Book of Reports
Alliance of Baptists 2017-2018
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Letter of Introduction

Howard Thurman, an essential theologian of the civil rights movement, spoke words of hope and wisdom for troubling times:

“Look well to the growing edge! All around us worlds are dying and new worlds are being born; all around us life is dying and life is being born... This is the basis of hope in moments of despair, the incentive to carry on when times are out of joint and [people] have lost their reason, the source of confidence when worlds crash and dreams whiten into ash...Look well to the growing edge!”

If the Alliance of Baptists has taught me anything, it has taught me to “look to the growing edge.” In times of theological distress, of political disturbance, and of justice denied, this community of Baptists have showed me how to pay attention to the something of God that is found at the edges and on the margins, to be alert to Life and Grace and Hope that is always found when Love is lived and shared.

Included in this 2018 Book of Reports is a summary and reflection on the work of the Alliance of Baptists, calling us to “look well to the growing edge,” to see with eyes of clarity, to sense with a renewed urgency the Good News we have been called to proclaim and embody as followers of Jesus.

With this Book of Reports, I conclude four years of service as the president of our beloved Alliance of Baptists. I have been blessed beyond measure to see from this vantage point “the growing edge” of what it means to be Christian, and Baptist, and progressive.

I have seen our bold witness for justice and inclusion time and time again. It happens each time we sign on to offer a clear voice and witness to many issues we face today. The last time we met in Dayton in 2004 we passed a statement on marriage equality. When I began my presidency, the first action of the board of directors was to join the United Church of Christ lawsuit against the State of North Carolina. This case was ultimately resolved by the U.S. Supreme Court’s decision legalizing marriage equality for the entire nation. Look well to the growing edge!

And now, we are expanding this bold witness in a groundbreaking conference we are calling JUSTSEX, to take place October 18-20 in Nashville, Tenn. This conference came out of a board of directors meeting where we engaged in thoughtful and meaningful dialogue about sex and sexuality. One of our members stated, “We seem really good at welcoming sexual minorities into our churches, but I am struggling to figure out what to teach my teenage daughters about sex.” Two years after that conversation, and with the strong financial support of the Carpenter and Huff Foundations we will set in motion a more educated and healthy dialogue about sex and sexuality, calling the church in particular to move beyond a limiting and narrow ethic to one that is good news for everyone. And I can only imagine that what we set in motion in Nashville will be timely, transformative, prophetic, and its impact will be far greater than the size of our religious body might indicate. Look well to the growing edge.

As I end my presidency, I am so pleased that we are moving into a deeper awareness of the Alliance’s founding in white privilege, and a studied advocacy regarding matters of race in this country. This is always a painful and difficult conversation to have, but
it is one we must have if we are ever going to live more fully our Gospel calling. The staff has been working for almost two years on anti-racism training and our board of directors gave time to anti-racism training at its fall 2017 meeting. What has happened in our nation during the last two years has exposed the festering wound of racism that is far from being healed. I am so glad that the Alliance of Baptists is considering its own white privilege in order to be more fully engaged with our siblings of color in the healing of racism in our economic, social, political and ecclesial systems, as well as our hearts. And as we confess our sin and declare our intention to be more proactive and intentional in our internal and external efforts to heal racism, let’s not forget to “look well to the growing edge!”

During my presidency, I have seen our commitment to partnership expanded. In 2003, we entered into an ecumenical agreement in “partnership in mission and ministry” with the United Church of Christ and the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). We have entered more fully in partnership with United Church Funds—an excellent resource for socially conscious investing, and with the Insurance Board—a superior, not-for-profit organization specializing in property and liability insurance for churches and religious organizations, thereby becoming the fourth denominational partner along with the United Church of Christ, the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.). All of this building on our highly successful and creative “Summer Communities of Service” shared with the United Church of Christ. The Alliance of Baptists has modeled beautifully the power and potential in partnership. Look well to the growing edge!

I also celebrate the upward trajectory in the number of churches who identify with the Alliance of Baptists and in our growth in income, increasing from $592,000 in 2015 to a record $696,000 in 2017. And all of this is happening at a time when all other religious bodies are seeing a downward trend. I am convinced that the Alliance of Baptist’s commitment to being a theological home, to pursue God’s justice, and to partnership in mission—though at times costly and painful—is at the heart of our growth. We are practicing a way to be Church that will take us into our future with hope and strength. Look well to the growing edge!

Finally, I offer thanksgiving and praise to the Alliance staff who give their hearts to their work. They have offered stellar, capable and energetic leadership, and our growth is in no small measure a reflection of their care, commitment and love for our Alliance. I offer gratitude to our board of directors, for their commitment and love and care for our Alliance. In particular I want to thank Lisa Davis-Brownlee, outgoing vice president, and Leslie Withers, outgoing treasurer, for all the time and energy they dedicated to our Alliance and for their companionship on the journey. Lisa stepped right up to the plate with excellence as she unexpectedly filled in for me at the fall board meeting while I recovered from a health crisis. And Leslie has led us with skill and passion, not only as treasurer, but to live into our consensus model of decision-making. And I thank Lisa Darak-Druck, John Evans, Lee Nicholas-Pattillo, Susan Reed and Cecil White as they end their terms on the board of directors. Your presence and leadership has been a treasured grace and gift to our Alliance.

And I offer thanks and praise to God for the churches, clergy, and laity who give our Alliance of Baptists a place and space to live out a radical commitment to the way of Jesus in our rapidly changing world. You have looked well to the growing edge and it
has made all the difference. Keeping looking for that growing edge as we move into the future with faith, hope and love ... and an unwavering commitment to do and dream God’s justice.

With Joy,
Michael D. Castle, president

Board of Directors, 2017-2018

Aaron Austin, Lexington, Ky.
John Ballenger, Baltimore, Md.
Kevin Brown, Minneapolis, Minn. (UCC)
Ben Curry, Sacramento, Calif.
Jim Dant, Greenville, S.C.
Lisa Darak-Druck, Westbrook, Maine
Tammarie Day, Hillsborough, N.C.
John E. Evans, West Chester, Pa.
Melinda Huff, Boerne, Texas
Ken Booker Langston, Annapolis, Md. (DOC)
Jessica Lynd, Washington, D.C.
Daniel Miles, Charlotte, N.C.
Tim Moore, Charlotte, N.C.
Terryn Nelson, Woodbridge, Va.
Lee Nicholas-Pattillo, Halifax, Nova Scotia
Tiffany Pittman, St. Louis, Mo.
Susan Reed, Louisville, Ky.
Douglas Washington, Dallas, Texas
Cecil White, Hayward, Ca.
Christine Wiley, Fort Wash., Md.

President - Michael Castle, Dayton, Ohio
Vice President - Lisa Davis Brownlee, Irmo, S.C.
Treasurer - Leslie Withers, Decatur, Ga.
Secretary - Allan Burton, Birmingham, Ala.
In a time when historic Baptist principles, freedoms, and traditions need a clear voice, and in our personal and corporate response to the call of God in Jesus Christ to be disciples and servants in the world, we commit ourselves to:

The freedom of the individual, led by God’s Spirit within the family of faith, to read and interpret the Scriptures, relying on the historical understanding by the church and on the best methods of modern biblical study;

The freedom of the local church under the authority of Jesus Christ to shape its own life and mission, call its own leadership, and ordain whom it perceives as gifted for ministry, male or female;

The larger body of Jesus Christ, expressed in various Christian traditions, and to a cooperation with believers everywhere in giving full expression to the Gospel;

The servant role of leadership within the church, following the model of our Servant Lord, and to full partnership of all of God’s people in mission and ministry;

Theological education in congregations, colleges, and seminaries characterized by reverence for biblical authority and respect for open inquiry and responsible scholarship;

The proclamation of the Good News of Jesus Christ and the calling of God to all peoples to repentance and faith, reconciliation and hope, social and economic justice;

The principle of a free church in a free state and the opposition to any effort either by church or state to use the other for its own purposes.

Mission

To keep faith with the covenant the Alliance of Baptists body will:

- Make the worship of God primary in all our gatherings.
- Foster relationships within the Alliance and with other people of faith.
- Create places of refuge and renewal for those who are wounded or ignored by the church.
- Side with those who are poor.
- Pursue justice with and for those who are oppressed.
- Care for the earth.
- Work for peace.
- Honor wisdom and lifelong learning.
- Hold ourselves accountable for equity, collegiality, and diversity.

Agenda of the Annual Meeting
April 27-28, 2018

Friday, April 27, 2:00—3:15 p.m.
1. Call to Order - Mike Castle, president
2. Adoption of Minutes of 2017 Annual Meeting - Allan Burton, secretary
3. Presentation of Nominating Committee Report - Ashlee Wiest Laird
4. Presentation of Statements and Clarifying questions
   a. Earth Justice Statement - Betsy Sowers
   b. HP Free Churches - Leslie Withers
   c. Sexualized Violence - Jorene Taylor Swift
   d. Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope for Korea - Carol Blythe
   e. Young Adult Statement on Welcome - Benjamin Smith
   f. Letter from Harmony Creek Youth - Alan Kobs
5. Covenant Revisioning Team - World Cafe Conversation
   Join us for table conversations about the Alliance Covenant. As the Alliance begins a year-long process of reviewing our covenant, we want to hear your stories, your hopes, and your concerns about our historic and living covenant.
6. Recess Annual Meeting until Saturday, April 28 at 2-3:30 p.m.

Saturday, April 28, 2:00 p.m.—3:30 p.m.
1. Call to Order, Mike Castle - president
2. Report of the Treasurer - Leslie Withers, treasurer
3. Report on the Audit - Lisa Davis Brownlee, vice president
4. Report of the Board of Directors - Allan Burton, secretary
5. Decision-Making Model - Consensus - Leslie Withers, treasurer
6. Discernment Regarding the Statements Presented
   a. Earth Justice Statement
   b. HP Free Churches
   c. Sexualized Violence
   d. Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope for Korea
   e. Young Adult Statement on Welcome
   f. Letter from Harmony Creek Youth
7. Discernment Regarding Nominating Committee Report
8. Insurance Board - Timothy Harris, president and chief executive officer
9. Recognition of Congregational Partners - New Churches - Jason Smith
10. Introduction of New Business
11. Invitation to the 2019 Annual Gathering - Brent Newberry
12. Adjourn

Proposed 2018 Statements

Statement on Environmental Justice Earth: A Beloved Community

… and God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good. Gen. 1:31
Naming the problem: As followers of Jesus, called to Beloved Community, we recognize the unfolding destruction of God’s good earth as a mortal sin, a moral challenge, and an injustice connected to every other injustice:

- Mass extinctions are unraveling of web of life on which human life, both physical and spiritual depends, and which is sacred in its own right as God’s creation.
- Climate change induced sea level rise is already drowning coastal and island communities, and marshes critical to wildlife.
- Climate change is causing increasingly erratic weather - stronger and more frequent storms, floods, droughts, and fires. These disrupt natural ecosystems, threaten agriculture, destroy livelihoods, and limit access to food and clean water, exacerbating hunger, poverty, and the spread of disease.
- Climate change is driving regional conflicts and mass migrations of refugees. Women and children, vulnerable to abuse and trafficking, and the old and disabled, are especially impacted.
- Pollution is the number one cause of death globally, especially in the developing world, *not including* deaths from climate related storms, floods, droughts and fires.
- In the U.S., race is the number one predictor of where to find communities exposed to dangerous levels of toxins. Poverty is second.
- We would need 1.7 planets to sustainably support earth’s 7.6 billion people at current, vastly inequitable levels - four planets if everyone consumed at the rate of the United States. Global population is projected at 11.8 billion by 2100, yet many hold out false promises that those future billions can all one day enjoy our unsustainable developed-world lifestyle.

Our response: A theology, practice, and proclamation of earth justice:

1. **We will preach, teach, and live a theology of Beloved Community.**

What we preach and teach about God’s relationship to humanity and the earth matters. The dominant global theology enthrones a hetero-patriarchal God atop a pyramid of power. Those higher in the chain of divine command may objectify and utilize those below them for their own purposes. Global economies have adopted and secularized this model, turning markets into gods whose worship requires infinite, unregulated, unquestioned growth and consumption on a fragile, finite planet. The deadly results of this idolatry are falling first, and worst, upon women, children, marginal communities, and fragile ecosystems. Those in power suffer the soul-killing consequences of the worship of wealth and influence.

As members of the Alliance of Baptists, we commit ourselves to call each other, our churches, our communities, and our public leaders to repent from this deadly idolatry. We pledge to proclaim the counter-narrative of a God whose relationship to the world and its people is incarnational and liberationist - a Divine Presence embodied in all of creation, who suffers and rejoices in us, and who brings hope out of despair and life out of death. We will cultivate mindfulness of our inborn interconnection and responsibility to one another, to all living beings, and to The Holy One, in whose image we are made. We will follow our call to preach, teach, and live in ways that
communicate the good news of Christ’s Beloved Community, whose expansive solidarity enfolds humanity’s outcasts and the natural world.

2. We will respond pastorally to the fear and grief of climate catastrophe.

The denial of death is pervasive in our culture. In the face of personal mortality, many comfort themselves with thoughts of their children’s children, and life on earth continuing forever, carrying on their hopes, dreams, and DNA. The probability of climate catastrophe - planetary death - is so terrifying and grief inducing that it is no wonder many deny the reality of climate change. As a resurrection people, the Alliance of Baptists accepts our call to the pastoral task of helping people open their hearts to their fears and grief about personal, and planetary mortality, and in community, to cultivate the collective courage and hope necessary to act for a just future, which is the only survivable future.

3. We will engage in personal and corporate spiritual disciplines in the consumption of resources.

Building Beloved Community requires accepting the daunting challenge of significantly reducing our own consumption of resources and advocating for an equitable distribution domestically and globally. It requires putting debates about balancing human population with the survival of the natural world in a context that places primary responsibility on the developed world, rather than blaming the poor. We, in the Alliance of Baptists, accept the challenge of reducing consumption in our personal lives and churches, of advocating for a more equitable distribution of resources, and of engaging in discernment about balancing consumption and population, mindful of our position as alpha consumers.

4. Public Policy

- We reaffirm the commitments made in our 2009 Statement on Climate Change in support of congregational and public policy that reduces carbon emissions, supports vulnerable communities, and assists and welcomes migrants.
- To our 2009 commitments, we add environmental justice impacts not directly caused by climate change, such the siting of toxic emitting industries and dumps in low income and/or communities of color, and the global problems of unsustainable agricultural practices, and of toxic and plastic waste.
- We pledge as individuals, congregations, and as the Alliance of Baptists, to oppose new fossil fuel infrastructure, to support a rapid transition to clean energy, and to consider divestment from fossil fuels.
- We commit to informing ourselves about local, state, and federal energy and environmental policy and to public witness and activism on behalf of earth justice.

###

Statement on HP Free Alliance
The Alliance of Baptists supports the Hewlett Packard Free Churches campaign of FOSNA, the Friends of Sabeel in North America. Therefore, the Alliance of Baptists refuses to purchase Hewlett Packard (HP) equipment. We encourage individual Alliance members, congregational partners and allies to avoid future purchases of HP products.

**Background:**
Why should we refuse to buy Hewlett Packard products? Briefly, HP, known for computers and printers, plays an essential role in the illegal occupation of Palestine and violations of Palestinian human rights. Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) provides servers to the State of Israel for its population registry. IDs that are issued based on this registry determine what level of rights Israeli citizens have. Under this system, Jewish citizens have more rights than non-Jewish Israeli citizens, and non-Jewish Israeli citizens have more rights than Palestinian citizens.

HPE is also the exclusive provider of computers to the Israeli military, which carries out the occupation of Palestine, including the West Bank and East Jerusalem, as well as maintaining the brutal siege of the Gaza Strip. HPE also provides servers and technology used in Israeli prisons where Palestinians from all walks of life, including children, are frequently tortured and detained without charge. Israel’s prison system is used to suppress Palestinian political activity and to stifle opposition to its policies. By helping Israel run its prisons, HPE is at the heart of Israel’s use of mass incarceration to undermine Palestinian opposition to apartheid.

For more information on the campaign and materials: [www.fosna.org/free-your-church-hp](http://www.fosna.org/free-your-church-hp)

Congregations can sign on to the pledge directly here: [http://fosna.nationbuilder.com/hp_free_churches](http://fosna.nationbuilder.com/hp_free_churches)


For Alliance clergy, here is an invitation to the Clergy and Seminary Action Council. For information and to sign up: [www.fosna.org/clergy](http://www.fosna.org/clergy)

Statement submitted by the Community for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel

###

**Statement on Sexualized Violence**

The church must be proactive and not keep silent on the reality of sexualized violence. All that we believe and preach is in the name of the One who values each

1. Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA) is a nonprofit, tax-exempt Christian ecumenical organization seeking justice and peace in the Holy Land through nonviolent advocacy and education. Sabeel is an international peace movement initiated by Palestinian Christians, who seek a just peace as defined by international law and existing United Nations resolutions.

2. 2015 Hewlett Packard Co. split into two corporations: HP Inc. (consumer goods) and Hewlett Packard Enterprise, HPE, (corporate services). Both continue to profit through contracts with the state of Israel and Israeli military and both continue to profit from the HP brand name.
person as a beloved child of God. To that end, the Alliance of Baptists offers this statement:

God created humankind in God’s own image and called creation “good” (Gen. 1:31); there is not a place in the church for behavior that demeans or disrespects any person. We hold fast to the commandments that Jesus called the two great commandments: “You shall love the Lord your God with all your hearts. . . soul. . .and mind” and, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.” (Matt. 22:37, 39)

Sexual harassment and sexual assault do not honor the image of God in each person. If we do not honor the image of God in another we cannot live into that image in our own lives. Sexual violence creates deep wounds, trauma, confusion, fear, and chaos in the life of the survivor and also in the life of the perpetrator. Because we are called to stand alongside one another in suffering - “when one member suffers, all suffer together” (1 Cor. 12:26) - the Alliance of Baptists recognizes its call to not only help those who have been victimized but also to proactively oppose patterns of behavior which enable the perpetuation of sexual violence.

As a part of the church, the Body of Christ, we are to give ourselves in service and love to each other and to all those God loves by:

- teaching the Biblical truth that sexuality is a gift from God - it is holy and good. “Set me as a seal upon your heart. . .for love is strong as death, passion fierce as the grave.” (Song of Solomon 8:6)
- honoring and celebrating the dignity of all people in our actions and language.
- taking a stand against situations that encourage or allow the abuse of power in the church.
- creating an atmosphere where clergy and members are not demeaned or disrespected by any form of harassment, based on any aspect of a person’s gender, age, sexual orientation, race, ability (as examples).
- creating healing space for survivors.
- creating healing space for perpetrators.

Sexual violence prevents our becoming the people God created us to be, and it is detrimental to the ministry and mission of the church in the world.

End the Silence about Sexualized Violence

If you have been the victim of sexual violence, there is respect, support and solidarity to be found. There is a place to tell your story. It is important to speak your truth. The online platform at http://www.ourstoriesuntold.com/about/ offers a place where survivors of sexualized violence are welcomed to speak.

There are also counselors who have been specifically trained to help you. It is important to seek professional support with a counselor who understands the issues related to this kind of victimization.
In addition to a place to honestly discuss experiences of sexualized violence, it is important for our faith communities to learn about sexualized violence and its repercussions, and for congregations to put in place mechanisms to resist the perpetuation of this violence and the trauma it creates in the name of religion.

**Establish congregational policies, procedures, and accountability practices**

There are policies and best practices faith communities can put in place to cultivate healthy and safe spaces. Visit [Into Account](#) to learn about the strategies and policies congregations can implement to create healthy and safe places where everyone’s dignity is honored and protected.

The Alliance of Baptists takes seriously the problem of sexualized violence and realizes that many victims hold their experiences as guarded secrets. We seek to stand with survivors of sexualized violence as they seek freedom from the stories that bind and keep them from flourishing. We urge our congregations to put in place church policies and practices addressing sexual abuse prevention and response.

###

**Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope for Korea**

**Background:** On March 7, 2018, the World Council of Church (WCC) issued a Communique in Celebration of the 30th Anniversary of the 88 Declaration called *Cultivating Peace, Proclaiming Hope*.1

The 1988 *Declaration of the Churches of Korea on National Reunification and Peace* affirmed five principles: Independence, Peace, Grand National Unity, Humanitarianism and People’s Participation. The WCC noted those principles are still necessary for resolution of division today. The Communique invited Christians around the world and all people of good will to join the WCC to walk the path of peace with our God proclaiming the promise that God will one day redeem this whole creation.

The WCC Communique states in part:

“For he is our peace; in his flesh he has made both groups into one and has broken down the dividing wall, that is, the hostility between us.” (Ephesians 2:14)

God’s vision for this world sees swords being beaten into plowshares (Isaiah 2:4), nations gathering together under the light of God’s justice and peace, sisters and brothers once in conflict embracing each other, and all God’s children fearing neither hunger, nor thirst nor threats of war. So long as nations practice invading each other, developing bombs and missiles to destroy each other, and refusing to sit at the table until unrealistic conditions are met then we move further away from God’s vision for our world...After a period of explosively escalating tensions, we have welcomed the

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PyeongChang Olympic Truce and the new steps toward dialogue between North (DPRK) and South (ROK) as a historic opportunity.

In particular, we have been blessed to be meeting during the very days of the most hopeful developments for peace in the region for many years, with the South Korean delegation visit to Pyongyang on March 6—the first high-level direct talks between the two Koreas in more than a decade—and the announced commitment to a peace summit in April 2018. We give joyful thanks to God for these developments. . . We call for the international community, and especially the United States of America, to respond affirmatively to these signs of hope, with reciprocal tension-reducing and trust-building measures.

[W]e heard stories of the agony of division from the people of the Peninsula and the Korean diaspora, and shared hopes for peaceful coexistence and reunification. Peace-loving Christians and citizens shared visions for peace and reconciliation, and policy experts and former government officials proposed realistic ways of achieving a sustainable peace system on the Korean Peninsula. . .

We again call ourselves, as Christians, to repent that too often we have turned ideologies of domination and imperialism and Cold War antipathy into idolatries that affirm and sustain the divisions separating North Korea from the South, from countries in the region and the West, and among factions within South Korea and each of our societies...[W]e call for those who would follow the example of Jesus to seek peace by challenging not only the predominant powers of empire and war, but also the cultural values, social assumptions, and gender norms based on power and privilege.

Peaceful resolution to the continuing crisis on the Korean Peninsula can only come through authentic dialogue at the table to which the ROK and DPRK have now returned. We call on the United States of America to join them at the table of dialogue, so that hope for peace may be strengthened. We also call on China, Russia and Japan to work together with them for peace on the Korean Peninsula, and to develop a Northeast Asian common peace and security system.

The ecumenical community has affirmed that God’s peace and justice is based on the belief that without justice for all everywhere we shall never have peace anywhere. Indeed, peace in the world depends on realizing peace on the Korean Peninsula. In the 30 years since the 1988 Declaration the WCC have been dedicated to cultivating peace. Like the persistent widow mentioned in Luke 18, we can claim hope as the fruit of our persistence, described in our conference as a “fierce patience.” Paul’s letter to the Galatians encourages us to “not grow weary in doing what is right, for we will reap at harvest time, if we do not give up” (Gal. 6:9). We recognize the political events of the day present us with Kairos moment. We stand at the edge of possibility, and with God’s grace we proclaim that the time for peace on the Korean Peninsula is now.

**Statement**

In our Annual Meeting of 2018, we—the Alliance of Baptists—join with the World Council of Churches in celebrating the recent steps toward dialogue between the nations embroiled in the conflict in Korea. We urge the United States, China, Russia and Japan to join the Republic of Korea and Democratic People’s Republic of Korea in authentic dialogue with our pledge of support for peace and security for the people of Korea, indeed for all the people of the world.
We—the Alliance of Baptists—urge the U.S. Congress to adopt the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons that seeks to eliminate nuclear weapons not only from the Korean Peninsula but from the entire world. These weapons, the most destructive and indiscriminate weapon of mass destruction ever devised by human beings, must be considered condemnable from any ethical point of view, and certainly from our perspective that all the people of the world are beloved children of God.

We—the Alliance of Baptists—reaffirm today our Statement on Nuclear Disarmament from July 30, 2010. We pledge to raise our voices in advocacy for peace for all God’s children in communications with our U.S. Senators and other political leaders. We call on our Alliance of Baptists congregations to lead in prayer, teaching, and preaching about the biblical, spiritual and moral basis for God’s peace and shalom.

###

Statement of Welcome and Affirmation

The Alliance of Baptists in 2004 adopted a [Statement on Same Sex Marriage](#) that affirms our support for the rights of all citizens to full marriage equality. Since that time, we have witnessed many changes in our world and our communities. We have joined together to create additional statements and to boldly address the injustices perpetrated on queer* and trans** folk by power structures: social, ecclesial, political, and interpersonal alike.

Today, we once again gather, in person and in word, to hold ourselves accountable for equity, collegiality, and diversity.¹ We gather as queer and trans folk, as allies, as individuals whose lives represent countless sexual, gender, racial, ethnic, economic, variously-abled, and additionally intertwined and intersectional identities.

We gather to pursue God’s justice.

We gather in mourning for and in solidarity with clergy and religiously-employed folks who are in the closet to maintain their employment, who are continually forced to choose between living into their full identity and losing the livelihood that simultaneously gives and drains their lives.

We gather with the understanding that by fully affirming all sexual orientations and gender identities, by refusing to hide anyone’s light, by utilizing the gifts for ministry that come with the entirety of our neighbors’ individual identities and orientations, we move closer to God who is the Divine source of all life.

We gather knowing that human life is a journey in continuing discernment and self-naming, and we validate and affirm the power that comes in naming one’s self without restriction or retribution by the power structures attempting to control the narrative of queer and trans folk.

¹ Item #9 in the [Alliance Mission Statement](#) adopted 1997
We gather with intention to center, make visible, and make heard all marginalized people who are Black and Brown, immigrant, poor, differently-abled and especially those in the queer and trans community, the Church, and society-at-large who must daily defend their own identities.

We gather to affirm all persons at all stages in this journey, particularly persons of sexual and gender minorities who are too often wounded, ignored, and/or oppressed at personal and societal levels throughout our world, including in communities of faith.

Thus, in our gathering, we reaffirm the freedom of the church to shape its own life and mission, call its own leadership, and ordain whom it perceives as gifted for ministry, inclusive of the queer and trans members of God’s family.

The Alliance of Baptists celebrates and reaffirms those wounded and ignored by the church and society, not the least of these being the beloved members of the queer and trans community.

We are queer and trans. We are allies. We are lay and clergy. We are partners in mission. We are everyone. We are the Alliance. We are Baptists.

* queer: The most common use of queer is as an all-encompassing term inclusive of anyone who lives outside of heterosexual and gender-conforming norms. So queer is often used to mean lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and so on. But queer also has a more radical meaning, especially in academic literature, as a term that challenges the notion that sexual and gender experiences can be neatly categorized and understood in the fixed, static, and scientifically driven manner we have typically attempted to use in describing these aspects of human experience.

** trans or transgender: People whose psychological and spiritual sense of gender differs from the social and cultural expectations attached to the biological/physical sex characteristics with which they were born (i.e., their “sex assigned at birth”; see above). Terms sometimes used to denote a transgender person’s experience are “male-to-female” (MTF) and “female-to-male” (FTM). It is important to note that the general preference is for use of the adjective form of transgender or trans to describe a person’s gender identity, rather than to use the term as a noun (e.g., saying, “He is a transgender man,” rather than, “He is a transgender” or “He is transgendered”). It is not preferable to use the term with an added “-ed” ("transgendered"). At the time of this writing, the general preference is shifting toward the simple term trans rather than transgender.

###

A Letter to the Members of the Alliance of Baptists

We are sharing this letter with members and friends of our church, and made the decision to share this with you, the leaders of the Alliance of Baptists and also the United Church of Christ. The youth of Harmony Creek Church, Dayton, Ohio have met several times to share concerns and ideas that ought to be lifted up. We, the youth, believe that our church and its affiliated denominations need to publicly stand up and support youth in any efforts to help enhance progress in the social climate, especially

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2 Item #2 in the Alliance Covenant adopted 1987.
when it comes to gun violence in schools. Could our denominations really embrace the concept of teaching ways to help parents raise their kids with more empathy and compassion? Is there a way to have more direct communication with everyone in all of our churches of resources to help us better understand the issues surrounding youth in crisis who really need help?

When our youth group first met on the topic, we first asked what comes to mind when you think about the recent shootings in Florida? The following are quotes from our conversations:

“Here we are ... and what we see is: it’s just another school shooting.” “There is a cycle: we grieve, we argue, nothing changes.” “It’s pretty sad that we are now standing up to the government.” “…wanting to do something, not what others are telling us to do.” “With the internet and media: it’s always in our face.”

“Some of us believe that the shootings have been blown out of proportion by the media.” “We have a mental illness crisis in this country.” “We risk our lives every day when we go to school.” “Too many kids in this country go to school wondering if this day might be their last. It shouldn’t have to be that way.”

“This has gone on too long, and the older generation hasn’t done enough to help until our generation has started to become part of the newsfeed almost every day as the result of the shooting in Parkland, Fla.”

In our discussions, many different areas of concern came up. We feel you need to hear what we have to say: It’s not just one concern or another. It’s a combination of all of the concerns or as some may suggest “things.” It’s the gun thing. It’s the mental health thing. It’s the God thing. It’s the parent thing. It’s the internet thing. It’s the bullying thing. It’s the technology thing. It’s the violent media thing. It’s the racial thing. It’s the instant supervision thing. It’s the no supervision thing. It’s all of the things or concerns that need to be addressed.

While we waste time arguing about which one of the “things” it is that causes the school shooting instances to grow in number and severity — all of the things are coming together to create our next-door neighbor, student, classmate, and coworker. We need to be asking these questions: How are we contributing to improve the world that is creating those students? What can we, as a church, do? What can the Alliance of Baptists do?

We would like to explore avenues that we can work on together. We do not have the answers, but we are hoping to see some action take place by the denominations that represent Harmony Creek Church. Is there something we as youth can participate in? What guidance would be helpful as these subject matters are discussed at the local level as well as the regional and national level? Are there ways to share ideas, suggestions, programs, etc. that not only bring awareness, but show positive results when used? We believe there’s been a lot of talk. We need to see some positive progress that makes sense, that gives hope, that involves everyone working at it together. We hope that you would embrace our concerns. You are the adults. You’re the ones supposed to be ensuring our safety.
Sincerely,

The Youth Group of Harmony Creek Church, Dayton, Ohio

Alliance of Baptists
Minutes of the Annual Meeting
Friday, April 28, 2017, 3:15 p.m.
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

1. Call to Order
   a. The first session of the Annual Meeting of the Alliance of Baptists was called to order by Mike Castle, president of the Board of Directors.

2. Mr. Castle called on Leslie Withers (treasurer of the board) to explain the Consensus Model to the gathered so that everyone present would have a working understanding of how decisions are made during meetings of the Alliance of Baptists.
   a. Leslie explained the model and asked for any questions from the gathered. None were raised.

3. The gathered were led in a review of the Alliance Covenant through a responsive reading.

4. Paula Clayton Dempsey welcomed the gathered and recognized the Ministry Partners of the Alliance of Baptists. Several who were present brought a word of thankfulness for the support and partnership.

5. Because of an error in preparation, the minutes from the previous Annual Meeting (April 2016) were not presented to the gathered. No concerns were raised.

6. Mr. Castle then called upon Allan Burton (secretary of the board) to report on the actions of the Board of Directors since the April 2016 Annual Gathering.
   a. Highlights of the work of the Board between the 2016 and 2017 Annual Meetings were presented and Mr. Burton offered to talk with any person present following the Friday session.

7. Mrs. Withers was then called back to the podium by Mr. Castle to present the Treasurer’s Report.
   a. After providing the gathered with the current financial picture of the organization, one of strength in the 2nd quarter of the year, Leslie answered all questions posed.
   b. Mrs. Withers also encouraged all gathered to continue to support the Alliance of Baptists with their financial gifts toward the successful completion of the budget by year’s end.

8. Mrs. Withers remained at the podium for the discussion of the four Alliance Statements brought to the gathered.
   a. The following are a list of the Statements for the gathered to consider adopting:
      i. A Statement on Supporting the Right of Dissent
ii. A Statement in Support of the Freedom of Religion and Freedom from Persecution and Harassment based on Religion

iii. A Statement on Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope for Immigrants and Refugees

iv. A Statement of HB2 (North Carolina)
   a. The Statements were made available in print and were dealt with one at a time.
   b. Those who had worked on drafting the Statements were offered an opportunity to speak on their behalf.
   c. Questions and comments were accepted on each one.
   d. After questions and concerns were expressed, Mr. Castle and Mrs. Withers referred further discussion to the breakout sessions devoted to Statements, all of which would occur prior to the Statements being presented for Consensus the following day.

9. Mr. Castle then recognized 2 individuals who represented organizations committed to resourcing Alliance of Baptist Churches.
   a. Timothy Harris, president and chief executive officer of the Insurance Board, providing specialized insurance solutions for the UCC, AOB, PC(USA), and the Disciples presented new insurance options available to Alliance churches and ministers.
   b. Howard Hawkins, Director of Business Development for the United Church Funds, discussed the socially responsible investment options open to Alliance of Baptist ministers.
   c. The Alliance of Baptist Board of Directors continues to work to strengthen relationships with these and other partner organizations offering resources to ministers and churches.

10. 2 New resources available to the gathered were then highlighted and made available to anyone who wanted one.
   a. Trouble the Waters: A Christian Resource for the Work of Racial Justice, a book produced through the Racial Justice Community and funded by the ARCUS Foundation

11. Following the presentation of the new resources, Paul Richardson (Chair of the Nominating Committee) was called upon by Mr. Castle to make the Nominating Report.
   The Report is as follows:
   Secretary
   • Allan Burton, Birmingham, AL (to complete an unexpired term left vacant by resignation; to serve until 2018)
   Board of Directors
   • Aaron Austin, Lexington, Ky. (to complete an unexpired term left vacant by Allan Burton’s move from the board to the office of secretary; to serve until 2019)
   • Jim Dant, Greenville, S.C. (to serve a first term until 2020)
   • Lisa Darak-Druck, Westbrook, Maine (to serve a second term until 2020)
   • Tammerie Day, Hillsborough, N.C. (to serve a first term until 2020)
   • Jessica Lynd, Washington, D.C. (to serve a first term until 2020)
• Terryn Nelson, Woodbridge, Va. (to serve a first term until 2020; has served one year to complete an unexpired term)
• Christine Y. Wiley, Fort Washington, Md. (to serve a first term until 2020)

Endorsing Council
• Ben Curry, Sacramento, Calif. (to serve a first term until 2019; will be liaison to the Board of Directors, of which he is a member)
• Peggy Sanderford Ponder, Birmingham, Ala. (to serve a second term until 2019)

After presenting the slate, a call for nominations from the floor was given. Hearing none, the gathered were called to continue to consider the nominations until the calling for Consensus during the following day’s Annual Meeting session.

12. The gathered were then made aware of all the Alliance Communities that would be meeting following this Annual Meeting session and were encouraged to choose one that held significant meaning and to attend that session later in the day or during the day on Saturday.

13. The gathered then sang the Classic Alliance Hymn (1997) to the FOUNDATION hymn tune and were dismissed as Mike Castle adjourned the meeting.

Alliance of Baptists
Annual Meeting
Saturday, April 29, 2017, 11:30 a.m.
Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C.

1. Call to Order
   a. The second session of the Annual Meeting of the Alliance of Baptists was called to order by Mike Castle, president of the Board of Directors.

2. Call to Action and Advocacy “Shout Outs” were offered as the first “order of business” for the session.
   a. An attempt was made for each “Shout Out” to be less than 1 minute.

3. Mr. Castle recognized Carol Blythe to present the Advocacy Work of the Alliance over the previous year.
   a. Carol presented the many opportunities the Executive Committee had to represent the organization as a whole by signing on to Statements created by our Partners and other affiliated organizations.
   b. No Statement is signed without the prior approval of the Executive Committee.
   c. Carol was recognized and thanked for her seemingly tireless work she does to keep up with the many opportunities to advocate for the mission of the Alliance in the world.

4. Next, Mike called on the members of the Alliance (staff) Leadership Team to provide the gathered with a report on their work.
   a. The theme of the report was “Who We Are Becoming.”
5. Following the Staff Report, Mr. Castle, along with Leslie Withers, led the gathered into a period of discernment regarding the 4 Statements presented for affirmation.
   a. The gathered were reminded about content of each Statement, presented in detail the day before.
      i. A Statement on Supporting the Right of Dissent
      ii. A Statement in Support of the Freedom of Religion and Freedom from Persecution and Harassment based on Religion
      iii. A Statement on Protecting Welcome, Restoring Hope for Immigrants and Refugees
      iv. A Statement of HB2 (North Carolina)
         a. Each statement was discussed individually and consensus was considered for each individual Statement.
         b. As there was no one who wanted to block consensus, consensus was reached.

6. Mr. Castle then recognized Eric Cain to make a presentation on the new program/resource, CAIRN.
   a. CAIRN is a network of Alliance-affiliated clergy who believe that together, in a Spirit-led community, everything exists that is needed to become and remain healthy, resilient, and prophetic leaders.
   b. The network will sponsor a Winter Retreat in January 2018.

7. Following the CAIRN report, Mike led the gathered into a period of discernment regarding those nominated to serve as a part of the leadership of the Alliance.
   a. The gathered were reminded of the nominated and a time of questions and discussion was offered.

Secretary
- Allan Burton, Birmingham, Ala. (to complete an unexpired term left vacant by resignation; to serve until 2018)

Board of Directors
- Aaron Austin, Lexington, Ky. (to complete an unexpired term left vacant by Allan Burton’s move from the board to the office of secretary; to serve until 2019)
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Endorsing Council
- Ben Curry, Sacramento, Calif. (to serve a first term until 2019; will be liaison to the Board of Directors, of which he is a member)
- Peggy Sanderford Ponder, Birmingham, Ala. (to serve a second term until 2019)
  a. The call for consensus on the slate of nominees was made, and having no one to block it, consensus was reached.

8. Mr. Castle then called for representatives from each of the Alliance Communities to offer a report on the vital resources they are providing, discussions
they are leading, and the resulting comradery amongst the members. Reports were vocally given.

9. Mr. Castle then called on Jason Smith, the Congregational Engagement Specialist, to recognize the Congregational Partners and Individual Donors to the Alliance.

10. The outgoing Board Members were then recognized by Mike, who highlighted their service and thanked them.

11. An Invitation was offered to the gathered to attend the 2018 Annual Gathering at Harmony Creek Church in Dayton, Ohio.
   a. Sarah Macias highlighted the environmental theme of the gathering and announced that the dates would be April 27-29, 2018.

12. The Annual Meeting was then adjourned by Mr. Castle with the invitation to the gathered to sing the Alliance Hymn (2012) to the tune ST. DENIO.

**Report on Board Actions, 2017-2018**

Introduction:
Board members are volunteers. They are not staff or employees. However, because they are often engaged with a group that they feel passionately about, as it is with the Alliance of Baptists, they are often challenged to be more than they would be otherwise. Such as it is with your Board of Directors.

As Board Members, each has been asked:
1. To be cheerful givers to the Alliance of Baptists,
2. To be ambassadors of the mission, ministry, and program of the Alliance,
3. To be a connector to needed resources,
4. To carry the fiduciary responsibility of the organization,
5. And to offer their energy, experience, and expertise in ways that fulfills their callings and the calling of the Alliance.

Since we last gathered together, the Board has been busy doing just these things. We have:
1. Put the new directors, that you approved last April, to work on specific committees that match their abilities and experience
2. Followed the progression of the staff, encouraging them, and supporting them where needed through the personnel processes in place
3. Monitored the finances - both expenses and income of the organization, meeting the actual expense goals and exceeding the income goals of 2017
4. Begun to plan future gatherings, enlisting Alliance members to bring them to fruition
5. Answered missional/directional questions and concerns from member churches and individuals
6. Supported the continued development of CAIRN and the Just Sex Conference as vital resources for ever progressing churches and church leaders in this Alliance network
7. Supported the ever-expanding work of the Communications Committee, under the leadership of our (new this year) Communications Specialist, Toya Richards, bringing us new ways to tell our story.

8. Supported and participated in the endorsement of new chaplains.

9. Are bringing to you, at this meeting, a new slate of directors to take the place of the wonderfully talented folks who will be rotating off at the end of this Gathering.

But most importantly to the Alliance of Baptist as a whole ... we have

10. Extended the work of the Covenant Review sub-committee of the Board by receiving their report (at the September 2017 Board Meeting), acknowledging their hard work, considering many possibilities of next steps both at the September meeting and at the January 2018 Executive Committee meeting, and forming a membership wide committee to continue to Covenant review process. The results will be brought to the entire membership in time for consideration of their recommendations at the April 2019 Annual Gathering.

11. And extended the important work of the staff in identifying personal and corporate white privilege that exists within the Alliance, and intentionally joining them in the process. Working toward being increasingly anti-racist is now an active and ongoing process within the Board and an action that the membership as a whole will be invited into in the near future.

Submitted by Allan Burton, secretary of the board of the Alliance of Baptists. Any questions or concerns may be directed to Allan at allan@hopemanifest.org or face to face at the 2018 Annual Gathering in Dayton, Ohio.

**Board Committee Reports**

**Finance Committee**

When the Alliance board met in the fall of 2016 to plan the 2017 budget, we took a deep breath and then adopted a budget that did not balance. We would make up the difference using retained earnings from previous years. We decided to take this risk as an investment in our future by spending $25,000 to substantially improving our online presence. The software we had been using on our clunky old website was obsolete and no longer met our needs. Since we have no home office, our website is our “virtual home,” where people come to visit us and learn who we are. Our “home” needed major renovation to make it a welcoming place.

But then a funny thing happened on the way to the end of the fiscal year. The board members weren’t the only folks who believed in the future of the Alliance and were willing to invest in it. You stepped up your support of the Alliance. We received record contributions from individual donors, partner congregations, and foundations. And so we actually ended the year in the black, as you can see below, with a positive balance of almost $27,000.
Thank you for investing in our future. Together, we can ensure that we have the funds we need to increase our outreach, support our ministry partners, nurture our growing network of chaplains, develop resources for our partner congregations, and provide for our dedicated staff.

The Alliance of Baptists: theological home; pursuit of justice, partnership in mission.

Finance Committee:
Leslie Withers, chair
Jessica Lynd
Jim Dant
Tim Moore
Carole Collins, staff liaison

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<tr>
<th>Alliance of Baptists</th>
<th>Ministry Budget</th>
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* Includes $13,200
Mission and Ministry Partnerships Committee

The Mission and Ministry Partnerships Committee is tasked with determining mission priorities, overseeing the allocation of mission funds and providing vision and guidance for establishing and nurturing ministry and mission partnerships.

In the fall of 2017, after reviewing renewal forms and partnership requests, the committee recommended to the board the following list of 36 funded ministry partners for 2017-2018, which includes the addition of 1 new partner—Just Bakery, Atlanta, Ga.

**Mutual Partners**
African Baptist Churches in Zimbabwe  
Aliança de Batistas do Brasil  
Baptist Seminary of Mexico  
Fraternidad de Iglesias Bautistas de Cuba  
Peace Cathedral, Evangelical Baptist Church of Georgia  
Seminario Intercultural Mayanese  
Zimbabwe Theological Seminary

**Ecumenical and Advocacy Partners**
Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty  
BPFNA - Hispanic Summer Program  
Churches for Middle East Peace  
Church World Service  
Creation Justice Ministries  
Equity for Women in the Church  
Latin American Working Group  
National Farmworker Ministry  
National Council of Churches  
Global Baptist Peace Conference

**Ministry Service Partners**
AMOS Health and Hope, Nicaragua  
Bright Stars of Bethlehem  
Calvary Latino Ministry, Washington, D.C.  
Crossing Lines, Uganda  
Emmaus House, Raleigh, N.C.  
Hope Center at Pullen, Raleigh, N.C.  
Interfaith Chaplaincy, Al Akawayn University, Morocco  
Jitokese Wamama Wafrika, Kenya  
JourneyPartners, Franklinton, N.C.  
Just Bakery, Atlanta, Ga.  
Oakhurst Recovery Program, Decatur, Ga.  
QC Family Tree, Charlotte, N.C.  
Rauschenbush Metro Ministries, New York City  
Samaritan Neighborhood Center, Oakland, Ca.  
Seeds of Hope Publishers, Waco, Texas
Shalom Children’s Center, Ghana
Shekinah, El Salvador
Stewart Center, Atlanta, Ga.
Strive, Chicago, Ill.

The Mission and Ministry Partnerships Committee is also responsible for reviewing and recommending partnerships with programs, institutions and ministries which align with the Alliance’s covenant and mission. *Nevertheless She Preached*, a preaching series held in Waco, Texas, coordinated by two pastors within the Alliance, has been added as a program partner for 2018. The Alliance is made stronger by our program partners whose mission and witness intersects and overlaps our calling to embrace God’s loving justice. Our sharing of resources, collaborative efforts and programs makes our collective witness stronger. We are blessed to join hearts and hands with these organizations. For a full list of partnerships—those funded and those supported with energy—see [allianceofbaptists.org/partners](http://allianceofbaptists.org/partners).

Also on the “Our Partners” page of the website, a video featuring the ministry of mutual partner Peace Cathedral, Tbilisi, Georgia is featured. The video was created after the 2017 visit to the ministry partner of an Alliance delegation. The purpose of the visit was to stand in solidarity with Peace Cathedral’s witness for full inclusion of the LGBTQ community, interfaith work, and ministry to the poor.

In July 2017, Jason Smith had the opportunity to visit with ministry partners in Mexico at the Mayan Intercultural Seminary in San Cristobal and the Baptist Seminary of Mexico in Mexico City. He was able to see how the work of seminary leaders Dalla Juárez, Eleazar Perez, and Aurelia Jiménez stretches beyond the walls of the campus in San Cristobal, Chiapas. Nestled in green mountains and clouds high above Chiapas, San Cristobal is a town saturated with Mayan culture and the Seminary mirrors this environment as it seeks to be a place of openness, spirituality, and education in the community. We were able to visit some of the Tzotzil Maya villages where the seminary carries out solidarity projects around music, art, community organizing, and healthcare with the Mayan community. Jason learned about the Baptist Seminary of Mexico, rooted deeply in the ecumenical community around the National Autonomous University of Mexico. The seminary also works with indigenous communities providing primary-level educational opportunities and workshops on human rights, conflict transformation, indigenous rights, and issues of land ownership. They offer both secular and biblical training to students in the Mexico City region.

Because of the generosity of Alliance congregational partners, foundations and individual partners, the financial contributions projected in the 2017 budget for our funded ministry partners were met and, in at least one case, were exceeded. Because of the generosity of the Eula Mae and John Baugh Foundation, an additional grant has been given to the First Baptist Church of Bultrins, Pernambuco, Brazil for the *Orquestra de Câmara do Alto da Mina*. This chamber orchestra creates hope for 50 young people and their families who reside in the slums outside of Recifé, Brazil, as they learn discipline, music and faith. We celebrate this orchestra, its director, Israel de Franca, and the sponsoring church that is a part of the *Aliança de Batistas do Brasil*. 
Partnership is a core value of the Alliance of Baptists. The Alliance model of partnership in ministry works to build lasting relationships that offer the world hope while working for justice. With gratitude for our shared ministry and grief for the pain in the world, our partnerships make a difference giving birth to God’s dream for tomorrow. With profound gratitude for the privilege and the responsibility of sharing with our partners in both grief at the pain in the world and in effective ministry, our partnerships make a difference and bring God’s dream for tomorrow here and now and around the world.

Respectfully submitted,

John Ballenger, chair
John Evans
Terryn Nelson
Susan Reed
Kevin Brown, UCC representative
Ken Booker Langston, Christian Church/DOC representative
Paula Clayton Dempsey, staff liaison

Endorsement Council

The endorsement council, in conjunction with the endorsement board committee, has endorsed five individuals to chaplaincy since we met in Raleigh one year ago. We are excited to present these folks to you. Please take a moment to welcome them to Alliance-endorsed chaplaincy if you see them during this annual gathering.

The newest Alliance of Baptists endorsed chaplains are:

Ladale Benson, Charlotte, N.C.
An ordained Baptist minister, Ladale engages the perspectives of marginalized bodies and life for his theological development and praxis. He is an activist, hospital chaplain, and Ph.D. student at California Institute of Integral Studies in the Women’s Spirituality Program. His academic work is centered in imagining possibilities of a healed manhood/masculinity that does not function within domination practices. He enjoys going to the park with his three-year-old son, reading, writing, and traveling internationally. Ladale has a B.A. from Greensboro College in Liberal Studies/Religion (2012). He also received his M.Div. from Hood Theological Seminary in 2016 and Th.M. (Master of Theology) from Duke University Divinity School (2017).

Travis Clarke, Colorado Springs, Co.
Travis graduated from G.W. Truett Seminary in 2011 and completed five CPE units in 2013. He worked as a hospice chaplain for four years following CPE and now serves as a Hospital Chaplain in Colorado Springs. He was ordained in 2013, and his goal in the next year or so is to become board certified. As a newer member of the Alliance of Baptists, he looks forward to becoming more involved in coming years. Theologically he considers himself a progressive and straddles the Baptist-Anabaptist line.

Deborah Lynn, Nashville, Tenn.
Deborah Lynn is a Licensed Massage Therapist/Rosen Method Body Centered Practitioner and Chaplain. She and her spouse, April Baker, reside in Nashville, TN,
where Deborah has a Rosen Method Body Centered private practice and serves as Chaplain with St. Thomas Health Hickman County. When not working, Deborah loves to read, practice mindfulness yoga, receive massages, and drink really good, strong coffee, like Cafe Cubano. Deborah and April share a love of kayaking, hiking and camping when they can get away in Daphne, their 1986 Toyota Dolphin camper. Deborah is a member of Glendale Baptist Church, the Alliance of Baptists and the Baptist Peace Fellowship of North America/Bautistas por la Paz. Deborah has only missed two “Peace Camps” since they began attending in 1990. With one Baptist Global Peace Conference in her life experience, she is looking forward to the next Global Peace Conference in Columbia, South America in 2019!

Richard Watts, Carrollton, Texas
Rick is a hospice chaplain in Carrollton, Texas. Originally from Dunwoody, Ga., Rick attended college at Samford University in Birmingham, Ala. He then earned his Master of Divinity at Truett Seminary at Baylor University in Waco, Texas. He and his wife (Paige) of six years have a dog (Grover) and several guinea pigs. He enjoys spending time with family, reading, and watching baseball.

Angela Chavis, Winston-Salem, N.C.
Angela is currently concluding a 2nd year residency program at Wake Baptist Medical Center in Winston Salem, N.C. Angela is a 2016 graduate of Wake Forest University School of Divinity. Angela received approval from the Association of Professional Chaplains (APC) for Board Certification on March 2, 2018. She is a native of Greensboro, N.C., where she has been a long-standing member of her church and serves as congregation chaplain and community outreach coordinator. Angela has a deep passion for working through social justice issues for vulnerable populations. She has a long history of advocating for needs of immigrants and refugees.

Respectfully submitted,
Benjamin Curry, chair, Endorsement Board Committee
Tammerie Day
Christine Wiley
Endorsement Council members:
Ann Charlescraft
Benjamin Curry
Russell Davis
Don Fulton
Peggy Sanderford Ponder
Teresa Sanders

Development Committee

Purpose of the Development Committee
As one of the ongoing committees of the board of the Alliance of Baptists (AOB), the purpose of the Development Committee is to provide the following:
1. Support to the AOB staff in their efforts to raise the needed operating funds
2. Connect the Alliance to new sources of financial support
3. Connect the fundraising work of the AOB staff to the Board of Directors be keeping them informed and challenging their support as the resource connectors of the AOB.

Members of the Development Committee
1. Cecil White
2. Doug Washington
3. Tiffany Pittman
4. Jessica Lynd
5. Allan Burton, Chair
6. Paula Clayton Dempsey, staff liaison
7. Jason Smith, staff liaison

Ongoing work of the Development Committee
1. Meet regularly with Jason Smith to provide accountability, advice, and support
2. Perform fundraising tasks as requested by Jason and Paula. These tasks may include but are not limited to:
   a. Building relationships with AOB members and other supporters through the writing of thank you notes or making thank you calls
   b. Providing a sounding board for Jason as he plans the development work of the AOB
   c. Challenging members to give, as helpful according to the development plan
   d. Creating new avenues of financial support as resources allow
   e. Providing feedback on and/or editing direct fundraising appeals and grant requests
   f. Communicating with churches who support the AOB.
3. Report regularly to the board
   a. Challenging each director to give
   b. Requesting their advice and leadership as needed
   c. Utilizing the resources each has to discover new avenues of funding for the AOB

Respectfully Submitted by Allan Burton, secretary of the board of the Alliance of Baptists. Any questions or concerns may be directed to Allan at allan@hopemanifest.org or face to face at the 2018 Annual Gathering in Dayton, Ohio.

Communications Committee
The Communications Committee was very happy to welcome Toya Richards this past fall as the new Communications Specialist for the Alliance of Baptists. Our work over the past 6 months has been focused on helping Toya understand the history of and the future vision for proclaiming the Virtual Home of all of us who identify as part of our Alliance.

We are also very appreciative for the work of Kristy Pullen in the transition from our old website platform to our new one, with the help of Blue Fish web design and platform support.
After a few web conference calls, we fully support Toya in her creation of a communications plan for the Alliance for 2018 and beyond, which can be found at: https://drive.google.com/a/allianceofbaptists.org/file/d/1zFzJGCpX_9C5YSzmG9ZweanpfXeTW31/view?usp=sharing

We plan to assist Toya with story-boarding and video promotion for our website and overall video presence, helping ongoing supporters, searching progressives, and hurting seekers to understand all that we offer in ministry and partnership to our hurting world.

Respectfully submitted,
Lisa Darak-Druck, chair
Aaron Austin
Daniel Miles
Tiffany Pittman

Personnel Committee

Romans 16:22 - “I, Tertius, who write this letter, greet you in the Lord.”
Like Tertius, I welcome you to the reading of this report in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Personnel Committee (Personnel) members: Melinda Huff and Christine Wiley with myself as Chair. Committee members and the Chair serve for one year; and this term is renewable.

A Personnel Committee is an essential committee to the health of any organization and the well-being of the board itself. The board requires confidence and trust that Personnel is qualified to provide current, realistic and unprejudiced consultations and recommendations. Whether very active or available upon request the Personnel Committee requires a strong working relationship with the board. The board members we have worked with this past year have certainly made it easy to have this relationship. Thank you, Paula and Carole! Throughout 2017, the latter is the level of activity personnel had with the current board.

During 2017, Personnel welcomed the opportunity to work with Paula (Clayton Dempsey) and Carole (Collins) on behalf of the entire board to:

• Support the board with personnel related tasks, questions and concerns
• Organize a Search Committee, execute the Search Committee’s work and conclude the work of the Search Committee to the successful hiring of Toya Richards as the Communications Specialist (August 2017)
• Research, analyze and offer salary recommendations to the board for 2018 salary increases for staff
• Prepare the staff salary portion of the 2018 Alliance budget

Thanks to everyone who worked on these tasks with us.

Although committed and effective in all that Personnel was able to do, my one personnel disappointment in 2017 was our inability to have the time to review the existing Alliance of Baptists Personnel Policies & Procedures manual (as approved by
the Personnel Committee in April 16, 2014). This manual addresses who our staff will be, what our staff will be provided, how our staff will be cared for and general personnel procedures. The Alliance staff is our most valuable asset!

I feel confident that the Alliance acknowledges anything staff related is a priority. Qualified people worked many long hours to develop this manual. My hope is that the incoming Personnel Committee will be able to review this manual to ensure that as an open-minded employer, Alliance is conscientiously current in everything associated with staff.

Personnel is aware that many individuals assisted us in accomplishing our work. This report would be incomplete without naming and thanking the entire Alliance staff, who, at any given time, for any given request, make themselves - or the product of their work - available to us. (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12: “Two are better off than one, because together they can work more effectively. If one of them falls down, the other can help him up.”)

Therefore, to ‘the people behind the scenes’ who make us look good, many thanks and blessings to: Carole Collins (director of operations and finance); Cathy McGaughhey (operations specialist); Jason Smith (congregational engagement specialist); Kenneth Meyers (leadership & faith formation specialist); Kristy Pullen (website specialist); Paula Clayton Dempsey (director of partnership relations); and Toya Richards (communications specialist).

These people, along with all of you, make the Alliance what it is! We are blessed to be Alliance members.

Respectfully submitted,
Lee Nicholas-Pattillo, chair
Melinda Huff
Christine Wiley

Nominating Committee Report

The following individuals are recommended for service on the Alliance of Baptists’ board of directors and endorsing council:

To a two-year term as officers
- President: Michael-Ray Mathews, San Jose, Calif. (C)
- Vice President: Cathy Tamsberg, Raleigh, N.C. (C)
- Treasurer: Nancy Flippin, Asheville, N.C. (L)

To a second two-year term as an officer
- Secretary: Allan Burton, Birmingham, Ala. (C)

To a three-year term on the board
- Jo Ann Alley, West Monroe, La. (L)
- Malu Fairley, Charlotte, N.C. (C)
- Ben Sanders, St. Louis, Mo. (C)
- Elijah Zehyoue, Washington, D.C. (C)
To a second three-year term on the board
- Tim Moore, Charlotte, N.C. (C)
- Doug Washington, Dallas, Texas (L)

To a two-year term on the Board of Directors
(filling a vacancy occasioned by a recent resignation):
- Rob Marus, Washington, D.C.

To a two-year term on the endorsing council
- Elizabeth Harris Lamkin, Atlanta, Ga. (C)
- Robert Rennix, Capitol Heights, Md. (C)

Respectfully submitted,
Wayne Grinstead, chair
Russ Dean
David Gooch
Judith Myers
Ashlee Wiest-Laird
Paula Clayton Dempsey, staff liaison

Biographical notes on those being newly elected:

Jo Ann Alley is a general surgeon in a practice in Monroe, La., where she is an active member of congregational partner Northminster Church. A long-term supporter of the Alliance, she has traveled to visit ministry partners in Cuba and has filled a leadership role at Baptist Youth Camp, a weeklong summer camp program of a community of Alliance congregational partners.

Malu Fairley-Collins is the co-pastor of congregational partner Wedgewood Church, Charlotte, N.C., a congregation that extravagantly welcomes, celebrates and wrestles with persons of varied social locations, including ethnicity, orientation, gender-identity, socio-economic and mental/physical ability. She is passionate about affirming the value, worth and opportunities for all persons as created in the image of God. She serves as the director of spiritual care and education for the Palliative Care Group within Atrium Health. She is an Alliance-endorsed board-certified chaplain and an associate certified pastoral educator with ACPE. She is an African-American, pansexual, gender-queer fem (pronouns she, her, hers) who seeks to empower herself and others to embrace the truths of their spirituality, sexuality and ethnicity. She is happily married and co-parents one vivacious teenage son.

Nancy Flippin has a long professional history of finance and accounting in the nonprofit sector, including finance manager for an affordable housing ministry in Atlanta, 18 years as CFO for the Atlanta Community Food Bank, and currently CFO for MANNA Food Bank in Asheville, N.C. She was a member of Oakhurst Baptist Church, Decatur, Ga., for almost 30 years and focused her work and life on social justice issues impacting her low-income neighbors. She now lives in Asheville, N.C., is a member of congregational partner First Baptist Church, Asheville, and enjoys cooking, playing the piano, and just hanging out with her partner.

Elizabeth “Liz” Harris-Lamkin serves as chaplain at Piedmont Hospital In Atlanta, Ga., and has been endorsed by the Alliance since October 1999. She retired last year.
from serving as a chaplain in the Georgia Army National Guard. Liz is a member of Alliance congregational partner Northside Drive Baptist Church, Atlanta, where her husband, James Lamkin, is pastor.

Rob Marus is a communications professional who spent more than a decade in progressive Baptist journalism before moving into the public relations world. He currently serves as communications director for District of Columbia Attorney General Karl Racine, and previously worked as deputy communications director for former D.C. Mayor Vincent Gray. Prior to working for the District government, he served as managing editor and Washington bureau chief for Associated Baptist Press (now Baptist News Global). Rob is a member of The First Baptist Church of the City of Washington, D.C., where he has served in a number of leadership roles. A native of Little Rock, Ark., he graduated from Rhodes College in Memphis and attended Central Baptist Theological Seminary in Kansas City.

Michael-Ray Mathews has 30 years of ministry experience as a leader in the multifaith movement for justice - as a senior pastor, grassroots leader, psalmist, community organizer and currently as the director of clergy organizing for PICO National Network. He has served on the Alliance board of directors 2004-2009, and most recently co-edited Trouble the Water, a 2017 publication of the Racial Justice and Multiculturalism community of the Alliance. Since 2014, Mathews’ leadership has centered on the Theology of Resistance, a prophetic, multifaith discourse that is intended to ignite conversations and spark faith leaders to fight injustice and dehumanization. Michael-Ray and his wife, Dene, live in San Jose, Calif. and are parents of Kenan, a student at Ohio State University.

Robert A. Renix serves on the ministerial team at the Community Church of Washington D.C., United Church of Christ (UCC) as well as a chaplain and certified educator at Saint Elizabeth’s Hospital. He is recognized by the UCC and endorsed by the Alliance of Baptists. He holds a B.A. in psychology from the University of Memphis, a Master of Divinity from Wesley Theological Seminary, and is pursuing a Doctorate of Ministry in Educational Leadership at Virginia Theological Seminary (anticipated 2022). As a commissioned officer in the United States Army, he served in the Persian Gulf War and was awarded a Bronze Star Medal for his wartime service. Robert is passionate about education and helping others discover and uncover their own divinity lived out through their humanity.

Ben Sanders III is assistant professor of theology and ethics at Eden Theological Seminary in St. Louis, Mo. He is currently finishing a dissertation at the University of Denver and Iliff School of Theology on the meaning of black identity in black theology. Ben was ordained at New Hope Baptist Church in Denver, Co. (a historically black church dually aligned with the National Baptist and American Baptist Churches, USA) where he served as an associate minister for four years before joining the faculty at Eden Seminary. As an ordained Baptist minister, Ben is committed to following Jesus by thinking about and practicing Christian faith in ways that promote and contribute to social justice for marginalized communities.

Cathy Tamsberg will serve her last day as associate pastor of Pullen Memorial Baptist Church, Raleigh, N.C., on Monday, April 30, 2018, after 17 years on the Pullen staff. Prior to graduating from Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C., Cathy worked for 11 years as a legal-aid lawyer in Raleigh. She earned her law degree at
UNC-Chapel Hill. She served as a member of the Alliance Board of Directors from 1997 to 2003 and on the planning group of two annual gatherings. Deeply committed to working on justice and poverty issues, Cathy looks forward to serving the Alliance in new ways as she begins her retirement.

**Elijah R. Zehyoue** has been serving as pastor in residence at congregational partner Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D.C., since 2014. Prior to his ministry in D.C., he was the associate pastor for youth at University Church, Hyde Park, Chicago. An essential element of Elijah’s ministry is his work at the intersection of faith and public life. As a pastor and public theologian he is a strong advocate for racial and social justice and progressive theology. Through his preaching, writing, speaking, and broad work with several national faith-based groups Elijah is committed to helping build the beloved community. He earned his Master of Divinity degree from the University of Chicago and his B.A. degree in history from Morehouse College.

**Letters or Statements the Alliance of Baptists or Paula Clayton Dempsey (as Director of Partnership Relations) has signed from Spring Meeting 2017 to Fall Board Meeting 2017**

2. May 2017 - Signed on to a letter to Pres. Trump organized by Churches for Middle East Peace supporting negotiated resolution to the Palestine-Israel conflict at the time of 50 years since Israel’s military occupation of Palestinian lands.
3. May 2017 - Endorsed the United Church of Christ resolution calling attention to the plight of children suffering under Israel’s prolong military occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza.
4. May 2017 - Signed on to a letter to President Temer and Minister Serraglio of Brazil, expressing concern and indignation at the systemic attacks on the rights of indigenous people of Brazil.
5. May 16, 2017 - Agreed to sign-on to an Interfaith Amicus Brief challenging the president’s attempt to deprive “sanctuary cities” of federal funds.
6. May 25, 2017 - Signed on to a letter organized by Creation Justice Ministries to Pres. Trump and Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke in support of the Bears Ears National Monument. The letter noted that Secy. Zinke visited Utah for several days but spent just over an hour with tribal leaders. In addition, the official comment period was only 15 days and only online. The letter notes that 78% of the Navajo people impacted by these monument decision lack internet access and states, “This failure to sufficiently engage stakeholders is unacceptable.”
7. June 9, 2017 - Agreed to sign-on to an Interfaith amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court opposing any stay of lower court orders that have prevented implementation of the Executive Order that would ban people from six predominantly Muslim countries and by refugees from around the world, and drastically cut the number of refugees who can enter the U.S. this year. American Baptist Churches - USA also joined in this amicus brief. The attorney working on the brief grew up as a daughter of an ABC minister - so she was quite grateful to have two Baptist denominations sign-on to the brief. Information shared through Shoulder to Shoulder.
8. June 22, 2017 - Signed on to a letter supporting the Agricultural Worker Program Act of 2017 on request from National Farm Worker Ministry.


10. June 27, 2017 - Signed on to a letter organized by the Interfaith Disability Advocacy Collaborative to U.S. Senators sharing concerns with aspects of the Better Care Reconciliation Act and its injurious impact on people with disabilities, specifically opposing proposals to eliminate Medicaid expansion and to institute a per capita cap that would make individual often in most need of medical care the least likely to get it.

11. June 2017 - Signed on to a budget letter to Congress organized by the Coalition on Human Needs urging Congress to ensure that funding is adequate to meet the needs of all people and communities. Specifically, encouraging significant increases in investments in public education, affordable housing, health and nutrition, public transit, roads and bridges, clean air, clean water, clean energy, childcare, and other means of investing in communities that also create good jobs.

12. July 12, 2017 - Signed on to a letter organized by Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty opposing the language in Section 116 of the 2018 Financial Services and General Government Appropriations bill which would make it impossible for the IRS to enforce a long-standing federal law, sometimes referred to as the Johnson Amendment.

13. July 18, 2017 - Signed on to a letter organized by the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration to members of Congress sharing our grave concern for the House Appropriations Committee’s fiscal year 2018 budget proposals for the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) and Department of Health and Human Service’s Office of Refugee Resettlement (ORR). The letter supported funding for refugee protection and resettlement and opposed funding for the administration’s mass deportations force, for expanded immigration detention and for border militarization.

14. August 18, 2017 - Agreed to sign-on to an interfaith amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court on the merits of - and opposing - the president’s Executive Order stopping all refugees from entering the U.S. as well as stopping nationals of six predominantly Muslim countries.

15. September 1, 2017 - Signed on to a letter to Congress opposing unwise expansion of the H-2A program and the creation of a new guest-worker program. These workers would have fewer labor and political rights and would precipitate a race to the bottom to the detriment of agricultural workers who are already in one of the most poorly paid careers in the U.S.

16. September 12, 2017 - Email from Mike Castle, president of the board, to the attorney drafting an amicus brief, outlining the Alliance of Baptists’ interest in the amicus brief on the sanctuary cities executive order, specifically supporting the move for summary judgment which would lead to an order granting a permanent injunction against the executive order.

17. September 2017 - Agreed to be part of a second sending of a letter to Congress urging adequate funding for programs funded through annual appropriations, by continuing the bipartisan practice of providing relief from sequestration budget cuts and opposing any new efforts to cut the non-defense discretionary programs which serve vital national needs. The first copy of this letter was sent to Congress in March 2017.
18. September 2017 - Signed on to the Faithful Budget, prepared by the Washington Interfaith Staff Committee working groups. This 70-page document is a call to action to Congress to promote the common good in the 2018 budget. The message to national leaders is this:

*Act with mercy and justice by serving the common good; robustly funding support for poor and vulnerable people as well as peace-building, both at home and abroad; and exercising proper care and keeping of the earth.*

The Faithful Budget includes sections on what a Faithful Budget will include for:
1) domestic human needs; 2) health; 3) native communities; 4) immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers & migrants; 5) a just nation (addressing mass incarceration); 6) international humanitarian/poverty-focused development assistance; 7) creation; and 8) just peace & true human security. The Faithful Budget also includes a section on how it would be paid for.

19. September 14, 2017 - signed on to a letter to Congress organized by the Interfaith Coalition on Immigration encouraging passage of a clean Dream Act with a pathway to citizenship for immigrant youth.

20. September 24, 2017 - signed on to a letter to U.S. Senators opposing a partisan attempt to take healthcare away from millions of people and opposing the Graham-Cassidy proposal.

**Statements or Letters Signed by the Alliance of Baptists or Paula Clayton Dempsey from the Fall Board Meeting 2017 to Annual Meeting April 27-28, 2018 (list current through 4/3/2018)**

1. **Joint Civil Society Statement on Armed Drones** - to the UN General Assembly First Committee on Disarmament and International Security, October 10, 2017.

2. Letter of concern about the Kansas State Department of Education use of the state’s anti-BDS legislation to bar a member of the Mennonite church, a math teacher and curriculum coach in Wichita, Kansas, from participating in a program to train other math teachers, October 2017. Organized by Friends of Sabeel North America, presented by the Community for Justice in Palestine & Israel.


4. Letter encouraging **Congress to Act on a Dream Act** before the end of the year, organized by Interfaith Immigration Coalition, November 7, 2017.

5. Letter to leadership of the House Subcommittee on Commerce, Justice, Science and Related Agencies, requesting funding in FY 18 for federal innocence and forensic science programs at the highest levels in the appropriations bills, organized by the Interfaith Coalition on Criminal Justice, November 9, 2017.


8. Letter to Senate Leadership on the Tax Bill, opposing the Senate version that violates our faith values by giving tax breaks to the wealthiest households and large corporations partly paid by tax increases on low- and moderate-income individuals and more, organized by the Interfaith Working Group on Domestic Human Needs, November 27, 2017.


11. Paula Clayton Dempsey signed on to a religious leaders letter to the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives calling on Congress to immediately: 1) Pass the Dream Act; 2) Fully fund and reauthorize the Children’s Health Insurance Program, the Special Diabetes Programs for Indians and other health extenders; Fund desperately needed disaster and emergency relief for Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Florida, Texas and California; and 4) Pass a budget deal that protects critical non-defense programs from sequestration, January 18, 2018. Organized by the Washington Interfaith Staff Community Working Group on Health Care.

12. Letter organized by Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty from faith organizations and other strongly opposing any attempts to weaken or repeal the Johnson Amendment in the FY2018 funding mechanism, January 2018.


16. Letter to Charles Grassley and Dianne Feinstein, Chair and Ranking Member, Committee on Judiciary, U.S. Senate, Faith Community calls for the Judiciary Committee to pass the Sentencing Reform and Corrections Act, S. 1917. Organized by the Interfaith Criminal Justice Coalition.


18. Letter to U.S. Senate encouraging Senators to support the Americans with Disability Act and to not introduce companion legislation to H.R. 620 which would have an injurious impact on people with disabilities. February 2018, organized by the Interfaith Disability Action Committee.

20. Letter to Senator McConnell, Senator Schumer, Representative Ryan and Representative Pelosi, leadership in the Senate and House, calling for an end to the ban on federally-funded research into gun violence. March 22, 2018, organized by Families USA, a voice for health-care consumers.

21. Agreed to sign-on to an Interfaith Statement in support of the call by the U.N. Secretary General to the Nuclear Powers to Resume Negotiations to Reduce Nuclear Arms, to be released in May 2018. Organized by the All Souls Unitarian Universalist Disarmament Task Force.

22. Letter to President Trump expressing deep concern about the low level of refugees who have been resettled to the U.S. thus far in FY 2018. President Trump set the U.S. refugee admissions goal at a historically low 45,000 for FY18, but as of March 29, 2018 the U.S. has resettled just over 10,000 refugees. This means that the U.S. is on track to provide life-saving resettlement to less than half of the people the administration promised to welcome by the end of the fiscal year. This low level of arrivals signifies an abdication of our nation’s leadership in humanitarian protection through resettlement. March 29, 2018, organized by Church World Service and Interfaith Immigration Coalition

Clergy Affiliate Information & Resource Network (CAIRN)

CAIRN is a network of Alliance-affiliated clergy who believe that together, in a Spirit-led community, we have everything we need to become and remain healthy, resilient, and prophetic leaders.

Introduction & Workshops at the Alliance Annual Gatherings

A “soft launch” for CAIRN was made at the 2017 Annual Gathering in Raleigh, N.C. This included a presentation, as well as two sessions of an informational workshop. There were lots of great conversations and energy around the network as the leadership group prioritized goals and received good feedback from members.

During the 2018 Annual Gathering in Dayton, Ohio, CAIRN is sponsoring two sessions of a workshop on “Becoming a Teaching Congregation.” This workshop will help clergy and lay leaders think about ways to nurture a teaching model, through various ways, in their congregations and ministry settings.

Planning & Development

The CAIRN Leadership Group has spent a significant amount of time prioritizing goals for the network and spreading the news about CAIRN. Some examples of this work are below:

• CAIRN now has information and a link on the Alliance website;
• The leadership group had a planning retreat in Asheville, N.C., in December 2017;
• The leadership group had regularly scheduled conference calls each month (and sometimes more, as needed);
• A message was sent to former recognized clergy, as well as current endorsed chaplains, to tell them about the network;
• The leadership group has worked with Alliance staff (and others) to make sure CAIRN initiatives have appropriate and sustainable funding and support, including grant opportunities; and
• Much time and energy this past year was put into developing the first CAIRN clergy retreat (more information below).

CAIRN Retreat

CAIRN sponsored the first CAIRN Clergy Retreat at Lutheridge Retreat Center near Asheville, N.C., at the end of January 2018. The theme was “Prophetic Ministry from the Inside, Out.” It was a success! Leadership group members Beth Jackson-Jordan and Christine Wiley were co-organizers for the retreat. More information can be found at https://allianceofbaptists.org/calendar/event/cairn-retreat

Overall, about 40 people participated in the retreat, which include facilitated discussion, small groups, optional sessions, conversation, meals together, free time in the beautiful mountains of North Carolina, and plenty of fun! The retreat provided opportunities for clergy to learn, grow, rest, and connect and return to their communities and ministry settings refreshed and a thinking about ways they can care for themselves, the people around them, and continue to move forward in their work of prophetic ministry.

CAIRN Leadership Group Members
Brent Bowden
Eric Cain, chair
Stephanie Cooper
Beth Jackson-Jordan
Ken Meyers, staff liaison
Christine Wiley

Summer Communities of Service

During summer 2017, the Alliance, in partnership with the United Church of Christ, served 14 college students by placing, training, and supporting them in summer ministry roles in five different sites. Those sites included Alliance partners Ellis Avenue Church (Chicago, Ill.), Rauschenbusch Metro Ministries (New York City, N.Y.), QC Family Tree (Charlotte, N.C.), along with Englewood Church and Farm project (Kansas City, Mo., area) and Washington United Church of Christ (Cincinnati, Ohio).

SCOS provides ministry opportunities, along with strong mentorships and spiritual guidance for students who want to engage in justice-oriented work during their summers. Jennifer Helms Jarrell and Greg Jarrell, both Alliance members, serve as lead organizers for this partnership.

Thanks to pre-service and post-service assessments, we learned that SCOS is effective in helping students to gain a number of important skills, and to cultivate growth in their personal and vocational lives. Among the findings of our assessments were:

• Students grow in their ability to navigate complex work environments.
• Students expand their ability to identify both needs and gifts within their communities.
• Students are better able to express the connections between their faith practice and their work in communities they serve.

During summer 2018, students will continue building those skills and others at sites in the following locations:

• New York City, N.Y. (two different sites)
• Chicago, Ill.
• Charlotte, N.C.
• Rural Minnesota (a summer camp)

Submitted by Jennifer Helms Jarrell and Greg Jarrell, intern placement, discernment and support specialists for SCOS

Communities Reports

Equity for Women in the Church Community

Equity for Women in the Church Community is a 501c3 organization. It was essential to become a non-profit organization as we continue our partnership as a Community within the Alliance of Baptists. Our board meets via telephone conference calls and Zoom. We are advocates working on behalf of clergywomen as a team of people with diverse backgrounds and gifts. The 2017 year was very exciting. The Spirit of God, through that of Christ-Sophia, blessed Equity with a board meeting and training component of Equity’s latest endeavor, “Calling in the Key of She (CITKOS)” project the weekend of July 21-22, 2017 at Memphis Theological Seminary (MTS). Ten (10) of fourteen (14) board members attended the meeting and training. There were 50 registrants for the training with 30 actual participants, along with 10 board members who also took part in the training. As to date, due to “zero” funding for staff, it is the vision to train board members in CITKOS and facilitate future trainings in churches. The goal of CITKOS is to impact girls and boys at an early age by educating them, exposing them to female clergy, and allowing them to explore various aspects of ministry available to all persons. The project includes three main components: 1) development of age appropriate curriculum that addresses various theological models of female/male clergy, presentation of female characters in the Bible in a positive light, highlights historical female clergy and contemporary female and male clergy leaders, explores diverse images of God including female and gender-neutral images; 2) involves participants in ministry experiences; and 3) shows participants female/male clergy in practice. Due to our successful collaboration with MTS, we were included in the Seminary’s funded grant proposal to a foundation and will have another CITKOS training and board meeting at MTS in October 2018. There is another upcoming CITKOS training that is being planned for May 2018 in Austin, Texas. Finally, there is another Equity project endeavor, “The Retiring Pastors Initiative” that will work with pastors considering retiring in 3-5 years to help them prepare their congregations to call women as the next senior pastor. This vision is in its early stages of development. Yes, 2017 was an exciting year for Equity for Women in the Church Community as a non-profit, but equally as important as a Community within the Alliance of Baptists.

Submitted by Sheila Sholes-Ross (sandncajuns2323@msn.com) and Jann Aldredge-Clanton (aldredge-clanton@sbcglobal.net)
Community for Justice in Palestine and Israel

At last year’s Alliance Gathering, we presented two resolutions, both of which were adopted by consensus.

1. **The Alliance of Baptists supports the right of dissent.**
In defense of free speech and religious liberty, we will promote the right of churches, individuals, and organizations to engage in speech and nonviolent direct action to help end the unjust practices and policies in Israel and Palestine. Specifically, we oppose efforts by Congress and state legislatures to punish entities that engage in BDS or that provide sanctuary for immigrants.

Update: Congress has not yet passed legislations to punish entities that engage in BDS or that provide sanctuary for immigrants, but we remain vigilant, as the possibility of such legislation being adopted in the future is still an active threat.

2. **The Alliance of Baptists works to support freedom of religion and freedom from persecution and harassment based on religion.**
Specifically, we recognize the importance of the Middle East to Jews, Christians and Muslims and support right of access to holy sites for all, particularly in Jerusalem. We support measures to ensure the viability of the historic Christian community in Israel and Palestine and the entire region. As Christians and U.S. citizens, we also pledge to stand with Muslims and Jews in the United States in opposing anti-Muslim and anti-Semitic speech and acts of violence or vandalism.

Update: The Church of the Holy Sepulcher in Jerusalem was closed for several days in January when the Israeli government threatened to undo the Status Quo arrangement protecting holy sites in Jerusalem. Outcries from the U.S., including many Alliance members, from the European Union and other countries around the world, forced the Israeli government to withdraw proposed legislation and appoint a study commission. The main issue was the threat of imposing millions of dollars' worth of taxes on Christian church properties retroactively, which would have jeopardized their ability to continue to function.

The Alliance is a member of Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP) and the Faith Forum, both based in Washington, DC. CMEP is a coalition of 27 national Church denominations and organizations working to encourage U.S. policies that actively promote just, lasting and comprehensive resolutions to conflicts in the Middle East. They will host an Advocacy Summit, “And Still We Rise: Transforming U.S. Policy toward a Just Middle East,” June 17-19, 2018 in Washington, D.C. For more information, see their website: cmep.org.

The Faith Forum on Middle East Policy is a network of Christian denominations and organizations working for a just peace in the Middle East. They send out monthly action alerts on pending Congressional legislation affecting the Middle East. We forward those alerts to members of the Alliance Community for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel. To receive the monthly alerts, contact Leslie Withers: leslie@ML1945.com. For more information about the Faith Forum, see their Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/FaithForumOnMiddleEastPolicy/

Submitted by Leslie Withers
Cuba Partnership Community

Partnership with the Fraternity of Baptist Churches of Cuba

Over the past year we have continued to learn and grow and deepen our understanding of relationships through the partnership between churches in the Alliance and the Fraternity of Baptists in Cuba. New partnerships are being explored, while the longest-standing partnership (between Pullen Memorial and First Baptist Matanzas) celebrates 29 years of relationship. In a couple of instances, churches found that the relationship was not sustainable, and through prayerful discernment, decided not to continue. In another case, an old relationship was re-kindled and re-invested with new energy, between William Carey Baptist in Havana and First Baptist, Washington, D.C. We continue to work and pray for new relationships to form, as roughly half of the 43 Fraternity churches currently do not have partners and would enjoy the opportunity to engage with Alliance churches.

There was an ambitious project last summer that engendered much learning, as a group of 30 young people and adults from First Baptist Asheville (partner with Elohim Baptist in Las Tunas) went on a musical and service pilgrimage with a group of 30 youth and adults from a variety of Fraternity Churches. The trip began in the east, in Holguin, and ended up in Havana. One of the challenges was getting all the extra baggage down—electric pianos, guitars, speakers, sound system. Miraculously, it all got through customs and arrived at the church. This process of measuring and weighing baggage is a good metaphor for our partnership development—spiritually and culturally we all carry a lot of baggage, sometimes bulky and weighty, into our relationships. One of the important steps in the process of crossing borders and engaging with people from other cultures is to put ourselves through the x-ray scanner and examine what all we are carrying with us. There can be dangerous assumptions hidden away among all the hopes and dreams we carry.

Some of our good friends in the Fraternity are now carrying new responsibilities—Orquidea Lima de Armas, from the Arrachavaleta church in Matanzas (partner of Freemason Street Baptist in Norfolk), was recently elected the new executive secretary; she now has the huge load of processing visas for all visiting church groups. Many thanks to Santiago Delgado of Camino Baptist (partner with First Baptist Greenville, S.C.) for having done this for so many years, and blessings on him in his retirement; he is feeling grateful to be “traveling light” for the first time in years. Also, congratulations and prayers go out for Tony Santana, co-pastor of Fraternity Baptist in Matanzas (partner with Central Baptist in Newnan, Ga.), who was recently elected president of the Cuban Council of Churches.

Despite all of the dampening of enthusiasm for Cuba due to the reversal of diplomatic gains, it is still a good time to travel and enjoy the hospitality and richness of spirit offered by our Cuban sisters and brothers. Come and explore a partnership; come and deepen an existing partnership. As someone here recently said, “Come to engage. Don’t come as Santa Claus, and don’t come as if you’re going to the zoo to see exotic sights.” Come and open your heart for a family visit. Come and celebrate 30 years of Alliance and Fraternity folks walking together. Come and learn, come and grow.

Submitted by Stan Dotson
Additional Resources

Earth Justice Resources

Faith Based Groups and Resources:

Interfaith Power and Light [http://www.interfaithpowerandlight.org/] - Your local chapter can help your congregation make your building more energy efficient, and reduce its carbon footprint. They also provide worship resources and action alerts on energy policy matters.


Blessed Tomorrow - U.S. interfaith climate group led by major faith leaders. Similar to Creation Justice Ministries, but in a multi-faith context. [www.blessedtomorrow.org/]

Greenfaith [http://www.greenfaith.org/] - Global interfaith environmental group. Provides resources, awareness of global issues, educational resources and action opportunities.

Search online for national, local and state faith-based earth justice/creation care groups, including Baptist denominationally affiliated groups.

Local and state action resources: While communicating with elected leaders in Washington is important, especially on environmental threats in their own districts, most change is now happening at local and state levels. These groups enable effective engagement:

350.org State Organizations and Local Nodes [www.350.org] - Find your local affiliate via the web site. They can help you learn about state level legislation and regulatory issues that need citizen support, and connect you with front line action groups.


Environmental Justice groups in communities of color - Standing Rock and Flint raised awareness, but indigenous groups, and other communities of color are fighting against environmental racism nationwide. Search for those near you and support them.

Front line community groups: There is a fossil fuel extraction, transportation, burning facility, or proposed project near you. Front line communities, who bear the greatest health and safety risks, are organized across the country. Find one or more near you to support.
Mothers Out Front - www.mothersoutfront.org Mothers, grandmothers, and allies organized for climate justice. Find your local affiliate at the web site.

Divestment:

GreenFaith interfaith resources and statements on divestment/reinvestment
www.greenfaith.org/programs/divest-and-reinvest

Make a Clean Break: Your Guide to Fossil Free Investing
http://www.trilliuminvest.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Make-a-clean-break_4.13.17.pdf - A “how-to” on divestment from 350.org, with advisors from Green Century Fund and Trillium Asset Management. This resource is included because of the good advice, not as an endorsement of either company.

Go Fossil Free www.gofossilfree.org/ - part of 350.org focused primarily on divestment.

DivestInvest  http://divestinvest.org/ - You can pledge to divest personally and/or as a congregation at the site, and use tools provided to research how to go about it.

Staying Informed on National and Global Environmental Justice:
If you are on Facebook or Twitter, you can also follow these sites for regular updates

350.org www.350.org/ - Best global coverage of the climate movement.


Inside Climate News www.insideclimatenews.org and DeSmog Blog
www.desmogblog.com - Award-winning investigative journalists on climate issues.

Huffpost Climate www.huffingtonpost.com/topic/climate-change
NASA http://climate.nasa.gov/ - The latest science on the depth of the problem and sustainable energy proposals.

Indigenous Environmental Network www.ienearth.org/ - Global reports on threats to First Nations by the fossil fuel industry, including opportunities for allies.

Story of Stuff Project  https://storyofstuff.org/ - Connects the dots among production, consumption, and economic growth that is incompatible with environmental sustainability, along with strategies for personal and social change.


Must-read Books:

Great Tide Rising, Kathleen Dean Moore, Counterpoint Press, Berkeley, Calif., 2016.

What We’re Fighting for Now is Each Other, Wen Stephenson, Beacon Press, Boston, MA, 2015
This Changes Everything, Naomi Klein, Simon and Shuster, New York, N.Y. 2014

Laudato Si, Pope Francis, Our Sunday Visitor, Huntington, Ind., 2015.

JUSTSEX
honest. faithful. conversation.
set in motion by the Alliance of Baptists

How can people of faith engage in constructive conversations about sexuality when we are more aware than ever of its complexity and diversity? When the word “sex” itself can elicit conflict and division, is it possible to move beyond schisms to dialogue and discernment? How do modern understandings of human sexuality inform a holistic sexual ethic? Join the Alliance of Baptists for a justice-focused event exploring ways we can work together to bring sex to light.

The conference, taking place Oct. 18-20 at the Scarritt Bennett Center in Nashville, Tenn., is open to all who wish to foster healthy discussions about sexuality in their own lives and in their faith communities. Attendees will participate in worship, learn from experts, engage in honest conversation and take part in breakout sessions that explore:

How our understanding of sexuality changed over time;
How cultures, institutions and faith traditions approach sexuality - both in the past and in our current moment;
Guiding principles for developing a contemporary sexual ethic; and
How people of faith reclaim sex as a gift from God and support healthy sexuality in our communities.

We hope you’ll join us for this momentous and inspiring event. Keep checking the website for more details and for registration information.

SAVE THE DATE - ANNUAL GATHERING 2019
April 26-28, 2019
Calvary Baptist Church, Washington, D.C.