

connections

July 1998

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.

CHAPLAIN ENDORSEMENT

The Board of Directors at its September meeting will consider the issue of endorsing chaplains.

Alliance member Jim Hightower of New Orleans raised the issue at the annual meeting in March.

Endorsement is essential for chaplains, pastoral counselors and others as they move through the credentialing/certifying process in their chosen organizations. At each step, an endorsement by a current Religious Endorsing Body is required.

Board member Bill Sapp of Louisville, KY, is working on a process that will make the Alliance an endorsing

body.

Already, three chaplaincy organizations have agreed to recognize an Alliance endorsement, pending board approval.

“Our goal is to keep the process simple, straightforward and open to all Alliance members that want and need endorsement,” Bill said.

If the board approves, a permanent committee will be appointed and empowered to review applications and recommend endorsement.

A small fee will be charged to offset the costs involved such as mailing and duplicating so that no Alliance operating funds will be required.



The Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America is one of the recipients of the Alliance mission offering. Shown above is Executive Director Ken Sehested with some of the children present at the 1997 BPFNA summer conference. Pictured at right is the youth advisory council. A story about the Fellowship's work is on page 4.



MAHAN SILER RETIRES FROM PULLEN MEMORIAL

Mahan Siler helped found what was to become the Alliance of Baptists because he wanted to be involved in something that was proactive and not reactive.

As pastor of Pullen

Memorial Church in Raleigh and an adjunct instructor at Southeastern Seminary in nearby Wake Forest, he said he had seen the controversy in the Southern Baptist Convention “close up.” The Alliance, he said, was a group of like-minded Baptists who wanted to proceed with ministry and who didn’t have the heart for more political

efforts to regain control in the SBC.

Mahan was chair of the committee that wrote the original Alliance covenant, has served as a board member twice, and has remained an active Alliance member. “I’m very pleased with the way the Alliance has matured,” he said. “It turned out even better than I

thought it would and I’m pleased to have been a part of it.”

Mahan was at the heart of the SBC struggle early on — in fact he calls it the most traumatic part of his ministry — when Pullen was expelled from its association, state convention and the SBC because of its

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new guidelines for board members

During its March 1998 meeting in Washington, the Alliance Board of Directors adopted the following guidelines to assist future Nominating Committees in recommending board members for election at the annual meeting:

1. Board members are expected to serve their full three-year terms unless extraordinary circumstances intervene.
2. Board members are expected to attend meetings in the fall and spring and the annual convocation. If for some unusual reason a Board member is unable to attend, he/she is responsible for notifying Alliance staff in a timely fashion that he/she will be absent.
3. Each Board member is expected to serve on at least one committee and be an active participant on that committee.
4. Each Board member is expected to hold individual membership in the Alliance.
5. Each Board member is encouraged to make the Alliance a priority in her/his charitable giving.

These new guidelines are in addition to a 1989 Board of Directors action covering travel reimbursement policies for Board members. Both sets of guidelines are to be made available to incoming directors following their election.

Alliance members are encouraged to make recommendations to the Nominating Committee to assist it in the selection of proposed members of the Board. Although the 1998-1999 committee has yet to be named, it is not too early to make such recommendations for the next election cycle. Please forward your nominations to the Alliance office.

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Julie Pennington Russell has been called as pastor of Calvary Baptist Church in Waco, TX. Since 1993, she has been senior pastor of 19th Avenue Baptist Church in San Francisco, where she also served as associate pastor from 1984-93. She is the first female to be called as senior minister of a Baptist church in Texas. She earned a master of divinity degree from Golden Gate Seminary.

Mary Zimmer is the new pastor of Church of the Savior in Cedar Park, TX. She will begin her new position in mid-August.

Currently, Mary is a minister-at-large of the American Baptist Churches in the USA. Her latest assignment has been as interim pastor of First Baptist Church, Bedford, OH. She became the second woman called as pastor of a Texas Baptist congregation.

Jody C. Wright has been called as senior minister of Lakeside Baptist Church, Rocky Mount, NC, moving from Warrenton Baptist Church, Warrenton, NC.

Alliance members Tim Shirley and Lisa Haste have announced they are to be married Aug. 8 at Virginia-Highland Baptist Church in Atlanta, where he is pastor. She is a middle school civics teacher. They plan to reside in Atlanta. All Alliance members are invited to the 6 p.m. wedding.

Virginia-Highland Baptist Church will observe its 75th anniversary July 26 with what Pastor Tim Shirley describes as "a celebration of worship that will reflect its traditional Baptist heritage and its current liturgical identity."

happenings



Alliance member Jim Hightower, left, and President Welton Gaddy at the Alliance booth at the CBF General Assembly in Houston.

ucc and the alliance: future relations

United Church of Christ official John Thomas, assistant to the president for ecumenical concerns, and Stan Haste of the Alliance, have been given the task of drafting a statement on future relations between the two bodies. They met in Cleveland July 13-14 and will submit their work to the other members of the UCC/Alliance consultation team. Once approved by the team, the statement will serve as background material for an implementing motion to be presented during next year's Alliance convocation and UCC general synod.

Alliance Baptists are not Southern Baptists.” So reads the first paragraph in the most recently updated Page 1 on the Alliance Web site. It is a stark statement, to be sure, but one I believe needs to be made. Here’s the rest of that update:

“Most visitors at our Web site will have heard of the Southern Baptist Convention action in mid-June urging women to submit graciously to the men in their lives. We had nothing to do with that! In fact, in the nearly 12 years of the Alliance, one of our distinguishing marks has been that of champion of the rightful role of women in the church. One of the seven principles in our founding document — a statement we consider important enough to call it a Covenant — states clearly our conviction that churches should ordain women called of God on an equal footing with men.

“When congregations call on us for assistance in finding new pastors or other professional clergy, we routinely recommend women as well as men. We provide counsel and encouragement to laywomen and clergywomen as they seek to live out their own callings in ministry. We seek to be like Jesus, of whom it was said, ‘You do not regard people with partiality’ (Mt. 22:16).”

This statement is reprinted here for two reasons. For one, I want you to hear again that the Alliance has a Web site. If you travel along the information highway, pay a visit to our site and let us know what you think of it.

More important, you as members and friends deserve to know what I’ve been saying to the media about the latest travesty to emanate from the SBC patriarchy. At the same

time, I must admit an initial reticence to say anything. After all, the SBC seems intent on outdoing itself year after year in its annual burlesque show. Because it’s been a long time since I’ve thought of myself as a Southern Baptist, my first inclination this year — and last year and the year before — was to say nothing.

Yet Mother Church is hard to get away from. Perhaps those of us nurtured in that church never will get beyond being “recovering” Southern Baptists. But that’s not the main point either. What really matters is not that we react to the

perspectives



By Stan Hasteley
Executive Director

SBC’s latest impertinent presumption to know the mind of God on every imaginable subject, but that something redemptive be said, in this case about women.

Like it or not, all Baptists are implicated by what the SBC says and does. Yet the simple fact of the matter is not all Baptists denigrate the God-given role of women in the church. While the Alliance cannot and should not presume to speak for any other group of Baptists, we do have an obligation to speak for ourselves.

And while I cannot and will not presume to speak for you on every issue, thank you for empowering me to speak for the Alliance on those matters — including women’s issues — we have determined collectively of sufficient importance to declare ourselves.

mahan siler retires

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inclusion of gay Christians in worship. Though traumatic, he says, “I was willing to take the risk for the gospel.”

Mahan retired June 14 and intends to stay in Raleigh where he will write, work with other pastors, and remain active in his community.

Mahan earned Bachelor of Divinity and Doctor of Sacred Theology degrees from Southern Seminary. He is a former pastor of Ravensworth Baptist Church in Annandale, VA, and was director of the School of Pastoral Care at North Carolina Baptist Hospital for seven years.



The Alliance of Baptists and Covenant Baptist Church in Houston, where board member Millard Eiland, left, is a member, sponsored a reception on Friday night at the CBF General Assembly. Millard is shown here with past president Richard Groves of Winston-Salem, NC. Alliance staffers and members also tended a booth in the exhibit hall.



This newsletter is mailed to Alliance-affiliated churches and individual members. Please let us know if your church would like to get more or fewer copies.

Annual membership dues are \$40, individuals; \$60, families; \$125, sustaining; and \$20, student/low income. Some members choose to make regular gifts to the Alliance above and beyond annual dues.

Operating Income
YTD: **\$131,257**
Budget Needs YTD:
\$115,816



Frontiers of Hope
Mission Offering
Goal: \$75,000
Receipts: \$37,291

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With some exceptions, Baptists in North America consistently fail to make the connection between biblical faith and the suffering in creation, between spiritual formation and prophetic action. And even where such connections are made, little attempt is made to connect and mobilize Baptist believers for concerted redemptive response to such suffering.

This is what the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America does well. "We help people comprehend that our confessions of faith speak directly to the suppression of life; and we suggest very practical ways of doing that, beginning in local congregations," said executive director Ken Sehested.

"The other major role we play is that of being a pastor to prophetic people. Baptists who develop convictions about justice, peace, human rights, etc., often receive little encouragement or tutoring in their local congregations or larger denominational bodies," he said.

"We excel in finding these people, providing them with

Alliance dollars at work: Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America

resources and perspective, making sure they realize they are not alone in their convictions. This pastoral vocation consistently unleashes new imagination, energy and hope."

The Alliance of Baptists supports the Peace Fellowship's \$238,000 budget with a grant of \$7,500. The Alliance is one of three Baptist bodies that provide a small percentage of the Fellowship's budget. "The fact that the Alliance grants are not project-specific is a great asset," said Sehested. "It underwrites everything we do."

The BPFNA's current major program priorities include *Promise of Pentecost*, focusing on racial reconciliation; *And A Child Shall Lead*, giving attention to the ways violence affects children and young people; and the Gavel Memorial Peace Fund,

focusing on the work of conflict mediation and training in nonviolence. Currently circulating is *The Family Covenant on Nonviolence*, a covenant designed primarily to be used between parents and their children. Yet it also may be adapted for use with co-workers, friends and neighbors.

Its purpose is to encourage peacemaking up close and personal, particularly within families, and especially to encourage the strengthening of relationships that nurture children and youth in the attitudes and habits of peaceful living.

The first "family" to formally endorse the Covenant was the faculty and senior administrative staff of Central Baptist Seminary in Kansas City, KS.

The number of conflict

mediation and nonviolence training projects sponsored by the Gavel Memorial Peace Fund continues to multiply. A major breakthrough came when leaders of different factions among the Naga people of North-east India agreed to mediation and requested that the Peace Fellowship lead them through the process.

The Fellowship also sponsors Friendship tours. A two-day visit to migrant worker camps in North Carolina is scheduled in September; and one to Mexico to explore the economic, political, social and religious dimensions of Mexican society is planned for January 1999.

The Baptist Peace Fellowship was organized in 1984. Its membership includes individuals affiliated with more than a dozen Baptist conventions in the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico — many Alliance of Baptists members among them.

For the past two years the Fellowship's journal, *Baptist Peacemaker*, has won multiple awards from the Associated Church Press.

