

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.

Ayelén Bosch is a five-year-old girl in Havana, Cuba, in need of a wheelchair. Linda Cook is trying to find her one.

Cook is Executive Director of CrossLink International, a non-profit organization in northern Virginia that provides medicines, medical supplies and equipment, and eyeglasses to persons in need throughout the world. It has been one of the Alliance's *connections* since 1998 when Executive Director Stan Hastey began turning to CrossLink to help meet the myriad of medical needs in Cuba and to a lesser degree in Zimbabwe.

"Based on my 17 trips to Cuba over the past decade, I cannot begin to describe the sheer joy and overwhelming gratitude with which donations from CrossLink International are received there," Hastey said. "The ministry of CrossLink is truly inspired ... and an inspiration."

Most recently, Hastey has looked to CrossLink to find a non-motorized wheelchair for Ayelén, afflicted with a cerebral paralysis that strongly affects her motor skills. Though of normal intelligence, she is unable to walk, and has to rely on others to carry her around.

This latest request for help from the Alliance to CrossLink is one more in a series of projects the two groups have worked on together. "We have averaged three or four projects a year mostly into Cuba, although once I took some medicine for Zimbabwe to Stan when he was already

standing in the departure line at the airport," Cook said.

CrossLink began as a mission project of a Sunday School class at Columbia Baptist Church in Falls Church, VA, in 1993. Cook was a member of that class and worked on the project as a volunteer from the beginning. The class began CrossLink

initially because of a mission trip to Moscow. "We saw doctors reusing gauze and stitching wounds with ordinary sewing thread and needles," she said. "We saw so many needs there that a group of us came back wanting to do something."

So the ministry was born, working first through some government programs, then on

its own. Seeing a need to expand the work, CrossLink was organized as a non-profit organization in 1996, and Dan Watkins, church administrator at Columbia, resigned that position to become the first executive director. A year later, Cook became a regular volunteer, then joined the staff in a part-time role in 1998, the same year that Watkins was diagnosed with cancer and died. She continued on the staff in various roles until being named Executive Director in January of this year.

In this role, she has moved away somewhat from the hands-on ministry of CrossLink that she had been involved in since its beginning. "Now, I am a spokesperson for the ministry. I help set policy along

(continued on page 4)

**CrossLink
has become
another
Alliance
connection**

Linda Cook

is a native of the northern Virginia area. She went to college at Oklahoma Baptist University because of its music program, and earned a degree in voice with a piano minor.

She returned to her home state after college and has been there ever since. She earned a masters degree in music at American University in Washington, DC, and has taught high school music. She has been interim minister of music and youth at a number of churches in northern Virginia.

Cook also worked for Prison Fellowship for seven years and directed the Columbia Institute of Fine Arts.

She is married to Malcolm, a CPA. Their son Doug is a chef and caterer in northern Virginia. Daughter Kristy is physical therapist in Fort Worth, TX.

THE CROSSLINK PHILOSOPHY: LET'S SEE HOW WE CAN DO IT

There is no one formula or process for working with CrossLink. If your church or group has a project in mind, first visit the CrossLink website at www.crosslinkinternational.net. Then call Cook at 703/534.5465 to see how you can make the project happen.

CityChurch of Dallas voted unanimously July 21 to affiliate with the Alliance. In notifying the Alliance office of the church's decision, Pastor **Vicki G. Lumpkin** wrote: "We are

happenings

delighted to join the Alliance's growing number of churches. The Alliance mission statement and its strong stance on inclusivity make this decision simply 'right' More than benefiting just us, however, our prayer is that this

new relationship will also benefit the Alliance of Baptists. We look forward to a continued relationship that will grow increasingly stronger and deeper. We are proud to be the first Alliance church in the DFW Metroplex, offering the distinctive Alliance spirit and theology of hope, peace and love to all who seek to follow our Lord."

Sarah Jackson Shelton is the new pastor of the Alliance-affiliated **Baptist Church of the Covenant**, Birmingham,

AL, effective Sept. 3. Formerly associate pastor of Riverchase Baptist Church, also in Birmingham, she served BCC as intentional interim pastor from December 2000 through November 2001. Founded in 1970 as a result of a division in Birmingham's First Baptist Church over the admission of blacks, BCC has a distinguished history as an inclusive, progressive congregation. In 1987 BCC and Oakhurst Baptist Church in Atlanta became the first two congregations to affiliate with the Alliance. Congratulations to pastor and people!

Congratulations as well to the Alliance-affiliated **First Baptist Church**, Taylorsville, NC, which on Aug. 25 dedicated its new family life center. Longtime Alliance member **Roger Underwood** is the western North Carolina church's pastor. He served as a member of the local arrangements committee for this year's Winston-Salem convocation.

Another 2002 convocation stalwart, Alliance member **Susan Parker**, has been called as interim pastor of St. Mary's Metropolitan Community Church in Greensboro, NC. A member of the class of

2002 of the Divinity School at Wake Forest University, that institution's first graduating class, she is a member of Wake Forest Baptist Church.

Alliance-affiliated **Northminster Church** in Monroe, LA, is seeking an associate pastor to provide leadership in education, youth and children, pastoral care and outreach and church programming. If interested please forward resume or letter of inquiry to Associate Pastor Search Committee, Northminster Church, 2701 Lamy Lane, Monroe, LA 71201.

Board of directors/2002-2003 standing committees

Alliance President Craig Henry has announced the reconstitution of standing committees of the Board of Directors for 2002-2003, as follows:

Affiliate and Member Services

Tom McKibbens, Chairperson
First Baptist Church
Beacon at Centre Streets
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Ginny Brown Daniel,
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Carolyn Gordon, Kansas City,
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Donna Poynor, Gainesville, FL
Morris Vickers, Arnold, MD

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Craig Henry, Monroe, LA

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Willard Bass, Winston-Salem,
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Richard Groves, Winston-
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Margie Latham, Katy, TX

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Tim Dean, Charlotte, NC
Bettie Hodges, Savannah, GA
Louise Stanford, Greenville, SC

Peace and Justice

Sylvia Campbell, Chairperson
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Kathy Manis Findley, Little
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Russ Nelson, Austin, TX
Beverly Rodgers, Houston

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Cristina Garcia Alfonso, Atlanta
Martha Barr, St. Davids, PA
Stan Wilson, Clinton, MS
Karen Massey, Atlanta (BWiM)

Convocation Task Group

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The Alliance board will be meeting in Washington, DC, Sept. 19-21.

The Alliance and CBF: Setting the record straight

With rare exceptions during my 13-year tenure as executive director of the Alliance of Baptists, I have declined to comment publicly on criticisms by its detractors, nearly all of whom detest what we stand for. Yet when an erstwhile friend and ally such as Cecil Sherman goes on the attack, a clear response is in order if not necessary. It is certainly important to set the record straight when history is reconstructed to one's own ends, which is precisely what Sherman did in a portion of his June 27 speech in Fort Worth to the Mainstream Baptist Network.

In recalling merger discussions between the nascent Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and the then 4-year-old Alliance a decade ago, Sherman said that an Alliance representative declared, "Every church in CBF should hold our position on the women's issue." To which Sherman said he responded, "Then we'll never merge." As one of the Alliance's delegates in those merger talks, I can say unequivocally that no such exchange took place during our negotiating sessions. Nor is it true that the Alliance demands conformity of its own churches on women's issues or other matters, as if we could.

In his Fort Worth address, Sherman also warned against "elitist groups," another epithet he and some other "moderate" Baptist leaders have thrown out to describe the Alliance among others. For the record, it was CBF and not the Alliance that killed the proposed merger of the groups in 1991-1992. During a 15-month period overlapping those two years, representatives of the Alliance and CBF held two merger sessions. During the first of these, held in July 1991 in Raleigh NC, the negotiators agreed to merge the two groups into a new entity that would choose a new name. A 10-point framework for merger was unanimously approved, including agreement that the Alliance Covenant — described by historian Walter B. Shurden as one of the last century's most significant Baptist pronouncements — would be the founding document of the merged group. We all left Raleigh convinced we had achieved the desired objective of merging the two groups.

Between July 1991 and September 1992, however, CBF took no formal action to approve its negotiators' recommendation to merge with the Alliance. Repeatedly we in the Alliance asked CBF when we would get together again to consummate the union. Finally, and reluctantly, CBF officials agreed to let our merger team meet with them in September 1992, 15 months after the agreement to merge had been reached. It was only then that we were informed the merger was off. At the second meeting, none of CBF's original negotiators was at the table. Several CBF representatives at the second meeting spoke generally about perceived disadvantages

to merging with the Alliance. Finally, as the meeting was winding down, it was Daniel Vestal who had the courage and honesty to say openly that it was our promotion of women in ministry and our welcoming of gays and lesbians into the Alliance that had scared off other moderate Baptists, including many in Texas, where he then was serving as a pastor.

Looking back on those days and discussions, nearly all Alliance people I've talked with believe it was a good decision not to merge, despite our eagerness at the time to do so. Still, more than 80 percent of our churches are also affiliated with CBF. Knowing

there is no benefit to the Alliance in doing so, I have made it my personal policy not to criticize CBF in public. The ranks of moderate-to-progressive Baptists are simply not strong enough that we have the luxury of attacking one another.

In the decade-plus since the merger talks collapsed, we in the Alliance have gone about our mission and ministry with little fanfare. We have provided seed money for most of the new ventures in Baptist life during that period of time. We founded a school, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, that has been successful beyond our imagination and essentially bequeathed it to Virginia Baptists and CBF for its continuing and essential support. We have lived up to our ecumenical commitment by joining the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the USA and by engaging in

a formal dialogue with the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

We have collaborated with CBF, the American Baptist Churches in the USA, and the Progressive National Baptist Convention Inc., in a variety of projects. We paved the way for CBF to participate in the annuity programs of the Ministers and Missionaries Benefit Board of the American Baptist Churches. We have worked together with CBF in the placement of pastors and other church staff in the churches. We have entered into partnerships with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba and the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe. In 1990, we adopted a ground-breaking statement of confession and repentance having to do with our denominational roots in slavery and racism. Five years later, we adopted an historic statement on Jewish/Christian relations from a distinctively Baptist perspective and presently are at work on a similar declaration on Muslim/Christian relations. Beyond the statements themselves, we are engaging in joint activities and projects with both Jews and Muslims in the hope of fostering better relations among the nation's major faith groups.

These are worthwhile contributions by people of substance, I submit. We deserve better than to be dismissed as "nuts" and "fruitcakes."

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley

(This month's column consists of a Letter to the Editor of two publications — the Baptist Standard of Texas and Baptists Today. The former has posted the letter on its website; it appears in the September issue of Baptists Today.)

2002 Operating Budget

Through July 31

Needs: \$170,646
Receipts: \$155,779

2002 Mission Offering:

Goal: \$95,000
Receipts: \$48,127

September 2002

**NORTH
CAROLINA
ALLIANCE
CONVOCATION
SET FOR
OCT. 4-5**

The North Carolina Alliance of Baptists announces its annual convocation for Oct. 4-5 at Watts Street Baptist Church in Durham. Well-known Christian educator **Bill Dols** will address the theme, "Stories of Healing: Promise & Price." Dols is editor of *Bible Workbook: A Lectionary Bible-Based Resource for Individuals and Groups* and *Just Because It Didn't Happen: Sermons & Prayers as Story*.

Cost of this year's event is \$35 (students free) and covers program fee, dinner on Friday evening, Oct. 4, and breakfast and lunch Saturday, Oct. 5. Please call or write Diane Hill of Watts Street to register by Sept. 16. (Phone: 919/688-1366; e-mail:

dianehill@nc.rr.com)

Two hotels near Watts Street have offered special rates to convocation participants. Reservations should be made directly with the hotels as follows:

Courtyard by Marriott, 1815 Front Street. 800/321-2211 or 919/309-1500. Group Name: NC Alliance of Baptists. \$79, non-smoking doubles. Deadline: Sept. 13.

Hampton Inn, 1816 Hillandale Road. 800/426-7866 or 919/471-6100. Group Name: NC Alliance. \$69, non-smoking doubles. Deadline: Sept. 23.

Both hotels are located at the at I-85/Hillandale Road interchange.

CrossLink connection (continued from page 1)

with the board, and raise funds to continue to do our work. I represent CrossLink at meetings and conventions, and speak in churches. I will try to get to anywhere anybody wants me to speak."

Each year the ministry of CrossLink expands, from 44 projects in 1997, to 84 in 1998; 112 in 1999; 203 in 2000; and 276 in 2001. "The need is enormous," Cook said. "We have grown tremendously."

Much of the equipment and some of the medicines that CrossLink makes available are donated, and provided to organizations working on mission projects

at only the cost of transportation. Some medicines have to be purchased, and CrossLink has some suppliers it turns to



when special requests come in.

"We are a non-denominational organization," Cook said, "that wants to share the love of Jesus. We try to individualize every project. All anyone has to do to work with us is fill out a project request form and tell us what they need. We don't have a set formula that we follow. Our philosophy is

'tell us what your need is and we'll try to find a way to make it happen.'"

Cook and CrossLink value the Alliance partnership. "We hear over and over again of the tremendous needs that the people of

Cuba have. We know it is a tough situation and we want to do what we can to help," she said.

"Because the Alliance has such a vital connection in Cuba, what we are able to provide enables Alliance members to have a ministry there that goes beyond their normal means. It gives them tools to open doors that might not be opened otherwise. Lives are being changed not only healthwise but also spiritually. That makes what we do so very important. We want to continue to make that happen."

No matter what the project, large or small, CrossLink always tries to send stethoscopes, thermometers, and blood pressure cuffs with every missions team because many doctors don't have even those basic tools.