

# Former Sunday School Board President Lloyd Elder dies

November 7, 2023

NASHVILLE (BP)—Lloyd Elder, seventh president of the Baptist Sunday School Board—now known as Lifeway Christian Resources—died Nov. 3 at age 90. He led the board from 1984 to 1991.

James Williams, executive vice president under Elder, described him as “one of God’s giants and, throughout the years of his ministry, he demonstrated the highest qualities of Christ-centered servant leadership.”

“Southern Baptist Convention programs assigned to Lifeway grew rapidly,” Williams said. “His management style ‘toward excellence’ greatly enhanced staff loyalty but, most importantly, led to improved effectiveness and greater results in the churches.”



Lloyd Elder

During his tenure at the Sunday School Board, Elder oversaw the publication of low-cost editions of the Bible and Scripture portions for mass distribution including the Good News and Here’s Hope Bibles.

In 1986, the Outreach Bible Study was created to encourage church members to share the gospel in their neighborhoods and workplaces.

In 1991, the board dedicated Centennial Tower, a nine-story office and conference facility that stood above the entity’s now-former campus in downtown Nashville. That same year, a new edition of the Baptist Hymnal was introduced.

“Dr. Elder was a skilled administrator and carried an intensity and passion for excellence throughout his presidency,” said Jimmy Draper, president emeritus of Lifeway. “His contributions to the life of the Sunday School Board reflected his desire to serve the Lord with all his heart.”

Following his service at the Sunday School Board, Elder served as professor and Paschall Chair of Biblical Studies and Preaching at Belmont University in Nashville.

Additionally, he founded and directed the Moench Center for Church Leadership at Belmont and created the Servant Leaders Today website jointly with Lloyd Elder and Associates, which focused on excellence in leadership skills for Christian ministers.

## **History of denominational service**

Prior to his role at the Sunday School Board, Elder served as executive vice president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary from 1978 to 1983 and assistant to the executive director of the Baptist General Convention of Texas from 1975 to 1978.

He was pastor of several Southern Baptist churches, the last being Gambrell Street Baptist Church in Fort Worth from 1969 to 1975.

He also served as a leader in many professional and denominational organizations, including the Baptist World Alliance, Church Leadership Commission, Southern Baptist Bivocational Ministers Association and National Association of Church Business Administrators.

Elder was the author of more than 20 textbook and workbook publications on leadership, *Blueprints: Ten Challenges for a Great People*, a book published in 1984, and a 1993 research report on Southern Baptist life, *Calling the Family Back Together*.

He also wrote numerous articles on personal and spiritual development, management, strategic planning and staff guidance.

He earned a Bachelor of Arts from Howard Payne University in 1956. He later earned a master's degree and a doctorate in New Testament studies from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary. He received honorary doctorates from Dallas Baptist University, Howard Payne University and Campbell University.

Elder is survived by his wife of 70 years, Sue Bristow Elder; one daughter, Donna Sue Maas and husband Richard of Winston-Salem, N.C.; five grandchildren; and six great grandchildren. He was preceded in death by son Philip Lloyd Elder and daughter Janet Lynne Elder.

A celebration of life for Elder will be held Saturday, Nov. 11, at Gambrell Street Baptist Church with burial to follow that afternoon at Laurel Land Cemetery in Fort Worth.