

connections

March 1998

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.

New Alliance Congregation

Surely her call to ministry didn't mean a call to the pulpit — Wrong!

Stacey Simpson felt a call to ministry when she was a teenager in Columbus, GA. She wasn't sure where that calling was going to take her but felt certain it wouldn't take her to the pulpit. She was wrong.

Since July 1996, Stacey has been the pastor of Fellowship Baptist Church in Edison, GA, a small southwest Georgia town three hours from Atlanta. It is a new congregation, begun in 1995, and one that as of February 11 has affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists.

Stacey has provided much of the leadership that led Fellowship to become an Alliance church. She found her first Alliance involvement as a member of Oakhurst Baptist Church in Decatur, GA, where she was ordained, and as a student at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta. She was a student representative to the annual meeting of the Georgia chapter of the Alliance in the fall of 1995, her final year at seminary. Now she is the president-elect of that chapter and will become president in October. She has also been active in the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and Friends of New Churches.

Stacey is a 1993 graduate of Furman University in Greenville, SC, where she earned a degree in religion. She spent her four years there attending Methodist, Presbyterian, Episcopalian and Quaker services. Through those experiences, she decided her Baptist denomination was

A warm welcome also goes to First Baptist Church, Rochester, NY, where Bill Brosend is pastor. This church also recently affiliated with the Alliance.

where she wanted to be. She earned an M. Div. from Candler in 1996 and set out to find a job in para-church work. But then came the call to Edison.

She went first as a bivocational pastor, moving to full-time status last September.

The church is "slowly but certainly growing," she said. It has 16 active members, a ministry emphasis on children and caregivers, and an openness to accept anyone who wants to come. "People who are not comfortable at other churches in Edison can come to us," she

said. Most recently, Fellowship has partnered with a nearby black congregation to establish a scholarship to help a local public high school student attend college.

And now for Stacey Simpson, that long-ago certainty that she would not end up in a pulpit has become a certainty that she is right where she belongs and where God wants her to be — in the pulpit of a small, new, dynamic church whose congregation welcomes all seekers in the spirit of Christian fellowship.



Stacey Simpson is pastor of the Fellowship Baptist Church in Edison, GA, the most recent church to join the Alliance of Baptists

Alliance board member *C. Welton Gaddy* is the new Executive Director of The Interfaith Alliance, based in Washington. He comes to his new position from the pastorate of Northminster Church, Monroe, LA.

Board member *Pat H. Fulbright* is author of a new book, *Termites on the Ark: Creative Teaching for Children*, published by Smyth & Helwys.

Thomas Kilgore, who was chair of a task group of Alliance and Progressive National Baptist Convention representatives working on racial reconciliation, died Feb. 4 at age 84. The North Carolina native was pastor emeritus of Second Baptist Church, Los Angeles, and a past president of PNBC and American Baptist Churches USA.

Five northern California congregations and renowned Christian artist Ken Medema held a *fundraising concert* in January, with proceeds going to the Alliance and Baptist Peace Fellowship. Sponsoring churches — all of which have been discharged from or denied admission to a regional unit of American Baptist Churches because they welcome and affirm gay people — were First Baptist, Berkeley, CA; Lakeshore Avenue Baptist, Oakland, CA, San Leandro Community Church, San Leandro, CA, New Community of Faith, San Jose, CA, and Dolores Street Baptist, San Francisco.

Paul Hanneman is the new pastor of Park Road Baptist Church in Charlotte, NC. He was formerly pastor of Immanuel Baptist Church in Portland, ME.

MEMBERSHIP
NEWS

This newsletter is mailed to Alliance-affiliated churches and individual members. Please let us know if your church would like to get more or fewer copies.

Annual membership dues are \$40, individuals; \$60, families; \$125, sustaining; and \$20, student/low income. You may send your gifts to the Alliance office at any time.

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

Executive Director: Stan Hastey
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
Phone: (864)458-9995 Fax: (864) 458-9624
SuePoss@compuserve.com

cuba

Ben Griffith, a lay member of Lake Norman Baptist Church in Huntersville, NC, spent Feb. 19-28 leading a group of four to Ebenezer Baptist Church in Yaguajay, a town near the northcentral coast of Cuba. Joining him were Susan Alexander and Ron Miller, both members at Lake Norman; and David Clines, an Hispanic associational worker from Kingsport, TN.

During the same time, Kim Sellers of First Baptist Church in Cornelius, NC, led a group to Sancti Spíritus, a larger town in the same province as Yaguajay. With her were former pastor David Holloway, Michael and Caleb Sharpe, and Vincent Perez. Sellers said she particularly enjoyed spending time this trip, her second, at one of four missions sponsored by the church in Sancti Spíritus.

In Yaguajay, the volunteers were able to lead several services both at Ebenezer Church and at its two mission churches. "We also had a great planning session in which we got to know the church leaders better and were able to plan for our future relationship," Griffith said.

Another meaningful aspect of the trip for Giffith: They had taken with them a white sheet filled with the handprints of children and youth in Huntersville. They returned from Cuba with another sheet filled with handprints of Cubans, titled "Brothers and Sisters in Christ."

Holloway, who made his first trip to Cuba in 1993, says it appears to him that those who have dollars to spend are better off now while those without dollars are worse.

As is typical, the trip was not without problems. Most of the group's medicines were confiscated at the airport but were later released to Cuban pastors. The medicines had been packed in boxes. Medicines that were packed in suitcases were not held.

Upcoming need: Volunteers are being enlisted for a special medical fact-finding trip to Cuba in May. Anyone with a medical background who might be interested in going should contact the Alliance office for more specific information. The tentative dates are May 13-20.

It won't be an exotic African safari but it will be a chance to help our Alliance partners in Zimbabwe. Board member Bonnie Dixon is organizing a work/ministry team to participate in a project with the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe this summer.

A team of six-12 people is needed to help repair/renovate the convention offices and guest house and the men's dormitory at the Baptist Seminary; to help complete the administration library building at Zororo Primary School; and to visit churches, missions and preaching points. Approximate cost for the trip is \$3,000.

Donations of about \$10,000 are needed to complete the renovation projects.

Tentative trip dates are July 28-Aug. 13. Contact Bonnie at (919) 851-6577.

Executive Director Stan Hastey is also scheduled to address the annual Congress of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe in August.

zimbabwe

By the time these lines are read, I expect the Alliance Board of Directors will have accepted an invitation to hold our 14th Annual Convocation in the year 2000 with the University Baptist Church of Austin, Texas, a congregation much in the news of late.

This historic and strategically situated church, located virtually on the campus of the University of Texas, did not seek its new-found prominence or, as most Texas Baptists would have it, notoriety. If University Baptist Church has in fact become notorious, it is for the right reasons. It deserves affirmation, not condemnation.

In the big household of faith known as the Baptist General Convention of Texas, this Alliance-affiliated church is no longer welcome, despite a history replete with leadership in and support of all the causes held dear by Texas Baptists, because it has opened its doors to the gay community and ordained a gay man as a deacon.

In the small household of faith called the Alliance of Baptists, University Baptist Church is welcomed and affirmed because it is doing what a Christian congregation is supposed to do. It is loving all of God's children precisely because "God shows no partiality" (Acts 10:34b).

University's pastor, Larry Bethune, is a compassionate and gentle servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. Thrust unexpectedly into the media spotlight, he could not have done any better than he has. He is to be commended for the content and tone of all his public utterances and writings during the intense heat of the controversy set off by the tragic actions of the Texas convention's administrative committee and executive board.

What Larry has said and the way he has said it constitute a model of integrity and grace under fire. In taking their stand on higher ground, he and the congregation already have won a tremendous victory.

These things I have written Larry and the church in recent days, along with the following:

None of this is to say your battle is easy. At the same time, despite the price you are paying for doing what is right, I want you to know the Alliance of Baptists stands with you. With even greater enthusiasm than before, I will be asking our Board of Directors to accept the invitation from University Baptist Church to hold our annual convocation in the year 2000 there with you.

Already I am beginning to think how we can best use that time two years hence to say some things and take some actions to advance the greater cause of inclusiveness in our churches. In the meantime, I'll be

looking for opportunities to affirm you for what you have done.

Six years ago, when a courageous and prophetic president of the Alliance, Ann Quattlebaum, called upon us to study and address issues of homosexuality in the church, some thought we were skating out onto thin ice. Yet the task group she recruited to lead us in that process discharged its assignment with such sensitivity and skill that three years later, at our 1995 Vienna convocation, the membership in annual meeting enthusiastically received its report and commended it to our churches. Wherever it has been studied and implemented, churches have been immeasurably enriched.

Over time, what some feared might do us in has turned into a potentially historic initiative. The Force was with us then — and still is. It is, I am convinced, the Force of the Spirit of God, as always leading us on.

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director

Build an Alliance: Get to know a seminary student

The Alliance's Theological Education Committee is offering interested persons the opportunity to get to know and *build an alliance* with one or more of our college and seminary students. Each volunteer will be paired with a student and will be asked to initiate communication by letter, phone or in person. The hope is that with regular contact by both partners, an alliance of support and understanding can be formed.

If you're interested or want more information, contact B. J. Herring at (813) 238-4390 or write her at 7505 Veve Lane, Tampa, FL 33610. Interest in strengthening our alliance between students and volunteers is the only prerequisite.

— Marjorie George, *Outgoing Chair, Theological Education Committee*

The summer gathering of Baptists interested in spirituality will have three components this summer with the theme, "Listening to Wisdom." The schedule is:

August 3-5: Conference

August 5-6: Meeting of Baptist Spiritual Directors

August 6-8: Retreat to be led by Lynda Poston-Smith.

As in the past the gathering will be held at Mars Hill College, Mars Hill, NC. For information about housing, call (800) 582-3047. For information about the program call (704) 689-1128, the office of the Campus Minister. E-mail inquiries may be sent to dhuff@mhc.edu.

—Campus Minister Paula Dempsey, Mars Hill College

SPIRITUALITY
Listening to Wisdom

Operating Income
YTD: **\$41,977**
Budget Needs YTD:
\$38,605



Frontiers of Hope
Mission Offering
Goal: \$75,000
Receipts: \$5,991

This is the city: Chicago, IL. Some of the people who live here will enjoy better lives this year because of Alliance funding that will help train chaplains in the Chicago suburbs and offer academic assistance and support to at-risk children.

The Northwest Corridor Chaplaincy program will receive \$2,000 in Alliance funding for the first time in 1998. Strive, an agency that provides after-school tutoring and day camps, will receive \$3,500.

The Northwest high-tech corridor is home to many Fortune 500 companies including Motorola, Ameritech and Sears and to a large culturally and religiously diverse population of more than 100,000 people. The diversity of over 70 language/culture groups and many religious traditions poses serious challenges to police and fire

Alliance dollars at work: Northwest Corridor Chaplaincy • Strive

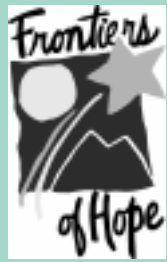
personnel of local municipalities as they respond to emergency situations. Northwest Corridor Chaplaincy Services, an independent agency funded primarily through church gifts, provides chaplains competent in responding to the human needs of such a diverse population.

Allen Eaton is senior chaplain. The Alliance funding, he said, will be used to help pay for instructors to train volunteer lay people and clergy to work as chaplains. The training program includes 40 core subjects taught in 90-minute sessions. "We are talking about a big time commitment the volunteers will make," he said.

The chaplains are/will be a

resource to law enforcement personnel, firefighters, paramedics, and their families. They will offer them counseling and stress management and help as

Northwest
Corridor
Chaplaincy
\$2,000
Strive
\$3,500



requested with death notifications, domestic violence, hostage negotiations, and community education.

On the other side of Chicago, Strive operates out of Cornell Baptist Church, where Alliance board member Shanta Premawardhana is pastor. Its aim is to promote social development and cultural awareness in children and youth who are considered at risk for failure in school and who live on Chicago's South Side. The per capita income for the area

is under \$8,000 and 93% of the children live in single-parent households.

Strive has evolved from an afterschool program begun nine years ago. Today, its one-on-one tutoring program provides children with four hours of individual tutoring each week. During the school year, up to 50 students in kindergarten through eighth grade are tutored. Many of the tutors are University of Chicago students.

The summer day camps further expand the educational development of the children, who come for five hours every weekday for four weeks. They take field trips, do arts and crafts, play games, keep journals, and listen to and discuss stories.

This past school year, an arts program was also begun to teach students ballet, writing, music, drama and art.

The Alliance's \$3,500 gift supports these Strive programs.



1998
Convocation
And Beyond

This issue of *Connections* went to press prior to the start of the 1998 Alliance Convocation March 12-14 at Calvary Baptist Church in Washington.

Reports from the Convocation will be in the April issue.

Northminster Baptist Church and Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond will be co-hosts of the Alliance's *13th Annual Convocation*, March 12-14, 1999.

Next year's Convocation theme: Theological education.