

# connections

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.

June 2000

Volume 3 Issue 6

## 1 The embargo should come to an end—now

Once again, the Alliance of Baptists has stepped forward to call on Congress and President Clinton to begin an intentional process to end the embargo against Cuba.

The resolution was adopted at the Annual Meeting April 28 during the 2000 Convocation held at University Baptist Church in Austin, TX.

The resolution reads in part: “The current tragic situation involving Elián González and the death of his mother and countless other Cubans over these years serves to emphasize the urgency of taking action to lift the embargo. The Elián González affair most likely would not have occurred if the embargo did not exist ... The violence of the embargo has lasted too long, hurt too many, and should come to an end — now.”

The resolution was introduced by Jim Strickland of Florida, AL.

## 2 Death penalty

A second resolution adopted in Austin put the Alliance on record as opposing the death penalty. It calls on legislators to abolish the death penalty, jurors to resist its use, governors to commute death sentences and churches to actively pursue ministries that promote healing and justice for victims of crime, while opposing “pseudo-solutions,” such as the death penalty, which perpetuate violence, hatred and revenge.



Alliance president C. Welton Gaddy presenting the BJCPA resolution to J. Brent Walker.

## 3 BJCPA

The Alliance plans its meeting theme each year around one of the principles in the Covenant or Mission Statement. This year's meeting focused on a free church in a free state and the opposition to any effort either by church or state to use the other for its own purposes. So, in keeping with the theme, a third resolution commended the work of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs: “Its reputation as a courageous voice for our nation's first freedom has been well-earned through careful research, trustworthy communication and diligent work.”



## 4 Church/State separation

This year's Convocation featured a panel discussion on contemporary issues in church/state separation. Samantha Smoot, at the microphone in the photo above, Executive Director of the Texas Freedom Network in Austin, was one of the participants. Others, from left, were J. Brent Walker, Executive Director of the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs; Barry Lynn, Executive Director of Americans United for Separation of Church and State; and C. Welton Gaddy, Executive Director of the Interfaith Alliance. Susan Paynter of Austin, also pictured, was the moderator of the discussion.

*364 people registered for the 14th Annual Convocation of the Alliance of Baptists April 27-29 in Austin.*

**C**ongregations that have voted recently to be affiliated with the Alliance include Church of the Savior, Roswell, GA, where Chris Graham is pastor; and Lakeshore Avenue Baptist Church, Oakland, CA, where Jim Hopkins is pastor.

happenings

**Northminster Church** of Monroe, LA, has called Joann Juett, as associate pastor. She served previously as an associate at Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC.

Alliance affiliate **Vienna Baptist Church**, Vienna, VA, has called James Munro as its new pastor. Vienna Baptist hosted the Alliance Convocation in 1995.

**Williamsburg Baptist Church**, Williamsburg, VA, has called James B. Johnson III as its new pastor, effective June 18. He is a former pastor of Grace Baptist Church, Richmond, VA, which hosted the 1991 Alliance convocation.

**First Baptist Church, Washington**, DC, has called Jim Somerville as its new pastor, effective July 9. He currently is

2001 ALLIANCE MISSION OFFERING GRANTS

Applications for the 2001 Alliance of Baptists Mission Offering will be received until Aug. 1. They then will be forwarded to the Alliance Missions Committee for review and recommendation to the Board of Directors for approval during its Sept. 21-23 meeting. Guidelines and application forms for new projects are available upon request from the Alliance office.

Current grant recipients will be sent application forms for the 2001 Offering along with the first distribution of funds from the 2000 Offering. Except for our three overseas partners, all recipients are required to apply for grants on an annual basis.

1999 BRIDGES OF HOPE OVERAGE ALLOCATED

Because of the generosity of Alliance members during 1999, the Mission Offering goal of \$85,000 was exceeded by \$7,122. The Alliance board has voted to distribute that overage to three causes:

1. Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe: \$2,622
2. Liberia Baptist Missionary and Educational Convention: \$2,500
3. Hispanic missions project, Central Baptist Church, Newnan, GA: \$2,000

pastor of Wingate Baptist Church, Wingate, NC. Alliance Executive Director Stan Hasteley was chair of the pastor search team that recommended Somerville. The Alliance is housed, free of charge, at First Baptist Washington.

Former Alliance board member **Flynn Harrell** of Columbia, SC, has been appointed by Governor Jim Hodges and confirmed by the General Assembly for a five-year term on the South Carolina Ethics Commission.

The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America has employed American Baptist minister **Jane Esdale** as its new development director. She is a graduate of Colgate Rochester Divinity School.



The Alliance-affiliated Church of the Savior in Cedar Park, TX, celebrated its 15th anniversary April 30, the day following the Austin Convocation. Among Alliance people leading in worship were Pastor Mary Zimmer, former Pastor Joe Phelps, former Associate Pastor Jackie Saxon and Alliance Associate Director Jeanette Holt.

**AB** The Alliance of Baptists  
1328 16th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20036

Executive Director: Stan Hasteley  
Associate Director: Jeanette Holt  
(202) 745-7609 Fax: (202) 745-0023  
AllianceofBaptists@compuserve.com  
www.AllianceofBaptists.org

Send information for newsletter to:  
Sue Harper Poss,  
P.O. Box 25461, Greenville, SC 29616  
(864)458-7503 Fax: (864) 458-9624  
SuePoss@compuserve.com

**C U B A**

**E**ight members of Northminster Church in Monroe, LA, will visit their sister congregation Iglesia Bautista Enmanuel in Ciego de Avila, June 6-13. Several members of Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville, including pastor and former Alliance board member Mark Caldwell and Alliance Secretary David Gooch, will visit Cuba in July in anticipation of establishing a church partnership. Executive Director Stan Hasteley will represent the Alliance at a meeting of the General Council of the Baptist World Alliance in Havana July 3-9. Xiomara Díaz, a pastor in Yaguajay, participated in the ordination of Rebeca Montemayor in Mexico City in March. Rebeca, co-pastor of Shalom Baptist Church and dean of the ecumenical consortium of seminaries in Mexico City, is the first Baptist woman to be ordained in Mexico. Ormara Noya from Ciego de Avila has been selected as vice-president of the Council of Churches of Cuba from the provinces of Ciego de Avila, Camagüey, and Sancti Spiritus.

If we are to keep bright freedom's holy light, it will only be if we remind ourselves of the fierce battle that raged during the colonial period of our nation's history over the proper relationship between church and state. The debate raging today is essentially the same one our forebears engaged in for more than two centuries before finally ensuring that nothing less than the institutional separation of church and state would suffice. That struggle began in 1607 with the arrival of the first English settlers in Jamestown, VA, and was not rewarded with final success until 1833, when Massachusetts at last gave up its state church.

The historical record demonstrates decisively that the framers of the Constitution knew precisely what they were doing and intended nothing less than the institutional separation of church and state by adopting the language that has served us so well ever since: "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion...."

In the conclusion of his concise and incisive work *Revolution Within the Revolution* (William B. Eerdmans, 1990), Professor William R. Estep wrote:

*That which made the American Revolution both unique and lasting was the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Basic to all else that follows in the Bill of Rights is the First Amendment, which was the result of a revolution within the Revolution sparked by the 'twice born.' At every point in the struggle for religious freedom in the colonies, the Baptists led the way. They and those who joined them in the final phase of the battle shaped a nation of freedom. In no other country have Christianity and Judaism enjoyed such growth and influence so remarkably free from religious strife.... It would be tragic indeed if present-day evangelicals of the New Right or the mainline denominations would seek to jettison the First Amendment out of a fear of freedom.*

The next time you visit the magnificent Capitol building in Washington, find the statue of our Baptist ancestor Roger Williams of Rhode Island. When you do, you'll note that the sculptor

rendered Williams holding under one arm the treatise that was his life's theme, Soul Liberty. That is our first freedom as citizens of the United States of America. Because of it we are free to believe as we choose or not to believe at all. We are free to exercise faith so long as we don't intrude on the freedom of others.

Our ancestors — Protestants, Catholics, Jews, and those of other faiths and of no faith — did not stumble upon this priceless principle. No, they came to a deliberate determination that the new nation would avoid, inasmuch as they could see to it, the tragic intermingling of church and state that had plagued the western

world since the fourth-century Roman emperor Constantine first declared their fateful union.

So they determined there would be religious freedom in this new nation, a freedom that hopefully would deter religious warfare. In great wisdom but against all previous experience in the annals of statecraft they put a healthy distance between church and state, not to prevent the two from engaging one another, but to ensure the essential integrity of both.

Because of their daring vision, the fruits of this bold experiment in religious freedom over the past two centuries have been unprecedented in the history of the world. We have had no religious wars in the United States. Sectarian strife has been kept to a minimum. And as religion has flourished in the fertile soil of this free land ... so too should

our respect for the constitutional principles that have nourished that freedom grow ever stronger.

We should revel in, not recoil from or revile, our first freedom. It is based, after all, on the first axiom of true religion — that the conscience is free. As Christians, quite apart from the historical record of the United States, let us ask why it is that those who advocate a form of theocracy never bother to quote Jesus himself on the matter. No one has put it better or more succinctly than he: "Give therefore to the emperor the things that are the emperor's, and to God the things that are God's." (Mt. 22:21, NRSV)

**perspectives**



*By Stan Hasteley  
Executive Director*

This month's column consists of excerpts from the annual State-of-the-Alliance address, delivered April 28 during the Austin Convocation.

Outgoing Vice President Genie Dyer, a lecturer in the Department of Sociology at Baylor University in Waco, TX.



Convocation Chair Kyle Childress, pastor of Austin Heights Baptist Church in Nacogdoches, TX.



**2001 Convocation**  
**Oakhurst Baptist Church**  
**Decatur, GA**  
**(Atlanta Area)**  
**April 20-22**

**2000 Operating Budget**

Needs: \$102,055  
Receipts: \$108,645

**2000 Mission Offering**

Goal: \$85,250  
Receipts: \$24,531

June 2000

**Live LIFE on the boundary**



“I see the Alliance of Baptists as the best example of a constitutional, organized expression of the historic Baptist tradition of church-state separation. The Alliance of Baptists acts more like Baptists act than anyone else I see bearing that name.”

Gaddy challenged the group to “live life on the boundary” between the secular and sacred realms.

**OUT-TAKES FROM REMARKS BY OUTGOING PRESIDENT C. WELTON GADDY**

**OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS**

President: Paula Clayton Dempsey, Mars Hill, NC

Vice President: Craig Henry, Monroe LA

Secretary: David Gooch, Nashville TN

**Board of Directors**

*for second 3-year terms, expiring 2003:*

Martha Barr, St. Davids, PA

Bonnie Dixon, Raleigh, NC

Kathy Manis Findley, Little Rock, AR

José Oliveras-Ocasio, Bayamón, PR

Cherie Smith, St. Louis, MO

David Waugh, New York, NY

Cathy Tamsberg, Raleigh, NC

*for new 3-year term, expiring 2003:*

Ginny Brown Daniel, Hagerstown, MD

The next Alliance board meeting will be Sept. 21-23.



Baptist Women in Ministry held its Board of Directors meeting in Austin prior to the Convocation. BWIM also provided the Friday night ice cream fellowship. Shown here are current BWIM president Raye Nell Dyer of Nashville, right, with newly-elected Alliance President Paula Clayton Dempsey, chaplain at Mars Hill College in Mars Hill, NC.

**ALLIANCE BOARD  
A C T I O N S**

The Alliance board of directors met prior to the Convocation and approved these actions:

- 1 Added \$6,500 to the Operating Budget with \$6,000 going to Denominational Relations and \$500 to board committees.
- 2 Voted to explore options for holding a meeting of some kind on the west coast this year.
- 3 Voted to support the work of the BJCPA with a gift of \$1,000 this fiscal year.
- 4 Voted to become a member organization of the National Farm Worker Ministry, including annual support in the amount of \$1,000.