

Allen John Kirkland (45)
Vice President 1931, 1952
President, 1953-1954

A. J. Kirkland was born December 5, 1902, in Angelina Co., TX, and died February 23, 1972. His parents were William Bryant and Francis Missouri (White) Kirkland. W. B. was an ordained preacher, who did mission work which resulted in several churches in Angelina and Shelby counties.

Bro. Kirkland was a native Texan and spent his life and 48 year ministry in that state. He was educated in the public schools of Texas and Jacksonville Baptist Academy, Jacksonville, Texas. He began a course of study under Dr. J. Louis Guthrie in 1940 and was awarded the Doctor of Bible Languages degree in May, 1942, from the Missionary Baptist Seminary of Little Rock, AR.



He surrendered to preach on Nov. 17, 1924, and was ordained on April 20, 1927, by First Baptist Church, Jacksonville. In 1926 he was called by the Ebenezer Church at Henderson, his first pastorate. He also pastored the Johnson and Salem churches in Angelina Co. Following this he pastored the Odell and Ozias churches, Angelina Co., and the Gallatin and Recklaw churches, Cherokee Co. All these churches were quarter-time.

After completing four years of studies at Jacksonville in 1929, he was called to his first full-time pastorate, the Walnut Street Baptist Church of Hillsboro. Hundreds were saved through his evangelistic work and the church grew. An educational building was erected and the church purchased a parsonage.

On March 1, 1935 he began a ministry with the First Baptist Church of Ennis. During that pastorate the church retired a \$10,000 debt which had been incurred under the ministry of Eld. L. S. Ballard and erected a large educational building.

In 1941 he held a revival at White Oak that resulted in sixty-seven additions to the church; then the church called him as pastor. He continued there until the Missionary Baptist Church of Corsicana called him in 1945, near the end of World War II. By the end of his first two years, the membership had grown from 135 to 450.

In 1950 he was called as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Henderson, and also to become President of Texas Baptist Institute. For the next seven years he worked diligently to pastor the church, edit the **Baptist Monitor** and serve as President of the school. During this time he led in a building program for the church, raised money and purchased property for the Institute and led in building the Administration Building.

By 1956 he felt that both the church and school needed full-time attention. Therefore, he resigned as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church.

During the next sixteen years additional property was purchased, five new dormitories and a library were built.

He was founder and Editor of **The Baptist Monitor** for 44 years. The paper began in mimeographed form in 1929. His son, James A. Kirkland, explained why the paper began:

...leaders of the Baptist Missionary Association (BMA) of Texas and the General Baptist Convention were beginning to look for a basis for unifying the two Baptist bodies. The two primary points of contention were the money basis and the numerical basis of representation in the Convention, i.e., Convention churches and societies sent representatives to the annual conventions according to the amount of money they contributed to the Convention and the number of members in the Convention churches. This meant that the larger churches would have more representatives than the smaller churches. Many BMA Baptists considered this an unscriptural and unfair basis of representation.

The Convention leadership had indicated it would give up the money basis of representation, but George Truett, influential pastor of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, insisted that they would not give up the numerical basis. Some of the BMA leaders were yielding to this determination and indicating that they would accept the numerical basis in order to get over the final obstacle to unification.

Allen and many other pastors considered this a "sell-out" to the Convention, and he entered the controversy by starting a small paper in which he could freely discuss the unification movement. The pages of the Baptist Progress, the BMA state paper, were closed to him. His influence through the new paper helped to defeat the unification effort.

The gift of the **Baptist Monitor** to Texas Baptist Institute was announced in the July, 1952, issue. James A. Kirkland noted, "The Baptist Monitor was a major force from its beginning in guiding Baptist people with regard to many issues they were called upon to consider. Allen named the paper as he did because a 'monitor' is a watchman with responsibility to call attention to important trends, to warn against impending danger, and to correct errors."¹¹²

He served as President of the American Baptist Association in 1953 and 1954.

He was long recognized as a top debater, teacher, pastor and writer, as well as a successful educator and evangelist.

Bro. Kirkland served until his death on February 23, 1972, completing 22 years as President of Texas Baptist Institute and Seminary.

112 Adapted from biographical sketch of A. J. Kirkland, written by James A. Kirkland, his son.

Typewritten manuscript dated Feb. 24, 1981.