

connections

October 2000

Volume 3 Issue 10

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.

She grew up in Kenya, the daughter and granddaughter of missionary doctors. Today she is finding her own mission field in the farm fields of North Carolina.

Deborah Norton

Alliance member and medical doctor Deborah Norton was the logical choice to be the first to represent the Alliance at a board meeting of the National Farm Worker Ministry held earlier this year in eastern North Carolina.

Deborah is the coordinator of the peace and justice mission group at Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh, where she has been a member since 1995. She is also a doctor at the county public health department where she focuses on women's health and family planning, and farm worker health.

She is an advocate of farm worker health in the state of North Carolina and is the medical director for a program that provides outreach and support services for farm workers at 12 sites around the state. In 1999, there were an estimated 37,800 migrant farm workers in North Carolina and 48,000 seasonal workers (workers who don't move about but also do not own the farm).

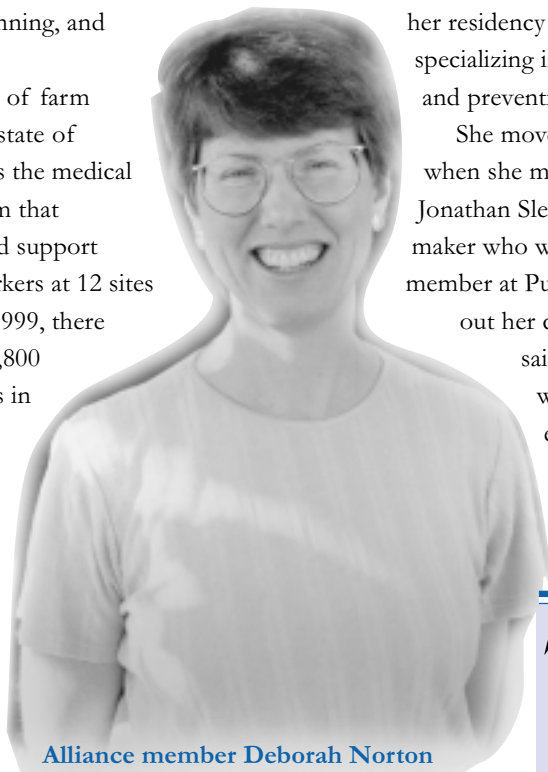
"Growing up overseas, I have always enjoyed working with

people from other cultures," Deborah said. "I find it fun and energizing."

Deborah's grandfather was a doctor in the Sudan briefly and her mother was a doctor for Africa Inland Mission for 20 years in Kenya, practicing rehabilitation medicine and psychiatry. Her father was a science and seminary teacher. Born in Wisconsin, Deborah lived in Kenya until she finished high school and enrolled at Wheaton College. She went to medical school at the University of Illinois and did her residency in Minnesota, specializing in public health and preventive medicine.

She moved to Raleigh when she met and married Jonathan Sledge, a cabinet-maker who was already a member at Pullen. Throughout her career, Deborah said she has worked almost exclusively in public clinics

(Continued on page 4)



Alliance member Deborah Norton

National Farm Worker Ministry: **Living our Mission Statement**

The National Farm Worker Ministry is a movement within churches to be present with and support farm workers as they organize to achieve equality, freedom, and justice.

The first seeds in building the NFWM were planted in 1920 when four migrant day care centers were established in New Jersey, Maryland, and Delaware. These programs were soon expanded and by the 1950s, the ministry reached migrant farmworkers in more than 38 states.

State migrant ministries and national denominations began to re-examine their migrant ministry programs throughout the country. Farm workers were demanding more participation in their own self-determination, and the support of the churches. The National Farm Worker Ministry was formed in 1971 to meet the farm workers' needs for church support in their struggle.

Today, the NFWM focuses on issues dealing with living conditions, hazards, benefits, wages, and workplace conditions of farm workers.

The next NFWM board meeting will be in Bakersfield, CA, Dec. 1-3. The Alliance would like to have a local representative present. If you are interested, please call the Alliance office.



BTSR Founders' Day

Among those attending the annual Founders' Day activities at Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond on Sept. 11 were these founding trustees. Mary Strauss, second from left on the front row, was the original chair of the board and brought this year's keynote address. BTSR was established in 1989 at the annual meeting of the Alliance of Baptists.

BOARD MEMBER RICHARD COOK'S MOTHER DIES

Betty Cook, mother of Alliance board member Richard Cook, died Sept. 7 in Louisville, KY, following a brief battle with cancer. A statement from the Cook family addressed to friends noted Mrs. Cook had been to church on Wednesday evening, Sept. 6, and died the next morning at home. "She was a remarkable woman whose example of faith, love for family, and her unflinching spirit of optimism and hope have inspired us continually," the family said.



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CUBAN ENSEMBLE TO TOUR SOUTHEASTERN US

KAIROS, a special ensemble of Cuban Christians who have become familiar to many Alliance members through our relationship with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba, will be on tour in the southeastern US in October and early November. If you are interested in hosting a concert in your church or area, please send an e-mail to Heber Romero, the ensemble's coordinator. His e-mail address is sempinos@quantum.inf.cu.

The schedule as *connections* went to press was:

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|------------------------|--|
| October 15 | Sunday morning, First Baptist, Jonesville, NC |
| | Sunday night, West Asheville Baptist, Asheville, NC |
| October 17 | Chapel, Mars Hill College |
| October 18 | Wednesday night service, Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh |
| October 26 (Tentative) | Campbell University, Buies Creek, NC |
| Nov. 2-5 | Birmingham, AL |
| Nov. 6 | Monroe, LA |

You may contact Alliance member Donna Goddard in Atlanta for more information, 404/491-7226 or djgoddard@mindspring.com

Board member Ken Williams has been called as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Rochester, NY. Williams is currently Executive Minister of the American Baptist Churches of Rochester/Genesee Region. He succeeds Bill Brosend, who had served as pastor for three years.

GLENN HINSON AT CANDLER

Glenn Hinson is spending the 2000-2001 academic year as a visiting scholar at Candler School of Theology in Atlanta, GA. Hinson retired from the faculty of Baptist Theological Seminary at Richmond in the spring of 1999.

BROADVIEW CELEBRATES ANNIVERSARY

Broadview Baptist Church in Temple Hills, MD, celebrated its 40th anniversary on September 9. Terry Minchow-Proffitt is pastor of the Alliance-affiliated congregation.

KATHY BERRY LEAVES COG

Board member Kathy Berry has resigned as associate pastor of Community of Grace Church in Richmond, VA. Berry is beginning work on a Master of Science in patient counseling degree at the Medical College of Virginia.

ROGER LOVETTE RETIRING

Roger Lovette is retiring as pastor of Baptist Church of the Covenant in Birmingham, AL. October 1 marked not only his retirement but his 40th year in ministry.

LYNN BERGFALK TAKES NEW JOB

Lynn Bergfalk, for the past 13 years pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Washington, DC, will become Executive Director of an urban ministries program under the auspices of Calvary, effective this month. Bergfalk is president of the DC Baptist Convention.

happenings

Zimbabwe is a deeply troubled nation these days. Twenty years after winning its independence from Great Britain in a bloody war, the former Southern Rhodesia is going through its first major political crisis. President Robert Mugabe, the only head of state Zimbabwe has known since independence, has lost considerable public support, illustrated dramatically in June when an opposition party won 57 of the 119 seats in Parliament elected by the people. Another 30 seats are appointed by Mugabe's ruling party. The election marked the first time any opposing party had won more than a handful of seats.

In the months leading up to elections, Mugabe had allowed and encouraged the violent takeover of numerous large farms owned by whites. These squatters, some quite young, allegedly fought during the revolution two decades ago with the expectation they would be given land of their own. Approximately two-thirds of Zimbabwe's arable land still is owned by whites. During the recent disturbances some 30 people were killed, most of them blacks employed by the farmers.

Politically, then, Zimbabwe clearly is in a state of uneasy transition. Economically, the country is becoming more desperate every day. Inflation is rampant. A year ago the exchange rate between the U.S. dollar and the Zim dollar was 1:38; this year it has risen to 1:50. Ordinary people are having a hard time paying their utility bills and putting food on the table. In the countryside, where more than two-thirds of Zimbabweans still live, conditions are worse.

More ominous yet is the AIDS pandemic. Of all the African nations, Zimbabwe has the second-highest incidence of the deadly virus. In the overwhelming majority of cases, AIDS in Africa is contracted by heterosexuals. Conservative estimates are that one of every five Zimbabweans is HIV-positive. Before the pandemic peaks, one in three may contract the AIDS virus. Virtually no family in Zimbabwe is unaffected.

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director

This is true within the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe family as well. During a visit in August to participate in the BCZ's 37th Congress, where I was privileged to be this year's guest speaker, I learned of numerous Baptist families who in recent months have lost family members, including that of my colleague John Mazvigadza, known to many Alliance people. Statistically, the AIDS crisis in Zimbabwe is of astounding proportions. Even more stunning is the indescribable sadness that every person lost to the ravages of AIDS is a reflection of the face of God.

On the drive from the capital city of Harare to the Baptist Conference Centre outside Gweru where the Congress is celebrated annually, I asked BCZ President C.H. Chiromo how he and other pastors deal with the terrible human toll brought on by AIDS. His reply, perhaps as predictable as it is remarkable, had to do with Christian hope. Without hope in Christ, he said, they simply couldn't cope.

Oh, yes, during Congress this year much was made of the modest contributions made by the Alliance to the Baptist Convention of Zimbabwe through our Mission Offering. Whether in Zimbabwe or in Cuba, I always find the praise heaped on us both humbling and embarrassing. Embarrassing in that the \$20,000 we hope to give each of these partners from this year's offering is such a paltry amount; humbling in that such a sum stretches so far in both Cuba and Zimbabwe and means so much to those we seek to assist.

You can believe me absolutely when I say, as I often do, that the Alliance relationship with our Zimbabwean and Cuban partners has brought to life for me the gospel truth that it is more blessed to give than to receive. By your giving in years past, I absolutely believe you know that truth too. And I believe this year you will respond even more generously.

So blessings on you as you ponder and pray about this year's Alliance Mission Offering. As you do, pray also for the peace of Zimbabwe....



UCC/Alliance

A 12-member dialogue team representing the United Church of Christ and the Alliance of Baptists met in Washington Sept. 13-14 for its second round of discussions on how the two bodies might relate to one another on an ongoing basis. The group is to gather once more, in early January 2001, before making its recommendations to the respective gatherings of the Alliance and UCC next year. Co-conveners of the team are Alice O'Donovan of the UCC and Stan Hasteley of the Alliance.

c o n n e c t i o n s

2000 Operating Budget:

Needs: \$172,449
Receipts: \$153,736

2000 Mission Offering

Goal: \$85,250
Receipts: \$42,287

October 2000

N A T I O N A L F A R M W O R K E R M I N I S T R Y

www.nfwm.org

Deborah Norton

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and community health centers.

Participating in the NFWM board meeting gave Deborah new insight into the struggles farm workers have had through the years. "The NFWM started out as a migrant ministry," she said. "Church members would go to the camps to provide childcare or bring food and clothes to the farm workers. Then we started realizing that more than charity, farm workers needed people who would stand with them as they organized. So the Farm Worker Ministry switched totally to that role of standing with farm workers as they unionized."

Their strategy, she said, is to form small support groups close to areas where there is labor action. "The goal is to be supporters, to follow the lead of the farm workers themselves, and to provide a faith perspective on all of that," she said.

How AOB members can get involved:

Deborah suggests the following ways for Alliance members to become involved with the plight of farm workers.

1. Become informed about the National Farm Worker Ministry.
Visit the website. Get on the mailing list to receive the newsletter.

2. Support specific advocacy issues.
Join boycott of Mt. Olive Pickles. Urge Taco Bell to negotiate with tomato workers.

3. Become an advocate for legislation about farm workers.
Write your legislators asking that worker protections be restored. Oppose current Senate Bills 1814 and 1815.

Alliance participation in NFWM

The Alliance board voted at its April 2000 meeting to become a member organization of the NFWM at the recommendation of its Peace and Justice Committee, chaired by Richard Cook of Hunt Valley, MD, who is a former Executive Director of NFWM. It is one way to tangibly live out the Alliance Mission Statement to "side with those who are poor" and "pursue justice with and for those who are oppressed."

The Alliance has budgeted \$1,000 annually to the group.

Mt. Olive is in a pickle: NFWM targets North Carolina producer

One example of the advocacy role of the NFWM is the ongoing boycott of the Mt. Olive Pickle Company in North Carolina. "Mt. Olive is a reputable company that treats its workers well," Deborah said. "The issue is that Mt. Olive contracts with growers who hire the farm workers and so the workers themselves can't make any demands of Mt. Olive. What we want is for Mt. Olive to expand the group of people they care for and negotiate directly for workers with the farm labor unions."

The Alliance signed the boycott resolution in September 1999. Pullen Memorial Baptist Church in Raleigh will host a meeting

on the Mt. Olive Pickle Company boycott on October 15 from 7 to 8:30 in Finlator Hall. Bill Bryan, the CEO of Mt. Olive Pickle Company, will be present, as will Baldemar Velasquez of the Farm Labor Organizing Committee. Information: Mary Boyer at Pullen, 919/828-0898.

Recently, the Farm Labor Organizing Committee has asked Kroger grocery chain to pull Mt. Olive pickles from its stores nationwide. Kroger has already taken Mt. Olive off its shelves in northern Ohio. Alliance members who use Kroger can write, or send a customer satisfaction note, to the company asking them to take this step.