

Tennessee State University

## Digital Scholarship @ Tennessee State University

---

Russell Barbour Collection

Manuscript Collections

---

8-2020

### Russell Barbour

Anna Presley Dyer

Tennessee State University, [adyer4@tnstate.edu](mailto:adyer4@tnstate.edu)

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalscholarship.tnstate.edu/russell-barbour-collection>

---

#### Recommended Citation

Dyer, Anna Presley, "Russell Barbour" (2020). *Russell Barbour Collection*. 1.  
<https://digitalscholarship.tnstate.edu/russell-barbour-collection/1>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Manuscript Collections at Digital Scholarship @ Tennessee State University. It has been accepted for inclusion in Russell Barbour Collection by an authorized administrator of Digital Scholarship @ Tennessee State University. For more information, please contact [XGE@Tnstate.edu](mailto:XGE@Tnstate.edu).

## Dr. Russell C. Barbour



Named after Russell Herman Conwell, the Baptist minister and founder of Temple University, Dr. Russell C. Barbour was born in Galveston, Texas on December 8, 1897 to Reverend Alfred and Ellen Barbour. After his baptism, Barbour, at the age of ten, decided he wanted to follow in his father's footsteps and go into ministry. Barbour attended Houston Junior College before completing his Bachelor of Arts degree from Morehouse College in Atlanta, Georgia. He then moved to Hamilton, New York and received his Master of Arts degree in Religion & Philosophy from Colgate University.

After being ordained on August 25, 1921, Barbour succeeded his father's pastoral position at Macedonia Baptist Church in Galveston. He also married Lillian Lewis on September 11, 1926. During his time in Texas, he pursued his passions for writing and civil rights activism. He became editor of *The Colored American*, prominent African American newspaper. Recognized as a leader of progressive thought, Barbour became a political leader of Galveston and a moving spirit in the Texas Baptist Convention.

In 1930, he came to Nashville, Tennessee and served as pastor of the First Baptist Church, Capitol Hill. Over the course of the next fifteen years, Barbour would also become the editor of the *National Baptist Voice* and a delegate to the World Baptist Alliance in 1934. His

editorials revealed his avid devotions regarding Black unity and fiery exchanges with critics. In one editorial column, he argumentatively questioned, “Shall we conclude that young Negroes should sit in a corner and spin mental cobwebs as a solution to our problems?” Such fierce language gained popularity, and his articles would captivate followers. As a result, Barbour became well-known within the Baptist denomination.

In addition to his pastoral and editorial duties, Barbour served as a theology professor at the American Baptist Theological Seminary and as a chaplain at Tennessee Agricultural and Industrial State College, now known as Tennessee State University. He was also an annual lecturer at former Bishop College School for Preachers in Marshall, Texas. These accomplishments paved the way for him to be the first Black editor featured in the *Christian Century*. In May 1944, Bishop College conferred upon him an honorary Doctorate of Law degree.

On Sunday, August 6, 1944, Barbour would stand at his pulpit and preach his final sermon from the Book of Psalms by declaring, “Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.” He died four days later from a stroke. His funeral, on August 15th, would be held at the First Baptist Church where a great assembly gathered in memoriam of his dedicated legacy.

### **Further Reading**

“Dr. Russell Barbour, Negro pastor, dies.” (1944, Aug 11). *Nashville Tennessean*, p. 25.

“Flash...Rev. Russell Barbour dies after stroke.” (1944, August 19). *People's Voice*, p. 3.

“Irreligious race ‘sits in a corner spinning mental Cobwebs;’ Barbour. (1935, Dec 14). *The Chicago Defender (National Edition)*, p. 12.

Murphy, L., Melton, J., & Ward, G. (Eds.). (2011). *Encyclopedia of African American religions* (pp. 68-69). Routledge.

Reed, C. “Free pulpit is urged by Rev. Barbour: noted minister is guest speaker at Baptist conference.” (1938, April 9). *Washington Tribune*, 2.