From the General Secretary

Elijah Brown

Too noisy to listen, too silent to speak

My life is filled with noise. With preschoolers whose running and laughter floods our
Member Bodies in Action

Karen Kirlew, installed first woman president of the Jamaica Baptist Union on February 25, 2018

Baptist work began in Jamaica in 1783 with the arrival of George Liele, a formerly enslaved person from Savannah, Georgia, in the United States. Liele, who had founded churches in Savannah, is regarded as the first ever international Baptist missionary.

The Jamaica Baptist Union (JBU) formed in 1849 when churches in the east and west of the Caribbean island united to form one island-wide body.

Baptists played a significant role in the nation's history and in global Baptist life. Sam Sharpe, a Baptist deacon and class leader, led a protest against enslavement with a sit-down strike during Christmas 1831. The strike turned violent after the planter class responded with brutal force. By May 1832 more than 500 of the enslaved, including Sharpe, were executed. The affair hastened the end of slavery in the Caribbean and elsewhere, which was abolished by law in 1834 and overturned by 1838.

Baptist leaders Paul Bogle and George William Gordon were implicated in the Morant Bay Rebellion in 1865. Both were executed but the event led to major changes, including Jamaica’s system of government.

Sharpe, Bogle and Gordon are three of only seven Jamaica National Heroes, the highest honor given by the country.

Neville Callam, the first Black general secretary of the Baptist World Alliance and the first who is neither an American nor European, is a former president, acting general secretary and treasurer of the JBU.

Azariah McKenzie, a former JBU general secretary, was the first BWA regional secretary for the Caribbean, the first secretary-treasurer for the Caribbean Baptist Union and a leader in the Caribbean Baptist Association.

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Fellowship and a former BWA vice president. Other BWA vice presidents from Jamaica included C. Sam Reid and Burchell Taylor.

During its 168th General Assembly in February 2018, the JBU installed its first woman president, Karen Kirlew. In October 2017, Merlyn Hyde-Riley, JBU associate general secretary, was elected the first female president of the Jamaica Council of Churches in its 77-year history.

With the end of slavery in 1838, Baptists created dozens of new communities for formerly enslaved persons and families. Called Free Villages, at the center of each community was a church that normally housed a school. Some of these communities, churches and schools have grown to be significant residential areas and institutions in modern Jamaica.

Calabar High School, founded in 1912, has produced five Rhodes scholars, a Jamaican prime minister, many Olympians and other prominent persons. Graduates of William Knibb Memorial High School, formed in 1961, includes Olympians Usain Bolt, Michael Green and other well known Jamaican track and field athletes.

Jamaican Baptist missionaries founded Baptist work in Haiti, Cuba and Turks and Caicos Islands in the Caribbean; Panama and elsewhere in Central America; and in Africa such as in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria.

The JBU has taken steps to aid community development in Jamaica. Approximately 1,000 acres of castor beans are to be farmed on church lands to produce castor oil. The JBU Grow Castor Bean initiative is one of eight finalists vying for up to US$400,000 in funding from the Compete Caribbean Partnership Facility.

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**Church Spotlight**

*College Park Baptist Church* in Greensboro, North Carolina, in the United States, was founded in 1906 as a mission of First Baptist Church, Greensboro. Since its inception, the congregation has had a close relationship with the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, originally founded as the State Normal School for Women.
"Because of its proximity to the campus, college students were a huge part of this church from the very beginning," the congregation stated. "The college students gave the first money toward the building of the new church. ... By 1923, there were so many students in Sunday school that the church built a hut on the church grounds for them to meet in."

College Park is dedicated to mission. "Three Nickels is a missions fund-raising program to help people living and dying in extreme poverty throughout the world." It aims to assist up to 100 families and individuals each year.

Through Energeia, volunteers spend Saturdays engaged in a local humanization effort. On the third Sunday of each month, members cook and serve about 100 meals at Urban Ministry's Potter's House Community Kitchen. Nonperishable food items are collected monthly for emergency food to families and individuals in need.

The Backpack Club provides a weekend's worth of nutritious food for children in need at local schools. Financial support is given to Shepherd's Center, which helps older adults pursue independent and active lives.

Youth are trained into mission with large groups of participants engaged in summer activities in different parts of the US. In addition, congregants assist refugees from Syria and elsewhere to settle in the Greensboro area.

"Our church believes that every person is created in the image of God and has the potential to reflect Christ as a mirror reflects light," College Park states. "We actively seek ways to make the message of God's love real in people's lives."

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**In Memoriam**

*Billy Graham preaching during the closing service at the Baptist World Congress in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, July 1960*
William (Billy) Franklin Graham, Jr., died on February 21 in Montreat, North Carolina, in the United States. He was 99 years old.

Graham, a global figure who traveled to and preached in dozens of countries, had deep Baptist roots.

Born on a farm near Charlotte, North Carolina, he was ordained at the Peniel Baptist Church in Palatka, Florida, in the US, and served as pastor of the Village Church of Western Springs (now Western Springs Baptist Church) in Illinois, from 1943-1945.

Graham became a full-time evangelist for American Youth for Christ in 1944 and was charter vice president for Youth for Christ International from 1945-1950.

He founded the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association (BGEA) in Minneapolis, Minnesota in the US in 1950 while serving as president of Northwestern Schools, which he led from 1947-1952. Northwestern Schools comprised a liberal arts college, a Bible school and a theological seminary.

In addition to planning evangelistic crusades, ministries of BGEA, which relocated to Charlotte, North Carolina, in 2003, included the weekly "Hour of Decision" radio program; a syndicated newspaper column, "My Answer," carried by newspapers both nationally and internationally; and Decision magazine, the official publication of the association that has a circulation of more than 425,000.

Graham was keynote speaker at every Baptist World Congress planned by the Baptist World Alliance between 1950 and 1985, including in 1960 where he preached to a packed Maracanã soccer stadium at the closing service in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. At that time, the stadium had a capacity of nearly 200,000. He also addressed the final session of the BWA's Baptist Youth World Conference in 1968 in Berne, Switzerland.

Graham and fellow Baptist, Civil Rights Leader Martin Luther King, Jr., collaborated. Both Graham and King traveled together to the 1960 Baptist World Congress in Brazil where Graham planned a dinner in honor of King.

In his autobiography, Just As I Am, Graham recounted their time in Rio de Janeiro:

I had known Martin Luther King, Jr., for several years. His father, who was called Big Mike, called him Little Mike. He asked me to call him just plain Mike. ... While in Rio [for the Baptist World Alliance], I gave a dinner ... in honor of Mike, and I invited Southern Baptist leaders from the United States to come. I wanted to build a bridge between blacks and whites in our own South, and this seemed like a good opportunity to move toward that goal.

Graham defied American state and local authorities in disobeying segregated laws. In 1963 he posted bail for King to be released from jail during the Birmingham campaign. He held integrated evangelistic crusades in Birmingham, Alabama, on Easter 1964 in the aftermath of the bombing of the Sixteenth Street Baptist Church, and toured Alabama again in the wake of the violence that accompanied the first Selma to Montgomery march in 1965.

Along with Coretta Scott King, MLK’s widow, Graham was honorary co-chair of the BWA-sponsored International Summit of Baptists Against Racism and Ethnic Conflict at Ebenezer Baptist Church in Atlanta, Georgia, in January 1999.

His more than 30 books included bestselling and award winning works such as Facing Death and the Life After; Approaching Hoofbeats: The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse; Angels: God's Secret Agents; World Aflame; and Peace With God.

Graham won dozens of personal awards and honors. In 1983, he received the
Presidential Medal of Freedom, the US highest civilian award, as well as the Congressional Gold Medal in 1996, the highest honor the American Congress can bestow on a private citizen.

He was presented with the Gold Award of the George Washington Carver Memorial Institute in 1964 for his contribution to race relations; was inducted into the Gospel Music Hall of Fame in 1999 by the Gospel Music Association, the first non-musician to be inducted; and was made an Honorary Knight Commander of the order of the British Empire (KBE) in 2001 for his international contribution to civic and religious life.

Other awards included the First National Interreligious Award from the American Jewish Committee in 1977; the Religious Broadcasting Hall of Fame award in 1981; the Templeton Foundation Prize for Progress in Religion award in 1982; and the National Religious Broadcasters Award of Merit in 1986.

In addition to numerous honorary doctoral degrees, Graham earned degrees and diplomas from the Florida Bible Institute in St. Petersburg, Florida, and Wheaton College in Illinois, both in the US.

Funeral services are scheduled at the Billy Graham Library in Charlotte on March 2.

Predeceased by wife, Ruth, in 2007, he is survived by sons, William III (Franklin) and Nelson; and daughters, Virginia, Anne and Ruth.
Upcoming Events

Executive Committee | Annual Gathering | Celebration 2020 | Weekly Prayer Guide | BWA Calendar

Downloads

BWA app | BWA Human Rights Directory | Covenant on Intra-Baptist Relations

*BWA Publications*

Baptist World magazine

Purchase at Amazon.com

Jesus Christ, the Door: The Official Report of the Twenty-first Baptist World Congress

Purchase at Amazon.com

About the Baptist World Alliance

The Baptist World Alliance, founded in 1905, is a fellowship of 238 conventions and unions in 124 countries and territories comprising 47 million members in 169,000 churches. Its priorities are nurturing the passion for mission and evangelism; promoting worship, fellowship and unity; responding to people in need; defending human rights and justice; and advancing relevant theological reflection.