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
22 Nov 1924, Sat  
Page 8

m.  
**Stanton Memorial Baptist.**  
Sunday school, 9:30 a. m. Preaching service, 11:00 a. m. and 7:30 p. m. B. Y. P. U., 6:30 p. m. The Rev. **W. H. Sledge** will preach both morning and evening. The **Rev. W. H. Sledge** is an evangelist for the home mission board. He served as a Chaplain in the World War in France. His last pastorate was in Macon, Ga.  
**Coral Gables Congregational.**

## **Sledge** Named **Baptist Pastor**

POMPANO BEACH.—The **Rev. W. H. Sledge** of Miami has been named temporary pastor of the Pompano Beach First Baptist church to succeed the **Rev. Charles W. Smith** whose resignation became effective last Sunday.

The **Rev. and Mrs. Smith** will leave the city Wednesday morning for Swannanoa, N. C., where the **Rev. Mr. Smith** will serve as pastor of the First Baptist church there.

Approximately 300 new members have joined the local church since the Reverend Smith came here four and a half years ago. Sunday night he and **Mrs. Smith** were honored guests at a farewell party at the church attended by members, the **Rev. and Mrs. A. A. Almand**, pastor of the local Methodist church, and a number of members from the latter church.

## STRONG CHURCH GROUPS ACTIVE AT MIAMI BEACH

Denominational Growth  
of City Told by Dr.  
E. A. King

ing on Collins ave.

It was during the same year, 1926, that a small group of Baptists began to hold meetings in the Aladdin building, Alton and Lincoln roads. For a few months their pulpit was supplied by a visiting minister. They moved very soon to the Beaux Art building on Lincoln road where the

**Rev. W. H. Sledge** began regular preaching services. The church now meets in the elementary school building on Washington ave. It was March 10, 1929, that this same group broke ground for a new building on Sheridan ave.

## SUPPLY PASTOR RECEIVES CALL

**Rev. Sledge Chosen To Lead  
Miami Beach Baptists.**

**Rev. W. H. Sledge**, supply pastor of the Miami Beach Baptist church, was elected pastor recently. The church has grown steadily under his supervision since its organization April 1, 1927.

The Sunday school will have a rally today, each class presenting a musical or educational feature. The Baptist Young People's Union of the church is growing rapidly.

## Roy Lee Barron To Be Ordained

Roy Lee Barron, jr., son of Mr. and Mrs. Roy L. Barron, 2099 NW 76th st., and former Miami Daily News reporter, will be ordained to the full gospel ministry at 3 p. m. tomorrow, at West Little River Baptist church, the Rev. W. H. Sledge, acting pastor, has announced.

He is a student at Chipola college, Marianna, and will serve as chaplain of the state tuberculosis hospital at Marianna, and pastor of the Sandy Creek Baptist church, Ponce de Leon, while finishing his studies at the college.

Preaching the ordination sermon tomorrow will be the Rev. Harold A. Davidson, moderator of the Miami Baptist association, and pastor of the Flagler Street church. The Rev. Ralph E. Gwin, pastor of Stampton Memorial where Barron was baptized, will give the ministerial charge.

give the ministerial charge.

The prospective young minister was questioned this week at a meeting at Central church by a presbytery of ministers composed of the Rev. Mr. Davidson, the Rev. Mr. Sledge, the Rev. Frank Keene, the Rev. Edmund Rice and the Rev. Waldo Wood.

Barron is a native Miamian and a graduate of Miami Edison Senior High school. He also attended the University of Miami where he was a member of Sigma Chi fraternity.

At present, he is executive secretary of the Chipola college ministerial association, college pianist and editor of the school newspaper. He served with the U. S. Navy during the war.

# West Little River Baptist Celebrates Anniversary

By PEG LEITHISER  
Miami Daily News Staff Writer

Celebration of a quarter of a century of service will be held tomorrow by West Little River Baptist church, 7999 NW 23rd ave.

The Rev. J. Robert Cockrell, pastor of the church, has announced that the occasion will be a home-coming, with some of the church's former organizers returning to the pulpit as guests to join in the celebration.

The Rev. Charles Lee, who when he was pastor of Little River Baptist church, sent missionaries to begin the work in West Little River, will officially open the celebration when he assumes the pulpit at 11 a. m. Also on the platform as preacher of the sermon will be the Rev. W. H. Sledge, one of the church's former pastors.

Dr. James B. Rogers of Queens Park church, and moderator of the Miami Baptist association at the time of the organization of West Little River Baptist, will also be present.

The Rev. Mr. Cockrell has reported that the home-coming is being used to launch a pay-as-you-go building fund program to insure completion of the first unit, the auditorium of the new church, already begun on 79th st. and 23rd ave.

A basket dinner, served in the cafeteria of West Little River elementary school, will follow the 11 a. m. service. A duet will be sung by two sisters, Mrs. Harry L. Griffin and Miss Nelie Hilliard.

First missionaries to preach in

The present pastor assumed his duties at the church in 1946. Since that time a parsonage has been built, and an organ purchased. A church constitution has been recently adopted, and the need is now great, reports the Rev. Mr. Cockrell, for large facilities.

the area started in 1926 year of the famous hurricane. Among those who worked then were the Rev. Charles Lee, the pastor, Mr. and Mrs. Luke McClam, Mr. and Mrs. L. M. Griffin, Mr. and Mrs. R. E. Lee and Miss Rosalie Muns, all still living.

After a time of meetings held in private homes and business places, a small tabernacle was built, and the church was active. Then the devastating hurricane razed the church, and a tent was erected, with purchase made later on four lots. In October, 1927 the church was formally organized, and November saw election of the first pastor, the Rev. B. B. Blitch.

The church continued to grow and the members of the congregation, in 1927, constructed another building. Addition was made in 1929, and in 1938 a baptistry was added. In 1940 construction was completed on the present educational building. Additional lots have been purchased, commensurate with the growth of the congregation.

The present pastor assumed his duties at the church in 1946. Since that time a parsonage has been built, and an organ purchased. A church constitution has been recently adopted, and

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
04 Mar 1925, Wed  
Page 2

**Tabernacle Revival.**—The **Rev. E. H. Rice**, pastor of the Allapattah Baptist Tabernacle, N. W. Seventeenth avenue and Thirty-third street, announced yesterday that the **Rev. W. H. Sledge**, evangelist from Louisville, Ky., who is spending the winter in Miami, will assist him in a two-weeks' revival which is to begin next Sunday morning. Only one service will be held each day, at 7:30 p. m. Mrs. Frank A. Keene will direct the music.

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
21 Apr 1966, Thu  
Page 66

## **Rev. W. H. Sledge, Ex-Baptist Minister**

Services for the **Rev. William H. Sledge**, 96, of 4340 SW 10th St., will be at 3:30 p.m. Friday at Van Orsdel Coral Gables Chapel. He died Friday.

He came to Miami from Macon, Ga. in 1926 after he retired. He was a Baptist minister.

He was graduated from Wake Forest College in 1894.

Survivors include his wife, Lillian.

## **Church Marks 25th Year at Beach Sunday**

Marking its 25th anniversary, **Miami Beach First Baptist** has planned a day full of activities for Sunday.

**Rev. W. H. Sledge**, first pastor of the church, and several other former pastors will be on hand for the celebration. The other former pastors are Dr. J. Max Cook, Dr. Hugh Ellis, **Rev. C. A. Moberg** and Dr. Morris Peterson.

**Dr. Cook**, who was pastor for the longest period, will speak at the 7:45 p. m. service.

**Rev. Maurice Fain**, the present pastor, will preach at the 10:45 a. m. service which will be followed by an anniversary banquet in the patio.

**Dr. James W. Parrish**, president of the Florida Baptist Convention, will speak for the 2 p. m. ceremony when the history of the church is reviewed.

## First Baptist Of Miami Beach

# Their 'Backyard' Is Mission Field

First Baptist Church of Miami Beach, 2816 Sheridan Ave., follows the Biblical command "to go into all the world and preach the Gospel."

And its mission program begins right in its own back yard — the hotels and motels of the famed Vacationland.

**Each day the Rev. L. Vernon Sisco, pastor, conducts a Bible class in a hotel, motel or home, promoting good will and fellowship among the residents and visitors alike.**

He is assisted by the Rev. Jose Reyes, formerly of Havana, Spanish pastor at the church, who teaches classes in Spanish. Rev. Reyes also preaches to Spanish-speaking people at Sunday worship services while Rev. Sisco preaches in English.

**At present, 21 Bible classes are in operation with the goal set at 100 by the first of the year.**

Situated in a community of changing population, First Baptist Church of Miami Beach is visited each Sunday by people from many states and countries.

The church was started in 1928 by the late Rev. B.C. Henning. First services were held in a store building. It was formally organized early in 1938 with less than 50 members. Today there are almost 400 names on the roll.

**The first building, now an educational building and junior auditorium, was erected shortly after the organization of the church. The present sanctuary which adjoins the former building, was erected in 1957.**

The church has had five pastors — The Rev. W. H. Sledge, Dr. John M. Cook, Dr. Hugh Ellis, the Rev. Maurice Fain, who has returned to the New Orleans Seminary for further study, and Rev. Sisco, a native of Tennessee, who came to the church a year ago this month from Flint, Mich.

## CHURCH TO OBSERVE NINTH ANNIVERSARY

### Miami Beach Baptist Congrega- tion Conducted First Meet- ing In Private Home

Miami Beach Baptist Church will celebrate the ninth anniversary of its organization tomorrow, when a large attendance of members and friends is expected.

The first meeting of Baptists in Miami Beach took place at the home of W. E. Norton, who is now an officer of the church. The church was formally organized April 10, 1927, and the present site at 2816 Sheridan road was purchased April 22, 1928.

Rev. W. H. Sledge was the first pastor. Other pastors are Rev. O. W. Garland, Rev. William Colvert and Rev. Charles Winter. Dr. Benjamin Otto has served the church as supply pastor. The present pastor, Dr. J. Max Cook, was called to the church in January of this year.

The church, though not numerically strong, has a record of generosity in giving, having at one time given the largest amount per capita for missions in the Miami Baptist Association.

# Birthday Services Planned

Sunday will be Homecoming Day for Melrose Heights Baptist church, which will celebrate its 20th year of service to residents of the unincorporated Melrose Heights "triangle" with an anniversary sermon at the morning service.

Then will come a picnic and program during the afternoon, and a special memorial program during the Training Union hour at 6:45 p.m.

The **Rev.** C. M. Russell, as-

The **Rev.** C. M. Russell, assistant pastor of Central Baptist church, will preach the anniversary sermon. He was one of the original deacons of the Melrose Mission, which was organized by members of Central Baptist church as a Sunday School on April 7, 1940.

Guests of honor at the anniversary services will include the first full-time pastor of the Mission, the **Rev.** Frank A. Keene, his successor, the **Rev.** Rex B. Duckett, and the present pastor, the **Rev.** James M. Sibole.

Recognition will be given to three other pastors who served the Mission in the early days — the **Rev.** W. H. Sledge, who preached the first sermon, and the **Rev.** Kirk Brown and the **Rev.** Fred Tittle who supplied the pulpit until the naming of a pastor.

It was during the **Rev.** Duckett's ministry that the Mission was constituted as a church on Jan. 22, 1952. The first service in the present building at 3200 NW 32nd Ave. was held on June 7, 1953.

A pantomime depicting the early history of the church will be presented during the Training Union hour under the direction of Harold Winegarden, TU director. Mrs. Ruth Fuller will serve as narrator.

The Miami News (Miami, Florida)  
02 Nov 1949, Wed  
Page 7

**Resignation of the Rev. Charles W. Smith** as the pastor of the First Baptist church of Pompano Beach has been accepted by the congregation, it was announced today. The resignation was proffered Sunday by the Rev. Smith, who will leave today to accept the pastorate of the First Baptist church of Swannanoa, N.C. He will be succeeded at the Pompano Beach church by the **Rev. W. H. Sledge** of Miami.

The Miami Herald (Miami, Florida)  
28 Jul 1929, Sun  
Page 22

Miami Beach Baptists began their work under the guidance of **Rev. W. H. Sledge**. He recently resigned because of ill health. **Rev. O. W. Garland** is temporary pastor.

The Miami News (Miami, Florida)  
30 Mar 1928, Fri  
Page 2

## BEACH BAPTISTS TO DISCUSS SITE

Plans for purchase of a site and the erection of a new church building will be discussed by members of the Miami Beach Baptist church following the services at 11 a. m. Sunday. **Rev. W. H. Sledge**, pastor, said Friday.

The congregation is now meeting in a small room at 721 Lincoln road, which is inadequate. A new building is needed immediately, he said.

Selection of the site will be announced following the Sunday services.

## WPA Transcript

MIAMI BEACH BAPTIST CHURCH, 1927-1933, 1935--. 2816 Sheridan Ave., Miami Beach, Dade County.

Constituted 1927. First services held in home of Mrs. W.E. Norton, 2474 Prairie Ave., Miami Beach; then in building, 719 Lincoln Road, 1927-29, when present white, rectangular, one story, concrete block, tile roof building was erected. Inactive 1933-35 when services were again held. Present membership, 46. Active organizations, Sunday School and Baptist Training Union. First settled pastor, Rev. **W.H. Sledge**, 1927-30; Wake Forest College, Wake Forest, North Carolina; Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Louisville, Ky. Present pastor, Rev. J. Max Cook, 1936--, 2816 Sheridan Ave., Miami Beach; Young L.G. Harris College, Young Harris, Ga., Vanderbilt University, Nashville, Tenn. See "Ninth Anniversary" author unknown, dated April 12, 1936, in Church News, also, Miami Beach Baptist Church, by R.A. Harris, found in "Church and Sunday School Guide," Dec. 1936.

CONVENTION CHURCH RECORD, CHURCH MINUTES AND RECORDS, 1926-1933, 1935--, 3 vols. Showing minutes of meetings, baptisms, deaths, financial reports.

UNIVERSITY COMPOSITION BOOK: MIAMI BEACH BAPTIST CHURCH OFFICE RECORD OF MEMBERS RECEIVED, 1936-37, 1 vol. Showing members by baptism, letter dates.

PARAMOUND DUPLEX ALPHABETICAL CHURCH TREASURER'S RECORD NO. 1: CHURCH FINANCIAL RECORDS, 1935-36, 1 vol. Showing receipts, disbursements.

(CHURCH VISITOR'S REGISTERED, 1935--, 2 vols. Showing visitor's name, address, church.

THE SUNDAY SCHOOL BOARD'S IMPROVED SIX POINT RECORD BOOK NO. 7, 1938--, 4 vols. Showing records according to Six Point Record System.

CLASS CARD; SUNDAY SCHOOL RECORDS, 1938--, 2 cards. Showing records according to Six Point Record System.