

# Pastor, denominational statesman James Pleitz dies

May 16, 2011

PENSACOLA, Fla. (ABP) - James Pleitz, a well-known pastor in Florida and Texas active in denominational leadership, died Sunday, May 15. He had been in care of the Joyce Goldenberg Hospice Inpatient Residence in Pensacola, Fla., since May 2.



Pleitz retired in 1993 after more than 15 years as pastor of Park Cities Baptist Church in Dallas, with 9,000 members one of the largest churches affiliated with the Baptist General Convention of Texas. Prior to that Pleitz was pastor of First Baptist Church in Pensacola, Fla., for 18 years. He and his wife, Margaret, returned to Pensacola in retirement, and he served First Baptist Church as pastor emeritus. She preceded him in death after 61 years of marriage in February 2010.

Pleitz was well known in Baptist life for service in many denominational leadership positions. He chaired the powerful Southern Baptist Convention Executive Committee in 1968-69 and a committee that studied the Cooperative Program unified budget plan in 1981-83. Pleitz was president of the Florida Baptist Convention in 1971-72. He was president of the SBC Pastors Conference in 1974-75 and preached the SBC annual sermon in 1983 in Pittsburgh. He also served as a trustee and board chairman of the SBC Radio and Television Commission, which is now a part of the North American Mission Board.

Pleitz was also active in the “moderate” resistance to efforts launched in

1979 by a group called the “conservative resurgence” to rescue the convention from so-called “liberalism.” He was a founding director of Associated Baptist Press, an independent news service formed in 1990 to ensure a free flow of information during the controversy.

Pleitz was also a beloved pastor, known in both Dallas and Pensacola for television broadcasts that spread his influence far beyond the church walls in both communities. He came to First Baptist of Pensacola as a young minister - some thought too inexperienced to handle the challenge - but he led the church to recognition as Guideposts magazine’s “Church of the Year” in 1970. Early in his ministry he was pastor of two churches in Arkansas, First Baptist Church of Bentonville and Grand Avenue Baptist Church in Fort Smith.

Pleitz was a graduate of Ouachita Baptist College (now University) and Southern Baptist Theological Seminary. He received honorary doctorates from four colleges, including his alma mater.

Pleitz is survived by a son, a daughter, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. Services are scheduled at 10 a.m., Wednesday, May 18, at First Baptist Church in Pensacola. In lieu of flowers the family suggests donations to either the Royal Outreach Center or Ouachita University Student Scholarships through [First Baptist Church of Pensacola](#) .