

## connections

February 2000

Volume 3 Issue 2

Our Mission is to make the worship of God primary in all our gatherings, foster relationships within and outside the Alliance, create places of refuge and renewal for those wounded or ignored by the church, side with the poor, pursue justice with and for the oppressed, care for the earth, work for peace, honor wisdom and lifelong learning, and hold ourselves accountable for equity, collegiality and diversity.

# LIVING ON THE BOUNDARY

Convocation 2000

University Baptist Church

Austin, Texas

April 27-29

beginning with a  
reception at 6 p.m.  
on Thursday  
and worship at 7:15

Included in this issue of *connections* is an insert with details about the 2000 Convocation. Please take a moment at your convenience to complete the registration form and return it to the Alliance office.

**B**eing a part of Community of Grace Church in Richmond, VA, means living by a covenant – and renewing your commitment to that covenant annually.

The church for the first time this year becomes one of the recipients of Alliance Mission Offering funds which will help support the missions and ministry work of the fairly new congregation, organized in homes in the summer of 1994.

Organizing members spent more than a year framing a covenant, before constituting as a church in December 1995. The covenant provides for three levels of commitment from participants:

*Friend:* Participates in the life of the church through attendance, mission work, financial gifts, or Bible study — without necessarily being a Christian.

*Member:* Intentionally commits to some disciplines in the covenant but not all.

*Member in Covenant:* Commits to the entire covenant and commits to participate in one of five shepherding groups that meets once or twice a month to support one another and

hold one another accountable.

Founding pastor is Ben Wagener — born in Brooklyn, NY, reared in First Baptist Church of Clemson, SC, Furman University graduate with an M. Div. from Southern and a D. Min. from Princeton — whose vision was to pattern the congregation after Church of the Savior in Washington, DC. The new church met for 3½ years in donated space in a Holiday Inn in nearby Midlothian before moving to the Baptist Student Union center on the campus of Virginia Commonwealth University in downtown Richmond.

“The great strength of this church is having the covenant and living out of the covenant as it involves at-risk people like the homeless, prisoners, refugees and immigrants,” Ben said. “Ministering to these people is something we do weekly and monthly.” For example:

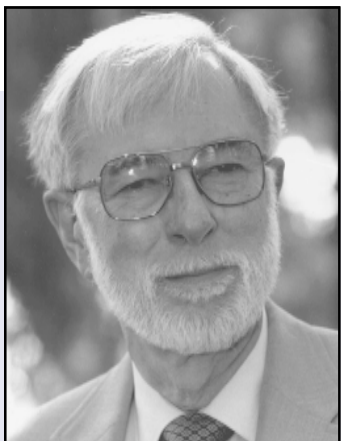
The church housed 35-40 homeless people Dec. 18-26 in the BSU center. Forty-seven people in the church helped prepare breakfast and supper, and packed lunches

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## Renewing the covenant

### T H E R E A L J A M E S M C C L E N D O N

Observant readers of *connections* noticed last month that the words did not match the picture. Indeed the photograph identified as James McClendon was actually Max Lyall, who will be the Convocation song leader. Shown here is James, who will bring the 2000 Covenant Address. Since 1990, James has been the Distinguished Scholar in Residence with the rank of professor at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA. There he teaches systematic theology and directs doctoral students in theology, philosophy of religion and ethics. He has traveled widely, frequently serves as guest professor or lecturer, and has published extensively.





Hardy Clemons

happenings

## HARDY CLEMONS RETIRES AFTER 43-YEAR MINISTRY

Alliance member Hardy S. Clemons was honored last month upon his retirement after 43 years of ministry, the last 11 as pastor of First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC. A former moderator of the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, Hardy joined the Alliance when it formed in early 1987, and has never tired of saying the fledgling group “saved my life” — a reference to the depth of his grief over the loss of the Southern Baptist Convention to fundamentalist forces. Along with spouse Ardelle, Hardy has argued consistently for the need of both CBF and the Alliance. Twice during his tenure at historic First Baptist Greenville, in 1989 and 1994, the church hosted Alliance convocations.

Among the speakers at a retirement dinner held Jan. 16 was James Dunn, retired executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs, who has known Hardy for more than 45 years.

### two more alliance churches have voted to leave sbc

Two Alliance-affiliated congregations, Grace Baptist Church of Statesville, NC, and Vienna Baptist Church in Vienna, Va., recently voted to withdraw from the Southern Baptist Convention. Both congregations took their actions during interim periods between pastors.

### village church in maryland destroyed by fire

The building of Alliance-affiliated Village Baptist Church of Bowie, MD, was destroyed by fire Jan. 8. The congregation’s pastor, Bruce Salmon, told *connections* the church will rebuild on the same site and that an insurance settlement should pay most of the cost. While noting the church does not expect large sums of money from outside donors, gifts will be welcomed. Checks should be made out to Village Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1634, Bowie MD 20717.

### glade church in blacksburg gets renewal grant

Alliance-affiliated Glade Baptist Church of Blacksburg, VA, is one of 12 congregations in North America to receive an initial Worship Renewal Grant from the Calvin Institute of Christian Worship in Grand Rapids, MI. Glade Baptist, whose pastor Kelly Sisson is an acclaimed potter, was awarded a grant of \$14,980 to develop a fine arts gallery in its sanctuary in conjunction with contemplative worship services. More than 250 proposals were evaluated by the Calvin Institute in the first year of the worship renewal program. Funds for the grants are from the Lilly Endowment.

### alliance member to head abc seminary in rochester

Alliance member G. Thomas Halbrooks has been named the next president of The Divinity School, an American Baptist-related theological seminary in Rochester, NY.

Halbrooks, currently dean of the faculty at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, will assume his new duties July 1, succeeding James Evans Jr.

An ordained minister in the American Baptist Churches in the USA, Halbrooks earned the M.Div. from Southern Baptist Theological Seminary and the Ph.D. from Emory University. He has done postgraduate work at Oxford University in England.



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## LEADING CUBAN PASTOR DIES

One of the leading figures in Cuban Baptist life, Juan Francisco Naranjo, died in Havana Jan. 10 at age 86. For nearly half a century he was pastor of William Carey Baptist Church in downtown Havana, one of the flagship Baptist congregations on the Caribbean island. In recent years the church’s co-pastor has been Naranjo’s spouse, Estela Hernández. One of the founders of the Council of Churches of Cuba, Naranjo also helped found the Alliance’s partner group, the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba. Along with three other founding pastors of the Fraternity, the move cost Naranjo his entire pension fund with the former Home Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Juan Naranjo and Estela Hernández



The Board of Directors and staff of the Alliance of Baptists thank you for your generous financial support during 1999. We particularly commend you for surpassing the 1999 Alliance Mission Offering goal of \$80,000. By Jan. 15, we had received in the office mission gifts totaling \$87,122. That means that each of our 20 recipients last year received full funding. All gifts above our 1999 goal will be applied toward our 2000 goal of \$85,250. Again this year, we have 20 recipients, most of whom depend on the Alliance gift to fund a significant portion of their budgets.

We are also pleased to announce that, because of your generosity, we met the 1999 operating budget of \$235,630. The 2000 operating budget is \$245,681.

Herbert Leon McBeth, one of this generation's preeminent Baptist historians, speaks of three rather than two principal traditions in Baptist life in the United States. To the well-documented and older Charleston and Sandy Creek strands, McBeth adds the Texas or Southwestern tradition. His is, in the judgment of this student of Baptist history, a compelling argument.

Although McBeth, a distinguished professor of Baptist studies at Southwestern Seminary, cites many evidences to back up his thesis — first put forward during a denominational heritage week at the old Southern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1989 — I offer only one in this space in hopes it will energize Alliance people to attend our upcoming 14th Annual Convocation in Austin.

Professor McBeth notes that, consistent with such a trend in other areas of national life, Baptists at the end of the 20th century and beginning of the 21st are more divided East and West than North and South. There is in the Texas tradition of Baptists, he asserts, a peculiar ethos of bigness, independency and self-sufficiency.

This does not mean that all Baptists in Texas think in such terms. Yet one of my observations about us Baptists over the past two decades of denominational dislocation and relocation is that the Mississippi River is in fact the great divide between Baptists, and particularly among those whose roots are in the Southern

Baptist Convention. While there are exceptions aplenty on both sides of the river, it seems to me to be generally true that even among progressive Baptists the fault line McBeth identifies is there, sometimes palpably so.

We Alliance Baptists are going to Austin in April to reassert the historic Baptist conviction that freedom of conscience in matters of faith is our first freedom, not

only as Baptists, but as citizens of this country, and that its essential corollary is the institutional separation of church and state. That we do so in Texas is certainly appropriate, given that in our generation many of the clarion calls to stand firm in that freedom have come from Texans — from such church-state champions as George W. Truett, Joseph Martin Dawson, James E. Wood, Jr., and James M. Dunn.

One of my hopes for this convocation is that those of us who live in the East will

go West, in part as an affirmation of those strong Alliance people in Texas and surrounding states who have been so faithful in their participation in all the eastern places we usually gather. More than that, perhaps our Austin gathering will give us a chance to examine more closely the regional biases that at times continue to be a wedge between East and West.

If what we're about in the Alliance is making connections, as I believe it is, why not strive to be the kind of group that soars above the petty and at times silly regionalism that fractures us? Just because Professor McBeth has put his finger on such an historical reality doesn't mean we are bound to perpetuate it.

## perspectives



By Stan Hasteley  
Executive Director



Individuals are invited to become members of the Alliance at any time. Annual membership dues are \$40, individuals; \$60, families; \$125, sustaining; and \$20, students/low income.

**2000 Operating Budget:**

Needs: \$20,411  
Receipts: \$32,312

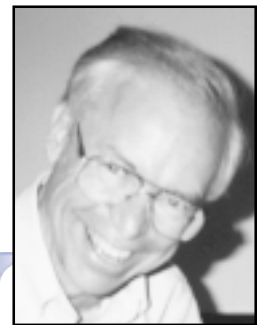
**1999 Mission Offering  
Final Report**

Goal: \$80,000  
Receipts: \$87,122

**2000 Goal: \$85,250**

**The Community of Grace Covenant**

- Prayer, beginning with 30 minutes daily.
- Strong devotional life that includes biblical and other Christian readings.
- Responsible care of the body, through diet, exercise, rest, fighting addictions, change of habits, stress management.
- Worship weekly within the Covenant of Grace unless there is an exceptional circumstance.
- Responsible steward concerning money and consumption. Work toward proportionate giving beginning with the tithe, if possible. Responsible use of environmental resources.
- Active involvement as a servant leader. Reaching out to the disadvantaged, the hurting, the poor. Work for peace. Challenge injustice. Defend human rights. Speak God's truth in love. Mission opportunities. Each person names specifically what he or she will do in this area.



“The great strength of this church is having the covenant...”

— Ben Wagener

**Community of Grace** (continued from page 1)

for those who went to work.

Through this ministry and others like it, a number of formerly homeless people have become members of the church. One is a deacon. All are invited to play on the church's sports teams. “Instead of just doing good, we invite them to become active participants,” Ben said.

*Cambodian ministry:* For almost five years on the first Sunday of each month, the church has given specific attention to Cambodians by offering crafts and sports activities, thereby building relationships and trust. Most of them are non-practicing Buddhists. This month, for the first time, they are being invited to the BSU for a Bible study. “We don't know whether it will work or not,” Ben said.

*Summer mission trips:* Teens and adults go together to places like New York

City to do Vacation Bible School or to Boone, NC, to work with Resort Area Ministries renovating low income housing and leading worship services for recovering alcoholics and addicts.

*Incarcerated youth:* Teenagers from Community of Grace once a month minister to other teenagers in jail.

For the third year, the church will hold a joint Ash Wednesday service with an African American church founded by slaves; and for the second time, will hold a Holocaust Remembrance Sunday at a Jewish synagogue, the leader being a survivor of the Holocaust.

Community of Grace also plays a major role at BTSR. Every year, a seminary student is a part of the staff. This year it is Tom Quisenberry from Clemson, SC, who is pastoral associate for youth. Many students also attend Community of Grace.

“These students help shape the church through their vision and we help shape their vision through our ministries,” Ben said.

Except for Ben, all other staff members are part-time, including Alliance board member Kathy Berry, associate pastor.

Community of Grace, with about 75 regular participants, has a budget of \$99,000 that includes gifts for the Alliance, BTSR, and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America. It gives a significant portion of its resources to missions.

