

Board member George Sims

Understanding ecumenism from a Jesuit college in Alabama

Alliance board member George Sims understands ecumenism from a standpoint most of us don't.

George is the associate vice president for academic affairs at Spring Hill College, a Jesuit school in Mobile, AL. He has general responsibilities for supporting the work of the provost as she leads the academic programs of the college, and specific responsibility for accreditation, assessment of student learning, and institutional research.

George has been a part of the Alliance as a congregational member since 1990 when he was a member of Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville, TN. "We had a front-row seat for most of the events that gave rise to the Alliance," he said. He has been an individual member for several years, and is completing his third year as a member of the Board of

Directors.

"I agreed to serve as a member of the Alliance board because I wanted to make whatever small contributions I could to the maintenance of the organizational structure that is committed to upholding Baptist principles," he said. "I serve on the board as part of my effort to find where God is at work in the world and join in that work."

"At Spring Hill, I am finding that there is a strong affinity between the purposes that the Alliance of Baptists embraces and the mission of the college, a mission rooted in the 450-year tradition of Jesuit education," he said.

There are three Jesuit concepts that illustrate this affinity, he said. "First, Jesuit education insists on cura

personalis, which means concern for the individual person. We — Jesuit colleges and Alliance Baptists — recognize the worth and dignity of every person and, as a consequence, we care for the formation (or development) of every person within the context of the human community."

"Second, Jesuit education focuses on 'education in the service of the faith that does justice.' Student learning has purpose as it prepares women and men to build relationships of trust and to work for reconciliation and peace."

"Third, Jesuit education has a particular concern for the poor. We demonstrate this, in one sense, by extending opportunities for education to everyone, regardless of the ability to pay. We demonstrate it, in another sense, (continued on page 2)

George Sims grew up in Alabama. His father was a Southern Baptist pastor who served a series of congregations during the years he was in school. "During my high school years, we lived in Selma, AL," he said. "Those were the years of the civil rights movement and school integration. As a high school student, I was doing the normal student things: playing in the school band, helping organize the prom, working on the yearbook staff, etc. And in the context of the racial transformations of the time, these were my first experiences with cross-cultural communication and local peacemaking."

George earned his undergraduate degree from Samford University; and went to graduate school at Emory where he earned a Ph.D. in history focusing on the history of the American South. "I was fortunate to study with Dan Carter, whose scholarship on race relations and politics in the 20th century South were almost as inspired as his personal advocacy of civil rights in South Carolina and Georgia," he said.



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Registration form on back page.

by seeking to understand and alleviate the forces that leave many people without material resources and without hope.”

Before moving to Mobile, George was on the staff of Muskingum College in Ohio. He was a member of First Baptist Church of Granville, which he said he encouraged to become an Alliance-affiliated congregation.

George and his wife Ellen are members of Hillcrest Baptist Church in Mobile. “It’s not a congregational member of the Alliance,yet,” he said.

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ALLIANCE

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2 Corinthians 5:18





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