

## connections

July 2000

Volume 3 Issue 7

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.

**E**xecutive Director Stan Hastey went head to head with Bob Jones III on CNN's Larry King Live June 14, the day the Southern Baptist Convention voted to substantially change its Baptist Faith and Message statement to prohibit women as pastors.

Stan participated in a round-table discussion on "Should women be pastors?" with fundamentalists Jones, president of Bob Jones University in Greenville, SC, and radio talk show host Janet Parshall of Janet Parshall's America. Also joining the discussion was Alliance member Raye Nell Dyer, president of Baptist Women in Ministry of Nashville, who continually had to reiterate to King that the Bible — to be properly interpreted — must be taken as a whole, not in pieces. "When you do that," she said, "you see clearly that God calls us to be equal partners in servanthood and grace."

Defending his viewpoint — and that of most Alliance members — Stan said that he relied on a higher authority than the Bible, that

is the Holy Spirit. "The Holy Spirit moves like wind — unpredictably, without discrimination — and calls whom God wants to be called into all offices of the church."

Stan reminded King's audience that the Southern Baptist Convention had also changed the Preamble to the Baptist Faith and Message to eliminate the clause that claimed that Jesus Christ not the Bible is the final authority. "Jesus asserted himself as the authority over Scripture. When he left the world, Jesus said there was much yet to be learned which he had not taught the disciples. But he said he would send the Holy Spirit to teach them all things."

And in what was perhaps the clearest explanation of the day's events — and the events of the past 20 years — Stan summed up the situation: "The Achilles heel of Christian fundamentalism is the fear that the Holy Spirit will go where men cannot predict and therefore upset the human system of authority."



### Alliance view presented by Stan Hastey on CNN

For a transcript of the show, go to [cnn.com/transcripts](http://cnn.com/transcripts). To order a videotape, call 800-CNN-NEWS.

**O**n my first visit to Iglesia Bautista Clara Rodés in Piedrecitas, Cuba, I experienced the most amazing hospitality at the home of the pastor, Rosalva Pérez. My fellow travelers and I received a warm greeting by the entire church that included a feast of rice and beans, cucumbers, tomatoes and yucca to satisfy our hungry bodies. The praise and prayers offered in worship affirmed our oneness in Christ.

When bedtime arrived, the pastor's children gave up their beds for us to have a night of rest. Children giving up their beds for guests did not appear to be that unusual. But later I learned that they gave us their beds only to sleep in the arms of their parents. The parents and their two children shared one full size bed so that the travel-weary strangers could each have a bed for rest. The space that

was created for us physically also opened a space spiritually where we, Cubans and Americans, could begin to receive and give one to another. That spirit of open giving and receiving that has been the foundation of our sister church relationship is inherent to the spiritual gift and discipline of hospitality.

The spirit of open giving and receiving has been present in the Alliance since its inception. The Alliance has been a refuge for those who have found and continue to find themselves strangers in other Baptist lands. Our openness to ecumenical partnerships and Baptist bodies across the ocean confirms our embracing of the spirit of hospitality that the Scripture and the ministry of Christ beckon us toward. The history of the Alliance's welcoming and encouraging the gifts and calling of women into ministry is indeed

welcoming those whom others call strangers. Our efforts to encourage all Christians to consider their response to the homosexual in our midst is a call to live with hands and hearts open. The mission statement outlining a sense of calling to respond to the needs of the poor, the oppressed and the earth is at the heart of what it means to be hospitable.

I do not yet know how my time with you as president will change me, or how it will change the Alliance, but I am grateful for the open hands and hearts extended my way entrusting me with leadership.

by Paula Clayton  
Dempsey,  
Mars Hill College  
Alliance President



**B**ob Ballance, former editor of *Baptists Today*, was installed June 4 as pastor of Heritage Baptist Church, Cartersville, GA. Before going to the newspaper in 1998, he was pastor of another Alliance-affiliated congregation, Highland Park Baptist Church, Austin, TX.

Alliance-affiliated Wake Forest Baptist Church in Winston-Salem, NC, celebrated 10 years of ministry June 4 with Associate Pastor **Lynn Rhoades**. Rhoades has served the Alliance in several roles, most recently as a member of the Gender Equity Task Group.

Alliance member **Jack McKinney** was installed June 4 as pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, NC. He went to Pullen this spring from another Alliance-affiliated congregation, Bethesda (MD) First Baptist Church. Alliance Executive Director Stan Hasty preached the installation sermon.

**Roger Lovette** has announced his retirement as pastor of Baptist Church of the Covenant, Birmingham, AL, where he has served since 1992. Baptist Church of the Covenant was one of the first two congregations to seek affiliation with the Alliance in 1987, the other being Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, GA.

**Jay Leach** has resigned as pastor of Covenant Baptist Church, Houston, to pursue advanced studies at the Graduate Theological Union in Berkeley, CA. Earlier this year, Houston's only Alliance-affiliated congregation dedicated a new building, one

**O**akhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, GA, dedicated this new Christian Education building on June 11. Associate Director Jeanette Holt represented the Alliance on the program, that also included music provided by these young people. Lanny Peters is pastor of Oakhurst.



## Oakhurst dedicates building

of numerous noteworthy achievements during Leach's decade of service to Covenant. His last Sunday there is July 30.

Member **Deb Norton** represented the Alliance at the June 16-18 board meeting of the National Farm Workers Ministry held in Whitakers, NC. Norton is a member of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, NC. During its April meeting prior to the Austin convocation, the Alliance Board of Directors voted to join NFWM, a St. Louis-based organization dedicated to "standing with farm workers in the struggle for justice." The group's current executive director, Virginia Nesmith, addressed the Alliance board at the request of Richard Cook, chairperson of the Peace and Justice Committee and former head of NFWM.

Alliance-affiliated **Broadus Memorial Baptist Church** in Charlottesville, VA, voted June 11 to withdraw fellowship from the Southern Baptist Convention. The action came upon recommendation of the congregation's Denominational Relations Committee. Alliance member Tim Noel is pastor.

**First Baptist Church**, Jonesville, NC, seeks applicants for the position of Minister of Youth and Education, with primary attention to be devoted to the youth of the congregation. Other responsibilities will include ministry to children and senior adults in a church with a resident membership of 435. For further information, or to apply, contact Max Hill, Pastor; P.O. Box 98; Jonesville NC 28647; 336/835- 2311.

**Ox Hill Baptist Church** in northern Virginia is seeking a minister to oversee its youth programs involving more than 60 young people. Résumés and cover letters should be sent to Search Committee, Ox Hill Baptist Church, P.O. Box 220536, Chantilly VA 22053, by July 30. They also may be sent by e-mail to [Tim@oxhillbaptist.org](mailto:Tim@oxhillbaptist.org). To learn more about the church, visit its Web site at [www.oxhillbaptist.org](http://www.oxhillbaptist.org).

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## RESTORING A DAMAGED FAITH

Alliance member and author Mary Tuomi Hammond has an outstanding article in the May-June issue of *The Other Side* titled, "Restoring a Damaged Faith." The piece challenges churches to understand why members leave and to build communities of spiritual healing. Hammond also is co-pastor of the Alliance-affiliated First Baptist Church, Oberlin, OH. The Other Side "advances a healing Christian vision that's biblical and compassionate, appreciative of the creative arts, and committed to the intimate intertwining of personal spirituality and social transformation," according to its statement of purpose. For more information, call 1-800-700-9280.

## ALLIANCE RESOURCES

**1** Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Resource for Congregations in Dialogue on Sexual Orientation. Edited by LeDayne McLeese Polaski of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America and Alliance member Millard Eiland of Houston, TX. \$22.50 plus shipping and handling. Developed to assist clergy and lay leaders in leading a healthy and respectful congregational dialogue on the most difficult task of discernment facing the church in our time. The 250+ page book features wisdom distilled from 13 congregations which have already had such a dialogue. It also includes helpful articles from the perspective of the Bible, spirituality, theology, science and psychology. This resource is for everyone who hopes to face this urgent task of discernment with courage, hope and faith.

**2** Being the Church: Exploring Multiculturalism in Congregations. \$12.50 plus S&H. This curriculum is designed to engage church members in individual reflection and collective discernment about issues related to the changing faces of our communities, how we understand the gospel and the mission of the church.

**3** Pursuing Justice: A Social Justice Curriculum for Churches. \$15 plus S&H. Now in its second printing, this resource makes the deliberate link between the spiritual life and social justice.

Contact the Alliance office to order any of these resources.

Once more, this time with emphasis, the Southern Baptist Convention has announced to the world that Holy Scripture forbids women to be pastors of churches. Last month's action, contained in the rewritten *Baptist Faith and Message* statement, made big news in the national press. Actually, the news was hardly new.

Without apology and with a certain edge of cockiness, the new SBC has been writing women off for the better part of the past two decades. Beginning with its first explicit declaration on the subject, the infamous 1984 resolution against the ordination of women to any church office, the convention set the course for a sustained and uninterrupted anti-womanist agenda. That agenda now is complete with the declaration in Article VI of the Baptist

Faith and Message that "the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture."

Not incidentally, the new confession of faith also places the authority of Scripture above that of Jesus with the omission from Article I ("The Scriptures") of the 1963 declaration, "The criterion by which the Bible is to be interpreted is Jesus Christ." The new standard for biblical interpretation clearly is being set by a hierarchy of self-appointed arbiters who routinely describe themselves as "godly men." They are, contrary to their fierce protestations, the undisputed ayatollahs of the established church of the South.

Enough about them. They have their reward. From my perspective, assessing the current status of women in ministry becomes even harder when I look at our own camp, the camp of self-described moderates, progressives and liberals. (Of the three designations, by the way, the only one I choose to shun is the first.) To put the matter bluntly, when it comes to the rightful role of women as pastors, the larger onus is

more on us than it is on them.

Why? Simply because, unlike the Southern Baptist overlords, we claim to be for women. Let me get right to the point with the example I know best. For nine months, between August 1999 and May 2000, I served as chair of the pastor search team for my own congregation, First Baptist Church of Washington. Of the 13 or 14 candidates we considered seriously, only one was a woman. And she decided her present ministry meant more to her than the prospect of becoming our pastor.

Women more than men know that example is legion. With rare exceptions, even the most progressive of our congregations in the Alliance — let's be straight here — are not calling women as pastors. Yes, we've become quite comfortable by now with women as associate pastors,

but somehow are not quite ready to elevate them to the last rung on the ministerial ladder. So women continue to hear the tinny sound of the still all-too-common refrain, "Our church is not ready yet."

So when will we be ready? When Larry King asked me on his program June 14 to predict whether we will see the calling of women as pastors in the near future, I replied as honestly as I knew how, "I think it will continue to go very slowly."

That clearly is nothing more than an opinion. What I added in my response is a conviction. God will continue to call out women. Courageous women will continue to respond to that call. And some congregations, as brave as the women they call, will give them a chance to validate their vocation as pastors.

Until the day comes when these rare exceptions become the norm, we liberal Baptists do well to remember how far we have yet to travel on the road to justice. When we do, it will be small consolation to gloat on the backwardness of the Southern Baptists.

perspectives



By Stan Hastey  
Executive Director

## ANOTHER CHANCE TO HEAR

M I K I  
T H O M P S O N

Miki Thompson, a recording artist who performed briefly during the Austin convocation, has CDs that can be ordered from her Web site: [www.palominopony.com](http://www.palominopony.com) (On the convocation evaluation form, several of you told us you wanted to hear more of Miki's music. Here's another chance!)

2000 Operating Budget	
Needs:	\$122,466
Receipts:	\$113,018
2000 Mission Offering	
Goal:	\$85,250
Receipts	\$30,665

**July 2000**

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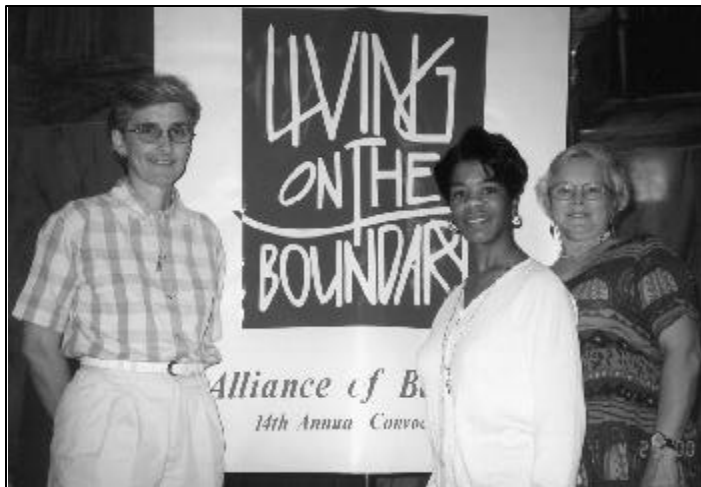
**B**eginning a formal scholarship program will be one of the top priorities at the House of Baptist Studies at Wesley Theological Seminary this fall.

The 600-student seminary, in Washington, DC, is quite diverse, but the majority of faculty and visiting lecturers are United Methodists, with many presentations oriented toward Methodist theology and polity.

The House of Baptist Studies provides an opportunity for the approximately 30-40 Baptist students enrolled at the seminary to explore more deeply the current issues that affect Baptist church life.

In addition to the push for a Baptist student scholarship next school year, the Baptist House is also planning a multi-day event to focus on "Things I Need to Know that I Didn't Learn in Seminary."

"We'll have speakers on various practical issues, which



Alliance board member Cathy Tamsberg, a recent honors graduate of Wesley Theological Seminary, is shown here with two other Wesley students who attended the April Convocation in Austin, Renee Woodward and Jane Wallace McNeil.

may include Christian education, empowering our laity, and conducting special services," said Beth Ward, who directs the program. "In addition to this event, we'll continue having Baptist chapel day every semester and meeting incoming students. We're also planning monthly events with the Baptist students, alternating between social events and seminars."

**Wesley Theological Seminary: \$2,500**



**North Carolina Alliance chapter to hold retreat**

The North Carolina chapter of the Alliance of Baptists will hold a retreat at Lake Junaluska Friday evening through noon on Saturday, Oct. 6-7, led by Roberta and Richard Bondi.

Roberta is professor of Church History at the Candler School of Theology at Emory University in Atlanta. Her books include **In Ordinary Time, To Love as God Loves, Memories of God** and, recently, **A Place to Pray**. Richard, who earned a Ph.D. from Notre Dame, is a pastoral psychotherapist at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Atlanta. He is the author of **Leading God's People: Ethics for the Practice of Ministry**.

A \$30 registration fee must accompany reservations. For forms and information call or write Marie Mason, 919.876.2510, 1108 E. Millbrook Rd., Raleigh NC 27609.

**A L L I A N C E  
E N D O R S E M E N T S**

These individuals have recently been endorsed as chaplains by the Alliance. Jim Hightower of New Orleans is chair of our endorsing committee.

Donald M. Norman	Fellow	AAPC
Catherine Balance	Staff Chaplain	Hospice of Houston County, Inc.
Amanda Tull	Board Certified Chaplain	Association of Professional Chaplains
Tere Tyner Canzoneri	Fellow	AAPC
	Board Certified Chaplain	GA Association of Professional Chaplains
Rose Stewart Young	Board Certified Chaplain	Association of Professional Chaplains
	Staff Chaplain	Bon Secours St. Mary's Hospital