

connections

September 2000

Volume 3 Issue 9

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.

GLENDALE BEGINS ITS FIRST CUBAN PARTNERSHIP

A delegation of seven from Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville, TN, visited Santa Clara, Cuba, in July to begin a partnership with the Alberto J. Diaz Baptist Mission in that provincial capital city. Representing Glendale were (l-r) Jim Berry, Mark Caldwell, Martha Jo Berry, David Gooch, Ginger Newman, Lisa Lehr and Bill Northrup.



PARTNERSHIP S

cuba connection continues to grow

Two Alliance congregations have started new partnerships with member churches of the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba.

Glendale Baptist Church in Nashville has begun its first partnership with a church in Santa Clara. Alliance secretary David Gooch is a member of Glendale and was one of seven from the church to visit the congregation in July. "We didn't know what a blessing it was going to be to us," he said. "It will be a great partnership for a our church."

At the Communist Party Headquarters

for the Province of Villa Clara, the Glendale group heard positive comments from the Secretary of Religious Affairs about the "young and small" congregation's work in its community and the valuable role it has played in the life of the people there. She was encouraging about the idea of partnership with a US church.

Adalberto Cuéllar, the executive director of the Fraternity, spoke at Glendale on Aug. 13. "I think his being with us so soon after the partnership has begun will really solidify it for us and get the whole church

involved immediately."

Former Alliance board member Mark Caldwell is pastor of Glendale. Jonathan Entenza is pastor of the Santa Clara church.

Jonathan's father Miguel is pastor of the church in Santi Spíritus that has become the new partner of First Baptist Church in Savannah, GA. Both of these churches previously had been partnered with other congregations and were looking to establish new relationships. John Finley is pastor in Savannah.

I am awake, again remembering my surprise at the culture I encountered among the Indians living in South Africa. And yet, after reflection, I realized that I have returned home to a culture quite the same. Perhaps my ability to see it was sharpened in Africa.

SOUTH AFRICA REFLECTIONS

By Alliance President Paula Clayton Dempsey, Chaplain, Mars Hill College



I departed the US just a few days after the Southern Baptist Convention annual meeting declared women unfit to serve as pastors. My hopes were to leave the US and to literally leave behind the issues that were burdensome and heavy at home. NOT! I found upon entering South Africa that any of my personal issues, or those of the students who accompanied me, were only magnified. Those same old feelings of inadequacy surfaced in the midst of the work among the church in South Africa for me. And

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Gender Equity Task Force

In preparation for the 2001 Convocation, the Gender Equity Task Force is enlisting churches to participate in Listening Groups this fall. The idea is for men and women to meet, both together and separately, in four to six sessions, to discuss issues that prohibit gender equity in our churches. Co-facilitators, who are members of the congregation, will help provide an atmosphere of safety so that participants can be as honest with one another as they care to be. Each group will identify:

1. Two or more concrete things it will recommend its congregation do in the coming year to address inequities.
2. Recommend to the Task Force two or more things the Alliance can do to help churches deal with inequities.

The facilitators of 6-10 pilot churches will gather for a retreat the first weekend in December to share and record their experiences. This information will be presented at the 2001 Convocation in written form and in a workshop.

If your church would like to participate, please contact Lynn Rhoades, Associate Pastor, Wake Forest Baptist Church, 336-758-5014 or rhoademl@wfu.edu.

CHURCH'S NAME CHANGE RESULTS FROM BAPTIST STEREOTYPE

First Baptist Church in Oberlin, OH, has changed its name to Peace Community Church. The consensus vote was taken on June 11 after several months of study. The name change comes about as the church continues to challenge negative Baptist stereotypes.

happenings "The average person on the street who has had no personal experience with Baptists does not distinguish the fine points of difference between various Baptist denominations, pronouncements, and perspectives," wrote pastor Stephen Hammond in explaining the name change.

"We are a different kind of Baptist church," he said.

"Baptists have a long and wonderful history of openness to new ideas, commitment to inclusive ministry, and belief that the gospel of Jesus Christ is, at least, as concerned about this world as the next. However, that is not the perception that seems to come to mind to most people these days when you say the word Baptist, or put that word in the name of your church."

The congregation narrowed a list of 28 suggested names to four finalists, then discussed each possibility in depth. "The process was good. We had six months of great discussions about this," Stephen said. "If we hadn't been able to arrive at consensus on changing the name, I think we all could have understood that as a word from God"

The church is now working on ways to reintroduce itself to the community. "We've done lots of talking and planning and dreaming and praying about how our new name can help us focus our ministry and mission," Stephen said.

Peace Community Church is affiliated with the Alliance of Baptists, American Baptists Churches USA, and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America.

RAMONIA LEE RECEIVES DOCTORATE

Alliance board member Ramonia Lee was recently awarded a Doctor of Ministry degree from Wesley Theological Seminary. She has accepted a position as Associate Pastor at the Interfaith Chapel at Leisure World, a retirement community in Silver Spring, MD. Previously Ramonia worked with Senior Adult Ministries of the D.C. Baptist Convention.

TIM TURNHAM JOINS CLINIC STAFF IN WASHINGTON

Alliance member Tim Turnham is the new director of development for the Whitman-Walker Clinic in Washington DC. Whitman-Walker specializes in HIV/AIDS and gay and lesbian health issues. It is the nation's largest AIDS service organization. Tim is a former board member of the Alliance.

A CHANGE IN ROCHESTER: THE BROSENDs WANT TO WRITE AND SING

Alliance members Bill and Christine Brosend have resigned their positions at First Baptist Church in Rochester, NY, to pursue their dreams of writing and singing. Bill has been pastor of the American Baptist congregation for five years and Christine has been music director for four. Their resignations are effective Sept. 10. They will remain in Rochester. Bill is a Ph. D. graduate of the University of Chicago and Christine is an organ major from Carnegie-Mellon University. Bill's immediate plans are to complete a book he is writing on the historical Jesus.



BILL BROSEND

GEORGIA CONVOCATION SCHEDULED IN OCTOBER

The Annual Convocation of the Georgia chapter of the Alliance of Baptists will be held Oct. 20-21 at Cohutta Springs Retreat Center in Crandall, GA, led by Ted Purcell, campus minister at Duke University and a member of the Alliance task force on the environment.. For information contact Brian Dixon in Atlanta, 404/377-6568, bdixon@learnlink.emory.edu.



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Now that both major political parties have nominated their candidates for president and vice president of the United States, the official debate has been joined over whose vision will guide the nation into a new century and millennium. We the people have the right to expect not only a vigorous debate but a civil one as well.

Perhaps a good place to begin is within ourselves. We the citizens like to complain about negative politics. Yet the pollsters and pundits insist we respond to negative advertising and attacks by candidates on one another. So it seems we can have it both ways. But should we want it so? What if we sent the message to all candidates that we expect them to be civil?

This is not to say we don't need a healthy debate. While we should applaud the basic decency of Vice President Gore and Governor Bush, of Senator Lieberman and Congressman Cheney, we expect them to debate their parties' differing views. The country deserves nothing less.

But we shouldn't let them trash each other. If they do we should call them to account. Each of these candidates has a distinguished record of public service. They should say so, publicly to the nation and privately to one another. Their campaign ads should reflect such respect. And their face-to-face debates, always among the most telling moments of any campaign, should be

perspectives



By Stan Hastey
Executive Director

characterized by thoughtful exchanges of views, not by personal attacks.

Such a balance is what the Interfaith Alliance is advocating again this election year in its Call to a Faithful Decision Weekend. This nationwide observance, set for Oct. 27-29, is part of the Interfaith Alliance's emphasis on "community responsibility, mutual respect, and the common good rather than the oft-used appeals to fear and confusion that have been the hallmark of other groups purporting to represent 'people of faith'...

"People of faith share common obligations to address issues of civility, human dignity, poverty and equality. One of the most basic ways to meet these obligations is by learning about important issues, educating those around us, and voting in a thoughtful, faithful manner."

Two years ago, more than 1,000 religious leaders in all 50 states joined in promoting the Call to a Faithful Decision Weekend. This year, as in 1998, the Alliance of Baptists is supporting the Interfaith

Alliance's call. If you are interested in participating, send an e-mail message to the Interfaith Alliance Foundation at religion@interfaithalliance.org, or fill out the on-line form at <http://www.interfaithalliance.org/Resources/ctfdwform.html>. For further information by telephone, call the Interfaith Alliance's Religious Outreach Coordinator, Sandhya Jha, at 202/639-6370.

SOUTH AFRICA

(continued from page 1)

the issue of women's roles did not become focused in the church but in the culture.

We were at a church in Sezela, a community composed of persons whose families came from India. While South Africa is predominately Christian, Hinduism and Islam are the faith expressions of many, and the superstition and fear that accompanies the practices of the blacks in South Africa has also affected the Indians.

When we attended a wedding, the impact of culture shock began to take hold. Our host pastor rose and delivered a message that stunned all of us dressed in saris for the first time. To my shock, he preached a sermon directed to the bride instructing her to submit to her husband's authority! How can he reach these conclusions? The answer he gave: this is the way of Indian culture.

The way of Indian culture that we

"... on the other side of the globe, I became again assured that the message of the gospel is one that frees us from bondage and slavery to many things in the world — including culture."

encountered consigned women to washing dishes and clothes, cooking and cleaning, childbearing and rearing, and tending the ill and elderly so much so that there was no time to dream of a different life.

The young women seemingly swallowed all these expectations without raising an eyebrow! They have obviously embraced western/modern culture in the way they dress, in their entertainment, and in their practices of worship. And yet the young women marry at astonishingly early ages and by the age 25 have given birth to several children.

In South Africa, the grip of culture on Baptists in the South became clear to me. Southern Baptists were born out of a culture intent on keeping as slaves a population brought here from Africa. That culture dominated in the south and contributed to massive bloodshed. The inheritors of that

same culture are now intent on preserving the traditional culture of the South in relationship to women in the church and home.

My last night in South Africa was spent in the company of a group of people who are the coordinators of the World Conference on Religion and Peace in the Durban, South Africa area. What a joy it was to meet these people with a vision for peace and justice that is so needed in South Africa — and here. The group included Hindus, Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

In an interfaith setting on the other side of the globe, I became again assured that the message of the gospel is one that frees us from bondage and slavery to many things in the world — including culture. The message of Christ is good news to those who are heavy laden and oppressed. I put my hope in the truth that Jesus the Christ embodied, and in that truth I find freedom.

2000 Operating Budget:

Needs: \$153,288
Receipts: \$168,216

2000 Mission Offering

Goal: \$85,250
Receipts: \$39,895

September 2000

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Charles Foster Johnson, pastor of Second Baptist Church, Lubbock, TX, presented one of the principal papers on capital punishment before the Baptist World Alliance's Ethics Commission in Havana, Cuba, this summer.

C U B A

NEW GRANT FROM MANN MISSIONS FUND

During its July meeting, the Myrtle Arnall Mann Missions and Scholarship Committee of Central Baptist Church, Newnan, GA, approved a grant of \$40,500 to the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba for construction and rehabilitation work at its future conference center in Havana. Over the past three years, the Mann fund has awarded nearly \$125,000 to Fraternity projects and nearly \$50,000 to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe.

Commenting on the Mann fund's gifts, Alliance Executive Director Stan Hasteley said they have validated the Alliance's "loaves and fishes" approach to mission support. "Just as Jesus invited a child to share his meager lunch with a multitude of hungry learners, so the Alliance has had the dual privilege of investing our own modest resources and inviting others to expand the support of our overseas partners in Cuba and Zimbabwe," Hasteley said.

"Myrtle Arnall Mann was a woman of faith with a vision for the whole world," Hasteley added. "Because of her profound sense of Christian stewardship, her biological heirs in the Mann family and her spiritual heirs in Central Baptist Church have entered into a partnership with the Lord to multiply the resources she so magnanimously left for others. We in the Alliance thank God for her and for them."

CRISTINA GARCÍA TO STUDY IN THE U.S.

Cristina García of Matanzas, Cuba, has been awarded a full scholarship to pursue post-graduate studies at the Episcopal Divinity School in Cambridge, MA. She begins the two-year program this month. A 1998 honors graduate of the Protestant Evangelical Seminary of Cuba in Matanzas, Cristina represented the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba at the 1995 Alliance convocation in Vienna, VA.

Although she was initially denied a student visa by U.S. officials in Havana, Fraternity President Francisco Rodés and Alliance Executive Director Stan Hasteley appealed the denial in meetings at the U.S. Interests Section in July. Following a second interview, Cristina's visa was granted.

Among those who have supported the young Cuban minister in her studies is a women's Bible class in First Baptist Church, Greenville, SC. Baptist Women in Ministry of Kansas City, KS, has indicated its interest in supporting Cristina during her stay in the U.S.

TWO CONGREGATIONS

ORGANIZED DURING JULY

Two new churches were organized by the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba during July. This increases the number of member churches to 25.

The first of these new churches, led by Ramona Matos, is located in the town of Bolivia in the province of Ciego de Avila. The second new church is in the city of Matanzas. Antonio Santana, the Coordinator of Youth Ministries for the Fraternity, is pastor.