

Initial picks for faith-based panel light on Baptists

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WASHINGTON (ABP) — Barack Obama's first dozen appointees to the next President's Advisory Council on Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships were heavy on mainline Protestants but light on Baptists.

Three of the names [announced](#) Feb. 4 are leaders of member communions belonging to the National Council of Churches.

They include Katharine Jefferts Schori, the first female head of the Episcopal Church, who voted to approve the consecration of the church's first openly gay bishop in 2003, prompting division in the worldwide Anglican communion.

Others include Mark Hanson, presiding bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America who [presided](#) over a controversial vote in 2008 where the denomination lifted its ban on openly gay and lesbian clergy in committed relationships, and H.E. Archbishop Demetrios of the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America.

Another well-known appointee is Lynn Hybels, co-founder and advocate for global engagement at the [Willow Creek Community Church](#), a Chicago-area mega-church led by her husband, Senior Pastor Bill Hybels.

Appointee Leith Anderson, the president of the National Association of Evangelicals, is [senior pastor](#) of Wooddale Church in Edenton, Minn., an interdenominational evangelical church with ties to the Baptist General Conference. Anderson's parishioners include former Gov. [Tim Pawlenty](#), who is expected to run for president in 2012.

The last advisory council, which completed its work a year ago, included three high-profile Baptist leaders. Frank Page, former president of the Southern Baptist Convention who now leads the SBC Executive Committee, served on that panel. So did Otis Moss Jr., pastor emeritus of Olivet Institutional Baptist Church in Cleveland, and William Shaw, past president of the National Baptist Convention, USA, Inc.

The past council's chair, Melissa Rogers, is an attorney who formerly worked at the Baptist Joint Committee for Religious Liberty and now teaches at Wake Forest University Divinity School.

Obama is expected to announce 13 more appointments later, bringing the panel's eventual membership to a total of 25.

"Last year we were able to make significant progress, especially in our recommendations on reforming the office of Faith-based and Neighborhood Partnerships, most of which the president incorporated into his recent executive order," said Brent Walker, executive director of the Baptist Joint Committee. "I trust this advisory council will build on that good work and carry the projects forward."

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