

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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Springfield, James (1934-2004) was a native of Texas and served as a trustee at Baylor University, Baylor Medical School, and University Community Hospital in Tampa. Springfield was pastor of New Tampa Baptist Church (1995-2004) at the time of his death. He served for 55 years in churches in Texas, Oklahoma, and Florida. He was an artist and left an extensive collection of drawings, paintings, and sculptures. Springfield and his wife, Ruth, had three children.



Lutz pastor, 70, dies at home Nov. 18

LUTZ (FBW)—James Springfield, 70, pastor of New Tampa Baptist Church in Lutz, died suddenly Nov. 18 at his home. He had served the congregation since 1995, when Palms Baptist Church and Livingston Avenue Baptist Church merged to form New Tampa Baptist Church. He had served 55 years in churches in Texas, Oklahoma and Florida.

The Texas native served as a trustee for his alma mater, Baylor University, Waco, Texas, and Baylor Medical School, and on several hospital boards, including University Community Hospital in Tampa. He also served on the Florida State Board of Missions. Springfield was an artist and leaves an extensive collection of drawings, paintings and sculptures.

He is survived by his wife, Ruth; son, Wes; two daughters, Jami Goode and Sherri Springfield; and three grandchildren.

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'We're all one family'

■ The merger of two very different Baptist congregations forms a diverse church family seeking spiritual guidance and offering acceptance to all.

By JENNIFER EMILY
Times Staff Writer

LUTZ — It's a lot like Noah's Ark. At least that's how 79-year-old William Borden describes New Tampa Baptist Church.

Two by two, or in some cases by the carload, parishioners come to church each Sunday and Wednesday.

Some drive to the modest building on Livingston Avenue from affluent areas such as Tampa

Palms. Others come from the University of South Florida area, known for its high crime rate and transient population.

The racially diverse congregation includes the old and young, doctors and boat mechanics, a ditch digger and an engineer.

Regardless of background, all find comfort in the Southern Baptist church because once inside, who they are in the secular world ceases to be important.

"They learned people are basically the same, whatever their backgrounds," said the Rev. James Springfield, the church's pastor. "The Scripture says there is no difference between Jew and Greek, male and female. . . . And without trying, these people really believe that. And when they're together, these people really believe that. They don't see the difference."

The marriage between these distinct commu-

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Church

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nities came about in March 1995, with the merger of Livingston Avenue Baptist Church and a fledgling Baptist church in New Tampa, called New Palms.

Livingston was struggling financially and in need of a pastor. New Palms needed a building because it could no longer pay the rent at its temporary home in a shopping center. And the New Palms congregation had grown too large to meet in Springfield's living room, as it had in its early days in 1990.

There wasn't enough room at the church for the 460 active members of these two congregations, so workers had to knock down several classroom walls behind the sanctuary. Hard white benches, donated from a Pentecostal church, and chairs were lined up with the yellowish, cushioned benches.

Members don't mind the mismatched furniture. Many don't notice anymore.

"Even though we don't have matching furniture, and it's flawed, our love isn't flawed," said Wilma Donaldson, who lives near USF and has attended for 15 months.

"The minute you walk in there, it's just like walking into your own home. It's like a happy marriage," Borden said. "People come from all directions, but once we get there, we're all one family."

In fact, simplicity is part of the church's attraction.

Geoffrey Okogbaa and his wife, Elizabeth Yakubo, a Nigerian-born Tampa Palms couple who were part of the New Palms group, say the church provides a strong foundation for their children, Janet, 10, and Timothy, 2. Yakubo, a pediatri-



Times photo — KEN HELLE

Nellie Sansom, left, reaches over a pew to greet Peg Fulmer during a service at New Tampa Baptist Church. The church includes in its services a time when members of the congregation can move about the room to hug and shake hands.

cian, is expecting twins in late July. The family wanted a church that would provide spiritual guidance, not business contacts.

"At some churches you showcase who you are," said Okogbaa, an associate engineering professor at USF. Our church isn't like that. You don't go to church to promote yourself or your business. You go to church to worship God."

The homelike atmosphere of the church is apparent in the familiarity with which members greet each other. About 90 seconds of the Sunday service is reserved for members to shake hands and quickly greet each other.

But instead of only turning to

their neighbor, parishioners rush from across the room to give a friend a hug or pat on the back.

Devorrick Day, 13, said it's his favorite part of the service. And though he likes the show of friendship, he also likes the chance to move around.

Devorrick and several other teens are picked up for church by Sunday school teacher Dolores Tinnen. The children's homes are on her way to church, but many members go out of their way to bring others to the service.

One of those members is church youth director Alma Santa Cruz.

"I bring a carload of kids every

Sunday," said Santa Cruz, who lives near Sulphur Springs. "And sometimes they come in shorts and their hair uncombed because their parents don't get them dressed. But they're accepted anyway. That's what church is about. If you want to learn about God, you're welcome."

Acceptance without strings extends to adults as well.

"There's people there who can't spare \$1 and there's people who give \$100. That's the diversity we have," said Borden, whose career includes a stint in the Navy. "But it doesn't matter what you give, we love you the same."

NEW TAMPA BAPTIST CHURCH

LOCATION: 14801 Livingston Ave., Lutz. 977-0273.

LEADERSHIP: James Springfield has been the pastor since the church formed in 1995. He began preaching at 13 and received his bachelor's and master degrees from Baylor University. He attended Southwestern Theological Seminary and received a doctorate of ministry from Luther Rice Seminary. He has been married to Ruth, a first grade teacher at Lake Magdalene Elementary School, for 42 years. They have four children, Jami, 36, Sherri, 34, David (deceased) and Wesley 22.



Pastor
Springfield

SERVICES: Sunday: worship at 10:30 a.m. and 7 p.m. Wednesday: 7 p.m. Bible study.

HISTORY: The church was established in 1995 with the merger of the Palms Baptist Church and the

Livingston Avenue Baptist Church. Palms lacked a location and Livingston leadership and they joined to form the racially and economically diverse congregation. The two groups agreed to disband the existing churches and renamed the body "New Tampa" Baptist Church after the rapidly developing area in which they are located.

RECENT SERMON TOPIC OR THEME: "Relaxology," a summer message of contentment and peace.

MEMBERSHIP: 637 members, around 460 active.

PROGRAMS: Bible studies, women's ministry, choir and a puppet team.

OUTREACH TO THE COMMUNITY: Active members of the Tampa Bay Baptist Association and Southern Baptist Convention that support worldwide mission efforts. The church is located on 12 acres in a park-like setting that is available for public use.

— SANDEE DAVIES

problem with that.

The New Tampa Baptist Church on Livingston Avenue in Lutz traces at least half its roots back to a storefront in City Plaza. In 1988, the Palms Baptist Church, which eventually merged with the Livingston Baptist Church, occupied the space now leased by Blockbuster Video.

James Springfield, who was pastor of the 3,000-member Tampa Baptist Church and Academy on Sligh Avenue, resigned to pioneer the church in Tampa Palms.

Why does the church today bear the name New Tampa?

"It's refreshing, it's descriptive and it's inclusive," Springfield said. "Its main value is that it gives all the neighborhoods a sense of community."

Moreover, he added, "It sounds fresh and exciting. Everybody wants to be part of something new and exciting. New Tampa is a new beginning."

