

The Alliance of Baptists is dedicated to the preservation of historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions, and to the expression of our ministry and mission through cooperative relationships with other Baptist bodies and the larger Christian community.

## Alliance helps make it possible

# Moroccans look into the faces of Christians

By Karen Thomas Smith

“Why are the Christians attacking the Muslims?” It’s a question perhaps no one in America heard (in so many words) during the war with Iraq. But it was a question I heard and felt even when it was left unspoken throughout the days and nights of the bombing of Baghdad and the advance of American troops on the capital.

For Americans, pro-war and anti-war, the invasion of Iraq was the result of a political decision made by a secular government. But it was not seen that way in the society we live in. In Morocco, the common word for Westerner is Nasrani, an Arabic word for Christian. Most Moroccans don’t think in terms of a separable sacred and secular. America=Christian as Morocco=Muslim and Iraq=Muslim in most people’s eyes.

Now, the war is and isn’t over. The fighting goes on. And many, perhaps most, people here believe that Christians will not be satisfied to control Muslim Afghanistan and Iraq but will also one day find a pretense to invade Iran and Syria. Every bullet fired by an American gun in the region fuels suspicions and smoldering anger, creating fertile ground for the militant fundamentalists to sow their message of hatred around the Muslim world.

On May 16, that hatred led to four bombs exploding in the heart of Casablanca, killing more than 45, including 14 young Moroccan men who chose to be martyrs to the cause of terrorism. The

government’s response has been to clamp down on the militant fundamentalist groups in the country, arresting and detaining scores of suspected plotters, reminiscent of the days following September 11 in the US. But strong-arming the fundamentalists can backfire, and the government knows it. Where is the way to that high ideal we and all Moroccans pay tribute to in our greetings multiple times a day – Salaam – peace?

Last weekend, I was in Casablanca as guest preacher at the Casablanca Protestant Church and guest speaker for the subsaharan African student group. The church is located only a block away from the Hotel Farah, one of the bombing sites. On Saturday morning, I went for a run and came back by the Hotel Farah, which I had

thought was closed, but I noted a sign on the left side of the scarred building that said, “Provisional Entrance.” It was still open. The terror hadn’t closed it down; it just meant that a new way in had been created. “Farah,” by the way, means joy.

I believe that we can be part of that new way in to peace and joy. Maybe I am an idealist, but I believe that our being here as the visible face of Christ makes a difference. Right after the invasion of Baghdad, the Al Akhawayn University charity association, Hand in Hand, held our annual Fun Run for charitable projects in the region. As we do every year, Kevin, Claire, and I ran the 5-K run. As the jogging stroller is something of an anomaly, our image was shown all over national television. Again, when Moroccans see our faces, they don’t just see Westerners, they see Christians – Christians running with Muslims, not fighting Muslims, to  
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### An Alliance Mission Offering recipient

Karen Thomas Smith, right, with literacy student Amina Ychen. Karen is chaplain to the Christian community at Al Akhawayn University in Ifrane, Morocco. She receives \$2,000 in Alliance Mission Offering funds to aid her ministry to students.

Through May 31

**2003 Operating Budget**

Needs: \$ 125,065

Receipts: \$ 106,606

**2003 Mission Offering**

Goal: \$ 111,000

Receipts: \$ 40,063

On June 8, the Alliance-affiliated Glade Church, Blacksburg, VA, was formally welcomed into the United Church of Christ. During the Pentecost Sunday service, the congregation's pastor, Kelly Sisson, was installed as a minister in good standing with the UCC. Shown with Sisson are John Deckenback, conference minister for the Central Atlantic Conference, UCC, and Alliance of Baptists Associate Director Jeanette Holt. Glade Church describes itself as "an open and caring faith community in the free church tradition where worship is central and diversity is celebrated."



## Glendale voted out of convention; Daniel called to UCC church

Alliance-affiliated **Glendale Baptist Church, Nashville, TN**, was voted out of the Tennessee Baptist Convention May 30 during a called meeting of that body's Executive Board. The special meeting was called for the sole purpose of formally dissolving the relationship between the convention and the church because of Glendale's calling last year of April Baker, a lesbian woman, as associate pastor. Executive Board President Laurann Whetham, who earlier this spring appointed a subcommittee to address the matter, said during the meeting, "We felt the only option for us at this time was to seek some means of separating the Tennessee Baptist Convention from them and their actions."

Whetham said further: "Done incorrectly, any action we took could damage the witness of Tennessee Baptist churches to these people and families. If we took no

action, and allowed the debate to become part of our convention in November, the resultant bad press would be harmful to all concerned." In a formal response to the action, Glendale Baptist Church expressed appreciation for the "prayer and dialogue" with convention representatives and said it accepted the decision "to dissolve our relationship."

happenings

Alliance director **Ginny Brown Daniel** has been called as pastor of Plymouth Church, United Church of Christ, in Spring, TX, beginning July 14. For the past four and one-half years, she has been associate pastor of Christ Reformed Church, Hagerstown, MD. A 1998 graduate of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, she is the new chairperson of the Women in the Church Committee of the Alliance Board of Directors.

**Carl Gregg**, a May 2003 graduate of Brite Divinity School, Fort Worth, TX, has accepted a call as associate pastor of the Alliance-affiliated **Northminster Church, Monroe, LA**. He earned his B.A. from Furman University, where one of his mentors was former Alliance President Ann Quattlebaum.

**Mario Delgado**, father of Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba Executive Secretary **Manuel Delgado**, died June 10. He is survived by his spouse of nearly 55 years, four sons, 10 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. In an e-mail message to the Alliance office, Manuel recounted that on March 8, 1964, he and his father were the first two members of their family to be baptized into the Baptist church of San Antonio de Río Blanco. Expressions of sympathy may be sent by e-mail, [emanuel@enet.cu](mailto:emanuel@enet.cu).

## Christian faces in Morocco

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make a difference in this world.

Three weeks ago, we distributed notebooks, pens and pencils to women studying in a local literacy program. The money for this was given by a Baptist church in North Carolina. I told the women that Christians in America did not see them as enemies, but as sisters, whom they wanted to support, for whom they prayed. The women applauded. Again, our "Christian" faces, alongside "Muslim" faces,

showed up in a national newspaper for this simple act.

I believe these small acts of hope and faith matter greatly in the Kingdom of God where the Prince of Peace reigns. Peace is not just something brokered at the bargaining tables of diplomats. The way of peace is worked out person by person, community by community, through the power of the Holy Spirit.

We are grateful to Alliance peacemakers who join with us on this way.

### The future of the Alliance

Alliance members in Texas are invited to a meeting July 12 to talk about the future of the Alliance. The meeting will be held at Covenant Church, 4949 Caroline Street, Houston, TX, from 1-5 p.m. This is a part of the Alliance's strategic planning process. Please notify Alliance board member Beverly Rodgers if you will be attending, [BevJon@sbcglobal.net](mailto:BevJon@sbcglobal.net) or 281.293.8430.

# Our future together

Periodic strategic planning, while necessary in the life of any organization, can be deadly boring. And it can be practically useless.

Such is emphatically not the case in the strategic planning process the Alliance is presently engaged in under the guidance of Signal Hill, a self-described “mission-driven” group that specializes in helping organizations move positively into the future. Signal Hill’s approach involves use of a method called “appreciative inquiry.” Rather than the traditional approach of “fixing” problems in organizational life, Signal Hill guides organizations in a process of discernment of the future based on what’s already working.

Nonetheless, this is not a head-in-the-sand approach that ignores problematic areas in organizational life. Far from it. We are learning that this “what’s working” approach to strategic planning, by its very nature, is leading us to address those areas in which we clearly need to improve. It might be called a “non-anxious” kind of strategic planning. We in the Alliance are indebted to Signal Hill and its principal, Daniel Pryfogle, and his associates Debra Sutton and Desmond Hoffmeister, for leading us well in this process of discerning the future of the Alliance.

On the weekend of May 30-31, the Alliance Strategic Planning Work Group held the second of two planned retreats to do the necessary face-to-face work in our process. During those days at Bend of Ivy Lodge near Mars Hill, NC, we focused on our collective hopes for the future. The result of that gathering is the brief statement that follows.

Besides the desire to keep you informed of our progress, the other purpose in publishing the following statement is to invite your participation by joining the conversation. To enable you to

help us in our discernment, we ask you to go to the special strategic planning bulletin board on our website ([www.AllianceofBaptists.org](http://www.AllianceofBaptists.org)) to respond to these stated hopes. What you offer will be added to data being collected in a variety of settings and given full consideration by the Strategic Planning Work Group. In a word, we need your participation.

In our collective discernment of what the Spirit of God is leading us to become and to do, the Strategic Planning Work Group of the Alliance of Baptists proposes:

1. That the Alliance will become ever more an inclusive people — as to race and region, gender and sexual orientation, clergy and laity, young and old and in-between — to the end that we will be a model of Christian hospitality and a source of blessing to persons inside and outside the Alliance.

2. That the Alliance will become ever more a missional people with partnership as our working model -- domestically and internationally, ecumenically and in interfaith relations, and in our public witness to peace with justice - - to the end that we will be intentional about our possibilities of service in and to the world around us.

3. That the Alliance will become ever more a spirit-led people — in our governance and staffing, communications and fund development, and overall institutional capacity — to the end that we share more effectively the good news of the Alliance within and beyond our circles; pass along our understanding of the Christian faith to our children, young people, and all others who come after us; listen to, learn from, and respond appropriately to our constituent congregations and individual members; and model well in every aspect of our life together the equity, collegiality, and diversity to which we have committed ourselves.

perspectives



By Stan Hastey  
Executive Director

## As partnership with Sri Lanka becomes official, Executive Secretary returns home to flooding

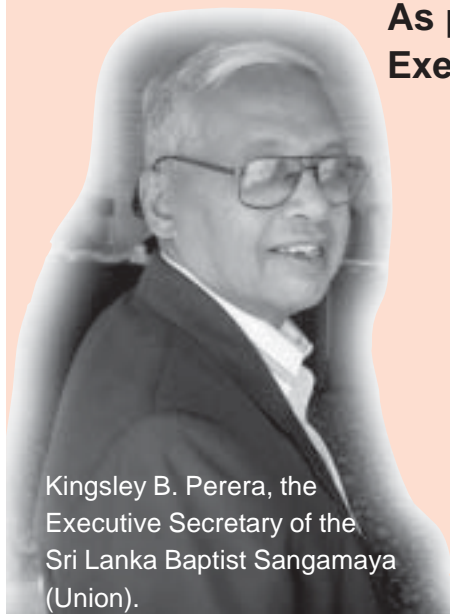
One of the actions taken at the April meeting of the Alliance’s Board of Directors was to establish officially a partnership between the Alliance and the Sri Lanka Baptist Union.

Kingsley B. Perera, the Executive Secretary of the Union, was present for the board meeting and also addressed the Annual Meeting.

The population of Sri Lanka is 75 percent Buddhist and 8 percent Christian. The 33 Baptist churches in the country, Kingsley said, have enjoyed a major revival in the past few years.

The union is receiving \$4,000 in Alliance mission offering funds this year to help pay transportation costs for pastors, who often must travel long distances.

Kingsley returned to Sri Lanka to the worst flooding since 1947. “We had 175,000 families affected with about 300 deaths,” he said. “Two of our Baptist churches are situated in the affected communities and we are involved in flood relief work. With the help of the Baptist World Alliance and our church members, we are planning to rebuild damaged houses.”



Kingsley B. Perera, the Executive Secretary of the Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya (Union).

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## National Farm Worker's Ministry continues to advocate for fair wages, benefits

Board members of the National Farm Worker's Ministry (NFWM) went to Yakima, a farming area in central Washington, to meet with representatives of the United Farm Workers Town Committee, workers from the Chateau St. Michelle Winery, growers involved in the NFWM apple campaign and workers from a large corporate dairy farm in the area.

The board heard from workers who reported on contract negotiations with the Chateau St. Michelle Winery. The contracts, which established fair wages and health care benefits, marked a victory for workers and NFWM, which had led a seven-year boycott of the winery.

A local apple grower discussed the difficulties apple growers face due to unfair pricing practices locally and the demands of a global economy. He was one of 10 apple growers who has agreed to participate in the NFWM's Fair Trade Apple Campaign designed to increase the wages of both the

apple growers and the farm workers.

Also during the visit, workers from a large corporate dairy shared stories of worker abuse and refusal of management to hear worker grievances. The workers lost their jobs when they sought to organize a union to address their concerns.

During the board meeting, reports were filled with examples of hard work and creativity in developing shared ministries with church-farm worker partnerships and youth campaigns, in lobbying efforts to secure legal protection and fair treatment for farm workers, and in boycotting companies and products produced by companies with unfair labor practices.

These highlights of the June board meeting present just a small portion of the

vital work carried out by the NFWM. In December, the board of NFWM adopted budget increases to fund new staff and programs serving farm workers. The shrinking economy has resulted in dramatically reduced income and NFWM faces a severe budget deficit. Board members and staff have pledged to work toward ways to

The board of the National Farm Worker's Ministry (NFWM) met June 6-8 in Issaquah, WA, just outside Seattle. The Alliance was represented at the meeting by Sylvia Campbell, chair of the Peace and Justice Committee. This is her report.



increase funding in order to meet budget needs and avoid depleting reserve funds provided by a bequest. As budget strategies evolve, you will be provided with specific information on how to participate financially in this ministry of the Alliance.

## Applications due for 2004 Mission Offering funds

Applications for the **2004 Alliance Mission Offering** are due in the Washington office by Aug. 1. With the exceptions of our three permanent international partners (Cuba, Zimbabwe and Sri Lanka), all other current recipients are required to reapply on an annual basis. Applications from potential new recipients also are invited. Submissions will be evaluated by the Missions Committee of the Board of Directors. Recipients will be announced following the next meeting of the board, to be held Sept. 18-20 in Nashville, TN.