

connections

November 2002

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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 Mission Offering recipient in Louisville is

Reclaiming Christmas *(and keeping garbage out of the dumps)*

by Dan Trabue

Jeff Street Baptist Community at Liberty, Louisville, KY

According to the Center for a New American Dream, Americans generate about 220 million tons of trash a year, or about 4½ pounds per person per day. New York City alone produces 11,000 tons of garbage *every day*.

The figures get even worse during that *most wonderful time of the year*. In the five weeks leading up to Christmas, Americans throw away an extra five million tons of junk.

As we move toward the Christmas season, it has almost become a cliché to say that the holiday season has become too commercialized, yet it is certainly true, at least according to our garbage dumps. Remember Jesus said, "Beware! Don't be greedy for what you don't have. Real life is not measured by how much we own."

Who sold out Christmas to Madison Avenue and how do we get it back?

At Jeff Street Baptist Community at Liberty, in downtown Louisville, KY, we have begun the journey back to Bethlehem by celebrating the season with the Reclaiming Christmas Project. Begun by the Peacemakers group at Jeff Street, the

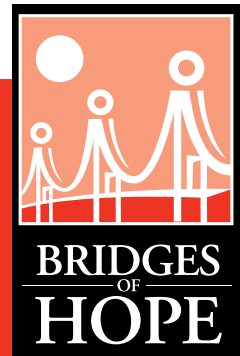
Reclaiming Christmas Project is our way of saying to our friends and family, "Enough."

Those who participate urge their loved ones *not* to buy them anything for Christmas. Instead, church members encourage their friends and family to direct the amount of money that they would have spent to a project to benefit those more in need.

For eight years, the Peacemakers group at Jeff Street has chosen to support various projects in Central America. One year, we sent money to a group of indigenous widows from the war-torn Chimaltenango province in Guatemala as they developed employment opportunities for themselves. Another year, we donated money that went toward digging a well to provide clean water to the village of Ximbaxuc, also in Guatemala.

Once the project is chosen, the Peacemakers prepare an information package for others who might be interested in getting off the Christmas merry-go-round. The packets include a sample letter to family and

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Jeff Street is just one of 24 organizations that is receiving Alliance Mission Offering funds during 2002. The deadline for receipt of funds in the Alliance office to be counted for the 2002 offering is December 31. Funds received after that date will be credited to the 2003 offering. Our 2002 goal is \$95,000.



NORTH CAROLINA ALLIANCE OFFICERS

Susan Aldrich, a lay leader in Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, is the newly elected president of the North Carolina Alliance of Baptists. Elected president-elect in last month's annual NC Alliance convocation was John Burton-Crutchfield of Henderson.

Steve Jolley has been called as the new pastor of Freeman Street Baptist Church, Norfolk, VA, following 12 years as associate pastor of Greenwood Forest Baptist Church, Cary, NC. He is a former president of the North Carolina Alliance of Baptists.

During the annual convocation of the North Carolina Alliance, held last month at Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham, \$335 was given to the 2002 *Bridges of Hope* Mission Offering.

Two Alliance women were installed Oct. 13 as pastor and associate pastor of their respective Alliance-affiliated congregations. **April Baker** is the first-ever associate pastor of Glendale Baptist Church, Nashville, TN. Alliance President Craig Henry was

Distinguished Christian educator and author Bill Dols was the featured presenter at last month's convocation of the North Carolina Alliance. Formerly on staff at Myers Park Baptist Church in Charlotte, he now resides in Alexandria, VA. He is editor of Bible Workbook: A Lectionary Bible-Based Resource for Individuals and Groups and author of Just Because It Didn't Happen: Sermons & Prayers as Story.



among those who spoke during her installation service. **Sarah Jackson Shelton** was installed the same afternoon as the fifth pastor of Baptist Church of the Covenant, Birmingham, AL.

The board of directors of the **Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America** has

announced the appointment of Alliance member **Jim Lowder** as interim executive director beginning Feb. 1, 2003. Along with spouse **Jerene Broadway**, a former director of the Alliance, he will move to Charlotte NC, to assume his new post.

Bonnie Decuir is the new pastor of the Alliance-affiliated **Fellowship Baptist Church** in Edison, GA, effective in early November. Notifying Alliance Associate Director Jeanette Holt of her call, the recent graduate of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond wrote, "They are truly warm and gracious people, and I am deeply honored to serve in that place."

Alliance board member **Kathy Manis Findley** of Little Rock was the 2002 recipient of the Arkansas Attorney General's Larry Dunklin Award for excellence and commitment in service to victims of crime. She also recently graduated from the U.S. Department of Justice National Victim Assistance Academy.

happenings

alliance **f**inances

Interim financial development plan

In an effort to increase Alliance membership and help the organization move forward financially, each member of the Alliance Board of Directors, at the September board meeting, committed to:

- Enlist five new members by the end of the year
- Revisit his/her own financial commitment to the Alliance.
- Urge his/her church to increase its financial giving to the Alliance through its budget.

The board also approved an interim development plan that calls for renewed efforts to recruit new individual members and enlist new affiliate

churches; to request increased support from churches that currently give and seek new support from affiliated churches who do not currently contribute to the Alliance; to ask for increased contributions from existing members; to target key individuals for additional gifts; and to explore grant sources.

The interim financial development plan is designed to carry the Alliance through its long-term strategic planning process which is expected to take more than a year to complete.

2002 Operating Budget

Through September 30

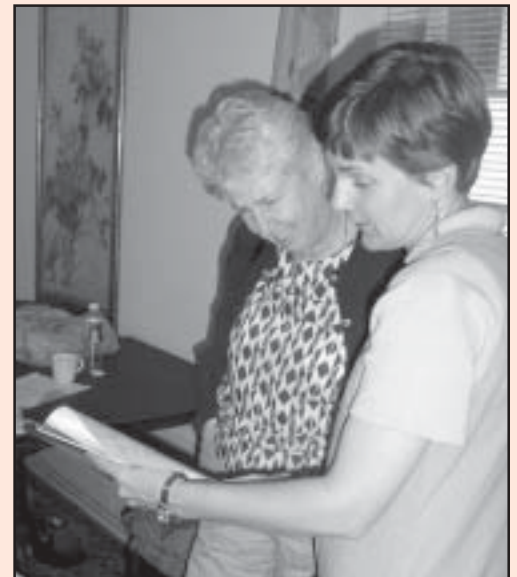
Needs: \$219,402

Receipts: \$186,640

2002 Mission Offering:

Goal: \$95,000

Receipts: \$53,724



Bettie Hodges, a member of First Baptist Church in Savannah, GA, and Margie Latham, a member of Covenant Church in Houston and interim pastor of a UCC congregation, are two of several new members of the Alliance of Baptists Board of Directors. They attended their first board meeting in September.

Alliance Mission Offering: Worthy of our times

In his most recent book, *A New Call to Mission: Help for Perplexed Churches* (Smyth & Helwys, 2000), Alan Neely compares and contrasts the missionary methodology of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the Alliance of Baptists. In the introduction to his chapter on the Alliance approach to mission, he wrote: *The Alliance was not begun as a missionary sending body or a "missions" agency. It was organized in 1987 to make a statement about what was felt to be the repudiation and loss of historic Baptist beliefs and values....*

Nevertheless, he went on, within its first year the Alliance began to receive requests for assistance from congregations and individuals in fulfilling their own sense of mission. A missions committee was named to make the necessary decisions about allocating the unsolicited funds that were coming in. From that modest beginning, the Alliance soon thereafter began to promote its own annual Mission Offering.

The sad truth, however, is that the Alliance never really has caught on as a missionary body worthy of wide support, even within our own affiliated congregations and individual membership. Fewer than half our churches promote and receive the Mission Offering. So it is that year after year we find ourselves where we are again this year — well short of our still-modest goal (this year, \$95,000) and seemingly unable to get to the next level in our support of truly worthy causes.

In his book, Neely notes both strengths and weaknesses of the Alliance approach to our larger mission. Among the former, he identifies the following:

- Our larger mission “is crucial to the continuation of many ministries, likewise crucial to the health of the Alliance itself.”
- Most recipients of the Alliance Mission Offering “represent small efforts and limited constituencies.” Some, he rightly points out, “have been excluded from Baptist life or forced to the margins.”
- As to the administration of grants, all decisions “are made by individuals directly involved and responsible.”

But he notes weaknesses in our approach as well. Among them are these:

- Limited funds have meant we cannot offer assistance to all who ask for it.

- Although we have been called on all along to provide such assistance, “the image of the Alliance is not that of a mission agency.”

- “The Alliance has not adequately publicized its mission efforts. Many individuals and churches that support the Alliance know little about its mission endeavors.”

- Most of our own congregations have yet to “make a transition from thinking of missions in the traditional sense — thousands of vocational missionaries and millions of dollars — to thinking on a smaller scale.”

Perhaps the most telling paragraph in Neely’s chapter on the Alliance is the last one: “Every recipient of the Alliance’s mission offering is small and struggling, and represents a frontier of hope. Money and short-term personnel provided by the Alliance assist those who are working with people

on the margins of society — people not seen by most of us, people easily forgotten or ignored. For them the Alliance is a reason to hope.”

Alan Neely, one of the leading missiologists of our time, is right on all counts. The Alliance’s approach to mission is worthy of the times in which we live and render our service. Yet to date we have been woefully inadequate in addressing the crying needs of a hurting world. Many potential mission partners are waiting in the wings. If we had the resources to do so, virtually overnight we could move to establish partnerships with Baptist bodies on every continent, groups not being supported by any other Baptist group. Their number will only increase.

For now, my appeal is that you include the Alliance Mission Offering in the good causes you will support with a year-end gift. Let me ask you further to make sure your gift arrives here in the Alliance office *before Dec. 31*. By action of our board of directors, only gifts actually received by year’s end will be distributed to our 2002 Mission Offering recipients. For their sake and our own, please respond generously.



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director

Reclaiming Christmas at Jeff Street

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friends; a rationale for a different Christmas tradition; a description of the project where the money will go; an outline of biblical teaching on poverty and wealth; and several sayings, cartoons and reflections about Christmas.

Even with our relatively small congregation, we have managed to accumulate more than \$2000 each year. This becomes money well-spent in a struggling community rather than a little more garbage at the dump here. The Reclaiming Christmas Project has also restored to us some

of the joy of the season in ways Tickle Me Elmo never could.

If you would like information on the Reclaiming Christmas Project, you may write Jeff Street Baptist Community at Liberty, 800 E. Liberty St., Louisville, KY 40204.

November 2002

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In the orientation session for new board members and again to the entire board at our September board meeting, I said that it is truly an exciting time to be a board member of the Alliance of Baptists. Then I hurried to say that every time in the Alliance's brief 15-year history has been an exciting time to be on the Alliance board.

Over the years our board of directors has dealt with so many cutting-edge issues with such insight and courage. It has truly been a prophetic voice within the Alliance and within the greater Christian community.

But back to my original point. It really is an exciting time to be on the board of the Alliance. The word *exciting*, though, really doesn't do justice to the time. Other more

REFLECTIONS ON A TIME



by Craig Henry, President
Monroe, LA

appropriate words may be *historic, critical, visionary*. And those words, too, apply equally to all previous times.

Well, back to the present time again—an exciting, historic, critical and visionary time. Why do I say this? I say it because we are again being called to stretch, to reach, to press in order to “carry the Alliance into the future and the new challenges we face” to use Welton Gaddy's words. As you no doubt have

read by now the Alliance is attempting to embark on the development of a strategic plan to help guide us for the next five years. As you read this issue of *connections*, we are working to find funding outside the operating budget for this process.

A consultant will be engaged to help us. Ultimately it will be the responsibility of the board of directors to wrestle with information and recommendations from the consultant as we chart a course for our immediate future.

This process will likely take the next year or more. As we proceed, please keep the Alliance leadership in your prayers. Pray that we will be found faithful to this time—this exciting, historic, critical, visionary time.

2003 CONVOCATION

April 24-26

Vienna Baptist
Church Vienna, Virginia

Health in God's Garden ... Hope in God's Children

focusing on the
environment

Jay McDaniel
Keynote Speaker

Elizabeth Barnes
Covenant Address



Individuals who would like to support the work of the Alliance of Baptists are invited to become members of the Alliance at any time simply by sending a check to the Alliance office at the address at the top of this page. Annual membership dues are \$40 for individuals; \$60 for families; \$125 for sustaining memberships; and \$20 for students and others with low income.