

Florida Baptist Historical Society Biography Collection

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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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Smith, Virgil T. was an evangelist known for his speaking ability and noted to be the youngest World War I soldier to serve in the regular Army. He served as pastor of Norwood Baptist Church, Jacksonville, Dundee Baptist Church, First Baptist Church, Sopchoppy, 1944; First Baptist Church, Bronson, 1946-1947, and First Baptist Church, Linden, 1956-1957. Records indicate Virgil Smith served as pastor of Mt. Elon Baptist Church, 1944 and First Baptist Church, Chiefland. Also Virgil O. Smith as pastor of Hatch Bend Baptist Church, 1959. (possibly the same person)



Evangelist to Begin Series

**Calvary Baptist Services
Open Today.**

The Rev. Virgil T. Smith, evangelist, will open a week's revival services at 11 A. M. today in the Calvary Baptist Church, the Rev. Claude Bridges, pastor, announced last night. He also will speak at 3 P. M. in the home of the pastor, 1850 Liberty Street, and again at 7:30 P. M. in the church.

The Rev. Mr. Smith, who came to Jacksonville from Illinois, where he has been conducting tent meetings this Summer, will continue the revival services at 7:30 P. M. each night throughout the week.

Will Observe Hearing Week

**President Roosevelt Lauds
Motive Behind Plan.**

Evangelist



The Rev. Virgil T. Smith, evangelist, will open a revival meeting at 11 A. M. today in Calvary Baptist Church.

William A. Will Ad On I

William A. M. the Co-Ed Class morning in the Christian Church his subject, "O Play."

Mr. McRae has Jacksonville from studied at Oxford. He toured tensively during of the universi

Mr. McRae wi sions of the pa personally with be illustra ed w

The plays whi ject of his add tenth year. Th Oberammergau, 1633.

Another feat services will be Adella Forbes. anied at the p Stubbs.

Miss Edwina a reading of Kip Swann Davis, w program, will p

Others taking will be Jimmy schoolmates of

Norwood to Change Time for Services

Starting times of Sunday evening services at the Norwood Baptist Church will be changed effective tomorrow, the Rev. Virgil T. Smith pastor, has announced.

New times of services are the Training Union at 6:15 P. M. and the worship service at 7:30 P. M.

The Missionary Society of the Norwood Baptist Church will meet this morning at 10 o'clock to discuss plans for the revival, which will begin tonight in the new church. The Rev. Virgil T. Smith, pastor, will be the evangelist. The women are asked to bring sandwiches and at 1 P. M. coffee will be served by Mrs. Guy Chambers, hospitality chairman. The Royal Service program will be given at 3 P. M. at the church, under the chairmanship of Mrs. J. A. Rawl. The subject will be "Christ, the Answer to Racial Tension."

PLAN REVIVAL AT W. WHITE

Baptists to Hear **Rev.**
Virgil T. Smith Be-
ginning Sunday

Rev. Virgil T. Smith of Anderson, Baptist evangelist, will conduct a revival at White Street Baptist church in Rock Hill beginning Sunday morning, **Rev. H. C. Martin**, pastor, announced today.

The meeting will continue for 10 days or two weeks with nightly services starting at 7:30 o'clock.

Rev. Mr. Smith a young man, is highly recommended by many Baptist leaders and pastors of this and other states.

He gives his full time to the conducting of revivals.

Music will be furnished for the revival by the church choir under direction of Gillam Lowry.

(Rock Hill, South Carolina)

THE INDEX-JOURNAL, GREENWOOD, S. C.

Series Of Revival Services Will Begin By The Rev. Virgil Smith

Tuesday night, July 5, will mark the opening of a series of revival services to be conducted in Greenwood by the Rev. Virgil T. Smith, outstanding evangelist and radio preacher, who has completed a two-weeks campaign in Anderson.

Both the Baptist and the Methodist churches of the Greenwood Mill community are lending cooperation in the evangelistic campaign, which is to be carried on at a tent on Grove street. The services will be held each night, beginning promptly at 8 o'clock, and are expected to arouse a great amount of interest in not only Greenwood but also throughout the county.

Evangelist Smith has been engaged in evangelistic work for the past seven years and has traveled much. As a result, he has gained wide experience in his chosen field of endeavor. He bears the distinction of being the youngest member of the A. E. F. during the World War, and with thousands of other Americans boys shouldered a rifle and went to the battlefields of Europe. He still considers himself a soldier, he declares, and is waging a war against sin. Atheism and communism he also considers dangerous enemies, and fights these relentlessly.

Evangelist Smith, a member of the Baptist denomination, is well known throughout the Piedmont section of



REV. VIRGIL T. SMITH

South Carolina. Within the past few years he has conducted numerous revivals at Anderson, Spartanburg, Eelton, Honea Path, Westminster, Iva, Liberty, Central, and various other towns in this area as well as Georgia. In addition, he has covered the entire nation in preaching the gospel, including Atlanta, Houston, Fort Worth, Birmingham, Jacksonville and Mobile.

Everybody is cordially invited.

Youngest World War I Soldier to Talk

The **Rev. Virgil T. Smith**, said to be the youngest soldier serving in the regular army during World war I, will be the featured speaker at a patriotic reveille rally to be held in the Central Tabernacle Assembly of God, Third street at Vine, at 11 Sunday morning.



The **Rev. Smith** who is on a national speaking tour in the interest of America's fighting men, will speak on "Fighting at Fourteen in the Trenches of France." He will tell of experiences during his service with the American Expeditionary Forces, where he won five decorations and medals for heroism.

Having traveled extensively, the **Rev. Smith** has been visiting army and navy hospitals and camps, and training centers from coast to coast.

Rev. and Mrs. McKinley Feted at Norwood Church

The Norwood Baptist Church Auditorium, Norwood Avenue and Calvert Street, was the scene of a reception last evening, honoring the Rev. and Mrs. John E. McKinley, who recently moved to Jacksonville from Pensacola, where the Rev. Mr. McKinley was pastor of the Seventh Avenue Baptist Church.

Mrs. McKinley is the former Miss Betty Thomas, daughter of Mrs. Leila Thomas of Jacksonville and the late N. A. Thomas.

The Rev. Mr. McKinley, a graduate of the Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Tex., is now pastor of the Norwood Baptist Church, succeeding the Rev. Virgil T. Smith who has assumed ministerial duties of the Dundee Baptist Church.

Among the speakers included on the program were Dr. John McGuire, executive secretary and treasurer of the Florida Baptist Convention; Dr. Homer Lindsay, pastor, First Baptist Church; Dr. G. O. Lantz, pastor, Norwood Presbyterian Church, and the Rev. J. P.

Hall, pastor, Norwood Assembly of God Church.

A musical program was given, featuring vocal and instrumental numbers by church members.

At the conclusion of the program refreshments were served in the Educational Building adjoining the church auditorium.

Cooking Is Fun

By CECILY BROWNSTONE

SUNDAY DINNER

Fruit Cup
Chicken Pie with Peas and Carrots
Green Salad Bowl Crusty Rolls
Praline Cookies Beverage

Praline Cookies

Ingredients: 2-3 cup sweetened

History

Established in 1885, the **First Baptist Church of Bronson**, Florida has faithfully served the Bronson community for over one hundred and thirty-four years.

Pastors

*Interim Pastor

- Z A Crumpton – 1897-1906
- J H Richardson – 1907
- C J Bruner – 1921-1922

Church was inactive from 1937-1934)

- Eugene T Vining – 1934-1935
- Ray W Walden – 1935-1942
- U W Rollins. – 1944-March 1946
- **Virgil T Smith** – April 1946-April 1947
- Marcus D Drake – September 1947-April 1948
- George T Evans – July 1948-July 1949
- G B VanAllen – November 1950-September 1952
- George W Dunn – September 1952-February 1957
- Harold L Brown – May 1957-November 1959
- Harold H Johnson – February 1960-December 1962
- James H Paddock* – February 1963-April 1963
- R G Key – April 1963-August 1965
- John Stewart – November 1965-September 1966
- Harold Mitchell* – February 1967-March 1967
- Harold Johnson – March 1967-January 1973
- Jimmy W Rogers – June 1973-June 1977
- Joe Hudson – December 1977-May 1980
- Earl Lookabill* – June 1980-August 1980
- A Larry Finley – September 1980-July 1982
- David O Goss – October 1982-August 1984
- James Shelton* – September 1984-May 1985
- Gary Wiggins – June 1985-January 1989
- Gene Coons* – January 1989-February 1989
- Mark Conrad – June 1989-January 1998
- Ray Scott* – March 1998-June 1998
- Steven C Garnett – June 1998-October 2008
- Troy Turner – October 2008-May 2013
- Fritz Fountain* – May 2013-June 2014
- Jeff Buchanan – June 2014-December 2018
- Fritz Fountain* – January 2019-July 2019
- Pete Pharis – July 2019 – Present

FBC, Linden (Alachua) 1975

appointed to select and secure a lot on which to build a church here at Linden. And at this same meeting the Clerk was instructed to inform the Church Clerk at Webster Baptist Church of those who had united with this Church and request that their names be removed from the Webster roll.

These two events being recorded as taking place at the same time leads us to believe that worship under the historic oak was not long continued--that the church dream became a church reality.

There is nothing in the records to show how the first church was financed or built; but knowing the limited resources of the early founders, we are led to surmise that the timber was doubtlessly owned by the small membership and that the work of sawing and building was of their own hands.

On two occasions, during the mid and late thirties, the doors of this church were closed--perhaps brought about by the "Depression" but this did not long continue. Reverend Freer graciously offered his services for whatever donation of farm produce the membership could give.

A.C. Parrish and E. Balch represented this church at the Associational meeting. We are not certain of the date they served, but the fact we were affiliated is substantiated by the following excerpt from the minutes of the Alachua Association for the year 1894: "Elected N.A. Bailey as delegate to the Southern Baptist Convention and D.B. Farmer as Alternate." So we can see as far back as the records go this church has been working with the Southern Baptist Convention.

Our records are not as inclusive and detailed as we could wish them to be, but these are a few of the significant events that have been recorded. The first communion service was held, the first revival was conducted, and the first recorded instance of a "paid minister." The record states that the Church agreed to pay a yearly salary of \$60.00.

The first Sunday School was organized April 10, 1900, with G.W. Gideons as Superintendent. On May 19, 1900, a bell was purchased for the Church, which is enshrined in the belfry of our present building.

It was not until August 17, 1913, that we find any mention of the Church Building having been painted.

Many ministers have given of their all--since Reverend Parrish's beginning in May of '94 down to Reverend Bohner of 1975. According to our records, these are the persons who have given so much for so little material returns:

Rev. A.C. Parrish	May 1894 to October 1895
Rev. G.A. Bryant	December 1895 to October 1900
Rev. S.C. Sloan	October 1900 to September 1901
Rev. G.A. Bryant	September 1901 to September 1902
Rev. J.W. Gideons	October 1902 to August 1904
Rev. J.W. Tucker	September 1904 to September 1907
Rev. D.T. McLeod	October 1907 to January 1909
Rev. W.D. Entzminger	February 1909 to September 1911
Rev. O.N. Williams	October 1911 to January 1913
Rev. W.D. Levy	February 1913 to 1916
Rev. E.L. Gillintine	1920 to 1922
Rev. G.A. Martin	1923 to 1925
Rev. R. Strickland	1925 to 1927
Rev. Simmons Wade	1927 to 1931
Rev. Stapleton	1931 to 1932
Rev. Aldrick	1932 to 1933
Rev. Ed. Bryant	1933 to 1934

Student pastors from Stetson University filled the pulpit for a period of time. Then the Church doors were closed until 1937.

Rev. G.A. Martin	1937 to 1938
The Church doors closed for nearly a year.	
Rev. E.M. Freer	1940 to 1943
Rev. R. Strickland	1945 to 1946
Rev. D.E. Pait	1946 to 1947
Rev. Donald Martin	1947 to 1948
Rev. C.A. Crosby	1948 to April 1950
Rev. Wallace Bierer	August 1950 to October 1950
Rev. J.P. Kessler	November 1950 to May 1952
Rev. C.A. Crosby	May 1952 to February 1955
Rev. W. Carroll Townsend	September 1955 to September 1956
Rev. Virgil T. Smith	September 1956 to June 1957
Rev. Jack Harris	July 1957 to June 1959
Rev. Gene Shultz (supply pastor)	
Rev. L.J. Coker	June 1960 to September 1961
Rev. L.O. Calhoun	November 1961 to May 1962
Rev. O.M. Sweat	July 1962 to November 1965
Rev. C.A. Crosby	February 1966 to November 1968
Rev. O.M. Sweat	January 1969 to October 1969
Rev. Glen Brooks	March 1970 to July 1970
Rev. P.M. Shipman	September 1970 to August 1971
Rev. James Presly	September 1971 to December 1973
Rev. Thomas N. Channell	February 1974 to January 1975
(Interim pastor)	

These God-called men served well in the First Baptist Church of Linden and I do not question but that the community was better because of each of them having come this way.

Four of these men were called a second time as pastor at this church. They were:

Rev. G.A. Bryant	1895 to 1900 and 1901 to 1902
Rev. C.A. Martin	1923 to 1925 and 1937 to 1938
Rev. R. Strickland	1925 to 1927 and 1943 to 1944
Rev. O.M. Sweat	1962 to 1965 and January to October 1969

Rev. C.A. Crosby was called three times as pastor: 1948 to 1950, 1952 to 1955, and 1966 to 1968

Rev. C.A. Crosby, was a member of our church, Dec. 4, 1970, when he went home to meet his Saviour, whom he served faithfully for many years.

The idea of a new church building was born with the damage done by the hurricane of 1950. The building was so badly damaged that it was deemed unwise to try to repair it. The great question of how to finance a building such as we needed and hoped for during times of such extreme inflation preyed upon the minds and spiritual beings of our membership. The inflation of 1950 has grown to such size and effect now that we are not just sure that inflation adequately describes the condition of 1950. But faith in God prevailed and the membership worked, gave God's tithe and their gifts, and God blessed their efforts.

So the church elected a Building Committee and March 9, 1950 to devise ways and means to raise funds for a new building. Thus the plans for our new building came into being and began to materialize into actuality. This, our church, has been financed by church members giving--giving until it hurt. The rest came from the inexhaustible riches of Divine Providence. And great is our appreciation of all of those whose names fill the long list of givers.

Those who thought not of themselves but our church, our community, have helped to build this noble edifice. On November 9, 1952 a dedication service was held in honor of finishing our building.

HISTORY OF THE FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH OF SOPCHOPPY

This Church became the Mt. Beasor Missionary Baptist Church in 1873 when 80 members withdrew from the Mt. Beasor Primitive Church which was constituted in 1853. The first church building was erected on a site in West Sopchoppy in 1873 and remained there until 1906 when Mr. John C. Hodge gave a lot in the present City of Sopchoppy and a second church building was constructed. The site was moved to the present City of Sopchoppy because of a shift in the community growth. The building erected in 1906 remained until the present building was constructed in 1967. The church went by the name of Mt. Beasor Baptist Church until 1942 when it was changed to the First Baptist Church of Sopchoppy. In 1964, the first gifts were made to a building fund for the present church building on this third site. In 1965, the church voted to build, and on December 17, 1967, the first service were held in the new building. However, Sunday School and Church Training were not held in the new building until February 11, 1968, when every part of the building was completed. The present building was dedicated on February 25, 1968. The new educational wing was completed the first part of 1982 and was dedicated on March 21, 1982.



Wakulla
1988
Now in
Florida
Association

PASTORS WHO SERVED AT SOPCHOPPY FIRST Approximately 1900 - 1983

Rev. Lewis Roberts (Mr. Johnnie Roberts Uncle)	
Rev. Steve Revell	
Rev. Judah	1921-1923.
Rev. O. N. Revell (son of Rev. Steve Revell)	1924-1927
Rev. G. E. Holified	1927-1928
Rev. Frank Bancroft	1928
Rev. O. N. Revell (Former Pastor)	1929-1934
Rev. L. E. Goodgame	1935-1936
Rev. A. V. Pickern	1937-1938
Rev. O. N. Revell (Former Pastor)	1938-1942
Rev. Homer Duggar	1942-1943
Rev. Virgil T. Smith	1944
Rev. C. J. Johnson	1945-1946
Rev. John E. Pelham, Sr.	1947
Rev. Ralph Rittenhouse, Sr.	1948-1953
Rev. Truett Smith	1954
Rev. DeWitt Cox	1955-Sept. 1957
Rev. Homer Duggar (Former Pastor)	Oct. 1957-Oct. 1960
Rev. Ted Rodda	1960-1962
Rev. O. G. Hall	Feb. 1963-Sept. 1969
Rev. Glenn Lawhon	June 1970-Aug. 1977
Rev. D. O. Goss	March 1978-Oct. 1982
Rev. Harold J. Crosson (interim)	Nov. 1982-Apr. 1983
Rev. Darrel Smith	May 1983-June 1986
Rev. Henry Jones	April 1987-Present

Wakulla
1988

History of First Baptist Church,
Chiefland, Florida
1914-2014

On August 25, 1914, J. W. Griffin, led the church in an organizational meeting. Later in 1914, George Newton was called to serve as pastor of the church. In the 1914, Harmony Baptist Associational Minutes Chiefland Baptist Church requested membership into the association and was "duly received." Graham Carter served as the only messenger from the Chiefland church at the November 6-9, 1914 meeting. Chiefland gave \$3.85 for associational work in 1914 and they were second only to Pine Grove who gave \$7.00.

By 1920, the church had made the advancement of having preaching services every two weeks. In 1926, under the direction of a committee composed of A. V. Pickern, B. A. Rodgers and Graham Carter the church voted to build the Highland Avenue Church building which was dedicated on August 4, 1927, with C. M. Britton preaching the dedication service.

During the ministry of Virgil Smith, who was called in March, 1946, the pastorium was built. The church began full-time ministry and the first section of the educational building was begun under the leadership of J. T. Nail, who came in January, 1947. The educational building was completed and the Sunday School departmentalized in 1948 while Clyde Hall was on the field. Perry Edwards was ordained to the Gospel ministry. It was in 1949 that Chiefland Baptist Church became First Baptist Church, Chiefland.

Charles Davis was called as pastor in 1951. While he was serving the church, the auditorium was renovated, new pews were installed and the baptistry was built.

In September, 1956, while Loren Williams was pastor, the church voted to build an addition to the crowded educational building. April 28, 1957, was set aside as groundbreaking day for the new addition.

The church grounds were landscaped and the auditorium was redecorated during the ministry of

Le Roy Curry who was called as pastor in February, 1960. In 1961, the auditorium was air conditioned. The organ was purchased in September, 1963. In September, 1965, Lonnie King was ordained to the Gospel ministry.

In December, 1964, Thomas Kennedy was called as pastor. Under his leadership the church constructed the present building which we proudly dedicated June 11, 1967. In July, 1967, the old church property was sold. The grounds of the new church were landscaped in February, 1968. In August, 1968, the church voted to sell the pastorium. The Policies and By-Laws were revised in April, 1969, and the "The Baptist Faith and Message" was adopted as the Articles of Faith of our church.

Gerald E. Howell was called as pastor in June, 1969. Paved driveways were made in December, 1971. In order to broaden our ministry in the community, we entered into a program of broadcasting the morning service over radio station WLQH. The first broadcast was in October, 1969. In June, 1973, the church approved a summer program for the youth of our church. John Newsome was elected to serve as the first director for a ten-week period. Being concerned about a more effective outreach program we purchased a minibus in June, 1974. Mrs. Dale Chandler was elected to serve as director of the summer youth program.

George Collins was elected to serve as Minister of Youth and Music in 1974. In August, 1975, Beldon Smith was called as pastor. We began our participation in prison ministries. In

Hatch Bend Baptist Church Pastors

1862 – D.F. Ward
1892 – Peter McCallister
1893 – L.R. Thomas
1901 – C.F. Holmes
1902 – G.W. Martin
1903 – L.R. Thomas
1907 – T.J. Sims
1908 – L.R. Thomas
1909 – W.B. Liston
1914 – W.H. Holmes
1916 – W.Y. Everton
1917 – W.B. Liston
1919 – T.J. Sims
1921 – Henry Holmes
1922 – R.E. Parnell
1923 – C.F. Holmes
1926 – W.B. Liston
1928 – C.F. Holmes
1930 – H. A. Jordan
1931 – E.H. Fletcher
1932 – Oscar Thomas
1933 – J.A. Watts
1937 – W.B. Liston
1938 – L.G. Hemmingway
1939 – A.M. Parker
1942 – Julian L. Dyess
1943 – John Dicks
1946 – J.B. Benniefield

1947 – R.W. Henry
1949 – John Dicks
1950 – Thomas Goodman
1951 – A.M. Parker
1956 – Glen Sumner
1957 – Dan Booth
1958 – Kenneth Minton
1959 – **Virgil O. Smith**
1960 – Billy Bryant
1961 – Roscoe Hurst
1963 – Joe Day
1966 – C.L. Clements
1974 – E. Woodrow Crews
1975 – Crews & Poitevint
1976 – Cecil E. Poitevint
1982 – Eugene Polk
1984 – Sterling Branch
1985 – Bobby Bryan
1988 – Cecil E. Poitevint
1988 – David H. Cunningham
1994 – T. Dean Reule
1997 – W.H. Futch
2002 – Randy Waters
2004 – George Dunn
2008 – Paul Coleman
2010 – Hugh Dampier
2011 – Brett Patterson

Committee Members

Donald Hurst, Honorary Chairman

Jimmy Ray Hill

Anita Hurst Riels

Emily Smoak

Janis Earl Owen

Arlene Huffstuttler

Brett Patterson

Emma Sims Moore

Mt. Elon (Florida)

J.B. Langston	1890-4 yrs.
S.J. Revell	1893-1 yrs.
J.B. Langston	1894-6 months
J.P. Roberts	1894-2 1/2 years
(page left blank to memory as he passed away 1897)	
S.J. Revell	1897-4 1/2 yrs
L.A. Roberts	1903-7 yrs.
J.E. Clements	1910-6 months
Alexander Cox	1911-6 months
S.J. Revell	1911-1 yr.
James Holland	1912-2 yrs.
J.E. Clements	1914- 2 yrs.
Alexander Cox	1916- 1 yr.
Obie N. Revell	1917-21 yrs.
W.I. Davis	1938-4 yrs.
Homer Dugger	1942-2 yrs.
Virgil Smith	1944-1 yr.
C.J. Johnson	1945-2 yrs.
J.E. Pelham	1947-1 yr.
John Perry	1948-2 yrs.
Truman Gray	1950-13 yrs.
Bill Flury	1963-4 yrs.
Howard Pickels	1967-4 yrs.
Gordon Adank	1972-4 yrs.
Henry Jones	1976-3 yrs.
Harold Crosson	1979-3 yrs.
Lee Outlaw	1982-1 yr.
Doug Graham	1983-4 yrs.
George Clark	1988-2 yrs.
David Carraway	1990-1 yr.
Wayne Sumner	1991- 1993
Guest speakers	1994
Carl Powell	1995-

David Carraway was the longest serving interim Pastor. Our present Pastor, the Reverend Carl Powell is the thirtieth individual to serve as Pastor of Mt. Elon