

Obituary: Ralph Smith

March 17, 2017

Ralph Smith, retired pastor and denominational leader, died March 11 in Austin at age 85. Smith was born March 19, 1931, and grew up in Hot Springs, Ark., where he made a profession of faith in Christ at age 8. He initially attended the University of Arkansas in Fayetteville, planning to become a lawyer, but he transferred to Ouachita Baptist University to prepare for the pastorate. He went on to earn a doctorate from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary in Fort Worth. After serving at First Baptist Church in Rosenberg, he accepted a call to become pastor of Hyde Park Baptist Church in Austin. During his 36 years there, the congregation grew from about 1,000 members to more than 12,000. He later was instrumental in starting Austin Baptist Church. He was elected president of the Baptist General Convention of Texas in 1974 and 1975. He served as president of the Southern Baptist Convention Pastors' Conference, as a regent at Baylor University, as chair of the SBC Home Mission Board and as chair of the board of trustees of Southwestern Seminary. He also was a chaplain of the Texas House of Representatives. He was preceded in death by his wife, Bess Noble Smith. He is survived by daughter Diane Smith Love and her husband, Bill; son Wallace Smith and his wife, Lanette; and son Peyton Smith and his wife, Beth; seven grandchildren; and three great-grandchildren.