

## A clear voice

for Christian freedom, distinctively Baptist and intentionally ecumenical in an interfaith world.

April 2007 • Vol. 10 Issue 4

# connections

Alliance of Baptists • 1328 16th Street NW • Washington, DC 20036  
www.allianceofbaptists.org • 202.745.7609 • 866.745.7609

## Alliance founder, Convocation co-chair

# John Roberts remembers

It's been 20 years and John Ewing Roberts has been around for all of them. John helped organize the Alliance of Baptists and as we celebrate this special birthday, he is serving as co-chair of the 2007 Convocation Task Group.

Here are some of his reflections on where we started and where we are:

### What do you see as the major accomplishments of the Alliance over the past 20 years?

The Covenant, giving birth to all sorts of institutions and entities many of which are now free-standing, establishing partnerships, producing courageous statements, providing a network of information, relationships and fellowship, offering enriching worship, joining the NCCC-USA.

Because of my involvement with the Institute for Christian & Jewish Studies as a pastor and in retirement as a part-time associate scholar, and due to my membership on behalf of the Alliance in a dialogue table on Palestinian and Israeli issues for the National Council of Churches of Christ-USA, I am most grateful for the Alliance statements on Jewish-Christian and Muslim-Christian relationships.

I very much enjoyed leading an Alliance study trip to Israel in 2000.

### How has the Alliance evolved? Is it the organization you envisioned? Has it changed its focus or mission through the years?

The Alliance's evolution is evident in

the name change from Southern Baptist Alliance. We have gone well beyond the old identification of "recovering Southern Baptists" to being simply Alliance Baptists. In the early years I offered to sell t-shirts saying, "Help! I'm Christian trapped in a Southern Baptist body!" That's no longer relevant or amusing – we're past that. Thank God!

We're more and more mindful that all kinds of Baptists are part of us now, and that references to the old SBC culture from which many of us came are meaningless.

I don't think we have changed our focus or mission. Rather I think we've followed the trajectory into which we were launched.

### Why do we need the Alliance?

To continue the kind of accomplishments listed above, but also to serve as a kind of R & D wing for moderate Baptists. We take chances and get issues on the Baptist radar screen. In time, others see them, process what's happened, and may launch similar initiatives.

The Alliance remains the most vibrant part of Baptist life. If you go to an Alliance meeting, you know you will be stimulated and stretched. When you go to most Baptist meetings, it is an exercise in patience and endurance. The Alliance is always a challenge. It requires that you be alert and ready.

### Read John's full reflections on our website.

**"THE ALLIANCE IS ALWAYS A CHALLENGE. IT REQUIRES THAT YOU BE ALERT AND READY."**



John Ewing Roberts graduated from Wake Forest University in Winston-Salem, NC and went to Southern Seminary for one year, the year that 12 professors were fired in a controversy with the president. He immediately transferred to and graduated from Yale Divinity School. He then studied classical languages at Princeton on a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship.

He was ordained by Highland Baptist Church in Louisville, KY. He was associate pastor for three years at Eutaw Place Baptist Church (now Woodbrook) and was pastor for 31 years at Woodbrook Baptist Church in Baltimore. He is pastor emeritus at Woodbrook.

In 2005-2006 John was interim pastor for preaching at Vienna (VA) Baptist Church. For five years in the 1960's he taught Latin at Wake Forest University.

John has served the Alliance as a board member, vice-president, president, chair and co-chair of the Convocation Committee.

**2007 Convocation • April 13-15**  
Calvary Baptist Church • Washington, DC

## 2007 Workshops

These are workshops that have been confirmed since the list was published in the March issue of connections:

**We Need More Money! A New Day in Fundraising** – Susan Parrish, executive director, Habitat for Humanity of Anderson County, Oak Ridge, TN.

**Becoming Who We Say We Are: Progressive Congregations and Women in Ministry** – Amy Jacks Dean, co-pastor, Park Road Baptist Church, Charlotte, NC.

**Pastoring in Partnership** – Co-pastors of Central Baptist Church, Wayne, PA, and Glendale Baptist Church, Nashville, TN.

**How Does an Anxious Family Make Decisions? Family Systems Theory and Congregational Life** – Larry Matthews, founder and coordinator, Leadership in Ministry Workshops, Vienna, VA, and Tom McKibbens, pastor, First Baptist Church, Worcester, MA.

### Clarissa Strickland will bring her own personal style of humor to Saturday's celebration

Clarissa Strickland is a native of Atlanta, GA, and also a native of "Baptistville" – having been born at Georgia Baptist Hospital. She grew up swinging her legs off Baptist pews, under the tutelage of a mother who equated the importance of Lottie Moon and Annie Armstrong with the Apostle Paul. She graduated from a Baptist university, supported a husband through a Baptist seminary and was a Baptist pastor's wife for 32 years – having tiptoed through many tithers. For the past 16 years, she has worked for the Cooperative Baptist Fellowship and is its longest-tenured employee. She is currently the associate coordinator for Leadership Development.

Clarissa is an avid seamstress and an avowed "fabriholic." Her favorite type of sewing is making worship banners and clergy stoles. Her job at CBF helps to support her deep-seated fabric-buying habits. Clarissa was Baptist-born, Baptist-bred, and is confident that, when she dies, she will be Baptist-dead.

And, if you like the way she describes herself in these short words, you'll love her remarks at the Saturday night celebration banquet! Come have fun with Clarissa as she honors her long-time friend, Jeanette Holt.

Tickets to the banquet are included in the Convocation registration fee. Unregistered guests are invited to the after-dinner program which begins at 7:30 p.m. at Calvary Baptist Church.



### Breakfast with Bey: First-time attendees

Neeki Bey will perform at the breakfast for first-time attendees on Saturday. Neeki is minister of music and outreach at CityChurch of Dallas, coordinating a diverse music ministry and outreach offering. Neeki writes and arranges inclusive global music (hymns, anthems, jazz, etc.). This summer he will go to Ghana for research in traditional African music forms. He maintains an active schedule as a worship leader, jazz pianist and conductor serving as music director for the Men of the Houston Boychoir and the Perkins Youth School of Theology of Southern Methodist University.

So, if this is your first Convocation or you want to learn more about the Alliance, plan to attend the Saturday morning breakfast, and wake up to Neeki.

## Schedule

### Friday, April 13

- 5:00 p.m. Registration at Calvary Baptist Church
- 5:30 p.m. Welcoming Reception
- 7:00 p.m. Worship with Harvey Cox

### Saturday, April 14

- 7:30 a.m. Breakfast for First-time Attendees
- 8:30 a.m. Morning Prayers
- 9:00 a.m. State of the Alliance Address
- 10:15 a.m. Annual Meeting Lunch
- 2:30 p.m. Workshops I
- 4:00 p.m. Workshops II
- 6:00 p.m. Banquet
- 7:30 p.m. Worship

### Sunday, April 15

- 9:00 a.m. Morning Prayers
- 9:30 a.m. Children's and Youth Sunday School Adult Forum
- 11:00 a.m. Worship

## Record your Alliance memories

Help us preserve our history by sharing your memories of the Alliance at the Convocation.

Throughout the day on Saturday, April 14, a recording studio will be open for participants to share memories of the Alliance. We would like to capture on video and audio the oral history of the Alliance. A sign-up sheet will be available at the registration table.

Start now to think about your life with the Alliance and the stories your grandchildren will want to hear about the birth, the work, the fellowship, and the worship of the Alliance in its first 20 years, and be prepared to share them with posterity.

**Jeanette Holt: Most Valuable Player, retiring after 18 years with the Alliance. She will be honored at the anniversary banquet on Saturday night.**

## *perspectives* (on the retirement of a co-worker)

Jeanette Holt, as anyone who knows her will attest, is not a retiring person. She is, on the contrary, actively engaged and intellectually curious. She is a person of strong convictions unafraid to express them, including in the realm of politics, where her partisanship is both unabashed and principled.

But Jeanette is retiring from her employed position with the Alliance of Baptists following 18 years of distinguished service. This is my tribute to a trusted co-worker.

For several years before coming to work for the Alliance in early 1989, Jeanette and I labored in adjoining offices at the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty. She was the inimitable James Dunn's personal aide and the administrative assistant who managed the office. Virtually everything that came to the front office passed through her. Occasionally, James would refer to the two of us as his right and left hands. It was a good team at the Baptist Joint Committee and has remained so through the intervening years with a new cast of characters.

Shortly after a search committee asked me to assume the role I've played here at the Alliance for the past 18 years, the board of directors authorized me to find a co-laborer who would manage the day-to-day matters of the office in the basement of Washington's First Baptist Church. Both my spouse Bettie and our fellow worker at the BJC, Victor Tupitza, urged us both to consider becoming a new team. Theirs was a good suggestion I accepted.

From the beginning, of course, we had to negotiate the new arrangement. Generally speaking, I believe we've done that well. We've tried to model good teamwork, although we both agreed early on that the idea that in any conventional sense I would be her supervisor was something of a joke. Most of the time, it's been a good joke. When occasionally needed, we've done our best to renegotiate the working relationship, both for our sake and the good of the Alliance.

Born in Little Rock, AR, and reared in Fort Worth, TX, Jeanette was working at the University of Texas at El Paso when in 1982 James Dunn asked her to move to Washington. For the next seven years she and the rest of us on the

BJC staff worked under the intense pressure of official investigations by the Southern Baptist Convention that eventually led to that body's withdrawal from the agency it had helped found in 1946. Just the same, she has never stopped crediting James with "rescuing me from El Paso."

Reflecting on the Baptist battles in those days in an interview with Pam Parry for a Profile piece in the Winter 1996 issue of Folio magazine, Jeanette observed: "That feeling of being embattled dominated our



By Stan Hasteley  
Executive Director

lives internally as human beings working in that place and externally as the Baptist Joint Committee. I wonder what it is like to be there now where you can really put your effort into doing what the agency was established for."

Yet as Parry wrote next, "the BJC was not to be her greatest risk." That would come in February 1989 when she agreed to join me at the Alliance at a time when, as Anne Thomas Neil noted poignantly at the time, the new group had enough money in the bank to pay salaries for a year. Beyond that, she added, "we don't know what to expect."

Despite the risk, Jeanette was able to tell her interviewer seven years later that in the Alliance she had found her "perfect job."

As is so often the case with women working in supporting roles, Jeanette's substantial contributions to the Alliance's early history have been under-reported and often overlooked. Besides fulfilling a challenging job description, she has represented the Alliance on the boards of Churches for Middle East Peace and Church World Service and has served on the Nominations Committee of the National Council of Churches. And outside her Alliance capacities, she served with distinction as president of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention and moderator, Sunday School teacher and member of the choir in her beloved University Baptist Church of Silver Spring, MD.

This month, during the final convocation she has helped plan and stage, we rightly honor an Alliance of Baptists Most Valuable Player — Jeanette Holt.



## Registration for 20th Anniversary Convocation

— April 13-15

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

Daytime phone \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Church (Name, City, State) \_\_\_\_\_

Is this your first Convocation? \_\_\_\_\_

Special dietary/access needs \_\_\_\_\_

Childcare needs: \_\_\_\_\_

There is no charge for preschoolers but they must be registered in advance.

Please indicate your entree choice for the Saturday banquet:

Beef  Chicken  Vegetarian

### Registration Fees

\_\_\_\_\_ Adults @ \$80 ea. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Preschoolers @ \$ 0 ea. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Grades K-5 @ \$40 ea. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Grades 6-12 @ \$40 ea. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ College @ \$40 ea. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Seminary @ \$40 ea. \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ To help a student attend \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Total Enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Mail registration form with check to:

Alliance of Baptists

1328 16th Street NW

Washington DC 20036

You may also register online  
[www.allianceofbaptists.org](http://www.allianceofbaptists.org)



**CHANGE SERVICE REQUESTED**

**April 2007**

**Executive Director Stan Haste**  
 shaste@allianceofbaptists.org

**Associate Director Jeanette Holt**  
 jholt@allianceofbaptists.org

Phone: 202.745.7609 • Toll-free: 866.745.7609  
 Fax: 202.745.0023  
 info@allianceofbaptists.org  
 www.AllianceofBaptists.org

**Communications Consultant Sue Poss**  
 editor@allianceofbaptists.org  
 864.469.0779



Abernethy



Ammerman



Haggray

**Sunday morning forum**

**A conversation about . . . .????**

A panel of distinguished guests will discuss the landscape of religion in American life today and look ahead to the challenges ahead for congregations on Sunday morning at the Convocation. Panel members are:

**Robert Abernethy** — Executive editor and host of RELIGION & ETHICS NEWSWEEKLY, which he developed and created for PBS in 1997 and is now marking its 10th season on the air. Abernethy is an alumnus of Princeton University where he received bachelor's and master's degrees from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs. He is a member of the United Church of Christ.

**Nancy Ammerman** — Professor and Director of Graduate Programs at Boston University. A sociologist with a Ph.D. from Yale University, she has spent much of the last decade studying American congregations. Her most recent book, *Pillars of Faith: American Congregations and their Partners* (University of California Press, 2005), describes the common patterns that shape the work of American's diverse communities of faith.

**Jeff Haggray** — Executive Director/Minister of the District of Columbia Baptist Convention. The D.C. Baptist Convention consists of 150 churches in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Northern Virginia, and is affiliated with the American Baptist Churches, the Southern Baptist Convention, and the Progressive National Baptist Convention.

Moderator for the session will be the board's vice president, Kristy Arnesen Pullen, associate director of publishing at The Alban Institute.



**FINANCIAL PICTURE**

*Through Feb. 28*

Budget needs	\$73,808
Receipts	\$54,344
Mission Offering Goal	\$125,000
Mission Offering Receipts	\$33,399

**Register for the Convocation online or use the registration form that was included in the January newsletter. If you need a form, contact the Alliance office.**