

connections

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.

March 2001

Volume 4 Issue 3



Oakhurst Baptist Church, and long-time member Walker Knight.

ANNUAL CONVOCATION

April 20-22

Oakhurst Baptist Church
Decatur, Georgia

Friday, April 20

6:00 p.m.—Welcoming reception sponsored by the Baptist Studies Program, Candler School of Theology

7:15 p.m.—Opening worship.
Covenant Speakers: Andrew Lester and Jann Aldredge-Clanton

Saturday, April 21

8:30 a.m.—Morning prayers
9:00 a.m.—Stan Hastey, State-of-the-Alliance address
10:00 a.m.—Annual Meeting
12:00 p.m.—Lunch, Oakhurst Baptist Church
1:30 p.m.—Workshops
3:30 p.m.—Mission Fair
7:00 p.m.—Evening worship
Preacher: Paula Clayton Dempsey

Sunday, April 22

8:30 a.m.—Morning prayers
9:00 a.m.—Bible study. *Teacher:* Ofelia Miriam Ortega, president, Protestant Evangelical Seminary of Cuba.
9:00 a.m.—Workshops
11:00 a.m.—Closing worship/Communion

convocation host: Oakhurst proud of its liberal tag and the ministry it undertakes

Oakhurst Baptist Church, the host of this year's Convocation, has a long history with the Alliance. It was one of two congregations which supported the formation in 1987 of the Southern Baptist Alliance and immediately became a member. The other congregation was Baptist Church of the Covenant in Birmingham.

Walker Knight, founder and editor emeritus of *Baptists Today*, has been a member of Oakhurst since 1959, and was present at the first Alliance meetings.

This will be the first time Oakhurst has hosted the Convocation, and it will be ready in newly renovated facilities. "We've been in a building and renovation process and are supposed to be in our renovated sanctuary on April 1," Walker said. The church has already completed a new educational building to replace one that was not handicapped-accessible.

Walker describes Oakhurst as "extremely liberal." The church was ousted from the Georgia Baptist Convention in 1999, and recently got a letter from the Executive Committee of the SBC, saying the church was no longer in fellowship with

that organization, because of its open policy on homosexuality. But the Atlanta Baptist Association on Jan. 30, refused to disfellowship the congregation. While the association doesn't "support or condone homosexual activity," the action stated, it "affirms the longstanding Baptist polity of local church autonomy."

"I think we got the liberal tag because of our concern for justice issues," Walker said.

The issues: The church accepts blacks. It accepts women as deacons and ministers. It accepts gays and lesbians. "Even the replacement of the old educational building because of its lack of handicapped-accessibility shows the church's desire for justice," Walker said.

Through its missions groups, Oakhurst has fostered a number of significant undertakings. The church gave birth to SEEDS, a world-hunger emphasis. It gave birth to *Baptists Today* in 1983. The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America had its first offices at Oakhurst. Clergy and Laity Concerned had offices there.

Oakhurst Recovery Center, a recipient of

(continued on page 4)



a still more
excellent
way

celebrating the call of
Christ for men and women
to live in equal partnership

Alliance member **Brett Younger** has been called as pastor of Broadway Baptist Church, Fort Worth, TX. He has been pastor of the Alliance-affiliated Lake Shore Baptist Church, Waco, TX.

The Alliance welcomes **Crossroads Church**, Kansas City, MO, as our newest affiliated congregation. Michael G. Elmore, chair of the church's affiliations committee, wrote that church members voted unanimously last Sept. 30 to affirm the Alliance Covenant and Mission statement. His letter included the congregation's initial contribution to the Alliance. Currently served by Gary W. Harris as intentional interim minister, the new congregation has begun a search for its first pastor.

Alliance member **Robert Johnson** has been named editor of the *American Baptist Quarterly*, a journal published by the American Baptist Historical Society. Johnson teaches church history at Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City, KS.

Glen Sehested, father of Baptist Peace Fellowship Executive Director and Alliance member **Ken Sehested**, died Jan. 27. Gifts honoring Mr. Sehested's memory may be sent to BPFNA, 4800 Wedgewood Dr., Charlotte, NC 28210; or to the Memorial Fund, First Baptist Church, 7382 Main St., Houma, LA 70360.



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MILITARY CHAPLAINS

Elizabeth Harris-Lamkin of Mableton, GA, is the first applicant approved for endorsement by the Alliance as a military chaplain.

The Armed Forces Chaplains Board of the Department of Defense notified the Alliance on Jan. 11 of approval of our application as an ecclesiastical endorsing agent to nominate clergy for the military chaplaincy.



Max Hill in Cuba:

A pastor installed; a seventh inning stretch observed

Max Hill, pastor of First Baptist Church in Jonesville, NC, participated in the installation of a new pastor in Cuba during a visit Jan. 19-31.

"This was one of the better experiences I have ever been involved in," he said. "Three North Americans and our hosts undertook the long and arduous journey throughout the length of the island. We traveled more than 1,200 miles from Havana to Bayamo and back. During the journey, we visited 21 churches, mostly those of the Fraternity. In many we worshipped, while in others, we simply visited the pastor or the homeowner where the church met in order to speak a word of encouragement and have a prayer."

The main purpose of the trip east was to transport Tomás Ynguanzo, and his family

to Bayamo and to install him there as pastor. The installation service took place on Tuesday Jan. 23.

"As always, there are serendipities when we travel to Cuba," Max said. "Two stand out above the rest. While on a walking tour of Bayamo we visited a Troubadours' House. Though it was early in the day, they opened and performed for us. They are working hard to preserve some of the older forms of traditional Cuban music."

In the city of Ciego de Avila, Max and his group were invited to the baseball game between the national championship team, Santiago de Cuba, and the local team. The Cubans don't observe the *seventh inning stretch*, but that didn't stop the North Americans from rising and singing "Take Me Out To The Ballgame."

notice of proposed constitutional amendment

Notice is hereby given of a proposed amendment to Article 1 of the Constitution of the Alliance of Baptists to be acted upon during the Annual Meeting on April 21, 2001, at Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, GA. It was approved by the Board of Directors last September but is subject to a vote of the membership, as required by the Constitution. The proposed amendment reads: "**The name of this organization shall be The Alliance of Baptists in the U.S.A.**" The language of Article 1 as it now stands is: "The name of this organization shall be The Alliance of Baptists, Inc."

nominations

Alliance members are welcome to make nominations in advance of the Annual Meeting for secretary of the Alliance and members of the Board of Directors. Please send your recommendations to Nominating Committee Chairperson Bill Ingram, Berryville Baptist Church, 114 Academy St., Berryville VA 22611. Telephone: 540/955-1423. E-mail: bingram@shentel.net

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof...” (From Amendment I, The Constitution of the United States of America)

Through the newly created White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives, President Bush is utterly serious in his commitment to provide federal funding for religious institutions to deliver social services in their communities, churches included. This program of charitable choice will be administered, the president has said repeatedly, without forcing churches and other religious entities to give up their own sense of identity and mission.

In a first-day-on-the-job appearance at the National Press Club, John DiIulio, director of the new office, outlined its three purposes as (1) increasing charitable giving; (2) “ending discrimination” against religious institutions, and (3) bridging the divide “between the sacred and the secular.”

Appearing at the same forum, Richard Foltin of the American Jewish Committee spoke of “two basic concerns.” The first has to do with the “fundamentally inconsistent goals” of providing direct governmental subsidies to pervasively religious organizations and of doing so without overt sponsorship of religion. Second, Foltin warned, is the inevitability of an excessive entanglement of governmental agencies and officials in the internal affairs of religious institutions once funds exchange hands.

Although some advocates of church-state separation argue that charitable choice is possible without violating the First Amendment’s ban on an establishment of religion, it will be difficult at best. It certainly is fraught with dangers to both church and state.

As to the consequences for churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious entities, what is at stake is their integrity. There was a

time when most religious institutions in this country, certainly the great majority of Protestant bodies, considered it almost an anathema to receive (let alone seek) a helping hand from the government for its spiritual functions. This was partly pragmatic, to be sure, specifically the fear of governmental regulation. But the churches’ unwillingness to seek and receive tax funds was primarily principled: To do so would compromise their spiritual mission.

Let it be noted that the debate over charitable choice is not entirely

partisan in that during the presidential campaign both Governor Bush and Vice President Gore advocated variations on the concept. Many Democrats as well as Republicans favor the church-state partnership charitable choice would institute. As the debate intensifies in Congress, members of both parties will advocate for and against.

Of special interest in the upcoming debate on Capitol Hill will be the voices of Baptists. We can rest assured that the Baptist Joint Committee, for more than six decades a reasoned voice for church-state separation, will be steadfast in opposing most

if not all charitable choice schemes. Its opposition will be principled and nonpartisan.

But what about the Southern Baptist Ethics and Religious Liberty Commission? And the recently “converted” Southern Baptist Jerry Falwell? These are really on the spot, eager to help the president they did so much to elect.

For the most part, I’ve gotten over my grief about the “loss” of the Southern Baptist Convention. What many of us once considered an incalculable loss has turned out to be an immeasurable gift of grace. Yet I readily admit to one lingering piece of that grief. It is the lamentable fact that on issues having to do with the establishment of religion, the Baptist voice in Washington is more often divided these days than united. That is a great loss to the nation.



perspectives



By Stan Haste
Executive Director

H O T E L

INFORMATION

Holiday Inn Select
130 Clairemont Avenue
Decatur, Georgia 30030
404/371-0204
800/225-6079
One block from the Decatur
MARTA Station
Van service to/from the
Convocation
provided by the Alliance
\$89 single/double

Deadline: March 17

a still more excellent way celebrating the call of Christ for men and women to live in equal partnership

Name(s): _____

Address: _____

Daytime Phone _____ Church: _____

Child-care needs (ages/times): _____

Registration Fee: \$60 per person; \$30 for seminary and college students

Amount enclosed: \$ _____



Please complete this registration form and return with registration fee to:
The Alliance of Baptists, 1328 16th Street NW, Washington, DC 20036

2001 Operating Budget

Needs: \$46,156
Receipts: \$49,660

Mission Offering:

2000 Final Receipts: \$87,575
2001 Goal: \$92,000
Receipts: \$16,490

March 2001

CONVOCATION WORKSHOPS:

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth: A Resource for Congregations in Dialogue about Sexual Orientation. LeDayne McLeese Polaski, managing director, Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Charlotte, NC.

A House of Prayer for All People: Planning for Inclusive Worship. Deborah Loftis Schoenfeld, associate professor of church music, Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond, Va., and Paul A. Richardson, assistant and dean for graduate studies, School of Music, Samford University, Birmingham, AL.

Endorsement for Specialized Ministry. Beth Jackson-Jordan, chaplain/CPE supervisor, St. Joseph of the Pines, Rockingham, NC.

Pastoral Supervision, Sabbatical Leave and Self-Care. James Lamkin, pastor, Northside Drive Baptist Church, Atlanta; Lanny Peters, pastor, Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, GA., and Elizabeth Rechter, canon missionary, Cathedral of St. Phillip, Atlanta.

About the Gender Difference. Mahan Siler, friend of pastors and consultant to congregations, Franklinton, NC, and a panel of ministers.

Narrating the Way: A Theological Exploration of Calling. Elaine Nocks, professor of psychology; Jeff Rogers, assistant dean; and Ann Quattlebaum, coordinator, Center for Theological Exploration of Vocation, Furman University, Greenville, SC.

Spiritual Formation at Oakhurst. Claudia Dickerson, John Medearis, Walker Knight and Lois Shirley, members of the Spirituality Mission Group, Oakhurst Baptist Church.

Gender Equity Task Force Listening Groups. Lynn Rhoades, associate pastor, Wake Forest Baptist Church, Winston-Salem, NC, and Steve Boyd, professor of religion, Wake Forest University, Winston-Salem, NC.

Mother/Daughter Connections. Carolyn Mathis, pastoral counselor and mother, Greenville, SC.

When Christ Calls a Man: Reflections on Men and Discipleship. Steve Boyd, professor of religion, Wake Forest University, and president, American Men's Studies Association.

The Alliance of Baptists-United Church of Christ Dialogue. Timothy C. Downs, conference minister, Southeast Conference, United Church of Christ, Atlanta, GA., and Stan Haste, executive director, Alliance of Baptists, Washington, DC.

The Church IS a Place to Discuss Sex. Susan Aldrich, lay leader, Myers Park Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC., and Diane Eubanks Hill, minister with children and their families, Watts Street Baptist Church, Durham, NC.

When Violence Comes to Church (two sessions). Kathy Manis Findley, director, Victims Support and Prevention Program, Little Rock, AR.

Oakhurst Recovery Program Open House. Mayo Funderburg, director, Oakhurst Recovery Program, Decatur, GA.

oakhurst baptist church (continued from page 1)

Alliance Mission Offering funding for several years, was also born in the church. It started on the top floor of the old educational building where homeless men were housed. That program has grown and is now housed in a separate building on the church grounds.

Oakhurst has 430 members, drawn from all over the Atlanta Metro area, Walker said. It is in a section of Decatur that has changed – and changed again. In the 1960s, African Americans moved into the community. Recently, Walker said, another transformation has begun as the community gets a facelift. “The area has moved into a period of renewal, and where you once could buy a house for

\$40,000, it now costs \$200,000. We’re now faced with a whole new challenge as we have new people moving in,” he said.

But the church is ready, said Lanny Peters, the pastor. “In the last several years, we have strengthened our sense of identity, in a large part, in response to outside pressure,” he said. “I am sensing now an opportunity to build upon this in a proactive way. We have a clearer sense of our ministry and mission than we have had in many years. The energy level is high. There is enthusiasm for planning for the future.”

Oakhurst is affiliated with the Alliance, American Baptist Churches in the USA, and the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship.