

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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Safford, Perley G. (1921-2009) served as a pastor in Central Florida for over 50 years. He served in the United States Army and graduated from Stetson University. He served as pastor of First Baptist Church, Sorrento, Fort McCoy, Morriston, Olivet Baptist in Marion County and First Baptist Church, Altoona (1949-1950). He was the founding pastor of Gateway Baptist Church in Ocala. He and his wife had a son Richard and two daughters, Sharon and Faith.



Taylor 1979

HISTORY OF ATHENA BAPTIST CHURCH

The first church was established in 1897 and named Corinth Baptist Church. The ten charter members were Mr. and Mrs. Henry F. Austin, Mr. and Mrs. E. A. Dixon, Mr. and Mrs. C. C. Johnson, Mr. and Mrs. Sam Coker, and Mr. and Mrs. H. C. Deal. Henry F. Austin was the first pastor. The church grew to 25 members before the name was changed to Athena Baptist Church.

The first building was a one-room log structure with puncheon floors and benches and a cypress log roof. This building was later replaced with a wood frame building made from rough lumber and was used until 1948. Church and school were held there. Though not well organized, Sunday School was a part of the early church program.

In 1907 Rev. J. W. Pearson was pastor with the church still named Corinth. In 1915 C. E. McClellan came as pastor. Rev. McClellan was pastor from 1915 to 1917 and during his pastorate nine conferences were held, the church gave to two State Mission Offerings, and for a mission, they extended an arm to the Lake Joe Community.

From 1918 until 1925, J. O. Wilcox pastored Athena Baptist Church. While he was there, on January 15, 1922, the first organized Sunday School was started and held each Sunday.

S. K. Wilson served as pastor from 1925-1926 and the church voted to pay him not less than \$10.00 per month. There are no records from 1926-1929 at which time Rev. Watts was called as pastor. On July 31, 1932, Rev. Holmes from Cross City was called as pastor. In 1935 through 1937 I. M. Moore was pastor. He presented a church budget, introduced midweek prayer service, and organized the first church census. He also held the first church study course. He died while in service.

Rev. Charles W. Persons served as pastor from 1937-1938. Church services were being held only twice a month. He organized a BYPU in 1938 and started the church's first Training Union Program. The second building was remodeled at this time to provide Sunday School rooms and the Sunday School was graded. A Brotherhood was organized under his leadership in March of 1938 and also WMU in April of 1938. After Rev. Persons left, the Training Union soon dissolved since it was not very strong yet.

Joe Connell was pastor for one year beginning in July, 1939. Deacons were elected on September 14, 1941 and Rev. Townsend became pastor at that time.

Rev. John R. Collins served as pastor from 1941-1944 and helped reorganize the Brotherhood. During this time the church first subscribed to the "Baptist Witness".

In 1944 Rev. Persons returned as pastor and organized another Training Union. He served as principal for the first Vacation Bible School in June, 1945. A new block building was built in 1948 with an auditorium and educational building at an approximate cost of \$8,000. Two years later the church note was burned. There were 35 additions to the church under Rev. Persons' pastorate.

K. A. Whaley was called as pastor in 1951 and served until 1954. A pastorium was built under his leadership in 1953. W. L. Price was pastor from 1954-1957 and helped establish a mission at Ezell's Beach. The church was remodeled and improved during the pastorate of P. G. Safford who served from 1957-1960.

Rev. Roy Bailey came to the church as pastor on January 10, 1960. On April 19, 1961, Bryant Morgan made a motion to build some additional class rooms and the nursery building was built with four classrooms and one bathroom.

On March 25, 1964, R. E. Merrell was called as pastor and served until 1966.

PASTORS

Our records of the pastors who served First Baptist Church through the years is incomplete. The following are the pastors that have been identified:

From 1849 through 1886:

Rev. Stanley – Grahamville
Rev. Williams - Citra
Rev. Williams - Ft. McCoy
Rev. Billie Carlton - Island Grove
Rev. Hall – Melrose
Rev. Holt - Island Grove
Rev. H.C. Martin - Ft. McCoy

From 1887 through 1909:

Rev. Zack Crumpton – Fellowship
Rev. H.C. Martin – Fellowship
Rev. Priso - Fellowship
Rev. Thompson - Island Grove
Rev. R.F. Rogers – Lynn

From 1910 through 1973:

Rev. Rogers
Rev. Strickland
Rev. W.L. Martin
Rev. Ed Boyer
Rev. McCullars
Rev. Straham
Rev. Franz
Rev. S.R. Lane
Rev. Dedman
Rev. Scarborough
Rev. Gus Padgett (four periods 1919-34)

Rev. L.R. Love 1930-32
Rev. Denman 1936-?
Rev. D.E. Smith 1940-41
Rev. J.J. Dorough 1944-?
Dr. Bell 1945-?
Rev. Harold Mitchell 1947-?
Rev. H.C. Harvey 1948-?
Rev. L.L. Batts 1949-?
Rev. Theo Farr 1950-?
Rev. L.E. McRae 1951-54
Rev. B.B. Hicks 1955-57
Rev. Clyatt 1958-?
Rev. P.G. Safford 1959-64
Rev. C.E. Simpkins 1964-75
Rev. Robert Brown (Asst. Pastor) 1975
Dr. Frank Jessup 1976-89
Rev. George Pizzi (Interim) 1989-90
Rev. Don Burgess 1990-96
Rev. Ted Burrell 1996-2008

First Baptist Church had part-time or bi-vocational pastors until Rev. L. E. McRae came in 1951. Rev. Gus Padgett's grandson William Padgett is one of our present deacons, and is an ordained minister of the gospel.



A one-time announcement of special events is a free service provided by the Witness to Florida Baptist churches. Please e-mail materials at least three weeks before the date of the event to cnichols@floridabaptistwitness.com. Information may also be mailed to Florida Baptist Witness, 1230 Hendricks Ave., Jacksonville, FL 32207; faxed to 904-346-0696; or submitted via the Web site: www.FloridaBaptistWitness.com.

BREVARD

Clearlake First Baptist Church in Cocoa will host Lorne and Jimmie Ruth Matthews in concert Oct. 28 at 6 p.m. Matthews is pianist for the Cathedral Quartet. For more information, call 321-636-0861.

CHIPOLA

Lovedale Baptist Church in Bascom will celebrate homecoming Nov. 4 at 10:30 a.m. Former pastor Randall Jarnigan will speak, and dinner on the grounds will be

served. For more information, call 850-209-7116.

GULF STREAM

Primera Iglesia Bautista Hispana in Plantation will host a missionary conference, "Congreso Misionero del Sur de la Florida," Oct. 27-Nov. 4. A Gran Concierto Misionero will be held in conjunction with the conference at the Nova University Center Arena Nov. 3 at 7 p.m. The concert will feature Rene Gonzalez, Blest, Don Misionero, Uncion Tropical, Contagious and others. For more information, call 954-584-5113 or go to www.congresomisionero.org.

ORANGE BLOSSOM

Fort Green Baptist Church in Bowling Green will meet in revival Nov. 4-7 with evangelist Randy Perry. Service times are Sunday, 11 a.m. and 6 p.m., then 7 p.m. nightly. For more information, call 863-773-9013.

SHILOH

Sydney Baptist Church in Dover will hear several missionaries speak during its fifth annual Missions Conference Nov. 3-7. The kick-off dinner is Sat. at 6 p.m. Service times are Sunday, 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m., then 7 p.m. nightly. For more information or a dinner reservation, call 813-754-6974.



The new director of missions of Gulf Stream Baptist Association, Michael Petty, was introduced during the association's annual meeting Oct. 7 at First Baptist Church in Ft. Lauderdale. Petty previously served as pastor of First Baptist Church in Marianna, and of churches in Georgia and Louisiana. He is a graduate of Brewton Parker College in Mt. Vernon, Ga., and New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary. Petty and his wife, Sue, have two adult children. He began his tenure with the Gulf Stream association Oct. 23. Photo by Joni B. Hannigan

SOUTH FLORIDA

Faith Baptist Church in Lakeland will host a Turkey Shoot Oct. 27, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. A shotgun and a tree stand will be given away at the end of the shoot. For more information, call 863-984-3610.

SUMTER COUNTY

First Baptist Church in Webster celebrates its 116th anniversary with

homecoming Oct. 28. Cham McMillen, director of H.E.L.P. Ministries, will speak in the 11 a.m. service, and The Pickeringers will sing in the 6 p.m. service. A potluck lunch will be served after the morning service. For more information, call 352-303-7160.

TAMPA BAY

Bell Shoals Baptist Church will

OBITUARY

Pastor of 50 years dies

MARIANNA (FBW)—Perley G. Safford, 88, a pastor for more than 50 years in central Florida, died Oct. 2 in Marianna. After serving in the U.S. Army, he graduated from Stetson University in DeLand. Safford served several Marion County churches, including Fort McCoy Baptist, Morriston Baptist and Olivet Baptist. He was the founding pastor of Gateway Baptist Church in Ocala, and served as moderator of the Marion Baptist Association. He is survived by two daughters, Sharon King and Faith Wasserkrug; a son, Richard; seven grandchildren and five great grandchildren. His wife Jessie, preceded him in death in February.

host a conference for widows and those who minister to them: 'Tis So Sweet ... Walking the Journey Together, Nov. 2-3. Vonette Bright, co-founder of Campus Crusade for Christ with her late husband, Bill, is a keynote speaker.

For more information, please call 813-689-4229 ext. 314, or go to www.tis-sosweetshbc.com.