

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.

Board affirms bold plan to increase AOB membership, resources

Looking toward a future that focuses on inclusion and partnerships among a “Spirit-led people,” the Board of Directors of the Alliance of Baptists has affirmed a bold plan that calls for a 30 percent increase in membership and a 40 percent increase in financial resources over the next three years.

The strategic plan was the result of nearly a year of work by a committee appointed to study the Alliance’s current structure and goals and make recommendations for the future.

The board spent two days considering the recommendations of the work group. The three major priorities that were recommended and affirmed include:


- That the Alliance become more inclusive as to region and race, clergy and laity, gender and sexual orientation, young and old.

- That the Alliance focus more on partnerships – domestically and internationally, ecumenically and in interfaith relations, and in its public witness to peace with justice.

- That the Alliance become more a “Spirit-led people on the move” in its governance and staffing, communications and fund development.

Each priority includes numerous goals and strategies, such as increasing financial gifts by 40 percent by 2006. The board hopes to do that by employing a part-time financial development specialist, and in the 2004 budget approved \$30,000 to fund that position.

The board also hopes to meet its priorities by beefing up its



New Alliance board members Alan Hoskins of Bardstown, Kentucky, and Dale Peterson of New Haven, Connecticut, listen to presentations about the strategic plan.

internet and printed communications both within the Alliance and among potential member congregations and individuals. The 2004 budget includes \$36,000 for communications, up from \$29,900 in 2003.

“I think this is an exciting plan that will position the Alliance to be a leader in advocating for the inclusion of all people in worship and ministry,” said Alliance president Craig Henry, an attorney from Monroe, LA. “It will also position us to set the standard for working with people of all faiths who have a commitment to ministries and missions consistent with our covenant.”

The plan calls for the Alliance to start three new churches by 2006; to continue to explore possibilities for collaboration with other Baptist bodies; to increase its participation with the National Council of Churches; to double the number of chaplains and pastoral counselors that it has endorsed (currently 95); to make its resolutions and policy statements more available especially to public officials; and to encourage more regional meetings among Alliance members.

The work group recommended some specific tactics for implementing the goals, and appropriate board committees, work groups and Alliance staff will be assigned to consider those recommendations as the plan moves forward.

“This was a potentially historic meeting of our board,” said Alliance Executive Director Stan Hastey. “Since the beginning, the Alliance has done a good job of defining itself. We have done so again, this time with greater precision than ever before, in adopting a new strategic plan. The real work begins now as we seek to live up to these ambitious priorities and goals.”

Budget

Meeting at a Methodist retreat center in Nashville Sept. 18-20, the Alliance's Board of Directors adopted a 2004 budget of \$346,311, up 15 percent from the \$301,156 2003 budget.

The board also accepted recommendations of its Budget and Development Committee to address a shortfall of about \$20,000 in 2003 receipts. Those recommendations include utilizing a volunteer fundraising professional for the rest of the year, and continuing to appeal to the membership and affiliated churches for support.

Mission Offering

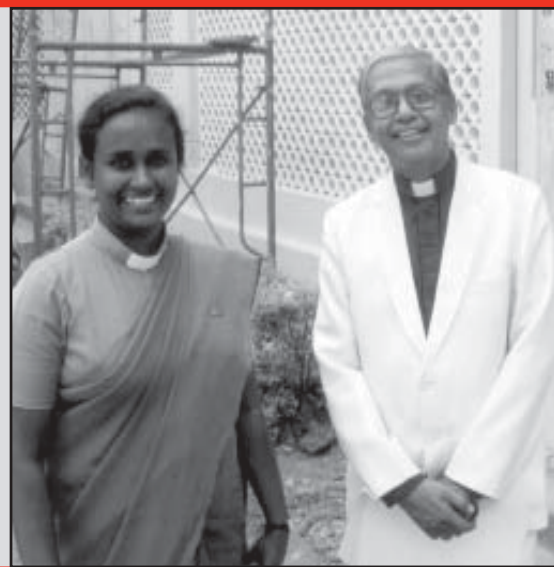
The 2004 Mission Offering goal of \$113,000 will support 27

domestic and international organizations. The largest recipients are the Alliance's international partners in Cuba (\$20,000), Zimbabwe (\$20,000), and Sri Lanka (\$10,000).

The 2004 goal is a 1.8 percent increase over the 2003 goal of \$111,000.



Louise Stanford,
chair of the
board's Missions
Committee.



Sri Lanka gathering

Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya (Union) General Secretary Kingsley Perera with Ranjini Liyanaarachi, pastor of Makevita Baptist Church, the first and to date only woman ordained to the ministry by the Alliance's newest international partner organization. They are shown during a break in the annual gathering of the Sangamaya, held at Carey College in the capital city of Colombo. Executive Director Stan Hastey represented the Alliance at the gathering.

Rogers accepts visiting professorship

Melissa Rogers, an Alliance member and former general counsel of the Baptist Joint Committee, has accepted a visiting professorship in religion and public policy at the Wake Forest University Divinity School. For the past three years, she has been executive director of the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life in Washington. Said Rogers' Pew Forum colleague and Washington Post columnist E.J. Dionne: "Melissa Rogers has been an exceptional leader because she combines her deep commitment to religious liberty with an exceptional understanding of the pluralism of America's religious life."

Alliance member **John Duke** has accepted the position of minister of education and community ministries at the Alliance-affiliated **Baptist Church of the Covenant, Birmingham, AL**, starting Dec. 1. The Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond graduate has been associate pastor at another Alliance-affiliated congregation, **Ginter Park Baptist Church, Richmond, VA**.

Alliance member **Lynda Poston-Smith**, a renowned soprano who once taught voice at Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has a new CD scored for voice with string quartet, piano and clarinet. Titled "Lead, Kindly Light," the new disc includes selections made following the events of Sept. 11, 2001, and what the artist calls a "late night visitation" and "years of singing my own

arrangements of the old songs" from *The Broadman Hymnal*. What is pulled together in her new work, Poston-Smith writes, is "the storminess of the soul in 'Stand By Me,' the not-often-heard dance of well-being in 'It Is Well With My Soul,' the sweet Brahmsian lyricism of 'Sweet Peace, the Gift of God's Love,' (and) the haunting Appalachian strains of 'Fill Me Now.'" Clips of this and Poston-Smith's other CDs can be heard on her website (www.lyndapostonsmith.com).

Alliance member **Bob Kidd** of Houston is the new president of the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC). One of nearly 100 Alliance-endorsed chaplains himself, Kidd took the helm of the professional society Nov. 4 following two years as president-elect.

Alliance member **Terry-Thomas Primer** gave the invocation for the Temple rededication service for the Jewish Community of Monroe Township, NJ. She is the chaplain for Monroe Village, a retirement community where some of the members live.

Glendale Baptist Church, Nashville, TN, is seeking an additional full-time pastor to join its ministry team. Go to the church's website at [www.glendalebaptist.org/pastoral search](http://www.glendalebaptist.org/pastoral%20search).

Lake Avenue Baptist Church, Rochester, NY, seeks a minister for community life. To be considered, send denominational personnel record or resume with three professional references by Nov. 15 to: ABC/RGR, 151 Brooks Ave., Rochester, NY 14619 (Attention: Alan Newton).

happenings

Renew pressure: The Christian thing to do

For the past decade the Alliance of Baptists has spoken forcefully and insistently urging our government to revisit and revise its policies toward Cuba, an island nation scarcely 100 miles from the coast of Florida that is home to our partner organization, the Fraternity of Baptist Churches (Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba).

Repeatedly we have exercised the right of all U.S. citizens, as guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution, “to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.” Our grievances in the case of U.S.-Cuba policy include an economic embargo designed to break the will of Cuba’s president, Fidel Castro, with the objective of forcing Cuba to adopt a U.S.-style political system. And we have objected to restrictions on travel to Cuba.

In a series of votes taken September 9, the House of Representatives voted to end funding for continued enforcement of the travel ban on a vote of 227-188. The House also voted, 246-173, to reinstate legal people-to-people travel to Cuba, and, on a vote of 222-196, to end restrictions on the amount of money U.S. citizens may send to individuals and families in Cuba. Before year’s end, the U.S. Senate may vote on one or more of these items.

For the past three years, the House has shown its willingness to break with the failed policies of the past 40 years. Yet the Senate has failed to act. With the current Congress eager to adjourn for the year, now is the time to press senators on these matters. Although an e-mail message is one avenue of registering one’s position, better options include a call to a senator’s office in Washington or in your state or a face-to-face meeting. The latter may be accomplished in Washington or in any one of

a senator’s offices back home.

As the Alliance noted in its most recent statement on U.S.-Cuba policy, our economic sanctions “have caused untold hardships on the Cuban people, including chronic shortages of medicines, medical supplies, and nutritious foods.” Such a cruel policy flies in the face of the American tradition of feeding and healing even enemies at war, let alone citizens of a tiny island whose nation poses no threat to our security.

Since President Bush’s highly publicized appearance in the Rose Garden on October 10 to announce an even harder line on Cuba, I’ve been asked what will change. The short answer is that it’s too early to tell. Should the president’s announcement not be followed by tough, new regulations by the Departments of State, Treasury and Homeland Security, not much will have changed.

But should these and other federal agencies crack the whip by writing new regulations seeking further

restrictions on travel, trade and remittances, some U.S. citizens will be intimidated into not traveling, trading or giving – even when current law permits these within limitations.

As applied to the Alliance, for example, fewer members of our churches already in congregational partnerships in Cuba might choose to travel, at least for a while. They might be more reticent to invite members of their partner churches to visit them here in the U.S. And some Alliance-affiliated churches currently beginning to explore partnerships in Cuba might be dissuaded from continuing the process.

A better option than these is to renew pressure on our own government. After all, it is a right guaranteed us. It is the American way. It is the Alliance way. And in the case of Cuba, it is the Christian thing to do. At least that’s my perspective.

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive
Director

Peace & Justice: Faith & Action

The Alliance’s Peace and Justice Committee offers this thought to generate awareness, prayerful consideration, conversation and action on social justice topics. Use this as a jumping off point for your own journey and to engage others along the way.

Prayer/Meditation: Creator God, you are the air I breathe.

Come and fill my lungs with your Holy Spirit
So that my voice and my deeds cry out for justice
For all of your creation. Amen

Consider: Pollution from fossil fuels afflicts the health of the most vulnerable: our children and elders, people in inner cities, the poor of the planet.

Conversation starter: Air is necessary for life, yet the quality of the air in many parts of the US creates disease and death. What implications does this hold for us as caretakers of the earth — and each other? Genesis 9:12

Action: Urge car companies to make cleaner cars. For an easy way to contact GM, Ford and Chrysler, go to www.ProtectingCreation.org

For more information: Contact the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, 110 Maryland Ave, NE, Wash., DC 20002 or at the website above.

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2004 CONVOCATION

APRIL 16-18 2004

**FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH,
DAYTON, OHIO**

7 p.m. Friday April 16 through
worship Sunday, April 18

The theme of the 2004 convocation is "Lifting Our Lights Together: Strengthening our Commitment to Ecumenical and Interfaith Relationships."

Steve Lucas, pastor of Highland Park Baptist Church in Austin, TX, is chair of the Convocation work group.

"At the heart of this theme interpretation is the work group's belief that the Alliance's commitment to relationships with Christians of other denominations, and people of other faith traditions is based upon a deep respect for mystery in general, and the mystery that is God, in particular," Lucas said.

"We are also committed to these relationships out of our conviction that underneath our different theological particularities lies an ethical universality, namely, that we are called upon to treat others as we ourselves would like to be treated, with respect and dignity, as we work together for peace in our time," he said.

Speakers will be:

Jeremiah Wright, senior minister, Trinity United Church of Christ, Chicago,

IL. Wright will lead us in worship around the theme of ecumenism.

James Fowler will lecture on Saturday afternoon concerning his work in faith development and public policy research as it pertains to the ongoing reconciling and peacemaking work of all peoples of faith and conscience in the world.



Charles Kimball, author of *When Religion Becomes Evil* and chair of the religion department at Wake Forest University, will deliver the Covenant Address on Saturday evening.

Singer/songwriter **Kate Campbell** will join us for worship on Saturday evening and then perform at a reception afterwards.

And on Sunday morning, **Karen Thomas Smith**, Christian chaplain on the campus of Al Alhawayn University, Ifrane, Morocco, will be the featured preacher.

Doubletree Hotel

\$89 per night, single/double; \$99 for a suite. 937.461.4700. Airport transportation provided by the hotel.