

connections

July 1999

Volume 2 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.

C U B A

Zaida Hernández, co-pastor of the Iglesia de Dios in Matanzas and chair of the Women's Committee of the Fraternity

of Baptist Churches of Cuba, presided at the third annual women's retreat, held May 28-30 in Los Pinos, Camagüey. Seven women have been ordained to the ministry by Fraternity

churches during the group's first decade. It was the first Baptist body in Cuba to ordain women as pastors and deacons.

Francisco (Paco) Rodés, pastor of First Baptist Church of Matanzas, Cuba, presided during the May 20 service marking the centennial of the church's organiza-

tion in 1899. One of the oldest Baptist congregations in Cuba, First Baptist of Matanzas is known

for its community ministries. Rodés was the first president of the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba when the Alliance's partner group was organized a decade ago.



Cross Creek Community Church in Dayton, Ohio, is a recipient of Alliance Mission Offering funding. Shown here is volunteer Karen Dubro with two of the kids who are part of a new "Great Adventure" program made possible in part because of the Alliance gift.

massachusetts church is new affiliate

'alliance transcends old dividing lines'

First Baptist Church in Newton, MA, voted unanimously on May 21 to affiliate with the Alliance, making it the first American Baptist church in Massachusetts to do so. Located just outside Boston near the campus of Andover Newton Theological School, the church has been a leader among American Baptists since its founding in 1780.

The vote to join the Alliance came after six months of discussion and education concerning the principles of the Alliance, a visit by Stan Hastey in which he preached and led an informational forum, and discussions with other Baptist leaders. "By the time of the vote, one long-time church leader called it a no-brainer, meaning that there was no question that the Alliance of Baptists was a group of kindred spirits and that the church should be affiliated with the Alliance," said pastor Thomas R. McKibbens.

McKibbens was sensitive to the American

Baptist concerns expressing the hope that the Alliance has expanded beyond its regional origins. "It became clear that current tensions within American Baptist life in many ways mirror past tensions in Southern Baptist life," McKibbens said, "and that the principles on which the Alliance is founded are crucial for Baptists everywhere. There is great appreciation within the First Baptist Church in Newton that the Alliance of Baptists transcends old dividing lines among Baptists."

"Those committed to the founding principles of the Alliance need to know each other and can benefit greatly from the association," said McKibbens. There is also the hope among members of the Newton church that their decision will influence other American Baptist churches in New England to consider joining the Alliance, McKibbens said.



Thousands of Cuban Christians gathered May 30 in Marianao, a municipality of the city of Havana, for one of many outdoor services held during May-June as part of a nationwide Evangelical Celebration. Forty-nine Protestant bodies joined in sponsoring the event, which culminated June 20 in Havana's Plaza de la Revolucion, where an estimated 100,000 — including Cuban President Fidel Castro — participated.

Zimbabwe

A group of Alliance members will go to Zimbabwe July 15-Aug. 3. Included will be Furman Hewitt, Director of the Baptist House of Studies at Duke University, who will teach pastoral care at the Church Leadership Institute the Alliance is sponsoring for pastors, and Tracy Hartman, who will teach preaching. Also, Stan Hastey will represent the Alliance at the 36th Annual Congress of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe Aug. 20-22 at the Baptist Conference Center outside Gweru. This year's theme is *The Grace of Giving*.

Puerto Rico

A friendship tour to Puerto Rico, jointly sponsored by the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America and the Alliance of Baptists, is scheduled for Oct. 27-Nov. 1. To learn more or to register, contact LeDayne McLeese Polaski, BPFNA, 4800 Wedgewood Dr., Charlotte NC 28210. Phone: 704/521-6051. Fax: 704/521-6053. E-mail: ledayne@bpfna.org.

Alliance board member **Bonnie Dixon** is one of two new staff members at Millbrook Baptist Church in Raleigh. Bonnie began on June 1 in the new position of Associate Minister for Mission and Ministry. She is a daughter of home missionaries, a graduate of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond and has been on several mission trips to Zimbabwe. She currently serves as the chair of the Missions Committee for the Alliance.

Jacqueline Hope Derby began work May 9 as the Minister with Youth. Jacqueline has just completed her first year at Duke Divinity School and is responding to a sense of call to parish ministry. She is a native of Florida.

Bob Albritton, also an Alliance board member, has just completed his fifth year as Senior Pastor of Millbrook and has been granted a six-week sabbatical this summer, June 28-August 8.

David Breckenridge is the new pastor of Rolling Hills Baptist Church in Fayetteville, AR. He has served three years as Associate Pastor for Youth and Family Life at Highland Park Baptist Church in Austin, TX.

Carolyn Hale, a past president of Baptist Women in Ministry, has been called as pastor of Memorial Baptist Church in Savannah, GA. She began her ministry May 9.

Rodney Stewart-Wilcox, former co-pastor with his wife Ronda of Grace Baptist Church in Statesville, NC, has been called as pastor of the Nineteenth Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco.

happenings

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Alliance Board of Directors member Cathy Tamsberg is coordinating an effort by Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, DC, to organize a new Latino Baptist congregation in the nation's capital. The seed for the endeavor was planted last year when Calvary, host of the 1998 Alliance convocation, started a Latino Sunday school under the leadership of Revs. Edgar and Amparo Palacios. Initially funded by a one-year grant from a Calvary mission fund, the project now needs other congregational partners to move toward the formation of the new Shalom Baptist Church.

Currently a few small Baptist congregations are ministering to the needs of more than 100,000 Spanish-speaking persons in D.C. For more information, call Cathy at 202/347-8355 (Calvary) or 703/684-7951 (home). Or send her an e-mail message at ctamsberg@aol.com.

MISSION
OPPORTUNITY

They even have their own acronym, HIPC, for Highly Indebted Poor Countries.

They are the 33 poorest nations in the world and collectively “owe” \$127 billion to industrialized countries and institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank. Many are located in sub-Saharan Africa. Others include Burma, Bolivia, Guyana, Honduras and Nicaragua.

After years of high-level international debate over how to balance their often conflicting interests with those of their prosperous creditors, momentum has been gathering for some resolution, albeit partial, to mark the changing of the millennia.

Now, with a suddenness that seemed to stun even the strongest advocates of debt reduction, the Group of Seven (G-7) leading industrialized democracies agreed to a major breakthrough. As Charles Babington of the *Washington Post* put it in the lead paragraph of an article filed in Cologne, Germany, on June 18, “The world’s seven wealthiest nations pledged today to relieve poor countries of more than half of a crushing load of debt that for decades has stymied their efforts to climb out of poverty.”

Noteworthy in the agreement is the significant condition that in order to qualify for the reductions, the debtor nations must spend the windfall primarily on education and health programs, with special attention to the prevention of AIDS. If they meet the conditions, the HIPCs can escape as much as \$70 billion in payments to the G-7 countries over the next few years. Other lending nations are being challenged by the G-7 to chip in an

additional \$20 billion in debt relief.

Among those responsible for the heightened attention to international debt relief are the constituent bodies of the Jubilee 2000 Coalition. Among these is Bread for the World, whose representative Joel Underwood appealed for and received support for the plan from the Alliance of Baptists last March, when our Board of Directors endorsed Jubilee 2000.

Although the coalition and other humanitarian groups had wanted even greater debt relief from the G-7, many nevertheless are praising the new initiative for placing emphasis on health and education spending. Yet much remains to be done. Now is a propitious time for Alliance people to lend a helping hand.

This year’s Bread for the World theme, Proclaim Jubilee: Break the Chains of Debt, is actually an invitation and a challenge to action. BFW’s 1999 Offering of Letters campaign is asking the U.S. Congress to relieve the burden of all debtor nations. As Archbishop Desmond Tutu put it in urging support for the campaign: “The biblical principle of Jubilee reminds us that all belongs to God. In the Jubilee year, debts are forgiven. Debtors make a new beginning. Children deserve to be free from malnutrition, to have basic health care, to have a chance at education. Their shoulders cannot and should not carry their countries’ burdens of debt.”

To learn how to do your part, contact Bread for the World at 1100 Wayne Ave., Suite 1000, Silver Spring MD 20910. Phone: 1-800-82-BREAD. Fax: 301/608-2401. E-mail: offering.of.letters@bread.org.

perspectives



By Stan Hastey
Executive Director

MEMBERSHIP NEWS

Individuals are invited to become members of the Alliance at any time. Annual membership dues are \$40, individuals; \$60, families; \$125, sustaining; and \$20, students/low income.

ALLIANCE COMMITTEE ASSIGNMENTS

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Sharlande Sledge (non-board)
D. H. Clark (non-board)

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Cherie Smith Bill Sapp

The 11th Assembly of the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba has been set for Nov. 25-28 in Matanzas. During this year’s gathering, delegates will observe the 10th anniversary of the Fraternity’s organization, elect officers and conduct other business. Alliance Executive Director Stan Hastey is to lead a group of Alliance people on a pre-Assembly visit to Cuba Nov. 18-24. Some Alliance representatives will stay on to participate in the Assembly, which this year falls on our Thanksgiving Day weekend.

cuba

Operating Budget YTD:

Needs: \$117,815
 Receipts: \$126,566

Mission Offering YTD:

Goal: \$80,000
 Receipts: \$25,590

Cuba Grant:

Challenge: \$23,700
 Receipts: \$19,012

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Dolores Street Baptist Church

in San Francisco, CA, is still rebuilding from the ashes that fell upon it seven years ago – ashes caused by fire and those caused by its separation from the Southern Baptist Convention.

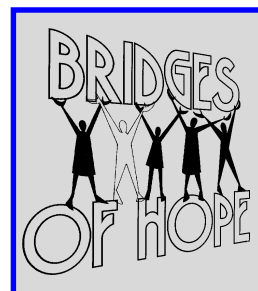
The fire destroyed most of the building the congregation had worshipped in since it was founded in January 1943 as the First Southern Baptist Church of San Francisco. Since then the small congregation has been worshipping in a storefront building and had drawn up plans for a new permanent facility. Those plans have been put on hold now, said pastor Doug Donley, as the church has decided to look for rented space that can be shared with several other like-minded organizations.

“Some of the groups that want to share space with us need it now,” Doug said. “They don’t have time to wait for a new building.” He thinks a site will be found and the church moved within the next few months.

Out of the ashes caused by the separation with the SBC has come a clear vision from the members at Dolores Street: “We know that we can be quite ordinary people. Yet, we remember that our community, frail and changeable as it is, chooses to bear the promise of God in the world. Our church chooses not just to believe, but to be shaped by that promise. As we discover our real selves and our appetite for righteousness, justice and service, we move toward

fulfillment. There are no other options.”

Today’s congregation still includes some former Golden Gate Seminary students who have stayed to work in the city. There are also a few old-timers, who’ve been with the church for decades. And there are some displaced Southerners who came to San Francisco for other reasons. “But we find



**Cross Creek
 Community Church \$1,000
 Dolores Street
 Baptist Church \$1,000**

our numbers getting smaller,” Doug said, “The cost of living here is exorbitant and some of our long-time members have recently moved away from the city.”

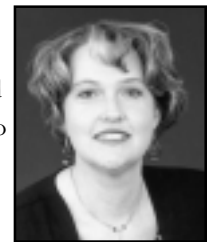
Nevertheless, the ministry goes on and Doug is looking forward to having a student from BTSR work with him this summer in the church’s companion ministry, Dolores Street Community Services, which provides shelter to up to 120 people each night.

The Alliance funding goes toward pastoral salary support.

Cross Creek Community Church

in Dayton, OH, has been able to start a new children’s program, due in part to Alliance funding that supports the salary of one of the church’s pastors, Sue Voisard.

Sue is a part-time minister at Cross Creek, and a full-time occupational therapist in the public schools. She is also a Master of Divinity student at United Theological Seminary in Dayton. In January, Sue took over the weekend children’s program and “completely revolutionized it,” said senior pastor Mike Castle. The *Creator’s Kids’ Great Adventure* is now offered to children from birth to fifth grade at all three weekend worship services (5:30 p.m. on Saturdays and 9:30 and 11 a.m. on Sundays). “We have seen our children’s attendance double with all her efforts and creativity,” Mike said. “It’s boosted our overall weekend worship attendance as the children’s rooms have been remodeled and brightly painted with themes from nature.” Sue has also developed and trained a staff of 23 volunteers for the program.



Sue Voisard

Beyond the children’s program, Cross Creek has been working recently with church member Sabri Saif as he sought and just received asylum in the United States. “Sabri was baptized in our church in September of 1998,” Mike said. “Because he converted to Christianity from Islam and because he is gay, he has been cut off from his family and a death sentence has been placed on his life if he were to return to his native Saudi Arabia.”