

connections

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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.



The Saturday night session of the Convocation commemorated the founding of the Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond by the Alliance 10 years ago. BTSR President Tom Graves was one of several speakers.

Nancy Ammerman, *professor of sociology of religion, Hartford Seminary, Hartford, CT.*

Rediscovering that we need democratic, voluntary, communities of faith, not just faithful individuals, is part of what it will mean for us to rediscover a priesthood of all believers. But how on earth are those voluntary communities to be connected with one another? For much of

this century, we have been more bureaucratic than Baptist in our means of cooperation. We have combined a modern, hierarchical, bureaucratic organizational system with ironic rhetoric about "local autonomy." It was a rhetoric, of course, that had little basis in reality. As we face a new era, however, we have the opportunity to reconnect the rhetoric

of local autonomy with the realities of organizational life. Connection need no longer mean either the independently owned local franchise of the SBC or the radically independent "tub on its own bottom." That either-or dichotomy can be replaced by a both-and system of voluntary affiliations. Local bodies of believers that know their need for connection can construct webs of affiliation that enhance and sustain their identity and their ability to do the work of the gospel in the world.

**board
meeting**

The Board of Directors of the Alliance of Baptists met prior to the Convocation. A report from that meeting will be in next month's *connections*.

Nearly 600 people attended the 1999 Convocation held at Northminster Baptist Church and Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond March 12-14. Presented in this issue are excerpts from the remarks of the principal speakers.

Phyllis Tribble, *associate dean and professor of biblical studies, Wake Forest University Divinity School, Winston-Salem, NC*

During the years since I first found myself at the boundary of feminism and faith and sought a blessing from this difficult, dangerous, and persistent book (the Bible), many things have happened in the world, in the life of our nation, our denomination, and our lives to exacerbate the problem for all who love the Bible, but not uncritically; for all who love the Bible, but find it being used against us or being used against others. More than ever, this book now occupies a central role in the so-called cultural and political wars of our time. Take any issue tearing apart our nation or our churches and you will find the Bible being elicited to support, even define, what a given group deems right or wrong.... In these wars of words and deeds the Bible has become captive, indeed it is a double captive, to the self-righteous promotions of the thumpers and bashers. But subversively, the Bible itself undercuts captivity to simplistic readings and native assumptions. Those of us who cannot join, who refuse to join, either the thumpers or the bashers are called upon to engage the text in more excellent ways – to free it and ourselves from double bondage.



President Welton Gaddy, left, announced that Executive Director Stan Hasty and Associate Director Jeanette Holt would each receive a gift of \$1,000 in recognition of their 10 years of service to the Alliance.

Metro Baptist Church in New York City is the most recent congregation to affiliate with the Alliance. Alliance board member David Waugh is pastor.

Dallas Stallings has been called as pastor of Haymarket Baptist Church in Haymarket, VA. Dallas has served the church for more than two years as interim pastor.

Highland Park Baptist Church in Austin, TX, voted on March 3 to withdraw from the Southern Baptist Convention.

Alliance member and veteran educator **William Hendricks** has announced he will retire at the end of August as director of the Baptist Studies Program at Texas Christian University's Brite Divinity School. Named to the post four years ago, Hendricks is also lecturer in theology at the Fort Worth, TX, institution, affiliated with the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). During a career spanning nearly four decades, he also has taught at Southern, Southwestern and Golden Gate seminaries.

Alliance member and supporter **Edwin S. Gaustad** is author of a highly recommended new book, *Church and State in America*, the latest in the "Religion in American Life" series from Oxford University Press. One of this century's foremost historians of American religion,

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Gaustad's latest work receives high praise from the Baptist Joint Committee's James M. Dunn, who wrote in his *Report from the Capital* column: "The urgent need for such a quality resource cries out. Writing, televising and peddling revisionist history has become a growth industry.... There's a market for history as folks wish it were."

Northside Drive Baptist Church in Atlanta, an Alliance-affiliated congregation, is accepting résumés for a full-time minister of Christian education/associate pastor. Candidates must be seminary graduates with experience as Christian educators in a

church setting and have strong communications skills in working with a broad range of members. The person called will be expected to assist in pastoral ministries and worship. Résumés should be sent to: Search Committee; Northside Drive Baptist Church; 3100 Northside Drive NW, Atlanta GA 30305.

Shane and **Christy McMillin-Goodwin** of Rock Hill, SC, are the parents of a new baby daughter, Paige Laurel, born February 15. Christy has recently completed a term on the Board of Directors of the Alliance.

happenings

Genie Dyer, left, of Waco, TX, was the chair of the Convocation Committee this year. She is shown here with Associate Director Jeanette Holt, who provided staff assistance to the committee.



First Baptist Church of Greenville, SC, has renewed its partnership with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba for another three years. In doing so, it announced a gift of \$3,000 to underwrite 1999 expenses of 18 theology students in the Fraternity. Five of these are enrolled in the Protestant Theological Seminary in Matanzas, while the other 13 pursue degrees from the Biblical University of Costa Rica.

cuba

Woodbrook Baptist Church of Baltimore has announced its intention to enter into a partnership with the Fraternity. Seven Woodbrook members, led by Pastor John Ewing Roberts, made an initial trip to the Caribbean island last November. Woodbrook's missions committee is exploring a variety of ministries the church's members might undertake in future visits.

Eighteen members of **Pullen Memorial Baptist Church** in Raleigh, NC, will travel to Matanzas, Cuba, May 17-26, to participate in the centennial celebration of Pullen's sister congregation, First Baptist Church of Matanzas, one of the oldest Baptist congregations on the island. Pullen was the first Alliance-affiliated church to enter into a partnership with a Fraternity congregation.

Nine members of **Trinity Baptist Church** in Seneca, SC, will visit its sister congregation in Guanajay, province of Havana, June 5-12. Trinity's pastor, Bob Ferguson, visited the Cuban congregation in November 1997. Since then, Trinity has been organizing itself for the new partnership, the 23rd such relationship jointly sponsored by the Fraternity and the Alliance.

Ten years ago the Alliance conducted what turned out to be an historic debate over a report brought by the Theological Education Committee. It was an unexpectedly broad-ranging report that concluded with the ambitious recommendation that the Alliance move deliberately to explore creation of a new school of theology in Richmond, VA.

What became a few years later Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond represented but the beginning of a broad trend in graduate theological education among Baptists that continues to unfold. As ambitious as it was even to think of starting this new school, other initiatives that followed have been nearly as breathtaking. Yes, BTSR was first. Yet consider all the other new ventures in theological education among progressively inclined Baptists that have followed — a Baptist House of Studies at Duke Divinity

School; Baptist studies programs at Candler School of Theology at Emory University, Brite Divinity School at Texas Christian University, and Wesley Theological Seminary at American University — each of which the Alliance has helped get off the ground.

But there's been so much more on the theological education front. Following the Alliance's decisive move to create what became BTSR, we've witnessed the formation of new seminaries or schools of theology at Mercer University, Baylor University, Hardin-Simmons University, Campbell University, Gardner-Webb University and Wake Forest University. And in a particularly sweet twist of irony, we've witnessed the virtual rebirth of Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, KS, at the very time a cross-town school created by Southern Baptists to combat alleged liberalism in the North — a school that arguably never had a compelling reason for being — has fallen into decline and disrepute.

Consider as well that just as the creation of the Alliance had much to do with the looming crisis in theological education among Southern Baptists, so it is that every one of the overseas partnerships we have forged to date has had to do with crises in theological education in those places and the consequent imperative of finding new ways to educate clergy for service in the churches...

What we are witnessing today is but the beginning of one of

the most significant trends in Baptist life around the world in our time. Once more, as they have done so often throughout their history, Baptists are acting out of an historic disposition to schizophrenia over the value - or absence thereof — of theological education itself. Baptists in this country, and particularly Baptists in the South, have debated the matter seemingly continuously and are not about to stop...

Given this reality, combined with our early commitment, in the words of the fifth principle of the Alliance Covenant, to "theological education in congregations, colleges, and seminaries characterized by reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship," I am convinced we will have significant opportunities, in this country and beyond, to continue encouraging and supporting new initiatives in theological education....

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director

(This month's column consists of excerpts from the "State of the Alliance" address, delivered to the membership convened in annual meeting March 13 in Richmond, VA.)

Welton Gaddy, executive director of The Interfaith Alliance in Washington, DC, and president of the Alliance of Baptists

How can a congregation function as a church if that congregation does not know the meaning of "church?" A social gathering, regardless of the nobility of its intentions, cannot be expected to serve

as a community of grace not knowing the wild forgiveness and radical inclusiveness of grace. A fellowship of believers will not live as a prophetic and redemptive presence in the world as long it thinks its calling is to draw people into a sanctuary, involve them in institutional programs, and ask them to give money as they repeat a doctrinal creed. No amount of admonition and encouragement can cause people to live as a church if those people don't know what it means to be church. Think theologically!

The Alliance of Baptists must always be a prod to theological thought, an advocate for critical biblical studies, a supporter of scholarly theological research, and a leader in theological

instruction. We must help people bring faith to bear on issues such as the nature of creation, political action, work, human sexuality, the challenge of suffering, and the meaning of death. We are off to a good start.



military endorsement

The Board of Directors and the members attending the Annual Meeting on March 13 approved the Alliance as an endorsing body for military chaplains, with the understanding we will engage in an ongoing study of its church-state and peace and justice implications. The proposal had come from the Endorsing Committee that had been authorized last September to endorse chaplains serving in other settings. Two requests for military endorsement have been received.

Budget Gifts YTD:

Operating Income: \$71,096
Budget Needs: \$58,908

Bridges of Hope YTD:

Goal: \$80,000
Receipts: \$13,727

Cuba Grant:

Challenge: \$23,700
Receipts: \$13,308

Needing room to expand is the common element tying Emmaus House in Raleigh with the Oakhurst Recovery Program in Atlanta this spring. Both of these recipients of Alliance Mission Offering funds provide homes for men who are recovering from substance abuse.

The board of directors of Emmaus House has been looking for a site to open a second home for more than a year. High real estate prices combined with inadequate public transportation have thus far made the search futile, said board member Brooks Wicker.

Six or seven men live in a rooming house atmosphere at Emmaus House under rigid rules that are designed to help them recover from their dependency. They all work. No alcohol or drugs are allowed on site. No one is allowed to come home drunk or under the influence of drugs. They have tasks assigned them around the house that they must do.

In return for following these rules, Wicker said, the men are provided the subsidized housing and meals, giving them the opportunity to save their money. They also learn to live with other people, an

important aspect of their being able to return to live with their wives and children.

Emmaus House II would have less stringent rules but still offer the men some protection from outside influences that could cause them to revert to their old behavior, Wicker said.

This year's Alliance grant to Emmaus House is \$1,500, which is being used for general operating expenses. "Because of this money, we can continue to pay off the mortgage on Emmaus House I so that when we do find another house, we could mortgage two properties if necessary," Wicker said.

The Oakhurst Recovery Program in Atlanta is about to sign a renovation contract on a building that will allow it to expand by 40 percent, moving from serving 10 men to 14. Mayo Funderburg, the

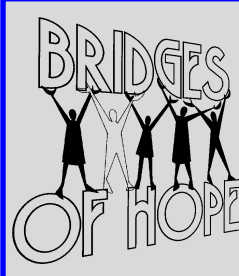
director, hopes the work will be complete by July.

Oakhurst offers a long-term approach to addiction recovery that is individualized for each man, Funderburg said. "For example, a man with limited reading skills would receive individual literacy tutoring, would study recovery materials on tape instead of in a book, and would complete his work on tape," he said.

Each participant is paired with a staff member who guides him through his program. There are 12 staff members — only two are paid — and seven of them are graduates of the program themselves, including Funderburg. "A person who has been through this himself is better able to help someone else," he said.

Oakhurst is also planning to hire a professional counselor who can provide one-on-one counseling for the men to better prepare them to live on their own.

The Alliance is providing \$3,000 to Oakhurst this year, which will go toward the food budget. "The value of this gift to us can't be overstated," said Funderburg. "Obviously food is essential and we try to provide healthy meals. The Alliance funding is a great help."



Emmaus House:
\$1,500

Oakhurst:
\$3,000

new publications from the alliance

Three new documents are available from the Alliance office. *Pursuing Justice: A Social Justice Curriculum for Churches*, written by board member Cathy Tamsburg, is available by mail for \$20. Alliance founder Alan Neely has written a new book, *A New Call to Mission: Help for Perplexed Churches*, which presents an explanation of the theory and policies behind missions through the International Mission Board, the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship, and the Alliance. This book is available by mail also for \$20. Also available is *Care for the Earth: An Invitation to Reflection and Action*, prepared by the Alliance work group on ecology. This publication is free.