

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.

## To Carter: “We Cubans Will Not Forget You”

By Francisco (Paco) Rodés

In recent years two windows have been opened up to Cubans through which a refreshing breeze of hope, friendship and peace have entered in. One was the visit of the Pope, who as a messenger of peace and hope convened hundreds of thousands of Cubans in public squares to pray for the peace and well-being of Cuba. His call was, “That Cuba open itself to the world; that the world open itself to Cuba.”

More recently, although with virtually no mobilization of the people, but with great efficacy, former President Jimmy Carter, dressed in a *guayabera* and accompanied by his wife Rosalynn and their delegation, made his appearance.

His visit was not of a religious nature; he came rather as a retired politician, though still committed to peace in the world. His kind smile, his friendly gestures, his approach to people and especially to common people, captured the good will of all Cubans, who by means of television attentively followed this unexpected visitor.

Not only did he express admiration for

and publicly acknowledge the achievements of Cuban society in the areas of medical care, education, and attention to the disabled, as well as Cuba’s scientific development in particular fields such as biotechnology; but also his courage did not fail him in criticizing both the economic embargo enforced on Cuba for more than 35 years by several U.S. administrations and



Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, seated center, listens to Cuban pastors at the Martin Luther King Center in Havana on May 15. Among other initiatives during his term as president, Carter helped open the way for Cubans living in exile to visit their relatives in Cuba.

what he considers deficiencies in Cuba’s political system.

For the first time in the history of the revolution, the demands of those opposed to the government were expressed on

television and in the press. Carter was heard with great respect by the highest authorities in the government. It could not have been otherwise given that they were dealing with an honest man with no ulterior motives but a man filled with good will.

Protestants, knowing well the Christian qualities of the visitor, followed his visit with particular interest and had the

opportunity to spend an entire afternoon meeting with him. First he met with the presidents of nearly all religious denominations in the country for a conversation in which they were able to explain to him the progress and opportunities enjoyed by the Cuban churches since the beginning of the decade of the ’90s, during which time every reference to atheism was deleted from the Constitution and every practice of religious discrimination was outlawed. The churches’ growth in recent years particularly impressed the visitor.

A worship service celebrated at Ebenezer Baptist Church in

Havana gave the former President the chance to sense the enormous joy and vitality of the Cuban church, expressed in dance, song and a moving sermon by the

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**FRANCISCO (PACO) RODÉS** is the former pastor of First Baptist Church in Matanzas, Cuba, and was a founding member of the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba. He is currently serving as president of the Fraternity, and is professor of church history at the Protestant Evangelical Seminary of Cuba in Matanzas. He was awarded a Doctor of Ministry degree from Columbia Seminary in Atlanta last month.

**G**lendale Baptist Church of Nashville, TN, has called Alliance member **April Baker** as its first associate pastor. She is to begin her ministry July 1. Currently a member of Olin T. Binkley Memorial Baptist Church of Chapel Hill, NC, and a director of the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America, Baker is also BPFNA's board pastor.

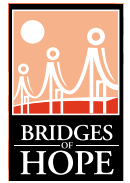
**happenings** Alliance member **Anita D. Thompson** has been called as minister of family enrichment at her home church, First Baptist of Ahoskie, NC. She will also direct the older children's choir, a dimension of her ministry she asked the search committee to include in its recommendation to the church.

Former Alliance President **Ann A. Quattlebaum** has earned the Ph.D. degree from the College of Social Work at the University of South Carolina. A longtime lay leader in Greenville First Baptist Church, Quattlebaum is coordinator for the Center for Theological Exploration of Vocation, a Lilly Endowment-funded program at Furman University.

Alliance member **Sharlande Sledge**, associate pastor of Lake Shore Baptist Church, Waco TX, has been awarded a study grant for pastoral leaders by the Louisville Institute, a Lilly Endowment

## MISSION OFFERING FUNDING APPLICATIONS DUE

The Alliance of Baptists Missions Committee is now accepting applications for projects to be considered for funding through the 2003 Mission Offering. Information about the guidelines and the application for support are available on the Alliance website at [www.allianceofbaptists.org](http://www.allianceofbaptists.org), or you may contact the Alliance office at 202/745-7609. The deadline for application is Aug. 1.



Program for the Study of American Religion. Her proposal, "God's Welcome for a Weary World: The Practice of Biblical Hospitality," was one of 40 chosen from a field of 232 applications. Sharlande will be on sabbatic leave from Lake Shore through mid-July.

Virginia-Highland Baptist Church in Atlanta on May 5 changed its name to **Virginia-Highland Church**, a Baptist and United Church of Christ congregation. In his pastor's column, Tim Shirley said: "I must tell you that the struggle with the name change came after much

soul-searching. I am a Baptist! I have reached the point, however, that if a word hinders people from coming to church, then that word must either be jettisoned or transformed. I pray that our decision will help bring to Virginia-Highland folks who otherwise would never visit, much less join, this church."

The Alliance-affiliated College Park Baptist Church of Greensboro, NC, has called **Marnie Fisher-Ingram** as associate minister for youth and education. She is a 2002 graduate of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond.



Francisco (Paco) Rodés, standing at right, speaks to the group of Christian leaders meeting with former U.S. President Jimmy Carter at the Martin Luther King Center in Havana. Carter is at left.

## Jimmy Carter in Cuba

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Rev. Raúl Suárez, who brought tears to the eyes of those present in telling of a visit to a school for children with Down's syndrome. He observed the tenderness of those attending to these children, and this in spite of the economic deprivations known to all Cubans.

"A people such as this," the preacher declared with emotion, "cannot be forgotten by God." Carter said a few words in perfect Spanish, testifying of his deep Christian convictions, of his joy to find himself with other Christians, and of his hope that Cuba will be richly blessed by God.

Carter's visit could not possibly raise expectations such as those raised by a

sitting official with respect to treaties, agreements and official documents. His was simply the visit of a man motivated by the best of human sentiments. Here is a man who signals a path to reconciliation, understanding and tolerance, which are the premises for harmony and peace between peoples and nations.

Carter has shined a light into the shadows that for 40 years have separated the United States and Cuba. His example is a call, a "voice in the wilderness," of one who prepares a new way for future relations between our two peoples.

Thank you, admired and beloved brother, President Carter, for your lovely gesture. We Cubans will not forget you!



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# Cuba and Zimbabwe: Troubled countries

Both Cuba and Zimbabwe, places where by God's grace the Alliance has been called to invest of our energy and resources, are in trouble. In both places, fundamental changes in our country's policies are desperately needed.

In the case of Cuba, former President Jimmy Carter had barely set foot back on U.S. soil following his dramatic May visit to our island neighbor before incumbent President George W. Bush sought to nullify the good Carter had done by announcing Draconian new policies. Instead of using Carter's historic visit and the former president's finely-honed diplomatic skills as an occasion to reach out to the Cuban people, President Bush instead gave them the back of his hand in a bellicose address in Miami. It was plainly designed to bolster his brother's standing within the Cuban-American community in the latter's run for reelection as Florida's governor.

No significant change in U.S. policy toward Cuba can be expected, Bush declared, until Cuban President Fidel Castro is out of power. This is a shame. And it is shameful.

These observations are born, not of political partisanship, but of conviction. Alliance people and others who have heard me talk about Cuba know I have condemned policies carried out by both Republican and Democratic presidents over the past four decades. And they have heard me say as well that the significant breakthrough we so long for is more likely to happen with a Republican in the White House. Regrettably it is becoming plain such a change is unlikely to come with this Republican president.

In Zimbabwe, while the entire country teeters on the precipice of unparalleled disaster, we are doing precious little. The neglect of Africa as a whole by the western world is nothing short of

disgraceful. Yes, it is true that Africa is at the top of the agenda for this summer's G8 summit. Some new willingness to address the continent's indescribably desperate conditions has been signaled in discussions about trade liberalization.

Yet so much more is needed. Nothing less than a project similar to the Marshall Plan in post-World War II Europe is called for. It is true that certain African nations, Zimbabwe included, must reform themselves politically to have any chance at significant improvement in their overall economic condition. But when it comes to Africa, the rich world's governments — led by the United States — give fitful attention at best. Such on-and-off expressions of concern will do little to relieve the vast continent's misery.

If nothing else, our nation could lead an all-out attack on HIV/AIDS in Zimbabwe and those other

African countries where the pandemic threatens the survival of entire peoples. Our government could and should tap into the passion of good people inside and outside Africa in developing strategies to combat the deadly syndrome. Experts such as Fran and Lonnie Turner, Cooperative Baptist Fellowship representatives in sub-Saharan Africa, could lead the way. Lonnie and Fran, by the way, are also passionately committed members of the Alliance. We too need to help them and avail ourselves of their expertise and willingness to serve in order to save lives in Zimbabwe and elsewhere in Africa.

Frequently I'm asked how things are with the Alliance. And I reply that things are good, that we have challenging and interesting work to do. That is an understatement. What we need is an infusion of nothing less than a passion to change the world — and our own country's policies.

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley  
Executive Director

## ZIMBABWE GUESTS APPRECIATE WELCOME

Champion Chasara, president of the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe, has asked that his thanks and those of BCZ Executive Secretary John Mazvigadza be passed along to all Alliance people and churches who made their visit to the United States this Spring such a success. Chasara also wrote, "Thanks very much for letting us ... be part of your Convocation. We really felt welcome. Our brothers and sisters treated us as guests of honour." Those wishing to remain in contact with our Zimbabwean friends may do so by e-mail ([baptconv@adtech.co.zw](mailto:baptconv@adtech.co.zw)).



Champion  
Chasara,  
president  
of the Baptist  
Convention of  
Zimbabwe

## JOB OPPORTUNITIES

**First Baptist Church** of Greenwood, SC, is searching for a senior pastor. This church has just completed a year-long self-study using the Intentional Interim Process guided by The Center for Congregational Health in North Carolina. Direct inquiries to: Chairman of the Senior Pastor Search Committee, First Baptist Church, 722 Grace Street, Greenwood, SC 29649.

**University Baptist Church** in Baltimore, MD, seeks a full-time minister of education and spiritual formation. Send resumes and references to: Lamar King, pastor, University Baptist Church, 3501 N. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21218.

**2002 Operating Budget**

Through May 31

Needs: \$121,890  
Receipts: \$113,230

**2002 Mission Offering:**

Goal: \$95,000  
Receipts: \$39,286

July 2002

**PURSuing JUSTICE**

Pursuing justice with and for those who are oppressed is one of the commitments we make in our Alliance Mission statement. This is another in a series of columns on that subject. This one is written by Sylvia Campbell, a member of the Peace and Justice Committee. At right is one suggestion from board member Bonnie Dixon on how we can help pursue justice for those suffering in Zimbabwe.



Sylvia Campbell

**FAIR WAGES: AN ISSUE FOR THE ALLIANCE**

On Wednesday, June 5, 2002, the lead story in the Business section of the *Washington Post* detailed the severance packages of several chief executives in the business world.

The value of just four of the packages ranged from \$100+ million to \$9 million per year, plus retirement benefits. According to the *Post* headline, the “road out is paved in gold.”

That same day, I attended a coalition gathering in which the status of the minimum wage earner in America was discussed. Clearly, the road to work for millions of Americans is NOT paved in gold.

In stark contrast to the severance pay of CEOs, minimum wage employees working 40 hours per week, 52 weeks per year, currently earn \$10,700 per year, which is more than \$4,000 below the poverty line for a family of three.

The Minimum Wage Coalition meeting, at which this fact was presented, gathered to develop grassroots support and strategies to insure passage of the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2002.

The bill, sponsored by Senator Edward Kennedy of Massachusetts, should reach the Senate floor in July of this year. If passed, the act

would raise the minimum wage by \$1.50 in three moderate steps: \$0.60 sixty days after enactment; \$0.50 on January 1, 2003 and \$0.40 on January 1, 2004.

The bill faces strong opposition from the business community and will require an equally strong effort from those who support its passage.

To that end, leaders of organizations attending the coalition meeting pledged to get the word out about the bill to their membership and ask those interested in seeing this bill enacted to please contact their senators and House members TODAY and urge that they vote YES on the Fair Minimum Wage Act of 2002 (S.2538/H.R. 4799).

As the sponsor of the bill, Senator Kennedy stated, “This is a moral issue. It is an issue for women and children, an issue of civil rights, an issue of fairness and an issue of dignity. A fair increase in the minimum wage is long overdue and our inaction shameful. No one who works for a living should have to live in poverty.”

You may call the offices of your senators and House member at the Capitol switchboard 202/224-3121 or find E-mail addresses at [www.house.gov](http://www.house.gov) and [www.senate.gov](http://www.senate.gov).

**Addressing Global Crises: Zimbabwe**

Write to Zimbabwe’s President Mugabe, calling for an end to restrictions of peaceful dissent and the suppression of basic freedoms.

Urge that Zimbabwe respect the fundamental human rights and freedoms to which it is committed by treaty, including freedoms of expression, association and assembly.

Letters may be addressed to:  
H. E. Robert Mugabe  
President of Zimbabwe  
c/o H. E. Dr. Simbi V. Mubako  
Ambassador of Zimbabwe to the United States  
1608 New Hampshire Avenue, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20009  
FAX: 202.483.9326;  
[zimemb@erols.com](mailto:zimemb@erols.com)