



Addison Vastapha Pinkney
Photo courtesy of Oakwood University Archives.

Pinkney, Addison Vastapha (1903–1981)

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For more than thirty years Addison V. Pinkney served the Seventh-day Adventist Church as an educator, pastor, radio program director, and administrator. He was the sixth president of Oakwood College (now a university).

Addison was born on May 23, 1903, to Talmage DeWitt Pinkney and Grace Addison in Baltimore, Maryland!¹ Growing up in Baltimore, he received his primary and secondary education in the city's public schools.²

In 1924 Pinkney graduated from the Baltimore Teachers' Training School in Baltimore, Maryland. Later, in 1939, he received a Bachelor of Science in Education from Morgan State College in Baltimore, Maryland. Then, in 1965, he earned a Master of Science in Administration and Curriculum Development from the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.³ Pinkney married Lillian Amy Moseley (1904–1991), and they had four children: Frances Orme, Dorie Lee, Addison, Jr., and Donald.⁴

After graduating from the Baltimore Teachers' Training School, Pinkney was hired by the Baltimore County School Board in 1925 to serve as a teacher and principal of Turner's Station School in Baltimore County, Maryland. He continued in that position for twenty years.⁵ Prior to the April 1944 General Conference Spring Meeting in Chicago, Illinois, scheduled to take up the issue of segregated facilities within the denomination, Pinkney and Joseph Thomas Dodson (1897–1985) produced and distributed an agenda for the participants titled "Shall the Four Freedoms Function Among Seventh-day Adventists?" This document called for the complete and immediate integration of the church. When confronted with the choice of full integration or granting a certain level of autonomy to its black constituency, the denomination opted for the latter.⁶ Between 1944 and 1952 seven black regional conferences came into being: Lake Region, Northeastern, Allegheny, South Atlantic, South Central, Southwest, and Central States.

From 1946 to 1963 Pinkney worked for the Allegheny Conference of Seventh-day Adventists as the educational and public relations secretary.⁷ While serving in this capacity, he was ordained to the ministry in 1952.⁸ Moreover, he was an elementary school teacher at Pine Forge Academy in Pine Forge, Pennsylvania.⁹ Eleven years later Pinkney accepted an invitation to become the president of Oakwood College. Under his leadership, nicknamed "The Upward Years" (1963–1966), he is credited with the following:

Achieving the institution's largest student enrollment up to that time

Erecting two modern buildings (the George E. Peters Fine Arts Center, and Carter Hall women's dormitory)

Establishing the annual Conference Emphasis Weekends

Overseeing Oakwood College's inaugural membership in the United Negro College Fund (UNCF)

Increasing the amount of the annual North American offering for Oakwood College

Creating a faculty development program

Securing greater financial support for Oakwood from the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists

Strengthening Oakwood's participation in federal government student aid programs

Procuring a "firm" accreditation status from the Southern Association of College and Secondary Schools

Organizing a pipeline of private grants for the ongoing support of Oakwood College¹⁰

In 1966 Pinkney left Oakwood to become the associate director of the Temperance Department of the General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists. While there, he directed *Kaleidoscope*, a daily radio show carried by approximately 50 stations. This five-minute educational program addressed the dangers of alcohol abuse, tobacco, and illicit drugs. He continued serving in this capacity until his retirement in 1980.¹¹

On August 1, 1966, Glenn Hern, mayor of the city of Huntsville, Alabama, awarded Pinkney the key to the city. In accepting the honor, he stated, "I was amazed to find the wholesome race relations that exists in the rocket capital of the world, and in going to Washington, the nation's capital, I will carry a glowing story of the Huntsville community and their outstanding humanitarian relationship."¹² In recognition of his service to Oakwood College, Pinkney received an honorary Doctor of Laws degree in 1968 from Daniel Payne College in Birmingham, Alabama.¹³

On April 11, 1981, Pinkney died suddenly, at the age of 77, of a heart attack that occurred right before he was scheduled to preach for the 11:00 a.m. service at Chestertown Seventh-day Adventist Church in Chestertown, Maryland.¹⁴

Addison V. Pinkney is remembered for the momentous progress realized at Oakwood in his brief and successful term

as the college president. Furthermore, his advocacy for social justice and health-conscious lifestyles bring additional luster to his already-rich legacy.

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NOTES

1. Most sources cite Addison Pinkney's birth year as 1903. However, his draft registration card cites his date of birth as May 23, 1902. See Records of the Selective Service System, National Archives in St. Louis, Missouri, Record Group 147, Box: 407, digital image, "Pinkney, Addison Vastapha," Ancestry.com, accessed May 21, 2019, <http://ancestry.com>?
2. D. A. Roth, "New President for Oakwood College," *The Record* 62, no. 27 (July 10, 1963): 2.?
3. "Addison V. Pinkney, Ex-College President, obituary," *Washington Star*, April 16, 1981, Oakwood University Archives. See also "Addison V. Pinkney— 1963–1966," Oakwood University Archives; D. A. Roth, "Oakwood College Has New President," *Pacific Union Recorder* 62, no. 45 (June 3, 1963): 1.?
4. Roth, "New President for Oakwood College." See also "Addison V. Pinkney, Ex-College President, obituary."?
5. "Addison V. Pinkney, Ex-College President, obituary." Roth, "New President for Oakwood College."?
6. Samuel G. London, Jr., *Seventh-day Adventists and the Civil Rights Movement* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 144, 145.?
7. "Addison V. Pinkney, Ex-College President, obituary"; see also Roth, "New President for Oakwood College."?
8. "Addison V. Pinkney— 1963–1966."?
9. Roth, "New President for Oakwood College."?
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