

Editor's Note: On March 8, 2006, Birmingham-Southern College learned that two of its students had been arrested for conspiracy and arson of nine Alabama rural churches damaged or destroyed by fire in early February. For the next several days, media from around the nation converged on the Birmingham-Southern campus to cover this unfolding story. As tragic as this situation was, however, the college was for the most part portrayed by the media as an outstanding liberal arts institution with bright and caring students. The college's immediate response on the afternoon of the arrests was that it would help rebuild the damaged churches. Over the weeks that followed, offers of support came in from around the country from alumni and from those who had no connection to the college. On campus, students, faculty, and staff formed teams to worship with the churches and establish relationships with the congregations. What follows are the initial response from the college by President David Pollick on March 8, selected comments from the media, and information on the results of the Alabama Churches Rebuilding and Restoration Fund efforts.

Initial Response to the Church Fire Situation

"In response to the two students having been charged with arson of nine Alabama community churches, Birmingham-Southern College has suspended each student from the college and immediately banned them from campus awaiting further action by the authorities. The students, faculty, and staff of our college are at once shocked and outraged, and we share the sorrow of our neighbors whose churches represent the heart and soul of their communities.

"These cruel and senseless acts of destruction have profoundly touched our college community. Where there once existed such a clear line between the harmless and playful and the harmful and cruel, we increasingly see young adults throughout our nation incapable of distinguishing between healthy and destructive conduct. Boundaries are all too often exceeded. The social use of alcohol moves easily and too frequently to dangerous irresponsibility. Innocent and healthy stages of interpersonal social encounters too frequently degrade to violent and personal acts of violation. We see symptoms of a culture of personal license so powerfully magnified in the actions of these young men.

"We also are deeply concerned for the families of these young men, knowing the pain they are experiencing. The entire community of Birmingham-Southern College—students, faculty, and staff—pledges to aid in the rebuilding of these lost churches through our resources and our labor. Together we'll stand as a reminder of the strength of communities that transcend the differences of religion and place, as well as the effects of mindless cruelty."

Dr. David Pollick
President

What others said

"We are impressed with the way Birmingham-Southern College President David Pollick reacted to the news that two students from the private Methodist school were arrested in the burnings of nine rural churches last month. The arrests were devastating to the Birmingham-Southern community, not only because it is relatively small and close-knit, but also because it prides itself on the concern for humanity and society that the college inculcates. ... The alleged involvement of Birmingham-Southern students was disappointing but Pollick did not disappoint in his eloquent response. We're sure that the college community will not fail to follow through."

—from *The Tuscaloosa News*, March 12, 2006.

"The (College) took a risk for saying what you said, and for that, I thank you. The future of Alabama and the prospect for shared community will be better for your having taken the position you did. Your response answered the question, "somebody ought to say something," and you did. I don't envy the pressures you will be feeling in the coming days, but I am convinced your faith, family, and conviction will carry you through."

—e-mail from a local leader.

"... That purpose was articulated by students and administrators at Birmingham-Southern College, affiliated with the United Methodist Church: to repair the damage done by their classmates and make the victims whole. They have volunteered to rebuild the churches and have established a fund to aid the congregants. The college's president, David Pollick, asked the right question: How can students from wonderful families with such zest for life do something so diametrically opposed to their background and the school? How, indeed. But it's comforting that their perfidy served as a springboard for caring and hope."

—from the *Hartford (Conn.) Courant*, March 21, 2006.

"... It is the mark of a changed South that Birmingham-Southern College, where two of the students were enrolled, immediately announced plans to institutionally support rebuilding the churches. The college had no connection to the arson except that two of those charged were enrolled."

—from the *Northeast Mississippi (Tupelo) Daily Journal*, March 12, 2006.

Birmingham-Southern's church rebuilding, restoration fund tops \$368,000; checks distributed to 10 churches

Teams of Birmingham-Southern students, faculty, and staff have delivered checks to the 10 rural Alabama churches damaged or destroyed by fire in early February from the more than \$350,000 donated to the college's Alabama Churches Rebuilding and Restoration Fund.

Through the Alabama Churches Rebuilding and Restoration Fund, the college also distributed funds collected for the churches in other campaigns, including more than \$55,000 from a joint effort of The National Conference for Community and Justice, AmSouth Bank, and FOX 6/WBRC TV, and more than \$33,000 from The Community Foundation of West Alabama.

Checks were distributed to Antioch Baptist Church in the Antioch community of Bibb County, Ashby Baptist in the Brierfield community of Bibb County, Beaverton Freewill Baptist in Lamar County, Dancy First Baptist in Aliceville, Galilee Baptist in the Panola community of Sumter County, Morningstar Missionary Baptist in the Boligee community of Greene County, Old Union Baptist in the Brierfield community of Bibb County, Pleasant Sabine Baptist near Centerville in Bibb County, Rehobeth Baptist in the Lawley community of Bibb County, and Spring Valley Baptist in the Gainesville community of Sumter County.

The money was distributed equitably according to the individual needs of the churches.

The fund was announced March 8 when the college learned that two of its students had been arrested for conspiracy and arson of nine of the churches. The college also included a 10th church in the fund. Beaverton Freewill Baptist was destroyed by fire Feb. 11, but was not linked to the other fires.

At a March 8 press conference, Birmingham-Southern President Dr. David Pollick vowed that "the entire community of Birmingham-Southern College—students, faculty, and staff—pledges to aid in the rebuilding of these lost churches through our resources and our labor. Together we'll stand as a reminder of the strength of communities that transcend the differences of religion and place, as well as the effects of mindless cruelty."

Since the establishment of the fund, unsolicited donations have been received from individuals, corporations, and foundations across Alabama and the nation.

"We've received support from all over the country and from many who do not have a connection to Alabama or Birmingham-Southern College," Pollick said of the fund-raising total. "I have been deeply touched by the show of respect for our students and the moral stance of our college."

The fund was boosted by a \$150,000 contribution from a Jackson Hole, Wyo., couple who wished to remain anonymous.

"In Galatians 6:2, God's word instructs us to 'Bear one another's burdens, and thus fulfill the law of Christ,'" the couple wrote with their gift. "As Christians we feel compelled to be instruments of Christ's encouragement and comfort those in need. Many people suffer from poverty of hope, of inspiration, of comfort, and of faith to name a few. When we heard about the Alabama church burnings, we felt compelled to see how we could help to bear the burdens of others."

Since the initial announcement of the college's offer to help rebuild and restore the churches, a Birmingham-Southern committee has been working to determine the specific needs of each church. Members of the committee visited with pastors or leaders of each of the 10 churches to determine what resources were needed.

The college then formed teams of faculty, staff, and students and assigned each team to a church.

"The teams are a link between the church and the resources that the college distributed," said BSC Dean of Chapel Dr. Stewart Jackson. "Members of the teams first worshipped with the congregations of the churches to build relationships. Each church had unique resources, each church had unique needs, and each church responded to this tragedy in their own way. Therefore we needed our teams to get to know them and help us make the best use of the gifts that have and are being given."

In addition to the monetary support, Jackson said the college received dozens of offers of physical assistance, in-kind gifts of materials, and charity fund-raising events.

"I am sure that you and all the students at BSC were initially confused and maybe even a bit angry that BSC's name was involved in such a tragedy. However, the immediate and pure response by you and BSC students to rise above a debate about blame and to simply reach out and repair the damage is a model of decency. There is too little of this simple humanity today. My father is from Mobile, and I believe that this simple desire to do "what is right" is very Southern. You should be very proud of your students."

—e-mail from the mother of a Boston University theatre student.

"... The work of college officials to collect and distribute money to rebuild these churches is not likely to garner the kind of headlines and airtime the church-burnings and the arrests did, especially given everything else going on in the world today. But college officials and those who donated to help with the rebuilding fund deserve some appreciation for the work they've done to try to right the wrongs of others. It would have been easy for the school to try to distance itself from the entire episode. ... By choosing instead to help the churches involved, Birmingham-Southern is offering a better lesson about dealing with a negative situation."

—from *The Gadsden Times*, July 22, 2006.

Award-winning faculty member delivers Birmingham-Southern's Commencement address

Professor of English John D. Tatter addressed the Birmingham-Southern class of 2006 during the college's Sesquicentennial year Commencement ceremonies May 27.

Tatter was named the Birmingham-Southern Outstanding Educator of the Year for the 2004-05 academic year in recognition of excellence in all aspects of teaching. The award includes a cash stipend and an invitation to speak at the following year's Commencement.



BSC 2004-05 Outstanding Educator of the Year Dr. John Tatter (center) addressed the 2006 graduating class during the college's Sesquicentennial year. Tatter, who is a professor of English, is pictured with Provost Dr. Kathleen Murray and President Dr. David Pollick prior to the historic address.

He delivered the keynote address at the 147th event when Birmingham-Southern conferred some 276 bachelor's degrees, 23 master's degrees, and five honorary degrees.

In his address, titled "Your Defining Moment," Tatter expressed his gratitude for the opportunity to serve as the 2006 class valedictorian, a term he says is not defined by grade-point average, but rather "in Latin simply means the person who says farewell."

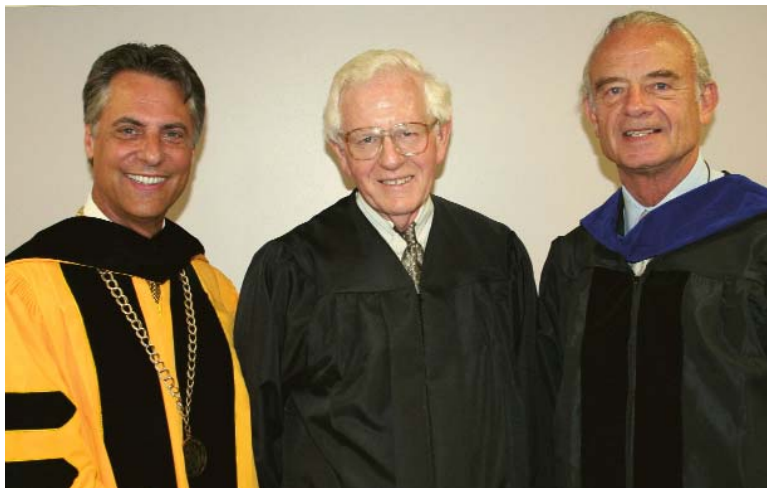
Tatter spoke about defining moments, focusing on the connection between literature and art. He selected the topics of a life-sized sculpture of Eve by Sir Thomas Brock, and the painting by John Waterhouse of the Lady of Shalott, based upon a poem by Alfred Lord Tennyson, which tells the story of a woman who casts off from a riverbank, both on display in the Tate Gallery of British Art in London.

"But though you may share some similarities with these two young women, you differ from them in one important way—no one else is telling your story for you, or painting your defining moment," he said. "You are both storyteller and painter. You choose the moments that will define you."

Birmingham-Southern's Commencement Day began with the Baccalaureate Service that morning. Bishop William H. Willimon, leader of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church, was the keynote speaker.

In his address, Willimon encouraged students to "please overcome politeness and respect and let disrespect blossom."

"We are handing you a world with huge problems," he explained. "We need you to show less respect for the older generation and more determination. Don't be intimidated by global problems. Dream dreams we have forgotten how to dream; think thoughts; create ideas."



Medal of Service—BSC presented a Medal of Service to alumnus Donald A. Brown (center) at its Commencement ceremony in May in recognition of his significant commitment to the college's mission, quality, and character. A 1958 graduate, Brown is an award-winning journalist with more than 50 years of experience. He recently wrote *Forward Ever*, Birmingham-Southern College at its Sesquicentennial. Brown is pictured with President Dr. David Pollick (left) and Jim Stephens, chair of the BSC Board of Trustees.

College presents five with honorary degrees

Birmingham-Southern presented five individuals with honorary degrees at its Sesquicentennial year Commencement ceremony May 27 in recognition of distinguished careers and service to the college.

Rebecca Gilman of Chicago, a 1987 BSC graduate and award-winning playwright, received an Honorary Doctor of Humanities degree.

Dr. Carol A. Newsom of Atlanta, a 1971 BSC graduate and Charles Howard Candler Professor of Old Testament at the Candler School of Theology and the Graduate Division of Religion at Emory University, received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

David Shipler of Chevy Chase, Md., a Pulitzer Prize-winning author, received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree.

Bishop William H. Willimon of Birmingham, leader of the United Methodist Church North Alabama Conference, received an Honorary Doctor of Divinity degree.

Odessa Woolfolk of Birmingham, founding president/chair emerita of the board of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute, received an Honorary Doctor of Laws degree.



Receiving honorary degrees during Commencement were (from left) Rebecca Gilman, Odessa Woolfolk, David Shipler, Dr. Carol Newsom, and Dr. William Willimon.

Birmingham-Southern names new VP for administration, research, and planning



van der Werff

Dr. Terry J. van der Werff, doctor of philosophy and certified management consultant, is the new vice president for administration, research, and planning at Birmingham-Southern.

“He is particularly well suited to the tasks and challenges that stand before us,” said BSC President Dr. David Pollick. “I’m very excited that Dr. van der Werff has decided to join the Birmingham-Southern community.”

van der Werff has been president and CEO of van der Werff Global Ltd. since 1991. The firm, based in Seattle, Wash., and Devon, Pa., advises corporate leaders on strategies for their future. He has consulted with leaders worldwide in 25 industries, served as a speaker and corporate retreat leader, and written more than 200 articles on global trends and strategic change for *Washington CEO* magazine and other publications.

Prior to founding his own firm, van der Werff served as executive vice president for academic affairs at Saint Joseph’s University in Philadelphia; dean of science and engineering at Seattle University; and chief biomedical engineer with appointments on the faculties of Medicine, Science, and Engineering at Groote Schuur Hospital and the University of Cape Town, South Africa; among other positions in academia and government.

He has two degrees from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, a doctorate in biomedical engineering from Oxford University, and a certificate from the Kolbe School of Theology in Cape Town, South Africa.

Pollick addresses human rights forum in France

Birmingham-Southern President Dr. David Pollick was an invited speaker at the Council of Europe’s Higher Education and Democratic Culture:

Citizenship, Human Rights, and Civic Responsibility forum held this summer in Strasbourg, France.



Pollick addressing human rights forum.

Photo courtesy of Josef Huber.

Pollick was a presenter during the “Promoting Human Rights and Democratic Citizenship” session, led by Thomas Hammarberg of Sweden, commissioner for human rights of the Council of Europe and former secretary general of Amnesty International, a worldwide movement of people who campaign for internationally recognized human rights.

Since taking office as Birmingham-Southern’s 12th president in July 2004, Pollick has worked with college faculty, staff, students, and alumni on the establishment of the Center for Global Human Dignity, based on the fundamental principle that advancing human dignity is central to the mission of liberal education.

The forum, which was attended by international higher education experts from around the world, covered issues such as fostering the culture of democracy, promoting human rights and democratic citizenship, and building sustainable democratic citizenship.

Women, & LEADERSHIP, & HUMAN DIGNITY



(Left photo) Participating in the Women, Leadership, and Human Dignity Town Hall Meeting are moderator Judy Woodruff (standing) and panelists (front row, from left) Rev. Susan Crow, Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, Dr. Carol Newsom, and Hon. Sandra Storm; (back row, from left) Dr. Enriqueta Bond, Dr. Gail Cassell, Carol Herrmann-Steckel, Hon. Shirley Franklin, Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky, and Melanne Verveer. (Right photo) Woodruff addresses the attendees at the Honoree Luncheon.

National and international women leaders address ‘Advancing Human Dignity’ at college’s Town Hall Meeting

Eleven women leaders who have made significant contributions across the U.S. and the world toward advancing human dignity participated in a Town Hall Meeting at Birmingham-Southern in February.

Part of Birmingham-Southern’s year-long Sesquicentennial celebration, the Women, Leadership, and Human Dignity forum included a question-and-answer format Town Hall Meeting in the Munger Hall Auditorium, which was moderated by Judy Woodruff, a former correspondent and host of “Inside Politics” for CNN.

Following the Town Hall Meeting, the women were honored at a luncheon, which included a keynote address by Dr. Musimbi Kanyoro, general secretary of the World YWCA.

The event concluded with a Birmingham Art Music Alliance concert featuring violinist and Birmingham-Southern First Lady Karen Bentley Pollick and cellist and Adjunct Professor of Music Craig Hultgren. The concert featured world premieres by four BSC faculty composers.

In addition to Woodruff and Kanyoro, the other women participating in Women, Leadership, and Human Dignity included: Dr. Enriqueta Bond, president of the Burroughs Wellcome Fund; Dr. Gail Cassell, vice president of scientific affairs and Distinguished Lilly

Research Scholar for Infectious Diseases for Eli Lilly and Co.; Rev. Susan Crow, executive director of Appalachia Service Project and a 1992 graduate of Birmingham-Southern; Hon. Shirley Franklin, mayor of Atlanta, Ga.; Carol Herrmann-Steckel, commissioner of the Alabama Medicaid Agency and a 1981 BSC graduate; Marjorie Margolies-Mezvinsky, chair of Women’s Campaign International; Dr. Carol Newsom, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Old Testament at Emory University and a 1971 graduate of BSC; Hon. Sandra Storm, recently retired as presiding circuit judge of the Family Court of Jefferson County, Ala., and a 1968 graduate of BSC; and Melanne Verveer, co-founder and chair of the board of the Vital Voices Global Partnership.

In addition to the Town Hall Meeting and the Honoree Luncheon, each woman also participated in classroom discussions with Birmingham-Southern students.

Editor’s Note: A limited number of DVD’s that contain both the Town Hall Meeting and the Honoree Luncheon in their entirety are available free of charge through the BSC Office of Communications. Copies may be reserved by calling 205/226-4921 or e-mailing sbarr@bsc.edu.

BSC television promotions win national award

The “Arrive” Birmingham-Southern television promotions airing since last December have won the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) Gold Medal for Public Service Announcements and Commercial Spots at the national level.

CASE annually recognizes higher education institutions through its Circle of Excellence awards program in the areas of Advancement Services, Alumni Relations, Design, Electronic Media Presentations, Fundraising, Institutional Relations, New Media, Periodicals, Publications, and Student Recruitment Marketing.

BSC developed its “Arrive” television promotions, as well as print and radio advertisements, in collaboration with Birmingham marketing firm FitzMartin.

The promotional pieces may be seen at www.bsc.edu/seeitfirst.

BSC president attends national meeting of Methodist presidents

Birmingham-Southern President Dr. David Pollick recently participated in the annual meeting of the National Association of Schools, Colleges, and Universities of the United Methodist Church held in Rockport, Maine, July 22–26.

The NASCUMC is a 123-member organization that strengthens ties between the church and its affiliated educational institutions. The conference, attended by Methodist college presidents, featured national speakers and covered a wide spectrum of topics ranging from presidential leadership to what it means to be church-related. The association has expressed appreciation that BSC has chosen to become active at the national level of Methodist higher education.

“Birmingham-Southern’s active and ongoing participation with this group is invaluable,” said Pollick. “As a Methodist-related institution, our ties to the United Methodist Church are extremely important. This association not only helps us strengthen and grow those ties, it equips us for greater service to the church as well as the campus and community.”



Bentley Pollick

By special invitation, BSC First Lady Karen Bentley Pollick provided a featured violin performance at the conference banquet July 26.

The association’s member institutions include college preparatory schools, two-year colleges, four-year colleges and universities, one professional school, and 13

United Methodist schools of theology, all located in the U.S. and Puerto Rico.

Pollick elected to national college council board

Birmingham-Southern President Dr. David Pollick has been elected to the board of directors for The Council of Independent Colleges.

Pollick was one of 11 new members elected to the board during the group’s annual Presidents Institute awards banquet held in Naples, Fla.

The council, which is celebrating its 50th anniversary this year, is the national service organization for small to mid-sized independent liberal arts colleges and universities in the United States.



Honors Day Convocation—Birmingham-Southern alumnus Dr. Kevin Tucker (center) presented the Sesquicentennial year Honors Day Convocation address April 27 in Munger Hall Auditorium. Tucker, a 1986 BSC graduate and professor of medicine at Harvard University’s Medical School in Boston, spoke on “What Does it Mean to be an Educated Person in the 21st Century?” Shown with Tucker are BSC Provost Dr. Kathleen Murray and BSC President Dr. David Pollick.



Holocaust remembered—Historian and internationally respected Holocaust author Dr. Deborah Lipstadt (center) delivered the N.E. Miles Judaic Studies and Middle Eastern Culture Lecture April 25 in Munger Hall Auditorium, marking the Jewish observance of Holocaust Remembrance Day (Yom HaShoah). Lipstadt, Dorot Professor of Modern Jewish and Holocaust Studies at Emory University, spoke on “History on Trial: My Day in Court with Holocaust Denier David Irving.” Shown with Lipstadt are (from left) BSC President Dr. David Pollick and Donald Hess, a member of the BSC Board of Trustees whose family helps support the biennial lecture.



Grading the environment—Dr. Maureen L. Cropper (center), a lead economist in the infrastructure/environment team of the World Bank’s Development Research Group and a University of Maryland economics professor, delivered the B.A. Monaghan Lecture in Economics at Birmingham-Southern March 16. Cropper shared her views on the environmental problems of developing countries. Pictured with Cropper (from left) are BSC President Dr. David Pollick and Dr. Kathleen Rossmann, BSC associate professor of economics.



A steward for natural resources—Dr. Edward O. Wilson (second from left), Harvard University professor emeritus of entomology and biology, two-time Pulitzer Prize winner, and Alabama native, lectured at Birmingham-Southern March 9. Wilson shared his views on the status of the biosphere and his plan to save the Earth’s biological heritage based on his latest book, *The Future of Life*. Pictured with Wilson (from left) are Jeanne Jackson, director of the BSC Hess Center for Leadership and Service; Cori Anderson, a junior biology major from Madison, Miss.; and Farley Lord, a senior French major from Atlanta. The lecture was sponsored by the Hess Center for Leadership and Studies.



A master writer—Former U.S. Poet Laureate and Pulitzer Prize winner Rita Dove (second from right) was Grand Master of the 2006 Writing Today conference held March 10-11 at Birmingham-Southern. Pictured with Dove are (from left) Dr. David Pollick, BSC president; Odessa Woolfolk, founding president/chair emerita of the Birmingham Civil Rights Institute who introduced Dove at the luncheon; and Nabella Shunnarah, acting chair of this year’s writer’s conference. Writing Today annually brings together writers, editors, publishers, playwrights, poets, journalists, and other literary professionals for two days of panel discussions and lectures on the literary arts, as well as practical information necessary to the craft of writing.