

# connections

November 1999

Volume 2 Issue 11

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.

## FOUNDATION GRANT MATCHED

With nearly a year to spare and thanks to the generosity of Alliance people and churches, we have matched an anonymous grant made last year in the amount of \$23,700 for the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba.

The doubled funds, \$47,400, are being used already for purchasing properties for new church starts, renovating existing structures and establishing a pension fund for Fraternity pastors.

Along with generous grants each of the last two years from the Myrtle Arnall Mann Fund administered by the Central Baptist Church of Newnan, GA, the successful completion of the matching grant means the Alliance has been privileged to pass along \$128,600 to our Cuban partner during 1997-1999. This figure does not include our annual support through the Alliance Mission Offering. Thanks be to God!

**T**wenty-two Alliance people will visit Cuba this month, including delegations from Central Baptist Church, Newnan, GA; First Baptist Church, Washington, DC; Kirkwood Baptist Church, St. Louis; and Heritage Baptist Church, Cartersville, GA. Another traveler is a member of St. Charles Avenue Baptist Church in New Orleans.

Led by Alliance Executive Director Stan Hastey, who will be making his 11th trip to the Caribbean island nation, most in the group will visit churches in Havana and Matanzas and participate in a ceremony launching construction of a new center in Havana which is to house our partner group, the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba. The three-person delegation from Heritage Baptist will visit that congregation's sister church in Holguín, a city in eastern Cuba. Lanny Goldfinch, the St. Charles Avenue representative, will visit the New Orleans church's sister congregation in Boca de Mariel.

Following the return to the U.S. of the rest of the group Nov. 24, Goldfinch and Hastey will participate in the Fraternity's 10th anniversary Assembly, to be held in Matanzas Nov. 25-28. Host for the gathering is the historic First Baptist Church of Matanzas, which this year is celebrating its centennial.

Two of the churches sending delegations on the trip — Central Baptist of Newnan and First Baptist of Washington — are exploring sister-church relationships with Fraternity congregations. Central Baptist Church has expressed a desire to explore such a tie with William Carey Baptist Church in Havana. The Georgia congregation, through a family foundation it administers, already has contributed \$25,000 to the Havana church toward construction of a new sanctuary.

## DANIEL ALEJANDRO CUELLA SANTANA, 1998-1999



Daniel Cuella, the Cuban infant who last December was brought to the United States for life-saving surgery to repair a congenital heart defect, died suddenly Oct. 7. He was one month shy of his first birthday.

Wayne Blythe of Norfolk, VA, who coordinated a blitz of medical and diplomatic activity a year ago to make possible little Daniel's trip to the U.S., reported the baby's sudden demise in an e-mail message. "Daniel was at home, in apparent good health," Blythe wrote, "and just minutes before his death he had been smiling, happily playing with his father, and drinking milk. He suddenly lost consciousness, apparently having a cardiac arrest. An ambulance was summoned to take him to a hospital in Cárdenas some 10 miles distant, but he was dead on arrival...."

"Despite this whole process not turning out as we had hoped and prayed for, I feel that some real, lasting good has been done. Many people have had opportunity to join hands, hearts and checkbooks in a noble cause.

(concluded on page 3)

Alliance member **Bob Ballance** has resigned as editor of *Baptists Today* and is now serving as interim pastor of Heritage Baptist Church in Cartersville, GA.

**Northminster Church**, an Alliance congregation in Monroe, LA, is searching for an associate pastor. To request information concerning the church or position or to forward a resume write to Craig Henry, Chair, Associate Pastor Search Committee, Northminster Church, 2701 Lamy Lane, Monroe, LA 71201 or e-mail at [chenry@iamerica.net](mailto:chenry@iamerica.net).

The **Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church**, a welcoming and inclusive congregation affiliated with the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. and the Alliance of Baptists, is looking for a minister of music. 30 hours/week. Bachelor of music degree (master's desired); at least two years of church music experience, including directing; knowledge of church liturgy and church music. Salary/benefits. Send resume and references to Binkley Baptist Church, 1712 Willow Dr., Chapel Hill, NC 27514 or e-mail [binkleychurch@juno.com](mailto:binkleychurch@juno.com).

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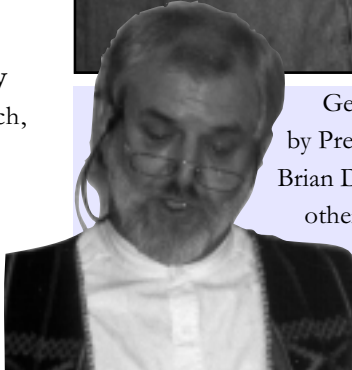
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**GEORGIA CONVOCATION**

Georgia Alliance President Stacey Simpson is flanked by President-Elect Mary Sue Brookshire and Secretary Brian Dixon. Not available for the photo was the group's other 1999-2000 officer, Treasurer Walt Skinner. The Convocation was held Oct. 8-9 at Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta. Ken Sehested, executive director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, was the keynote speaker.



**NORTH CAROLINA CONVOCATION**

Former national Alliance directors Shanta Premawardhana and Diane Hill did some catching up during the North Carolina Alliance of Baptists gathering last month. Shanta is pastor of Cornell Baptist Church in Chicago, while Diane is minister with children and families at Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, NC.

Dorisanne Cooper, associate minister at College Park Baptist Church in Greensboro, delivered the sermon during the concluding worship service of the convocation, held Oct. 1-2 at Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh.



**MEMBERSHIP NEWS**

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.

Despite the best efforts to date of a growing coalition seeking changes in U.S.-Cuba policy, legislation that would have exempted the sale of food and medicine from the overall economic embargo against Cuba has failed for this year. Yet the debate has crystallized unprecedented attention on the absurdity of U.S. policy toward our Caribbean neighbor.

A quarter of a century of observing Congress close-up has taught me that few substantive legislative initiatives make their way unobstructed through the maze of procedural obstacles usually thrown up by one or both houses. So it has been thus far in the ongoing debate over altering or even ending the broadest economic sanctions ever imposed on another country by the United States.

Here's how the maze devoured this latest effort. The companion bills that would have lifted the sanctions on Cuba's ability to buy food and medicine on international markets ended up trapped in the final version of the Agriculture Appropriations bill, one of 13 spending measures Congress is obligated to pass annually. In the end, the Republican leaders of the House of Representatives refused to go along with a strong bipartisan majority in the Senate in approving such a provision.

Earlier in the summer, the Senate had voted 70-28 to accept an amendment by Republican Senators John Ashcroft of Missouri and Chuck Hagel of Nebraska to eliminate sanctions on sales of food and medicine. These generally conservative senators from midwestern states were reflecting the views of agricultural interests in all parts of the country in a growing desire to exempt the sale of agricultural products from economic sanctions the U.S. maintains against several countries.

## perspectives



By Stan Hastey  
Executive Director

Yet the House version of the bill contained no such provision and on September 22 House GOP leaders refused to go along with a majority of both House and Senate conferees by insisting that Cuba alone continue to be made an exception. Although some of the House conferees, representing both parties, argued forcefully that Cuba be included, the House Republican leadership adjourned the conference committee meeting without letting the issue come to a vote.

Once it became apparent a majority of House conferees would vote not to exclude Cuba from the bill, the leadership decided not to reconvene the committee. Instead, the majority leaders let it be known they had devised a behind-the-scenes compromise on all remaining issues at dispute in the bill and circulated their proposal on the entire bill. By September 30 a sufficient number of members had signed the conference report, thus returning it to both houses for favorable final votes — but without the language lifting the sanctions.

The good news in all this is that many members, particularly in the House of Representatives, were infuriated by the shenanigans of their leaders and will be energized next year during the second session of the 106th Congress to see the effort through to a successful conclusion.

In the meantime, Alliance members and others who want to see the sanctions lifted have the opportunity during the recess between sessions to make appointments with their House members and senators to press the point. When it comes to changing the law of the land, there is always work to be done. And hope for a better outcome.

## DANIEL (CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1)

Two vastly different nations, with normally hostile governments, decided to cooperate to give a precious child a chance at life. Medical people have shown again how caring and generous they can be....

“To those who observed this process, a word of implicit witness has been spoken. People of faith — Cuban and North American — have shown that we have a mysterious unity that is stronger than any ideology which could divide us, and that the great Mystery whom we worship is worthy as well of our sacrificial, risk-taking love.

“Daniel's earthly life was brief, but for more than 11 months he was loved intensely. Perhaps the greatest tragedy is that thousands of children now alive, including many in our own country, will not receive as much love in normal-span lifetimes as Danielito did in 11 months. Thank you for being a part of that care and love for this little boy, even if you never had the joy of meeting him. Thanks be to God who creates such good people to make such wonderful deeds possible. And thanks to be God who comforts us in all our sorrows and who promises to wipe away every tear from our eyes.”

Expressions of sympathy may be mailed to Daniel's parents at their home address: Rubén Daniel Cuella and Miriela Santana, Union 60, Méndez Capote, Matanzas 44140, CUBA.

## REMITTANCES TO CUBA

Western Union has expanded its money transfer service to Cuba in response to a recent relaxation on the part of the U.S. government on such remittances. Any U.S. citizen may now send up to \$300 quarterly to a Cuban, provided the recipient presents a proper photo ID, the sender's full name, the amount of the funds to be wired and a money transfer control number.

To provide the service, Western Union has made the service available in many of its offices across the nation and instituted a service charge of \$29 for each transaction. Previously, only Cuban-Americans were authorized to send funds to relatives on the island.

(connections thanks Alliance board member Jose Orraca for this news item. It has been confirmed in a telephone interview with a Western Union customer service representative.)

**Operating Budget YTD:**

Needs: \$196,360  
Receipts: \$201,964

**Mission Offering YTD:**

Goal: \$80,000  
Receipts: \$44,012

**Cuba Grant:**

Challenge: \$23,700  
Receipts: \$23,700

Max Hill will be making his 11<sup>th</sup> trip to Cuba in November, not what he expected when he made his first trip in 1991, just out of curiosity about religion in the communist state.

“I had every intention of going once, seeing how things worked, and forgetting it,” he said. But something happened during that first visit that has drawn Max and many other Alliance members back to Cuba on numerous occasions: He formed a personal relationship with the Cubans he met.

Max is pastor of First Baptist Church in Jonesville, NC, which has one of the longest sister relationships with a congregation in the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba.

Among his first friends were Adalberto Cuéllar, the executive secretary of the Fraternity, and his wife Ena García, the pastor of El Jordán Baptist Church in the Havana municipality of Guanabacoa.

Max went back to Cuba for a second visit and was then invited to bring some members of his congregation. By 1993, FBC Jonesville and El Jordán had established the partnership that has done nothing but thrive in the years since.

Four groups from El Jordán have visited Jonesville, and another is expected to visit in March. Six groups from Jonesville have visited Cuba. “We have exchanged membership privileges,” Max said. “Their travelers are members of our church and ours are members of theirs. I’m a co-pastor of their church.”

When in Cuba, the Jonesville groups spend time building relationships in the neighborhood, leading or participating in home Bible studies, visiting with church members and others, and touring hospitals and government offices.

The Cubans, in turn, participate in the worship services at FBC Jonesville and also help at two Hispanic missions.

“This relationship has transformed us,” Max said. “As Southern Baptists, we were nurtured on missions. Our partnership has given more focus to that than we’ve ever had before. The Cubans have put names, faces, and identities to missions.”

“They also,” he said, “have taught us a whole lot about what it means to be church, what it means to minister in a hostile environment where you aren’t the majority.”

That is a valuable lesson in our changing culture, he said. “I was raised in the ‘50s when everybody went to church and we prayed at every event. Now, fewer people attend church and are Christian, even in rural North Carolina. In some ways our culture grows more hostile to organized religion every day and the Cubans’ experience in an officially atheist state and environment, where there is open hostility to church, is beneficial to us.”

Beyond this, the partnership has helped the Jonesville congregation modify its “corporate image” of church. “We have always been numbers oriented, whereas their congregations are relationship oriented,” Max said. “In their society the church really is family. They lean on each other. They love each other

and depend on each other. It’s less important to them to talk about budgets and buildings and numbers of baptisms. When one is nurtured in the faith and baptized in the faith, that is not a cause to celebrate adding another number to the membership roster but a celebration of expanding the family to include this one whom we love. That’s a different mindset entirely.”

A native of Madison, WV, Max is an M. Div. and D. Min. graduate of Southeastern Seminary. He has been pastor of FBC Jonesville for 13 years.

The Fraternity this year will receive \$15,000 from the Alliance if the annual Mission Offering goal of \$80,000 is reached.



*P*lease send in your contribution to help meet this year’s Mission Offering goal.  
If your church would like a supply of gift envelopes, contact the Alliance office.