

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.

Martha Barr: “I have lived into a new life”

Martha Barr’s life is one on which novels are built.

An Alliance board member who completes eight years of service in April, Martha fought back from discrimination issues to become one of the highest officials in the American Baptist Churches. She has fought to bring ABC churches into the Alliance and challenged the Alliance to see the need for diversity among its members. But probably her greatest fight has come as she tried to recover her life after a severe brain injury in 1991.

Martha’s journey of faith began in the Missouri River where she was baptized by a Southern Baptist minister. She went to William Jewell College, aligned with both the ABC and Southern Baptist Convention, and majored in music and psychology. From there she headed to Colgate-Rochester Divinity School to earn first a Bachelors in Divinity and then a Masters of Theology. Those degrees led to her ordination in 1964.

But so what? “I couldn’t get on the mailing list for ABC pastors and I couldn’t get any jobs supply preaching in Baptist churches,” she said.

While Baptists ignored the young Baptist female preacher, the Lutherans, Presbyterians, Episcopalians and Quakers all invited her to preach, which she said led her to a lifetime commitment to ecumenism.

Not being able to find full-time church work, she took non-ministerial jobs during her early career. Once she was asked to organize and establish a home health agency. She did. Then a priest, not she, was hired to direct it. She sued the county for discrimination and won. Later, she was teaching a popular course in psychology part-time at a local college. When overall student enrollment didn’t reach expectations, it was she who was let go. Again, she went to court and won her case.

“I continued not to think of myself as a firebrand, but I couldn’t live with myself if I let these issues go unchallenged,” she said. “It pains me to no end that 30 years later young women are having to go through the same thing I did.”

Then finally in 1975, the pendulum swung in Martha’s favor. A mentor from seminary called from Valley Forge, the headquarters of American Baptists, and asked if she wanted to interview for a position in the office of General Secretary. She got the job. “I was like a seal in water,” she said. “It was the greatest feeling”

She poured herself into reading old minutes and learning the structure of the ABC inside and out. “The ABC became my lifeblood,” she said. “I was as entrenched in the ABC organization as anybody can get.”

She also enrolled in a Ph. D. program at



Martha is married to Bill Barr, a Ph. D. in philosophy who taught at the State University of New York for 17 years and has just retired from the computer industry. They are parents of three children, Joanna, and twins Jennifer and Jonathan.

Temple University and taught herself German and French to meet the language qualifications.

Her work paid off, for in 1985 she was selected to be Executive Director of American Baptist Women, a job she held for three years, and in 1988, she was
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“It pains me to no end that 30 years later young women are having to go through the same thing I did.”

Groves' play about Rosie's life debuts in January

Alliance founder and former president **Richard Groves** has written a one-woman play based in part on his wife Rosie's book, *Ethel's Girl*, in which she tells stories from her difficult childhood. The play, *Flight to Bertrandville*, reflects those childhood experiences "but goes beyond the book by dealing with her mental illness as well," Groves wrote last month in the newsletter of Wake Forest Baptist Church, where he is pastor. "Writing the play has been a healing experience for me," he said. "As you can imagine, it was very difficult at times. My deep concern has been to share Rosie's story both with people who knew her and people who never knew her. Her life has been spent, in large part, struggling with demons and overcoming barriers — courageously, joyfully. The play is, as a friend noted, my tribute to her."

Flight to Bertrandville will play in the Ring Theater at Wake Forest University Jan. 10-12. The lead role is played by Tess Malik Kincaid, an actress from Atlanta who has performed in the Georgia Ensemble Theater and the North Carolina Shakespeare Festival. Tickets are \$10.



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— Richard Groves

Associated Baptist Press announced in December that its news editor, Alliance member **Bob Allen**, has been laid off for financial reasons. The move left Allen, a nine-year ABP employee, without a job as of Dec. 31.

Faced with a projected \$40,000 deficit for 2002 and a reduced budget for 2003, ABP's board of directors voted unanimously to eliminate the news editor position.

Executive Editor Greg Warner has assumed responsibility for the daily news operation. Allen, who began working for ABP in November 1993, has covered most Alliance convocations for the Jacksonville, FL-based news agency.

Former Alliance director **Mark Caldwell**, for the past 12 years pastor of the Alliance-affiliated **Glendale Baptist Church** of Nashville, TN, has announced his impending retirement, effective March 16.

ABP cuts Allen; Christman, Caldwell announce retirement

In a statement to the congregation in November, Caldwell noted he will turn 62 on that day and looks forward to an early retirement with spouse Cecelia, who retired from public school teaching last spring. "Our health is good, and we look forward to living a bit differently than two very busy and intense careers have allowed," he said.

Alliance member **Edgar D. Christman**, for the last 33 years chaplain at Wake Forest University, will retire July 31. In announcing the retirement to WFU faculty, students and staff, President Thomas K. Hearn Jr., wrote: "Ed Christman is one of the Wake Forest 'institutions' whose tenure and influence have made him one of the most

visible and beloved figures in our modern history. Whether working with individual students or leading our public liturgical observances, Ed has influenced generations of Wake Foresters."

Alliance member **Anne Burch Plunkett Rosser**, one of the first women ordained to the pastoral ministry in the Southern Baptist Convention, died Nov. 17 in Richmond, VA. She was the widow of Aubrey J. (Buddy) Rosser and served as co-pastor with him at Bainbridge Street Baptist Church and Southampton Baptist Church, both in Richmond. Later she was associate pastor of Hampton Baptist Church of Hampton, VA.

A visiting lecturer at Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary, she was awarded

the doctor of divinity degree in 1990 by the University of Richmond in recognition of her pioneering efforts in encouraging women in pastoral ministry and for her dedication to the advancement of Baptist theological education in Virginia.

Bill Hendricks, a Baptist professor of theology known for his sharp wit and keen intellect, died in Fort Worth, TX, Dec. 8. Hendricks taught at three of the six Southern Baptist seminaries — Southwestern (1957-1978), Golden Gate (1978-1984), and Southern (1984-1995). Most recently he was founder of the Baptist studies program at Brite Divinity School of Texas Christian University in Fort Worth, a Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) institution where he also taught.

A sermon on missions by **Alan Neely** has been posted to the Alliance website, www.allianceofbaptists.org.

happenings

There is time left to avoid the “pathetic epitaph”

In a book titled, *Where Do We Go from Here: Chaos or Community?* (Beacon Press, 1968), Martin Luther King Jr. wrote:

We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history there is such a thing as being too late. Procrastination is still the thief of time. Life often leaves us standing bare, naked and dejected with a lost opportunity. The ‘tide in (human) affairs’ does not remain at the flood; it ebbs. We may cry out desperately for time to pause in her passage, but time is deaf to every plea and rushes on. Over the bleached bones and jumbled residues of numerous civilizations are written the pathetic words: ‘Too late.’ There is an invisible book of life that faithfully records our vigilance or our neglect. ‘The moving finger writes, and having writ moves on....’

As the nation observes this month the 74th anniversary of Dr. King’s birth and as the political establishment in Washington still reels from the jarring pronouncement of Sen. Trent Lott at the 100th birthday celebration for Sen. Strom Thurmond, the words of God’s prophet Martin ring truer than ever. Yet maybe, just maybe, we have sufficient time left before the pathetic epitaph is pronounced over this so-called civilization.

If we do in fact have sufficient time to address what Martin Marty has called the “original sin” of our nation — that is, the racism that has stained our history from its beginnings — then we must do so urgently. There is no common task more urgent, not one.

And if we do in fact address the roots and ongoing reality of racism among and within us, it must happen at every level of society. Yes, its egregious manifestations, as in the case of Sen. Lott’s words, must be confronted head-on regardless of the political price to be paid. The simple truth

is that Mr. Lott’s statement almost passed unnoticed. That in the end it provoked the discussion that has ensued may be taken as a small grain of hope. Maybe, just maybe, there is yet time for national redemption.

If that happens, however, it likely will be because sub-groups like the Alliance of Baptists help it happen. In our own circle, as we begin this month a strategic study of how we are doing after 15 years of existence, surely we must ask what it is we are summoned to say and do with respect to the racism that infects us. As one among many Alliance people, I know it infects me. Its ugly manifestations, when they move from the subconscious to the conscious level, astound and frighten me. As much as I abhor what those moments reveal about me, they are nonetheless real. And they really matter.

For white Americans, the best evidence that we really care about racism is to admit we are guilty of it. That is precisely where Sen. Lott failed. What he could have said, what he should have said, is

something like this: “Yes, I am a racist. As much as I hate it about myself, my very being is infested with racism. It is in one part my legacy, in the other part my choice. Yet that is what and who I am. Won’t you help me overcome it?”

Nor was President Bush’s response adequate. One full week after Sen. Lott’s statement, the president told a predominantly African-American audience in Philadelphia, “Every day our nation was segregated was a day that America was unfaithful to our founding ideals.” That what the president said was well-intentioned does not negate the fact that it was patently wrong. It was wrong on two levels, for we are still segregated. And our “founding ideals” simply did not include the founders’ own slaves, who were specifically and explicitly excluded from their reach.

Only when and not until we white Americans own the historical and contemporary reality of our original sin will we have any hope of redemption. If we do, though, the reward will be great in that history can begin to record our vigilance as well as our neglect.

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director

“For white Americans, the best evidence that we really care about racism is to admit we are guilty of it.”

Alliance chaplain deployed to Kuwait

Alliance-endorsed chaplain Carol Mitchell has been deployed to Kuwait for a year with the United States Army. When she returns, she will be assigned to the Chief of Chaplains office in Washington, DC. Carol is not able to discuss her assignment in Kuwait, and will not be able to communicate with Alliance friends while she is there. Before she left for Kuwait in early December, she e-mailed Alliance member Beth Jackson-Jordan, chair of our Endorsing Committee, asking for continued prayer support.

January 2003

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Martha Barr —

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promoted to Deputy General Secretary of American Baptist Churches.

Then came the tragedy in 1991 that changed her life. A young boy, drinking, plowed into Martha's car. She doesn't remember much about the accident and doesn't talk about what she does remember. She does talk about her determination to fight back, to regain some semblance of a normal life. She got a lot back but not enough to finish her Ph. D. work or continue in her role with ABC.

Active always in the Roger Williams Fellowship of American Baptists, she became aware of the Alliance of Baptists and encouraged the Fellowship and the Alliance to share their common visions of working for historic Baptist principles. She has served on the Alliance board for eight years, and has taken a leading role on a number of subcommittees during that time, including the ongoing United Church of Christ dialogue team.

She doesn't have the life she had prior to the 1991 accident but she does have a life. "At first I was determined to get back all that I had lost," she said. "It took me a long time to realize that wasn't going to happen. Now, I have lived into a new life."



Shanta Premawardhana

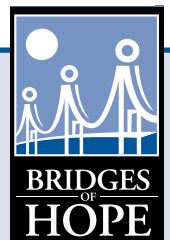
Sri Lanka Baptists have approved Alliance partnership

As this issue of *connections* was being prepared, Alliance Vice President Shanta Premawardhana reported that the Working Committee (board of directors) of the **Sri Lanka Baptist Sangamaya** (convention) has given final approval to a proposal to enter into an open-ended partnership with the Alliance of Baptists. Sangamaya General Secretary **Kingsley Perera** notified Premawardhana of the action in an e-mail message Dec. 17, noting the Working Committee vote was unanimous. Last August, delegates to the annual meeting of the Sangamaya authorized the panel to move forward with the proposal. As for the Alliance, the proposed partnership now will be submitted to the Missions Committee for a recommendation to the full board of directors and to the membership in annual meeting next April.



2002 Operating Budget
Through November 30
Needs: \$268,153
Receipts: \$240,810

2002 Mission Offering:
Goal: \$95,000
Receipts: \$67,943



A final accounting of 2002 budget and Mission Offering receipts will be included in the February issue of *connections*.