

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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Sprague, Thomas H. died on March 20, 1949. He was born in Nova Scotia, and graduated from Bucknell University (Ph.B.) and Crozer Theological Seminary. Stetson University conferred a Doctor of Divinity on him in 1912. Bucknell also gave him an honorary degree. Sprague served as pastor in New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and New York. He organized First Baptist Church in Hollywood, Florida, and served as pastor. He served as an American Baptist Home missionary to Cuba and the West Indies. Sprague married Jessie Barton Lovell from Pennsylvania. He was a prolific writer and a well known speaker.

WORSE THAN AN INFIDEL

Harsh words but true, these words from God's word,—“If any man provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel.” I Tim. 5:8.

The Christians for whom the Spirit of God was directing Paul to write Timothy these instructions knew full well that even the heathen regarded it a natural obligation to provide for one's own family. Heathen writings are full of maxims of this kind; Tacitus says, “Nature dictates that to everyone his own children and relatives should be most dear.” Cicero says, “Every man should take care of his own family.”

For the pagan to refuse to provide for his own was a denial of a natural urge, but for a professing Christian to do it was an open denial of the faith he claimed, and he who had been granted the privileges of Christianity thereby became worse than an infidel. For the emotionally perverted unbeliever not to provide for his own is a denial of natural love, but for the professing possessor of a Spirit-born, God-given, Christ-disposed, new nature to fail to provide for his own is such an open denial of everything Christ stands for that we are forced to agree with God and say such a person is worse than an infidel. His act of impiety belies his claim to the faith. Titus 1:16.

Let it never be said that a group of Florida Baptist preachers who have claimed and preached the Bible as a sufficient rule of faith and practice are denying the faith by either refusing or neglecting to provide for their own widows, or that their neglect is hindering others from making such provision.

The Widows Supplemental Plan of The Relief and Annuity Board offers a most sensible channel for making a vital part of the provision any preacher would like to make for the loving companion he will leave behind. Yet, more preachers must apply for membership in the plan before any of us can secure its benefits. Think it over!

Let's STUDY, PRAY OVER, and GET INTO the Widows Supplemental Annuity Plan NOW!

W. G. Stracener, pastor
East Hill Baptist Church,
Pensacola, Fla.

DEATH OF

REV. THOMAS H. SPRAGUE, D.D.

Dr. Thomas Henry Sprague, son of John and Ruth Ann Sprague, died March 20, 1949 at Hollywood, Florida. He was born in Nova Scotia. His elementary education was received in the public schools and at Bucknell Academy. He graduated from Bucknell University with the degree of Ph.B., later receiving the honorary degree of Master of Arts. He graduated from Crozer Theological Seminary being one of the Commencement orators. In 1912 Stetson University conferred upon him the degree of Doctor of Divinity.

He was pastor successively of the Haddon Heights Baptist Church of Haddon Heights, New Jersey, of which he was the first pastor, and where he was ordained to the work of the Gospel Ministry, Chester Avenue Baptist Church, Philadelphia; Fulton Avenue Baptist Church, Baltimore, Md., Temple Baptist Church, Philadelphia, Pa., First Baptist Church, Troy, New York,

Emmanuel Baptist Church, Ridgewood, N. J., and the First Baptist Church, Hollywood, Fla., which he organized. For some time he represented the Baptist Young People of Philadelphia in missionary work in Cuba and West Indies under the auspices of the American Baptist Home Mission Society. During the world war he found great joy in serving as Camp Pastor for some time in Camp Greene, Charlotte, N. C. He also lectured at Camp Upton under the auspices of the National YMCA.

At different times Dr. Sprague was a member of the Pennsylvania Baptist Education Society Board; the Executive Board of the New Jersey State Convention, the Executive Committee of the Miami Florida Baptist Association, Rotary, Kiwanis, Chamber of Commerce, all numbered him at various times among their membership. He was also a member of Phi Gamma Delta Fraternity, and Fidelity Lodge No. 113, F. and A. M., Ridgewood, New Jersey, and Trinity Lodge, Deep River, Conn., the Pioneer Club of Hollywood, Fla., and President of The Connecticut Club of Ft. Lauderdale, Fla.

His writings have had a wide circulation, he was the author of a volume of religious meditations entitled: “Think on These Things,” number of stories including “Howard Payne's Christmas,” “Deeds Not Things,” “Inasmuch.” Editions of his “My Christianity,” amounted to over 750,000 copies. He wrote a History of the First Baptist Church, Troy, N. Y., and a collection of verse entitled “The Mountain Road.” Some of his poems appear in an “Anthology of Florida Poets.”

Dr. Sprague was married to Miss Jessie Barton Lovell, daughter of K. Allen Lovell, a prominent member of the Huntington County, Pennsylvania Bar, and Mrs. Lovell who was a daughter of Judge William B. Leas of Huntington County, Pa., and found in her comradeship through the years until his death that help and inspiration which proved a great factor in his life and work. She survives him, also two sisters, Mrs. James G. Zerby, Swarthmore, Pa., and Mrs. S. E. Downs, Ardmore, Pa., five nieces and their families.

The funeral was held at the First Baptist Church, Hollywood, Florida, conducted by the pastor, Rev. William N. Gardner. Interment later will be in West Laurel Hill Cemetery, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The honorary pall bearers were from Ft. Lauderdale, Hollywood, Miami, Miami Beach, and Miami Shores. Dr. and Mrs. Sprague have lived in Florida in the winter months and Deep River, Connecticut, in the summer for many years. Dr. Sprague has been in constant demand as a supply pastor since giving up the active ministry. This poem, “A Psalm of Life,” was read at his funeral.

A PSALM OF LIFE

How could I live without Thee,
Thou light on life's dark way,
For if I lived without Thee,
How much like night, the day?

How could I work without Thee,
Thou Source and Means of Power,
For if I worked without Thee,
How long and lone the hour?

How could I speak without Thee,
Thou Inspiration given,
For if I spoke without Thee,
How oft would truth be stricken?

How could I die without Thee
Thou Saviour of the blessed,
For if I died without Thee,
My soul would be distressed?

And so Thou Christ who comfortest,
Control Thou all my ways,
Let life and work and speech and death
Be full of joy and praise.

SOLOIST ON THE BAPTIST HOUR

Dr. G. Kearnie Keegan will be guest soloist on The Baptist Hour Sunday morning, April 24. Dr. Keegan, pastor of Temple Baptist Church, Los Angeles, California, will be the revival preacher at the First Baptist Church, New Orleans, Louisiana, where The Baptist Hour preacher, Dr. J. D. Grey, is pastor.

Widely known as a singer as well as a preacher, Dr. Keegan will sing “The Lily of the Valley,” a hymn which has been identified with him for a number of years. Dr. Grey's subject will be “Jesus, Our Advocate.”

Dr. Keegan was formerly pastor of the First Baptist Church, Longview, Texas.

The Baptist Hour may be heard in Florida over the following radio stations: WJAX, Jacksonville; WIOD, Miami; WDBO, Orlando; WWPB, Palatka; WTAL, Tallahassee, and WFLA, Tampa, at 8:30 A. M. EST.

S.B.C. MESSENGERS, ATTENTION!

By Joe W. Burton

Secretary, Southern Baptist Convention
Pastors or church clerks should secure from the office of the Executive Secretary of the State Baptist Convention registration cards for the certification of messengers appointed to attend the annual meeting of the Southern Baptist Convention in Oklahoma City, May 18-22.

These cards set out the Convention's constitutional requirement respecting the appointment of messengers from churches and provide for the necessary certification of the messenger.

The registration card should be secured at once from the state office and a card filled out properly for each messenger. These cards should be brought to Oklahoma City by the messengers.

ROOMS in RIDGECREST

at the Wigwam Cottage,
during Sunday School and Training Union weeks. For information write to Mrs. James S. Day, Jr., 826 South Johnson Ave., Lakeland, Florida.

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