

Obituary

Dr. Gene Garrison, Pastor Emeritus, First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City

Dr. Gene Garrison, pastor of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City from March 1973 to August 1996, passed away June 9 in Pittsboro, NC. He was born July 9, 1931 in Harrison, Arkansas. For 17 years, Dr. Garrison was TV pastor to thousands of worshippers across Oklahoma by way of First Baptist's live-televised services on KWTU Sunday mornings. Prior to that, while pastoring at the First Baptist Church of El Paso, TX, those church services were also telecast live on the CBS affiliate there. From 1992-1996, his Bible studies and devotional teachings were broadcast on a weekly studio program called, "In the First Place." At his retirement in 1996, First Baptist honored him with the title of Pastor Emeritus. After retirement, he was host of "Religious Talk," a weekly radio show on KTOK, during which he took questions regarding religious matters from callers from all over Oklahoma.

Involved in community affairs, Garrison was appointed Chairman of the State Ethics Commission (1973-77) by then-Governor David Boren. He served as a member of the Board of Directors of the Baptist Medical Center, now Integris Baptist Medical Center (1976-96), a member of the Mayor's Advisory Council of Oklahoma City, member and chair of the Board of Governors for Day Care of Oklahoma County, member of the Child Welfare Advisory Committee for the Oklahoma Department of Human Services, member of Governor Henry Bellmon's Economic Task Force (1987-88), chair of the Neighborhood Initiative Commission for Oklahoma City (1992-96), member of the Board of Directors of Oklahoma City Hospice (1992-95), member of the Board of Directors of the Ambassador Concert Choir (1993-96), member and chair of the Board of Directors for the Thomas N. Lynn Institute for Healthcare Research (1993-99), and member of the Board of Directors for The Educational and Employment Ministry (1996-99). He was inducted into the Hall of Fame by the Oklahoma County Historical Society in 1996.

Garrison was active in Baptist circles, having served in many leadership capacities at state and local levels, and as preacher at Falls Creek Baptist Assembly and innumerable state and national Baptist events. He also served as second vice-president of the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) in 1982. Garrison was integrally involved in the formation of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship (CBF) and the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma (CBFO), centrist organizations formed in response to the 1979 Fundamentalist takeover of the SBC. He was the first recipient of the CBF Oklahoma Outstanding Service Award.

Prior to coming to Oklahoma City, Dr. Garrison served as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Phillips, TX (1953-56), Memorial Baptist Church of Grapevine, TX (1956-60), First Baptist Church of Hobart, OK (1960-63), First Baptist Church of Altus, OK (1963-68), and the First Baptist Church of El Paso, TX (1968-1973).

Dr. Garrison and his wife, the former Martha Bailey of Amarillo, TX, have resided in retirement near Raleigh, NC, since 1999, where he served as interim pastor for Baptist congregations in the area, particularly the First Baptist Church of Butner, NC, where he preached and taught

regularly from 2000 to 2005. He is survived by Martha, his son Stephen M. Garrison of Edmond, OK, his daughter Christy Garrison of Cary, NC, two granddaughters and two great-granddaughters.

A memorial service is set for 10 a.m. Saturday, June 17, in the Louise Prichard Chapel of the First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, NW 11th Street at Harvey. Suggested memorials are Gene Garrison Memorial Fund of First Baptist Church of Oklahoma City, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, or the Cooperating Baptist Fellowship of Oklahoma.