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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Smith, William L. served as pastor of Plymouth Baptist Church, Mt. Dora, 1959-1963. He and his wife, Carolyn Smith, served as missionaries in South America. The Smith's had four children.

Plymouth Baptist Church
Celebrates 100th Anniversary
1893-1993

Plymouth Baptist sprang out of the needs of the people in the area. The entire community pitched in to build the first church house - Christians and non-Christians. Early pioneers included the John Chapman family, the S.A. Stuart family, the W. W. Carpenter family and the J. T. Pirie family, many who were winter residents from the New England area. The Piries were a wealthy Chicago family who had a winter estate called Errol Estates near Plymouth. In fact, the Piries gave liberally toward establishment of the church. Their daughter, Margaret, had electricity installed in the church.

The first service in the church was held March 12, 1989. The State Mission Offering that first Sunday was $3.11. The pastors were bi-vocational, many of them attending school as well as working and pastoring.

The church had a lot of ups and downs. The worst time was the Big Freeze of 1895 when most members left the community because work was not available in Plymouth.

The first resident pastor was hired in 1929. He was Robert Holmes from Stetson University. Another pastor in the following years was M. J. Bouters, a popular radio evangelist from Mt. Dora.

In 1947 land was given by Herschel and Gladys Cleghorn on which to build a pastorium. Rev. R. T. Liner, then pastor, built a house on the land while he also attended Stetson. During Brother Liner's four years as pastor, the church grew by leaps and bounds...the first bus was bought; church members took their first trip to Ridgecrest Baptist Assembly in North Carolina; three members were called into the ministry; the baptistry was built.

In 1959 William and Carolyn Smith came to pastor for four years before moving on to the mission field in South America.

It was not until 1965 that the church's charter was changed to form the official name for the church, Plymouth Baptist church. Pastor Howard Long along with his wife, Frances, pastored in the 1960s. During the 60s and 70s, additional educational space was completed and a new sanctuary was built.

The church has a history of being mission-minded and it continued with more young people going into the ministry. The WMU, GAs and Brotherhood were very active.

Pastors during the 70s and 80s included John Wetmore and Jim McKinney. During 1976, while Rev. Wetmore pastored, Jim McKinney was called as the first associate pastor and minister of education. He and his wife, Marica, became a great asset to the church. The old sanctuary became the Youth Building and was called The Lighthouse. Former members who went on the mission field returned throughout the years, sharing their work with the congregation - Carolyn and Bill Smith, Roy and Janet Rawls. Following Mr. Wetmore's pastorate, the church called Jim and Marcia McKinney to pastor the church.

In 1991 Jim and Marcia McKinney left the church after 14 years of service and in January 1992 Jeff and Marilyn Helms were called into the pastorate position. In the early 1990s the church bought land adjacent to its present property for future expansion.

In 1993 the church celebrated 100 years of existence, having several days of celebration with many of the previous pastors returning to share memories of the past and challenges for the future. It is an exciting time for growth and members see a bright future for the glory of God.

Greater Orlando 1993

BLACK EYED PEAS . . . By JEAN DOOLITTLE

Orlandoan Fills Good Samaritan Role

Red Sails in the Sunset . . . Rev. William L. Smith and his family were almost sunk before they sailed.

Last Saturday, Smith and the Mrs. were downtown finishing up some last minute business before taking off to New Orleans.

They were supposed to catch a boat to Brazil as Southern Baptist missionaries for the next five years. They had stopped off in Orlando from their last pastorate in Plymouth to have a last visit with Mrs. Smith's mother, Mrs. Odessa Brand, 2029 S. Rio Grande Ave.

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Returning home from their downtown jaunt, the Smiths discovered they had lost their briefcase containing their passports and official papers they needed to "get out of the country."

They enlisted the aid of the police, sheriff's and fire departments. No luck. They placed an ad in the S-S.

Monday morning they got a call from Col. E. Hood Wilkerson, an attorney who lives at 120 N. Orange Ave. He found their briefcase in the municipal parking lot in back of Penney's. He'd noticed the ad. He returned the briefcase with its lock still intact. He refused their reward saying he was "glad to help out his fellow man."

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Rev. and Carolyn Smith and their children, Billy, Claude, Mary Anne and Jeanne finally left Monday night for New Orleans. They will bon voyage tomorrow as planned. Said the reverend, "We'd like to express our appreciation to the people of Orlando and especially Col. Wilkerson . . . everybody helped so much."

Smith considers himself a very lucky bird . . . bye, bye, birdie!

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