

Connections

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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.

Alan Neely died May 14. His prophetic vision for what the Alliance of Baptists could be and could mean will continue to be lived out in the mission and ministries he was instrumental in establishing.

“Alan saw more clearly than any of the founders the vision of being an alternative Baptist network, and he had major influence on the shaping of our covenant,” said long-time friend

and Alliance co-founder Mahan Siler. “Alan was proud of what was being done, but always felt there was more. He always challenged us to be much more. He was aware of our limits and our mistakes. He never idealized the Alliance, and always challenged us to become more mature, broader, more effective.”

“Alan was a horizon person with a



Alliance founder Alan Neely at the 10th Anniversary Convocation at Meredith College in Raleigh, NC, in 1997. Alan died May 14, 2003.

Alan Neely: “It is not finished”

prophetic voice,” said former Alliance president Anne Thomas Neil. “He lived beyond where most of us are, challenging us to move forward.”

“Alan had a vision that was global,” Neil said. “He was not just interested in us meeting our own immediate needs. He was so concerned about social and economic justice, the oppressed.”

Alan was born Nov. 3, 1928, in Little Rock, AR, and was reared in

Fort Worth, TX. He earned a degree in English from Baylor University in Waco, TX, a Ph.D. in philosophy of religion from Southwestern Seminary and a Ph.D. in Latin American studies from The American University in Washington, DC.

Alan’s life as a young Baptist pastor took him to churches in Texas, Virginia, and Colorado. In 1963, the Foreign Mission

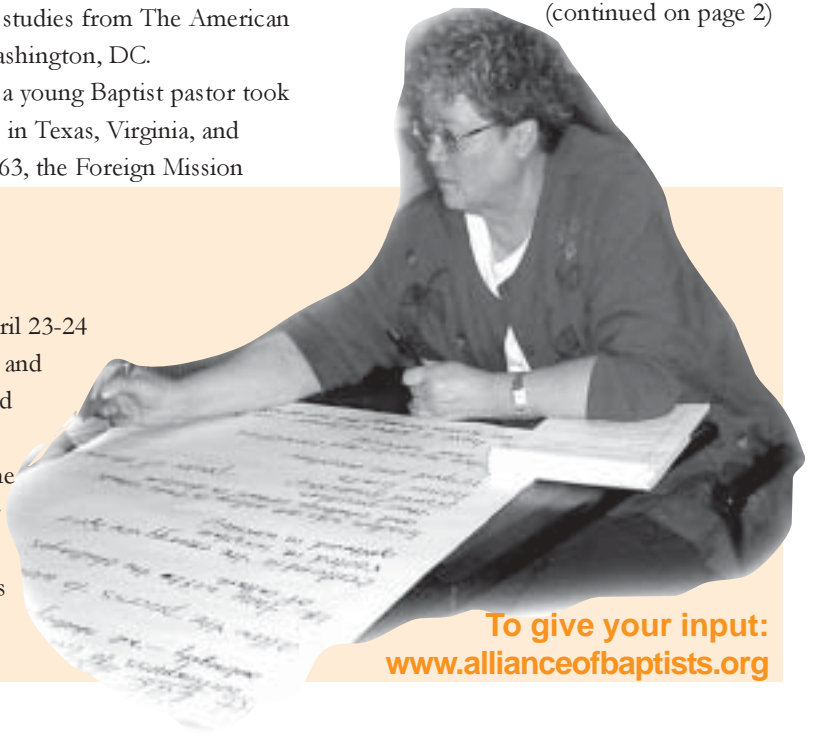
Board of the Southern Baptist Convention appointed Alan and his wife Virginia as missionary teachers in the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali, Colombia, where they served from 1963-1976. Their work in church planting and development became the basis for a genuine respect for people of different religious backgrounds and a lifelong commitment to building relationships with people of different cultures.

When the Neelys returned to North Carolina from Colombia in 1976, Alan became a member of the faculty at Southeastern Seminary where he was professor of missions. In 1988 he was named to the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary where he taught ecumenics and mission until his retirement in 1996, when he and Virginia returned to Raleigh.

(continued on page 2)

What’s working?

Alliance board members spent much of the time at the April 23-24 meeting working on strategic planning issues. Daniel Pryfogle and other associates of Signal Hill, a consulting firm in Raleigh, led the discussions which focused on “appreciative inquiry.” The questions posed to board members were what is working in the Alliance and among our churches, and what are our hopes for the future. Here, board member Anne Charles-Craft makes notes during a small group discussion that focused on answers to those questions. Input from all Alliance members is being sought as the strategic planning process moves forward.



To give your input:
www.allianceofbaptists.org

Through April 30

2003 Operating Budget

Needs: \$ 100,184

Receipts: \$ 84,900

2003 Mission Offering

Goal: \$ 111,000

Receipts: \$ 35,300

A gift for Glendale

Alliance board member Sylvia Campbell, right, commissioned a painting for Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville. The painting, by Alliance member and artist Peggy Travis, is of Glendale's partner church in Santa Clara, Cuba. It was painted from photos taken during a recent trip to Cuba. Another Alliance board member, David Gooch, accepted the painting on behalf of Glendale



Alan Neely (continued from page 1)

Alan devoted his retirement years to continued learning, writing, teaching, and building a community of understanding among people of different faiths. In addition to his work in organizing the Alliance of Baptists, his passion for creating a community among different faiths led him to become active in the Interfaith Alliance of Wake County. He served for several years on the boards of

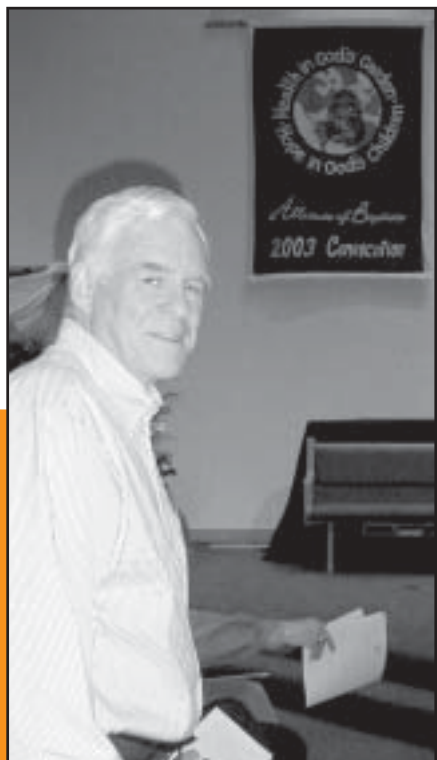
the Interfaith Alliance and the Martin Luther King, Jr. Resource Center in Raleigh. He was a member at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church.

"Although no one is indispensable, a few people are irreplaceable. Alan was one of these," said Alliance Associate Director Jeanette Holt.

"He was working to the end to make sure his unfinished projects would be

finished, and one of the things was the history of the Alliance," Siler said. "Alan had told me he wasn't so afraid of death, but he had things he wanted to do, and he wanted on his tombstone, 'It is not finished.' But even if he lived another 10 years, Alan would have never been finished because his vision was so broad."

"It is a great loss that he won't finish his work," Neil said, "but Alan was always a part of a community, a team, and his work will be finished by others in their own way."



Mahan Siler of North Carolina was chair of the task group that organized the 2003 Convocation and Annual Meeting April 24-26 at Vienna Baptist Church in Vienna, VA.

Lockwood called to Connecticut church

Alliance founder **Susan Lockwood** has been called and installed as the new minister of the parish at Noank Baptist Church, Noank, CT. A former pastor of what then was Cornell Baptist Church in Chicago, Susan most recently has been an interim pastor in American Baptist-affiliated congregations.



Lockwood

David Waugh, pastor of Metro Baptist Church in New York City, has just completed a three-week sabbatic leave in Scotland and France. His activities included a creative writing and conservation wilderness camp on the Isle of Mull, an Amnesty International-led conference with the Iona Community on the Isle of Iona, and a stay with the Taizé community in France. Focus of the leave was on urban spirituality. David recently completed a term on the

Alliance board of directors, which he served as chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee.

Former Alliance board member **Diane Eubanks Hill** is the new associate minister for adults at Watt Street Baptist Church, Durham, NC. For the past 11 years, she has been a part-time minister at Watts Street, working with children and their families.

Brian Dixon is the new pastor of the Alliance-affiliated **Dolores Street Baptist Church** in San Francisco. In last month's issue of *connections*, we reported incorrectly that Brian Graves had been called to Dolores Street. We regret the error.

happenings The Baptist Joint Committee on Public

Affairs is seeking a staff member to assist the General Counsel in matters before Congress and the courts. Duties include research, monitoring legislation and advocacy. Send resume and cover letter to BJC Personnel at bjcpa@bcjpa.org or fax to (202) 544-2094.

A giant has fallen

Alan Neely was not physically gigantic. Far from it, his body had failed him for years. During his 50s, doctors told him his failing lungs wouldn't see him past his early 60s. That he proved the prognosis wrong by living more than a decade longer than expected is testimony to the sheer power of his will. And to the grace of God.

Alan was an intellectual giant. Early in his career as a missionary teacher at the International Baptist Theological Seminary in Cali, Colombia, he learned about liberation theology from its principal South American exponents. Over time he became Baptists' preeminent interpreter of liberation theology from a distinctively Christian perspective. He understood the similarities and differences between the Christian and Marxist versions of liberation and articulated them clearly.

As professor at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, he introduced generations of students to the larger mission of the church. His passion for the whole of the gospel was contagious. He held in perfect balance the perpetual tension between individual salvation and the redemption of societies. Thus he led the founders of the Alliance of Baptists to commit themselves and all the rest of us who were to follow to "the proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the calling of God to all peoples to repentance and faith, reconciliation and hope, social and economic justice."

After leaving Southeastern, Alan became the Luce Professor of Ecumenics and Mission at Princeton Theological Seminary. Only then did many of us come to realize what the scholarly community knew: He truly was a world-class missiologist/theologian. In great demand as a lecturer in this country and abroad, he was able to accept only a small fraction of the invitations he received because

of the rare disease that attacked his lungs. Yet even beyond his retirement from Princeton, he continued to realize his vocation as a teacher as an adjunctive professor at Duke Divinity School.

Although the endowed chair he occupied at Princeton might have ensconced him comfortably for the rest of his career, Alan was anything but comfortable. On the contrary, he demonstrated constant concern for the faculty colleagues he had left behind at Southeastern. Visibly agitated, he once told me he was utterly convinced the enormous pressure they had been subjected to had killed some and left others with disabling illnesses. Tirelessly, he sought to help those who survived into the next phase of their teaching careers or into other ministries. One after another of these, his dearest friends, attest to this. All of them have called him blessed.

And so do all of us in the Alliance. No one was more responsible for setting the Alliance of Baptists on the course we have taken. Among the founders, none was more prescient about what was happening in Baptist life or more determined to do something about it. He was not guilty of the charge levied against him by some of giving up too soon on the Southern Baptist Convention. The truth is, no one fought harder to

salvage it. Yet having lost that battle, he forged ahead to meet directly the challenges its demise presented. Exhibit A was his key role in the creation of the Alliance-founded Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.

As Alan Neely's successor with the Alliance, I testify to the following: No one has enjoyed a better predecessor. He was always available yet never intrusive. His counsel was invariably sound and wise. He was unfailingly a true friend. Along with many others, I celebrate Alan's life and mourn his death.

He was a giant among us.

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director



Jay McDaniel, professor of religion at Hendrix College in Conway, AR, was the keynote speaker at the 2003 Convocation.

STATEMENTS of concern

At the annual meeting on April 25, Alliance members adopted several important statements, some new, some revisions or updates of previous statements.

A new statement on Muslim-Christian relations was brought to the floor by David Waugh, chair of the Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee which drafted the statement.

The Ecumenical and Interfaith Relations Committee also recommended and the body approved an ecumenical agreement among the Alliance of Baptists, United

Church of Christ and Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Minor revisions were also made to the 1995 statement on Jewish-Christian relations that brought it more up to date.

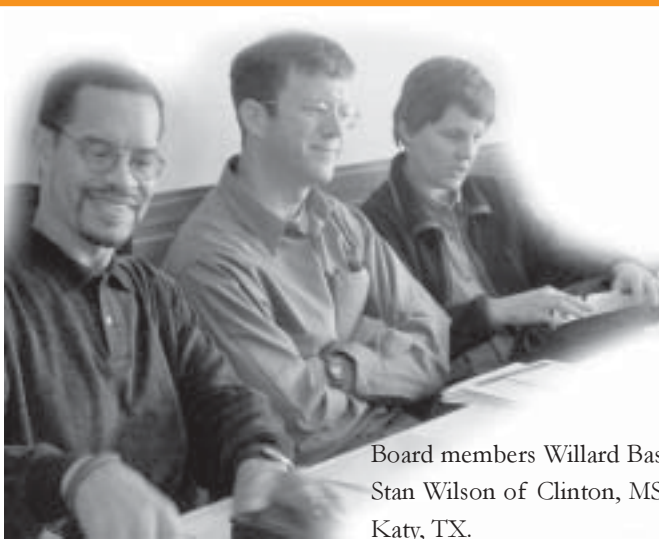
As has been customary the past several years, the body also adopted a statement on Cuba prepared by Executive Director Stan Hasteley.

The full texts of these statements are available on the Alliance website, www.allianceofbaptists.org.

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Board members Willard Bass of Winston-Salem, NC, Stan Wilson of Clinton, MS, and Marjorie Latham of Katy, TX.

2003 CONVOCATION



Pat Hielscher of Apex, NC, and a member at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh was one of the participants in the Convocation.



Convocation Task Group member Cathy Tamsburg and host pastor Jamie Munro.



Elizabeth Barnes, retired professor of theology and ethics at BTSR, brought this year's Covenant Address.

Several young people from Calvary Baptist Church in Washington participated in the Youth Convocation, organized by board member Tim Dean.